Aspects of The Bodhisattva Ideal
(Mitrata edit)

Introduction

In this series of lectures, Sangharakshita explores the path as conceived by, and practised in, Mahāyāna Buddhism. The primary study material here – i.e. the core material that is essential to read before your group meetings – is the series of lectures by Sangharakshita entitled *The Bodhisattva Ideal*, comprising the following lectures

1. The Origin and Development of the Bodhisattva Ideal
2. The Awakening of the Bodhi Heart
3. The Bodhisattva Vow
4. Altruism and Individualism in the Spiritual Life
5. 'Masculinity' and 'Femininity' in the Spiritual Life
6. On the Threshold of Enlightenment
7. The Bodhisattva Hierarchy
8. The Buddha and Bodhisattva: Eternity and Time

These lectures were originally given by Sangharakshita in 1969. We would strongly recommend listening to the audio lectures for this module – Sangharakshita's humour, energy and inspiration come across through listening to him in a way that you just can't get from the text. The are available here:

https://www.freebuddhistaudio.com/series/details?ser=X09

The texts in this document are slightly edited versions of the talks, the editing being personally done by Sangharakshita for a series of booklets called *Mitrata*, produced between 1985 and 1988.

There is also a book – *The Bodhisattva Ideal* (part of *The Complete Works of Sangharakshita Volume 4: The Bodhisattva Ideal*, Windhorse Publications) – which contains these lectures and lots more material inserted into them from seminars by Sangharakshita. For the purposes of the study material here, we have stayed with the original Mitrata texts, though note that the book is well worth reading too.

Though they are not required reading for the retreat, the original Mitratas, including their extra seminar materials, are available here if you want to have a look:

https://thebuddhistcentre.com/mitra-support/bodhisattva-ideal-mitratas

1. The Origin and Development of the Bodhisattva Ideal

Free Buddhist Audio link for audio talk: https://www.freebuddhistaudio.com/audio/details?num=65

Tonight, it falls to us to consider 'The Origin and Development of the Bodhisattva Ideal'. But before we go on to that principal topic of the evening, just a few words about the series as a whole. Most of you, I think, will have seen our latest Newsletter. And no doubt you will have noticed the illustration on the cover of that Newsletter. It shows a hand holding just a few leaves. It is evidently the Buddha's hand — there's a robe hanging down. This illustration illustrates the Buddha's parable of the *siṁsapā* leaves.

It is said that the Buddha was wandering, as often was his custom, in the forest — presumably to get away from the heat of the day — with a few of his disciples. The Buddha often taught in a very simple, direct way — not always with long and elaborate discourses. On this occasion, it is said, he just bent down and scooped up a handful of leaves. Then he asked his disciples, "Tell me, what do you think: these leaves which I hold in my hand, as compared with all the leaves of the forest, are they few or are they many?" The disciples of course replied, "Well, in comparison with all the leaves in the forest the few leaves which you hold in your hand are as nothing. They are just a handful." So, the Buddha said, "So it is with all the truths which I have realized compared with what I have been able to reveal to you." So, this is something upon which we need often to ponder. Even though the scriptures, in which we find the Buddha's teaching, are voluminous they represent just a fraction of the Buddha's infinite knowledge and understanding.

So, the Dharma, the teaching, Buddhism, is, in any case to begin with, a handful of leaves. But in this series, we are offering, as it were, just a few leaves from that handful itself, not even the whole handful. The Bodhisattva Ideal is a very, very vast subject. It is conterminous practically with the whole of Buddhism. One cannot possibly hope to exhaust this subject, even in the course of eight lectures. Therefore, the series as a whole is entitled simply *'Aspects' of the Bodhisattva Ideal*. Not only will the series present certain selected aspects, but it will not deal with the subject systematically. It will try to deal with it much more directly, in terms of the spiritual life and experience itself, with a minimum of historical and doctrinal detail.

So much by way of preface. Now we come to tonight's subject proper, which is, as I've said, 'The Origin and Development of the Bodhisattva Ideal'. When one begins to speak on this subject of the Bodhisattva Ideal, though one might have studied it for many years, though one might have spoken upon it many times, all the same, one hardly knows where to begin. Even in the handful there are so many leaves one hardly knows which one to take up first. But these lectures are meant for beginners as well as for more advanced students, so perhaps it is best this evening to begin right at the beginning, with the word 'bodhisattva' itself.

It's a Sanskrit word, and it may well be unfamiliar to at least some of you. The word bodhisattva consists of two parts: *bodhi* and *sattva*. *Bodhi* means 'Knowledge', it means 'Awakening' — not knowledge in the ordinary sense, not awakening in the ordinary sense. It means knowledge in the sense of supreme knowledge; spiritual knowledge; knowledge of Reality. It means awakening in the same sense: awakening to Reality; awakening to the ultimate truth of things; penetrating to the heart of existence; seeing Reality; seeing Truth face to face and becoming one with it. *Bodhi* is, of course, in English translations usually rendered as 'Enlightenment'. That's good enough, provisionally speaking, provided, of course, we don't understand Enlightenment in the eighteenth-century rationalistic sense; provided we understand it in its full spiritual, even transcendental sense. This Enlightenment, this bodhi, is the Ultimate Goal of the Buddhist life. This is what we are really concerned with: Enlightenment, Awakening, supreme knowledge.

Now *sattva*, the second part of the word, means simply 'a living being' (not necessarily a human being, it can mean any living being, even an animal, even an insect). So, bodhisattva means an 'Enlightenment being' (a 'being of Awakening', if you like). Therefore, the term means a being whose whole life is dedicated to the attainment of Enlightenment.

So, we may say provisionally that the Bodhisattva is the ideal Buddhist. The Buddhist, ideally, is dedicated to following the teaching of the Buddha, and by following that teaching to realize the same spiritual experience as the Buddha himself. Therefore, we may say that the Bodhisattva, all of whose energies are devoted to the attainment of Enlightenment, is the ideal Buddhist. We may also say, therefore, that the Bodhisattva Ideal is the Buddhist Ideal itself; the Bodhisattva Ideal is the ideal of the Higher Evolution, of one's self-transformation from unenlightened to Enlightened humanity. The Bodhisattva Ideal, in a word, is the ideal of the attainment of Buddhahood.

This is the literal meaning. I've gone into it a little more carefully and closely than usual, for the benefit of those who may not have encountered this word — or this ideal — before. This is the literal meaning of the word bodhisattva. It is what logicians call the 'denotation' of the term: the plain, simple, straightforward, verbal meaning. But there is also what is known as the 'connotation'. The connotation means various associated shades of meaning which are not given directly in the literal meaning of the term itself. The connotation of the term bodhisattva is expressed by an important rider to the main definition. A Bodhisattva is described as one who is dedicated to the attainment of Enlightenment not for his own sake only, but for the benefit of all living beings. This is the full, doctrinal, traditional definition of the term bodhisattva. The Bodhisattva is not just one who is striving for Enlightenment. He is not striving for it just for his own benefit, just for his own individual emancipation, his own private Nirvana, but so that he may benefit, so that he may lead to the same state, all living beings whatsoever. This is the rider that is added.

So, what is the significance of this rider? Why was it added? Why was it not merely said that the Bodhisattva aims at the attainment of Enlightenment? Surely, that was enough. Why add this qualification: 'for the benefit of all living beings?' Why this implied distinction, as it were, between the attainment of Enlightenment for one's own sake, and the attainment of Enlightenment for the sake of others? To understand this matter we have to go back to the origins of Buddhism, we have to get down to certain

fundamentals of human nature itself.

If we think about the matter, we see that there's a quite important distinction between what a person is and does and what he or she says (or what he or she writes). The two — the being or doing on the one hand, and the saying or the writing on the other — are very often incommensurate. We may find, for example, that a certain person, say a psychoanalyst, may write about love, write a whole book about love, very, very beautifully indeed. They'll explain to you all about it: what love is, how it develops, how it grows, how one is to maintain the state of love, how one goes against it, what one is to do when things go wrong, and so on and so forth. But, very often, if one examines the life of that psychoanalyst, one will find that, though they seem to know all about love, though they're able to write about it very fluently, their own life fails to be, in any way, an embodiment of love. So, there is an incommensurability here. Love is manifested yes, in words (in the written word), but not in the life.

On the other hand, one may have the opposite case. One may have the case of a person who really does embody love in his or her life. So even other people, meeting quite casually with this person, feel that this person is kind, is affectionate, that this person radiates goodwill (as the Buddhist expression is). But the person may not have a very adequate, verbal expression of that. They may not be able to talk about it, may not be able to analyze it, may not even be able to put it into words at all — even to those to whom they are quite close. So this is the sort of situation that we find: as between being and doing on the one hand and verbal expression on the other there is very often a sort of chasm — the one does not always correspond with the other.

Now, let us apply this to the Buddha himself. Let us apply it, in other words, on the very highest level. The Buddha by very definition was, we might even say is, a Fully Enlightened being. Now, we hear these words, we even pronounce these words, but it's very, very difficult for us even to imagine what an Enlightened must be like. We read the scriptures, and we read books about Buddhism. We read that a Buddha knows Reality, he's compassionate, he's wise, and so on and so forth. But most of the time, usually, these are just words. We don't really make an effort of imagination to try to realize what these words really mean, what a Fully Enlightened being really is. Even if we encountered an Enlightened being it is very doubtful whether we would be able to recognize that that person was an Enlightened being. Now, in the case of an Enlightened being his Enlightenment (his inner experience, his knowledge of Reality) expresses itself primarily in terms of what he is and what he does. (This is the primary expression: in terms of being.) It expresses itself only secondarily in terms of what he says.

In the case of the historical Buddha, the Buddha, Gautama the Buddha, he didn't actually write anything, he didn't get even as far as that. There was verbal expression in oral communication, but nothing actually written. It is interesting, incidentally, to observe that there is no evidence that the Buddha could even read or write. This is a bit significant. If we think about it should give us considerable food for thought, that an Enlightened being like the Buddha, in all probability, could not read, could not write, had never read a book, never read a newspaper, hadn't even read the *Dhammapada*, hadn't even signed his name to a document, was quite innocent of all these things. The Buddha just spoke; the Buddha just taught orally. However,

though he might speak quite a lot, though he might even speak about Enlightenment itself, nothing that he said could fully or adequately express what he was. What the Buddha was infinitely exceeded what he said. This is, of course, evident from the parable of the *siṁsapā* leaves, when the Buddha told the monks that what he had realized was infinitely greater than what he had imparted in verbal communication to the disciples.

This incommensurability between what the Buddha was and what he was able to express is underlined in a very striking manner by an incident which occurs quite a number of times in the scriptures. We're told that the Buddha meets a certain monk, or the monk meets the Buddha. And, either in reply to a question or spontaneously, the Buddha gives a few words of instruction (most of them are still in the scriptures; they are usually just a few, very simple words). Then, to our astonishment we read that hearing those words monk so-and-so (or nun so-and-so) became Enlightened, became an Arahant. This is really staggering. We can't help thinking, "But why? How?" We read those same words, we read them a hundred times over, we might even read them aloud, but nothing happens. There might be a dim glimmer of understanding; we might just think, "Well, of course, yes, it is so." We agree. We accept. But nothing 'clicks', nothing happens. We certainly don't go spiralling up into Enlightenment — nothing like that.

So, how did it happen? How was it that on these occasions — and there are quite a number of them recorded in the scriptures — these few words, apparently, were able to produce such a tremendous effect? You might try to explain it by saying, "Well, after all, the monk was prepared." That is true (it's not the whole truth, but it is true). Very likely he had been meditating for years and years before he approached the Buddha and put his question. So he was ready and receptive. But it isn't the whole explanation. There's another factor to be taken into consideration, a factor which is even more important, but which — though so important — we often overlook. That fact is the Buddha himself. It wasn't just a question of those words being spoken, of those words appearing in the air, as it were. It was the Buddha speaking those words. (In a sense it didn't really matter what the Buddha said.) It wasn't so much what the Buddha said to the monk that made the impression and brought about the transformation, it was what the Buddha himself was which produced the impression and brought about the result.

Sometimes, we are told, the Buddha didn't say anything at all, didn't even have recourse to words. But the effect was still the same. The effect was tremendous. We all know the story of the golden flower. This is a Zen story. We know how the Buddha, without saying anything, held up a golden flower in the midst of the assembly. All the monks were sitting round; hundreds, thousands of them, all quietly sitting, meditating. They all saw the Buddha hold up this golden flower. The Buddha didn't say anything. And no one understood what he meant by it, except one very old disciple, Mahākāśyapa. He understood what the Buddha was getting at. So he looked at the Buddha, and he smiled. And the Buddha looked at him, and he smiled. We are told that that was the origin of Zen. But that, as they say, is another story. The anecdote may be apocryphal. It is said now to have been invented about a thousand years later. That doesn't really matter; the story embodies a very important truth indeed. The truth is that the Buddha taught and influenced people quite as much by what he was and by what he did as by what he said. Borrowing a modern idiom, we may

say of the Buddha that the man himself, the Enlightened man, was the message. We may even say that Buddhism is the Buddha; the Buddha is Buddhism.

Thus, during the lifetime of the Master on earth, the tremendous results — in the way of the production of so many Enlightened beings — were produced not just by the words he uttered (words which are still available in the scriptures), but by his tremendous presence and personal influence — the influence which emanated, as it were, from him.

But after his death, after his *parinirvāṇa* (as it's called), a change set in —at least in certain quarters. There are several accounts available of what happened, but they are rather contradictory and confused. However, they seem to agree that not long after the Buddha's *parinirvāṇa* a very large number of his monk disciples held a big meeting. They discussed, in effect, the question 'What is Buddhism?' This is, of course, a question which still very much concerns all of us. So far as we are concerned the Buddha is, as it were, dead, dead within us, in the sense that we are dead to (not aware of, not awake to) our own inner Buddha-nature. Therefore, inasmuch as he is dead we too discuss from time to time 'What is Buddhism? What is the path to the realization of Enlightenment, to the recapturing of our own, lost Buddhahood?'

After the Buddha's *parinirvāṇa* it seems that there were two parties among his disciples, representing different points of view. One party said, in effect, that Buddhism is the teaching of the Buddha. Buddhism is the 'Four Noble Truths', plus the 'Noble Eightfold Path', plus the 'Three Signs of Conditioned Existence', plus the 'Twelve Links of the Chain of Conditioned Co-production'. These teachings, in their entirety, given out by the Buddha during his lifetime, constitute Buddhism. Buddhism is the teaching, the doctrine.

The other party disagreed with this. Not that the other party rejected the teaching. On the contrary, they valued the teaching very highly indeed. But they did not agree that Buddhism was fully embodied in the verbal teaching. According to these people — and they seem to have been rather in the majority – Buddhism was embodied in two things. One, of course, was the teaching itself (consisting of various doctrines, various rules of conduct, and so on). The other was the life and the example of the Buddha himself. They felt that, if anything, the latter (the life and the example of the Buddha) was the more important, was even more important than the verbal, doctrinal teaching.

Let us look into this just a little more deeply. Let us try to place ourselves imaginatively in the position of those early followers of the Buddha, those who were unable to identify Buddhism exclusively with the verbal teaching. And, in case some of you may be thinking that we have wandered rather far from our subject, let me observe at once that we are very close now to the origin of the Bodhisattva Ideal.

The Buddha died. The Buddha passed away. By all accounts the disciples were grief-stricken. Not quite all of them. The Arahants, we are told, those who were Enlightened for themselves, who had gone beyond all passions, all sorrows, were not moved. Everybody else, we are told, was struck almost dumb with grief. According to tradition, even the animals were affected.

There are very, beautiful representations in Buddhist art of this very solemn, final scene, the Buddha's passing away. They are mainly Chinese in origin, and they usually show a scene in the forest. (It is rather interesting and significant, incidentally, that the Buddha was born in the midst of trees, and he gained Enlightenment under a tree, and he also died in the midst of trees.) The scene which the scriptures conjure up for us, the scene which is depicted by these ancient Buddhist artists, is of a grove of sal trees. Sal trees are very, very beautiful. I've often seen them in India. They are perfectly straight; they are just one straight, slender stem. They are not quite even a foot in diameter. They are very, very straight, and they grow up to a height of about twenty or thirty feet. They have broad, green leaves and beautiful, white flowers. So we are told that the Buddha passed away, lying on a stone couch at the foot of a cluster of these sal trees. And these representations show the disciples — monk disciples, kings, princes, merchants, wandering mendicants, brahmins, traders, flower-sellers — in attitudes of grief, grouped around him; and, a little further away, the different animals of the forest, and domesticated animals — all of them weeping, as if to say that the whole world shared a common grief in the loss of the Buddha. And there's a little folklore incident here which says that among all the animals there was only one animal which did not weep. That was the cat. That's why the cat in Buddhism, I'm afraid, has a rather bad reputation. There was a rule which said that Bodhisattvas are not supposed to keep cats, as cats are supposed to be devoid of feeling, because even on the occasion of the Buddha's passing away the cat just went on presumably licking her paws, and didn't take very much notice.

But, however great their grief might have been, however great their grief undoubtedly was, even though they felt that — in the words of the scriptures — "the light of the world had gone out", still, slowly the disciples recovered — as we all have to recover on these occasions — from their grief. And they started taking stock of the situation. The Buddha was gone. At first they couldn't believe it, that the Buddha was no longer there. But, eventually they had to settle down to life without the Buddha (life in a 'Buddha-less' world, as it were), which, especially for those who had lived in his presence for many years, was a terrible change.

But, eventually they settled down, and they started taking stock of the situation, and they started trying to understand what they were left with. What did they have left, now that the Buddha was gone? Some said, "Well, we've got the teaching that the Buddha has given us, the doctrines: the 'Eightfold Path', 'seven Stages of Purification', the 'Five *Skandhas*'. We've got the rules of behaviour: the ten rules, the hundred and fifty rules, and so on. We've got those." Some of them were quite satisfied, or more or less satisfied to be left with the teachings. They felt that they'd got it, as it were, all there. They, perhaps, were the more intellectual ones. They, perhaps, were those who were quite happy analyzing and classifying the teaching (the tradition which later became what we know as the Abhidharma).

There were, however, many disciples who were not satisfied with that. Yes, they had the teaching. They had nothing against the teaching, but they weren't satisfied. They felt that there was something missing from their lives now that the Buddha himself had gone. They couldn't help remembering the Buddha. Even when they were supposed to be thinking of the teaching, committing those long lists of terms to memory, they couldn't help thinking of the Buddha. They couldn't help thinking of his qualities. They couldn't help

—so far as we can see — recalling various incidents in his life, incidents with which many of them must have been personally acquainted, incidents which exemplified his personal qualities.

For instance, some of them no doubt remembered the occasion when the Buddha was going round from one little hermitage to the next, and he found in one little hut an elderly monk just lying on the floor in a terrible condition. (He had evidently been there for days and days without any attention, any help.) And the Buddha asked Ānanda who was going round with him, "What is this? What has happened?" And Ānanda said, "He's an elderly monk. He hasn't got a very good temper. He's not very popular with the other monks, so they've neglected him. He's lying here in his own filth without anyone to care for him." So the Buddha sent Ānanda for water, and the water was heated. And we are told that the Buddha took the head, and Ānanda took the feet, and they lifted him onto a bed. They washed him. They made him comfortable. Then the Buddha, we're told, called all the monks together. And he said, "Monks, you have neither father nor mother, nor brother, nor sister. You have given up the world. You must be brother and sister, you must be mother and father, to one another." Then he said, "He who wishes to serve me, let him serve the sick."

So, incidents like this, incidents which show the Buddha's practical Compassion, surely must have remained in the memories, in the minds, in the hearts, of many of the disciples after his passing away.

Some of them, especially the lay disciples, might have recalled the story — again a famous story which some of you, no doubt, have read or heard about — of Kisāgotamī. In India, in those days as at the present, infant mortality was very, very high. The story goes that a young woman, a newly-married woman, lost, soon after his birth, her only child. As mothers naturally tend to be she was very much attached to the child. She couldn't believe that the child was dead. She didn't want to believe that the child was dead. She took it in her arms from house to house asking for medicine to make it well. She became almost crazed with grief.

The Buddha, we are told, heard about it. And people, in fact, sent Kisāgotamī to the Buddha, saying, "He is a great physician. He can heal your child." So she asked him to help her and to heal her child, to bring her child back to life. So, what did the Buddha do? What did the Buddha say? He didn't give her a long sermon. He knew that would be useless (she was crazed with grief; she couldn't listen to words of that sort). So he said, "I will cure your child if you bring me a certain medicine." Very eagerly she said, "Of course." So he said, "Bring me just a few grains of sesamum seed: but bring them from a house where none have died." So, off she went, knocking on the door of house after house. Everywhere she went, yes, they were ready to give the sesamum seed, but when she asked, "Has anyone died in this house?" they said, "Do not remind us of our grief. The dead are many; but the living are few." From house to house she went. At every door that she knocked, at every house from which she sought the sesamum seeds, she learnt the same lesson: the dead are many; but the living are few. Death comes to all. Death takes away father or mother, or brother, or sister. She wasn't the only one who had been bereaved.

Eventually she came back to the Buddha. She just sat quietly at his feet. The Buddha said, "Where is your child?" She didn't have the child any more. She had just left the child's body in the jungle. She didn't say anything for a long time. Then at last she said, "Give me a refuge." And she became a nun.

So this is another story which the monks, after the Buddha's death, remembered. They remembered how sympathetic he was; how understandingly he dealt with Kisāgotamī, with this poor woman who had been bereaved of her only child.

The Buddha, however, didn't have just these qualities of sympathy, of love. He also had more vigorous qualities. No doubt they remembered his fearlessness, his equanimity. No doubt they remembered how the Buddha behaved when one of his disaffected disciples, Devadatta, tried even to take his life. We are told that Devadatta was the cousin of the Buddha, but he was a very ambitious man. He had been with the Buddha for quite a number of years. He was very good at meditation. He had all sorts of supernormal powers. He could do all sorts of psychic tricks. But he was ambitious, and he was proud. One day he went to the Buddha, when the Buddha was a very old man, and he said, "Lord, you are now old. Please retire. Don't give yourself any trouble. I will take over the Sangha. You, please go into retreat. Spend your time quietly and happily." So, what did the Buddha say? The Buddha knew his mind, so he said, "Even to Śāriputra and Maudgalyāyana I would not hand over the Sangha, much less still to you." Devadatta was so incensed, and so offended by these words, that he resolved to take the Buddha's life. He conspired with a wicked king with whom he was on friendly terms. He bribed the king's elephant trainer to release against the Buddha a mad elephant. But nothing happened. So Devadatta got desperate. He knew that the Buddha used, sometimes, to walk at the foot of the Vultures Peak. So he climbed up on to this rocky peak, and he pushed a great boulder down, right on to the Buddha. It bounced down the hillside and just missed the Buddha, though a splinter pierced the Buddha's foot and drew blood.

After these incidents the other disciples became very, very alarmed for the Buddha's safety, for the Buddha's life in fact. They thought they ought to protect the Buddha. So, without saying anything to him, they constituted themselves into a sort of bodyguard. They ringed the vihāra (where the Buddha was sleeping) with a circle of disciples, some with sticks. They were going to guard him. During the night the Buddha came out. (The Buddha never spent the whole night sleeping; he would sit up half the night meditating.) In the middle of the night he came out. He saw all these monks around. So he said, "Monks, what is this?" The monks said, "Lord, we're protecting you." So the Buddha said, "Go away. The Buddha needs no protection. Go away." So, slowly and shamefacedly they all just melted away. The Buddha just remained there by himself. This was the spirit of the Buddha. This was his fearlessness.

No doubt there were other occasions on which the Buddha showed qualities no less remarkable. There was, for instance, the Buddha's great love of silence. We usually think of the Buddha as talking — giving sermons, giving discourses. But it wasn't always like that. There's a very wonderful story in the scriptures about how the physician Jīvaka, who was the Buddha's physician and also the physician of Ajātaśatru, a neighbouring king, took the king on a midnight visit to the Buddha. Apparently they were all sitting on the roof of the palace admiring the full moon. It was the full moon of October (when the lotus is supposed to bloom). They agreed that it was a wonderful night for a visit to a holy man. (You see the Indian tradition: not, a wonderful night to go to the cinema, or to go somewhere like that; a wonderful night to go and see a holy man.) It was twelve o'clock at night. The moon was full; the bright moonlight was over everything. So,

off they went. Being a king, he had to go in state, in style. So we are told that five hundred elephants were saddled, and five hundred ladies of the harem were mounted on the elephants. The king went off at their head with Jīvaka, to visit the Buddha in the depths of the forest.

As they got into the depths of the forest it was very, very dark. The king, after all, was a king, and he'd got his throne by foul means, and he had a guilty conscience. He became afraid, and he became suspicious. He stopped and he said, "Jīvaka, are you leading me into a trap?" (This is the way the minds of kings worked in those days.) So Jīvaka said, "Fear not, your majesty. It's just a little way ahead. The Buddha lives in the depths of the forest." So they went on a few more hundred yards, and it became darker and darker, and more and more silent — they couldn't hear anything at all. So Ajātaśatru said to Jīvaka, "Jīvaka, are you sure you are not leading me into a trap?" So Jīvaka said, "Be not afraid, your majesty. There's no trap." Then Ajātaśatru said, "But you've told me that the Buddha is living there with two thousand five hundred monks. There isn't a sound. With two thousand five hundred monks, well, you should be able to hear them a mile away." But Jīvaka insisted, "Don't worry. Look — just over there you can see the lights burning in the Buddha's pavilion." Sure enough, as they got near, there was a great circle made under the trees. And there was the Buddha sitting in the midst, surrounded by his two thousand five hundred disciples. All were perfectly silent. All were sitting there in the light of the full moon. There was not a movement, not a sound — perfect silence. So the king, with all his fears, with all his suspicions, came upon this sight. He came into this clearing. And we are told that he said to Jīvaka, "O that my son might experience peace of mind such as this." (In India they are very much attached to their sons, and so, if you wish anything, you wish it for your son.) So this was Ajātaśatru wish. This goes to illustrate another great quality of the Buddha: his love of peace, his love of solitude, his love of silence.

To touch upon something rather different, some of them must have remembered stories concerning what we would call miracles, all sorts of odd things that used to happen when the Buddha was about. There were supernormal happenings, even, as it were, miraculous happenings, something for which there was no rational explanation. They might have recalled how people used to say that, when the Buddha was staying anywhere, during the night you'd see marvellous figures, hovering around, going to see the Buddha, even going to speak with the Buddha. Sometimes — it might even be — the Buddha would give them instruction during the night, just as he gave to human beings during the day.

So surely, after the *parinirvāṇa* of the Buddha, stories of this kind from the life of the Master must still have been very, very fresh in the minds of the disciples. Surely many of them must have felt that these stories (stories like the story of the sick monk and the story of Kisāgotamī) conveyed something of tremendous importance. Many of them might have felt that these incidents exhibited the qualities of the Buddha, and therefore conveyed something that the formal teaching (the 'Four Noble Truths', the 'Eightfold Path', the 'Five *Skandhas*', and so on) did not succeed in conveying. In other words, the stories were able to convey the personal influence of the Buddha, the personal effect of the Buddha on the minds and the hearts of the people with whom he came in contact. They conveyed, in other words, the direct impact of an Enlightened being, above and beyond all words.

We can get an example of this — a very beautiful example — from the story of Ānanda. Ānanda, you probably know, was one of the Buddha's cousins. For more than twenty years he was the Buddha's personal attendant. He went with the Buddha everywhere. If the Buddha was invited for lunch, Ānanda went. If the Buddha went to give a sermon, Ānanda went. If the Buddha received visitors, answered questions, Ānanda was present. He was always present. He was always there. He was the Buddha's shadow, as it were; his personal attendant, his servant, his disciple. And the Buddha, we gather, was all in all to him.

When the Buddha was about to pass away, Ānanda — we can understand — felt it more deeply than anybody. The *Mahā-parinibbāṇa Suttanta* relates to us the scene. The Buddha was inside, (as it were) dying. Ānanda, we're told, went to the door of the hermitage where the Buddha was staying at that moment (before he moved out into the open air). And Ānanda, we are told, stood leaning against the lintel. (The door must have been very, very low, and he was leaning with his elbow against the lintel.) As he was leaning there in that way he was thinking that the Buddha was going to pass away very soon — in a matter of hours, or at most within a matter of days. He was so upset, he was so grieved, that he was weeping bitterly. And as he wept he said to himself, "The Master is about to pass away from me: he who is so kind." These were Ānanda's words which were heard by other disciples and reported to the Buddha, who then called Ānanda.

These words of Ānanda, as he stood there, leaning against the lintel of the door and weeping, are of the very greatest significance. Ānanda, as I've said, had been with the Buddha twenty years. He had heard the Buddha deliver hundreds of discourses, no doubt often abstruse, deeply philosophical, deeply mystical discourses. He had heard him answer thousands of questions. He must have admired his brilliance, his affability, the very easy way in which he handled difficult questions. No doubt Ānanda must have also witnessed all sorts of odd things about the Buddha, all sorts of strange, supernormal happenings. But what was the overall impression of the Buddha's person, of the Buddha's character, upon Ānanda after those twenty years when he had heard so much? The overall impression which the Buddha made upon Ānanda is given in those few words which Ānanda uttered as he wept: 'he who is so kind.' This is very significant. Not, 'he who is so wise', or 'he who is so Enlightened', or 'he who has such a deep, philosophical understanding', or 'he who is such a brilliant debater', or 'he who has worked so many miracles', or 'he who is so brave', or 'so tireless'. Not that, but 'he who is so kind'.

This was the overall impression of the Buddha after twenty years of intimate day-to-day contact: 'he who is so kind.' We can say that half of Buddhism is in that remark. The origin of the Bodhisattva Ideal is in that remark. We may say that the Buddha's Wisdom is revealed in the teaching: the 'Four Truths', the 'Eightfold Path', the 'Chain of Conditioned Co-production', the analysis of the being into the 'Five *Skandhas*', all sorts of other, deep, difficult, abstruse teachings found in the scriptures. These teachings embody the Buddha's Wisdom. But his love, his Compassion, his sympathy — which had so deeply impressed Ānanda more than anything else — was revealed in his life and his personal example.

So we can now, perhaps, understand the position of the disciples after the Parinirvāṇa, the position (that is to say) of those disciples who could not identify Buddhism exclusively with the verbal teaching of the

Buddha. We can perhaps understand now what they were getting at. They were saying, in effect, that Buddhism was not just Wisdom — as represented by the teaching. They were saying that Buddhism was also love, it was also Compassion — as exemplified by the life of the Buddha. They were saying that both should be taken into consideration in a formulation of Buddhism itself. They were saying (in a way) that the Buddha himself — the life, the person, the inspiring example of the Buddha — cannot be left out of Buddhism, cannot be left out of his own religion. In other words, they were saying that the Buddhist life is not just a development of Wisdom; it is also a cultivation of love, a cultivation of Compassion. We should try to attain Enlightenment, yes; try to 'Awaken', try to see the Truth, yes — this represents the Wisdom aspect. But we should try to attain it for the sake of all sentient beings — this represents the Compassion aspect. These two together — Wisdom aspect (attainment of Enlightenment aspect), and Compassion aspect (attainment of Enlightenment for the benefit of all living beings) — constitute the Bodhisattva Ideal.

Now we can see how and why the Bodhisattva Ideal originated. In general the Bodhisattva Ideal is a statement of the Buddhist Ideal itself, the ideal of the Higher Evolution, the ideal of evolution from unenlightened to Enlightened humanity, to Buddhahood. But the Bodhisattva Ideal itself also stresses that Buddhism comprises not just the teaching of the Buddha, but also his life and his personal example. In practical terms this means that we must develop both Wisdom and Compassion, both the self-regarding and the other-regarding aspects of the spiritual life. During the coming weeks we shall be seeing how this works out, how this principle — or this pattern — works out in detail.

Now, before concluding, just a couple of observations. I have said that the Buddha cannot be left out of Buddhism. This statement links directly with what will be our concluding function of the evening, the Sevenfold Puja. The Puja brings us, as it were, face to face with the Buddha. This is why we stand, or sit, directly facing the shrine and the image. This enables us to contemplate the Ultimate Goal. The teaching is, as it were, for a moment forgotten. When we sit for the Puja, when we look at the Buddha image (or picture), we do not think of the teaching for that moment — at least, the teaching occupies a subordinate place. For a moment we are face to face, as it were, with Buddhahood. We contemplate Buddhahood: and we recognize in that Buddhahood our own, true nature.

Our second and final point relates to Wisdom and Compassion. These are what we may describe as the 'self-regarding' and the 'other-regarding' aspects of the spiritual life. These two aspects (the self-regarding and the other-regarding) constitute the basic polarity of the spiritual life: Enlightenment within, through Wisdom; manifestation without, through Compassion. There are many manifestations of this basic polarity of the spiritual life (the self-regarding and the other-regarding aspects). Some of these we shall be exploring in the coming weeks. For instance, we shall be studying 'Altruism and Individualism in the Spiritual Life', and '"Masculinity" and "Femininity" in the Spiritual Life'. In this way we shall come to understand some of the most important aspects of the Bodhisattva Ideal. We shall come to see in detail, as we have tried to see, this evening, in general, the origin and development of the Bodhisattva Ideal.

2. The Awakening of the Bodhi Heart

Free Buddhist Audio link for audio talk: https://www.freebuddhistaudio.com/audio/details?num=66

Last week we addressed ourselves to the question: Who or what is a Bodhisattva? We saw that a Bodhisattva – as the term itself suggests – is one who seeks to gain Enlightenment; is one whose whole being, in fact, is orientated towards Enlightenment. We then saw that a Bodhisattva is further defined as, 'one who seeks to gain Enlightenment not for his own sake only, but for the sake of all sentient beings'. Now, there arises a most important, practical question: How does one become a Bodhisattva? In other words, how does one embark upon the actual realization of this sublime, spiritual ideal? This is where we come in this week. The answer to this question is quite short and straightforward, but it demands considerable explanation. The traditional answer to the question is: one becomes a Bodhisattva upon the awakening of the Bodhi Heart. 'The Awakening of the Bodhi Heart' is, of course, our subject for this week.

Let us go back for a moment to the original Sanskrit term. This is *bodhicitta-utpāda*. *Bodhi* means, as we saw last week, 'spiritual Enlightenment', or 'spiritual awakening', (consisting in the seeing of Reality face to face). *Citta* means 'mind', it means 'thought', it means 'consciousness', it means also 'heart'; it means all of these things. *Utpāda* means simply 'arising' or, more poetically, 'awakening'.

This term, *bodhicitta-utpāda*, is one of the most important terms in the whole field of Buddhism, certainly in the whole field of the Mahayana. It is usually translated into English as 'the arising of the thought of Enlightenment', but let me say at once that this is exactly what it is not. In a sense you could hardly have a worse translation. It's not a thought about Enlightenment at all. We can think about Enlightenment as much as we like. We can think about it, read about it, talk about it. 'Enlightenment is both Wisdom and Compassion' – the words come very glibly from our tongues, and we think we know all about Enlightenment. We are thinking about Enlightenment perhaps even now. The thought about Enlightenment undoubtedly has arisen in our minds as we sit here, but the Bodhicitta has not arisen – we haven't become transformed into Bodhisattvas. The Bodhicitta is something very much more than a thought about Enlightenment. Guenther translates it as 'Enlightened Attitude'. I personally sometimes translate it (I translated it like this in *The Three Jewels*) as the 'Will to Enlightenment'. In the title of tonight's talk we speak of it as the 'Bodhi Heart'. Although all these alternative translations are considerably better than the 'thought of Enlightenment', none of them is really satisfactory. (This isn't altogether the fault of the English language. We may say it's the fault of language itself. We might even say that 'Bodhicitta' is a very unsatisfactory term for the Bodhicitta.) The Bodhicitta is, in fact, not a mental-state (or -activity, or -

function) at all. It is certainly not a 'thought' (not a thought which you or I can entertain). If we think of Enlightenment, that is not the Bodhicitta; the Bodhicitta has nothing to do with thought. It is not even an 'act of will', if by that I mean my personal will. It is not even 'being conscious', if by that I mean my being conscious – or your being conscious – of the fact that there is such a thing as 'Enlightenment'. The Bodhicitta is none of these things.

We may say that the Bodhicitta basically represents the manifestation, even the irruption, within us, of something transcendental. In traditional terms – and I am thinking now of Nāgārjuna's exposition of the Bodhicitta in a little work which he wrote on that subject (a very short but very profound work) – the Bodhicitta is said to be not included in the 'Five *Skandhas*'. This is a very significant statement indeed. It gives us a tremendous clue to the nature of the Bodhicitta. This statement of Nāgārjuna, representing the best Mahayana tradition, requires a great deal of pondering.

Some of you might not have encountered these 'Five *Skandhas*' before. *Skandha* is another of those untranslatable terms. It is usually translated as 'aggregate', or 'confection', or something equally unsatisfactory. It is really untranslatable. It literally means 'the trunk of a tree', but that doesn't get us very far. However, the 'Five *Skandhas*' are one of the basic, doctrinal categories of Buddhism. Whether it's Pali literature, Sanskrit literature, Tibetan, Chinese, over and over again you get references to the 'Five *Skandhas*', the 'Five Aggregates', or, as Dr. Conze delights to translate the term, the 'Five Heaps' (which doesn't help us very much either). Let us refer back to these 'Five *Skandhas*' a little, so that we are quite sure where we are, and what we are trying to ponder on.

The first of the 'Five *Skandhas*' is *rūpa*. *Rūpa* means 'bodily form', it means anything perceived through the senses. Secondly there is *vedanā*. *Vedanā* means 'feeling', it means 'emotion' – positive, negative, pleasant, painful, etc. Thirdly there is *saṃjñā*, which is, very roughly, 'perception'. (Sometimes it is translated 'sensation', but it seems that 'sensation' is a more suitable translation for vedanā.) *Saṃjñā* is the recognition of something as that particular thing. When you say, "that's a clock", that is *saṃjñā*; you've recognized it as that particular thing, you've identified it, pointed it out, labelled it. Fourthly, the *saṃskāras*. This term is more difficult still to translate. By some German scholars it is usually translated as 'steering forces'. We may say, very roughly indeed, 'volitional activities', i.e. acts of will, etc. Fifthly, *vijñāna*, which is 'consciousness'; consciousness through the five physical senses, and through the mind at various levels.

So these are the 'Five *Skandhas*'; *rūpa* (material form), *vedanā* (feeling, emotion), *saṃjñā* (perception), *saṃskāras* (volitional activities), *vijñāna* (consciousness). I must warn you that if you want to make anything of Buddhist thought at all, especially on its more technical side (its philosophy, its metaphysics), you must know these 'Five *Skandhas*' 'inside out', as it were. You must be able to reel them off, and know what you are talking about, otherwise you won't get very far with Buddhist philosophy. This, however, is just by the way – we are not dealing so much now with Buddhist philosophy.

In Buddhist thought, generally speaking, these 'Five *Skandhas*' are regarded as exhausting our entire psychophysical existence. In the entire range of our psychophysical existence, on all levels, there's nothing

– no thought, no feeling, no aspect of our physical existence – which is not included under one or another of these 'Five *Skandhas*'. This is why, at the very beginning of the *Heart Sutra*, the text says that the Bodhisattva Avalokiteśvara, coursing in the profound Perfection of Wisdom, looked down on the world (looked down on conditioned existence), and saw Five Heaps (Five *Skandhas*). That is just what he saw. No more than that. He saw that the whole of psychophysical conditioned existence consists of just these five things; nothing occurs, nothing takes place, nothing exists, on the conditioned level of existence (the *saṃskṛta* level) which cannot be included under one or another of these 'Five *Skandhas*'.

But the Bodhicitta is not included in the 'Five *Skandhas*'. The 'Five *Skandhas*' comprise all that is of this world, so when we say that the Bodhicitta is not included in the 'Five *Skandhas*', it means that it is something altogether out of this world, something transcendental. It is not a thought, nor a volition, nor an idea, nor a concept, but – if we must use words at all – it is a profound, spiritual (read 'transcendental') experience: an experience which re-orients our entire being.

Perhaps I can make this rather obscure matter clearer with the help of a comparison – and it is only a comparison – from the Christian tradition. You can imagine someone in a Christian context talking about 'thinking of God'. When you talk about 'thinking of God', even if you are a pious churchgoing person, it doesn't mean very much – you just think about God. You might think of God as a beautiful old gentleman seated in the clouds, or you might think of God as Pure Being, Knowledge, Wisdom, etc. But 'thinking about God' would be just thinking about God. You wouldn't describe it as a spiritual experience, or as a profound experience of any sort. Suppose, however, you speak of 'the descent of the Holy Spirit', this would be a very different thing indeed. Thinking about God is one thing, but having the Holy Spirit descend upon you, and into you, so that you are filled by the Holy Spirit, is a quite different thing.

So it is just the same in the case of 'thinking about Enlightenment' (or the 'thought of Enlightenment') on the one hand, and the actual arising of the Bodhicitta on the other. If the thought of Enlightenment is analogous to thinking about God, the arising of the Bodhicitta is analogous to the descent upon you – in full force, as it were – of the Holy Spirit. Now this comparison is just for the purpose of illustration – if possible, illumination. There's no question of equating these two different sets of doctrinal and spiritual concepts. I am concerned only to try to make clear the nature of the difference between thinking about Enlightenment and the arising of the Bodhicitta. The Bodhicitta is not just a thought about Enlightenment, but is a profound spiritual experience, even a profound, spiritual, transcendental 'entity'.

Not only is the Bodhicitta transcendental, but the Bodhicitta is not individual. This is another point that Nāgārjuna makes. We speak of the Bodhicitta as arising in this person or that person, and one might then therefore think that there were in existence a number of Bodhicittas – apparently a glorious plurality of Bodhicittas – arising in different people, making them all Bodhisattvas. In fact, it isn't so at all. Different thoughts (even if they are thoughts of the same thing) may arise in different people. But just as the Bodhicitta is not a 'thought' of Enlightenment, it is not an individual thing – it is not anybody's individually – so there is no plurality of Bodhicittas arising in different people. *Your* thought of Enlightenment is *your* thought of Enlightenment, *my* thought of Enlightenment is *my* thought of Enlightenment; there are many

thoughts. But *your* Bodhicitta is *my* Bodhicitta, and *my* Bodhicitta is *your* Bodhicitta; there is only one Bodhicitta.

The Bodhicitta is only one, and individuals in whom the Bodhicitta is said to have arisen participate in that one Bodhicitta, or manifest that one Bodhicitta, in varying degrees. The Mahayana writers bring in that very well-worn, but still very beautiful, illustration of the moon. (I don't know whether it is full moon day tonight. I think perhaps it's tomorrow. But we have outside, as you probably noticed as you came along, a very, very beautiful, almost full, moon, shining in the clear blue sky, with just one or two stars in attendance, as it were.) This old Buddhist simile tells us that the Bodhicitta is like the moon (like, if you like, the full moon). The Bodhicitta is reflected, as it were, in different people (i.e. it arises in different people) just as the moon is reflected variously in different bodies of water. There are many reflections, but only one moon; in the same way, many manifestations, but one Bodhicitta.

Now, though we used the expression 'reflection', which is a bit static, we are not to think of the Bodhicitta in purely static terms. What is known in the Mahayana tradition as the 'Absolute Bodhicitta' – the Bodhicitta in its Absolute aspect, outside space and time – is identical with Reality itself. Being identical with Reality, the Absolute Bodhicitta is beyond change, or rather, is beyond the opposition between change and non-change. But this doesn't hold good of what is known in the tradition as the 'relative Bodhicitta'. The relative Bodhicitta is, as it were, an active force at work. This is why, as I said a little while ago, I prefer, personally, if I have to translate the term 'Bodhicitta', to speak of it as the 'Will to Enlightenment' (bearing in mind that one is speaking of the relative, as distinct from the Absolute, Bodhicitta). This Will to Enlightenment though, is not an act of will of any individual. The Bodhicitta is not something which *I* will. Just as it is not *my* thought, it's not *my* will. The Bodhicitta is no more an act of anybody's individual will than it is anybody's individual thought. We might, in fact – though here we have rather to grope for words – think of the Bodhicitta as a sort of 'cosmic will'. (I don't like to use this word 'will', but there's really no other.) We might think of the Bodhicitta as a sort of 'cosmic will' at work, if you like, in the universe, in the direction of what we can only think of as universal redemption: the liberation, the Enlightenment, ultimately, of all sentient beings.

We may even think of the Bodhicitta as a sort of 'spirit of Enlightenment', immanent in the world, and leading individuals to higher and ever higher degrees of spiritual perfection. This being the case it is clear that individuals do not possess the Bodhicitta. If you possess it, it's not the Bodhicitta (it's something else; it's your own thought or idea); the Bodhicitta – the transcendental, non-individual, cosmic Bodhicitta – you've missed. Individuals do not possess the Bodhicitta. We may say that it is the Bodhicitta that possesses individuals. And those of whom the Bodhicitta 'takes possession' (in whom this Bodhicitta arises) become what we call 'Bodhisattvas'. They live for the sake of Enlightenment; they strive to actualize, for the benefit of all, the highest potentialities that the universe contains.

So much, then, for the Bodhicitta. Very much more could be said about it. Some of the Mahayana sutras in particular, are never tired of singing the praises of the Bodhicitta. I remember that a few years ago, when I was in Kalimpong, I was compiling a book on the whole field of Buddhist canonical literature. And I came,

amongst other things, to the Mahayana sutras, and among other sutras to the *Gaṇḍavyūha*. I wanted to quote just a few verses of what the *Gaṇḍavyūha* said in one place about the Bodhicitta. And, believe it or not, there were hundreds and hundreds of clauses, and hundreds and hundreds of illustrations, comparing the Bodhicitta to this, comparing it to that, comparing it to a gold mine, comparing it to the sun, comparing it to the moon, comparing it to everything. You got the impression – after going through this vast array of similes and comparisons – that, for the Mahayana author of the sutra (traditionally, the Buddha), the Bodhicitta was just everything. It was hymned and it was praised almost as though it were a sort of deity. You certainly didn't get the impression of someone's thought or idea. You got the impression, rather, of something vast, something cosmic, something sublime, which descends into, and penetrates, and possesses, people who are receptive to it – not anything individual, not anything limited in any way. So the Mahayana sutras (not only the *Gaṇḍavyūha*, but many other sutras) sing the praises of the Bodhicitta inexhaustibly.

But tonight we have no more time to say anything more on the subject of the Bodhicitta, so this must suffice for the present. A further question arises for our consideration, to which we now have to turn. We have understood what a Bodhisattva is, we have understood how one becomes a Bodhisattva through the arising within one of this glorious Bodhicitta, now the question arises: How does the Bodhicitta itself arise? This is a very mysterious matter. The Mahayana sutras supply one of their unfailing similes. They say that the arising of the Bodhicitta within us is like a blind man finding a priceless jewel on a dunghill at night. It is so wonderful, it is so unexpected – who would think that a blind man just poking his way round the dunghill in the middle of the night would find a priceless jewel? So, in the same way, who would have thought that in our case, living as we are in the midst of the world – earning our living, raising our families, going along to meditation classes once a week – in us this Bodhicitta should ever have arisen? This is the simile that the Mahayana sutras give.

But, wonderful as it is, unexpected as it is, the arising of the Bodhicitta is, in fact, not at all a matter of chance. It is one of the most fundamental principles of Buddhist thought that whatever arises in the universe, at any level, arises in dependence on causes and conditions; not by chance, not as a result of 'fate', not as a result of the 'will of God', but in dependence upon natural – and even the supernatural is natural – causes and conditions. This applies also to the arising of the Bodhicitta within us. That event, that phenomenon, depends upon the creation of certain mental and spiritual conditions. These mental and spiritual conditions we can create within ourselves. When we create them, the Bodhicitta will then arise.

This fact draws our attention to one of the most important principles of the entire spiritual life: the need for preparation. We are usually, most of us, in far too much of a hurry. I don't mean just that we are working hard. I don't mean just that we are putting a lot of effort into things. I don't even mean that we are doing things quickly. I mean that we are just in too much of a hurry. This means that we usually want results rather quickly. And, because we are so anxious to secure the results we very often neglect the preparations, we neglect the very conditions upon which the results depend. This is one of the reasons, if not the main reason, why we so often fail. But, on the other hand, if we make sufficiently careful preparations we can usually quite safely leave the results to look after themselves. We shall find that we almost succeed without noticing it.

This applies very much to meditation. If you want to meditate, for instance at home, you should not just sit down and just think you can meditate – that isn't possible. In the East there is a tradition that when you want to meditate, you should first of all go into the room in which you are going to meditate, and, very slowly and carefully, sweep it – you sweep the floor with a broom. You dust the room – if necessary, you dust the image of the Buddha there. You tidy the room. You do all this slowly, gently, mindfully. Then – in a meditative sort of mood – you change the flowers; you throw away the old flowers – in some Eastern countries you throw them into running water, not on the dust heap – and you cut fresh flowers, you put them in a vase, you arrange them thoughtfully: you take your time over it. Then, maybe you light a candle, maybe you light a stick of incense. You look around, just to see that everything is in order – maybe the window open for a bit of fresh air, the door shut to keep out disturbances. You arrange your seat, making sure it is placed square, and that if you are sitting on a piece of cloth it is properly folded. Then you sit down. You just adjust your clothing, put your feet into the proper posture – your hands. Even then, very often, you won't start meditating, you'll recite the Refuges, the Precepts, a few invocations to the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas. Then – and only then – you will start meditating. If one proceeds in this way, preparing, paving the way, then there is a very much greater chance of success. This is the case not just with regard to meditation, but even with regard to comparatively ordinary, daily activities. If you want to write something, if you want to paint a picture, even if you want to cook, the secret lies in the preparation.

It is just the same with regard to this matter of the arising of the Bodhicitta. One should not even think of becoming a Bodhisattva. (One should not even *think* of it.) It is not anything that you can become; it's not anything that you can sort of go into, follow a course, get a certificate – "you are a Bodhisattva". (I'm sorry to say that even in the East there are establishments which give certificates of this sort. People have these certificates framed and put up on their wall for all to see – "I'm a Stream-Entrant", or "I'm a Bodhisattva". It's a sort of ecclesiastical rank or dignity, which is nonsense.) One shouldn't even think of developing the Bodhicitta. One can't even do that. One can't even think of it. It's out of the question. It's a waste of time. But, one can very well think of creating within oneself the conditions which will enable the Bodhicitta to manifest.

There are two ways of doing this. One way is associated with the name of Śāntideva, the other way is associated with the name of Vasubandhu. Both are great Indian masters of the Mahayana – Śāntideva in the seventh, and Vasubandhu probably in the fourth, centuries CE. Both of them are traditionally recognized as being themselves Bodhisattvas. Their two methods, though different, are complementary, and can even be combined.

Śāntideva's method is, frankly, more devotional. It is known as *anuttara-pūjā*, or 'supreme Worship' ('supreme Adoration' even). It consists in a series of what we may describe as seven spiritual exercises. Each of these exercises is expressive of a certain phase of the religious consciousness. When we externally go through certain ceremonies or recitations, corresponding to these different phases of the religious consciousness, then the Supreme Worship is known as the 'sevenfold Worship'. We are, of course, quite familiar with this inasmuch as it is the 'sevenfold Puja' – or Sevenfold Worship – that we recite every Friday evening after our lecture, before we disperse. But, though we perform externally – though we recite with

our lips – we must always recollect that the Supreme Worship, even the 'sevenfold Puja', is essentially a sequence of devotional and spiritual moods and experiences, which, between them, pave the way for the arising of the Bodhicitta. Many of you are familiar with the 'sevenfold Puja',
and have joined us in reciting it here in this very room, but, for the benefit of those who are new to it, and those who perhaps haven't participated in it ever before, let me just very briefly go through these seven items.

First of all, there's what we call 'Worship' itself, worship proper. This is addressed principally to the Buddha: not just to the human, historical figure, but to the Buddha as the symbol or representative of the Ideal of Enlightenment itself. When we perform *pūjā*, or when we adopt the attitude of worship within our hearts, it means that we recognize with deep devotion, with great reverence, with awe, the sublimity, the value, of this Ideal of attaining Enlightenment for the sake of all sentient beings. And, feeling so powerfully and profoundly filled with this devotion, we cannot but make offerings, we cannot but give something. The most popular offerings are flowers, lights, and incense (though there are indeed many other things). These are offered before the Buddha image, representing our feeling of worship, of devotion, even of adoration, for that – as yet very distant – Ideal of Supreme Enlightenment. This is the 'Worship'.

Secondly there is what is known as the 'Obeisance', which literally means 'bowing down'. This consists simply in the payment of outward physical respect. Buddhist tradition says it is not enough just to feel something mentally. You are not just a 'thinker', you've not just got a brain; you've got speech, you've got a body, too. So, in any religious exercise all three must participate – body, speech, and mind. So one makes an external obeisance. At least, one puts the hands together in reverence and salutation. This is a gesture, also, of humility; we not only see the Ideal shining in the distance, but we recognize that as yet we are far from it. The Ideal, just like the Himalayan peaks, is there in the distance, and we are here. We have just put our foot onto the ... I won't even say onto the road, but onto a little path, leading to a lane, leading to a road, which leads to the pathway, leading to that sublime Enlightenment. So we, as it were, bow down, we make obeisance from a distance, seeing the Ideal shining afar off. This is what is meant by the 'Obeisance'.

Thirdly, there's the 'Going for Refuge'. We go for refuge to the Buddha, to the Dharma (or Teaching), and the Sangha (or the Spiritual Community). We began in the 'Worship' by recognizing the Ideal (by just seeing it, venerating it, responding to it emotionally); then, in the 'Obeisance' we recognize (by our salutation, our obeisance) the distance at which we stand from it. Now, in this third stage, this phase of 'Going for Refuge', we commit ourselves to the actual realization of the Ideal. We recognize the Ideal 'there', we recognize that we stand 'here', and now we resolve that we will go forward from 'here' to 'there'. We commit ourselves to the realization of that Ideal; we commit ourselves to the Way leading to that realization; and we commit ourselves to the Company – the spiritual brotherhood and sisterhood – of all who walk that Way to Enlightenment along with us. This is the 'Going for Refuge'.

Then, fourthly, 'Confession of Faults'. Some people don't feel quite happy about this – I don't know whether it is because they feel they don't have any faults. What it really represents is a 'recognition' of the darker

side of ourselves, that side of ourselves which we would rather other people did not see, which we would rather ourselves not see – which we try to forget, but which is always dogging and pursuing us, just like Mephistopheles dogging and pursuing Faust in Goethe's great poem. But, though we recognize this darker side – though we recognize our little weaknesses, our little shortcomings, our little backslidings, our little meannesses, our little furtivenesses, even our own, downright, plain, open, honest wickedness – this is not a matter of breastbeating. It is not a matter of proclaiming oneself the greatest sinner that ever lived. It is merely a realistic appraisal of our own shortcomings, as well as the resolve that, in future, we shall do our best to overcome them – because they are just so much luggage, so much extra weight, that we have to carry on this journey to Enlightenment, on which, of course, we have to travel very light indeed. So, this is 'Confession of Faults'.

Then, fifthly, 'Rejoicing in Merits'. This means that we think of the lives of good, noble, virtuous, holy people; Buddhas, Bodhisattvas, great saints and sages; even great poets, great artists, great musicians, scientists, even ordinary people whom we know – who have exhibited, or who do exhibit, in their lives, outstanding human and spiritual qualities. We read about their lives, we admire them. We read their works, we recollect them. We think, "What a wonderful example – what heroism," or, " – what nobility, – what self-sacrifice, what fortitude, – what determination, – what purity, – what love, – what compassion!"
We derive tremendous encouragement and inspiration from all this. We think, "Isn't this a marvellous thing that here in this wicked world, where one can encounter so much meanness and so much misery, at least from time to time, there do appear people of this sort", – you meet them, and you feel a little uplifted; you read about them even, you feel a little uplifted. You rejoice in the fact that the world can produce people of this sort. You rejoice in the fact that good, holy, and enlightened people live at every age of human history, in every part of the world, succouring and helping the rest of humanity in so many different ways – whether saint or sage, teacher or mystic, even as a scientist or administrator, the humble worker in a hospital, anybody who helps in any way to raise humanity to higher, more divine heights.

This is what is meant by 'Rejoicing in Merits'; feeling happy in people's virtues. It is not denigrating, nor debunking – which now seems to be the fashion – but appreciating, and enjoying, and feeling happy in the contemplation of, other people's good qualities, good deeds, and good nature.

Then, sixthly, 'Entreaty and Supplication'. This means that we request those who are more enlightened than ourselves to teach us. It doesn't mean that unless we ask they are not going to teach. It doesn't mean that they have to be begged or cajoled into teaching. This should express our own attitude of inner readiness, and receptivity. We are saying, as it were, "I am open, please teach me. I would like to receive, please give." Unless there is this attitude of receptivity we can gain nothing, much less still the Bodhicitta. So this is 'Entreaty and Supplication'.

Seventh and lastly, 'Transference of Merit and Self-surrender'. According to Buddhist tradition, when you perform any good action you acquire a certain amount of merit which helps you on your way. So, if you perform the ceremony of the 'sevenfold Puja', if you enact within your own heart the Supreme Worship, a certain amount of merit accrues to you. But, what do you do with it? At the end, when you've gained it, you

give it away. You say, "Whatever merit I might have gained by this performance," – whether it's pūjā, whether it's meditation, whether it's listening to a lecture, whether it's giving some money to a charity – "let that merit be shared by all, not just by me; not just for the sake of my own individual Emancipation (not just so that I can go to heaven leaving aside other people), but for the benefit of all."

So, at the end of this Puja one resolves, "Let this be for the benefit of all, not just for me." When one lifts this to a higher, and ever higher spiritual level, this of course becomes the Bodhisattva Ideal itself; one doesn't seek to gain even Enlightenment for one's own sake, but for the sake of all.

So this is the Supreme Worship, the method of Śāntideva, and I repeat that, even though we may recite it, chant it, perform it, it's not just a ceremony. It is not even just a set of spiritual exercises. It is essentially a sequence of devotional and spiritual moods and experiences (the performance of the external Puja may help, of course, induce the corresponding religious moods and experiences), and it is on account of these that we can become transformed to some extent. If our hearts are filled with sublime feelings of devotion; if we really feel the distance which separates us from the Ideal; if we are really determined to commit ourselves to the realization of the Ideal; if we truly see the darker side of our own nature; if we honestly rejoice in the good deeds of others; if we are really receptive to higher spiritual influences; if we really wish to keep nothing back for ourselves alone – then, in dependence upon these states of mind and consciousness, the Bodhicitta, one day, may be able to arise. This is the soil, as it were, in which the seed of the Bodhicitta, once planted, can grow and flower.

Śāntideva's method is more devotional; Vasubandhu's method is more 'philosophical'. In Vasubandhu's method the arising of the Bodhicitta depends upon four factors. Let us briefly see what they are.

First, it arises in dependence, Vasubandhu says, on the 'Recollection of the Buddhas'. One thinks of the Buddhas of the past; one thinks of Śākyamuni, Gautama the Buddha, and of his great predecessors in remote aeons of 'human pre-history' (what scholars would refer to as legendary times): Dīpaṅkara, Koṇḍañña, and so on. And one reflects, in the words of the sutras, "As they were, so are we. As they became, so may we become." In other words, they started off as human beings, so do we. They started off with weaknesses and imperfections, so do we. They started off with all sorts of limitations, so do we. But then, look what they achieved. They transcended their limitations. They became Buddhas. They were human, we are human; what they achieved, we too may achieve – if only we make the effort. This sort of reflection is called the 'Recollection of the Buddhas', deriving inspiration from their example. This is one of the factors upon which the Bodhicitta arises.

Secondly, 'seeing the Faults of Conditioned Existence'. Conditioned Existence is a technical term in Buddhism for phenomenal existence of every kind: physical, mental, and even what we might call in the West 'spiritual'. Whatever arises in dependence on causes and conditions is all called Conditioned Existence. It is axiomatic for Buddhism as a spiritual tradition that all conditioned existence is impermanent. It arises, it passes away. It may be an idea, it may be an empire. It may arise and disappear in an infinitesimal fraction of a second, or it may arise and disappear over a period of millions, even billions,

of years, as in the case of a great galactic system. But whatever arises, sooner or later ceases. So everything conditioned is impermanent, transitory, and therefore also – Buddhism says – a sorrowful, in the sense of not ultimately satisfactory, not ultimately most deeply satisfying, because, however great the satisfaction, an impermanent thing cannot give permanent satisfaction. So, sooner or later pain comes; the separation comes, the wrench comes, and then comes suffering. Everything also is, in a word, unreal: not in the sense that it doesn't exist and it isn't there, but what we think of as that particular thing is only the surface of something deeper. It isn't real in and by itself. It's only partly real, it's only relatively real. So one sees that conditioned existence as a whole has these 'faults', as they are technically called: it is impermanent, it's riddled with unsatisfactoriness, and it isn't ultimately real. One knows that nothing conditioned can fully satisfy the deepest longings of the human heart. The human heart is always craving for something permanent above and beyond the flux of time, something blissful, something permanently satisfying – which does not pall after a while – something also which is entirely real and true. In this way one 'sees the Faults of Conditioned Existence'; one pierces and penetrates through the conditioned to the Unconditioned beyond. And, in dependence upon this factor also, this 'seeing the Faults of Conditioned Existence', arises the Bodhicitta.

The third factor in dependence upon which the Bodhicitta arises is 'Observing the Sufferings of Sentient Beings'. And what a lot of sufferings there are! One has only got to open one's newspaper just to read about some of them. People hung, people shot, people executed, people burned to death. In the common run of things, people dying in all sorts of painful ways, from all sorts of dreadful diseases, or from hunger, from famine, from flood, from fire. Every day, almost every hour, almost every minute of the day – even as we are sitting here so peacefully – in other parts of the world many people must be dying very painful deaths, many people must be suffering in all sorts of horrible, and dreadful, and agonizing ways. One doesn't need very much imagination to realize this when one thinks in terms of volcanic eruptions, and earthquakes, and aeroplane crashes, to say nothing of war, to say nothing of sudden death. Even if one thinks of something to which, in our callousness, we have become very accustomed: deaths on the road (due to careless driving very often, or to careless walking) – even that is sufficiently horrible.

So, one reflects upon all these sufferings to which human existence is heir, to which flesh itself seems heir. Even the struggle of getting on in the world, of 'making both ends meet', of leading a happy human existence: sometimes it seems very difficult indeed. You strive and you struggle to do the decent thing, to do the right thing, to do the honest thing. You strive to lift your head a little bit above the waves. You've just got your head above the waves, and you're swimming with all you might (as it were), and you're sort of gasping for breath, and ... a great wave comes along and overwhelms you again. Down you go, and maybe up you come (yet again) to go through it all over again – again and again. This is human life.

So if one looks at it objectively one sees that in many ways – no doubt this is only one side of the picture, but it is a side which we very often ignore – human life is very often a painful and miserable thing (as one of the English philosophers said, "nasty, brutish, and short"). And these are the sort of things that we should bear in mind. And I have mentioned only the sufferings of human beings, but what about the animals? What about all those animals that are trapped for fur, or slaughtered, either for human consumption or just for

human pleasure, for sport (as it's called): – "the unspeakable in pursuit of the uneatable", as somebody said of foxhunting? So if one thinks of these things, if one observes, if one 'feels' the sufferings of sentient beings, then this also, Vasubandhu says, is a factor in dependence upon which the Bodhicitta arises.

Then, fourthly and lastly, there is the factor of the 'Contemplation of the Virtues of the *Tathāgatas*' ('*Tathāgatas*' means the Buddhas, the Enlightened Ones.) There are several ways of doing this. One can contemplate those virtues – and 'virtues' here doesn't mean just the ethical virtues, it means the spiritual qualities – by reading, say, the life of the Buddha, or the life of Milarepa, who also was an Enlightened One. One can do it by just performing a *pūjā* in front of an image, just sitting, perhaps, and looking at the image, trying to feel what is behind the image (what it represents, what it symbolizes). Or, as in Tibetan Buddhism, one can contemplate the spiritual qualities of the Buddhas by means of visualization exercises, by conjuring up a sort of vivid mental picture, a sort of archetypal vision, of the Buddha, or of a Bodhisattva who also symbolizes Supreme Enlightenment. What one does in these practices – and this, of course, is summarizing very drastically indeed – is to see this visualized form more and more vividly, and then gradually feel oneself, as it were, merged with it. Whether it is the Buddha of Infinite Light, or the Buddha of Eternal Life, whether it's the Red or the Blue Buddha, whether it's the Bodhisattva of Compassion or Wisdom, you contemplate them, you visualize them clearly, you feel and see yourself connected with them by a shaft of light which gets brighter and brighter, shorter and shorter, until the two of you merge. Your heart, as it were, merges with the heart of the Buddha, the heart of the Bodhisattva, the heart of Enlightenment. And in this way one 'Contemplates the Virtues of the *Tathāgatas*'. And in dependence on this factor also, the Bodhicitta arises.

This is Vasubandhu's method. The Bodhicitta here arises in dependence on: Recollection of the Buddhas; Seeing the Faults of Conditioned Existence; Observing the Sufferings of Sentient Beings; and Contemplating the Virtues of the *Tathāgatas*. In dependence on all these four factors simultaneously, the Bodhicitta arises. And surely, without even going into these traditional details too closely, it isn't very difficult to understand why and how this should be. By the Recollection of the Buddhas one becomes convinced that Enlightenment is possible. They have attained, why should not I attain? In this way energy and vigour is stirred up. On Seeing the Faults of Conditioned Existence (how impermanent it is, how basically unsatisfactory, not ultimately real) one becomes detached from conditioned existence, indifferent to it. The trend, or the stream, of one's existence sets in the direction of the Unconditioned. Then, by Observing the Sufferings of Sentient Beings – whether in imagination or, close at hand, in actual fact – surely, in this way compassion arises, love arises, sympathy arises. We don't think only of our own salvation, we want to help, we want to succour. Then, by Contemplating the Virtues of the Tathāgatas (their Purity, their Peace, their Wisdom, their Love, their Enlightenment, their Eternal Life, their Infinite Light) gradually, as I described, we become assimilated to them, and approach the Goal.

And as these four, as it were, coalesce; as energy, and detachment, and compassion, and this 'becoming one' with the Buddhas, all start coalescing within our hearts – then the Bodhicitta arises, then the 'awakening of the heart' has been achieved, then a Bodhisattva is born.

3. The Bodhisattva Vow

Free Buddhist Audio link for audio talk: https://www.freebuddhistaudio.com/audio/details?num=67

Tonight we are concerned with 'The Bodhisattva Vow'. The Bodhisattva Vow is one of the most important, practical aspects of the Mahayana tradition. In a sense, tonight's talk is a direct continuation of last week's. Last week we saw that the Bodhicitta has two aspects. There's first of all the Absolute Bodhicitta: identical with Enlightenment, identical with Reality, above and beyond time and space. Then there is the relative Bodhicitta: the Bodhicitta which manifests 'within' the stream of time. Now the relative Bodhicitta in turn has two aspects. These are known respectively as the 'vow aspect' and the 'establishment aspect'. The establishment aspect refers to what are known as the 'six *Pāramitās*', or the six transcendental virtues, the practice of which carries the Bodhisattva to supreme Enlightenment. The 'six *Pāramitās*' are: Giving (or Generosity), Uprightness, Patience, Vigour (or Energy), Meditation, and Wisdom. These six transcendental virtues will be dealt with in the next three lectures. This evening we are concerned with the first of the two aspects of the relative Bodhicitta, the vow aspect.

The question which arises is, of course: What does the Mahayana mean when it speaks of the Bodhisattva's Vow? The word in the original Sanskrit is *praṇidhāna*. *Praṇidhāna* means 'vow', 'inflexible resolution', 'determination', 'pledge', and so on. It is understood to be something very solemn and special; also something public, not private; and something irrevocable – something which when it has been made can never, under any circumstance, be withdrawn. We may even describe the Bodhisattva's Vow as a sort of promise which the Bodhisattva makes at the commencement of his career upon the arising of the Bodhicitta within him. It is a promise made to the universe at large — or to all sentient beings. This is the word meaning — what the word *praṇidhāna* means. But the word meaning does not help us very much in understanding the truth of the matter, so let us now look into it a little more deeply.

We saw, last week, that the Bodhicitta represents a sort of cosmic will to universal redemption. Its manifestation in the individual, in dependence on the appropriate conditions, is what is known technically as 'the arising of the Bodhicitta'. Now, as we also saw, the Bodhicitta itself is not individual, but universal; there's only one Bodhicitta in which all Bodhisattvas participate. But this one Bodhicitta — 'one' though it is — manifests in individuals. Not only does the one Bodhicitta manifest in individuals, but it also expresses itself through them. This expression of the Bodhicitta through the individual, this individual expression, as it were, of the Bodhicitta, is what is known as 'the Bodhisattva's Vow'. The Vow, therefore, may be defined as the concrete, practical expression of the Bodhicitta in the life and work of the individual Bodhisattva. This expression is no single; it's multiform. Traditionally we do indeed speak of the Bodhisattva's Vow, but the Vow is, in fact, a set of vows. We can now begin to see the difference between the Bodhicitta on the one hand and the Bodhisattva's Vow on the other. The Bodhicitta is one, and different Bodhisattvas participate in it; but the vows are individual: the vows reflect the Bodhisattva's special interests and aptitudes within the framework of the Bodhicitta and the wider framework of the Bodhisattva Ideal itself.

At this point, as this may begin to sound a little abstruse, a comparison may possibly help. We may say that

the Bodhisattva himself is like a glass prism. The Bodhicitta is like pure white light shining through the prism. The vows of the Bodhisattva are like the different, coloured lights which emerge from the prism on the other side. Thus there are three things: the prism, representing the Bodhisattva; the pure white light shining in, representing the Bodhicitta; and all the colours of the rainbow shining out, representing the Bodhisattva's Vow.

We can pursue this sort of comparison even further. We can go so far as to say that this pure white light of the relative Bodhicitta streams from the sun of the Absolute Bodhicitta. And we can further say that this pure white light of this one Bodhicitta shines through hundreds and thousands of individual prisms. As it shines through them all each one produces its own particular combination of colours. We know, of course, only seven colours of the rainbow, but in some kinds of meditation we try to visualize colours which as yet we don't know. So if we can think of all these prisms — as the white light shines through them — emitting not just the seven colours that we know, but hundreds of thousands of wonderful colours that we don't know, then perhaps we shall get some idea of how this one Bodhicitta shines through the minds of different Bodhisattvas producing all these innumerable combinations of vows.

We see, in this way, that provision is made both for unity and for variety. We see that the Bodhisattvas all participate in one Bodhicitta (this is the source of their unity). But it manifests itself in them all in different ways. Each Bodhisattva expresses that one Bodhicitta in his or her own way. This individual expression — in terms of life, work, career, and activities — is what we call the Bodhisattva's Vow.

We usually think of a vow as something verbal, rather like the oath you take in court. But the Vow is not just a verbal expression. It's not just that the Bodhisattva says, "I will do *this*, and I will do *that*". The Vow is an expression in terms of the life and work and activity of the Bodhisattva. It is not just a question of the Bodhisattva's conscious intention. To change the metaphor, we may say that the vows of the Bodhisattva are so many sparks struck from the Bodhisattva's total being — not just from his mind or will, but from his total being — under the tremendous impact of the Bodhicitta.

The Mahayana scriptures make mention of a number of different sets of vows. Some of these sets of vows are associated with the names of various great Bodhisattvas. For instance, there are the celebrated forty-eight vows of the Bodhisattva Dharmākara (who became the Buddha Amitābha, the Buddha of Infinite Light). These forty-eight vows are enumerated at length in the *Large Sukhāvatī-vyūha Sūtra*. (*Sukhāvatī-vyūha Sūtra* means the 'sutra of the Adornment of the Land of Bliss'). Again, the *Daśabhūmika Sūtra* (the 'sutra on the Ten Stages of the Bodhisattva's Path') mentions ten great vows. These ten great vows of the *Daśabhūmika Sūtra* have been summarized as follows: (1) to provide for the worship of all the Buddhas without exception; (2) to maintain the religious discipline that has been taught by all the Buddhas, and to preserve the teaching of the Buddhas; (3) to see all the incidents in the earthly career of a Buddha; (4) to realize the Thought of Enlightenment, to practise the duties of a Bodhisattva, to acquire all the *pāramitās*, and purify all the stages of his career; (5) to mature all beings and establish them in the knowledge of the Buddha, viz. all the four classes of beings who are in the six states of existence; (6) to perceive the whole universe; (7) to purify and cleanse all Buddha-fields; (8) to enter on the Great Way (the Mahayana), and to produce a common thought

and purpose in all Bodhisattvas; (9) to make all actions of the body, speech, and mind fruitful and successful; (10) to attain the supreme and perfect Enlightenment, and to preach the doctrine. All these ten vows of the *Daśabhūmika Sutra* are clearly different aspects of the Bodhisattva's one determination to gain Enlightenment for the sake of all sentient beings.

Well-known as these sets of forty-eight and often are, perhaps the most famous set of Bodhisattva's vows is the set of 'The Four Great Vows'. These 'Four Great Vows' of the Bodhisattva are recited daily throughout the Far East: in China (at least they used to be recited in China — one doesn't quite know now), Japan, Korea, Mongolia, Tibet, Vietnam, and so on. These 'Four Great Vows' are usually given as follows: (1) May I deliver all beings from difficulties; (2) May I eradicate all defilements; (3) May I master all *dharmas*; (4) May I lead all beings to Buddhahood.

Let us try to understand some at least of the implications of these vows. But before we do that I would like to make one comment. I've observed that these 'Four Great Vows' are recited daily throughout the Far East, which suggests that every Bodhisattva or would-be Bodhisattva, makes the same four vows. But it isn't quite like that. The 'Four Great Vows' obviously comprehend the spiritual aspirations of many people, but one is not necessarily obliged to adopt this particular set, or any other set, even though found in the scriptures. Any individual Bodhisattva — the scriptures make this quite clear — is free to formulate his own set of vows, if he or she so wishes, in accordance with his or her own particular aspirations, within, of course, the general framework of the Bodhisattva Ideal itself. The main consideration is that the vows should be universal in scope. This is the common characteristic of all these vows. They don't have reference to mean, or petty, or immediate objectives, but to something ultimate, something remote, something universal.

Now for the 'Four Great Vows' themselves.

1. May I deliver all beings from difficulties

You will notice that the Bodhisattva starts at the beginning. Here by 'difficulties' is meant worldly difficulties. It's as though whoever framed these vows said to the would-be Bodhisattva, "Forget for the moment about helping people spiritually. That is very difficult indeed." It is very difficult indeed to help other people spiritually even if one is qualified to give spiritual help, as occasionally is the case. Many people indeed do ask for spiritual help, but even when someone is qualified to give it very few people are able really to receive it and act upon it. Therefore the Bodhisattva begins, as it were, in a small way — because everybody can give, to some extent, material, tangible help and assistance to other people. It is said, under the heading of this particular vow, that the Bodhisattva, or the would-be Bodhisattva, should be sympathetic and helpful in the affairs of everyday life. The Bodhisattva should do, on all occasions, whatever he or she can do to help: be friendly, co-operative, helpful, and so on. There's no need to go into details because I think everybody understands the sort of attitude that is meant here. The only thing I want to add to this is that when the Bodhisattva's Vow speaks of 'delivering all beings from difficulties' it is understood that 'beings' includes not just human beings, but even animals as well.

Those who take the Bodhisattva Vow seriously should not be satisfied just being helpful in this way in the

affairs of everyday life, useful and necessary though that is. They should be prepared to go a little further, should be prepared to go even a little out of their way to help those in difficulties. In this connection I'd like to suggest four kinds of people in difficulties we can particularly help today. First of all, those who are now euphemistically called 'senior citizens' — not that that makes it any easier for them. Lots of our senior citizens have to live alone, and they not unnaturally often feel lonely or neglected. So here is a whole class of people who are in difficulties of some kind — maybe nothing very serious or acute, but certainly very often lonely, friendless, and feeling perhaps very much neglected. One who takes the Bodhisattva Vow seriously could very well make a point of trying to establish contact with one, or two, or three old people in the neighbourhood and maintaining a friendly human contact and relationship with them, which will obviously do them a very great deal of good.

And then, secondly, there are the sick. Not just those who are down with 'flu for a couple of days', but especially those who are confined to hospital, sometimes with very serious, painful diseases, for long periods of time. It often happens that even their closest relations, after a while, begin to forget. They think, "Well, I can go next week or the week after. After all, old so-and-so's there all the time; he won't go away; I can go and see him any day". So what happens? In the end they don't go at all, and the weeks and months slip by. It may be your own brother or sister, your own father or mother, uncle or aunt, but, strange as it may seem, very often you just don't go along. Hence there is a very great deal of work which can be done in this particular field, with people of this sort. Many of these people in hospital, especially those who have been there a long time, and especially those who are also old, have no relations or friends to go and visit them. Thus here too there is something very practical and concrete which we can do.

Then, a third class of persons, are people in prison. It may not be possible for us to visit them personally, but at least we can write. Quite a lot of prisoners appreciate people writing to them and helping them to keep in touch with the world outside, and making them feel that they still in a sense belong to that world to which, one day, they will have, in most cases, to go back. This is another kind of person in difficulties that we can very easily help.

And then, fourthly, I would suggest the psychologically disturbed: those who are neurotic, mentally unbalanced, or suffering mentally in one way or another. Many of them may need 'expert help'. Here we certainly shouldn't try to venture into a field in which we are not really qualified; though, at the same time, I cannot help thinking that the 'expert help' — from all that one hears about shock therapy in hospitals, for instance — sometimes makes things worse instead of better. In fact, I might even go so far as to say, as a result of my own contact with this particular field, that I am convinced that there is no psychological solution for psychological problems. In the long run there is only a spiritual solution.

It wasn't so many weeks ago that I read — I think it was in the *Evening Standard* — a report which stated that in the year 1967, in this country, five thousand young people committed suicide. (I wasn't able to verify that figure, but I suppose it's more or less accurate; a hundred or two more or less doesn't make it any less shocking.) If one has a little imagination and thinks about this, what does it mean? It means that in that one year five thousand young people, who ought to have been on the threshold of their lives, looking forward

to the future, were so overcome by problems and difficulties (largely mental, I should imagine) that they felt they had no alternative but to opt out — in other words, to commit suicide. A case by case study might make very interesting and revealing reading. No indication was given as to what their reasons might have been, but obviously the five thousand young people who ended their lives in that way were under very considerable stress. And one cannot help thinking that, had some friendly person been at hand at the appropriate moment, quite a number of those who did commit suicide might have been saved. Here is a whole field of work. Here is a whole class of people in difficulties, or potentially in difficulties, who can be helped — the mentally disturbed, especially the mentally disturbed younger people.

These are four classes of people in difficulties which I've suggested as very proper objects of the Bodhisattva's help, if he takes his first Great Vow seriously: the old, the sick, the prisoners, and the psychologically disturbed. But we can go even farther afield than this. We can help refugees, the homeless, the starving, the underprivileged, in all countries of the world. This sort of thing, however, is very difficult to do directly; not everybody can just up and go away to Africa or India and help. If we want to help at all we usually have to do it indirectly through a charitable organization, though many of us are not a little suspicious of organized charity. One sees that a large proportion of the funds subscribed are absorbed by administrative expenses etc., so that only a small proportion reaches the people for whom the money was intended. So perhaps personal action is best. I remember a story in this connection concerning one of our own Friends. He isn't here tonight but I can just tell this little story about him.

This particular Friend of ours was very much concerned with the problem of race relations. He felt that he had to do something about it. He was a rather active sort of person, and a good speaker, and having been politically involved in the past he thought at first that he might join some organization and, perhaps, carry out some militant action. But then he thought, "No, that doesn't really do any good. If I really believe in inter-racial harmony I should begin by practising it myself." Since he happened to have a spare room in his house, he advertised that he was willing to put up any coloured student. He got several coloured students in succession (I think most of them were university students from America). He said that it was a very interesting experience indeed adjusting his own relations with these people, and really learning to live in harmony, friendship, and understanding with a person of another colour. So this is the sort of attitude I feel that we should adopt: not thinking in terms of sending out help to remote areas, or doing something highly organized, militant, and dramatic, but helping people personally and directly, within the context of our own immediate lives.

This, then, is the first Great Vow of the Bodhisattva: May I deliver all beings from difficulties. These are just a few of the ways in which some of us can deliver some other people from at least some of their difficulties. These remarks are obviously only suggestive, not definitive; there's so much that can be done if only we have the heart. This is the first thing that the Bodhisattva sets himself to do: to help living beings in immediate, practical, material difficulties. He doesn't at this stage presume to think of helping them spiritually — leading them to Enlightenment. At this stage he thinks, "It is enough if I can just give them a helping hand in the affairs of everyday life."

2. May I eradicate all defilements

Here two questions arise. Firstly, what are the defilements, and secondly, how are they to be eradicated? The term 'defilements' covers all negative emotions, psychological conditionings, prejudices, preconceptions, or in other words, all that binds us to the Wheel of Life and makes it revolve yet again. There are several, traditional lists of these defilements. For instance, there's the list of what are known as the 'Three Unwholesome Roots'; Craving, Hatred, and Ignorance. They are symbolized by the cock, the snake, and the pig of the Tibetan Wheel of Life. When you see this vividly depicted Tibetan Wheel of Life, with its circles and subdivisions, you see these three animals right in the centre, at the very heart of the Wheel — the wheel of our own lives. The cock represents craving, the snake hatred, and the pig ignorance.

Another list of defilements is that of the 'Five *Nivaranas*'. *Nivarana* (literally 'covering') is usually rendered as 'hindrance'. These 'Five Hindrances' are: craving, hatred, restlessness and anxiety, sloth and torpor, and indecision.

Perhaps the most useful list of defilements is that known as the 'Five Poisons'; distraction, anger, craving, conceit, and ignorance. While I am on the subject, it occurs to me that this word 'poison' isn't used accidentally. The negative emotions are poisons quite literally. If you indulge in negative emotions you're poisoning your whole system, not only in the metaphorical sense, but even quite literally. I remember, in this connection, some rather horrifying experiments which were carried out in the United States. (I don't know why it is, but all these interesting experiments seem to be carried out in the United States, and one reads about them two or three years later in the *Readers Digest*.) The experimenter made a number of people angry in the laboratory and then popped a bag over their mouth and nostrils. As they breathed in and out a slight film was deposited on the bag. He kept on doing this, and when the film was thick enough it was scraped off. It was brown in colour, and found to be a deadly poison. So, apparently, all the negative emotions are quite literally poisonous, and when we indulge in them we quite literally poison our own system. You might even have noticed yourselves sometimes that when you're overpowered by a very powerful negative emotion, especially that of anger or hatred, you get a sharp, stabbing pain either in the stomach or in the heart. This is the poison as it were eating into your vitals. So it is no accident that this particular list of the defilements refers to the 'Five Poisons' — they're quite literally poisonous. We're poisoning ourselves all the time we are indulging in distraction, anger, craving, conceit, and ignorance.

The defilements can be eradicated in a number of different ways; but the best thing to do is to attack them at source. In this connection the Buddha gives an illustration. He says, "Suppose there's a gang of robbers operating in the kingdom, how does the king go about destroying them? He finds their hide-out and destroys it; then the robbers can no longer operate." Similarly with the defilements: you have to find their hide-out; you have to attack them, and root them out, at source. Their source, of course, is in the mind. That's where they are to be eradicated. One does that through meditation: meditation helps to eradicate the defilements.

As some of you know, in the Buddhist tradition there are five basic meditation exercises, each of which is an antidote to one or another of the 'Five Poisons'. First of all, the poison of **distraction**, or the tendency of

the mind to jump about from this to that. We speak of people having a 'grasshopper mind', or a 'butterfly mind', by which we mean that they are unable to settle on one thing for any length of time. It's a matter of being — in T. S. Eliot's famous line — 'distracted from distraction by distraction'. That just about summarizes modern life; it is a constant process — every day, every week — of being 'distracted from distraction by distraction'. The antidote to this, at least as a mental state, is the Mindfulness of Breathing. I don't think that there is any need for me to describe the practice; it's familiar to most of us because in the FWBO we practise it in all our meditation classes. One-pointed concentration on the breathing process is the antidote to all our distractions.

The second of the 'Five Poisons' is **anger**. This is said to be the most un-Bodhisattva-like of all defilements: you can give way to craving, or steal, or tell a lie, and in your heart of hearts you may still be a Bodhisattva; but if you really lose your temper, then bang goes all your Bodhisattvahood — you have to start all over again, because anger is directly opposed to compassion. One of the works quoted in the *Śikṣā-samuccaya* says (in effect), "Here are you promising to deliver all beings, and to be kind and compassionate to them, and then what do you go and do? You go and get angry with one of them! So there really isn't much substance in your Bodhisattva Ideal or your Bodhisattva Vow." Therefore the Bodhisattva is advised to avoid anger at all costs. The antidote to anger is again quite simple. It's the Metta Bhavana, the development of universal loving-kindness: the beautiful practice which so many of us find extremely difficult. But, though difficult it's familiar because this too we practise in our meditation classes. And many people do know from their own experience, at least from time to time, that this particular negative emotion of anger can be dispelled through this particular practice — the deliberate, mindful development of love and good will towards all living beings. Thus one eradicates the poison of anger through developing universal loving-kindness.

Thirdly, we come to **craving**. In a sense it is the Poison *par excellence*. It is not just 'desire' but what we may describe as 'neurotic desire'. Take, for instance, the case of food — without being philosophical — just ordinary food. We all have a desire for food and enjoy eating it — this is quite normal and healthy. But the desire for food becomes neurotic when we try to use food as a substitute satisfaction for some other need, whether mental or emotional. Only last night I was reading a report by a writer for girls' magazines to the effect that many girls who read the magazines wrote in to say that when faced by emotional problems they felt an uncontrollable urge to eat sweets. This is a neurotic desire. In other words, it's a craving.

As we can see, only too easily, craving is quite a problem, especially in modern times. There's a whole vast industry geared to the stimulation of our craving and to nothing else. This is, of course, the industry — or whatever you like to call it — of advertising. It is geared to persuading us, with or without our knowledge, that we 'must' have this, that, or the other. In fact, we may say that advertising is one of the most unethical of all the professions.

Craving can be eradicated by various practices. I'll mention just a few of them. (You can see how big the problem is from the number of the antidotes.) Some of the antidotes, I must warn you in advance, are quite drastic. For instance, contemplation of the ten stages of decomposition of a corpse. This is still quite a

popular practice in some Buddhist countries. It is said to be especially good as an antidote for sexual craving, in other words for neurotic sexual desire. I won't describe the stages one by one that might be a little too much for some of you.

If one can't go the whole hog there is a milder version of this practice: meditating in a cremation ground. In India, as you probably know, they don't usually bury, they usually cremate, and a special area called a cremation ground or a burning ground is set aside for this purpose — very often on the banks of a river. One is advised to go there at night, alone, and to sit and meditate. I can assure you that these cremation grounds are not always very pretty places, at least by day. There are fragments of charred bone and charred cloth lying about, and usually there is quite a stench of burning human flesh in the air. But, it can be a very beneficial and interesting, and even I would say exhilarating, practice.

I had one experience of this myself many years ago, on the banks of the River Ganges, not far from Lucknow. There was a beautiful stretch of silver sand that was used as a cremation ground, and it was the night of the full moon. Everything was completely silvered over, and one could just make out the low mounds here and there on the sand where cremations had been held. Little bits of bone and pieces of skull lay scattered around. It was very quiet and peaceful, and one really felt quite away from the world. There was nothing depressing about the experience at all; one can only say that it was exhilarating. One felt, as I say, away from it all, almost as though one's own cremation had already taken place. In this connection it is interesting that when a Hindu becomes an orthodox sannyasin he performs his own funeral service, going through the motions of cremating himself. The idea is that when one becomes a sannyasin, and gives up the world, one is civilly dead and no longer exists so far as the world is concerned. This is the last thing he does before donning his yellow robe. This association of death with renunciation and the eradication of all worldly cravings represents the same sort of idea.

If even an occasional visit to the graveyard is too much (it may be too much for quite a lot of people), and one wants a still milder form of the same kind of practice, one can simply meditate on death: that death is inevitable, that it comes to everybody in due course, and that none can escape it. Since it must come, why not make the best possible use of one's life? Why devote one's life to unworthy ends? Why indulge in miserable cravings which don't bring any satisfaction and happiness in the long run? In this way one meditates upon the idea of death. This is an antidote for craving in general, whether for possessions or success or pleasure.

One can also meditate upon impermanence: that everything is impermanent, that nothing lasts (whether it is the solar system or your own breath); from instant to instant everything is changing. One remembers that everything is going to pass away just like clouds drifting through the sky. This meditation has the same general effect as the other practices I have mentioned. One can't hang on very determinedly to things when one knows that sooner or later one is going to have to give them up.

There is another kind of practice. This consists in what is known as 'the contemplation of the loathsomeness of food'. I'm not going into the details of this practice either, because they are rather

unpleasant and have been made so quite deliberately. But this practice is very good for young ladies who are neurotically addicted to sweets.

Out of the various antidotes to craving one should select the exercise suited to one's need. If one feels that craving is very strong, and really has one in its grip, then by all means just grit your teeth and go off to the cremation ground and, if you can find a corpse or something reminiscent of death, even if it's only a bone or two, dwell upon the idea of death. Some people familiarize themselves with this idea by keeping skulls and bone around them.

After all, what is there to be afraid of? In my flat at Highgate I've got a highly polished old skull-cup. One day a lady came to tea, and was asking about my Tibetan things. She told me she loved everything Tibetan, so I said to her, "Would you like to see *this*?" and put it into her hand. She nearly dropped it, as though it had been a live coal. She said, "Oh, but it's a skull!" I said, "Of course it is: the Tibetans are always using them." Tibetans, I would say, are very fond of these things. They're very fond of anything made out of human bone or a human skull. They like rosaries made out of bits of human bone; they like thighbone trumpets; and they like skull-cups. This is because they take a quite natural, common-sense view of death. They don't think there is anything morbid or macabre in it as we do. We've been brought up in the wrong way. We've been brought up in the Christian tradition in which the word 'death' sends a shiver down one's spine. But this isn't the Buddhist way of looking at it. Death is something just as natural as life. I often quote, in this connection, those very beautiful words of the great modern Bengali poet, Tagore: 'I know I shall love death because I have loved life.' He sees life and death as the two facets of the same thing, so that if you love life you will love death. This is paradoxical but true.

It is now time for us to pass on to the fourth of the Poisons, which is **conceit**. The original term is sometimes translated as 'pride' but I think 'conceit' is better. We all know about conceit from our own experience and I need not say very much about it. Conceit may be described as one's experience of oneself as separate, not only separate but isolated, not only isolated but superior.

The antidote for this poison of conceit is meditation on the six elements. The six elements are earth, water, fire, air, ether or space (*ākāśa* in Sanskrit), and consciousness, and these are represented by various geometrical forms which build up into a stupa. Earth is represented by a cube, which is the base of the stupa; water by a sphere, which rests on the cube; fire by a cone on top of the sphere; air by an inverted bowl (symbolizing the firmament); ether by a flame in that bowl, and consciousness by the space in which the whole arrangement stands. The stupa has a great symbolical significance, the forms representing the six elements being arranged in order of increasing subtlety — the grossest at the bottom and the subtlest at the top.

How does one do this meditation? First one meditates upon earth. One reflects, "In my physical body there is the solid element, earth, in the form of flesh, bone and so on. And where does this come from? It comes from the earth element in the universe, from the solid matter in the universe. When I die, what is going to happen? My flesh, bone and so on are going to disintegrate and go back to the earth element in the universe:

‘Ashes to ashes, dust to dust.” One thinks and reflects in this way — though this is just an outline of the meditation, which is much more elaborate.

Then one takes up the water element in one’s physical body, thinking, “In me there is blood, sweat, tears, and so on. This is the water element. Where does this water element in me come from? It is not my own; it doesn't really belong to me. It came from the water around: from the rain, from the seas, from the streams. One day I shall have to render it back. One day the liquid element in me will flow back into the liquid element in the universe.”

Then one meditates upon the element fire (still more subtle). One reflects, “In me there is heat, there is warmth. Where does this come from? What is the great source of heat for the whole solar system? It’s the sun. Without the sun the entire solar system would be cold and dark. So the warmth in me comes from that source. And when I die, what will happen? Heat — which is one of the last things to leave the body — will withdraw from my limbs until in the end there is just a little hot spot at the top of the head. When that disappears I shall be dead. The heat element in me will have returned to the reservoir of heat and light for the whole universe.” This is how one meditates on the element of fire, reflecting that that too has been borrowed for a while and must be rendered back.

Then one thinks of air. “What is the air element in me? It’s the air in my lungs. I'm taking it in and giving it back every instant. It doesn't really belong to me. None of the elements belongs to me, but in the case of the breath I have it only for a few instants at a time. One day I'm going to breathe in and breathe out, breathe in and breathe out ... and then not breathe in again any more. I will have given my breath back finally. I will be dead. My breath won't belong to me then, so it doesn't really belong to me even now.”

Then one meditates upon ether or space. One reflects, “My physical body occupies a certain space. But when that body disintegrates what becomes of the limited space it formerly occupied? It merges with the infinite space around or, in other words, disappears.”

And then, what about consciousness? You reflect, “At present my consciousness is associated with the physical body, and with the space occupied by that body. When the body ceases to exist, and the space it formerly occupied merges with infinite space, what will become of that limited consciousness? It will become unlimited. It will become free. When I die physically I will experience, just for an instant, that unlimited consciousness. When I ‘die’ spiritually my consciousness will finally transcend all limitations whatsoever and I will experience complete freedom.” In this way one meditates upon consciousness.

This is only a summary, but it may give you some idea of how one meditates upon the six elements of earth, water, fire, air, ether and consciousness. Meditating in this way one applies the antidote to the poison of conceit. One progressively dissociates oneself from the material body made up of the gross elements, from the space occupied by that body, and from the limited consciousness associated with that body and that space. Thus one becomes totally free: one becomes Enlightened.

The meditation on the six elements is a very important practice, as you have probably gathered already. It is well symbolized by the stupa consisting of five geometrical forms superimposed one upon another. There are variants of the practice. One can visualize the forms as coloured. The cube or square will then be yellow, the sphere white or blue, and so on. In this way one can vary the practice, making it easier and perhaps more congenial.

The fifth Poison is that of **ignorance**. Here is meant spiritual ignorance, or unawareness of Reality — in a sense, the basic defilement. The antidote for this is meditation on the 'links' (*nidānas*) of conditioned co production. There are twenty-four of these, twelve worldly, pertaining to the cyclical order of existence, and twelve spiritual, pertaining to the spiral order of existence. While the first twelve represent the Wheel of Life, the second twelve represent the stages of the Path. One set corresponds to the reactive mind, the other to the creative mind. There is no time to describe all this in detail this evening. We have here the subject matter for several lectures, and I have in fact often spoken on these things before.

These are the five basic meditations: mindfulness of breathing, which is the antidote to the poison of distraction; development of universal loving-kindness, which is the antidote to the poison of anger; various forms of meditation on impermanence, death, impurity, and so on, all of which are antidotes to the poison of craving; meditation on the six elements, the antidote to conceit; and meditation on the nidānas, the antidote to spiritual ignorance. With the help of these five basic meditations the Bodhisattva eradicates the defilements and thus fulfils the second of his 'Four Great Vows.'

3. May I master all dharmas

I'm going to deal with this and the following vow somewhat more briefly than I dealt with the first two. By dharmas here is meant, primarily, the teachings of the Buddha, as contained within the scriptures of the Hinayana and of the Mahayana, as well as the teachings of all the Buddhist schools. The Bodhisattva doesn't belong to this school as opposed to that school. He doesn't even belong to the Mahayana as opposed to some other *yāna*. He studies and masters the *dharmas* of all *yānas*, all schools, all sects, and all traditions. Not only that, but the Bodhisattva, we are told, should master even the non-Buddhist religious and philosophical systems. Some scriptures go so far as to say that the Bodhisattva should study secular arts and sciences, especially rhetoric and prosody (which were very much in favour during the Indian Middle Ages). We're told that he should study these subjects because this will increase his power of communication: he'll be able to put across his message more effectively if he has these arts and sciences at his fingertips. A few of the sutras even say that the Bodhisattva should master various trades, such as that of the potter. Then, knowing the vocabulary and outlook of these trades, he will have a fresh range of reference, with the help of which he will be able to get the teachings across to more and more people. In other words, he'll be able to 'speak their language'. Knowing the sort of language — both literal and metaphorical — which they normally use, he will be able to communicate his attitudes, ideals, and aspirations more effectively. This, then, is the Bodhisattva's third Great Vow: to master all *dharmas*; to master the teachings of Buddhism, the teachings of non-Buddhist schools, and even all the humanistic subjects.

4. May I lead all beings to Buddhahood

This, of course, is the ultimate aim. This the Bodhisattva does by teaching, by example, and also by silent communication of his influence.

Such are the 'Four Great Vows'; (1) May I deliver all beings from difficulties; (2) May I eradicate all defilements; (3) May I master all *dharmas*; (4) May I lead all beings to Buddhahood.

Perhaps now we are in a position to understand something at least of the implications of these 'Four Great Vows', which are recited daily in all centres of Mahayana Buddhism. Together they constitute the heart of the Mahayana, the heart even of Buddhism itself. Together they constitute the Bodhisattva Vow — the concrete, practical expression of the Bodhicitta in terms of the life and the work of the individual Bodhisattva and the foundation of his whole subsequent career.

4. Altruism and Individualism in the Spiritual Life

Free Buddhist Audio link for audio talk: https://www.freebuddhistaudio.com/audio/details?num=68

Last week we saw that the relative Bodhicitta has two aspects. We saw that there is a vow aspect and an establishment aspect. The vow aspect refers to the Bodhisattva's Vow itself (with which we were concerned last week). The establishment aspect refers to the practice of the 'six *Pāramitās*', or 'six Transcendental Virtues'; Giving, Uprightness, Patience, Vigour, Meditation, and Wisdom. We shall be dealing with these 'six Transcendental Virtues', these 'six Perfections' as they are sometimes called, in the course of the next three weeks. Tonight we are dealing with the first two: Giving (*dāna*) and Uprightness (*śīla*). We are dealing with these two as expressions respectively of altruism and individualism — *dāna* being the expression of altruism, and *śīla* being the expression of individualism. In other words, we are dealing with them as the other-regarding and the self-regarding aspects of the spiritual life.

First, however, let us go back a little and make a few general observations. Let us go back to the first lecture on 'The Origin and Development of the Bodhisattva Ideal'. Those who were present will remember that the Bodhisattva Ideal originated, historically, in an attempt to do justice to two great aspects of Buddhism: the Wisdom aspect, as expressed in the Buddha's verbal teaching, and the Compassion aspect, as expressed not so much in the verbal teaching but — more abundantly at least —
in the life and activity of the Buddha.

The Bodhisattva Ideal, we saw in that lecture, represents a union of opposites — to begin with, a union of Wisdom and Compassion. That the Bodhisattva Ideal represents a union of opposites is true of the beginning of the Bodhisattva's career, is true of the end of the Bodhisattva's career (where Wisdom and Compassion are united in their highest power, in Enlightenment itself), and is true of all the stages in between. So much in fact is the Bodhisattva's very spirit a union of opposites, that we can perhaps describe the Bodhisattva himself as a sort of living contradiction. This is one of the reasons why the Bodhisattva and the Bodhisattva Ideal are so very difficult to understand. Generally speaking, we may say that the Bodhisattva synthesizes the sublimest heights and the profoundest depths of existence: the mundane and the Transcendental, samsara and Nirvana. More specifically, as we shall see today, the Bodhisattva synthesizes the altruism and individualism. (In next week's lecture we will see how the Bodhisattva synthesizes the 'masculine' and the 'feminine' approaches to the spiritual life.)

Now there is a misunderstanding to be cleared up. If you read books about Buddhism, especially popular books, and especially perhaps books about the Mahayana, you will find it sometimes said that the

Bodhisattva is not concerned with his own salvation, but is concerned with the salvation of other beings. You may even read — people sometimes put it rather poetically — that the Bodhisattva postpones his own entry into Nirvana: he sees, as it were, the gates of Nirvana shining afar off, and he says, "No! I am not going to enter. I want to help others to enter first." Very often the Bodhisattva Ideal is presented in this quite appealing and attractive poetic form. And you will find that the Bodhisattva comes to be contrasted with the Arahant (the Arahant is the perfect man, or the realized man, of the Theravada). The
Arahant is said to be concerned only with his own salvation, and the Arahant Ideal is said, therefore, to be selfish. In contrast to this, the Bodhisattva Ideal is said to be unselfish. The Arahant Ideal is said to be individualistic; the Bodhisattva Ideal is said to be altruistic.

In this way you find, in some literature on Buddhism, that a sort of controversy develops, with people (even) taking sides. You will sometimes find that the followers of the Arahant Ideal criticize the followers of the Bodhisattva Ideal, or criticize even the Bodhisattva Ideal itself. Sometimes they point out that charity begins at home. Here, they say, is the Bodhisattva wanting to help others to gain Enlightenment, but he has not gained it himself. This, they say, is like a person trying to pull others out of the ditch when he is right in the ditch, in the mud, himself. They say, "This isn't possible. First you must get out yourself, and then you can help others out."

Now the Arahant Ideal may or may not be selfish — I am not going to say anything about that this evening — but one can say that the Bodhisattva Ideal itself is certainly not one-sided. This is the misunderstanding to be corrected. The Bodhisattva Ideal does not represent altruism *as opposed* to individualism; the Bodhisattva is not concerned with saving others *as opposed* to saving himself. As I have already said, the Bodhisattva synthesizes opposites. In this case he synthesizes the opposites of helping oneself and helping others, individualism and altruism. He synthesizes these opposites in the spiritual life by practising *dāna* and *śīla*.

This tension between altruism and individualism, regard for others and regard for self, is not confined to the spiritual life: it occurs at every level of human existence. After all, we exist as individuals, but we also exist as members of society, that is to say, we exist in relation to other individuals. We have our own needs: material needs, psychological needs, emotional needs, spiritual needs — which obviously we have to consider. But others too have their needs (usually of the same kind as our own, at least in principle). And these needs too we have to consider, because we have to live with other people, in society. We cannot ignore altogether the needs of others.

But, often it happens that the two come into conflict: our needs as individuals and the needs of other individuals, the needs of society. This can happen in the wider life of the community or in our own very personal life; our needs come into conflict with the needs of others or at least with the needs of one other.

But at the same time, despite that conflict of needs — or at least that tension between needs — we continue to depend upon others and others continue to depend upon us. Thus it comes about that we find ourselves in a familiar and rather painful predicament. We find that sometimes we cannot live with other people, but

at the same time we find that we cannot live without them. It is rather like the snake in the fable. The snake in the fable caught a frog. But the frog was so big the snake could not swallow it down. At the same time, owing to its curved front teeth, the snake could not vomit the frog out. So the frog was just stuck there with the snake, able to neither swallow it nor reject it. We are very often just like that with people. We cannot live with them — apparently; yet also, it seems, we cannot live without them. One might say that if we cannot live with people, we cannot live without them — I think that takes a little thinking over! And conversely, if we can live with people, we can live without them, and vice versa. This is paradoxical, but true. We can probably say that only those who can live without people -really without people — can live with them.

What we undoubtedly need is a social context which will enable us to do both: to live with people and also live without them; to regard our own needs and regard the needs of other people; to be altruistic and also individualistic. This perhaps is the meaning of living in community. However, this is probably taking us just a little too far afield and it is time we got back to *dāna* and *śīla*.

It is not without reason that *dāna* is enumerated first among these 'six *Pāramitās*'. It seems that our natural human tendency is to take, to draw towards ourselves, for ourselves. If any new proposition comes up, whether it is in connection with our working life or our home life, our usual — maybe half conscious — reaction is to think: "What is there in it for me?" There is always a self-reference. There is always this tendency of grasping. Those of you who have seen the Tibetan Wheel of Life may remember that right at the hub there are three animals, one of which is a cock. This cock represents craving. It is right there at the hub of the Wheel of Life, right there in the midst (as it were) of our own hearts. It gives recognition to the fact that craving — not just ordinary healthy desire, but actual craving — very often dominates our life, at least unconsciously. We are all in the grip of this craving, all impelled by this thirst. So everything that we do, everything in which we become interested, has a self-reference underneath.

The Bodhisattva, if he is to get anywhere near Enlightenment, has got to completely reverse this tendency, or turn it (as it were) inside out or upside down. Giving therefore comes first, because giving is the direct opposite of grasping.

It is as if the teaching said to us, "You may not be very moral — you may not be very strict about your observance of the Precepts; you may not be able to meditate for hours at a time — in fact even five minutes may be difficult; you may not be very learned in the scriptures — you may not have read very much: but if you want to lead a spiritual life, if you aspire to lead any sort of higher life at all, then the very least that can be expected of you is that you will give, that you will be a little bit open-handed." From the standpoint of the Mahayana (at least), if you are generous, then whatever else you may be — you may be a thief, you may be a murderer, you may be a prostitute, you may be anything else — there is, spiritually speaking, some hope for you. Conversely, the ungenerous person, the person who finds it difficult to look outward to the needs of others, cannot, at least not for the present, lead a spiritual life. Such a person may be rigidly virtuous, may strictly adhere to all the Precepts, may even be quite well versed in Buddhist philosophy, but, for the present at least, from the standpoint of the Mahayana, there is, spiritually speaking, no hope for

him.

Now the Bodhisattva is the giver *par excellence*, the ideal giver. Giving is not just a question of transferring possessions. Giving, or generosity, is above all else an attitude of heart and mind. Indeed, it is an attitude of one's whole being. One does not just give with one's hand, one does not even just give with one's heart, one gives with one's whole being; one's whole being is involved in the act of giving. This is why Walt Whitman, in a very memorable line, says, 'When I give, I give myself.' That does not mean "I give personally, with my own hand", but "I give my whole being when I give; I give myself, because nothing less than that will do." And this is very much the Bodhisattva's attitude. If we want to get away from Buddhist philosophy and technical traditional definitions, if we want to forget even about Enlightenment as a concept, and if we want to define the Bodhisattva in some original way which will mean something more to us, we may perhaps describe the Bodhisattva as the person who gives himself: gives himself all the time and gives himself to everybody.

The Buddhist scriptures have got much to say on this topic of *dāna*. It is also a very popular theme for discourses in the East. If you go, in the evening or on a full-moon day, to a temple, in any Eastern Buddhist country, and sit amongst the people listening to the sermon, and just listen to what the monk or the lama is saying, you will find, in nine cases out of ten, that he is speaking on this subject of *dāna*.

The scriptures consider *dāna* under a number of different headings. Those of you who have done any study of Buddhist texts will know that they are rather fond of dividing and subdividing subjects. Sometimes you can get a little bit lost in this, but for serious study it is quite helpful. This evening, so far as *dāna* is concerned, I am going to follow that tradition, but let us remember that we are concerned with the spirit of giving, not just with the letter of the teaching — the technical details. The scriptures usually deal with *dāna* under the headings of: (1) to whom the gift is given; (2) what is given; (3) how it is given; and (4) why it is given. These four headings, with their sub-divisions, are believed to exhaust the whole subject of *dāna*.

First of all, to whom the gift is given. Ideally, or in principle, all sentient beings are the objects of the Bodhisattva's generosity. That is the ideal; that is the principle. But it is practically impossible: very, very few people are even in the position of being able to benefit the whole human race. Nevertheless one must at least uphold the ideal.

The scriptures mention three classes of recipients to whom the Bodhisattva should pay particular attention. First of all, there are his own, or her own, friends and relations. It is no use the would-be Bodhisattva being very kind and friendly so far as strangers and people outside are concerned, if at home he is difficult, awkward, and an uncomfortable person to live with — if not actually cruel. Sometimes you find cases of this sort: someone has a wonderful reputation outside his or her home for being so kind, so generous, so good, but at home is a petty tyrant or something else equally unpleasant. Therefore the tradition says that the recipients of the Bodhisattva's generosity are, in the first place, his own kith and kin. Charity begins at home, but the emphasis is on the verb — it begins at home but does not by any means end at home. It is rather like the practice of the Metta Bhavana. You start the practice of the Metta Bhavana by developing

feelings of metta towards yourself, then towards a near and dear friend, and so on. In the last stage of the practice you extend the feelings of metta to all the people in the room, and all the people in the town, and the country, and the continent, till eventually you are feeling metta to the whole world, even to the whole universe. Generosity, giving, should be like this. It may begin right in your own home, but you should try to extend it wider and wider, in fact as wide as you possibly can.

The second class of people who should especially be recipients of the Bodhisattva's generosity are the poor, the sick, the afflicted, and the helpless (among the helpless, tradition includes all animals). I dealt with this to some extent last week when speaking of the first of the 'Four Great Vows' of the Bodhisattva — the vow to deliver all sentient beings from difficulties — so I will say nothing more about it now.

The third of the special recipients of the Bodhisattva's generosity are those who are leading a full-time religious life. Traditionally Buddhism considers it the duty of society to support all those who are engaged in any kind of higher spiritual life or higher creative work and activity. Usually it amounts to supporting the monks, nuns, lamas, spiritual teachers and so on, but ideally it should include all those who are engaged in any kind of higher creative work, including painters, musicians, writers etc. At the same time, there should be, on the part of society, no attempt to coerce either the religious person or the full-time artist into conforming to the ideas and ideals of the supporting society. Complete freedom is essential both for the religious person and for the creative person. Usually the (at least implied) condition of support from society is that one should support the status quo; if one supports the status quo one can, usually, be sure of some kind of support, but not otherwise. This, from a Buddhist point of view, is entirely wrong. The support should be a free support, whether it is given to the full-time religious person or to the artistically creative.

Now secondly, what is given as *dāna* — or what can be given. Potentially this is coextensive with whatever can be possessed; whatever you possess you can give away. But to assist us further, there is a six-fold classification of the kind of things that can be given as *dāna*.

Buddhism starts off right at the bottom with material things, like food, clothing, shelter. If one goes to the Buddhist countries of the East one sees in operation the Buddhist tradition of generosity and hospitality. I remember that I had abundant experience of this myself when I was in the East, whether it was in India or elsewhere. I remember that I used to come down from the hills, come down from Kalimpong, every winter, and usually make my first halt in Calcutta at the monastery of the Maha Bodhi Society of India. Usually when I arrived there, there would be a gathering, maybe of ten, or twenty, or thirty monks from different parts of the Buddhist world, many of whom would be known to me either personally or through correspondence or reputation. And it was often my experience that as soon as one walked in, someone would say, "Do you need anything?" One monk would say, "Do you want any new robes?" If you wanted them, they would be handed over at once. Or another — a more modern sort of monk — might say, "Do you want a typewriter?" Or a monk might ask, "Where are you going? Do you want some money?" This was their attitude: to give, to share.

In the same say, if one went to any layman's house, they would consider it a disgrace if you sat down even

for half an hour without being offered something to eat and drink. In this country, unfortunately, it is a little different. People usually hesitate to go along to the houses of other people at what they think might be lunch time or tea time, because then they would place the host in the embarrassing position of having to offer them something — embarrassing all round!

I remember a rather extreme example of the generous attitude of people in the East. I was staying for six months with a Burmese friend. He happened to be a member of the former Burmese royal family. He was very, very poor at that time, but was unstintedly generous. So generous was he that it was very difficult to stay with him; you had to be very, very careful. If you said, "Oh, I like that", he would say, "Take it!" It would be given on the spot. If you said, "Oh, this is an interesting book", he would say, "Take it!" Anything that you admired was given. This apparently was their custom. After a while you learned to be very careful, particularly because you could not refuse — it was very bad manners indeed to refuse anything. You could give him something back, or at least give him something later on (there was no question of giving back), but you had to accept at that particular time.

In some parts of the Buddhist world the lay people (especially) make a practice of giving something every day. After all, you are taking something every day, if it is only air or food; why not give something every day? Some Buddhist families in the East always look out for a beggar or a monk to whom they can give food, or a poor person to whom they can give a piece of cloth or something of that kind. In this way they are giving all the time. It may not be very much — it may only be a few coins or just a few spoonful's of rice — but at least they are training themselves, they are getting into the habit of giving, and thus giving becomes an integral part of their everyday existence. Giving should not be something you do once or twice a year — at Christmas or at birthdays — but something that you are doing all the time. Thus there is a constant outflow to counterbalance the constant process of taking in that we do only too easily and readily.

The second thing that can be given — this may come as a surprise to some of you — is not material but psychological. It is called 'the gift of fearlessness'. As one goes about one finds that so many people are very, very worried and anxious: they appear strained and tense; they seem to have something on their mind all the time; they do not seem at ease or at peace; they do not seem happy. The Bodhisattva has to deal with this. He has to try to give people strength, encouragement, and freedom from fear by his very presence, by his personal inspiration. There is in Buddhist art a very famous representation of the Buddha (as well as of various Bodhisattvas) in what is called 'the *abhaya mudrā*'. The *abhaya mudrā* means the *mudrā*, the hand-sign, of fearlessness. The Buddha, by this *mudrā*, is saying, "Fear not. Do not be afraid. Do not be afraid, because essentially there is nothing to fear."

We can go so far as to say that fear is the great modern disease. It is not appendicitis, nor even cancer, nor even heart disease that most of the time kills us' prematurely: it is simply fear. I remember in this connection a very interesting little episode which was told me by a friend of mine in Kalimpong. He was a well-known Russian Tibetologist. He happened to pay a visit to the United States of America. When he came back he told me that he had had a very interesting experience there. Apparently he was just disembarking when he paused and thought, "That is strange. That is very odd. There is a peculiar

atmosphere here, like a fog — something clinging, something clammy. What on earth can it be?" He was a very sensitive person. He thought, "It isn't anything physical — it isn't coming from factory chimneys or the exhaust pipes of cars — so what is this grey, heavy, clinging atmosphere?" Then, he said, it suddenly struck him that this was fear. He realized that this was fear exuding, as it were, from the people of that vast continent; they were all living in fear.

We have the expression 'to smell fear'. You can quite literally smell fear. If someone is afraid, you can smell it: a dog can smell it, and, very often, if their senses are sufficiently acute, a human being can smell it too. So when you have a whole nation living under the influence of fear, the whole psychic atmosphere is, as it were, poisoned. The fear becomes tangible, becomes perceptible, becomes like a great oppressive cloud over the land. In the midst of this cloud of fear — this darkness at noonday — people are living, working and all the time trying to breathe. This fear is like a dark pall, in Wordsworth's phrase, hanging over our spirits. In modern life there is something more than just the threat of the atom or hydrogen bomb hanging over us: there is the fact that people seem unable to trust one another, have no confidence in one another, have no confidence in life itself. People are all the time shrinking as though they are about to receive a blow; they are all the time overpowered by fear.

Those who practise meditation will know that in meditation from time to time an experience of fear comes up very powerfully. At first it may be a fear coming from your childhood — or even earlier — but a stage may come, for some people at least, when a basic, primordial fear comes up. This is a terrible fear, but not a fear of anything in particular. It is an existential fear, a fear which goes right down to the bottom of one's being, right down to the roots of existence. It is a fear which one has to face and overcome.

The Bodhisattva, by his very presence, by his very example — by showing the example of a person who has himself conquered fear, transcended fear — gives freedom from fear. Thus the Bodhisattva gives fearlessness in the world of beings who are overcome by fear.

Thirdly, the Bodhisattva gives education and culture. We find that wherever Buddhism went in Asia, it was a carrier of culture — that is art, science, and knowledge of all kinds — not just a carrier of religious teachings and practices. The Bodhisattva spreads secular knowledge also, because through the arts and the sciences the mind and the heart — the intelligence and the emotions — are refined and become more closely attuned to spiritual things. This gift of knowledge, this gift of culture, this gift of education (even in the ordinary sense) is therefore, we find, one of the things which the Bodhisattva is to give.

Fourthly, the Bodhisattva may, upon occasions, give his life and limbs. This particular form of giving is the subject of many a Jātaka story (the Jātaka stories are stories about Gautama the Buddha's previous lives). Some of these stories will strike the Western mind, especially the modern Western mind, as rather lurid, not to say melodramatic. For instance, there is the story of the Bodhisattva giving away his wife and children. Sometimes people get all het up about this and say, "Were the wife and the children the property of the Bodhisattva that he should give them away just like so many goods and chattels?" Some people get very excited over this, but the story is not to be taken this way. The story just illustrates how the Bodhisattva

should give up, should renounce, even those things which are naturally nearest and dearest to him.

Nothing being dearer than one's own life and limbs, there are stories in the Jātakas of how the Bodhisattva, or the Buddha-to-be, gave them away too. There is a very lurid story of how the Bodhisattva on one occasion sacrificed his body to a starving tigress so that she could feed her cubs. If you take that literally it raises all sorts of questions and problems (we won't go into them now). Perhaps a modern equivalent of this particular gift is donating one's blood (though perhaps we shouldn't go into that either). I understand there is quite a bit of controversy concerning the magnetism of different kinds of blood and whether, therefore, from an occult point of view, donating blood is desirable.

One thing that we should not ever forget in this connection is that if we take the Bodhisattva Ideal seriously, if we take Buddhism seriously, if we take spiritual principles seriously, we may be required, under certain circumstances, to sacrifice our life for those principles and ideals.

Here in this country we have it, in many ways, very, very easy. One of the great blessings we enjoy in this country is comparative religious freedom: in fact, almost complete religious freedom. Here we are free to profess and to practise Buddhism. If we want to be a Buddhist, there is nobody and no law that can stop us. We can study Buddhism, meditate, practise *dāna*, perform a Puja; we can do whatever we like. We are very fortunate that this should be so. It isn't so in all parts of the world. If you were to live, for instance, in a communist country — China, or Czechoslovakia, or Tibet — you would find it very, very difficult to practise Buddhism. Not just to single out the communist countries, you cannot be a Buddhist in a Muslim country. I have some friends who tried to follow Buddhism in Persia, which is a predominantly Muslim country, but it was just not possible. They were not preaching or propagating Buddhism, but as soon as it was known that they were Buddhists, they were stoned. In the end they had to leave. Not to speak of the Muslim countries, what about the Roman Catholic countries? It is very difficult to be a Buddhist in some of those countries. It is very difficult to send Buddhist literature into some Roman Catholic countries. I remember a friend of my own, a French woman, who crossed over from France to Spain a few years ago. When she passed through customs with a load of Buddhist literature — which she was studying — in her luggage, she was told: "Such literature is not allowed in our country." As far as I know, there has been no public lecture on Buddhism ever given in Catholic Spain. In fact, not to speak of an oriental religion like Buddhism, there you cannot openly preach Protestantism!

So we should perhaps recognize how fortunate we are in this country in being able to enjoy complete religious freedom and toleration; but also we should recollect that in this modern world, under some regimes, it might not be so easy for us, and we might have to be prepared even to sacrifice our lives for the sake of our principles and ideals. We have to ask ourselves the question: "Would I be prepared to sacrifice my life?" It is easy enough to come along to a lecture like this; but suppose you had to do it at night, in fear of being found out, with an eye open for the police or the informer. Would you come then? If, perhaps, you meditated in peril of your life, or read a book on Buddhism in peril of your life, or stood up and spoke on Buddhism in peril of your life, would you do any of these things? Or would you not perhaps be amongst the majority who thought, "Well, I'll be a Buddhist in my next life; it is too difficult in this one."

If we are to take the Bodhisattva Ideal seriously, if we are to think seriously in terms of *dāna*, then we have to be prepared for the giving, if necessary, even of our own life and limbs for the sake of the principles and ideals which we hold dear and in which we believe. This does not mean that we should throw away our life in a foolhardy, showy, and reckless manner, but we must ask ourselves whether, if the sacrifice was really necessary, we would be prepared to make it.

Then, next, there is the giving of merit. The idea of merit is that if you do a good deed you get a certain amount of merit 'chalked up' to your credit; the more good deeds you do, the more merit you accumulate. The idea of merit is very prominent in the Hinayana. It is a good idea in a way, because it encourages people to perform good deeds. But there is another side to it: it tends to foster individualism. You think of the spiritual life in terms of accumulating enormous amounts of merit which are your personal property — your merit. In my *Survey of Buddhism* I have quoted the example of the Jain mendicant who performed austerities for years on end until he had a very large number of units of merit chalked up to his account. Eventually he got the idea that he didn't want to be a mendicant anymore; he wanted to return to the lay life and set up a business. So what did he do? There was another mendicant who hadn't got so much merit but had got some money. So the first mendicant sold his merit to the second one and with the proceeds set himself up in business — and lived happily ever after! This then is what happens when you take this idea of merit very literally, not to say literalistically.

Then the Mahayana came along. The Mahayana said, as it were, "We can't have this because this is individualism. But at the same time, people are very attached to this idea of merit: they believe in merit; they think they have got merit by performing these good actions. All right, we shall ask them to give up their merit, share their merit, transfer their merit." In this way the Mahayana counteracted the rather rigorous individualism of the previous approach.

If we want to consider it in non-traditional, non-technical, even non-Buddhist terms, we can say that this idea of giving up merit means that one should not hang on to one's virtues; one should not say to oneself, as it were, "What a nice little virtue I have got! It's mine!" If you have this attitude, you treat your virtue like the child that you've produced: you're proud of it; you're complacent; you stroke its head; it's your little pet virtue and it isn't anybody else's. The Mahayana, as I say, discourages this sort of approach and says, "Give it up! Share it! Spread it around a bit!" Francis Bacon said, 'Money is like muck — the better for being spread.' One may say the same about merit: merit also is like muck — the better for being spread around among a number of people.

Lastly we come to Dharma *dāna*, the gift of the Dharma, the gift of the truth, the gift of the teaching. This is said to be the highest of all gifts. You can give a person material things, give them psychological security, give them education and culture, even sacrifice your life and your limbs, even share your precious merits, but the greatest of all gifts is the sharing of the truth that you have understood —
perhaps after much toil, pain, and difficulty. This Dharma *dāna*, this giving of the gift of the teaching, by word, by precept, or by example, is traditionally the special duty of the monks, of the lamas, of the masters, and so on. But it is at the same time emphasized that all can participate in this great responsibility. In fact,

one cannot help it. One is, in fact, giving all the time: you are giving out something all the time; something is radiating from you all the time. If you have imbibed anything of Buddhism, then inevitably — whether you like it or not — you must give out Buddhism in your commerce with other people. This does not mean that on every possible — or impossible — occasion you just drag in the word 'Buddhism' and become a Buddhist bore. It does not mean that you should become like the ardent Roman Catholic in one of G. K. Chesterton's stories, who, whatever topic of conversation was started, would bring it round to the Roman Catholic Church. One day in a pub he met a man who was very fond of fishing, so said to him, "Oh, fishing? I'm interested in fishing too. There was a very famous fisherman once. His name was Saint Peter ... "In this way he got on to the Pope and the Catholic Church. This is not what is meant. In the course of a conversation what you have taken in of Buddhism should express itself naturally, without necessarily being labelled as Buddhism.

So much then for 'what can be given'. This is the most important heading of the four. Let me just summarize, by way of a list, the six things which can be given: (1) material things; (2) fearlessness; (3) education and culture; (4) one's life and limbs; (5) one's merit; (6) the Dharma.

Thirdly how should one give? There is no need to spend much time over this; it is very simple. First of all, we are told, one should give courteously. I am afraid that in the East, where beggars are concerned, people sometimes sin against this precept. They perhaps see a beggar begging in the street — maybe he is just squatting at the roadside — and they fling him a coin rather contemptuously. Buddhism, however, says that when one gives, to whomsoever, whether it is to a beggar or even to an animal, one should give courteously. And then, one should give happily — with a smiling face. This is of psychological importance. What is the use of giving something if you give it with a frown? It undoes half the effect. And then, one should give quickly, without delay. This is especially important in the East where sometimes a person's life depends upon somebody else's prompt generosity. Then, do not give as though you are unwilling to give, as though you are being forced into it. Then, give without subsequent regret. Having given, feel happy that you have given; don't think, "I suppose I had to. It would have been better if I had not. What a pity I did."

And then, we are told, give without talking about it to other people — don't say anything. I remember once I was attending a meeting in South India. Before the meeting someone had sent along a very, very small sum of money — about fourpence — as a contribution. Then in the middle of the meeting he got up and in a loud voice asked the organizer, "Did you receive my donation?" This is the sort of thing which does happen. So one should give without drawing attention to one's generosity. Then, the Mahayana sutras say, give to friend and to foe: if your enemy comes along and is in need of help, given to him as much as to your friend. And then, give to good and bad: don't discriminate between the so-called good person and the so-called evil-doer. And further, we are told one should give everywhere and at all times, but observing due proportion (discriminating and giving to people according to their real needs, not according to their apparent wants).

Now fourthly and lastly, there is the question of why *dāna* should be given. This introduces the very

important question of motive. Some people give — sometimes give on a grand scale — for the sake of reputation. I am sorry to say that this is very common in India: big business people, millionaires, multimillionaires, subscribe large sums of money for hospitals and dispensaries, but always say quite openly, quite blatantly in fact, "My name must be there!" — they insist that the hospital or dispensary be named after them. Sometimes they give on the express condition that if they donate so much money, then the building which is erected will be named after them — it is usually a very long name! Other more religious people may give with the idea that after death they will go to heaven, that they are 'laying up treasures in heaven' for themselves. According to Buddhism, this is not a very noble idea. Buddhism does teach that if you lead a virtuous life you will get the reward of it later on, but you should not lead a virtuous life with that as your motive. The Bodhisattva gives simply and solely so that he may be helped by his generous action (helped by the destruction of greed which it brings about) to gain Enlightenment — not just for his own sake but for the sake of all sentient beings.

This brings us now from *dāna* to *dāna pāramitā*, the Perfection of Giving, Transcendental Giving. The word *pāramitā* literally means 'that which conveys to the other shore', in other words, the other shore of Nirvana (the Unconditioned, the Absolute, the Void). Strictly speaking, there is only one *pāramitā* (we do speak of six or ten), which is *prajñā* (Wisdom) *pāramitā*. *Prajñā* is Wisdom in the sense of the direct realization of *śūnyatā*, the Voidness. *Dāna pāramitā* really means the practice of giving conjoined with the experience of *śūnyatā*. For this reason, true *dāna*, *dāna pāramitā*, is often technically referred to as *trimaṇḍalapariśuddha*, which means 'of a threefold circle of purity'. The threefold circle of purity is that in the act of giving there is no idea of self (no idea of I am giving), no idea of a recipient (that I am giving to him or to her), and no idea of the act of giving (that I am giving). This does not mean that there is a state of blankness, stupidity, unconsciousness; there is perfect, clear awareness. The giving is also natural, spontaneous, inexhaustible. It is a giving, one may say, out of the depths of one's own inner experience of Reality, one's own one-ness with the spirit of Compassion in accordance with the needs of sentient beings. So much, then, for *dāna pāramitā*, the Perfection of Giving, the embodiment of the altruistic aspect of the Bodhisattva's life and work.

Now we come to śīla, the second *pāramitā*, which embodies the more individualistic, more self-regarding aspect of the Bodhisattva's life. This, we may say, corresponds to the aspect of self-purification — not exclusively so, but perhaps predominantly so.

In dealing with *dāna*, we made use of the traditional classification; but in the case of śīla I propose to adopt a different procedure. Traditionally, śīla is expounded in terms of (i) the 'Five Precepts', (ii) the 'Ten Precepts', which result in a threefold purification of body (through three precepts), speech (through four precepts), and mind (through three precepts), and (iii) also the special 'sixty-four Precepts' for Bodhisattvas. This is familiar ground, and today I am going to take it all for granted. Today we shall be concentrating on Buddhist ethics as applied to three different spheres of human life, which affect practically everybody: food, work, and marriage.

First, a word on śīla in general. A little while ago I rendered śīla as 'uprightness'. This is more or less the

literal meaning. It is generally rendered — in fact I have myself rendered it in some contexts — as 'morality', but this evening I have deliberately avoided doing this. I've avoided this term morality because I find, especially when I am in conversation with my younger friends, that for many people it has rather unpleasant connotations. The word morality is associated with the traditional, the conventional, not to say the reactionary moral attitudes which many people believe are now outdated and outworn, in other words, those which are based on orthodox Christian doctrines, not to say dogmas.

While we are on the subject, I cannot help observing, as a result of my own study not only of religion in the West but of the general history of the West, that orthodox Christian moral ideas and ideals, which are not necessarily those of the Gospels themselves, have probably done much more harm than good in the West. Amongst other things, they have been responsible for generating in millions of people feelings — in some cases very, very strong feelings indeed — of sinfulness and guilt. Such feelings have, I am sure, ruined the lives of countless thousands, even countless millions, of human beings in the West. I think it is only fair to observe that especially in the sphere of sexual ethics the influence of orthodox Church Christianity has been disastrous.

I emphasize this because all of us, having been born, brought up, and educated in the West, are to some extent influenced by these attitudes and assumptions. It is not a question of accepting or not accepting Christianity; even in the case of those who consciously reject Christianity (atheists, humanists, agnostics, and so on), they are often deeply influenced by Christian ethical assumptions. It is very important that we should try to understand this because if we do not understand it, if we are not aware of these processes at work in our own lives, we shall unconsciously carry Christian attitudes, especially in ethical matters, over into our Buddhist life, with resultant confusion and possibly chaos.

Not so very long ago, at a meeting, I did happen to remark that in my opinion Buddhism could become widespread in England only if there was first a revival of paganism. Everybody at the meeting thought this was a great joke and that I was pulling their leg. But there was just one man who thought I might be serious. So after the meeting he came to me and said, "What did you mean by that remark? What do you mean by paganism?" I said, "I mean by paganism an abandonment of Christian — that is to say, orthodox Church Christian — ethical attitudes; only if one gets rid of these can the way be paved for the introduction and practice of Buddhism on a wider scale."

Now let us come to the application of Buddhist ethics to the three aspects of life already mentioned. Here the treatment will be only suggestive, not exhaustive.

First of all, food. We had some not very long ago, because we all have to eat. In this country we have to eat several times a day; in some countries they eat only once a day, or sometimes once every other day. It is as well we should be aware that we eat twice a day, or three times a day — some of us I believe eat four times a day, what with little snacks, or at least cups of tea and biscuits, in between meals! Obviously eating, the ingestion of this material we call 'food', occupies a very important place in our lives. I don't know how many thousands of hours per lifetime we spend in this fascinating activity, but it must be rather considerable.

Being such an important activity, one to which we devote so much time, energy, and money, one for which we require special provision in our houses in the form of kitchens and utensils and so on, it requires to be brought within the influence of Buddhism: we cannot think to leave it outside, unaffected by our Buddhist ideals.

In this matter of food, there are several principles which can be applied. The most important principle, obviously, is that of non-violence, or, more positively, the principle of reverence for life. This means, in practice, abstention from flesh food; in other words, it means vegetarianism. Some of the Mahayana sutras say that the Bodhisattva can no more think of eating the flesh of living beings than a mother can think of eating the flesh of her child. This is how the Bodhisattva should feel.

In the Western Buddhist Order we do not make strict vegetarianism compulsory, but we certainly do expect that all our Members, and possibly all our Friends too, will make a definite step in the direction of vegetarianism. I know that sometimes at home circumstances may be difficult and it may not be possible to be strictly vegetarian, but at least one can give up certain things, or one can give up on certain days of the week or on certain occasions. After all, no-one is perfectly non-violent; it is comparative, a matter of degree. But in this respect we should certainly be as non-violent as we can, should reverence life as much as possible. We may say that vegetarianism of any degree is a direct application to our lives of the very important principle which animates the Bodhisattva: the principle of Compassion.

Even this, however, is not enough. One should also eat, in justice to oneself, food which is pure and wholesome. By 'pure' I do not mean refined to such an extent that there is no goodness left in it. That is not pure, not naturally pure, at all; that is simply chemically pure.

We should eat only as much as is necessary for maintaining good health. Sometimes we forget that the purpose of eating is just to keep the body going. If one is down to a subsistence level diet, as people often are in the East, one knows this very well; in the West, where we very often have an optimum diet, one does not always know this.

Then again, one should not eat neurotically. I mean by this that one should not eat using food as a substitute satisfaction for some other — usually emotional — need. This is what people do. Lots of people overeat, because they are using food as something to make up for a frustrated emotional need.

Then again, one should eat quietly and peacefully. I think this is very important. In a previous lecture I have referred to that abomination 'the business lunch'. At the business lunch you try to do business while

you are at the same time supposed to be eating. I think that this is the height of uncivilization; this is grossly uncivilized conduct. Eating should be quiet and peaceful. Incidentally, to eat in a public restaurant or some sort of coffee bar, somewhere where there is a lot of noise — clatter and rattle, and loud conversation — is, I am sure, not good for any sensitive and mindful person.

Above all you should eat mindfully — with awareness of what you are doing. This is the great Buddhist principle here. You should not eat while trying to read a newspaper, or trying to discuss some business deal, or having an argument with your wife; you should eat mindfully, knowing what you are doing. Sometimes I have been asked whether Buddhists have a grace which can be recited before meals. In Tibet and Japan, in some of the monasteries, they do have, but the original practice was not like this. Originally there was no grace to be recited by the monks before meals: the monks were simply asked to eat mindfully. To eat mindfully is a religious exercise in itself.

I cannot think of a more beautiful example which combines all these qualities than the Japanese Tea Ceremony. There, just a small group of people — two or three, maybe four people at most — gather together in some quiet corner of a garden in a little rustic hut. They sit around a charcoal stove and listen to the kettle simmering away. Very quietly, very peacefully, with very slow, graceful, delicate, mindful movements, the tea is poured out. It is handed round to the guests. People sip it. They are just there together, engaging in this very ordinary, everyday activity of drinking tea. I shudder to think how sometimes we drink tea in this country — slopping it in our saucers and so on. The Japanese Tea Ceremony does show to what a pitch of perfection, even these ordinary, everyday activities of ours can be raised if only we apply mindfulness. After all, you could eat your cornflakes mindfully ... I was going to add, "And you can eat your steak and onions mindfully!" I might risk a paradox here and say that it is better to eat your steak and onions mindfully than your nut cutlets unmindfully. I don't know. What you lose on the swings you seem to gain on the roundabouts. I think, though, that everybody can understand the principle involved: even eating, this quite ordinary activity, can be made into a sort of art, can be made even into a do ('way') in the Japanese sense of the term. I think I could say that if someone ate every day mindfully, drank tea every day mindfully, and could live eating and drinking mindfully year after year, then after a few years it might well be that they would have gained as much as other people might have gained from a sustained practice even of meditation.

Secondly, the Buddhist attitude towards work. I must begin by saying that in the West we have all got the wrong idea about work. To begin with, we think — and sometimes say — that everybody should work. We mean by this that everybody should work for money. We think and say that it is wrong not to work, that it is sinful not to work — not to be 'gainfully employed' as the phrase is. This attitude is undoubtedly a legacy from Protestantism (you can look up that very famous classic *Religion and the Rise of Capitalism* by Tawney, and find it all detailed there.) Most of us find that if we take a few days off and just not do anything, we have a bit of a bad conscience about it, not to say feel guilty about it — as though we ought not to have a few days off, *ought not* to be enjoying ourselves, *ought not* to be just not doing anything. Some people, because of the way they have been brought up and conditioned, cannot spend a few extra hours in bed in the morning without feeling horribly guilty about it. Sometimes, if we see people sitting down and not doing anything, we feel fidgety and uncomfortable: we want to get them moving and doing something, because it is almost a standing menace to us if they are sitting there quietly like that while we are getting on with it.

This attitude is not new; you find it in the Gospels in the story of Martha and Mary. Martha was bustling around getting everything ready; Mary was just sitting at the feet of Christ listening — actually listening

— when there was food to be prepared and served, and washing up to be done! Christ, you may remember, said that Mary had the better part, or, more colloquially, she had the best of the bargain, while Martha had only the second best. In the West we tend to be very much Marthas rather than Marys. In fact, this feeling that we have to be doing something is, in the West, especially in the Anglo-Saxon countries, including, of course, the United States of America, a sort of disease.

I remember when I lived in Kalimpong a very worthy French woman who had become a Buddhist nun, who stayed in Kalimpong for some time. She was a tremendous activist; she was always doing things. She had her cell in spic-and-span condition; she was always washing, and scrubbing, and wringing out, and rinsing, and putting out to dry, and taking in to scrub again; she was feeding cats and feeding dogs; she was whitewashing things; she was climbing up ladders; she was carrying big buckets of water; she was studying Sanskrit, and consulting her Pali dictionary, and reading Tibetan; she was going to the bazaar: she was doing, morning, noon and night. One day she came to me for advice about her spiritual state! So I said, "My dear Anila," ('Anila' is how one addresses nuns; in Tibetan it means 'auntie') "there is one thing you must learn." She said, "Oh, what is that?" She was all agog to learn it! So I said, "You must learn to waste time." Her face fell. In fact it went scarlet — I am not sure whether with rage or indignation. And without another word she turned and went away. But she did come again, and I referred to this. I said, "Seriously, you must learn to waste time. Even though you have become a nun you have got a compulsive urge to work. Just look at these Indians and Tibetans. They sit around; they don't do anything all day. Look how wonderful it is!" When I said that she almost spat with contempt. Nevertheless there was a very great deal of truth, I am sure, in my advice.

Unfortunately in the West we only too often look down on those who don't or won't work. We call them by all sorts of rude names: 'social parasites', 'layabouts', and so on. We don't consider them at all respectable. Incidentally, it did occur to me while I was thinking over this lecture that the Buddha himself, so far as we know, never did a single day's work in his life. He was born into a wealthy, aristocratic family. He had lots of servants. He never did any work at home — not a stroke! According to the best accounts, he spent most of his time in three palaces with singing girls, dancing girls, and musical instruments. This is what the scriptures tell us. Then, after he left home, after he went out as a mendicant, he lived off other people: other people gave him food and clothing — he never did anything for those things. He preached of course, but he would have preached anyway, just as the sun shines anyway. He never did any work in the sense of working for money. So this is perhaps something to consider, that the Buddha, the Enlightened One, never did a single honest day's work in his life.

I have been speaking of work in the sense of employment; but there is such a thing as creative work. Creative work, we may say, is a psychological necessity. We do need to create; we do need to produce. It may only be in the form of cooking, or may only be in the form — I say 'only' but it is in fact a very important activity — of bringing up children. It may be in the form of writing or painting. It may be some constructive social venture. Whatever the particular activity, we do need to create: this is a human need. *But* satisfying the need to create need not be linked with employment.

If one thinks for just one moment of the ideal society, no-one should have to work for wages. I think that the ideal state of affairs would be one in which one gives to the community whatever one can in the way of one's labour, one's productivity, one's creativity, and the community gives to each person whatever he or she needs for his or her own life — not only needs materially but also needs psychologically and spiritually.

However, the day when that will happen is, I think, quite a long way off and meanwhile we do have to be gainfully employed in the ordinary sense. So here we have to apply the principle of Right Livelihood. I have often spoken about this so I am not going say very much about it on this occasion. In brief, Right Livelihood means that through one's means of livelihood there should be no exploitation of others and no

degradation of oneself. If one does have to engage for any reason in work which is non-creative, mechanical, repetitive, then try to work part-time; with regard to this sort of work, the principle to be applied is 'do as little of it as possible', i.e. as little as is compatible with one's existence economically in the world. In any case, however one is employed, there should always be time for meditation, for study, for contact with friends and other positive and creative things.

Thirdly and lastly, we come to the topic of marriage, which is another of those aspects of life affecting practically everybody in one way or another, formally or informally. The Buddhist conception of marriage is very different from the traditional Western one, is very different, in other words, from the traditional Christian one. On this subject we really require a whole lecture, but this evening there is only time for a few salient points.

Traditionally in Buddhism, marriage is not regarded as a religious sacrament; in other words, God does not come into it. At the same time, it is not regarded as a legally binding and legally enforceable contract: marriage should not be something that you go to law about in order to coerce somebody — the married partner — into doing something or not doing something that you want them to do or do not want them to do.

According to Buddhist tradition, marriage is primarily simply a human relationship: a human relationship which is recognized by society (in the form of one's family and one's friends). You may be interested to hear that in the Buddhist countries of the East, whether it is Tibet, or Burma, or Ceylon, or Japan, there is no such thing as a wedding ceremony in the Western sense. We have become so used to thinking of the wedding ceremony — the wedding dress, the orange blossom, the church bells ringing — as something so essential, you may wonder how on earth Buddhists in the East get along without it. But in the Buddhist East one just does not have that sort of thing. If one has anything at all after the couple concerned have come together, one has a feast, which they give to their friends and relations, and an announcement: they call everybody together and say, on that occasion, after feasting them, "We are living together. We are man and wife." In this way it becomes known to everybody — then that is that!

Sometimes the feast is given after several years. I remember a quite amusing case between a Sikkimese

friend of mine and his wife, who did not give their feast until they had been together for twenty years. They were not regarded, however, as living in sin in the interval. In the Buddhist East, living together and being married are regarded as the same thing. There is a little story I sometimes tell to illustrate this. A visitor came to Kalimpong and wanted to have a conversation with a certain friend of mine who didn't understand English, so I had to go along and act as interpreter. In the course of the conversation, the visitor wanted to put across to this Tibetan friend a remark about a certain couple whom he knew, to the effect that they were living together but weren't married. I translated this very carefully for the benefit of the Tibetan, but he looked puzzled and said, "But if they are living together, they are married!" This is the Buddhist view, that marriage consists in living together; it does not consist in the legal contract, nor in the social convention, nor even in the feast and the announcement. For Buddhism, the marriage is primarily the human relationship itself.

Now after the feast you may, if you like, go along to the monks at the temple or monastery and ask for a blessing, but this is not a wedding ceremony. The monks bless something that has already happened — the relationship; they do not make or create the relationship. The monks simply recognize the relationship and give their blessing that the couple concerned may live together happily in accordance with the spirit of the Buddha's teaching, helping each other to practise it.

With that background, it is only inevitable that in Buddhism divorce (by mutual consent) should be recognized. In all Buddhist countries, from ancient times, there has never been any difficulty about dissolving a marriage, if the persons concerned wish it.

Also one finds that in most of the Buddhist countries the wife after marriage retains her own name. We think we are comparatively emancipated in this country, but in this country if Miss Brown marries Mr Smith, she becomes Mrs Smith, whereas in the Buddhist countries of the East, the woman after marriage retains and uses her own name — she doesn't just duplicate her husband's name.

One must also say that in the Buddhist countries of the East there is no one pattern of marriage relationship. This is perhaps rather surprising to us. Buddhism nowhere says that monogamy is the only possible form of marriage. It says that monogamy is possible, polygamy is possible, polyandry is possible. You will find all these institutions in most Buddhist countries. For instance, in practically all Buddhist countries you find polygamy recognized; in Tibet, in the old days, you found polyandry also recognized and accepted as a perfectly respectable form of marriage. It is not correct to say that in Buddhism monogamy is the norm and is good, but polygamy or polyandry is sinful. On the contrary, these are alternative patterns, and whether you follow this or that pattern depends on your social tradition, on you yourself and on the people with whom you are involved. One cannot label one way of living together as 'good', the other as 'bad'; these are relative. What is important for Buddhism, what Buddhism pays attention to, is not the particular set-up, but the quality of the human relationship(s).

Now all this may sound very strange, even very revolutionary, to some people who have not really got into the spirit of Buddhism, and who are still, as I said earlier, carrying over into Buddhism Western, especially

Christian, ethical assumptions. But we must understand that these ideas have been common in the Buddhist countries of the East for centuries past. For instance this way of looking at marriage: we think it is quite revolutionary if a woman continues to use her own name after marriage, but this has been the common thing in all Buddhist countries for centuries. So perhaps even in ordinary social matters like these, Buddhists in the ancient Buddhist East were more enlightened (in the common sense of the term) than even many people are in the West nowadays.

So much then for *śīla*, or uprightness, which represents the predominantly self-regarding aspect of the Bodhisattva's life. We must not forget however that it is *śīla pāramitā* — *śīla* as a Perfection, as a Transcendental Virtue, as conjoined with Wisdom — with which we are concerned. Uprightness, even the greatest uprightness, is not in Buddhism an end in itself, but a means to Enlightenment. If uprightness is regarded as an end in itself, then it becomes, according to Buddhism, a hindrance. *Dāna*, giving, too, if regarded as an end in itself, becomes a hindrance. *Dāna* as an end in itself is what we call humanitarianism or secular philanthropy: it is good, but isn't good enough – it doesn't go far enough. *Śīla* as an end in itself corresponds to morality or ethics: sometimes morality is a good thing, but only too often it is harmful. The Bodhisattva practises *dāna* and *śīla* as means to Enlightenment. He practises them, that is to say, as Perfections. In this way, he fulfils the altruistic and the individualistic aspects of the spiritual life.

5. 'Masculinity' and 'Femininity' in the Spiritual Life

Free Buddhist Audio link for audio talk: https://www.freebuddhistaudio.com/audio/details?num=69

In the course of this series of lectures we have seen that the Bodhisattva represents a living union of opposites. The Bodhisattva synthesizes the mundane and the Transcendental, synthesizes Wisdom and Compassion. Last week we were concerned with altruism and individualism. We saw that the Bodhisattva synthesizes these opposites too; we saw that the Bodhisattva embodies both altruism and individualism. Today we are concerned with another very important pair of opposites and with the way in which the Bodhisattva synthesizes these. Today we are concerned with 'masculinity' and 'femininity' in the spiritual life.

In the title of this lecture on the printed programme you will have noticed that the words 'masculinity' and 'femininity' are in single inverted commas. This indicates that we are not to take these terms too literally: we are to take them in a more metaphorical sense. How they are really to be understood in this context we shall see in due course.

This evening we are still concerned with the establishment aspect of the Bodhicitta; in other words, we are still concerned with the practice of the 'six *Pāramitās*'. Last week we dealt with *dāna*, Giving, and *śīla*, Uprightness, the first two *pāramitās*. This week we are dealing with *kṣānti*, Patience, and *vīrya*, Vigour, the third and the fourth *pāramitās*. It is these which represent, within the context of the Bodhisattva Ideal, the 'masculine' and 'feminine' aspects of the spiritual life —or, represent the active and the passive poles of the Bodhisattva Ideal. *Vīrya* represents the 'masculine' aspect; *kṣānti* represents the 'feminine' aspect. Incidentally, in the ancient Indian languages, in a compound of this sort, the feminine usually comes first. For instance, in Pali and Sanskrit one always says *mātā-pitaro*, 'mother and father' —
one never says 'father and mother'. In English it is very often the opposite. Today we are following the Indian order and are dealing first with *kṣānti*, then with *vīrya*. After that we shall try to see in what way *vīrya* represents the more 'masculine' aspect and *kṣānti* the more 'feminine' aspect in the spiritual life.

Kṣānti is undoubtedly one of the most beautiful words in the whole vocabulary of Buddhism. It combines quite a number of associated meanings; no single English word is sufficient to do justice to the richness of meaning which the word *kṣānti* contains. Literally, *kṣānti* means 'patience', 'forbearance'. But it also includes the idea of gentleness or docility, even the idea of humility. Sometimes we say that humility is not a Buddhist virtue, but we mean humility in the more artificial, self-conscious sense. In this connection, there is a little story about Mahatma Gandhi. When he started one of his ashrams in India he drew up a list of all

the virtues which the inmates were supposed to practise. Right at the head of the list he put the virtue of humility. Someone pointed out to him that if you practised humility self-consciously, then it was not real humility and your practice was hypocritical. So Gandhi crossed it out and wrote at the bottom of the list 'all the virtues are to be practised in a spirit of humility' — which was a rather different thing. If one takes humility in the right sense — as an unselfconscious self-abnegation of spirit, or as an unawareness of self — then one can include humility also as part of the connotation of *kṣānti*. *Kṣānti* also contains very definite overtones of love, even of compassion, of tolerance and acceptance, and receptivity. On the negative side, *kṣānti* covers such things as absence of anger and absence of the desire for retaliation and revenge.

It is not very difficult to understand from these facts what kind of spiritual attitude *kṣānti* represents. Generally speaking, we may say that it represents, within the context of the Bodhisattva Ideal, the antidote to anger. In other words, it is a form of love. You may remember that *dāna*, giving, the first of the *pāramitās*, represented, within the context of the Bodhisattva Ideal, the antidote to craving. In the same way, *kṣānti*, patience, forbearance, or love, within the context of the same Bodhisattva Ideal, is the antidote to anger.

There is a lot that one can say about *kṣānti* — as one can in fact about all the *pāramitās* — but I propose to discuss in this lecture just the three principal aspects of *kṣānti*: firstly, *kṣānti* as forbearance; secondly, *kṣānti* as tolerance; and thirdly, *kṣānti* as spiritual receptivity. I am going to depart from my usual custom by introducing each aspect with a story — the story is not going to come in the middle or at the end, but right at the beginning. This will serve to remind us that *kṣānti* is not something to be theorized about or speculated about, but is essentially something to be practised in our everyday life, as in fact we shall see a little later on with the help of a verse from the *Dhammapada*.

First of all, *kṣānti* as forbearance. *Kṣānti* in this sense is illustrated by a story from the life of the Buddha himself. This story is found in the Sūtra of Forty-two Sections. (This sutra is historically of considerable importance. It was the first Buddhist text ever to be translated into the Chinese language. We now no longer have the Sanskrit — or perhaps the Pali — original of the sutra; we have only this Chinese translation.) One of the earlier sections relates the following story about the Buddha.

The Buddha, we are told, was going about as usual, preaching or going for alms, when he happened to encounter somebody, probably a brahmin, who for some reason was not happy with him. The Buddha was not universally popular in his day; quite a lot of people did not like what the Buddha was doing — enticing people away from their wives and families, putting them on the spiritual path, making them think about Nirvana instead of about making money. On this occasion, this person who met the Buddha straight away started to abuse him: he started to abuse the Buddha with all the words in his vocabulary. But the Buddha did not say anything at all: he just waited for the man to stop. After five minutes of uninterrupted abuse, the man just stopped — he got out of breath, apparently. So the Buddha very quietly asked him, "Is that all?" The man was a bit taken aback and said, "Yes, that's all." So then the Buddha said, "Let me now ask you a question. Suppose you have a friend, who one day brings you a present. But suppose you don't want to accept that present. If you don't accept it, to whom does it belong?" The man said, "If I don't accept it, it belongs to the person who wanted to give it to me." The Buddha then said, "You have tried to make me a

present of this abuse. I decline to accept your present. Take it, it belongs to you."

This is how the Buddha behaved. However, I think you will agree, upon a little reflection, that this is not how we, in similar situations, usually behave. If we are abused we retaliate, either by making a similar retort or in some other way. At best we keep the abuse burning in our mind and take revenge later.

The great teacher, Śāntideva, in the *Bodhicaryāvatāra*, gives some very useful hints on how we are to emulate the Buddha's example and check the arising of anger. Śāntideva says that if someone comes along and beats you with a stick, though that is indeed a very painful experience, nevertheless you should not straight away fly into a rage. He says that you should reflect on, and try to understand, what has actually happened. If you analyze it, all that has happened, when you are beaten with a stick, is that two things have come together: the stick and your body. The painful experience arises on the coming together of these two things.

Śāntideva goes on to ask who is responsible for this coming together and therefore who also is responsible for this painful experience. The other person, the enemy, has admittedly taken the stick to you and so is partly responsible, but you, Śāntideva argues, have brought the body (the body comes from your previous *saṃskāras*, from your ignorance and activities based upon ignorance of previous lives); the enemy provides the stick but you provide the body. Because you provide the body, you are equally responsible with the enemy for the painful experience. The enemy has put the stick there, it is true, but you have put the body there, so why should you get angry with him for his stick being there and not with yourself for your body being there? Śāntideva has a number of reflections of this sort, which help us to practise forbearance.

There is more however to practising forbearance than practising forbearance towards people expressing harsh words or people with sticks. In Buddhist literature the objects towards which forbearance is to be practised are sometimes classified into three groups.

First of all, there is nature: the material universe that surrounds us. We have to practise forbearance especially towards nature in the form of the weather. We are rarely forbearing towards the weather: it is always either too hot or too cold, or there is too much wind, or too much rain, or not enough sunshine. We also need to practise forbearance towards what are known in law as 'acts of God'; natural disasters beyond human control, like fire, flood, earthquake, and lightning.

Then secondly, we are to practise forbearance towards our own body, especially when our body is sick or suffering in any other way. We should not get angry with the body; we should not start beating 'brother ass' — it is not his fault. After all, we have brought the body here; it is our own responsibility. Some people of course find it difficult to practise forbearance towards their body: they get a little headache sometimes, but from the fuss they make — expressing their need for sympathy and so on — one might think that they were undergoing a major operation without anaesthetic.

The fact that we should practise forbearance towards physical suffering does not mean that we should not try to alleviate suffering, whether it is our own suffering or the suffering of other people. But we should at

least realize that there is always a residue which cannot be relieved, which we simply have to bear with patience.

Even if there is no sickness, sooner or later come old age and, eventually, death. In the West many people rebel against the thought that old age must come creeping inevitably upon us. They rebel and refuse to grow old gracefully. This is sometimes quite tragic. In the East, especially in the Buddhist countries, it is different: people there very often look forward to old age. They think, or even say, "How wonderful, in ten years' time I'll be sixty." In many parts of the East they think that old age is the happiest time of life. It is the happiest time of life because in old age all the passions of youth have subsided — there is no emotional turbulence; one has gained experience and with that experience perhaps just a little wisdom; one has fewer and fewer responsibilities — one hands over everything to the younger generation; one has little to do; one has plenty of time for reflection, even for meditation. In the East people do very much look forward to their old age; but even in the East it very often is not easy for people to accept the fact of death. Whether in the East or West, the fact of death is, for most people, a very sobering consideration. Nevertheless there is no alternative: whether we like it or not, one day death will come. One is therefore advised to practise forbearance towards the dissolution, or the idea of the dissolution, one day, of the physical body.

Thirdly and lastly, one is advised to practise forbearance towards other people. It is said to be much more difficult to be forbearing towards other people than towards the weather or even towards one's body. Other people can be very difficult indeed. This is perhaps why someone once said that hell is other people — heaven is other people too, but that is another story.

We can perhaps already see that the Buddhist ideal of forbearance is a very sublime one. In Buddhist literature, even in Buddhist life, the ideal is sometimes carried to what we in the West would regard as extremes. For instance, there is the Buddha's parable of the saw. The Buddha one day called all his disciples together and said, "Monks, suppose you were going through the forest, and suppose you were seized by robbers who were highwaymen, and suppose they should take a sharp, two-handed saw and saw you limb from limb, if in your mind there arose the least thought of ill-will, you would not be my disciple."

This is the sort of extreme to which this ideal could — perhaps should — be carried. Practising forbearance is not just a question of stoical endurance; it is not just a question of gritting your teeth and bearing it, while feeling angry and resentful inside. The Buddha's teaching makes it clear that forbearance is essentially a positive mental attitude, essentially an attitude of love. This fact is very well brought out in a passage from the Majjhima Nikāya (*The Collection of Middle Length Sayings of the Buddha*). In this passage the Buddha, again addressing his disciples, says, 'When men speak evil of ye, thus must ye train yourselves: "Our heart shall be unwavering, no evil word will we send forth, but compassionate of others' welfare will we abide, of kindly heart without resentment; and that man who thus speaks will we suffuse with thoughts accompanied by love, and so abide: and, making that our standpoint, we will suffuse the whole world with loving thoughts, far-reaching, wide-spreading, boundless, free from hate, free from ill-will, and so abide." Thus, brethren, must ye train yourselves.'

On this same subject there is a highly significant half line in the *Dhammapada*, *'Khantī paramam tapo titikkhā'*, which is usually translated as 'patience is the greatest penance', or 'forbearance is the greatest asceticism'. *Tapo* (or *tapa*) means 'penance', 'austerity', 'self-mortification', 'asceticism'. There were lots of these practices in ancient India. If you reduced your food to a few grains of rice a day, that was an asceticism. If you meditated while hanging head downwards from a tree, that was an asceticism. If you stood with one hand in the air and kept it there for months until it withered, that also was an asceticism. There was a famous asceticism called the *pañca agni tāpasya*, 'the asceticism of the five fires'. To practise this, you kindled four fires at the four cardinal points. When they were blazing, you sat and meditated in the middle, with the sun, the fifth fire, directly overhead.

All these forms of asceticism, self-mortification and torture were very popular in the Buddha's day (there are plenty of references to them in the Pali scriptures) and were regarded by many people as means to salvation. They believed that the more the flesh was mortified, the finer, the purer, the more enlightened the spirit became. But the Buddha did not agree with this; he had tried it all for six years and had found that it did not work. So in this little verse he says that forbearance is the greatest asceticism. It is as though he is saying, "If you want to practise asceticism, there is no need to seek out special opportunities for it (no need, for example, to sit in between five fires). Just go back to ordinary everyday life and practise forbearance in the midst of *that*. You could not have a more difficult asceticism than practising forbearance in the trials of everyday life." So in that sense *kṣānti* is the greatest of all asceticisms.

Secondly, we come to *kṣānti* as tolerance. You may know that the Mongols were converted to Buddhism in the thirteenth century by a great Tibetan spiritual master called 'Phags.pa. 'Phags.pa was the head at that time of the Shakyapa School, one of the four great schools of Tibetan Buddhism (the other schools are the Gelugpa, the Nyingmapa, and the Kagyupa Schools). 'Phags.pa was a man of great ability and great influence. He was the guru, the spiritual teacher, of the great Kubla Khan, who was emperor of China as well as Khan of Mongolia. In gratitude to 'Phags.pa for his teaching, Kubla Khan gave him the secular jurisdiction over the whole of Tibet. At the same time Kubla Khan wanted to pass a law and apply it throughout his domains compelling all Buddhists to follow the Shakyapa teaching. Now you might think that 'Phags.pa would have been very pleased that there was going to be such a law, but that was not the case. 'Phags.pa in fact dissuaded Kubla Khan from passing the law. He told the emperor that everybody should be free to follow their own conscience, to follow that form of Buddhism which they liked best.

This is an example of tolerance. This tolerant attitude is the attitude of all Buddhists everywhere and has been the attitude of all Buddhists at all times. If there have ever been any exceptions, they have been very few indeed. There might have been two or three, at the most four, very minor exceptions in two thousand five hundred years of Buddhist history.

We cannot help reflecting in what striking contrast this all stands with the history, in the West, of Christianity. If one goes through the history of the Church, especially during the Early and Middle Ages, one cannot help being — I will say — revolted, because there are so many instances of intolerance, of fanaticism, of persecution. These things seem to be the rule, not the exception. We have only to think, for

example, of the ruthless destruction of practically the whole pagan culture of Western Europe. We have only to think of the wholesale massacre of heretics, like the Cathars, the Albigenses, the Waldenses. We have only to think of the sad and sorry story of the Inquisition and the Crusades and, later on, the witch burnings. We have only to recollect that all these things represented the official, declared policy of the whole body of the Church and that everybody, from the Pope downwards, was involved — even, in some cases, some of those who were considered to be saints. If we go through the history of the Church and attend to this particular aspect of it, we cannot help sometimes getting the impression of something deeply abhorrent, even deeply pathological. Some people do say that all this is an aberration; they say that it does not represent real Christianity. That may be so. However, one may certainly observe that there are quite strong traces of intolerance even in the Gospels themselves. In fact, we may say that Christianity seems to have been intolerant right from the very beginning, and continues so, in the vast majority of cases, right down to the present day, the only difference between the past and the present being that nowadays the Church has very little secular power and therefore cannot do very much harm to its opponents.

It would seem, in fact, that intolerance, exclusiveness, and a tendency towards persecution and fanaticism are characteristics of all forms of monotheism; monotheistic religions tend to be of this nature. Not only Christianity, but Judaism and Islam too are very intolerant. As I mentioned in last week's lecture, if I wanted to go and preach Buddhism in a Muslim country I simply could not do it. If I attempted it I would probably pay very dearly for it. Muslims do not have a tradition of tolerance of other religions.

Buddhism, on the other hand, is non-theistic: it does not believe in a personal god, it does not believe in a supreme being, it does not believe that religion consists in faith in, or submission to, such a supreme being. According to the Buddhist teaching, each and every individual is responsible for his or her own spiritual destiny. But you cannot be responsible, you cannot be expected to be responsible, without freedom. Therefore in Buddhism everybody is encouraged to choose and to follow, in their own way, their own path. This is why there are many different forms of Buddhism. These different forms are not sects; they are not rival bodies; they do not all claim exclusive possession of Buddhist truth. The different forms of Buddhism represent particular aspects of the one total tradition.

Though Buddhism is tolerant, not only towards all other forms of Buddhism itself but towards all other religions, it is not vague. Sometimes you find that individuals are tolerant, but they are very vague and woolly: they mix everything up and don't distinguish, don't divide, don't analyze. But Buddhism is not like this. In Buddhism there is no pseudo-universalism. The teaching of Buddhism is a clear, precise teaching; at the same time, perfect tolerance is practised.

This combination of certainty on the one hand and tolerance on the other is very difficult for the Western mind to understand. We tend, in the West, to think that the more confident you are that you know, the greater your right to impose your views on other people. We tend to think, "I know that this is right and true, therefore I have to bring other people into it, if necessary I have to force them to accept. Why can't they see it? It's their blindness, their foolishness, their stupidity!" But in Buddhism it is not like this. Buddhists are very clear in their understanding of the Buddhist teaching, say, the 'Four Truths', the

'Eightfold Path', Conditioned Co-production, śūnyatā — these make up a clear, precise teaching, which has been well formulated intellectually; and those who do believe the teaching believe it wholeheartedly — they are fully convinced of its truth; but at the same time, perfect freedom is extended to other people to think differently.

Furthermore the Buddhist does not become agitated, worried or upset at the thought that elsewhere in the world, even in his own environment, there are people who do not accept what he accepts — who do not believe that the 'Noble Eightfold Path' leads to Nirvana, for example — and in fact reject what he accepts. The Buddhist recognizes this fact, sees it quite clearly, but is not disturbed; whereas in the West, if someone does not share our belief, we tend to feel threatened, insecure and undermined, and this results in this fanatical desire to make everybody believe what we believe.

There is much more that could be said on this topic of tolerance, but we do not have any time to pursue it this evening, so we will pass on now to the third aspect of *kṣānti*: *kṣānti* as spiritual receptivity. This time our illustration comes from chapter two of the *Saddharma-puṇḍarīka Sūtra*. This chapter opens with the Buddha surrounded by his disciples: tens of thousands of Arahants and Bodhisattvas. The Buddha is just sitting there, cross-legged, in the midst of the assembly, with his eyes half closed and his hands folded on his lap; he is immersed in very profound meditation. He sits there a long, long time. As it is an assembly of Arahants and Bodhisattvas, they don't become impatient — they don't start fidgeting and coughing — but just sit there along with him, quietly, calmly, also immersed in meditation. When, eventually, the Buddha comes out of meditation, he announces to the assembly that the Ultimate Truth is something very, very difficult to understand, that even if, having seen it himself, he were to explain it, very likely nobody would be able to understand it; he says that it is so profound, so vast and so transcends all human capacity, that no-one will be able to fathom it. Naturally his disciples entreat him to at least try to communicate this Truth to them. Eventually the Buddha agrees and says, "I shall now proclaim to you a further, higher teaching, a more profound teaching than anything that you have heard before, something which, because it is so tremendous and goes so far beyond anything that you have heard before, will make your previous understanding and experience seem childish." When he says this, five thousand of the disciples just walk out. As they leave they murmur among themselves, "Something further? Something higher? Something we haven't understood? Something we haven't realized? Impossible! We know it all already. We have realized all there is to realize. We are 'there'!"

So this represents a very universal human tendency; people think that they have nothing more to learn. It is a tendency that is especially strong, and especially dangerous, in the spiritual life. We think that we have nothing more to learn, that we have taken it all in, that we have got it, that it is all under control. When we think like this, however, we close our minds and become no longer receptive. Of course we are not altogether fools and we say, "Oh yes, I've got a lot more to learn; I know I don't know everything." We say that, but we don't really mean it — in fact we don't really know what we mean by those words. We go on thinking in the same old way; we go on behaving in the same old way; we maintain the same old attitudes.

This receptivity is not just a question of acquiring additional information: it does not mean that having

learned all about the Mādhyamīka School, one should be open-minded about further historical developments — maybe about the arising of sub-schools. Receptivity means that one should be prepared for a radical change in one's whole mode of being, one's whole way of life, one's whole way of looking at things. And it is this that we are not prepared for; it is this which, in fact, we resist; it is against this that — in order to protect ourselves — we set our defences.

We may say that spiritual receptivity is of supreme importance and that without it spiritual progress cannot be maintained. We should hold ourselves open to the truth just as the flower holds itself open to the sun. We should be ready, if necessary, to give up whatever we have learned so far — that is not easy by any means. We should be prepared to give up whatever we have been, whatever we have become, whatever we are so far — that is still more difficult. By spiritual receptivity, we mean holding ourselves open to those higher spiritual influences, which are streaming through the universe, but with which we are not usually in contact, and against which we usually shut ourselves off.

So much then for *kṣānti* in the senses of forbearance, tolerance, and spiritual receptivity. As I indicated earlier, *kṣānti* represents the 'feminine' aspect of the spiritual life. Now we are going to pass on to *vīrya*, or vigour, the fourth pāramitā. This of course represents the 'masculine' aspect of the spiritual life.

The word *vīrya* itself presents us with no difficulties. *Vīrya* means 'masculine potency', 'driving force', 'energy', and 'vigour'. It comes from the same Indo-Aryan root as our own English word, 'virtue', which originally meant 'strength' and also 'virility'. In Buddhist terms, however, *vīrya* has the specific meaning of 'energy in pursuit of the good' (this is how it is defined by Śāntideva). 'Good' here means 'Enlightenment for the sake of all sentient beings'.

It is important to notice that *vīrya* does not mean just ordinary activity. If you are rushing here and there, being very busy, doing lots of things, you are not necessarily practising *vīrya* pāramitā. Vigour as one of the Buddhist virtues is quite a different thing. In fact, in this connection, it is very interesting to refer to sGam.po.pa's definition of laziness. (sGam.po.pa was a great Kagyupa teacher, who lived in Tibet at about the time of the Norman conquest in this country.) In his *Jewel Ornament of Liberation* sGam.po.pa defines laziness as 'being constantly busy and active in subduing enemies and accumulating money'. You can take 'subduing enemies' as representing politics and 'accumulating money' as representing business. So sGam.po.pa is saying that to engage full time, very energetically, in either politics or business — or both — is simply laziness, however apparently busy you may be: this is not *vīrya* in the Buddhistic sense.

This *pāramitā*, *vīrya*, is extremely important, because, in a sense, the practice of all the other *pāramitās* depends upon it: if you want to give, or practise the Precepts, or meditate, you need energy; to practise patience and forbearance you need energy, even if it is negative energy in the form of resistance; if you want to develop Wisdom, you need more energy then than ever.

This brings us right up against a very big problem. Let us say that we have a spiritual ideal, an ideal that we want to reach and realize. Let us say that our spiritual ideal is the Bodhisattva Ideal itself. We have of this

Ideal a quite clear intellectual understanding: we have read about it, heard about it, understood it in our own minds — we could perhaps give a connected account of it if anybody asked us. We genuinely accept it as our ideal. But, despite our clear intellectual understanding of the Ideal, despite our quite genuine acceptance of it, we do not somehow manage to attain it. In fact, the months and the years, perhaps even the decades, go by, and, though we do still have the Ideal — we are still hanging on to it — we do not seem to have made any perceptible progress towards it: we feel as though we are just where we were. It is as though we stand at the foot of Mt. Kanchenjunga and look up at the snow peak; then, maybe twenty years later, we are still standing at the same spot, with the peak as distant as ever.

I remember a very — in a way — moving example of this, many years ago in India, when I went along to hear a talk by J. Krishnamurti. At the end of the talk there were questions and answers, and a discussion. In the midst of the discussion one woman got up and said to Krishnamurti, with her voice vibrating with emotion (this often happens in Krishnamurti's meetings), "Sir, we've been following you, and accepting this ideal, and trying to put it into practice for forty years, but, we are just where we were forty years ago. What shall we do about it?" (I forget what he said in reply, though he did have quite a lot to say).

This is the sort of thing that happens. The question arises then: why does this happen, why are we not able to make any progress? After all, we *do* have the Ideal: we are quite clear about it, we know what we have to do, we even make an effort. If this question is put to us, we will most likely reply that we have not been able to progress because we have no strength or energy; we will say, "I could not put the energy into it." In other words, there was no *vīrya*.

Why, then, should there be no energy? Why should there be no drive for the living of the spiritual life? Actually we have got plenty of energy; there is no shortage of energy at all. Far from being short of energy, we ourselves are embodiments of energy; we are crystallizations, as it were, of psychophysical, even spiritual, energy. We have a body and a mind: these are made up of energy. We ourselves are energy. There is no shortage of energy, but usually our energy is dissipated. Our energy is like a stream which is divided and led away into thousands of channels, so that it loses its force. Our energy flows out over innumerable objects, is dissipated in numberless directions. Only a small part of our energy goes into the spiritual life. The rest of our energy goes into all sorts of other activities that contradict the spiritual life. As a result, we sometimes feel pulled apart: part of our energy is going one way — towards the Ideal; another part is going another way — away from the Ideal. We feel pulled apart and very often — for this reason — exhausted.

The central problem of the spiritual life, we may say, is that of the conservation and unification of our energies. Some of you may recollect that I went into this, some months ago, in the course of a lecture on the Sevenfold Puja, 'Poetry and Devotion in Buddhism'. We saw on that occasion that our energies, especially our emotional energies, are not available for the living of the spiritual life, because they are either blocked within us, or are wasted and leak away, or are too coarse.

We find that our energies are blocked within us for various reasons. Very often our emotional energies are blocked because we have been brought up to repress our emotions, to not show them, to not express them

— some people say, of course, that the English are particularly good at this. Then again, our energy becomes blocked if we are compelled to engage in mechanical, routine work, work into which we cannot put our energy (we do not want to give our energy to something in which we are not interested). Then again, our energies petrify if we have no real, positive, creative outlet for them. Again, sometimes emotional energies are dammed up on account of emotional frustrations, emotional disappointments, fear of being hurt through the emotions. Again, we find that people's emotional energies become blocked on account of the wrong type of education, such as the orthodox Christian teaching on sex, which must have resulted in the emotional stultification, in the course of history, of tens of millions, if not hundreds of millions, of people. Above all, perhaps, our energy becomes blocked if there is an absence of any real communication with other people. We find that real communication has an energizing, almost an electrifying effect on people. Most people are out of communication with one another, but when they come into communication it is as though a negative and a positive terminal meet and a spark, energy, is produced. In all these ways our emotional energies are blocked, and because they are blocked they are not available for the living of the spiritual life.

Secondly, emotional energies are wasted: they are allowed to just leak away. This happens in a number of different ways, though mainly it happens on account of indulgence in negative emotions. If you indulge in negative emotions, energy drains away from you. The negative emotions include: fear, hatred, anger, ill-will, antagonism, jealousy (perhaps the most terrifying of all the negative emotions), self-pity, guilt, remorse, anxiety. We in the West tend to regard some of these negative emotions as virtues, but from a Buddhist point of view, they are all negative: if we had the words 'vice' or 'sin' in Buddhism they would certainly apply to all of these. Just cast your mind back over the previous day, over the previous week, and recollect how often you have indulged in fear, or hatred, or jealousy, self-pity, guilt, remorse, anxiety - recollect how often there has been, at the least, a sort of ticking over of the mind about this or that, under the influence of one or other of these emotions. For as long as you have been engaging in these negative emotions, energy has been draining away from you.

Our emotional energies are also wasted through the verbal expressions of negative emotions. In the lecture, 'Poetry and Devotion in Buddhism', I went into these in considerable detail. For instance, there is grumbling. Grumbling just expresses negative emotion, nothing more. Then there is carping criticism — fault finding. And then what I called 'dismal-Jimmyism' — looking on the gloomy side of everything, discouraging people from doing things. And then a rather poisonous expression, gossip, which is usually of course malicious. Then lastly, nagging, which unfortunately is especially common in the domestic circle. All of these are verbal expressions of negative emotions. Through these verbal expressions too, energy is leaking and draining away, and is therefore not available for spiritual purposes.

Thirdly, emotional energy is not available for the living of the spiritual life because it is simply too coarse. Spiritual life requires spiritual energy. We cannot, for instance, meditate with our muscles. The muscles may be very full of energy, may be very strong, but for meditation we require something finer. Ordinary human energy, even ordinary human *emotional* energy, is not available for the spiritual life just because it is too coarse-grained: before it can be used for and by the spiritual life it has to be refined.

There are various ways of resolving blockages of emotional energy, of stopping the waste of emotional energy, and of refining the more coarse emotional energies. If we can resolve the blockages, stop the waste, and refine the coarse energies, then energy will be conserved, will be unified, will just flow forth.

Blockages are resolved through awareness, through introspection. They are resolved through engaging in genuinely creative, or at least productive, work. They are resolved through the stepping up of human communication, if necessary with the help of what we call the 'communication exercises'. We also find that quite a lot of blockages get resolved, as it were spontaneously, in the course of meditation practice.

Waste also is stopped through awareness: through awareness of the fact that one is indulging in negative emotions. Waste is also stopped by cultivating the opposite emotion: love instead of hate, or confidence instead of fear, and so on. As regards the verbal expressions of negative emotions, these just have to be stopped by an act of will. There is nothing else that one can do about them. They do not deserve any better treatment. As I have observed on more than one occasion, if we can only stop talking, if we can only stop not just verbal expressions of negative emotions but all verbal expressions whatsoever, if we can just be silent for a while — a few minutes, a few hours, maybe a few days — we find that energy is accumulated within us. Probably most of you know that if you can spend a day quietly at home, all by yourself, not talking to anyone, you experience an accession of energy. An enormous amount of energy goes out of us simply because we have to talk. By stopping the verbal expressions of negative emotions we save energy, but by stopping also, for a while, all verbal expressions, we begin to feel more calm, more aware, more mindful; and then, gradually, it is as though a fresh clear spring of energy begins to bubble up inside us, pure, virginal, not touched, not tainted, because it has been kept within us and not expressed outwardly in any form.

The coarser emotional energies are refined in two ways: through practices of faith and devotion, e.g. the 'sevenfold Puja', and also through the fine arts.

As we resolve blockages of energy, stop the waste of energy, refine energy, energy becomes available for the leading of the spiritual life, for the practice of all the Perfections, which the Bodhisattva must practise to attain Buddhahood. There is no division of energies. The Bodhisattva becomes the embodiment of energy. At the same time, there is no hurry, no fuss, no restlessness, or anything of that sort; there is just smooth, uninterrupted activity for the benefit of all sentient beings. Śāntideva may be quoted again, in this connection. Śāntideva says that the Bodhisattva is like an elephant. (In Indian literature if you are compared with an elephant it is highly complementary. They say, for instance, of a beautiful woman that she walks just like an elephant. This does not mean that she is clumsy or well-built, but that she walks with a slow, graceful, stately movement.) The Bodhisattva is said to be like an elephant, because the elephant, especially the male elephant, is very playful. The male elephant loves to bathe in lotus ponds: he squirts water over himself; he trumpets gaily; he plucks up great bunches of lotus flowers and washes them carefully before eating them. In this way he passes the day very happily. Śāntideva says that the Bodhisattva is just like an elephant, because just as the elephant, as soon as he has finished playing and sporting in one lotus pond, plunges into another, so, with equal delight, the Bodhisattva, as soon as one period of work is finished,

plunges into another. I hardly need to remind you that with us it is not like that: if we finish one period of work we like to have a good rest, perhaps a cup of tea, and so on.

Though the Bodhisattva plunges straight from one period of work to the next, he nevertheless does not really think that he is doing anything; he does not think, "I am working." His manifestation of energy is selfless. It is spontaneous activity: it just comes bubbling up, like a fountain; or, like a flower, it naturally unfolds. Sometimes the Bodhisattva's activity is spoken of in the Indian languages as a '*līla*', which means a 'game', a 'sport', a 'play'. Just as a child plays, spontaneously manifesting energy, in the same way the Bodhisattva plays, manifesting the Perfections. Eventually the Bodhisattva plays the great game of Buddhahood and manifests Enlightenment.

This idea of spiritual life being a sort of playfulness, a bubbling up of spiritual, or Transcendental energy is very prominent in some forms of Indian thought and Indian religious life. In this country we tend to take religion very seriously. We have got 'sabbath faces' and 'sabbath gloom'. We think that the more serious you are, the more religious you are, and the more religious, the more serious. You never laugh in church! In the East, spiritual life is compared to a game, because it is — in a way — complete in itself, it is self-contained, it does not look beyond itself for its justification. Also the spiritual life is spontaneous; it is free from egotism; it is natural and enjoyable.

So much then for *vīrya pāramitā*, the Perfection of Vigour. Now we have completed our account of both *kṣānti* and *vīrya*, the third and the fourth *pāramitās*. Our account of them has not been exhaustive, but I hope it has at least been sufficient to indicate the specific quality of each of them, and also sufficient to make it clear why one is described as 'masculine' and the other as 'feminine'; vigour is clearly the more active, the more assertive, the more creative, and is therefore said to be 'masculine', while patience is the more passive, the more receptive, the more quiescent, and is therefore said to be 'feminine'.

This distinction represents a very important polarity in the spiritual life. We may even say that there are two radically different approaches to the spiritual life. One approach stresses self-help, do-it-yourself, self-exertion. The other approach stresses reliance upon a power outside yourself — in some systems, reliance upon divine grace. One approach represents the attitude of getting up and doing things; the other approach represents the attitude of just sitting there and letting things happen — letting them do themselves, as it were.

In India they have got two rather charming expressions for these two religious attitudes. They say of one that it is the monkey attitude and of the other that it is the kitten attitude. The baby monkey, when it is born, clings with a very tight grip onto its mother's fur. This therefore represents self-reliance (though, admittedly, the mother is moving about carrying it, the baby monkey has to hold on itself with its own strength). The baby kitten, on the other hand, when it is born, is completely helpless. For a while it has to be picked up by the mother, by the scruff of its neck, and carried everywhere. This therefore represents the approach of dependence on another power, reliance on divine grace, and so on.

In the Indian traditions, the first approach, the monkey type of approach, is associated with *jñāna*, wisdom. The wise man is the self-reliant man: he tries to find things out and understand things for himself. But the second approach, the kitten type of approach, is associated with *bhakti*, the path of devotion, which consists in a feeling of dependence upon some divine power, or divine ideal, superior to oneself.

In Japanese Buddhism, we find that these two different approaches, reliance upon oneself and reliance on some divine power outside oneself, are represented respectively by Zen Buddhism and Shin Buddhism. Zen, as is well known, represents, even stresses, reliance on self-power, *jiriki*, as it is called in Japanese. Whereas the Jōdō Shin Shu represents reliance upon other-power, *tariki*, reliance, in other words, on the spiritual power of Amitābha, the Buddha of Infinite Light and Eternal Life.

These two approaches, the approach of the baby monkey and the kitten, of the intellectual and the devotee, of reliance upon self-power and reliance on other-power, are generally held to be mutually exclusive: if you follow one path you cannot follow the other; either you depend on your own efforts, or you depend upon another power to do it for you. In fact, Buddhism itself is usually held to be a religion of self-effort as opposed to a religion of self-surrender. But this is not strictly true. In Buddhist literature, we have a number of references to the helpful spiritual influences which emanate from the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas, and which can be felt by those who are receptive to them. They are sometimes called 'grace waves'. This is not like the 'Grace of God' in Christianity, because in Buddhism, of course, there is no God. These spiritual forces arise essentially within oneself, but not within oneself. In other words, they appear to descend from the heights (if you like to call it 'heights') or arise from the depths (if you like to call it 'depths') of which one is not usually aware, not usually conscious, but to which one's awareness can be extended, and which can in a sense be included within one's greatly enlarged 'self'.

The Bodhisattva combines *both* approaches and for this reason practises patience and vigour. He synthesizes the 'masculine' and the 'feminine' aspects of the spiritual life. In fact we may say that both approaches are necessary. Sometimes in the course of our spiritual life, as in the course of our worldly life, it is necessary to hang on — for grim death. It is necessary to make an effort. It is necessary to strive, to exert, to struggle. But sometimes also it is necessary to let go, to let things look after

themselves, to let them even drift, to let them just happen without one's interference. There is no hard and-fast rule as to which approach is appropriate at any particular time. Sometimes you have to exert, but on other occasions you have to just let things look after themselves (you may think, "Let whatever is going to be done, be done"). Sometimes one has to adopt one attitude, sometimes the other, according to circumstances. Though there is no hard-and-fast rule, it is safe, very broadly speaking, to assume that a lot of self-effort, a reliance upon self-power, is necessary at the beginning, while later on perhaps, after a great initial effort has been made, one can begin to rely more upon the help, the power, the force, which comes apparently from somewhere outside oneself, or at least from outside one's present conscious self. One cannot start relying — or thinking that one is relying — upon that power prematurely, otherwise one will simply drift in a purely negative sense.

Again there is an Indian illustration. When you leave the shore in a little rowing boat, you first, with a great deal of straining of muscle, perhaps against the current, have to row yourself out into the middle of the river. But then, when you have got there, you can hoist your sail and let your boat be carried along by the breeze. In the same way, a great deal of effort is necessary in the early stages of the spiritual life, but a time comes when you contact forces which in a sense are beyond yourself (in another sense they are a part of your greater self), which begin to carry you along.

Now there is just one more very important point to be made before we close. The active and the passive aspects of the spiritual life have been termed 'masculine' and 'feminine'. I observed at the beginning of this lecture that the use of these terms was more or less metaphorical. At the same time, it must also be said that the use of them is not entirely metaphorical. One may say that there is in fact a real correspondence between biological and psychological masculinity and femininity on the one hand, and spiritual masculinity and femininity on the other. But one must bear in mind that the Bodhisattva combines both. We come therefore to what may appear to some people to be a rather curious statement that the Bodhisattva is what we may describe as psychologically and spiritually bisexual. This means that the Bodhisattva integrates the masculine and the feminine elements at each and every level of his own psychological and spiritual experience.

This fact is reflected very clearly in Buddhist iconography. We find in some representations of the Buddha and of various Bodhisattvas that it is sometimes very hard, from a Western point of view, to distinguish whether the figure is masculine or feminine. I have sometimes had the experience of showing, for instance, an image or a picture of Avalokiteśvara to a friend, who perhaps did not know very much about Buddhism. I would say, "Isn't this a beautiful figure?" and they would say, "Yes, she's lovely". Then I would explain that it was not a female figure but a male figure, and when they looked a little more closely, they would see that it was in fact a male figure, though it seemed to have certain feminine characteristics. This iconographical representation reflects this principle of the psychological and spiritual bisexuality of the Bodhisattva, indeed of the spiritual person in general.

This idea, or even ideal, of psychological and spiritual bisexuality is rather unfamiliar to us in the West. But it was known to the ancient gnostics, one of the heretical sects of early Christianity (the teaching was of course rather quickly stamped out by the Church). There is an interesting passage in a gnostic work known as the Gospel of Thomas. The Gospel of Thomas is one of several gnostic works that we have. The text was discovered in Egypt only in 1945. It consists of one hundred and twelve sayings attributed to Jesus after his resurrection. In Saying 23, Jesus is represented as saying,

> When you make the two one,
> and make the inside like the outside,
> and the outside like the inside,
> and the upper side like the underside,
> and (in such a way) that you make the man
> (with) the woman a single one,

in order that the man is not the man and the
woman is not the woman;
when you make eyes in place of an eye,
and a hand in place of a hand,
and a foot in place of a foot,
an image in place of an image;
then you will go into [the kingdom].

This is not the sort of teaching that one normally encounters in church, but you can see its obviously profound significance and import.

Within the context of Buddhism, this concept, or even practice, of spiritual bisexuality is dealt with especially by the Tantra. Enlightenment is represented as consisting in a perfect union of Wisdom and Compassion. In this union Wisdom represents the 'feminine' aspect of the spiritual life and Compassion represents the 'masculine' aspect, both at the highest possible pitch of perfection. This is often represented in Tantric Buddhist iconography by male and female Buddha or Bodhisattva figures in sexual union (these representations are called *yab-yum*: *yab* means literally 'father', *yum* means 'mother'). This sort of iconography would in the West be regarded as obscene, perhaps even as blasphemous — you certainly would not encounter this sort of thing in a church; but in the East, especially in Tibet, it is regarded as extremely sacred. One must observe that, though there are two figures, there are not two persons: there is only one Enlightened person, one Enlightened mind, within which are united reason and emotion, Wisdom and Compassion. These representations embody, under the form of sexual symbolism (here of course one has nothing to do with sexuality in the ordinary sense), the Ideal of Wisdom and Compassion united: the highest consummation of 'masculinity' and 'femininity' in the spiritual life.

❧

6. On the Threshold of Enlightenment

Free Buddhist Audio link for audio talk: https://www.freebuddhistaudio.com/audio/details?num=70

For five weeks now we have allowed ourselves to be carried along by a great stream, the stream of the Bodhisattva Ideal. Each week we have travelled just a little farther. As we have travelled, we have seen the stream, as it were, broaden. When we travel down a stream, and that stream begins to broaden, we know that we will eventually reach a point when the stream — or by this time the river — is so broad that we cannot be quite sure whether we are still in the stream, or whether we have not started entering the great ocean. This is the point we reach today. Today we are, as it were, about to pass out of the estuary of our river into the great ocean of Enlightenment itself.

In order to reach this point, we have had to cover quite a distance. We have seen unfold, week by week, many different aspects of the Bodhisattva Ideal. In the first week's lecture we saw how the Bodhisattva is the ideal Buddhist, one who lives for the sake of the Supreme Enlightenment of all sentient beings, and that he is the living embodiment of Wisdom and Compassion.

In our second lecture we saw, in some detail, that one becomes — or is born — a Bodhisattva by virtue of the 'arising of the Bodhicitta'. The Bodhicitta is often translated as 'thought of Enlightenment', but we saw that it is in fact something much greater than that: it is not just a thought, or idea, or concept of Enlightenment in somebody's mind — even in the Bodhisattva's mind — but something Transcendental. The Bodhicitta, we further saw, is only one, but individual Bodhisattvas participate in that one Bodhicitta, each to the measure of his capacity. This Bodhicitta arises in a man or a woman, transforming them into a Bodhisattva, in dependence on certain conditions. In this connection, we examined Śāntideva's 'supreme Worship', a set of seven conditions in dependence upon which the Bodhicitta arises, as well as Vasubandhu's 'Four Factors'.

In the third week's lecture we saw that though the Bodhicitta itself is universal, the Bodhisattva is an individual being, and the Bodhicitta therefore expresses itself, in the Bodhisattva's life and work, in a thoroughly individual, even in a unique, manner. The individual, unique expression of the Bodhicitta in the life and work of the Bodhisattva is known as the 'Bodhisattva's Vow'. We speak of the Bodhisattva's Vow in the singular, but in reality it is plural — the Bodhisattva makes a number of vows. There are several famous sets of vows, especially the 'Four Great Vows' of the Bodhisattva. We examined the 'Four Great Vows' in detail.

Even more than all this, we have seen that the Bodhisattva Ideal represents a union of opposites. In general, it represents a union of the mundane and the Transcendental, samsara and Nirvana. More specifically, it represents a union of the altruistic and the individualistic aspects of the spiritual life, as well as the 'masculine' and the 'feminine' approaches to the spiritual life.

In the fourth lecture we saw that the first of these pairs of opposites, the altruistic and the individualistic aspects of the spiritual life, are represented, in the context of the Bodhisattva Ideal, by *dāna*, Giving, and *śīla*, Uprightness, which are the first two *pāramitās*, (Perfections), the first two Transcendental virtues to be practised by the Bodhisattva.

In last week's lecture we saw that the second pair of opposites, the 'masculine' and 'feminine' approaches to the spiritual life, are represented by the second pair of *pāramitās*: *kṣānti*, Patience, and *vīrya*, Vigour or Energy.

Today we come to a pair of opposites still more rarefied, and we shall be seeing how the Bodhisattva synthesizes these too in his life, work and spiritual experience. This pair of opposites is represented by *dhyāna* on the one hand and *prajñā* on the other, that is to say, by Meditation (in the widest sense) and Wisdom. These two are the last two *pāramitās*, the fifth and the sixth of the Perfections. This lecture is entitled 'On the Threshold of Enlightenment', because that is where we find ourselves when we practise, either separately or together, Wisdom and Meditation, Meditation and Wisdom. These two *pāramitās* between them represent the consummation of the 'establishment aspect' of the Bodhicitta.

We have here, in meditation and wisdom, two vast subjects, and it is very difficult to know where to begin. One could well speak on either of these subjects for a very long time, without saying, in comparison with the enormity of the subject matter, very much at all. There is certainly no question of trying to treat these two subjects exhaustively. All that can be offered in the course of this lecture is a more or less connected account of certain topics of importance.

First of all, *dhyāna*. I have translated this as 'meditation', which, for practical purposes, is good enough. However, the term *dhyāna*, like so many other Indian Buddhist, Sanskrit and Pali terms, cannot really be translated by any single English word. We shall not go very far wrong, however, if we consider *dhyāna* as comprising two things: firstly, higher states of consciousness — states of consciousness above and beyond those of our ordinary everyday waking mind; and secondly, not only the higher states of consciousness themselves but also the various practices which lead to the experience of those higher states of consciousness.

These higher states of consciousness are, broadly speaking, of two kinds. On the one hand, there are those which, though higher than our everyday states of consciousness, are still mundane; on the other hand, there are those which are truly Transcendental. What this distinction really means we shall see a little later on.

In the Buddhist tradition there are quite a number of lists of these higher states of consciousness. These

lists represent different levels within, or different dimensions of, the higher consciousness. Today we are going to concern ourselves with three lists: the 'Four *Dhyānas* of the World of Form', the 'Four Formless *Dhyānas*', and the 'Three Gates of Liberation'. As we go through these three lists, we shall get some idea of what *dhyāna* in the sense of higher states of consciousness really means. But we must remember that though we may understand what is said perfectly well, this is no substitute for our own first-hand experience.

First of all, the 'Four *Dhyānas* of the World of Form'. Traditionally there are two ways of describing these: in terms of psychological analysis or in terms of images. These two methods of description correspond to the two principal modes of human communication, or the two principal 'languages' which we may use. We may speak the language of ideas, of concepts, of abstract thought (it is this sort of language which is spoken by science and philosophy), or we may speak the language of images, of mental pictures, even of archetypes (this language comprises such things as metaphor, myth and symbol).

Buddhism uses both of these languages. On some occasions, it speaks the language of concepts; on other occasions, it speaks the language of images. Both of these languages are of equal importance. The language of concepts appeals more to the conscious mind — to our conscious rational intelligence; the language of images, which is much more concrete, vivid, and pictorial — in a way much more deeply moving — appeals to the unconscious depths within us.

Most modern expositions of the Buddha's teaching, fortunately or unfortunately, are given in terms of concepts, and if one reads through the literature which is available (at least in English) on Buddhism, one sometimes gets the impression that Buddhism is one-sidedly, not to say overwhelmingly, intellectual (one is almost led to believe sometimes that to really understand Buddhism one needs to undergo a rigorous course in Buddhist logic, metaphysics and epistemology). This impression needs to be corrected, because traditional Buddhism does use the non-conceptual mode of communication — the communication through images. In fact, traditional Buddhism speaks the language of images at least as frequently, and at least as powerfully, as it speaks the language of concepts. We have to try to redress this imbalance in the presentation of Buddhism in the West by encouraging various methods of communicating non-conceptually — even perhaps non-verbally — the truth and the reality of the Buddha's teaching.

There is a very beautiful example in the life of the Buddha of such non-conceptual communication. This story comes from the Zen tradition. We know that sometimes the Buddha spoke at length, discoursing intellectually upon his spiritual experience. But not always. Sometimes he resorted to more direct methods and spoke the language of images. This is what happened on one very famous occasion. With the assembly sitting silently around him, the Buddha, instead of speaking, simply took from an attendant a golden flower and held it up. He held up this flower in the midst of the assembly and said nothing — nothing at all. He did not even smile. But Mahākāśyapa, one of the greatest of the disciples, he smiled. He smiled because he understood what the Buddha was trying to communicate through holding up this golden flower, through this non-verbal communication.

This action on the part of the Buddha was, we are told, the origin of the Zen transmission. It is worth just

reflecting on this, that the great spiritual movement of Zen, which is one of the greatest forms of Buddhism, which has spread all over the Far East, which has produced hundreds of Enlightened masters, did not spring from a system of philosophy, nor from a lengthy discourse by the Buddha, but, according to tradition, from this one simple symbolical action of the Buddha, this holding up of the golden flower. Mahākāśyapa understood what the Buddha meant and so he smiled. He probably thought to himself that the Buddha had never done anything more wonderful than hold up that single golden flower. We may say that that golden flower, even now, all over the Far East, even over those parts of the West which now know about the Zen tradition, is shedding its lustre.

It is easy for us to discuss Buddhist philosophy; speaking the language of concepts, we can talk the hind legs off the proverbial donkey. It is this other language, the language of images, which we need to learn to speak. We have to immerse ourselves in myth and symbol, and learn to experience this comparatively unfamiliar dimension of human communication.

We have digressed, however, so let us return to the 'Four *Dhyānas* of the World of Form'. Usually four *dhyānas*, but sometimes five, are enumerated. This should remind us that we are not to take these classifications too literally: the 'Four *Dhyānas*' represent successively higher states of psychic development, which in reality constitute one continuous ever-unfolding process.

Now for the description of these four higher states of consciousness in terms of psychological analysis. We will speak the language of concepts for a little while, before going on to speak the language of images.

In terms of psychological analysis, the first *dhyāna* is characterized by the absence of all negative emotions. Specifically, in terms of the Buddhist tradition, the first *dhyāna* is characterized by the absence of lust, ill will, sloth and torpor, restlessness and anxiety, and doubt, which traditionally are called the 'Five Mental Hindrances'. Unless all negative emotions are inhibited, suppressed, suspended, unless the mind is completely free, at least for the time being, not only of the 'Five Mental Hindrances' but of fear, anger, jealousy, anxiety, guilt, there is no entry into higher states of consciousness. It is quite clear, therefore, that if we want to practise meditation seriously, our initial task must be to learn to be able to inhibit, at least temporarily, the gross manifestations (at least) of all these negative emotions.

On the positive side, the first *dhyāna* is characterized by the concentration and unification of all our psychophysical energies. Last week we saw that our energies are usually scattered over a multiplicity of objects; we saw that our energies are blocked and wasted — in the latter case they simply leak away in various directions. When we take up the practice of meditation one of the things that happens is that all our energies are brought together: those energies which are blocked are unblocked, those which are being wasted are checked in the waste. In this way, all our energies come together, flow together, are concentrated, are unified. This flowing together of psychophysical energy, this heightening of energy, this accumulation of energy, is characteristic of the first *dhyāna* and, in fact, is characteristic, in increasing degrees, of all four *dhyānas*.

This concentration and unification of energies is experienced, in the first *dhyāna*, as something intensely pleasurable. When all our energies come together, when there is no dissipation, or division, or conflict of energy, when our energy is naturally concentrated on higher and higher levels, then this is experienced as something intensely pleasurable, even blissful. In this first *dhyāna* the pleasurable sensation experienced is of two kinds: there is a purely mental aspect and also a physical aspect.

The pleasurable physical aspect, which is called *prīti*, or 'rapture', manifests in various ways. It may, for instance, manifest by way of somebody's hair standing on end. It may manifest in the form of tears: some people, when they practise meditation, after a while start weeping violently — this is a very good, healthy, positive manifestation of prīti, though it does pass away after some time.

The first *dhyāna* is also characterized by a certain amount of discursive mental activity. One can enter upon the first *dhyāna* having suspended all negative emotions, having unified one's energies, having experienced various pleasurable sensations, mentally and physically, but with some vestige of discursive mental activity still remaining. This discursive mental activity is present, but is not enough to disturb concentration. It is a little flickering mental activity, at least about the meditation experience if not about anything else. After a while, it may seem as though this recedes to the fringes of one's concentration.

In the second *dhyāna* the discursive mental activity disappears: with increased concentration, it fades away. The second *dhyāna* is therefore a state of no thought. When one speaks in terms of 'no thought' people often become a little afraid. They imagine that if there is no thought, one must almost cease to exist; they perhaps think that one goes into a sort of coma or trance. In fact nothing like that happens. It must be emphasized that in the second *dhyāna* there is simply no discursive mental activity. One is fully awake, aware, conscious. In fact, one's whole consciousness is heightened: one is more awake, more aware, more alert than one normally is. Even though the discursive mental activity fades away, even though the mind is no longer active in that sense, a clear, pure, bright state of awareness is experienced. In the second *dhyāna* one's psychophysical energies become still more concentrated, with the result that both the mental and the physical pleasurable sensations of the first *dhyāna* persist.

We noticed that in passing from the first to the second *dhyāna*, discursive mental activity was eliminated. Now in passing from the second *dhyāna* to the third *dhyāna*, it is the pleasurable physical sensations that disappear. Consciousness is increasingly withdrawn from the body, so the pleasurable, even blissful, sensations are no longer experienced in, or with, the body. The mind nevertheless is blissful. In this stage bodily consciousness may be very peripheral indeed: it is as though you are conscious of your body a great way away, right on the edge of your experience, not right at the centre of it, as is usually the case. The other factors remain in the third *dhyāna* as before, except that they are still further intensified.

In the fourth *dhyāna*, even the mental experience of happiness disappears. This does not mean that one in any way becomes unhappy. In this stage the mind passes beyond pleasure and pain. This is something which is rather difficult for us to understand. We cannot help thinking of such a state as being a sort of neutral grey state, rather *lower* than pleasure — perhaps even lower than pain. But it is not like that. In the fourth

dhyāna the mind passes *beyond* pleasure and pain, beyond even the mental bliss of the previous *dhyānas*, and enters a state of what is called 'equanimity'. To be paradoxical, one may say that the state of equanimity is even more pleasant than the pleasant state itself (one cannot say, of course, that it is more painful than the painful state). The state of equanimity is a state which is even more deeply satisfying than the pleasant state. It is a sort of positive peace, even more blissful than bliss itself. In this stage, the total energies of one's being are fully integrated, so that this *dhyāna* is a state of perfect mental, perfect spiritual, harmony, balance and equilibrium.

These are the 'Four *Dhyānas*', the four states of higher consciousness, in terms of psychological analysis. Now for the description of them in terms of images. Here we find the Buddha using four similes, one for each *dhyāna*. You will notice that the Buddha gives very ordinary, everyday sort of illustrations, but ones which nevertheless are very apposite.

The Buddha's simile for the first *dhyāna*: The Buddha says, "Suppose there is a bath attendant, who is going about his usual work. He takes a handful of soap powder and mixes it with water." (You might be rather surprised to hear that they had soap powder in ancient India two thousand five hundred years ago, and you may be still more surprised to learn that they got it, and still get it, from a soap tree. If you dry and powder the fruit of this particular tree you get something which works in exactly the same way as soap powder.) The Buddha said, "Suppose this bath attendant mixes and kneads the soap powder and water until the soap powder is a ball, fully saturated with moisture. It is so fully saturated with moisture that it cannot absorb one more drop of water; at the same time, no single speck of soap powder is unpermeated by the water. The experience in the first *dhyāna* is just like that."

The Buddha's simile for the second *dhyāna*: The Buddha says, "One's experience in the second *dhyāna* is like a great lake, full of water. The water in this lake does not come from rainfall, nor from streams flowing into it, but from a subterranean inlet, deep down in the middle of the lake. There is a little inlet where the cool, cold, fresh water bubbles up, gradually extending throughout the waters of the lake."

The Buddha's simile for the third *dhyāna*: Here the Buddha takes not just a lake of water, but a lake of lotuses. He says, "Suppose you see great beds of lotus flowers, red, blue, white and yellow, growing in the midst of the water. What is the condition of those lotuses? They are fully in the water: their roots, stems, leaves, even the petals of their blossoms, are soaked in water. They grow there, permeated by the water. One's experience in the third *dhyāna* is like that."

The Buddha's simile for the fourth *dhyāna*: The Buddha says, "Suppose there is a man who, on a very hot day, takes a bath — in the open air, in a tank. Having bathed, he takes a great length of white cloth, wraps it round himself, and sits down. Now he feels pure, clean, insulated. This is what one feels like when one experiences the fourth *dhyāna*."

These are the four similes which the Buddha uses to describe one's experience in the 'Four *Dhyānas*'. Here the Buddha is speaking the language of images. You may well have got more out of this description than

you got out of the description in terms of psychological analysis; it may be that the Buddha's language of images spoke to you more closely, more intimately, perhaps even more truthfully, than his language of concepts.

One can see from these four similes that there is a definite progression as one passes from one *dhyāna* to the next. In the first *dhyāna* there is a unification of the energies of the conscious mind. In the first simile you start with a duality: there are the two things, soap powder and water. But that duality is resolved: the soap powder and water are kneaded together. The first *dhyāna* really represents a unification of all the energies of the conscious mind on the conscious level.

Then, in the second *dhyāna* the energies of the superconscious mind begin to penetrate into the unified conscious mind. This is what is meant by the cool, clear, cold water bubbling up within the innermost recesses of the lake. The superconscious energies bubble up, as it were, in the unified conscious mind as a sort of source of inspiration.

Next, these energies which have started to bubble up within one — or pour down into one — take, as it were, complete possession. They take complete possession just as, in the third simile, the lotuses are completely permeated by the water — their roots, stems, flowers, are soaked by the water. In this third stage the superconscious energies transform the energies of the conscious mind.

Finally, in the fourth *dhyāna* the conscious mind is dominated by, enclosed and enfolded by, the superconscious energies, just as the man who has taken his bath is enclosed and enfolded by the white sheet in which he swathes himself. You may notice that in the second *dhyāna* the superconscious, in the form of the water flowing in from the inlet, was contained within the unified conscious, the lake, but now, in the fourth *dhyāna* it is the conscious — though the thoroughly transformed conscious — which is contained within the super-conscious: the situation has been completely reversed.

All this could be represented visually. One is painting pictures with words, but it could be done more directly with the brush, with colours, etc. In fact, Lama Govinda has done this. Years ago I saw a series of paintings by him — he called them 'abstract paintings' — which represented the 'Four *Dhyānas*'.

So much then for the 'Four *Dhyānas* of the World of Form'. We have spent rather a long time on them because of their central importance for the practice of meditation and, in fact, for the practice of the spiritual life generally. We are now turning to the 'Four Formless *Dhyānas*', four states of higher consciousness associated with the Formless World. These are often superimposed upon the 'Four *Dhyānas* of the World of Form'. They are rather remote from the experience of most meditators, so we shall be dealing with them only briefly. They consist in the experience of objects of ever increasing degrees of subtlety and refinement.

The first formless *dhyāna* is known as the 'sphere of Infinite Space'. You may recollect that by the time we reached the fourth *dhyāna* of the World of Form we had left behind the body consciousness. If one abstracts

oneself from the senses through which objects in space are perceived, one is left, as it were, with the experience of infinite space — space extending infinitely in all directions, all of which is everywhere. It is not just a sort of visual experience of looking out into infinite space from a certain point in space; it is a feeling of freedom and expansion, an experience of one's whole being expanding indefinitely.

The second formless *dhyāna* is known as the 'sphere of Infinite Consciousness' (*vijñāna*). One reaches this by 'reflecting' that one has experienced infinite space; in that experience there was a consciousness of infinite space. That means that conterminous with the infinity of space, there is an infinity of consciousness: the subjective correlative of that objective state or experience. Abstracting or subtracting from the experience of space and concentrating on the experience of consciousness, one experiences infinite consciousness, once again extending in all directions, but not from any one particular point — consciousness which is all present everywhere.

The third formless *dhyāna* is the 'sphere of No-thingness', the 'sphere of Non-particularity'. In this experience one cannot pick out any one thing in particular as distinct from any other thing. In our ordinary everyday consciousness we can pick out, say, a flower as distinct from a tree, or a man as distinct from a house, but in this state, there is no particular 'thingness' of things. One cannot identify this as 'this' and that as 'that'. It is not as though they are confused and mixed up together, but the possibility of picking out does not exist. This is not a state of nothingness but of no-thingness.

The fourth formless *dhyāna* is known as the 'sphere of Neither Perception Nor Non-perception'. This is still more rarefied, though is still within the mundane. In passing from the first to the second formless *dhyāna*, one passed from the infinite object to the infinite subject. Now, one passes beyond subject and object. One is not fully beyond subject and object, but one can no longer think or experience in terms of subject and object. One reaches a state in which one cannot say — because in a sense there is no one to say — whether one is perceiving anything or whether one is not perceiving anything.

The 'Four *Dhyānas* of the World of Form' and the 'Four Formless *Dhyānas*' are all classified in the Buddhist tradition as mundane, or worldly — as opposed to Transcendental. They are not mundane in the ordinary sense: they are super-conscious states, and as such represent a very high degree of unification and refinement of psycho-spiritual energy; they represent spiritual states, spiritual experiences. However, they are still not truly Transcendental; they have no direct contact with Ultimate Reality. In Buddhism, only that is termed 'Transcendental' which is of the nature of Ultimate Reality or which is directly conducive to it. It is this contact with Ultimate Reality from the heights of the mundane, from the heights of the superconscious, which now has to be made. This contact is made when the concentrated mind (i.e. the mind in the *dhyāna* state, whether higher or lower) turns with awareness from the mundane to the Transcendental, when the concentrated mind begins to contemplate Reality. It is then that the *dhyāna* states pass from being mundane to being Transcendental.

There are many different Transcendental *dhyānas*. Sometimes the Transcendental *Dhyānas* are called *samādhis*. They differ according to the particular aspect of Reality which is contemplated. Among the most

vital and significant of these Transcendental *Dhyānas* are a set of three, known as the 'Three Gateways to Liberation'. We will go into these briefly.

The first is known as the 'sign less Samādhi', or the 'Imageless Samādhi'. In this Transcendental *dhyāna*, in this experience with a Transcendental object, Reality is contemplated as devoid of all conceptual constructions. One sees that all thoughts and all concepts about Reality have no reference to, have no bearing upon, Reality itself. One sees that even the word 'Reality' is quite nonsensical (only when one sees that there is 'no word', 'no thought', can one get at that Reality which is not Reality). In this 'sign less Samādhi', one contemplates Reality as devoid of all signs which might give the mind some hint of what it 'really' is.

Secondly, there is the 'Unbiased *Samādhi*', or the 'Directionless *Samādhi*'. The mind at this level of superconscious experience does not discriminate between this and that. It does not discriminate between the means and the end, between the here and the three, between the then and the now. There is no time sense — no past, present or future; there is no direction in which to go; there is no bias, no tendency. The mind contemplates Reality under this aspect, that there is no tendency or bias towards this or that, because there is no this or that.

Thirdly and lastly, there is the 'Voidness *Samādhi*'. Here Reality is contemplated as having no self-nature. Reality has no characteristic of its own by which it might be recognized, or distinguished from other things. In this experience one cannot say that a chair is 'this', a human being is 'this' and Reality is 'that'. Reality is not anything as distinguished from any other thing; Reality does not have a particular self-nature of its own. The 'Voidness *Samādhi*' is the contemplation of Reality under the aspect of having no recognizable, identifiable nature of its own, distinct from the natures of other things.

With these Transcendental *samādhis*, which represent a very lofty peak of spiritual experience indeed, we begin to pass from *dhyāna*, meditation, to *prajñā*, Wisdom. But before we deal with Wisdom, I will say just a few more words about *dhyāna*.

We have dealt with *dhyāna* in the sense of the higher states of consciousness, but we have still to deal with *dhyāna* in the second sense of the practices leading to those higher states of consciousness. Under this heading I could speak of the 'Five Basic Methods of Meditation', or of the preparations for meditation, or of some of the experiences which occur in the course of meditation practice. However, I have dealt at some length with these subjects on other occasions, and so here I am going to limit myself to just one observation. That observation is that *dhyāna* in the sense of the experience of superconscious states is a natural thing. Ideally, as soon as one sat down to meditate, as soon as one crossed one's legs and closed one's eyes, one would go straight into *dhyāna*. It could be, should be, as natural and easy as that. In fact, we may say that if we led a truly human life, if we had spent the previous day, or week, or month, or year, properly, then this might well happen — there is no reason why it should not. However I need hardly tell you — it seems almost cruel to mention it — that this is not what usually happens. We all have to strive, struggle, and sweat — and sometimes swear under our breath. We feel disappointed; we think that it is not worth the effort, that we

are making fools of ourselves and might just as well be at the cinema or watching the television. We have to strive and struggle. However, it is not, in fact, that we strive and struggle to meditate, to get into the *dhyāna* state, but that we strive and struggle to remove the obstacles which prevent us assuming the *dhyāna* state. We have to remove such obstacles as the 'Five Mental Hindrances'. If we could only remove them, then we would go sailing at least into the first *dhyāna*. Most meditation exercises do not lead us directly to higher states of consciousness, but simply help us remove the obstacles to those higher states of consciousness. By practising the Mindfulness of Breathing, we can remove the obstacle of distraction. By practising the Metta Bhavana, we can remove the obstacle of ill will. If we can, with the help of such meditation exercises, just remove the obstacles, then the higher states of consciousness will naturally manifest themselves.

Now the Bodhisattva does not simply practise *dhyāna*, meditation: the Bodhisattva practises *dhyāna* pāramitā, the Perfection of Meditation, Transcendental Meditation. In other words, he practises meditation in order to gain Enlightenment for the benefit of all. He does not practise it for the sake of his own peace of mind, though that comes. He does not practise it so that he may go to heaven, though even that may come if he wants. He practises meditation as one aspect of the path which will lead him one day to Supreme Enlightenment for the benefit of all.

Finally, on this subject of *dhyāna*, we may say that the Bodhisattva's practice of meditation does not exclude external activity. In our case, meditation does exclude external activity: if we want to meditate, we have to retire, find a quiet place, sit still, close our eyes, etc. But the Bodhisattva is practising something much higher and is able to do both — practise meditation and perform external activities — simultaneously. The scriptures stress this in a number of places; they say that internally he should be immersed in *dhyāna*, but externally he should be carrying on various activities. This does not mean that he suffers from a sort of partial schizophrenia. What appear to us to be two contradictory things, in the case of the Bodhisattva are one thing. The activity is the external aspect of the meditation; the meditation is the internal dimension of the activity. Inner meditation and external activity are, as it were, the two sides of a single coin.

The Bodhisattva practises meditation as not excluding external activity, and this should be our aim too, eventually. Meanwhile we must not delude ourselves, but recognize that for us, for a very long time to come, meditation will exclude external activity and external activity will exclude meditation, even though we shall certainly try to see that the effects of our meditation persist and carry over into our everyday life and activities. It will be a very long time before we can meditate when we are in the midst of traffic, or when we are washing up, just as we meditate at our best on our meditation cushion; but that should be our ultimate aim.

It is time now that we passed on to *prajñā*, which is the sixth and last pāramitā, the sixth and last Perfection. *Prajñā* is from the Sanskrit root *jña*, 'to know', and *pra*, which is simply an emphatic prefix. *Prajñā* is therefore knowledge in the extreme, or knowledge par excellence, which means of course knowledge of Reality. The word for Reality in this connection is śūnyatā, which literally means 'Voidness', 'Emptiness',

though not emptiness as opposed to fullness, as the word śūnyatā indicates a state beyond opposites, a state beyond words. Śūnyatā is Reality. Knowledge of Reality means knowledge of śūnyatā. Knowledge of śūnyatā is *prajñā*, or Wisdom.

Śūnyatā is the subject matter of the Perfection of Wisdom' group of sutras, one of the most important of all the groups of Mahayana Buddhist scriptures. There are over thirty Perfection of Wisdom scriptures, some very long — the longest has one hundred thousand verses – and some very short. Among the shorter versions are the well-known *Diamond Sutra* and *Heart Sutra*, both of which present the essentials of the whole Perfection of Wisdom teaching in a highly condensed form.

We find that four main degrees of *śūnyatā* are enumerated (some texts speak of twenty, even thirty-two degrees, but really there are four main degrees). These are not four different kinds of Reality, but rather represent four progressively deeper stages of penetration by Wisdom into Ultimate Reality. By looking at these four, we will get some idea of the nature and content of *prajñā*. As we go through them, however, we should not forget that these are all conceptual presentations, not the real thing, not the experience itself; they are only 'fingers pointing to the moon', and if we can get a glimpse of the moon with their help, then we shall be lucky.

The first degree of *śūnyatā* is *samskrta-śūnyatā*, 'Emptiness of the Conditioned'. This means that conditioned, phenomenal, relative existence is devoid of the characteristics of the Unconditioned, the Absolute, the Truth. The characteristics of the Unconditioned in Buddhism are: firstly, Bliss; secondly, Permanence, that it is beyond time (not that it persists in time, but that it occupies, as it were, a dimension in which time itself does not exist); and thirdly, True Being, Ultimate Reality. Conditioned existence is devoid of these characteristics. It is, on the contrary, unsatisfactory, impermanent and not ultimately real. For this reason, the conditioned is said to be empty of the Unconditioned. This means that we should not expect to find in the flux of relative existence what only the Absolute can give us. So this is the first of the four degrees of śūnyatā, that the conditioned is empty — empty of the Unconditioned.

The second degree of *śūnyatā* is *asaṁskṛta- śūnyatā*, or 'Emptiness of the Unconditioned'. Here Wisdom sees that the Unconditioned is devoid of the characteristics of the conditioned. Conditioned existence, as we have noted, is unsatisfactory, even riddled with unhappiness, impermanent and not wholly real, whereas the Unconditioned is the locus of Bliss, of Permanence, of True Being. Therefore we speak in terms of the emptiness of the Unconditioned — that it is empty of the conditioned. Just as in the conditioned one will not find the Unconditioned, in the Unconditioned one will not find the conditioned.

These first two degrees of emptiness are common to all forms of Buddhism and represent, obviously, a comparatively dualistic approach (the conditioned is not the Unconditioned, the Unconditioned is not the conditioned; this world is not that world, that world is not this world; the conditioned is empty of the Unconditioned, the Unconditioned is empty of the conditioned). This approach is necessary as the working basis of our spiritual life in its early stages. To begin with, we have to make this distinction, we have to think, "'Here' is the conditioned and 'there' is the Unconditioned, and I want to get from 'here' to 'there'."

In the early stages of our spiritual life we cannot help thinking in these terms, and so we take as our working basis this (mutually exclusive) duality of the conditioned and the Unconditioned.

The third and fourth degrees of *śūnyatā* are peculiar to the Mahayana. The third degree is *mahāśūnyatā*, or 'Great Emptiness'. In the Mahayana *mahā* always means pertaining to *śūnyatā* (the Mahayana is 'the vehicle of *śūnyatā',* the Bodhisattva is also the *mahāsattva*, 'the being born out of the Voidness'). Mahāśūnyatā consists in the emptiness of the distinction between the conditioned and the Unconditioned. We see that the distinction between the conditioned and the Unconditioned is not ultimately valid, that it is a product of dualistic thinking. We may spend ten, fifteen, twenty years of our spiritual life working on the assumption that the conditioned is the conditioned and the Unconditioned is the Unconditioned — that is necessary — but eventually we have to learn to see the emptiness of the distinction between the two: we have to see that the distinction is not ultimately valid and has ultimately to be transcended. We have to see, to experience — not just intellectually theorize, nor just speculate — that *rūpa* and *śūnyatā* ('form' and 'Voidness') are ultimately of one and the same essence and reality, as are the conditioned and the Unconditioned, samsara and Nirvana, ordinary beings and Buddhas. This is *mahāśūnyatā*, the 'Great Void', in which all distinctions, all dualisms are swallowed up and simply do not exist anymore. It is this 'Great Void' into which people, even spiritual people, are so afraid of disappearing. People want to cling on to their dualistic ways of thinking — self and others, this and that — but eventually these must all be swallowed up. The 'Great Void' is the tiger's cave which is remarkable for the fact that many tracks lead into it, but none come out (you get into the 'Great Void', but you never come out, which is why, in fact, you want to get into it).

The fourth and final degree of *śūnyatā* is *śūnyatā-śūnyatā*, 'Emptiness of Emptiness'. Here we see that emptiness itself is only a concept, only a word, only a sound. Even with *mahāśūnyatā*, you are still hanging onto subtle thoughts, subtle dualistic experiences, so ultimately even *mahāśūnyatā* has to be abandoned. When that is abandoned, when you come to śūnyatā-śūnyatā, then there is just nothing to be said: all that is left is silence, a significant silence, a thunderous silence.

These are the four degrees of śūnyatā, which represent successively more advanced stages of penetration into Reality. What penetrates, what breaks through, is *prajñā*, Wisdom. Earlier I referred to the Heart Sutra, which is so called because it contains the heart, the essence, of the Perfection of Wisdom teachings. The heart of the Heart Sutra is contained in its concluding mantra, *gate gate pāragate pārasaṁgate bodhi svāhā*, which literally means (though the literal meaning does not give the real meaning): 'gone, gone, gone beyond, gone altogether beyond. Enlightenment. Success.' The words of the mantra refer to the four degrees of *śūnyatā*.

Gate gate, 'gone, gone'. This means gone from conditioned existence, gone from relative existence, gone from the world. This is the first degree of *śūnyatā*, *samskrtaśūnyatā*, experience of the 'Emptiness of the Conditioned'. As a result of this experience, one leaves the conditioned, one goes forth from it.

Pāragate, 'gone beyond'. When one leaves the conditioned one goes to the Unconditioned — there is

nowhere else to go. This represents the second degree of śūnyatā, *asamskrtaśūnyatā*, the 'Emptiness of the Unconditioned'. One goes to the Unconditioned, one goes beyond, because the Unconditioned is empty of the conditioned — in the Unconditioned there is no trace of the conditioned — and one does not want to have anything more to do with the conditioned.

Pārasaṁgate, 'gone altogether beyond'. One goes beyond the distinction between the conditioned and the Unconditioned. This represents the third degree of śūnyatā, *mahāśūnyatā*, the 'Great Emptiness'. When one goes beyond the very distinction between the conditioned and the Unconditioned, then one truly does go altogether beyond.

Bodhi, 'Enlightenment'. There is no sentence here; there is just the word, the exclamation, 'Enlightenment!' Here, *in* Enlightenment, the idea of *śūnyatā* itself is transcended. It is as though when one comes here, having traversed these three degrees of *śūnyatā* and come to the fourth, one can only open one's arms and say, in Alan Watts' phrase, 'This is IT' — Enlightenment, Awakening.

Svāhā, 'success'. *Svāhā* is a word which often comes at the end of a mantra; it indicates 'auspiciousness', 'success', 'achievement'. It means, 'you have done your task, you have achieved success, you have reached your goal, you are Enlightened.' It means that all four degrees of śūnyatā have been traversed, that Wisdom has been fully developed and true success has been achieved.

The aforegoing account of Wisdom has been progressive; in other words, it has been an account in terms of more and more advanced stages of penetration into Reality. But there is another tradition which unfolds different *dimensions* of Wisdom simultaneously. This is the teaching of what are known as the 'Five *Jñānas',* the 'Five Knowledges', or the 'Five Wisdoms'. We will conclude with an account of these, which will give us further insight into the nature of *prajñā*.

The first of the 'Five Wisdoms' is the 'Wisdom of the *Dharmadhātu*. This is the basic Wisdom, of which the other four are subsidiary, or special, aspects. The term '*Dharmadhātu'* is a difficult one. *Dhātu* means a 'sphere', or 'realm', or 'field', and here represents the whole cosmos. Dharma here means 'Reality', 'Truth', the 'Ultimate'. So, the *Dharmadhātu* means the whole cosmos considered as the sphere of the manifestation of Reality, or the whole cosmos conceived of as fully pervaded by Reality. Just as the whole of space is filled by the sun's rays, so the whole of existence, with its galactic systems, its suns, its worlds, its gods, and its men, is pervaded by Reality itself. The whole of existence is a field for the manifestation of, the play of, the expression of, the exuberance of Reality. The Wisdom of the *Dharmadhātu* means direct knowledge of the whole cosmos as non-different from Reality. Not that the cosmos is wiped out or obliterated. The cosmos is still there and you see it still. The houses, the trees, the fields, the men and the women, the sun, the moon, and the stars are all there, just as they were before, but now they are pervaded by Reality. You see both the cosmos and Reality at the same time — the one does not obstruct the other. You see the cosmos; you see Reality. You see Reality; you see the cosmos. Cosmos is Reality; Reality is cosmos. Rūpa is śūnyatā; śūnyatā is rūpa. This Wisdom of the *Dharmadhāta* is symbolized by the figure of Vairocana, the 'Illuminator,' the white Buddha (sometimes he is called the 'sun Buddha').

The second of the 'Five Wisdoms' is the 'Mirror-like Wisdom.' This Wisdom is like a mirror, because just as a mirror reflects all objects, so the Enlightened mind reflects everything: it sees everything, it understands the true nature of everything. If you look into the depths of the Enlightened mind you see everything. All the objects of the world are reflected in the depths of the Enlightened mind, but the Enlightened mind is not affected by them. If you take a mirror and place an object in front of it, the object is reflected. If you take that object away and put another object in front of it, that second object is now reflected. When you move the object — or when you move the mirror — you do not find the reflection sticking. The Enlightened mind is just like that: it reflects but nothing sticks. Our mind, however, is quite different. To pursue the illustration, one might say that our mind is a sort of mirror to which all the reflections stick. In fact they not only stick, but they congeal and get all jammed up together. Sometimes the mirror even sticks to the object and they cannot be separated. In other words, in the Enlightened mind there is no subjective reaction, no subjective attachment, there is pure, perfect objectivity. This 'Mirror-like Wisdom' is symbolized by Aksobhya, the 'Imperturbable,' the dark blue Buddha.

The third of the 'Five Wisdoms' is the 'Wisdom of Equality,' or the 'Wisdom of Sameness'. The Enlightened mind — we have seen — sees everything with complete objectivity (it sees that a man is a man, a woman is a woman, a flower is a flower, a house is a house, the sun is the sun) and sees the same Reality (śūnyatā) in everything. Therefore, it has the same attitude towards everything — this is the 'Wisdom of Equality'. The Enlightened mind is equal-minded towards all. The Enlightened mind has the same Love and Compassion for all, without any distinction or discrimination. Sometimes it is said that the Love and Compassion of the Enlightened mind fall without discrimination on all beings, just as the sun's rays fall now on the golden roofs of a palace and now on a dunghill. It is the same sun which is shining on the palace and the dunghill. The Enlightened mind shines with its Love and Compassion on high and low alike, on 'good' and 'bad' alike. This 'Wisdom of Equality', or 'sameness', is symbolized by Ratnasambhava, the 'Jewel-born', the yellow Buddha.

The fourth of the 'Five Wisdoms' is the 'All-Distinguishing Wisdom'. A mirror, as we have seen, reflects all things equally but at the same time does not confuse or blur their distinctive features — a mirror will reflect the tiniest detail. Similarly, the Enlightened mind, especially under its aspect of the All Distinguishing Wisdom, does not only see the unity of things, but at the same time sees the uniqueness of things, and in fact sees both of these together. The Enlightened mind does not see things only in their unity or only in their diversity, but sees both together. It does not reduce the plurality to a unity; it does not reduce the unity to a plurality: it sees the unity and the plurality. Buddhism, on the philosophical level, is neither a monism, in which all differences are cancelled out, nor a pluralism, in which all unity disappears. It is neither monistic nor pluralistic. In the Buddhist vision of existence, unity does not obliterate difference, difference does not obliterate unity. We cannot help perceiving now one, now the other, but the Enlightened mind sees unity and difference at one and the same time. It sees that you are uniquely yourselves, individually blossoming with all your idiosyncrasies; at the same time, it sees that you are all one. These two, the unity and the difference, the monism and the pluralism, are not two different things (we do not say that they are one, but they are not two). This 'All-Distinguishing Wisdom', is symbolized by Amitabha, the 'Buddha of

Infinite Light', the red Buddha.

The fifth of the 'Five Wisdoms' is the 'All-Performing Wisdom'. The Enlightened mind devotes itself to the welfare of all living beings. In doing so it devises many 'skilful means' of helping people. The Enlightened mind helps people naturally and spontaneously. We must not imagine the Bodhisattva sitting down one morning and thinking, "How can I help someone today? Is this person more in need of help or that? Maybe I'll go and help so-and-so today." The Enlightened mind does not function like that: it functions freely, spontaneously, naturally. The helpfulness pours forth in a flood, but quite spontaneously, without any premeditation, without any intellectual working things out. This 'All-Performing Wisdom' is symbolized by Amoghasiddhi, the 'Infallible Success', the green Buddha.

These are the 'Five Wisdoms', which exhibit, on the same level, different aspects of prajñā. We have dealt with dhyāna and prajñā separately, as distinct pāramitās. Now it is time to consider them together. This we shall do with the help of Hui-Neng (or Wei-Lang), the Sixth Patriarch of the Dhyāna School in China (the Dhyāna School is the Ch'an or Zen School). Hui-Neng, the Sixth Patriarch, in the course of his Platform Scripture — a series of addresses to a body of people whom he very politely addresses as 'learned audience' — has this to say on the subject of samādhi (samādhi is the highest form of dhyāna) and prajñā:

> Learned Audience, in my system Samādhi and Prajñā are fundamental. But do not be under the wrong impression that these two are independent of each other, for they are inseparably united and are not two entities. Samādhi is the quintessence of Prajñā, while Prajñā is the activity of Samādhi. At the very moment that we attain Prajñā, Samādhi is therewith; and vice versa. If you understand this principle, you understand the equilibrium of Samādhi and Prajñā. A disciple should not think that there is a distinction between 'samādhi begets Prajñā' and 'Prajñā begets Samādhi'. To hold such an opinion would imply that there are two characteristics in the Dharma.
> ....
>
> Learned Audience, to what are Samādhi and Prajñā analogous? They are analogous to a lamp and its light. With the lamp there is light. Without it, it would be dark. The lamp is the quintessence of the light and the light is the expression of the lamp. In name they are two things, but in substance they are one and the same. It is the same case with Samādhi and Prajñā.

Commenting on this passage, we may say that samādhi, which represents the highest form of *dhyāna*, is the Enlightened mind as it is in itself, whereas *prajñā* is what we may describe as its objective functioning. We could even say that *dhyāna* represents the subjective and *prajñā* the objective aspect of Enlightenment, except that in Enlightenment there is no subject and no object.

We have now completed our journey for this week. We have seen today how the Bodhisattva practises Meditation and Wisdom, the fifth and sixth of the *pāramitās*, which represent respectively the subjective and objective poles of spiritual experience at their very highest level. Now, in imagination at least, we are standing — or maybe sitting in meditation — 'On the Threshold of Enlightenment'.

7. The Bodhisattva Hierarchy

Free Buddhist Audio link for audio talk: https://www.freebuddhistaudio.com/audio/details?num=71

In the course of the last few weeks we have been on a journey through the mountainous terrain of the Bodhisattva Ideal. On a journey of any kind we may sometimes look forward, at other times look back. Sometimes we look forward to see how far we still have to go, if we are able rightly to judge that. Sometimes we look forward to encourage ourselves: we fix our eyes on the final snow peak, which is perhaps our goal, as it discloses itself in the midst of the blue sky when the clouds momentarily part. Sometimes we look back to estimate how far as yet we have come. Sometimes we look back to see the appearance of the country through which we have been passing, because often when we look back, especially if we look back from a high altitude, we can see that country more clearly and more definitively than when we were actually struggling through it.

As we look back, perhaps from this higher altitude, we may see certain landmarks. This is particularly true when it is mountainous country through which we are travelling. Certainly the country through which we are even now still travelling is nothing if not mountainous. To me, as I look back in thought over the lectures of the previous weeks, there is one landmark that stands out. It dominates the entire landscape. It is the Bodhicitta, the Will to universal Enlightenment. In retrospect, all the other aspects of the Bodhisattva Ideal seem to group themselves quite naturally around the Bodhicitta, just as lesser mountain peaks group themselves around one particularly lofty peak.

We have seen in this series of lectures how the Bodhisattva, one who lives for the sake of the Enlightenment of all sentient beings, becomes a Bodhisattva only by virtue of the arising of the Bodhicitta. We have seen that the Bodhicitta is something Transcendental, cosmic, universal, something which sweeps through the whole of existence. The Bodhicitta, we have also seen, has two great aspects. These are traditionally called a 'vow aspect' and an 'establishment aspect'. The vow aspect consists in the formulation by the Bodhisattva of certain vows, the import of all of which is universal. This vow aspect of the Bodhicitta represents the expression of the one universal Bodhicitta in the life and work of the individual Bodhisattva. The establishment aspect consists in the practice by the Bodhisattva of the 'six *Pāramitās*', the 'six Perfections'. These, as we have seen over the last three weeks, are made up of three pairs of opposites: Giving and Uprightness, which represent the altruistic and the individualistic aspects of the spiritual life; Patience and Vigour, which represent respectively the 'feminine' and the 'masculine' approaches to the spiritual life; and Meditation and Wisdom, which represent the internal and external dimensions of the Enlightened mind. Each of these pairs of opposites is synthesized and balanced by the Bodhisattva. In his spiritual life there is

no one-sidedness whatsoever; everything is harmonized and integral.

Today we are still concerned with this same Bodhicitta. In previous lectures we were concerned with it by way of general principles; today we are considering the different concrete embodiments of those principles. Today we are dealing with what has been described as the 'Bodhisattva Hierarchy'.

'Hierarchy' is not a very popular word nowadays — it is not one of those 'in' words which are on everybody's lips. According to the dictionary, it is generally used in the sense of 'a body of ecclesiastical rulers'. You may read in the newspapers, for instance, of the Roman Catholic hierarchy: that the Roman Catholic hierarchy has issued a statement condemning divorce, or condemning birth control, or condemning something else — they usually seem to issue statements condemning something. I am not using the word 'hierarchy' in that sense. The sense I am using it in is nearer to its original and true meaning. I am using it in the sense of an embodiment, in a number of different people, of different degrees — higher and lower degrees — of manifestation of Reality.

Using the word 'hierarchy' in this sense, one can speak of a hierarchy of living forms, from the amoeba up to the unenlightened man. The higher living form manifests a more abundant degree of Reality than the lower form. This hierarchy of living forms is what we call the 'Lower Evolution'.

Now there is another hierarchy of living forms, which people don't usually take into consideration. This is the hierarchy from the un-enlightened man up to the Enlightened man. This hierarchy of living forms corresponds to what, in other contexts, we have described as the 'Higher Evolution'. Just as the un enlightened man embodies, or manifests, more of Reality, more of truth, than the amoeba, so the Enlightened man embodies, or manifests, more of Reality — in his life, work, in his words even — than the man who is unenlightened. The Enlightened man manifests Reality more clearly than does the un enlightened man. The Enlightened man is like a window, through which the light of Reality shines without any diminution; the light of Reality shines through the Enlightened man, just as the light of the sun shines through a window that is made not even of glass but of pure, transparent crystal.

In between the un-enlightened man and the Enlightened man (the Buddha) there are a number of people at various stages of spiritual progress. The majority of them are not completely Enlightened — to a greater or a lesser extent they are still short of full and perfect Enlightenment — but at the same time they are not wholly un-enlightened. It is these people who make up the spiritual hierarchy, and it is the higher reaches of this spiritual hierarchy which is known as the 'Bodhisattva Hierarchy'.

This principle of spiritual hierarchy is a very important one for Buddhism. It is important therefore that we try to understand it radically. We can perhaps do this by remembering that we, that human beings, are related to Reality in two different ways: directly and indirectly.

We are related to Reality directly in the sense that in the very depths of our being there is something, a golden thread if you like, which all the time connects us with Reality. In some of us that golden thread may

be thin, may be gossamer thin, but it is there. In others that thread has become a little thicker and stronger. In the case of those who are Enlightened, there is no difference at all between the depths of their being and the depths of Reality — the two are directly continuous. Most of us, though we are directly connected with Reality, do not realize it — we do not even see that thin golden thread shining in the midst of the darkness within ourselves. Nevertheless, however oblivious to the fact we may be, we are related to Reality, directly, in the very depths of our own being, all the time.

We are related indirectly to Reality in two ways. We are related, in the first place, to those things which represent a lower degree of manifestation of Reality than ourselves. We are related to nature: to minerals, to stones, to water, to fire; to the different forms of vegetable life; to the different forms of animal life. In this way we are indirectly related to Reality; we are related to Reality through these forms which manifest a lesser degree of Reality than we manifest ourselves. In the second place, we are indirectly related to Reality also through those forms which represent a higher degree of manifestation of Reality than ourselves.

The first kind of indirect relationship with Reality — through those forms of life which manifest Reality less than we manifest it ourselves — may be compared with the seeing of a light through a very thick veil. Sometimes the veil — especially in the case of material forms — seems to be so thick that we are unable to see the light which is there behind it. The second kind of indirect relationship with Reality —through those forms of life which manifest Reality more than we manifest it ourselves — is like seeing a light through a very thin veil. In this case, the veil seems at times to become diaphanous, or even to have rents in it, through which the light of Reality can be seen directly, as it is, without any intermediation at all. This thin veil, through which we see the light of Reality, is the spiritual hierarchy, especially the Bodhisattva Hierarchy.

It is very important for us to be in contact with those through whom the light of Reality shines a little more clearly than it shines through us, those who are at least a little more spiritually advanced than we are. Such people are known traditionally in Buddhism as our spiritual friends, our Kalyana Mitras. Most of us, undoubtedly, are not ready for contact with a Buddha. For most of us, if not for all of us, the idea of receiving guidance directly from a Buddha is perhaps even ridiculous. Even if we met a Buddha — or even an advanced Bodhisattva — we would not be able to recognize him or her for what in truth they were. Nevertheless we certainly can benefit immensely from contact with those who are just a little more spiritually developed than we are, those whose veil lets through a brighter glimmer of light than does our own.

In this connection there is a very beautiful passage in that great Tibetan spiritual classic by sGam.po.pa, The Jewel Ornament of Liberation. Speaking of spiritual friends, Gam.po.pa says:

> Since at the beginning of our career it is impossible to be in touch with the Buddhas or with Bodhisattvas living on a high level of spirituality, we have to meet with ordinary human beings as spiritual friends. As soon as the darkness caused by our deeds has lightened, we can find Bodhisattvas on a high level of spirituality. Then when we have risen above the Great Preparatory Path we can find a Nirmānakāya of the Buddha. Finally, as soon as we live on a high spiritual level we can meet with the Sambhogakāya as a spiritual friend.

> Should you ask, who among these four is our greatest benefactor, the reply is that in the beginning of our career when we are still living imprisoned by our deeds and emotions, we will not even see so much as the face of a superior spiritual friend. Instead we will have to seek an ordinary human being who can illumine the path we have to follow with the light of his counsel, whereafter we shall meet superior ones. Therefore the greatest benefactor is a spiritual friend in the form of an ordinary human being.

This association with spiritual friends is what the Indians even today call *satsangh*. *Satsangh* is something to which they attach tremendous importance. *Satsangh* is a Sanskrit word (it is in fact a Hindi, Marathi, Gujarati, and Bengali word too). It is made up of the two parts, *sat* and *sangh*. Sat means 'good', 'true', 'right', 'real', 'genuine', 'holy', and 'spiritual'. *Sangh* means 'association', 'company', 'fellowship', 'community', even 'communion'. So *satsangh* means 'good fellowship', or 'communion with the good', or 'holy association' — all these shades of meaning are included and suggested by the word.

The reason why in India all down the centuries and even today the importance of *satsangh* is stressed is that we all need help from other people in leading the spiritual life: we need at least strong moral support. If we are honest with ourselves we have to admit that we cannot get very far on our own. If there was no meditation class to go to, no lectures to come to; if one never met another person interested in Buddhism week after week, month after month, year after year; if one couldn't even get any books on Buddhism, because even reading books in the right way is a kind of *satsangh*; if one was entirely on one's own; however great one's enthusiasm and sincerity — one would not be able to get very far.

We get encouragement, inspiration, moral support, help, from associating with others who share similar ideals with us and who are following a similar way of life. Especially is this the case when we associate with those who are at least a little more spiritually advanced than we are, or who, putting it even more simply, are just more human than most people usually are.

In our own particular Movement, the Friends of the Western Buddhist Order, we lay very great stress on this principle of spiritual hierarchy and its corollary, the principle of spiritual fellowship, or spiritual brotherhood. In practice this means that we should try to be receptive to those who are above us in the spiritual hierarchy, those who have greater insight, understanding, sympathy and compassion than we have. We should try to be open to them and ready to receive from them, just like the lotus flower, which opens its petals to receive the light and warmth of the sun. It means that towards those who are below us in the spiritual hierarchy, we should try to be generous, kind and helpful. Then with regard to those on the same level as ourselves, our attitude should be one of mutuality, sharing, reciprocity.

These three attitudes — the attitudes we have towards those who are higher than us, lower than us and on the same level as us — represent the three great spiritual emotions of the Buddhist spiritual life. Firstly, there is the emotion of *śraddhā*. *Śraddhā* is often translated as 'faith' or 'belief', but it does not really mean that. *Śraddhā* means a sort of receptivity, or devotion, to the light streaming from above. Secondly, there is compassion. Compassion means a giving out to those below us of what we are receiving from above.

Thirdly, there is love, which we share with, which we radiate towards, all those who are on the same level as ourselves. When we speak in terms of spiritual hierarchy and spiritual brotherhood, we have in mind these three great spiritual emotions: faith and devotion directed upwards; compassion directed downwards; love radiating all around us.

Though I have referred to those who are 'higher up' and those who are 'lower down', I must stress that there is no question here of any sort of official grading. There is certainly no question of anyone saying, "Well, I'm a bit higher than you are". If we start even thinking in those terms, then we have forgotten the whole meaning of spiritual hierarchy and spiritual brotherhood. The appropriate emotion should flow forth naturally, spontaneously and unselfconsciously: when we encounter something which we feel is higher we spontaneously feel devotion; when confronted by someone in distress, we respond spontaneously with compassion; when we are surrounded by equals our feelings towards them are those of love and sympathy.

I remember in this connection sometimes going with Tibetan friends, whether lamas or lay people, to visit Tibetan monasteries and temples. It was very interesting to see their responses when they entered the place we were visiting. People in this country when they go to a place of worship, perhaps to a great cathedral, don't quite know what to do, because the tradition in a way no longer appeals to us. But it is quite different with the Tibetans. As soon as they see an image of the Buddha, or a beautiful *thang-ka*, or painted scroll, the feelings of devotion and reverence at once well up within them. They immediately put their hands to their forehead and very often prostrate themselves flat on the ground three times. They do this naturally, spontaneously, and completely unselfconsciously, because this is how they have grown up and learnt to behave.

Devotion, compassion and love should pervade the spiritual community, based as it is upon the twin principles of spiritual hierarchy and spiritual brotherhood. People in such a community, some of whom are higher and some of whom are lower in the spiritual hierarchy (though none are conscious of being higher or lower), should be like roses that are at different stages of growth and unfoldment, all blooming on a single bush. Or they should be like a family, of which the Buddha is the ultimate head and the great Bodhisattvas are the elder brothers. In a family of this sort everybody gets what they need — the younger members for example are cared for by the older members — and everybody gives what they can. The whole family is filled with a spirit of joy and with a spirit of freedom.

The Bodhisattva Hierarchy concentrates all this into a single focus of dazzling intensity. The Bodhisattva Hierarchy has its own radiant archetypal figures in the higher and ever higher stages of spiritual development, right up to Buddhahood itself. It is at some of these figures that we are now going to look; but as we proceed, we mustn't forget that we are still concerned really with the Bodhicitta.

The Bodhisattva Path is divided, according to the Mahayana, into ten progressive stages, which are known as the 'Ten Bhūmis' (for general purposes *bhūmi* just means a 'stage of progress'). These 'Ten *Bhūmis*' represent increasing degrees of manifestation of the Bodhicitta: the Bodhicitta begins to manifest in the first *bhūmi*, and continues to manifest a little more in each succeeding *bhūmi*, until by the time it reaches

the ninth and the tenth bhūmis it has, as it were, shaken off all mundane habiliments and stands entire and perfect in itself, identical with complete Enlightenment, the Enlightenment of a Buddha.

In some of the scriptures the process of the progressive manifestation of the Bodhicitta through and up the 'Ten Bhūmis' is compared to the process of smelting and refining a lump of gold that is mixed with dross. The dross is gradually purged away and the gold is finally worked up into a beautiful ornament, a diadem for a prince perhaps. In the simile the gold is of course the Bodhicitta, which all the time is within us but is adulterated, is covered over by all sorts of defilements, foreign elements. The foreign elements have to be separated, so that the gold of the Bodhicitta is allowed to manifest its own incorruptible nature.

I am not going to attempt to describe these 'Ten *Bhūmis'*. I am simply going to use them as points of reference for describing the four principle kinds of Bodhisattva which make up the Bodhisattva Hierarchy: the Novice Bodhisattva; the Bodhisattva of the Path; the Irreversible Bodhisattva; and the Bodhisattva of the Dharmakāya. I am going to deal with each of these in turn.

Novice Bodhisattvas are sometimes also called 'Bodhisattvas in Precepts'. Novice Bodhisattvas are all those who genuinely accept the Bodhisattva Ideal as the highest possible spiritual ideal. In other words, they aspire to attain the Enlightenment of a Buddha, not just for the sake of their own emancipation but so that they may contribute to the cause of universal Enlightenment, the Enlightenment not just of the human race but of all forms of life. Genuinely accepting the Bodhisattva Ideal is not of course just a matter of intellectual understanding — anyone can read a book about the Mahayana and understand the words that describe the Bodhisattva Ideal, but they don't thereby become a Novice Bodhisattva. Novice Bodhisattvas do not just understand the Bodhisattva Ideal intellectually or just accept it theoretically, they devote themselves deeply to its realization and make a real, tremendous effort to practise it. Such Novice Bodhisattvas may even have taken what is called 'Bodhisattva ordination', which entails formally, publicly pledging oneself to the fulfilment of the Bodhisattva Ideal.

The point to remember about the Novice Bodhisattva is that, despite his genuine, heartfelt acceptance of the Bodhisattva Ideal, despite the real efforts he makes to practise the Bodhisattva Ideal, as yet the Bodhicitta has not actually arisen in him: he has not, as yet, had the direct, dynamic experience of the urge to universal Enlightenment taking possession of his entire being. We may say perhaps — this is not said unkindly — that the Novice Bodhisattva is a Bodhisattva in every respect except the one that is most important. This is because it is upon the arising of the Bodhicitta, it is when the breath of the Bodhicitta breathes through one, that one becomes a Bodhisattva. Nevertheless the Novice Bodhisattva, by virtue of his acceptance of the Bodhisattva Ideal and his efforts to practise it, is genuinely a Novice Bodhisattva, he has set his foot on the path. We must admit that most sincere followers of the Mahayana, whether in the East or the West, fall into the category of Novice Bodhisattvas.

The Novice Bodhisattva, among other things, devotes a great deal of time to studying the Mahayana scriptures, those which deal with *śūnyatā*, or Emptiness, with the Ideal of the Bodhisattva, with the *Pāramitās*. He may not read many volumes, may not read commentaries and expositions; he may read just a

very few volumes, even just a few pages. But what he does read he reads again and again: he steeps himself in the spirit of the texts and tries to make the teaching one with his own mind and heart. In many parts of the Mahayana Buddhist world it is a traditional practice for the Novice Bodhisattva to learn some of these scriptures, like the *Heart Sutra*, by heart and to repeat them from time to time, especially after meditating.

The Novice Bodhisattva should even make copies of the scriptures. Making copies of scriptures is a practice to which the Mahayana attaches very great importance. It is not done with the intention of producing as many copies as possible as quickly as possible, but as a spiritual discipline, as a sort of meditation. You have to concentrate so that you can form the letters beautifully, so that you don't miss any words, so that you don't make any spelling mistakes. You think of the meaning with your conscious mind, but as you concentrate on writing, something of the meaning also percolates through, perhaps drop by drop, into the depths of your unconscious mind, influencing and transforming you.

The Novice Bodhisattva may not just copy texts, he may illuminate them too, just as in the West, in the Middle Ages, the monks spent hours, days, weeks, months, years illuminating manuscripts — burnishing them with gold, decorating them with red and blue, painting all sorts of beautiful pictures and designs. Only the other day — I can't resist this little digression — I was looking through a volume of French miniature paintings of the Middle Ages, and I was quite astonished to discover one painting which might have come straight out of the *Tibetan Book of the Dead*. It was an illustration to an illuminated manuscript, called *The Hours of the Duke of Rohan*. It was an illustration of a dead man face to face with his judge. It wasn't done in the traditional Renaissance style of Christian art. The corpse of the dead man was drawn very realistically indeed — with gruesome realism. Above the dead man was painted a sort of explosion of blue light, studded with golden stars, and in the midst of that was the face of the judge. Those of you who have read the *Tibetan Book of the Dead* will at once recognize this. You had the impression of a blaze of blue light, then golden stars, then the golden-haloed face of the judge, breaking in upon the inner vision of the dead man. When one speaks of illuminating texts, whether Christian texts or Buddhist texts, this is the sort of thing that one has in mind. This is the sort of care, the sort of devotion, the sort of love, which is traditionally lavished upon them. In fact all these activities that the Novice Bodhisattva engages in — studying, reading, learning by heart, copying, illuminating — are done as labours of love, as *sādhanas*, spiritual disciplines.

The Novice Bodhisattva meditates, and meditates especially upon the 'Four *Brahma-vihāras*'; *metta*, love; *karuṇā*, compassion; *muditā*, sympathetic joy; and *upekṣā*, equanimity, or perfect steadiness and evenness of mind. It is said that the Novice Bodhisattva should especially devote himself to the practice of the 'Four *Brahma-vihāras*' because they form the foundation for the development later on of the Great Compassion which characterizes the truly developed Bodhisattva.

The Novice Bodhisattva directs his attention to the practice of the *Pāramitās*, the Perfections though at this stage we cannot strictly speaking call them *Pāramitās* because they have not as yet been conjoined with Wisdom. He also performs, in some cases every day, the 'sevenfold Puja'. He also cultivates the 'Four Factors' for the arising of the Bodhicitta, as mentioned by the *ācārya* Vasubandhu. The Novice Bodhisattva,

of course, tries to be straightforward, helpful, friendly and sympathetic in all the affairs of daily life.

The second kind of Bodhisattva is the Bodhisattva of the Path. I have referred to the 'Ten *Bhūmis',* the ten stages of the Bodhisattva's progress up to supreme Enlightenment. These 'Ten *Bhūmis'* are divided into two sections, consisting of *bhūmis* 1-6 and *bhūmis* 7-10. Those who have attained to any of the first six *bhūmis* are Bodhisattvas of the Path. In the case of Bodhisattvas of the Path the Bodhicitta has arisen. In fact it is upon the arising of the Bodhicitta that one is said to enter upon the first *bhūmi*. The Bodhisattva of the Path has therefore also made his Vow, or Vows, and has embarked upon the really serious practice of the Perfections.

Incidentally, I should also observe that, according to many Mahayana traditions, the Stream-Entrant, the Once-Returner, the Non-Returner, and the Arahant of the Hinayana teaching are all regarded as Bodhisattvas of the Path — the Mahayana makes them sort of honorary Bodhisattvas. So far they have all been aiming at individual Enlightenment, but according to the Mahayana one can at any time change over to the Path of the Bodhisattva, the aim of which, of course, is Enlightenment for the sake of all: even if one has progressed along the path of individual emancipation right to the end, there is still the possibility, on the basis of one's previous practice of the individual path, of going on to practise the Bodhisattva Path and rising to supreme Buddhahood.

Moving on now to the Irreversible Bodhisattva, the third kind of Bodhisattva, we are ascending into really rarefied heights. The arising of the Bodhicitta within the individual is in itself a tremendous experience, but the achievement by the Bodhisattva of this stage of Irreversibility is an experience greater still. We may say that Irreversibility represents, within the context of the Mahayana, an extremely important aspect of the whole spiritual life: the aspect of non-retrogression, not falling back, not falling away.

We all know from our own experience how difficult it is to advance on the spiritual path. Some of us might look back over the last few months, even over the last few years, a little sadly, thinking, "There hasn't been much change. I'm still more or less the same person that I was. What progress have I made?" Progress is very difficult to make on the spiritual path; we measure our progress, we may say, by inches, not by miles. But though it is difficult to advance, it is only too easy to fall back, even a mile or two. We are familiar with this in the sphere of meditation. We may get on quite well for a few weeks or a few months, but then it happens that just for a couple of days we don't meditate. When we next sit down to meditate we find that we are right back where we were those few weeks or few months before. I'm sure everybody has had this experience, once or twice at least, in their spiritual life so far.

This danger of falling back applies at all levels of the spiritual life, so it becomes important for us to reach, from time to time, within a particular context at least, a point upon the attainment of which there is no danger of falling back — it is important to reach firm land where we can stand and from which we don't regress.

In the context of the spiritual life in general, this point is what we call the point of Stream-Entry (we enter the Stream which bears us eventually to Nirvana itself). Once we reach this point, once we enter the Stream, then there is no danger of ever falling permanently back into the round of existence, into mundane life. Those of us who have studied a little of the Hinayana teaching, the basic Buddhist teaching, know that Stream-Entry is achieved by breaking the first three of the 'Ten Fetters' which bind us down to the Wheel of Life, to the round of conditioned existence.

The first fetter is the fetter of belief in self. It is the belief that I am I and that this is fixed and final. It is the belief that my personal, individual existence is something irreducible, ultimate. It is the conviction that there is nothing beyond me: there is no such thing as a universal consciousness, a universal mind, an absolute Reality, outside of me. It is the belief that I am, as it were, the terminus, the point at which all the ends of the earth meet. This is how we feel most of the time. We believe in ourselves as identified with the body, as identified with the lower mind, as identified with the thinking principle, the *vijñāna*, the *manas*, and so on; we are blind to any more ultimate selfhood, any more universal consciousness. Sometimes a little chink is made, and through that chink in ourselves we see something greater than ourselves, but usually we believe in ourselves in the narrow, egoistic sense I have described. This belief in the ego-self is a fetter that has to be broken before we can enter the Stream and break through into a higher, wider dimension of being and consciousness.

The second fetter is the fetter of doubt. This is not doubt in the sense of an objective, cool, critical enquiry: that sort of doubt — if you like to call it doubt — Buddhism encourages. Doubt as the second fetter is a sort of soul-corroding scepsis — that won't settle down in anything; that is full of fears, humours, whimsicalities; that won't be satisfied; that doesn't really want to know and then complains that it doesn't know; that shies away from life; that won't really try to find out. This sort of scepsis, this sort of *vicikitsā* as it's called, is also a fetter that must be broken for Stream-Entry to be possible.

The third fetter is what is known as 'attachment to moral rules and religious observances'. If you're too moral you can't get Enlightened — not that you can get Enlightened more easily if you're immoral. If you are so moral, so good, so holy, that you think a lot of yourself on that account (you think that you have really got somewhere, you really are somebody, and you think that that is ultimate) and at the same time you look down on those who don't do what you do, who maybe don't keep the rules that you keep (you think that they're nowhere, they're nothing, they're miserable sinners), if you have this sort of rigid attitude, then you are in the grip of this third fetter of attachment to moral rules and religious observances. An example of this sort of attitude is found in Sabbatarianism, which regards the Sabbath as an end in itself, forgetting the words of Christ: 'The Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath'.

You get this sort of attitude, I'm sorry to say, even in some forms of Buddhism. A dispute split the Burmese Sangha as to whether, when a monk went out of the monastery, he should cover his right shoulder or leave it bare. This issue rocked the Sangha in Burma for a whole century. Books, articles and commentaries were written about it. I believe it is now settled only in the sense that the two sides have agreed to differ. Really this is a matter of attachment to moral rules and religious observances.

Some things may be good as means to an end (meditation, a moral life, charity are all good as means to an end); but as soon as you set them up as ends in themselves, they become hindrances. The third fetter therefore really consists in treating moral rules and religious observances — which in themselves, as means to an end, may be good — as ends in themselves. Breaking this fetter does not mean giving up the moral rules and religious observances: one uses them as means to an end, without being attached to them, or dependent on them. This fetter is very difficult to break indeed; but when you break it, you enter the Stream.

In the context of the career of the Bodhisattva, it is only when he achieves Irreversibility that he is no longer in danger of falling away from the Bodhisattva Ideal. The Bodhisattva becomes Irreversible in the eighth *bhūmi*, the eighth stage out of the ten. This gives us an indication what a long way the Bodhisattva has to go before he can be completely sure that he's going to persevere to the end. In the eighth *bhūmi* the Bodhisattva becomes Irreversible from full Enlightenment for the sake of all sentient beings. Up to that point, till he becomes Irreversible, there's always the danger, not that he'll fall away from the spiritual life itself (he has overcome that danger long before), but that he'll fall back into spiritual individualism: he'll give up trying to become a Buddha for the sake of all and instead seek to gain Enlightenment just for his own sake.

After all, one must recognize that the Bodhisattva Ideal, if one takes it seriously, is a very difficult Ideal to live up to. You are aspiring to gain Enlightenment for the sake of all living beings. You are supposed to be feeling compassion *for all living beings*. But sometimes feeling compassion even for the few dozen people that you meet is difficult enough, because people can be very trying, very foolish, very weak, very misguided. So even the Bodhisattva of the Path, who has got up even to the seventh *bhūmi*, may be tempted to give them all up in despair, as a bad lot. He may think, "I can't do anything for them. Never mind. I'll just get on with my own emancipation and let them do what they like." Sometimes he might express it even more strongly than that! Having given up the Goal of universal Enlightenment, he may achieve individual Emancipation, Arahantship, Nirvana. But in relation to his original Goal of supreme Buddhahood for the benefit of all, this represents a falling away. For the Bodhisattva Nirvana represents a failure. One can realize from this how high the Ideal is set for him.

How does the Bodhisattva become Irreversible? This is something that will not really concern us for a long time to come, but we may at least see what the scriptures have to say on the subject. Broadly speaking, the Bodhisattva becomes Irreversible by the realization of 'Great Emptiness', *mahā-śūnyatā*. We dealt with this to some extent in last week's lecture. We saw then that *mahā-śūnyatā* is the third of the four principal kinds of *śūnyatā*. The first of these is 'Emptiness of the Conditioned'. This is the fact that the conditioned is empty of the characteristics of the Unconditioned. Secondly, there is 'Emptiness of the Unconditioned'; the Unconditioned is empty of the characteristics of the conditioned. Thirdly, there is 'Great Emptiness', which is the emptiness of the very distinction, the non-ultimate validity of the very distinction, between conditioned and Unconditioned. Here the conditioned and the Unconditioned are both reduced to one non-dual Reality, transcending both Nirvana and samsara. Finally there is 'Emptiness of Emptiness', *śūnyatā-śūnyatā*, in which even the idea, even the conception, of emptiness vanishes away — the finger, however transparent, disappears, and the full moon is left, with nothing pointing to it.

In what way is Irreversibility connected with the realization of 'Great Emptiness'? 'Great Emptiness', as we have seen, is essentially a realization of the emptiness of the distinction between conditioned and Unconditioned. When the experience of 'Great Emptiness' dawns one sees clearly that neither the conditioned nor the Unconditioned is really a separate, independent Reality. One sees that the distinction between the two — 'this' is conditioned and 'that' is Unconditioned — is not ultimately valid. The distinction may be useful provisionally, at the beginning of one's spiritual life, for practical purposes, but ultimately it is not valid. When you go deeply into the conditioned you encounter the Unconditioned; when you go deeply into the Unconditioned you

encounter the conditioned. With the experience of 'Great Emptiness', therefore, one gives up the distinction of conditioned and Unconditioned, one reduces them, as it were, to one common, non-dual Reality.

Until the Bodhisattva attains the eighth *bhūmi*, there is always the danger of his falling back into spiritual individualism. Spiritual individualism is based on dualistic thinking. It is based on the idea that there is an Unconditioned 'up there', or 'out there', separate from the conditioned, to which one can aspire, to which one can escape, as it were, by oneself. When the Bodhisattva realizes 'Great Emptiness', he sees that it is not so — the conditioned is not separate from the Unconditioned. He awakens from dualistic thinking as though from a dream. He sees that all this talk of conditioned and Unconditioned, and getting from 'here' to 'there', is unreal. He sees through all this — out of the conditioned into the Unconditioned, whether to go by himself or whether to take others with him, whether to come back or stay there ... He sees that this is all a dream, or a game that he has been playing, a make-believe. He wakes up from this dream of dualistic thinking into the light, into the reality, of the one mind, the non-dual mind, the non-dual Reality, or whatever one likes to call it. He sees that in its ultimate depth the conditioned is the Unconditioned. He sees that there is no line, no division, whatsoever between them. He sees, in the words of the *Heart Sutra*, that *rūpa* is *śūnyatā* and *śūnyatā* is *rūpa*.

There is no difference whatsoever between the conditioned and the Unconditioned. Therefore there is nothing to escape from and nowhere to escape to. Seeing this, the Bodhisattva sees the utter absurdity of the very idea of individual emancipation. By realizing the import of 'Great Emptiness' in this way, the Bodhisattva becomes Irreversible. He cannot fall back to individual emancipation because he sees that there is no individual emancipation to fall back to.

The scriptures, especially the Perfection of Wisdom scriptures, tell us that there are various signs of a Bodhisattva's Irreversibility — this is how to know whether or not you have become Irreversible. We are told that the Irreversible Bodhisattva, if asked about the nature of the ultimate Goal, always includes in his reply a reference to the Compassion aspect of that Goal: he does not speak just in terms of individual emancipation, but always includes a reference to other sentient beings. In this way he is known to be Irreversible. The Irreversible Bodhisattva, we are told, has archetypal dream experiences. In a dream he may see himself as a Buddha preaching the Dharma, surrounded by Bodhisattvas. Or he may see himself practising the *Pāramitās*. We are told that he may especially see himself sacrificing his life and feeling quite happy about it, not afraid or upset at all. These are all signs that he has become Irreversible. Finally, it is a sign of his Irreversibility that the

Bodhisattva never wonders whether he is Irreversible or not.

The fourth and last principal kind of Bodhisattva is the Bodhisattva of the *Dharmakāya*. The Bodhisattvas of the *Dharmakāya* make up the innermost circle of the Bodhisattva Hierarchy. Here we find ourselves on a wholly Transcendental plane.

In English there are very few words for Ultimate Reality; 'God', 'Reality', 'Truth', maybe 'the Absolute' (people don't usually use that expression in everyday conversation) are practically the only words available to us. But Buddhism is very rich in words for Ultimate Reality. It has many terms, and each term has its own special flavour, its own particular connotation. The word *Dharmakāya* is one of these terms. The scholars — bless their hearts! — translate it literally as 'Body of Truth' and leave it at that. We are told that it is the third of the three bodies of the Buddha, the first two being the Buddha's 'Body of Transformation' and his 'Glorious Body'. We are maybe to imagine these three bodies one on top of another or maybe side by side — it is not very clear. The literal translation of *Dharmakāya* conveys nothing at all. Dharmakāya really means Ultimate Reality as the constitutive essence of Buddhahood and Bodhisattvahood. It means Ultimate Reality as the fountainhead as it were of Enlightened being and Enlightened personality, as the fountainhead from which Buddha forms and Bodhisattva forms come welling up inexhaustibly.

Bodhisattvas of the *Dharmakāya* are of two kinds, though at this Transcendental level one cannot really speak in terms of differences of kind at all. The first kind consists of those who, after gaining Enlightenment, though being in Reality Buddhas, retain their Bodhisattva forms, so that they can continue working in the world. The second kind consists of those who are aspects, or direct emanations, of the *Dharmakāya* and have got no previous human history. These two kinds make up the Bodhisattvas of the *Dharmakāya*. They are all archetypal forms of Buddhahood, each revealing, manifesting, incarnating one or another aspect of the one Buddhahood. There are vast numbers of these forms. In some meditations you imagine an infinite blue sky, free of cloud, filled with mandalas containing tens, hundreds, even thousands of these Bodhisattva forms. The majority of these forms are represented as very young men, of slender, graceful appearance, with long flowing hair, and decorated with ornaments of gold and silver. This represents the beauty and richness of the *Dharmakāya*, its superabundant efflorescence.

Amongst the most prominent of all the figures is Avalokiteśvara. The name Avalokiteśvara means ‘the Lord who looks down'; he looks down in compassion, and thus represents the Compassion aspect of Enlightenment. Suppose you imagine a great blue sky, completely empty; and suppose you see appearing in that sky, not even a face, but just the features of a face, features which are just sufficient to express a smile, a smile of compassion — this is the Compassion aspect of Reality, this is Avalokiteśvara.

Iconographically Avalokiteśvara is depicted as pure white. He carries a lotus flower, which symbolizes spiritual rebirth. His face is usually alive with a very sweet, compassionate smile. One foot is tucked under in the posture of meditation, showing that internally he is deep in meditation; the other hangs loose, representing his readiness to step down at any moment into the turmoil of the world to help other living beings. As I explained in last week’s lecture, in the Bodhisattva these two aspects of inner recollection and external activity are not contradictory, rather are different aspects of the same thing.

There are altogether one hundred and eight different forms of Avalokiteśvara. One of the most famous of these is the eleven-headed and thousand-armed form. To us it perhaps seems a little grotesque, but the symbolism is very interesting. It is said that once the great Bodhisattva Avalokiteśvara was contemplating the miseries that sentient beings suffer — death, sickness, separation, bereavement, flood, famine, war, and so on. He was overwhelmed by Compassion, we are told, to such an extent that he was weeping. He wept in fact so violently that his head shivered into eleven pieces, each of which itself became a head. There were eleven of them because there are eleven directions of space (north, south, east, west, the four intermediate points, up, down, and in the centre). This means that Compassion looks in all directions simultaneously — while it is looking here it is also looking there, while it is looking on this side it is also looking on that side. Avalokiteśvara also has a thousand arms — I think they stopped at a thousand only because the artists couldn't represent any more. At the end of every arm there’s a hand stretched out to help. With the help of this symbol, Buddhism tries to express the nature of Compassion, that it is looking in all directions and trying to help in all conceivable ways.

Mañjuśrī represents the Wisdom aspect of Enlightenment. He is depicted as a beautiful golden, or orange, or tawny colour. In his right hand he carries a flaming sword. He whirls it above his head. It is a sword of Wisdom, which he uses to cut through the bonds of ignorance and the knots of karma — what we are tangled up in and tripped up by all the time. In his left hand he carries a book. He holds it close to his heart. It is a little book of the Perfection of Wisdom (it is left to our imagination whether it is the *Diamond Sutra* or the *Heart Sutra*). His

legs are crossed in the lotus posture, the posture of meditation, because Wisdom, as the Dhammapada also teaches us, springs from meditation. Mañjuśrī is the patron of all the arts and sciences. In traditional Buddhism, if you want to write a book, or paint a picture, or compose a piece of music, you invoke Mañjuśrī. His mantra, the *arapachana* mantra, is repeated for retentive memory, for understanding of the Dharma, for eloquence, and so on.

Vajrapāṇi represents the Power aspect of Enlightenment. He does not represent power in the usual sense of political power, power over other people, but power in the sense of spiritual Power or simply Power in itself. Though he has a peaceful form, Vajrapāṇi is usually depicted in a wrathful form, because he is engaged in an act of destruction: he is destroying the dark forces of ignorance which separate us from the light of the truth. He is usually depicted, appropriately, in a dark blue colour. He is not slender or graceful; he has a stout, thick body, a very protuberant belly, and very short, heavy limbs. His countenance expresses extreme anger. He has long white teeth. Usually he is represented as naked except for ornaments of human bone. Sometimes he is depicted wearing a tiger skin. He carries in one hand a vajra, a thunderbolt, and if he has a number of hands he carries other weapons too. This terrifying figure is crowned with five skulls, representing the 'Five Wisdoms'. One foot is uplifted, as if about to trample on all the forces of ignorance. He is surrounded by a roaring halo of flames, which consume whatever of conditioned existence is near.

By way of contrast, there is Tārā. She represents the essence, indeed the quintessence, of Compassion. She is a Bodhisattva appearing in female form. (It is not strictly correct to say that she is a female Bodhisattva, because Bodhisattvas have gone far beyond the distinction of male and female. Some Bodhisattvas may appear in male form, others in female form; sometimes a Bodhisattva may appear at one time in male form and at another in female form – it does not really make any difference.) Tārā is the spiritual daughter of Avalokiteśvara. According to a very beautiful legend, she was born of his tears as he wept over the sorrows of the world. It is said that one day he was weeping so much that his tears formed a great pool. In the midst of the pool a white lotus emerged, which opened to reveal Tārā at its heart.

Tārā is usually depicted as either green or white in colour. Very often she bears a white lotus flower, sometimes a blue lotus flower, depending on the particular form. In her white form she has seven beautiful eyes, which just look at you from different parts of her body (there are two ordinary eyes, a third one in her forehead, one in each of her two palms, and one in each of the two soles of her feet). What this means is that the compassion which

Tārā represents is not foolish, sentimental compassion, it is not in any way blind, it sees. True Compassion, even in its remotest operations, is informed by awareness. That is more than can be said of some people's compassion, or rather pity, which sometimes just makes things worse. That is why there is the little saying, that it takes all the wisdom of the wise to undo the harm which is done by the merely good, or the merely pitiful.

The last great Bodhisattva that we are concerned with is Vajrasattva. He represents the aspect of Purity. This is not physical purity, nor moral purity, nor even spiritual purity. It is not any purity that can be attained. Vajrasattva represents primeval Purity, the Purity of the mind from beginningless ages. We may, through our spiritual practice, purify the lower mind, because the lower mind can become impure, but we never purify the Ultimate Mind, because the Ultimate Mind never becomes impure. We purify ourselves truly by waking up to the fact that we've never become impure, that we were pure all the time. This primeval purity of the mind, which Vajrasattva represents, is a Purity above and beyond time and a Purity above and beyond the possibility of impurity.

Vajrasattva is usually depicted as dazzling white, like the sunlight reflected from fresh snow. He is usually completely naked — he does not even have any Bodhisattva ornaments. The one hundred syllable mantra of Vajrasattva is recited and meditated upon for the purification of one's faults, or for purification from the impurity of thinking that one is not — primevally — pure. Many important practices are connected with Vajrasattva, all of which are included in what is called the 'Vajrasattva Yoga', which makes up one of the 'Four Foundation Yogas' of the Tibetan Buddhist Tantra.

As I mentioned, there are very many Bodhisattvas of the *Dharmakāya* — these few must suffice by way of illustration. They are all, we are told, in the last analysis, which is not an intellectual analysis, simply different aspects of our own fundamentally Enlightened mind, our own immanent Buddha mind.

Finally a few words about the Bodhisattva ordination. The Bodhisattva ordination is not just a ceremony; it is the natural expression of the arising of the Bodhicitta. As such it usually occurs in the first *bhūmi*, which is when the Bodhicitta itself arises. But as a ceremony, as something undergone externally, it may be taken at any time, even by the Novice Bodhisattva. In the case of the Novice Bodhisattva, he takes the Bodhisattva ordination in anticipation of the arising of the Bodhicitta. The taking of the Bodhisattva ordination in this way is therefore

included among the conditions in dependence upon which the Bodhicitta arises.

The Bodhisattva ordination consists of two parts. First of all there is the taking of the Bodhisattva Vow, usually in the form of the 'Four Great Vows'. Secondly there is the acceptance of the Bodhisattva precepts, which are principles governing the behaviour of the Bodhisattva. There are different lists of these precepts in different branches of the Mahayana. They have all been extracted from the Mahayana scriptures and constitute a more detailed application of the Great Vows themselves. The taking of the Bodhisattva Vow as a part of the Bodhisattva ordination corresponds, on its own higher level, to the Going for Refuge. The acceptance of the Bodhisattva precepts corresponds to the acceptance of the five, or the ten, ordinary precepts.

The Bodhisattva ordination is the third of the four degrees of ordination which we have in the Western Buddhist Order. The first degree is that of lay brother or lay sister; the second is that of senior lay brother or senior lay sister; the fourth is that of the full time bhikshu, or lama, or master. It must be emphasized that the Bodhisattva ordination, which comes third, does not represent the conferring of any spiritual status. Spiritual status in fact cannot be conferred. Bodhisattva ordination does not even imply a *recognition* of spiritual status. Bodhisattva ordination represents a public pledge by the person concerned that he or she will do their best to live up to the Bodhisattva Ideal ('public' here means 'in the presence of the Buddhist spiritual community', especially in the presence of other members of the Order). It is a quite different matter whether or not the Bodhicitta arises at the same time. It is obviously very difficult for other people to know, in the case of any given person, whether or not the Bodhicitta has arisen.

For most of us, even for those who are interested, the Bodhisattva ordination lies a long way ahead; for most of us, our immediate objective is the first- or the second-degree ordination. For the time being, therefore, we have to be content to contemplate from afar the glories of the Bodhisattva Hierarchy.

8. The Buddha and the Bodhisattva: Eternity and Time

Free Buddhist Audio link for audio talk: https://www.freebuddhistaudio.com/audio/details?num=72

Last week we began our lecture by permitting ourselves, for a few moments, a backward glance over the mountainous terrain of the Bodhisattva Ideal, terrain through which we have been travelling in the course of the last two months. As we looked back, we saw that one mountain peak stood out and dominated the landscape. This was the mountain peak of the Bodhicitta, the Will to universal Enlightenment. In retrospect we saw that all other aspects of the Bodhisattva Ideal, some of which we had touched upon and even explored, seemed to group themselves around this particular aspect, just as lesser mountain peaks seem to cluster around one great peak that towers above them all.

This evening we are still concerned with the Bodhicitta, but whereas so far in the course of this series of lectures we have dealt only with the relative Bodhicitta, today we are going to deal with the Absolute Bodhicitta. Quite early in the series the distinction between the Absolute Bodhicitta and the relative Bodhicitta was introduced, but the Absolute Bodhicitta was mentioned just briefly (we also slightly anticipated this subject of the Absolute Bodhicitta last week in speaking of the Bodhisattvas of the *Dharmakāya*).

It is not easy to approach this subject of the Absolute Bodhicitta. It is difficult enough to deal with the relative Bodhicitta. If it is difficult to get a glimpse, even from far off, of the relative Bodhicitta, it is difficult even to get a glimpse of a glimpse of the Absolute Bodhicitta. So perhaps we should work our way into the subject gradually, little by little, until perhaps we have some perception, however remote or indirect, of the nature of the Absolute Bodhicitta.

In the course of listening to the previous lectures, you cannot but have received certain impressions. You may not remember very much of the lectures in detail, but some broad general impressions will have remained with you. You will surely think of the Bodhisattva as following a certain way of life: performing the 'sevenfold Puja', making the 'Four Great Vows', practising the *Pāramitās*, and so on. In other words, you will think of him as treading a certain path. In the same way, you will undoubtedly think of him as aiming at a certain goal: Enlightenment for the sake of all sentient beings, supreme Buddhahood. These at least are the sort of impressions with which you will be left after listening to this course of lectures. These impressions, though very general (not to say vague), are, as far as they go, perfectly correct — it is true that the Bodhisattva aims at the goal of Enlightenment for the sake of all sentient beings. But though these impressions are correct, there is a danger. The danger consists in the fact that these expressions, as when we speak of the Bodhisattva following a path or arriving at a goal, are in fact metaphorical.

We do not always realize how much of our thought and speech is metaphorical. It is not to be taken literally; it is suggestive. It is not meant to communicate in a clear-cut, scientific, quasi-mathematical fashion; it is meant to stimulate, even inspire. So there is the danger that we may forget this. We may start taking these metaphors — with the help of which we try to make clear what is going on in the spiritual life — somewhat too literally and may try to press them to logical conclusions.

Let us look into this a little more closely. Suppose that we're walking along a road. In due course, having covered a certain distance, we arrive at our destination, which is perhaps a house. This is a simple enough situation. But what are the facts of the situation? The facts are that we have changed our position, but we have changed it on the same plane, or level. The house therefore is, in a sense, a continuation of the road, because it is on the same plane as the road.

Now it is only too easy to think that the path of the Bodhisattva leads up to Buddhahood as though to the door of a house. We think of the Bodhisattva as going along step by step, until one day he comes to the door of Nirvana — perhaps we imagine a great gateway, glistening, pearly and golden — and he goes in. This is the way in which we think of these experiences; we cannot perhaps help thinking in this way. But it isn't really like that at all. When you come to the end of the Bodhisattva path, when you come in fact to the end of the spiritual path, you don't find a door or a gateway — there is no celestial mansion waiting for you. What do you find? When you reach the end of the path, you don't find anything at all. There is nothing there. The path just ends. You find

yourself at the edge of a precipice (this is another metaphor, so again it should not be taken too literally). You have walked along the path for mile after mile — you have counted all the milestones. You're expecting to arrive in comfort at the door of a great house. But instead you find that the path ends right at the edge of a precipice. And when you look down, you see that the precipice does not drop just a few feet, nor even a few miles: it drops down to infinity. So what are you to do?

In the Zen tradition leading the spiritual life is compared to climbing up a flagpole. This particular flagpole is rather slippery, if not deliberately greased — by fate or circumstances. It is also very high indeed. Eventually, with a lot of effort, you struggle to the top of it. Then, however, you cannot go any further up — obviously. It is also impossible for you to come down. Why is this? This is because the Zen master is standing below with a big stick! Worst of all, at the top of the flagpole there is no cosy little platform on which, like St Simeon Stylites, you can settle down — there is just empty space. Finally, of course, you're afraid to jump off. You can't go up, you can't go down, you can't stay there, and you can't jump off. So what are you to do? Well, it's quite impossible to say. No statement is possible. So I'm afraid I shall have to leave you on top of the flagpole!

Here we are not concerned with that particular predicament directly, only inasmuch as it illustrates the point that 'path' and 'goal' are discontinuous. Contrary to what we usually think, contrary to our usual metaphorical mode of description, Enlightenment is not reached by following a path — at the end of the path Enlightenment is not there staring you in the face. At the same time this does not mean that the path should not be followed. Paradoxically, one follows the path knowing that it doesn't lead anywhere. However, we're not concerned here with that either. The point I am trying to make clear is that the path and the goal occupy different dimensions, the dimension of time and the dimension of eternity, and therefore you will not arrive at the goal by the indefinite prolongation of the path; you do not reach eternity by the indefinite prolongation of time (it would be like trying to arrive at a two-dimensional figure by the prolongation of a one-dimensional line: however far you may go in that dimension, protracting the line, you never will arrive at a two-dimensional figure). Eternity, the goal, on the one hand; time, the path, on the other hand — these are discontinuous, discrete.

Now the Bodhisattva, about whom we've been speaking over the last few weeks, represents the dimension of time. This is because — obviously — the Bodhisattva path is followed in time; it has a past, a present and a future; it doesn't go beyond time. But the Buddha represents the dimension of eternity. The Buddha represents the goal, and the goal is gained out of time. One reaches the end of the path in time, but one does not attain the

goal in time: one can say either that one attains the goal out of time or that the goal is eternally attained.

We usually — and up to a point quite justifiably — think of the Buddha as an historical figure. We think of his attainment of Enlightenment as an historical event. We say, for instance, that it took place two thousand five hundred years ago — we might name the year, or even the day. So we look upon the Buddha's attainment of Enlightenment as something occurring in time, within the dimension of time. Now so long as we make it clear that we're speaking popularly, conventionally, then this is not altogether wrong. But only too often we go on to think of Buddhahood itself as existing in time. This is quite wrong. Though the Buddha, the historical person, may exist within time, Buddhahood itself exists outside time: it exists in the dimension of eternity. We can in fact think of the Buddha as existing simultaneously on two different levels: on the level of time, as a human, historical figure, and on the level of eternity, as Reality. We can think of him existing also on a further level, in an intermediate, archetypal realm. This brings us, as some of you may have perceived, to what is known in Buddhism as the *trikāya* doctrine, the doctrine which some scholars are pleased to call 'the Buddha's three bodies'.

This doctrine has been, and still is, much misunderstood. *Trikāya* does literally mean 'three bodies', or 'three personalities', or 'three individualities', but the literal meaning of the term is not to be taken too seriously. It is a doctrine not about three bodies, much less still about three Buddhas, but rather about one Buddha, or one Buddha-nature, functioning on three different levels.

The first of the so-called 'three bodies' is the *nirmāṇakāya*. This term literally means 'created body', or 'body of transformation'. It represents the Buddha as functioning on the human, historical level, as subject to birth, old age and death. The *nirmāṇakāya* therefore obviously corresponds to Gautama the Buddha, Śākyamuni, whom we know as an historical figure.

Secondly, there is the *sambhogakāya*, which literally means 'body of mutual enjoyment'. It is sometimes rendered more poetically (less accurately, but more truthfully) as the 'glorious body' of the Buddha, or as the Buddha's 'body of glory'. This is the archetypal Buddha form. This is the form under which the Buddha is perceived by advanced Bodhisattvas dwelling on a much higher level of consciousness, a much higher meditative (*dhyāna* or *samādhi*) state, than that on which we usually function and operate. This archetypal form is the form of the

Buddha under which the Bodhisattvas are said to 'enjoy' the vision of him.

The *sambhogakāya* has a number of different aspects. The principle aspects are five in number and are known as the 'Five *Jinas*', or 'Five Conquerors', or, more simply, the 'Five Buddhas'. They appear often in Buddhist art: sometimes individually, sometimes collectively. It is important to remember that they don't represent the human historical Buddha, but different aspects, or facets, of this glorified Buddha, this archetypal Buddha, existing on this higher, archetypal plane, in between the plane we usually experience and the plane of Absolute Reality. I will say just a few words about each of these 'Five Buddhas' in turn.

First there is Vairocana. The name Vairocana means 'The Illuminator'. He is sometimes called 'The Great Sun Buddha', because just as the sun illumines the physical cosmos, so the archetypal Buddha, Vairocana, illumines (as it were) the spiritual cosmos. He is represented in Buddhist art as being of a dazzling white colour. His hands are in the teaching *mudrā* (more technically, the *dharmacakrapravartana* mudrā, which means the mudrā of turning the wheel of the law). He holds in his hands an eight-spoked golden wheel — obviously a sort of solar symbol. When Vairocana is represented in a mandala (a circle of archetypal forms), he usually occupies the central position.

Secondly, Aksobhya. His name means 'The Imperturbable' — one who cannot be moved. He is represented as being of a rich, dark blue colour, the blue of the midnight sky on a clear night in the tropics. His right hand is in the earth-touching mudrā (the *bhūmisparśa mudrā*), or the *mudrā* of calling the earth to witness. His emblem is the vajra, the thunderbolt. It is a symbol of indestructible strength and power. It represents Wisdom, the Wisdom which smashes everything that opposes it, which destroys all error and illusion. Aksobhya is associated with the East.

Thirdly, Amitabha, which means 'The Infinite Light'. Amitabha is red in colour, usually a beautiful, deep, rich red, very much like the colour of the setting sun when, just before it actually sets, it is seen through a little mist. The *mudrā* of Amitabha is the meditation *mudrā*, in which one hand rests simply upon the other. His emblem is the lotus, which is a symbol of spiritual rebirth. He is associated with the West.

Fourthly, Ratnasambhava, 'The Jewel Born', or 'The Jewel Producing'. He is golden-yellow in colour. His right hand exhibits the *mudrā* of giving (the *varada mudrā* is the *mudrā* of the supreme gift, which is especially the gift of the Dharma itself). His emblem is the jewel. He is associated with the South.

Fifthly, Amoghasiddhi, which means 'Unobstructed Success', or 'Infallible Success'. Amoghasiddhi is a dark green colour. His right hand exhibits the *mudrā* of fearlessness: he says, as it were, "Fear not! Be free from fear!" His emblem is the double *vajra* (two *vajras* crossed). He is associated with the North.

These 'Five Buddhas' are different aspects of the *sambhogakāya*, the archetypal Buddha form. They are the five chief aspects, but are not the only ones. There are scores of other aspects, far too numerous to mention. All of them are archetypal: they all exist on this archetypal plane, intermediate between ordinary earthbound human consciousness and the level of Absolute Reality.

All of them are out of time as we usually experience it, but are not out of time altogether: they occupy (as it were) a time scale different from that of our normal waking consciousness. We ourselves are not altogether out of touch with this archetypal world of the *sambhogakāya*. We sometimes touch the fringes of it in very deep meditation, in some archetypal dreams, and perhaps in aesthetic experience of a more truly visionary nature.

Thirdly and lastly, we come to the *dharmakāya*. This is usually translated as 'body of truth', though it is not indeed a very satisfactory translation. A more accurate rendering would be 'the aspect of Absolute Reality'. The *dharmakāya* represents Buddhahood as it is in itself, or the Buddha as he is in himself. The *dharmakāya* therefore represents the real, the true, the genuine, the ultimate, Buddha. This is not the human, historical Buddha, nor even the archetypal Buddha. Therefore we find the Buddha saying in the Diamond Sutra, in a verse which is very famous in the Buddhist world and often recited:

Those who by my form [the human, historical form] did see me,

And those who followed me by voice

Wrong the efforts they engaged in,

Me those people will not see.

From the Dharma should one see the Buddhas,

From the Dharmabodies comes their guidance.

Yet Dharma's true nature cannot be discerned,

And no one can be conscious of it as an object.

So here the Buddha is saying that the Buddha is not really his physical body, nor even his archetypal form, but is the *dharmakāya*, is (as it were) Reality.

The message of another great Mahayana text, the *Saddharma-puṇḍarīka*, or 'White Lotus of the True Dharma', is similar, in fact in a way is even more explicit. It's worth pointing out that this sutra employs the non-conceptual mode of communication. There are two modes of communication: conceptual and non-conceptual. In the former one speaks the language of abstract ideas, of concepts; in the latter the language of parable and myth etc. It is this language of parable and myth which the *Saddharma-puṇḍarīka* speaks predominantly.

I have in mind a particular episode, when suddenly, according to the text, millions of Bodhisattvas appear from the earth. You can imagine how staggered everybody was! There they were, somewhere in northern India, sitting round the Buddha on the top of a mountain, — monks, nuns, male and female lay devotees and so on, — when suddenly, out of the fissures of the earth, there came millions of Bodhisattvas — quite an extraordinary thing to happen, even during the lifetime of the Buddha.

The Buddha, when he saw all these Bodhisattvas, said, addressing the other ordinary human disciples, "Oh yes, these are all my disciples. I've taught and trained them all." The ordinary human disciples expressed their astonishment at this and said, "But you were Enlightened only forty years ago. We admit that you've been working pretty hard. You haven't wasted any time, and you have been teaching all sorts of beings. But these millions of Bodhisattvas? That is a bit too much to ask us to believe. How could you possibly have trained so many of them? What's more, some of them are not just ordinary novice Bodhisattvas, they've been following the

Bodhisattva path for hundreds of lives, for *kalpas*, so how can they possibly be your disciples?" They said, "It's just like a young man of twenty-five pointing out a collection of centenarians and saying, 'They're all my sons.' It's just impossible."

So at this point, according to the sutra, the Buddha makes his great revelation, the one towards which the whole sutra has been building up, a revelation which is the keynote of the sutra. The Buddha says, "Don't think that I was Enlightened forty years ago. That is just your way of looking at it. I am eternally Enlightened." When the Buddha makes that statement it obviously isn't the *nirmāṇakāya* speaking, nor the *sambhogakāya*: it's the *dharmakāya* speaking. In other words it's the real Buddha, the eternal Buddha, Buddhahood itself, speaking, not any particular individual, however great.

So when the *Saddharma-puṇḍarīka* speaks in terms of the eternal Buddha, one is not to understand the word 'eternal' in the sense of indefinitely prolonged in time, but rather in the sense of being outside time altogether. This means therefore that for the *Saddharma-puṇḍarīka*, as for the *Diamond Sutra*, the Buddha symbolizes the dimension of eternity, or symbolizes Reality as existing outside time. This is why also we speak, in the title of this lecture, of 'The Buddha and the Bodhisattva: Eternity and Time'. The Buddha here represents the dimension of eternity, the dimension above and beyond, or outside, time.

Similarly therefore the Bodhisattva represents the dimension of time, or represents Reality — even Buddhahood — as manifesting in time (this again is metaphorical). It is not difficult to understand how the Bodhisattva should represent the dimension of time, because, as we have seen, the Bodhisattva follows the path, engages in certain activities, originates a certain sequence of thoughts, words and deeds. This sequence is progressive (the Bodhisattva manifests the relative Bodhicitta to an ever increasing degree), and the whole process takes place in time. This process is the process of the Higher Evolution — at least in its upper reaches.

We can take a view even broader than this. We can regard the Bodhisattva as symbolizing the whole evolutionary process, the *whole* process of life going on to higher and ever higher forms, the Higher Evolution (the evolution of man from the unenlightened to the Enlightened state) *and* the Lower Evolution (evolution from the very beginnings of life up to man in his unenlightened state). We can regard the Lower and the Higher Evolution as being, in a way, one continuous process; or at least we can regard the process of the Higher Evolution as arising

in dependence upon the process of the Lower Evolution.

This view is supported by the *Jātaka* stories. *Jātaka* are one particular branch of Buddhist canonical literature (there are also many non-canonical *Jātaka;* in fact whereas there are only about thirty canonical *Jātaka*, there are well over five hundred and fifty non-canonical *Jātaka*). Traditionally the *Jātaka* are stories of some of the previous lives of Gautama the Buddha (Buddhism traditionally teaches rebirth, and this of course applies to the Buddha himself). They show how, from life to life, the Bodhisattva, or the future Buddha, advanced in the direction of Enlightenment.

Scholars have had a look at these *Jātaka* stories — you know what scholars are like, they probe, turn over, ask awkward questions — and have discovered that quite a number of them are old Indian folk tales, which have been turned into *Jātaka* by the simple process of identifying the Buddha with the hero of the tale (this applies particularly to the non-canonical *Jātaka;* it doesn't apply in quite the same way to the canonical *Jātaka*). It is rather as though we in the West had taken *Aesop's Fables*, had identified Christ, five hundred years later, with the principal character in each fable, and had regarded the fable as telling the story of one of the previous lives of Christ. This is what the early Buddhists did, apparently, with a vast mass of Indian folk lore: they turned folk stories into *Jātaka* simply by identifying the Buddha with the story's hero.

Some of the folk tales are in fact animal fables, and in these the Buddha is identified as having been the particular animal who is the hero of the story. Some scholars ask of course whether Buddhists take all this quite literally, and whether we are in fact to think that the particular hero, who might have been a hare, or a deer, of a lion, really represented the Buddha as he was in his own previous life. In some parts of the Buddhist East they are literal-minded and do quite honestly regard the *Jātaka* as really and truly depicting the actual previous lives of the Buddha. So, for instance, they often think that the hare *Jātaka*, in the course of which the Buddha is born as a hare and sacrifices his life, represents a real historical previous life of the Buddha. Simple-minded people everywhere take things in this way, but we need not be quite so simple-minded as that. We can say, adopting a more intelligent point of view perhaps, that the *Jātaka* quite clearly depict an evolutionary process. In each *Jātaka* there is a story involving a number of characters, one of whom is a hero. In other words there's someone, a man or an animal, who stands out from the rest, who stands above the rest, who is more advanced than the rest, and who therefore may be said to represent, in comparison with the rest, a more advanced stage of evolution. It is significant that this hero figure is identified with the Buddha. This means that this figure

represents at that particular stage that same — in this context 'lower' — evolutionary urge which ultimately resulted in the 'production' of a (*nirmāṇakāya*) Buddha in the future. Just as the end result is symbolized by the Buddha, so this evolutionary urge itself is symbolized by the Bodhisattva, and therefore in the *Jātaka* the hero of the story is the Bodhisattva, in other words the Buddha-to-be.

To return to our main subject, we have therefore two principles: a principle of Buddhahood in the dimension of eternity and a principle of Bodhisattvahood in the dimension of time. In the principle of Buddhahood eternity is transcendent; in the principle of Bodhisattvahood the principle of growth, evolution, development, is immanent. The principle of Buddhahood represents perfection eternally complete, eternally achieved; the principle of Bodhisattvahood represents perfection everlastingly in the process of achievement, in the world order, through the evolutionary process. The two principles are discontinuous, discrete.

Now is this the last word that can be said on the subject, that on the one hand there is the Buddha, eternity, and on the other the Bodhisattva, time, and the two are discrete? According to the Mahayana, and especially according to the Tantra, it is certainly not. There's no question though of merging one into the other. The solution is not as easy as that. The solution does not consist in saying, "Time is illusory, merge it in eternity," or, "Eternity is illusory, merge it in time." No. They are both irreducibly there — Buddhahood *and* Bodhisattvahood, eternity *and* time — and they can't be merged, the one into the other.

The solution consists rather, according to the Mahayana and again especially according to the Tantra, in realizing both of them simultaneously: Buddha and Bodhisattva simultaneously, eternity and time simultaneously. It consists in seeing everything as eternally achieved and everything at the same time in process of achievement, and in seeing that these two do not contradict each other. One may say one has to see that everything moves but nothing moves. Sometimes, when one is walking perhaps or even running, one may have the feeling that one is moving but nothing moves. The two are both there and are (in a sense) contradictory — movement and no movement — but one can deny neither of them.

In the same way, one may say that the Buddha sits eternally beneath the Bodhi tree (the Buddha has always sat and always will sit beneath the Bodhi tree), that at the same time the Bodhisattva is eternally, life after life to infinity, practising the Perfections, and that these two, Buddha and Bodhisattva, represent different aspects of

one, even the same, Reality. It is the realization of this — Buddha together with Bodhisattva, eternity together with time, no movement together with movement — that constitutes the arising of the Absolute Bodhicitta, though at the same time there's no question of 'arising'.

The essence of this Absolute Bodhicitta is very beautifully expressed, as far as it can be expressed, in certain Tibetan verses. These verses have never been published; they were privately translated in 1959 in Kalimpong. They are to be recited and meditated upon in a *sādhana*, which is known as 'The Confounder of Hell'. The Confounder of Hell is one of the titles of Vajrasattva, and this *sādhana* is part of a form of the Vajrasattva Yoga. These verses juxtapose in a single vision two different aspects of Reality: Reality existing out of time, in eternity, and Reality as progressively revealed in time.

Each of the verses starts with a mantra-like exclamation, E MA O (it is sometimes pronounced quickly as a single word). In the Tibetan tradition this comes at the beginning of certain things to be recited and is meant to express extreme wonder. Plato said that philosophy begins with a sense of wonder, so one might say that the spiritual life begins with a sense of wonder. When you come across anything numinous, transcendent, your reaction is one of wonder and astonishment, you're impressed, almost overwhelmed, by it. So each of the verses starts with this exclamation of wonder and astonishment at the vision of the Absolute Bodhicitta which is about to dawn on one.

E MA O

Dharma wondrous strange.

Profoundest mystery of the Perfect Ones.

Within the birthless all things take their birth,

Yet in what's born there is no birth.

E MA O

Dharma wondrous strange.

Profoundest mystery of the Perfect Ones.

Within the ceaseless all things cease to be,

Yet in that ceasing nothing ceases.

E MA O

Dharma wondrous strange.

Profoundest mystery of the Perfect Ones.

Within the non-abiding all abides,

Yet thus abiding there abideth nought.

E MA O

Dharma wondrous strange.

Profoundest mystery of the Perfect Ones.

In non-perception everything's perceived,

Yet this perception's quite perceptionless.

E MA O

Dharma wondrous strange.

Profoundest mystery of the Perfect Ones.

In the unmoving all things come and go,

Yet in that movement nothing ever moves.

It's very difficult for the mind to go beyond this point. But this doesn't mean that the Absolute Bodhicitta is too remote for us to practise, at least to some extent. To begin with, we have to realize that however long time goes on, time never reaches eternity; time does not go beyond time. There's no question of getting nearer and nearer to eternity as time goes on, nearer to the Absolute, to Buddhahood, which is in the dimension of eternity. In a million years we'll be no nearer to eternity than we are now, no nearer to Buddhahood — no nearer at all.

This sounds pretty hopeless. But it is not really as hopeless as it sounds, because you can turn it the other way round and say that at this very moment we're as near to Enlightenment, to eternity, as we shall ever be. We might even say that even a Bodhisattva, on the very threshold of Enlightenment, just a minute before he gets it, is no nearer *really* than we are at this moment. This is really something to meditate upon, to ponder. Every moment is the last moment, whether it's this moment, or the next, or a moment occurring after a million years. Every moment is the last moment, and beyond the last moment there's only Buddhahood. There's only *this* moment, and after this moment there's only Buddhahood. So every moment in fact, only we don't know it (if we did know it what a terrible reaction there would be), we find ourselves at the top of the flagpole, and all that we have to do is ... well, what?

We've gone quite a long way tonight; at the same time we haven't gone anywhere. We've completed our journey along the Bodhisattva path; at the same time we've realized that the goal of the journey is eternally achieved and eternally in process of being achieved. The Buddha and the Bodhisattva, eternity and time, are one, or are not two. With that insight achieved, we bring to an end our exploration of aspects of the Bodhisattva Ideal.