

## Lecture 181: The Rain of the Dharma

Members of the Sangha and friends.

Manjuvajra has made it clear that he's very happy to be here on this occasion. And I must say also that I too am very glad, am very happy to be here with you at Zen Center on this occasion. This happens to be my first visit to the West Coast. I've been thinking about visiting the West Coast for quite a number of years, but it hasn't actually happened until just now. And I'm in San Francisco itself just for four days. But in being here for these four days I have mainly three objectives, three ideas in my mind. First of all, I wanted to have personal contact with the members and the friends of our small branch here in San Francisco of the Friends of the Western Buddhist Order - that was the first reason for which I came here. Secondly I wanted to see something of San Francisco itself, about which of course I had also heard so much. And thirdly and lastly, and I could almost say in a way most importantly perhaps, I wanted to have personal contact with some of the Buddhist groups of this city, of the Bay Area, and some of the Buddhist leaders - I'm not quite sure whether I should use this word 'leaders' - but at least with some of those, let us say, who are and who have been prominent in the Buddhist movement in and around the Bay Area for the last so many years.

And I'm happy to be able to say that in the course of the last few days I have had - I have been able to have - that contact. I've been able to see for myself some of the things that I have only read about in the course of the last few years and the course of the last few decades. And here I am of course this evening at our famous Zen Center, about which I'd heard so much in the course of the years. And I'm very glad indeed to be here. And on this occasion I can't help remembering, in fact I can't help saluting, I take this opportunity of saluting all the great teachers, beginning with your own Suzuki-roshi, who have been associated with this center over the years, and who have been responsible for its creation. I think in particular of some of those whom I knew personally, who were personal friends of mine many years ago, like Lama Govinda and like Dr Conze.

So yes, in short I am, for various reasons, for so many reasons, very glad and very happy to be here in San Francisco and in Zen Center at last. As I mentioned, it's my first visit to the West Coast. It's only really my third or fourth visit to the United States. Much of my time in the course of the last twenty odd years has been spent in Britain, mainly concerned with the creation and development of our new Buddhist movement there, the Friends of the Western Buddhist Order. But before that, of course, I was in India. I was in India altogether for some twenty years, nearly twenty years. And it was there principally that I pursued my - at least my earlier - Buddhist training. Of course we never finish our Buddhist training, do we? It always goes on and on. In fact, we wouldn't like to finish our Buddhist training, because we do enjoy it so much.

So I spent about twenty years in India, in various parts of India. A couple of years I spent just wandering from place to place with a yellow robe and a begging bowl in the traditional fashion. And of course one of my greatest and one of my pleasantest and one of my most valuable recollections of India is my recollection of my various teachers, my various Buddhist teachers especially. I was so fortunate as to have eight principal teachers, and it might be of interest if I at least mention their names and say a word or two about each of them, in roughly chronological order.

First of all there was Bhikshu Jagdish Kashyap, who was an Indian by birth, a Bihari, and who was a Theravadin bhikkhu, and a very great scholar, one of the greatest Buddhist scholars that modern India has produced. With him I stayed for nearly a year, studying Pali, studying Abhidhamma. He was a great authority on Pali grammar and on Buddhist logic, and he eventually edited the entire Pali Tipitaka in devanagari characters, and established the Nalanda Pali Institute, which subsequently became the Nalanda Buddhist university. He died some years ago, unfortunately. And I remember the days, the months I spent with him with very great fondness, because he was a complete embodiment of tolerance and of kindness, as well as being a very great scholar - a very humble man. Some scholars I've met, I'm sorry to say, have not been particularly humble men. They haven't been remarkable for their humility. But Kashyaji, as we

usually called him, certainly was.

And then again I must mention the first of my Tibetan teachers, and that was Chetul Sangye Dorje, from whom I received various teachings and initiations. Some of you may have heard his name, because it occurs in the writings of Thomas Merton, of whom some of you must have heard. Thomas Merton mentions him in the course of his *Asian Journal*, I think it is, because it was on the personal recommendation of no less a person than the Dalai Lama that Thomas Merton went to Chetul Sangye Dorje, and he was more impressed by Chetul Sangye Dorje, he afterwards wrote, than he had been by any other Tibetan lama whom he met, not excluding the Dalai Lama himself. So I was so fortunate as to be associated with Chetul Sangye Dorje, who in fact is still alive - he's the only one of my eight teachers who is living - but he's now 82, and he does not choose to come to the West.

He was in some ways the most eccentric and bizarre and extraordinary of all my teachers. He did not give straightforward teachings. If you asked him a question he'd very rarely answer it. Usually he would do something very odd, and you had to make the best of that sort of reply that you could. Some of my own disciples actually have visited him. Some have been rebuffed; others have been welcomed and given teachings and initiations for no apparent reason. So he was one of the most extraordinary of my teachers.

And then I must also mention the great Dudjom Rimpoche and Dilgo Khyentse Rimpoche, and the great Jamyang Khyentse Rimpoche, who died in 1959. And I also must mention Khachu Rimpoche, from whom I received most of my Nyingmapa teachings. He was the head lama, the abbot, of Pemyangtse Gompa in Sikkim, which is the principal Nyingmapa establishment in Sikkim. It's also the royal, or was the royal gompa, the royal monastery. With him too I was closely associated.

And again I must not forbear to mention the name of Dhardo Rimpoche. He was my Gelugpa teacher. I was very closely associated with him for quite a number of years. He was remarkable both for his compassion, I would say, and his extreme mindfulness. I associated with him for a number of years. We were quite intimately associated. We travelled together. But though I observed him very closely - observed his words, observed his actions, could almost sometimes read his thoughts - I never saw him on a single occasion, for a single instant, unmindful. Now that's a very big thing to say. Those of you who practise, or try to practise mindfulness will know how difficult it is to remain mindful even for five minutes. But I never caught out - well, not that I tried to catch him out - I never caught out Dhardo Rimpoche even once. His mindfulness, his self-possession, was so extraordinary one could call it really supernatural. He was never caught napping. And one of my disciples, I'm glad to say, has written the biography of Dhardo Rimpoche. It's called 'The Wheel and the Diamond'. He died about two years ago - Dhardo Rimpoche did, that is to say.

And perhaps last of all I should mention another rather strange, rather eccentric teacher of mine. Or perhaps I should say he wasn't exactly a teacher, although I regarded him as such. He refused to be regarded as a teacher. He refused to regard anybody as his pupil or student. And that was Yogi CM Chen, of whom some of you may have heard. With him also I was closely associated for a number of years, though he would perhaps deny that. But although he would perhaps deny the fact, I learned a lot from him, a very great deal from him. And his tradition was Chinese Zen - Ch'an, that is to say. He practised Ch'an and he also practised Vajrayana, he'd been in Eastern Tibet for a number of years and he'd been associated with the great Jamyang Khyentse Rimpoche.

So these, very briefly, were my eight principal teachers, and I had the very good fortune to be associated closely with these eight great personalities, especially in the course of my last ten or twelve years in India. So India means a very great deal to me. For me India means these teachers of mine, it means friends of mine, it means so many things to me. And sometimes I say even now that even though I was born and brought up in England, and though I've spent now more than twenty years in England, I still feel more at home in India than I do in England. I remember so many things about India. There were so many features of India that I recollect with great affection.

And one of them, I must say, is the rainy season. In India - or perhaps in California you can't imagine this - but in India there's a rainy season. It rains without intermission for three or four months, in some parts of India very heavily indeed. There are parts of India which have four hundred and fifty inches of rain a year. Again, in California I'm sure you can't even imagine that. So there's a rainy season. And the rainy season in India is a very pleasant, a very enjoyable time indeed. You really do enjoy the rain. In south India, where it's very warm at that time of year, people don't bother about mackintoshes and umbrellas, they just walk about in the rain, because they wear so little clothing they can just change when they go home, and that's it. They enjoy the rain. And the rainy season, the period of the rainy season, has also a spiritual significance, because in the Buddha's day the wandering monks used to just stay in one spot during that period, and they'd devote themselves to intensive meditation and study and recitation of suttas and so on.

And I myself, especially during the last eight or nine years of my life in India, I used to spend the rainy season virtually in seclusion. For a number of years I didn't step outside my monastery for the period of the rainy season retreat. I secluded myself: I studied, meditated, and so on. So the rainy season is something very different. It's a very distinctive feature of life in India. And as you might have gathered, in India the rain is very welcome. People don't mind when it starts raining, because for the rest of the year it's so hot and so dry. The ground is parched, the ground is thirsty, as it were. Everything withers, everything is brown. So people are very glad, very happy, when they see those first dark rainclouds looming on the horizon. The falling of rain is something really to be looked forward to, especially by the farmers. Rain is a very positive symbol, a very positive experience.

And so from this we can understand that the expression 'the rain of Dharma' has a very special significance for Indians, and perhaps especially for Indian in the Buddhists. Perhaps in the West, well, certainly in England, the rain of the Dharma doesn't sound very positive, it has a rather depressing sort of ring to it. But in India this expression 'the rain of Dharma' has a really very positive ring indeed, it's a very positive symbol.

So it's therefore not very surprising that there should be a parable of the raincloud in the Saddharma pundarika sutra. And, as I'm sure many of you do know, the Saddharma pundarika sutra or White Lotus Sutra, or simply Lotus Sutra, as we usually call it in the West, is one of the most important of all the great vaipulya Mahayana sutras. The Sutra of course, incidentally, is a Buddhist canonical text purporting to record the actual words of the Buddha, the historical Buddha Shakyamuni. I say 'purporting to record' because according to modern scholarship many of the sutras, and perhaps especially many of the Mahayana sutras, do not so much record the actual words of the Buddha but try to recast in contemporary format something of the essence, something of the spirit, of the Buddha's teaching as it has come down through the centuries.

So the Saddharma-pundarika Sutra, or White Lotus Sutra, is a Mahayana sutra. And so far as we know, in its present form it was written down in Sanskrit - in a form of Sanskrit, or perhaps more precisely two forms of Sanskrit - in about the first century of the Common Era. And doctrinally speaking, spiritually speaking, the Saddharma-pundarika Sutra, the White Lotus Sutra, is of very great importance indeed. It's of great historical importance, it's of great doctrinal importance, especially in the far Eastern Buddhism of China and of Japan. Whole Buddhist schools, in fact, have been founded on the teachings and on the practice of the White Lotus Sutra.

I'm not going to say very much this evening about the doctrine of the Saddharma-pundarika Sutra, the White Lotus Sutra. But very broadly speaking we may say, in a doctrinal sense or from a doctrinal point of view, there are two principal themes reverberating through the White Lotus Sutra. First of all, the first theme is that there are not in fact three yanas; there is only one yana. So the question obviously arises, well, what are these three yanas? Nowadays students of Buddhism usually understand by the three yanas the Hinayana, the Mahayana and the Vajrayana. If one refers nowadays in Buddhist circles to the three yanas this is what usually people think of: Hinayana, Mahayana, Vajrayana. But it is not these three yanas that are referred to here, when the Saddharma-pundarika Sutra, the White Lotus Sutra, maintains that there are not in fact three yanas but only one. There's a quite different set of yanas which is being referred to, with some of which some of you may be familiar, others perhaps not. So perhaps I'll just say a few words

about them.

The three yanas here, in the context of the White Lotus Sutra, are first of all the sravakayana, then the pratyekabuddhayana, and finally the buddhayana, also known as the bodhisattvayana. So let's just look at this briefly, just for a few minutes; this is sort of basic Buddhist doctrine, or at least basic Buddhist doctrinal history. Sravaka, the word sravaka, comes from a root meaning 'to hear', and a sravaka is one who hears. So the sravakayana is the path or the way of the hearers, of those who hear, of those who listen. And by the sravakas is understood the immediate disciples of the Buddha, those who heard, those who listened to his teaching, and who after listening to his teaching gained Enlightenment for themselves, gained supreme Enlightenment for themselves, became - in traditional Buddhist terms - Arhats. So these followed the path of the sravaka, this was the sravakayana - the path of those who, hearing the teaching from another, followed it by their own efforts and gained Enlightenment, but did not - at least according to the Hinayana - did not actually teach, at least did not teach in the way that a Buddha taught. So such are the followers of the sravakayana.

Perhaps it should also be mentioned that according to Hinayana teaching, which is rather later perhaps than the original teaching of the Buddha himself - according to the Hinayana teaching the Enlightenment attained by the sravaka was somewhat inferior to the Enlightenment attained by the Buddha himself. So here we have first of all the sravakayana.

And then we have the pratyekabuddhayana. Pratyeka is usually explained in the commentarial sources in two ways. Sometimes it's explained as private or personal, and sometimes as relating to conditionality. The Pratyekabuddha is one who does not hear the Dharma, does not hear the teaching, from another. He discovers it by his own efforts. And the Enlightenment that he attains is the supreme Enlightenment of a Buddha, not the relatively inferior Enlightenment of the Arhant. This is the Pratyekabuddha. But after gaining that Enlightenment he does not teach. Here there is a difference, according to the Hinayana, between the Arhant and the Pratyekabuddha. The Arhant gains Enlightenment, the inferior Enlightenment of the Arhant, after hearing the teaching, but after realizing that Enlightenment, does not teach. The Pratyekabuddha, on the other hand, realizes that Enlightenment having not heard the teaching from another and having realized that bodhi by his own efforts, and then also he, like the Arhant, does not teach. This is the basic distinction according to the Hinayana. I say 'according to the Hinayana' because it is a distinctively Hinayana teaching here, not that of the Mahayana.

And then finally of course there's the Buddhayana or Bodhisattvayana. The Bodhisattva is one who hears the teaching from a Buddha, by his own efforts achieves supreme Enlightenment, the Enlightenment of a Buddha, and also does thereafter teach. This is the great difference between the Buddha and/or the Bodhisattva.

So we have these three, as it were, spiritual ideals. We have these three yanas. We have these three spiritual paths. We have these three goals. Now it must be said here that the historical Buddha, so far as we know his teachings through the Pali scriptures, which are probably on the whole the oldest of the scriptures in their written form, so far as we know the historical Buddha did not actually teach that there were three yanas in this sense. The historical Buddha did not speak in terms of a Hinayana, or rather did not teach in terms of a sravakayana, a pratyekabuddha and then a bodhisattva or buddhayana.

The historical Buddha did not teach these three yanas, as far as we can make out. He certainly did not use this particular nomenclature. So far as we can make out from the Pali scriptures, and especially from the oldest portions of those scriptures, like the Sutta-nipata, the Udana, the Itivuttaka, some suttas of the Majjhima-nikaya, the Dhammapada, and so on, so far as we can make out from these older, even more archaic texts, the Buddha taught one bodhi for all. The bodhi that the Buddha himself had realized was also realized by his disciples; there was not, as it were, a higher and a lower bodhi, not a higher bodhi which he had realized and a lesser bodhi which they had realized. Sometimes their bodhi was spoken of in Pali as anubodhi, a following bodhi, a bodhi following upon his, a bodhi which they, following in his footsteps, realized - but the two bodhis, the two realizations, being one and the same. As the Master realized, so the

disciple realized. As the disciple realized, so had the Master realized. That, so far as we can see, was the position historically in the time of the Buddha himself.

But gradually distinctions came to be made. Gradually three bodhis came to be distinguished. Because it seems that after the Buddha's passing away, his disciples, or at least the disciples of his disciples, or the disciples of the disciples of his disciples, started feeling that the Buddha was a man of such extraordinary greatness, of such extraordinary spiritual attainment, that his Enlightenment must have surpassed that of his disciples. They couldn't imagine, it seems, that the disciples, great though they were, the Arhant disciples, great though they were, had attained to that supreme bodhi that the Buddha himself had attained to. So they started as it were distinguishing between a higher bodhi attained by the Buddha and a lower bodhi attained by his Arhant disciples; there was the samyak sambodhi and there was just sambodhi, or just bodhi. There were Buddhas and there were Arhants. Buddhas were superior to Arhants, Arhants were inferior to Buddhas. So that development took place.

But then it seems inbetween the samyak sambuddha and the Arhant was interpolated the pratyekabuddha, who came, as it were, halfway between, as I've already described. So you had therefore the samyak sambuddha, the arhant, and the pratyekabuddha. And one had three yanas, three ways, three spiritual ideals, and you could take your choice. According to some Buddhist schools, according for instance to the Sarvastivadins, you could either choose to be a Bodhisattva and become a samyak sambuddha, or you could choose to be a pratyekabuddha and not teach, have no teacher yourself, or you could choose the lower goal of the arhant and follow the sravakayana.

So there came into existence in this way during the first few hundred years of the existence of Buddhism these three distinctive ideals, these three distinctive paths, these three yanas: that is to say the sravakayana, pratyekabuddhayana, and samyak sambuddhayana, also known as bodhisattvayana. But then there comes in the teaching of the White Lotus Sutra, the Saddharma-pundarika Sutra. The White Lotus Sutra says no, there's only one goal for all, one path for all, and that is the highest, that of the samyak sambuddha, that of the Buddha himself, Shakyamuni, the original Buddha. There is one path, one goal, one yana for all, ekayana. This is the great teaching, or one of the great teachings, of the Saddharma-pundarika Sutra, the White Lotus Sutra: ekayana, one yana for all Buddhists.

So we may say therefore that the White Lotus Sutra represents in effect a return to the Buddha's original teaching - not quite to the wording of that teaching but certainly to the spirit of that teaching. According to the White Lotus Sutra all Buddhists follow the same spiritual path. They all have the same goal. There are no higher goals or lower goals; there is just one goal, which is Buddhahood for all Buddhists. So this is one of the great themes, one of the two major themes of the White Lotus Sutra, and one of the reasons why historically it has been of such great importance, especially in far Eastern Buddhism.

Now the fact that all Buddhists follow the same spiritual path finds a certain expression. It finds expression in the fact that all Buddhists Go for Refuge. All Buddhists Go for Refuge to what we call traditionally the Three Jewels. All Buddhists Go for Refuge to the Buddha, to the Dharma and to the Sangha. And that fundamental and basic act of the Buddhist spiritual life, as I call it, that Going for Refuge to the Buddha, the Dharma and the Sangha, takes place on three different levels. The terms here - the English terms here - are my own paraphrasing of the Pali and the Sanskrit.

First of all we have what I call provisional Going for Refuge, or what I also sometimes call cultural Going for Refuge, or even ethnic Going for Refuge. In the Buddhist East there are tens, scores, perhaps even hundreds of millions of Buddhists, and in a sense they all Go for Refuge. They all at least repeat Buddhāṃ saraṇaṃ gacchāmi, Dhammāṃ saraṇaṃ gacchāmi, Saṅghaṃ saraṇaṃ gacchāmi, either in Pali or Sanskrit, or in their own language. So they all consider themselves as Buddhists. But usually they repeat the refuge-going formula without attaching any great significance to it. It's a sort of formality, as I have seen myself so many times in the East.

In the East you have a Buddhist meeting, and how do you start that meeting? Someone, usually a monk, administers the Three Refuges; everybody repeats the Three Refuges after the monk; but nobody gives it much thought. Very rarely do people ask themselves, well, what is it that we are doing? What does this mean? It's part of their culture. It's what they always do. It's the respectable thing to do, even; it's the respectable thing to do, to be a Buddhist and recite the Refuges and the Precepts from time to time. But not much thought is given to it. It's something that you've inherited, something you do because your parents do or did, or because your grandparents do or did. So this is what I call provisional or cultural or ethnic Going for Refuge. It doesn't have a great spiritual significance. Its significance is mainly cultural, even one might say sociological.

So this is the first level, the lowest level. And one need not depreciate that level. It's a start, it's a starting point. But then comes what I've come to call effective Going for Refuge. Effective Going for Refuge is where you've given some thought to the matter. You know what is meant by Buddha, you know what is meant, you understand what is meant by Dharma and Sangha. And you really and truly wish consciously, with your whole heart, your whole soul, to Go for Refuge to the Buddha, the Dharma, the Sangha. You wish really to practise the Dharma. You wish to follow in the Buddha's footsteps. You wish to really be an effective member of the Sangha. You wish to develop spiritually. You wish to gain Enlightenment. And you are determined, at least in your conscious mind, that you will do that. You commit yourself to the Three Jewels. You haven't as yet had any major spiritual experience, any transcendental breakthrough, but you're doing your best to be a real, authentic practising Buddhist of this tradition or that. So this is what I've come to refer to as effective Going for Refuge. It's the Going for Refuge of the majority of sincere practising Buddhists.

And then there's what I've come to call real Going for Refuge. And real Going for Refuge is synonymous in traditional Buddhist terms with Stream-entry and also with what is known in the Buddhist texts as the opening of the Dharma eye. Real Going for Refuge means that your faith in the Three Jewels has become unshakeable. The traditional phrase is that no sramana, no brahmana, not even Brahma himself together with Mara the evil one, could shake your faith in the Buddha, the Dharma and the Sangha. It is absolutely unshakeable, like the Himalayas themselves. And your ethical practice, your observance of the precepts, also is firmly established. Moreover, in that real Going for Refuge, in that Stream-entry, in that opening of the Dharma eye, there is an element, a distinct element, an unmistakable element, of what we call vipasyana, or in Pali vipassana, or clear vision, which means a vision of the Transcendental. Not a vision of the Transcendental as something distant, but as presently, here and now, actually realized, at least to some extent. Vipasyana represents a sort of entry into, an approach to, a close approach to, the Unconditioned itself, the absolute itself, the asamskṛta.

And one approaches the Unconditioned when one goes for refuge in that real sense, according to tradition by way of one or other of three transcendental samadhis. And I want to say just a word or two about those; they may or may not be familiar ground to you. These transcendental samadhis are so called, they're lokuttara samadhis, because they're not associated with the world; they're associated with the transcendental, with the transcendental dimension, with the asamskṛta, with the unconditioned, the uncompounded, the absolute. One focuses on that. And one focuses by way of these three doors; these three samadhis constitute three doors. And these three doors are known as the door of sunyata ... when you get sunyata into view, when you get some glimpse, some realization, to some extent, of sunyata, egolessness, selflessness ... that's one door through which you approach the absolute.

And then there's the door of what is called animitta. Nimitta means literally a sign, but it can also mean a word or a concept. And animitta samadhi is where you approach the transcendental by bypassing all words and all thoughts. And this is a very distinctive experience. When you have this experience, you realize that all words, all concepts, are totally inadequate. Not that they're not very adequate, but that they're totally inadequate, that actually they don't mean anything at all. And this is another door, another samadhi, through which one approaches the absolute, the unconditioned.

And then there is the apranihita samadhi, which literally means the 'directionless', the

directionless samadhi. This approach to the absolute is by way of not going in any particular direction. And why do you not go in any particular direction? Well, you've no particular desire to go in any particular direction. And why do you not have any particular desire to go in any particular direction? Well, because you don't have any desire anyway, and you don't see any particular direction in which you could go. So in this way you come to approach the absolute or the unconditioned through or via the apranihita samadhi, the directionless samadhi.

So according to the earliest tradition, as far as we can see, these are the three approaches to the Unconditioned. By way of these three transcendental samadhis, or one or other - one doesn't necessarily have to approach the Unconditioned through them all - but one may approach through this or through that or the other.

So when one does this, when one approaches the Unconditioned in this way, this is synonymous with what I've come to call the real Going for Refuge. This is when you really and truly Go for Refuge, when you approach the Unconditioned in this way, when you become a Stream-entrant and when your Dharma eye opens.

So we can see from all this that the Going for Refuge is very important indeed. In fact, it is the central and definitive act of the Buddhist life. It's what we all have in common. But this idea of Going for Refuge, this Going for Refuge teaching, is often, I'm afraid, quite neglected, at least in some Buddhist circles. And I was quite interested to find recently that there's been a sort of revival of interest, again in some Buddhist circles, in the importance, in the significance, of the act, this central and definitive act, of Going for Refuge. And in this connection I'd like just to read an extract from a talk which I came across just a few days ago in the current Shambhala Sun. And you'll never guess who this is a quote from - or perhaps you will. It's a quote from none other than Abbot Tenchin Anderson. It seems he gave a talk called 'Speaking of the unspoken'. And this has been reported in the current Shambhala Sun. So let me just read you what he says here, because it is really of very great importance indeed. He says,

'For many years at Zen Center I never really noticed that I had taken Refuge in Buddha, Dharma, Sangha. Now I've learned, again from Dogen's mouth, through Dogen's life. As he was dying, what was he doing? The last practice he did was to walk around a pillar upon which he had written 'Buddha, Dharma, Sangha'. And he said: 'In the beginning, in the middle, and in the end, in your life, as you approach death, always, through all births and deaths, always take refuge in Buddha, Dharma, Sangha.' This basic practice - and this is Abbot Tenchin Anderson's continuation - this basic practice, this fundamental practice, which all Buddhists do, many Zen students never even heard about. It was said that we didn't hear it because it wasn't emphasized strongly enough. In some way our sitting practice is so essential, so profound, that we may feel we can overlook some of these more basic practices.'

So I find myself very much in agreement with those sentiments of Abbot Tenchin Anderson. But it's time we passed on to our second great doctrinal theme of the White Lotus Sutra, perhaps more briefly. And that second doctrinal theme is that of the eternity of the Buddha, or literally of the infinite life of the Buddha. Even in the early Buddhist scriptures, by which I mean the more archaic Pali texts, we do find a distinction drawn between the rupakaya and the dharmakaya. The rupakaya is the Buddha's physical body, at least his physical presence, as we encounter it in history. And the dharmakaya is his inner spiritual, transcendental realization, we could even say his inner transcendental personality. Kaya literally means body, and rupakaya is often translated as 'form body', dharmakaya as 'dharma body'; but kaya doesn't really mean body. It means something much more like the Greek hypostasis. It's much more like 'person' - you could say person without personality.

So you've got the Buddha as he appears, especially as he appears to unenlightened persons, in a physical form, in a human form. And you've got the Buddha as he is in the depths of his being, as he is in reality, as he is at one, so to speak, with the absolute. So you've got the rupakaya Buddha, and the Dharmakaya Buddha. But of course there aren't two Buddhas; there's only one Buddha, who is both rupakaya and dharmakaya - rupakaya, as it were, on one level, and dharmakaya on the other.

So this is basic Buddhist teaching. We find it in the Theravada and we also find it in the Mahayana, especially in the Madhyamika. But the Yogacarins introduced a refinement. The Yogacarins introduced a third body, a third kaya, a third hypostasis, and that was the sambhogakaya, sometimes translated as the body of glory; we might say the archetypal Buddha. So you have, as it were, three Buddhas, three bodies, three kayas or three hypostases. You have the rupakaya Buddha, the Buddha as he appears on the level of history; the archetypal Buddha, the Buddha as he, so to speak, appears in higher celestial realms to great Bodhisattvas; and then the dharmakaya, the Buddha as he is ultimately, at one with absolute Reality.

Now we're not concerned so much with the trikaya. We're more concerned with the distinction between the rupakaya and the dharmakaya, because we find that reflected in the Saddharma-pundarika Sutra. The Saddharma-pundarika Sutra makes no mention of trikaya; it's concerned only with rupakaya and dharmakaya. But all three of them are important. Rupakaya is important, dharmakaya is important, trikaya is important. Or we may say that rupakaya and dharmakaya are both equally important. But the White Lotus Sutra definitely emphasizes dharmakaya. It may be that there were reasons for that. It may be that by the time the White Lotus Sutra was written down the dharmakaya, the Buddha as he was in absolute reality, had come to be obscured by as it were historical recollections of the rupakaya Buddha. So the White Lotus Sutra emphasizes very strongly that the Buddha is not to be identified with his material form. He's not to be identified with his historical personality. He's not to be regarded as limited in the depths of his being by considerations of time and space. In reality he transcends time, he transcends space. The dharmakaya, that is the real Buddha, transcends time and transcends space. He is infinite, he is eternal. So that is the distinctive emphasis of the White Lotus Sutra: on the dharmakaya rather than on the rupakaya.

But I would suggest that many of us in fact need an opposite emphasis. We need an emphasis on the human, historical Buddha. Because it's rather difficult for us to envisage, to get into view, the dharmakaya. It's difficult for us to soar beyond space and time and just glimpse the eternal Buddha, the Buddha of infinite life, revealed in the White Lotus Sutra.

I remember in this connection that when I was in Kalimpong and when I came in contact with many Tibetan Buddhists, I was surprised that many of them hadn't heard of Shakyamuni. They might have just heard the name, but it didn't mean anything to them. Yes, they'd heard of Amitabha; they knew all about Amitabha. They knew all about Tara. They knew all about Avalokitesvara, Manjusri, Padmasambhava - Guru Rimpoche, that is. They knew all about them. But they didn't really know anything about Shakyamuni. In their case the dharmakaya, or perhaps I should say the sambhogakaya, had overshadowed the rupakaya. They'd virtually forgotten all about the rupakaya. But we need to remember the rupakaya. We need to remember the Buddha in his human historical existence, because this can be a very great source of inspiration to us.

So I would suggest to those of our friends who are followers of Tibetan Buddhism and who are followers perhaps of Zen that you shouldn't forget, you shouldn't neglect the human historical Buddha, because after all it's from that same human historical Buddha, as represented especially in the Pali Canon, that this whole great tradition of Buddhism has come down, this whole great tradition of Dharma in all its multifarious forms has come down. So we should never forget, we should never overlook, that human historical Buddha. If we read the Pali scriptures, even in summary, we'll discover so many cases, so many examples, so many stories in which the Buddha illustrates not just so many features of the Dharma, but so many aspects of his own personality in a very inspiring sort of way. We can derive very great inspiration indeed from the life of that human historical Buddha. So perhaps we need to give somewhat more attention than some of us have done to that same human historical Buddha. We really need to follow his life step by step from the Enlightenment to the final Parinirvana.

So these are perhaps the two main themes, doctrinally speaking, of the White Lotus Sutra: the theme of one yana and of eternal Buddha. But on the whole the sutra does not speak, we may say, the language of concepts. It's not really a doctrinal work, though there's quite a bit of doctrine in it. Its approach is not intellectual. The language which the White Lotus Sutra speaks mainly is the language of parables, of myths, and of symbols. And nowadays of course many people are



greatly concerned with parables, myths and symbols. We have all sorts of books on parables, myths and symbols. Perhaps Jung, Carl Gustav Jung, initiated a great movement of this kind, in this direction. We tend very often to read books of mythology, books about parables, books of symbols, symbolism. And my own book, which we mustn't forget, which we supposedly launching this evening, is concerned especially with the parables, the myths and the symbols of the White Lotus Sutra. It's not so much concerned with the doctrine. It's concerned with elucidating, with presenting, perhaps, the most important of the parables and the myths and the symbols of the White Lotus Sutra.

And among those really very beautiful parables, myths and symbols, which are of absolutely epochal importance for Buddhist spiritual life throughout the far East, perhaps one of the most important is the parable of the raincloud. I'm going to read - just to give you a little taste - I'm going to read from, I think it's Soothill's translation actually. I'm going to read this parable of the raincloud. It's a feature, by the way, of the White Lotus Sutra that it says everything twice. Well, it's not just that the audience was especially obtuse, perhaps. It's to do with the historical transmission of the Sutra. It says everything twice - in prose and then in verse - for the prosaic people, perhaps, and the poetic people. It is believed by some scholars that the verse portion is earlier. It is in somewhat more archaic Sanskrit, which is heavily mixed with Prakritisms. The prose portion conforms much more closely to the rules of classical Sanskrit. But perhaps that's neither here nor there. I'll read the poetical version of this parable of the raincloud; and it's the Buddha himself, Shakyamuni, who is represented as speaking. It's Soothill's translation, from Kumarajiva's Chinese version. The Buddha says:

It is like unto a great cloud  
Rising above the world,  
Covering all things everywhere,  
A gracious cloud full of moisture;  
Lightning-flames flash and dazzle,  
Voice of thunder vibrates afar,  
Bringing joy and ease to all.  
The sun's rays are veiled,  
And the earth is cooled;  
The cloud lowers and spreads,  
As if it might be caught and gathered;  
Its rain everywhere equally  
Descends on all sides,  
Streaming and pouring unstinted,  
Permeating the land.  
On mountains, by rivers, in valleys,  
In hidden recesses, there grow  
The plants, trees, and herbs;  
Trees, both great and small.  
The shoots of the ripening grain,  
Grape vine and sugar-cane.  
Fertilised are these by the rain  
And abundantly enriched;  
The dry ground is soaked,  
Herbs and trees flourish together  
From the one water which  
Issued from that cloud,  
Plants, trees, thickets, forests,  
According to need receive moisture.  
All the various trees,  
Lofty, medium, low,  
Each according to its size,  
Grows and develops  
Roots, stalks, branches, leaves,  
Blossoms and fruits in their brilliant colours;

Wherever the one rain reaches,  
All become fresh and glossy.  
According as their bodies, forms  
And natures are great or small,  
So the enriching (rain),  
Though it is one and the same,  
Makes each of them flourish.  
In like manner also the Buddha  
Appears here in the World,  
Like unto a great cloud  
Universally covering all things;  
And having appeared in the world,  
He, for the sake of the living,  
Discriminates and proclaims  
The truth in regard to all laws.  
The Great Holy World-honoured One,  
Among the gods and men  
And among the other beings,  
Proclaims abroad this word:  
'I am the Tathagata,  
The Most Honoured among men;  
I appear in the world  
Like unto this great cloud,  
To pour enrichment on all  
Parched living beings,  
To free them from their misery  
To attain the joy of peace,  
Joy of the present world,  
And joy of Nirvana.  
Gods, men, and every one!  
Hearken well with your mind.'

Well, this is the parable of the raincloud, and here clearly the raincloud is the Buddha, pouring down the rain, and the rain is the Dharma, the teaching. And the plants are all living beings. The plants are what we may describe as the cosmic Sangha - all living beings.

Now there's a number of points to be just briefly noted here. First of all, the rain falls on all alike. The Buddha does not discriminate. The Buddha does not differentiate. We know that the historical Buddha didn't do this. He preached his Dharma, he taught his Dharma, to all alike: to princes, to peasants, to men, to women, to merchants, to outcasts, to murderers, to robbers. He taught his Dharma to all without making any distinction, without discrimination. So the rain, the rain of the Dharma, falls on all alike.

And those who receive the rain, the rain of the Dharma, the plants, the living beings, in other words ourselves, we grow. But we grow in accordance with our own individual natures. The rain falls on the palm tree; the palm tree grows into a palm tree. The rain falls on the flower; the flower grows into a flower. The flower doesn't become a palm tree; the palm tree doesn't become a flower. Each grows nourished by the same rain, but in accordance with its own nature. So in the same way we all learn and practise the same Dharma, but we develop spiritually each in his or her own way; though at the same time we all grow equally towards the same Enlightenment, the same Buddhahood, the same bodhi.

Now for the growth of a plant, we may say, five things are needed. The plant - well, first of all there needs to be a seed. Then there's soil, then there's warmth, then there's light, and then of course finally the rain. So similarly if we are to grow, if we are to grow spiritually, we need five things. First of all there needs to be a seed. There needs to be what we may call a potentiality for Enlightenment. And according to traditional Buddhist teaching, all human beings do possess that, even, we may say, all living beings possess that. They possess the potentiality for Enlightenment.

The seed is there. All can become Enlightened if they make the effort and if conditions are propitious. So the seed, that's the first thing; we all have that.

And then, corresponding to the soil, there need to be favourable circumstances, circumstances favourable to spiritual growth and spiritual development. It's not that we can't develop if circumstances are unfavourable, but it's very much more difficult. And especially we need leisure, we need health, we need facilities of various kinds. And in the West, I think, we're very fortunate that usually these facilities do lie ready to hand. Some of you, before this talk, saw the video of my last visit to India. And many of our Indian Buddhist friends do not enjoy the facilities that we enjoy. For them it's not easy to follow the spiritual life, for all sorts of reasons. I'll just give you a few examples that I know of from my personal experience.

I remember there was a young woman who became a Buddhist and who wanted to take up meditation. But she came from an ex-Untouchable Buddhist family, and they all lived together in a hut which had only one room, and there were eighteen members of the family. But she was determined to meditate. So she meditated every morning - she got up very early - and she meditated sitting upon a shelf on one side of this one room of the hut. And she kept up her meditation practice in that way. I don't suppose any of you have ever meditated, or had to meditate, in that particular way, sitting up on a shelf in a room, a small room, occupied by seventeen other people, but this is what she did.

And then very recently I heard the case of an old woman - not a young woman, an old one this time. This old woman wanted to go on one of our retreats, and the retreat was to last a week. And in India it costs usually a hundred rupees for the week's retreat. A hundred rupees is about two pounds sterling - so that's about five dollars. So that's what it costs for a week's retreat. But this old woman didn't have that five dollars, that hundred rupees. She was seventy years of age, by the way. So what did she do? She worked for a month as a farm labourer, digging and carrying stones, at the age of seventy. She saved up her hundred rupees and then she came on a week's retreat.

So that's the sort of difficulty people have to face there if they want to practise the Dharma. We don't have those sort of difficulties anywhere, I think, in the West, well, certainly not outside some of the Eastern European countries, or perhaps some parts of South America. We don't usually encounter those sorts of difficulties. We have it very easy, and we don't always appreciate that. We have access to books, access to literature. We have free time. We have health. We have leisure. But we have to ask ourselves, do we really make the best use of those facilities? The soil is really there.

But then, corresponding to the heat, the warmth, that the seed needs, we need the warmth of spiritual friendship. And spiritual friendship is very important in Buddhism. And in the FWBO we distinguish two kinds of spiritual friendship: what we call vertical, between the less and the more spiritually experienced, especially between pupil and teacher, and horizontal spiritual friendship, the spiritual friendship which springs up within the Sangha among those who are practically on the same level. It's peer spiritual friendship. And we do really need both. We can't always be in personal contact with our teacher. Perhaps our teacher has many disciples and he doesn't have much time to spare for us, but he gives what we need. But we need more than that in the sense of needing more, let us say, ordinary human spiritual friendship, and that we get from our peers. So we need both of these. We need that warmth, we need that friendship, that devotion, in our spiritual lives. So warmth also is one that helps us in our spiritual growth, our spiritual development. Spiritual friendship is essential.

And then, corresponding to the light that the seed needs if it is to grow, we need intellectual clarity, we need clear thinking. And this is one of the things that does sometimes disturb me. I think not all Western Buddhists are notorious for clarity of thought. One can read all sorts of books written on Buddhism, on the Dharma, by people with less or more factual knowledge about Buddhism, but only too often one finds quite serious misunderstandings and misrepresentations, even about quite basic Dharmic matters. So we need the light of intellectual clarity, we need also clear thinking.

And then of course above all we need the rain of the Dharma itself, especially in the more spiritual sense. And here I want to extend the simile if I may. I'm going to extend it by saying that the rain of the Dharma must be pollution-free. It must not be an acid rain of Dharma. In other words, the rain of the Dharma, the Dharma, must not be mixed with non-Dharmic or even with anti-Dharmic elements. And again, Buddhist teachers in both East and West are becoming increasingly aware of this danger, that is to say the danger of mixing the Dharma with non-Dharmic elements, the danger of an acid rain of the Dharma and not just a rain of Dharma. And I'm going to read just a couple of quotations to illustrate this point. The first comes from a Thai Buddhist, a leading Thai Buddhist. It's Sulac Shivaraksha of whom some of you may have heard. He's a prominent engaged Buddhist, as we say.

And he was interviewed in the summer 1992 issue of Tricycle. And he had this to say in this connection, and I think we should ponder these words. He says: 'The Buddhists of China and Burma have suffered so much. The mistake they made was to compromise with the Confucians. The compromise was fatal for Buddhism in China. The Confucians say 'Why don't you live for the next world and leave this world to us?' And most of East Asian Buddhism took part in that. The Japanese Buddhist clergy make a lot of money on funerals, but until the people die they leave their lives in the hands of the Confucians, who run the country. And what 'Confucian' means here is that the big boss is the emperor. Everyone follows the big boss, and when you work you serve the big boss. You do not upset the status quo.'

So this is from - in exile in Ceylon - an interview with Sulac Shivaraksha. And then the second quotation I want to make is from Roshi Philip Kapleau in the summer 1993 issue of the same journal, that is to say Tricycle. Tricycle is interviewing Roshi Philip Kapleau, and Tricycle says 'Recently I was at a meeting in Santa Fe with a mix of Buddhists from all different traditions, and someone said that we get so caught up in identifying corruption - money, sex, power - that we've lost sight of the real corruption in Buddhism, which is the way the teachings are being altered to make them palatable to an American Sangha.' And Kapleau Roshi responded in this way. He said: 'I fully agree - that is, if you mean making the practices easier or less disciplined. Then there are other corruptions as well, such as the appropriation of fundamental elements of Zen training by psychotherapists teaching their patients meditation and equating it with spiritual liberation. Another threat to the integrity of Zen and in many ways the most bizarre is that of Zen teachers sanctioning Catholic priests and nuns, as well as rabbis and ministers, to teach Zen.'

So this is what Roshi Philip Kapleau has to say. And I must say that I'm very much in agreement with both these Buddhist teachers, both with Sulac Shivaraksha and with Roshi Philip Kapleau. Yes, we need the rain of the Dharma. We need it desperately. We need it more today than ever before. The world needs it. But that rain of the Dharma needs to be pure, and not mixed with extraneous elements. We need it unmixed with Catholicism or Vedanta, unmixed with secular ideologies. And we need to Go for Refuge. We need to do what the great Dogen did. We need, we may say, to inscribe the words 'Buddha, Dharma, Sangha' on a pillar literally or metaphorically, and we need to circumambulate that pillar constantly. We need to stretch out our hands to the Buddha, the great raincloud. We need to saturate ourselves in the rain of the Dharma. We need above all to grow. We need to grow to Enlightenment. We need to grow to Buddhahood.