

The Higher Evolution of Man

Tape 81: The Cosmic Significance of the Bodhisattva Ideal

Last week you may remember we started with a fragment of auto-biography, a little incident from the days when I stayed in South India. Tonight, I feel that I ought to be starting, in view of the general subject-matter of the lecture, with something richly imaginative, not to say even fanciful; possibly with a fairy tale or a piece of science fiction, or at least an extract from one or another of the Mahayana Sutras. But unfortunately I haven't been able to think up anything of this kind. So I am going to start this evening in a comparatively prosaic manner. I am going to start simply by reminding you, as in fact we have already been reminded, that this is the last lecture but one of our present series, of our present course. Those of you who have been coming along week by week will I am sure already have realised that we've covered even so far quite a vast amount of ground. It perhaps wouldn't be too much to say, wouldn't be too much to claim, that in the course of these past few weeks we have covered, in fact, practically the entire field, the entire area, of general human interest. But throughout, week by week, regardless of the apparent nature of the subject surveyed, regardless of the particular part of the area, or part of the field, throughout we have been concerned, above and beyond all else, concerned in one way or another with just one subject. We've been concerned, that is to say, with the Higher Evolution of Man. And this means, as we've reminded ourselves more than once already, this means that we've been concerned essentially with ourselves; concerned with ourselves not just as vegetating pseudo-individuals, but concerned with ourselves as developing, as progressing from lower to higher and ever higher levels of being and consciousness, moving up that is to say in the evolutionary scale. Now we've been concerned, as you will have gathered too, with this process of the Higher Evolution from a number of different points of view; concerned with it as occurring at a number of different levels. And at this stage so far on in the course, with so much ground already covered, there can be no question of any detailed or even summary recapitulation. But before we start tonight, at least I'd like to indicate just in a very general way, the nature of the different contexts within which the subject of the Higher Evolution of Man has so far been considered.

Recapitulation

We began, most of you I think remember, with *Evolution: Lower and Higher*. The Lower Evolution, we saw, represents all that Man has been, whereas the second, the Higher Evolution, represents all that he may become, can become, is in fact at present in process of becoming. One, the Lower Evolution, we saw, is a collective process whereas the other, the Higher Evolution, is an individual process. So at this stage, so as far as this initial lecture was concerned, the context we may say was scientific; more specifically, it was biological, or better still it was, we may say, biological and meta-biological.

In the second lecture, we studied *The Axial Age and the Emergence of the New Man*. The Axial Age, we came to understand, was the third great segment of human history; the first segment being the Promethean Age; the second, the Age of Divine Kingship; and the fourth, the Age of Science and Technology. We further understood that the Axial Age is that highly creative period beginning around 800 BC and concluding around 200 BC. It was during this period, we also saw, that the Higher Evolution of humanity really began. This was the period of the emergence, in a number of different parts of the world, of the New Man. That is to say the emergence of Man as an Individual, of Man as characterised by such qualities as self consciousness or awareness, true as distinct from false individuality, by creativity, also by aloneness, and not un-often by unpopularity. So, so far as this lecture was concerned, the context was we may say anthropological and historical.

Then in the third lecture we went on to consider *Art and the Spiritual Life*. We saw that the artist, the true artist at least, the man of artistic genius, is himself a kind, a variety of New Man. His artistic creations, we saw, are the expression, are the outward form, the outward utterance, of a state of consciousness, of being even, higher than that accessible to the average man. And enjoying these works of art, participating in these works of art, being influenced by them, even inspired by

them, our own consciousness, the consciousness of humanity at large we may say is imperceptibly elevated. So here, in this lecture, the context is of course clearly artistic.

Then in the fourth lecture, we devoted ourselves to *Religion: Ethnic and Universal*. We started by discussing the factors responsible for the disappearance of Buddhism from India. One of the most important of these factors, we saw, was the partial absorption of Buddhism by Hinduism. And this factor led us to distinguish between Ethnic Religion on the one hand, and Universal Religion on the other. Ethnic religion, we saw, is collective, belonging more to the Lower Evolution, even though it does have its branches in the Higher Evolution as well. And the second, the Universal religion, we saw was individual and as such belonging to the Higher Evolution, even though having at the same time roots deep down in Ethnic religion, in the Lower Evolution. We then went on to classify the various individual religions. We saw, for example, that Confucianism, Shinto, Hinduism, Judaism, were all Ethnic religions, whereas Buddhism, Zoroastrianism, Christianity, Islam, were Universal. So in this lecture, the context was clearly that of Religion in general, or we may say even of Comparative Religion.

Our next lecture was on *Buddhism as the Path of the Higher Evolution*. Here we were at pains to point out that Buddhism was not a philosophy in the sense of a system of abstract thought, and not a religion either in the popular conventional sense of this term. Buddhism, we saw, was in reality nothing other than the Path of the Higher Evolution itself, representing we may say the evolutionary process become as it were self-conscious, aware, conscious of itself. And this reading, this interpretation of Buddhism, as it were, we saw was borne out by the Buddha's reply to Mahaprajapati, his aunt and foster-mother, when she asked him for a criterion by which to know what was really and truly his Teaching, and what was not. And he gave her, we saw, a purely pragmatic criterion, saying in effect that whatever conduced to the Higher Evolution of the Individual was to be considered as part and parcel of his Teaching. And this reading, this interpretation of Buddhism, was borne out also we saw by the account of the Buddha's Vision, soon after his Enlightenment when he looked forth over the whole world, of the entire mass of humanity, all human beings, as being like a bed of lotus flowers, that is to say in various stages of growth and development and unfoldment; some immersed still in the mire, others just rising clear of it, and others standing perfectly free with the sunlight upon their petals. But above all we saw that this reading, this interpretation of Buddhism, was borne out by, made clear by, that great figure of the Path, the Way to Enlightenment, which runs through the whole Teaching, which is in fact, we may say the whole Teaching. And that Path we saw has many forms, many formulations even, and we studied in detail one in particular, that is to say the one consisting of the Twelve Positive Links. We saw, for instance, how Man, or humanity, rose from the experience of suffering to faith, from faith to joy, from joy to rapture, and so on, up the spiral, up the stages of the path, one positive link in the chain succeeding another, right up to the threshold of Enlightenment, of Nirvana. And here, so far as this lecture was concerned, the context was that of Buddhism in general.

Now last week we dealt with *Stream Entry: The Point of No Return*. We saw that what we may term the Conditioned and the Unconditioned each had its own gravitational field, as it were, and that these two gravitational fields overlapped. And this fact gave us what we described as three areas. First of all an area within which there operates only the gravitational force, as it were, of the Conditioned. Secondly an area within which operate the gravitational forces of both the Conditioned and the Unconditioned. And thirdly an area within which there operates only the gravitational force of the Unconditioned. We saw that these areas correspond to the three traditional great sub-divisions of the whole path to Enlightenment; correspond that is to say to the stages of Morality, Meditation and Wisdom. And we discerned further that in the middle of the second area or stage, that is to say the area or stage where both forces are operative, there is what we called a point of equilibrium. That is to say a point where the two gravitational forces, that of the Conditioned and that of the Unconditioned, as it were balance, where even they cancel each other out. And we saw that if we take this point of equilibrium and if, then, we take the point next to the point of equilibrium and immediately succeeding it, then this second point is the Point of No Return, the point where the gravitational pull of the Unconditioned starts predominating over the gravitational pull of the Conditioned. And we saw that there are two ways of attaining this Point of No Return: a positive way and a negative way. The positive way, we saw, consists in the

cultivation of the positive links already referred to. The negative way consists in destroying the first three Fetters, as they are called. We studied these Fetters, ten fetters in all, in some detail. The first three fetters we studied in greater detail than the others and we saw that they were: Self-belief, Indecision, and Dependence on Moral Rules and Religious Observances. So the context, we may say, of last week's lecture was that of the Hinayana, that is to say, of the first of the three great stages of the development of Buddhism in India. In other words, the context was that of Individual Spiritual Evolution and Enlightenment.

Now tonight, our context is much broader. Tonight our context is that of the Mahayana or the Great Way, which historically speaking is the second great stage of the development of Buddhism in India. Tonight we are concerned with *The Cosmic Significance of the Bodhisattva Ideal* and the Bodhisattva Ideal is, of course, the essence, even the quintessence of the Mahayana.

Next week in the concluding lecture of the series we shall be concerned with *Buddhism, Nietzsche, and 'The Superman'*. We shall still of course be concerned with the Higher Evolution of Man but our context on that occasion, next week, will be the context of Modern Western Thought.

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However, it's time that we left this survey and got on with the subject of tonight's lecture: **The Cosmic Significance of the Bodhisattva Ideal**. Now the subject matter tonight falls quite naturally into two main sections:-

- first of all we will elucidate the Bodhisattva Ideal itself;
- after that we shall try to explore its cosmic significance.

This I hope will throw some light on the general nature of the Mahayana and also reveal something of the cosmic significance of the evolutionary process itself.

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First of all then, The Bodhisattva Ideal. Some of you know that last winter, in this very place, we devoted a whole course, a whole series of lectures to this particular subject. We had eight lectures on Aspects of the Bodhisattva Ideal, and we haven't left that subject behind in the course of the summer. The tapes of these lectures were played, and not only played but discussed in some detail every alternate Friday evening. And it is hoped that we will be able to follow the same procedure with this series as well. Now at this point, in the interests of thoroughness, I ought really to give a summary of those eight lectures. This would give us a fairly good idea of the general nature of the Bodhisattva Ideal; but such a summary is out of the question because it would take far too long. I hope, nevertheless, to be able to cover some at least of the ground covered last winter in those lectures. Those who attended may remember that as we proceeded on our way week by week, we found again and again, more and more definitely, that there was one aspect of the subject which was assuming more and more importance. We came back to it again and again. We insisted upon it again and again. We saw it rising before us as it were again and again. And this was the subject of the *Bodhichitta* or the Will to Enlightenment. As we proceeded on our way, as we proceeded with the course, we found that all other aspects of the Bodhisattva Ideal tended to group themselves, to arrange themselves, even organise themselves around this one. It was rather like, we saw, a number of foothills gathered around some great central mountain peak.

Now we dealt with the subject of the Bodhichitta, of the Will to Enlightenment proper, in the second lecture in that series, which was entitled "The Awakening of the Bodhi Heart". This was preceded by a lecture on the origin and development of the Bodhisattva Ideal and followed by another on the Bodhisattva Vow. So the points I am going to make, the ground I am going to cover tonight, are connected one might say, or derived from mainly these three lectures. And for a more detailed explanation of the Bodhisattva Ideal I must refer you to them. They are of course available on tape, and I hope also to be able to write them out in book form one day.

Now the Bodhisattva, to begin with, is the ideal Buddhist. That is to say, the Bodhisattva is a Being (sattva) who lives for the sake of Spiritual Enlightenment (Bodhi). So the Bodhisattva Ideal is in general nothing other than a statement of the Buddhist ideal itself, the ideal of the attainment of Enlightenment. In other words, the ideal of what we have been describing in these lectures of the Higher Evolution, of evolution from a state of Unenlightened to a state of Enlightened humanity. But it is even more than that: the Bodhisattva is further defined as one who seeks to gain Enlightenment not for his own sake only, not just for the sake of his own individual emancipation from suffering, from ignorance, from the wheel of life, but who seeks to gain it for the sake of all sentient beings. So this is the full definition, full description if you like, of the word or idea 'Bodhisattva', going far beyond the literal meaning of the term. One who seeks to gain Enlightenment, not for his own sake only but for the sake of all sentient beings.

Now the question arises, why the amplification? Why not just say that the Bodhisattva is one who seeks to gain Enlightenment, and leave it at that? Why add that particular rider, "for the sake of all sentient beings"? To understand this, we have to go back to the beginnings of Buddhism. The Buddha, we know, lived and taught for some five-and-forty years and then he passed away. And this passing away is traditionally known as the *parinirvana*, the attainment of supreme *Nirvana*, the ultimate peace, the ultimate rest, away beyond conditioned things, eternal and complete and self-illuminating. And after the Buddha's *parinirvana*, there arose or there developed somehow, among his disciples, two groups, two parties or two wings if you like, or two tendencies.

One group, one party, was on the whole quite satisfied with the Buddha's verbal teaching. They were deeply interested in the different doctrinal formulations of the teaching, interested in the Four Noble Truths, the Eightfold Path, the Seven Stages of Purification, the Five Skandhas, the Twelve Dhatus, the Twelve Nidanas, and so on. They concentrated more on the verbal teaching, were more interested in that, and in fact came to regard this - the verbal teaching of the Buddha, the doctrinal teaching of the Buddha - as being Buddhism, the whole of Buddhism in fact.

But the other party was not quite satisfied with this. They of course accepted the Buddha's verbal teaching, accepted all the doctrinal formulations - the Eightfold Path, the Four Noble Truths, and so on - but they maintained that Buddhism was something else, something more also. They maintained that above and beyond the teaching, or if you like behind the verbal teaching, the actual life and personality (to use a much abused term) and example of the Buddha had also to be taken into consideration. They said, in effect, that what the Buddha himself was as a man, as an Enlightened man, as Enlightened Being, and what he did, was at least as important as what he said. The verbal teaching, the doctrinal teaching, gave expression to the Buddha's wisdom, but his life, his person, his activity gave expression to his love, to his compassion. And this other party, this second party, held that Buddhism comprises both of these together and it maintained that both of these had to be taken into consideration in the formulation of the spiritual ideal. And they therefore said that the Bodhisattva seeks to gain Enlightenment - yes, here they agreed with everybody else, this gives expression to the Wisdom aspect of Buddhism - but they also went on to say, in addition, that he seeks to gain Enlightenment for the benefit, for the sake of all sentient beings and this gives expression to the Compassion aspect of Buddhism.

So in this way we see that the Bodhisattva Ideal is a balanced ideal. It derives its inspiration not only from what the Buddha said - the Teaching - but also from what the Buddha was and what he did, his person and his example. In other words the Bodhisattva Ideal incorporates both Wisdom and Compassion.

So much then for the origin of the Bodhisattva Ideal. Having understood what the Bodhisattva is, an important question arises: How does one become a Bodhisattva? How does one embark on the actual realisation of that Ideal? And of course the general Mahayana answer to this question is that one becomes a Bodhisattva by the arising of what is called the Bodhichitta, the Will to Enlightenment. Now at this point I must apologise for introducing yet another Sanskrit term. I believe I promised not to do so in this series but you must remember that we are still drawing upon material dealt with in an earlier course. Some scholars, of course, translate Bodhichitta as 'thought

of Enlightenment' but this is exactly what it is not. It is not a thought about Enlightenment but an urge if you like in the direction of Enlightenment, an urge of one's whole being. In fact, going even further than this, we can say as the great Mahayana teachers say, that the Bodhichitta, the Will to Enlightenment, is not a conditioned mental state or function at all. In traditional terms it is not included in the Five Aggregates, which between them make up the whole of Conditioned Existence. The Bodhichitta, the Will to Enlightenment, is something transcendental, something as it were belonging to the Beyond, something pertaining to the Unconditioned, if you like a reflection of the Unconditioned in the midst of the Conditioned. And also the Bodhichitta is not individual. Different Bodhisattvas have arising in them the Bodhichitta but there are not as many Bodhichittas as there are individual Bodhisattvas. There's only one supreme, transcendental Bodhichitta, and individuals participate in it or manifest it in varying degrees. We saw also that the Relative Bodhichitta, as it is called in contra-distinction to the Absolute Bodhichitta, is not static but active and therefore we find the translation, 'Will to Enlightenment', more appropriate. But we must not think that the Will to Enlightenment is, strictly speaking, anybody's individual Will. It is a sort of Cosmic Will, Universal Will to Universal Redemption. And those of whom it takes possession, in whom it arises or manifests, they become or they are Bodhisattvas.

Now this Bodhichitta arises in dependence on certain conditions and these conditions are represented by Shantideva's Supreme Worship, which is a sequence of profound devotional experiences. Also represented by Vasubandhu's Four Factors. We have no time to enumerate those this evening. Now, as we have seen, the Bodhichitta, the Will to Enlightenment, is universal. It is cosmic. But the Bodhisattva himself is an individual and the Bodhichitta therefore expresses itself in his life and work in an individual manner. And this individual expression, in and through the Bodhisattva, of the cosmic, the transcendental Bodhichitta is known as the Bodhisattva's Vow, which is not just a verbal expression. It represents, we may say, a re-orientation of his entire being. Traditionally, the Bodhisattva's Vow is spoken of in the singular but is really plural. There are quite a number of famous sets of Vows, such as the 48 Vows of the Bodhisattva Dhamakara, and so on. The most famous set of Vows is that of the Four Great Vows, which the Bodhisattva makes at the commencement of his career:

1. May I deliver all beings from difficulties;
2. May I eradicate all passions;
3. May I master all dharmas;
4. May I lead all beings to Buddhahood.

These are the four Great Vows which are still repeated by many Buddhists, especially in Mahayana Buddhist monasteries, all over the Buddhist world.

Now the Relative Bodhichitta has two aspects: there's the Vow Aspect and there's the Establishment Aspect. The first refers, of course, to the Bodhisattva's Vow and with this we have just dealt. The second refers to the practice of THE SIX PERFECTIONS OR TRANSCENDENTAL VIRTUES; that is to say: Giving or Generosity, Uprightness, Patience, Vigour, Meditation, and Wisdom. So a few words on each of these.

1. First of all, Giving or Generosity. What is this? This represents essentially a positive, outward-going attitude, an attitude, even a feeling we may say, an urge to give and to share. One can enumerate all the different kinds of things which can be given away. There are all sorts of lists, all sorts of classifications in Buddhist literature. But potentially we may say, one can give away anything that can be possessed.

There is a traditional six-fold classification, in terms:-

(i) of giving MATERIAL THINGS, sharing with other people things like food, clothing and so on

(ii) the giving of FEARLESSNESS. Great importance is attached to this in Buddhist circles in the East, that the Bodhisattva by his very presence, by his very example, his very person if you like, his very being, creates in other people a positive attitude, an attitude of fearlessness, of freedom from fear. This is surely one of the great problems of today: that people are riddled with anxiety.

You can see anxiety written large on most people's faces. Most people's way of life conduces to anxiety, conduces to fear, and often this is repressed, and because it becomes repressed it becomes unconscious and in this way it is projected, it's spread, over the whole of their lives, whole existence almost. They feel threatened from this quarter and from that, on account of this diffused anxiety. So the Bodhisattva, by his presence, by his example, we may say counteracts all this. He is positive, he creates confidence and freedom from fear, freedom from anxiety wherever he goes; because he makes people see that it isn't worth while being attached to or bound down by conditioned things. He gives them a new, a larger perspective, gives them in fact a cosmic perspective, and in this way he emancipates them from conditioned things and creates in them an attitude of fearlessness.

(iii) the Bodhisattva gives EDUCATION AND CULTURE. These are considered very important, traditionally, in all Buddhist countries. Unless there is a certain level of education in the true sense, not just book learning, unless there is a certain level of culture in the sense of a certain refinement of spirit, no spiritual life really is possible. So the Arts and Sciences are encouraged by the Bodhisattva, by Buddhism in general.

(iv) Then next the Bodhisattva is quite ready to sacrifice if necessary HIS LIFE AND LIMBS. He is prepared to give these, too, if necessary. This is of course something that surpasses the scope of most people nowadays. Very rarely are we called upon actually to sacrifice our life or even our limbs for the sake of what we believe in, certainly in this country, but there have been Ages in the past, and there are areas of the world even at present, where if you have a spiritual belief, if you believe in spiritual principles, then you stand up for those in public perhaps at the risk of your life. So we shouldn't forget, perhaps, how fortunate we are in many respects in being able to profess publicly and follow to a very great extent those spiritual principles in which we believe. Under less favourable circumstances, we might have to pay for our belief, or at least our profession, with our lives.

(v) Next again, the Bodhisattva is prepared to give away his MERITS. Merits are something you acquire as the result of good deeds, good actions, generous actions. So one mustn't be attached to these. We're told the Bodhisattva is quite ready to give away these merits that he has acquired. He doesn't want to mark himself off, as it were, from other beings as more meritorious or more virtuous than they are. And this is why, at the conclusion of a successful religious observance or ceremony or undertaking, we very often recite verses saying that the merits accruing from this performance I don't wish to keep for myself alone, I wish to share them with all living beings whatsoever. So this is called the Gift or the Transference of one's Merits.

(vi) Then again the Bodhisattva gives the DHARMA, gives the TRUTH, the TEACHING, and this we're told is the supreme gift, the greatest of all gifts, because you can give people food and clothing but they may not lead a very noble life. You can give them fearlessness but even that may not carry them very far. Even education, culture and so on, even share your merits with them, but they can still not be leading a truly human life. But once you give the gift of the Dharma, once you open their spiritual eye, once they can see things in a more universal, a more cosmic perspective, once they can begin to see the plan, the pattern of it all and to accord their lives with that plan and with that pattern, orient them in the direction of Enlightenment, then they really and truly begin to live. Before they were merely existing, if not vegetating. So lastly the Bodhisattva gives the gift of the Dharma.

This is the traditional six-fold classification with regard to Giving or Generosity. But one can say there is even another form of giving, a higher or at least a more comprehensive form of giving which includes all the others. And that is that the Bodhisattva always gives HIMSELF. You may remember in this connection, there is a little verse or a line in one of Walt Whitman's poems⁽¹⁾, where he says: "When I give, I give myself." And this is, in a way, the greatest and certainly the most inclusive form of giving, that you give yourself. It is easy to give material things but not give yourself with them. It is even easy to make other people fearless, to emancipate them from anxiety, but not give yourself. It is even possible to give the gift of the Dharma, the Teaching, but not give yourself. So this, we may say, this giving of oneself is the greatest of all gifts, the supreme gift which includes all others. So this too the Bodhisattva makes. The Bodhisattva is one who gives

himself, who as it were spreads himself out, if you like radiates himself out toward all other living beings, not holding anything of himself back from them. So this is DANA, this is giving, this is generosity.

2. Secondly, the virtue, the transcendental virtue of Uprightness. This is often rendered as Morality, but as I observed the other week, I generally prefer to avoid this term, even though I do use it upon occasion. The term morality unfortunately has all sorts of wrong connotations for people today. Morality, or Uprightness, in the Buddhist sense is what we call Skilful Action, that is to say action expressive of skilful mental states or mental states free from craving, aversion and ignorance. And there are various traditional patterns of skilful behaviour. For instance, there are the Five Precepts, the Ten Precepts and the 64 Precepts of the Bodhisattva himself. And these precepts, these sets of precepts, are not just lists of rules. They represent we may say how the principles of Buddhism are worked out in different spheres of human life and activity. Sometimes in the course of lectures we've considered three such spheres in particular where Buddhist principles need to be worked out in a very practical manner. That is to say, the spheres of food, of work, and of marriage.

First of all, a word about food. The Bodhisattva, according to the Mahayana Sutras, should eat, since even he has to eat, simply for the sake of health and energy or vigour; not to satisfy neurotic cravings. And he should also eat harmlessly, without causing harm to other living beings, which means in practice being as far as he possibly can, a vegetarian. Some people, when we come from philosophy to the subject of food, tend to smile a little and they think it is rather a come-down from the sublime, as it were, to the ridiculous. Some scholars have been very surprised that in the Lankavatara Sutra, in the midst of very very profound and abstruse metaphysical and epistemological⁽²⁾ speculation you suddenly find a chapter on food, a chapter on meat-eating. And of course the scholars say, "Aha, it must have been interpolated. The Buddha couldn't possibly have spoken on a subject like this. Someone must have added it later on." But not so. This sort of attitude only goes to show people's want, in a way, of a sense of proportion because the whole subject of food is much more important than we generally think. After all, we are eating food every day. Food has an effect upon our bodies and upon our minds. So it is much more important than we generally think. Or we might even go so far as to say that it isn't much use our calling ourselves Buddhists, or anything else of that nature, and continuing in the same old way so far as food is concerned, continuing maybe with our same old roast beef and two veg for dinner. One of the things that we have to learn, one of the things that we have to appreciate when we take up Buddhism, is that it isn't enough to study intellectually, to learn the philosophy. We have to start changing each and every aspect of our lives. And food, after all, is one of those really basic things; you can hardly have anything more basic than food, apart from air perhaps. So certainly some change when one becomes a Buddhist or starts following the spiritual path, or the path of Higher Evolution, some change, an important and radical change, has to be made here.

Then work, what about work? People often ask me about this and I'm afraid my advice is short and simple and to the point, and I say, "So far as work is concerned, do as little as possible." By work of course, one means wage-earning work, work simply for the sake of money because you need money on which to live under the present economy. So work as little as possible unless of course one's work is also one's true vocation. If that is the case there need be no limitation whatever. But this sort of condition, one's work being one's vocation, is very rare under modern conditions. And in either case, whether it's work for the sake of money, wage-slavery, or whether it is vocational work, the work should be in accordance with what we call Perfect Livelihood. It shouldn't harm, shouldn't exploit others, and it should not degrade or narrow or mechanicalise oneself. And of course the spare time that one gains if one does manage to work only part of the time, should be used for creative activities, for meditation, study and the cultivation and development of real human relationships.

Thirdly and lastly, marriage. 'Marriage' I am afraid is another of those dreadful words I prefer to avoid, because it raises all sorts of misconceptions in people's minds. Buddhist conception of marriage, we may say, so far as it has a conception at all, is entirely different from the Western

Christian conception. To begin with, in Buddhism marriage is not regarded as a religious sacrament. It is not regarded, either, as something legally binding and enforceable in a court of law. In a Buddhist context we may say marriage is primarily a human relationship, a relationship between two people, a relationship which is known to and accepted by the family, friends and the social circle. And in Buddhist countries we may say that there has never been any rigid or universal pattern of marriage relationship. In the Buddhist countries of the East we find monogamy, we find polygamy and we also find polyandry. And these are all permitted and allowed. The only criterion which is taken into consideration is the quality of the human relationship involved. And, of course, I need hardly say that in all the Buddhist countries under all these systems divorce is permitted.

3. From Uprightness let us move on to Patience. Patience covers a number of things, a number of virtues, not just patience but forbearance. It includes also such things as gentleness, docility, even we may say humility, as well as love, tolerance and receptivity. On the negative side, patience consists in the absence of anger, and of all desire for retaliation and revenge. So this is patience, one of the most beautiful of the Buddhist virtues.

4. Fourthly Vigour, which is customarily defined as 'energy in pursuit of the good'; and 'the good' here means Enlightenment for the sake of all sentient beings. I've often said, and this is one of the subjects we have been concerned with very much lately, that energy, the problem of energy, is the central problem of the spiritual life, especially the problem of emotional energy. We need lots of energy for the spiritual life. It is not something that you can do in a state of half-exertion, or if you're half-asleep or half-dead. The spiritual life demands all one's energies. But most people haven't got any energy, they are weak, or they say that they are weak, they are overcome by lassitude, they're dull, they're sluggish, energy isn't available. So why is the energy not available?

Where has the energy gone? What's happened to the energy? The energy isn't there, isn't available because it's either blocked, or it's wasted or it's too coarse. We've gone into all this in some detail in earlier lectures and I'm not going to repeat all that material. But this situation means that we have to learn to unblock our blocked energy, conserve our wasted energy and refine our too coarse energy. And there are various ways of doing this: through awareness, by engaging in creative work, communication exercises, meditation, enjoyment of the Fine Arts, faith and devotion, and so on. In this way energy can be freed, energy can be released, freed and made available for the spiritual life. And I need hardly say that according to the Mahayana tradition, the Bodhisattva himself is the embodiment of energy. His emotional energy, his energy in general, is wholly and totally available to him for the purposes of his spiritual career; and we might say that in his case there is a smooth, an uninterrupted, a harmonious flow of energy, that he himself is that flow of energy in the direction of Enlightenment. He does much, he does many things, he accomplishes a great deal, but there is no question of haste, no question of strain, no question of tension of any kind.

5. Fifthly, Meditation. This word covers three things, three levels. That is to say:

(i) concentration, unification of energies;

(ii) meditation proper, ascent into higher stages of consciousness, of super-consciousness.

(iii) contemplation or the adverting of the mind to the contemplation of Reality.

We dealt with all this last week and so I'm not going to repeat anything more about meditation at present.

6. Sixthly and lastly, Wisdom. Wisdom means, in the Buddhist context, intuition, transcendental intuition if you like, of the Unconditioned, of Reality. It means seeing Reality face to face, not thinking about Reality, not entertaining ideas about it, but seeing it directly face to face and experiencing it for oneself. This is Wisdom, and there are many formulations. One of the most popular is in terms of what we call The Five Knowledges. The Five Knowledges being the five principal aspects or modes of Wisdom, just like the five facets of a jewel. So let's take a look at each of these in turn.

(i) First of all, what is known as the Knowledge of the Dharmadhatu. This is the basic knowledge, this is Wisdom, intuition of Reality, *per se*; the other four are only partial, limited aspects. The word *Dharma* here means Reality and the word *Dhatu* means a sphere or a realm or a field. So *Dharmadhatu* means the Universe as the sphere of manifestation of Reality; or gravitational field of Reality; or it means, we may say, the whole Universe as pervaded by Reality, as the space is pervaded by the sun's beams. And 'Knowledge of the Dharmadhatu' means knowledge of the whole cosmos, knowledge of the whole universe as pervaded by, as non-different from, ultimately, the Unconditioned Reality itself. And this knowledge, the Knowledge of the Dharmadhatu is symbolised by the figure of VAIROCANA, the Illuminator, the White Buddha, the Buddha of the Centre.

(ii) Next we have the Mirror-like Knowledge, so called because the Enlightened Mind sees everything. Nothing is hidden from the Enlightened Mind, there's nothing it fails to see. It looks through, pierces through all veils. It understands the true nature of everything and it sees everything in its ultimate depth, its ultimate reality. And it sees everything with complete objectivity, with complete impartiality. Mirror-like knowledge reflects all objects just like a mirror reflects, without distortion, whatever is placed in front of it. The mirror reflects the objects but it isn't touched, it isn't tainted, by the objects it reflects; they don't stick to it. And it's the same with the Mirror-like Wisdom. It reflects all things, sees all things, knows all things, understands all things, pierces and penetrates all things, but it is not touched, it's not affected, it doesn't stick, they don't stick to it. It's perfectly free, perfectly independent; there's no subjective reaction. There's complete, pure, perfect objectivity. The mirror-like wisdom just reflects the whole of existence, nothing but reflects. And this Mirror-like Wisdom is symbolised by AKSHOBYA, the Imperturbable One, the One who cannot be moved, the Dark-Blue Buddha, the Buddha of the Eastern quarter.

(iii) And then again, Knowledge of Equality or Sameness. The Enlightened Mind sees everything with complete objectivity. There's no reaction. It sees everything in the same way, sees the same Reality in everything. And on this account, we may say, it has the same attitude towards all, it's even-minded towards all, has the same love towards all, the same compassion towards all. It shines impartially just like the sun's rays, without any differentiation, any distinction. Everything is equal for it, everything is the same for it, everything is one for it. And this knowledge, the Knowledge of Equality, of Sameness, of One-ness, is symbolised by RATNASAMBHAVA, the Jewel-born Buddha, the Yellow Buddha, the Buddha of the South.

(iv) After this comes the All-distinguishing Knowledge. The mirror reflects everything equally. At the same time the mirror does not confuse or blur the distinctive features of things. It reflects a rose as a rose, a tree as a tree, a man as a man, a mountain as a mountain. It doesn't merge and blur them all together and this is very important. It means that the Enlightened Mind does not only see things in their unity, in their one-ness, it sees them also in their diversity and it sees them in both these ways together: sees them as all one, sees them as all different; sees their unity, sees their common essence, but sees them at the same time in all their unique, unrepeatable, ineffable individuality. For this reason, philosophically speaking, Buddhism is neither monistic⁽³⁾ nor pluralistic⁽⁴⁾, but both and more than both. In Buddhism, in Buddhist philosophy, unity does not obliterate difference, and difference does not obscure unity. Both are there together, unity and difference, difference and unity. Unity in difference, difference in unity. And this All-distinguishing Knowledge is symbolised by AMITABHA, the Buddha of Infinite Light, the Red Buddha, the Buddha of the West.

(v) Lastly, the All-performing Knowledge. The Enlightened Mind devotes itself to the welfare of all living beings. It helps living beings in whatsoever way it can. It devises various what are called skilful means, ways of helping, means, methods of working; but it does all this naturally and spontaneously. It doesn't have to think things out, it just functions purely, simply, freely, spontaneously, and everything gets done. In a sense, it does nothing. In another sense, it does everything. And this All-performing Knowledge is symbolised by AMOGHASIDDHI, the

Infallible Success, the Green Buddha, the Buddha of the North.

So these are the Five Knowledges exhibiting five different aspects of Wisdom.

And having described Wisdom, we have now described all the Six Perfections, all the Six Transcendental Virtues. These are arranged, as we've pointed out before, in three pairs. First of all, GIVING and UPRIGHTNESS. These represent, between them, the Altruistic and the Individualistic aspects of the spiritual life. Then the second pair, PATIENCE and VIGOUR. These represent the feminine and the masculine approaches to the spiritual life. And lastly, MEDITATION and WISDOM. These are the internal and external dimensions, as it were, of the Enlightened Mind. And all these pairs of opposites: individualistic and altruistic, 'feminine' and 'masculine', external and internal, all these pairs of opposites the Bodhisattva synthesises and balances in his own Enlightened or well-nigh Enlightened mind. In his life, therefore, in his spiritual life there is no one-sidedness.

This then we may say, in brief, very much in brief, is the Bodhisattva Ideal. The Ideal of attaining Enlightenment not for one's own sake only but for the sake, for the benefit of all sentient beings. And as I have already said, this Bodhisattva Ideal, this Ideal of attaining Enlightenment for the benefit of all, is of the very essence of the Mahayana form of Buddhism. The Bodhisattva Ideal, we may say even, is the finest flower of Buddhist spirituality and the most powerful and emphatic statement of the theme of the Higher Evolution.

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Now having considered the Bodhisattva Ideal, it's time now to explore the Cosmic Significance of the Bodhisattva Ideal. And this is the second main section into which our subject for tonight falls.

First of all, what does one mean by 'cosmic'? One speaks of cosmic significance but what is 'cosmic'? Cosmic is universal, pertaining to the cosmos or the universe as a whole, not just to one part of it, not just to one portion of it. Cosmic means not limited to any one period of history, not even limited to this Earth. Therefore we see, therefore we find that the Bodhisattva Ideal, according to the Mahayana sources, the Mahayana sutras, is unlimited in time and unlimited in space. We've seen that the Bodhisattva in the course of his spiritual career practises six perfections, practises six transcendental virtues: giving or generosity, uprightness, patience, vigour, meditation, and wisdom. And practising these six he passes through ten stages of spiritual progress, ten stages of spiritual advancement.

In the first of these ten stages, the Bodhichitta, the Will to Enlightenment, arises, manifests in or through him. In the eighth stage, the Bodhisattva becomes irreversible; that is to say he cannot fall back from the attainment of Supreme Enlightenment. There's no danger of him ever regressing to the comparatively lower ideal of Enlightenment for himself alone. And then in the tenth and last stage, the Bodhisattva attains Supreme Enlightenment itself, Supreme Buddhahood itself, for the sake of all sentient beings. Now all this, the practice of the six perfections, the practice of the six transcendental virtues, the arising of the Bodhichitta, attainment of irreversibility, attainment of Supreme Enlightenment, Supreme Buddhahood, passage through all ten *bhumis*, all ten stages of spiritual progress, all this takes an immensely long period of time. And according to the tradition, the period of time, the length of time that it takes is absolutely unthinkable, is absolutely awe-inspiring. We're told that it takes not less than three *kalpas*, or three aeons. A *kalpa*, an aeon, is a period of millions of years. There is no precise figure given but it is very, very lengthy indeed. And during this period, the Bodhisattva, practising the perfections, passing through the stages of spiritual progress, passes also through many different births, many different lives, in many different spheres, many different worlds, many different planes. But all the time he holds fast, as though to a golden thread, to the Will to Enlightenment.

We've also seen that the Bodhisattva dedicates himself to the attainment of Enlightenment for the sake of all sentient beings. And this expression, 'all sentient beings', reverberates again and again

through the entire Mahayana sutra. It is taken up like a great chorus, we may say, in all the Mahayana sutras, 'for the sake of all sentient beings'. And this expression is meant quite literally. By 'all sentient beings' one means not just beings living on this Earth, on this particular plane of conditioned existence. By 'all sentient beings' one means the beings of all worlds, all planes, all spheres whatsoever. We see, we find the same sort of thing in a way in our practice of the development of universal loving-kindness, metta-bhavana or, as I sometimes prefer to call it, the positive emotional attitude. And this incidentally is often practised to help induce the arising of the Will to Enlightenment. Those of you who have done it will recollect that one starts by practising first of all, or developing first of all, love towards oneself, then towards a near and dear friend, then towards a neutral person, then an enemy, and then the love, then the metta, goes out in ever-widening circles first of all to all the people in the room where you are practising, all the people in the locality, in the city, the country, all the continents one by one, then the beings of the whole Earth, all human beings, animals and so on, and then finally all living beings whatsoever in all the directions of space. In other words, not just the beings of this earth but beings inhabiting other planets, other worlds, even we may say other galactic systems. It goes as far, as wide, as universally as this. And we may say that this expression, 'all sentient beings', occurring so often in the context not only of the Bodhisattva Ideal but of the Mahayana generally, this expression 'all sentient beings' as well as the loving-kindness practice itself, makes clear three things, and these three things are related, are highly relevant to the Cosmic Significance of the Bodhisattva Ideal.

First of all, they make it clear that Buddhism teaches plurality of worlds, not just one world but an infinity of worlds. It teaches also that some of these worlds, at least, are inhabited by other intelligent beings. And it teaches, too, that these worlds and these other intelligent beings are not outside the scope of Buddhism, of the way to Enlightenment, either theoretically or practically.

In this connection, I recollect that some years ago there arose a dispute among some German Catholic theologians. You probably know that German Catholic theologians are generally in the forefront of Catholic theological thinking and the question which arose was this: Suppose, as a result of the discoveries of modern science, we find that other worlds are inhabited. Suppose we find intelligent beings on Mars or on Venus or even on the Moon. Then the question which arises, they said, is: Does the Christian scheme of redemption apply to those beings? Did Christ die for them? Or did he die only for the inhabitants of this Earth? This was a question much discussed and much canvassed among these German Catholic theologians some years ago. And opinion was, as it usually is in theological circles, divided. Some said: No, Christ's salvation, Christ's saving death, is for the benefit of the beings of this Earth only. Others said: No, it's for the benefit of all sentient beings, as we would say, whatsoever. So there was a division.

But we may say that there is no such division in Buddhism. So far as Buddhism is concerned, the question was settled long ago, settled in fact from the very beginning. And it is on this account partly that we say Buddhism is a universal Teaching in the fullest sense, a Teaching applicable to all intelligent beings at any time, whether now or 10 million years ago or 10 million years hence; in any part of the universe in this galactic system or in any other imaginable galactic system, is applicable at all times and in all places, everywhere. And this fact is brought out very clearly, not to say strongly, in some of the Mahayana sutras, especially we may say the *Saddharma-pundarika sutra* or White Lotus of the True Teaching, often called simply the Lotus Sutra. The Lotus Sutra we may say, quite definitely, is the grandest of all the Mahayana sutras. Others may be more profound in their teaching, more subtle, but the *Saddharma-pundarika*, the Lotus Sutra is certainly the grandest, the most awe-inspiring, the most colourful, the most impressive, the most dramatic; we might even go so far as to say that it is perhaps the grandest of all the spiritual documents of mankind. But we've no time this evening to say very much about it. I will just refer to a few passages relevant to our present theme.

But first of all, let me quote (W. E.) Soothill, one of the translators of the Lotus Sutra, on the Lotus Sutra as a whole. Soothill says:

From the first chapter we find the Lotus Sutra to be unique in the world of religious literature, [he was, by the way, a Christian missionary in China] a magnificent apocalyptic⁽⁵⁾. It presents a spiritual drama of the highest order, with the universe as its stage, eternity as its period, and

Buddhas, gods, men, devils, as the dramatis personae. From the most distant worlds and from past aeons, the eternal Buddhas throng the stage to hear the mighty Buddha proclaim his ancient and eternal Truth. Bodhisattvas flock to his feet, gods from the heavens, men from all quarters of the Earth, the tortured from the deepest hells, the demons themselves crowd to hear the tones of the Glorious One.

So this is how Soothill describes the Lotus Sutra as a whole. The scene of the Sutra, the venue of the Sutra is the Vulture Peak, that great rocky crag overlooking Rajagrha. I've stood there myself in the evening time, looking out over the valley and certainly a very peaceful and a very solitary, a very sublime spot it still is. And it was the scene, the venue of many discourses given by the Buddha, of many Teachings given to his more intimate disciples. But in the Lotus Sutra it isn't just a locality, it isn't just an earthly mountain, it isn't just a rocky crag. In the Lotus Sutra it represents, it symbolises the very summit of existence, the summit of Conditioned Existence itself. And as the Sutra opens, as it unfolds, we see the Buddha surrounded by twelve thousand Arahants, twelve thousand saints who have realised Nirvana for their own sake alone; by eighty thousand Bodhisattvas, besides tens of thousands of gods and other non-human beings with their followers. And on this occasion, seated on that spiritual Vulture's Peak, surrounded by this great congregation, the Buddha, Shakyamuni Buddha delivers a discourse. We're given the name of the discourse - I'm not going to mention it now.

And at the conclusion of that discourse, as so often happens in a Mahayana sutra, we're told that flowers rained down from the heavens and the whole universe shook. And then the Buddha, we are further told, entered into a very deep meditation. His eyes remained closed, the smile almost faded from his lips, and for a long, long time he remained immersed in deep meditation. And as he was in that state of deep, profound meditation, a ray of white light issued from between his eyebrows and that ray of white light, we are told, lit up the entire universe, lit up the whole of Conditioned Existence, revealing in the infinitude of space in all directions innumerable world systems. And in each of these world systems so revealed by this white light shining from the Buddha's forehead, was seen a Buddha teaching the Dharma to his disciples, and a Bodhisattva sacrificing life, sacrificing limbs, for the sake of Supreme Enlightenment, of Supreme Buddhahood. And this great marvel, this great apocalyptic vision having taken place, the Buddha then reveals to the disciples, to the great assembly a higher teaching, a more esoteric teaching, a profounder teaching than any ever given before. And what was the reaction? Some of the disciples were able to accept it but others were not. And those who were unable to accept this further teaching, this higher, this more esoteric teaching, simply walked out. A very significant episode. The others, those who remained, who could receive the teaching, they received from the Buddha what is called a prediction. (I've not mentioned this topic before as far as I recollect, in any of the previous courses.) A prediction follows upon the Bodhisattva's making of his vow, either in the form of the four Great Vows, or any other form. And the Bodhisattva's Vow is made in the presence of a living Buddha. And this Buddha in whose presence the Bodhisattva has made his vow, then tells that particular Bodhisattva what his name will be when he too becomes a Buddha, what the name of his Buddha-field will be, and what his aeon or his kalpa will be called. And on this particular occasion, in this particular assembly, the one at which the Lotus Sutra was preached, Sariputra for example, among others, is told that he will become a Buddha known as Lotus Radiance, that his Buddha-field will be called The Pure, and that his aeon will be called the Great Jewel-adorned Aeon.

Now great as the marvels that have taken place were, there are greater revelations in the Lotus Sutra still to come. A third of the way through the Sutra there occurs the most impressively dramatic scene of the whole marvellous pageant of the Lotus Sutra. Suddenly there appears a great stupa, a stupa being a sort of reliquary in which the relics of the Buddha are usually kept, and this great stupa suddenly springs up out of the earth and it towers way up into the sky, like a great mountain. And it was made, we are told, of the seven precious things: gold, silver, lapis lazuli, crystal, and so on. Not only that, it was magnificently adorned, and from it came light, came fragrance, came music, and these filled the entire earth. And while the disciples were still marvelling, still looking at this wonderful, incredible stupa that had appeared in their midst, from the stupa there came forth a mighty voice. And this mighty voice praises Shakyamuni Buddha for preaching the Lotus Sutra, and further bears witness to the truth of what he has said. So you can

imagine the scene, you can imagine the astonishment, even the consternation of the disciples, advanced though they were, when all this happened.

And then after they'd got over the shock, as it were, of this great revelation, one of the disciples just inquires what it all means. And the Buddha, Shakyamuni Buddha, then explains that the Stupa, the reliquary, contains the intact body of an ancient Buddha called Abundant Treasures. And he further says that this Abundant Treasures lived millions of years ago, and living millions of years ago he made a great vow, and his vow was that after his *parinirvana* he would appear whenever and wherever the Lotus Sutra was taught and would bear witness to the truth of its Teaching. So the disciples gathered together, the congregation, are very interested to hear this and they are naturally desirous of seeing the Buddha Abundant Treasures, whose intact body is shut up within the Stupa, within the reliquary. But it seems that the Buddha Abundant Treasures has yet another vow: apparently he has a vow to the effect that if a Buddha, in whose presence the Stupa appears, wishes to show the Buddha Abundant Treasures to his disciples, a certain condition must first be fulfilled. And that condition is that the Buddha who wishes to show Abundant Treasures to his disciples must cause all the Buddhas who have emanated from him and who are preaching the Dharma throughout the universe, to return and assemble in one place.

So this condition Shakyamuni Buddha, our Buddha as we usually say, fulfils. He emits another ray of light from his forehead and this ray of light illuminates innumerable pure Buddha-fields in the ten directions of space, revealing all the Buddhas there. And all these Buddhas, in these pure Buddha-fields, in all the directions of space, realise the significance of the message, the summons. They all tell their own Bodhisattvas that they must go now to the Saha-world. The Saha-world is our world, in the Mahayana sutras. *Saha* means 'world of endurance', 'world of suffering', because our world amongst all the worlds, according to the Mahayana sutras, is a particularly unpleasant world and one is not very fortunate in being born here at all. So it's called the Saha-world. So these Buddhas in these other Pure Buddha-worlds (ours is an impure Buddha-world, by the way) tell their Bodhisattvas that they must all go to the Saha-world, to our world. And the Saha-world is then purified, we are told, for their reception. The Earth, we are told, is transformed into a pure blue radiance like that of lapis lazuli, and it becomes adorned not just with ordinary trees but with jewel trees, trees made entirely of jewels, all bright and shining, and it is marked off neatly in squares with beautiful golden cords. And gods and men we are told, other than those of the congregation, are transferred elsewhere, whatever that may mean. And villages, towns, mountains, rivers and forests just disappear; and the earth smokes, we are told, with incense. And it is strewn with heavenly flowers. When this process of purification has taken place, five hundred Buddhas arrive from these distant Pure Buddha-worlds or Buddha-fields, each attended by a great Bodhisattva. They take their seats on magnificent lion thrones under jewel-trees. But once they have come, once these five hundred have arrived, each with an attendant Bodhisattva, the available space is found to be exhausted and the Buddhas have hardly begun to arrive. So what is Shakyamuni Buddha to do? Well we are told he therefore purifies and transforms untold millions of worlds in the eight directions of space. And in this way all the incoming Buddhas are accommodated. This having been done, when they've all assembled, and chanted and thrown flowers, all the hundreds of thousands of them, Shakyamuni Buddha, we are told, ascends into the sky, ascends as high as the door of that Stupa, within which is seated the intact body of the Buddha Abundant Treasures. And then we are told, with a sound like ten thousand thunders, he draws the bolt of the door and he opens the door of the Stupa. And inside there is seen the intact body of the ancient Buddha Abundant Treasures and the whole congregation then scatters flowers on the two Buddhas. And Shakyamuni Buddha takes his seat beside the Buddha Abundant Treasures.

Now the congregation has been left down below. There's that great Stupa, towering in the sky, and there is the Buddha Abundant Treasures seated in it, beside him is seated Shakyamuni Buddha; but the congregation is right down below. So the congregation desires, we are told, to be raised to the level of those two Buddhas. So Shakyamuni Buddha, exerting his supra-normal power, receives the whole assembly into the sky. At the same time asking them, in a loud voice, a very important question. But I'm afraid we'll have to leave them there. We've already spent more time on the Lotus Sutra than our present purpose really requires. I know it is difficult for us to tear ourselves away from the Sutra, but we'll have to find out what that question was some other time.

But I hope that enough has been said, that enough passages have been cited, to make it clear that the activities of the Bodhisattvas, like those of the Buddhas, are not confined to this world. Incidentally, some of you might have been rather surprised by these extracts, these episodes from the Lotus Sutra. They may not be quite like what you've been led to expect a Buddhist scripture to be. You might have been expecting something rather abstruse and philosophical and conceptual, not to say analytical and academic. But as the Lotus Sutra seems to read, judging by the portions I've extracted from it, more like science fiction; Transcendental science fiction, of course.

This reminds me of a little episode that occurred some years ago when I was in Bombay. I was staying in Bombay with a Polish friend of mine who happened to be a follower of J. Krishnamurti⁽⁶⁾. One day he gave me, when I was staying with him, a book to read and this was a book called "Star Maker" by Olaf Stapledon. It's a comparatively early but very good example indeed, of science fiction. And my friend said to me, "You will like this very much. It's just like a Mahayana Sutra." And indeed when I read it I found that that was quite a fair description of it. Of course, there is a great deal of difference between the Mahayana Sutras and even the best of science fiction because the former have a very definite spiritual, not to say transcendental, content. But there are a number of important resemblances too, because neither the Mahayana Sutras generally nor science fiction is confined to this particular planet, this particular Earth. Both of them tend to show consciousness, Man himself as ranging up and down time, and throughout space, from one side as it were to the other. And this can be a very liberating experience even if only imaginatively realised. Some months ago, again another friend happened to lend me a book called "The City and the Stars", and this begins I was very interested to find, one million years ahead in the future. Again, not unlike a Mahayana Sutra.

And in this connection, I would like to refer to some of the modern myths. Nowadays one hears quite a lot about unidentified flying objects. Some people believe that they originate from Venus or even more distant parts of the universe, that they are sent or even occupied by, guided by, beings more highly evolved than ourselves. One also finds a renewed interest in things like Atlantis and the Lost Continent of Muru. And all these things, all these modern myths have the same general significance. It is, we may say, a cosmic significance. They represent the extrapolation, as we may call it, of consciousness beyond the usual frontiers, into the universe at large.

But let's get back to our main subject. The Bodhisattva not only ranges from world to world, from one universe to another, but from plane to plane. And this is borne out by one particular version of the Tibetan Wheel of Life. The Wheel of Life contains, as you know, four concentric circles. The third circle is divided into five or six segments and these five or six segments represent the five or the six planes of Conditioned Existence into which all impure world systems are divided. There's the plane, or the sphere or the world, of the gods; then of the titans, those great, powerful beings who are warring with the gods; then of animals; then of beings in states of suffering; then hungry ghosts; and finally humans. Some representations, some paintings of the Wheel of Life show the Bodhisattva Avalokitesvara appearing in each of these planes. Avalokitesvara is, of course, in a way the Bodhisattva *par excellence*. He is the embodiment of compassion, absolute compassion, and he appears amongst the beings of each plane, each world, in a Buddha-form appropriate to their particular needs.

Among the gods, he appears as a White Buddha and he plays the lute or a sort of guitar, judging by the illustrations; and he plays the melody of impermanence because the gods are very long-lived, they have a very happy life, they forget that one day it will come to an end. So they have to be reminded of the impermanence of things, then they'll start thinking about the Dharma. So amongst them, the Bodhisattva Avalokitesvara, the Bodhisattva of Compassion, appears as a White Buddha playing on a guitar. A rather unconventional image of the Buddha you may say, but again [it is] according to the Mahayana Sutras and the Tibetan Wheel of Life.

Then amongst the titans, those great war-like beings who are fighting with the gods for the possession of the Tree of Life, amongst them Avalokitesvara appears as the Green Buddha and he brandishes a flaming sword of knowledge. He is, as it were, saying to the asuras, the titans: "All right, you are fighting, you are trying to defeat the gods, you are very war-like. Well that's fine but why don't you fight in the proper way? Why don't you try to gain true victory and you'll get that

only through knowledge". So he brandishes amongst them the flaming sword of spiritual knowledge which points the way to true spiritual victory, rather in the spirit of the Dhammapada where the Buddha says, "Though one may conquer a thousand men in battle a thousand times, yet he who conquers himself has the more glorious victory." So, as the Green Buddha brandishing this flaming sword of knowledge, Avalokitesvara is as it were saying to all these warring multitudes, these giants, these titans, even perhaps to the great nations of today, that one doesn't gain victory by conquering others. One gains a victory by conquering oneself. That is the true spiritual victory.

Then, among animals the Bodhisattva Avalokitesvara appears as a Blue Buddha and he shows to the animals a book. And this of course represents knowledge, understanding, culture, everything which distinguishes the human from the animal, and the animal from the human. And he is showing this, as it were, not only to animals but to animal-like human beings, indicating the next stage, the next level of evolution, the cultural leading on then to the spiritual.

Fourthly, Avalokitesvara appears amongst the beings in states of suffering, states of torment. Amongst them he appears as a Smoke-coloured Buddha, and he showers upon them ambrosia, nectar, which cools, which alleviates their suffering. Because when people are suffering, when they are tormented, it's no use preaching to them. It's no use trying to give them a Teaching. What you must do, the only thing you can do, is to alleviate their suffering. So when the Bodhisattva Avalokitesvara appears amongst the beings in states of suffering, as a Smoke-coloured Buddha, he simply showers them with ambrosia, with nectar, he alleviates their suffering.

Then, fifthly, he appears among the hungry ghosts, and among them he appears as the Red Buddha, and as they are hungry he regales them with food and drink. Swami Vivekananda⁽⁷⁾ once said, "It's a sin to preach religion to a starving man". Give him something to eat and drink first, and then give him the gift of the Dharma.

Sixthly, Avalokitesvara, the Bodhisattva of Compassion, appears among men as the Yellow Buddha, and he appears as a religious mendicant. He carries the staff, he carries the begging bowl of the monk. And this symbolises the spiritual life, symbolises the Higher Evolution which only human beings are capable of following in its entirety.

Now I could mention also in this connection another Bodhisattva, not only Avalokitesvara. I could also mention the Bodhisattva Kshitigarbha who is one of the most popular Bodhisattvas in the Far East. His name means 'earth-womb', and Kshitigarbha, 'earth-womb', is connected with the depths. In fact he is connected with Hell, and is concerned with rescuing those who seem, those who appear to be irrecoverably lost. He descends into the depths, we may say, descends into the dregs of sentient existence, goes right down into the depths even, one might say, of insanity, of despair, of torment, and so on, in order to alleviate, in order to remedy, even transform conditions there. And the figure of Kshitigarbha, this great Bodhisattva who descends into the depths of Hell, represents the transforming power of the Buddha's influence, the Bodhisattva's influence, even under the most difficult, under the most unfavourable circumstances and conditions.

But perhaps by this time I've said enough, enough to show that the Bodhisattva Ideal, as depicted in the Mahayana scriptures, is not limited by time, is not limited by space, enough to show that the Bodhisattva traverses all time, all space, even all worlds; that the Bodhisattva ascends into the highest heights, that he plumbs also the lowest depths. I have said enough, I hope, to show that the Bodhisattva Ideal is cosmic, that it is universal. More even than that, we are concerned still (as we mustn't forget) with the Higher Evolution of Man, and the Bodhisattva Ideal exemplifies as perhaps no other spiritual ideal exemplifies that evolution, the Higher Evolution of Man, and it exemplifies it in the clearest, the most unmistakable, the most glorious manner possible. In fact we may go so far as to say that the figure of the Bodhisattva, what we might even describe as the Bodhisattva archetype, embodies the whole idea, the whole meaning, the whole presence even, of the Higher Evolution. And even more than that: we may say that the Higher Evolution is not just a human ideal, not just an ideal for human life and conduct, though it includes that. The

Bodhisattva Ideal, the figure of the Bodhisattva we may say, is a sort of force, the work, the activity of which is not limited to this world or to this plane. The Bodhisattva, the figure of the Bodhisattva, symbolises a force which is at work throughout space, at work in all worlds. One can call it the Bodhichitta, the Will to Enlightenment; one can call it what one likes. But whatever one calls it, whether the Will to Enlightenment or anything else, one may be sure that it works, works from eternity to eternity. That it leads not only this world, not only the human race to higher and ever higher levels of being and organisation, but leads also the whole of existence. It is one may say the Unconditioned at work in the midst of the Conditioned, Light ever at work in the heart of Darkness. It is we may say the universalisation of the Higher Evolution. It is the Cosmic Significance of the Bodhisattva Ideal.

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NOTES - Tape 81
(mostly taken from Collins English Dictionary)

1. *Behold, I do not give lectures or a little charity, When I give I give myself.*
- Walt WHITMAN, 'Song of Myself', section 40, in *Leaves of Grass*.

2. EPISTEMOLOGY: the theory of knowledge, especially the critical study of its validity, methods, and scope.

3. MONISTIC: 1. *Philosophy*. The doctrine that reality consists of only one basic substance or element, such as mind or matter. Compare Dualism, Pluralism. 2. *Epistemology*. the theory that the object and datum of consciousness are identical. 3. the attempt to explain anything in terms of one principle only.

[DUALISM: 1. the state of being twofold or double. 2. *Philosophy*. the doctrine, as opposed to idealism and materialism, that reality consists of two basic principles, usually taken to be mind and matter.]

4. PLURALISM: *Philosophy*. the doctrine that reality consists of several basic substances or elements.

5. APOCALYPTIC: outstanding in revelation, prophecy or significance.

6. KRISHNAMURTI, Jiddu, 1895-1986. Born in southern India to Brahman parents. Adopted when young by Annie Besant, president of the Theosophical society, who believed him to be the future 'World Teacher', the reincarnation of great past religious leaders. He eventually refused this messianic role and systematically rejected all religions, believing that they were obstacles to the personal search for truth.

7. VIVEKANANDA, Swami. 1863-1902. Disciple of Ramakrishna and founder in 1897 of the 'Ramakrishna Mission', a monastic order.

[RAMAKRISHNA: 1836-1886. Hindu yogi and religious reformer; he encouraged each individual to follow his own path to its end. He preached the equal value of all religions as different paths to God.]

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