Aspects of the Bodhisattva Ideal

Lecture 68: Altruism and Individualism in the Spiritual Life

Last week I said something about the absolute Bodhicitta, but in reality there is very little indeed that can be said about the absolute Bodhicitta. The absolute Bodhicitta, we may say, in its ultimate essence is beyond thought, and beyond speech. Some of the great teachers, some of the great Acaryas, do, very provisionally, have something to say about it. They say, for instance that the Absolute Bodhicitta is of the nature of sunyata, of the nature of the voidness, of the nature of emptiness. That is to say that it is identical with absolute, with ultimate reality. They say further that the absolute Bodhicitta is endowed with the essence of Compassion, that it is not a blank, as it were, featureless, as it were, inert, absolute, but, as it were pulsing with life, spiritual life, and spiritual activity, which we call, which we denominate, as Compassion.

Further still they say that the absolute Bodhicitta is like unto pure light, that it is radiant, that it is immaculate, that it cannot be touched, cannot be soiled, cannot be shaken, and that furthermore it transcends space and transcends time.

The relative Bodhicitta on the other hand is more comprehensible, as it were more accessible. It is, we may say, the reflection of the absolute Bodhicitta in the cosmic process, in the web of conditioned existence. If you like, in the stream, in the process, of time. This relative Bodhicitta therefore may be described, is in fact described, as a sort of 'cosmic will', a cosmic will to universal salvation, universal redemption, universal Enlightenment.

And this relative Bodhicitta, this cosmic will to universal salvation, manifests itself in different individuals. It manifests itself, we are told, in those who have created within themselves, in their own minds, in their own hearts, in their own lives, the conditions for its manifestation. And these beings, these individuals in whom this Bodhicitta manifests, in whom it reveals itself, through whom it works - these are known as Bodhisattvas. The Bodhisattva is the ideal Buddhist, the Bodhisattva is one who lives for the sake of Enlightenment - not just for his own Enlightenment, not just for his own emancipation, but for the Enlightenment of all sentient beings, of the whole of life. The Bodhisattva is the embodiment of Wisdom and Compassion. He is inspired, or she is inspired, not only by what the Buddha said, but by what the Buddha <u>was</u>, in his intrinsic being, and by what he did in the activities and affairs of his daily life.

So so much, as much as this, we saw in our first lecture, on 'The Origin and Development of the Bodhisattva Ideal'.

One becomes a Bodhisattva by virtue of the arising of the Bodhicitta, and this Bodhicitta, though often translated as the thought of Enlightenment, is very far from being just a thought, just an idea, in somebody's mind, even in a Bodhisattva's mind. The Bodhicitta as it arises, as it manifests, is something transcendental, something not of this world, something which does not belong to any individual, which is in fact not individual, but which is universal. There is in the world, in the universe, only one Bodhicitta, and individual Bodhisattvas in whom the Bodhicitta arises, participate in this one transcendental, universal, Bodhicitta. And this Bodhicitta arises within the heart, within the mind, within the life, of the individual Bodhisattva, in dependence upon certain necessary conditions. And these conditions are represented by Santideva's Supreme Worship, a sequence of seven religious, spiritual, devotional, moods and experiences, as well as by Vasubandhu's Four Factors, that is to say: recollection of the Buddhas; seeing the faults of conditioned existence; observing the sufferings of sentient beings; and contemplation of the virtues, the good qualities, the transcendental qualities, of the Tathagatas, the Buddhas.

So much we saw in the course of our second lecture, on 'The Awakening of the Bodhi Heart'.

Now the Bodhicitta is universal, common to all Bodhisattvas, but the Bodhisattva himself, or the Bodhisattva herself, is individual, and this one, this universal, Bodhicitta, therefore expresses itself in the life and work of the Bodhisattva in an individual manner, and this expression, this individual expression, is what we call the Bodhisattva's Vow. It's not just a verbal expression, not just something you say, not just a promise you verbally make. It represents the reorientation of the Bodhisattva's whole being. Traditionally one speaks of the vow, the Bodhisattva's Vow in the singular, but it is in fact really plural, and there are several, quite famous, sets of vows. The forty eight vows of Bodhisattva Dharmakara, for instance. But possibly the most famous set is that known as the Four Great Vows, which recited daily throughout the Buddhist lands of the Far East. Firstly, May I deliver all beings from difficulties. Secondly, May I eradicate all passions. Thirdly, May I master all Dharmas, and fourthly, May I lead all beings to Buddhahood. So much we saw last week, in our third lecture, "The Bodhisattva Vow"

Now tonight we break, or begin to break fresh ground. Tonight we're concerned with "Altruism and Individualism in the Spiritual Life". You may recollect that last week we saw that the relative Bodhicitta has two aspects. We saw that there is a vow aspect and an establishment aspect. The first, the vow aspect, refers of course to the Bodhisattva's Vow itself, and it is with this that we were concerned last week. The second aspect refers to the practice of the 'Six *paramitas*' or 'Transcendental Virtues', that is to say to: Giving or Generosity; to Uprightness; to Patience; to Vigour; to Meditation; and to Wisdom. And we shall be dealing with these six *paramitas*, these 'Six

Transcendental Virtues', these 'Six Perfections' as they are also sometimes called, in the course of the next three weeks. And tonight we are dealing with the first two. We are dealing with *dana* or giving, and with *sila* or uprightness. And we are dealing with them, we are dealing with these two as expressions respectively of altruism - *dana* being the expression of altruism, and individualism - *sila* being the expression of individualism. Dealing with them, in other words as the other-regarding and self-regarding aspects of the spiritual life.

First, however, let us just go back a little and make, to begin with, 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, to two main, or two major aspects of Buddhism. First of all, the Wisdom aspect, as expressed in the Buddha's verbal teaching, teaching about the Four Truths, Noble Eightfold Path, Twelve Nidanas and so on, and the Compassion aspect, as expressed not in the verbal teaching so much but more - more abundantly at least - in the life and activity - the actual work and deeds -of the Buddha.

And the Bodhisattva Ideal, we saw in that lecture, represents a union of opposites - to begin with, a union of Wisdom and Compassion. And this, that the Bodhisattva Ideal represents a union of opposites, is true of the beginning of the Bodhisattva's career; it's true of the end of the Bodhisattva's career (where Wisdom and Compassion are united in their highest power, in Enlightenment itself); and it's true of all the stages in between. So much is this the case. So much in fact is the Bodhisattva a union of opposites, so much is his life, his very spirit, a union of opposites, that we can perhaps describe the Bodhisattva himself as a sort of living contradiction. And 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, or the Bodhisattva Ideal, synthesizes the heights and the depths of existence - the sublimest heights, the profoundest depths. Synthesizes the mundane and the Transcendental, synthesizes samsara and Nirvana. Synthesizes, as we've just seen, Wisdom and Compassion. But more specifically the Bodhisattva Ideal or the Bodhisattva Himself synthesizes altruism and individualism, synthesizes the 'masculine' and the 'feminine' approaches to the spiritual life, and so on, and tonight it is with the first of these that we are more especially concerned. In other words with altruism and with individualism, especially as embodied, respectively, in *dana*, or giving, and *sila*, or uprightness.

But before we go into these there's just one little misunderstanding to be cleared up. If you read books about Buddhism, especially popular books, and especially perhaps books or articles about the Mahayana, you will find it is sometimes said that the Bodhisattva is not concerned with his own salvation, but is concerned with the salvation of other beings. You may sometimes 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 pass through, I am not going to enter. I want to help others to get there first." And very often the Bodhisattva Ideal is presented in this quite appealing and quite attractive poetic form - that he is postponing his own Enlightenment so that he can help others to get to Enlightenment first. And in this way you will find in some works on Buddhism, in some literature on Buddhism, the Bodhisattva comes to be contrasted with the Arahant. The Arahant is the perfect man, the realized man, if you like, of the Theravada. The Arahant is said to be concerned only with his own salvation, with his own emancipation, and the Arahant Ideal is said, therefore, to be selfish. And in contrast to this, the Bodhisattva Ideal is said to be unselfish. And the Arahant Ideal is said to be individualistic, and the Bodhisattva Ideal is said to be altruistic.

And in this way you find, in some Buddhist works or some works on Buddhism, some literature on Buddhism, that a sort of controversy develops, with, even, people taking sides. And you'll 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 say, sometimes they point out, that charity begins at home. Here is the Bodhisattva wanting to help others to gain Enlightenment, but he has not gained it himself. So they say that this 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 <u>yourself</u>, 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 doesn't 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. He synthesizes the two - helping oneself and also helping others, Wisdom and Compassion, and he synthesizes these opposites in the spiritual life, of altruism and individualism, by practising *dana* and *sila*, or generosity and uprightness, as we shall see in a few minutes.

Now this sort of tension - this tension between altruism and individualism, regard for others and regard for self, is not confined to the spiritual life. This sort of tension, this sort of clash if you like, occurs at each and every level of human existence, from the bottom, practically to the top. After all, we exist as individuals to begin with, but we also exist as members of society. That is to say, we exist in relation to other individuals. Now we have our own needs; we have material needs - for food, clothing warmth, shelter and so on; we have our psychological needs; we have our emotional needs; we have our spiritual needs, and obviously we have to consider these. We have to consider our own needs. This is inevitable, it's unavoidable. But others too have <u>their</u> needs. Needs of the same kind

as our own usually, at least in principle, and these too we have to consider, because we have to live with other people, we have to live in society. We cannot ignore altogether their needs.

But sometimes it happens, in fact often it happens, that the two come into conflict: our needs as individuals and the needs of other individuals, the needs of society. And this can happen in the wider social context, 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, 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. And 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 can't live without them. It is rather like the snake in the fable. The snake in the fable swallowed a frog. But owing to its curved front teeth it couldn't vomit the frog out and at the same time the frog was so big it couldn't swallow it. So it just got stuck. It could neither come in nor go out. So we are very often just like that with people. We can't live with them apparently, and also, it seems, we can't live without them. One might say that if we can't live with people, we can't 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. And we can probably say that only those who can live without people - without people, mind you - can live with them.

Now what we need, undoubtedly, is a social context which will enable us to do both. Enable us 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. And this perhaps, we may say, is the meaning of living in community. However, this is probably taking us just a little too far afield and perhaps it's in any case more suitable as a subject for discussion than as part of the lecture proper. And perhaps it is time we got back to our *dana* and *sila*.

Now *dana* means literally 'giving'.It means 'generosity', and it represents the practical, the altruistic aspect, of the Bodhisattva's life and career and activity, and *dana* or giving is the first of the 'Six *paramitas*', the Six Perfections or Transcendental Virtues. What the term *'paramita'* means, or really means, we shall see just a little later on. Now it apparently is not without reason that *dana* is enumerated first as among the six *paramitas*, and in fact it seems that there is a definite reason for this, for *dana*, giving, generosity, coming first, right at the head of the list. 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 the business or home, working life, professional activity, any sort of sport, entertainment, our usual reaction - at least half-consciously, at least unconsciously - is "Well what is there in this for me?" There is always a self-reference. "What can I get out of it?" as it were, "What can it offer for me?". There is always this sort of tendency, this sort of grasping, this sort of clinging. You may remember, those of you who have seen the Tibetan Wheel of Life that right at the hub there are three figures, three animals, and one of these is a cock. And this cock represents craving, it represents thirst. And it is right there at the hub of the Wheel of Life, right there in the midst (as it were) of our own hearts. And it symbolizes, it gives recognition to the fact that craving - not just ordinary healthy desire, but craving - occupies a very very important place in our total life and activity, and very often dominates our life, dominates our activity, at least unconsciously. We are all in the grip of this craving, all swept along, as it were by this craving, impelled by this thirst. So everything that we do, everything in which we become interested, has a sort of self reference underneath.

Now the Bodhisattva has got to reverse this tendency if he is to get anywhere near Enlightenment. He has got to put it completely into reverse, got to turn it (as it were) inside out or upside down. And therefore, giving comes first, because giving is the direct opposite of grasping, which is the normal, or at least the usual human tendency.

It's as if to say, as if the teaching said to us, "Well, 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 might 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 at least, the very least that can be expected of you is that you will give, that you will be a little bit open-handed." Because if you are generous, if you can give, 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 - but if you can give, then there is some hope for you, from a spiritual point of view. At least certainly from the Mahayana point of view.

And conversely, we may say, that the ungenerous person, the person who finds it difficult to give, difficult to part with things, difficult to look outwardly to the needs of others, as it were, such a person cannot, at least not for the present, lead a spiritual life. They may be rigidly virtuous; they may strictly adhere to all the Precepts; they might even be quite well versed in Buddhist philosophy, but, for the present at least, spiritually speaking, from the standpoint of the Mahayana, there is no hope for them.

Now the Bodhisattva is the giver *par excellence*. If you like, the ideal giver. And it's not just a question of transferring possessions. It's not just a question of giving this to that particular person. Giving, or generosity, is

above all else an attitude of heart and of mind. Indeed, it's an attitude of one's whole being. One doesn't just give with one's hand, one doesn't even just give with one's heart, one gives with one's whole, one's total, being. One's whole being is involved in the act of giving. And this is why Wait Whitman says, in a very memorable line, says, "When I give, I give of myself." That is not "I give personally, with my own hand", but "I give my whole being when I give; my whole being is involved in the gift; 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 new, some original way which will mean something more, perhaps, to us, we may perhaps describe the Bodhisattva as the person who gives himself: gives himself all the time and gives himself to everybody.

Now, the Buddhist scriptures have got much to say on this topic of *dana,* generosity or giving. In fact we may say that it is one of their favourite topics. They are always going on about it. It's a very popular theme for discourse in the East. if you go along to any Eastern Buddhist country; if you go to a temple, especially in the evening or especially on full-moon days, if you just sit amongst the people listening to the sermon, and if you just listen to what the monk or the lama is saying, usually seated on a high sort of throne where everybody can see him - if you just sit, if you just listen, you will in nine cases out of ten find he's speaking on this subject of *dana*, generosity, or giving.

Now the scriptures consider generosity or giving under a number of different headings. Those of you who have had any sort of study of Buddhist texts will know that they are rather fond of doing this. They sort of divide and sub-divide and sub-sub divide and so on. Sometimes you can get a little bit lost in this way, but for serious study it is quite helpful. So this evening, so far as *dana*, so far as generosity, so far as giving, is concerned, I am going to follow that tradition, but let's remember that we are concerned with the spirit of giving, not just with technical details, not just with the letter of the teaching. The scriptures usually deal with *dana* under the headings of: (1) to whom the *dana* is given; then (2) what is actually given; (3) how it is given; and (4) why it is given. And these four headings are believed to exhaust the whole subject of *dana*, with of course their sub-divisions.

First of all, **to whom** the gift is given. Ideally, in principle, all sentient beings, all living beings whatsoever, 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 ever in the position of being able to benefit the whole human race, but at least one must at least uphold the ideal.

The scriptures especially mention three classes of recipients to whom the Bodhisattva should pay particular attention. First of all, it says, his own, or her own, friends and relations. In other words the familiar proverb, which we've already quoted in another context. "Charity begins at home". It's no use the Bodhisattva or the would-be Bodhisattva being very very kind and friendly so far as strangers and people outside are concerned, but at home he's a difficult and awkward and uncomfortable person to live with - if not actually cruel. Sometimes you find cases of this sort: someone has a wonderful reputation outside his home, or her home, for being so kind, so generous, so good, but at home well either they're a petty tyrant or something else equally unpleasant. So therefore the tradition says that the recipients of the Bodhisattva's generosity are, in the first place, his own kith and kin, his own friends and his own relations. Charity begins at home, but the emphasis is on the verb - it begins at home. It doesn't by any means end at home. In this way it's rather like the practice of metta, when you start with yourself, and then the near and dear friend, and so on, and then you go on to all the people in the room, and all the people in the town, and the country, and the continent, till eventually you come to the whole world, the whole universe. So generosity, giving, should be like this. It may begin right on your own doorstep, right in your own home, but you should try to extend it ever wider and wider, in fact as widely as you possibly can.

Now the second class of people who should especially be recipients of the Bodhisattva's generosity are, first, the poor, then the sick, the afflicted, and the helpless, and among the helpless, tradition includes all animals. Now I dealt with this last week, more or less, when speaking of the first of the 'Four Great Vows' of the Bodhisattva. In other words, the vow to deliver all sentient beings from difficulties - so I will say nothing more about it now.

And thirdly, the third of the special recipients of the Bodhisattva's generosity - those who are leading a full-time religious life. This may be new to some people but traditionally Buddhism considers it the duty of society, of the community at large, to support all those who are engaged in any kind of higher spiritual, or higher creative work and activity. Usually of course it amounts to helping, supporting, the monks, nuns, lamas, spiritual teachers and so on, but ideally it would include all those who are engaged in any kind of higher creative work, including painters, musicians, writers, and so on. But at the same time, there should be, on the part of society, on the part of the community, no attempt to coerce either the religious person, the full-time religious person, or the full-time artist, into conforming to the ideas and ideals of the supporting society, the supporting community itself. Complete freedom is essential both for the religious person and for the creative, the artistic, person. Usually of course the (at least implied) condition of any sort of support from society or from the community, is that one should support the status quo; and if one does this one can be sure, usually, of some kind of support, but not otherwise. But this, from a Buddhist point of view, is completely and entirely wrong. The support should be a free support, whether it is given to the religious people, the full-time religious people, or to the artistically creative. So much then for our first heading - to whom the gift is given.

Now secondly, **what** is given as *dana* - or what can be given. Potentially this is coextensive with whatever can be possessed; whatever you can possess can be given away. If you want to know what is to be given, well it's anything that can be possessed, because anything that can be possessed can also be given away. But to assist us further, there is a six-fold classification here of the kind of things that can be given as *dana.*

And Buddhism starts off right at the bottom with material things, like food, clothing, shelter. And if one goes to the Buddhist countries of the East one sees very much in operation the Buddhist tradition of generosity and hospitality. I remember when I was in the East, whether it was in India or elsewhere, I had abundant experience of this sort of thing. I remember I used to come down from the hills, come down from Kalimpong, every winter, and usually I'd make my first halt in Calcutta at the monastery of the Maha Bodhi Society of India. And usually when I arrived there, there would be a gathering, maybe of ten, maybe of twenty, 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 very 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 might say - a more modern sort of monk might say, "Do you want a typewriter?" Or "Do you want a pen? What do you want? Do you want some money? Where are you going?" This is the attitude: the attitude of giving, the attitude of sharing.

And, in the same say, if one went to any layman's house, they consider it a disgrace if you sat down even for half an hour without being offered something to eat and offered something to drink. This is very much the Buddhist custom. 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 might be tea time, because then they place the host in the embarrassing position of having to offer them something, which is embarrassing all round! But in the East they don't think like this. Their attitude, their outlook is quite different.

I remember a rather extreme example of this sort of things especially when I was staying for six months with a Burmese friend. He happened to be a member of the former Burmese royal family, and he was very, very poor at that time - he didn't have very much money - but he was unstintedly generous. So much so that it was very difficult to stay with him; you had to be very, very careful, because if you said, "Oh, I like that, isn't it nice", 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, and this apparently was their custom, their tradition. So after a while you learned to be very careful, because you couldn't refuse. If you refused it was very bad manners indeed. 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.

And in some parts of the Buddhist world, in some Buddhist countries, the lay people, especially, make it a practice of giving something every day, just to get into the habit of it, as it were. After all, you are taking something every day, if it is only air, if it's only food; why not give something every day? So 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, so that every day they are giving all the time. It may not be very much - it may just be a few coins, a few coppers as it were, or just a few spoonfuls of rice - but at least they are training themselves in this way, and they are getting into the habit of giving, so that giving, so that generosity, becomes an ingrained part of their lives, part of the very fabric, part of the very texture, of their normal everyday existence. Not something you do once or twice a year - at Christmas time or at birthdays - but something that you are doing all the time. So that there's this constant outflow to countereffect, to counterbalance if you like, the constant process of taking in that we do only so easily and so readily.

And then, the second sort of thing that can be given, not material - this is more psychological, and this may strike some of you as a surprise - it is called 'the gift of fearlessness', confidence. As one goes about one finds that so many people are very, very worried and very anxious: they appear strained and they appear tense; they seem to have something on their mind all the time; they don't seem at ease, they don't seem at peace; they don't seem happy. So the Bodhisattva has to deal with this. He has to cope with this and he has to try to give people strength, and encouragement, and freedom from fear by his very presence, by his very personal inspiration. And those who are students of Buddhist art will know that there is a very famous representation of the Buddha (as well as of various Bodhisattvas) in what is called 'the *abhaya mudra*'. The *abhaya mudra* means the *mudra*, the hand-sign, of fearlessness, and it's like this. The Buddha is saying, "Fear not. Don't 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's not so much appendicitis, it's not even cancer, it's not even heart disease that kills us most of the time prematurely: it is simply fear. And I remember in this connection a very interesting little episode, a story which was told me by a friend of mine in Kalimpong. He was a great Russian Tibetologist, and 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 getting off the boat, when he paused, he just stopped, and he thought, "That is strange. That is very odd. There is a peculiar sort of atmosphere, like a sort of 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 motor cars, what is it, a sort of grey, heavy, clinging atmosphere?" Then, he said, it suddenly struck him that this was fear. That this was exuding, as it were, from the people of this vast continent; that they were all living in fear. And we know that we have the expression 'to smell fear', and you can quite literally smell fear. If someone is afraid, you can smell that: a dog can smell it, and, very often, a human being too, if their senses are sufficiently developed, sufficiently acute, can smell the fear as well. So when you have a whole nation, a whole people, living under the influence of fear, what do you think happens? The whole psychic atmosphere is, as it were, poisoned with that. The fear becomes tangible, becomes perceptible, becomes like a great oppressive cloud over the land. And in the midst of this cloud, in the midst of this darkness, as it were, of fear, this darkness at noonday of fear - people are living, and working and all the time trying to breathe all the time. It's like a dark pall, in Wordsworth's phrase, just hanging over our spirits. But this is what modern life is like. It's not just a question of the threat of the atom bomb or hydrogen bomb hanging over us all: it's something much more than that. It's the fact that people seem unable to trust one another, they have no confidence in one another, no confidence in life itself. All the time shrinking as though they are about to receive a blow; all the time overwhelmed and overpowered by fear.

And those who practise meditation will know that from time to time this sort of thing comes up very powerfully in meditation. You get an experience of fear. 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 sort of basic, primordial fear comes up, which is a terrible fear, but which is not fear of anything in particular. It's a sort of existential fear, a fear which goes right down to the bottom of one's being, right down to the roots of existence, and which one has to face and which one has to overcome.

So the Bodhisattva, by his very presence, by his very example, he gives freedom from fear, by showing the example of a person who has himself overcome fear, who has conquered fear, who is the master of fear, who has transcended fear, risen triumphant over it. So this is another thing which he can give - fearlessness in the world of beings who are overcome by fear.

And then thirdly, education and culture. The Bodhisattva spreads, if you like radiates secular knowledge also. We find that wherever Buddhism went in Asia, it was a carrier of culture; a carrier of art, a carrier of science, a carrier of knowledge of all kinds, not just a carrier of religious doctrines and religious teachings and practices. Because through the arts, through the sciences, the mind and the heart - the intelligence, the emotions - these are refined, these become more closely attuned to spiritual things, and therefore we find it given as one of the things which the Bodhisattva is to give, this gift of knowledge, this gift of culture, this gift of education, even in the ordinary sense.

And fourthly, the Bodhisattva may, upon occasions, give his life and limbs. This particular form of giving is the subject of many a *Jataka* story, that is to say a story about the Buddha's, Gautama the Buddha's, own previous lives. And some of these stories will strike the Western mind, especially the modern Western mind, as rather lurid, not to say melodramatic, not to say rather odd in some cases. 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, "Well, were the wife and the children the property of the Bodhisattva that he should give them away just like so many goods and chattels, just like giving away an old cardboard box or something like that!?" Some people get very excited over this, but, no, it isn't to be taken this way. It just illustrates how the Bodhisattva should give up, should renounce, should relinquish, even those things which are naturally nearest and dearest to him. And nothing is dearer than one's own life and one's own limbs, and there are stories in the *Jatakas* of how the Bodhisattva, or the Buddha-to-be, gave them away too. There is, as I say, 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 all sorts of problems - we won't go into that. Perhaps a modern equivalent is donating one's blood - though perhaps we shouldn't go into that either because I understand there is quite a bit of controversy about this, about whether it's desirable from an occult point of view, and about the magnetism of different kinds of blood and so on and so forth.

But one thing that we shouldn't ever forget in this connection is that if we take the Bodhisattva Ideal seriously, if we take Buddhism seriously, we may be required, we may be required, we may be required, under certain circumstances, to sacrifice our life for those principles and for those ideals. Here in this country we have it, in many ways, very, very easy. If we want to be a Buddhist, if we want to follow Buddhism, there's nobody can stop us, there's no law can stop us. We can do that, we can study Buddhism, we can meditate, we can practise *dana*, we can perform a Puja; we can do whatever we like, and we are very lucky and very fortunate that this should be so. But it isn't so in all parts of the world. If you were to live, for instance, in a communist country today. If you were to live say in China, or in Czechoslovakia, or in Tibet - you would find it very, very difficult to practise Buddhism, and not just to single out the communist countries, what about the Muslim countries, you couldn't be a Buddhist there. I have some friends who tried to follow Buddhism in Persia, which is a Muslim country predominantly, but it just wasn't possible. They weren't preaching Buddhism or propagating Buddhism, but as soon as it was known that they were Buddhists, they were just stoned and they had to leave in the end. And what 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, crossing over from France to Spain a few years ago, passing through customs with a load of Buddhist literature in her luggage - which she was studying - was told: "Such literature is not allowed in our

country." And so far as I know, there has been no public lecture ever given on Buddhism in Catholic Spain. In fact, what to speak of Buddhism, you can't even practise, you can't even preach at least Protestantism there openly, so what to speak of an oriental religion like Buddhism.

So we should appreciate the situation and realize and recognize how fortunate we are being able to enjoy this complete religious freedom and toleration; but we have also to recollect that in this modern world, under regimes like those of China, under regimes even like those of Czechoslovakia, or like those of some Muslim or some Catholic countries, it might not be so easy for us, and we might have to be prepared even for a sacrifice, even for a sacrifice of our life for the sake of our principles and our own ideals. And we have to ask ourselves the question: "Would we be prepared?" It's easy enough to come along to a lecture like this; easy enough to go along to 'Sakura', but suppose you had to do it in the darkness, suppose you had to do it at night, in fear of being found out, with one eye open, as it were, for the police or the informer. And if perhaps you did it at peril of your life, if you meditated at peril of your life, or you read a book on Buddhism in peril of your life, or you stood up and spoke on Buddhism in peril of your life, well would you do it, or would you perhaps not be amongst the majority who thought, "Well, I'll be a Buddhist in my next life; it is too difficult in this one." We don't know.

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

Then, next, the giving of merits. The idea of merits, the idea that if you do a good deed, if you perform a good deed, a good action, you get a certain amount of merit 'chalked up' as it were to your credit, which can be accumulated, which can be added up. This idea of merit is very prominent in the Hinayana, and it's a good one in a way, because it encourages people to perform good actions. But there is another side to it - does tend to foster individualism. You think of the religious life, you think of the spiritual life, in terms of accumulating enormous amounts of merit which are your personal property - your merit. Some of you may know that in my *'Survey of Buddhism'* I have quoted the example of the Jain mendicant who performed austerities for years upon end and accumulated a really enormous stock of merit, because he was fasting and, I don't think he was lying on a bed of nails but he was leading a very very hard life. So he had a very very large number of units of merit chalked up to his account at the end of that period. I don't know what the unit is but they had some way of measuring it! So he got the idea eventually that he didn't want to be a mendicant any more; he wanted to return to the lay life and wanted to set up a business and so on. 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 he set himself up in business - and he lived happily ever after! So this is what happens when you take this idea of merit very literally, not to say literalistically.

So then the Mahayana came along. The Mahayana said, as it were, "We can't have this. 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, to share their merit, to 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 or sharing merits means that one shouldn't hang on to one's own virtues; one shouldn't, as it were, say to oneself, "What a nice little virtue I have got! Isn't it sweet. It's mine!" Your virtue is like the child that you've produced: you're proud of it; you're complacent; you sort of stroke its head; it's your little virtue, your little pet virtue, and it isn't anybody else's. They haven't got it, it's yours, all to yourself. So the Mahayana, as I say, discourages this sort of approach and says, "Well never mind, give it up! Share it! Spread it around a bit!" Francis Bacon said that, "Money is like muck - the better for being spread." So one may say the same about merit- that's also like muck - the better for being spread around among a number of people.

Now, lastly we come to Dharma *dana*, the gift of the Dharma, the gift of truth, the gift of the teaching. And this is said to be the highest of all gifts, the greatest of all gifts. You can give a person material things, even give them psychological security, give them education and culture, you can even sacrifice your life and your limbs, even share your precious merit, but the greatest of all gifts is the sharing of the truth that you have understood - perhaps after much toil, much pain, and much difficulty. The sharing of the teaching itself. And this Dharma *dana*, this giving of the gift of the teaching, either by word, or by precept, or by example, this 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, all can share, in this great duty, this great responsibility. In fact, one cannot help it. One is, in fact, giving all the time: you are giving out something - something is coming from you, radiating from you - all the time. And if you have imbibed anything of Buddhism, well inevitably you must give out Buddhism in your commerce with other people - whether you like it or whether you don't. This doesn't mean that on every possible - or impossible - occasion you just drag in the word 'Buddhism' and become a Buddhist bore! It doesn't mean that . It doesn't mean that you should become like the man, like the ardent Roman Catholic in one of G. K. Chesterton's stories. Whatever topic of conversation was started, he'd got onto 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, and it was like that with every topic of conversation that was started. So this is not what is meant. It's something much more subtle, it's something that just comes from your, or comes out, in the course of conversation but without always necessarily being labelled as Buddhism, but something does come out.

Well so much for 'what can be given'. As this is the most important, the sort of central item, the central heading of the four, let me just briefly run over it again. First of all material things can be given; fearlessness can be given; education and culture can be given; even one's life and limbs can be given if necessary; one's merit can be given; and finally the truth itself, the Dharma itself, can be given.

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 in the East sometimes, where beggars are concerned, they sin against this precept. They see a beggar just begging in the street - maybe squatting at the roadside - they fling a coin rather contemptuously. But Buddhism says, no, when one gives, to whomsoever, whether it's to a beggar or even to an animal, give courteously. And then, one should give happily - with a smiling face. This is also of psychological importance. What is the use of giving something and giving it with a frown? It undoes half the effect. And then, one should give quickly, not delay. This is especially important in the East where sometimes a person's life depends upon somebody else's prompt generosity. So give quickly if you're going to give at all. Don't give as though you were unwilling to give, as though you're being forced into it, or dragooned into it.

And then give without subsequent regret. Having given, feel happy that you have given; don't think, "Oh well, I suppose I had to. It would have been better if I had not. What a pity I did." and so on and so forth. Not that

And then again, 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, in my very very early days, and before the meeting someone had sent along a very, very small sum - about fourpence I think - as a contribution. Then in the middle of the meeting he got up and he said very very loudly to the organizer, "Did you receive my donation?!" So this is the sort of thing which does happen. So without talking, without drawing attention to one's generosity.

And then, the Mahayana sutras say, to friend and to foe. Even if your enemy comes along and is in need of help, well give to him as much as to your friend.

And to good and bad: don't discriminate between good and the bad - 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. That is to say discriminating and giving to people according to their real needs, and not their apparent wants.

Now fourthly and lastly, there is the question of **why** *dana* should be given. And this introduces the very important question of motive. Some people give - sometimes giving on the grand scale - for the sake of reputation, and I am sorry to say that this is very very common in India. You get big business people, millionaires, multimillionaires, subscribing large sums of money for hospitals and dispensaries, but they always say quite openly, quite blatantly in fact, "My name must be there!", and it must be named after them, and sometimes they give on this - and sometimes it's put in writing - that if they donate so much money, then the building which is erected will be named after them - and it's usually a very long name - about four long words! And this is the sort of thing which does happen.

Other people, more religious people, they may give, they may be generous, with the idea that after death they will go to heaven, that they are 'laying up treasure in heaven' for themselves. But, according to Buddhism, it isn't a very noble idea. Buddhism does teach that, yes, if you lead a virtuous life you will get the reward of it later on, but you shouldn't really lead the virtuous life with that sort of motive. So the Bodhisattva gives simply and solely so that he may be helped by his generous action, by the destruction of greed which it brings about, to gain Enlightenment - not just for his own sake but for the sake, for the benefit, of all living beings.

And this brings us now from *dana* or giving to *dana paramita,* the Perfection of Giving, Transcendental Giving. The word *paramita* 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 *paramita* (we do speak of six or ten), but strictly speaking there is only one *paramita* and this is Wisdom - *prajna. Prajna* or Wisdom in the sense of direct realization, experience of, the Voidness, sunyata, Reality itself. So *dana paramita* really means *dana*, the practice of giving, the practice of generosity, conjoined with the experience of sunyata, the experience of reality. For this reason, true *dana*, *dana paramita* is often technically referred to as *trimandalaparisuddha* - 'of a threefold circle of purity'. And the threefold circle of purity is that in the act of giving there's no idea of self. There's no idea that 'I am giving'. There's no idea of a recipient - that I'm giving to him or to her, and there's no idea of the act of giving, that I am giving. But this doesn't mean that there's a state of blankness, a state of stupidity, as it were, of unconsciousness, as it were. There's perfect awareness, clear awareness. If you have absolute awareness,

but the giving is natural the giving is spontaneous, the giving is inexhaustible. It's a giving, one may say, out of the depths of one's own inner experience of Reality, one's own oneness with the spirit of Compassion in accordance with the needs of sentient beings.

So much then for *dana paramita*, the perfection of giving, the embodiment of the altruistic, the other-regarding aspect, of the Bodhisattva's life and work. We've lingered over it rather a long time because it is very important, and now we come to *sila*, the second *paramita*, 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, and with this *paramita, sila paramita*, we shall deal rather more briefly than with the *dana paramita.*

Now we've dealt with the dana *paramita* more or less along traditional lines, making use of the traditional classification, the traditional subdivision. But in the case of *sila*, I propose to adopt a different procedure. Traditionally *sila* is expounded in terms of: the Five Precepts - not to take life, not to take what is not given, and so on; the Ten Precepts, which result in a threefold purification, a purification of body through three precepts, speech through four precepts, mind through three precepts and so on; and also in terms of the special Sixty Four precepts for Bodhisattvas. Now all this is familiar ground. All these sets, all these lists of precepts. We've gone over it several times before, and today, I'm going to take it all for granted. Today we shall be concentrating on Buddhist ethics as applied to three different aspects, three different spheres of human life: that is to say first of all food - we really are coming down to earth, aren't we; work, and marriage.

Now these three affect practically everybody. Now first a word on *sila* in general. A little while a go I rendered *sila* as 'uprightness'. This is more or less the literal meaning, just uprightness. I know it's generally rendered - in fact I have rendered it myself in some contexts - as 'morality', but I've deliberately this evening refrained from, or avoided, doing this. I've avoided this term 'morality, because I find, especially when I'm 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.

And while we are on the subject, I can't help observing, as a result of my own study not only of religion in the West but 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 <u>much</u> 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 of guilt. Feelings which have, I am sure, <u>ruined</u> 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 quite disastrous.

I mention this, in fact I emphasize this, because all of us, having been born in the West, having been brought up in the West, having been educated in the West, are to some extent influenced by these attitudes and by these assumptions. It is not a question of accepting or not accepting Christianity; even in the case of those who do not accept Christianity, who consciously reject it - atheists, humanists, agnostics, and so on - they are very very often deeply <u>influenced</u> by Christian ethical assumptions and so on. And it's important that we should try to understand this, because if we don't understand it, if we don't see it, if we are not aware of these processes at work in our own minds, we shall unconsciously carry Christian attitudes, especially in ethical matters, over into our Buddhist life, with resultant confusion and possibly chaos, especially where the sphere of ethics is concerned.

Not so very long ago, at a meeting - not a meeting in London, but a meeting outside - I did happen to observe, I did happen to remark, that in my opinion Buddhism could become widespread in England only if there was first of all a revival of paganism. Now everybody at the meeting thought this was a great joke and they just though I was pulling their leg. But there was just one man who thought I might possibly 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?" So 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, for the practice of Buddhism on a wider scale."

Now let us come on to the application of Buddhist ethics to the three aspects of life already mentioned. Here the treatment, as we've just a few minutes left, can be only suggestive and not exhaustive.

First of all, food. We had some not very long ago, because we all have to eat, and we have to eat every day, and in this country we have to eat <u>several</u> times every day. In some countries they only eat once, or sometimes rat only once every other day, but we eat every day, and it's as well we should be aware of that - twice a day, three times a day, some of us I believe eat four times with little snacks in between, or at at least cups of tea, or cups of coffee, or cups of cocoa, or sweets or chocolates and so on in between. So, obviously eating, the ingestion of this material called '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. So obviously such an important activity, to which we devote so much time and so much energy, so much money, for which we require special provision in our houses in the form of kitchens and utensils and so on, requires to be brought within the influence of Buddhism:

we can't think to leave it outside, unaffected by our Buddhist ideals, our Buddhist principles.

So in this matter of food, there are several principles which can be applied. And the most important, obviously, is that of non-violence. The principle of, more positively, reverence for life. And this means of course in principle, 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 the mother can think of eating the flesh of her child. This is how the Bodhisattva should feel. This is how the heart of the Bodhisattva should feel.

Now in our own movement, in the Western Buddhist Order, we don't make strict vegetarianism compulsory, but we certainly do hope, we certainly do expect, that all our Members, and possibly all our Friends too, will make a definite step, a definite move, 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, if one isn't able to be a full-time vegetarian. After all, no-one is perfectly non-violent; it is in any case comparative, a matter of degree. But we should certainly be as non-violent, should reverence life as much as possible in this respect as we can. We may say that vegetarianism of any degree is a direct application to our lives, to our eating habits of the principle, the very important principle, the principle which animates the Bodhisattva: the principle of Compassion.

But even this isn't enough. One should also eat, in justice to oneself, food which is pure and which is wholesome. By 'pure' we don't mean sort of polished and refined to such an extent that there is no goodness left in it. That isn't pure at all, that's just chemically pure, not naturally pure. And 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 are often in the East, one knows this very well; but one doesn't know it always in the West, where we have an optimum diet very often, to say the least.

And then again, one shouldn't eat neurotically. What does one mean by this. One shouldn't eat using food as a substitute satisfaction for some other need - usually emotional. This is what people do. Lots of people over eat, because they are using food as a substitute satisfaction. Very often something to make up for a frustrated emotional need.

And then again - I think this is also very important - one should eat quietly and peacefully. In a previous lecture I have referred to that abomination - 'the business lunch', where you try to do business while you are at the same time supposed to be eating. I think this is the height of uncivilization; this is grossly uncivilized conduct. Eating should be quiet, it should be peaceful. You should be able to just sort of settle down to it, and incidentally, to eat in a public restaurant or some sort of coffee bar, where there is a lot of noise and clatter and rattle, and loud conversations going on. This, I am sure, is not good for any sensitive, any mindful person.

Because above all one should eat - and this is the great Buddhist principle here - should eat mindfully, should eat with full awareness of what you are doing. You shouldn't eat while trying to read a newspaper at breakfast time, or trying to discuss some business deal, or having an argument with your wife even or something like that; you should eat mindfully, knowing what you are doing, aware of what you are doing. And if you want an example, a very beautiful of example where all these principles, all these qualities are combined, one can't think of anything better, one can't think of anything more beautiful, than the Japanese Tea Ceremony. Where just a small group of people - two or three, maybe four people at the most - gather together in some quiet corner, a little rustic hut down in the garden, and they sit around a stove, which of course is a charcoal stove and listen to the kettle simmering away. And very quietly, very peacefully, with very slow, with very graceful, very delicate, very mindful movements, the tea is poured out. It is handed round to the guests. People sip it, and they are just there together, just being together, and engaging in this very ordinary, this very 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. But it shows to what a height, 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 say, "You can eat your steak and onions mindfully!", but you can. Perhaps, I don't know - I might risk a paradox here and say that it is better to eat your steak and onions mindfully than your nut meat unmindfully. I don't know. What you lose on the swings you seem to gain on the roundabouts here! But I think everybody can understand the principles involved: even eating, this quite ordinary activity, can be made into a sort of art, can be made even into a way, a 'do', in the Japanese sense of the term. I think I could say someone who ate every day mindfully, drank tea every day mindfully, if they could live like this, year after ear, mindfully eating, mindfully, well 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, though time is short, that in the West we have all got the wrong idea about work. To begin with, we think - sometimes we say - that everybody should work. By which we mean that everybody should work for money. And we think and we say that it's wrong not to work, that it's sinful not to work - to be 'gainfully employed' as the phrase is. And this is undoubtedly a legacy from Protestantism. If you like you can look up that very famous classic Tawney's *"Religion and the Rise of Capitalism"*. You'll find it all detailed there. Most of us find, I'm afraid, that if we take a few days off and just don't do anything, well we tend to have a bit of a bad conscience about it, not to say feel guilty about it - as though we ought not to

be having a few days off, ought not to be enjoying ourselves, ought not to be just not doing anything. And some people I know can't spend a few extra hours in bed in the morning without feeling horribly guilty about it, because they have been brought up, because they've been conditioned in this way. We feel usually that we ought to be doing something. And sometimes if we see people sitting down and not doing anything, we feel all fidgety and uncomfortable and want to get them moving and doing something, because it's a sort of almost standing menace to us if they are just sitting there quietly like that while we are getting on with it.

After all this is not a new thing. It's an old thing. You find it in the Gospels in the story of Martha and Mary. How Martha was sort of bustling around getting everything ready, and Mary was just sitting at the feet of Christ just listening - actually listening - when there was food to be got ready and served, and washing up to be done! But Christ, you may remember, said that Mary had the better part, or, more colloquially, she had the best of the bargain, and Martha only the second best. But 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 a sort of disease, we may say in the West, especially in the Anglo Saxon countries, including, of course, the United States of America.

I remember when I was in Kalimpong we had staying with us for some time, or staying in Kalimpong itself for some time, a very worthy French woman who became a Buddhist nun. And 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; and she was feeding cats and feeding dogs; and whitewashing things and climbing up ladders and carrying big buckets of water and studying Sanskrit and learning up her Pali dictionary, and reading Tibetan and going to the bazaar, and all sorts of things she was doing, morning, noon and night. And 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 that 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." So her face fell. In fact it went scarlet - with rage or indignation, I'm not sure which. 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. You've got a compulsive urge to work, even though you have become a nun. Just look at these Indians, look at these Tibetans. They sit around; they don't do anything all day. Look how wonderful it is!" So she almost spat with contempt when I said that. But there is a very great deal of truth, I am sure, in this advice.

But, unfortunately in the West we only too often look down on those who don't or those who won't work. And we call them by all sorts of rude names. We say that they're 'social parasites', and that they're 'layabouts', and so on and so forth. We don't consider them at all respectable. But, incidentally, it did occur to me - I'd never thought of it before but while I was thinking over this lecture it did occur to me - that the Buddha himself never did a day's work in his life. And I think this requires reflection upon. That the Buddha never did a single day's work, so far as we know, 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, and dancing girls, and musical instruments, and he didn't move out. 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, other people gave him clothing. He never did anything for that. Of course he preached, but he would have preached anyway, just as the sun shines anyway. But he never did any work, he never worked for money, he never worked for hire. So this is perhaps something to consider, that the Buddha, the Enlightened One, never did a single honest day's work in his life!

Now I am speaking of work of course in the sense of employment; but there is such a thing as creative work, and creative work, we may say, is a psychological necessity. We do need to create; we do need to produce. It maybe only in the form of cooking, it may be only in the form - I say 'only' but it is in fact a very important activity - of producing and bringing up and educating children. Or it may be in the form of writing or painting, or it may be some constructive social venture. But we do need to produce, we do need to create: this is a psychological, a human need, a human necessity. But it need not be linked with employment. Ideally, one may say, 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, to other people whatever one can, in the way of one's work, one's labour, one's productivity, one's creativity, and the community gives to each person whatever they need, not only materially, but psychologically and spiritually also for their own life. But I think the day when that will happen is quite a long way off and meanwhile we do have to work, we do have to be gainfully employed in the ordinary sense. And so therefore here we have to apply this principle of Right Livelihood. I have often spoken about this so I am not going say very much about it on this occasion, but in brief, Right Livelihood means that through our 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, which is mechanical, which is repetitive, then try to work part-time. Here, with regard to this sort of work, the principle to be applied is 'do as little of it as possible', as little as is compatible with one's existence, economically, in the world. And in any case, whatever work one does, however one is employed, there should always be time for study, for meditation, for contact with friends and other positive and creative things.

Now, 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 and so on. Now the Buddhist conception of

marriage, we may say, to begin with is quite different from the traditional Western one, or at least very different from it. In other words different from the traditional Christian one. And really on this theme, on this subject we require a whole lecture, but this evening there is only time for a few salient points.

In the first place, traditionally in Buddhism, marriage is not regarded as a religious sacrament; in other words, God doesn't come into it. And at the same time, it is not regarded as a legally binding and legally enforceable contract. In other words, marriage shouldn't be something that you go to law about to coerce somebody - to coerce the married partner - into doing something or not doing something that you want them to do or don't want them to do. According to Buddhist tradition, marriage is primarily, in the first place, simply a human relationship: a human relationship which is recognized by society - in the form of one's family and one's friends. And you may be interested to hear that in the Buddhist countries of the East, whether it's Tibet, or Burma, or Ceylon, or Japan, there is no such thing as a wedding ceremony in the Western sense, and you might wonder well how on earth do they get along without it. We have become used to thinking of the wedding ceremony as something so essential - the white dress and the orange blossom and the church bells ringing and all that sort of thing - but in the East, in the Buddhist East one just doesn't 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 their relations, and an announcement: they just call everybody together and they say, on that occasion, after feasting them, that "We are living together. We are cohabiting. We are man and wife." And then in this way this becomes known to everybody then that's that!

And sometimes the feast is given after several years. I remember a quite amusing case as between friends of mine in Kalimpong - a Sikkhimese friend of mine and his wife - who didn't give their feast until they had been together for twenty years, and they had grown up children. But in the Buddhist East they would not be regarded as 'living in sin' in the interval. They were married, they were living together. They were living together, they were married. This is how it is regarded. There is a little story I sometimes tell to illustrate this. I remember 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. So in the course of 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 they weren't married. I translated this very carefully for the benefit of the Tibetan, that they were living together but they weren't married, but the Tibetan looked puzzled and said, "But if they are living together, they are married!" So this is the Buddhist view - the marriage consists in the living together; not in the legal contract, not in the social convention, not even in the feast and the announcement. The marriage primarily is the human relationship itself.

Now after the feast you may, if you like, go along to the temple, you may go along to the monastery, to the monks, and you may ask for a blessing, but this isn't a wedding ceremony. They bless something which has already happened. They bless the relationship, but they don't make it, they don't create it. They just recognize it 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, helping each other to follow it.

Now with that sort of background, it is only inevitable, I suppose, that in Buddhism divorce should be recognized. That divorce, by mutual consent in fact, should be recognised, and in all Buddhist countries, from ancient times, there's never any difficulty about dissolving a marriage, if the persons concerned wish it. There's no difficulty at all.

One does find again - this is just a matter of interest - that in most of the Buddhist countries, after marriage the wife retains her own name. We think we are comparatively emancipated in this country, but in this country if Miss Brown marries Mr Smith, well she becomes Mrs Smith, but it isn't like that in the Buddhist countries of the East. Even after marriage, the woman retains her own name and she uses her own name. She's not just Mrs so-and-so. She doesn't just duplicate the husband's name.

One must also say that in the Buddhist countries of the East there is no one pattern of marriage relationship, and this is something rather surprising to us perhaps. Buddhism nowhere says that monogamy is the only possible form of marriage. It says, well, 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; and in Tibet, for instance, in the old days, you found polyandry, which means one wife and several husbands, and this is accepted and this is recognized as a perfectly respectable form of marriage. Because Buddhism would pay attention to, Buddhism would direct its attention to, not the particular form of set up, not the particular institution, but the quality of the human relationships involved.

So there's no such thing in Buddhism as saying well monogamy is the norm and is good, but polygamy is sinful or polyandry is sinful. No, these are alternative patterns, and whether you follow this pattern or that pattern, it depends on your social tradition, it depends on you yourself and the people with whom you are involved. But one can't label one way of living together as 'good', the other as 'bad': these are relative. What is important for Buddhism as I've said is the quality of the human relationships involved.

Now this may sound very strange, it may sound 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 conceptions. But we must understand that these sort of ideas, this way of looking at things, this way of looking at marriage for instance, is a way which has been common in the East, in the Buddhist countries from the very beginning. We think it quite revolutionary if, for instance, a woman continues to use her own name after marriage, but this is the common thing in all Buddhist countries - for centuries past. So perhaps in matters like these, even ordinary social matters, the Buddhists of the East, the ancient Buddhist East, were more enlightened (in the common sense usage of the term) than even many people are in the West nowadays today.

Well these are, very briefly, the standard Buddhist views on food, on work and on marriage, and they represent the application of Buddhist principles to three very important spheres of human life and activity, and it's very important for those of us who try to understand and perhaps try to follow Buddhism in this country to understand. Otherwise, as I've said, we may unconsciously continue to be under the influence of Western, perhaps Christian, assumptions on these various subjects.

Well so much then for *sila*, or uprightness, representing the predominantly individualistic, predominantly self-regarding aspect of the Bodhisattva's life. But we mustn't forget that it is *sila* ***paramita*** with which we are concerned, *sila* as a Perfection, *sila* as a Transcendental Virtue, or *sila* as conjoined with Wisdom. Uprightness, even the greatest uprightness, is not an end in itself in Buddhism - it's a means to Enlightenment. If uprightness is regarded as an end in itself, then it becomes, according to Buddhism, a hindrance. And it's the same with *dana.* If it's regarded as an end in itself, it too becomes a hindrance. *Dana* as an end in itself is what we call humanitarianism or secular philanthropy: it is good, but isn't enough - it doesn't go far enough. *sila* as an end in itself, uprightness 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 *dana* and *sila* as means to Enlightenment. He practises them, that is to say, as *paramitas*, as Perfections. And in this way, fulfils the altruistic and the individualistic aspects of the spiritual life.