Shunyata

Cutting through our conceptualized versions of the world with the sword of prajna, we discover shunyata—nothingness, emptiness, voidness, the absence of duality and conceptualization. The best known of the Buddha's teachings on this subject are presented in the *Prajnaparamita-hridaya,* also called the *Heart Sutra;* but interestingly in this sutra the Buddha hardly speaks a word at all. At the end of the discourse he merely says, "Well said, well said," and smiles. He created a situation in which the teaching of shunyata was set forth by others, rather than himself being the actual spokesman. He did not impose his communication but created the situation in which teaching could occur, in which his disciples were inspired to discover and experience shunyata. There are twelve styles of presenting the dharma and this is one of them.

This sutra tells of Avalokiteshvara, the bodhisattva who represents compassion and skillful means, and Shariputra, the great arhat who represents prajna, knowledge. There are certain differences between the Tibetan and Japanese translations and the Sanskrit original, but all versions make the point that Avalokiteshvara was compelled to awaken to shunyata by the overwhelming force of prajna. Then Avalokiteshvara spoke with Shariputra, who represents the scientific-minded person

or precise knowledge. The teachings of the Buddha were put under Shariputra's microscope, which is to say that these teachings were not accepted on blind faith but were examined, practiced, tried and proved.

Avalokiteshvara said: "Oh Shariputra, form is empty, emptiness is form; form is no other than emptiness, emptiness is no other than form." We need not go into the details of their discourse, but we can examine this statement about form and emptiness, which is the main point of the sutra. And so we should be very clear and precise about the meaning of the term "form."

Form is that which *is* before we project our concepts onto it. It is the original state of "what is here," the colorful, vivid, impressive, dramatic, aesthetic qualities that exist in every situation. Form could be a maple leaf falling from a tree and landing on a mountain river; it could be full moonlight, a gutter in the street or a garbage pile. These things are "what is," and they are all in one sense the same: they are all forms, they are all objects, they are just what is. Evaluations regarding them are only created later in our minds. If we really look at these things as they are, they are just forms.

So form is empty. But empty of what? Form is empty of our preconceptions, empty of our judgments. If we do not evaluate and categorize the maple leaf falling and landing on the stream as opposed to the garbage heap in New York, then they are *there*, what *is*. They are empty of preconception. They are precisely what they are, of course! Garbage is garbage, a maple leaf is a maple leaf, "what is" is "what is." Form is empty if we see it in the absence of our own personal interpretations of it.

But emptiness is also form. That is a very outrageous remark. We thought we had managed to sort everything out, we

thought we had managed to see that everything is the "same" if we take out our preconceptions. That made a beautiful picture: everything bad and everything good that we see are both good. Fine. Very smooth. But the next point is that emptiness is also form, so we have to re-examine. The emptiness of the maple leaf is also form; it is not really empty. The emptiness of the garbage heap is also form. To try to see these things as empty is also to clothe them in concept. Form comes back. It was too easy, taking away all concept, to conclude that everything simply is what is. That could be an escape, another way of comforting ourselves. We have to actually *feel* things as they are, the qualities of the garbage heap*ness* and the qualities of the maple leaf*ness*, the *isness* of things. We have to feel them properly, not just trying to put a veil of emptiness over them. That does not help at all. We have to see the "isness" of what is there, the raw and rugged qualities of things precisely as they are. This is a very accurate way of seeing the world. So first we wipe away all our heavy preconceptions, and then we even wipe away the subtleties of such words as "empty," leaving us nowhere, completely with what is.

Finally we come to the conclusion that form is just form and emptiness is just emptiness, which has been described in the sutra as seeing that form is no other than emptiness, emptiness is no other than form; they are indivisible. We see that looking for beauty or philosophical meaning to life is merely a way of justifying ourselves, saying that things are not so bad as we think. Things *are* as bad as we think! Form is form, emptiness is emptiness, things are just what they are and we do not have to try to see them in the light of some sort of profundity. Finally we come down to earth, we see things as they are. This does not mean having an inspired mystical vision with archangels, cherubs and sweet

music playing. But things are seen as they *are*, in their *own* qualities. So shunyata in this case is the complete absence of concepts or filters of any kind, the absence even of the "form is empty" and the "emptiness is form" conceptualization. It is a question of seeing the world in a direct way without desiring "higher" consciousness or significance or profundity. It is just directly perceiving things literally, as they are in their own right.

We might ask how we could apply this teaching to everyday life. There is a story that when the Buddha gave his first discourse on shunyata, some of the arhats had heart attacks and died from the impact of the teaching. In sitting meditation these arhats had experienced absorption in space, but they were still dwelling upon space. Inasmuch as they were still dwelling upon something, there was still an experience and an experiencer. The shunyata principle involves not dwelling upon anything, not distinguishing between this and that, being suspended nowhere.

If we see things as they are, then we do not have to interpret or analyze them further; we do not need to try to understand things by imposing spiritual experience or philosophical ideas upon them. As a famous Zen master said: "When I eat, I eat; when I sleep, I sleep." Just do what you do, completely, fully. To do so is to be a *rishi*, an honest, truthful person, a straightforward person who never distinguishes between this and that. He does things literally, directly, as they are. He eats whenever he wants to eat; he sleeps whenever he wants to sleep. Sometimes the Buddha is described as the *Maharishi*, the Great Rishi who was not trying to be truthful but simply was true in his open state.

The interpretation of shunyata which we have been discussing is the view of the *Madhyamika* or "Middle Way"

philosophical school founded by Nagarjuna. It is a description of an experiential reality which can never be accurately described because words simply are not the experience. Words or concepts only *point* to partial aspects of experience. In fact, it is dubious that one can even speak of "experiencing" reality, since this would imply a separation between the experiencer and the experience. And finally, it is questionable whether one can even speak of "reality" because this would imply the existence of some objective knower outside and separate from it, as though reality were a nameable thing with set limits and boundaries. Thus the Madhyamika school simply speaks of the tathata, "as it is." Nagarjuna much preferred to approach truth by taking the arguments of other philosophical schools on their own terms and logically reducing them *ad absurdum*, rather than by himself offering any definitions of reality.

There are several other major philosophical approaches to the problems of truth and reality which preceded and influenced the development of the Madhyamika school. These lines of thought find their expression not only in the earlier Buddhist philosophical schools but also in the approaches of theistic Hinduism, Vedantism, Islam, Christianity, and most other religious and philosophical traditions. From the point of view of the Madhyamika school, these other approaches can be grouped together into three categories: the eternalists, the nihilists, and the atomists. The Madhyamikas viewed the first two of these approaches as being false, and the third as being only partially true.

The first and most obvious of these three "misconceptions of the nature of reality" is eternalism, an approach which is often that of the more naive versions of theism. Eternalistic doctrines view phenomena as containing some sort of eternal

essence. Things are born and die, yet they contain an essence which does not perish. The quality of eternal existence must adhere to some *thing*, so the holders of this doctrine usually subscribe to belief in God, a soul, an atman, an ineffable self. Thus the believer asserts that something does exist as solid, ongoing, and eternal. It is reassuring to have something solid to hang onto, to dwell upon, a fixed way of understanding the world and one's relationship to it.

However, eventually the believer in eternalistic doctrines may become disillusioned with a God he has never met, a soul or essence he cannot find. Which brings us to the next and somewhat more sophisticated misconception of reality: nihilism. This view holds that everything is generated out of nothingness, mystery. Sometimes this approach appears as both theistic and atheistic assertions that the Godhead is unknowable. The sun shines, throws light upon the earth, helps life to grow, provides heat and light. But we can find no origin to life; there is no logical starting point from which the universe began. Life and the world are merely the dance of *maya*, illusion. Things are simply generated spontaneously out of nowhere. So nothingness seems important in this approach: an unknowable reality somehow beyond apparent phenomena. The universe takes place mysteriously; there is no real explanation at all. Possibly a nihilist would say that the human mind cannot comprehend such mystery. Thus, in this view of reality, mystery is treated as a *thing*. The idea that there is no answer is relied upon and dwelt upon as the answer.

The nihilistic approach evokes the psychological attitude of fatalism. You understand logically that if you do something, things happen in reaction to it. You see a continuity of cause and effect, a chain reaction over which you have no con-

trol. This chain reactive process springs from the mystery of "nothingness." Therefore, if you murder someone, it was your karma to murder and was inevitable, fore-ordained. For that matter if you do a good deed, it has nothing to do with whether or not you are awake. Everything springs from this mysterious "nothingness" which is the nihilistic approach to reality. It is a very naive view: one leaves everything to mystery. Whenever we are not quite certain of things which are beyond the scope of our conceptualized ideas, then we begin to panic. We are afraid of our own uncertainty and we attempt to fill the gap with something else. The something else is usually a philosophical belief—in this case, the belief in mystery. We very eagerly, very hungrily search for nothingness, surveying every dark corner in our attempts to find it. But we find only the crumbs. We find nothing more than that. It is very mysterious. As long as we continue to look for a conceptual answer there will always be areas of mystery, which mystery is itself another concept.

Whether we are eternalists or nihilists or atomists, we constantly assume that there is a "mystery," something which we do not know: the meaning of life, the origin of the universe, the key to happiness. We struggle after this mystery, trying to become a person who knows or possesses it, naming it "God," the "soul," "atman," "Brahman," "shunyata," and so on. Certainly this is not the Madhyamika approach to reality, though the early Hinayana schools of Buddhism to some extent fell into this trap, which is why their approach is considered only a partial truth.

The Hinayana approach to reality sees impermanence as the great mystery: that which is born must change and die. However, one cannot see impermanence itself but only its manifestation in form. Thus the Hinayanists describe the uni-

verse in terms of atoms existing in space and moments existing in time. As such, they are atomistic pluralists. The Hinayana equivalent of shunyata is the understanding of the transitory and insubstantial nature of form, so Hinayana meditation practice is two-fold: contemplation of the many aspects of impermanence—the processes of birth, growth, decay, and death, and their elaborations; and mindfulness practice which sees the impermanence of mental events. The arhat views mental events and material objects and begins to see them as momentary and atomistic happenings. Thus he discovers that there is no permanent substance or solid thing as such. This approach errs in conceptualizing the existence of entities relative to each other, the existence of "this" relative to "that."

We can see the three elements of eternalism, nihilism, and atomistic pluralism in different combinations in almost all the major philosophies and religions of the world. From the Madhyamika point of view, these three misconceptions of reality are virtually inescapable as long as one searches for an answer to an assumed question, as long as one seeks to probe the so-called "mystery" of life. Belief in anything is simply a way of labeling the mystery. Yogachara, a Mahayana philosophical school, attempted to eliminate this mystery by finding a union of mystery and the phenomenal world.

The main thrust of the Yogachara school is epistemological. For this school the mystery is intelligence, that which knows. The Yogacharyans solved the mystery by positing the indivisible union of intelligence and phenomena. Thus there is no *individual* knower; rather everything is "self-known." There is only "one mind," which the Yogacharyans called "self-luminous cognition," and both thoughts and emotions and people and trees are aspects of it. Thus this school is also

referred to in the traditional literature as the *citta-matra* or "mind-only" school.

The Yogachara school was the first school of Buddhist thought to transcend the division between the knower and the known. Thus its adherents explain confusion and suffering as springing from the mistaken belief in an individual knower. If a person believes that he knows the world, then the one mind appears to be split, though actually its clear surface is only muddied. The confused person feels that he has thoughts about and reactions to external phenomena and so is caught in a constant action and reaction situation. The enlightened person realizes that thoughts and emotions on the one hand, and the so-called external world on the other, are *both* the "play of the mind." Thus the enlightened person is not caught in the dualism of subject and object, internal and external, knower and known, I and other. Everything is *self*-known.

However, Nagarjuna contested the Yogacharin "mind-only" proposition and, in fact, questioned the very existence of "mind" altogether. He studied the twelve volumes of the *Prajnaparamita* scriptures, which came out of the second turning of the Wheel of Doctrine by the Buddha, the teaching of the middle portion of his life. Nagarjuna's conclusions are summed up in the principle of "non-dwelling," the main principle of the Madhyamika school. He said that any philosophical view could be refuted, that one must not dwell upon any answer or description of reality, whether extreme or moderate, including the notion of "one mind." Even to say that non-dwelling is the answer is delusory, for one must not dwell upon non-dwelling. Nagarjuna's way was one of non-philosophy, which was not simply another philosophy at all. He said, "The wise should not dwell in the middle either."

Madhyamika philosophy is a critical view of the Yogacharin theory that everything is an aspect of mind. The Madhyamika argument runs: "In order to say that mind exists or that everything is the play of the one mind, there must be someone watching mind, the knower of mind who vouches for its existence." Thus the whole of Yogachara is necessarily a theory on the part of this watcher. But according to the Yogacharyans' own philosophy of self-luminous cognition, subjective thoughts *about* an object are delusive, there being no subject or object but only the one mind of which the watcher is a part. Therefore, it is impossible to state that the one mind exists. Like the physical eye, self-luminous cognition cannot see itself, just as a razor cannot cut itself. By the Yogacharyans' own admission, there is no one to know that the one mind exists.

Then what can we say about mind or reality? Since there is no one to perceive a mind or reality, the notion of existence in terms of "things" and "form" is delusory; there is no reality, no perceiver of reality, and no thoughts derived from perception of reality. Once we have taken away this preconception of the existence of mind and reality, then situations emerge clearly, as they are. There is no one to watch, no one to know anything. Reality just *is*, and this is what is meant by the term "shunyata." Through this insight the watcher which separates us from the world is removed.

How then does belief in an "I" and the whole neurotic process begin? Roughly, according to the Madhyamikas, whenever a perception of form occurs, there is an immediate reaction of fascination and uncertainty on the part of an implied perceiver of the form. This reaction is almost instantaneous. It takes only a fraction of a fraction of a second. And as soon as we have established recognition of what the thing is, our next response is to give it a name. With the name of course

comes concept. We tend to conceptualize the object, which means that at this point we are no longer able to perceive things as they actually are. We have created a kind of padding, a filter or veil between ourselves and the object. This is what prevents the maintenance of continual awareness both during and after meditation practice. This veil removes us from panoramic awareness and the presence of the meditative state, because again and again we are unable to see things as they are. We feel compelled to name, to translate, to think discursively, and this activity takes us further away from direct and accurate perception. So shunyata is not merely awareness of what we are and how we are in relation to such and such an object, but rather it is clarity which transcends conceptual padding and unnecessary confusions. One is no longer fascinated by the object nor involved as a subject. It is freedom from *this* and *that*. What remains is open space, the absence of the this-and-that dichotomy. This is what is meant by the Middle Way or Madhyamika.

The experience of shunyata cannot be developed without first having worked through the narrow path of discipline and technique. Technique is necessary to start with, but it is also necessary at some stage for the technique to fall away. From the ultimate point of view the whole process of learning and practice is quite unnecessary. We could perceive the absence of ego at a single glance. But we would not accept such a simple truth. In other words, we have to learn in order to unlearn. The whole process is that of undoing the ego. We start by learning to deal with neurotic thoughts and emotions. Then false concepts are removed through the understanding of emptiness, of openness. This is the experience of shunyata. Shunyata in Sanskrit means literally "void" or "emptiness," that is to say, "space," the absence of all conceptualized at-

titudes. Thus Nagarjuna says in his *Commentary on Madhyamika:* "Just as the sun dispels darkness, the perfect sage has conquered the false habits of mind. He does not see the mind or thought derived from the mind."

The *Heart Sutra* ends with "the great spell" or mantra. It says in the Tibetan version: "Therefore the mantra of transcendent knowledge, the mantra of deep insight, the unsurpassed mantra, the unequalled mantra, the mantra which calms all suffering, should be known as truth, for there is no deception." The potency of this mantra comes not from some imagined mystical or magical power of the words but from their meaning. It is interesting that after discussing shunyata —form is empty, emptiness is form, form is no other than emptiness, emptiness is identical with form and so on—the sutra goes on to discuss mantra. At the beginning it speaks in terms of the meditative state, and finally it speaks of mantra or words. This is because in the beginning we must develop a confidence in our understanding, clearing out all preconceptions; nihilism, eternalism, all beliefs have to be cut through, transcended. And when a person is completely exposed, fully unclothed, fully unmasked, completely naked, completely opened—at that very moment he sees the power of the word. When the basic, absolute, ultimate hypocrisy has been unmasked, then one really begins to see the jewel shining in its brightness: the energetic, living quality of openness, the living quality of surrender, the living quality of renunciation.

Renunciation in this instance is not just throwing away but, having thrown everything away, we begin to feel the living quality of peace. And this particular peace is not feeble peace, feeble openness, but it has a strong character, an invincible quality, an unshakeable quality, because it admits no gaps of hypocrisy. It is complete peace in all directions, so that not

even a speck of a dark corner exists for doubt and hyprocrisy. Complete openness is complete victory because we do not fear, we do not try to defend ourselves at all. Therefore this is a great mantra. One would have thought that instead of saying, *Om gate gate paragate parasamgate bodhi svaha*, this mantra would say something about shunyata—*Om shunyata maha-shunyata*—or something of the sort. Instead it says, *Gate gate*—"gone, gone, gone beyond, completely gone." This is much stronger than saying "shunyata," because the word "shunyata" might imply a philosophical interpretation. Instead of formulating something philosophical, this mantra exposes that which lies beyond philosophy. Therefore it is *gate gate*—"gone, given up, got rid of, opened." The first *gate* is "rid of the veil of conflicting emotions." The second *gate* represents the veil of primitive beliefs about reality. That is, the first *gate* represents the idea that "form is empty," and the second *gate* refers to "emptiness is form." Then the next word of the mantra is *paragate*— "gone beyond, completely exposed." Now form is form—*paragate*—and it is not only that form is form but emptiness is emptiness, *parasamgate*—"completely gone beyond." *Bodhi. Bodhi* here means "completely awake." The meaning is "given up, completely unmasked, naked, completely open." *Svaha* is a traditional ending for mantras which means, "Sobeit." "Gone, gone, gone beyond, completely exposed, awake, sobeit."

Q: How does desire lead to birth?

A: Each time there is a desire there is another birth. You plant wantingness, wanting to do something, wanting to grasp something. Then that desire to grasp also invites something further. Birth here means the birth of further confusion, further dissatisfaction, further wanting. For example, if you

have a great desire for money and you manage to get a lot of it, then you also want to buy something with that money. One thing leads to the next, a chain reaction, so that desire becomes a kind of network. You want something, want to draw something into you, continually.

The experience of shunyata, seeing precisely and clearly what is, somehow cuts through this network, this spider's web, because the spider's web is woven in the space of desire, the space of wanting. And when the space of shunyata replaces it, so to speak, the whole conceptualized formulation of desire is completely eliminated, as though you had arrived on another planet with different air, or a place without oxygen at all. So shunyata provides a new atmosphere, a new environment, which will not support clinging or grasping. Therefore the experience of shunyata also makes impossible the planting of the seed of karma, which is why it is said that shunyata is that which gives birth to all the buddhas, all the awakened ones. "Awakened" means not being involved in the chain reactions and complications of the karmic process.

Q: Why is it that so many of us have such a strong tendency to not see things as they really are?
A: I think largely because we are afraid that we will see it.

Q: Why are we afraid of seeing it?
A: We want an umbilical cord attached to the ego through which we can feed all the time.

Q: Can this understanding of "emptiness is form" be attained through the practice of meditation techniques or must it come to us spontaneously?
A: The perception of shunyata is not achieved through the

practice of mental gymnastics; it is a matter of actually *seeing* it. It could be perceived in sitting meditation or it could be seen in life situations. There is no set pattern to producing it. In the ease of Naropa, the great Indian yogi, he perceived shunyata when his master took off his sandal and slapped him on the cheek. That very moment he saw it. It depends upon the individual situation.

Q: Then it is not something you go looking for?
A: If one is really keen, really devoted to finding it, completely devoted to understanding it, then one has to give up looking for it.

Q: I have some difficulty reconciling the concept of shunyata with what is going on right now.
A: When you have a shunyata experience, it does not mean that you cease to perceive, cease to live on Earth. You still live on the Earth, but you see more precisely what is here. We believe that we know things as they are. But we only see our version which is not quite complete. There is much more to learn about the true subtleties of life. The things we see are a very crude version of what is. Having an experience of shunyata does not mean that the whole world completely dissolves into space, but that you begin to notice the space so that the world is somewhat less crowded. For example, if we are going to communicate to someone, we might prepare ourselves to say such and such to calm him down or explain things to him. But then he comes out with so many complications of his own, he churns out so much himself, that before you know where you are, you are completely confused by him. You share his confusion rather than having the clarity you prepared at the beginning. You have been completely absorbed

into his confusion. So shunyata means seeing through confusion. You keep precision and clarity all the time.

Q: And with this experience, you are still alive in this world?
A: Yes, of course! You see, enlightenment does not mean dying. Otherwise, enlightenment would be a kind of suicide, which is ridiculous. That is the nihilistic approach, attempting to escape from the world.

Q: Is an enlightened person omniscient?
A: I am afraid this is a mistaken conclusion drawn from the Yogacharin one mind theory, a theory which has also appeared in other religious and philosophical traditions. The idea is that an enlightened person has become the one mind and so knows everything that ever was, is or could be. You always get this kind of wild speculation when people involve themselves with "mystery," the unknowable. But I am afraid that there really is no such thing as the one mind.

Q: How is one to begin to see what is?
A: By not beginning, by giving up the idea of a beginning. If you try to affirm a particular territory—my experience—then you are not going to see shunyata. You have to give up the idea of territory altogether. Which can be done, it is not impossible. It is not just philosophical speculation. One can give up the idea of territory, one *can* not begin.

Q: Is it part of not beginning to try for so long that one gives up from exhaustion? Can one give up before one has tried? Is there any shortcut? Must the monkey go through the

whole process of banging himself against the walls and hallucinating?

A: I think we must. Sudden enlightenment comes only with exhaustion. Its suddenness does not necessarily mean that there is a shortcut. In some cases, people might experience a sudden flash of enlightenment, but if they do not work their way through, their habitual thought patterns will resume and their minds will become overcrowded again. One must make the journey because, as you said, at the point where you begin to be disappointed you get it.

Q: This seems to lead back to the Hinayana path of discipline. Is that correct?

A: Yes, meditation is hard work, manual work, so to speak.

Q: Having begun, it seems that there is something to do.

A: There is something to do, but at the same time whatever you are doing is only related to the moment rather than being related to achieving some goal in the future, which brings us back to the practice of meditation. Meditation is not a matter of beginning to set foot on the path; it is realizing that you are already on the path—fully being in the nowness of this very moment—now, now, now. You do not actually begin because you have never really left the path.

Q: You described enlightened people as being free from the karmic chain. I would like to know what you meant by that, because it seems to me that they create a new karmic chain.

A: The word "karma" means "creation" or "action"—chain reaction. For example, by looking toward the future we plant a seed in the present. In the case of enlightened

people, they do not plan for the future because they have no desire to provide security for themselves. They do not need to know the pattern of the future anymore. They have conquered the preconception of "future." They are fully in the now. The now has the potential of the future in it, as well as that of the past. Enlightened people have completely mastered the restless and paranoid activities of mind. They are completely, fully in the moment; therefore they are free from sowing further seeds of karma. When the future comes they do not see it as a result of their good deeds in the past; they see it as present all the time. So they do not create any further chain reactions.

Q: Is the "awake quality" different from just being in the now?

A: Yes. Enlightenment is being *awake* in the nowness. For instance, animals live in the present and, for that matter, an infant child lives in the present; but that is quite different from being awake or enlightened.

Q: I do not quite understand what you mean by animals and babies living in the present. What is the difference between living in the present in that form and being an enlightened person?

A: I think it is a question of the difference between dwelling upon something and really being in the nowness in terms of "awake." In the case of an infant or animal, it is being in the nowness but it is dwelling upon the nowness. They get some kind of feedback from it by dwelling upon it, although they may not notice it consciously. In the case of an enlightened being, he is not dwelling upon the idea—"I am an enlightened being"—because he has completely transcended the idea

of "I am." He is just fully being. The subject-object division has been completely transcended.

Q: If the enlightened being is without ego and feels the sorrows and the sadness of those around him but does not feel his own necessarily, then would you call his willingness to help them get over their difficulties "desire"?
A: I don't think so. Desire comes in when you want to see someone happy. When that person is happy, then you feel happy because the activities you have engaged in to make him happy are, in a sense, done for yourself rather than for the other person. *You* would like to see him happy. An enlightened being has no such attitude. Whenever someone requires his help, he just gives it; there is no self-gratification or self-congratulation involved.

Q: Why did you name your center here Karma Dzong?
A: *Karma* means "action" as well as "Buddha activity," and *Dzong* is the Tibetan word for "fortress." Situations just present themselves rather than being deliberately premeditated. They are perpetually developing, happening quite spontaneously. Also there seems to be a tremendous amount of energy at the center, which also could be said of karma. It is energy which is not being misled by anyone, energy which is in the fortress. What is happening definitely had to happen. It takes the shape of spontaneous karmic relationships rather than of missionary work or the conversion of people into Buddhists.

Q: How would you relate samadhi and nirvana to the concept of shunyata?
A: There is a problem here with words. It is not a matter

of differences; it is a matter of different emphases. Samadhi is complete involvement and nirvana is freedom and both are connected with shunyata. When we experience shunyata, we are completely involved, without the subject-object division of duality. We are also free from confusion.