

Lecture 101: The Jewel in the Lotus

Those of you who were here last week will remember that on that occasion we dealt with something found all over the Buddhist world in the East, something which we find everywhere as part and parcel of the landscape, the scenery, of every single Buddhist country, that is, we dealt with the Stupa. Now this week we're dealing with something which is not found all over the Buddhist world, but which is found mainly in one part of the Buddhist world, a very important part, a very well-known part, found in Tibet. Now we've only to look at the map to see that Tibet is a truly enormous country. I wasn't myself even quite sure exactly how big Tibet is, so I had a look at the map, and by comparing I discovered rather to my astonishment that Tibet, even inner Tibet, is considerably bigger than France and Spain put together. So we are dealing with a very large area, a very big part of the Buddhist world indeed. But though so big, though so extensive, Tibet is very thinly populated indeed. Until very recently we were rather in the dark as to the exact number of Tibetan people, but it would seem now that there are between two and three million people in Tibet, scattered so thinly over that vast area. And in Tibet even now there are hardly any cities, only a few settlements that we would regard as being more of the nature of towns: Lhasa, Shigatze, Gyantze, hardly more than that. And there aren't even very many villages in Tibet. Lots of people, especially in the East and in the North, still lead a nomadic existence. They roam from place to place, with their horses, with their felt tents, with their flocks and with their herds, and I'm sorry to say that quite a lot of these nomads, though Buddhists, live by robbery.

And I remember in this connection a little story which was told me by one of my incarnate Lama friends in Kalimpong. And he was saying that he was once in a caravan travelling from Lhasa to the borders of China, and the caravan belonged to a very important incarnate Lama, and there were scores of people in this caravan, and a great deal of wealth of various kinds, in various forms: money, bricks of tea, rolls of silk, and so on. Now apparently in Tibet it is the custom that when the caravan belongs to an important incarnate Lama the leading horse in the caravan has a very special decoration, so that everyone can recognize that this is the caravan of an incarnate Lama and show it due respect. But on this particular occasion people in charge of the caravan thought that the times are very troubled. We're going through areas that are perhaps not very friendly to Buddhism, so let us not put that usual insignia on the leading horse. Let us go, as it were, incognito. So that's what they did. They covered hundreds, almost thousands, of miles and I was told that they were passing through a narrow mountain defile and they were ambushed. A few shots rang out and several people dropped dead and within a matter of minutes the robbers were swarming all over the caravan and pillaging it. Now they hadn't been pillaging very long when they discovered whose caravan it was - it was such-and-such an important incarnate Lama's. So when they discovered that, they were horrified and they said: 'But where's his insignia on the leading horse? Had we known that it belonged to an incarnate Lama we would not have touched the caravan.' So the robber chief called all his men together and he called all the people in the caravan together and he gave back everything that had been pillaged. And he said: I have one apology to make. I'm only sorry I cannot restore to life the people who have been shot. And with those words he went away, because apparently though robbers, they were all pious Buddhists.

Now naturally when one travels under circumstances of that sort you can't help being a little apprehensive, when you go for hundreds of miles and you don't meet anybody, and you see enormous rocks behind which someone might be hiding with a gun to shoot you. So as you come near the village, or as you think you're coming near a village, you feel very relieved and very pleased. And before you reach the village, before you come even to the environs of the village, you usually see signs of one kind or another that you are approaching now human habitations. You may see, for instance, a chorten, that is to say a Tibetan-style Stupa, built up of great rough stones and perhaps whitewashed and painted. But though stupas, though chortens, are quite common all over Tibet. When you approach, or begin to approach, a village, you're much more likely to see something else, something other than the Stupa, other than the chorten, at least at first. You're much more likely to see, as you go along the track, or what eventually becomes a track, you're much more likely to see on your righthand side a long and rather low stone wall composed for the most part of very large undressed stones just placed one on top of another, not held together with any cement or mortar. And along this wall, running now on your righthand side, on this wall there will be painted some letters, there will be some writing, and the letters will be very very big, as tall perhaps as you are if the wall is high enough. And these letters will be painted in or of a number of different colours. There'll be a yellow letter, or part of a letter, a red letter, a blue letter, a green letter. And if you know Tibetan, if you can read the Tibetan script, you'll notice that they spell out a word or a phrase, and they spell out invariably the phrase: OM MANI PADME

HUM. OM the Jewel in the Lotus HUM. And you find this mani wall, as it is called, at the approach to every village, and almost to every human habitation, in Tibet, all over the country - at least that was the situation in the old days before the Chinese invasion. What the situation is like now, we don't know. It may well be that in many cases they've obliterated the OM MANI PADME HUM and have written instead, in Tibetan: Long live Chairman Mao. That's probably likely in at least some cases.

But in the old days, before they'd heard even of Chairman Mao, not only did they paint and engrave and carve the OM MANI PADME HUM on these long stone walls, but they printed OM MANI PADME HUM from wooden blocks thousands of times on long strips of paper and they wound these strips of paper round and round, they put them into cylinders, into what we call in the West prayer wheels, but what they themselves have always called mani wheels. And this same mantra, the OM MANI PADME HUM, was printed also from wooden blocks onto innumerable prayer flags, along with other mantras, and these prayer flags fluttered outside not only every monastery but every single habitation, fluttered from long bamboo poles all over Tibet. And not only that. Not only was this mantra as it were wafted by the breeze in Tibet, but it was recited every day by hundreds and thousands of people. I remember when I was living in Kalimpong and when I used to go out in the evening for an evening stroll along the road, I'd often meet Tibetan people, mainly elderly people, also having a little stroll, and they'd usually have in one hand their rosary, in the other their prayer wheel, and they'd be murmuring to themselves as they went along: OM MANI PADME HUM, OM MANI PADME HUM, and they'd have half an hour or an hour's walk, and they'd spend their time in this way reciting or chanting this mantra: OM MANI PADME HUM - the Jewel in the Lotus.

Now what does it mean? This is the question which obviously arises. What does the Jewel in the Lotus mean? Not only that, but why does it occur as the title of this evening's lecture? What is the connection between this famous phrase, this famous formula, this famous mantra, the Jewel in the Lotus, and the parables and the myths and the symbols of the White Lotus Sutra, with which we are concerned in this series? Now the first of these questions: What does it mean? - this is obviously the most important, but we shall be dealing with it just a little later on.

The phrase occurs as the title of the lecture this evening for a definite reason. It occurs because tonight we're dealing with another parable of the White Lotus Sutra, and the meaning of that parable happens to be identical with the meaning of this particular formula, this particular mantra, the Jewel in the Lotus. And there's another reason also for using this mantra as our title. As I've already said, OM MANI PADME HUM, or OM the Jewel in the Lotus HUM, is what is technically called a mantra. Now what is a mantra? There's quite a lot of misunderstanding on this subject. Sometimes mantra is translated as 'mystic phrase', but that doesn't help us very much. If we look at the traditional etymology of the term man-tra, we find that the word is split up into two parts: 'man', which means 'mind' and 'tra', which is a verb meaning 'to protect'. So the traditional etymology, what Guenther calls the symbolical etymology, not the scientific one, makes the word mean 'that which protects the mind', because the recitation of the mantra as it were protects, not only protects but helps, develops, matures, the mind of the person reciting it, meditating upon its meaning. Scientifically speaking, in strict philological terms, the word 'mantra' comes from a verb meaning 'to call', to call out, even, or to call down, or in other words to invoke.

So a mantra is a word or words used to call up or call down, or simply to call, to invoke, dormant spiritual forces within our own minds. And in a sense the mantras, not only OM MANI PADME HUM but other mantras too, are the names of these forces, the names given to these forces, these spiritual forces, dormant spiritual forces, within our own minds. And these forces in the Buddhist tradition are personified, not sort of artificially, but they naturally spontaneously assume what we may describe as these archetypal forms, forms of Buddhas, forms of Bodhisattvas, forms of guardian deities, forms of dakas and dakinis and so on. And there are many different mantras. Each of these archetypal forms of Buddhas and Bodhisattvas, each of these archetypal forms has its or his or her own mantra, every single one, every Buddha, every Bodhisattva, Dharmapala and so on. So we may say that the form, the shape if you like, in which the Buddha or the Bodhisattva appears, the figure, represents the shape symbol, as we may call it, of the spiritual energy concerned, and the mantra represents its corresponding sound symbol. Now all these forms, all these figures, Buddhas, Bodhisattvas, and so on, have a colour, a definite colour assigned to them by tradition - some for instance are brilliant red, others are deep blue, others are pure white, others are a beautiful green - and colour, as we know, is a form of light. So we

could call the shape symbol also a light symbol, and we could therefore speak not only of shape symbols and sound symbols but of light symbols and sound symbols.

Now this particular mantra with which we are concerned, OM MANIPADME HUM, is the mantra of the Bodhisattva Avalokitesvara, and Avalokitesvara is perhaps the most famous of all the great Bodhisattvas. He's worshipped, meditated upon, invoked, not only in Tibet but throughout the Mahayana Buddhist world, and he's even worshipped here and there in Theravada Ceylon. Now coming back to the White Lotus Sutra we discover that in this work there's one whole chapter devoted to the Bodhisattva Avalokitesvara, so we may even say that Avalokitesvara, the Bodhisattva of Compassion, is one of the symbols of the Mahayana in this sutra. So we shall be dealing tonight with this Avalokitesvara chapter, as well as with the parable that I have already mentioned, and it's for this reason that the title of the Jewel in the Lotus, which is Avalokitesvara's mantra, has been given to tonight's lecture. So we can see at once that our material this week is somewhat more varied, not to say miscellaneous, than usual, but it all ultimately centres on this one basic theme of the Jewel in the Lotus.

Now before we go into the significance of the symbols contained within this mantra and the general meaning of the mantra, I'm going to read this week's parable. It has no title in the original but perhaps we could call it the Parable of the Drunkard and the Jewel, and as I've already said the meaning of this parable is identical with that of the mantra itself. It occurs in Chapter Eight of the White Lotus Sutra.

Now how does this Chapter begin? - let's go into this a little bit first. First of all in this chapter the Buddha predicts to Supreme Enlightenment his disciple Purna. Now we find among the disciples of the Buddha, especially the chief disciples of whom there were sixty four, certain disciples were outstanding for particular qualities, not to say qualifications. And it so happens that Purna, among all the disciples of the Buddha, was the greatest speaker, the greatest preacher, and he was famous for his eloquence. So in this particular chapter the Buddha declares that Purna, in the distant future, will become a Buddha, and his name will be then Radiance of the Truth. Now you may remember that in previous chapters other disciples have been predicted to Supreme Enlightenment in the distant future, and different worlds as it were assigned to them, some of them unthinkably remote from our own. But in the case of Purna's prediction there's a difference. He too, the Buddha says, will become a Buddha in the distant future, but he'll not become a Buddha, he says, in some other world remote from ours. He will become a Buddha in this very world itself, millions and millions of years ahead. But it seems from what the Buddha goes on to say that in those days this world will be a very different place from what it is now; it will have undergone considerable changes, so much so it will have become what is called technically a pure world, a world free from certain imperfections, if you like an ideal world. It will have become very very much better, and this is surely a very encouraging thought - that if not in our lifetimes, at least in several millions of years time, this world will have become an almost perfect place.

Now the Indian Buddhist tradition has its own ideas as to what constitutes perfection so far as a world is concerned, and the sutra says in the first place the whole world will be perfectly flat. The Indians, including the Indian Buddhists, for some reason or other had an objection to any irregularity of the earth's surface. They apparently thought it was untidy and unaesthetic having all these mountains and hills all over the place breaking up the beautiful smooth contours of the horizon, so in those days, in millions of years' time, everything will have been worn flat, and I believe this is even geologically possible, that all the mountains will be made flat, all the hollows will be filled up, and the whole world will just be flat like the top of a table. But the sutra doesn't stop there. It says that the world will not only be made flat, but it'll be transformed, it'll hardly be recognizable. It won't be made up of things like earth and stone and so on. It'll be made up entirely of the seven precious things. In those distant days the whole earth will be made of gold and silver, crystal, etc., and there'll also be many buildings, and the buildings too, the sutra says, will also be made of the seven precious things, gold, silver, crystal and so on. And it also goes on to say, and this is a very interesting feature indeed, for some people at least, the sutra says that in those days divine vehicles will be stationed in the sky - this has a rather familiar ring! And not only that, but it says that the entire division between the world of men and the world of the gods will be abolished, will be broken down. There'll be no barrier between the ordinary human world and the world of the gods, or what we might call the archetypal realm. Human beings on the earth will look up and be able to see the gods, and the gods in their heavens looking down will be able to see human beings; there'll be this sort of regular contact and intercourse between them. And also the sutra goes on to say that in those days there will be in the world no places of suffering, not even the sound

of any torment or distress. And it also goes on to say that in those days in the world there will be no women. I hope the Women's Liberation isn't listening! But this of course doesn't mean that the world will contain men but not women. It really means that there'll be no distinction of sex among the beings of the earth in those days - in a sense, neither men nor women, just human beings. And beings, it says, will be born, or reborn, by what is called apparitional birth - none of the present rather crude arrangements. People will just sort of spring into existence, blossom naturally out of thin air, as it were, and having been born in that way it's not surprising that they'll lead, according to the sutra, a purely spiritual life. They'll have no gross physical bodies; they'll have what are called mental bodies, spiritual bodies, and they'll all be self-luminous, brilliant, and they'll be able to fly through the air at will. And because they don't have gross material bodies, they won't have any need for gross material food. The sutra says they'll feed on only two things - they'll feed on delight in the Buddha's teaching and delight in meditation. And of course in those days, as isn't surprising under those circumstances, there'll be many many Bodhisattvas, and not only that, but as a crowning touch, the sutra says, there'll be many stupas, all made of the seven precious things.

So having given this rather glowing account of Purna's Buddha-world, or rather this world at the time when Purna becomes a Buddha, the Buddha, that is to say Shakyamuni, then proceeds to predict five hundred other disciples to Perfect Buddhahood, and of course they're very delighted with his prediction and they feel as though they've suddenly gained possession of something wonderful, and they tell a story, they tell a parable; they tell the Parable of the Drunken Man and the Jewel, and it's this that I'm now going to read. And they say:

World-honoured One! It is as if some man goes to an intimate friend's house, gets drunk, and falls asleep. Meanwhile his friend, having to go forth on official duty, ties a priceless jewel within the man's garment as a present, and departs. The man, being drunk and asleep, knows nothing of this. On arising he travels onwards till he reaches some other country where, striving for food and clothing, he labours diligently, undergoes exceeding great hardship, and is content even if he can obtain but a little. Later his friend happens to meet him and speaks thus: 'Tut, sir! How is it you have come down to this merely for the sake of food and clothing? Wishing you to be in comfort and able to satisfy your five senses, I formerly, in such a year and month and on such a day, tied a priceless jewel within your garment. Now as of old it is present there, yet you in ignorance are slaving and worrying to keep yourself alive. How very stupid! Go you now and exchange that jewel for what you need and forever hereafter live as you will, free from poverty and shortage.'

So that's their story, that's their parable. Now I'm sure that the general meaning of this parable is fairly clear, but I want to comment on just a few points, and then deal directly with the symbolism of the jewel, the symbolism of the jewel not only in context of the parable but in the context of the Mahayana generally, and this will bring us to the Jewel in the Lotus. So first of all, what does the parable say, how does it start? The man goes to the house of his intimate friend and gets drunk and falls asleep. So two states are mentioned here, drunkenness and sleep, and both these states are symbols, the drunkenness and the sleep. They're symbols for lack of awareness, lack of any real, any true human self-consciousness.

And drunkenness and sleep are very often mentioned in Buddhist literature as symbols of this sort; in fact we may say that all over the world in different spiritual traditions the symbols of drunkenness and sleep are used in the same way. There's one tradition especially, a semi-Western tradition, in which this sort of symbolism, the symbolism of sleep or drunkenness, is especially prominent, and that is Gnosticism. Some of you may remember in lecture four we had occasion to refer to the Gnostic Hymn of the Pearl, and that related, that Hymn of the Pearl related, how the king's son goes down into Egypt, and he goes down in quest of the pearl. He goes disguised, but though he goes disguised the Egyptians suspect him and what do they do? They mix a drink for him and the hymn says they give him of their meat. So eating and drinking with them in this way, he forgets that he is the king's son, he forgets all about the pearl, all about his quest for the pearl, and he sinks into a deep, into a profound slumber.

So this state of drunkenness, about which the parable speaks, about which all these traditions speak, this state of slumber, this is, we may say, the ordinary, the usual, human state, the state in which people

are most of the time, much of the time, and it isn't really a human state at all, not a truly human state; we may say that it's more like an animal state of torpor, and of unawareness and darkness and ignorance. Because the human state, the truly human state, that of a human being who is really a human being, is one of awareness, one of self-consciousness, not one of ignorance, or darkness, or sleep, or drunkenness. But this sort of state, this state of awareness, this state of self-consciousness, this state is very difficult to achieve, very difficult to attain, and usually we need at least some outside help. It's just like when we are sound asleep and we just go on sleeping and sleeping, as some people do, until late in the morning or even early in the afternoon. What do we require? We need someone, we require someone, to come along and wake us up, to shout to us, if you like: 'Wake up!' Sometimes even the alarm clock is no good; it goes on ringing, we don't hear it. We need someone with a very loud voice, very powerful lungs, to shout in this way and wake us up. But sometimes even that isn't any use, if we're really sound asleep, fast asleep, in the midst of dreams maybe. We need someone to come along and take hold of us by the shoulder or by the arm and give us a really good shake and wake us up in this way.

So we may say that this is all that religion really is, all that it really has to do. Religion is just that shout, it's just that shake, to wake us up out of our sleep, out of our drunken stupor, if you like, of ignorance and unawareness, and lack of consciousness, lack of self-consciousness. And because we're asleep in this way, because we're in this sort of drunken stupor, we don't really know who we are, we don't know really what we are, we don't know our own true nature, we don't know that we have in our possession, in the words of the parable, a priceless jewel. We think, we dream, that we are poor, that we're limited, that we're contingent, that we're conditioned, and consequently we suffer.

Now in the parable the friend ties the jewel inside the man's garment, before he goes to work apparently. Now we shouldn't take this detail too literally. We shouldn't think on account of this detail that the jewel is literally acquired at a certain point in time. We must remember that the beginning of this parable, like the beginning of all parables, all stories, all fairy stories, takes place outside time. Within the parable itself there's a sort of transition from eternity to time. So that the jewel doesn't come into our possession, as we might think if we took the story, the parable, literally; the jewel is eternally in our possession. We've never really lost it, it's there all the time, that is to say outside time altogether. It's only our awakening to the fact that we have the jewel, or don't have the jewel even, that occurs in time.

Now some of you may have noticed, some of you may have remarked already, that this parable of the drunken man and the jewel is somewhat similar to one of the parables with which we've already dealt in this series. It's rather similar to the Parable or the Myth of the Return Journey, and there are several parallels between the two parables. In both of the parables, the hero, if we can call him that, goes, goes away to a distant country. In both the parables the hero suffers hardship in the distant country on account of poverty. And in both the parables the hero ends up possessed of riches, riches that had really been his all the time. So there is this similarity, there are these parallels. At the same time, between these two parables there are important differences, and these differences are quite significant. In one parable you have a father and a son; in the other you have two friends. So in the first, the fact that there's a father and a son, a sort of senior and a junior, whereas in the latter, in the second parable, there are two friends - friends of course are sort of equal - the fact that in the first parable you have a father and a son suggest, as it were, a greater, a more extreme, degree of alienation.

But there's an even more important difference. You may remember that in the Parable of the Return Journey the poor man, after he comes back home and is recognised by his father, though he doesn't recognise his father himself, the poor man is made familiar with riches gradually; he's gradually introduced to them. He learns to go in and out of the rich man's house without any fear, then he's made manager, and he handles all the riches, the treasures, becomes accustomed to them, starts thinking of riches himself, and then he is told that really they are all his because he is in fact the rich man's long lost son. But in the Parable of the Drunken Man and the Jewel, it isn't like that. In this parable the transition is much more abrupt. The friend comes along and he tells the man at once, without beating about the bush, that he's rich; He said, the jewel is there in your clothing, without any sort of introduction or preamble. So this means that in the second parable one instant, as it were, the man is poor, destitute, suffering; the next instant, he's rich, he's a millionaire, the very next instant.

So there's a very important and profound difference here between the two parables, and the difference corresponds, we may say, to two different approaches to the spiritual life, two different methods, two different methods that may be used by the teacher or the guru; that is to say, the gradual method and the sudden method. In the gradual method, the disciple, the pupil, is led step by step. The teacher says, as it were: Don't strain yourself too much, or don't bother about Nirvana or Enlightenment. Just think in terms of steadying your mind, and being peaceful and enabling yourself to work better, enjoy life more, and so on. Step by step he leads him, and only right at the end, after many many years, he starts talking about Nirvana, Enlightenment, and so on. But in the second, in the second method, the teacher, the guru, confronts the disciple, confronts the pupil, with the Ultimate Truth, with the Absolute Truth, immediately. He doesn't give him any chance to prepare, doesn't give him any introduction, any preamble, he just says: Well, this is it, it's right here, it's this. Now whether the teacher, whether the guru, uses one method or the other, the gradual one or the sudden one, the abrupt one, depends entirely on the temperament of the pupil. If the pupil is a bit easy going, if he's a bit immersed in the things of the world, then obviously the gradual method. But if he's a more heroic type, if he can stand the shock, then alright, the guru doesn't hesitate to use the abrupt method, the sudden method, and tell him everything, as it were, all at once.

We can say also that the difference corresponds to the difference between the two paths, as they're called; that is to say the Path of Vision on the one hand, and the Path of Transformation on the other, about which I spoke at length in the series on the Buddha's Noble Eightfold Path. The Path of Vision is the initial spiritual experience; the Path of Transformation is the working out of that experience in terms of every aspect of one's life, the application of that experience to every aspect of one's life. So in the Path of Vision what happens is that one sees, even if it's only for an instant, just for a flash, one sees that one has the jewel, that you are the jewel; whereas in the Path of Transformation you as it were adjust your life gradually to the fact that you have that jewel, that you are in possession of that jewel. We can say that the two, the two aspects, the two paths, are rather like what happens when it happens that you suddenly inherit a large sum of money, or you win it on the football pools or something like that. Someone tells you, you get a telegram maybe or a solicitor's letter, that you've got half a million pounds, so that's the first news. What a shock! What a surprise! Overnight, well, only in a matter of minutes, you're rich, incredibly rich. So what happens after that? Slowly, gradually, you adjust, you readjust, you reorganise your life as the possessor of those riches. Maybe you move into a bigger house, maybe you buy a better car, and so on - everything starts changing because now you are rich. So it's just the same with the Path of Vision and the Path of Transformation. You have that vision, you have that spiritual experience. You see that you have the jewel, that you are the jewel, and you are in one flash, one instant, but it takes a long time to sort of work it out in detail to readjust and reorient and reorganise your whole life around that supreme fact, around that supreme experience. You don't get around to doing it immediately, not in its entirety, just like when you inherit that money you don't all at once start buying this and buying that. You may be so stunned for a while, you've got all that money in the bank, you may not know what to do for several days or even weeks, you may be just so overwhelmed by that experience. So it's just like that with the Path of Vision. You may be so overwhelmed by this great spiritual experience you don't know what to do with it. And it may be for a while you're just the same as you were before, your usual crude self, and it's only after a while, little by little, that you start changing, being transformed in the light of that great experience.

Now there are a few other details of the parable on which one could comment, but maybe it's better if I proceed straight to the symbolism of the jewel, not only in our parable but in the Mahayana generally, something of that significance I think has already been disclosed incidentally from what I've said. But first of all I'm going to state the general significance of the jewel in plain terms, and then deal with particular aspects and particular qualities. We do have to remember though in all this, and in fact throughout this entire series, that symbols in a sense don't have meanings, not really cut-and-dried meanings. You can't really take a symbol and say: Well, here's such-and-such a symbol; it means that. Here's another symbol; it means something else. The symbols are always suggestive, they're always evocative, you can't really reduce them to any one cut-and-dried meaning. So with this proviso in mind, let's try to - I won't say understand, but to feel or even experience what the jewel here signifies, the jewel in the parable, the Jewel in the Lotus. What does it signify?

Well, briefly and broadly it signifies our own true nature, what we ourselves really are. One could, if one wanted to be a little rash, say that the jewel represented, symbolised, the Self with a capital S, but

in the Jungian rather than in the Vedantic sense. And this jewel, this Self, this own true nature of ours, is hidden, it's concealed. In the parable it's concealed in the man's clothing. We could also say in the case of most of us it's covered with mud. So this sort of speech, this sort of symbolism, of clothing, mud, and so on, this suggests that there are within us a number of layers, as it were, that we don't exist just one level, we exist on a number of levels, that there are some more superficial levels, other deeper levels. So the jewel represents the deepest level of all, the sort of bedrock of our being. It represents a level which is even outside time altogether, a level, to change the terminology, to reverse, even, the terminology, a level above ordinary individuality, or individuality in the ordinary sense of the term.

So if the jewel represents this, symbolises this, what does finding the jewel represent, what does that symbolise? Finding the jewel means coming into contact with, establishing contact with, recovering, if you like, the deepest level of our own being, and this suggests that most of the time, all the time in fact usually, we are not in contact with that deepest level of ourselves. We're out of contact with it, we don't know that it's there, we don't know that it exists, we live merely from the surface of our being, not from the depths. But finding the jewel means coming in contact with that deepest layer, that deepest level of ourselves, outside time - not just touching it and then going away, as it were, not just establishing contact for a while and then breaking off, but establishing permanent contact with that jewel, with that deepest level within ourselves, and then living, as it were, from that level, out of the depths of that experience.

Now the parable describes the jewel as priceless; it speaks of a priceless jewel, and this is exactly what it is. The word has to be taken quite literally with the full force of its meaning attached to it. And it means that contact with the true self, contact with the bedrock of our own being, is the most important thing in our life. Money isn't the most important. Success isn't the most important. Popularity isn't the most important. Knowledge isn't the most important. Culture isn't the most important. Religion isn't the most important. Meditation isn't the most important. The most important thing is contact with one's own true self, contact with the depths of one's being, contact between the surface of one's being and the depth of one's being. This is the most important, the most precious, thing of all, the priceless thing, the priceless jewel. And the suggestion of course therefore is that one shouldn't sacrifice this to anything whatsoever, otherwise one will have had the worst of the bargain.

We can't help being reminded here of other familiar words, the words of Christ in the Gospel where he says: 'What should it profit a man if he gain the whole world but lose his own soul?' Now the implication of all this is obvious, that the soul, or the true self, one's own true being, this deeper level within oneself, of oneself, which is oneself, is more precious than the whole world, and by world is not meant here other people, but one's own material and even intellectual possessions.

Now one might ask, one might enquire, why it is that the jewel is chosen as the symbol of the true self and not some other object, some other entity, and we may say that there are various reasons for this. First of all, the obvious one, the jewel is the most precious of all material things, at least traditionally, so it's a worthy, a fitting, symbol of the self, the true self, one's own true nature, because that, like the jewel in nature, is infinitely precious. And then the jewel is bright and shining; this is perhaps its most prominent natural characteristic. It's brilliant; perhaps it's many-faceted. It's some beautiful transparent colour. It's bright, glittering, shining. And the true self is very much like this, it's even more like that, because the true self, the depths of our own being, the true self is self-luminous, it's conscious, it's aware. In fact even to say that it is conscious, that it is aware, is wrong, is not correct, because it doesn't possess consciousness, it doesn't possess awareness, as a quality, something as it were stuck on from outside and which can be removed. The true self, one's own true being, or oneself in the depths of one's being, this true self, this jewel, is consciousness itself, not that it possesses consciousness as an attribute, but its very being, its very nature, is pure clear transparent consciousness without the distinction, without the dichotomy, of subject and object.

And another reason why the jewel is chosen as a symbol for the true self is the jewel cannot be soiled. It cannot be made dirty. It may conceivably lie hidden in dust and dirt for ages upon ages, but when the dirt, when the dust, is removed then the jewel shines and sparkles clean and bright as ever, and it's just the same with our own true nature. It's essentially pure. It may be hidden for ages, hidden for the greater part of our lives, may be hidden by passions of various kinds, may be hidden by ignorance, may be hidden by anger, may be hidden by egotism and so on, but once it comes to light, once all those

defilements are removed, then it shines forth in its original splendour. Really it has not been defiled at all.

Now the jewel, this jewel of one's true nature, one's true being, has many different facets and many different forms, and one of the best known of these is what is called the *Chintamani*, usually translated as the wish-fulfilling jewel. And this is a form of jewel symbolism that comes directly from, that is part and parcel of, general Indian mythology. In Indian mythology - Hindu, Buddhist, Jain - the wish-fulfilling gem, the wish-fulfilling jewel, is the sort of thing that you get in one form or another in the mythologies and the folklore and the fairy stories of the world. It's an object that gives you everything that you want, that grants every wish of your heart, every desire, just like Aladdin's lamp. You hold it in your hand and you say 'I wish' and you get it. And when you've recovered from your surprise you maybe hold it again - 'I wish' - and it comes. So this is a sort of universal dream of humanity, to have some jewel, or some magic pot, or some magic lamp, or magic anything, that will give you just whatever you want. So in Indian mythology this is called the *Chintamani*, the wish-fulfilling or the wish-granting gem. They've also got a wish-fulfilling tree, and a wish-fulfilling cow, and a wish-fulfilling pot, but we're not going into all that now - but it's much the same sort of symbolism. So there's also this wish-fulfilling gem, so this makes its appearance in Buddhism too. And in Buddhism the wish-fulfilling gem symbolises the Bodhicitta, the Will to Enlightenment, the Bodhisattva's Will to Enlightenment, the Bodhisattva's aspiration to gain Enlightenment for the benefit of all. Because once you've got Enlightenment, you've got everything; you don't really need anything else at all, all your wishes, all your desires, all your aspirations, are fully satisfied, so everything is satisfied in that. So Enlightenment even in its primitive rudimentary form of the Bodhicitta is the real, the true, *Chintamani*, the real, the true, wish-fulfilling gem.

Now in Buddhist art the wish-fulfilling gem as the Bodhicitta is often represented as a flaming jewel, a brilliant, shining jewel with flames as it were bursting out of it; and this represents the fact that the Bodhicitta, the Will to Enlightenment, the Bodhisattva's Will to Enlightenment, is on fire with activity, and that adventitious defilements of the mind are all being burnt up. Now this jewel is as it were very protean; it splits up into three, and then what do we get? We get the Three Jewels. We get the Buddha, the Buddha jewel, we get the Dharma, the Teaching, the Dharma jewel, the Sangha, the spiritual community, the Sangha jewel; in other words the Three Jewels, as we call them, or the Three Refuges, that is to say the three highest values of Buddhism. This one great value looked at from three different points of view. And the jewel also becomes the Vajra, the Dorje; and the Vajra or the Dorje is both diamond and thunderbolt, that which is indestructible, which can destroy anything, smash any thing, obliterate anything, but itself is unscathed, unscratched. It's the Transcendental, it's the Absolute. And in this way, the word Vajra entering into many compounds, you've got the Vajrayana, you've got the Vajraguru, the Vajrakaya, Vajrakula, and many other terms, but a consideration of these or of this aspect would lead us too far afield. We'd better return.

In general we may say that the jewel as a symbol is a solar symbol, an embodiment of a principle we referred to last week and the week before, an embodiment of the yang principle. Now where there is yang, there is yin; and it's time now that we proceeded from the jewel to the lotus, and then we shall have to conclude this part of the lecture by considering the significance of the jewel being in the lotus. Now if anything the lotus symbol is an even more popular one than the jewel symbol, not only in Indian tradition generally, but in Buddhist tradition, and, as we saw some weeks ago, as the White Lotus this lotus symbol is included even in the title of the sutra with which we are concerned in this series. Now it isn't possible even to touch on all aspects of the symbolism of the lotus. I'm just going to refer to some of those which are immediately relevant to our purpose.

Broadly speaking we can say that the significance of the lotus is twofold. There's a macrocosmic significance and a microcosmic significance. The lotus stands in the first place for the universe as a whole, the whole of creation, and it also stands in the second place for the individual, the individual organism, the individual being, or just the individual. The lotus consists, as we know, also of many petals, consists of many layers of petals. Some layers are without, others are within. And in just the same way, both the universe and the individual consist of many different layers, many different levels, many different stages, degrees. Some are lower, others are higher. So in this way we may say the lotus comes to represent the whole process of development, of unfoldment stage by stage, level by level, degree by degree, from the bottom to the top; development, unfoldment, both cosmic and human.

Sometimes the lotus represents what we've called the lower evolution. Sometimes it represents in a more rarefied form the Higher Evolution. And sometimes the lotus represents both the lower evolution and the Higher Evolution taken together. As I've already said, symbols such as this don't have any one unchanging, unvarying, meaning, so it isn't so much a question of understanding a symbol, but rather of allowing oneself to be influenced by it. We may say that if we want to conjure up the right sort of associations around this symbol of the lotus, we should say in very general terms, perhaps more evocative, more atmospheric, terms, that the lotus represents something very rich, something very colourful, something growing, something complex, something beautiful, something harmonious, something delicate, something pure. In other words, the lotus represents something ideal. And the lotus, as we know, the flower of the lotus is associated with the water. It grows in the water, it drinks the water, it stands in the water. And water, as we learned last week, is one of the yin symbols, just as fire and light are yang symbols. The lotus, calling up a different set of associations now, the lotus therefore represents the emotional as distinct from, even opposed to, the intellectual. It stands for the feminine as distinct from the masculine.

So having understood this, having seen this, having seen these associations, let's come back to the mantra as a whole, come back to the Jewel in the Lotus. And as we know the Jewel in the Lotus is enclosed by OM and HUM, because the full mantra is OM the Jewel in the Lotus HUM, OM MANI PADME HUM. We'll see what the OM and the HUM mean in a minute. Macrocosmically speaking, the Jewel in the Lotus means that the Unconditioned, the Transcendental if you like, Absolute Reality if you like, exists in the midst of the conditioned. The Real exists in the midst of the unreal. Light exists in the midst of darkness, even though we may not be able to see that light because of our own blindness, the fact that our own eyes are closed. Now this means that the universe in its depths is based on a principle that is ultimately spiritual, and that this principle is working itself out in the universe in the course of the whole process of evolution, in the whole process even of life. And microcosmically the Jewel in the Lotus means that Enlightenment itself, Buddhahood itself, spiritual perfection itself, is imminent in the depths of our own being, the depths of our own hearts. It means that if we as it were take our courage into both hands, if we plunge into ourselves deep enough, if we go right down into the depths of our own being, underneath our thoughts about this and that, underneath our emotions, underneath our conditioned reflexes, our reactions, if we go even deeper than the personal subconscious, even deeper perhaps than the collective unconscious, if we go deep enough down, then we shall encounter the Buddha nature, our Buddha nature, everybody's Buddha nature, itself. This is the microcosmic meaning of the Jewel in the Lotus.

Now what about OM? What about HUM? I can only give a brief hint at their general meaning in this context. OM in general is the Absolute, the Unconditioned, the Transcendental, as it is in itself, entirely unconnected with the world. And HUM is the same Absolute as manifesting in the world, as descending into the world, as permeating the world, moulding the world, if you like, from within. OM and HUM, we may say, are the alpha and omega, the beginning and the end, but a beginning that is before time and an end that is after time. In other words both the beginning and the end, the alpha and omega, the OM and the HUM, are outside time. One, the OM, is the abstract universal; and the other, the HUM, is the concrete universal. And we may say further that the words MANI PADME, the Jewel in the Lotus, indicate how the abstract becomes the concrete.

Now OM MANI PADME HUM is, as we've already seen earlier, a mantra. It's a sound symbol. It's a sound symbol used to invoke a particular aspect of Reality, a particular aspect of Buddhahood. When you recite the mantra, you set up as it were vibrations. These vibrations propagate themselves and Reality as it were starts responding. The appropriate Buddha form or Bodhisattva form appears. Now what is the appropriate aspect here? - aspect appropriate to, correlative to, the mantra OM MANI PADME HUM. Well it's the aspect of Compassion. OM MANI PADME HUM is, as we've seen, the mantra of Avalokitesvara, and he is the Bodhisattva of Compassion.

Now I must observe here that there are two kinds of Bodhisattva, broadly speaking. There are actual individuals, historical human beings who are working towards supreme Enlightenment for the sake and the benefit of all. They may be at any stage. There are ten stages of development and progress for a Bodhisattva, so a Bodhisattva of this sort, or Bodhisattva in this sense, can be at any of these stages, an individual, a human historical person striving for Enlightenment in this sense, in this way. And then the other meaning of the word Bodhisattva is that of a personification, as it were, or embodiment, as

it were, of a particular aspect of Enlightenment. One can think of Enlightenment in the abstract, in general, but if one thinks of it concretely, in terms of particular aspects, particular facets, then one sees that there's a Wisdom aspect, a Compassion aspect, a Peace aspect, a Power aspect. One can look at Enlightenment, experience Enlightenment, in all these different ways, and different Bodhisattvas embody, or if you like personify, though not in any artificial sense, one or another of these aspects of Enlightenment, of Buddhahood. Manjusri represents Wisdom, Vajrapani represents Power, Vajrasattva represents beginningless Purity, and so on. So in this sort of way Avalokitesvara represents, embodies, if you like crystallises, Compassion, the Compassion aspect of Enlightenment. And Bodhisattvas of this sort, which are not historical, not human, though they may appear or be represented in human form, Bodhisattvas that embody different facets, different aspects, of Enlightenment, these are called Bodhisattvas of the *Dharmakaya*, the *Dharmakaya* being one particular Buddhist term for ultimate Reality - what its full meaning is we're not going to enquire now.

Now Avalokitesvara, the Bodhisattva of, the embodiment of, Compassion is one of the five or six most important Bodhisattvas of the *Dharmakaya*, and in some parts of the Buddhist world he's the most important of all. And he makes his appearance in Chapter Twenty Four of the Sanskrit text of the White Lotus Sutra, Chapter Twenty Five in the Chinese version. Now this particular chapter I didn't refer to, you may remember, when I gave a general summary of the sutra under the title of 'the Drama of Cosmic Enlightenment', because it is not an integral part of that great drama. And we can be practically certain that this Avalokitesvara chapter originally was an independent sutra which only subsequently became incorporated in the *Saddharma Pundarika Sutra*, the White Lotus Sutra. We find this sort of thing happening very often in the history of Buddhist canonical literature. You find different traditions and then different texts circulating, and as time goes on they get sort of collected together, they sort of draw together, and texts and traditions which were originally independent come to be as it were anthologised into one large important overall sort of portmanteau text, and when this is written down it contains quite a lot therefore of miscellaneous material. So it would seem that the Avalokitesvara chapter was originally independent, a sutra in its own right, but owing to the great popularity and prestige of the White Lotus Sutra, it seems to have drawn into its orbit a great deal of material of this sort, and much of this material was sort of added on to the end of the sutra in the last four or five chapters, and the Avalokitesvara chapter seems to have been of this sort, it seems to have been added in this way.

Now before examining this chapter, before seeing what the sutra says in this chapter about Avalokitesvara, let's have a little general information about him. As we've seen, he is the Bodhisattva of Compassion, he's Compassion incarnate, as it were, and he has a number of different forms.

One of the most famous of these forms, perhaps rather bizarre from the Western point of view, is that with eleven heads and a thousand arms. Now I've seen a number of representations of this sort, some of them very large indeed, and, believe me, they're very very impressive. There are eleven heads because there are eleven directions of space, including the central point: centre, North, South, East, and West, the four intermediate points, and then the zenith and the nadir - so eleven altogether. Compassion is omnipresent, it looks in all directions, and it has a thousand arms, because there's so much to be done, there's so much suffering, so much to be done to relieve suffering, so a thousand arms at least are necessary, an infinite number even are necessary. And there's a very interesting legend attached to the origin of this particular form of Avalokitesvara, the Bodhisattva of Compassion. It's said that once upon a time Avalokitesvara was seated on the Potala hill where he usually lives in South India, and he was surveying the whole world, and he saw in all quarters a terrible amount of suffering. He saw some people being oppressed by unjust kings, led off to execution, tortured, beheaded. He saw other people being burned, others devoured by wild beasts, others bitten by serpents and dying painful deaths, saw others drowning at sea, saw others suffering from disease, sickness, old age, bereavement, separation. And he felt there was a terrible amount of suffering in the world, and he couldn't help feeling it very very deeply, very very bitterly indeed, that there should be so much suffering. And we're told that he felt this suffering, the suffering of humanity, the suffering of sentient existence, so intensely that his whole being felt sort of screwed up. He felt a terrible sort of tension, as it were, and suddenly under the strain his head, the legend says, split into eleven fragments, and each fragment became a head, eleven heads. And these came together and a thousand arms came out to relieve and succour all these people suffering in different parts of the world in this way. So we can see the meaning of the symbolism very very clearly, that this is how you feel, this is how you can actually feel when you see around you so much suffering; you feel as though you could sort of split, as though your head was split into eleven

pieces and your arms multiplied infinitely, a thousandfold, in all directions so as to succour this, to help, to render some aid. So this is the sort of compassion that Avalokitesvara represents.

And then again there's another very beautiful legend associated with the fact that Avalokitesvara, the Bodhisattva of Compassion, is the spiritual father of the female Bodhisattva Tara, who is his sort of spiritual daughter. We're told on another occasion, seeing all the suffering in the world, Avalokitesvara couldn't help weeping bitterly, and he wept for so long and so profusely that a great pool of tears formed, a great pool of water, and the pool of water, the pool of tears, grew and grew and grew, it spread and spread and spread until it was an enormous lake, a shining lake of pure clear crystal water. And then from that lake there sprang up a beautiful pure white lotus, an enormous white lotus, and the petals slowly opened, and inside there was seen standing, perhaps sitting, a beautiful white goddess with a lotus, a white lotus in her hand, and this, we are told, was the goddess Tara, the female Bodhisattva Tara, and she's sometimes described as being born out of the vow, or born by the power of the vow, of the Bodhisattva Avalokitesvara. And she represents the sort of quintessence of compassion. She's an even more sort of delicate, an even more tender sort of figure than Avalokitesvara himself.

So there are these various forms of Avalokitesvara. The most famous, perhaps, is the four-armed form. This is known as *saddhakshari* Avalokitesvara. *Saddhakshari* means with, or possessing, six letters or syllables, and these six letters or syllables are those of the mantra: OM MA NI PA DME HUM - six syllables or six letters. We'll describe this particular form of Avalokitesvara in a few minutes. In Tantric Buddhism, in the Vajrayana, Avalokitesvara assumes a wrathful form, an angry form, destructive of ignorance, destructive of anger, destructive of hate. And this wrathful form is known as *Mahakala*, Great Time, the destroyer of everything conditioned.

Now in China a rather interesting thing happened. The worship, the cult, of Avalokitesvara was introduced into China largely through the agency of the White Lotus sutra, but in China the originally masculine Bodhisattva became feminine, and became known as Kwan Yin, the most popular of all the Chinese Bodhisattvas.

Now let's get back to the sutra and the Avalokitesvara chapter. The chapter opens with the Bodhisattva Aksayamati asking the Buddha why Avalokitesvara is so called, why he has that particular name. Now the word Avalokitesvara, or name Avalokitesvara, can be interpreted grammatically in two quite different ways. It can be interpreted as 'the one who looks down on the world', looks down, that is to say, in compassion; and also it can be interpreted as 'the one who listens', listens to cries, that is to say cries of distress, who harkens to cries of distress. So both interpretations, whether of Avalokitesvara as the one who looks down in compassion, or the one who harkens to cries of distress from the world, they both reveal, they both emphasise even, the compassion aspect. And in response to Aksayamati's question, the Buddha says that Avalokitesvara is so called because he responds to all those who invoke his name, responds out of compassion; not only responds, but delivers them from difficulties, dangers, both physical and spiritual. The sutra gives a long account of these, but we're not going into that now. It's clear though that Avalokitesvara is here represented, here depicted, as a sort of popular saviour figure. The Buddha also says in this chapter that Avalokitesvara preaches the Dharma in different forms, that he assumes different forms according to the needs and temperaments and requirements of different beings. Sometimes he assumes the form of a Buddha and preaches the Dharma, sometimes the form of a Bodhisattva and preaches the Dharma, sometimes even the forms of the different Hindu gods.

So having heard from the Buddha this account of Avalokitesvara, which is quite lengthy, Aksayamati presents Avalokitesvara, who we now learn is actually present, with a magnificent golden necklace, and then sings a beautiful hymn of praise. This hymn of praise, Aksayamati's hymn of praise to Avalokitesvara, is one of the most beautiful in the whole range of Mahayana Sanskrit Buddhist literature.

Now the form, or the forms, of Avalokitesvara on the one hand, and his mantra, the OM MANI PADME HUM, the Jewel in the Lotus on the other, these two are connected. The form, the figure, whether with a thousand arms or four arms, is a symbol, a shape symbol, space symbol, light symbol; and the mantra of course is the sound symbol. And they're both symbols of this sort of compassion

state, compassion aspect, of Enlightenment, and they as it were converge on it from different directions, the light symbol converging say from this direction, the sound symbol from this direction, converging on their common object, this state, this experience, of the compassion aspect of Enlightenment.

Now the question arises: How does one bring them together? How does one meditate on them? And it's this process that I'm going to describe now and then conclude. Now we're going to assume that one is meditating on the four-armed form, that is to say on the *Saddhakshari* Avalokitesvara form. So what does one do? How does one proceed? First of all one Goes for Refuge. One says I Go for Refuge to the guru - this comes first in Tibetan Buddhism - then to the Buddha, then to the Dharma, then to the Sangha. And one doesn't Go for Refuge on one's own, by oneself. One goes taking as it were with one all living beings. One imagines, one visualises, them also as Going for Refuge, because all life ultimately is heading in that direction, heading in the direction of Enlightenment. So one begins, one starts by, Going for Refuge, and then one invokes, one calls down, blessings. One as it were prays or aspires, for blessings on one's body, speech, and mind, that they may be transmuted, transformed, transfigured, and that one may make spiritual progress. And after that one develops the Bodhicitta; one takes the Bodhisattva Vow. One vows as it were that one will gain Enlightenment not just for one's own sake but for the sake of Enlightening, benefitting, helping, all other living beings, and that one will practise the Six Perfections as a means of achieving that end, that result. So in this way one develops the Bodhicitta. This is a very elaborate procedure; I've no time here for details. After that, one reflects. One reflects in the first place, using a Sanskrit formula, that all things whatsoever in the universe are by nature pure. You see no impurity anywhere; everything is pure, the whole world is pure, and everything in it is pure. And having reflected in this way, you reflect: I too am pure. I'm a pure being in a pure world. In my essential nature I too am pure. And having done that, out of the depths of space, as it were, out of the depths of Reality, one conjures up the figure of Avalokitesvara. One sees first of all a throne of jewels. On that throne of jewels one sees a moon disc or moon mat, as it's sometimes called, on top of a lotus carpet. And on top of that one sees, one visualises, one feels, one experiences, oneself as Avalokitesvara. Now there are different kinds of practice. In some kinds you visualise the Buddha or Bodhisattva in front of you, different from you, but in others you visualise yourself as the Buddha or Bodhisattva; so it's the second exercise that one is doing here in this context. One visualises, one imagines, oneself as Avalokitesvara, one's body the colour of a conch shell or crystal, with smiling face, with four hands, four arms. The lower two are joined at the chest, at the heart, and here's a bit more symbolism. They symbolise the Jewel in the Lotus. The two hands with the forefingers each symbolise the lotus, the two thumbs together are the jewel. So this is why the Buddhist salutation is like this [*demonstrates*] - the Jewel in the Lotus. This [*demonstrates*] according to Buddhist tradition is the Brahminical salutation which a Buddhist is not supposed to do. The Buddhistic one is this, with the fingers separated and the thumbs together so that you make a jewel in a lotus, so that when you greet someone in this way, you remember that there's a jewel i.e. Enlightenment potentiality in him as well as in you. Then the upper pair of hands hold one of them a rosary, a crystal rosary, for reciting the mantra of course, and the other a lotus, the symbol here of spiritual rebirth. The two feet are in *Vajrasana*, one on top of the other. Then the body of Avalokitesvara, one's own body, is decked with silks and jewels. One has long blue-black hair, with a top-knot. And right on the top of the top-knot there's a little figure of Amitabha, the Buddha of Infinite Light, because he is the spiritual father, as it were, of the Bodhisattva Avalokitesvara; he's the head of what is called the lotus family. All Buddhas and Bodhisattvas are organised into five families, the lotus family being one of them, and this sort of organisation is the basis of a lot of Buddhist symbolism. We're not going into that now. But one ends up visualising the Buddha of Infinite Light on the top of the topknot of Avalokitesvara or oneself visualised, realised, as Avalokitesvara. Then having done that one invokes upon oneself, invoking as Avalokitesvara, the blessings of Amitabha, the Buddha of Infinite Light on the top of one's head, regarded as the guru, and one prays, as it were, that one may gain Buddhahood for the sake of all quickly. And having done that, and this is quite an elaborate exercise taking quite a long time, then one just lets go. It's said that one lets go smoothly - you just drop everything - and you stay in a state free from thought, so no thoughts. And you stay there as long as is necessary, free from thought. And then you go back to your visualising. Inside your heart you visualise a sort of moon lotus, horizontal, and on top of that a red HRIH, this is the seed mantra of Amitabha, and round this, encircling it, the six letters of the mantra, OM MA NIPA DME HUM, of the appropriate colours, and from them there issue rays of light, and these rays of light call down the compassion and blessing of the Buddhas.

Now having done all this, and not before, one starts reciting the OM MANI PADME HUM. This is the

full practice, or at least one version, one form, one tradition, of the full practice. You don't just start reciting the mantra in any old sort of way, though even the simple recitation has its own value, one mustn't underestimate that. But if one wants to do the practice fully and properly, you visualise in this way first, and then and only then you recite the OM MANI PADME HUM, and, in the context of this particular practice, at least five hundred times. You can go on as long as you like, even for one or two hours, or the whole day. And having come to the end of your recitation, you dissolve the throne on which you're sitting, the lotus, the moon disc, you dissolve them all into light, and this light merges in yourself, and then you bring the practice to an end with dedication of merits. You as it were say: Whatever merits, whatever benefits, I might have gained from this practice, may they be shared by everyone. And then, having done the practice, having come to the end of the practice, you shouldn't just leave it there. You have thereafter to think of your dwelling place, your abode, your whole surroundings, as being the Pure Land, the Happy Land itself, the sort of Paradise of Avalokitesvara. You're living in a transfigured world because you're changed, a transfigured being. So this is the way in which one must think, one must reflect, that your whole environment is a Pure Land, a Happy Land, a glorified realm, and you yourself are Avalokitesvara, that you've become transmuted into Avalokitesvara. And not only that, but as Avalokitesvara, all the time, whatever you do, wherever you go, you are attending upon, recollecting, remembering, the guru as it were on your head, the Buddha of Infinite Light. You think constantly about the Buddha of Infinite Light, and whatever you do, wherever you go in the world, to whomsoever you speak, whatever your activities, howsoever you're engaged, all the time, day and night, one has to act, after doing this exercise, with compassion, compassion for all living beings. So if one can do this, if one can practise this visualisation and mantra recitation in this way, then one becomes completely transformed, completely transfigured. One becomes as it were radiant, one becomes, one may say, a jewel, even one becomes the jewel, and the world in which you live, the world in which you move, the world in which you have your being, your environment, your immediate environment especially, this becomes your lotus. So in this way, practising, realising, experiencing in this way, oneself becomes, oneself is the Jewel in the Lotus.