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THE BODHISATTVA IDEAL

2

The Origin and
Development of the
Bodhisattva Ideal



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Cover Symbol

The symbols on the covers of the issues in this series are from original lino-cuts by Dharmachari Aloka based upon the *mudrās* of the eight principal Bodhisattvas of Mahayana tradition. This issue features the *mudrā* of Bodhisattva Manjughosha, the 'Gentle-Voiced', who is the embodiment of Wisdom. His left hand is shown here holding the volume of the *Prajñā-pāramitā*, the 'Perfection of Wisdom', which he presses to his heart. His right hand wields aloft the flaming Sword of Wisdom which cuts through all delusion.

THE BODHISATTVA IDEAL

1. The Origin and Development of the Bodhisattva Ideal

Part 2

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* Indicates refer to Glossary

Editorial

To aim for Buddhahood according to the Bodhisattva Ideal is a tall order. In the first issue of our present series of *Mitrata* we were concerned, as we still are, with the Origin and Development of the Bodhisattva Ideal and we saw in particular how, historically speaking, the need arose for the opening up of a richer, more imaginative perspective from which to view the goal of the spiritual life. Having embarked on our journey into the dazzling, be-jewelled world of the Bodhisattva Ideal we come, in this issue, very much closer to the Bodhisattva himself, and we begin to get a glimpse of what is involved in this tall order.

At one point, in an extract from the seminar on 'The Precious Garland', the Venerable Sangharakshita touches on the incredible magnitude of the Bodhisattva vow, a subject which will be explored in greater depth in *Mitrata* 60 'The Bodhisattva Vow'. Coming back down to earth we are shown that even within the FWBO, a movement which views Buddhism as a whole and stresses the principle rather than the letter of any particular school, the tendencies to settle down, to being content with a lesser goal, are ever present, and so we too, like the early Mahayanists, must work to counteract this by cultivating a more adventurous spirit. And to do this we don't always have to go a long way from home. To aim for Buddhahood according to the Bodhisattva Ideal is to aim for Enlightenment for the benefit of all sentient beings. To cherish such a lofty Ideal is wonderful, but to experience it in terms of a consideration for others is even more wonderful. To be sympathetic, to be mindful of others, means that we are applying the Ideal of the Bodhisattva in our own lives, putting into practice the spirit of the Buddha's teaching. And if we can do this more and more, on our own doorstep as it were, we will be making great strides forward to bridge the gap between what we say and what we are. Perhaps we will even be in a position to be able to imitate the Buddha without falling into the trap of merely copying him.

Sometimes it might seem that we cannot take the fantastic world of the Bodhisattva altogether seriously. Can anything really be proven by magic or miracles? Once again Venerable Sangharakshita helps us to explore the message behind the words. If the Buddha ever performed miracles it was not to prove anything but simply 'to point out the way to someone who needed a way to follow'. Exalted as it might appear we must be able to relate to the Bodhisattva Ideal from our own experience. What does this mean from our point of view, we are encouraged to ask. What is the principle, what is the spirit, behind the words or outward appearance?

Our seminar extracts begin with the subject of aiming for Buddhahood, Supreme Enlightenment, as opposed to aiming for the lesser goal of the Arahant. But as we approach the final extract in this issue we discover that an Arahant is, in a sense, a Buddha. Perhaps we will be thrown into even greater confusion when we come to the concluding extract — One Bodhisattva is Enough. Does this mean that our efforts are not necessary? As you can imagine, it does not. It doesn't matter how many Bodhisattvas there are in the world, it won't make any difference to us unless we are receptive to the spirit of the Bodhisattva. And perhaps not every one of us will become a Bodhisattva in this life but at least we could be in contact with one. In fact, by reading the following pages we could all experience for ourselves a glimmering of the Bodhisattva spirit.

SRIMALA

Seminar Extracts

1 Aiming for Buddhahood

from *Dhammapada* Chs. 14 and 20 Men's Order/Mitra Event, Vinehall, April 1981

Murray Wright: Do you think that we could call the Buddha's disciples like Maudgalyāyana and Mahākāśyapa,¹ people like that, Buddhas?

Sangharakshita: Well, they are called Buddhas in some of the older Pali texts. In fact, in one place the Buddha makes the statement that there is no difference between himself and his Enlightened disciples in respect of their experience. The only difference is of relative priority and posteriority of attainment. He attained Enlightenment first; they attained it afterwards by following his teaching. But later on, even within the Hinayana, a distinction came to be drawn between the Buddha and the Arahants, and the attainment of the disciples came to be regarded as a lower attainment.

Then, of course, the Mahayana tried to unify the goal for all again, and said that Buddhahood was open to all and that one should not aim at Arahantship, the lower goal, but at Supreme Enlightenment, the higher goal. They had to phrase things in that way because of the development that had taken place already in the Hinayana, and because also they did not have in those days a historical sense; they could not understand that the term Arahant had become, as it were, degraded in course of time, relatively speaking.

Murray Wright: The impression I got was that, even though the Buddha said that his chief disciples were his virtual peers, they all seemed to acknowledge that he still had something extra.

S.: One does get that impression from the Pali scriptures. Maybe it was very difficult for them in those days. The Buddha was not only Enlightened; it seems as though he was a very commanding personality too, even quite apart from being a Buddha. He had more character than the others, even if they were all equal as regards Enlightenment.

Clive Pomfret: I guess one thinks that the experience of Enlightenment is something completely other than any mundane characteristics. However, as far as other people are concerned, a more effective personality or character can communicate experiences much better.

S.: Yes, it seems as though some of the Arahant disciples, the Enlightened disciples, hardly communicated at all. Perhaps they just didn't have that gift. But it must also be said that the Mahayana, especially, regards such gifts of communication almost as an integral part of Enlightenment itself, and that, if you are really Enlightened, you will be able to communicate, because if *prajñā* (Wisdom) is there *karuṇā* (Compassion) will be there too. It isn't an easy matter to determine.

Mike Sherck: But this seems to imply the later Mahayana view of the major Arahant disciples of the Buddha, Maudgalyāyana and Śāriputra, especially when they are stereotyped as Arahant in a negative sense. That is actually quite unjustified. It is just a figurative way of distinguishing. In fact, they were far closer to what the Mahayanists would have described as the *Samyak-sambuddha* (Fully and Perfectly Enlightened One), really.

S.: Yes. Though, again, one must remember that the Mahayana inherited the differentiation between the Buddha and the Arahant from the Hinayana. This was part of the material with which it started; so, having

this distinction between Buddha and Arahant, they plumped for Buddhahood and regarded Arahantship as a lower, lesser goal.

Mike Sherck: One cannot then assume, though, that the original Buddhism of Śāriputra and the Buddhist teachings is identifiable with and exactly the same as the Hinayana?

S.: No, one cannot. The Hinayana itself, it seems, rather caricatured its own Arahants and the Mahayana, not having the modern historical sense, took that over and did its best with that material, being concerned above all to get back to the original spirit of the thing.

Clive Pomfret: I am confused about just what an Arahant is supposed to be. Some people seem almost to despise an Arahant. I guess you could say that the Arahant could be compared to someone who is wrapped up in his own experience, however positive that might be, and the Bodhisattva is someone who is aware of himself and of others. But, in the sense that we're talking about, Arahant is still quite a state to achieve!

S.: Yes. I have said somewhere that Arahantship is lower than Supreme Buddhahood only in the sense that Mount Kanchenjunga is lower than Mount Everest. You still have to look up to Mount Kanchenjunga. I mean that you, as an unenlightened worldling, cannot afford to look down on an Arahant.

Clive Pomfret: If you climb Kanchenjunga, you can get to the top of it, but then you cannot just step on to Everest. If you follow the path of an Arahant, you may become Enlightened, but you won't become Enlightened in the Mahayana sense.

S.: In the Mahayana there is in a way a difference of opinion. Some Mahayanists regard Arahantship as an actual [or potential] stage on the way to Supreme Enlightenment — Buddhahood: that, having become an Arahant, you can awake to the possibility of a further stage of development that you were not aware of before, and then progress as a Bodhisattva to Buddhahood. But other Mahayana schools tend to see Arahantship as a sort of spiritual cul-de-sac. They seem to think that, from the very beginning, you have to be careful not to follow that path, because once you have become an Arahant — yes, you are Enlightened, you are delivered from the Samsara;* but you have permanently precluded the possibility of that higher transcendental realization as a Buddha. Therefore they would say that, even from the very beginning of your spiritual career, you should aim at being a Supreme Buddha and not an Arahant, and that to become an Arahant, from the point of view of Buddhahood, is almost a mistake. These are the two emphases within the Mahayana.

Clive Pomfret: Do you think there is any truth in [the latter view]?

S.: One is up against different versions of the Arahant ideal, but I would say that, if one looks at the Buddhist tradition as a whole and tries to do justice to all these different ideals, one should adopt more the Mahayana point of view, that it is Buddhahood that one is after. On the other hand, one needs to be quite aware that the Arahants of the Pali texts are not the Arahants of the later Sanskrit works, and that at every level of the Path, at every stage, you need to beware of spiritual individualism. Spiritual individualism isn't simply crystallized into the Arahant Ideal; it is a danger that may arise at any level or stage of the Path.

But overall, I would say that since we know about all these ideals — and definitely Buddhahood is the highest of them — one should aim at that and not think in terms of being an Arahant.

Clive Pomfret: It would seem that an Arahant, in that sense, is a person who cannot communicate the experience because he hasn't developed the power of communication.

S.: One does find in the Pali scriptures Arahants like Śāriputra teaching quite successfully. Even so, in the Pali scriptures the Buddha seems to have by far the greater capacity, so perhaps the Buddha was in a way more Enlightened. It isn't easy to speak of being 'more Enlightened', but again one could say there are degrees. It isn't as though Enlightenment were a sort of fixed full stop. This is the way that we think of it — as a fixed state that you finally attain and stay in — but that is probably due to our mental limitations. Maybe [we] try to find a track of the Buddha when there is in fact no track. Perhaps one should think more in terms of indefinite development: after a while, you cannot track him any further. He goes out of sight. So the point at which he goes out of sight you tend to think of as the actual goal, which someone has reached and settled down in. But actually it isn't so.

To formulate the whole thing in the most general terms, I would simply say, "You should aim at the highest goal that you can possibly imagine, but be open to the fact that the more you progress, the greater the goal will become." You will see goals beyond that original goal. It is just as someone said a few minutes ago: when you went for Refuge the intention was just trying to find a shelter from the storms of the world. But once you have Gone for Refuge,² once you have found that shelter, you will find that there is more to it than that.

So it is not an easy question in the literal sense of taking up either the Ideal of Buddhahood or the Ideal of Arahantship. It is very difficult to get a feeling of what they are like at all. You should think more in terms of aiming for the highest ideal you can possibly imagine. Broadly speaking, that is the Ideal of Enlightenment or Buddhahood, but it is not easy to say whether that should be seen in terms of Buddhahood or in terms of Arahantship. We need not in the early stages of our spiritual life go into that too closely, but we should be prepared at all times to revise our conceptions of the highest goal in the light of our own higher and higher experience.

It is like mountaineering. You get to a certain peak and you see further peaks beyond, which you didn't see when you started out. The higher you go, the more you see. The higher you go, the higher you *can* go. So there is no need to aim absolutely at a fixed point. You aim at the highest point that you can see. When you get there you will see another point further on to aim at.

Murray Wright: So, in a sense, Enlightenment is the beginning?

S.: You can even look at it like that. It is the beginning of something that we cannot even think of now, so there is no point in trying. We cannot really think of Enlightenment. We can perhaps think of Stream-Entry* in an adequate way, but Enlightenment is very difficult to think of in any way. That is why I sometimes say, "Let people aim at Stream-Entry." That is intelligible. That is something they can really aim at. The rest is probably just words.

It is even difficult for many people to form an idea of what a human being is like, not to speak of a Stream-Entrant, not to speak of a Buddha. It is not easy to imagine what a real human being is like, even an unenlightened one, even one who isn't a Stream-Entrant. Healthy! Even that isn't very easy to imagine. And happy! That is quite difficult, too. And human! Quite a few people haven't really ever seen or known anyone who is really healthy and happy. They might go for years and years without seeing anybody who is really healthy and happy, as distinct from just bounding boisterously along — that is just animal high spirits and is a bit different.



2 A Tall Order

from 'The Precious Garland' (*The Precious Garland and the Song of the Four Mindfulnesses*)
Men's Mitra Seminar, Padmaloka, August 1976

*[A Bodhisattva] stays for a limitless time [in the world],
For limitless embodied beings he seeks
The limitless [qualities of] enlightenment
And performs virtuous actions without limit.*

*The Precious Garland and the Song of the Four Mindfulnesses, Nāgārjuna and the 7th
Dalai Lama, Allen & Unwin, London 1975, v. 219*

Sangharakshita: So what sort of impression does one get from this verse about the Bodhisattva?

A Voice: The infiniteness of his activities.

Ajita: He gives himself without any stint at all.

S.: But even more than that?

A Voice: Total egolessness.

A Voice: The quality of being outside time altogether.

S.: Yes. What I'm really getting at is this: does the Bodhisattva seem like a person in any recognizable sense, judging from this description? Can one really imagine — can one actually think of — someone who stays for a limitless time in the world? And seeks the limitless qualities of Enlightenment for limitless embodied beings? And performs virtuous actions without limit? It really baffles the mind, doesn't it? Therefore what sort of impression does one get about the Bodhisattva?

A Voice: Beyond man.

S.: Beyond man. And not only beyond man, but beyond even individuality as we usually recognize it, as we understand it. It's almost as if the Bodhisattva is a disembodied, impersonal spiritual energy. Do you see what I'm getting at? In the Mahayana sutras we come across so many descriptions of a Bodhisattva. The Bodhisattva is held up to us. This is supposed to be the Ideal that we are aiming at, the Ideal that we are aspiring to fulfil. But do you think it is very practicable for us? Can we really think in those terms? '*Virtuous actions without limit.*' Can we actually think of ourselves even trying to do this here and now? That's quite a tall order!

When the Mahayana describes the Bodhisattva, it's as though it isn't describing an individual at all. And therefore it's not expecting us to behave like that literally. What is being depicted is a spiritual energy, a spiritual force, at work in the universe. We can get just a glimpse of it now and then. We can't really think of literally being a Bodhisattva, but we can at least be open to the Ideal, and hope that to some extent at least that kind of spiritual energy will be able to manifest through us. If you take the Mahayana scriptures literally, then you have to say, "I am going to become a Bodhisattva, I'm going to perform infinite good deeds, I'm going to establish a Buddhaland, I'm going to liberate an infinite number of beings..." But is one in a position even to aspire to this? Can one imagine oneself, as an individual, actually doing all this? It seems more practical to take the Bodhisattva as representing a universal, even omnipresent spiritual energy which is at work in the universe, tending to the good, tending to the emancipation, tending to the Enlightenment of all beings. And we can aspire to be a channel of that within our own particular sphere, within our own particular context, our own life. Otherwise we get ourselves into the position of making vows or adopting attitudes which are not very realistic. It becomes a little bit theatrical; this does sometimes happen in the Buddhist East in the Mahayana countries.

So it is not that you, as an individual, are going to be a Bodhisattva in this sort of cosmic sense. There is a Bodhisattva, or *the* Bodhisattva at work, and one will assist and co-operate in that work, make oneself a channel for that sort of energy. You can't appropriate to yourself as an individual, which means really as an ego, the attributes and qualities and activities and vows of a Bodhisattva. So the Bodhisattva is not an individual in the ordinary sense of the term. Just as the *Sambhogakāya*³ Buddha represents the Ideal of Enlightenment outside any historical context, outside space and time; in the same way the Bodhisattva does not represent any historical individual but what we can perhaps call the spirit of Enlightenment at work in the world and as it were personified in that Bodhisattva form.

A Voice: Could one say that there are certain forces of evolution at work in the universe which manifest because that is the way they communicate themselves to the human psyche for the sake of communication?

S.: One could, perhaps. But I think one has to be quite careful how you put these things. One is dealing here with myth and poetry rather than with scientific fact.

Ajita: Do you see it in terms of a certain attitude?

S.: The Bodhisattva takes a vow to pursue his career for three unthinkable aeons and to practise each *pāramitā*⁴ for so many millions of years. Well, can one quite realistically and honestly make those sort of vows? One *can* think in terms of the Bodhisattva spirit at work in the universe, not limited by space, not limited by time. *Then* one's own task is to reflect that, to manifest that Bodhisattva spirit, within one's own sphere of influence, within one's own life. That would seem to be more realistic and more true, even in a way more honest. I think one has to stick very close to one's actual situation and not get lost in rather unrealistic aspirations, as the Mahayana does sometimes get lost in the East. In a way the Theravada is much more sober, and much more close to the actual facts of the situation. But the Mahayana gives very

well the *spirit* of the whole thing, the whole process, within a much wider, even a cosmic, context. In a way you have to take the two together: take the Theravada as a guide for here and now, the daily practice; and take the Mahayana as a guide to the Ideal, as it exists outside space and outside time, and independently of one's own rather pathetic efforts.

The Mahayana represents the spiritual Ideal presented independently of any historical context. This is why I sometimes say there is only one Bodhisattva, just as there is only one Buddha and one Bodhicitta. The Bodhisattva is in a way a personification of the Bodhicitta. You could even say that the Bodhisattva represents the spirit of the Higher Evolution.



3 Beyond the Routine

from Questions and Answers on the Bodhisattva Ideal, Pre-Ordination Retreat, Tuscany 1984

Devamitra: You've spoken quite a lot about the dangers of settling down into an FWBO sort of life style, and it seemed to me that settling down into the FWBO was symptomatic, in particular, of the onset of a deepening of the third fetter.⁵ I wonder if you'd care to comment on that.

Sangharakshita: I don't think that literally one can settle down into the FWBO. That would be a contradiction in terms — although I have used that expression myself. It's more that you settle down into the concomitants of the FWBO: for instance, [you settle down into] — I won't say the community but — the building in which the community lives. You can settle down *there*, which means that you are not really living in it as a member of a community. The community has in fact to some extent ceased to be a community; it's almost just a substitute for home. So in that way one settles down: not in the FWBO itself, but, under the appearance of being involved in the FWBO, into things which are not really in accordance with the spirit or meaning or purpose of the FWBO. [In settling down] you are taking things which are means as ends in themselves. And that is, one might say, the essence of that [third] fetter: that you start treating things like ethical rules (or principles), [or] religious observances, as ends in themselves. You forget that they are all intended to help you grow and develop in the direction of Enlightenment. In the same way, you forget that things like communities, and classes, and meeting with your [spiritual] friends, are not ends in themselves [but that] they point beyond themselves [and that] they are all leading you beyond themselves in a certain direction. You forget that. You just take your ease in those things themselves.

Devamitra: You also commented some years ago — I think after you had returned from India once — about some of the older Order Members becoming a bit staid, and I think you also used the term settling down in relation to them. And they weren't people who were just obviously going through the motions of living in a community etc. I think you referred to the Chairmen, actually.

S.: Yes, I remember saying something about having the impression that people were a bit staid. It got some people quite worried. I think what I was trying to get at was that people seemed lacking in life, in vitality, in adventurousness. There wasn't much of a spirit of 'going forth', or conquering fresh fields. It was more like staying around the home base and getting a bit 'dug in': not necessarily in a negative way but not in a very imaginative way [either]. I think it is quite easy to get into a routine. It may be a quite positive, even a quite necessary routine, but then after a while you can no longer see beyond the routine. This can happen if you

stay with a particular centre or community for too many years. You may begin not to see beyond that — not to see the wider Movement, not to speak of the wider world.

Devamitra: Isn't that also an aspect of the third fetter?

S.: One could say that [it is], very broadly speaking. But 'staid' also suggests an unduly sober, rather unimaginative, slightly stiff, way of doing things; lacking in flexibility or adventurousness or imagination. It suggests a certain amount of rigidity. (At that time I think people were over-concerned to find out exactly what 'staid' meant, rather than trying to understand what I was getting at by using that word.) It's very easy to get tied down by a round of duties — perfectly good duties which need to be done — but if you allow that to go on for too long, or you don't take proper precautions, you tend to become unable to see beyond that round of duties.

For instance, around centres there are quite well-established ways of doing things and they are all good things. You have beginners' classes, and regulars' classes, and study groups of various kinds. The structure is quite good: it is well thought out, it functions well. But even in that positive and useful structure you should not become so absorbed, or so immersed, that you can no longer think of alternative or additional ways of doing things. You should not become unwilling to venture into new fields where the structures to which you are accustomed, good as they are, are not appropriate, and where you have to devise *fresh* structures and find out new ways of doing things. Without being aware of it, you tend to shrink from that possibility.

Prasannasiddhi: Do you think things have improved since you made that comment a few years ago?

S.: Certainly people have been more worried about being staid (*laughter*), whatever it might mean. But I think things have improved generally, so I take it that they have improved in that respect too.

One is not surprised when one sees people becoming a bit staid as they get older, but one is surprised when one sees how staid the young sometimes are. I'd like to see a much more adventurous spirit in the Movement as a whole. I don't want people to go out trying to be adventurous prematurely or trying to run before they can walk, or fly before they have any wings worth speaking of. None the less, I hope, for instance — to speak more concretely — that not everybody who is being ordained this year is thinking in terms of going straight back to their own original centre and remaining there indefinitely. That would be rather unimaginative. I know quite well that there is much to be done in the centres from which you have come, and that it would be good for you to be there for some time at least after ordination, to get used to functioning as an Order Member. But, sooner or later, I would like to see people looking much further afield and thinking in terms of going to new places where there is no FWBO, no centre, no community, and *starting up* something, rather than settling down in an almost cosy way in an established situation. And it does seem that quite a lot of people think in those terms. But, obviously, I don't want people to go to the other extreme.

Also, sometimes people indulge in daydreams — you know, of setting up a centre in Spain or South Africa or wherever — but it's only a daydream. It is a sort of compensation for just carrying on in the old way. They are not really serious about it; if they were, they would start to make active preparations. For instance, they would be learning Spanish if they were going to Spain, or Afrikaans if they were going to South Africa, and so on. So I am not referring just to daydreaming or anything of that sort. Also, of course, I don't mean to provide people with a rationalization for restlessness, and I don't want them to go out unprepared. But, at the same time, people do have to watch themselves, because especially as you begin to reach a certain age, even though you are not married and don't have children, there is a tendency to settle down, [a tendency] just to be comfortable, and follow a steady routine, and have everything laid on, pretty

well sorted out and established. You don't necessarily escape this automatically simply because you don't have a wife and family. In fact, you can be so sure you are escaping it that it actually overtakes you without your knowing it.

So one needs to be very much on the alert. Otherwise, we shall no longer be an expanding Movement. We shall be a Movement that is consolidating, perhaps even hardening a little, round the cores, as it were, in the form of the existing, well-established centres and communities. [This will be the case] especially if your whole FWBO career has been, for instance, in connection with a particular centre, or as part of a particular community. Having returned from Tuscany to wherever you came from, and having established yourself as an Order Member, you should start quite seriously thinking in terms of at least seeing something of some other centre or community for a while, so that you don't identify the whole Movement just with your particular centre or community. This is especially important for an Order Member. You can understand a Mitra being identified with a particular centre. A Mitra *is* connected with a particular centre. But in the case of an Order Member, he is ordained into the whole Order, and the whole Order could exist without any centres, or even perhaps any communities, at all. So inasmuch as one is ordained into the Order, one belongs primarily to the Order. As an Order Member one does not really, when it comes to the point, belong to a centre. You belong to the Order, and you function in connection with this centre, or as part of that community, in accordance with the needs of the situation; not because you exclusively identify yourself with this particular centre or community. But, human nature being what it is, there is bound to be a tendency of this sort. So if your whole FWBO life has been lived out in connection with a particular centre or community, you need to counteract that tendency by moving away from it within a reasonable period after ordination.

Padmavajra: What would you call a reasonable period?

S.: It would vary, but I would say give yourself a year. I am not suggesting that you then go and start up a centre anywhere, but [that you] move on to another centre or community: have a bit more experience, a broader experience, of the Movement. You won't do that just by paying the odd visit or reading about other centres and communities in the Newsletter.

Sometimes I am surprised at the extent to which Order Members and Mitras belonging to one particular centre are ignorant of what is going on in other centres and communities; maybe not so much in the case of Mitras but certainly in the case of Order Members. Sometimes I've been really surprised [to find that, for] some people, it was almost as though other centres and other communities didn't exist. They just did not know anything about what was actually going on there at all.



4 Burnt Rice - Late Lunch

from Questions and Answers on the Bodhisattva Ideal, Pre-Ordination Retreat, Tuscany 1984

Devamitra: This question arose out of our discussion of anger and hatred, when we begin to feel the nature of the poisons.⁶ Over the last two or three years I think I've heard you refer more than once to the general lack of sympathy within the Movement, but I've never heard you speak at length about it. I was wondering if you could define for us what you mean by sympathy; what it is that is lacking; how this lack manifests itself; what we need to guard against to overcome our lack of sympathy; and how to set about cultivating it?

Sangharakshita: Sympathy is literally 'feeling with', but I don't think the term really expresses what I was trying to get at. There is another term that expresses it more adequately: 'fellow-feeling'. When I speak of a lack of fellow-feeling I mean really a lack of consideration for others, which is the result simply of not feeling for them, not appreciating how they are feeling, not appreciating the sort of position, or even predicament, that they are in, and responding accordingly. It seems that very often people are so bound up with their own affairs, their own interests, their own concerns, their own preferences, that they are quite oblivious of the needs and the feelings of others. So one thing which I think is needed in connection with the cultivation of this feeling of sympathy, or fellow-feeling, is just awareness of other people. I think the lack of fellow-feeling is to a great extent due to the fact that we are not sufficiently aware of others. That is also bound up with a lack of imagination, an inability to project ourselves into others' shoes and to realize what it must be like for them to be in that position, and to act accordingly.

So I think the very least that we can do in this connection is to try to be more mindful of others, of their needs, their feelings, and to try to realize that we have to consider others more. I can't think offhand of any specific exercise or method or practice that we could undertake. Perhaps it does just depend upon mindfulness. But you know the sort of thing that I am talking about. You will recognize that I have not given any actual examples.

Devamitra: Is there an example that comes to mind?

S.: Not offhand; I could probably think of one if I tried. But can any of you think of any?

Vessantara: Very often when somebody comes to your centre or community you forget to introduce him or tell him where things are. You just assume that he knows.

S.: Yes, that's true. You assume that he knows, or maybe you don't even introduce him properly. Sometimes that happens. Or he is left almost floundering. You don't sympathize or there's no fellow-feeling, in the sense that you don't stop and think how it must feel to be a new person, a new arrival, in a centre or a community, maybe not feeling at ease, not knowing your way around, not knowing what you should or should not do, and being therefore a little uncertain and needing a bit of reassurance or encouragement. You just don't realize all that, so there is no *sympathy*: no fellow-feeling, and of course no awareness or imagination.

Phil Miller: [Another example is] not answering letters.

S.: Yes. Perhaps not appreciating what the other person may be feeling when he or she gets no answer to their letter. Maybe you have a perfectly good reason for not replying, but they don't know that; they are not thought readers, presumably; they are not telepathic.

Prasannasiddhi: It seems fairly easy to pick out the person's [needs]. You know what he should be doing. You are in communication with him. You're aware that he is not doing this, and so on. But...

S.: Yes, it's not only a question of feeling with them but feeling *for* them, appreciating their limitations. Also, of course, appreciating their good points, their good qualities, so that you are not always dealing with them or thinking of them in terms of what needs to be amended or corrected or changed.

I have also discussed this lack of sympathy even more simply and basically by saying I've often thought — I am talking specifically about situations within the FWBO — that people are not kind enough to one another. I have often been struck by the extent to which people can be quite unkind to one another, almost without cause sometimes. They are not *kindly*, by nature or behaviour, only too often. I'm afraid that I have noticed this quite a lot, quite generally. Do you understand what I'm getting at? In other words, one might say still more basic Buddhism [is necessary; there is] not enough *mettā*,* despite the 'daily dose'.

Devamitra: Why do you think that should be?

S.: I suppose there are all sorts of reasons. You could blame it all on mother, I suppose (*laughter*), on the welfare state, or the weather, or almost anything. But often people don't seem very pleased, they don't seem very happy, they have no time for other people, they are too self-centred. The main reason, probably, why there is not enough kindness around is that people are too preoccupied with themselves and what *they* want, what they would like, what is due to them, what *their* rights are. It is our whole modern way of thinking and ideology that has encouraged this, that has made us very selfish little animals — in many cases, quite spoiled. I really notice this, by way of contrast, when I go to India sometimes. Everyone — at least the people I come into contact with — seems much more *kindly* there.

Pete Dobson: Perhaps people should worry more about other people's development.

S.: I think it is not even a question of worrying about their development, to begin with; it is just worrying about their little creature comforts and conveniences. I think I mentioned that in the lecture. [It's a question of] just helping other people. It doesn't mean that you have got to perform some great heroic deed for them — well, you might have to one day — but it's enough to do little things because, after all, daily life is made up of lots of little things. For instance, if someone burns the rice, and then maybe lunch is late, or someone borrows your favourite book and forgets to tell you, or someone slams the door violently as he goes out — there are dozens and dozens of these little annoyances and forgetfulnesses throughout the day. Well, that can add up to a quite unpleasant and irritating day for you. So people need to be aware of these sorts of things and practise their kindness and mindfulness in all these sorts of *little* ways. Do you see what I mean?

Prasannasiddhi: Perhaps this has something to do with people being in so much of a hurry. They've got so many things to do that they don't take time to look after...

S.: That may be true, but they are things for *oneself*.

Padmavajra: In your lecture 'A Case of Dysentery',⁷ you refer to the bhikkhus neglecting the monk who had dysentery. They were obviously not practising the Dharma. Do you think there is a danger, in practising the

Dharma, that if we are not careful we can be so preoccupied with dealing with our mental state that we can lose sight of basic human kindness?

S.: Well, I have touched on this sort of thing recently. [I have said] that people have started in some cases using the language of 'good for my development' in the wrong way. This is often an excuse for doing something that you want to do, for indulging yourself, a way of justifying yourself to spiritual friends and others. "Oh, I think it would be good for my development," you say. "I think it would be good for my development if I just let myself get angry sometimes." "I think it would be good for my development if I went and found myself a girl friend." Or, "I think it would be good for my development if I had more money", or "I think it would be good for my development if I just went off to Greece for a few weeks." (*Laughter.*) Because 'good for my development' is the accepted language. So one comes in the end to justify things in that way, and one may basically be leading a very self-centred and selfish life. But when you mentioned the incident which I referred to in '*A Case of Dysentery*', what occurred to me was this: as I think I mentioned in the original lecture, when the monks were asked why they had not looked after that sick monk, what did they say? What reason did they give for their neglect?

Padmavajra: They said he was useless.

S.: Yes; he was not of use to them. What a terrible admission! What a giveaway! So often, this is the reason for our neglect of people and our lack of kindness: they are not of use to us, we don't get anything out of it. We are kind enough to those from whom we hope for something; we are ready to scratch *their* back all right. But what about those from whom we *don't* expect anything? We just don't bother about them. So such kindness as we do practise is often not real kindness, it's tit for tat; it's just a sprat to catch a mackerel. That is all it really is. But often we are nice to those people from whom we expect something. It may not be anything material. It may be consideration, regard, praise, psychological support, perhaps indulgence, approval; it may be all those sort of things; but we can be nice, even kind, to *them*, but not to others. So again it seems to come back to our self-centredness, our egocentricity.

Phil Miller: Is that egocentricity peculiarly Western?

S.: Basically it isn't. They are not Enlightened in India, but they are marginally more positive. They are more kindly, but, one has to say, in most cases not in any spiritually significant way. But it is certainly better to be the way they are than the way people often are in the West. There is more warmth or kindness [there], even though it is not on a very high level; but in a sense it doesn't have to be [on a high level], it's a good start.

I remember an experience of mine when I was staying in Bombay in about 1954 or 1955. I was staying in a block of luxury flats on Malabar Hill with a friend who lived there, and there were a lot of Europeans, especially American and German business people, living in that same block. I used to see some of the children going to school in the morning. One day I was really struck by the expression on the face of a little German boy as he was going off to school — he was only six or seven, but his face was so cross, so spiteful, it was really astonishing, especially compared with the expressions on the faces of all the little Indian boys and girls going to school. It was really quite remarkable and it really struck me. And I thought then that it had some significance, though at that time I wasn't sure what it was. I never saw that sort of expression on the face of an Indian child. So I think we have a lot to learn in this respect.

So it is all very well to talk about the Dharma, and [about] practising meditation and enlightening all beings and all the rest of it, but people do need to start with just being more kindly to one another. Auden speaks of 'our kindness to ten persons'; well, if we can even be kind to ten people that is probably quite an

achievement, for some people! But, obviously, it need not stop there. There should be an *element* of kindness, at least, in our attitude to everybody we meet; at least we should have good will towards them, and do what we can for them in at least small ways. There needs to be much more of this spirit even within the Movement itself. I am sure there is more within the Movement than there is in the world outside — in, say, England — but that certainly does not mean that we should be satisfied with the degree of positivity or kindness that has already been achieved. People who come into the FWBO, whether into centres or into communities, from outside, really do comment on the positivity and friendliness of the atmosphere. I certainly don't want to overlook what has already been achieved, or undervalue that. But there is still a lot more that could be done in this respect.

People might consider even making a small start here in Tuscany, so that they go back a bit more human and kindly than they were when they arrived. Perhaps it will even be noticeable to people when you get back, to members of your community and people you work with around the centre. Even your own families may notice that you have mellowed a bit (*laughter*) in the course of your 'Tuscany experience'; you're more human, a bit easier to get on with than you were before. So they might be quite happy to let you go again, in five or six years!

5 'What You Are Speaks So Loudly'

from Questions and Answers on the Bodhisattva Ideal, Pre-Ordination Retreat, Tuscany 1984

Dipankara: I have a question concerning the distinction between what a person is and what he says, between being and expression. If the words do not express being, then what is it that the words are coming from?

Sangharakshita: Well, of course, words always express what you are to some extent, but they do not necessarily express what you *think* they express, or what you would, perhaps, like others to think that they express. Your words may not be truthful; in that case they express your being, but they express the untruthfulness of your being, or of a part of your being. And you can repeat words which are not adequate to your being, or repeat words to which your being itself is not adequate.

For instance, supposing someone comes along and asks you, "What is the goal of Buddhism?" And you say, quite glibly, "Enlightenment of course, Supreme Enlightenment: unification of Wisdom and Compassion on the highest level." Well, that's true: the words themselves are formally correct. But your being is not adequate to what you have said, because you yourself don't embody that. So, in that case, your words are not an expression of your being, because your words go far beyond your being. In a sense, they're only words.

You can think of there being two circles: a great big circle — which is your words — and then a little tiny circle — which is your being. Whereas they should be much more nearly commensurate. And if your words are too much out of harmony with your being, people will pick up on that. There is a saying — I think it's by Emerson — that 'What you are speaks so loudly that I cannot hear what you say.' (*Laughter.*)

So you have to be very careful about the sort of message you're actually putting across. You can be talking about love and about *mettā* but be in a thoroughly irritable frame of mind and that's what the other person will pick up on. So it is important that when you talk about the Dharma, your being should be, to some extent at least, in harmony with that. And that's why people who take study classes and who lead *pūjas* should be in the corresponding frame of mind and take steps to prepare themselves to get into the

corresponding frame of mind before they take that class or lead that *pūja*. They must give themselves that [necessary] time; this is very important. Otherwise you dash in, snatch up your *kesa*⁸ and plonk yourself down on the seat and look about and say, "Good heavens! Gosh! Meditation ... Which meditation is it? OK ... Mindfulness!" Dong! (*Laughter.*) That's not good enough. I have seen people doing almost that.



6 To Imitate the Buddha

from 'Rechungpa's Repentance' (*One Hundred Thousand Songs of Milarepa*)
Men's Seminar, Padmaloka, November 1980

*In the Great Bliss Cakra in my head
Dwells Buddha Sungwong Duba and many gods;
This is the Cakra of Great Bliss,
Where the Nādīs and Hindus both unite.
Son, if you can identify your self with the Buddha,
The Divine Body will vividly appear;
Your flesh and blood will be transformed into the Rainbow Body.
Of all marvels, this is most marvellous.
Son, do not lose your faith
But increase your veneration!*

The Hundred Thousand Songs of Milarepa, trans. Garma C. C. Chang, Shambhala,
Boulder & London 1977, Vol. II, p. 446

Sangharakshita: '*Son, if you can identify your self with the Buddha, The Divine Body will vividly appear;*'. So what is this identifying oneself with the Buddha? There is of course an actual visualization practice* in which you don't visualize the Buddha figure out there in front of you and then contemplate it: you visualize or experience yourself as being Buddha. But what exactly does one mean by identifying oneself with the Buddha? In what sense can you identify yourself with the Buddha? To what extent can you do that in a real or genuine way?

Mike Chivers: By having a realization that you are essentially the Buddha.

S.: In what way does that differ from actually attaining Buddhahood?

Mike Chivers: This is presumably talking about your potential. That you do actually have a sort of seed of Buddhahood in you. You aren't actually Enlightened, but through practice you realize that.

S.: But in the Vajrayana it goes a bit beyond that because you actually visualize yourself as having the body of a Buddha, the marks⁹ of a Buddha and so on. What do you think is the significance of that?

Mike Chivers: Well, is that like a symbolic transformation of all your energies?

S.: Yes, it's like a symbolic transformation. It helps you to feel that there is in you at least some Buddha-like quality or potential. Just to say that one has got the potentiality of Enlightenment, that one is potentially a Buddha, is a rather dry abstract statement. There isn't much emotional resonance to it. But if you visualize yourself as having the body of a Buddha, seated cross-legged on a lotus-throne and [with] rays of light proceeding from different parts of your body, this may give you a more emotional appreciation of the fact that you do have that Buddha potential. It may also have the secondary effect of purifying your mundane being and getting rid of unskilful mental states such as guilt and self-hatred. However, looking at it in a different way, do you think there is any danger in 'identifying' with the Buddha? Could you do it in an unskilful way and if so, how?

Devaraja: By pushing in to your ego...

S.: Yes, by identifying with the Buddha in a purely intellectual way as sometimes happens in pseudo-Zen. You think you are a Buddha, and what happens in that the idea of your being a Buddha is appropriated by the ego, and the ego 'becomes Buddha'. Not that the ego is transformed into Buddha, but the ego thinks that itself as ego is Buddha.

Abhaya: It's dragging the Ideal down...

S.: Yes, indeed. It is the negation of the Ideal. It's just the glorification of the ego. (*Pause.*) So this introduced the distinction between genuinely emulating and merely imitating. Do you see the point of the distinction? Sometimes the question is raised: Should we not imitate the Buddha? In Christianity there is the famous imitation of Christ.¹⁰ There is nothing wrong with imitating if you take the word literally, but it has acquired a somewhat different connotation in modern times. Now, imitation usually means copying in rather an external way. So perhaps one should speak in terms of emulating rather than imitating. Emulating means being inspired by somebody's example and doing your best genuinely to follow that example. Imitating means behaving like that person in quite a superficial manner while remaining essentially unchanged, and even copying the behaviour of that person in such a way as to conceal your own real nature. (*Long pause.*) Do you think one could speak in any meaningful way of imitating the Buddha, to use that word in a positive sense?

Mike Chivers: Yes, I think that simply by sitting in a meditation posture...

Jayadeva: Practising the precepts is only emulating, because until they become a spontaneous expression of your inner state you are just going through the motions in a sense, to try and cultivate that kind of behaviour in yourself.

S.: Yes, right. One says that one's ideal, one's aim, is to gain Enlightenment, to be a Buddha. One knows that Śākyamuni, the historical Buddha, actually did that and one can trace the different stages of his career. One knows how he behaved after attaining Enlightenment, too. Therefore one can, perhaps, meaningfully speak of doing what the Buddha did, in as much as one is also aiming at Enlightenment. In that sense one can speak of living like the Buddha, [or of] imitating him. But does that mean that one must necessarily duplicate or reproduce all the different incidents of the Buddha's life?

Voices: No. No.

S.: Well, in some cases maybe. Or perhaps one might ask, "How literally?"

Kulamitra: But if you do it mechanically then it's just an imitation. It's different if the conditions in your life really correspond to the conditions in the Buddha's life and therefore certain things become necessary, such as Going Forth.

S.: If you are living in a palace and all that, presumably you have to leave it, literally.

Simon Chinnery: I was thinking of heroic figures like Dharmapāla,¹¹ of the actions he performed. You could try to undertake similar things, though not literally go to India and do what he did.

Kulamitra: Isn't that what monks think they're doing when they take on the Vinaya* and the robes and the bowl? They think they are emulating the life of the Buddha.

S.: Yes, in a few cases it may actually be so, but in many cases it's just purely external.

Kulamitra: That would be OK, if you really understood the principles, if you felt your act was an expression of the principles you understood.

S.: Yes, indeed. For instance, in some Buddhist countries -at least until quite recently – there was the custom that when a young man became a monk the Buddha's leaving home was re-enacted. The young man was put on a white horse and led round the village etc. This can emphasize a certain principle. But it can also, no less easily, become just a cultural tradition which doesn't have much spiritual significance. Even then, it can have spiritual significance for someone who really takes it seriously. It becomes significant if the person feels that he's doing as the Buddha did, in a very deep and genuine way.

<This question not printed fully in the Mitrata> ... tradition expression.

S.: Yes. I think we also have to try to understand the difference between those incidents in the Buddha's life which reflect actual stages of spiritual development and those which were merely accidental. You could say that the Buddha's Going Forth represented an actual stage of spiritual development. Therefore, you could say to yourself, "I have to imitate the Buddha in this respect. I too have to Go Forth if I want to be like the Buddha, if I want to gain Enlightenment." The Buddha had a home to leave. He had a palace to leave. He had a wife to leave. You might not have a palace or a wife. (*Laughter.*) You might not even have a horse to Go Forth on. But you have to ask yourself, "What is Going Forth for me?" It's not that you have to find a palace and then leave it or get married and then give up your wife, just to be like the Buddha. I actually knew someone who did that in India. (*Laughter.*) He was a bachelor and he wanted to become a monk. But he wanted to do it the way the Buddha did it, so he got married and had a son. He was quite pleased it was a boy and not a girl! And as soon as the child was born he became a monk. He felt he had done what the Buddha did! (*Laughter.*)

A Voice: You could get really mixed up if you tried to Go Forth in the way Padmasambhava did it. (*Laughter.*)

S.: Yes, it would be very difficult to imitate Padmasambhava, especially the way he was born.¹² (*Lots of laughter.*) But certainly some incidents in the Buddha's life, and in Padmasambhava's life, represent actual

stages of spiritual development that everybody needs to go through. So you have to ask yourself how you, in your own way, are to traverse that particular stage. Clearly, you can't take this literally, because then you might say, if my father wasn't a king and I didn't have a palace and a wife and a son and a horse and an attendant, then I couldn't Go Forth. That just shows the absurdity of the literal imitation. You've got to ask yourself, "What is Going Forth to me, in the circumstances I am in. What have I got to Go Forth from?"

Mike Chivers: Doesn't that tie in with having a vision? Your vision is created in part or even completely maybe by your guru of the Sangha (Spiritual Community); you respond to that vision and channel your energies towards realizing it. That is your Refuge and that is following the Buddha. There may well be a lot of difficulties and you can see them, but you follow your vision, and that is your spiritual path.

S.: Some people of course may derive their vision from reading the life of the Buddha. The account of his life makes it very clear, in quite concrete terms, what the spiritual life is about, how one leads it. Having been inspired by the life of the Buddha one may then want to imitate it. As I said, one would need to discriminate between those episodes which really did represent genuine stages along the Path and those which were merely accidental, due to the fact that he was living in India 500 years BCE¹³ and so on. Otherwise you are like the disciples who bought themselves kittens and tied them up every time they meditated because they had noticed their guru did that. The story goes that a certain Indian guru was given a little kitten as a present. He became quite fond of it and kept it near him. But it was a very troublesome little kitten and wanted attention when he was meditating, so he tied it up to a post which he stuck in the earth whenever he wanted to meditate. His disciples saw this so they thought there must be some esoteric significance in it, they thought he was doing it to improve his meditation. So they all went to the bazaar and bought kittens and tied them to posts whenever they meditated. (*Chuckles.*) This is an example of unintelligently imitating a teacher, in inessential respects. One doesn't want to imitate the Buddha in that way. You can even argue wearing the yellow robe was incidental. Maybe some Buddhists would not agree with you but you could argue that wearing robes and even shaving your head were just Indian customs at that time, and not integral parts of spiritual life.

Mike Chivers: I suppose the skill is to recognize what is essential. In a way you can only do that through a certain amount of trial and error.

S.: Yes, indeed. (*Pause.*) I think we have to be careful not to over-react against the idea of imitation. To think that you shouldn't imitate anybody is an expression of individualism in a rather unskilful way. Wanting to be different, wanting to be original, wanting to do things in your own way, is an individualistic attitude. It is good to imitate the Buddha; I think 'imitate' is the word rather than 'emulate'. I'm not saying that one should not emulate the Buddha, but 'imitate' seems to be a more appropriate word, provided it is properly understood. 'Emulate' suggests that you should try to do as well as the Buddha, but 'imitate' suggests a closer correspondence with the actual life of the Buddha. At least with what was essential in that life. I don't think we should be afraid of the word 'imitation' just because it has been abused, or because sometimes people do imitate in the wrong way.

Kulamitra: So when you use the word 'imitation' you are thinking of Going Forth or...

S.: Yes, I'm thinking of people doing things like Going Forth.

Mike Chivers: Perhaps imitating is easier to feel for than emulating because emulating is a bit 'out there'. You want to do as well as the Buddha, but it's a bit nebulous.

S.: Yes, imitating is more detailed. I distinguish between imitating and copying. Copying is merely external. That is to say, you dress yourself up in a yellow robe, you shave your head, you adopt a sanctimonious expression and you think that you are imitating the Buddha. You are not imitating in my sense of the term, but simply copying.

A Voice: It depends on your degree of awareness doesn't it?

S.: Well, one has to understand what should be imitated. One imitates only what is essential, and your imitation is with a view to re-creation [of the thing imitated] within yourself.

A Voice: Like a ritual?

S.: You could say that.

Guhyananda: Couldn't imitation develop into ritual? Wouldn't there be the danger that there was no awareness in the ritual?

S.: Well, yes and no. Because you could say that any practice has dangers. You could even start observing the precepts* in an unskilful way. Until you actually enter the Stream there is always a danger of misunderstanding, of practising in a wrong kind of way. This applies to any practice of the Dharma whatsoever. I think one must beware of thinking that there is any safe way of practising the Dharma. There is no safe way of practising the Dharma. Sometimes when people ask, "Isn't it dangerous to do this or that?" I say, "Of course it is!" They are suggesting that there are other ways which wouldn't be so dangerous. But there are no such ways. Every way is dangerous. It is dangerous to practise any of the precepts in the sense that there is the possibility of practising it wrongly. To ask for a completely safe practice is to ask for a practice where attitude doesn't matter. It is asking to be sure that if you just do it you'll be doing the right thing. But that is impossible. Attitude always counts; so where there is a possibility of skilful* attitude there is also a possibility of unskilful attitude until such time as you are a Stream-Entrant. You can sit and meditate in an unskilful way. You can do *pujā* in an unskilful state of mind or for unskilful reasons. You can go on retreat for the wrong reason. You can go on solitary retreat for the wrong reason. You can do any of these things for the wrong reason. You can be a Buddhist for the wrong reason. You can read Buddhist books for the wrong reason. You can go on a pilgrimage for the wrong reason. You can't really meditate for the wrong reason, not while you are actually in the state of meditation. But once you come out of it, you can adopt a wrong attitude towards the fact that you have meditated. For instance, you can start thinking it makes you better than somebody else. You can give an egoistic tinge to the experience. So there is no practice to which no danger is attached, in the sense that you can [always] use it in a wrong sort of way or adopt a wrong sort of attitude towards it. As I said, until you enter the Stream there is a possibility of being reactive or being creative at every point.

7 Why Miracles?

from Questions and Answers on the Bodhisattva Ideal, Pre-Ordination Retreat, Tuscany 1984

Lalitavajra: I was struck by the difference between the incident in the Buddha's life concerning Kisāgotamī and the incident in the life of Christ of the raising of Lazarus.¹⁴ The latter incident is usually taken in a literal manner. If both these are indeed true, there appears to be a huge chasm as to what is regarded as spiritual teaching. The Buddha is pointing directly to the nature of existence and Christ is again abnegating.

Sangharakshita: I think the difference goes even deeper than that. One might say that Christ, as represented in the Gospels, wasn't concerned so much to give a teaching — though he did give some teaching — as to demonstrate that he was the Son of God. Because, after all, God was regarded as the Creator; God had created Man. God was, so to speak, master of life and death. So, if you could bring a dead man back to life, what did that show, what did that prove? That you had some tremendous power; that you were God.

This is why, down the ages, Christians have usually regarded Christ's miracles as proof of his claim that he was, in fact, the Son of God. So the miracle of raising Lazarus from the dead must be seen in that context, whereas the Buddha was not concerned with establishing any such claim. That would actually have been impossible within the context of the Dharma as taught by him. One might even say that he wasn't concerned to establish the fact that he was Enlightened. He was only concerned to point out the way to someone who needed a way to follow.

So when Kisāgotamī came before him there was no question of his bringing her son back to life to demonstrate that he was the Son of God or even that he was Enlightened — or even that he had supernatural powers. It was a question of leading Kisāgotamī to Enlightenment. So the two different attitudes or responses do illustrate this very great difference between Christianity on the one hand and Buddhism on the other.

It is perhaps significant that in Christianity, as I mentioned, so much importance has historically been attached to the miracles of Christ, and that when these were attacked or questioned — as they have been quite a lot since the eighteenth century or even earlier — Christians have felt that one of the foundations of their faith was being removed. Whereas Buddhists certainly don't have that sort of feeling about the miracles of the Buddha. There are plenty of miracles — that is to say supernormal phenomena or *pāṭihāriya iddhis* [Skt: *pratihariya siddhis*]— recorded in the Pali scriptures. But you can doubt those and question whether they really occurred; it leaves the Buddha's central teaching quite intact.

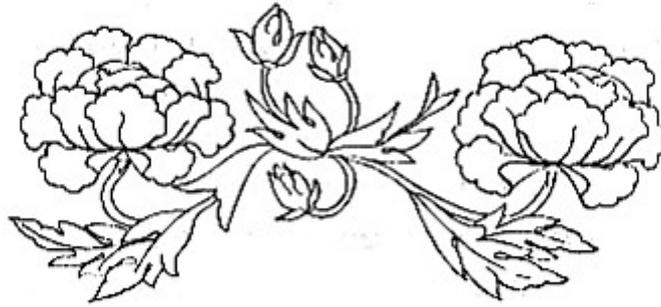
Miracles are regarded, or were regarded, as proving that Christ was the Son of God. But the Buddha's miracles — to use that term — were never considered as demonstrating that he was Enlightened. People like Devadatta and others could perform those sort of miracles without being Enlightened in the least.

Dipankara: Can I ask a question relating to the miraculous events in the Buddha's life? I think you mention in the lecture that at times he was visited by devas and this is spoken of as a miraculous event.

S.: No, I would not speak of that as a miraculous event. It is not spoken of as a miraculous event in the Pali scriptures. It is not regarded as a *pāṭihāriya*. A *pāṭihāriya* would be, for instance, the Buddha walking up and down in the air and simultaneously emitting fire and water [from his body].¹⁵ Devas are of course supernormal beings and, in the texts, they are represented as appearing before the Buddha. And he was able to perceive them and converse with them, so one could regard that as a supernormal happening. But it wasn't due to the Buddha himself; it wasn't anything that he did. Clearly, it is something which is not taking place on the ordinary material plane — but it isn't classified as a miracle of the Buddha in the strict sense.

Dipankara: So it wasn't caused by the Buddha?

S.: No. It was a supernormal happening. But that is not to say that the Buddha did not have the supernormal power of creating and causing to appear what people might take to be a deva, if you see what I mean.



8 Why Avalokiteśvara has a Blue Throat

from 'Benevolence and Compassion' (*The Jewel Ornament of Liberation*)
Women's Seminar, Padmaloka, January 1980

*Beloved by gods and men,
And also protected by them,
Peace of mind and many other blessings of this kind,
Not being harmed by poison or by weapons,
Attaining our aim without exertion,
And being reborn in the Brahma world —
Even if we should not attain final liberation,
At least we obtain these eight qualities through Benevolence.*

Gam.po.pa, *Jewel Ornament of Liberation*, trans. Guenther, H. V., Rider, London
1959, Ch. 7, p. 95

Sangharakshita: '*Peace of mind and many other blessings of this kind, Not being harmed by poison or by weapons*,¹. How literally is one to take this? Buddhist tradition takes it quite literally, as in the case of the Buddha turning back the mad elephant.¹⁶ Well, I suppose it isn't that you are not harmed, as though by magic, but rather that it happens due to the effect on the other person concerned. [Faced by someone with a weapon,] if you were permitted to get to close enough quarters, and enter into communication with the person, perhaps your *mettā* would be able even to disarm the person. The only question is whether you could get into that sort of communication. If someone was aiming at you with a rifle, from a distance of seven hundred yards, without your knowledge, even the most *mettā*-full person could well be bumped off. But if you had a chance to meet that person face to face and talk with them you might well be able to dissuade them, by virtue of your sheer positivity. (*Pause.*) What about poison?

A Voice: Your system could reject it.

S.: Well, your system always rejects poison, in a sense, doesn't it? But what would be happening [in the case of a person who had developed *mettā*]? Could you literally neutralize poison by your sheer emotional

positivity? Again, Buddhist tradition would say 'yes', but surely, if it is possible one would need emotional positivity of a very high order indeed.

Anjali: In the scriptures, doesn't the Buddha say of the truffles which he ate just before he died,¹⁷ that if any other monk had eaten them he would have just kicked the bucket straight away?

S.: Yes, but it is not that they were [literally] poisonous. There's a lot of discussion about this quite mysterious episode. The Buddha didn't speak about truffles in general, but about those which had been offered to him. Some people point out that when something was offered to a spiritual person it partook of his, as it were, spiritual energy, *ojas*, and that in the case of these truffles, having been offered to the Buddha first, they were spiritually enriched to such an extent that nobody else would be able to assimilate it. This is one explanation of what the Buddha meant; not that they would be affected by the poison. Though again, some do say that it was as simple as that: the Buddha didn't want others to be poisoned in the way that he had. It is a rather odd episode. One might say that there must have been something wrong with the truffles, or whatever they were, to begin with. Well, could not the Buddha have counteracted that by virtue of his emotionally positive mental state? One could say that. But perhaps the Buddha didn't know; perhaps you have to know — [in order] to consciously direct your *mettā* — for it to have that sort of effect.

A Voice: I read somewhere that it was meat that he ate.

S.: Well, again, this is part of the whole discussion. What is *sukkāra madhara*? It literally means something like 'pig's delight'. So is it 'delightful pig', in other words, 'pork'; or is it 'pig's delight', i.e. 'truffles', which the pig, of course, roots up? Whatever it was it didn't agree with the Buddha, and it was the occasion, if not the cause, of his death.

Anne Macmillan: It doesn't mean quite literally poison, does it?

S.: Well, it seems to mean poison in the literal sense because weapons are [also] mentioned. But you could regard *mettā* as neutralizing the poison of even other people's negative states. You actually do find this: if you encounter people whose mental states are strongly negative emotionally, you experience it almost like a poison invading you, especially if you are the direct object of it. But presumably if you had a really strong emotional positivity yourself you would be able to absorb that. There is a sort of mythological story in this connection which might be interesting. It belongs to both Hindu mythology and Buddhist mythology — Indian mythology, that is to say. It is related, in the case of the Hindus, of Shiva, and in the case of the Buddhists, of Avalokiteśvara. They are both called *nilakantha*, which means 'blue-throated'. But why are they called 'blue-throated'? The story goes that once upon a time the gods churned the ocean of existence, and all sorts of wonderful things came up. The gods used Mt. Meru as the churning stick and the serpent of infinity as the cord with which they revolved it. The gods got on one end and the *āsuras*¹⁸ on the other, pulling back and forth, churning the ocean. Then out of the ocean came the goddess of prosperity, so they fought and disputed over her. Then came the wish-fulfilling tree, and they fought and disputed over that, etc., etc. And then came an enormous lump of poison. Nobody wanted that: neither the gods nor the *āsuras*. So there was the danger that this great lump of poison would destroy everything and everybody. So Shiva, or Avalokiteśvara, it is said, took it and swallowed it to save living beings. But it stuck in his throat, and turned his throat blue. So in a way this is quite symbolical of the way in which the positive person absorbs the poison of existence, the poison in his or her surroundings, and is able to assimilate it. It leaves some trace, yes, but it doesn't actually kill them. It is a quite powerful story. But you may find that you actually experience this. Sometimes you may become very sensitive through meditation. You may pick up on quite a bit of negativity, in the atmosphere so to speak, or directed towards you from other people. You may have to absorb it.

Anne Macmillan: Sometimes I have been at the centre, and certain people's company...

S.: You feel drained by some people's company. But some people can, almost literally, inject emotional poison. You feel poisoned, especially if they've expressed a lot of anger and resentment — not necessarily towards you. I think one has to be careful and just recognize how much of this you can take. It might take you several hours to absorb whatever they have pumped into you. You don't want to have that sort of experience, say, just before you take a meditation class.

9 An Arahant has Nothing to Lose

from Questions and Answers on the Bodhisattva Ideal, Pre-Ordination Retreat, Tuscany 1984

Will Spens: In the lecture you say that when the Buddha passed away, everyone grieved except the Arahants, and I wondered whether the Arahants would actually feel an emotional loss or whether they would just take it perfectly equanimously.

Sangharakshita: Apparently they did. According to the traditional account in the Pali *Mahā-parinibbāna Suttanta*,¹⁹ they were not moved; they did not feel, and did not exhibit any grief at all. This is quite extraordinary in a way because even the gods and unenlightened human beings are represented as becoming really distraught at the time of the Buddha's death, the Buddha's *parinirvāṇa*. But the Arahants remained absolutely calm and absolutely, in a sense, unmoved. Because they realized that even a Buddha's physical body must break up; even the Buddha must, so to speak, die.

Their realization of this truth is so profound that they are not moved by the *Parinirvāṇa*; they don't feel any sense of loss. After all, what have they to lose? Even though the Buddha has died, they are Enlightened; and inasmuch as they are Enlightened, they have got the Buddha with them. In a sense, they are the Buddha. So what loss is there? It's as though one particular physical body has been detached from the unitary experience of Enlightenment — which was neither his or theirs as a personal possession. From their point of view there was really no essential change. They'd not lost anything at the time of the Buddha's *parinirvāṇa*. They certainly hadn't lost the Buddha because they hadn't lost Buddhahood. And it is Buddhahood that makes a Buddha a Buddha.

So — one must be careful to understand this — it was not that there was any coldness or any detachment in a negative sense on their part, though the account is sometimes presented in that sort of way. But, as I have said, it was more that, since they were Enlightened, just as was the Buddha himself, the Buddha's *parinirvāṇa* did not represent a loss to them.

But it did represent a loss to those who were not themselves Enlightened, because Enlightenment was not only outside them, but associated with the physical body of the Buddha himself. So, for them, it was as though when the Buddha's physical body disintegrated, Enlightenment disappeared from the universe, because they'd associated it with that particular physical body, that particular personality. Therefore, some of them exclaimed, "the eye of the universe has gone out."¹⁹ But in a sense it hadn't. You could say that a shadow had moved across the face of the sun, but the sun was still shining.

10 One Bodhisattva is Enough

from *Outlines of Mahayana Buddhism* Mixed Order Retreat, Abhirati, August 1974

Sudatta: How many people have you met in the Buddhist East who you might think met all the criteria of a Bodhisattva?

Sangharakshita: *All* the criteria?

Sudatta: Well, the minimum criteria of being a Bodhisattva.

S.: I certainly have met many people who are good and kind, and spiritually minded, and helpful, and there are perhaps ten or twelve who *might* be Bodhisattvas. There was only one about whom I was absolutely certain, from my personal experience: Dhardo Rimpoche. It was from him that I took my own Bodhisattva ordination, and it was partly for this reason that I took it from him. The others might have been — and in many respects certainly were — very good in their behaviour and attitude. I am not saying they were not. But I was absolutely convinced, from my personal observation of *his* behaviour from day to day over a period of many years, and [from] seeing him in all sorts of situations, that he was [a Bodhisattva]; but I could not feel that conviction about anybody else. But one [Bodhisattva] is enough.

Devamitra: Is he Gelugpa?²⁰

S.: He is Gelugpa — but...

Devamitra: But?

S. (*Whispers*): He's Nyingmapa²⁰ really! (*Laughter.*)

Devaraja: Really?

S.: Yes. He's a *tulku* of Nyingmapa lineage. The Thirteenth Dalai Lama seized many Nyingmapa *tulkus* and had them educated as Gelugpas, and Dhardo Rimpoche's [immediate] predecessor was one of them. He was in great favour with the Thirteenth Dalai Lama and was educated or re-educated, at, I think, Depung. Dhardo Rimpoche himself was educated there, but he regards himself essentially as Nyingmapa, though outwardly he is the perfect Gelugpa. He sticks very much to Gelugpa tradition. He's very strict, he's very faithful to the tradition, to the precepts and so on, but his inner spiritual side seems to be definitely Nyingmapa and he has a sympathy with Padmasambhava and so on: well, much more than sympathy. *He* was the only one that I was fully convinced was a Bodhisattva. I can't believe it of the Dalai Lama, to be quite frank. He just doesn't impress me like that. Not [as] a Bodhisattva in the real sense.

Devamitra: Are you talking in terms of someone who is a highly developed Bodhisattva or of someone who has perhaps reached the first *bhumi*?²¹ Technically you are a Bodhisattva if the Bodhicitta has arisen.

S.: Yes, right.

Devamitra: But presumably you must have had contact with more than just one person in whom...

S.: The Bodhicitta can have arisen in a very germinal form and it may just not be visible to other people. But I think, in Dhardo Rimpoche's case, it was well developed. It was quite visible and really shone through everything he did. [For instance] the way he ran that school for Tibetan refugee children.²² He wasn't just running a school as a kind of social service. It was the same with everything he did. I never saw any

variation. He was always the same, and always completely mindful. I had many opportunities of catching him out, or seeing him caught out, but he never was — not once. This is quite remarkable.

I think I have told the story of the famous occasion when we were on tour together in 1956 visiting the holy places with other Buddhists from the border areas, a party of more than fifty. Our programme was in the hands of the Government of India, who sent an official with us on the special train. We arrived at one particular holy place and we were told that in the morning we would be going to see something just of archaeological interest and, in the afternoon, after returning to the train for our meal, we would be taken to the holy place itself. So, since we were going to the holy place after lunch and only to the archaeological place in the morning, no one bothered to take incense and candles and so on with them for worship. But somehow the guide either got things muddled up or deliberately changed them round, and we found ourselves in the holy place in the morning without any candles or incense or anything and, as you can imagine, everyone — mostly Tibetan-type Buddhists — was really upset that they had nothing to offer or worship with and there they were in the holy place. So Dhardo Rimpoche, with a smile, pulled out from under his robe enough candles and incense for everybody. (*Laughter.*) This sort of thing I found happening many times, so I concluded that he had mindfulness and awareness to a 'supernatural' degree that nobody else seemed to have. Some of the other people [in the party] were quite advanced, too, so far as one could see, but *they* were caught napping. He wasn't. *I* was caught napping: I trusted the guide, but apparently he didn't. (*Laughter.*) That is just a small example. And he was never any different. I never saw him unmindful, or at a loss for words — for a reply — in any situation. He never hesitated, never stumbled.

Yet one mustn't deceive oneself or allow oneself to be carried away by 'the Great Guru So-and-so' and all that. People do get carried away, and want to get carried away, but that has nothing to do with the spiritual life. If there had been any flaw in Dhardo Rimpoche I would have found it out, because I have a critical mind and I see things. But I didn't find any flaw.

Devamitra: On the other hand, I sometimes get overwhelmed because the whole task seems so enormous and treading the Bodhisattva Path seems such a rare thing that I often feel quite depressed at the thought of it.

Sudatta: In what sense do you say that one Bodhisattva is enough?

S.: I meant it subjectively; it convinces you that such things as Bodhisattvas are possible. You only have to find one, just like some rare variety of flower that you may have heard of, but you go botanizing and you actually find a specimen. Even though you only find one specimen you know that the whole species exists. (*Laughter.*)

Sudatta: Is there any theory in Buddhism as to how many Bodhisattvas there should be at any particular time?

S.: Oh, as many as possible! (*Laughter.*) No number is given, but I think one is enough. If you are in contact with one or even hear about one, genuinely, that is enough.

Sudatta: Did you find subsequently [through the] special relationship you made with Dhardo Rimpoche that you were constantly able to draw on him, as it were.

S.: I used to see him quite a lot. At one time I was seeing him regularly every day, especially for the few months just before I came to England in 1964. We were working on translations together. Seeing him was always quite inspiring and sort of galvanizing; he was always positive, and this was quite remarkable. He

had terrible difficulties which I knew about and we talked about. There were people who wanted to have him thrown out of Kalimpong, get him imprisoned, murder him, all sorts of things — it was extraordinary: mainly Tibetan officials. They were absolutely against him because he would not submit to them and insisted on functioning quite independently outside the Tibetan ecclesiastical framework as controlled by the lay officials. He just would not have anything to do with this, and they were so much against him, and they tried all sorts of tricks to get him into trouble with the Government of India, reporting him as a Communist and all the rest of it.

Sudatta: What would be the special spin-off one would expect to enjoy from a relationship directly with a real Bodhisattva, as distinct from a relationship with any other level of teacher?

S.: Well, to be sure, if you were in contact with a real Bodhisattva it would spark off at least a little of the Bodhisattva spirit in *you*, because you would see the real thing in somebody else and experience it there, whereas with other teachers you would only be hearing about it. On another level it's like being in contact with someone who really observes the precepts. It is quite different from being with some clever person who can tell you all about them, and explain them philosophically [but who is not observing them properly]. If you are actually living all the time with someone who is observing them, as some Buddhists in the East *really* do, it has a noticeable effect.

Sudatta: Does one benefit from some sort of psychic attunement if one has, say, been initiated by them?

S.: I think one does, provided one is receptive. Dhardo Rimpoche certainly made a very positive impression on all sorts of people — certainly on the local Indian Government officials. They were always 'with' him and he had very friendly relations with them, luckily. But some of the Tibetan officials were absolute devils in their relationship with Dhardo Rimpoche and their attitude towards him. It was amazing. I would not have believed it if I had not witnessed it.

Only once did I see him slightly cast down; not depressed, but a little tinged with sadness, and surprised that a particular person could have behaved so badly. He had no reason to expect it, and when I met him he was just a tiny bit thoughtful about it. But that's the only change I ever saw from his complete cheerful positiveness. He even impressed — very favourably — Christmas Humphreys, whom I took to see him [when he visited Kalimpong], with the result that [on his return to London] he persuaded the Tibet Society to help Dhardo Rimpoche's school financially.

Devamitra: When I hear you talk about your teachers like this it tends to inspire me more than, say, reading about the Buddhas and the Bodhisattvas. It's that much more real.

S.: Well, them one has actually seen. I have never actually seen a Buddha, certainly not the Buddha or a discarnate Bodhisattva, but I have seen Dhardo Rimpoche and he might say "My teacher was much more than me." So in that way one has a genuine link with the whole spiritual tradition.

Nagabodhi: To what extent is it a matter of time? Devamitra was saying that the prospect seems awesome to the point of being depressing. I think that I'm at a certain age now — I see things in terms of time; how many years it would take I don't know. Is that a valueless way of looking at it?

S.: It can help to spur you on — not to waste time. But maybe if you consider in that way, unskillfully, you get a bit depressed. Of course, traditionally Buddhists believe in rebirth, so they think [they have] all their future lives to do it in. But for us it is a bit difficult to really feel like that.

Ratnapani: I think ... the opposite way round as a counteraction to feeling too disheartened with my own weakness. I think that, in just thirty years' time, when I'll still presumably have health and vigour, a fantastic change could take place.

S.: Well, Ratnapani at twenty-four is pretty bright but Ratnapani at forty-four should be absolutely brilliant! *(Laughter.)*

[Before we go on] I'll just mention something more about Dhardo Rimpoche, something which someone wrote about him in quite the early days. It was a visiting German scholar who got quite a bit of information from Dhardo Rimpoche. He wrote about him in his book. He said Dhardo Rimpoche believed that he was a Bodhisattva and acted accordingly. I thought that quite a nice, if slightly back-handed, tribute. *(Laughter.)*

Glossary

Mettā (Skt. *maitri*): Abstract noun from *mitta*: friend, which in turn is derived from *mid*: to love. In Western Buddhist usage, it is usually conveyed by such words as 'friendliness', 'amity', 'love'. However, the nearest English equivalents do not translate '*mettā*' adequately. 'Friendliness' and 'goodwill' are a little weak; 'love' is ambiguous because of the element of the erotic in its denotation of which there is no suggestion in the word '*mettā*'. *Mettā* denotes a feeling of friendliness of a very high degree of intensity. It is characterized by three factors: (a) an ardent desire for the welfare of the sentient being which is its object, (b) disinterestedness; there is no element of self interest in it and (c) non-exclusiveness; *mettā* has no tendency to limit itself to a particular object. The development of *mettā* towards all sentient beings (Metta Bhavana) is one of the two basic traditional Buddhist meditation practices taught and practised in the FWBO. The *locus classicus* for the Buddha's teaching on *mettā* is the *Karaṇīya-mettā-sutta* of the *Sutta-nipāta*, v. 143.

Precepts: the guidelines or principles for action given by the Buddha to his followers for the living of a truly ethical life. There are several lists of precepts in traditional Buddhism, the best known being that of the 'Five Precepts' or the 'Five *Śīlas*', taken by the Buddhist layman. With respect to the 'Ten Precepts' observed by members of the Western Buddhist Order, the word 'precept' is the English equivalent of various terms in the canonical sources, which nevertheless refer to the same set of principles: the 'Ten *Śīlas*', the 'Ten *Śikṣāpadas*', abstention from the 'Ten *Akuśala-dharmas*', and so on.

Samsāra (Pali and Skt.): lit. 'faring on, a flow or stream (of becoming)'. In ancient Hindu texts it means to roam through or to pass through a succession of states. In Buddhist usage it came to mean the perpetual repetition of birth and death in the three worlds (see below) and the six realms of existence. Being the opposite of Nirvana, Samsara is, from the objective point of view, the conditioned as distinct from the Unconditioned, or, in FWBO terminology, the mundane as distinct from the Transcendental; from the subjective point of view, it is bondage as distinct from Liberation; the purpose of the spiritual life is to escape from the bonds of Samsara into the perfect Freedom of Nirvana. In more poetic terms, it is referred to as the 'torrent of Samsara', or 'a vast swamp'. Samsara refers to the whole of phenomenal existence, or the round of birth and death with no perceptible beginning or end. Objectively, the Samsara consists of three planes or worlds, namely: the *kāmaloka* or world of sensuous delight, the *rūpaloka*, or world of form (the archetypal realm) and the *arūpaloka* or formless world. Each world has as its subjective counterpart a particular state or range of states of consciousness. Samsara and Nirvana can also be seen as two possible modes of being in one and the same Reality (cf. *A Survey of Buddhism*, Ch. 1, section 14), Samsara being the reactive mode, Nirvana the irreversibly creative mode. The Hinayana tended to speak in terms of two discrete states and of passing from one state into another, from a real Samsara to a real Nirvana, whereas the Mahayana taught that Samsara and Nirvana are mere thought-constructions, that the discrimination between the two is, ultimately, an illusion and that Liberation consists not in passing from one realm to another but in realizing the essential non-difference between them.

Skilful: The basic distinction on which Buddhist ethics are based is that between 'skilful' and 'unskilful' actions of body, speech and mind. The Sanskrit word for 'skilful', '*kuśala*' (opposite of '*aśusala*': 'unskilful') is the same word that is used with reference to arts and crafts, which suggests that morality in Buddhism has an aesthetic as well as a moral element. Actions are determined to be skilful or unskilful depending on the state of mind in which they are performed. In contrast to unskilful states of mind, which are rooted in the negative factors of greed, hatred and delusion, skilful states of mind are rooted in the positive factors of contentment, *mettā* (q.v.) or awareness, or a combination of all three.

Stream-Entry (Skt. *Srotāpatti*; Pali *Sotapatti*): lit. 'entering upon the stream'. The Stream-Entrant (*Srotāpanna*) is one who has developed insight sufficiently to attain to the first stage of the Transcendental Path, thereby breaking the first three of the 'Ten Fetters', that is: (a) belief in a substantial, unchanging self (*satkāyadr̥ṣṭi*), (b) doubt (*vicikitsā*), in the sense of hesitancy or indecisiveness about whether to commit oneself to following the Path, and (c) dependence on mere morality and external religious observances (*śīlavrata parāmarśa*) as though these were sufficient in themselves to ensure Enlightenment. Traditionally, the attainment of Stream-Entry ensures the eventual achievement of full Enlightenment in not less than seven lifetimes and that there will be no more rebirths into the three lower realms of existence, namely, that of animals, of hungry ghosts (*pretas*) or of tormented beings. Stream-Entry marks that stage of spiritual development at which progress towards the goal of full Enlightenment becomes irreversible. This is sometimes referred to as 'The Point of No Return'. In FWBO terminology, this indicates the point at which the mode of conditionality in which the developing individual operates becomes irreversibly creative, or at which the pull exerted by the gravitational field of the Unconditioned becomes greater than that exerted by the gravitational field of the conditioned. Stream-Entrants are the first category in the fourfold hierarchy of the *Ārya Sangha* (lit. the Noble Assembly) consisting of all those who have entered upon the Transcendental Path, the other three categories being those of the Once Returners, the Non-Returners and the Arahants. Stream-Entry coincides with the eighth of the 'Twelve Positive Nidānas', i.e. Knowledge and Vision of Things As They Really Are and with Perfect Vision, the first stage of the Transcendental (as distinct from the mundane) Eightfold Path. It also corresponds to the phenomenon of religious conversion in the sense of a turning about in the deep seat of consciousness, that is, to a decisive and far-reaching re-orientation in the spiritual development of the individual. The *Dhammapada*, v. 178, praises Stream-Entry, 'Better is the fruit of Entering the Stream than sole sovereignty over the earth, than going to heaven, than rule supreme over the entire universe'.

Vinaya: from 'vinayati', lit. 'that which leads away from', i.e. in this case, all that is unskillful (cf. 'skillful' above). While 'vinaya' originally had the general designation of the teachings of the Buddha practically applied, it eventually came to have a predominantly monastic reference, namely, the code of ethics of the Bhikkhu Sangha or the detailed code of monastic discipline. The Vinaya Piṭaka (lit. 'basket') is one of the three Collections of Buddhist canonical literature, the other two collections being the Sutra Piṭaka and the Abhidharma Piṭaka. The Vinaya consists of an earlier code known as the *Prātimokṣa*, which is the monastic code proper and the later *Skandhakas* or 'Chapters'. There are different versions of the Vinaya, one in Pali, the rest in Sanskrit, all of them derived from a common source. In addition to the main material concerning monastic rules of conduct, the Vinaya also includes much interesting material, historical, biographical and sociological, relating to the Buddha and his time.

Visualization: lit. forming a mental image of something. In the context of Buddhist meditation, particularly those methods practised in the Vajrayana schools, it means building up a clear, detailed mental image of a spiritual or archetypal symbol in the form of one or more Buddhas or Bodhisattvas, referred to as '*yidams*'. The *yidam* is the chosen 'protector' or form to which the meditator is attracted, or one that is assigned by the teacher. These forms are visualized with all their relevant adornments, implements and attendant deities. In some cases, the image built up is of a mandala or other symbolic geometric form. Usually this procedure of creating an image in the mind's eye is just one aspect of a complete practice or '*sādhana*', which also includes the recitation of the mantra appropriate to the particular subject visualized and, often, the recitation of verses of praise. In most meditations of this kind, the importance of dissolving, at the end of the practice, all forms and colours, is emphasized, since all form, according to the Perfection of Wisdom teachings, is emptiness, void, *śūnyatā*.

Notes

¹ Maudgalyāyana and Mahākāśyapa, and Śāriputra who is mentioned later in this discussion, were among the foremost disciples of the Buddha, according to the Pali Canon. Maudgalyāyana and Śāriputra were close friends who were noted for their psychic powers and wisdom respectively. Several *suttas* in the Pali Canon contain teachings by Śāriputra and he was referred to by the Buddha as the '*Dharma Senāpati* — 'the Captain of the Dharma'. For the Mahayana Śāriputra became the embodiment of the Abhidharma scholastic tradition (see the *Heart Sutra*). Maudgalyāyana and Śāriputra predeceased the Buddha, but Mahākāśyapa survived him and became the virtual leader of the Sangha. The Chan (Zen) schools consider that it is through him that their tradition was transmitted. See *The Life of Śāriputta*, Nyanaponika Thera, The Wheel Publications 90-92, and *Mahā-Moggallāna*, Hellmuth Hecker, The Wheel Publications 263/4, both published by Buddhist Publication Society, Kandy.

² 'Going for Refuge to the Three Jewels of Buddha, Dharma and Sangha' is the act of personal commitment to the Ideal of Enlightenment, the Path to its realization, and the community of those who are similarly committed. Going for Refuge within the context of the Western Buddhist Order constitutes one a member of the Order.

³ The Samboghakāya (lit. 'body of mutual enjoyment') is the second of the three 'bodies' of the Buddha as formulated in the *Trikāya* (Three Bodies) doctrine of the Mahayana. This teaching gives expression to deepening levels on which the Buddha may be experienced. The *Samboghakāya* is the archetypal nature of the Buddha (beyond the historical plane) which can be experienced in meditation. See Sangharakshita, *The Three Jewels*, Windhorse Publications, Ch. 5.

⁴ The *Pāramitās* or 'Perfections' are the virtues which a Bodhisattva must perfect in the course of his career. The most common list of six perfections — generosity, morality, energy, patience, meditation, and wisdom — will be dealt with in *Mitratas* 62-7.

⁵ This Fetter is the third of ten which bind us to conditioned existence. The breaking of the fetters, one after another, leads to Enlightenment. The breaking of the first three fetters constitutes Stream-Entry (see Glossary). The third fetter is *śīlavrata-parāmarśa* (Pali: *śīlabbata-parāmāsa*), 'dependence on moral rules and observances'. This is the following of spiritual practices and precepts without understanding — or trying to understand — their deeper significance. Ven. Sangharakshita in *The Taste of Freedom*, available on FreeBuddhistAudio - <http://tinyurl.com/og8r4x9> or on video at <http://vimeo.com/27006320> - refers to this fetter as the 'fetter of superficiality'.

⁶ The five mental poisons are craving, hatred, distraction, conceit, and ignorance (jealousy is sometimes added).

⁷ Sangharakshita, *A Case of Dysentery*, available on FreeBuddhistAudio, <http://tinyurl.com/kjy8mt3>. In this lecture Ven. Sangharakshita discusses an incident in which a sick monk is neglected by the other monks because he was 'no use to them'. The Buddha and Ānanda wash him and care for him.

⁸ Kesa is a Japanese word which derives from Sanskrit, *kāsāya*, meaning the robe of a Buddhist monk. In Japan the full robes were no longer worn but a sort of stole, consisting of a narrow band of silk, was worn around the neck as a symbolic robe. The Western Buddhist Order has taken over this practice and Dharmacharis and Dharmacharinis wear a white kesa on which are the brightly coloured badges of the three jewels.

⁹ According to early Indian tradition a Buddha carries on his body 32 major and 64 minor marks which show that he is, or will be, a Buddha. A 'Universal Monarch' also has these marks. They are a rather strange and

miscellaneous set of characteristics, the most familiar of which are the protuberance on top of the head and the curl of hair on the forehead.

¹⁰ Particularly as set out in 'The Imitations of Christ' by Thomas à Kempis.

¹¹ Anagarika Dharmapāla (1862-1933) was born in Ceylon and brought up as a Buddhist. He worked all his life with astonishing vigour to revive Buddhism in India and to transmit the Dharma to the West. For a biography and appreciation see *Flame in Darkness: The Life and Sayings of Anagarika Dharmapāla*, Ven. Sangharakshita, Triratna Grantha Mala, Pune 1980.

¹² Padmasambhava was a great Indian teacher who was mainly responsible, in a short visit, for establishing Buddhism in Tibet in the Eighth Century. His life story is made up almost entirely of miraculous events, not least of which is his birth from a great lotus flower without parents. The highly symbolic but deeply stirring account of his life can be read in *The Life and Liberation of Padmasambhava*, Yeshe Tsogyal, Dharma Publishing, Emeryville, USA 1978.

¹³ BCE = Before the Common Era. C.E. = Common Era. This is a convention adopted by non-Christians to avoid dating events as BC = Before Christ or AD = Anno Domini (the Year of the Lord). Dates however remain the same. It was proposed at the 1985 Order Convention that we should start to date events from the Enlightenment of the Buddha within the Movement.

¹⁴ The story of Lazarus is found in the New Testament at John 11. 1-44. Twice Jesus speaks of the miracle — bringing Lazarus back to life — as giving him the opportunity to strengthen the faith of his disciples.

¹⁵ The Buddha is recorded as performing this feat on a number of occasions, for instance in the *Mahāvastu*, Vol. III, 115, trans. Jones J. J., Pali Text Society, London 1978.

¹⁶ See *Mitrata* 56, p. 16

¹⁷ The Buddha died after eating some truffles (scholars still dispute what exactly they were). See *Mahā-parinibbāṇa Suttanta*, Dīgha Nikāya ii, 127.

¹⁸ *Āsuras* are god-like beings — translated as Anti-Gods or Jealous Gods — who are consumed with jealousy, fighting the gods for possession of the Wish-fulfilling Tree. See Subhuti, *The Buddhist Vision*, Windhorse Publications.

¹⁹ *Mahā-parinibbāṇa Suttanta*, Dīgha Nikāya ii, 158.

²⁰ Tibetan Buddhism is divided into four main schools: Gelugpa, Nyingmapa, Kargudpa, Sakyapa. The Gelugpa (yellow hat) is by far the largest and is the school to which the Dalai Lama belongs. The Nyingmapa (red hat) is the oldest.

²¹ The ten *bhūmis* are the stages through which a Bodhisattva progresses. They will be dealt with more fully in *Mitrata* 68.

²² The 'Indo-Tibetan Cultural Institute' is a school for refugee Tibetan children run by Dhardo Rimpoche in Kalimpong, India. He attempts to teach them traditional Tibetan culture, which is inextricably bound up with Buddhism, as well as to give them a modern education. The school is supported by Aid for India (now the Karuna Trust) — a charity run by members of the Western Buddhist Order and Mitras. See www.karuna.org for more details.