

Lecture 129: Buddhist Economics

In the course of the last few weeks we've been very much concerned with gods and goddesses, particularly with the goddesses. Three weeks ago we saw in the course of our study of the sutra, the *Sutra of Golden Light*, we saw the four great kings come forward - that is to say the four great kings who are protectors of the four quarters of the world, the four quarters of the universe, and we saw them, or rather we heard them promise to protect the sutra, the *Sutra of Golden Light*. And the week before last there came forward the great goddess Sarasvati, and she too promised to protect the sutra - or rather she promised to protect the monk who is the preacher of the sutra. And last week another goddess came forward. Last week it was Drdha the earth goddess, and you may remember that she came forward out of turn; that is to say, out of the order of her appearance in the sutra itself. And she too promised to protect the monk who is the preacher of the sutra.

Now this week the third and last goddess comes forward and, as we'll be seeing, she makes the same promise as the others, the same promise as the two previous goddesses; and the goddess who comes forward this week is the great goddess Sri.

What these three goddesses in general represent, and what their coming forward and promising to protect the sutra represents, should by this time be clear, and I am therefore not going to repeat any of the previous explanations. By this time, perhaps, the gods and the goddesses are beginning to speak for themselves, or rather perhaps we are beginning to understand, even to fathom, their language.

Now last week I observed that all three goddesses promised to protect the monk who is the preacher of the sutra, but I also observed that nothing whatever was said about this monk himself - at least, not in the three chapters devoted to the goddesses. The monk remained, you may remember, a quite anonymous figure. It was rather as though he was simply the hook on which the goddesses hung their promises, hung their vows. Last week, therefore, I not only spoke about Drdha the earth goddess, but I also had something to say about the monk who is the preacher of the sutra. We found, you may remember, that there was a description of the monk who is the preacher of the sutra, or rather of a monk who is the preacher of the sutra, in another chapter of the *Sutra of Golden Light*, in chapter 13, the chapter on Susambhava; and you may recollect that this monk was called Ratnoccaya, and he expounds, in that chapter, the *Sutra of Golden Light* to king Susambhava; and king Susambhava is greatly impressed by the exposition, and he offers to the Order, the Order of the Buddha of those days, he offers the four continents filled with jewels. And the Buddha, that is to say our Buddha, Sakyamuni, explains that he himself was Susambhava in a previous existence, a previous life, and that Buddha Akshobya was the monk Ratnoccaya.

Now last week we also tried to understand why the monk in particular should be the preacher of the sutra, and this led us to inquire what a monk was; and we saw that the monk is not one simply formally ordained as such. 'Monk' really means one who is totally committed to the spiritual life, not committed to it for his own sake only, even, but for the sake of all living beings. The monk therefore is one who is free from all worldly ties and worldly responsibilities. The monk has no wife, no family. The monk does not engage in any wage-earning work. The monk is one who has set out on the noble quest, the *ariyapariyesana*. He is one who has made the transition from the conditioned to the Unconditioned, or at least who is very much in process of making that transition. The monk, again, is one whose natural energies have submitted to the Golden Light, whose natural energies are completely at the service of the Golden Light. Therefore in the sutra Drdha the earth goddess places her head against the soles of his feet. The monk is one who has identified himself with the Golden Light, who is as it were one with the Golden Light, at least to some extent, and it is he therefore in particular who is the preacher of the *Sutra of Golden Light*, the medium for the transmission of the Golden Light.

We also saw, you may remember, again, that the monk leads what some of the old Christian writers call an angelic life; leads, in fact, what is the best and happiest of all lives.

Now this week we are still concerned with the monk who is the preacher of the sutra, at least to some extent, as well, of course, as being concerned with the great goddess Sri. Sri comes forward in chapter 8 of the sutra, and she makes her promise. So what does she promise? She doesn't promise simply to protect the monk who preaches the sutra; she is much more specific than that. She promises much more than that. As we saw last week, she doesn't even begin by saluting the Buddha. She plunges straight in. She comes straight out with her promises. And what does she promise? She says that she will give the monk, first,

zeal; second, garments; third, begging bowl; fourth, bed and seat; and, fifth, medicines - and, she says, other excellent equipment. And she also makes it clear why she is going to give them. She is going to give them, she says, so that the preacher of the Dharma may be provided with every equipment so that he may have no lack, so that he may be sound in mind, so that he may pass night and day with a happy mind, as it were with a carefree mind, so that he may examine the words and letters of the *Sutra of Golden Light*, so that he may perpetuate them for the sake of all living beings, that all living beings may eventually awaken to full, perfect Enlightenment. This is what she says; this is what she promises.

Now the chapter on Sri is quite a short chapter. It consists of less than three pages in the English translation, and Sri's promise takes up only a part of it. But before we go any further, I want to take up two questions. First of all, who is the great goddess Sri? And secondly, what is the significance of her promise - that is to say, her promise to give garments, begging bowl, etc., to the monk? We will then deal with the rest of the chapter.

The week before last we saw that the goddess Sarasvati is widely worshipped in India today - worshipped, that is to say, by the modern Hindus, especially by scholars, writers, students - by anybody who has anything to do with learning, with writing, with literature. And in the same way, the goddess Sri is still worshipped in India today. In fact, she is worshipped even more widely than the goddess Sarasvati. Sri is worshipped in practically every Hindu home, usually under the name of Lakshmi. And it's not very difficult to understand what she represents. The word Sri itself means simply prosperity, and Lakshmi means luck or good fortune. The prosperity, of course, which is meant here is material prosperity, and the good fortune is good fortune in the worldly sense; that is to say, it's the good fortune that causes you to win in the pools. It's not the good fortune that causes you to find a copy of the latest FWBO Newsletter lying on a seat in the bus.

So the goddess represents, very much represents, material prosperity. She represents material success. In a word, she represents wealth and riches, and the modern Hindu Lakshmi is depicted more or less like the modern Hindu Sarasvati: in other words, she is depicted as a beautiful young woman, dressed in a beautiful crimson sari, very often with a golden border, and she has long, flowing, glossy black hair. Lakshmi, however, is more definitely represented as a young married woman, and she wears the red *tilaka* of the married woman on her forehead, and perhaps also the red powder called *kum-kum* in the parting of her hair, as well as various items of jewellery. She is decked with, for instance, necklaces, bracelets, anklets, earrings, as well as, of course, nose ring or nose stud. The South Indian Lakshmi especially is adorned in this sort of way. Sarasvati, of course, is generally dressed much more simply, as in fact befits a goddess of learning. Lakshmi is seated, not on a goose as Sarasvati is, but on an enormous, usually pink or white, lotus flower, and sometimes she holds a lotus flower in her hand.

Now there are many images of Lakshmi in the temples, and often these images have more than one pair of arms. Usually Lakshmi stands beside her consort, who is the god Vishnu, that is to say the second member of the Hindu Trimurti. Vishnu represents, or rather embodies, the preserving aspect of divinity, according to the general Hindu tradition, just as Brahma represents the creative aspect or embodies the creative aspect, and Siva embodies the aspect of destruction. So Vishnu the preserver and Lakshmi the goddess of wealth and prosperity are very properly regarded as being as it were married to each other, and sometimes they are jointly known as, or jointly referred to as, Lakshmi Narayan; Narayan being another name for the god Vishnu the preserver. Some of you, that is to say those who have been to India, have probably visited the famous Lakshmi Narayan temple in New Delhi. It's an enormous temple; if you go to New Delhi at all, you can hardly miss it. Not surprisingly, perhaps, it was built by a modern Hindu multi-millionaire, in fact I am told he was a multi-multi-multi-millionaire, one of the very biggest millionaires that India has ever produced in modern times; a very well-known businessman, incidentally, who in the days before Indian independence was the principal financial supporter of Mahatma Gandhi and the Congress Party. It's he also, by the way, who made that famous remark: 'It costs me,' he said, 'two thousand rupees a day to keep Bapu (that is to say, Mahatma Gandhi) living in poverty.'

So, as one might have expected, the goddess Lakshmi is very much worshipped by members of the business community, not to say the business fraternity, in India, and every Hindu shopkeeper has an image or a picture of the goddess Lakshmi, usually very brightly coloured, in his shop, as well as, of course, an image or picture of Ganesha the elephant-headed god, who removes obstacles. And he, that is to say the orthodox Hindu businessman, worships them every day; that is to say, he lights sticks of incense and he waves lights in front of these pictures or images. Now very often the images or pictures of Lakshmi as well as of Ganesha, are placed above the safe; you know, every Hindu shop has got a safe in the corner, or at

least a big, strong iron box; and you will find the image or the picture of Lakshmi placed immediately above the safe, and sometimes you will find that the image or picture of Lakshmi is placed inside the safe. And I've seen myself Hindu shopkeepers opening their shop, opening the safe first thing in the morning, and then what do they do? They worship the image or picture of Lakshmi inside the safe, so that you could say that they were quite literally worshipping riches; they really do worship money. And also the account books are bound in a traditional red, which is the colour of Lakshmi's sari.

Now images or pictures of Lakshmi are also found in the home, for obvious reasons; probably Lakshmi is the most popular household deity in India. There is not much religious feeling attached to her; she is just generally believed to bring good luck, prosperity, good fortune. The ladies in the audience, incidentally, may be interested to know that a good wife is called a Lakshmi. If a woman is cheerful and industrious, if she is a good cook, a good housekeeper, a good mother - very solid qualities - and if her husband's affairs prosper, then his friends will say to him, 'Your wife is a real Lakshmi', or they'll say, 'The goddess of fortune has surely come to your house.' In other words, your wife has brought you good luck. But I'm sorry to say there is also a darker side to the picture. If the husband's affairs go wrong, or if he dies prematurely, then his relations will say that it's the wife's fault; that she brought him bad luck. Generally speaking, however, the married woman is regarded as auspicious, the married woman is regarded as a sign of good luck, especially the young married woman with children; so that if you are leaving house in the morning, if you're leaving the house to go to work or to go to do something, if the first person that you see on leaving the house is a married woman - and in India, of course, you always know if a woman is married or not, because she wears this red mark - then if you see a married woman on leaving the house, you will have good luck during the day. But if the first person you see is a monk, then you'll have bad luck, because the monk represents the negation of worldly prosperity, the negation of worldly success; so much so that some Hindus, especially some orthodox brahmins, if the first person that they meet on leaving the house in the morning is a monk of any kind, they just turn back. They don't even attempt to do anything that day, they say they know that it's not going to be successful. They've met that monk, and he has completely destroyed their good luck for the whole of the day.

This is, of course, I must add, the Hindu point of view, and Hinduism, of course, is an ethnic religion; it stresses group values, and it stresses worldly values, worldly prosperity. The Buddhist point of view is quite different. I won't go so far as to say that according to the Buddhist point of view it's unlucky if you meet a married woman in the morning, but it's certainly regarded as lucky if you meet a monk, that is to say lucky from the spiritual point of view.

Now there are many legends concerning the goddess Lakshmi, many legends in India, and one of them concerns her birth. It's said that the gods one day decided to churn the great ocean of milk, the cosmic ocean of milk. So how did they go about it? They uprooted Mount Meru and they used Mount Meru as their churning stick, and then they took Ananta the cosmic serpent as their rope. They wound the rope round the churning stick, the cosmic serpent round Mount Meru, and then they churned. Some of the gods and goddesses pulled one end of the rope, some of them pulled the other, so they pulled back and forth, they churned and they churned; and as they churned this ocean of milk, this cosmic ocean of milk, all sorts of marvellous things came up, all sorts of marvellous things were produced, just like butter. First of all came up the cow of plenty, then the wish-fulfilling tree, the tree that fulfils all your desires; you've only got to touch it and wish, and at once your wish is granted. And then the heavenly elephant came up, the elephant that goes as fast as the wind and has got six tusks. And then there came up the goddess Lakshmi; she too came up on this occasion, this is how she was born. But after her there came up - what do you think? A pot full of poison. So the poison was strong enough to kill all the beings in the universe; so what happened? Everybody wanted to take just the good things that had come up; especially they wanted to take, or rather especially the gods wanted to take, the goddess Lakshmi; but nobody wanted the poison, so in the end Vishnu, the god Vishnu took Lakshmi and married her. As for the poison, it was swallowed by the god Siva - that is, according to the Hindus. According to the Buddhists, it was the Bodhisattva Avalokitesvara who swallowed the poison, but it did neither of them any harm. Each was able to digest the poison, but his throat turned a deep blue, and that is why they are both known as Nilakanta - that's one of the names of Siva, one of the names of Avalokitesvara - Nilakanta, the Blue-Throated One.

However, it's time that we left these old stories, time that we got back to chapter 8 of the *Sutra of Golden Light*. We probably now have a fairly clear idea of what the goddess Lakshmi represents, that is to say the modern Hindu goddess Lakshmi. She is worldly prosperity, she is wealth and riches, especially in their more domestic aspect. We could perhaps say that she is affluence or even that she is economics. So what does she do? What does she do in the sutra? What does the goddess Sri do? As we have seen, she promises

to give the monk who preaches the sutra five things: zeal, garments, begging bowl, bed, seat and medicines, and other excellent equipment. And she does this, as we've seen, so that he can preach the sutra properly and so that all beings can benefit.

Now what does this mean? What does this represent? It means that wealth and riches are placed at the service of the monk who is the preacher of the sutra; that they are placed at the service of the Dharma, placed at the service of the Golden Light. So Lakshmi represents, or rather Sri represents wealth and riches devoted to spiritual ends. In fact, we can say that Lakshmi, the Hindu goddess Lakshmi, represents wealth and riches devoted to worldly ends, and Sri, the Buddhist goddess Sri, represents wealth and riches devoted to spiritual ends. Lakshmi, we can say, is economics, economics in general, but Sri, we may say, is Buddhist economics; and this, of course, is the title of our lecture tonight - 'Buddhist Economics'.

Now before I go any further, I have a small confession to make, which is that the title of the lecture is not original. As some of you will have guessed, I borrowed it from Dr. E.F. Schumacher. Dr. Schumacher is the author of an interesting and important book called *Small Is Beautiful*, a book which I think every Order member, Mitra and Friend should read. And in this book there is a chapter called 'Buddhist Economics', and it's interesting to see that his point of departure is exactly the same as my own. This chapter on 'Buddhist Economics' opens with the following statement. Dr. Schumacher says:

Right livelihood is one of the requirements of the Buddha's Noble Eightfold Path. It is clear, therefore, that there must be such a thing as Buddhist economics.

So this chapter on Buddhist economics in his book, *Small Is Beautiful*, explores the implications of this statement, explores them within a predominantly modern, non-traditional context. In this lecture we are concerned with Buddhist economics within a predominantly traditional context, a context of spiritual life, context of the *Sutra of Golden Light*. Nevertheless, I find myself in fundamental agreement with Dr. Schumacher's approach, and I think, in fact, that he is very much on the right lines. I am glad that his book has received so much attention, and I hope it will continue to receive, in fact will receive still more. I hope more and more people will act also on his recommendations. In short, to put it in Buddhist terms, I rejoice in Dr. Schumacher's merits and I hope you will too - at least, that you will do so after reading his book.

Now I also rejoice in the great goddess Sri's merits; rejoice in the promise that she makes. In fact, having understood who the great goddess Sri is, I want to take up the second of our two questions, which is: what is the significance of her promise? And I want to examine first the fundamental nature of that promise, and secondly the nature and significance of the things she promises to give. I also want to say a few words about the relation between the monk and the laity. It will then be time to deal with the rest of chapter 8 of the *Sutra of Golden Light*, the chapter on Sri.

Now first, the fundamental nature of the goddess's promise. And this is really very simple; it's so simple that we might easily overlook it. Fundamentally, the great goddess Sri's promise is a promise to give. And what does she promise to give? Virtually everything - everything, that is, that is necessary to support the spiritual life: food, clothing, residence, medicine. You don't really need anything more than that. So we can say that Buddhist economics is the economics of giving. We can even go further than that and say that the Buddhist life is the life of giving. To the extent that we possess, to that extent we must give - at least, must give material things, if we can't give anything more than that. If there is no giving, there is no spiritual life. Spiritual life begins with giving, and we can see this very clearly in the case of the Bodhisattva, that is to say in the case of the ideal man of the Mahayana, the one who is committed to the attainment of Bodhi or Enlightenment, not for his own sake only but for the sake of all sentient beings. He, such a being, a Bodhisattva, practises six *paramitas*, six transcendental virtues, six Perfections, and the first of these is *dana* or giving. And *dana* is of many different kinds. There are many different things, many different kinds of things, that can be given, and they can be given in all sorts of ways to all sorts of people. I have dealt with this at some length, in fact, on previous occasions; for instance, in the fourth lecture in the series 'Aspects of the Bodhisattva Ideal', in the lecture entitled 'Altruism and Individualism in the Spiritual Life', as well as in my *Survey of Buddhism*, chapter 4. So I'm not going to repeat all that now.

The practice of *dana* is widespread in all Buddhist countries, in all Buddhist communities, whether Theravada or Mahayana or of any other school. In those countries, in those communities, the Dharma and those practising and preaching the Dharma are supported on a scale that we in the West can hardly imagine; and nowhere is this more so - was this more so - than in Tibet, that is to say in the old Tibet, the

Tibet that existed up to 1950, or to some extent even up to 1959. I remember in this connection a talk I had many years ago with a Tibetan student of mine - a student who was learning English with me. This must have been in the early 1950s, and the conversation took place, of course, in Kalimpong. And the name of this student, I remember, was Aggen Chototsang. He was about 30 years of age and he was a native of eastern Tibet; in fact, he was a Khamba. If you know anything about Tibetan affairs you will have heard of the Khambas. They are very fierce and warlike, and have a reputation of being aggressive and undisciplined, but very good Buddhists. He was short, he was stocky, and very straightforward, very direct; and he was one of five brothers, and they were all traders. I'm sorry to say that he was killed about 10 years later fighting the Chinese in eastern Tibet. I hope he had a good rebirth, even though he died fighting. Anyway, he once told me how he and his brothers spent their income. They said whatever money they had, whatever money they'd made at the end of the year, they divided it all into three parts: one part, one-third, was given for the Dharma, for Dharma purposes, that is to say for repairing monasteries, providing food and clothing for monks, printing copies of sacred texts, sponsoring religious ceremonies, commissioning images and paintings of Buddhas and Bodhisattvas, and so on. One part, one-third, was spent on pleasure, and I'm sorry to say that this consisted mainly of drinking and gambling, especially gambling - but not smoking. The old-fashioned Tibetans regarded smoking as much worse than drinking. One-third, one part, was devoted to household expenses, as well as being reinvested in the business; one-third, one part. And according to my student, according to Aggen, this was the general practice in Kham. Everybody, or rather every family, gave one-third of their income for the Dharma.

Now this is really something for Buddhists everywhere to live up to. We generally think that we are giving quite a lot if we give a tenth of our income, but by Khamba standards this would be comparative meanness.

Now the goddess Sri promises to give the monk who is the preacher of the sutra such things as food, clothing, bed, seat; in other words, what she gives she gives in kind. She doesn't give cash. And this is the more traditional practice, and it's still widespread in some parts of the Buddhist world, though less so than formerly. People don't give monks money. they give them what they need in kind, and if I may be allowed to reminisce a bit I may say that I myself lived in this way for a couple of years - not in a Buddhist country but in India. I didn't keep any money at all, not even in the bank; and I didn't handle money, didn't touch it, and I didn't accept money if it was offered to me. And I found that this arrangement simplified life greatly. There were lots of things that one simply did not have to think about, because one didn't have any money.

However, I later discovered it was only possible to live like this if one was concerned exclusively with one's personal spiritual development and one's personal spiritual practice. One couldn't live like this if one wanted to engage in Buddhist activities, if one wanted to work in an organised way for the Dharma. For that, money was needed, cash was needed, even in India. So if this was the position even in India, it's much more the position here in the West. It is still possible, of course, even here in the West, to invite the monk who is the preacher of the sutra for a meal; it is still possible to present him with a pair of socks or a small country house. But if you want to support the Dharma to any great extent, it means giving money; in fact, it means giving quite a lot of money.

Now people's attitude to money is rather strange. This perhaps is not surprising: money itself is rather a strange thing. It's rather a protean thing. One could almost say that money is everything except money. Money is life; money is power; money is prestige; money is success; money is security; money is pleasure; money is love. After all, with money we can buy love, can buy anything - or at least we think we can. The strangest thing about people's attitude to money, perhaps, is their reluctance to part with it. In the West this is true even of some Buddhists. They seem to think that there is somehow something wrong in giving money for Dharma work, and we may say that this reluctance is probably connected with our basic attitude towards money. We tend to think of money as something dirty and disgusting, something that decent people have as little to do with as possible, at least in public. After all, we speak, do we not, of 'filthy lucre'? And this expression probably reflects our basic attitude towards it, and Western Buddhists, of course, tend to share this attitude - some apparently more than others. At the same time, they think of the Dharma as something very pure. They think of the Dharma, even, as something that has to be kept pure. And how do you keep the Dharma pure? Well, one way is to keep your dirty, disgusting money as far away from it as possible.

But this is certainly not the traditional attitude. The traditional attitude is that money is good, wholesome stuff - that is to say, money that you've acquired by righteous means, in accordance with the principles of Right Livelihood. So the best thing you can do with your money is to give it for Dharma work. You could

say that money is like manure: it smells a bit sometimes, but it's good, clean, wholesome stuff really. So we need not be squeamish about handling it, and certainly need not be squeamish about giving it away.

Let's remember, perhaps, what Sir Francis Bacon said four centuries ago: 'Money is like muck, not good except it be spread.' So if you have any of this muck, spread it around! Spread it in the direction of the Dharma. As the Buddha himself said, 'Don't be afraid of giving.' Despite what the Salvation Army says, it doesn't really hurt. In case this sounds a little esoteric, I should perhaps explain that older Friends may remember the old Salvation Army slogan or appeal: 'Give until it hurts.' But surely this is quite wrong; surely this reflects a typically Christian attitude. It makes us think of the spiritual life in general as something essentially painful. It makes us think of giving in much the same way as we think of going to the dentist. We put it off as long as possible. Why? Because we think it's going to hurt, really hurt. But it won't hurt. I mean giving won't hurt - I can't vouch for going to the dentist. In fact, the more you give, the happier you will feel, the lighter you will feel, the freer you will feel. So we should change the slogan, 'Give till it hurts'. It may be all right for Christians, at least all right for the Salvation Army, but Buddhists should say 'Give till you swoon with joy'!

Now I've spoken at some length about giving, because it seems necessary to do so, but we ought really to pass on now to the nature and significance of the five things the great goddess Sri promises to give. But I want to say just a few more words on the present topic. Giving does not mean paying. When we speak of giving, we don't speak of paying, and it's very important to distinguish between the two. In the early days of the Movement, that is to say in the early days of the FWBO, we found that people were very reluctant to give for the sake of the Dharma, even when they themselves were benefiting from it, and saying that they were benefiting from it, assuring you that they were benefiting from it. They were very reluctant to give. But they were often quite ready to pay; pay, for example, for lectures, yoga classes, retreats and so on. And we used to wonder why this was so, and eventually we came, or I came, to certain tentative conclusions, which may not fully explain the matter but which may shed some light on it.

When you pay, you buy. What you buy, you own, you possess. And when you own something, when you possess something, it's yours. And when it's yours, it's for you, so you don't mind paying - even paying for the Dharma. When you give, however, you give away. Money given is money lost. What you give away is no longer yours. What is no longer yours is not for you, so you are reluctant to give, even for the sake of the Dharma.

However, I must hasten to add that things have changed radically, changed dramatically for the better since those days. People in general are much more committed to the Dharma, much more committed to the spiritual life, and much more willing, therefore, to give; and therefore they are much happier, much more positive.

Now for the things that the great goddess Sri promises to give the monk who is the preacher of the sutra. First of all, she promises to give him zeal, and this implies both enthusiasm and energy. But how does this goddess come to be giving zeal? How does she come to be giving that? Surely she is essentially a goddess of wealth and riches, so how does she come to be giving a psychological quality? How does she come to be giving even a spiritual quality? Has she not stepped a little out of place, a little out of line? Has she not gone beyond her proper jurisdiction?

Not really. She gives zeal not directly but indirectly. She gives zeal by giving the other things, that is to say by giving garments, begging bowl, bed, and so on. And how is that? The monk needs to be able to devote the whole of his energies to the spiritual life, the whole of his energies to preaching the *Sutra of Golden Light*; but if he has to bother about food and clothing, then he cannot do that, so food and clothing etc. have to be provided, and this is what the great goddess Sri does: she gives the monk food and clothing and so on, and thereby she enables him to devote all his energies to preaching the sutra. In other words, she gives him zeal. After all, the monk has not only given up the responsibility of supporting a wife and family. He has given up responsibility for supporting himself, and this is well known and widely recognised in most Buddhist countries, especially in Theravada countries. There, as I know from my own experience, a monk is not permitted to cook for himself. He is not even permitted to make himself a cup of tea. Everything is provided for him, everything is done for him.

But, of course, there is another side to the coin. The monk has to devote all his energies to the Dharma, and 'all' means all - and this is certainly not an easy thing for anybody to do. He may devote himself to Buddhist activities such as preaching the *Sutra of Golden Light*, or he may devote himself to meditation,

or to a combination of the two, but in one way or another all his energies are devoted to the Dharma, and it is the goddess Sri who makes this possible. In other words, it's Buddhist economics that makes this possible - the economics of giving. So indirectly the goddess Sri gives the monk who is the preacher of the sutra zeal.

And then, secondly, she gives him garments. I haven't had an opportunity of consulting the Sanskrit text here, so I don't know what this word is in the original, but it's interesting that the translator renders it 'garments', that is to say not 'robes' - garments. And this is very much in accordance with the original spirit of Buddhism. In the Buddha's day, monks - as we call them now - wore ordinary dress. They wore, that is to say, one piece of cloth round the waist, another piece of cloth draped under the right arm, over the left shoulder; plus a bigger, thicker piece of cloth, in fact a cloth of double and treble thickness; this was used as a sort of shawl during the day and also as a blanket at night, and folded it would make a sort of cushion.

Some monks stitched a number of small pieces of cloth together to make one large piece, and this practice later became general. But the only real difference between the monk's dress and the layman's dress was in the colour. The layman's dress was white; the monk's dress was dyed a sort of yellowish brown - a bit like khaki, in fact, or rather it was not dyed, it was discoloured, and the reason for this discolouration was twofold. The cloth was discoloured because if it was discoloured, rather dirty-looking, not clean and white, it would be much less likely to be stolen; and, secondly, it made the monk more easily recognisable. People would know, if they saw someone wearing this discoloured cloth, that here is someone who needs to be supported. The monk's dress is not a robe, if by 'robe' we mean something gorgeous and ceremonial, not to say theatrical, though in course of time it has tended to become so. So the goddess Sri gives the monk who is the preacher of the sutra garments, in other words, just clothes, and the sutra leaves it at that; and perhaps we had best leave it at that.

Thirdly, she gives him a begging bowl. The Sanskrit word for monk is *bhikshu*, and a *bhikshu* is usually explained as one who lives upon *bhiksha* or almsfood - food that has been begged. *Patra* means bowl, or 'bowl' is used to translate *patra*. the bowl or *patra* can be of earthenware or wood or iron, so the *bhikshapatra* is the bowl in which almsfood is collected and out of which it is eaten. The begging bowl, by the way, is one of the traditional eight requisites of the monk, the eight things that you receive, the eight things that you are given, when you are ordained as a monk, as a *bhikshu*. The others are the three garments - the inner, the outer and the upper; one girdle or belt; one water strainer; one razor; and one needle and thread. The general practice was that the monk went out early in the morning, went from door to door without skipping any house, and at each house he received a small quantity of cooked food. And when his bowl was full, or when he had collected enough, he stopped, and he returned to his monastery or to wherever else he happened to be staying. And he offered some of the food to his teacher, and perhaps also shared it with fellow disciples. The rest of the day he spent meditating, studying, teaching, etc. If he happened to be travelling, then, after collecting his food, he retired to a secluded spot, maybe to a grove of trees; he ate the food, rested, meditated, and then resumed his journey.

Now monks are also allowed to accept invitations to eat food at the houses of the laity, or the laity could also bring food to the monastery, but in either case the food is deposited in the bowl. The monk eats out of the bowl. The bowl is also used for fetching water, as well as for drinking out of, so clearly a begging bowl is a very useful piece of equipment. An ancient text, a very well-known text, says that the monk with his bowl and his three garments is just like a bird with its two wings; equipped with these he can go freely wherever he pleases. Incidentally, it is interesting that the goddess does not promise to supply the monk with food. She promises to supply him a begging bowl. We could, of course, say that the begging bowl stands for food, and this is true, but perhaps there is another explanation. The monk begs food, or at least he collects food. He is dependent for food on others. But not only that: he is dependent on others even for the very means by which he begs food - that is to say, the begging bowl. He doesn't even provide his own bowl. Even that has to be given to him. In other words, he is totally dependent on others for his worldly requirements. He is left totally free - free to devote all his energies to the Dharma, in this case to preaching the sutra.

Fourthly, she gives bed, seat. The word used here is *sayanasana*: not so much bed or seat in the sense of particular items of furniture, big and heavy and immovable, as it were. *Sayanasana* means something more like a place to sleep, a place to sit, or somewhere to stand. We mustn't forget that the monk was originally a wanderer. There was no question of his being permanently settled in the monastery; that came later. So in the course of his wanderings, all that he needed was a place to stay, either just for a single night or for

a few days. It could be at the foot of a shady tree, could be in a summer house in somebody's private park, or in a cave. You may remember that last week we found the monk Ratnoccaya sitting in a cave, studying and reflecting on the *Sutra of Golden Light*. So this is what the goddess promises to supply, whether in the form of a tree, a hut or a cave: she promises to supply somewhere to stay.

Fifthly and lastly, medicines. In the Buddha's time, these were comparatively simple. A medicine that is frequently mentioned in Pali texts is gallnuts dissolved in cow's urine. This was regarded as a sort of panacea for the sick monk. I've never tried it, but I've known monks who believed in it very much. There was one Ceylonese monk in particular who strongly recommended it to me in my early days. He said it would cure me of all my complaints. It's the same monk that I've mentioned towards the end of my volume of memoirs, *The Thousand-Petalled Lotus*. It's the same monk who urged me to stop writing poetry and turn out more articles on Buddhist philosophy. I'm afraid I've not been able to follow his advice. I haven't yet tried gallnuts dissolved in cow's urine, and I still occasionally write poetry. He must be turning in his stupa. He was a very holy monk, a very holy monk, though not a very happy one. He had been born and brought up as a Christian and never quite got over it.

However, to return to the medicines. Whether it is gallnuts in cow's urine or whether it is the latest miracle drug, the principle is the same: there is no objection to the monk receiving medical treatment. There is, in fact, a chapter on healing illness in the *Sutra of Golden Light* itself, as we saw in the course of the first lecture. It's chapter 16. Medical treatment, whether of the monk or anybody else, should, however, be in accordance with spiritual principles, in accordance with the laws of life, in accordance with the laws of nature. So the goddess Sri promises to give medicines.

These, then, are the five things that she promises to give the monk - the monk who is the preacher of the sutra: zeal, garments, begging bowl, bed and seat, and medicines. And the last four some of you will notice correspond to a well-known list often found in ancient Buddhist texts, a list of four things that the monk has the right to expect from the Buddhist laity, that is to say food, clothing, shelter and medicine. These four represent the indispensable minimum required to support life; in other words, the monk has the right to expect from the laity only what is necessary, no more.

This brings us very briefly to the question of the relation between the monk and the laity. Traditionally, the Buddhist laity accepts full responsibility for supplying all the material needs of the monk, and they do this very happily. They are very happy to be able to make it possible for the monk to devote all his time and all his energy to the spiritual life. They believe that this is for everybody's benefit. In fact, they believe that by supporting the monk they are laying up for themselves a stock of merit. They believe that this merit will help them to have a better rebirth, will even contribute to their material prosperity here on earth itself. Some lay people, it must be admitted, support the monk simply for the sake of the merit. Such people may not have much understanding of the spiritual life as such, but they do have a firm belief in the superior virtue of the monk and in the meritoriousness of supporting him.

Now in the modern West the monk cannot expect to be supported in this way or for this kind of reason, certainly not by the general public; perhaps not even by all the lay Buddhist public. It is becoming difficult for the monks to be supported in this way even in the East, and some other way must therefore be found, some other way of providing for the material needs of the full-timer - that is to say, one who is devoting all his time, all his energy to the Dharma. I have gone into this on a previous occasion in other lectures; I don't propose to discuss the matter now. It's time we got back to the sutra, back to the remainder of chapter 8, the chapter on Sri.

The great goddess Sri has made her promise. She has promised to give zeal to the monk who preaches the Dharma, promises to supply all his material needs, and she's done this so that he can preach the sutra properly, so that all beings can benefit, so that all beings can awaken to supreme perfect Enlightenment. The chapter then continues, and apparently it is the Buddha who is now speaking, that is to say the Buddha Sakyamuni, though we are not actually told so. And he tells of a previous Buddha, a Buddha under whom the goddess Sri planted, as the text says, a merit root; in other words, under whom she performed skilful actions, actions which have presumably led to her being reborn as the goddess Sri. He says that this Buddha should be ceremonially worshipped, worshipped with perfumes, flowers and incense, and should be worshipped by the power of the great goddess Sri. Sri herself, he says too, should be worshipped in the same way, as well as by the sprinkling of various juices, and in this way one will acquire a great heap of corn.

A rather interesting verse then follows, a verse which the Buddha apparently quotes, and the verse runs like this:

The earth's savour grows in the earth. The deities rejoice continually. The deities of the fruits, crops, shrubs, bushes, trees make the crops grow in brilliant condition.

Now there are two things to be noted here. According to the verse, fruits, crops etc. do not grow as a result only of material factors. Psychological factors are also involved, and the psychological factors are referred to as devas or deities. Only a few years ago, people in the West would have scoffed at such a notion, would have dismissed it as utter nonsense, as a relic of ancient pre-scientific, animistic superstition. But now people in the West, even scientists in the West, are not so sure. They are now considering the matter rather more carefully.

The second thing to be noted is that in this passage the great goddess Sri becomes a sort of goddess of agriculture, even a goddess of corn, and this illustrates something I said last week. Last week I said that in a sense all goddesses are earth goddesses, and in Sri's case the connection is particularly clear. After all, the most primitive form of wealth next to cattle is corn or grain. The Sanskrit word for riches, and the Sanskrit word for corn or grain, is the same word - that is *dhana*. A wealthy man was a man who had a lot of grain, *dhana*, in his storehouse.

The remainder of the chapter consists mainly in directions for the ceremonial worship of Sri as goddess of riches, even as the goddess of corn or goddess of grain, and various magic spells are given. The worship is to be carried out mainly by lay people. They should perform meritorious actions, should repeat the magic spells over a period of seven years, should observe the full moon and new moon days - that is to say observe them by keeping the eight moral precepts - and they should worship all the Buddhas, worship them in the morning, worship them in the evening, worship them with flowers, with perfumes and with incense. And they should do this for the sake of Enlightenment of oneself and all beings. One's wishes, all one's wishes, will then be fulfilled. The great goddess Sri will appear, and one's abode will be replete with gold, jewels, wealth. One will be blessed with a supply of every blessing.

As I said, the worship is to be carried out mainly by lay people. Clearly, it's more appropriate for lay people than for monks. Nevertheless, it does seem that monks also worshipped the great goddess Sri. The text says that one who performs worship makes his house pure, or his monastery or forest retreat. And later the text says: 'In that house, village, city, settlement, monastery or forest retreat, no one at all will cause deficiency.' So it appears that monks worshipped the great goddess Sri at the time that the sutra was committed to writing, that is to say monks performed magical ceremonies for the acquisition of wealth. This would seem to be inconsistent with the first part of the chapter, where the great goddess Sri promises to supply the monk with everything that he needs anyway. So we could regard this passage as evidence of some degeneration, that is to say as evidence of the fact that some of the monks, at least, were hankering after worldly things. Or we can perhaps regard it as pointing in the direction of the future; pointing to a time when monks will no longer be able to rely for support on the laity in the traditional way.

Be that as it may, the chapter on Sri clearly falls into two parts. In the first part, the great goddess Sri promises to give the monk who is the preacher of the *Sutra of Golden Light* everything he needs, really needs; and here we have Buddhist economics in its purest form. Here we have the economics of giving. Worldly wealth, worldly riches, are dedicated to purely spiritual ends, placed at the service of the Golden Light. In the second part of the chapter we are more concerned with the great goddess Sri herself, more concerned with wealth itself, riches itself, and despite the reference to Enlightenment here in this part of the chapter, it seems that wealth and riches are tending to become ends in themselves. In the first part of the chapter we encounter the Buddhist goddess Sri. In the second part of the chapter we really encounter the Hindu goddess Lakshmi. Sri represents Buddhist economics; Lakshmi represents economics in general. Sri represents wealth devoted to spiritual ends; Lakshmi represents wealth simply collected and accumulated. Sri is the bare necessities of life; Lakshmi is abundance, even opulence.

Now I've had quite a lot to say about wealth, even about money; quite a lot to say about the dedication of wealth to spiritual ends. But there's one topic of fundamental importance about which I've not said anything at all, and that is the production of wealth, the creation of wealth. After all, it's all very well to talk about giving *dana*, giving wealth, giving money; but where is it going to come from? Before you can

give it away you've got to have it, and before you can have it you've got to produce it. So how is this to be done? How is wealth to be produced?

Now the second part of chapter 8, the chapter on Sri, tells us this quite clearly. It says wealth is produced by worship, worship of the great goddess Sri, or rather worship of Lakshmi. But can we really accept this? At present we need money for Sukhavati, but do we really believe that it will come if we perform the ceremonial worship of Lakshmi, even if we perform it for seven years? Now I don't wish to deny the importance of the psychological factor in the creation of wealth, even the psychic factor, but I hope I won't be accused of lack of faith if I express doubt that we will get the money in this way, i.e. by worship. It might help, of course; it certainly wouldn't do any harm; but I don't think it would be the really decisive factor. Indians, of course, Hindus of course, believe very much in worship - not so much worship in the sense of devotion, that is to say devotion for the sake of purely spiritual ends. They believe in what we may call magical worship, worship for the sake of bringing about some worldly objective or other. And a great deal of popular Indian religion consists simply of such worship. If you want to pass your examinations, worship Sarasvati; if you want to remove obstacles, worship Ganesh; if you want success in battle, worship Karttikeya; if you want wealth, worship Lakshmi. And we find this attitude reflected in this chapter of the sutra. But I may say it does not really belong to Buddhism, does not really belong to the Dharma, is not part of the Dharma. It belongs more to Indian culture, and we need not therefore consider ourselves bound by it.

So if wealth is not produced by worship, what is it produced by? Wealth is produced by work. It is produced by the application of energy, human energy - your energy and my energy. Now there is work and work. There is work which is not in accordance with the principles of Right Livelihood, and there is work which is. Most people are familiar, only too familiar, with the first kind of work: work which is not concerned with the production of the basic amenities of life, work which is boring, repetitious and non-creative, work which is done under unfavourable conditions, that is to say under conditions not favourable to personal development and done with unfavourable people. A few people are familiar with the second kind of work, that is to say work which is in accordance with the principles of Right Livelihood, and this is very different from the first kind of work. In the first place, it is work done for the sake of the Dharma, not work done for the sake of a wage, not work done for the sake of one's own creature comforts. It's work done so that the wealth produced, or the wealth acquired, can be given to the Dharma, and this work is ideally done with others similarly committed, that is to say committed to the Dharma, committed to the spiritual life. If it's done in this way, if work is done in this way, then it will be a spiritual practice in itself. It will be what the Hindus call *niskama karma yoga*, unselfish action practised as a means of self-development.

Now some Friends - and when I say Friends, I mean Friends with a capital F - are not only familiar with this kind of work; they are actually doing it now. Not at this very moment, perhaps, though perhaps even at this very moment somebody is, but now in the sense of - well, today, this week. And they are doing it in order to raise money for Sukhavati, and they are doing it within the framework of life as members of a spiritual community. So Buddhist economics is not only an economics of giving; it is also an economics of the right acquisition of wealth, the right creation of wealth. We may say that Buddhist economics will not only help us build Sukhavati; it will help us transform the world.

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