

LOTUS PETALS

INTRODUCTION

Since 1975, when South Vietnam fell under the Communist yoke, many Vietnamese, finding life in their country intolerable, made the heart-rending decision to leave their homeland, the tombs of their ancestors, and ~ in more cases than not ~ their families, to brave the dangers of crossing the sea in small, overcrowded and leaky boats, in order to find freedom and a better life. No-one will ever know how many of those who escaped thus now lie on the sea-bed; it cannot be calculated, but must be well into the hundreds-of-thousands after all these years. And still the exodus goes on.

Those who survived, and reached 'free' shores, were put into Refugee Camps to await resettlement in other countries. The Camps in Thailand, Malaysia, Singapore, Indonesia, Philippines, Macau, Hong Kong, Korea, Taiwan and Japan varied in many ways, such as the degree of freedom, friendliness, and living-conditions accorded the refugees by the host-countries; some were much better than others; some have a terrible record as regards the treatment of the refugees.

Internationally, governments, private organizations, and individuals responded to the situation, and provided humanitarian help in many forms. Numerous religious groups sent well-funded missions to the Camps, and did immeasurable good work. Sadly, however, some could not resist the temptation to take advantage of the opportunity to proselytize, knowing, perhaps, that according to their culture, the people of South-East Asia find it difficult to give a straight refusal to anything, out of consideration not to offend anyone. Their suffering, poverty and uncertainty were thus exploited by unscrupulous people in order to gain converts. Some over-zealous missionaries offered money and other material inducements ~ like bait on a hook ~ to those who would convert to their particular sect; at one time, the 'market-rate' in the Camps in Thailand was 400 *baht* (about US\$20) per convert; in Philippines, it was 200 pesos (about US\$25, at that time). And it was funny to see the various sects of the same religion not working together, but competing with each other to 'catch fish.'

In January 1979, I went to the Philippines, thinking to stay there perhaps three months, so as to visit some of the psychic-healers for which that country is famous. I ended up staying there for five years straight, and never visited any of the healers. In February '79, I learned that there was a refugee-ship by the name of ***Tung An*** in Manila Bay, so, together with a group of local Chinese Buddhists, I went out to visit it. This formed my introduction to the World of the Refugees. We found 2,300 refugees living in terribly-crowded and unsanitary conditions, badly-treated by the Philippines Navy personnel, and given such meager food-rations that ~ if I remember correctly ~ one banana had to be divided between three people! I was appalled by the suffering of these refugees, and resolved that, since I was not involved in anything else, I would do what I could, within my limited capacity, to alleviate their suffering in some way. I visited this ship as often as I could get permission, which was not very often, in order to extend solace to the refugees, who were made to stay on that rotten old hulk through rain and shine, and not allowed to come ashore. It was never easy to get permission to visit, and involved going to two or three government offices for applications, signatures and approvals; it became harder with each attempt, and I had the feeling that the authorities wished to deter me from going, as they didn't want people to see how poorly they were treating the refugees; they had *that* much shame, anyway.

Finally, after keeping these refugees on the *Tung An* in Manila Bay for eight months, the authorities transferred them to a tiny island in the south, named *Tara*, an uninhabited

place where almost nothing edible grew, and where the well-water was brackish, so that everything had to be brought in by ship. It was very difficult for the delegations to get there to interview refugees; however, some refugees were resettled from Tara Island.

Eventually, the authorities realized that they had made a mistake, and in January 1980, transported the remaining refugees to the newly-opened PRPC ~ *Philippine Refugee Processing Center* ~ in Bataan, about 200 kms north-west of Manila. This Camp was a project of the-then First Lady of the Philippines, Imelda Marcos, although funded by the UNHCR, and rumor had it that by setting up this Refugee Center as a 'show-case,' she hoped to be awarded the Nobel Peace Prize. Be that as it may, the PRPC was a vast improvement on the Tung An ship, Tara Island, and the 'Jose Fabella Center' in Manila, which was another crowded, dirty and rat-infested refugee place that I used to visit and nick-named 'Mosquito Hotel' because of the swarms of mozzies there.

In September '79, I began to visit the Manila City Jail, to bring the Dharma to some of the inmates there. This became almost a full-time job to me, and I had many interesting experiences there. One evening, in March '80, as I came back from the jail to the temple where I was staying, in the semi-darkness at the top of the stairs outside my room, I noticed a strange monk, but since he didn't speak to me, I thought he was waiting for someone else, so went into my room. After a few minutes, when I came out to go to the bathroom, he was still there, so I asked him who he was waiting for, and he told me, in his broken English, that he was looking for me. He said he was a Vietnamese refugee who was staying at the PRPC, and had heard from someone in Jose Fabella Center that there was a Western monk in Manila who was concerned about the refugees, so had come alone to Manila to look for me. But, since he didn't know my name or address, he wandered around Manila until he came to Chinatown, where he began asking people if they knew where he could find a 'European monk.' Finally, he was lucky; someone who had seen me and knew where I was staying, directed him to the temple, where I found him waiting. He told me that he had been in PRPC since January, and would like me to pay a visit, but I said that I was very busy at the jail and wasn't free. "Maybe next time," I told him. He went back to Bataan, somewhat disappointed, but two weeks later, he came again, with a friend, and this time, I agreed to go with them, "but just for one day, okay?"

My visit of 'just one day' to Bataan, however, was enough for me to decide to go to stay there; I told Thich Thong Hai ~ for such was the monk's name ~ "Just let me round off my work in Manila, and I will come." By the end of March, I was in PRPC to stay, but I never realized then that my sojourn in that Camp would last, unbroken, until November '83. Thich Thong Hai left there for resettlement in the U.S. in July 1980.

To recount a few of my experiences in Bataan Camp would need a book for themselves, so I will restrict myself here to saying that my main purpose in going to stay there and in remaining for so long had to do with the suffering of the refugees. Having realized that Suffering is the First and Foremost Teacher ~ *Guru Dukkha* ~ on the Way, I felt that an attempt should be made to show some of these people how it can be turned around and something gained therefrom, otherwise, if nothing were gained, it would be an even greater tragedy than the suffering itself. This was, and still is my main purpose. To a Buddhist, the Buddha is not our First Teacher, but the Second. Suffering is the First Teacher, because without Suffering, nobody would be interested in the Buddha's Teachings about how to deal with and overcome Suffering.

Many refugees were persuaded, by fair means and foul, to change their religion. I objected to this, not because I am against people changing their religion, but because they were pressured and influenced into changing. I do not blame the refugees themselves for changing, but consider the missionaries highly reprehensible for using whatever means they could devise to convert these poor, suffering, trusting and gullible

unfortunates, many of whom had little left to call their own except the traditional religion of their ancestors; it was cruel, callous, calculating and ruthless of the missionaries to exploit them in this way. Certainly, I know that many Buddhists understand little or nothing about Buddhism, and that therefore, one name ~ Christian ~ is just as good as another ~ Buddhist ~ but still, that is no reason to pressure them to convert; these people risked everything to be free, and should be left alone to choose for themselves something as personal as religion. I had little choice, therefore, but to oppose such proselytization, and to encourage the Buddhists to keep their religion, and most of my talks in the Camps were given for this purpose. How much success I had in this, no-one could say; perhaps very little, if any. On the other hand, no-one could say what would have happened had I not exhorted people as I did. My words were seeds, freely scattered, in the hope that some of them ~ a tiny proportion, perhaps ~ would grow. Have any of them grown so far? That is not for me to say.

The Vietnamese Refugee Center ~ VRC ~ in Palawan, South Philippines, was opened in 1979, and from '81 to '87, I visited there periodically, a total of ten times. While there at the end of '83, I gave talks in the temple covering several evenings, and these talks were later transcribed from tapes made at the time, and typed-up in book-form under the title: "LOTUS PETALS." Recently, in Melbourne, I met Nguyen Van Cam, the man who, together with Dr. Tuan, had translated those talks in VRC, and he showed me the "LOTUS PETALS" he had typed. Reading through it, although there were quite a number of mistakes, I felt that, if the biggest mistakes were corrected, to make it easier to understand, this collection of talks might be worth publishing as a book. I told Mr. Cam about this, and we agreed to work on it; I would correct the more-obvious mistakes, and he would translate it all into Vietnamese.

At first, I thought to correct it and make it as grammatically-correct as my writings, but upon second thoughts, decided that it would be wrong to do so, as they were talks, not writings, and talks ~ my talks, at least ~ differ from writings, in that there are errors and breaks in the flow of the speech, particularly when it is being translated; this is to be expected, as I do not prepare my talks, and in fact, seldom know what I'm going to talk about beforehand, so it is usually spontaneous. I have therefore decided not to modify these talks too much, but just to correct the most-obvious mistakes, and leave the rest as it was spoken, without apologies, feeling that what my words indicate matter much more than the words themselves. There are some breaks where tapes were turned over, or where the recording wasn't clear, or where neither Mr. Cam, Dr. Tuan or myself remember what was said; I don't want to fill those breaks with new words.

Those refugees who were in Palawan at one time or another may visualize the scene of the talks out in front of the temple there, in the open air, with the moon and stars shining down through the coconut-palms, the frangipani and bougainvillea trees, and the sound of the sea in the background.

Abhinyana, Melbourne, July 2533/1989.

FIRST TALK

A tree stands through a storm because it has strong roots. A mushroom is easily broken because it has weak roots. People have roots, too, but they do not grow in the ground; they grow inside us. Some people have strong roots, so they can pass through all the storms of life without being hurt or affected; but other people have weak roots, so even a small wind can blow them over.

You all know that foxes have beautiful tails, don't you? Well, one time, a fox was caught in a trap, and in his efforts to become free, his tail was cut off. Although he escaped and was still alive, he was very sad, because he had lost his beautiful tail. For many days, he stayed inside his hole and didn't go out anywhere, as he was afraid of other foxes seeing him without a tail; but he could not stay there forever, because he needed to find something to eat. Therefore, he made a plan. Going outside, he called a meeting of all the foxes in that area, and when they had assembled, he addressed them in this way: "I have come to show you the latest fashion", he said, "Look! No tail! Very beautiful! Why don't you all cut off your tails, so that you can also have the latest fashion?"

But the other foxes were not so stupid, and replied to him: "If you had not lost your tail, you would not be telling us to cut off ours!"

Many people call others to follow and join them. It is to your credit that you still remain Buddhists, that you have not lost your faith, you have not lost your tails. And you will not cut off your tails to join other people, even if there are material benefits to be had. The Buddhist temple offers no material things to the refugees, and we are not ashamed of that, because that is not the responsibility of the temple. Buddhist people do not expect to get anything material from the temple. That is not our way. The Buddha never gave anyone money, clothes, or sponsorship. He gave spiritual wealth, not material wealth: The temples are set up as places of learning and understanding, of comfort and consolation. A Buddhist does not say: "The temple is very poor; I cannot get anything there, so I'll go somewhere else". It is not material wealth we look for in the temple, but spiritual wealth. That is why you are here now. I do not think that you are expecting me to give you clothes or money; if you are, you will be disappointed. What I am trying to give you is something which, if you use it, will last you until you die. A T-shirt will be worn-out in a few months, but if we know how to help ourselves, we can use that knowledge always.

When you are in trouble or danger, or sad or unhappy, you pray for help; but when you are safe and happy, you do not pray anymore.

If you wait until your storeroom is empty before you decide to plant rice, to grow rice, you will die before the crop is ready. You have to plant every day, so that there is a crop every day, also. Do not wait until everything is finished before you plant again.

If a man is good, he does not say so; if he says he is good, he is not good. In the same way, if we are religious people, we do not make a big show of it. If we are Buddhists, it is not necessary to say we are. Someone else may say about us: 'He is a Buddhist,' but if we say: "I am a Buddhist," it is not quite true. It is more important to have the fruit than to have the leaf. How, therefore, to become good? We do not become good by saying we are good, but by living right. Buddhists have five rules to live by, and they cover our relationship with other living beings ~ not only people, but all living things. And we do not follow these rules because we are afraid or because we think of getting anything in return, but because we understand about our relationship with others.

The first rule advises us not to kill anything, but it does not say "Do not kill." It is quite different. Nobody tells us what to do; instead, we understand that killing is not good or wise. And we think that, "Just as I would not like someone to kill me, so others would not like me to kill them." We do not kill because we understand, not because someone tells us not to kill, and because we see everybody and everything wants to live and to be happy, and does not want to die; even the ants want to live, do not want to die. So we begin to take care of the way we live, not to kill, not to hurt anything. Our motive in this is Compassion, not Fear, and this is a much firmer foundation.

The second rule advises us not to take things that do not belong to us. In the same way, because we do not like other people to steal our property, so others do not like it if we steal theirs. In Bataan Camp, I heard of several cases of people going to the bathroom and putting money or gold on top of the wall, taking a bath, and then forgetting and going home; but later, remembering, and going back to look for it, they found ~ no more; gone already. Someone who had used the bathroom after them thought they'd had a lucky find. But I never heard any announcements on the loud-speakers reporting that someone had found someone else's gold or money.

It is not so much the suffering of the refugees that makes me sad, because that is a result of the past, but the fact that many refugees seem to have learned very little from their suffering. If we learn something from suffering, then the suffering is not in vain, is not wasted. Suffering is Life's way of trying to teach us something. We know that if we have a pain in our body that something is wrong and needs attention, so we go to the doctor for treatment. If we have ~ for example ~ appendicitis, but without pain, we would not know that anything is wrong, so would not go to the doctor, and if we did not go to the doctor, it would probably get worse, until maybe it burst, and then we would be in very great danger. But because there is pain, we pay attention, and this gives us an opportunity to be cured of the sickness. So pain is Life's way of telling us that something is wrong; we should listen to it. If we are afraid of pain, if we hate pain, it is very difficult to learn from it. Pain is really a friend, even if its face is ugly. To a Buddhist, pain is a Teacher, the greatest. From your experiences as refugees there are many lessons to be learned, and you can become rich from them. Pain can be used to advantage instead of seeing it as something bad to escape from. If we can learn to look at it, there is something useful, there is deep meaning in pain. It helps us to understand others, because if we've suffered ourselves, when we see others suffering, we can sympathize with them.

A few years ago, someone told me about how the Jewish community in Canada had sponsored many Indo-Chinese refugees, and had given them everything: housing, clothes, furniture, money, food, and had helped them in every way possible, without asking anything in return; nor did they ask them to join their religion. They did these things because, forty years earlier, they themselves were refugees; they were Refugees from Europe where Hitler had tried to kill them all ~ and had succeeded in killing six million Jews. So, many Jewish people fled to other lands, just like you. Just like you, they took very little with them ~ in many cases, only their lives. But they started again; they were not lazy, and worked hard, and became successful. They received help from kind people, perhaps, and later, many years later, after they had become successful, and were in a position to help others, they did not fail in their responsibility, because they had learned something from their suffering, they had learned Compassion. To Buddhists, this is the greatest quality. The meaning of the word 'compassion' is: 'to suffer with' or 'to feel with,' so that if we see someone suffering, we feel it as if we are also suffering. And there is then a response; we become responsible, respond-able, that is, able-to respond.

In India, women, even until today, have a very low place, and if a girl-child is born, it is considered unlucky, because her parents will have to give money ~ and sometimes a very large sum of money ~ in order to find a husband for her; it is called a 'dowry.' So everyone wants to have boys; nobody wants to have girls. Well, once there was a young woman of a poor family named *Kisagotami*. She had not had a happy life, but when she was old enough to marry, her parents did their duty, and managed to scrape together enough money to find her a husband, who was also poor. However, her husband was kind to her, and when, later, a boy-child was born to her, her happiness knew no limits, because a boy meant respectability in the community, and whereas before, people had ignored and looked down upon *Kisagotami*, now they respected and befriended her.

One day, when the little boy was about two years old, she put him outside to play in the garden, as she often did, while she did her housework, and she could hear him playing happily with his toys. After some time, however, she noticed that he had become quiet. Wondering what was wrong, she went outside to see, and found him lying on the ground among the flowers, not moving. She ran to him, and picked him up, but he was cold, and still and quiet; she didn't know that a snake had bitten him while he was playing. Shaking him, and holding him tightly to her, she said: "Speak, cry, move, do something," but he remained still, and cold. Quickly, she ran round to her neighbor's, saying, "My baby is sick; he won't move or talk. Can you tell me what to do? Do you have any medicine?"

The neighbor could see that the child was dead, but said: "I'm sorry, I have no medicine for that."

Kisagotami went to the next house, but received a similar answer. She went to many houses, and some people said they hadn't any medicine, while others, who were unkind, laughed at her, telling her that her baby was dead, and no medicine could cure him. But she could not accept this ~ her baby, who had been so well and happy just a short time ago, dead? She continued to ask around for medicine until one man, who was a little more intelligent than the others, said to her: "If you follow the path into the forest over there, you will come to a place where a monk is sitting beneath a tree. Ask him; perhaps he knows of some medicine."

Overjoyed, she followed the path until she came to the place where the Buddha was sitting. Her hair and clothes were disarrayed, and she was out of breath because she had run all the way, and she said to the Buddha: "Please, please, Sir, can you help me? My baby is sick; he does not move or even cry. Please can you give me some medicine?"

The Buddha could see, of course, that the baby was dead, but He said to her: "Yes, I know some medicine for this sickness. Go back to the village, and ask for a handful of green beans from a household where no-one has died".

Hearing this, she was very happy. "It is very easy," she thought; "everyone has green beans." So she ran back to the village as fast as she could, and at the first house that she came to, said: "Please help me; I need a handful of green beans as medicine for my sick baby."

"Certainly," said the woman, and went inside to get them, but when she returned and gave them to her, *Kisagotami* said:

"But tell me, friend, of your family, has anyone ever died?"

"What is this that you ask?" said the woman, surprised; "many of my family are dead: my parents, some of my sisters and brothers, and even two of my own children."

"Oh, then in that case, I cannot take the beans," said Kisagotami, and gave them back. She hastened to the next house, and the next, and the next, but although they were all willing to give her the beans, the story was always the same: so many people had died; she could find no family that had not been visited by Death. Slowly, she understood that it is normal, that everyone is going to die. And when she understood this, she took her baby to the riverbank where the bodies of the dead were cremated, and said to the man in charge there: "Sir, my child is dead, but I am very poor, and cannot give you anything. Please have pity on me, and cremate him for me."

And the man, who was poor himself, so understood, said, "Yes, I will do that for you." Then she went back to the forest, to the Buddha. But this time, she didn't run, and her face was calm and peaceful, instead of sad.

The Buddha saw her coming, and knew what had happened, but asked her: "Did you get the medicine I sent you for?"

"Yes", said Kisagotami, "I got it. And now I wish you to become your disciple; please teach me more".

Such is the Buddhist way: by understanding things clearly, we reach Enlightenment. That is how we overcome suffering while living in this world ~ by understanding things clearly. When we do not understand, we suffer very much, but when we understand, although we still suffer, it does not affect us so much. What has happened to you is not really unusual; it has happened many times before, and can happen to anyone, even to rich people with all their money; money is no protection against things like that.

There was a man who left his country before it fell to Communism with sixteen tonnes of gold ~ that is 16,000 kilos of gold. Do you think he is rich? He can buy whatever he wants to ~ except peace of mind. He is not like you and I; if we want, we may go to the beach alone, no problem; but he can't do that, because he will always be afraid of someone coming to kill him. Wherever he goes, he must have body-guards with him. If he hears something behind him, he will look around in fear: "What's that?!" He's already living in Hell. His gold is useless to him, and can never buy him happiness.

But there was another man, who was born a prince, and had everything that money could buy at that time. He had only to clap his hands, or snap his fingers, and his servants would come to do his bidding. He never had to carry water, cook, sweep his house, or do any kind of work; it was all done for him. But something inside him told him, "This is not everything, it is not complete; there is something more than this."

Once, when he went out into the town, he saw an old man staggering along with the aid of a stick, very slowly, and with obvious difficulty. His skin was dark and wrinkled, he had no teeth, and appeared unable to see well. The prince asked his attendant, whose name was Channa, "Why is that man like that? Why does he stagger along in that way? Why is he so ugly?"

Channa replied: "Once, this man was young, strong, healthy, and handsome, just like you, my prince; but now he is old, maybe 70 or 80 years old. That is the result of old age."

"Are there others like this?" asked the prince, "or just this one?"

"There are many," said Channa, "it is not uncommon."

"Might I become like this, and my wife, too?"

"Yes, you, too, might become like that, my prince, if you live so long." The prince was disturbed, but continued on his way.

Further on, they came across a sick man lying in the gutter, crying in pain. The prince exclaimed: "Why does he cry like that? What is wrong with him?"

"Oh, he is sick; he has a fever, or plague, or dysentery, or something."

The prince had never been sick, nor seen anyone in the palace sick; he could not understand what it meant to be 'sick.' What does 'sick' mean?" he asked.

"It means he is not healthy; his health has failed, the four elements are out of balance, and disease has taken hold of him. Perhaps he will recover, perhaps not. Please do not go near him, lest you catch his disease, too."

"I catch it? Might I become sick like this?"

"Yes, you might, my prince; no-one is exempt from sickness."

Continuing down the street, not long afterwards, their path was crossed by a funeral-procession ~ people carrying a corpse on a stretcher, taking it to the burning-grounds by the river. Curious, the prince asked: "What is this? What are they carrying? And why do they cry and look so sad?"

"They are carrying a dead man, and are going to burn him."

"Burn a man? How can they do such a thing? It's terrible! We must stop them!"

"But he is dead already, and cannot feel anything. When a person dies, his family do not keep his body, for it would soon be stinking; they burn or bury it".

"Dead? What does that man?" asked the prince.

"It means, he is no longer alive; the life has gone from him; he cannot see, hear, smell or feel anything. His body is only like a piece of meat, and so they will burn it. That is what they usually do," said Channa.

Hearing this, the prince was more shocked than ever; "Will they burn me, and my wife?"

"Yes, when you are dead."

Greatly disturbed, his mind in turmoil, the prince turned back towards the palace. "Come," he said, "let's go back now; I don't want to see any more."

Before they reached the palace, however, they saw another strange sight: a monk, sitting beneath a tree at the roadside, meditating, with a very peaceful expression upon his face. The prince paused, and said to Channa: "Today, I have seen many things that I never expected to see. Among happy faces, I have seen an old man, someone sick, a dead person, some sad people, and now this. Never, in my whole life, have I seen anyone with such a peaceful countenance, yet he looks very poor; I see that he has only a staff, and a clay bowl, and his clothes are old and torn. Who might he be? And what is he doing here?"

Channa said: "He is someone who has left his home and family in order to seek for Truth; he is trying to find out why we get old, become sick, and die."

When the prince heard this, he made up his mind that he, too, would do this. So, not long after, when the first opportunity came for him to leave the palace secretly, he did so; in the middle of the night, when everyone was asleep, he rode off on his horse to the border of his father's kingdom; there, he crossed the *Anoma* river, cut off his long hair and beard, took off his jewels, changed his fine clothes for the robes of a mendicant, and set off into the forest, barefoot, with just an alms-bowl. For six years, he wandered from place-to-place, living on the scraps of food that kind people put into his bowl, going from teacher to teacher, learning all that they had to teach. But all that they could teach him was not enough; it did not lead him to Enlightenment, Nirvana. So he started to fast ~ that is, not eat ~ until he became almost just skin and bones; he did so because he thought he could find Enlightenment thereby, and almost died before he realized it was the wrong way. Then he changed, and began to follow the way of meditation. By this, his mind became calm and clear, and shortly afterwards, Enlightenment came to him. He became the Buddha, the Awakened One. He had no money, but was the richest person in the world. Since that time until now, His Teachings have spread all over the world, and have been followed by countless millions, who loved and respected Him because He was wise, kind, and Enlightened. The merit of the Buddha is great and inexhaustible.

About 1,200 years ago, a great Indian Buddhist Teacher who spread Buddhism in Tibet, and who could see into the future, said this: "When the Bird of Iron flies, and Horses run on Wheels, then will the Tibetan people be scattered like ants across the face of the Earth, and the Teachings of the Buddha will go to the Land of the Red Man." 1,200 years ago, there were no aeroplanes, so what he 'saw' he described as an 'iron-bird' because it could fly in the sky; and there were no automobiles, but he could 'see' that these things carried people, so he described them as 'horses on wheels.' The first recorded landing in America by outsiders took place about 500 years ago. Until that time, nobody knew about the 'Red Men' in America ~ the 'Land of the Red Man' ~ but this Teacher could see. In 1959, when the Chinese communists took over Tibet, many Tibetans, who were Buddhists, fled as refugees. Before that time, Tibet was a closed country; it was very difficult to go there but when the Chinese communists took over, many Tibetans fled, and took Buddhism with them to the West.

I have spoken to you before about the Yin-Yang (positive and negative), about the two fish, one black and one white. The black fish has a white eye, and the white fish has a black eye. It means that, in the black, there is some white, in the wrong, there is some right, in the bad, there is some good. When the Chinese communists took over Tibet; the

Tibetans fled, and took Buddhism with them. This is the good part. Since 1945, many Buddhist countries have been taken over by Communism: China, Tibet, Mongolia, North Korea, North and South Vietnam, Cambodia and Laos. But not everything was lost. In America now, there are about 600 Buddhist temples, many of which have been set up since 1975, when people began to flee South East Asia as refugees. This is not really so many in a country the size of America, but every year more temples are established. In Canada, Australia, Germany, France, England, and other Western countries, there are Buddhist temples. They have been set up by refugees like yourselves who have strong roots. There are not only Vietnamese Buddhist temples or Cambodian Buddhist temples, but Buddhist temples from many countries: Japan, China, Tibet, Mongolia, Burma, Sri Lanka, Thailand, Korea, and so on. Neither are they all for Asian people; there are now many Western Buddhists, and there will be many more. In the West, many people say, quite openly, that they have no religion; but that is not necessarily a bad thing, and might be good. It is like an empty container: it can be filled; but if it is already full, nothing else can be put in. There are many people in the West waiting in darkness for the Buddha's Teachings; if they hear them, many will receive them. The Buddha's Teachings are suitable for people who cannot accept the old explanations about life, the explanations which require us to believe without seeing. Many people have thrown all that away; so they are empty, and can be filled. If they are given a clear explanation of the Buddha's Way, many will accept. And you have a part to play in this. Buddhism is still young in the West and not very strong, but it is growing. You can help with that. Because of your needs, this temple was set up; if you had not needed it, it would not have been set up. But, you know, this place is important not only to the refugees; there are others who come here and who can get something ~ as in Bataan, where there are two temples; there are some American Buddhists working there.

So, even though you might not understand very much about Buddhism yet, I admire you for keeping your faith, because it is easy to be drawn away. That is being true and honest to yourselves. Therefore, use your time and your opportunities to go deeper into your religion to find out the real meaning there.

**In the black there is some white;
In the wrong there is some right;
In the dark there is some light;
In the blind there is some sight.**



"Iron-ore may think that it is uselessly tortured in the furnace, but when the tempered blade of finest steel looks back, it knows better." (Chinese proverb).

SECOND TALK

How many faces do you have? Only one, you would say; but that is not true. We all have many faces: happy faces and sad faces, angry faces and kind faces, jealous faces and bored faces; so many kinds faces we have ~ not just one. Do we know all the faces that we have? Have you noticed when we take photos, if we take a nice one of ourselves we like to print copies and give them to our friends. But if the photos are ugly, we do not make copies of them. We want people to see our beautiful faces.

We all have great capacity to do good and to do evil. Now you think: "Oh, I am very sad because the Communists have thrown me out of my homeland The Communists are very bad!" When we have no power or position, we complain about people who do have, and say: "If I were powerful and rich, I would use my power and wealth to help others." But if we became powerful and rich, the situation might be quite different, because power, position and wealth are like whisky: they make people drunk. And then it is easy to forget earlier good intentions. Power is very sweet, and many people like to have high positions, but few people know how to use them wisely. Instead of using them well, they use them in the wrong manner, and this causes trouble and brings pain.

Even religion is commonly used in the wrong way. Religion is like fire: if you know how to use it properly, it is very useful, very good; but if you do not know how to use it, it can be very dangerous and destructive. Many people consider their religion is the best, better than all others. A Buddhist should never say that ~ that Buddhism is the best religion ~ because such an idea causes a lot of trouble. You will notice that it is people who do not really understand or practice their religion who say such things ~ that their religion is better than others. We do not say that Buddhism is better than other religions; what we say is that Buddhism is different from other religions. But when we say it is different, we do not mean that it is better or worse than other religions; something that is different cannot be compared with anything else. We can compare things that are the same, but things that are different we cannot compare. A rose is not a lotus. A rose is a rose, and a lotus is a lotus. It would be incorrect to compare a rose with a lotus because they are different. A rose is not better than a lotus, and a lotus is not better than a rose. Perhaps you like roses more than lotuses, or lotuses more than roses, but that is just an opinion; it does not make one or the other better. Religion is not something to make comparisons about, either, but something to be lived; religion is supposed to make people better than they are, but the way that many people use it does not make them better; in fact, it makes them worse; they often become more proud, selfish, and stupid thereby. .

People have used religion in many wrong ways. They have used it to make competition between each other, and to make themselves feel superior. They have even used it to make wars, and have called these 'Holy Wars,' or 'Religious Wars.' But how can war ever be holy or religious? War is evil. Some people use religion to hate, and turn themselves into demons (e.g. Khomeini in Iran), to become more ignorant, instead of more enlightened. Not understanding the meaning of religion, they make it into something of superstition and stupidity; they use it to divide people, instead of to unite. And really, all that many people have is just a name: Buddhist, Christian, Muslim, etc., and the name is nothing at all. It is better to know nothing, if what you know is wrong. So before we think about changing the world, we should change ourselves first, that is, we should use our religion in order to gain Enlightenment. It is not enough just to call oneself a Buddhist.

(Question from the audience: Someone is asking how a Buddhist behaves in this world towards demon-people: "Is it right to destroy demons?" he asks. "Can affection and enlightenment be brought to such people? What is the correct attitude and action to reach the Buddhist goal?"

This is why we need wisdom, and that is not really something that can be taught to another, but has to be acquired through our own meditation, reflection, and experience. We may spend our whole life trying to change the world, and by the time we die, the world will have been changed very little or nothing thereby. According to Buddhism, there is to be found no lasting peace in the world outside; the only peace and freedom is to be found inside our minds. In the nature around us, we do not find birds, animals, or fish making wars like human beings do, because they do not have the capacity that human beings have; if they had the same capacity, for good and evil, perhaps they would do the same. We have to know and understand our own capacity, and what we are going to use it for.

I met a young man this afternoon, and it was a very pleasant meeting. I asked him "How long have you been here?" He told me "One year," but added, "I love to stay here, and I would like to stay here forever to help my poor, suffering people. I need little, and I do not want much."

I said, "That is very nice to hear. You are rich, aren't you?"

He said, "No, I am very poor."

"No, you are rich, because you need and want little." A person who wants much, even if he has much money, is poor. The young man had little; he said he needed little, and wanted little, and therefore he is rich, while at the same time, he is poor. Contentment is wealth, while greed is poverty. There are many ways of approaching life. There are always demons in the world. What are we going to do with such people? Are we going to be demons in our dealings with them? It is very easy to be so; it is very easy for us to become demons, too. But is there another way by which we can deal with such people?

Once, there was a young man, a good, intelligent person, who went to study meditation and spiritual practices with a teacher in the mountains. This teacher was not a monk, but had a wife and children. The young man ~ whose name was Ahimsaka, which meant 'Non-Violence' ~ quickly learned anything that the teacher taught him, and soon became the teacher's favorite disciple, and this made the other disciples jealous. They were not happy with Ahimsaka; so they thought of a way to discredit him in the eyes of the teacher. They waited in the garden behind a big tree until they saw the teacher coming, and then they began to speak in loud voices. One of them said: "This Ahimsaka is very bad; he is having an affair with our teacher's wife." As they had intended, the teacher heard this. At first, he didn't believe it, as he was very fond of Ahimsaka, but the seed had been sown, and as the days passed he continued to think about it; finally he came to believe it must be true.

He thought: "Now I must destroy Ahimsaka." So he called him, and said to him: "You have learned very quickly here, and there is only one more thing that I can teach you. But before I can teach you this, you must bring me one thousand fore-fingers from the right hands of people you have killed."

Ahimsaka was shocked when he heard this, as he was not a bad man, but he thought: "If that is the only way I can get this teaching, I must do it." So he took a sword, and a bow-and-arrows, and went into the forest to wait for people to come by, and, as travelers passed through the forest alone or in small groups, he attacked and killed them; then he cut off their right fore-fingers, and hung them on a string around his neck. Soon, everyone in the country-side around knew that there was a terrible murderer in the forest, and nobody went that way anymore. So he started to attack small villages, and sometimes killed all the inhabitants therein. The king of that area sent his soldiers out to catch him, but Ahimsaka was very strong and fierce, and killed all the soldiers, too. And so, his reputation spread, and people began to call him 'Angulimala', which meant 'Garland of Fingers'. His killing went on and on, until he had 999 fingers around his neck, and he needed just one more.

Now, it just so happened that the Buddha was visiting that area, and 'saw' Angulimala during His early-morning meditation. He also 'saw' Angulimala's mother, on her way to the forest to try to persuade her son to give up his evil ways, and the Buddha knew that, if nothing happened to prevent it, Angulimala would kill his own mother in order to complete his bloody garland. So the Buddha quickly made His way to that place, and put Himself between Angulimala and his mother. Upon seeing the Buddha, Angulimala turned away from his mother, and began to run towards the Buddha, who turned, and walked slowly away. Angulimala was very surprised that, although he was running very quickly, he could not catch up with the Buddha: Stopping, he called out: "Stop, monk, stop!"

The Buddha continued to walk slowly, and said: "I have stopped, Angulimala. It is you who have not stopped".

And Angulimala thought: "What does he mean? He says he has stopped, but he is still walking, and he says I have not stopped, but I am standing still. What can he mean? These monks are usually honest people, and don't tell lies. What does he mean?" And then he understood the Buddha's meaning ~ that the Buddha had stopped turning the Wheel of Birth and Death, while he had not. So Angulimala was converted from his evil ways, and asked the Buddha to accept him as a monk.

Shortly afterwards, the king of that country, who was a supporter of the Buddha, came to visit the Buddha in the forest, and began to tell Him about the wicked murderer who had killed so many people; the Buddha listened to him, and then said: "What would you say, O king, if you knew that Angulimala was here now?"

"What!" the king said in fright, "Where?"

The Buddha said: "This is Angulimala."

The king was surprised, and said: "Angulimala has become a monk? Well, in that case, allow me to be his supporter, too." The king had such confidence in the Buddha that he thought: "If this murderer has been tamed and converted by the Buddha, it must be alright."

Angulimala was a very good monk, following the Way diligently, so that it was not long before he attained Enlightenment himself. Then, one day, he went out for alms in a town nearby, and the people there recognized him. "Look!" they said, "That is Angulimala,

disguised as a monk! He is coming to kill us and our children again! Let us kill him first!" So they took sticks and stones and beat him until they thought he was dead, and left him lying in a pool of blood. But he was not yet dead, and when he had recovered consciousness, he made his way back to the forest where the Buddha was. There he died.

This story illustrates how even bad people, people who have done much evil, can also attain Enlightenment. Buddhism teaches that everyone has Buddha-nature; anyone can become a Buddha. There is not only one Buddha; there have been many before, and there will be many more in the future. The word 'Buddha' is not a name, but a title, and it means 'One Who is Awake.' We are not Buddha because we are sleeping, but it is possible for us to wake up, and when we do, we will be Buddhas. We are sleeping because we do not know what is true; if we know what is true, we are awake. So a bad man can become a good man. We are stupid if we hate people who hurt us; by our hatred, we hurt ourselves also. People who hurt others are stupid, because they will suffer themselves afterwards. We should keep in mind that there is goodness in all people, and try, by some means, to bring out the goodness in others, as well as in ourselves.

Some years ago, before I became a monk, I used to stay in a temple in Malaysia. The chief monk liked me because I worked hard in the temple, but one of the other monks disliked me as a result. He used to scold me and blame me to other people. It also seemed he had some psychic-power which he would sometimes use against people he didn't like. It would have been easy to have become angry with him and scold him back, but I didn't do so. I was not happy there, and considered leaving and going elsewhere. But one morning, as I was cleaning the altar, and putting fresh flowers there, I thought of another way, the way of *judo*, which is a way of overcoming someone by using his own strength against him, instead of using one's own strength. So I prepared an extra dish of flowers, took it to his room, and knocked on the door. When he opened it, without saying anything, I offered the flowers to him, and he accepted them, also without a word. He was never angry with me after that, and later, when I left that temple, he gave me \$50! If I had become angry with him and scolded him, he would have hated me more. But because I knew there are other ways, I was able to win him ~ not defeat him, but win him. I felt good, and he felt good, and we both benefited.

There was once a convicted murderer who had been in jail for many years. He hated everyone ~ the jailors, and also the other prisoners ~ so he had to be kept alone, in a small cell, and was not allowed outside. One day, a sparrow flew in through the window, and he caught it, and was about to crush it to death, but stopped, and thought: "This bird is also a prisoner now, just like me. I don't like being a prisoner, and neither does this bird." So, instead of killing it, he kept it and fed it, and it became tame, and didn't fly away. This man had never known love in his life before, but it came in at his window in the form of a little bird. And it changed him completely, so that he became a very good person. The jailors had never seen such a change in a prisoner before, and he was allowed to go out inside the prison, where he was able to influence other prisoners to become better, too.

We often say that 'So-and-so is no good; he is very bad,' but we should be very careful what we say; just because a person does bad things, that doesn't mean that he is a bad person; it means that he is foolish. There is no-one who has never done anything bad; we have all done bad, and sometimes we still do bad. And that is where religion comes in: we use religion to become better. We do not know how much good, and how much bad there is in our minds, or in the minds of other people. A person might do bad today,

but tomorrow, he might become enlightened; nobody knows. So we should be intelligent, and look for ways to show people the goodness in themselves. People kill and destroy and do bad things because they do not understand. It is very easy to kill and destroy; we do not need intelligence for that. This building here: it took a long time to build, but in one second, with a bomb, it can be destroyed. But which is better: creation, or destruction? Everyone would like to live in a nice house; nobody wants to have his house destroyed. We should understand ourselves first, and then we will know how to help others to change.

Someone is asking about Enlightenment ~ What does Enlightenment mean? Well, there are many kinds of Enlightenment, many degrees, as on a thermometer. All of us are enlightened to some degree. I will tell you how enlightenment arises. Suppose you have a problem ~ a mathematical problem, for example ~ and you try to work it out, and try, and try, but cannot get the answer, until you get tired of it, and get frustrated, so you leave it and go to do something else, to eat something, or play guitar, listen to music, etc. And suddenly, when you are not thinking about the problem at all, the answer comes! And you think: "Wow! So easy! Why couldn't I think of it before?" Maybe you couldn't think of it because you were trying too hard, and looking with a mind full of ideas. When the mind is already full, there is no room for anything else. Another example: you are trying to think of the name of someone you met before, but cannot get it, and later, when you are doing something else, the name comes to you. That is a form of enlightenment; enlightenment comes in such a way. It is the sort of thing that could make even a blind man say: "Oh, yes! I see!"

Do you know what are icebergs? Well, our mind is like an iceberg: the greater part of it is beneath the surface, and cannot be seen; we consciously use only a small part of our minds, and that part sleeps when we go to bed at night; but the greater part of our minds ~ the subconscious never sleeps; it is always awake. So when we think about something very much, very deeply, with the smaller part of the mind ~ the conscious part ~ it is taken over by the subconscious, so that, even when the conscious mind is asleep, the subconscious is still thinking about things. And it is from the subconscious that the answers to our problems come when we are no longer looking for them. It is in the deeper part of the mind, too, that the seed of Buddha-hood or Enlightenment is hidden. Enlightenment does not come to us from outside, but from inside our own minds. It is there already, just waiting to come out, but is buried beneath lots of rubbish. That is why it is very important for us to be quiet at times, to let the mind settle down, because the mind is usually disturbed, like muddy water, unclear. You cannot make your mind clear by saying: "Now I will make my mind clear," just like you cannot make muddy water clear by stirring it up. But, just as when you leave muddy water to settle, it becomes clear, so also is it with the mind; you cannot make your mind quiet, but you can allow it to become quiet. You can make your mind disturbed and unclear, but you cannot make it clear. Meditation can help the mind become clear; by being aware of things in and around us, the mind may become quiet. Chanting is one way to help the mind become quiet; it is very important to some Buddhists, while to others, not; that is just according to their personal preferences. The Buddha did not chant, but spoke in a common language so that ordinary people could understand Him. So, chanting is not absolutely essential; if you want to chant, that's fine, but if you don't want to, that's also alright. Many people misunderstand about chanting, and think that it is prayer, but it is not; it is a recitation of the scriptures, that is, of the Buddha's Teachings, the real value of which, of course, lies in understanding and applying them, not in chanting them. There are some results of

chanting, of course, even if you don't understand the words that you are using; but compared to understanding and applying the Teachings, the merit from chanting is very little.

For 500 years after the Buddha passed away, there were no written records of what He had said. His Teachings were passed on orally from person to person, and memorized. Having taught for 45 years, there was a great deal to be remembered, and people who had to work for a living and take care of their families did not have the time necessary to remember these prodigious Teachings. This became the duty of the monks and nuns, because they had time, they didn't have families; they didn't have to work for a living, and could devote themselves to remembering the Teachings, and to pass them on. For 500 years they were passed on in that manner, until they were written down. The easiest way to remember these things by heart was to give them a kind of tune; if they are just spoken, it is more difficult to remember them, but with a kind of rhythm, it is easier. That is how chanting of the Teachings originated. As to these instruments that you use here ~ *toc-toc-toc, ding* ~ they were not used in India at all, but originated in China, where the temples were so large, and so many people attended the ceremonies, that, in times when there were no microphones, the people at the rear couldn't hear where the people at the front were up to. Therefore, what you call the 'wooden-fish' was invented and used, so that the people could all chant in unison.

Let me say again: Chanting is useful, but is no substitute for understanding the meaning.

This morning, someone came to see me to ask about a part of the scriptures that she has chanted every evening for many years. I was rather surprised by this question because I have never been asked this before. Hundreds ~ thousands ~ of people recite regularly, but not many ever ask questions about it. Not many people understand the language of the chanting, because it is in old Vietnamese, not modern; moreover, it includes many Chinese and some Sanskrit words that are not translated to Vietnamese, so how can you understand it if you have not studied it? One example, one word: "*Nam-mo*." Maybe none of you knows what it means, although you have heard it and chanted it thousands and thousands of times. Vietnam got this word from China, but it's not a Chinese word, either, but Sanskrit, from India. So it came from India, through China, to Vietnam, and now it comes to Philippines, still untranslated. It means '*Homage*' or '*Praise*,' or '*Respect*.' So when we say "*Nam-mo Bon Su Thich Ca Mau Ni Phat*", it means: "Homage to the Great Teacher, the Sage of the Sakya People, the Buddha."

THIRD TALK

Every diamond is a stone, but not every stone is a diamond. I am concerned more with diamonds than with stones. Diamonds are rare, and stones plentiful, but occasionally I do find a diamond.

You can take a horse to the water, but you cannot make it drink; it will drink only when it is ready to drink. If people choose to go to the Camp movies rather than listen to a Dharma-talk, it is up to them; it shows that they are yet ready, not ripe. Most movies that are shown here are silly movies: killing and violence, or for 'catching fish.' If people are satisfied with such, that is alright. If you give a diamond to a dog, it will only sniff it and go away; it is a waste to give diamonds to dogs.

Tomorrow, we shall hold a "Refuge Ceremony" for people who feel ready to take this important step. But I want anyone who wishes to Take Refuge to understand clearly first, and to be quite sure that they are ready, otherwise it has no meaning. Please do not believe what I say. I want you to see and understand, so that you know, and not believe. You see, people believe all kinds of things, and some of these things are very stupid, and cause much trouble, because everybody thinks that they are right and others are wrong. They never bother to investigate or question, so how will they know what is right? That is not the Buddhist way. A Buddhist must understand clearly, so that every step that he takes is important, and brings him nearer to his goal. Beliefs change; they come and go. But Truth does not change, so that is what we must look for. Long, long ago, people in Europe believed that this Earth was flat, because that is what they were taught by the Church, and that if they sailed too far over the sea, they would fall off the edge of the Earth. They also believed that the Sun turned around the Earth, rising and setting every day. But now we know that this is not true. So beliefs change. We must try to understand what is true, not always to think that we know already, and that "I am right, and you are wrong." To think like this is wrong, so we must keep open minds. I try to show people different ways of looking at things, because often, we have fixed ideas and see things narrowly and unclearly.

Let me ask you a question: Do you think there is anyone who likes tooth-ache? What do you think? Yes or no. "Surely not!" Are you sure? What about the dentists? If there is no tooth-ache, they will have no money, and nothing to eat. Dentists like tooth-ache ~ other people's tooth-ache ~ because it means money. Every coin has two sides; every diamond has many faces. So we must learn to see things in different ways, and not only from our own point of view. This is the way that we follow the Buddha's Teachings. From the very beginning, the Buddha's Way was a way of freedom; the Buddha never called anyone to believe Him or follow Him. He never said to people: "If you believe in me, you will go to Heaven, or Nirvana, but if you do not believe in me, you will go to Hell". Going to Heaven or Hell is not a matter of believing or disbelieving in the Buddha or in anyone else, but in what we do. What the Buddha said was: "Come and see, and test my teachings as a goldsmith would test gold."

Now, if you have some gold, and want to sell it, and take it to the jeweler and tell him: "This is pure gold, 100; please buy it from me," do you think he would believe you and pay you? Would he not first test it to see how much gold it contained, and when he knows if it is pure gold or not, then he would pay you accordingly? He would not believe you because probably, the gold would not be pure gold. So, in the same way, the Buddha told people to test His Teachings by applying them, then they would know for themselves whether they work or not. If we do not apply them, but only believe, we will never know if they are true or not. This is what makes Buddhism different from other religions. Other religions tell you: "You must believe." But Buddhism ~ and Taoism, too ~ does not call people to believe. You know, strangely enough, it is the Western religions, or the religions of the Middle-East, and not the Asian religions, that call people to believe. But many people all over the world are blinded by the material wealth and technology of the West, and think that everything from the West is best, and everything from the East is least, that is, inferior. They never understand anything. They have money in their eyes, and see everything in terms of money. Asian culture is much older, and richer, and deeper than Western culture. But many people do not know anything about it, and what a great pity this is. Some Asian people want so badly to be like Westerners; they adopt

all the Western customs and fashions, dyeing their hair blonde or brown, putting on ugly clothes.

Some people have even asked me: "Do you know where I can get some medicine to make my skin white?"

And I replied: "Do you know what skin is for? Skin is for keeping the inside in and the outside out, nothing more."

"Oh, but white skin is more beautiful. I do not like to be brown." Very strange. Many Westerners go to the beach, take off their clothes and lie under the sun in order to become brown. Many Asian people will not go out in the sun for five minutes without an umbrella because they are afraid of becoming *more* brown. We should be happy that we have got skin, never mind about the color. So, do try to see what you have, and what you are, and you will probably find that you have much more than you thought you had, without changing your customs or your religion, or without trying to be someone else. Already, we are special people, just as we are, but we do not understand who we are, so we think we are ordinary. Are you special, or are you ordinary? Who thinks they are special? Nobody? Okay; only one? Why do you think you are special? He says he feels that religion is the basis of life. Alright, who thinks they are ordinary? Tell me why. (Discussion between listeners and speaker, inaudible on tape). Okay; are you the same as other people? Are you her? Are you him? Who are you? Is another person you? Can another person be you? Someone says: "Everybody has a mind." Yes, everybody has a mind, but not everybody has your mind. Now, can anyone see for you? Can anyone eat for you? You know, sometimes I am tired and lazy, and do not want to take a bath, so I say to someone, "Please take a bath for me." Can do? I would still be dirty even if someone went to the bathroom and bathed two or three times. Can someone take a bath for you? Can anyone die for you? Impossible! Many people use religion to become more stupid. They tell you that they are 'saved.' Saved from what? I think perhaps you have heard this expression: "Are you saved?" they ask. What do they mean, 'saved'? Very funny. Does it mean that they will never die? Everyone dies, so where is the evidence that they are 'saved'? "Oh, I believe, I believe," they say. Yes, they believe, but they do not know, until they die. They are only victims and prisoners of their own ideas; they use religion to imprison themselves. This is the opposite of what the Buddha intended. Now, if you are tired of suffering, and have had enough, then you will begin to look for a way out, and you will know what to do and what not to do without needing anyone to tell you. You know, we do not depend upon ourselves enough; and really, we are the only person that we can depend upon. We always look outside ourselves for answers to our questions; we never look inside ourselves or listen to ourselves. People made this image, you know, and then we come and worship it, and put food before it. But has anyone ever seen the image reach down and take a banana and eat it? Never, because it is only a image, made of cement, by people; it is a symbol of something else, but a symbol is never the thing that it symbolizes. It is not "Quan Am;" Quan Am is nearer to us than that image. Do you know where? People who understand and follow "Mahayana," do not look for Quan Am outside themselves because they know that Quan Am outside of themselves is not the real one. Quan Am is inside our own hearts, and reveals 'herself' in kind actions. Someone who follows Mahayana shows Quan Am in the way they live. So Quan Am is not far away. When we are in danger, and pray to Quan Am, we are sending out signals and attracting goodness to ourselves; our prayers act like a magnet that pulls iron to it. A Bodhisattva does not need to be asked for help; if a Bodhisattva is able to help, he helps, immediately, without any hesitation. But we must make ourselves

ready to be helped. If we surround ourselves with barbed-wire, nobody can get in to help us, so we have to remove all the barbed-wire, and all the obstacles that surround us, all negative and bad things, and do good, and this will attract more good to us. If you receive something ~ for example, a money-order ~ do not use it all for yourself, but share some of it with others. The part that we share, we keep; it is like the seeds for a future harvest. The part that we keep for ourselves, we lose, eventually. So, whatever comes to you, share it, and you will see that you will never be without. As we give out, we make room inside ourselves for more things to come in. But if we only take in, and never give out, we soon reach the point where we cannot take any more in; it is like breathing: you can only breathe in a certain amount; you cannot continue breathing in and breathing in, but have to breathe out, and then you can breathe in again. Life is like that ~ a process of giving out, and taking in.

One time, in Bataan, an old woman brought a monkey to me. Someone had trapped it in the forest, and its hand had been cut off in the trap. The old woman had seen it for sale in the market, and had felt sorry for it, so instead of leaving it there for someone else to buy and eat, she bought it and brought it to the temple, where she knew no-one would kill it, and it would be safe. When I saw it, I was so sad: there were two bones sticking out of its wrist, and the stump was bloody and swollen. I thought: "This has been trapped by a refugee. How can anyone be so cruel? The refugees value their lives, and do not want anyone to hurt or kill them, but some of them think nothing about inflicting pain upon others". He had sold the monkey in the market for a few pesos, which would be soon spent. But the suffering that he caused to that poor monkey, who probably had a father and mother, family and friends in the forest ~ that pain would take a long time to fade. I took the monkey in, and tried to find a doctor to treat it, but could find none. I did not know what to do, so told someone to put it behind the temple, and give it food and drink, expecting it to die of its wound. But the monkey was wiser than I; it knew what to do when I did not. I have been to school, and studied many things, and travelled far and wide, but didn't know what to do; that monkey had not been to school, didn't know how to read or write, had never studied First Aid, but somehow, knew what to do to save its life. After a few days, I saw only one bone sticking out of its wrist; I do not know if it had slowly chewed off the other bone, or broken it off against the tree; but after a few more days, the other bone was also broken off, and then the flesh and skin began to grow over the wound until it was completely healed. Wonderful! I learned very much from this monkey; it was my teacher. How did it know how to do this? Nobody had ever taught it; something inside must have prompted it.

Now, have you seen birds building their nests? How do they know how to do it? Birds of the same species, of the same family, all build their nests in exactly the same way; they do not go to school to learn how to build nests, or read books, yet they know how. And a spider spinning its web ~ have you ever watched a spider spinning a web? It's fantastic! How does it know? And if these creatures know how to do things like that, is it not possible that we also know things that we have not been taught? A little baby, as soon as it is born, knows how to get milk from its mother's breast. So there is part of us that knows many things without having been taught. And that faculty or ability is still in us. We should not think that all knowledge comes from outside of us, but should learn to depend more upon ourselves. The way to do this is to be quiet, and let something come out, to listen to our own heart speaking; but when we are busy all the time, it is very difficult to hear the inner voice speaking. You know, people spend most of their lives running, running after pleasure, running away from pain; they are seldom still, and seldom happy. Observe how people go to see any movie that is showing in the Camp: it does not matter

if they can understand it or not. They think the movie is shown only on the screen there, and do not know that the whole of life is a movie. Life is a movie ~ moving ~ and we are all actors. If we know this, we do not need to go to the movies; we are in the movies, constantly. Sometimes we play the part of the hero, and sometimes the part of the villain; many, many different parts we play, every day. If we know that we are acting in the movie, then we can begin to act in a way that we want to act; we can choose our parts; but if we do not know, somebody else will tell us how to act, what part to play.

Let me ask you another question: Do you like to suffer? No, of course not! Well, would you consider that fear ~ being afraid ~ is a kind of suffering? Yes, it is. Does anyone like to be afraid? Of course not, you will all say, but I'm not so sure. Why? Well, tell me: Have any of you ever been to see a Dracula movie? Yes, most people have. And was it free, or did you have to pay to see such a movie? You had to pay. And when you watched, such a movie, how did you feel? "Afraid." What? You told me before that you didn't like to suffer, and now you have just told me that you paid to watch something that made you feel afraid! How strange! It means that you like to be afraid, ie, to suffer. Very strange, no? Part of us likes to suffer, and much of our suffering is self-caused; we do things that cause suffering to others, and eventually to ourselves. We suffer so much, until finally, we are sick of suffering, we feel we have had enough already, so we begin to look for a way out. If we are ready to get out of the Dracula movie, there is a way out, but it is not so easy; it is easier to get in than to get out; we need no assistance to get in, but do need it to get out. You know, in the movie-house it is very dark, and there is someone with a flash-light to show you the way to your seat. Now, the Buddha is like someone with a flash-light who shows you the way out, instead of in, but He does not take you out, or make you go out. He only shines the way out. If you are ready to go out, you go; but if you are not ready, or do not want to go out, you stay, and continue to watch the Dracula movie. So it is up to us; there is a way out, if we are ready to go out. That is why Buddhists *Take Refuge*. A Refuge is a state or a place of safety. There are Three Refuges for a Buddhist.

There was once an army general, powerful and wealthy, and he was a follower of a certain religious teacher, but he was not quite satisfied with what he taught. He had heard about the Buddha, but had never been to listen to Him speak. He told his teacher: "I have heard so much about this Buddha, and would like to hear Him speak".

But his teacher discouraged him, saying: "Ah, do not waste your time; that fellow is nothing; he's just another of those wanderers". But the man could not be dissuaded, so went to the place where the Buddha was preaching, and was so impressed that he wished to become a disciple.

The Buddha said, however: "This is the first time you have heard my teachings; you must go away and think about them first". But this answer only made the man more happy, and he said: "I am convinced already, and want to Take Refuge now".

Again the Buddha exhorted him: "Do not be in a hurry, but think clearly first".

The general then said: "I am a wealthy man, with power and position; if I'd gone to any other teacher and asked to become his follower, he would have accepted immediately, and probably would have had me taken round the town on the back of an elephant to show everyone: 'Look at my new disciple! See who is following me now!' But the Buddha does not do that; instead, he tells me to think clearly first, and will only accept me when I

am quite sure and ready. So now I want to Take Refuge in the Buddha, in the Dharma, and in the Sangha. Please accept me as a lay-follower". And the Buddha then accepted him, but advised him to continue to respect and support his former teacher.

You see, the Buddha was not afraid of anyone finding out that what He taught was not true. If a person knows that what he teaches is not true, he cannot put it out in the open like that, but must hide or disguise it. The Buddha encouraged people to investigate and test everything, and until now, nobody has been able to prove that what the Buddha taught is untrue, because it is very clear, and here and now we must try to understand. His Teachings help us to live through all the difficulties of life. Now, Buddhism never teaches that it possesses all the answers to all the problems of life; it does not have all the answers to all the problems; it is a way by which we can find our own answers, and this is much better. That is the Dharma of the Buddha. But what is the *Sangha*? Not many people understand this. The word 'Sangha' has several meanings; it does not mean only the monks and nuns. By itself, it means 'group', 'community', or 'congregation'. If we are talking about the monks or nuns, we must say '*Bhikkhu-Sangha*', or '*Bhikkhuni-Sangha*', and that is not the Sangha that we Take Refuge in. You see, monks and nuns are also people, and a person does not automatically become enlightened merely by shaving his head or putting on a robe; it's not so easy as that, monks and nuns can also make mistakes and do something wrong. So when people pay respect to the monks and nuns, they are not really paying respect to the person, but to the robe, which is like the Buddhist flag. If a monk or nun disrobes ~ quits the monkhood or nunhood ~ people do not pay respect to him or her anymore. We have to be very careful about this, and understand it clearly. People with too much faith, and not enough wisdom, sometimes respect the monks so much that it is as if they put them up in the sky, so high that they almost need a telescope to see them there. Then, after elevating them thus, if they see the monks doing even a small thing wrong, they become very disappointed, and in their estimation, the monks fall down. Why? Because they put the monks so high in the first place. This is very dangerous, therefore, and we lose the balance. You see, the monks also walk with their feet on the ground; they don't float along. So be careful about this.

There is another Sangha, what, in Sanskrit, is called '*Ariya Sangha*', that is, those who have attained some 'fruit' of the Way, some Enlightenment; they have crossed the 'Stream of Becoming', and are going up the mountain. There are various levels of Enlightenment, of course, but those who have 'crossed the Stream' do not come down again, do not go lower. They can never become animals, or ghosts, or demons; they can never be reborn in Hell. But it is still possible for them to make mistakes, and do bad things; until a person reaches the level of *Arahant*, and is out of the Cycle of Becoming, he can still make mistakes, but cannot fall down lower. But, although he can still make mistakes, he cannot hide them, cannot tell lies and say: "No. I never did that". It is such people, people who have attained the various levels of Enlightenment, that constitute the Sangha ~ the Ariya, or 'Noble' Sangha ~ that we Take Refuge in. They can be monks or nuns, but not necessarily so; they can also be people like yourselves, living a family life. Many Buddhists think, quite wrongly: "Oh, I am not a monk (or nun); I cannot follow the Way". This is not true at all, but is often an excuse for not doing that they know they should as Buddhists.

It is not true; they also can follow the Way, if they wish to; they also can become members of the 'Noble Sangha', of those who follow the Way upwards.

So, those are the Three Refuges: the Buddha, as the Teacher, the Dharma, as His Teachings, and the Sangha, as all those who have followed the Dharma and have obtained some Fruit thereof.

Now, some people think: "This is a very difficult time in our world, it is very difficult to attain Enlightenment; there cannot be any more Enlightened people in the world at this time". But I don't accept this; I think there are always some people who are Enlightened, although there might not be very many right now. However, we should not let that stop us from trying to become Enlightened ourselves. Certainly, it should be said that the Way is hard; if you have ever climbed a tree or a mountain, you will know that it is much more difficult to climb than to fall down; it is very easy to fall down, is it not? But which is better? What do we want? We must be sure in our minds what we want from Buddhism. If you know that you really want to climb the mountain, that you want to get out of suffering, out of the horror movie, then the Way is open. You know, as the Buddha was about to pass away, as He lay there in a very calm and peaceful position, He continued to teach until the very end, and some of His last words were: "Be an island unto yourselves. Be a lamp unto yourselves. Be a refuge unto yourselves. With the Dharma as your Refuge, do not go to any outside refuge".

Actually, there is only one Refuge, Three-in-One: Buddha, Dharma, and Sangha. The Buddha is the Teacher, the Revealer of the Dharma, and the Sangha are those who follow the Dharma. Only one, three-in-one. I told you that the statue of Quan Am is not Quan Am; Quan Am must be found inside us. We should not always ask Quan Am to help us, thinking only of ourselves, but should manifest Quan Am in our actions towards others. In the same way, we should show truth in our living, should be honest and straight; if a person is not honest, he will never find the Truth. So this is the key: become honest; it is not easy, but it is possible. Taking Refuge helps us to become firm on our way. When we Take Refuge with clear understanding, we make a connection with all the Buddhas, with all Enlightened people, and we make a commitment to try harder to follow the Way, so that there is a direction in our lives. We ally ourselves with the Buddhas and all those who follow the Way; henceforth, we are engaged in the same kind of work as They. We know which way we are going, instead of just wandering around without aim or purpose. So it is a serious step to take, and I want people who wish to take this step to understand clearly first. It should not be just, "Oh, something to do because my friend is doing it", or "Well, I haven't done it before, so now I'll try it". No, it is not something like that. We should be careful, and if we are not sure, we shouldn't do it.

Now, a Buddhist has what are known as The Five Precepts. These are not commandments, not rules that someone makes us follow, and the Buddha never said "You must follow these".

The First Precept is worded like this: I undertake the training-rule to abstain from killing living beings". This is because we see that all living things want to be happy, and do not want to suffer or die, just like us. (And the reason why Buddhists ~ but, unfortunately, only a few Buddhists ~ are vegetarians and abstain from meat, is not out of consideration for physical health, so that they will be strong, and their blood 'clean', or so that they can avoid high blood-pressure, nor do they abstain from meat in order to 'make merit', or to persuade the Buddha or Quan Am to help them. A Buddhist is not vegetarian for his own sake, but for the sake of the animals. It is his way of saying: "Stop the Killing! I do not agree with it!" Although it is a not-doing, a negative-doing, it has a positive effect, and helps to reduce the suffering in the world).

The Second Precept is: "I undertake to abstain from taking what is not given to me". This is because we respect other people, their rights, and their property, just as we would like others to respect us.

The Third Precept: "I undertake to abstain from sexual misconduct that causes pain to others". Rape and adultery are covered by this. If a person is married, that person should be satisfied with his/her partner. One husband or wife should be enough; so before you get married, be sure that the person you are going to marry is the one you want.

The Fourth Precept is to abstain from False Speech. This doesn't mean only not telling lies, but includes such things as flattery, and harsh words. Sometimes, if we want something from somebody, we use sweet words ~ "You are very nice, and kind, very handsome", etc. ~ but if we do not want anything, the story is different; then we might say otherwise ~ "You are very selfish, stingy, not nice", etc. Lao Tse said: "Beautiful words are often not true; true words are often not beautiful". But often, we do not like to hear words that are not sugar-coated; we like everything sweet, and the truth suffers because of this. If someone says something bitter, something that is not sweet, to us, we become sad or angry, and seldom stop to consider whether it is true or not. This is silly. If what people say to us is true, we should be able to use it to our advantage; but if it is not true, never mind. If someone calls you a monkey, do you immediately grow a tail, and start climbing trees? If someone were to say to you: "Excuse me, you, have egg on your face", would you become angry, and think: "How dare he say such a thing to me?!" What would you do? Would you not immediately put your hand to your face, and find out if there was egg there or not? And, if there was, would you not thank your informant for pointing this out, and thus saving you some embarrassment? If it is true, accept it, and use it; if it's not true, disregard it. But words have limitless power to hurt, and we should be as careful as possible in using them.

Now, the most important thing for following the Way is to get our minds calm and clear, like focusing a camera: if the camera is not focused, the pictures we take with it will not be clear. To intoxicate ourselves makes the mind blurred and unclear. That is why the Fifth Precept is to abstain from drugs and intoxicants, which cause us to be careless. Many people say: "Oh, just a little won't do any harm", but very few people can stop at 'just a little', and go on to drink more, and more. There is a Japanese proverb about this: "The man takes a drink. The drink takes a drink. The drink takes the man". And so, the mind is easily clouded and blurred, and many bad and foolish things are done when people get drunk. Moreover, people pay to lose their minds, for alcohol is not cheap or free, is it?

So, these are the Five Precepts that a person voluntarily undertakes. And, though there may be times when he breaks them, and makes mistakes, he gets up and goes on again. They are guidelines to help him, like the lines on paper that we use to write by; when we know how to write straight, we do not need the lines anymore. Thus, these Precepts are there to help us; they cover our relationships with all living things, and are undertaken through understanding, not through fear of punishment if we break them. We follow them because we see others as ourselves. So, tomorrow, if anyone wants to *Take Refuge*, we will have a ceremony. I would like to add, however, that Taking Refuge brings with it a responsibility, and I exhort people who have children to take very great care of them, and guide them in the Buddhist Way. For example, anyone who Takes Refuge, and who has children, should explain to his or her children the importance of not

shooting birds, catching fish, or killing any other living things; they should educate them about the sanctity of life.

(Question from the audience): "What is the difference between Mahayana Buddhism and Hinayana Buddhism?"

Mahayana and Hinayana are generally considered to be sects of Buddhism, but I do not see them as that; I look upon them as something quite different ~ as attitudes of mind: the Mahayana attitude being one that is unselfish, broad, and wide open, like an open lotus-flower. It means being consciously aware that we are parts ~ each one of us ~ of the society that we call the world, and living and striving to make this world a better place to live in. We are only passing through this world; none of us will stay here forever. Nobody has a country; we might think we have, but that is because we do not understand things clearly. We are passing through, and we own nothing. We are pilgrims, on a journey. But we have many false ideas, and the idea of nationality is one of them. Between Vietnam and Cambodia, for example, there is not a line drawn on the ground separating one from the other, nor a river or mountain-range dividing them. The division is artificial, man-made, not natural. People have created many divisions that do not exist in nature, and other people, like you and I, have accepted these divisions without question. In reality, we have no country; nobody does. In fact, we have nothing at all that we can call our own. We live in this world for just a short time, and then we die. And what nationality will we be when we are dead? We did not choose to be born where we were born, but had no choice about it, did we?

In the beginning, when we hear of the Dharma, and of how 'Life is Suffering', perhaps we get scared, and wish to escape from the Wheel of Birth and Death, so decide to follow the Way. But at this stage, we are concerned primarily with ourselves, so the good that we might do is motivated by self: I, me, and mine. / want to escape from suffering; / want to attain Enlightenment. Our goodness is good, but is not full; it is like the lotus-flower as a bud, not yet open. This might be termed the Hinayana stage, or attitude; it is limited by thoughts of self.

Later on, however, as we learn more about the Dharma, and begin to perceive the causes of suffering- ~ stupidity and selfishness ~ we become less afraid of suffering because we know that we can do something about it; we are not helpless. We see that, just as suffering ~ like everything else ~ arises from causes, so, when the causes are removed, the effect also ceases. This knowledge is power, and means that we can do something not only for ourselves, but for others in the world around us. And it is with such understanding that Hinayana changes into Mahayana, our minds blossom, like the open lotus, and we begin to live for life. Let me tell you two short stories to illustrate this: I once asked my first Buddhist teacher ~ a Thai monk ~ what he would do if he saw a woman drowning, and could reach in and save her; would he do that? "Oh, cannot, cannot! A monk must not touch a woman!" he said.

"Then what would you do?"

"I would go to look for a stick or a piece of rope and pull her out with that". He would think only of keeping his rules strictly, and not of the drowning woman. Such an attitude is Hinayana, concerned primarily with self. According to his way, we could not say that he would be doing anything bad, but neither would he be doing anything good. If such a

situation did arise, who would stop to think: "Oh, that is a woman, a dangerous creature of the opposite sex! I must not touch her!"?

One time, two monks were on a journey, and it was raining heavily. On their way, they had to cross a stream, which normally was not very deep, but because of the rain, they found the water quite high. This was not much of a problem for them, however, but on the bank of the swollen stream, they saw a beautiful girl, and she said to them: "Oh, Sirs, my mother is sick, and I must visit her, but the water is too deep, and I cannot cross. Would you please help me?"

"Certainly," said one of the monks, and picked her up and carried her across the stream, so that she didn't get wet. The girl thanked the monk, and they went their different ways. Upon reaching the monastery, the monks were assigned quarters, and lay down to sleep. One monk was soon asleep, but the other could not, sleep at all, until finally, in the midnight, he woke the other monk, and said to him: "Brother, I cannot sleep".

"Why not?" asked the other.

"Well, I am worried because you carried that beautiful girl, and you know we are not supposed to even touch a woman!"

"Oh, is that why you cannot sleep? I put the girl down at the stream, but you are still carrying her". You see, the monk who carried the girl was thinking only of helping someone in need; he was displaying the Mahayana mind, while the other one was more concerned about his own personal discipline, and was showing the Hinayana mind.

The Buddha said: "If you have a cut on your hand, you should not work with poison, but if there is no cut, it is alright to do so". This means we should know our own minds, and do what needs to be done. Would it have been Mahayana if that monk had said to the girl at the stream: "I am a monk, and monks should not touch women. I am sorry, therefore, and cannot help you", and left her standing there? So, there are different ways of looking at things. Mahayana means having an open mind, a mind that cares about others. Hinayana means thinking primarily about oneself. They are not visible things; you cannot see from a person's dress that he thinks with a Mahayana or a Hinayana mind. But it goes without saying, that when we Take Refuge, it should be with a Mahayana mind, with thoughts about others, and not just about oneself.

I could give you more examples about that, but let me just say here that the Buddha did not teach Mahayana or Hinayana; He taught a Way to Enlightenment. There are many sects of Buddhism, but at the heart of them all is Enlightenment.

Question: "What is Nirvana?"

Some people think that Nirvana must be like Heaven, but this is incorrect, because we can go to Heaven only after we die; not while we are alive. Nirvana, however, can be attained while living in this world; it is not a place where you can go, but a state of mind. Nirvana is Here-and-Now, not in another time or place; when we find It, it will be Here-and-Now, because actually, there is no other Time and Place; the only Time there is is Now, but it's not something we can talk about, because if we talk about now, it's not Now, the present, but already in the past. We can live Now, but cannot talk about it.

Likewise, the only place you can be is Here; wherever you are, at any moment, is Here; you cannot be in any other place except Here.

Do you remember the story of Prince Siddhartha ~ how old was he when he became the Buddha? Thirty-five. That is when He attained Nirvana. Enlightenment, or the attainment of Buddhahood, is Nirvana. And how old was He when He passed away? Eighty. Yes, you see, you understand. The Buddha attained Nirvana under the Bodhi-Tree, not when He passed away. Now, who knows where the Buddha was born? Buddhist youths do not know? Why not? Someone says he was born in Lumbini Gardens. Do you agree? Who was born in Lumbini Gardens? The Buddha? No, He wasn't; the Prince was born in Lumbini Gardens, not the Buddha. The Prince became the Buddha under the Bodhi-Tree, at the age of thirty-five; he wasn't born as the Buddha. The Buddha was not born and therefore, the Buddha did not die. Do you see my point here? What is born, must die; death is unavoidable for those who are born. What is not born does not ~ cannot ~ die. The state of Nirvana has several different names ~ but we must keep it in mind that the names are not the thing that we are talking about. Other names for the state of Nirvana are: Enlightenment, the Unconditioned, Buddhahood, and Amata, which means 'Deathless'. Nirvana is therefore 'that which is not born, and does not die', does not come, and does not go. And it is this that we, as Buddhists, are looking for. But we must find it ourselves, because nobody, not even the Buddha, can give it to us. So it is useless for us to pray for Nirvana, or pray to it; Nirvana is not a person, nor a consciousness; it will never answer our prayers. It is not a God, and no God has the capacity to bestow Nirvana on anyone; the Gods must also find Nirvana for themselves.

FOURTH TALK

A man once went to catch wild horses, and when he returned home with the horses he had caught, his neighbours said: "Oh, you are very lucky". "Maybe", he said. A few days later, when he was taming the horses, one of them threw him to the ground, and his leg was broken. Then his neighbours said: "Oh, how unlucky you are." "Maybe", he said. Some days after this, the king's soldiers came to conscript all able-bodied men to serve in the army, but because this man had a broken leg, they didn't take him. His neighbours said: "You are very lucky". Again, he said: "Maybe". This is a very good word ~ maybe.

We cannot see into the future, nobody knows what tomorrow holds. Someone told me the other day that he would be leaving here on 15-December to Australia. "Maybe", I said, "Not sure". Many refugees think only of the things they have lost, but seldom of the things they still have. It is like when there is lots of water: we use it to bathe and wash clothes, for cooking, and watering the garden, and we waste it, seldom take care of it. But when there is no water, oh! the word 'water' is on everyone's lips! And last week, somebody wanted to kill someone because they were out of water! When we have good things, we don't think of them, don't take care of them. It is only when we have lost them that we think of them; but then it is too late. It is like Freedom: Freedom is difficult to win and keep, but very easy to lose, as you know. You have lost your freedom once, but then regained it, at terrible cost, and now you should take great care of it. But many

people do not understand what freedom means; they think it means they can do just whatever they want to do without taking other people into consideration. But it's not like that at all. I wouldn't like to live next-door to someone who plays his radio very loud all the time; it's not that I don't like music; I do. But there are times for music, and times for being quiet. And although one person may like music all the time, it doesn't mean that everyone else likes it. Perhaps some people like to study, or be quiet, or just to sleep. It is therefore inconsiderate towards other people to play music loud at any time, and would not be exercising freedom, but abusing it. The freedom of this world, you see, has limits. The Philippines has more freedom than Vietnam, the U.S. has more freedom than both, but even in the U.S., freedom has limits. Suppose you go to the U.S. and get welfare-money, but you think: "This welfare-money is not enough; I want to be rich, but how can I become rich on welfare or by working? I had better buy a gun and go to rob a bank". So you buy a gun and go to rob a bank, but get caught by the police. But then you say to the police: "Hey! What are you doing? America is supposed to be a free country, so I can do whatever I like. You must allow me to rob the bank!" Do you think the police would listen to you, and let you go? We must know the limits, and live within them; if we do not live within the limits, we must be prepared to accept the consequences, and not complain about them. You know, the reason why there are so many rules and laws is because people are not honest. If people were honest, there would not be so many laws. We all live as parts of society; society is made up of people like you and I, and each person is important, whether other people recognize him as important or not.

Individually, we could not produce all the things that we need every day for our survival. If we had to grow all our own food, for example, we would find it very difficult, and we certainly would not have the variety of food that we do have every day. We'd have to spend all our time growing food, and what about our clothes? We'd probably be wearing animal-skins, or leaves, or grass. And our houses would not even be as good as the ones we are living in now in the Camp. Surely, we wouldn't have electricity, or running water. Yes, life would be very difficult if we had to do everything for ourselves. It is because we live together with others, and work with them, that we benefit in many ways. So, although there are many things wrong with society, and many ways in which it can be improved, still there are many good things about it for which we should be grateful. But some people hate society so much that they do not want to contribute anything at all. The honest thing for such people to do, therefore, is to go away and live alone on a small island, because if they remain in society, living and enjoying the benefits, but contributing nothing, they are simply thieves. The benefits that we enjoy bring with them responsibilities; they go together.

There was a boat on the open sea, and it was sinking, but while most of the people in it were at the front end, baling out the water, two men were sitting in the back end, and one said to the other: "It's good that the water is at their end, and not ours". They forgot that they were all in the same boat.

Everywhere should be regarded as our home, even if we stay in a place for only one day, and we should treat it accordingly. If we think: "It is not my country (or my house), so never mind", we will not take care of it. But if we think: "I am living here now", then it is our home, and we will take care of it.

In Bataan Camp, there are ten neighbourhoods where all the refugees live. But there are two extra neighbourhoods: Neighbourhood 11 is the place just outside the check-point where people go to buy beer illegally, because in Bataan, unlike here, beer is not al-

lowed in the Camp. The other neighbourhood is a little different, and people stay there for a very long time. Neighbourhood 12 is the cemetery, and there are about 100 refugees who came to PRPC, expecting, like you, to be resettled in another country, but they will stay there a very long time because they were resettled sooner than they expected, and in a place they did not want to be: they died. I am booked to fly back to Manila tomorrow, but there is plenty of time for me to die before then. We do not need half-a-day to die; we can die in less than a second, somaybe....maybe... You know, if we breathe in, but do not breathe out, we die; if we breathe out, but not in, the same. Very easy, easy to die. But I think: "While I'm still alive, let me do something useful; instead of waiting and waiting for something to happen, let me *make* something happen". If you think you can do nothing to help yourselves and/or others, you are just as much victims of your own thinking as you are of the Communists, and maybe more so.

Most Buddhists misunderstand about Karma, so let me ask you a question about it. You are all afraid of my questions, I know, because they are not ordinary questions. But this one is ordinary, so fear not. Do you think that everything we have done in the past, good and bad, will surely come back to us? That is an ordinary question, is it not? What do you think ~ Yes or No? Who thinks 'Yes, it is sure to come back to us'? And who thinks 'No'? Somebody thinks 'Yes'; please, tell us why you think 'Yes'. Who is brave enough to tell? Next time I ask a question, nobody will put up their hands perhaps. Alright, who thinks No, and why? If you think 'something, you must know why you think it. "Well, we do something good or bad today, and if it returns tomorrow or after tomorrow, something like that, and we do not know when we will die, we really do not know. Maybe we will die first. Yes, maybe we will die before the bad things or the good things come back to us. So we do not know. But what about the next life? "I only know the present; I do not know what will happen tomorrow, so how can I know what will happen in my after-life?" Yes, but it is not a complete answer. You know, we all have many chains tying us up; we call them Chains of Ignorance, Not-Knowing. Many, many chains we have. But I think I can help you to cut one of these chains now, and it is a big one. Many people believe that they must receive the results of every action they have done, good or bad. If it were like that, then it would be useless to lead a religious life. If we must receive the results of every action, it would be a waste of time to follow the Way. It would be better just to live and enjoy ourselves in a selfish way, because we could never become free; it would be impossible to become free, because all the time, until we die, we are performing new actions, good and bad. If we were to receive the results of everything we have done and do, we would have to be reborn again and again and again, without end. Now, already you have forgotten the story of Angulimala ~ how many people did he kill? And how many times did he die after that? Someone says: "I'm not sure, but I think two times, and after he died, he lived again". No, he didn't. When he died, he was an Arahant, so was not born again. "Yes, I think he was an Arahant, but didn't he live again?" No, an Arahant is not reborn, because he has attained Nirvana. Why did Angulimala not need to be reborn again? Because it is possible to cut through all the chains, all the Karma ~ as Angulimala did ~ so that very little remains, and the little that does remain is the result of something very, very heavy before. But most of our Karma we can change, we can cut through. And it is by knowing this that we have greater capacity to change our lives; it makes us feel strong. If we think we cannot change our lives, we give up, and just lie down. Our lives are changed every moment, even without us trying to change; and if our lives are changed without us trying to change, how much more will they be changed if we try?

There was a teacher, a monk who had in his care a young boy of 8 years or so, and he was very fond of this boy. The teacher had some psychic power, and could see into people's karma. One day, looking into his student's karma, he saw that, because of something the boy had done long before, he would soon die, and that nothing he ~ the teacher ~ could do would prevent this. The teacher was very sad, so said to the boy: "It is time for you to have a holiday; you have not been home to visit your parents for a long time, so you should go". The young boy went off, and the teacher thought that that would be the last time he saw him, as he expected his karma to soon bring about his death. On the way, the boy came to a stream, which was swollen from rain the previous day, and was still rising. On the bank of the stream, he saw an ants' nest, with the ants running around frantically, fearful of being drowned. Feeling sorry for these tiny creatures, the boy built a wall of mud and stones around their nest, so it would not be flooded. Then he went on his way, and reached his home without anything else happening. He enjoyed his holiday at home, but after some time, he thought: "I've stayed here long enough, and should now go back to my teacher". So he said "Good-bye" to his parents, and set off. When his teacher saw him coming, he was very surprised and happy, and told the boy to tell him all about his holiday, hoping to learn what had happened to save the boy from his imminent karma. So the boy told him about his journey, and his stay at home, about what he had done, what nice food he had eaten, and so on, but he didn't tell about the ants as he considered this not very important, just a minor thing. And the teacher said: "That's very nice, and I'm glad you enjoyed yourself, but are you sure you have told me everything? Was there anything else that happened?" And then the boy remembered, and told him, about the ants. The teacher then understood: "This is what saved his life". The boy thought that it was just a small, ordinary action, but, you know, an act of compassion is never a small unimportant action, but always a big one.

Let's compare our past bad actions to a glass of black ink. Let's consider that a person has done so much bad in the past. Some people feel that they have done so many bad things before that it's too late to change, that it's no use trying, because they cannot change all the bad they've done, so must just continue. That is wrong and weak thinking. If your bad actions can be compared to black ink, let us compare your good actions to water. Now, if you have a piece of cloth, a white handkerchief or something, and dip it into the glass of black ink, what colour would the cloth become? Black, of course. Okay, let's put the glass of ink into a pail of water, and then dip a white cloth into it. What colour would the cloth become? Black, but not very black. And if you then take this inky water, and throw it into the sea, and then dip your white cloth into the sea, what colour would your white cloth be? Maybe a little bit dirty, but it would not be black from the ink. So, with the good, we neutralize the bad. And you can do that here, in the present. Many of you have been here for a long time, some of you for four years, and people tend to become resigned to it, thinking that there is nothing they can do about it. "I do not know anyone in JVA (Joint Voluntary Agencies), or the Australian or Canadian delegations; so there's nothing I can do", they think. Again, that is not true, not true at all; there is a lot that you can do. It might seem that what you can do here will not affect your resettlement chances. But try to put more water in the ink. It is because we have so much ink that we fall into bad conditions. Everything changes. This is the foundation of Buddhism. The Law of Life is Change. We hate change when we are happy, but when we are sad and miserable, we think change is good. Remember: everything changes. You may just sit back and wait until something good from your past comes up, of course. That would be like a person getting on an escalator ~ a moving staircase ~ in a big department-store, and being carried up. But, if you try to do something here to improve your karma, that would be like getting on the escalator, and walking up it, too. If you walk up the esca-

tor, instead of just letting it carry you up, you will get to the top much faster. But I think many people don't know what an escalator is. Are there any escalators in Vietnam? Maybe in the big stores of Saigon, but certainly not in the countryside. But maybe you have seen them in the movies.

Doing good has many effects. It has the immediate effect of making us feel: "I have done something useful and beneficial to others". Everything that we do affects others, whether we can see it or not. So you should not think that what you do will be of no use. Many people pray for help, but not many people know how to pray. When they pray, they focus their attention on a person or a being or a god, and narrow down the transmission. Often, they look up to the sky while they pray; but what we here call 'up', to people on the other side of the Earth is 'down'. Actually, there is no up or down; if you could go into space on a space-ship, you would not know which way was up and which way was down. So, people send out their prayers to the sky above, thinking that that is the only direction they can get help or answers from. Also, people often ask in selfish ways; some people pray only when they are in danger or in need. I think that we are like radio-stations, sending out messages. A radio-station does not transmit only in a particular direction, but in all directions. Our prayers should be sent out in all directions, too, and we should be clear in our minds about what it is we want or need. There is no need to use many words; the shorter and more concentrated, the better. For example, if you really want to go to Australia, fix in your mind a picture of a map of Australia. But you cannot just go to Australia, because Australia is such a huge country; you could go to Sydney, Perth, Adelaide, Melbourne, or somewhere else, so you first decide which place you would like to go to, and see it on the map in your mind; see yourself going to the place you would like to go. If you would like to go to Perth, for example, see Perth on your map, and send out your message, strongly, in all directions: "I want to go to Perth", so wherever the Australian-delegation officers are, maybe they will catch your message somehow. If you are sending your message in that direction only, but the officers are not over there, it will not reach them. We must send out our messages in every direction, strong and clear. But this should be done only in special cases of need, like yours now, and not all the time for just whatever we want, like "I want a candy-bar" (or a hot-dog); not for things like that.

Also, we should not pray only for ourselves; remember that we share this Earth with many other people; if we pray for others around us, we also pray for ourselves at the same time. You know, Quan Am made a vow not to enter Nirvana until everyone else had gone first. We should not always think about ourselves; when we help others, we also help ourselves.

Are there any questions about Karma? Do you understand how you can change things? Some people say that, in this time, it is no longer possible to follow the Buddha's Way and reach the Goal. But I do not accept that, and I would say to people who think and say that: "Just because you have not reached the Goal does not mean to say that other people cannot reach it". It would be like a person who has never seen a ghost saying that there are no ghosts; he would not be qualified to say so. There are many people who have seen ghosts. Who would be qualified to talk about ghosts ~ the person who has seen, or the person who has not seen? It is silly to talk about things that we have no knowledge of people who are lazy and who do not want to make the effort to follow the Way repeat those stories; but a person who is not lazy says: "Well, I don't know. Maybe; let me try."

Now, the fruit that we eat: this has surely grown from seeds before it; we can deduce that. But will every seed in the fruit that we eat today grow and produce fruit in the future? Let's talk about beans ~ something very common. The beans that we eat came from seed, no? But when we eat these beans, surely they will not grow and produce more beans. We can look back from the present to the past, and say: "This fruit came from a seed", and be sure about that. But the seed that we have now, we cannot say for certain ~ 100% that it will grow and produce fruit. We can see from the present back to the past, but we cannot see from the present to the future.

Everything that happens is the result of many causes ~ just like your huts here are built of many poles, not just one. Everything has many causes. Usually, we can see only very few of the causes of anything, but we can be sure that there are many more. If we plant seeds today, we cannot be sure that they will grow. We can water them, and take care that birds don't eat them, or dogs scratch them up, but we cannot make them grow. Maybe they will grow, maybe not, because there are many other things necessary for them to grow. And the same with our actions: if there are the right conditions altogether for them to grow into results, then they will grow. Let us examine the action of killing: When we are walking along, sometimes we step on small insects, like ants, and they die, especially in the night, when we cannot see well. Do we kill them? No. Why? If we step on them, and they die, have we not killed them? Not necessarily. For the karma of killing to be complete, five factors must be present:

First: There must be a living being.

Second: It must be recognized to be a living being.

Third: There must be the intention to kill it.

Fourth: There must be the effort made to kill it.

Fifth: It must die as a result of that effort.

When all those five factors are complete, the karma of killing has been made. But if even one of them is absent, even though the being dies, killing has not been committed. However, maybe another type of karma has been made; that would depend mainly upon the intention in the mind of the doer.

In India, there is a religion known as Jainism. It is an old religion, and began about the same time as Buddhism. Jainism teaches that everything we do, intentionally or unintentionally, will come back to us. So, even today, you can see some Jains wearing face-masks, like doctors, so that they will not unintentionally breathe in any small insects. Some of them also carry a broom with them to sweep the way before they walk, and filter their water so that they won't drink in any small creatures.

But the Buddha's teachings about karma are not like this. Once, some monks went to visit the Buddha, but before they got to the place where He was, they saw a monk pacing slowly up and down in meditation, and they were surprised to see that, as he walked, he stepped on small insects like ants and beetles. They said: "Just look at this! Our first rule is not to kill anything. We must report this monk to the Buddha". So they found the Buddha, greeted Him respectfully, and after telling Him where they had come from, about their journey, and so on, they told Him about the monk. The Buddha then said: "But you do not know all the facts. That monk is blind, and cannot see where he is walking. His blindness is the result of something he did long ago in a former lifetime. But now, in this life, he has attained Enlightenment, and is an Arahant". An Arahant is without intention of any kind; he makes no more karma. He does not kill because he has no

intention to kill. This occasion gave the Buddha an opportunity to explain very clearly about Karma; He said: "It is intention that is Karma". So, without the intention to kill, there is no killing, even though there is death.

Do you have any more questions about this subject? It is an important subject. A Buddhist would not say that we are punished *for* our sins, but instead, that we are punished *by* our sins. There is a big difference here. No other questions about this? Any questions about anything else, then?

Some people have told me that they will be sad when I leave here tomorrow. I don't know why. You make me more important than I am. But after a few days, you will forget me, and that's okay; that's good; that's how it should be. My personality, my friendship, is very limited; don't become involved with that; it's not important at all. I'm not here to extend my friendship to you; I want to give you something more important than that. During my wanderings, I have met many kind people who have helped me, and I'm very grateful for that, and remember them fondly. But there were also some bad people who helped me; perhaps they didn't know that they were helping me, but I got something from them, and so am grateful to the bad people, too. Actually, bad people are often good teachers; they teach us what not to do. The Communists are good teachers: they teach us not to be like them. Can you learn? If you can observe the bad things they do, and learn not to do those things yourselves, then you can benefit from them; but if you do the same kind of things that they have done and do, then you are even worse than them! If our minds and eyes are open, then we can learn from anyone and anything. It doesn't matter who we learn from so long as we learn. If you are lost in a forest, and don't know the way out, you will ask anyone you meet there, "Please tell me the way out"; it doesn't matter who that person is, good or bad, young or old, male or female, educated or uneducated, as long as that person tells you the way out. So we should not be too much involved with personality. Our ability to speak is wonderful, but we do not remember all the people who helped us to learn our language, do we? Some, we do remember: our teachers, parents, brothers, sisters, friends, and so on, but there are many people who taught us some things who we do not remember. Well, it's not necessary to remember everyone who taught us something; what they taught us is more important. I came here to try to share something with you, and maybe to show you that there are different ways of looking at things. You should try to look at your situation in different ways, to see what you can make of it. It is like having a piece of cloth, let us say one square meter: from that meter of cloth, you cannot make a tent, you cannot make a long dress, or curtains for the whole house; but you do not throw it away as useless just because you cannot make such things from it, do you? You look at it to see what could be made from it. So, in this situation, see what you can make from it; Don't just sit around and wait for someone to come along and help you, but use your opportunities; there are many things that can be made from them.

Question: "Please explain more about Karma."

Karma is inside our minds. The Mind has no size or shape, or colour, or weight; it cannot be seen or measured, but that doesn't mean that it's not there. In recent years, in the West, there have been many experiments done with hypnosis. Hypnosis means helping people to relax so completely that there is no tension or strain, no resistance, no controlling of anything. In this state, people can be told to remember and re-live their past; they can be told: "Now you are ten years old, five years ...three years ...six months ...one month ...ten days ...What are you doing at that age?" They can be regressed to the mo-

ment of their birth, and further back. They can explain what it was like when they were inside their mother's womb. Some people can be sent back to the moment of conception. Some can even recall their previous life, or lives, under hypnosis, and can give information that can later be verified. Under hypnosis, some people are able to speak fluently in languages that they have never learned before ~ at least, not in their present life.

There was an American by the name of Edgar Cayce, who, for many years of his life, until he died in 1945, was able to put himself under hypnosis, and having just the name and address of a person, he could see that person, even if he/she were thousands of miles away, as if they were in the same room together. And if the person were sick, this man Cayce could diagnose the sickness and prescribe a cure for it, even though he was not a doctor and knew nothing about medicine in his normal state of mind, and even though qualified doctors had failed to diagnose and cure that sickness. There were many cases of him diagnosing and curing sicknesses in this manner.

There was the case of a young man who had been diagnosed by a doctor as insane, and had been ordered sent to a mental institution. But his parents had heard of Edgar Cayce, and wrote to him asking him to try to help their son. Under hypnosis, Cayce could see the young man, and said: "One of his molar teeth is pressing on a nerve to the brain, and is causing the problem. Remove the tooth, and it will be alright". When the offending tooth was removed, the man was alright, just as Cayce had said.

Now, not only could this man diagnose and prescribe cures for diseases that doctors had been unable to cure, but he could see people's past lives, too. Sometimes, people would write to him and ask him to look back into their past lives to see what caused their present problems. And one person who had asked him was a young woman who would have been beautiful if she had not been so fat. So he looked back into her past, and found the cause of her problem. "You used to be a very beautiful athlete in a former life", he told her, "but you were too proud of this, and used to make fun of others who were not as beautiful as you. Your cruel laughter now comes back to you in this form".

Another person who was a victim of her own laughter was a young woman who suffered from TB of the hip. Cayce looked back into her past, and saw that she used to like to attend the Games in ancient Rome, where people were thrown to the lions in the arena, and tortured in other cruel ways; people attended these Games then as people now go to watch football-games. This woman had gone to the Games to enjoy the savage shows, and had laughed in particular when a young slave-girl had her side torn open by a lion. The result of her mocking laughter was the disease of her hip. So, we must be very careful when we laugh, not to hurt others by our laughter. I have often seen children tormenting other children who were poor, ugly, or deformed, causing them more suffering thereby. That is a cause of future suffering for those tormentors, I feel. It is because we lack compassion that we laugh at others in such ways. We do not like others to laugh at us if/ when we are unfortunate, so we should never laugh at others. If we cannot help, we should not hinder. Our karma is really our life, our life is our karma; we reap what we have sown. Life is like a stream that flows on and on. Death is not the end, but only a transformation, a change of clothes, and the stream flows on until it reaches the Sea.

Question: "A person's physical body comes from the union of the male's sperm, and the female's egg. But what about the soul? Why does it come from?"

In Buddhism, we do not use the word 'soul' or 'spirit', and when we use the word 'heart' it does not mean the organ that pumps blood, but the emotional aspect of the mind as apart from the intellectual aspect; in reality, however, these two aspects are not separate, but complementary, like compassion and wisdom, and must be brought into balance.

A human being is composed of two main parts: physical and mental, body and mind. If we examine them closely, we will see that, like everything else, they change constantly; we cannot find anything about 'us' that remains the same from moment-to-moment, and that does not change. Hence, Buddhism does not talk about 'soul', since that word is generally used to mean something immortal and unchanging, and Buddhism denies that there is anything of this nature in our physical-mental make-up. It teaches, instead, that there is a process of life ~ a process of evolution, if you like ~ by which we pass through a series of many lives, until finally, we attain Enlightenment, and are no more subject to Birth and Death. It should be stressed, however, that Enlightenment is not something of the ego, the self, the personality, but rather, liberation from such. However, at our stage of evolution, Enlightenment is not something that we can profitably talk about, and the beginning of life is an even less-profitable subject. Scientists are continually coming up with new hypotheses about the origin of life, the origin of the Universe. But the beginning of things is not to be imagined, let alone discovered and proved, because there is always something before everything, stretching back, like an endless chain, into Infinity. It is a waste of time trying to find out about the beginning, because our time, our life, is rapidly running out; we are not going to live forever. And if we knew about the past, who we were in our past lives, how life began, and so on, it would not change the present situation. It might satisfy our curiosity a little, but it would not remove us from where we are now. The present is the most important time of all, because it is the only time we have. Use it wisely, therefore.