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Questions and Answers with the venerable Sangharakshita

Guhyaloka, August 1987

Names of those present not available

Authority and the Individual in the New Society

Day 1: 24 August 1987

Sangharakshita: Perhaps I had better mention, then, that these questions that I am dealing with this evening come from Kulamitra's study group. They have been studying the lecture on 'Authority and the Individual in the New Society', and the questions that are being asked arise out of their study of that text. There are ten questions, so we should be able to get through them this evening. I have, by the way, arranged them in a rough sequence, with one or two general questions coming first, then questions which seem to deal with power, then communities, co-ops there are several questions about coops and the new society. That is the sequence. did, by the way just as a general point find it quite interesting that, both in this study group and in the others, there were several questions about power, but I don't think there was a single question about love! I don't know whether one can draw any conclusion, but people did seem to be rather more preoccupied with power than love; perhaps love isn't a problem, I don't know. We shall perhaps come to that, we shall see. Anyway, first of all, a rather general question which I thought would be a good introduction, so to speak. This is from Hari, and the question is:

Is there a specific weak point in Buddhism, as belief in God in Christianity, where power could creep into the spiritual community, turning it into a group?

So, yes, in Christianity, as in Islam and Judaism, we do have belief in God, and people can represent God and power can creep in in fact has more than crept into those religions. Well, what about Buddhism? Is there, or could there be, in Buddhism, anything analogous to belief in God to provide a basis for the exercise of authority by people claiming to represent God, as it were? Well, clearly there can't be anything really resembling belief in God at all; not on the face of it. But I think there are other areas, there are other ways, in which a belief could creep in which could be used in that sort of way. Of course, I don't know what the questioner meant, but when I speak in terms of 'a specific weak point in Buddhism' I don't mean the Dharma as such, the teaching of the Buddha, but Buddhism as actually extant and present in the world of today or even historical Buddhism. Thinking this over, it occurs to me that there are two points where a belief could creep in that could be used in fact has been used, is being used as the basis for the exercise or assertion of some kind of authority. The first occurs more [2] within the Theravada context; the other occurs more within the context of Tibetan Buddhism. Within the Theravada context, we have the scriptures, the Tipitaka and especially perhaps the Vinaya, and you can quite often hear or even read representatives of Theravada Buddhism citing the Tipitaka, and especially the Vinaya, as though that was to be regarded or taken as a sort of authority, as if to say: 'If you can cite a verse from the Tipitaka to a certain effect, well, that closes all discussion; that's that. All you have to do is to obey.' There was an instance of

this sort of thing in a conference that Subhuti attended recently. Apparently there was a Theravada nun present on that conference. I forget how the question actually arose, but apparently she had been rather doubtful about some particular point of Buddhist practice and she had asked a bhikkhu about that and he had said, 'The Buddha had done such-and-such and what the Buddha did is good enough for me' and, by implication, should be good enough for her too. And she seemed actually to have been quite satisfied with that. So it is as though, in some cases, in the Theravada world, the scriptures almost take the place of God. It is not stated in so many words that the scriptures are infallible, but the scriptures are Buddhavacana, and the Buddha is Enlightened and the Buddha knows best, and there it all is, written in the Tipitaka; how can you possibly argue with it? How can there possibly be any dispute or any doubt? All you have to do is just to read the Tipitaka and follow it. But, of course, usually especially if you are a layman and not a monk, you don't read the Tipitaka at all. In any case, it is in Pali and you can't read it because you can't understand Pali. But the bhikkhu has read it, he knows what is in the Tipitaka, so he tells you; and if he says, 'This is what the Tipitaka says, this is what the Buddha says,' that ends the matter. There is no scope for discussion. You have simply to accept, obey, follow. So in this way the Tipitaka, though within the Tipitaka itself there is really no justification for this attitude, comes to occupy a position very similar to the position of God in the theistic religions, and the bhikkhu, as the one who reads, understands and interprets, if necessary, the Tipitaka, becomes a source of authority; he transmits authority, he exercises authority. So that is where power could creep in within the context of the Theravada, and does in fact creep in. And then Tibetan Buddhism: at what specific weak point in Tibetan Buddhism does power creep into the spiritual community? Here, I am afraid, it creeps in through the lama. The lama knows; the lama knows best. You have only just to obey what your lama tells you to do, what he teaches; you simply have to follow that without question. I remember that, the last time I was in Spain, when Subhuti and I had our little lecture tour, we did meet some Spanish followers, just a very few, of Tibetan Buddhism, and they were faced very much by this problem; because, on the one hand, they genuinely believed that they ought to follow their lama implicitly, that is to say the lama from whom they had taken the Refuge; at the same time they could not help feeling he didn't really understand conditions in the West, conditions in Spain didn't really understand them very well and, in a sense, at least in certain respects, he wasn't in a position to tell them what to do, in a position to give them advice. But, on the other hand, as they understood it, they had undertaken to obey him implicitly by taking the Refuge from him. And that does seem to be the attitude of quite a few Western followers of Tibetan Buddhism. The authority that they had formerly vested in God they seem now to invest, in many cases, in the lama; and here again you can see quite clearly power creeping in, because the lama does exercise power. [3] So I think, in Buddhism as actually current, there are these specific weak points: that is to say where, in the case of the Theravada or within the context of the Theravada, the scriptures and the monk, the bhikkhu, as the interpreter of the scriptures, becomes the authority; and, in Tibetan Buddhism, where the lama becomes the authority. There is no question of talking things over with the lama. You ask him, he tells you, and then you go and do what he tells you to do. Some people like that that is unfortunate but it is hardly Buddhism, it is not a very Buddhistic attitude, because in what, as far as we can see, are authentic records of what the Buddha most likely taught, the Buddha does not adopt that sort of attitude at all. He suggests that people examine his words, not that [they take] them on authority. This is just a general question; this sort of clears the decks, as it were. All right, we are a bit more specific now. No, maybe 'specific' isn't quite the right word, because I can't understand the first part of the question. This question comes from Kulamitra:

Devamitra once said to me: 'Bhante puts the finger on me, I put the finger on you, you jump!' Are you aware that by claiming to represent you, Order Members can turn a genuine spiritual hierarchy into a power structure?

What I can't understand is this highly colloquial expression 'put the finger on'! It is not an expression I am familiar with. I can't say I've ever heard Devamitra use it. I've heard, for instance, people say: 'Don't dare to lay a finger on me,' which means 'Don't act violently towards me,' but I'm not sure what this means. I am not aware of putting my finger (Laughter.)

Kulamitra: Shall I elucidate, Bhante? I thought it was good to start with an example; that is the only specific one that I can 'put my finger on'. In this situation, Devamitra had obviously spoken to you about some matter which I now forget, which he thought was my responsibility. The point I am making is that he didn't actually explain to me what your thinking was, how you saw things, asking me whether I could agree with that. Basically the expression, as I took it, was: 'Bhante says this should happen; he said that to me. I am saying the same thing to you: this should happen. Now you do it.' That was the meaning as I understand it.

S: So that could have been quite legitimate? For instance, I could have said to Devamitra: 'Please see that my chair is put in the right place for the question and answer session this evening,' and he could have said to you: 'Bhante says Please see that my chair etc. etc.' So what would be wrong with that representing me in that sort of way?

Kulamitra: In this case, as far as I remember, it was nothing to do with you personally in that sense; it wasn't one of your needs in a personal sense. It was some FWBO matter under the jurisdiction of the Norwich Centre, of which Devamitra was chairman at the time, which either you had brought up with him or he had brought up with you; and, within that situation, he saw someone else as having specific responsibility for it. I think it is a case in point, just because, as I understand you in the lecture, you say that someone out of their love can make another person a loving person; and I take it that someone also out of their understanding can make another person an understanding person. But if you end up in a position where you don't understand [4] why it's required of you you just know that the higher authority has said 'You must do it' then I take that as representing you in the sense that you use the word in the lecture. Does that make it clearer?

S: But then also one could say that the question of faith comes in, faith in a quite reasonable sense; because there isn't always time to explain everything. Some things need more explanation than others. In principle, of course, if one is asking someone to do something, or if you as an Order Member are trying to explain to somebody, say a Mitra, that Bhante thinks such-and-such ought to be done, then clearly it isn't enough just to say that Bhante thinks such-and-such ought to be done. One also needs to explain Bhante's thinking. That may involve explaining something about the Dharma itself, making clear some fundamental principle of the Dharma on account of which Bhante thinks such-and-such; and because Bhante thinks that, it follows that such-and-such ought to be done. Sometimes ideally, always this needs to be fully spelled out. But there may not always be time, depending on the situation. The situation may be one of some urgency, when things need to be done quite quickly, so there are, I am sure, situations in which people have to accept, let's say, an abbreviated explanation out of their confidence (perhaps we should say, rather than faith) not

only in me but in the person who is communicating my particular point of view. Otherwise it might sometimes occur that the explanations and the discussions just go on and on and on, and nothing gets done. Sometimes it becomes even, I have found, an excuse for not getting around to actually doing anything at all, because you go on asking for more and more and more explanations. But certainly, in principle, if you ask someone to do something if you ask yourself or if you say that I would like something done, or I think something ought to be done an explanation should be given. But I must say, partly from my own experience, that I have sometimes found that people in a way are unreasonable in the amount of explanation they require or profess to require in view of the practical situation everybody is in. Do you see what I mean?

Kulamitra: Yes, I do see what you are saying

S: So that there needs to be a sort of middle way between giving a reasonable explanation and being expected to go into things in quite inappropriate detail. But there is quite a bit more, I think, involved in the question than that, because you say: 'Are you aware that, by claiming to represent you, Order Members can turn a genuine spiritual hierarchy into a power structure?' There is this question of representing, which I have gone into; because, if it is a question of a genuine spiritual hierarchy, clearly it is based on the love mode and not the power mode, and, as I have said, love can't be represented. That doesn't mean to say it can't be communicated. An example that occurred to me, thinking about this question, was one that is mentioned in the scriptures that is of one light, one lamp, lighting another, or one candle lighting another. You can light your candle from somebody else's candle, so that the flame is transmitted. The original flame is still there, but you have got a flame too. But that flame you are having to nourish, even though you have taken it from the first flame, on your own oil or on your own wax, as it were. So sometimes or very often, I hope that can be done by an Order Member. That is not representing. That Order Member may catch, as it were, something from me or from another Order Member or from a book, and can communicate that to somebody else. He catches it, as it were. But here there isn't any question of representing. So this an Order Member can quite legitimately do, and should do. But I don't see quite how an Order Member can claim to represent me, in [5] the sense that I have spoken of representing in the lecture itself. How would that happen?

Atula: Certainly I have experienced such things happening, where seemingly what has happened is perhaps in a situation a certain kind of view is held by a group of people, perhaps you have considered or a person coming down has been asked or directed to check out a situation, and my experience is sometimes the people get uneasy themselves about communicating so they tend to resort to: 'This is the way it's got to be', rather than easing into a situation of encouraging a discussion and trying to bring up, you know

S: But where do I come in here, or where does representing come in?

Atula: Well, because I think sometimes your view has been represented in a situation well, what it actually ends up is

S: But can you represent a view? Just as, say, love can't be represented, can you represent a view?

Atula: Well, in my experience a lot of times what actually happens is the whole situation goes

very badly wrong. I suppose that's what I'm trying to communicate.

S: I must say it isn't very clear to me what you think is happening or does happen, in the context of the question.

Atula: The way I understand Kulamitra's question is to deal with the way information is actually conveyed, and sometimes it is not conveyed in a way

S: But the conveying of information is quite different from representing.

Vessantara: What I think I sometimes see happen is people invoking what you've said, from the point of view of you as an authority in the same way as when the Theravadin monk says to someone, 'This is the word of the Buddha,' people are not really being invited to consider what the Buddha is saying; they are supposed to simply follow it because it is the word of the Buddha. I think sometimes what has happened in the past is that an Order Member has simply said: 'Bhante has said such-and-such,' and it hasn't been an invitation to people to learn more about what you have said and go along with it; it is meant to end the discussion. People invoke you as an authority not that you have said it from the power mode, but people use it as if it had been said in the power mode, or they try to use you as an authority.

S: Do you think that that is necessarily the case, even if I am quoted in that way that 'Bhante says such-and-such'?

Vessantara: Well, I think one has to go very much by the attitude with which such things are said. In certain cases, they may simply be passing on what you have said, and people are free to take it or not. In certain cases one feels that one is being or an attempt is being made to coerce you by the fact that 'Bhante has said such a thing', so that should end the discussion.

S: It also occurs to me because, yes, I do know that that sort of thing does sometimes happen; but I also know that sometimes people are oversensitive. For instance, the person reproducing, let us say, my view, may simply be reminding people of a principle which everybody in the Order in principle does accept. For [6] instance, supposing someone says something like 'Bhante has said so many times that commitment is primary and lifestyle is secondary.' So this would simply be reminding someone of something that everybody really accepted, but which perhaps in the heat of discussion had been overlooked. And so, in a way, that should end the discussion, if the discussion questions something which is quite basic to the Order as such. Do you see what I mean? So there can be a justification, in a way, for ending a discussion by quoting something that I have said, not because I have said it but by way of reminding people that this is something absolutely basic to the Movement, to the Order, which you can't really seriously question without ceasing to be a Member of the Order, as in the instance I quoted. So I think sometimes that sort of thing happens. But if you feel that someone is quoting me as an authority, well, you have to do two things: first of all find out if I actually did say or write that particular thing, and then simply discuss the view on its own merits, bearing in mind that in certain areas I may well be more experienced than you. I say 'certain areas' because I am quite well aware of my own limitations. If it is a discussion about cars, I would hardly venture an opinion at all; but, in certain other areas, well, you could probably more or less take what I had said at its face value without too much discussion, assuming, of course, that you had understood for yourself what had actually been said.

Atula: What I am trying to [say] is not so much the information conveyed [where] you can quite easily enter into an understanding, but what I am getting at is where there is an atmosphere of fear engendered. I think that's

S: I really find that quite extraordinary, certainly if it's speaking to Order Members, that someone could engender an atmosphere of fear by quoting what I have said as though it was a sort of authority.

Atula: Well, it does happen sometimes, Bhante.

S: Well, if it does happen, I would say the Order Members who experience that fear should really look into their own minds and ask themselves why they should be afraid. Are they afraid of me? They are not normally afraid of me, I think. So why should they be afraid of me when I am quoted, or allegedly quoted, if they are not afraid of me when I actually speak directly? Where does the fear come from?

Atula: It's not you they're afraid of, Bhante.

S: If they are not even afraid of me, why should they be afraid of an ordinary Order Member? (Laughter.) You see? This in a way goes back to the little remark I made at the beginning, about the questions being about power but no question about love. I really think, as a result of a bit of discussion in different situations, and a bit of observation, that people are far too much on the defensive. They are, I think, far too much inclined, or have far too definite a tendency, to try to protect themselves against somebody else exercising the power mode on them. I think they are so preoccupied, sometimes, with this that they lose touch themselves with the love mode. I sometimes get the impression quite wrongly, I am sure, but I do get the impression as though here and there in the Movement there are people sort of cowering in corners, just afraid of someone coming down from somewhere, maybe from Padmaloka: 'Bhante says this,' and shrinking! Well, this is really quite strange, almost sort of pathological; because if people are in reasonable contact with me, and they experience the love mode themselves, at least sometimes, why should they be so sensitive to people exercising, or allegedly [7] exercising, the power mode? After all, don't forget, within the Order no one has got any power over you at all. This is something I have said repeatedly. Don't take it on trust, on authority, of course! but I have no power over anybody at all. I am not in a position to make anyone do anything or stop anyone doing anything at any time, ever. So how can anybody claiming to represent me ever have any such power? If he seems to be thinking that he has such power, well, you should just gently laugh at him; not be afraid of him, it's so ridiculous.

Atula: Well, he has got some O levels!

S: I don't, certainly, have any power, so far as the Order is concerned; so why should anybody 'claiming', as the questioner says, to represent me, have any power over anybody within the Order at all? as Order Member, that is to say. He might have power in other respects.

Atula: ... A lot of it is, I think, our passivity sometimes, not just to come back and question what's going on. Because a lot of it, when it comes down to it, it's the person's handling of whatever information they've got and the way they feel they've got to be defensive, and they create fear in that. I think we've got to be much more skilful in handling that. It does happen

quite a lot.

S: You see, the fact that someone speaks strongly or with feeling doesn't mean he is exercising power. I myself sometimes speak quite strongly; I really want to emphasize certain things and show people that I consider certain things very, very important. But I do it with that in mind, not that I want to pressure people into accepting certain things or doing certain things, but just to show the strength of my own feeling. So likewise with people who may be quoting me, because they think what I had to say on some occasion is relevant in that particular situation, and they perhaps think it ought to be followed; but, even if they express themselves very vigorously and strongly, that is not to be taken as claiming to represent any supposed power that I may possess. They are just expressing their view of my view, strongly; no more than that. So there is no need for anyone to take it more strongly than that. I am quite sure, if that person was cross-examined, he would always agree that he had no sort of delegated power from me over anybody. He has understood me as saying something or believing something, and he has represented that strongly inasmuch as what I had said had convinced him and he was conveying that to other people. No need for them to feel afraid or to tremble as though some dreadful authority had been invoked. So I do think this is a conclusion I have come to very recently that within the Movement, and especially within the Order, the whole problem as it were of power and the exercise of power is at least as much the problem of the people who are claiming that power is being exercised, or attempting to be exercised, over them. And I think if they were themselves stronger in their experience of the love mode they wouldn't be so susceptible to those sort of fears. So I think the whole question raises some quite important points. Any further comment? People, I think, really need to get this clearer. I have really been a bit surprised, sometimes, at how weak people seem; as though you can't speak a bit strongly before you have them sort of cowering up against the wall. I think people must be much more robust sensitive, yes, but robust at the same time. This question may come up again, either today or tomorrow.

Kulamitra: Bhante, can I trip in? I appreciate what you are saying within an Order context, but just going back to that statement at the beginning, I can't [8] remember exactly but I would have been either a Mitra or a very recent Order Member, without much personal experience of you, so there are people within the Movement as a whole who might not realize all those things, and who perhaps one couldn't expect to come back in the love mode and say, 'Look, let's talk about this,' and

S: Well, certainly an Order Member shouldn't quote me, perhaps, to someone who hasn't even heard of me. Because, for instance, an Order Member if I'm quoted on a particular subject may be very ready to consider seriously what I have said, more seriously, perhaps, than what somebody else had said. But clearly that is inappropriate with a new person who may not have heard of me and who certainly doesn't know me. So Order Members have to be careful in this respect. It is safer to say: 'The Buddha says.' But at the same time the Buddha says, 'Examine what I say and make it your own.' Anyway, there is another question from Kulamitra:

Are the chairman or council of an FWBO Centre justified in using their power to thwart Friends, Mitras or Order Members that they believe are not acting as individuals?

This depends, of course, very much on circumstances. It depends very much on the way in which Friends, Mitras or Order Members are not acting as individuals. I don't think one can

really deal with the question without giving fairly specific examples. Supposing, for instance, a Puja is going on, but someone whether Friend or Mitra or Order Member takes it into his head that he would just like to stand up and sing a comic song. Well, in a way he has got a right to do that; but he is disrupting the proceedings, so I think it would not be wrong to thwart him, even if one had to use the power mode to do that. Hopefully, he would listen to reason, but perhaps he wouldn't; so what are you going to do? You then have a choice: either you allow him to disrupt the proceedings, with all that entails for everybody present, or you actually thwart him (or her; sorry, mustn't leave the fair sex out!) So there are some circumstances under which you might be justified. If it's really some quite trivial matter which doesn't really matter very much one way or the other, well, you should just be tolerant and let him do things they way he wants to do them, even though it is not quite in accordance with your way of thinking. Of course, there may be other instances where that particular person is acting in a way which is actually harmful to others or even to himself. You would certainly be justified in thwarting him then. o you can't rule out the possibility that you may have sometimes to thwart people; and the chairman and council of an FWBO Centre can't rule that out. But hopefully that won't be necessary, at least in the case of Order Members, because there would be a consensus, presumably, among the Order Members constituting a council or a chapter about what should be done. Anyway, let's go on to something slightly different now. I am not sure who this question comes from, because I've cut it out from another sheet, but the question is oh yes, I think this is one of Hari's questions:

Are large resident communities like Sukhavati something to strive towards? If so, what are the benefits over small ones?

I think we probably need a spread of communities of different kinds, and that includes communities of different sizes. I am not quite sure what one means by [9] 'large resident communities': perhaps one means communities consisting, say, of 20 or 24 people. I think there are some benefits in large resident communities, and that therefore large resident communities should be striven towards, though not exclusively. In large resident communities, you do have, of course, quite a spread of personality types, so the chances are that you will be able to find at least one or two people within the community who are congenial to you personally, with whom you are able to get on, with whom you can become friends. Within a very small community, of course, your options are more limited. I think this is one of the big advantages of a large resident community. I think, in the case of a smaller resident community, it can become a bit too homelike. I think that is much less likely to happen in the case of a large resident community. And another advantage is, of course, over a smaller one, is that if you have got a very small community, say three or four or five people, if two of them are away on holiday and one is away on retreat, you've got hardly anything left; whereas, in the case of the large community, you can have perhaps a dozen people away for quite valid reasons, and still have a dozen left and still have a definite community, so that community life continues. So, yes, I think large resident communities like Sukhavati are something to strive for, and they do have benefits over smaller ones; but the smaller ones do have some advantages of their own. Other factors being equal, one can sometimes achieve a greater depth of intimacy within a smaller community. So smaller communities are certainly not to be ruled out. We need communities of all shapes and sizes so that everybody can be provided with what they really need.

Atula: This is connected with it, Bhante; I have often thought that perhaps a large community is something to be striven for, but I wonder if we ought not to take into account that perhaps

we, as a spiritual movement, haven't really developed enough maturity in ourselves to actually carry a large community through yet. I'm not arguing that therefore we shouldn't have one, but I think it is something that perhaps we should take into account and look at. Because I think, in a city especially, that a large community does become unfortunately people do get very dispersed and it becomes a very difficult thing to keep together. And I think a lot of it is just to do with the fact that we ... our own depth of experience at times. What I'm suggesting is perhaps we ought to look at communities much more thoroughly than we do at the moment.

S: I think certainly we should look at communities much more thoroughly; they are being looked at, I think, currently, more thoroughly than they were before. But no doubt there is room for improvement. I am not quite sure about the connection between the maturity or immaturity of the Movement, with regard to large communities.

Atula: Well, in terms of people I think sometimes a large community can be very, very demanding. I don't think that we've got enough people who themselves are individual enough to be in a community where they are not getting the kind of contact which is needed, by both of them, I'm sorry to say. In a large community, I've found, the more chance there is that people get lost in that community.

S: Well, you could argue the other way: that within a large community the more possibility that they will have contact with people, because there are just more other people around.

Atula: Yes, you could argue that; but somehow it doesn't quite happen. I'm just going on what my experience is.

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S: But then one has to ask oneself: is it not happening because of the size of the community, or for some other reason?

Atula: I think it's happening because people who are concerned haven't had that kind of spiritual interaction in a community themselves to actually be able to take it in to a large situation, because they haven't had that kind of contact.

S: But I'm not sure what you mean by 'taking in a large situation'.

Atula: Well, I think that a large situation requires a greater degree of outgoing in terms of the Order Members and even the Mitras. But I think the onus, because of the situation, is on the Order Members, and I think it does require a greater degree of commitment to that. Perhaps that is what I'm saying. And a lot of people, because they haven't received that during their own apprenticeship, to put it that way, are not able to give it.

S: I must say I am not convinced that a large community represents a more demanding situation than a smaller one. One could argue the other way round: in a small community you are brought up more against people, as it were, and therefore you have to face them and yourself to a greater extent than is possible, or usually occurs, within a large community.

Atula: My own experience has been of trying, in a smaller situation, of being able to see more clearly and more quickly what needs to be done to actually go out, whereas in a large community I think people tend to get lost, even if they are not quite sure what's happening ...

S: Well, a large community will necessarily be more complex. But then again,

Tape 1, Side 2

Before one joins the communities, whether large or small, it is up to one individually to decide which sort of community you think will be best for you in consultation with your spiritual friends. Large communities do have some advantages, I think, over small ones, those I have indicated; but in other respects, no doubt, small ones for certain people at least have advantages over the large ones. I wouldn't say that the Movement as a whole can't support large communities if by that one means communities of, say, up to a couple of dozen people. I don't think that's true, because no doubt there are difficulties but some small communities also haven't been particularly successful. So the crucial factor is really the degree of commitment of all the members of the community, especially the Order Members, to that particular situation and to one another.

Atula: I just wanted to add that that question has come out of my experience. I'm not going to jump to a generalization, but some things have been playing on my mind quite a lot, that we generally need to think about and be quite careful sometimes about the mix of people in the communities

S: Yes. This is true, but you probably have to be more careful of the mix in the smaller communities inasmuch as they will be in closer contact with one another, and if there is someone you don't mix with, in a smaller community you can't get away from him; but in a bigger one, you can. (Laughter.) And you may need to, at least for a while, or at least not to be brought into too close contact with him

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until you get a bit used to him. But, yes: if someone is thinking of joining a community, or someone asks your advice about joining a community, it is something to be thought over very, very carefully and thoroughly indeed, and perhaps people haven't always done that; they have joined, or been advised to join, without sufficient thought and reflection.

Kulamitra: Just to go back to something you said earlier in that question, Bhante: you said that perhaps a danger with a small community is that it becomes too like home. Could you explain what you mean by that phrase?

S: Well, cosy and comfortable, you know one another very well, you don't challenge one another much; you are more concerned to wear away the rough edges and just all to get along a bit happily in a nice sort of way. I am no doubt laying it on a bit thick, but just to give you an idea as you have asked the question. Sometimes people say that big communities I don't necessarily agree with this can become like institutions. Well, if that is so, and it may be so in some cases or it may be that there is a danger, the small ones can tend to become too much like home. Even if they are single-sex, it doesn't seem to make all that much difference in that sort of respect.

Vajramati: I am beginning to think, after living in Sukhavati for three years, that large communities in the city may not work, and the reason I am beginning to think this is that people in cities well, there are a lot of distractions, and when you get a large community like Sukhavati you have got people working in all different areas of the mandala, so for a lot of

their time they are in different worlds. They come together for meals at odd times, but having such a large number they don't often have a chance to tune in or communicate with people from the other worlds. And there is such a sort of mixture that, quite often, you can go for long periods and not really connect with somebody; and this does seem to be a problem where you get the situation where someone can actually drift out of contact, and not be in touch with anybody, for quite long periods, before anybody actually realizes, and I think probably in large communities like Sukhavati this happens to everybody at some period in the year. Whereas if everybody was engaged in one project, or all together in the country, even if they were working long hours they would all be involved in the same events and their communication would be flowing much easier.

S: No! No I won't cite any particular instances or mention any names, but I do know of situations where people are living together and working together living in the same community and working even in the same coop where they can get out of touch in that sort of way. So I don't think it's really quite as simple as that. I think I certainly agree that the sort of thing you describe does occur, but I think it occurs to a great extent, 1) because of bad organization, and 2) because of people, especially Order Members, not taking sufficient responsibility, especially for the Mitras in the community. When I speak of bad organization, I mean that there surely ought to be some process of checking up; surely all the Order Members, at least, within a large community should get together regularly they are supposed to have regular meetings anyway and just go through all the Mitras especially they themselves are having their get-together anyway go through all the Mitras living in the community one by one, and just check who is in contact, in communication, with that particular Mitra; who has been out with him recently, who has talked with him recently. There are very simple procedures for ensuring that people don't get neglected or out of contact in that sort of way. [12] And in the case of the Mitras, again what about your Mitra convenor? Isn't he doing his job? He ought to know where all his Mitras are at, and whether they are in contact with Order Members or not, whether they are getting what they need or not. He ought to be doing his job. So that is the as it were organizational side of things. And also it's up to every individual Order Member in the community to exercise personal responsibility and initiative. Another practical suggestion I have made in the past I don't know whether it has been acted on in any way yet is that in a large community the community could be divided into, for want of a better term, colleges, like in the big monasteries in Tibet. I even suggested, in the case of Sukhavati, that people engaged in different areas of work should occupy separate floors, so there was a certain unity within the wider unity of the community itself. I am sure there are ways of getting round these sort of difficulties. I don't deny that the difficulties are experienced, but I am not so sure that they need be experienced if sensible precautions are taken. Even if you are living in the country, different people can be involved in different areas. Someone can be working in the garden, someone else is working in the kitchen, someone else goes shopping into town, someone else is preparing a talk; there is just as much danger there, I think, of them getting out of contact. It can also happen in a small community in the city: they could all be working in different places, doing different things, working different hours; some of them may be working shift; but the fact that they are members of a small community doesn't necessarily make it any more easy for them to get together under those circumstances. So I am not convinced, really, that the situation is sort of inevitable. Though I agree that the difficulty exists, the problem does exist, I don't agree it's insoluble. Anyway, let's pass on. We are still on power and authority! This question comes from Eddie, a specific question:

Why has power, authority and callous indifference crept, at times, into Sukhavati community

and the LBC in general?

Well, there is a very general point to be made here: that is to say, within the Movement within the Order, even there are not many Stream Entrants. Now, if you are a Stream Entrant, you will be operating predominantly in accordance with the love mode; but if you are not a Stream Entrant you will be operating predominantly in accordance with the power mode. And I think one of the first things that we have to do is to recognize that that is our normal way of functioning; that is the way in which people almost always function all the time. So that when we come into the FWBO, normally we are creatures of the power mode; even when we are ordained we are still creatures of the power mode really. We only operate in accordance with the love mode from time to time in certain circumstances, under, very often, ideal conditions. All right, so what happens in a community whether Sukhavati or any other, whether large or small? You have got all these people, most of whom well, let's say for the sake of argument all of whom are not Stream Entrants, and most of the time they are operating in accordance with the power mode, grossly or subtly. In their better moments, they operate in accordance with the love mode; but sometimes it happens, at a given moment or in a given situation, that none of them are at their best; they are all operating in accordance with the power mode, and then some quite dreadful things can happen, and they do sometimes happen, and this [13] is how there arises the sort of situation that is referred to in the question. 'Power, authority and callous indifference' do creep in. And then, of course, again what happens is that the situation changes, and certain people see what has happened, or certain people begin to operate in accordance with the love mode, and they try to put things right. But sometimes it does happen within a community, unfortunately, that everybody seems to be acting in accordance with the power mode, and afterwards you have just to try to put things right and recognize what has happened; if need be, make amends for what has happened or even apologise for what has happened, whether individually or collectively. But one mustn't be surprised, really, at this sort of thing happening, whether in a gross way or in a subtle way. This is, of course, one of the reasons why speaking in terms of the love mode people do need to make a really vigorous effort to cultivate it, because if you are not functioning in accordance with the love mode you will definitely be functioning in accordance with the power mode if you are functioning at all. And, in our relationships with other people, we almost always function in accordance with the power mode. I am afraid I see it much more in men than in women. In men it very often takes the form of competitiveness, negative competitiveness. It is a sort of jostling for power and position all the time. I see it going on among men almost incessantly; it hardly ever stops believe me, it doesn't. I think I see it all the more clearly happening among men because, when I am with women, especially women Order Members, you don't see nearly so much of it. If you go into a more masculine situation, even into a situation where there are only male Order Members, you see it happening to a much, much greater extent; everybody is, at least sometimes, vying for power, trying to get the better of the other person. Sometimes it seems to be done in a good-humoured, joky sort of way, but don't be misled! There is a power struggle going on all the time underneath; don't be misled by the jokiness and the jocularity and the humour! No, it's not a very spiritual situation, I'm afraid.

John: You don't have to be a Stream Entrant, do you, to absolutely you don't have to use the power mode at all, do you? Isn't it possible to sort of make it a real practice

S: Yes, it is possible if you just sustain your mindfulness the whole time. Because if your mindfulness slips, you won't automatically go on functioning in accordance with the love mode; you will slip back into the power mode. So you need to be as it were constantly

vigilant. No, even if you are not a Stream Entrant, you don't have to function in accordance with the power mode, but you will unless you make a definite conscious effort not to.

John: It's not an inevitable thing at all, is it?

S: No, it's not inevitable in that way, no. It is inevitable if you don't make the effort; if, as a non-Stream Entrant, you don't make the effort not to function in accordance with the power mode, then function in accordance with the power mode you will. It may be, as I said, very subtle, but it's there, it's recognizable. I mentioned this sort of masculine competitiveness and the fact that it takes a joky form, but sometimes it takes a slightly negative, or even quite negative, sort of form which is really quite unpleasant and quite inappropriate within the spiritual community. Going back, though, to the question, something that occurred to me was this: the question says: 'Why has power, authority and callous indifference crept at times [14] into Sukhavati community and the LBC in general?' Well, I don't want to comment on that particular situation, but I think when that sort of situation arises, what is important is that people don't try to resolve it by having recourse to the power mode. For instance, you might get a situation where someone within a community feels that he has been very badly treated by the community; he has been subject to power, authority and callous indifference. So some people within the community might say that that person has been treated in that way and take a very strong stand about it; and others in the community might disagree and say, 'Well, no, he hasn't treated like that.' In that way, a situation develops, an argument develops, a dispute develops, which itself is an expression of the power mode. And again that compounds the situation. So, if you feel that a situation like that has arisen, you have to be very careful to try to resolve it by the exercise of the love mode, not by the further exercise of the power mode on behalf of some allegedly victimized person. Well, perhaps they were victimized; perhaps they were made a scapegoat, perhaps they were unjustly treated, but don't stand up for them in a way that represents an assertion of the power mode, because that will surely provoke further clashes.

Atula: I have been in situations like the one which you have been describing. I am always concerned about what to do in that sort of situation, and one thing that has come up recently is that the best thing to do is to try and establish objective criteria somewhere, in terms of the Precepts that everyone is agreed to, and you can begin to actually work something out. Again, you hit on the problem that people have got to be willing to do that, but I think it is a way that as soon as possible we have got to try and establish relevant objective criteria in terms of the Precepts, which everyone accepts, and then you can start ... Because all the time it's just kind of subjective reactions coming in, and you ... think in the future

S: I also think it's important

Atula.: ... establish that within Order meetings, where sometimes you get that kind of clash.

S: I think it is also important not to try to pin some charge of functioning in accordance with the power mode on some other person or persons, but to function in accordance with the love mode oneself, and make it very clear that one is doing that. Otherwise you get a situation in which people think: 'Oh, you're acting in accordance with the power mode.' 'No, you are acting in accordance with the power mode.' And that just doesn't help at all. Maybe everybody is right; maybe everybody is acting in accordance with the power mode, but that is not the way to resolve the situation. The way to resolve it is just to see what is happening and just

make sure that you at least, are functioning in accordance with the love mode. Don't be over-concerned about other people functioning in accordance with the power mode. Make sure, in the first place at least, that you are functioning in accordance with the love mode. All right, then, let's pass on. I think this is from Kulamitra:

If the existing FWBO does not always live up to the ideals of this lecture, is that because Order Members, though committed, are not individuals as described on page 3?

Well, yes, you could put it that way; you could say it is because they are not Stream Entrants; you could even say it is because they don't always remain mindful [15] of the fact that they have Gone for Refuge and that they have taken those Ten Precepts and that they are members of the spiritual community. Yes, indeed. But I think I have really gone into that a bit already, haven't I? So let's leave that. question from a quite different person ah, we come on to coops now. Recently we had a Convention, in fact three Conventions Women's, a Mixed ..., and Men's. I don't know what happened on the Men's Convention, but on the Women's Convention, the Dharmacharinis' Convention, there were a number of study and discussion groups, and after the study and discussion groups questions were presented to me. And one of the study and discussion groups was on coops, and that apparently was the one with which they had had, so to speak, the most trouble. That was the topic the topic of coops over which they were most concerned and where they experienced the greatest difficulty in understanding what it was best to do in certain circumstances. So it does seem that the question of coops is quite a tricky one still for a number of people, and there does seem to be still quite a bit of unclarity, at least in matters of detail, about coops. So let's enter on the topic now. This is Tony's question:

With the situation that coop members sometimes don't work for the co-op, is this a case of the workers taking responsibility but not having the decision[making] power?

I would say that, really, this is quite an absurd situation, and it really contradicts the principle of coops; even though the contradiction has arisen for, in a way, valid or at least positive reasons that is to say that control should be vested in those who have made a spiritual commitment, a commitment which perhaps the members of [?workers in] the coop haven't made. But I think if that is the situation those who are technically coop members, or officially coop members, don't actually work for or in the co-op, and those who are actually working in it aren't officially members and therefore don't have the power to take decisions it isn't really a co-op in the strict sense at all, I would say. We really ought to call it by some other name. A co-op is a situation, a team-based Right Livelihood situation, in which those who take the responsibility have at the same time necessarily the decision[making] power. That is what a coop really is. This really means that you can't, in the context of the FWBO, really have a co-op without a substantial number of Order Members working in it. If it is mainly or exclusively run by Mitras, with the co-op members being Order Members who don't actually work in the co-op, it can't really be described as a genuinely co-op type situation. I think we probably need to straighten out our nomenclature here, just to avoid confusion. I have made this point clearly enough before; it is really quite unfortunate that this kind of situation has arisen, and we really need to rectify it as soon as we possibly can, so that those in a team-based Right Livelihood situation which we call co-ops really are co-ops, in fact and not just in name. Anyway, perhaps that's clear enough about that. There is a series of questions from Dave O'Keefe, again concerning the theme or topic of co-ops. He has rather small handwriting.

Can coops introduce people to the Dharma and really make money at the same time? Is there not a case for separating these two functions so that some coops at least are free to utilize the talents of Order Members in more professional ways?

[16]

I am not sure about this, because so far we have defined a co-op's functions as being threefold, haven't we? unless it has been revised recently first of all, to provide the members of the co-op, that is to say the workers-cum-members, with what they need. That's the first. Then to provide a situation within which the members the workers can experience spiritual friendship in a way that will conduce to their spiritual growth. And then, thirdly, to make a surplus which can be given to the centre with which the co-op is connected, or some other dharmic cause. Those are the three functions or features of the co-op, aren't they? So the question says: 'Can coops introduce people to the Dharma and really make money at the same time?' think co-ops as such introduce people, or try to introduce people, to the Dharma only to a limited extent. They introduce them to it so far as they give them an experience of kalyana mitrata you know, working with other people. They introduce them to it to the extent, perhaps, that they get their energies going. But, as I said, usually co-ops are connected with, or affiliated to, a centre, and provision for introducing people to the Dharma as such in a systematic manner is usually made for them by that centre. You don't usually have a coop existing in isolation, apart from a centre or apart from a spiritual community; so I think that the question of separating the two functions, that is to say introducing people to the Dharma and really making money at the same time, doesn't in fact arise, because co-ops don't try to do the two things to any great extent; though some co-ops, I know, do have special co-op study groups and so on for their members. I also rather doubt whether many people would want to work in and for a coop which was solely concerned with the making of money without reference to the Dharma or without the possibility of people being introduced to the Dharma, or their knowledge of the Dharma strengthened. If they were to work in that way, probably they would work, as some have done and still do, outside the Movement altogether. Anyway, the question after that:

Within the terms of the lecture, you seem to suggest that in order to join the new society, you have to join a spiritual community and work in a Right Livelihood co-op. Isn't this confusing commitment and lifestyle?

I don't think it actually is, because we speak of the centre, the community and the co-op, the three Cs, as constituting the nucleus of the new society. So, by definition, as it were, if you want to join the new society, you have to be part of a complex of that sort. Of course, in some cases it may be that you are connected with a centre and you work in a co-op, you don't live in a community. Or it may be that you live in a community, you work in a coop, but you don't have much to do with the centre. But inasmuch as these three constitute the nucleus of the new society, if you want to join the new society you have to be involved with these three to some extent. It isn't just a question of your own spiritual development in the narrower sense; the nucleus of the new society is meant to be just that, a sort of transformation, not just of you individually, but of the society of which you are a part, to which you belong. So if you want to join the new society within the old, inasmuch as that new society consists of the three Cs you have to be involved with those three Cs; unless you find, way outside the FWBO, something analogous to the centre, the spiritual community and the co-op. Do you see what I mean?

[17]

Dave O'Keefe: Well, where would that leave someone who was attending a centre, and, say, working in a co-op but not living in a community? Would they not be a part of that nucleus?

S: Not fully. They would be a part of it to some extent, but they wouldn't be fully a part of it. To what extent they were not fully a part of it would depend on what else they were doing or not doing. But, if the nucleus of the new society consists of those three things, the spiritual three Cs, clearly you are not part of the nucleus of the new society unless you are involved with those three things. Perhaps I am only hazarding a guess here the centre, in a sense, is the most disposable of the three, because living in a community transforms your personal way of life; and working in a co-op represents a transformation of the economic life of society. But the centre is more the place where you sort of learn initially to transform yourself and to transform, to some extent, the society in which you live. So the things that you learn at the centre, or hear about at the centre, you could conceivably put into practice within your community and within the co-op. I mean you learn to meditate at the centre, but you can meditate in the community. You listen to Dharma talks at the centre well, you could do that at your community. You work for the centre; well, you can work for your coop, too. So if one had to dispense with one of the three assuming that you had been going along to a centre for some time presumably you could dispense with the centre. But, no doubt, if you wanted to be really fully involved with a part of the nucleus of the new society, it would be good to be involved, in one way or another, with all three, at least to some extent; even if you only turn up at the centre, say, for festivals, you may be doing something else of a dharmic nature instead of going along to the centre. You may be going from place to place giving lectures.

Atula: I am just a bit concerned about you using the language of the centre being disposable. I suppose, given sometimes the situation, the centre does become rather the poor cousin, I think; certainly in London it rather gets left.

S: Oh! I'm sorry to hear that!

Atula: Yes, it does, well, sometimes. It does happen.

S: Historically speaking, centre comes first. Because if you want to establish the FWBO anywhere, you want people. How are you going to get people? You are not going to get people straight away for a community or a co-op, but you can get them coming along to a centre. So centre comes first. In a way, centre is the foundation of everything, because that is how you get your people, and then they decide, having become more involved, to join a community or to join a coop and work for the coop. So if the centre is undervalued, that is a pity because that is our main source of people, and the Movement consists of people. You can dispense with almost everything else, but you can't dispense with people. You can dispense with buildings; you can function under trees, as you know! But you can't dispense Well, we might have the most beautiful villa-type retreat centre here, but if we didn't have people what use would it be? But I am rather surprised to hear that the poor old centre is not fully appreciated, or appreciated as much as it should be; which perhaps suggests that the people around the centre, or people working for the centre, aren't as appreciated as much perhaps as they should be, or at least feel that they are not.

Atula: I think that's the case!

[18]

S: I don't think anybody is appreciated sufficiently. I am sure I'm not sufficiently appreciated; Vessantara isn't, probably; no one is sufficiently appreciated. Because, I think, probably we don't give one another enough appreciation. There is not enough rejoicing in merits. Well, this is a well-worn theme. There is far too much trying to find out whether someone is exercising authority and all that sort of thing; no, don't bother so much about that rejoice in his merits, especially if he is an Order Member; he has surely got some merits! (Laughter.) If you look hard enough, surely you'll see them. Take a magnifying glass, if necessary! If you can't praise him for anything else, at least praise him for his good looks, or his physique, or something of that sort; but appreciate him on some grounds or other. So, yes, I really mean this quite seriously: there isn't enough mutual appreciation, and this leads to a lot of nit-picking and quite trivial criticism and silly little misunderstandings. If we made our appreciation of one another much more unambiguously understood, it would introduce a quite different atmosphere into all sorts of situations. So, yes, appreciate the centre; appreciate the community you live in. I don't know whether it's an English disease, but people seem to have a sort of tendency, a love for running down something that they belong to, as though their own touch is the least green of all. But don't fall into that sort of trap. Even rejoice in the merits of, or appreciate, your co-op or even Phoenix! (Laughter.) We know it has its blemishes, and we know it has all sorts of weaknesses and imperfections, but never mind! Phoenix is Phoenix maybe you can only see the flames and the ash, maybe you can't see the bird poking its head out at all! It's there, underneath all the ash. Perhaps you don't even see a flame, just a heap of ash, a dust-heap! But just have that faith that the phoenix is there, and appreciate the dust-heap accordingly! Appreciation I am sure none of us get enough of it! Anyway: last question.

Faced with a world of suffering, for example the famine in Ethiopia and Sudan, would it be justified as a Buddhist to devote one's life to trying to improve the lot of people in worldly ways, or should we concentrate on spiritual teaching so that people may be reborn in Sukhavati?

Presumably it means the Sukhavati; after all, no one can be born in Sukhavati (laughter). [They could be] conceived there! Well, I am certainly all in favour of people trying to improve the lot of people in worldly ways; we are trying to do that to some extent in the case of the ex-Untouchables in India. But I do think that teaching the Dharma has priority. If you feel it as the priority I don't want to say you must preach the Dharma, even if you are moved to try to improve the lot of people in worldly ways you shouldn't do that; if you feel it strongly, all right, do it; but I really think, if people ask my advice, that the preaching of the Dharma has priority; partly because there are many people engaged in trying to improve the lot of people in worldly ways, and comparatively few engaged in really teaching the Dharma, and it is the Dharma in the long run that is going to make things better not only in a spiritual sense but even in a worldly way as well. If people are not sure, or if they are still hesitating or still have to make up their mind, I would say concentrate on giving spiritual teaching not just so that people may be reborn in Sukhavati yes, they will be reborn in Sukhavati, no doubt [19] but so that their individual lives can be transformed and so that society gradually can be transformed, too. A little Dharma teaching goes a long way. Today I got a letter from Subhuti, and Subhuti in the course of that letter says an interesting thing. I hope I am not telling tales out of school, so to speak; but he did say that, in the course of the recent chairmen's retreat, or whatever they call it it went on for two weeks and was a great success, apparently the point had arisen or the point had been made that quite a few chairmen, at least some chairmen, are

still rather lacking in self-confidence. I think that is a quite interesting point. I think not only chairmen, or some chairmen, but quite a lot of people, even within the Order, are lacking in self-confidence. And, in order to teach the Dharma this is the point I really want to make you don't need to know an awful lot about the Dharma, but you do need quite a bit of self-confidence. A little of the Dharma goes a long way. If you know just a little of the Dharma, if you just know the basic principles and have self-confidence, you can put those across and you can do a lot of good. You can really benefit people and really attract people. In order to teach the Dharma, you don't need to know the Abhidharma or to have gone into the Madhyamika or examined in great depth the evidence for rebirth; you just need a very clear, but very definite and firm and positive understanding of the basic principles as taught in the FWBO. That is all you need and self-confidence: self-confidence so you can not only put across the Dharma effectively, but so that people can feel your self-confidence and feel that you know what you are talking about; you are not talking out of book knowledge, you are talking out of personal experience and personal conviction, and that you are communicating the Dharma to them out of good will towards them, that you genuinely want to help them and you really believe that the Dharma can do that.

Mokshananda: In the Order and the FWBO, there is a lot of emphasis on going out and setting up centres. Do you think that there would be great value in people just touring the country or whatever, giving talks, just getting the Dharma out ?

S: Oh yes; I thought I had made this point quite a number of times. I really do think that this would be a good thing for people to do those who feel like doing it. Clearly, it is not a case of my saying: 'You and you and you and you you've got to go round preaching the Dharma.' It is something that you must want to do yourself and really feel like doing. Devamitra has done a bit of this sort of thing, but he is about the only person, leaving aside those in India. I did a lot of it in my younger days. I think it is something that you really need to do when you are relatively young. You need quite a bit of energy, going from place to place day after day, week after week, month after month as I have done myself. You need quite a bit of energy, you need to be fairly robust, to put up with the different conditions and different kinds of food and the different kinds of people and different situations, the different beds that you sleep in if you sleep in a bed at all, of course, and very often I didn't in India but it can be a very interesting and worthwhile life indeed. If one does it in England, or if one does it in Spain or any other part of the West, clearly you would need to get someone to make arrangements for you to give your talk beforehand, not just turn up and try and give a talk in a market place; that doesn't work any more. Well, I don't think it does; you could try! But usually you need to make some advance arrangements; you book the hall, put up the posters or get somebody to do that.

Tape 2, Side 1

Of course, there is one way in which this sort of thing is going on, or has been going on, in England, and that is in the form of Padmasuri's talks and slide shows. [20] It is basically the same talk that she has given in several dozen places now, so if you want to teach the Dharma and go around in that sort of way you don't necessarily have to give a different lecture in every place. You can have just two or three lectures and perfect those; give the same lectures over and over again until you are tired of giving those lectures, and then you can compose two or three new lectures and give those. But don't be afraid of repeating yourself to different audiences; don't think you've got to provide a new lecture every time. I used to, usually, but it

isn't necessary to do that. In fact, it might not be a bad idea to give the same talk over and over again. Some of you have done that in respect of your life stories. You can perfect it, you can polish it, you can improve your delivery, make it more effective, make it more concentrated. It is quite good practice. So you don't need a very extensive equipment to be a good preacher or teacher of the Dharma. I think the trickiest part of the performance would probably be the question/answer session. There perhaps you have to be a bit careful and aware of your limitations, and just tread very carefully. If you are not too sure of yourself or your ability to deal with difficult and perhaps pseudo-intellectual people, then don't have a question and answer session; or have with you, supporting you, an Order Member who you know is able to deal with that type of question or that type of person, that type of audience. But I think if you go around in this way you will probably be surprised, in some places at least, at the positive response that you receive; and just accept any invitation you get, and just give your talk or one of your talks wherever you can, whether it is a Rotary Club or a Women's Institute or a church group or a school it doesn't matter, just get around and give as many talks as you can. In Glasgow they have done quite a bit of this sort of thing with regard to schools; they have systematically approached schools, and quite a number of talks have been given at least some dozens, I think. But every centre ought to be trying to do something of that sort. But also there is room for the individual Order Member travelling from centre to centre and from one part of the country to another just giving talks. They may be pioneering, going into areas where Buddhism hasn't been heard of.

Mokshananda: I suppose that is what I was thinking specifically what the value would be of people giving talks where there is not really any chance of follow-up in any satisfactory way.

S: But is that true? Because we do have a scattering of centres, in England at least. You can put people in touch with the centre; you have a small stock of booklets and Golden Drums for sale. You can put them in touch with the nearest centre. You can even get them to keep in touch by subscribing to Golden Drum. There are quite a lot of people around the world who keep in touch with us in that way. Then there are also retreats; some people will make their first actual contact with the Movement by attending a Battle retreat, a large mixed retreat, something of that sort, where they are provided with a sort of easy, but quite effective, introduction to the Dharma. So it isn't a question of you just passing on and then leaving them, having given your talk: you take pains to put them in touch with a centre, or with the magazine, or with the possibilities of retreat. In the case of women, there is Taraloka: you can suggest they go there. If you think they would like a men's meditation retreat, well, there is Vajraloka; or a men's event, there is Padmaloka. If you think a mixed retreat is the best thing for them, well, there are the Battle retreats.

[21]

A...(?): Bhante, in centres where there are few Order Members, do you think certain Mitras could be encouraged to open up that area more?

S: Well, certain Mitras, yes: not all! Some Mitras may be capable of that. But, then, if they were, you might ask why aren't they Order Members? So one just has to be a bit careful. There are a few Mitras who are helping out in this sort of way around the world; not necessarily in England. There are even some taking meditation classes or giving talks. So a Mitra is not necessarily excluded from doing this kind of thing, though sometimes his or her enthusiasm may need to be restrained a bit, because they may not be quite able to do what they would like to do or what they see needs to be done. But sometimes a Mitra can function

in place of an Order Member to some extent.

A...: I was thinking that the level of a Mitra's knowledge of the Dharma now will be so much more because of the Mitra study course.

S: That's true; yes, indeed. And also quite a few Mitras have experience of speakers' classes to give a decent talk. But I don't think a Mitra ought to operate in this way without consulting the Order Members he or she knows, who can judge his or her capacity in a particular area. Anyway, we have covered a fair amount of ground. [With] the other questions, which we will be having tomorrow, we may be going over some of that ground again in a slightly different way, because some of the questions do overlap. But that isn't necessarily a bad thing, because there are some questions which really do need to be made quite clear. So is everybody a bit clearer on at least some of these issues? Or are there still any doubts and uncertainties? Well, if there are, after the ordinations there will be the smaller discussion groups and people can bring up any doubts or difficulties they still have with regard to any of these questions in that context. Righto, then.

[22]

Day 2: 25 July 1987

S: All right, this evening we have questions from Atula's study group and also from Vessantara's study group. I am going to try to get through all the questions, though there are about 20 of them, because some of them do overlap with questions which were asked yesterday, so I can deal with them very briefly and pass on to those questions which are new. Once again, of course, we are quite concerned about the power mode. The first question comes from John. In the case of the questions coming from Atula's study group, I am taking them in the order in which they have actually been given, because they are numbered, and presumably that has some meaning.

Given certain people's views within the Movement that the Buddha can and did operate the power mode, subservient to the love mode, when dealing with non-individuals, is it a justification for an Order Member to use the power mode when dealing with someone he considers less of an individual than himself, on the grounds that it is what is best for that person?

Well, that was really dealt with yesterday, wasn't it? But there is something more to the question than that:

Would that attitude eventually turn the Western Buddhist Order into a power-based group such as the Christian church, who also know what is best for the individual?

Well, it may or it may not! It just depends. Because, in a way, you have to take a risk. The example I sometimes give a simple and, I think, self-evident example of the justified, the legitimate, use of the power mode in subordination to the love mode, is when you have to stop a child forcibly from doing something that is going to injure it for instance, playing with a live coal or something of that sort, or jumping over a precipice. So that is a quite clear-cut case; that sort of instance does illustrate the fact that there are situations when you do need to have recourse to the power mode, but in subordination to the love mode. And there may well arise, within the FWBO, within the Movement at large, situations analogous to that;

situations in which an Order Member may feel justified in having recourse to the power mode, but in subordination to the love mode. But, of course, that Order Member may make a mistake. You can only be quite sure that you are acting in accordance with the love mode when you are a Stream Entrant, otherwise you can only hope that you are, having informed yourself about the situation to the best extent that you can. But there may well be situations when you feel that your intervention in accordance with the power mode is justified; and if you were not to intervene you would still, of course, be indirectly acting in accordance with the power mode by withdrawing your power from the situation. Do you see what I mean? You very often, or at least in some situations you can't be completely neutral, or can't be neutral in the sense of not doing anything at all: non-action in some circumstances is action, because your non-action allows something to happen which would not have happened had you acted. So, if you don't exert your power, so to speak, in a certain situation, you may well be allowing another expression of power to come into operation to the detriment of a particular person. I think that is pretty clear, isn't it? But you have to take a risk. You may make a mistake. So [23] that, so long as the Western Buddhist Order is not composed of people the majority of whom are Stream Entrants, there will always be the danger that it will use the power mode, or have recourse to the power mode, in subordination to the love mode, wrongly or mistakenly. You will have to take that risk. You can't solve the problem just by not taking any action at all or abstaining from action in accordance with the power mode. o the best thing that you can do in the long run, both for your own sake and for the sake of the Order, is to aim for Stream Entry, and then you can be quite sure that you will be acting in accordance with the love mode, or that if you do have recourse to the power mode it will be genuinely subordinated to the love mode. But I really don't see any solution to this sort of problem short of a large number of people within the Order gaining Stream Entry. Anyway, another question from John, but again it is something that has been touched upon yesterday:

How does one resolve the difficulty that arises when you have a particular person responsible for running a Right Livelihood business, ensuring its success and viability, and yet without the power to make decisions as all the power resides with a committee none of whom work within the business nor are prepared to?

As I indicated yesterday, this is a quite anomalous situation. There is no solution for this problem within the terms of the problem itself. You just have to change the situation, as again I indicated yesterday; and the sooner it can be changed the better.

Anyway, this is a joint question now from Atula and John:

We have a policy within the Movement of 'give what you can and take what you need'.

Agreed? Let's be sure of our basic principles; first, do we agree to that, or does it require modification? 'Give what you can' that's clear enough, isn't it? I detect a certain ambiguity in the second half of the statement: 'take what you need.' Well, there is a double ambiguity here: what does one mean by 'need'? Let's say 'what you genuinely need'. But 'take' does that mean that, if you are a member of a coop, you are free to put your hand into the till or into the cash box and just take whatever you think you need? Does it happen like that in any coop?

: No!

S: So it isn't a simple question of taking. You have to ask, don't you? You have to present

your needs to the coop as a whole, including yourself, and it is the coop as a whole, including yourself, that decides what it is able to give. Hopefully, it is able to give you everything that you need, or its equivalent, but in some cases I know that it is not in a position to do that. Anyway, let's go on: Usually, however, people are giving their time, energy and sometimes money to the Movement, but when it comes to the needs of the individual being met, all too often he is fobbed off with seemingly good reasons. [24] I am not quite sure what we are getting at. Are we talking of an individual working within a coop?

Atula: Yes.

S: or working for a centre, or working outside the Movement altogether?

Atula: It's coops.

S: Let's limit it to coop then. Right: so people within the coop 'are giving their time, energy and sometimes money' do they usually give money within the coop? Well, at least they are giving their time and energy 'to the Movement' in the form of the coop. 'But when it comes to the needs of the individual being met, all too often he is fobbed off'. So who fobs him off?

Atula: Well, this is the problem, I think, sometimes.

S: Well, but who does fob him off? Presumably it is all the members of the coop including himself.

Atula: Well, yes, I think the question goes I don't know quite how the question [is worded]: collective responsibility sometimes feels as though it's no responsibility at all, it's kind of diffused in such a way that you can't know when you can actually approach because you know the situation is such that you can't really ask of it.

S: But if you know that the situation is such that you can't ask presumably because there isn't the money or whatever to give you clearly it's not reasonable to ask, even?

Atula: It's not but sometimes you do find yourself in such need that

S: But, as far as I understand it, if you have a coop, and if people are working in a coop, and if someone needs something, genuinely needs something, one needs the money for something, he raises that matter within the context of a coop meeting, at which presumably he would be present and where he would put his case. Is that not what happens?

Atula: I think it does these days, yes.

S: But that is presumably the way it should happen. But how can he be fobbed off because this is quite a strong expression if the question is raised in that sort of way and discussed in that way with him himself present?

Atula: It has not always been raised in that kind of way.

S: But, surely, it is the responsibility of the person with the need to make his needs known within the proper context or on the proper occasion, isn't it?

Atula: Yes, but sometimes the situation is such that there is no one there that can actually really listen or respond to it. That's

S: What do you mean, 'no one who can listen or respond'? Because other coop members are presumably there. Do you mean that the other coop members don't care about that person's need, or are not willing to discuss it?

[25]

Atula: Well, I don't think that that's necessarily the case, that they don't care. It's just subject to the actual demands of the coop, sometimes they're strict ... gone beyond the actual sometimes the needs of the workers are not met when ...

S: Ah, that may be. But if you have a coop, the workers, so to speak, and the employers, these are the same persons. It is not really a them-and-us sort of situation.

Atula: I agree with that, yes. But the difficulty is sometimes that we are trying to move faster than we are able to meet the needs of the people working within the situation

S: But 'we', who are these 'we'? Because, presumably, it's the same people who are having the needs.

Atula: Well, sometimes, in the case of the case I'm talking about is where I in particular was working for a branch of Sukhavati and I was working on Tyn-y-ddol actually

S: When you say 'a branch of Sukhavati', are you talking about the coop? Because we've been talking about the coop situation.

Atula: This ... was within the context of Sukhavati, it was a bit different to what it is today.

S: No, but I want to be quite precise, you see. When you say Sukhavati, what do you mean? Do you mean the community? Do you mean the centre? Or do you mean a coop?

Atula: Well, at that time it hadn't really been defined, because it was just after it had opened.

S: Yes, but anyway that is past history. We are now talking about coops. So that how can one be fobbed off within a coop, as coops are at present constituted? Maybe John can throw some light on this.

John: Well, it's quite a recent incident where an Order Member was working within a restaurant in the Movement, and he was in pain with back trouble, and he went and asked for money so he could go and see an osteopath. And they said they couldn't give him any money because he was still on three months' trial. Although he was in pain, because he was doing his three months or whatever, they weren't prepared to give him any money.

S: It seems to me, then, that there needs to be a clearer understanding as to what are the responsibilities of a coop during a trial period; or even in some cases, perhaps, the responsibilities of a community. These things should be clarified and hammered out beforehand so that there is no misunderstanding.

John: It did seem a bit odd to me that an Order Member could be in pain and ask for money for treatment and be refused that by another Order Member.

S: By other Order Members Other members of the coop, was it, in this case?

[26]

John: Other Order Members in the coop. I think the problem is, quite often, people are not actually members of the coop; they are working for an employer, really; they are working for the coop.

S: Well, then, that is a different sort of situation, because what we have been discussing so far is the situation of a member of a coop. But whether it is a member of a coop or whether it is someone working for a coop as a nonmember for a limited period, there must be a clearer understanding what the responsibilities of that employed person are and what the responsibilities of the coop as employer are. Perhaps this is where the difficulty arises. But the question begins by referring to the fact that 'people are giving their time, energy and sometimes money to the Movement.' Well, clearly they can do that in various ways. If they do it as a member of a coop a full member then clearly it is they, as well as the other members of the coop, who decide on the allocation of resources and to what extent the needs of members that is, their own needs can be met. But there is a slightly different situation when, as in the case you have mentioned, the coop is employing people. Whether in that particular instance they acted rightly or wrongly, I can't say because I don't know the full facts. I don't know what their resources were. They might have been in debt. I just don't know that. But, on the face of it, if a coop did have the resources, one would have hoped that they would have met the needs of that particular person on that particular occasion. But I can't say, on the facts as I have them, that they were wrong in not doing that, because I just don't know what the facts were. But anyway, let's go on.

This is causing many people to become disillusioned with the whole concept of 'give what you can', because they know they won't get what they need. Is this true?

When one says 'many people', what does one mean?

Atula: To come back to the position I found myself in, that I found that I did work for about 4 years putting all my time in, and

S: Into what was this?

Atula: When I was at Sukhavati and then I went to Tyn-y-ddol, and when it got to the end of it, because of the nature of the situation there just wasn't the money around which I

S: Was that a coop situation or what was it?

Atula: Well, it wasn't a coop situation because it wasn't set up in that kind of way. It was me going from Sukhavati to Tyn-y-ddol in this case. And, at the end of that job, there just wasn't the resources there, and I needed money, or I was going to need money, to sort myself out when I got back to London, and there just wasn't anything there. I suppose it makes me wary these days of putting myself in a situation where I am just not going to that side of things isn't necessarily going to be taken care of. It makes me wary...

S: Obviously, within a regular coop situation, this kind of situation is not likely to arise.

[27]

Atula: Hopefully not.

S: Because, after all, if it is a proper coop and the workers are at the same time the employers, it is up to them to decide, as I said, on the allocation of resources how much they are going to put into capital development, how much they are going to put into improvement of the premises, how much they are going to allocate to the needs of the workers, i.e. themselves.

Atula: I suppose why I am raising the question is I would like to see it not happen again that those sort of situations arose.

S: But I am sure it won't happen, and probably hasn't happened, within the regular coop situation, but when one is as it were giving in general, as it were giving to the world, one can't be sure of any so to speak return. For instance, take my case. For the whole of my life, practically, I have given what I can to the Dharma, given what I can for the Movement. There is no guarantee that I am going to be looked after in my old age. I don't belong to a pension fund. I don't have any savings. In a way I don't think about that, I don't think about the future. It could be that I end up with nothing, it's quite possible. In my memoirs, I was just reminded of an old lady that I saw I have written about her in *The Thousand-Petalled Lotus* old Miss Albers, who ended up in that wretched orphanage in Calcutta, aged well over 80, with Rs.10 a month to live on Rs.10 a month even in those days and was not well treated by the people for whom she had worked all her life. So I thought to myself then, quite consciously: 'I may end up like that. It is quite possible. There is no guarantee that I'll be looked after, or that I'll get, so to speak, a return for everything that I have put into the Dharma in the course of my life.' So I think, if we give what we can in that sort of general way, we have to be quite prepared not to get what we need one day, perhaps; and if we don't get what we need, not as it were to repine and not to recriminate, because we have just, so to speak, cast our bread upon the waters in the Biblical phrase. If it comes back to us after many days, fine; if it doesn't, fine! I think that has to be our attitude. Because if we are a member of a coop, then, so to speak, using the language of rights, we have a right to expect that inasmuch as we give what we can we will be able to take what we need; but when we function and give within a wider situation, where in a way we are not giving to anyone specifically or no one has or recognizes any responsibility to look after us, we can't adopt the sort of attitude that we could adopt if we were functioning within a coop.

Atula: I do agree with what you are saying, but I do think it is distorting the case just to say, in a sense, that I was expecting something back. I wasn't expecting something back; when it came to it, I didn't have enough to get back to London and sort myself out

S: But that may happen; it may happen! I have been and given lectures in India to the ex-Untouchables, and they have been so pleased with the lecture this is years and years ago, not recently and I have got such a wonderful reception, but after the lecture everyone disappears and no one has given me the money for my train ticket back to Poona! And no one offered me or arranged a place for me to stay the night! But one has to accept that, it does happen. It shouldn't happen, but then who is responsible? In this particular case I mentioned of my own, was it the man who had taken the chair at the meeting? Was it just other Buddhists in general? You could say it was the responsibility of all of them. But all right, it so

happened that no one took and no one recognized the responsibility. OK, it's [28] part of the deal. It does sometimes happen like that. It is unfortunate, but I think one mustn't grumble; because in a way you have to expect that that may happen.

Atula: I suppose what I'm concerned about is it doesn't happen too much to people.

S: We can only see that we aren't responsible for that sort of thing happening. We can't set up any sort of safety network of a general kind. If you happen to hear or know that someone is in that situation, well, all right, you put your hand in your own pocket and say, 'Here's your fare back to London.' You have no responsibility except what you yourself recognize. You could say, 'It's not my responsibility, I didn't ask you to come and work here.' You could say that. But if you have some feeling, you won't. So if we give, we give. It is not that we necessarily expect any return, but if our needs aren't met in that sort of situation, we mustn't be surprised, actually. It will sometimes happen that they are not met. If they are met, in those sort of conditions, we should regard it as a bonus; not think of it as something that is due to us well, it's just people's kindness; it's just people's generosity. Not that we deserve it or that we've earned it, because that, in a subtle way, is still thinking in terms of wage earning. Do you see what I'm getting at?

Atula: I see ...

S: But I think, with regard to 'many people becoming disillusioned', we have to be careful about that, because recently I was talking to Dhammarati and also the council of the LBC and saying we ought to take a sort of survey and get some facts. Because, very often, with regard to the LBC, people make all sorts of statements 'a lot of people are doing this,' or 'a lot of people are doing that', or 'a lot of people aren't doing this' or 'a lot of people aren't doing that'; but we don't really know. We don't have any facts, any figures, to go by. So I suggested that a sort of survey is taken of the whole LBC mandala: how many Order Members, how many Mitras, how many Friends, to start with at least Order Members and Mitras; how many are working in coops, how many are not; how many are full-time workers in coops, how many part-time; how many live in communities, how many don't, how many live with their families, how many live on their own; how many have outside jobs, how many are taking courses of various kinds. Let's get the facts, because otherwise we will just be making very general statements but without any sort of real facts and figures to back them up. o when you say 'many people', does it mean two or three, does it mean 40 or 50? We really need something more concrete to go on.

Phil: Don't you think that we can expect the Sangha to take care of us in our old age?

S: Yes; yes. It is reasonable to expect, in a way but if they don't, you mustn't sort of take it to heart. Just feel sorry, not on your own account, but that they, being Order Members, didn't have it in their hearts to look after you. You're all right; they are the ones who have to worry! (Laughter.) You'll only starve, but they don't have any metta, which is worse. Anyway, we are still on Atula's study group. Oh, we are still on John, actually. Again I think we have dealt with this question to some extent already:

[29]

Given the shortage of Order Members within the Movement,

Yes, there is a shortage of them, especially a shortage of women Order Members, we must not forget

And the need to spread the Dharma, should Order Members be encouraged to work in centres

...

they shouldn't really need any encouragement, should they?

or start new centres and discouraged from committing themselves to Right Livelihood businesses?

Who is going to do this encouragement and discouragement? I don't suppose I can do it, otherwise some people may think I am exercising authority or functioning in accordance with the power mode. I can only give a gentle hint, you know (laughter). Probably senior and responsible Order Members very often don't dare to give anything more than a hint lest they should be accused of functioning in a pope-like sort of manner! 'and discouraged from committing themselves to Right Livelihood businesses?' But, as I said yesterday, the centre really is the basis, because it is after all the centre, usually, from which communities and coops spring.

I realize we need both centres and Right Livelihood businesses, but given the shortage of Order Members, should not the priority be given to directly spreading the Dharma?

Well, a great deal, of course, depends upon what the individual Order Member wants to do. This is quite important. There are a very few people in the Order who have said to me that they are willing to do whatever I would like them to do just a handful of them; maybe not more than four or five or at the most six who have actually, genuinely said this to me and whom I can believe. The majority of Order Members want to do what they would like to do, and really there is no stopping them. If they want to work in a coop, they will work in a coop. If they want to go and spread the Dharma and start up new centres, that is what they will do. And I don't think they will really listen to any encouragement or discouragement encouragement, yes; if you encourage them to do what they want to do they will listen (laughter), but if you try to discourage them from doing what they want to do, that's another matter. It is very difficult to decide, even if someone asks me quite genuinely: 'What should I do? Should I join a coop? Should I work in a centre or start a new centre?', I usually find it very difficult to say, because I can see the need in all these different kinds of situations. But if one is thinking in terms of setting up a new situation, I think I would advise people to set up a new centre. Because I think probably that is what is most needed. I think one needs to be very careful indeed about setting up a new Right Livelihood business. Experience has shown it is the most difficult of the three. It is much easier to set up a centre than it is to set up a community, and it is easier to set up a community, by a long way, than it is to set up a Right Livelihood business. o start up a centre, what do you need? Well, people have done this you need, at the very least, one Order Member and the use of a room once a week. That's all you really need to set up a centre. And you, the individual Order Member, can go [30] along and take one class a week and this is how I started the FWBO or two classes a week, and you will gradually gather a little nucleus of people and you will have a centre; however small, you will have a centre. But it is not nearly so easy to set up a community. You can gather four or five people together, but then you are there much of the time, you are at least there most evenings. The question arises: will you be able to get on well with one another? Will he want to play his

record player when you want to meditate? Will he want to have his girl friend staying overnight when you are trying to practise celibacy? etc. etc. But, in the case of the people coming along to the centre, you only see them once or twice a week, you don't get involved with them very closely personally, at least not for a long time. It's all so much more simple. If need be, you can finance the centre out of your own pocket; you can have a full-time job, even; you can pay the hire of the room once or twice a week; and you can take classes in the evening. Even functioning in that sort of way, you can start up a centre. If you are working part-time, supposing you are highly skilled and can earn money easily, all right, work two or three days a week; you, a single Order Member, can get a centre going. Aryamitra did it in Leeds; Pramodana did it in Accrington; probably other people have done it in other places. So the centre is the easiest thing, in a way, assuming that you are psychologically positive and balanced, and have got a decent basic knowledge of the Dharma and get on with people reasonably well; those are the basic requirements. So I think, if it is a question of starting up something new, especially starting in a new area, I would encourage people to start centres and spread the Dharma through such centres, rather than trying to set up a community or to start a Right Livelihood business. The Right Livelihood business, to come to that, needs first of all money, capital we know this now! (Laughter) It needs very committed people, in fact it needs a team of them. It needs skills, also, of various kinds. So that is a much more difficult business. So, as I say, if it is a question of starting up something new in a new area, I would encourage people to set up new centres. I say 'new' because I don't want to discourage people from going into, from joining, existing coops, [31] especially Order Members, joining existing coops, if they really would like to do so and if there is really a need for Order Members in a coop, as usually there is. But I think we should think very carefully about setting up new businesses, that is within the context of a particular mandala, before we are certain that the existing Right Livelihood businesses are functioning really properly. Anyway, enough about that. Then there is a supplement from Ian P.:

If we are truly to build a new society, why is it that so few people are prepared to commit themselves to building Right Livelihood businesses? Are Right Livelihood businesses necessary for the new society's survival?

Yes, I am afraid they are necessary, because otherwise you are as it were parasitic on the old society, which means that the old society can withdraw its support from you any time it wishes; and then what happens to you? So, yes, the Right Livelihood businesses are necessary for the new society's survival. But then 'why is it that so few people are prepared to commit themselves to building Right Livelihood businesses?' Well, if one speaks of 'building' in the strict sense, starting new ones, it is obvious, I think, why people are reluctant; because it is really so difficult. People recognize now that capital is required, skills are required. They are not always available. But I must say I have quite often been surprised that more Order Members have not been willing to involve themselves in existing coops, especially coops in which Mitras and Friends are working who need contact within that situation with Order Members if they are to take full advantage of that situation and to develop. This, I must admit, does surprise me but it is only those who aren't prepared to commit themselves in this way who can answer the question of why they are not prepared to do that. I can't really speak for them. Anyway, come on to another supplementary question to Dave O'Keefe's, but almost identical the question actually is from John:

Is it time we described several kinds of Right Livelihood businesses, such as one run solely to support the workers within it, another primarily to support the centre or some project, and

another for the advancement of Mitras? Then the priorities within the Right Livelihood business would be made clear.

I am not so sure that we can do that, because all three things are needed. For instance, suppose one takes the first kind you mention Right Livelihood businesses 'run solely to support the workers within it'. All right, you've got your Right Livelihood business. It only exists to support the workers within it. It doesn't exist for the sake of providing kalyana mitrata or for supporting a centre. But, even if it exists for the sake of supporting the workers, its members, they can't really work together as a coop without a spirit of kalyana mitrata or spiritual friendship; it is that which holds them together as a coop. Because it is very difficult to overcome your individualism, your individualistic tendencies, and sink your personal interests to some extent in the interests of the coop as a whole. There needs to be some sort of spiritual ideal, and that is provided by kalyana mitrata. So you have to bring in that other objective of the coop. Also, I think, probably, for a successfully functioning coop, you need to have a sort of object, something that the coop is working for outside itself. I don't think, if you are at all idealistic, you would get much satisfaction simply from working in a coop in order to support yourself, even if there was also kalyana mitrata. Some people working in coops have said this to me that they like to feel that the coop is working towards a definite end, it is working to finance a particular project, the more specific the better. So I think very likely in practice you can't really separate these three. And then, all right, supposing you have, again, the question of supporting the centre: well, people won't be willing to run the coop in such a way as to make money to support the centre unless they've got some feeling for the Dharma, for which the centre stands. And this brings in again the question of kalyana mitrata and spiritual life. And, of course, they won't be able to make money to support the particular project unless their own needs are also being met. So, again, you really need all three functions or aspects of the coop within that situation. There may be, from coop to coop, some difference of emphasis a bit more emphasis ...

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Tape 2, Side 2

... abstract considerations or considerations or principle, but by the particular nature of the situation within which the coop exists, that is to say the needs of that particular mandala. Anyway, let's pass on, because we seem to be spending quite a lot of time over seem unable to get away from coops these days! This is from Vajramati! I wonder what he's got to say?

It is hard for many people to move from a wage-oriented mode of working to a cooperative mode of working.

yes, I suppose it is.

How can we make the transition from one to the other mode easier for these people?

What does one mean by 'easier' here? Less painful? More easy to understand?

Vajramati: Quite often, it is financial. They see that they are in a well-paid job and they would like to work in a Right Livelihood business, but they see they are going to earn, in their terms, because they are still like wage-oriented, they see a quarter the amount of salary, and this is quite a big move; and

S: Well, they may have a wife who doesn't want to cut down on the standard of living of the family. So?

Vajramati: Well, I have been thinking about this area, and one of the things that I have been wondering is whether, to ease this transition, when people first work for a Right Livelihood business, they should actually earn more, and as they

S: That is to say, be given more by the coop?

Vajramati: Well, yes, so that their needs they are seen that as they haven't yet

S: Well, that is for the coop to decide. If the coop, including that person assuming that person to be a member of the coop agrees, if they all really agree, in view of the fact that that person has been earning a very high salary to give him more, inasmuch as they recognize that his need is greater, than they usually give to I won't say to members of the coop, but to themselves, that is up to the coop.

Vajramati: Well, yes, I asked this because I have been thinking about this area, and I thought you have have done; you probably have! But I thought that, as people start to understand more and more what is going on Right Livelihood businesses, the longer they work, it seems that their needs decrease, or can decrease, so that when people start to work they need more and the longer they work the less they get. It's like there's a period of

S: Sounds brilliant! (Laughter.)

Vajramati: I have noticed the difficulty that people often go through to start with, and so I have been thinking about this and I wonder if there are any other [33] ways in which we could ease this transition; because a lot of people show interest but their first view is of just money, and it can be quite difficult to communicate any other aspects; but as soon as they start work, if they do make that decision, they quite quickly learn.

S: I think also it is a question of the person concerned weighing up the benefits of working within a coop a team-based Right Livelihood situation as compared with working outside the Movement and earning a lot more money than you could expect from the coop. I think it is for them personally to weigh up the relative advantages. If the coop as a whole, which means all the members of the coop including that person if he has joined, agree to recognize in his case a greater need and therefore a need for more money, well, it is up to that coop. We have had to face this sort of question in India quite a lot: not in the context of coops so much as in the context of centres, because some of our most capable Order Members have been holding down, by Indian standards, good and well-paid jobs, and I think they have virtually all been married and with families and usually with wives who do not share their ideals; but they have wanted to work for the Movement, and we have wanted them to do that. But they have got to be supported, and we have had, it seems, to accept that someone who comes from a very good job say, paying Rs.2,000 a month should be given by the Movement a bit more than someone who gives up a job, say, at Rs.200 a month, because he and his family have been accustomed to a higher standard of living and need a bit of cushioning. And some Order Members have had to undergo, or to accept, a cut of, say, 50% in their income, so they have made a real sacrifice for the sake of the Movement. This had to be discussed at great length, because some other Order Members did feel that everybody ought to get more or less the same with

maybe a bit more if they had more children, less if they had fewer children but that there shouldn't be very much difference. But, in the end, as far as I remember, it was agreed that those who had given up very good jobs should get, at least for the time being, a bit more than those who hadn't come from that sort of situation. But in India we do try to pay, so to speak, all our Dharma workers what by Indian standards is a very decent I won't say wage but a very decent means of support, because there the situation is rather different, and perhaps this is the first generation, in some cases, where people have been able to live decently; perhaps they were brought up almost as beggars, in some cases. So it is a bit more difficult for them to give up what they have achieved and what they are able to earn than it is for people in this country who have never experienced that sort of poverty. Also, of course, a person in that sort of situation needs to weigh up, perhaps, apart from his own needs or his own wishes, whether it wouldn't be better, from the point of view of the Movement as a whole, for him to continue in his existing job and make a substantial donation to the centre each week or each month. That might be better from the centre's point of view, provided he is happy about that. That possibility, at least, should perhaps be put to him, unless he feels very strongly about working in a coop. All right, let's go on to the last batch of questions from Atula's study group. This is a threefold question, in the sense that it is from Vajramati, Atula and John. They are presumably all thinking alike here.

Collective responsibility all too often is no responsibility at all.

Oh, yes, that's very true.

[34]

How can collective responsibility be maintained without using the power mode?

Oh. Who would use the power mode, in this case? Anyway, let's pass that over. 'How can collective responsibility be maintained?' Well, there are two ways: to some extent it depends on the size of the collective, whether it's a community or whether it is a coop. If everybody is very sensitive, everybody is very aware, and everybody is very emotionally positive, then whatever needs to be done will be done. Someone will, for instance, walk into the kitchen, see there are some dirty dishes, and just go and wash them up. They won't ask 'Who is responsible? Who hasn't washed the dishes?' They will just see dirty dishes, they will see that they are there; they will just go and wash them. If everybody behaves like that, then there is no problem of collective responsibility. That, of course, can happen more easily within a very small collective. It is rather more difficult for it to happen within a large one, though not impossible. But that represents quite a high ideal. One would wish that, in all collective situations, that would happen. must say, I used to be quite impressed I think I probably still would be if I happened to be around by what used to happen sometimes on retreats and Order weekends, when the contingent would arrive especially from Glasgow; because the contingent would come down from Glasgow, they would have had 8 or 10 hours on the road, and they would jump out, all fresh and lively (laughter), and go straight to the kitchen, and within five minutes they would be doing loads of washing up! I noticed this several times. They didn't ask: 'Who has left all the dirty dishes? Who is responsible?' They just did the dishes. This happened on quite a number of occasions. So this gave me a very good impression of people coming from Glasgow. It wasn't just Order Members, by the way; it was also Mitras and maybe Friends. But it seemed characteristic that they were willing to jump into the situation and just do what was needed. I thought it showed a very good spirit. People from other parts of the country might have done the same thing, but I must admit I didn't

particularly notice. But if everybody has that sort of spirit, no problem at all. But supposing they don't, what should you do? Then you should agree on an allocation of responsibilities. The collective, whether it is a community or a centre or whatever, should have a meeting and should agree who is going to do what. All right: he'll water the plants, whenever they need water; he'll be responsible for cooking; he'll be responsible for washing up; he'll be responsible for cleaning; he'll be responsible for shopping. You allocate responsibilities. Because, if the situation is a bit complex, it is very difficult practically just to deal with responsibilities on an ad hoc basis, in a spontaneous, free-and-easy way. It is very difficult to run a centre like that. So you really need to allocate responsibilities. And then, when you have your next meeting, if someone hasn't discharged his responsibilities, then that matter has to be raised. If some persistently fails to fulfil his responsibilities he has agreed to accept then I am afraid he automatically disqualifies himself from membership of the community, because he is really expecting other people to carry him as a passenger. You can do that to some extent with a Mitra or a Friend, but you shouldn't have to do that with regard to an Order Member. So if, after a while, you find that someone is not actually fulfilling the responsibilities which he voluntarily has accepted, he has to be regretfully informed that he had better look for a more accommodating community, or perhaps preferably live on his own or go back to mother! Anyway, let's go on: continuation of question. Yes, I say mother quite seriously, because I do sometimes get the impression that some people still feel that there [35] is some maternal figure hovering behind them, ready to clear up all their mess as they make it. But that isn't the situation, in a men's spiritual community, at least.

In particular, since centres are so autonomous ...

Yes, they are autonomous

and there is a great deal of movement of individuals from centre to centre, the individual centres seem reluctant to supply the needs of individual people, even though those people may be doing important work for the Movement as a whole.

Well, there is a generalization here, and we have to ask on what facts it is based, because it is a generalization about a number of centres and about a number of individuals moving from centre to centre.

Atula: I suppose the most direct one that comes to mind is, for instance, a Mitra convenor who is doing quite a lot of work, not necessarily attached to any centre but still with needs to be met. There is a reluctance, I think, on the part of a centre because they are not seen to be attached necessarily to any centre.

S: Well, it is not so much that, say, the Mitra Convenor we have only got, really, among the men, Devamitra isn't attached to any centre. That is a wrong way of thinking of it, to begin with. He is attached to all centres, because he fulfils a very important function with regard to all centres. I may be wrong, but I believe Devamitra is being supported. But it may be that in future we do have more Order Members working, so to speak, for the Movement as a whole, not permanently located in any particular centre, so they have to be supported, but supported through all the different centres the different centres have to allocate certain funds to a central fund, usually the Order Office, which disburses that money, or those monies, rather, to the individual concerned, the individual for whom they are meant. We probably need to extend those arrangements as we have more and more people working, so to speak, for the

Movement as a whole or for the Order as such. At present, for instance, in the Order Office we really need more people, but we don't have the means of support; and that can come, broadly speaking, only from the autonomous centres. And, as they are autonomous, they have to give freely and voluntarily. They can't be as it were taxed by the central body; there is no such central body in that sense.

Kulamitra: As an ex-centre chairman who often had to deal with these sort of difficulties, I think 'reluctant' only in the sense that there isn't much money available.

S: True.

Kulamitra: I didn't feel an emotional reluctance to do that, but sometimes you are really juggling even with the pennies. And, in a way reluctantly from your heart, you have to say 'At the moment we can't do what you are asking, or not all of it.' So I think one has to understand that that is not resisting people doing that work, or not feeling that they are fit for it, or something like that.

[36]

S: Well, I do know that, with regard to, say, coops, there are probably only two coops in the Movement that are in a position to make considerable donations to the Movement at large, as it were, or the Order as such; and they do contribute quite substantially and quite regularly.

Atula: I suppose what has been on my mind with this question is I wasn't suggesting that people weren't going to give money because emotionally they didn't want to. It's more this eternal problem of money. But it seems to me that, sitting in meetings for a long, long time, the problem does keep coming round, and I suppose, because of the nature of the centres being autonomous, somehow when we hit the problem we say 'We can't do it,' so the problem gets left. And somewhere I think there are still people, and are going to be people, who do need to be supported somehow by the Movement as a whole

S: It is not only people; it is central activities. For instance, there is The Golden Drum. That is still almost subsidized. We have to ask centres to take more copies than they can actually sell, or even to buy more copies than they sell, so that they give away quite a few. So it isn't even just individuals, it is also activities which are activities of the Movement and the Order as such. But it does point to the fact that we need to bring more money into the Movement, and when we do set up coops we have to be careful that we set up coops that are going to be successful and are not going to be a drain on the Movement rather than contributing to it financially.

Atula: I'd just like to push that a bit further. I suppose what I'd like to see happening somewhere is yes, I'd like to see, I don't know how, to see us moving towards a situation where we do set up some kind of central bank in some way that [could]

S: Well, this has been mooted, this has been discussed.

Atula: give money for those kind of concerns. It's there and it might actually encourage some kind of movement beyond the problem which is usually asking for handouts all the time. I know that in our chapter we did set up a fund because we were getting letters from India asking for money we were giving a little bit each week. And I think if we did that on a

Movement-wide basis we might get round to some of these

S: Well, in a way, we do, because we do have the Support Account at Padmaloka, and money comes into that from all the autonomous centres. And, if anybody wishes to give a donation in his individual capacity and some people do, quite generously that account is there to receive the money just in case anybody didn't know! So the arrangements are already set up. But we just need a bit more flow of funds into the appropriate account. All right, let's carry on... (sorting out questions.) Let's take the second paragraph of this question 8 as read, as having been dealt with.

Surely it is time we began taking better care of people within the Movement ...

Presumably we mean 'better care of ourselves'? [37] - and stop spending all our money on projects without thought for the individuals without whom there would not be a Movement in the first place.

I am not sure what sort of spending is being referred to here, on what sort of projects. Can you give me a concrete example? Has someone been wildly building unnecessary stupas? (Laughter.) Has someone been buying Rolls Royces for me on the quiet? (Laughter.) If so, please don't buy more than 10! So what has been going on? Please tell me.

Vajramati: That question was one that was written in respect of Atula's experience with Vajraloka that was the main one. But also related to that was the example of Sangharatana, who has at various times given fully to the Movement, and ended up in a not very good situation in London, and I think it was D...(?), mainly, who got him out of an unpleasant situation.

S: Well, when a centre and it is usually a centre sets up any particular project, part of the resources, obviously, must be allocated to the needs of the people who are engaged in working on that project. Sometimes, of course, financial projections can go wrong. This is where lack of experience and lack of skill comes in. It may be that the Order Members setting up that project intended, for instance, to give everybody at the end of that enough money to have a good retreat; but it could be, for all sorts of reasons, that their financial projections were wrong. It could have been that cost of materials suddenly doubled, in a way that they could not have foreseen. So sometimes it can happen that there are these unfortunate consequences, but without anybody necessarily being at fault. Do you see what I mean? But clearly one should do one's best to include provision for one's actual workers, whether Order Members or others, when one sets up a particular project. But I think one has to be careful before one starts almost accusing the people setting up the project of not caring. Sometimes it may be the case, but also sometimes things do get out of hand, due to no fault of theirs. Well, we all know how much money we ended up spending on Sukhavati. What was that original projection do you remember? It was first of all \$12,000, then it was \$20,000; and how much did we end up spending? \$220,000, was it? So you can't always be surprised if there isn't any money left in the kitty, or you end up even in debt; and you can't give your workers or the workers can't give themselves, because sometimes it is the same persons what they really need. Anyway, I have already talked about that.

Vessantara: Bhante, do you think that there should for instance, that at the moment you are supported, presumably, not as head of the Order or to do any particular thing, you are just

given money because people feel that you are worthy of support and are very happy for you to do whatever seems to be appropriate? Do you think that, in the future, there would be a case for supporting more individual Order Members, not because they are the chairman or because they are the coop treasurer, but simply because

S: Oh, yes, I am sure already some people would be very happy to do that, because they have trust that that Order Member would just make the best possible use of his or her time, even though it might not benefit the actual giver directly. Anyway, now we come on to the nomadic tribe:

[38]

How can we resolve the problems of a collection of autonomous centres benefiting from the efforts of a nomadic tribe of individuals, but not prepared to service the needs of those individuals because they have just left their patch or have only just entered their patch?

I wasn't aware that there was this whole tribe of Individuals (Laughter) tell me who they are, we need them! Let us look at the actual situation. Supposing an Order Member joins a particular centre and he agrees to work there, say, for a month. Well, yes, clearly he should be supported by that centre for that month. But supposing, two weeks after joining, halfway through the month, he comes along and says, 'Look, I've just had an enormous bill, I've got to pay my income tax or whatever \$10,000. Can you please give [it to] me? It's a need, and at present I am working for you, so I am your responsibility.' Would that be reasonable? If that centre was very, very wealthy, it might be; it might be. After all, \$10,000 nowadays isn't very much money; as they say in the trade union movement, it's peanuts! If you are offered that as a golden handshake, or if you are offered that as redundancy money, you would just turn it down at once, wouldn't you? (Laughter.) So, all right, if the centre could afford it, well, why not? But the actual position is that very, very few centres could afford that. So I think the nomadic Order Member can't really expect all the needs which arise for him within the time that he is working for a particular centre should be met by that centre. That isn't really reasonable. I think only the centre, or the Order Members of the centre, in consultation with that person, can really decide what they are able to give, even by stretching their resources a bit. Supposing that person is taken ill, supposing he incurs heavy hospital expenses while he is working for that centre just for a month; is it morally incumbent on that centre to meet all those expenses? One also has to see his general situation; perhaps he has other resources, perhaps he has well-to-do relations, perhaps he has a friend who is willing to help out. But is that centre necessarily responsible for all the needs that happen to arise in the case of that nomadic Order Member or Mitra, even during the time that he happens to be with them? That is really the question to be considered. So I mean each such centre has to consider it. So I don't really think that the fact that, for a short period, you are working for a particular centre, or coop for that matter, entitles you to receive all your needs during that period, especially as it were exceptional and occasional needs; certainly all your living expenses during that period, but not necessarily other needs that just happen to arise. Sometimes it is a fine point. Supposing someone has been with you for a year; well, are you responsible for, say, his expenses or his support when he comes on an ordination retreat? Sometimes it is not easy to decide, and sometimes a centre or a coop would like to give the whole support, but they just can't afford it [it would be] an injustice, perhaps, to their other workers, who are perhaps receiving an absolute minimum; they just can't give that particular person so much money, even though he has been with them for a whole year. Sometimes it just falls out like that. Anyway, another question now from John, from Ian P. and from Vajramati:

What would you recommend as the best upbringing for a boy or girl in the new society?

Oh. I feel like Dr Johnson, pestered by Boswell, who said: 'Sir, if you found yourself on a desert island with a newly-born baby, how would you bring it up?' [39] Johnson said: 'Sir, I would endeavour to procure some milk!' (Laughter.) So I really don't know!

Would it be any different from that current in Western society?

Well, one would hope that in certain important respects it would be different.

Would the boys live with the men and the girls with the women?

Perhaps. I think that after a certain age it would be a good idea if they did, but and this is a very big but I don't think that you can incorporate boys (let's talk about boys because we will be concerned more with boys) into an ordinary men's community. If you do have boys within a men's community, there have got to be very definite and specific arrangements for looking after them; not just looking after them in the sense that mother looked after them, but spending time with them, working with them, playing with them, showing them things, teaching them things, helping them grow up, spending quite a lot of time with them, almost taking the place of their father, or at least their uncle. Maybe their father would be in the community, in some cases. So I think probably, if there were any number of such boys, it might be advisable to set up a special men's community which would be oriented to the needs of the boys within that community. One would have to consider that. think the business of bringing up children is a very serious one, and one not to be embarked upon lightly. Some parents, unfortunately, do embark on it quite lightly. But I think it should be taken very seriously, and one shouldn't invite boys to join a community or spend time within a community, and then just leave them to their own devices. It just wouldn't be fair at all. At least I can say that. I don't really feel in a position to say very much more about the matter at this point. Anyway, a question from Ali(?); this is the last one in this group.

To what extent do you follow the laws of the land, the country within which our new society must operate, if they threaten the ideals or principles of our new society?

I think it is very difficult here to lay down any rules, or even any general principles. I think that, as far as one possibly can, one should avoid coming into conflict with the laws of the land. I think one should permit oneself to come into contact with them only if a very serious and vital Buddhist principle is involved; not if it is just a matter of your personal convenience or liking or disliking. I can't offhand think of any very serious Buddhist principle that you might consider as threatened, except perhaps that involving, say, military service. I think this is the one that perhaps springs most immediately to mind. But to refuse to do military service is not exactly against the laws of the land, not in Britain anyway, because you can object on conscientious grounds, and most likely your reasons would be accepted; but this, I think, is not so in all countries. There are some countries which don't recognize even the right to be a conscientious objector. And if you felt very strongly about not performing national service, not being involved even indirectly with violence in that way, then you would have no alternative but to refuse to serve and to take the consequences. But, clearly, one should put oneself into that sort of position well, not exactly put oneself into that position, because it is the state that puts you into it, really but adopt that [40] sort of attitude, only after the most serious thought and for the most serious reasons; not for any comparatively frivolous reason.

How are we going for time? Oh. Time is marching on, as usual. Anyway. We don't have many questions from Vessantara's group, but of course they are quite weighty ones! I believe there is one that Vessantara has kindly paraphrased at least, it looks like that. There is a rather long question it may well be from Andy O'Neill (laughter) but after that there is a question that looks like a paraphrase, in Vessantara's handwriting. Is it ?

Vessantara: I simply added another of Andy's questions on to that sheet.

S: I see. But they do seem to revolve around the same issue, so maybe I should read them both and then reply to them both at once.

You say, in *Going for Refuge* (the booklet), that the arising of the Bodhicitta, *Going for Refuge*, the opening of the [Dharma] Eye, Stream Entry and even *Going Forth* are five different aspects of a single basic, crucial and unique spiritual experience. You go on to say that Stream Entry is the permanent and far-reaching aspect of this experience. This seems to contradict what you say in *The Endlessly Fascinating Cry* (seminar text), when asked if the Bodhicitta can be related to the idea of Stream Entry: there you say Stream Entry means the point of no return, and that an irreversible Bodhisattva corresponds to a Stream Entrant.

Perhaps I should comment on this bit by bit, otherwise it might be confusing. When I said that Stream Entry means the point of no return, and that an irreversible Bodhisattva corresponds to a Stream Entrant, what I mean is that within the context of the Hinayana Stream Entry corresponds to what within the context of the Mahayana is the irreversibility of the Bodhisattva; not that those two things are the same. In the *Going for Refuge* booklet I say that the *Going for Refuge* and the arising of the Bodhicitta are different aspects of the same experience; that is not the case in this other context. Here I am following tradition; I am discussing tradition, where you've got an arhant path which is different from a Bodhisattva path. Within the arhant path of the Hinayana, when you reach the point of Stream Entry you are irreversible from Nirvana, for yourself alone. Within the context of the Mahayana, when you reach the point of irreversibility as a Bodhisattva, you become irreversible from Enlightenment for the sake of all sentient beings. Inasmuch as Nirvana for your own sake, and Enlightenment for the sake of all sentient beings, do not represent the same experience, Stream Entry within the context of the Hinayana is not the same thing as irreversibility within the context of the Mahayana path. They are both irreversibilities, but they are not irreversibilities from the same thing. They are comparable or analogous only to the extent that they are irreversibilities, not with regard to that from which they are irreversible.' You say Stream Entry means the point of no return, and that an irreversible Bodhisattva corresponds to a Stream Entrant'. So it is clear what I meant by that.

You go on to say that the Bodhisattva can fall back despite his Bodhicitta right up to the time that he becomes irreversible.

That is, he can fall back from his aspiration to supreme Enlightenment for the sake of all sentient beings.

[41]

Could you clarify the position: i.e. can you fall back after the Bodhicitta has arisen?

Yes, you can fall back. Within the context of the Bodhisattva path, the Mahayana path, you

can fall back once the Bodhicitta has arisen; that is, before you reach the eighth bhumi.

Does Stream Entry correspond to the arising of the Bodhicitta or the eighth stage of the Bodhisattva path, irreversibility?

Well, again, Stream Entry within the context of the Hinayana path corresponds to irreversibility arising of the Bodhicitta at the eighth stage, or continuation of the Bodhicitta to the eighth stage, within the context of the Bodhisattva path or Mahayana path. Is that clear?

Voices: Mm.

S: [To] go on to the further question which Vessantara has written out:

You have talked of Stream Entry as a state we can reach in this life, but you have also said that you shouldn't even think of becoming a Bodhisattva: the closest we can come to it is as a Movement as a whole. There seems to be a paradox here. If Stream Entry and the arising of the Bodhicitta are simply different facets of the same spiritual experience, why do you encourage us to think in terms of trying to attain one but not the other?

Well, clearly, when I talk about becoming a Bodhisattva, I am talking about becoming a Bodhisattva in the traditional Mahayana sense; not talking about becoming a Bodhisattva, not talking about the arising of the Bodhicitta, in the sense that that is equivalent to Going for Refuge. The Mahayana doctrine of the Bodhisattva is that the Bodhisattva commits himself to a course of spiritual development extending over three asamkheyas of kalpas, and he quite seriously makes a vow that he will, if necessary, spend even a hundred aeons in hell if it can only help a single human being to advance one step upon the path. Now I believe that that is a vow that, at least nowadays, no one can seriously take. Here we are concerned whether the historical Mahayana recognized it or not so much with the Bodhisattva as an ideal individual, but the Bodhisattva as representing a whole cosmic tendency; and, while we can participate in that cosmic tendency, we cannot as it were take upon ourselves, as we at present are individually, the whole responsibility, so to speak, of that cosmic tendency in the way that the Mahayana Bodhisattva is traditionally represented as doing. That is really quite unthinkable for us. So therefore I speak in terms of us participating in that, or allowing that to manifest itself through us, rather than in us aiming at being Bodhisattvas in that full traditional sense. Is that clear? It is quite important that this should be clear. It is in a way a quite confusing sort of issue; because we are having in a way to transpose these very magniloquent Mahayana statements of the Bodhisattva ideal back into more ordinary, everyday terms, closer to those which the Buddha himself, the historical Buddha Sakyamuni, seems to have used.

Atula: You have always stressed the participating and allowing something to work through

[42]

S: Yes, so far as the traditional presentation of the Mahayana Bodhisattva ideal is concerned, yes. If one is thinking of the arising of the Bodhicitta simply as being the altruistic aspect of the Going for Refuge, that is quite another matter. That is something comprehensible to us. That is something within our scope, as it were.

Atula: Could I add to that? I just wondered whether you envisaged individuals within the

Movement perhaps taking a vow of making conscious that kind of orientation in their lives? I don't know whether you would discourage that?

S: I think, though we do have the Bodhicitta practice as one of the four mula yogas, I would prefer to see people expressing this in their lives generally, in the way that could be recognized by others, rather than making a vow, as sometimes people do in the East, and then declaring that they have made that vow and that they are at least novice Bodhisattvas. No, I think I would rather see that altruistic element actually manifesting in their lives, so that other people might say quite spontaneously: 'Good heavens, that person seems to be a real Bodhisattva.' I think that would be better.

Tape 3, Side 1

It is the same even with regard to being an Order Member, because an Order Member is one who has Gone for Refuge and the arising of the Bodhicitta is the altruistic aspect, let's say, of that Going for Refuge. So, even if you are not wearing your kesa, people in the Movement who don't actually know you personally should be able to feel, if they see a bit of you: 'Good heavens, that person must be an Order Member, because he is behaving much more mindfully, he is much kinder, he is much clearer in his thinking; he must be an Order Member.' So they should be able to tell that, even though you are not wearing your kesa. You shouldn't have to wear your kesa so that people can recognize that you are an Order Member; certainly not people who are regularly within the Movement. Strangers and members of the general public coming along to the centre or to a lecture, that is another matter.

Vessantara: Bhante, you say this is a confusing area, this correspondence of Stream Entry and the arising of the Bodhicitta. Do you think that it seems to me that in, for instance, your Going for Refuge pamphlet, you equate the two; and yet you don't seem to really make the distinction that you are not using the arising of the Bodhicitta in the traditional Mahayana way. Do you see the point I'm making?

S: Yes, I probably do, at some time or other, have to go into that more fully. That was a semi-popular lecture in Bombay, one mustn't forget, and it was already quite long enough; and I had a very sore throat that evening, and was thinking I might not be able to speak at all! But, yes, perhaps some day I need to elaborate that to a greater extent and explain the cross-relationship with the Mahayana presentation of the Bodhisattva ideal and the Mahayana conception of the Bodhicitta; and explain how it was that, within the general Buddhist tradition, the arising of the Bodhicitta came to be seen, within the Mahayana at least, as something far in advance of the Going for Refuge, which resulted in, or perhaps as a result of, a devaluation of the Going for Refuge.

Vessantara: I think Andy wanted to just clarify something.

Andy: You say that the Bodhisattva can fall back before he gets to the eighth bhumi.

[43]

S: I am talking about the standard Mahayana teaching about the Bodhisattva and the Bodhisattva path, yes. This is what tradition says; this is not my personal view or personal interpretation; this is the standard Mahayana teaching on the subject, yes. Whereas what I say about the Bodhicitta being the altruistic aspect of the Going for Refuge this is, of course, my

personal interpretation or reinterpretation of tradition.

Andy: Well, traditionally, then, Bhante, what happens to the Bodhisattva who does fall back before the eighth bhumi?

S: Well, anything might happen!

Andy: But does he then, instead of entering

S: On the one hand, he may simply transfer to the arhant path. He may think: 'The Bodhisattva path is just too difficult; people are just too difficult to get on with. They just refuse to be saved. I might as well just look after myself.' But then he falls back, and perhaps he enters upon the arhant path, perhaps he returns to worldly life.

Andy: I just wanted that clarified whether he would just become a worldling again.

S: It depends whether and here, I think, Mahayana teachers differ whether you regard Hinayana Stream Entry as an intermediate stage between the arising of the Bodhicitta and the stage of irreversibility, or not; because, if you regard it as an intermediate stage, though he fell back from irreversibility from full Enlightenment, he wouldn't fall back necessarily from irreversibility from Nirvana in the individualistic sense. But views of Mahayana teachers differ in this respect. Some of them I think most of them do not see Stream Entry as a stage on the path of Bodhisattvahood prior to the eighth stage. It all gets a little complicated, doesn't it? So I try to simplify it and bring it all together, and bring together those aspects of the spiritual path and spiritual life which, due to historical circumstances, grew apart. All right, there are a few short questions.

The phrase 'the new society' do you still feel it is the most potent, effective way of expressing this idea? Our group doesn't respond very well to it.

Well, did your group come up with any alternative? Because I am quite willing to consider a better expression. I am not myself especially enamoured of the expression 'the new society', and it may not be the 'most potent, effective way of expressing' the idea. Any suggestions?

Vessantara: We didn't find any.

S: Oh well, maybe you'll think about it. You'll be having lots of silence, I think, quite soon, and at least the existing Order Members will perhaps think about it. Others, no doubt, will have other things to think about.

Centres should be able to stand on their own feet as far as media coverage is concerned. Things are at present centralized, e.g. Subhuti was called down to the LBC to be interviewed by ITV. What do you think?

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Well; I would go further than the question. The question says 'centres should be able to stand on their feet as far as media coverage is concerned'. I say that every Order Member ought to be able to stand on his or her own feet; but, unfortunately, they are not. I think not every Order Member, and therefore not all centres, because centres essentially consist of Order

Members, are able to stand on their own feet. I think, in order to stand on your own feet, to use the questioner's phrase, you need several things in dealing with the media. First of all, you need to be very well informed about the Dharma and about the Movement. You need to be very quick-witted. You have to be able to see what the person is getting at whether he is trying to trap you or to trick you, because the media sometimes are very unscrupulous and do not come along with the best of intentions. You have to be very articulate. You have to be able to get in your point of view very quickly. And you have to be especially on the lookout for sort of trick questions; and I am afraid quite a few Order Members, irrespective of their purely spiritual qualities, or whatever spiritual qualities they may have, do not always have these qualities, and therefore could be misled by the media and very misleading statements could be extracted from them, or they could be induced to make statements which could be paraphrased in such a way as to give a very wrong impression of the Movement. So one has to be very, very careful indeed, especially so with the national press and the more important and popular TV networks. You are much, much safer with the local press. If it is the local paper, you are reasonably safe; you don't have to bother all that much, though you need to be a bit careful. But with the national press you have to be very careful indeed. I think there are only a few Order Members within the Movement who can really handle the national press; even then it isn't easy for them. Supposing they misquote you, or misrepresent you; however careful you have been, it is very difficult to get them to publish a correction or a letter from you putting the record straight. They are very, very uncooperative, even the so-called quality papers. We have found this. So therefore, if there don't seem to be, in a particular centre, Order Members who are able to cope with the media, it is best that someone from Padmaloka like Subhuti, or myself personally, should do that. If there happens to be someone around the centre who can deal with the media, quite often Subhuti or myself say, well, let that particular person deal with it; there is no need for Subhuti to come down or no need for me to be personally involved. But we are extremely cautious. But, yes, in principle I would like every Order Member to be able to deal with the media, but you don't just need spiritual qualities to deal with the media; you need some very worldly qualities as well; and Order Members are more likely, perhaps, to possess the spiritual qualities than the worldly ones. We are approaching the end. Still on Vessantara's group:

Do you think it was a mistake for the Buddha to make rules for the early Sangha, as described in the Vinaya? If not, why did they need this when we have avoided it in the FWBO? Do you think that we are going to need rules?

Well, first of all, it is not clear well, we are not really sure exactly how many of those rules the Buddha himself did make. That is a quite separate question. But no doubt he did make some. But we must remember that, as far as I recollect, the Buddha did not start laying down rules and he only started laying them down when certain bhikkhus started misbehaving until the Sangha had been in existence, I believe, for about 20 years. So the early Sangha lasted at least for about 20 years without the Buddha having laid down any rules. We have lasted for [45] about 20 years without there being really any rules; but 'do you think that we are going to need rules?' I think we are going to need them but what are rules? Rules are really only deductions from principles to meet specific circumstances. They are guidelines, in a way. But we are going to need rules, I think, sooner or later. I am not quite sure who is going to formulate them; that is another matter, but I think we are going to need them.

Vessantara: Could you give an example of the sort of situation in which we might need rules, Bhante?

S: Well, to give a simple example: when you say 'a rule', a rule, to be effective, must also have, so to speak, a penalty. So, right, we have, say, the principle of nonviolence. Supposing you have a situation in which an Order Member, say, strikes another Order Member. Perhaps we need a rule that an Order Member should not strike another Order Member well, that should be understood, that is implicit in the principle. But then you have to have a rule so that you can lay down a penalty in the case that an Order Member does strike another Order Member. Well, you might say that Order Member should be suspended for a period of a year, or six months, or whatever; or until such time as he repents and makes satisfaction to his chapter. At present, we don't have any rule, so that, supposing an Order Member does strike another Order Member, there is no accepted procedure; and it has happened at least twice, to my knowledge, or perhaps even three times which is unfortunate, but it certainly hasn't happened with sufficient frequency for a rule, and therefore a penalty, to be necessary. But when you get a large Order and a lot of people, you are more likely to have, statistically speaking, things of this sort occurring.

Vessantara: Can you explain why frequency and the larger size of the Order should make a difference why people still can't work out things from the principles?

S: Well, in these particular cases I don't think they were able to do that. I did express my own concern that it was a very serious matter, but the Order Members concerned didn't always seem to realize that it was a very serious matter. If there is a rule with a penalty affixed to the rule, then they will be so to speak obliged to recognize that it is a very serious matter for one Order Member to strike another. They can't just shrug it off and laugh it off, as they might otherwise be tempted to do.

Vessantara: Do you think that the proliferation of rules in the early Sangha contributed to its ossification, and is there not a danger that if we

S: But it is not the proliferation of rules, because the Buddha himself says, according to the Pali Canon, that 'In the early days of my movement' paraphrasing him 'there were few rules and many arhants, now there are few arhants and many rules.' But that is not the fault of the rules; it is the fault of the people who couldn't or didn't have sufficient responsibility to observe and apply the principles he had laid down. So it is not the rules that get in the way or are responsible for any deterioration; the rules, in a way, are a bulwark against further deterioration.

Vessantara: You don't think that having rules encourages sort of discourages well, makes people lazy about going back to the principles? if you simply have the rule, there is always the danger that people after a while are more easily -

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S: You have to weigh up one danger against another. Because, if you don't have any rules, it would seem that in the long run even principles come to be completely disregarded. If people behave responsibly, no rules are needed; but do people always behave responsibly? If they behave irresponsibly in large numbers, the situation has to be clarified in some detail, because they are not able, it seems, to apply the general principles to the specific situation that they find themselves in. So therefore, how the rule is to be applied within a specific situation has to be spelled out; and it is that which basically constitutes the laying down of a rule, as distinct from a principle. For instance, in the case of celibacy, in the Buddha's day the

bhikkhus were all supposed to be celibate; so what happened? this was the first time the rule was laid down a bhikkhu, though he accepted the principle of celibacy, thought there would be nothing wrong if he went and slept with his former wife; so the Buddha laid down a rule that a monk should not sleep with his former wife, because that would be a breach of the principle of celibacy. That particular monk had not understood that; he thought that that didn't count, as it were, as a breach of celibacy, sleeping with one's former wife. So the Buddha laid down that rule, so no one slept with his former wife. After a while, someone slept with someone who hadn't ever been his wife, so the Buddha laid down another rule. And then, of course, someone who was living in the forest had sexual intercourse with a monkey, because the Buddha had spoken only of women; he didn't say anything about female monkeys. So the Buddha had to lay down a rule that you are not to sleep with female monkeys. So you see how it happens? This is how the rules come to be laid down: when the full extent and application of the principle is not understood by the person allegedly practising that principle. So that a body of rules constitutes, in principle, a more detailed spelling out of the implications of a particular ethical or spiritual principle. But the more intelligent and the more sincere people are, the less that is necessary, because you don't want to arrive at a situation where everybody is observing all the rules but the principle is really neglected; and I have seen so much of this in the Theravada Sangha. And this one reason I have held off for as long as possible [from] laying down any rules.

Vessantara: It seems at the moment what happens is you have laid down general principles, and where Order Members aren't clear of the application of that principle and usually you have replied [with] some kind of opinion

S: In a way, if I give an opinion, in a way it constitutes a rule, doesn't it?

Vessantara: I do feel there is a difference between a rule which one can simply as it were take out of the book and follow without full understanding, and a situation where we go back to something that you have said, where you have usually related that very clearly to the principle that is involved.

S: Presumably someone sooner or later is going to get around and write down all these opinions of mine; and then someone is going to go through all that writing down there might be thousands of pages and select all the opinions in a short form! and you might get, if you are lucky, several thousand rules! (laughter) if you see what I mean.

John: So far you have talked about suspension of an Order Member. We are told that you should never question an Order Member's commitment to the Three Jewels, for example. Supposing they seriously transgress the basic Precepts - maybe [47] butchering animals, something like that, quite serious should we consider that person no longer an Order Member in any sense, or merely an Order Member who is not acting in a skilful way for the time?

S: Well, clearly in a way the two things are separate, because Order Members, inasmuch as they are not Stream Entrants, do sometimes act unskilfully; they do even sometimes break Precepts. But if, as soon as that is pointed out, the Order Member is regretful and expresses regret and if necessary makes amends and tries, makes a special effort, not to break that Precept in future, then their membership of the Order is not affected. But if they persistently and habitually break one or another of the Precepts, and carry on doing that despite the remonstrances of their spiritual friends or other members of their chapter, then presumably

some action sooner or later would have to be taken, though we have not as yet laid down any procedure in such cases. We hope that we won't; we hope that that will not happen; but I think at least a few Order Members in the past have come perilously close to that sort of situation. For instance, supposing you heard that a certain Order Member was working in a slaughterhouse. You would have to do something about that, wouldn't you? All right, let's carry on.

On page 8, first para, you imply that the FWBO is the only organization in Britain offering people the opportunity to grow indefinitely. Do you still think this is the case?

So far as I know, this is still the case, and the more contact I have with people belonging to groups other than the FWBO the more, for instance, people like Subhuti have and the more things they tell me I am afraid the more I am convinced of this. As I have said before, it is not in a way a happy position to be in, because it means that so much extra responsibility rests on our shoulders; but perhaps we could even extend that, because, as you know, Nagabodhi attended recently this conference of North American Buddhist organizations he went with Manjuvajra, and we were included because Aryaloka is in North America and many of the people present expressed very great appreciation of the FWBO, and it did transpire, in a way that everybody could recognize, that the FWBO has found solutions to problems that Buddhist groups in America, at least, have only just begun to think about, only just begun to recognize. One very simple one: the problem of women, the problem of women's ordination. This is a big issue in American Buddhism; but is it a big issue in the FWBO? It is only an issue to the extent that we can't get enough of them. There is no problem about a woman being a Member of the Order. A woman can be ordained as a Dharmacharini, just as a man can be ordained as a Dharmachari. They do exactly the same thing, they have the same responsibilities. There is no difference whatever. They belong to one Order, with two wings as it were; but this is not so in the rest of the Buddhist world. There there is a big discussion or, say, argument, going on about women's ordination, especially women's ordination as bhikkhunis. We have bypassed all that. I don't see how they are going to be able to sort it out, really. It is an almost insoluble problem on their terms but we have changed the terms by going back to the Going for Refuge as the fundamental act of the Buddhist; and by going back to Going for Refuge as ordination, not becoming a monk or nun, bhikshu or bhikshuni, as being ordination. So this is a simple solution that we have found to a problem that, in the rest of the Buddhist world, seems to be intractable. [48] Anyway, let's go on.

Concerning power creeping into universal religions, you mention that if we look closely enough we can even see it happening in some Buddhist circles. What circles are you referring to?

I am not quite sure. What was the year in which I gave that talk?

Vessantara: '78, '79.

S: I might have been referring to an incident that happened in Trungpa's circle, involving his Vajra Guards, where two people, a husband and wife, were forced to strip themselves naked in front of everybody else and so on and so forth; it was a very big event at that time, and was written up in American magazines. I think I must have been thinking of something of that sort. The Vajra Guards were used in a very unpleasant sort of way; Trungpa apparently was drunk. I imagine it was that, or something akin to that, that I was referring to. Anyway, last

question, still from Vessantara's group:

In Peace is a Fire you describe laziness and indifference as the besetting sin of Buddhism. Can you see how this tendency derives from the Buddha's teaching, or a distortion of it?

To some extent. I'll just mention a couple of factors. For instance, in Theravada countries, and to some extent in other Buddhist countries, bhikkhus are supported. If you become a bhikkhu, you are supported for life. You have no further worry. So there is no incentive to do anything, in the case of a lot of bhikkhus, especially those who may have become bhikkhus just for that reason, to gain support. Some bhikkhus no doubt will devote themselves to study, to Pali, to Sanskrit, to preaching the Dharma, building temples; some do that. But they are a comparative minority. Quite a lot of bhikkhus, I am afraid, just lead quite a lazy life, and that wasn't the Buddha's intention. And they don't do anything much for themselves in a spiritual sense, or for the community to which they belong. Also, there is this idea of not interfering with other people's karma. This is quite strong in some eastern Buddhist circles, that you mustn't interfere with other people's karma. It is very strong in Hinduism, too. I have even heard Buddhists in the East express the view that a person shouldn't convert from one religion to another; I have even heard Buddhists in the East say that if you are born a Christian you should remain a Christian and not become a Buddhist, because your karma, so to speak, meant you to be a Christian. So I think this really expresses laziness and indifference. These are the sort of things I was thinking of. Also a pseudo-tolerance, perhaps, in some cases; the Buddha certainly taught tolerance, or what we call tolerance, though not pseudo-tolerance. Anyway, unless there is any supplementary on that, we will perhaps come to a close.

Atula: What would you consider to be pseudo-tolerance?

S: Well, when you, for instance, say, or you think: 'It doesn't really matter what people believe. Everybody is free to believe what they like; it doesn't matter what they say, let them say it.' That is pseudo-tolerance, because, according to Buddhism, there are certain views which are wrong views, which are false views. And while you don't want actually to attack anybody, if someone in your presence [49] does give expression to a false view or a wrong view, and especially if they attribute it to Buddhism, then it is your responsibility to speak up and to point out, in a reasonable, friendly sort of way, that in your opinion they are mistaken or that the Buddha has not taught such and such a thing. In India, for instance, I was always hearing that the Buddha really did believe in God, or had taught belief in God, and it was an integral part of Buddhism and that the Buddhists had got it all wrong. So I had to point out again and again that the Buddhists hadn't got it all wrong; and that, even if one did believe in God, one had to recognize that the Buddha didn't. o, if one doesn't accept that responsibility, if one believes it doesn't matter even if people misrepresent the Buddha's teaching, then that is a pseudo-tolerance. If you feel you have no right to correct them or to disagree with them that they are just as right as you are, or that one view is as good as another that is pseudo-tolerance because it fails to recognize the basic Buddhist distinction between micchaditthi and sammaditthi. And you have, after all, as an Order Member, taken a Precept to abstain from micchaditthis; and inasmuch as there is the altruistic aspect of your Going for Refuge, you should try to help other people or encourage other people to abstain from, or get rid of, micchaditthis likewise help them, in broader terms, just to clarify their thinking. So pseudo-tolerance, from one point of view, at least, represents a refusal to clarify one's thinking or the thinking of other people. Some people say, 'Who am I to disagree with others? Who am I to criticize others?' Well, this is sort of pseudo-humility, pseudo-modesty. It may

just represent a fear of getting involved, or a fear of people defeating you in argument. Or you may just want to appear very broad-minded, as it were, because some people regard that sort of broad-mindedness as a virtue. Anyway, we have got through all the questions, even though some of them a bit briefly. Any final point? Well, if you think of anything during the next week, you probably will have an opportunity of bringing it up in some other context. OK, then, that's fine.

[50]

Mitrata Omnibus

Day 3: 28 August 1987

Sangharakshita: ... questions: one from the Mitrata Omnibus, and the other from the review of the D. H. Lawrence book, the review entitled 'D. H. Lawrence and the Spiritual Community.' A lot of these questions in both groups seem to come from Kulamitra's group; there are some from Vessantara's group, too. So we will start off with the questions arising from the study of The Mitrata Omnibus, and the first question comes from Subhadra and is with regard to awareness, or at least arises out of the discussion of awareness. The question goes:

You refer to the fact that the spiritual life involves violence towards certain aspects of ourselves. What is the nature of that violence? Is it violence in the sense of wilful suppression of certain aspects of ourselves which would disrupt seriously our spiritual progress, or is it violence as a sudden demolishing of obstacles, which leads immediately to a higher spiritual level e.g. one as will power, the other as Vajrapani?

So 'the fact that spiritual life involves violence towards certain aspects of ourselves. What is the nature of that violence?' What, we may ask, is the nature of violence as such? Violence implies the use of force; it implies coercion. What do we mean, therefore, by the use of force with regard to certain aspects of ourselves, or what do we mean by coercing certain aspects of ourselves? It suggests that those aspects want to do, or are inclined to do, something that 'we' we, presumably, meaning the dominant self, let us say do not want them to do. We want them to do something or not to do something or to go in a certain direction, but they are recalcitrant; they do not obey 'our' wishes though they, of course, also are us. So what are we to do? They are not willing to cooperate, as it were, with that central self, that self-conscious individuality that is in charge; so that individuality has no alternative but to coerce them, has no alternative but to force them; in other words, to use violence towards them. And it can use violence towards them in various ways. It can use it [either] by gradually suppressing them or suppressing them all at once. Perhaps the type of violence that will be used will depend to some extent on the personality type of that individuality. It may depend on circumstances. It may depend upon what is to be suppressed. But I think, in one way or another, sooner or later, some violence towards certain aspects of oneself is inevitable in the spiritual life; because those aspects, for want of a better term, just do not want to go your way 'your way' meaning the way of the self-conscious individuality. They just don't want to go your way. Therefore you have no alternative except to coerce them. But, of course, you have to go about it wisely, you have to go about it tactfully. You have also to be sure that this self-conscious individuality really is in charge, really is dominant, really is more, so to speak, powerful; because, if it isn't, all you will achieve is a temporary, very provisional, very partial, suppression of those aspects, and after a while they will return in full force, and perhaps wreak havoc perhaps take revenge for what they have had done to them, perhaps they will

suppress you! at least for the time being. After all, you are suppressed [51] every day; that is to say, every night. Every night, to a great extent, that self-conscious individuality is in abeyance, lost sight of, not in evidence. So those other aspects very often don't have any difficulty in staging a comeback, at least temporarily. o, having explained things in that way, let us go on and look at the other parts of the question. 'Is it violence in the sense of wilful suppression?' It is not so much wilful suppression as willed suppression. It is deliberate 'suppression of certain aspects of ourselves which would disrupt seriously our spiritual progress.' 'Or is it violence as a sudden demolishing of obstacles'? I don't see these two as really antithetical; the suppression can be gradual, it can be more smooth, in a way more easy, or it can be sudden for instance, as when one resolves yet again to give up smoking. You can approach it in two ways: you want to smoke; there are certain aspects of you, or at least an aspect of you, that wants to smoke, that is dependent, let us say, on nicotine, for one reason or another. So you can either suppress that aspect of yourself by cutting down on your smoking gradually, over a period of, say, three months, or you can just give up straight away, stop the supply straight away. So the one is the more gradual method, the other is the more sudden and the more dramatic. The second one could perhaps be called the Vajrapani method, but it is not anything wilful or at least it shouldn't be anything wilful. It is just the deliberate exercise of one's will, doing deliberate violence to that aspect of oneself which one sees as inimical to one's spiritual life and spiritual progress. I know that, within the FWBO recently, the last couple of years, the term 'wilful' and 'wilfulness' has acquired some currency, and one is being, I gather, constantly

advised not to be wilful. But that is not to be understood as meaning you should never exert your will in that way. Being wilful means really insisting on having your own way, in a rather childish, irrational manner; that is what it really means, more. So in a way, yes, we do have to do violence to certain aspects of ourselves sometimes; the spiritual life does involve that. One might even say that the spiritual life represents a process of continuous violence towards certain aspects of oneself; there are certain aspects which should never be given a chance, never be allowed to express themselves. You all know what they are, obviously. Anyway, let us pass on to the next question: 'A System of Meditation' a question also from Subhadra.

You state that the Mindfulness of Breathing is usually the first practice to be taught to people at our centres. However, at my centre, Croydon, half of the new people start off with the metta bhavana practice first. How important is it that the Mindfulness of Breathing is taught first?

Well, Croydon is not necessarily deviating from the beaten path, but I myself originally did start off teaching the Mindfulness of Breathing and then added the metta bhavana at a later stage. The reason why I started with the Mindfulness of Breathing is that it seems to be more widely comprehensible, and people seem to find it less difficult than the metta bhavana. The metta bhavana, I remember, some people used to find very difficult. They even used to find it difficult in theory, not to speak of practice; quite a few people, I remember, found the idea of directing good will towards yourself, loving yourself, almost unintelligible. So, if you can't even do the first stage, or can't even comprehend the nature of the first [52] stage, or why it is necessary, or what you are doing, you can't really get very far. But, in the case of the Mindfulness of Breathing, you don't have that sort of difficulty. So it was my practice to start people off with the Mindfulness of Breathing, and when they had mastered all four stages of that and were reasonably familiar with the practice, then to introduce the metta bhavana. It could be that, in Croydon, there is an abundance of people filled with loving-kindness, who

find the metta bhavana quite easy and take to it like ducks to water; but one should be sure of that first. I am not saying it should be laid down as an absolute rule that we always start with the Mindfulness of Breathing, but I think it would be usually desirable to do that. It does represent an easier introduction to concentration and meditation. I have also discovered recently that those taking meditation classes have been introducing all four stages of the Mindfulness of Breathing practice in the first lesson, and I have pointed out that I never used to do that; I used to keep people on the first stage for one or two weeks, perhaps, just doing the first stage; then introduce the second after a couple of weeks, then introduce the third, and so take at least a month, or perhaps even five or six weeks, to introduce them to the whole practice. And in the course of that period I would check up on their posture. We would have short question and answer periods about meditation, about that particular practice; and then maybe we would carry on with the whole practice, in all four stages, for a few weeks, and then I would introduce the metta bhavana. I think this is on the whole preferable, rather than trying to give people everything at once. I think sometimes those who teach meditation want to almost impress the people that they are teaching; give them too much. It is almost as though they don't have confidence in the slow and steady method. But that is more effective, in the long run. So I don't think that one should start off the beginner with the metta bhavana unless there is very good reason for doing that. I don't know how it has come about that in Croydon the metta bhavana is at least as often the practice that people are started off with.

Kulamitra: It was good of Subhadra to put Croydon, because that is his experience, but ever since I first came along 10 years ago in Norwich that has been standard practice in every centre that I have been involved in or attended a beginners' class that week by week they would alternate Mindfulness of Breathing [with] metta bhavana. Whichever practice it was would be taught in a single week, so that if you came in week A, by chance, not knowing beforehand, you would get Mindfulness of Breathing; but if it was week B, well, you would get metta bhavana. If it was week C, you would get Mindfulness of Breathing again. So

S: Yes, I would alternate them, but of course I would alternate over a much longer period.

Kulamitra: So I think it is sort of standard practice, in England, anyway, that things happen in that way. It is not just Croydon. And also, as far as I know, it has been standard practice certainly since ...

S: I have gone into all this in something that appeared in Shabda recently, making it clear. I don't know how people got into this sort of practice, or slipped into it, but this is what has happened.

Kulamitra: I think it was a year ago that discussion arose in Tuscany and then came out in Shabda. But this is still going on in Croydon, as far as I know, and [53] the LBC and possibly other centres. Do you think it would be good this time just to go back and say, well, we don't know where this habit started but let us now stop it? It would probably be fairly easy to do that, rearrange things and proceed in a different way.

S: Yes, it is just a question of organizing the way the classes are taken. It also suggests that those taking meditation classes aren't very much in touch with the needs of the people coming along. If you happen to come one week, you get Mindfulness of Breathing; if you happen to come another week, you get the metta bhavana; that seems a bit as it were mechanical. It doesn't take into account the fact that more people have difficulty with the metta bhavana. So,

if you are one of those people that find metta bhavana very difficult, and you find the idea of loving yourself really quite ridiculous, well, you could just not come again. So I think this needs to be seriously considered. I even had one woman coming along who said this was years and years ago 'I don't need to learn this metta bhavana; I am full of love all the time!' I think she said it rather crossly! (Laughter.)

Phil: If, say, teaching the meditation for the first time and, say, the meditation is 20 minutes long, would you do the first stage for 20 minutes, or

S: Oh no; well, I can only say what my own practice was, what I found satisfactory. I used to get people doing it originally just for five minutes. Then we would stop, we would pause, have a little break, then we'd do it again. Then maybe we would have questions and answers. Then we would do it again for a slightly longer period. I think one needs to be really in touch with the beginners. For you, after so many years, perhaps to sit for 40 or 50 minutes is nothing; even if you are not able to, say, concentrate fully, at least you can sit. But one mustn't forget that beginners aren't like that, especially those who have never done meditation before. So one must take it very slowly and be really in touch with where they are at. It mustn't become a sort of processing of people. No doubt this one needs some thought given to it; perhaps just some reorganization of classes. Of course, in those days there was only myself, and I had the same well, usually not more than two groups of people who had joined at roughly the same time. And actually, in those days, if someone joined the class, say, several weeks after the others, I would take them separately before the class proper began. I know that people can slip through the net, because on one Tuscany I think it was a Tuscany we discovered someone coming from a particular centre, I can't remember, who had got the Mindfulness of Breathing practice all wrong. Apparently, he had been going along to that centre oh, for several years; he was being ordained by that time but he had never heard the Mindfulness of Breathing practice actually explained. (Gasps.) So I forget how he had got it wrong; well, he wasn't doing it in the usual way, let us say, and he wasn't aware that he was not doing it in the usual way. And he had got to Tuscany before that was discovered! Probably by Vessantara yes, I remember. He was surprised! Anyway, these are very general points. I think one lesson that emerges is that, if one is taking meditation classes, one is being much more in touch with the people that one is taking for meditation; and that implies a certain amount of continuity. I think ideally the same Order Member should take every week for a substantial period. I think relatively new people find it quite off-putting if they are having [54] to deal with different Order Members week by week. Ideally probably this is the case to some extent the class leader should not only take the class for a substantial period of time, but have an Order Member supporting him or her who will therefore be known to the class; so that if, for any unavoidable reason, the regular leader cannot take that class, it will be taken then by the Order Member supporting, who will already be well known and familiar to the members of the class. It isn't just a question of, well, you've got a class and any old Order Member can take it. It shouldn't be like that at all.

Vajramati: Can I just ask you what you mean by 'a substantial amount of time'?

S: I would say a couple of months. I think that would be reasonable. But, in a way, the longer the better; the greater the continuity that

Vajramati: So at least a couple of months?

S: Roughly speaking, yes. Yes. That is only eight weeks, after all. And always check up on where the people in the group [are] you should really know who has been coming along for two or three weeks, who has been coming along for four or five months, who has been coming along for years. And also if you see that there are new people, make sure that they are sitting properly, they've got enough space; make it clear that if they are not accustomed to sitting on the floor they are free to sit on a chair. Points of this sort one really needs to take care about. And make the point that you can just as well sit on a chair as on the floor, because some people, being what they are, are a bit sort of shy and hesitant about doing things a bit differently from other people; so they will sit in excruciating pain for the whole period rather than ask if they can sit on a chair. But the main thing that seems to emerge as I am talking is that the group leader needs really to be in contact with the people in his class, to be really aware of them. And remember that they are beginners of various kinds, in various stages, and that they are not probably going to find meditation easy; and they need to be introduced to it slowly and systematically.?

Kulamitra: Do you think that is still possible with a class of, say, 60 people?

S: Well, that is rather difficult unless you are a bit of a genius. But then you have to raise the question: should there be beginners' meditation classes of 60? If it is 60 people all of whom are well versed in the Mindfulness of Breathing and can do it, and don't need any instruction, that's fine; but I don't think you can have a beginners' class of 60. If you've got that number of people coming along to a beginners' meditation class, they should be split up and be taken in smaller groups by different people in different rooms ideally. Not many centres will have 60 people coming along to a beginners' meditation class; but, if that does happen, the group should be split up if they are really beginners or one may have to try and separate them: who is a beginner, who hasn't meditated before, who has been coming for several months? Try to split them up on that sort of basis.

Mokshananda: What you are saying, Bhante, will probably result in the demise of the sort of open beginners' class. You will just end up with courses.

S: What do you mean by 'open beginners' class'?

[55]

Mokshananda: Well, what normally happens at most centres, as far as I am aware, is that there is on, say, Wednesday nights, just an open class for anybody from the public to come to, and they are taught meditation. I mean

S: No, it is a question of finding out who are absolutely new. Because you have to explain to them properly. And if there are other people who have heard it all before, they have to be patient. You can't just sort of gloss it over, or rush through it, because some people have heard it before.

Mokshananda: Yes, that is what happens in my experience. So you still have a class; but every class is geared towards the complete beginner, the person who has just walked into the centre. And the whole meditation is taught in one go. What would happen, perhaps, if we did as you suggest, is that you would have courses you know, there would be a batch of people who would be taken through it, and another batch who would be taken through it.

S: Mm. It does seem that centres need to consider very seriously and carefully the way in which they are teaching meditation to beginners. It may even be that, in the circumstances, that is all that they can do, but it doesn't sound to me as though it is the best way of doing things; so they should consider alternative ways. One should ask oneself: what does one mean by 'a beginners' meditation class'? What is the function of that class? You could limit it, say, to people who either have never meditated before or have started meditating, say, within the last three months; in which case the people who had been coming along for up to three months wouldn't mind, probably, hearing explanations over again, because they might have missed the odd week and missed something. Do you see what I mean? Maybe it requires more of a definite stratification of classes. But I don't want to as it were pre-empt any discussion. Don't go back and say, 'Bhante says it's got to be done like this!' We have discussed that before, haven't we? Just say, 'Well, look, let's discuss it. Are we giving our beginners, new people who come along to learn meditation, the best deal? Are we doing the best for them that we can?' Not take it that, years and years ago, your centre started doing things in a particular way and you have never questioned or discussed that since. Anyway, perhaps that's enough about that. It is all part of really just being more aware of people, the people you come into contact with, and their needs: regarding them as people, as potential individuals, not as sausages to be put through or produced from a machine however good that machine may be. Oh, there's something on the back; yes, mustn't miss that.

Vessantara: Could people asking questions please make sure they identify themselves? We are being tape recorded.

S: This is also from Subhadra, from the Omnibus: 'The Primacy of Going for Refuge':

In the Buddha's day, a householder could commit himself to the Three Jewels and Go for Refuge after talking to the Buddha, but, because he was a householder, would not be able to join the Order and benefit from Order activities. Why was the early Order strictly monastic and exclusive of householders? Were there special activities for lay followers to participate in to compensate for not participating in Order activities? Why couldn't the ancient Buddhists have had a lay Order like our own?

[56]

The question is based on certain assumptions, one of which is that, from the very beginning, there was a hard and fast, or relatively hard and fast, distinction between the Buddha's monk disciples and his lay disciples. The farther we go back into the history of Buddhism, especially so far as we can trace it during the Buddha's own lifetime, the less of a hard and fast distinction we find. In a work of Mrs Rhys Davids' I was reading recently, she was making the point that the very first disciples of the Buddha, those who in subsequent Buddhist history, were known as monks, were very likely not monks at all in the later sense. So it does seem that, in the very early days of Buddhism, you just had a number of people who had Gone for Refuge to the Buddha, Dharma and Sangha and who were living in various ways: some as it were more monk-like, as we would say now; some less monk-like, more householder-like. But there was a quite close bond between them, and they weren't really divided into two bodies, one of monks and the other of lay people. I think it was certainly clear, and remained clear for a long time, that people living as householders could not only Go for Refuge but could even attain Stream Entry, even become anagamis, Non-Returners. The names of many such householders are given in the Pali scriptures. But certainly, as time went on, the spiritual community, the Sangha, came to be more and more exclusively

identified with those whom we now call monks or who came at a very early period to be called monks. You mustn't forget, for instance, verses like one that we have in the Dhammapada, where the Buddha says: 'He who is full of truth and righteousness' that is, sacca and dhamma 'he is the brahmana, he is the samana, he is the bhikkhu.' So no difference seems to be made here, from a spiritual point of view, between the sramana, who was the sort of non-Vedic mendicant, the brahmana, the pious householder of higher caste, and the bhikkhu, the Buddhist monk. So inasmuch as they shared that dhamma and sacca, representing their commitment, their differences of lifestyle, as we would say, as between samana and brahmana and bhikkhu, were relatively unimportant. They could even be regarded as identical. But certainly, in some forms of Buddhism, as time went on, the distinction between monk and householder, bhikkhu and upasaka, became very, very rigid and exclusive. But I see that as a departure from the original state of affairs. One reason why the Order became more and more identified with the order of monks was, I think, that the monks were more full-timers, because they were free from household responsibilities. They were celibate, so there was no question of children. But also one mustn't forget that it was a non-literate society. There were no books. Teachings had to be preserved by word of mouth, and they had to be committed to memory. If you were a busy householder, however good a Buddhist you were, even if you were a Stream Entrant, you didn't have much time for committing teachings to memory. The monks, the bhikkhus, inasmuch as they were full-timers, had much more time for that sort of thing than the lay people; so it seems that it was the monks who preserved the Buddha's teaching to a far greater extent than the lay people, for obvious reasons. They could only do that by spending hours and hours of time committing things to memory. In that way, the bhikkhus came to be regarded as the guardians of the teaching; the teaching became a possession of theirs, and in that way they came to be regarded as the Buddhists, as it were: they had the teaching. The lay people had to go to them if they wanted to hear the teaching; or a bhikkhu who wanted to hear the teaching and who didn't know it, who hadn't learned it by heart, had to go to another bhikkhu who knew it by heart and who could recite it to him. So this was the state of affairs for several hundred years and sort of set the pattern. By the time of the rise of the Mahayana, writing had come into more [57] general use, so you didn't have to go to a bhikkhu; you could just get a copy of a book. In that way, it became much more easy for the householders, who didn't have time to commit things to memory, to learn the Dharma, to study the Dharma; they could get a book, as we can nowadays, and just study it at home. In that way, as a result of the greater prevalence of literacy, the distinction as between monk and layman became somewhat lessened, especially within the Mahayana. But I think the main point here is that this exclusive type of distinction, even division, between monks and lay people, such as we have nowadays in the Theravada countries of Asia, was not really a part of the original setup, at least in the earliest days of the Buddha's post-Enlightenment career.

Andy: The meeting that took place after the Buddha's Parinirvana to gather the teaching together did that actually take place?

S: Well, there is a great deal of discussion about not only this sanghiti, or council, as it is translated it is really a reciting together, a chanting together, not a council but about the subsequent councils or sanghitis. Most scholars agree that, after the Buddha's Parinirvana, his disciples, or at least some of his disciples, must have got together. We hear, for instance, nothing about bhikkhunis getting together, though we know there were bhikkhunis: what were they doing?

Andy: I was just thinking where the lay followers were at that council, if it did actually take place.

S: According to the Theravada sources, only monks participated. But there are other sources coming down to us through the Mahayana which suggest that lay people sometimes participated. The Mahasanghikas, who were named after the Mahasangha, the great Sangha, were so called apparently because they comprised not only monks but also lay people; though there are other interpretations, too. Another point I was going to mention because the question ends by saying 'Were there special activities for lay followers to participate in to compensate for not participating in Order activities?' Well, yes, there were. As the bhikkhus became, so to speak, more and more exclusive, or as the Sangha became more exclusive in so far as it consisted exclusively of bhikkhus, it does seem that the lay people started meeting together in their own way; usually and this was 100, 200 years after the time of the Buddha in connection with the worship of stupas. Just as the bhikkhus met together to recite their pratimoksha, their rules and so on, the lay people gathered together to circumambulate and make offerings to stupas. And it does seem that one of the roots of the Mahayana is in this stupa worship by lay people. In works like the Mahavastu, which is supposedly a work belonging to the Vinaya Pitaka of the Lokottaravadins, stupa worship features very prominently. We know that, by the time of Asoka, it was very, very prominent indeed; it was a very popular activity among Buddhists, especially late Buddhists, because there were no images; there was no image worship, so to speak. So that was one of the strands contributing to the development of the Mahayana. But we know very little about all that. Historical records are very scanty and we have to deduce things from just a few documents. So probably the picture is of a sort of undifferentiated Sangha in the early days of Buddhism, with much closer relations between monks and lay people; in fact monks were not quite monks in the later sense. And then one sees the emergence of a relatively exclusive monastic order, and then, of course, the lay people start developing activities of their own; they didn't want to be left out altogether. But then, with the emergence of the [58] Mahayana, we find more of a coalescence of the monks and the lay people again, sharing more and more a common spiritual life, especially by way of the practice of the Bodhisattva ideal, which was common to all.

Vessantara: In what sense weren't the monks monks to start with?

S: Well, to begin with, there weren't the rules which later were laid down. It seems as I mentioned, I think, the other evening that no rules were laid down for about 20 years. And not so much importance seems to have been attached to the externals of monastic life. There was no practice, even, of the monks meeting together regularly until, I think, about 12 years after the Buddha started teaching.

Vessantara: Presumably those uposatha days were for bhikkhus as opposed to lay people?

S: It would well, we are not quite sure. When the uposatha days for the bhikkhus, as we may call them, started becoming occasions on which the pratimoksha was recited, then, of course, there was obviously no place for the lay people. But it is quite possible that, before that, the simple recitation of Dharma teachings which took place, Dharma verses, may have been attended by lay people. That is possible; we are not sure. There is no reason, after all, why they should not have gathered, even if on the outskirts of the meeting, and heard the Dharma being recited. But there is so much that needs to be done by way of investigation of the oldest texts, as they seem to be. All right: something about the stupa. This is from Hari:

'The symbolism of the five elements of the stupa'. Could you clarify akasa for us? Is it luminous? Does the symbol of the blue flaming drop give a clue to its nature? Is dimensionality its primary quality?

No: dimensionality is not its primary quality. Akasa is what makes dimensionality possible if you see what I mean. In pre-Buddhist thought, akasa was thought of as a sort of subtle fifth element that pervaded everything. That is not the Buddhist view. I don't quite know how to approach this: perhaps I could approach it by way of the modern Western, I was going to say scientific, concept of space, but actually this concept is out of date. There is a such a thing as probably you will know as Newtonian space; does that convey anything? Sometimes called mechanical space. That is, Newtonian space is the space within which material objects exist; they occupy space. So space is as it were 'out there'; space is as it were an objective reality, within which material objects exist. But this is not the Buddhist view. The Buddhist view more is that space, the external perceived space, is the condition for the existence of separate bodies. If there was not such a thing as space, or such a condition as space, it wouldn't be possible for bodies to be separate or distinct from one another. But, at the same time, Buddhism doesn't see space as a medium, so to speak, within which the bodies exist. Space is regarded as subjective, space is regarded as a concept; space, that is to say, is something within your mind which makes it possible for you to see objects as separate from one another, or to experience them as separate from one another. So supposing you look out and you see no objects; supposing you look out and see, so to speak, just space. You haven't got an objective thing like an empty box. You are merely left with a part of your own subjective experience. This, of course, connects up, we may say, with the first of the arupa dhyanas. Why is the first of the arupa dhyanas the perception of [59] infinite space? Because, if you go beyond all rupa, all material form, you have only got left that aspect of your mind which made it possible for you to perceive material objects as such, but actually without any objects perceived as separate. So this is what space is in Buddhism, briefly speaking. There is an article about it in The Buddhist Encyclopedia, which those who are interested can consult. We have a copy of it down at the bungalow if anyone is especially interested. The article is not altogether clear, but it does give one some idea. Anyway, does that at least throw some light on the topic? The question goes on: 'Is it luminous?' It is not luminous like an external or material body say, the sun but it is luminous to the extent that the mind is luminous, inasmuch as it is part of or an aspect of the mind itself. I don't think that the symbol of the blue flaming drop does give much of a clue to its nature. That is not to say that that symbol doesn't have its own value. It is also this is by the way interesting to see or to consider how we build up our perception of space, in the ordinary common-sense significance of the term. A baby has to find out about space. It has to learn to judge distances. A baby can see something there, and can put out its hand thinking it can touch it here. It hasn't yet learned to interpret the situation and infer distances. We have learned to do it so long ago, and have done it so often, it has become habit. We think it is something natural, but actually it is something that we have learned. But, as I said, that is by the bye. It just helps us to understand how subjective our experience of space is..

Tape 4, Side 1

Something else that occurs to me again, just somewhat connected with the subject; I just mention it because it does just occur to me suppose you go into one of these black boxes, are they called? or have I mixed it up with something else? one of these

: Isolation tanks.

S: Isolation tanks, yes, where there is sensory deprivation: do you perceive objects in that sensory deprivation tank? Do you see anything, for instance? Do you see any form, any material form? You don't, do you? All material forms are taken away. So what are you left with? Do you perceive empty space? What often happens, if you are in one of these isolation tanks? Well, I have not been in one, but I gather that you can hallucinate. So what does hallucination mean? What are you experiencing when you hallucinate?

: Mind-created objects.

S: Mind-created objects, yes. So this suggests that, when external objects are removed, you don't in their place perceive an objective empty space. You perceive a state of your own mind; which suggests that the so-called material objects exist within one's own mind, or at least dependent upon one's own mind, not as occupying a Newtonian space out there.

Atula: If what you're saying how much can you actually connect up with the ... that you actually experience as space?

S: Say that again.

[60]

Atula: If what you are saying is that your experience of space and objects is tied up with your subjective experience, I was just wondering whether that does actually fit in with the whole notion of a world in the first place, if Buddhism really sort of is breaking down that view of the world, breaking down that previous view of space at the same time.

S: I suppose one has to go step by step: as it were break down the external world, you reduce it to something subjective, but then you have to start looking at that subjective experience; you can go through all sorts of experiences. Even in the isolation tank, I think you will go through a whole series of experiences. And in a dream you are in a sort of isolation tank, aren't you? You are cut off from external sensory experience and you construct objects which are quite obviously a part of your mental content. Anyway, I only mention this just as a sort of connection with this idea of space as a concept, as something subjective, not as something objective.

[61]

'D. H. Lawrence and the Spiritual Community'

S: All right, let's come on to the questions about D. H. Lawrence. There are quite a few of these, but they won't necessarily take us much time to go through. First of all, from Kulamitra, [who] wants to know:

Why are you convinced that what killed Lawrence was his response to the Great War, and not tuberculosis? Since his illness began in 1911, and was at the time incurable, it seems odd to see manuniyama rather than vi...niyama(?) as the cause.

I don't think I would say that I was convinced, in any strong sense. I looked up what I had actually written, just to be on the safe side (Laughter), because admittedly I do sometimes

change my mind, which people find a bit confusing. It would be much easier for them if I just went on saying exactly the same thing year after year! It must be rather disconcerting to have learnt Bhante's teaching on some topic and then find out that he has changed his teaching! But what did I say? Ah: I say: 'I for one am convinced that what killed Lawrence was not so much tuberculosis as the war.' I don't exclude tuberculosis as (laughter) ... Then I go on to say: 'Keith Sagar [the author of the book I am reviewing] himself seems to believe as much. In the introduction to his Penguin Selected Poems he says, 'The horrors of the war, the moral debacle at home, the suppression of his splendid novel, *The Rainbow*, persecution, ill health, and poverty, all combined to destroy Lawrence, during the war, his faith in humanity and a human future.' And then, later on, I quote Lawrence as stating: 'The War finished me: it was the spear through the side of all sorrows and hopes.' So I do tend though without insisting on it too strongly, because it is a bit speculative after all to think it was the war rather than the tuberculosis. s for the tuberculosis being at that time incurable, I am not so sure about that. There there have been instances of remission of tuberculosis. Here I feel on quite safe ground, because I have had the experience myself. I did have tuberculosis without knowing it, years ago, and I only discovered this when I came to have a lung x-ray when was that? just a couple of years after the starting up of the FWBO. I had pneumonia this was in 1970, that's right and friends persuaded me to have an x-ray, just to make sure. And, when the x-ray was taken, it was discovered that I had had tuberculosis once upon a time, because there were the lesions on my lungs that is, the scars of the tuberculosis and they were clearly visible. So I concluded I must have had it when I was in Kalimpong, because in the whole Darjeeling district at that time about 70%-75% of people had tuberculosis. The Nepalese were very susceptible to it, mainly because they lived much of the time in little huts which were completely sealed up during the winter lots and lots of people, all in the same little huts, breathing the same air. So tuberculosis was very rife; and Tibetans used to catch it like flies when they came down. So, yes, it can as it were remit. So I think though again, this is hypothetical, one can't be sure that had it not been for the Great War and Lawrence's response to it, even though he had tuberculosis, he [might] well have got over it or it [might] not have developed as quickly as it did. But I must emphasize I am being quite speculative and hypothetical here. But one could make out a case for it being the war rather than the tuberculosis, even though he did have it.

[62]

Anyway; this is from Kulamitra and Dharmavira:

If Lawrence could contact our Movement, his response might be mixed. He might be inspired by friendship with Order Members, but unable to meet the demands of community living, with its responsibilities, cooperation and regularity. Do you think Lawrence would have been able to function happily within the context of our Movement? Are artists ambivalent towards a movement where structure and spontaneity are both important?

Well, again, here one has got to be speculative and hypothetical, so don't quote me as an authority. Yes, I think if Lawrence could contact, or could have contacted our Movement, his response might well be mixed. 'He might be inspired by friendship with Order Members': yes, I am sure he would be. Well, why just confine it to Order Members? I am sure he would be inspired by the friendship existing among Order Members, Mitras, Friends well, the general emphasis on friendship. I think he would have been very much inspired by that and attracted by that. ' but unable to meet the demands of community living, with its responsibilities, cooperation and regularity.' I am not at all sure about that. I think that probably Lawrence would have been able to meet the demands of community living. If you read the life of

Lawrence, any account of Lawrence, you find that he was very good at practical domestic things. He was a good cook. He knew how to lay a fire properly. He was very tidy. He was good at washing clothes. He could mend his own socks. A lot of domestic work he had to do not only for himself, after his marriage, but for his wife too, who was a German aristocrat by origin and just didn't know how to do anything. She couldn't even boil an egg. So Lawrence was very good in all those ways and seemed to enjoy such work, so I think he would have fitted very well into a community in that sort of way. As for his writing, he doesn't seem to have needed any special facilities. It seems he would sit down anywhere with a writing pad and a pencil and he just scribbled away; usually on the kitchen table. I don't think he ever had a study or anything of that sort. I think he could probably have functioned quite well within a community. I think he probably would have been a quite good Order Member from the point of view of caring for his environment and doing his share of the chores of the community, and probably assuming he didn't have to have an outside job he would have done his writing whenever he could; in his room, or in the kitchen or in the common area. He just wouldn't have minded, I imagine. He would have been grateful, probably, for the peace and quiet. hen the more general question: 'Are artists ambivalent towards a movement where structure and spontaneity are both important?' I don't know why they should be ambivalent. They should thank their stars that they have got both structure and spontaneity. Even an artist needs a minimum of structure and, of course, he needs spontaneity, the possibility of spontaneity. I think we have got into the habit of thinking of the artist as a whimsical, individualistic sort of person, but he wasn't always like that in the past. I was reading recently about Sir Walter Scott, who produced such an enormous number of very fine novels, quite apart from some very good poetry and various historical works. He did have a study, admittedly; but his children were allowed to come in and play around whenever they liked, and if they wanted to interrupt him or wanted him to tell them a story, well, they would just do that; he would put down his pen for a while and then go back to his writing later on. He seems to have been able to function in this sort of way. And for the greater part of his life he functioned as a lawyer though that is not what they called it in Scotland - and [63] had all sorts of judicial and civic responsibilities; but he still went on with his writing. The same with Trollope. Think of Jane Austen, discharging all her domestic responsibilities and writing her masterpieces at odd moments! I think artists have become a bit more precious in recent times, and we have tended to have perhaps a not very representative picture of the artist. think the artist also can train himself to write at certain times, even to write poetry at certain times; which means you are able to discharge other responsibilities. I don't think it's anything to be proud of that, just because you are an artist, you are not able to function as an ordinary human being. I think this is really a confession of a weakness, not a sign of superiority, by any means. anyway, let's go on. This is from Martin:

How can you tell if you are in a neurotic relationship? What are the criteria?

You always know, surely you do! If you don't, surely your friends can tell you. But what are the criteria? First of all, this adjective 'neurotic'; I thought I'd better look it up in the dictionary. I use the term neurotic in this sort of context only partly to the extent that the dictionary defines it. I usually use the word neurotic in the sense of being 'afflicted with a tendency to be emotionally unstable or unusually anxious' this is part of the dictionary definition. This is the part that I usually have in mind when I personally speak of, say, a neurotic relationship. So some of the criteria I have given are in this definition. A relationship is neurotic if the people involved in it are afflicted, so far as that relationship is concerned, with a tendency to be emotionally unstable, or unusually anxious; and [they] do, of course, go

together.

If you get into, say, a neurotic relationship, what does it mean? Basically it means that a certain part of your being, as it were, has been invested in the other person. You have started off by projecting on to the other person; you project something of yourself on to the other person, so that the other person not only belongs to you but becomes a part of you. So that, if you lose that other person, or are in danger of losing that other person, you are in danger of losing part of yourself, or even yourself, if the projection and investment of yourself in that other person is very extreme. So that the loss of that other person, even the temporary absence of that other person, will be felt as a threat to your very existence, and therefore you will feel extremely anxious. You may sometimes feel quite ecstatic when you are in the presence of that person, when the part of you that that person represents is reunited with you; but when separated you can feel a great deal of anguish, and you can obviously alternate between these two. Hence the emotional instability and hence the anxiety, because you are afraid of being deprived well, of your very existence, virtually, if that person is no longer around. So this is the nature of a neurotic relationship. If a relationship with another person, whether sexual or non-sexual, is of this nature, then it is definitely neurotic. These are the criteria. I think really everybody recognizes this. I once had the opportunity of studying a neurotic relationship at very close quarters, shortly after the formation of the Friends. I was really staggered by it, because I hadn't seen this sort of thing really well, not so closely, not at such close quarters in India; don't forget, I had only come back quite recently and was a bit sort of sheltered from the realities of life in Britain, I suppose. This young man, who was an American, formed an association with a young woman, and [64] gradually he sort of invested himself, virtually, in her and she in him. And in the end, he couldn't bear to be separated from her for more than two minutes. He even accompanied her to the toilet! He couldn't bear to be separated from her for that length of time. And when they went out walking along the street, they literally wrapped themselves round each other. They couldn't bear to be separated. They had to be together all the time. And I remember an occasion when they invited me out with them I knew the young man quite well and the young man was going along to the centre sometimes, and he wanted to talk to me about something, I think it was about meditation, and it was in the park, so we left this girl sitting on the park bench and we just had a little round not more than, say, two or three minutes, because he wouldn't stay away from her longer than that and he was already quite anxious by the time we rejoined her, and she had become so angry with him for leaving her for two or three minutes that she had just gone and hidden herself; whereupon he became very, very anxious indeed, extraordinarily anxious (laughter) and almost collapsed; and he didn't find her for 40 or 50 minutes she really wanted to teach him a lesson. He didn't dare leave her after that, even for a minute or so. It was really extraordinary to see this going on. Yes. It really opened my eyes, I can tell you! So that kind of relationship is a neurotic relationship; and you can have it not only between men and women, husband and wife, boyfriend and girlfriend; you can have it between mother and child, or child and mother, even at a comparatively late stage of life. I have found it sometimes with mothers and daughters; they can develop very neurotic relationships. D. H. Lawrence describes some of them in some of his stories. So I think that makes it pretty clear, if you did have any doubt, as to what a neurotic relationship is, what are the criteria, and how you can tell whether you are in it. Anyway, let's pass on; it's a rather dreadful subject.

Even if sexual relationships are not neurotic, do they have a detrimental effect on the spiritual community? If so, is the Western Buddhist Order in danger?

I suppose it depends on what you mean by 'a detrimental effect on the spiritual community'. Obviously, if the sexual relationship takes a member of the spiritual community out of that spiritual community too often, and if he or she is away for too long, and if when they are in the spiritual community their thoughts are clearly elsewhere with that other person, then obviously that does have a detrimental effect on the spiritual community. On the other hand, presumably one has to make, even within a spiritual community, in the case of most people, especially young people, some provision for sexual relationships. You can't cut sex out altogether, because even if someone, even in all sincerity, tries to do that, you might find that it is so much on their mind that they become restless; they might even become a bit irritable due to sexual frustration, and that itself will have a detrimental effect on the spiritual community. So, especially if you are young, I think very often you are between the devil and the deep blue sea. And there is danger on both sides; there is danger all around; there is danger everywhere! So I think probably, for the healthy, robust young Order Member, the solution is just to follow a middle path: that, yes, all right, you have your sexual relationship if you really can't get on without it, but you have it outside the community. You don't go out in pursuit of that relationship very often, and you try to keep it [65] towards the periphery of your mandala and not towards the centre. And you ask your spiritual friends just to alert you if they feel that you are spending too much time in this respect outside the community to the detriment of the community. I think probably that is the best that you can do until you are a bit older and your passions are more under control, or sort of start melting away in the fire of your spiritual practice, or just due to old age! (Laughter.) I remember reading somewhere that Sophocles, the great Greek dramatist, was once asked, when he was a quite old man, how he felt now that he experienced no sexual desire, no sexual craving or passion; and he said he felt as though he had been released from the clutches of wild beasts!

John: Bhante, you said to find a sexual relationship outside the community. Does this mean that it is not really on to have a homosexual relationship within a spiritual community?

S: I don't think it can be ruled out; one can't say, 'No, there shall not be' but, obviously, one has to be very careful, because one mustn't be under any illusion that a neurotic relationship of a homosexual nature can't develop as well as one of a heterosexual nature. So it is quite easy to think of, say, a homosexual relationship within a spiritual community as being very elevated and very spiritual and platonic, but one has to be really quite careful about that, and quite honest with oneself. Otherwise, again, in that way you can develop or introduce a disruptive element within the community. You have to be very careful.

John: ... I was thinking of a healthy sexual relationship, because you said: 'Go outside the community' for any kind of sexual relationship.

S: Well, I suppose it depends what you mean by 'healthy sexual relationship'. I suppose it can be said to be healthy when the neurotic mental element doesn't develop; when it is as it were limited to just mutual sexual satisfaction. But it isn't very easy, very often, to keep it on that level, in whatever context, whether homosexual or heterosexual. Probably it is possible only if your emotions are strongly invested elsewhere your emotions as such say, invested in the spiritual life, or invested in devotion, or invested in culture, invested in the arts. I don't think you can keep your emotions unemployed, as it were. I think inevitably your emotions will tend to gather around your sexual relationship, if you have one, if they don't have something else of, say, a more ideal nature to gather round. But this is, in a way, a very difficult and tricky business; but the general principle is that whether you are having a sexual relationships

of this kind or that kind, in the community or out of the community, it should be peripheral and it should absorb as little of your emotional energies as possible. Those emotional energies should be directed into the spiritual path itself. Anyway; now one from Subhadra again:

Is it all right to use the words 'psychological technique' rather than 'spiritual practice' when describing the Mindfulness of Breathing to beginners? Is that making it more accessible or selling it too cheaply?

I can only cite my own practice here. When I used to explain the Mindfulness of Breathing to beginners, I used to say that this was a traditional Buddhist practice, but that none the less it did not involve belief in Buddhism as a religion, so that you could practise the Mindfulness of Breathing even though you were not a [66] Buddhist or even if you were a Christian or even if you were a Muslim or if you were a humanist, you could still practise the Mindfulness of Breathing; and I then used to go on to say that you could regard it not as a spiritual practice but as a psychological technique; and I used to say that if you regard it as a psychological technique it would still operate in exactly the same way. So one can certainly describe it in those terms if one thinks it would be more helpful to the people who are taking up the practice. Right, another question from Subhadra:

Is the creativity described by you as the positive aspect of breaking the First Fetter the same as the creativity of the artist?

I would say, broadly speaking, not. But then the question goes on to ask:

Have people in the Western artistic tradition become Stream Entrants?

Even though I don't think that the breaking of the First Fetter is the same as the creativity of the artist in a general sense, I none the less think that there are some artists who at the peak, as it were, of their creativity, have succeeded in breaking that Fetter. It is not easy to tell, because you are dealing with as it were a different world, a different kind of experience in a way, a different setting, different terms, different points of reference. But I don't think that that possibility can be excluded. I wouldn't be surprised, for instance, if someone like Blake was in fact a Stream Entrant; I certainly don't think that one can dogmatically assert that Blake could not possibly have been a Stream Entrant; I don't think you can assert that. I think there is a possibility that some of the greatest artists, at the height of their productivity, their creativity, do become Stream Entrants. But I don't think we can be too confident about asserting that this or that artist actually did do that, without going into the whole matter much more thoroughly which I don't think anyone has ever done.

Vessantara: Bhante, would you like to hazard a conjecture at one or two other artists you think might have been Stream Entrants?

S: Oh dear. (Laughter.) That's quite a problem. I can't think offhand of anybody. No, I wouldn't like to hazard a guess, no. Blake seems a rather obvious example of someone who might be, because here the question of criteria arises he was a great artist, just simply as an artist, a great visual artist; a great poet, a very great poet; and also a deep spiritual thinker. We also know that his life was in accordance with his vision. There is nothing to apologise for in his life. When one considers, for instance, the manner of his death that he died happy and singing songs; well, that is not an ordinary man. What other great poet, even, whether Keats

or, say, Wordsworth, or Shelley (no, Shelley, of course, was drowned), Byron died in that way? It is quite extraordinary. It does suggest something more than an artist, as 'artist' is usually understood. It seems difficult to believe that he hadn't made a very definite, tangible breakthrough, perhaps even to the point of Stream Entry.

Alistair: What about Walt Whitman, Bhante? He is mentioned in 'The Cosmic Consciousness.'

S: Yes. I personally regard Walt Whitman not as such a clear-cut case as Blake, but certainly he had a temperament, or he had a nature, he had a way of life in accordance with his own vision. He was a quite extraordinarily unified character [67] as far as we can tell, though some writers, some critics, do suspect a deeply neurotic element in Walt Whitman. But that isn't, certainly, the initial impression that one gets. There was a very strongly compassionate element in Whitman, which showed itself at the time of the Civil War. Anyway, we must press on because we don't have too much time left. This is from Mokshananda:

In 'D. H. Lawrence and the Spiritual Community', you raise the question of what Lawrence would have thought of the FWBO had he lived long enough

- we have dealt with this to some extent already, but there is a particular point.

When describing his feelings for the American Indian, the Aztec, and old Mexico, Lawrence said, 'There is glamour and magic for me.' Do you think that he would find the glamour and magic that he wanted within the FWBO? Do you think that the Movement would benefit from being more glamorous and magical?

What does this word 'glamour' mean? Anybody know? Is it an English word?

Atula: It has connotations of emotionally attractive.

S: Connotation, yes, but what about the denotation? Is it an English word?

Alistair: South American.

S: Oh no! It's a Scottish word.

Alistair: Is it? (Laughter.)

S: It is introduced into English from Scottish. But where did the Scots get it from? Is it a Gaelic word?

: French.

S: No! Well, it might have come via the French, but basically it is a Latin word. But what Latin word? This is very interesting. It is the word that in English has become 'grammar'. 'Glamour' is the same word as 'grammar', believe it or not! (Laughter.) We don't usually think of grammar as a glamorous subject, do we? But, yes but how has grammar become glamour? Well, grammar is obviously connected with language, isn't it? So, when you have language you can have spells, can't you? So a man who knows language, who knows grammar,

certainly is potentially knows spells. The learned man is the magician. This is what people thought in the Middle Ages: the learned man was a magician. Don't forget Virgil was regarded as a magician throughout the Middle Ages, partly because of his, originally, great command of language. So that is just a little point by the way. But there is some significance in this, because language is such a powerful medium of communication. Grammar is so essential a part of language and communication. If your communication is ungrammatical, it may well be ambiguous. So you can't really have an effect on people unless you speak or write properly. So grammar is, at least potentially, glamour. But anyway, that is, as I say, a little bit by the way. What does Lawrence say? 'When describing his feelings for the American Indian, the Aztec, and old Mexico, Lawrence said There is glamour and magic for me'. Well, [68] that's clear enough what he means. So: 'Do you think that he would find the glamour and magic that he wanted within the FWBO?' What about this question of Lawrence's feelings for the American Indian, the Aztec and old Mexico? What sort of contact did Lawrence have with the American Indian? How much did he really know about him? What did he see of him? Did he ever live with the American Indians?

Voices: No.

S: He probably wouldn't have wanted to. He just saw them; he saw their dances and he saw their houses. I think we can say that Lawrence projected a lot on to the American Indians; I think that is generally agreed. He was very dissatisfied with English society, especially after the war. He was looking, don't forget, for his ideal community. He wasn't able to create it himself. So he ended up just looking for it all over the world, and projecting his idea of spiritual community, as we would say, on to this and that community, usually a rather primitive one. He sort of projected it on to the American Indians; he projected it on to the Etruscans, who of course were safely dead. He contrasted them with the rather dreadful Romans. And then, of course, he projected his ideal on to this Digger movement that he imagined in Australia, in his novel Kangaroo Kangaroo being the Digger leader. So what was the nature, then, of this glamour and magic that Lawrence saw in the American Indian? To some extent, at least, it was subjective, inasmuch as he was projecting on to them his own ideal of spiritual community, Rananim. So the question might arise: would he be able to project in that sort of way on to the FWBO? I rather doubt it. We are not colourful enough. We don't dress up in feathers and leopard skins and dance round bonfires, or do any of the sort of things that American Indians are supposed to do. So he might in that way have been rather disappointed with the FWBO. But then: 'Do you think that the Movement would benefit from being more glamorous and magical?' Well, that depends, I suppose, on precisely what you mean. I don't think it's good that a religious movement is of such a nature that people find it easy to project on to it. We have seen, to some extent, what happens when people do that, in the case of the Rajneesh movement. Well, there are all sorts of other movements, too. If there is to be a real spiritual community, and if people are really to join us generally as a spiritual community, they must see us as we really are: the real, of course, including the ideal, to at least some extent [and not] project on to us all sorts of unreal expectations which are afterwards disappointed.

Alistair: Do you think, Bhante, that we could make more of festivals and celebrations?

S: We could certainly make more of festivals and celebrations, but the question arises: why don't people? I don't think we can make more of them by sort of taking thought. It seems as though people have to develop within themselves something which can make the festivals,

when those people do get together, more as it were glamorous and magical; perhaps a few people will have to take the lead. But do people feel the need of this glamorous and magical element? If so, why don't they create it within themselves? I think the danger is that you try to find it elsewhere, that you project it on to some other group or body, instead of developing it from within yourself. Why aren't you glamorous and magical? Because if enough of you are glamorous and magical well, some of you are, no doubt! [69] When you all get together, a really glamorous and magical event will be the consequence. When, say, 500 glamorous and magical people get together to celebrate Buddha Day, well, of course it will be a glamorous and magical event! If they are not glamorous and magical, no amount of taking thought and putting up balloons and things is going to transform the event into a glamorous and magical one to any great extent. That might help just a little bit. Do you see what I mean?o people really want more colourful festivals? If so why? It has become more, sort of, one might say fashionable within the FWBO to say, 'We've got to have more colourful festivals'; but do they really feel that? Or are people saying that because they feel that they ought to say it? Or do they see the need in a rather abstract sort of way? Because, if people really wanted more colourful festivals very strongly, and if lots of them did, surely we would have had those colourful festivals? Even if not quite glamorous and magical by this time, they have become a bit more colourful over the years; but most people seem to feel there is a lot left to be desired. I think one might even ask: is it appropriate that, say, Buddha Day should be glamorous and magical? Isn't it more of a spiritual occasion? I am only asking questions. I am only trying to get you thinking. Wouldn't it be more appropriate that people have a day of intensive meditation? When the Buddha sat down beneath the Bodhi Tree, was that Bodhi Trees decorated with balloons (laughter) blown up by the Buddha or the devas?

Vessantara: Alistair was next.

Alistair: I feel that sometimes we think that playfulness and mischief and that kind of thing is unspiritual, maybe because we are a sort of new movement, but

S: Well, if a new movement isn't playful, I am sure old ones wouldn't be! What does one mean by that? Is it appropriate to be playful on Wesak Day if you are an adult, that is?

Vessantara: Why should it not be, Bhante?

S: I am only asking the question. (Laughter.) Was the Buddha playful? If anyone had occasion to be playful, if playfulness was appropriate on Wesak Day, well, surely it was the Buddha. We don't read that he was playful. Perhaps he was never playful!

Kulamitra: Yes, this isn't to do with playfulness but it is to do with magic. I think for me Padmasambhava Day has always been quite a magical festival, and I think it improved very significantly when the excellent translation of *The Life and Liberation* came out; because, although the translation might not always be completely clear technically, it is very beautiful and poetic,

S: That's true.

Kulamitra: and all the festivals that I was involved with at the LBC had a lot of readings from it, which were always very popular.

S: I think that is still the case.

Kulamitra: But sometimes, at other festivals, although you do try to have extended readings from Buddhist scripture, the language is not so alive; and I think perhaps -

[70]

S: Grammar and glamour!

Kulamitra: Yes! But that is somewhere where the two elements have come together and someone else has presented us with that, another Buddhist movement.

S: Yes. Well, there is a similar translation of the Lalita Vistara, which after all is a Mahayana Life of the Buddha; and that no doubt could be used in just the same way. So I think the point that people are really getting at, I think the point they are getting at when they talk in terms of more colourful festivals and all that, is that the emotions must be involved to a greater extent. I think this is what it is. Otherwise you think, yes, it is the anniversary of the Buddha's Enlightenment and, yes, the Buddha went through such and such stages, and all that sort of thing, and you hear the lectures explaining all that and you quite enjoy them; but the emotional element doesn't seem to enter in very powerfully. So it is really a question, I think, of involving one's emotions or involving oneself emotionally to a greater extent. But the emotions are something that can't be forced; they have to be coaxed, they have to be developed. And perhaps we need to develop traditions, and they develop only over quite a period of time; perhaps they can't be hastened. or instance, if you think of Christmas; well, there is an occasion with which we do have emotional associations. Well, if for instance we see holly and mistletoe, we think of Christmas. They have got definite associations. But we don't have much of that sort of thing in connection with Buddhism so far, that is speaking individually do we? We haven't developed all those sort of associations. And therefore there is not much for our emotions to sort of cling on to.

Tape 4, Side 2

This is just by the way. I think sometimes people can be more deeply stirred by Parinirvana Day, because death is something that is very close; it is closer to us than Enlightenment, (laughter) to say the least. You can come to grips with it. You may not have met in the course of the previous year many people who have gained Enlightenment, but you almost certainly will have known or heard about someone who has died, and therefore there is an emotional connection. So you can really feel the sort of solemnity of Parinirvana Day, in a way that you can't really feel the joy of Wesak. Do you see what I mean? So perhaps we should make more of Parinirvana Day. It is, after all, a very important occasion; not only historically but the fact that we remind ourselves of death and that we recall, as I think most centres do now, in the course of the Parinirvana Day observances, the people that we have lost, so to speak, in the course of the previous year or so. And the Pali Mahaparinibbana Sutta is a very, very moving work, even though it isn't ideally translated; but none the less it does communicate very well, especially if it is edited you know, if some of what seem to be rather later additions in the form of small doctrinal episodes are eliminated, so that the outline of the story emerges more clearly. It can have a very profound effect on people hearing it. So perhaps we should tackle this whole problem of involving our emotions more in our festivals at the point or points of least resistance. Don't force ourselves to be joyful on the occasion of Wesak, but be as joyful as we can. All right, let's pass on. Two more questions:

[71]

If it did, how did the war change Lawrence's writing?

I think I had better deal with this quite briefly. I think the war that is to say, the First World War, changed Lawrence's writing by changing Lawrence himself. As that quotation I read out earlier on indicated, as a result of the war Lawrence to a great extent lost his faith in humanity; he certainly lost his faith in English society. A lot of life and optimism, as it were, went out of his writing; and, of course, he started travelling around the world, and the stories of his novels are laid in different parts of the world. Had things been better at home, in Europe and in England especially, he probably would not have wandered in that way. His writings, his fiction, would have continued to have, no doubt, a predominantly English setting, and he wouldn't have been just looking for this ideal community, ideal society, in all sorts of exotic corners of the earth, because he would have been more deeply satisfied with the community in the midst of which he was actually living. Lawrence had originally an almost sort of Blakean vision he was certainly influenced in this respect by Edward Carpenter of what England could be, and he was deeply disappointed when the war just destroyed that vision, destroyed English society in the way that he had seen it formerly. Then another question:

What was Lawrence's 'wan resurrection'?

'Wan' means sort of pale. Perhaps I had better go back to the review itself. What had a wan resurrection? I think actually it is quite clear. Maybe I won't go back to the text. I think the review makes it clear that the very young Lawrence was a very healthy and positive character. He lost that positivity and health, for whatever reason, and his novels after that period to a great extent gave expression to his bitterness and cynicism and disillusionment. But, towards the very end of his life, the last two or three years when he was a really sick man, something of that positivity came back in his very last writings and in his poetry. So it was as though that early, youthful, positive Lawrence had a wan, a pale resurrection. It wasn't really the youthful Lawrence as he had been, but just a very pale shadow of that; but still there was something of that old positivity there in those latest writings. For instance, one thinks of *The Man Who Died*, and one thinks of poems like *The Ship of Death*, and perhaps some of the animal poems. Another one from John: *The couple is indeed the enemy of the spiritual community*.

The couple is indeed the enemy of the spiritual community. I really want to read it more and more times, but I won't!

However, sexual attraction is a strong emotion.

Indeed.

Can one transform this exclusive kind of love into a more refined spiritual love like compassion ... ?

This is a very big question indeed. We had a very extensive discussion of it on one of the Tuscanies, I can't remember which one; perhaps two or three years ago. This is rather a different question of how to keep the sexual element in one's life in its proper place, towards the periphery. One is not here concerned so much with [72] sexual attraction, though it is described as a strong emotion, as with emotion as such. What is one to do with this emotion

which you are refusing to allow to attach itself to sex, to the sexual relationship? I think and this is what I touched upon, I talked about in Tuscany you have to watch what happens when you fall in love. The discussion in Tuscany was all about falling in love; it went on for hours, didn't it? It was a fascinating discussion, wasn't it? to which people made all sorts of interesting contributions, so we really ought to get it transcribed and put into circulation.

Vessantara: It was Tuscany 1985.

S: Yes. But I think the basic point I made was this. You all know what happens when you meet somebody and you start liking them, and then you start falling in love. You can usually tell when it starts happening. To begin with, it's very faint. It is not just a question of a sexual attraction, it's definitely emotional; you start feeling about that person in a particular way, start seeing something in them. As a result of that you want to see more of them, because what you see in them, or think you see in them, is so attractive, so fascinating you want just to experience it more and more. But that is really the crucial point. At that point quite early on in the game, as it were you have to tell yourself very firmly that 'What I see in this person is not in this person at all; certainly not in the way that I am seeing it and experiencing it.' This is not to say that the experience is unreal; no, the experience is quite genuine, and the experience, indeed, is to be cultivated but in dissociation from that person on to whom you are as it were projecting it. So I think that is quite important. And what is also important is, you help yourself or you enable yourself to keep that emotional experience dissociated from that person by not seeing too much of that person. If you see a lot of that person, if you see them regularly, and if you end up living with them, that experience, that quality that you have experienced, will be totally identified with that person; you will not be able to distinguish the two. But if you keep away from that person and discipline yourself in that way, you will be able to continue to distinguish between that experience and the person on to whom you tend to project the quality; and you can see yourself doing it. You can see yourself sometimes projecting that quality on to that person and then withdrawing it; projecting it, then withdrawing it. So what you have got to try to do is to dwell upon that quality in isolation from that person on whom you are tending to project it, and develop it more and more until it becomes quite as it were independent of that person. You can experience it without even thinking of that person. And, as you do that, obviously you can then try to associate it with, or direct it on to, some more ideal figure, say an angel, Bodhisattva, Buddha and so on; or at least just be able to experience that quality without projecting it on to that particular person. This is, broadly speaking, the technique as described in Plato's Symposium, in fact, 2,400 years ago; that is the textbook. But I can't say more at the moment; there isn't time, and in any case I have discussed it we have discussed it in Tuscany quite thoroughly a few years ago. Just two more questions, I think. It is a very interesting subject. I think you can't just suppress that emotional element or quality; you have to do something about it. This is from Timothy:

If an Order Member were to get married, is this going back on his/her commitment? [73]

- presumably commitment to the Three Jewels. Well, I suppose it would depend on why you were getting married. If you were getting married so that you could stay in a particular country, or so that the other person could stay in a particular country, well, it wouldn't be necessarily a going back on your commitment; how could it be a going back on your commitment? I don't think you can say absolutely that getting married constitutes a going back on one's commitment. (I hope this is not going to be used and quoted against me.) I don't think one can say that absolutely, because one has conceded that one needs to make some

arrangement for one's sexual needs, especially when one is young, and one might perhaps consider that marriage is the best way of doing that. But then again, what does one mean by marriage? If one means by marriage well, the usual kind of thing; maybe being married in church and then getting a mortgage and buying a house, and all those sort of things, that very likely would represent going back on one's commitment because one would be tying oneself down; one would be limiting one's freedom of action. It is very difficult to be married in that way and not allow marriage, married life or the married state, to occupy the centre of the mandala. But getting married might mean also having a sort of pact of sexual fidelity with someone with whom one was not actually living; you might be living in a community, she might be living in another community. So one could regard that pact of sexual fidelity as constituting marriage and, in the circumstances, that might well not be going back on one's commitment. But I think, for almost all Order Members if not all, entering into marriage in the ordinary sense would represent going back on one's commitment, especially since it would limit one and one would not be free to do what we really need to do at present. Because, obviously, the Movement and the Order are in a very early stage of development; obviously there are many people in the world who need the Dharma but haven't yet heard of it, and probably they will only hear of it if we make some effort to enable them to hear it. And that would certainly not be compatible with tying yourself down in marriage in the ordinary sense; though it might be compatible with having that pact, as I have called it, of mutual sexual fidelity with somebody with whom, most likely, you are not actually living and whom you didn't see too often. Probably that is the best short answer to that. Then, last question:

Do you have a vision for Guhyaloka? Do you see the community developing along traditional lines those of a monastic community, or an ashram, perhaps? Or do you see it as an opportunity for breaking new ground?

I can't say that I have got a definite vision for Guhyaloka; I haven't been thinking in those terms. I have been thinking mainly in terms of spending some time here myself and just getting on quietly with some writing. Also, of course, I have been thinking in terms of having the ordination retreats here, and obviously being involved with them. What else emerges, we shall see; there are all sorts of possibilities. There is a possibility of people coming for solitary retreats in special separate cabins that will be built for them. There is a possibility of people coming to get on with their own writing. There is a possibility of our having retreats for Spanish Mitras and Friends and other interested people. These are all possibilities. But I can't say that they form part of a definite vision which I have and which I am determined to put into operation. It isn't like that; I don't see it in that way. I think, if I do have a vision, it is to some extent a negative one negative in the sense that it is a place where Bhante will not be [74] required to do such-and-such! where he will not be required to read lots and lots of minutes; where he will not be required to deal with all sorts of rather knotty administrative and organizational problems; where he hopes to be able to get away from things of that sort. Maybe other people will share that vision, also, in their own way and from their own point of view. To the extent that I have a vision, it is a largely negative one at present of Guhyaloka representing a place where one does not have to do certain things: where one does not have to stop in the middle of one's writing because there is something else to be done; where one is free just to carry on, and where one is free to write poetry, even, if one wants! Sometimes duty demands that you scrutinize minutes instead, but Guhyaloka really should be a place where one is free from such p...s(?). Maybe I see it rather in the terms of Rabelais' what was it called? the Abelliard and Heloisa, was it? where the motto was 'Do what you will'? I don't see Guhyaloka (I suppose this is a little bit of a vision) as a place of rules. I think it should be a

place of freedom and spontaneity which is not always possible, of course, when one is functioning in a city and running an organization. It shouldn't, of course, be a place of indiscipline; that is another matter. It should be a place where people enjoy a sort of communion with nature. Even the wind is a part of nature; [one can] maybe learn to enjoy the wind, if one possibly can. Even the rain! Well, we've got lots of practice in learning to enjoy the rain in another place, another country. But, yes, I am sure the contemplation of nature can be enjoyed; I think that is part of the vision, as it were. Personally, I don't see Guhyaloka as a very organized place. Harmonious, yes; cooperative, yes; but not organized in the narrower sense of the term. Where it is possible for you to just go and meditate under a tree if you want to, at any time of the day. You don't have to listen for the bell and then go and meditate at that particular time. Though at the same time it is not a place where one neglects one's meditation, just because one has that freedom. One is free to neglect it, of course; you have to have that freedom; but you don't actually neglect it. At least, only very, very rarely and for the best of reasons. But I think it is easy to confuse vision with plan. I don't have any plan for Guhyaloka; not more than I have outlined that I stay here sometimes and get on with my writing and well, I don't even have to get on with my writing, do I? I can just do nothing the whole day, if I wish. What a thought! (Laughter.) And, of course, the ordination courses are held here. I don't even think in terms of the ordination courses necessarily retaining their present form. The time might come when it is just enough to have people staying here for three, four, five months. They might not even need anything very highly organized, but, say, in the course of a year they would be ready for ordination just by staying here and participating in various activities that just happen to occur from time to time. It could happen like that. But I think we will probably have to try not to impose a plan. Having a plan and carrying it out is not quite the same thing as having a vision and allowing it to come to fulfilment. I suspect that if, at this early stage, we tried to articulate our vision, it is more likely to end up, if we are not careful, as a plan.

Voices: Mm.

[75]

S: All right, then, I think we'll leave it there. Unless there is any supplementary on that? Anybody rather disappointed that there isn't a plan, or even a very detailed vision?

: Sounds great.

: Thanks very much, Bhante.

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