

Aspects of the Bodhisattva Ideal

Lecture 70: On the Threshold of Enlightenment

It's for five weeks now that we've allowed ourselves to be carried along by a great stream. By the stream of the Bodhisattva Ideal. And week by week we have managed to travel just a little farther. And as we've travelled, week by week, we have seen that the stream has (as it were) broadened, widened. And we know that when this happens, or when this begins to happen, we eventually reach a point when the stream, when the river, is so broad, so wide, that we don't quite know, we aren't sure, whether we are still in the stream, or whether we have not started entering the great ocean. So this is the point that we reach today. Today we stand, in imagination at least, on the Threshold of Enlightenment.

And in order to come to this point, in order to be able to take up this position, we have had to cover, in the course of the last five weeks, quite a lot of distance. We've seen unfold, week by week, many different aspects of the Bodhisattva Ideal. We've seen how the Bodhisattva is the ideal Buddhist, one who lives for the sake of the Enlightenment, the supreme Enlightenment, of all sentient beings whatsoever. That he is the embodiment, the living embodiment, of Wisdom and Compassion. And we've also seen in some detail that one becomes a Bodhisattva, one is born as a Bodhisattva, by virtue of the arising of what is called the Bodhicitta, often translated as "Thought of Enlightenment", but we saw that it is in fact something much more, something much greater than that; not just an idea, not just a concept of Enlightenment in somebody's mind, not even in the Bodhisattva's mind, but something Transcendental, something universal. The Bodhicitta is only one, but individual Bodhisattvas participate in that one Bodhicitta, each to the measure of his capacity. And this Bodhicitta arises in a man or in a woman, transforming them into a Bodhisattva, in dependence upon certain conditions. And in this connection we examined Shantideva's Supreme Worship, as set of seven conditions in dependence upon which the Bodhicitta arises, as well as Vasubandhu's Four Factors, in dependence upon which the Bodhicitta arises.

And further we have seen in the course of the last so many weeks, that though the Bodhicitta itself is universal, the Bodhisattva is an individual being. And the Bodhicitta therefore expresses itself, universal though it may be, in his life and in his work, in a thoroughly individual, if not in a unique, manner. And this individual, this unique expression, of the Bodhicitta, in the life and in the work of the individual Bodhisattva, it's what we describe, what is known in the Buddhist tradition as, the Bodhisattva's Vow. And though we speak in fact of the Bodhisattva's Vow in the singular, in reality it is plural. And there are, you may recollect, several famous sets of vows, especially the Four Great Vows of the Bodhisattva, which we examined in detail.

We have seen, even, more than all this. We've 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. And 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.

Now you may recollect that the first pair of opposites, that is to say the altruistic and individualistic aspects of the spiritual life, are represented, in the context of the Bodhisattva Ideal, the Bodhisattva Path, by *dana* (or giving) and *sila* (or uprightness), which are of course the first two *paramitas*, the first two perfections or Transcendental virtues to be practised by the Bodhisattva.

And the second pair of opposites, that is to say the masculine and feminine approaches to the spiritual life, these are represented by the second pair of *paramitas*, the second pair of perfections: *ksanti* (or patience) and *virya* (which is vigour or energy).

Now all of these we studied in some detail. We saw, for example, what was the Buddhist attitude, the traditional Buddhist attitude, towards such things as food, work, and marriage. We saw that the conservation and unification of energy was one of the central problems of the spiritual life. We saw that the Bodhisattva is a spiritually bisexual being. And so on.

And today we come to a pair of opposites still more rarefied, and we shall be seeing how the Bodhisattva synthesises them in his life and his work, and his spiritual experience. And this still more rarefied pair of opposites is represented by *dhyana* on the one hand, and *Prajna* on the other, that is to say by meditation, in the widest sense, and Wisdom. And these two are of course the last two *paramitas*. The fifth and the sixth of the perfections, of the Transcendental virtues, to be practised by the Bodhisattva. And inasmuch as this lecture deals with the last two *paramitas*, with the last two perfections or Transcendental virtues, it is entitled "On the Threshold of Enlightenment" because that is where we find ourselves when we practise, whether separately or together, Wisdom and meditation, meditation and Wisdom. These two between them represent the consummation of what is known as the 'establishment aspect' of the Bodhicitta.

Now it's very difficult to know where to begin. We have here two vast subjects: Meditation and Wisdom. One could well speak on either of these for a very long time, and perhaps not succeed in saying, in comparison with

the enormity, the greatness, of the subject matter, really very much. In any case there's no question of trying to treat these two subjects exhaustively. All that can be offered in the course of the next forty-five or fifty minutes is a more or less connected account of certain topics of importance.

Now, first of all: *dhyana*. *Dhyana*. We've translated this as meditation, which will do; it's good enough for practical purposes. But the term *dhyana*, like so many other Indian, Buddhist, Sanskrit and Pali terms, is really untranslatable. But we shan't go very far wrong if we consider it as comprising two things: First of all what we may describe as higher states of consciousness. This is one of the meanings of *dhyana*, simply higher states of consciousness, supernormal states of consciousness, states of consciousness above and beyond those of our ordinary everyday waking mind. And secondly *dhyana* covers not only the higher states of consciousness themselves, but the various practices leading to the experience of these higher, these supernormal states of consciousness.

Now these higher states, these supernormal states of consciousness themselves, are of two kinds, very broadly speaking. On the one hand one has those higher states of consciousness which are still mundane, and on the other hand those which are truly Transcendental. What this distinction really means we shall see perhaps a little later on. We're going to deal with each of these topics in turn.

First of all, the higher states of consciousness, or the superconscious states. In Buddhist literature, in Buddhist tradition, there are quite a number of lists of these. And these lists, these sets (as it were), represent different levels within the higher consciousness, or different dimensions of the higher consciousness. And today we're going to concern ourselves with three lists. And these are: 'The Four *Dhyanas* of the World of Form', 'The Four Formless *Dhyanas*', and 'The Three Gates of Liberation'. These are the traditional terms, and the meaning I hope will emerge, will be disclosed, as we progress. And if we go through these three lists, then we shall have some idea of the whole subject; some idea of what *dhyana*, in the sense of higher states of consciousness, really means. But we have to remember all the time that though we may understand what is said perfectly well, this is no substitute for our own first hand experience.

Now first of all, 'The Four *Dhyanas* of the World of Form'. And traditionally there are two descriptions of these, or two ways of describing these, two ways of looking at these. One way in terms of psychological analysis - trying to understand what psychological factors are present in each of these higher states of consciousness, or superconscious states. The other approach, the other method of description, is in terms of images. Even visual images. And these two descriptions of these higher states of consciousness, one in terms of psychological analysis, the other in terms of images, these correspond to the two principal modes (as we may call them) of human communication, or the two principal languages which we use, or may use. One of course is the language of ideas, the language of concepts. It's this sort of language which is spoken by science and by philosophy. And then there is the language of images, the language, if you like, of mental pictures, the language even of archetypes, comprising such things as metaphors, myth, and symbol, and so on. Now Buddhism, as we've seen on other occasions, uses both of these languages. It speaks on occasions the language of concepts, of abstract ideas, abstract thought. And on occasions also it speaks the language of images, of myth, of symbol, of mental pictures. And both of these languages are of equal importance. One of these languages, that is to say the language of concepts, this appeals more to the conscious mind, to our conscious rational intelligence. But the other language, the language of images, which is much more concrete, much more vivid, much more pictorial - in a way much more deeply moving - this appeals to the unconscious depths within ourselves.

Now most modern expositions of Buddhism, of the Buddha's teaching, fortunately or unfortunately, are given in terms of concepts. We have an awful lot about Buddhist thought, Buddhist philosophy and so on. And sometimes reading through the literature which is available, at least in English, on Buddhism, one gets the impression that Buddhism is, perhaps one-sidedly, not to say overwhelmingly, intellectual. One almost gets the impression sometimes that if you really want to understand Buddhism you have to undergo a rather rigorous course in Buddhist logic and metaphysics and epistemology and so on. But this is rather onesided, we have to correct this sort of impression because Buddhism does use - traditional Buddhism does use - the non-conceptual method or mode of communication, communication through images. It does speak the language of images at least as frequently, at least as powerfully, as it speaks the language of concepts, of abstract ideas. So we have to try to correct this sort of imbalance in the presentation of Buddhism in the West by encouraging various methods of non-conceptual, even perhaps non-verbal, communication of the truth, and the Reality, of the Buddha's teaching.

There's a very beautiful example of this sort of thing in the life of the Buddha himself in the Zen tradition, which I'm sure practically everybody knows, but which it might be as well to call to mind. We know that sometimes the Buddha spoke at length, sometimes he discoursed intellectually upon his spiritual experience. But not always, sometimes he resorted to more direct methods. Sometimes he spoke the language of symbols, images and so on. And this is what happened when one day, on a very famous occasion, when everybody was sitting round him silently, the Buddha instead of speaking, simply took from an attendant standing nearby a golden flower. And he held it up, he held up this golden flower in the midst of the assembly, and he said nothing. He said nothing at all. He didn't even smile. But Mahakasyapa, one of the greatest of the disciples, he smiled. Because he understood

what the Buddha meant, he understood what the Buddha was trying to communicate through his non-verbal communication - this holding up of a golden flower. And this, we are told, was the origin of the Zen transmission. Just think of it - a great spiritual movement, one of the greatest forms, one of the biggest branches of Buddhism, spreading all over the Far East, producing hundreds of Enlightened masters. And where did it spring from? Not from a system of philosophy, not 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. The whole of Zen (we may say) was in the petals of that golden flower. And this is what Mahakasyapa understood, and that's why he smiled. He probably thought to himself that the Buddha has never done anything greater, never done anything more wonderful in his life, than hold up that golden flower. And 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 light, and shedding its lustre. So this is one of the most famous instances, one of the most famous examples, of this sort of thing. And this is the sort of language that we too have to learn to speak. We're very ready, we're very glib, with the language of ideas, the language of concepts. We can discuss perhaps Buddhist philosophy *ad infinitum*, we can talk the hind legs off the proverbial donkey, but we have to learn this other language, we have to learn to speak, we have to learn to communicate in, this language of images. We have to immerse ourselves in myth and symbol, and learn to experience this different dimension, this comparatively unfamiliar dimension, of human communication.

But this is a bit of a digression, so let's go back to our four *dhyanas* of the world of form - our four superconscious states of the world of form. Four are enumerated usually but sometimes five are enumerated, and this suggests, this (as it were) reminds us, that we shouldn't take these divisions, these classifications, these enumerations, too literally. They represent, these four *dhyanas*, successively higher stages, successively higher states of psychic, of spiritual, development, which are in reality, or which in reality constitute, one continuous ever-unfolding process.

All right, now for the description of these four states, or these four higher states, of consciousness in terms of psychological analysis. Now we'll speak, for a little while at least, the language of concepts before going on to speak the language of images.

In terms of psychological analysis the first *dhyana*, the first of these states of higher consciousness, is characterised by absence of all negative emotions. We've heard quite a bit about negative emotions in the course of these lectures and in the course of some of the lectures which preceded this series. But specifically, in terms of the Buddhist tradition, the negative emotions are lust, ill will, sloth and torpor, restlessness and anxiety, and doubt. In other words the five mental hindrances, as they're traditionally called. And the first *dhyana*, the first state of higher consciousness, is characterised by an absence of negative emotions such as these. In other words unless all negative emotions are inhibited, are suppressed, are suspended, unless the mind is clear, not only of the five mental hindrances but of fear, of anger, of jealousy, of anxiety, of worry, of remorse, of guilt - unless the mind is completely free from all these negative emotions, at least for the time being, there is no entry into higher states of consciousness.

So it's quite clear, it's quite evident, what our initial task must be if we want to practise meditation seriously. It is to learn to be able to inhibit, at least temporarily, the grosser manifestations at least of all these negative emotions. And there are of course various methods of inhibiting, various methods with the help of which we can get rid of these negative emotions such as lust, ill will, sloth and torpor, and so on - fear, guilt, anxiety, jealousy - but we're not going into all that now.

On the positive side, the first *dhyana* is characterised by a concentration and unification of all our psychophysical energies. Last week (I think it was) we saw that our energies are usually scattered, they usually are dispersed over a multiplicity of objects, our energies leak away in various directions, they're wasted, they're blocked. But when we take up the practice of meditation one of the things that happens is all our energies are brought together - those energies which are blocked are unblocked, those which are being wasted are checked in the waste, they're not wasted any longer, and all our energies in this way come together, they're concentrated, they're unified, they flow together (as it were), and this flowing together of energy, this heightening of energy, this accumulation of energy - psycho-physical energy - is characteristic of the first *dhyana*. It is in fact characteristic, in increasing degrees, of all four *dhyanas*, this unification, this concentration, of all our energies, the energies of our total being.

Now this concentration and unification of energies is experienced, in the first *dhyana*, as something intensely pleasurable. When all the energies come together, when there's no dissipation of energy, no division of energy, no conflict, no energy being wasted, no energy blocked but everything flowing freely (as it were) and concentrated naturally on higher and higher levels, then this is experienced as something extremely, intensely, pleasurable, even blissful. And the pleasurable sensation experienced, in this first *dhyana*, is of two kinds: there's a purely mental aspect, and there's also a physical aspect. The physical aspect is often described as rapture, or *priti*, and it manifests in various ways. It may manifest by way of somebody's hair (for instance) standing on end, or it may manifest in the form of tears. Some people, when they practise meditation, after a while start weeping

violently. This is a manifestation of the *priti*, the rapture, on the physical level, and it's a very good and healthy and positive manifestation, though it does pass away after some time. Now the first *dhyana* is also characterised by a certain amount of discursive mental activity. One can enter upon the first *dhyana* having suspended all negative emotions, unified one's energies, having also experienced various pleasurable sensations, mentally and physically, but some vestige of mental activity, some vestige of discursive mental activity will still remain in the first *dhyana*. It isn't enough to disturb concentration, but it is still present, a sort of little flickering mental activity, at least about the concentration, the meditation, the experience itself - at least about this if not about anything else. And after a while of course it may seem as though the discursive mental activity recedes to the fringes of one's experience, one's concentration; it doesn't really disturb one, one is carrying on with one's practice, but a certain amount of mental activity is there. So this is the first *dhyana*, the first state, or stage, of higher superconscious experience.

Now in the second *dhyana* the mental activity, the discursive mental activity, which was one of the characteristics of the first *dhyana*, this disappears. This fades away with increased concentration. So therefore the second *dhyana* is a state of no thought. When one speaks in terms of no thought people often become a little afraid, they think that one almost ceases to exist when there is no thought, but it must be emphasised that there is simply no discursive mental activity. But at the same time one is fully awake, one is aware, one is conscious, in fact one's whole consciousness, one's whole being, is heightened if anything, you're more alert, more awake, more aware, than you normally are. So even though the discursive mental activity fades away, even though the mind is no longer active in that sense, but still a clear and pure, a bright, state of awareness is experienced. One doesn't go into a sleepy state, one doesn't go into a coma, one doesn't go into a sort of trance, nothing of that sort. And of course in the second *dhyana* also one's psychophysical energies become still more concentrated, still more unified, with the result that the pleasurable sensations of the first *dhyana* persist, both the mental ones and the physical ones.

Now in the third *dhyana* another change takes place. We noticed in passing from the first to the second *dhyana* discursive mental activity is eliminated. Now in passing from the second *dhyana* to the third *dhyana* it is the pleasurable physical sensations that disappear. The mind is blissful, but consciousness is increasingly withdrawn from the body and these pleasurable, even blissful, sensations are no longer experienced in the body, or with the body, because consciousness, because awareness, is being withdrawn from the body. In fact in this stage bodily consciousness may be very peripheral indeed, it's as though you're conscious of your body a great way away, right on the periphery of your experience, not right on your own doorstep (as it were) as is usually the case. The other factors remain in the third *dhyana* as before except that they are still further intensified.

Now in the fourth *dhyana* another change occurs, or rather a change occurs in order to make it possible for the fourth *dhyana* to be experienced, and that is that in the fourth *dhyana* even the mental experience of happiness disappears. Not of course that one becomes unhappy or uneasy in any way, but in the fourth *dhyana* the mind passes beyond pleasure and pain. And this is something which is rather difficult for us to understand, we can't help thinking of a state which is neither pleasure nor pain as being a sort of neutral grey state rather lower than either pleasure or pain, but it isn't like that. In the fourth *dhyana* the mind passes beyond pleasure, beyond pain, beyond even the mental bliss of the previous *dhyanas*, and it enters a state of what is called 'equanimity'. And if one can be paradoxical one may say that the state of equanimity is even more pleasant than the pleasant state itself, but of course one can't say that it's more painful than the painful state, it doesn't work quite like that. It is something even more deeply satisfying, put it in that way. It's a sort of positive peace, which is even more blissful than bliss itself. And in this stage, of the fourth *dhyana*, of course all one's energies, the total energies of one's being, are fully integrated, so that this *dhyana*, the fourth *dhyana*, is a state, is a stage, of perfect mental, perfect spiritual, harmony and balance and equilibrium.

So these are the four *dhyanas*, the four states, the four superconscious states, the four states of higher consciousness, in terms of psychological analysis. Now for the description in terms of images. And here we find the Buddha using four similes, one for each *dhyana*.

He says (as it were) the first *dhyana* is like this, or one's experience in the first *dhyana* is like this. (And you notice the Buddha is giving very ordinary everyday sort of illustrations, but they're very, very, apposite.) He says supposing there is a bath attendant. They had such things, such people, apparently two thousand five hundred years ago in India. So the Buddha said suppose there is a bath attendant, and he's going about his usual work and what does he do? He takes a handful of soap powder. Now you might be rather surprised to hear that they had soap powder also in ancient India two thousand five hundred years ago, and you may be still more surprised to learn that they get it from a soap tree. In India soap grows on trees, and I've seen this, I've used this myself in South India. There's a tree which has a sort of fruit, and you dry this fruit and then you powder it, and you get something almost exactly like soap powder, at least it works in exactly the same way. So the Buddha said supposing this bath attendant takes a handful of soap powder, and he mixes it with water, and he goes on mixing, and kneading, and he mixes and he mixes, he kneads and he kneads, until the soap powder is a ball, fully, thoroughly saturated with moisture. It's so fully saturated that it can't absorb one more drop of water, and at the

same time no single speck of soap powder is unpermeated by the water. He said the experience in the first *dhyana* is just like that.

And then, experience in the second *dhyana*. The Buddha said this is like a great lake, and it's full of water. But the water doesn't come from the rain fall, there are no rivers, there are no streams which flow into this lake, but there is a subterranean inlet, right deep down in the middle of the lake there's a little inlet where the fresh water bubbles up from the depths. And gradually this fresh, cool, cold water which bubbles up from the depths in the middle of the lake extends throughout the waters of the lake, and permeates them. And this is, he said, what one's experience is like in the second *dhyana*.

And then, the third *dhyana* experience. Here the Buddha takes not just a lake of water, but a lake of lotuses. And he said suppose you see great beds of lotus flowers, red and blue and white and yellow, growing in the midst of the water. So what is the state, what is the condition of these lotuses? He said they're fully in the water, their roots are soaked in the water, their stems are soaked, their leaves are soaked, even the petals of the blossoms are soaked in water, and they live there, they grow there, in the water, soaked in the water, permeated by the water, they spring up from the water. So the Buddha said one's experience in the third *dhyana* is like that.

And then he said one's experience in the fourth *dhyana*, what is that like? He said supposing there is a man who, on a very hot day, and as you know it can be very hot in India, suppose there is a man who on a very hot day takes a bath. Takes a bath of course as they do in India in the open air in a stream, in a tank. And then having bathed he comes out feeling all fresh and cool and clean, and he takes a great length of white cloth, which is what they garb themselves in in India, and he wraps it round him, and he sits down, in this clean white cloth. Pure, clean, insulated. He said this is what one feels like when one experiences the fourth *dhyana*. The fourth state of the higher consciousness.

So these are the similes. Here the Buddha is speaking the language of images. But possibly you've 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. And one can see from these pictures, from these images, from these four similes, that there is a definite progressive order visible. As one passes from one *dhyana*, one superconscious state to the next.

First of all, there's a unification of the energies of the conscious mind. You'll remember in the first simile you've got two things, you've got water and you've got soap powder. There's a duality, there's a split, there's a division. But they're kneaded together. So first of all one has a state, or an experience, of complete unification of the energies of the conscious mind. This is what the first *dhyana* really represents. Once the negative emotions have been put out of the way, a unification of all the energies of the conscious mind on the conscious level.

And then what happens? Next, the energies of the superconscious mind begin to penetrate into the unified conscious mind, begin to bubble up within it, as it were, as a sort of source of inspiration, if you like. And this is what is meant by the cool, clear, cold water bubbling up within the innermost recesses of the lake. It represents that trickling in, that percolating in, perhaps and finally that pouring in, of the superconscious energies, the superconscious forces, once one's energies have been unified on the level of the conscious mind.

And next, these energies having started bubbling up within one, or pouring down into one, next they take (as it were) complete possession, just like the lotuses, being permeated by the water, their roots, their stems, their leaves, their flowers, their buds, everything permeated by the water. So in this third stage the superconscious forces, the superconscious energies, coming from deep within if you like, or coming from high up if you like, they permeate, they transform, they transmute, the energies of the conscious mind.

And finally they not only permeate, but they dominate, not only dominate, but they enclose and they enfold. Just like the man who has taken his bath being enclosed and enfolded by the white sheet in which he swathes himself. You notice that in the second *dhyana* the superconscious, in the form of the water flowing in from the outlet is contained just like a seed (to change the metaphor) within the unified consciousness, but in the fourth it's the consciousness, though of course the thoroughly transformed consciousness, which is contained within the superconsciousness. So the situation has been completely reversed.

Now all this could be represented visually. One is painting pictures (as it were) with words, but it could be done more directly with the brush, with colours, and in fact it's interesting to observe that Lama Govinda has done this. I remember many years ago I saw a series of what he called abstract paintings, four abstract paintings which represented the four *dhyanas*, the four states, the four stages, of higher consciousness. And

as in fact I was thinking over this lecture only this morning, it did occur to me that I could represent the different kinds of experience in these four *dhyanas* in a diagrammatic form, just in black and white like a sort of chart, which would make it still more clear, still more tangible, still more palpable (as it were).

So much then for the Four *Dhyanas* of the World of Form. We've spent rather a long time on them because of their central importance for the practice of meditation, for, in fact, the practice of the spiritual path generally.

We're now turning to the Four Formless *Dhyanas*. Now these four formless *dhyanas*, which are often superimposed upon the four *dhyanas* of the world of form, these are rather remote from the experience of most meditators, so we shall be dealing with them rather more briefly. They consist, one may say, in the experience of objects of ever increasing degrees of subtlety and refinement.

The first of these *dhyanas* of the formless world, these four states of higher consciousness as associated with the formless world, this first one is known as the '*Sphere of Infinite Space*', or the experience, if you like, of infinite space. Here there's no visual image. You may recollect that by the time we reached the fourth *dhyana* of the world of form we had left behind the body consciousness, so what does that mean? There are no pictures in the mind, there are no images, no visual images, you don't think about your own body, you don't think about objects in the external world, you don't think about a house or a tree. So what is your experience like? It's devoid of all objects. So when you take away all objects, if you were to take away for instance all the people in this room, take away all the chairs, take away all the pictures, take away all the lights, what have you got? You've just got space. Empty space. And if furthermore you take away this whole city, you take away the whole globe itself, what have you got? Empty space. If you take away the whole planetary system, the whole galactic system, what have you got? Empty space. So if you abstract yourself from the senses through which these objects in space are perceived, you are left (as it were) with the experience of infinite space, space extending infinitely in all directions. But you can't even say "in all directions" because it would be extending in all directions from a point here, but there is no point here, because there's no here, there's no there, physically, materially, spatially, speaking. So it's just a great infinity of space all of which is everywhere. So this is the experience in the first of the *dhyanas* associated with the formless worlds.

And then, secondly, the '*Sphere of Infinite Consciousness*', infinite *vijnana* to use the original word. You reach this, we're told, by reflecting that you experienced infinite space, but there was an experience of infinite space, there was an awareness of infinite space, there was a consciousness of infinite space, so that means that conterminous with the infinity of space, there is an infinity of consciousness, the subjective correlative of that objective state or that objective experience. So subtracting from or abstracting from, the experience of space, and concentrating upon the experience of consciousness, the infinity of consciousness, you experience infinite consciousness. Consciousness extending in all directions, but again not from any particular point. Consciousness again which is all present, everywhere.

And then, something still more rarefied: The '*Sphere of Neither Perception nor Non-perception*'. Here you really do take wing and you really do go very far, though you're still within the mundane as we shall see a little later on. You've gone from the object, the infinite object, to the infinite subject, as it were, and now you go beyond both. And you reach a state in which you cannot say, because there (in a sense) is no-one to say, whether you're perceiving anything or whether you're not perceiving anything. You're not fully beyond subject and object, but you can no longer think in terms of, or experience in terms of, subject or object. So it's a sphere of neither perception nor non-perception.

And then fourthly and lastly, the sphere of... it's usually translated as "nothingness", but it's really '*no thingness*', the sphere of non-particularity. This means a stage, or a state, or an experience in which you cannot pick out anything in particular as sort of distinct from any other thing. In our present state, in our present stage of experience, we can pick out say a flower as distinct from a tree, we can pick out a face as distinct from a house, but in this state, in this stage, there's no particular thingness of things, you can't

identify this as this and that as that. It's not exactly as though they're all confused or mixed up together, but the possibility of picking out doesn't exist. This is perhaps as nearly as one can get to it. So it's called the '*Sphere of No-thingness*'. Not a state of blankness, not a state of nothingness, but of no-thingness. The particularity of things is abrogated.

Now the four *dhyanas* of the world of form, and the four formless *dhyanas*, are all classified, in the Buddhist tradition, as mundane, worldly. You might think we've gone a very great distance but no, this is not Enlightenment. These are superconscious, supernormal experiences, but they fall short of Enlightenment, they're mundane. They're not worldly of course in the ordinary sense, they represent a very high degree indeed of unification and refinement, of psychic energy. We can call them spiritual states, spiritual experiences, but they're still not Transcendental, in other words they have no direct contact, as yet, with Ultimate Reality. And in Buddhism only that is called Transcendental which is either of the nature of Ultimate Reality or directly leading to, directly conducive, to it.

So it's this contact with Ultimate Reality from the heights of the mundane, from the heights of the superconscious, which now has to be made. And it's made when the concentrated mind, the mind in the *dhyana* state, whether

higher or lower, turns, with awareness, from the mundane to the Transcendental, when it begins to contemplate Reality. It's then that *dhyana*, it's then that the *dhyana* state becomes, from being mundane, Transcendental.

Now there are many different Transcendental *dhyanas*, and sometimes these Transcendental *dhyanas* are called *samadhis*, and the difference among them is in accordance with the aspect of Reality, the particular aspect of Reality, which is contemplated. And amongst the most important, amongst the most vital and significant of these Transcendental *dhyanas*, these *samadhis*, are a set of three, technically known as the 'Gateways to Liberation'.

First of all (and we'll deal with them quite briefly), first of all comes what is called the 'Signless', or the imageless, Samadhi. And here, in this *dhyana*, in this experience, this superconscious experience with a Transcendental object, Reality is contemplated as devoid of all conceptual constructions. One gets rid of all thoughts, all concepts, about Reality. One sees that Reality is devoid of all these things, that they have no reference to, no bearing upon, Reality; that even the word "Reality" itself is quite nonsensical, that there is no word, that there is no thought. And it's only when one comes to this no word and no thought, no concept, only then one can get at, one can see that Reality which is not Reality. So here, in the signless, the imageless Samadhi, one contemplates Reality, not even using the word Reality, as devoid of all signs. All signs which might give the mind some hint of what to look for. In comparison with what. Devoid, in a word, of all ideas and all concepts.

And then there is what is called the 'Unbiased', or the 'Directionless', *samadhi*. The mind at this level, this level of *dhyana*, of superconscious experience, doesn't discriminate between this and that, so it has no particular goal, it doesn't discriminate, it doesn't distinguish between, the means and the end, here and now. There's no time sense even. No past, no present, no future. So the mind stays where it is (as it were), it's got no direction in which to go. And it contemplates Reality also, under this aspect: that it's got nowhere to go. No direction, no tendency, no bias towards this or that, because there is no this, there is no that. So this is what we call the Unbiased, or the Directionless *samadhi*.

And thirdly and lastly, there is the 'Voidness' *samadhi*. And here Reality is seen, Reality is contemplated, as having no self nature. It has no characteristics of its own by which it might be recognised or distinguished from other things. You can't say that, say, a chair is this, a human being is that, and *sunyata*, Reality, is that. It's not any thing as distinguished from any other thing, or things, as having a particular self nature of its own. So this is what we call the Voidness *samadhi*, the realisation of the fact, or the contemplation of Reality under the aspect of having no recognisable, identifiable nature of its own distinct from the natures of other things.

Now with these Transcendental *samadhis*, which represent of course a very lofty peak of spiritual experience indeed, we begin to pass from meditation, *dhyana*, with which we've been concerned hitherto, to *prajna*, or Wisdom. But we'll deal with Wisdom in a minute.

Before we deal with wisdom just a few more words about *dhyana*. We've dealt with *dhyana* in the sense of the higher states of consciousness, the superconscious states. But we now have to deal with the second great meaning of *dhyana* - *dhyana* in the sense of the practices leading to these higher states of consciousness. But we're going to be very, very brief here. We could of course explain the five basic meditation exercises, could speak at length of the preparations for meditation, could describe the experiences, or some of the experiences occurring in the course of practice. But we've no time for all that. And in any case, these topics have been dealt with on a number of other occasions before. Today I'm going to limit myself just to one observation under this heading. And that is that *dhyana* in the sense of the experience of superconscious states is a natural thing. A natural thing. Ideally, as soon as one goes into the meditation room, whether it's the shrine at Sakura or a corner of one's own house - as soon as one goes there, as soon as one sits down, as soon as one crosses one's legs, as soon as one closes one's eyes, as soon as one does all this one should go straight into *dhyana*. It should be as natural, it should be as easy as that. In fact we may say that if we led a normal, if we led a truly human life, if we had spent the previous day or the previous week, the previous month, the previous year, properly, this might well happen. No reason why it shouldn't happen. That as soon as we sit down, cross our legs, close our eyes, we just go quite naturally into the *dhyana* state, the superconscious state. But I hardly need tell you, it seems almost cruel to mention it, (laughter) that this is not what happens. We all have to strive, and to struggle, and to sweat, and sometimes to swear under our breath. And you feel disappointed, and it isn't worth the effort, that we're making fools of ourselves and we might just as well be at the cinema or watching the television and so on. So this is what usually happens, we have to strive and struggle, but strive and struggle to do what? We don't have to strive and struggle to meditate, no. We don't have to strive and struggle to get into the *dhyana* state, no. Not that. We have to strive and struggle to remove the obstacles. We have to strive and struggle to remove, for example, the five mental hindrances. If we could only remove them then we'd go sailing at least into the first *dhyana*.

So most of what we call meditation exercises do not lead directly to higher states of consciousness. They simply help us remove the obstacles. Concentrate on Mindfulness of Breathing - it removes the obstacle of distraction. Concentrate on the Metta Bhavana, it removes the distraction of ill will. So just remove the obstacles with the help of these methods, and then the higher states, or at least the first of the higher states, will naturally manifest themselves.

Now the Bodhisattva does not simply practise *dhyana*, meditation. The Bodhisattva practises *dhyana-paramita*, the perfection of meditation, Transcendental meditation. In other words he practises meditation so as to gain Enlightenment for the benefit of all. He doesn't practise it for the sake of his own peace of mind, though that comes. He doesn't practise it so that he may go to heaven, though even that may come if he wants. He practises meditation, he practises *dhyana*, as one aspect of the path which will lead him one day to Enlightenment, Supreme Enlightenment, for the benefit of all.

Finally, we may say that the Bodhisattva's practice of meditation does not exclude external activity. In our case, if we want to meditate, we have to stop external activities, we can't do both at the same time, we have to retire, we have to find a quiet place, a quiet corner, we have to sit still, have to close our eyes, cross our legs and all the rest of it. But the Bodhisattva is practising something much greater, something much higher. The Bodhisattva is able, or should be able, to do both simultaneously. And the scriptures stress this very, very much in a number of places: that internally he should be immersed in *dhyana*, but externally carrying on various activities. Not that he suffers from a sort of partial schizophrenia or anything like that. 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 inner meditation, the inner meditation is the inner dimension of external activity - the two sides of a single coin as it were.

So this is how the Bodhisattva practises meditation. He practises it as not excluding external activity. So this of course should eventually be our aim too, but in the meanwhile we mustn't delude ourselves, and we have to recognise that for us for a very, very long time to come, meditation will exclude external activity, external activity will exclude meditation, even though we shall certainly try to see that the effects of our meditation, our meditation experiences, persist and carry over into our everyday life and activities. But it'll be a very long time before we can meditate, just as we meditate at our best on our meditation cushion, when we're in the midst of the traffic, when we're washing up, and so on. But that should be our ultimate aim.

However, it's time we passed on now to *prajna*, which is the sixth and last *paramita*, the sixth and last perfection or Transcendental virtue. And *prajna* is from the Sanskrit root "*jna*" which means simply "to know", and "*pra*", which comes before it is simply an emphatic prefix. And *prajna* is therefore knowledge in the extreme, or knowledge *par excellence*, and this means of course knowledge of Reality. *Prajna* is knowledge of Reality. And the word for Reality in this connection, (not that words really matter very much) the word for Reality in this connection is '*Sunyata*', which literally means the voidness, emptiness. But of course it's not emptiness as opposed to fullness. The word *sunyata* indicates a state beyond opposites, a state beyond words.

Now *sunyata* is the subject matter of the Perfection of Wisdom group of sutras, and the Perfection of Wisdom group of sutras is one of the most important of all the different groups of Mahayana Buddhist scriptures. There are incidentally well over thirty different Perfection of Wisdom texts, Perfection of Wisdom scriptures. Some are very long - the longest is a hundred thousand verses - and some, on the other hand, are very short. Among the shorter versions are the well known *Diamond Sutra*, and the equally well known *Heart Sutra*, and these two present the essentials of the whole Perfection of Wisdom teaching and experience in a highly condensed form. But this is just by the way.

Sunyata then is Reality, and knowledge of Reality means knowledge of *sunyata*, and knowledge of *sunyata* is *prajna* or Wisdom. And we find that four main degrees of *sunyata* are enumerated; some texts speak of twenty, even thirty-two degrees, but really there are four main degrees of *sunyata*, emptiness, voidness. And these are not four different kinds of Reality, they represent four progressively deeper stages of penetration by Wisdom into Ultimate Reality. And these four will give us some idea of the nature and content of *prajna* or Wisdom. Though as we go through them we shouldn't forget that these are all conceptual constructions or conceptual presentations, not the real thing, not the experience itself, they're all only fingers pointing to the moon. If we can get a glimpse of the moon with the help of these fingers, then we shall be lucky.

First of all what is called 'Emptiness of the Conditioned', or *samskrta-sunyata*. This means that conditioned existence, phenomenal existence if you like, relative existence, is devoid of the characteristics of the Unconditioned, the Absolute, the Truth. The characteristics of the Unconditioned, of the Absolute in Buddhism are, first of all, 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 then thirdly, True Being, Ultimate Reality. Now conditioned existence, phenomenal existence, relative existence, is devoid of these. Devoid of these three characteristics of the Unconditioned. Relative existence, on the contrary, is unsatisfactory, it's impermanent, and it is not ultimately real. And for this reason the conditioned is said to be empty of the unconditioned. And it means, or this means, that we should not expect to find in the flux of relative existence what only the Absolute, only the Unconditioned, can give us. So the conditioned is said to be empty. And this is the first of the four kinds of *sunyata*, when we see that the conditioned is empty of the Unconditioned.

Secondly, 'Emptiness of the Unconditioned', *asamskrta sunyata*. Here we see, or Wisdom sees, that the Unconditioned is devoid of the characteristics of conditioned existence. Conditioned existence is unsatisfactory, riddled with unhappiness, it's impermanent, and it's not wholly real. But the Unconditioned, the Absolute, is

devoid of these characteristics of relative existence, the conditioned. The Unconditioned is the locus, as we may say, of bliss, of permanence, beyond time, True Being, and so on. Therefore we say, or therefore we speak in terms of, therefore we see, the emptiness of the Unconditioned, that the Unconditioned is empty of the conditioned. Just as in the conditioned you will not find the Unconditioned, in the Unconditioned you will not find the conditioned. So these first two kinds of voidness, emptiness of the conditioned, emptiness of the Unconditioned, the two being mutually exclusive as it were - these two forms of *sunyata* are common to all forms of Buddhism, and they represent obviously a comparatively dualistic approach; that 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. So this, as I said, represents a comparatively dualistic approach. But this sort of dualistic approach is necessary at first as the sort of working basis of our spiritual life in its early stages.

We have to make this distinction, we have to make this division, we have to think to begin with: well, here is the conditioned and there is the Unconditioned. And I want to get from here to there. This is how we cannot help thinking in the early stages of our spiritual life. So we take as our working basis (as it were) this duality of the conditioned and the Unconditioned. Mutually exclusive, the one not being found in the other.

Now the third and fourth kinds of *sunyata* are peculiar to the Mahayana. The third kind of *sunyata* is what we call 'Great Emptiness', *Mahasunyata*. In the Mahayana, 'maha' always means pertaining to *sunyata*, the Mahayana is the vehicle of *sunyata*, the Bodhisattva is the Mahasattva also, the being born out of the voidness (as it were). So thirdly the Great Emptiness, the *Mahasunyata*. And in what does this consist? How is it empty? How is this void? This 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, see that it's a product of dualistic thinking. We may spend ten, fifteen, twenty, thirty years of our spiritual life working on the assumption that the conditioned is the conditioned and the Unconditioned is the Unconditioned, and that is necessary, that's very good, that's right, but eventually we have to learn to see the emptiness of the distinction between these two, the conditioned and the Unconditioned. We have to see that this distinction is not ultimately valid, and that it is, as I've said, a product of our dualistic thinking, and ultimately to be transcended. We have to see, and not just intellectually theorise, not just speculate, not just think, we have to see, we have to experience that *rupa* and *sunyata*, the form and voidness, the conditioned and the Unconditioned, samsara itself, the wheel, the spiral, the goal, ordinary beings, and Buddhas, are ultimately of one and the same essence, one and the same reality. And this is *Mahasunyata*, the Great Emptiness, the Great Void, in which (as it were) all distinctions, all dualisms are swallowed up, are lost, are obliterated, so that they simply don't exist any more. And it's this Great Void, of course, into which people - even spiritual people - are so afraid of disappearing; they want to cling on to their dualistic ways of thinking - self and others, this and that - but eventually they must all be swallowed up. And this is the real Tiger's Cave. The Tiger's Cave of is course remarkable for the fact that many tracks lead into it, or up to it, but none come out. (laughter) So the Great Void is like this. You get into it, but you never come out. This is why you want to go into it. So this is Great Emptiness, *Mahasunyata*, the third degree or level of penetration into Reality.

And fourthly: 'Emptiness of Emptiness', *sunyata-sunyata*. And what could that possibly be? Here we see that emptiness itself is only a concept, only a word, only a sound. Even *Mahasunyata* - you're still hanging onto subtle thoughts, subtle dualistic experiences, so even this ultimately has to be abandoned. And when this is abandoned, when you come to *sunyata-sunyata*, well there's just nothing to be said - all that is left is a great silence. And of course it's a significant silence, it's a thunderous silence.

And these are the four degrees of *sunyata*. And as I said, they represent successively more advanced stages of penetration into Reality. And what penetrates, what breaks through if you like, is *prajna*, Wisdom. A few minutes ago I referred to the *Heart Sutra*, and the *Heart Sutra* is so called because it contains the heart, or the essence, or the gist, of the whole body of the Perfection of Wisdom teachings. And the heart of the *Heart Sutra* is contained in its concluding mantra, which as most of you know runs, '*Gate Gate Paragate Parasamgate Bodhi Svaha*'. Which being interpreted literally, and the literal meaning doesn't give the real meaning, goes something like this: 'Gone, Gone, Gone Beyond, Gone Altogether Beyond, Enlightenment, Success'.

Now the words of the mantra refer to the four degrees of *sunyata*. "Gone, Gone", what does this mean? Gone from conditioned existence, gone from relative existence, gone from the world. In other words the first degree of *sunyata*, the *samskrta-sunyata*, experience of the emptiness of the conditioned, as a result of which you leave it, you go forth from it. So "Gone, Gone".

And then "Gone Beyond", when you leave the conditioned where do you go to? Well you go to the Unconditioned, there's nowhere else to go, you go to the Unconditioned, you go beyond. And this represents the second degree of *sunyata*, the *asamskrta-sunyata*, the emptiness of the Unconditioned. You go to the Unconditioned, you go beyond, because the Unconditioned is empty of the conditioned, you don't want to have anything more to do with the conditioned, and in the Unconditioned there's no trace of the conditioned.

And then, "Gone Altogether Beyond". Altogether beyond. Beyond the distinction between the conditioned and the Unconditioned. And this represents the third degree, *Mahasunyata*, the Great Voidness. When you go beyond the very distinction between conditioned and Unconditioned, and then you really and truly do go altogether beyond. And then Enlightenment, Bodhi. There's no structure, there's no sentence here, it's just the word, the exclamation, Bodhi! Enlightenment! Awakening! And here, in Enlightenment, in the Ultimate Awakening, the idea of *sunyata* itself is transcended. So it's as though when you come there, having traversed these three degrees of *sunyata*, when you come to the fourth, you can only (as it were) open your arms and say, (in Alan Watts's phrase) "This is IT", Enlightenment, Awakening. And this is the word in the mantra, Bodhi.

And then, "*Svaha*", or "*Swaha*". This is a word indicating auspiciousness, success, achievement, and it often comes at the end of a mantra. It means "You've done your task, you've done your work, you've achieved success, you've reached your goal, you're Enlightened. It means that all four degrees of *sunyata* have been traversed, it means that *prajna*, Wisdom, has been fully developed, and success, true success, has been achieved.

Now the foregoing account of Wisdom has been progressive, in other words it's been an account in terms of more and more advanced stages of penetration into Reality. But there's another teaching, there's another tradition which unfolds (as it were) simultaneously different aspects, various aspects, various dimensions, if you like, of Wisdom. And this is the teaching of what are known as the five '*Jnanas*': the five knowledges or the 'Five Wisdoms'. And we will conclude with an account of these Wisdoms. These will give us further insight, perhaps, into the nature of Wisdom, *prajna*, with a capital W.

First, what is known as the knowledge, or 'Wisdom of the *Dharmadhatu*'. Knowledge or Wisdom of the *Dharmadhatu*. And this is the basic wisdom, of which the other four are subsidiary aspects, or special aspects. Now the term *Dharmadhatu* is a rather difficult one; '*Dhatu*' means a sort of sphere, it means a realm, or a field if you like. And here it represents the whole cosmos, the whole universe. '*Dharma*' here means Reality, Truth, the Ultimate. So the *Dharmadhatu* means "the universe, the whole cosmos, considered as the sphere of the manifestation of Reality", or *Dharmadhatu* means "the universe, or the cosmos, conceived of as, fully pervaded by, Reality". Just as (the comparison goes) the whole of space is filled with, permeated by, the sun's beams, the sun's rays; in the same way the whole of existence, the whole cosmos, the whole universe, with all its galactic systems, its suns and its worlds, and its races and its gods and its men; they're all pervaded, or it is all pervaded by Reality itself. It's a sort of field for the manifestation of Reality, for the play (if you like), the expression, the exuberance, of Reality. So that wisdom of the *Dharmadhatu* means "Knowledge of, direct knowledge, experience of, the whole cosmos as pervaded by - non-different from - Reality". Not that the cosmos is wiped out, not that it's obliterated, you see it still, it's still all there: the houses and the trees, the fields, the men and the women, the sun and the moon and the stars, they're all there, just as they were before. But now they're pervaded by, permeated by, Reality. And you see both at the same time. One doesn't obstruct the other. You see the cosmos - you see Reality. You see Reality you see the cosmos. Cosmos is Reality, Reality is cosmos. Rupa is *sunyata*, *sunyata* is rupa. One doesn't obstruct the other, they interpenetrate, and this is the *Dharmadhatu*. And knowledge of this is knowledge or Wisdom of the *Dharmadhatu*. And this knowledge or wisdom of the *Dharmadhatu* is symbolised by the figure of Vairocana, the 'Illuminator', the Illuminator like the sun, the Sun Buddha as he is sometimes called, or the White Buddha as he is more usually described.

Then, secondly, the 'Mirror-like Wisdom'; the wisdom which is like a mirror, because the Enlightened Mind sees everything. The Enlightened Mind understands the true nature of everything, it reflects everything, just as the mirror reflects all objects. In this way the Enlightened Mind reflects everything. If you look into the depths of the Enlightened Mind you see everything just as Sudana in his pilgrimage when he reached the Vairocana's Tower in south India, when he walked inside what did he see? He saw the whole universe, the whole cosmos mirrored, because Vairocana's Tower symbolised the Bodhicitta, the Enlightened Mind itself.

So the Enlightened mind reflects all the objects of the world - everything that exists - they're all reflected in the depths of the Enlightened Mind, but the Enlightened Mind is not affected by them, they don't stick. If you take a mirror and you place an object in front of it, the object is reflected. You take that object away, put another in front of the mirror, the mirror reflects that. Or you move the mirror - you don't find the reflection sticking when you move the mirror or you move the object. So the Enlightened Mind is just like that, nothing sticks, it reflects but nothing sticks. Whereas our mind of course is quite different. If you pursue the illustration you may say that our mind is a sort of mirror, but all the reflections stick. Not only stick but they sort of congeal, and they get all jammed up together (laughter). And sometimes the mirror sticks to the object and you can't separate them. So in other words in the Enlightened Mind there's no subjective reaction, no subjective attachment, there's pure, perfect objectivity - just like a mirror reflecting everything that exists. So this is the Mirror-like Wisdom, which sees everything, knows everything, understands everything, but doesn't stick, doesn't stop, anywhere. And this Mirror-like Wisdom is symbolised by Akshobya the Imperturbable, the Dark-blue Buddha.

Thirdly, the 'Wisdom of Equality' or Sameness. The Enlightened Mind sees everything with complete objectivity, there's no reaction, there's no sticking. The Enlightened Mind sees the same Reality in all, the same *sunyata* in all, equally. So the Enlightened Mind has the same attitude towards all - it sees that a man is a man, and a woman

is a woman, a flower is a flower, a tree is a tree, a house is a house, a cathedral is a cathedral, the sun is the sun, and the moon is the moon. It sees all that, but it sees at the same time the same, the common, Reality in all. So it has a same, a common, attitude towards all, it's equal, it's equal minded, the Enlightened Mind is equal minded towards all. There's the same love, the same Compassion for all, without any distinction, without any discrimination. Sometimes it's said that the love and the Compassion of the Enlightened Mind fall without discrimination on all beings, on all objects, on all things, just like the sun's rays fall now on the golden roofs of a palace, and now on a dunghill, but it's the same sun, it doesn't mind whether it gilds the gilded roof of the palace or the dunghill, it's the same, it shines alike. So the Enlightened Mind is just that - shining in the same way, with its love and its Compassion, on high and low, so-called good and so-called bad. And this Wisdom of Equality or Sameness, which is the same, which is even towards all, is symbolised by Ratnasambhava the Jewel-born, the Yellow Buddha.

Fourthly the 'All-Distinguishing Wisdom'. The mirror, we've seen, reflects all things equally, but at the same time (we've seen) it doesn't confuse or blur their distinctive features. The mirror will reflect the tiniest detail, it'll be clear and distinct in the mirror. So this is very important, and it means that the Enlightened Mind doesn't see things only in their unity, or only in their diversity, it sees both together. The Enlightened Mind, especially under its aspect of the All-Distinguishing Wisdom, doesn't only see the unity of things, it sees the differences of things, the uniqueness of things, and it sees both of these together. It doesn't reduce the plurality to a unity, it doesn't reduce the unity to a plurality, it sees the unity and the plurality, the unity and the difference. So that Buddhism on the philosophical level, intellectually speaking, is neither a monism, in which all differences are cancelled out, neither is it a pluralism, in which all unity disappears. It's neither monistic nor pluralistic. In the Buddhist vision of existence, the Buddhist vision of life, of Reality, unity does not obliterate difference, difference does not obliterate unity. We can't 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're all ineffaceably, uniquely, yourselves; at the same time it sees that you're all one. And the one does not obstruct the other. You're one at the same time that you are yourselves, individually, and at the same time that you're yourselves individually, blossoming with all your idiosyncrasies, at the same time you're all one. And these two, the unity and the difference, the monism and the pluralism, these are not two different things. We don't say that they're one, mind you, but they're not two. (laughter) And this All-Distinguishing, this All-Discriminating Wisdom, is symbolised by Amitabha, the Infinite Light, the Red Buddha.

Fifthly and lastly, the 'All-Performing Wisdom'. The Enlightened Mind devotes itself to the welfare of all living beings, and in so doing it devises many skilful means of helping people, as they're called. And it does all this, it devises these skilful means, it helps living beings, naturally and spontaneously. We mustn't imagine the Bodhisattva, or the Enlightened Mind, as sort of sitting down one morning and thinking, well, "How can I go and help someone today? Let's think, maybe I'll go and help so-and-so today," huh? The Enlightened Mind doesn't function like that, it just functions freely, spontaneously, naturally. The helpfulness (sort of) pours forth in a flood, but quite spontaneously, without any pre-meditation, without any intellectual working things out, weighing the pros and cons and thinking, well, is this person more in need of help or that, and trying to strike a sort of balance. So this All-Performing Wisdom is symbolised by Amoghasiddhi, the Infallible Success, the Green Buddha.

So these are the Five Knowledges or the Five Wisdoms, which exhibit, on the same level (as it were) different aspects of *prajna*, different aspects of Wisdom. Now we've dealt (now) with *dhyana*, and with *prajna*, with meditation and with Wisdom, separately, as distinct *paramitas*, but it's time now to consider them together. And this we shall do with the help of Hui-Neng, or Wei-Lang, the sixth Patriarch of the *dhyana* School in China. The *dhyana* School is the Ch'an or Zen School, of course. 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 *samadhi* and *prajna*. He says:

"Learned audience, in my system Samadhi (which of course is the highest form of dhyana) Samadhi and Prajna 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. Samadhi is the quintessence of Prajna, while Prajna is the activity of Samadhi. At the very moment that we attain Prajna, Samadhi is therewith; and vice versa. If you understand this principle, you understand the equilibrium of Samadhi and Prajna. A disciple should not think that there is a distinction between "Samadhi begets Prajna" and "Prajna begets Samadhi". To hold such an opinion would imply that there are two characteristics in the dharma....

Learned audience, to what are Samadhi and Prajna 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 Samadhi and Prajna."

In other words, commenting upon this we may say that *samadhi*, which represents the highest form of *dhyana*, is the Enlightened Mind as it is in itself, whereas *prajna* is its, what we may describe as, objective functioning. The Enlightened Mind at work in the world (as it were). We could even say that *dhyana* represents the subjective, and *prajna* the objective aspect of Enlightenment. We could say that, except that in Enlightenment there's no subject and no object.

Well, we've now completed our journey. Perhaps we're not just standing on the threshold of Enlightenment, perhaps, in imagination, in hopeful anticipation at least, we are now knocking on the gate, perhaps the Buddha's listening. Perhaps he's ready to open the gate a little, perhaps he's ready, one day, to let us in. We've seen how the Bodhisattva unites various pairs of opposites - the altruistic and the individualistic aspects of the spiritual life, the 'masculine' and the 'feminine' approaches. And we've seen today how the Bodhisattva unites the subjective and the objective poles (as it were) of spiritual experience at their very highest level. In other words we've seen, during the last three weeks, including today, how the Bodhisattva practises giving and uprightness, patience and vigour, meditation and wisdom. And these are of course the six *paramitas*, or perfections, or Transcendental Virtues, which constitute the establishment aspect of the Bodhicitta. And it is, of course, upon the arising of the Bodhicitta that one becomes, one is born as, a Bodhisattva.

So we've covered a very great deal of ground, but there's still quite a bit of ground left to cover. And next week we shall be turning from the comparatively general, the comparatively abstract, to the more particular, the more individual, the more concrete, and we shall be considering the stages of the Bodhisattva Path in terms of the actual persons who realise those stages. In other words we shall be considering them in terms of the Bodhisattva Hierarchy. And until then we remain standing, or kneeling perhaps, or perhaps even sitting in meditation, on the Threshold of Enlightenment.