

Aspects of the Bodhisattva Ideal

Lecture 69: 'Masculinity' & 'Femininity' in the Spiritual Life

Mr. Chairman and Friends,

It's now, and I think most of you know, about a month since we stepped down into what we may describe as the current, as the mighty river, the mighty stream, of the Bodhisattva Ideal. And each week as we've come here we've gone, or we've tried to go, just a little deeper into that river, into that current, into that stream. And by this time, I think, we can say, I think we can feel, that we find ourselves more or less right in the middle of that stream. Not only find ourselves in the middle of it, but find ourselves, feel ourselves, being borne along by it more and more rapidly. Perhaps at first we might have struggled a little against the current, we might not have been altogether happy about being borne along, but perhaps now we are not struggling, not resisting any more, but just allowing ourselves to be borne (as it were) in the direction of the ocean. That is to say in the direction of what we call Enlightenment, Nirvana, Buddhahood, and so on.

Now in the course of these last four weeks we have travelled quite a distance. We've left behind perhaps quite a number of old familiar landmarks. We've passed through quite a lot of unfamiliar country, unfamiliar terrain. We've seen perhaps (to continue the metaphor) have seen as we were swept along this river, have seen dense forests. Have seen perhaps in the distance lofty mountain peaks. In other words we've seen, as we've been carried along, week by week, different aspects of the Bodhisattva Ideal.

In the course of the first week - in the course of the first week's lecture - we saw that the Bodhisattva was the ideal Buddhist, one who lives for the sake of Enlightenment, Enlightenment for the benefit of all sentient beings. We saw further that the Bodhisattva is the living embodiment of both Wisdom and Compassion. That he's inspired in his life, in his activity, in his work, not only by what the Buddha said, not only by the verbal teaching of the Buddha, but also by what the Buddha, in his intrinsic being, was, and what he did, the sort of influence he radiated on other men and other women.

In the course of the second week's lecture we saw that one becomes a Bodhisattva, one becomes a being dedicated to Enlightenment for the benefit of all by the arising of what is called the Bodhicitta. Literally this means, as we saw, the thought of Enlightenment, but we also saw that the Bodhicitta is much more than the thought of Enlightenment in the sense of an idea or a concept of or about Enlightenment. We saw that it's a sort of spiritual force, a spiritual power (if you like) at work in the universe. We saw that it is something transcendental, something above and beyond this world in its ultimate essence. We saw that it is not in fact individual at all, but universal, that there is one Bodhicitta, one Will to Enlightenment, and that individual Bodhisattvas participate in this in varying degrees.

We also saw that the Bodhicitta arises in dependence on certain conditions, and these conditions are represented by Santideva's Supreme Worship and Vasubandhu's Four Factors.

Now in our third week's lecture we saw that whereas the Bodhicitta itself is universal, the individual Bodhisattva is an individual, a person, and the Bodhicitta therefore expresses itself in his life and in his work in a thoroughly individual manner. And this individual expression of the Bodhicitta, through the individual Bodhisattva, is what we call the Bodhisattva's Vow. And though we speak of the vow in the singular rather than in the plural, it is in fact, we saw, really plural. And there are a number of famous sets of vows which illustrate the nature of the Bodhisattva's Vow. The most famous set is of course that of the Four Great Vows, wherein the Bodhisattva gives expression to the aspiration, the fourfold aspiration: May I deliver all beings from difficulties, may I eradicate all passions, may I master all Dharmas, and may I lead all beings to Buddhahood.

Now last week we dealt with 'Altruism and Individualism in the Spiritual Life'. And we saw that the Bodhisattva himself represents, or the Bodhisattva Ideal itself represents, a living union of opposites. We saw that the Bodhisattva Ideal synthesizes the mundane and the transcendental, samsara and nirvana, wisdom and compassion. We saw further that it does not represent - the Bodhisattva Ideal does not represent altruism as opposed to individualism, we saw that the Bodhisattva is not concerned with the salvation of others as opposed to his own salvation. This, we saw, is a popular misrepresentation - these expressions should not be taken literally. The Bodhisattva does in fact embody both altruism and individualism. The altruistic aspect of the Bodhisattva Ideal is represented by *dana*, or giving, the first of the *paramitas*, the perfections or transcendental virtues, whereas the individualistic aspect is represented by *sila*, or uprightness, which is the second *paramita*.

We saw by the way, incidentally, that the practice of the *paramitas*, the perfections, the transcendental virtues, represents what is known as the establishment aspect of the Bodhicitta. Now last week we dealt with this question of *dana*, or giving, the first of the *paramitas*, along traditional lines. And we saw (you may recollect) to whom one could give, what one could give, how one should give, and why. In the case of *sila*, the second *paramita*, we adopted a rather different procedure. We took traditional categories like the five precepts for granted, and we examined the Buddhist attitude towards such things as food, work and marriage. So in this way, week by week, we have seen quite a lot as we've allowed ourselves to be borne along by the current of the Bodhisattva Ideal.

And today we're going to see just a little more. Today we're concerned with another pair of opposites, a very important pair of opposites, and we're concerned with the way in which the Bodhisattva synthesizes these. Today we're concerned with "Masculinity and 'Femininity' in the Spiritual Life."

Now those who have seen the printed programme,, or rather the cyclostyled programme in the Newsletter, will have noticed these words 'masculinity' and 'femininity' are in single inverted commas. And this indicates that we're not to take these terms too literally, we're to take them in a more metaphorical sense. How they are really to be understood in this context, we shall see in due course. Meanwhile we mustn't forget that we shall be all the time, this evening, still concerned with the establishment aspect of the Bodhicitta - in other words with the practice of the six *paramitas*. Last week, as I've just reminded you, we dealt with *dana* and *sila*, the first two *paramitas*, that is to say, giving and uprightness, and this week we are in fact dealing with *ksanti* and *virya*, or patience and vigour, the third and the fourth *paramitas*. And it is these which represent, within the context of the Bodhisattva Ideal, what we may describe as the 'masculine' and 'feminine' aspects of the spiritual life. Or if you like, these *paramitas* represent the active and the passive poles of the Bodhisattva Ideal. *Virya* or vigour represents the masculine aspect, and *ksanti* or patience represents the feminine aspect. Incidentally, in the Indian languages, at least in the ancient Indian languages, in a compound of this sort, the feminine usually comes first. For instance in Pali and in Sanskrit one always says '*mata-pitu*', that is to say 'mother and father', one never says 'father and mother', but always the other way round: 'mother and father'. In English of course it's very often the opposite. But today we're following the more traditional, the Indian, order, and we're dealing first with *ksanti*, the feminine aspect, and after that with *virya*, the masculine aspect. And after that we shall try to see in what way *virya* represents the more masculine, and *ksanti* the more feminine aspect of, or in, the spiritual life.

Now *ksanti* (this is by the way to be distinguished from *shanti* which means peace) *ksanti* (with an initial K) is undoubtedly one of the most beautiful words in the whole range of Buddhism. One of the most beautiful words in the whole vocabulary of Buddhism. And it links, it combines, quite a number of associated meanings. No one English word is really sufficient to do justice to the fullness, the richness of meaning, which this word '*ksanti*' contains. Literally *ksanti* means patience, it means forbearance, but included is also the idea of gentleness, of docility, and even of humility. Sometimes we say that humility isn't exactly a Buddhist virtue, but we mean humility in the more artificial sense, the more self-conscious sense. In this connection there's a little story about Mahatma Gandhi. When he started one of his ashrams in India he drew up a list of all the virtues which the inmates were supposed to practise, it was quite a long list, and right at the head of the list he had the virtue of humility. Everybody was supposed to practise that. So someone pointed out to him that if you practised humility deliberately, self-consciously (as it were) then it wasn't humility, it was just hypocrisy. So he crossed it out and he wrote at the bottom "All the virtues are to be practised in a spirit of humility", which was a rather different thing.

So if one takes humility in the right sense, as a sort of unselfconscious, self-abnegation of spirit, unawareness of self, then one can include humility also as part of the meaning, part of the connotation, of this term '*ksanti*'. And *ksanti* also contains very definite overtones (or undertones if you like) of love, even compassion, of tolerance, and of acceptance, and receptivity.

On the negative side *ksanti* covers such things as absence of anger, and absence of the desire for retaliation and revenge. So it isn't very difficult, from these facts, to understand what kind of attitude, what kind of mental, what kind of spiritual attitude, *ksanti* represents. Generally speaking we may say it represents, within the context of the Bodhisattva Ideal, it represents the antidote to anger. In other words it's a form of love. You may remember that *dana*, or giving, the first of the *paramitas*, represented within the context of the Bodhisattva Ideal, the antidote to craving. So in the same way *ksanti*, patience, forbearance, or love (if you like), within the context of the same Bodhisattva Ideal, is the antidote to anger.

Now there's a lot that one can say about *ksanti*, as one can in fact about all the *paramitas*, but I propose to discuss this evening just the three principal aspects of *ksanti*. First of all, *ksanti* as forbearance. Secondly, *ksanti* as tolerance,, and thirdly, *ksanti* as spiritual receptivity. And I'm going to depart from my usual custom and I'm going to introduce each aspect with a story. The story's not going to come along in the middle, it's not going to come along at the end, it's going to come right at the beginning. And this will serve to remind us that *ksanti* is not something to be theorised about or speculated about, but essentially something to be practised in our everyday life, as in fact we shall see with the help of a verse from the 'Dhammapada' a little later on.

Now, first of all, *ksanti* as forbearance. Now *ksanti* in this sense, *ksanti* as forbearance, is illustrated by a story from the life of the Buddha himself. And this story is found in the *Sutra of Forty Two Sections*. This incidentally was the first Buddhist text ever to be translated into the Chinese language. Now we haven't got the Sanskrit, or perhaps the Pali, original of it. We've only got this Chinese translation. But historically it is of considerable importance. So one of the earlier sections relates this particular story about the Buddha. Apparently the Buddha was going about as usual, he was either preaching or he was going for alms, or something of that sort, but he happened to encounter somebody, probably a Brahmin, we don't know, who for some reason or other wasn't very happy with the Buddha, wasn't very pleased with him. So he straight away started to abuse the Buddha, called him all sorts of names - we often find this in the Pali scriptures. The Buddha, by the way, wasn't universally popular in his own day. Quite a lot of people didn't like the Buddha and didn't like what he was doing - enticing people away from their wives and families, and putting them on the spiritual path, and making them think of nirvana instead of thinking about making money. With some people he wasn't at all popular.

So he encountered, it seems, one of these characters, and he just started abusing the Buddha with all the words in his vocabulary. So the Buddha didn't say anything, didn't say anything at all, he just waited for the man to stop. So after five minutes of uninterrupted abuse he just stopped, he got out of breath apparently. So the Buddha very quietly asked him - he said "Is that all?" So the man was a bit taken aback and he said "Yes, that's all". So then the Buddha said "Alright, let me now ask you a question," he said "Suppose you have a friend, and suppose that friend brings along for you one day a present. But suppose you don't want to accept that present. If you don't accept it, to whom does that gift belong?" So he said "Well, if I won't accept it, well, it belongs to the person who wanted to give it to me". So the Buddha said "Look here, you have tried to make me a present of this abuse. I decline to accept your present," he said, "Take it, it belongs to you". (Laughter) So, this is the story told about the Buddha. So this is how the Buddha behaved. But I think we'll probably agree upon a little reflection that this is not how we usually behave. This isn't the way in which we are likely to behave. What we usually do if we're abused in this way is that we either make a similar retort or we retaliate in some other way. At best we keep it burning within our mind, and we perhaps take revenge later on. So this is the way in which we behave. And we find that the great teacher, Shantideva, gives some very useful hints on how we are to practise *ksanti* in this sense, in the sense of forbearance, and emulate the Buddha's example. He gives us some hints, in other words, on how to check the arising of anger.

Shantideva says, supposing someone comes along and beats you with a stick. Well, he says, that's a very painful experience, but you shouldn't just straight away fly into a rage. He says you should reflect, and you should try to understand what has actually happened. If you just analyse it, when you're beaten with a stick, all that has happened is that two things have come together. One of them is the stick, and the other is your body. They've just come together. And the painful experience arises in dependence on the coming together of these two factors - stick and body. Now, Shantideva says, who is responsible for this coming together, for this painful experience. The other person, the enemy, admittedly he has taken the stick to you. He's partly responsible, but Shantideva says, you've taken the body. He provides the stick but you provide the body, and where does that body come from? It comes from your previous *samskaras*, it comes from your ignorance and activities based upon ignorance of previous lives. He's put the stick there, true, but you've put the body there. So you are equally responsible with him, so why should you get angry with him for his stick, and not with yourself for your body being there? So in this way Shantideva has a number of reflections, which we can read in the 'Bodicaryavata', which help us to practise forbearance in situations of this sort.

Now it isn't just a question of practising forbearance towards harsh words or people with sticks, it's a much bigger, a much wider question than that, and sometimes the objects towards which forbearance is to be practised are classified in Buddhist literature into three groups.

First of all, nature. Nature. The material universe that surrounds us, especially in the form of the weather. We have to practise forbearance towards the weather. Either it's too hot or it's too cold, or there's too much wind or too much rain or not enough sunshine. And I need hardly remind you that this sort of forbearance is especially necessary to us, whether Buddhist or non-Buddhist, in this country. And also we need to practise forbearance towards what are known in law as 'acts of God', natural calamities and natural disasters beyond human control like fire and flood and earthquake and lightning. So this is the first kind of object towards which forbearance is to be practised. Nature in general.

And then secondly, our own body. Especially when the body is sick or suffering in any other kind of way. We shouldn't get angry with the body, we shouldn't start beating 'brother ass'- it isn't his fault. After all, we've brought the body here, it's our own responsibility, we should just practise forbearance towards the body, and its aches and pains and so on. Some people of course find this a little difficult, they just get a little headache sometimes and you might think from the fuss they made that they were undergoing a major operation without anaesthetic, and they express need for sympathy and so on. Now the fact that we should practise forbearance towards the body, towards physical suffering, doesn't mean that we should not try to alleviate suffering, whether it's our own suffering or whether it's the suffering of other people. But we should realise at least that there's always a residue which cannot be relieved, and this we simply have to bear with patience. And even if there is no sickness, even if there's no disease, in any case, sooner or later, come along old age and eventually death. In the West we know many people rebel against this sort of thought, that old age must come creeping upon us, and they refuse to grow old gracefully, as people tend to do in the East. And this is sometimes quite tragic. In the East, one may say, especially in the Buddhist countries, people very often look forward to old age. They think (as it were) or even they say, "well how wonderful, in ten years time I'll be sixty", and they really look forward to it. And they tend to think, in many parts of the East, that old age is the happiest time of life. Happiest time of life because in old age all the passions of youth have subsided, all the emotional turbulence and so on. One has gained experience and with experience perhaps just a little wisdom. And then one has fewer and fewer responsibilities, one hands over everything to the younger generation, one doesn't have much to do, one has got plenty of time for reflection, even for meditation. So people do very much look forward, in the East, to their old age. But even in the East, one must confess, it isn't always - in fact very often it isn't - easy for people to accept the fact of death. Whether in east or west, this is usually, for most people, a very sobering consideration. But there's no alternative, whether we like it or whether we don't like it, one day death will come. And therefore one is advised to practise forbearance towards the dissolution, or the idea of the dissolution, one day, of the physical body.

And then thirdly and lastly one is advised to practise forbearance towards other people. And this is said to be the most difficult of all. Much more difficult to be forbearing towards other people than towards the weather, or even towards one's own body and one's own physical aches and pains. Other people can be very, very difficult indeed. And

this is why perhaps someone once said that hell is other people. Of course heaven is other people too, but that's another story. There's no time for details, I'm sure we can supply, all of us, the details from our own experience.

Now one can begin to see perhaps already that the Buddhist ideal of forbearance is a very lofty one, a very sublime one, and in Buddhist texts, in Buddhist literature, even in Buddhist life, the ideal is sometimes carried to what we in the West would regard as extremes. For instance there's the parable, the Buddha's parable, of the saw. The Buddha one day called all his disciples together and he said, "Monks, suppose you were going through the forest, and suppose you were seized by robbers who were highwaymen, and suppose they should take a sharp, two-handed saw and saw you limb from limb." He said, "If in your mind there arose the least thought of ill will," He said, "You would not be my disciple." So this is the sort of extreme to which this ideal can, could, perhaps should, be carried. It isn't of course just a question of stoical endurance. It isn't just a question of sort of gritting your teeth and bearing it, but feeling angry and resentful inside. The Buddha's teaching makes it clear that forbearance is essentially a positive mental attitude, essentially an attitude of love. And this fact is very well brought out indeed in a passage from the *Majjhima-Nikaya*, the collection of Middle Length Sayings of the Buddha. And here the Buddha says, again addressing his disciples,

"When men speak evil of you, thus must you train yourselves: Our hearts shall be unwavering, no evil word will we send forth, but compassionate of others' welfare will we abide, of kindly heart without resentment. And that man who thus speaks will we suffuse with thoughts accompanied by love, and so abide. And making that our standpoint, we will suffuse the whole world with loving thoughts, far reaching, wide spreading, boundless, free from hate, free from ill will, and so abide. Thus must you train yourselves."

Now just one more word before passing on to other aspects of *ksanti*. There's a little verse, not even a verse - a line - half a line, of the Dhammapada which goes like this: "*khanti paramam tapo titikkha*", which is usually translated as 'patience is the greatest penance' or 'forbearance is the greatest asceticism'. And this verse, or this line of the verse, is highly significant, so let's look into it just for a minute.

The line mentions *tapo* or *tapa*; *tapa* means penance, it means austerities, it means practices of self-mortification. There were lots of these in ancient India - for instance if you fasted for months on end, or just reduced your food to a few grains of rice a day, or every other day, or every third day, or once a week, this was an asceticism. Or if you hung head downwards from a tree with your feet in the air, and meditated like that, that was another kind of *tapas*, another kind of asceticism. Or you stood with one hand in the air and you kept it there for months until it withered, until it shrivelled, that was also *tapas*, that was also asceticism. And then there was a famous one called the *pancca agni tapasya*. The *tapas*, the asceticism, of the five fires. And in this one you kindled five fires - four at the four cardinal points, and when they were blazing and bright and hot you sat in the middle with the sun directly overhead, that was the fifth fire. And you meditated like this. And this was called the *pancca agni tapasya* - the asceticism of the five fires. And all these forms of asceticism, all these kinds of penance and self-mortification and self-torture, were very, very popular in the Buddha's day. There are plenty of references to them in the Pali scriptures. And many people in the Buddha's day regarded these various practices of asceticism, of self-mortification, as means to salvation. They felt - they believed - that the more the flesh was mortified, the finer and purer and more subtle and more enlightened the spirit became.

But the Buddha didn't agree with this, the Buddha didn't approve. He tried it all for six years, and he had found that it didn't work. So this is what he says in this little verse: "*khanti paramam tapo titikkha*". It's patience, it's forbearance, which is the greatest *tapas*, the greatest asceticism. It's as though the Buddha said, "Alright, if you want to practise penance, if you want to practise asceticisms, there's no need to seek out special opportunities, no need to sit in between five fires, just go back to ordinary everyday life. You just live in the midst of that. That'll give you opportunities enough for penance, that'll give you opportunities enough for *tapasya*, that'll give you opportunities enough for the practise of forbearance." In other words, if you bear properly the trials and the difficulties of life, other people and so on, well you couldn't have a *tapasya* more difficult than that. So in that sense forbearance, patience, *ksanti*, is the greatest of all penances, the greatest of all asceticisms.

Alright, secondly we come to *ksanti* as tolerance. And we'll deal with this and with the following aspect of *ksanti* a little more quickly, a little more briefly, because we've still rather a lot of ground to cover. So first comes the illustrative story. This particular story some of you must have heard before, because we had occasion to refer to it in our series on Tibetan Buddhism. Those of you who attended that series, or part of that series, may remember that the Mongols were converted to Buddhism in the thirteenth century by a great spiritual master called Phags.pa. Phags.pa who was of course a Tibetan, was the head at that time of the Shakyapa School, one of the four great schools of Tibetan Buddhism. You may recollect that there are the Gelugpas, the Nyingmapas, the Kagyupas, and the Shakyapas. So in the thirteenth century this great spiritual teacher, this great spiritual master, Phags.pa, was the head of the fourth of these schools, the Shakyapa School. And he was a man of great influence, great ability, great prestige, and he was the guru, the spiritual teacher, the spiritual master, of the great Kubla Khan, who, you may remember, Marco Polo visited. And the emperor, Kubla Khan, who of course was emperor of China as well as Khan of Mongolia, in gratitude to Phags.pa for his teaching, for his instruction, gave him the secular jurisdiction over the whole of Tibet, so that he became (as it were) the ruler of Tibet. And at the same time Kubla Khan wanted to pass a law, and apply it throughout his domains, compelling all Buddhists to follow the Shakyapa teaching. Now you may be thinking that, well, Phags.pa must have been very pleased, and very happy, that there was going to be a law compelling everyone to follow the Shakyapa teaching, but no, not at all. What happened was that Phags.pa dissuaded Kubla Khan from passing that law.

He said to the emperor, he said everybody should be free to follow their own conscience, to follow that form of Buddhism which they liked best. And he said this is the ancient Buddhist teaching, the ancient Buddhist tradition. So the emperor did not pass that law.

So this is an example of tolerance. And this we may say, this tolerant attitude, is the general attitude of Tibetan Buddhists. It is in fact the attitude of all Buddhists everywhere, at all times. If there have ever been any exceptions, they have been very, very, very few indeed. There might be two or three, or at the most four of them, very minor ones, in two thousand five hundred years of Buddhist history. And we can't help feeling in what striking contrast this all stands with the history, in the West, of Christianity. If one goes through the history of the church, especially during the Early and the Middle Ages, one can't really help being, I will say, revolted. Because there are so many instances of intolerance, of fanaticism, of persecution. These things seem to be the rule, not the exception at all. Now we've only got to think, for example, of the rather ruthless destruction of the whole pagan culture of Western Europe, the wholesale massacre of heretics, like the Cathars, the Albigenses, the Waldenses. We've only got to think of the sad and sorry story of the Inquisition and the Crusades, and the witch burnings later on. And we've only got to recollect that all these things represented the official and the declared policy of the whole body of the Church, and that everybody, from the Pope downwards, was involved. Even in some cases some of those who were considered to be saints.

And if we go through the history of the Church, and if we attend to this particular aspect of it, we can't help sometimes getting the impression of something deeply abhorrent, something deeply, even, pathological. Some people of course do say that all this is an aberration, they say it doesn't represent real Christianity, and that may well be so, but one may certainly observe that there are strong traces, quite strong traces, of intolerance even in the Gospels themselves. In fact we may say that Christianity seems to have been intolerant right from the very beginning and continues so in the vast majority of cases right down to the present day. The only difference being that nowadays the Church has very little secular power and therefore it can't do very much harm to its opponents. But it would seem (to go a little wider, to generalise) it would seem that intolerance, exclusiveness, and a tendency towards persecution and fanaticism - it would seem that this is characteristic of all forms of monotheism. Monotheism tends to be of this nature. Monotheistic religions do tend to be of this nature. It's not just a question of Christianity, but Judaism and Islam are also very, very intolerant. As I mentioned, I believe, the other week: if you wanted to go and preach, if I wanted to go and preach Buddhism in a Muslim country I just couldn't do that. If I attempted I'd probably pay very dearly for it, because Muslims do not have this tradition of tolerance of other religions. And this would seem to be true of all the monotheistic faiths. But Buddhism we know is non-theistic, it doesn't believe in a personal god, it doesn't believe in a supreme being, it doesn't believe that religion consists in submission to such a supreme being, or faith in such a supreme being. According to the Buddhist teaching each and every individual is responsible for his or her own spiritual destiny, but you can't be responsible, you can't be expected to be responsible, without freedom. And therefore, in Buddhism, everybody's encouraged to choose and to follow in their own way their own path. And this is why we've so many different forms of Buddhism. These different forms are not sects, they're not rival bodies, they don't all claim exclusive possession of Buddhist truth. The different schools, the different forms of Buddhism, represent, we may say, particular aspects of the one total tradition.

Now though Buddhism is tolerant, not only towards all other forms of Buddhism itself, but towards all other religions, at the same time it isn't vague, and it isn't woolly. Sometimes you find that people, individuals, are tolerant, but they're very vague and they're very woolly. They mix everything up, they don't distinguish, they don't divide, they don't analyse. But Buddhism isn't like this. In Buddhism there's no pseudo-universalism. The teaching of Buddhism is a clear teaching, is a precise teaching, but at the same time perfect tolerance is practised. And this sort of thing, this sort of combination, is very, very difficult for the Western mind to understand. This combination of certainty, on the one hand, and tolerance on the other. We tend to think in the West that the more confident you are in the truth of what you believe, or the more confident you are that you know, the greater your right to impose your views on other people. We tend to think, well, I know it's right and I know it's true, so therefore I've got, by hook or by crook, to bring other people into this, and even to force them to accept; why can't they see it, it's their blindness, it's their foolishness, it's their stupidity. This tends to be our attitude in the West. But in Buddhism it isn't like this, Buddhists are clear in their understanding of, say, the Four Truths, the Eightfold Path, Conditioned Co-production, sunyata, these are a clear, precise teaching which have been well formulated intellectually, well thought out, and those who do believe them, who do accept them, believe them fully, wholeheartedly, accept them completely, they're fully convinced of their truth, but at the same time: perfect freedom is extended to other people to think differently. And the Buddhist doesn't become agitated, he doesn't become worried, he doesn't become upset at the idea or at the thought that elsewhere in the world, even in his own environment, there are people who just don't accept what he accepts, who don't believe that the Buddha was Enlightened, who don't believe that the Noble Eightfold Path leads one to Nirvana, who reject all that. The Buddhist recognises this fact. He sees it quite clearly, but he's not disturbed, he doesn't feel upset, he doesn't feel threatened. Whereas in the West, if someone doesn't share our belief we tend to feel threatened, we tend to feel insecure, we tend to feel undermined. So this sort of fanatical desire, this fanatical insistence to make everybody believe what we believe, to propagate our faith.

Now, there's much more which could be said on this particular topic, but we don't have any time to pursue it this evening, so let's pass on now to the third aspect, that is to say, *ksanti* as spiritual receptivity. And this time our illustration comes from chapter two of the *Saddharma Pundarika*. This chapter opens with the Buddha, seated, surrounded by his disciples: by Arahants, by Bodhisattvas, and so on - hundreds and thousands, and tens of thousands of them. And the Buddha is just sitting there, just sitting there cross-legged, in the midst of the assembly, with his eyes

half-closed and his hands folded on his lap. And he's just sitting there in deep meditation. And he sits there a long, long time. And as it's an assembly of Arahants and Bodhisattvas they don't become impatient, they don't start fidgeting and coughing. They just sit there along with him quietly, calmly, also immersed in meditation. So this goes on, as I've said, a very long time, and apparently the Buddha was immersed, on that occasion, in very, very deep, very profound, meditation. And eventually he came out of that meditation, and when he came out of it he announced that the Ultimate Truth was something very, very difficult to understand, very difficult to perceive. That even if he taught it, even if he tried to explain it, having seen it himself, very likely nobody would be able to understand, it was so profound, it was so vast, it so transcended all human capacity, that no-one would be able to fathom it, no-one would be able to grasp it.

But naturally his disciples entreated him, well, just at least to try to tell them, to try to communicate this Truth to them. So, eventually, the Buddha agreed. He said, "alright, I shall now proclaim to you, I shall now announce to you a further, a higher teaching, a deeper teaching, than anything that you have heard before. Something which will make your previous understanding, your previous knowledge, your previous experience, seem childish. Because this is so tremendous, this goes so far beyond anything you have heard before."

So when he said that, five thousand of the disciples, they just walked out. And they murmured among themselves, and they said, "Something further? Something higher? Something we haven't understood? Something we haven't realised? Impossible! We know it all already. We've reached - we've realised! We're there!" So they just walked out, five thousand of them. So, this is a very characteristic, a very typical sort of incident: People think that they've nothing further, nothing more to learn. It represents a very universal human tendency. And a tendency that is especially strong, and especially dangerous, in the spiritual life. We think that we've nothing more to learn, we think that we've taken it all in, we think that we've got it, we think that it's all under control - so what happens? We close our minds, we shut off our minds, and we become no longer receptive. Of course we're not altogether fools, we'll of course say, at least verbally, "Oh yes, I've got a lot more to learn, and, I know I don't know everything, and, there are some things I haven't understood yet." We may say that, but we don't really mean it. In fact we don't really know what we mean by those words. We go on thinking in the same old way. We maintain the same old attitude. We go on behaving in the same old way. And this isn't just a question, this receptivity, this openness, isn't just a question of acquiring additional information. It doesn't mean that having learned all about the Madhyamika School you should be open-minded about further historical developments and the arising of sub-schools - it doesn't mean that. But it means that one should be prepared, receptivity means that one should be prepared for a radical change in one's whole mode of being, one's whole way of life, one's whole way of looking at things, one's whole attitude in fact. And it's this that we're not prepared for, it's this that, in fact, we resist, and against which we set our defences, to protect ourselves.

So we may say that spiritual receptivity is of the utmost importance, is of supreme importance, and that without it, spiritual progress cannot be maintained. So we should be open, we should be receptive, we should hold ourselves open (as it were) to the truth, just as the flower holds itself open to the sun. We should be ready if necessary to give up whatever we've learned so far, and this isn't easy by any means. And we must be prepared also to give up whatever we have been, whatever we have become, whatever we are so far. And this is still more difficult. So this is what we mean by spiritual receptivity - holding ourselves open to these higher spiritual influences which are (as it were) streaming through the universe, and with which we're not usually in contact, against which we usually shut ourselves off.

So much then for *ksanti*, in the sense of patience and forbearance, in the sense of tolerance, in the sense of spiritual receptivity. And as I indicated earlier, this represents the 'feminine' aspect of the spiritual life.

So now for *virya* or vigour: the fourth *paramita*, the fourth perfection, the fourth transcendental virtue. And this of course represents the 'masculine' aspect of the spiritual life. The word '*virya*' itself presents us with no difficulties. *Virya* means masculine potency, driving force, energy, and vigour. And it comes from the same Indo-Aryan root as our own English word 'virtue', which originally meant 'strength' and also 'virility'. And this is the general meaning - vigour or energy. Now in specifically Buddhist terms, in a specifically Buddhist sense, *virya* (energy or vigour) is 'energy in pursuit of the good', and this is how it's defined by Shantideva. And 'good' here means 'Enlightenment for the sake of all sentient beings'. And it's important to notice here that *virya* (vigour, energy) doesn't mean just ordinary activity. If you're rushing here and there all day doing this and doing that, being very busy, doing lots of things, getting through a lot of work, you're not necessarily practising *virya paramita*, you're not necessarily practising vigour or energy as one of the Buddhist virtues. That's quite a different thing. In fact in this connection it's very interesting to refer to Gampopa's definition of laziness. Gampopa was a great Kagyupa teacher, a Tibetan, at about the time of our Norman Conquest in this country. And in his '*Jewel Ornament of Liberation*' Gampopa defines laziness as being constantly busy and constantly active in subduing enemies and accumulating money - he says this is laziness. In other words, subduing enemies - you can take that as representing politics; and accumulating money you can take that as representing business. So Gampopa is saying that to engage full time, very energetically, in either politics or business or both is simply laziness, however apparently busy you may be. This isn't *virya*, this isn't energy or vigour in the Buddhistic sense.

Now this *paramita*, *virya*, (energy, vigour) is extremely important, because in a sense all the other *paramitas* depend upon it. If you want to give you ought to have a certain amount of energy. If you want to practise the precepts, again energy is necessary. If you want to meditate, again you need energy. Even if you want to practise patience and forbearance you need a certain amount of at least negative energy, in the form of resistance. And if you want to

develop Wisdom, well of course you need more energy than ever then. So this particular *paramita* is very, very important inasmuch as the practice of all the other *paramitas*, in a sense, depends upon it. And this brings us right up against a very big problem. And the problem is this: We have, let us say, a spiritual ideal. An ideal of a state, or an experience, or a goal that we want to reach and realise. Let us say that our spiritual ideal is the Bodhisattva Ideal itself, and we have of this ideal a clear, a quite clear, intellectual understanding. We know all about it, we've read about it, we've heard about it, we've understood in our own minds, we could perhaps give a connected account of it if anybody asked us. So we generally accept it. But what happens? What usually happens? Despite our clear intellectual understanding of the ideal, despite our quite genuine acceptance of it, we don't somehow manage to attain it. In fact the months and the seasons and the years, perhaps even the decades, go by - we've still got this ideal, we're still hanging onto this ideal, but, only too often, we do not appear to have made any perceptible progress. We feel as though we're just where we were. I remember a very, in a way, moving example of this many years ago in India, when I went along to hear a talk by J Krishnamurti. And it was a very, very good talk, and at the end of the talk there were of course questions and answers and discussions. And in the midst of the discussion one woman got up and she said, to Krishnamurti, with her voice sort of vibrating with emotion (this often happens in Krishnamurti's meetings by the way, when people get up and ask questions) she said "Sir, we've been following you, and accepting this ideal, and trying to put it into practice for forty years, but" she said "we're just where we were forty years ago. What shall we do about it?" So I forget what he said (laughter), but this is the sort of thing which can, which does happen. He wasn't speechless, no, he had quite a lot to say. But this is the sort of thing that happens, and I wouldn't like to think that any of us in forty years time - we look back and we have to admit that - well, forty years later, forty years from this day we're just where we were, all those years earlier. So the question arises: well, why is this? We've got the ideal, we're quite clear about it, we know what we have to do, but nothing seems to happen. We even make an effort, a sort of feeble, intermittent effort, every now and then, once a week, an hour or two - we make an effort but nothing seems to happen, there's no perceptible progress. It's just as though you stood at the foot of Mount Kanchenjunga, and you look up at the snow peak, and it's there, and maybe twenty years later you're still at the same spot - you think you've made a few steps forward, but as far as you can see it's just as distant as ever it was.

So what is the reason for this? Why do we not make progress - at least no perceptible progress, certainly nothing at all spectacular or dramatic? If one is asked this one will say, well, most likely, one has no strength or no energy. This is why one hasn't been able to make any progress. One couldn't put the energy into it. In other words there was no *virya*, no vigour, no energy. So why should this be? Why should there be no energy, no drive, for the living of the spiritual life, for the realisation of the ideal? Why do we say that we have no energy when we haven't enough strength. Because actually, in fact, we've got plenty of energy. Plenty of energy, there's no shortage of energy at all. In fact far from being short of energy, we ourselves are embodiments of energy. We are concretions (as it were), crystallisations (as it were) of psychophysical, even of spiritual, energy. That fact that we've got a body at all, a mind at all, these are all made up of energy. We ourselves are energy. So there's no lack, there's no shortage of energy. But what usually happens? What usually happens is that our energy is dissipated. It's like a stream which is broken up, which is subdivided, which is led off, led away, into thousands of channels, so it loses its force. In this way, in the same way, our energy flows out (as it were) over innumerable objects, it's dissipated in numberless directions. Not only dissipated but divided. Only part of our energy, a little of our energy goes into the spiritual life, and the rest of the energy goes into all sorts of other activities that contradict the spiritual life, that are working against it. So we seem sometimes, we feel sometimes, sort of pulled apart. Part of our energy's going this way to the ideal, another part of our energy's going that way away from the ideal. So we feel ourselves pulled apart (as it were), and for this reason we feel very often exhausted. So the real problem of the spiritual life, we may say, in a way the central problem of the spiritual life is that of the conservation and unification of our energies. And some of you may recollect that we went into all this some months ago in the course of a lecture on "The Sevenfold Puja: Poetry and Devotion in Buddhism". And we saw, in that lecture, we saw on that occasion, that our energies, especially our emotional energies, are not available for the spiritual life, not available for the living of the spiritual life because they're either just blocked within us, or they're wasted and just leak away, or because they're just too coarse, too unrefined. We find, for instance, that our energies are blocked within us for various reasons. Very often our emotional energies are blocked because we've been brought up to repress our emotions, not to show them, not to express them. In this way emotional energies get blocked, get dammed up (as it were), and some people say that the English are particularly good at this sort of thing. And then again we're compelled to engage in mechanical, routine work - things into which we can't put our energy. So in this way also, energy gets blocked. We don't want to give our energy to something in which we're not interested. And then again energy's blocked because we've no real, positive, creative outlet for our energy. And in this way energies congeal within us, and they petrify and harden within us. Again sometimes emotional energies are blocked on account of emotional frustrations, emotional disappointments, fear of being hurt through the emotions. And above all perhaps by the absence of any real communication with other people. We find that real communication has an energising, almost an electrifying effect on people. Most people are out of communication with one another, but when they come into communication it's as though two terminals had met - a positive and a negative - and a spark is produced, energy is produced.

And then again we find that people's energies, their emotional energies, become blocked on account of the wrong type of conditioning, the wrong type of education, especially (say) things like the orthodox Christian teaching on sex, which must have resulted in the emotional stultification of probably tens of millions of people, if not hundreds of millions, in the course of history. So in this way emotional energies are blocked, and because they're blocked they're not available for the living of the spiritual life.

And secondly, emotional energies are wasted, just allowed to leak away. And this happens in a number of different ways. But mainly (we may say) on account of indulgence in negative emotions. Negative emotions are terrible wasters of energy. And if you indulge in negative emotions it means that energy is leaking away, draining away from you, all the time, continually. And the negative emotions are, for instance, fear, about which I spoke a few weeks ago. Then hatred, anger, ill-will, antagonism. And then again jealousy - perhaps the most terrifying of all the negative emotions; self-pity, guilt, remorse, anxiety, these are all negative emotions, and some of them of course in the West, we tend to regard as virtues, but from a Buddhist point of view they're all negative. They're negative emotions and, if we had the word 'vice' or 'sin' in Buddhism it would certainly apply to all of these. So energy is leaking, energy is draining away from these things all the time. Just cast your recollection back over the previous day, the previous week, and just think how often you must have indulged in fear, in hatred, in jealousy, self pity, guilt, remorse, anxiety, worry at the least, a sort of ticking over of the mind about this and about that. So this means loss of energy, waste of energy, leaking and draining away of energy.

And then there are the verbal expressions of these negative emotions. In the lecture I mentioned we went into these in considerable detail. For instance grumbling: grumbling just expresses negative emotion, nothing more. And then carping criticism - carping criticism - fault finding. And then what I called - coining a term - dismal Jimmyism, looking on the gloomy side of everything, discouraging people from doing things. And then a rather poisonous expression, gossip, which is usually of course malicious. And then lastly nagging, especially common in the domestic circle unfortunately. And all of these are verbal expressions of negative emotions. And through these verbal expressions too, energy is leaking and draining away. As I've said, all these are explained in detail in the lecture I mentioned, so there's no need for me to repeat all that material over again. But this is just another of those ways in which energy, especially emotional energy, becomes not available for spiritual purposes, because it goes to waste through the negative emotions and their verbal expressions.

And then, thirdly, emotional energy is not available for the living of the spiritual life because it's just too coarse. Spiritual life requires spiritual energy. We can't for instance meditate with our muscles. The muscles may be full of energy, may be very strong, very powerful, but for meditation we require something finer. So ordinary human energy, even ordinary human emotional energy, isn't available for the spiritual life just because it's too coarse-grained (as it were). Before it can be used for and by the spiritual life it has to be refined. Now there are various ways of resolving blockages of emotional energy, various ways of stopping the waste of emotional energy, and of refining the more coarse emotional energies. And if we can do this, if we can resolve the blockages, stop the waste, and refine the coarse energies, then energy will be conserved, it'll be unified, and it'll just flow forth, will just stream forth (as it were).

Blockages are resolved through awareness - through awareness, through introspection, through engaging in genuinely creative or at least productive work, through the stepping up of human communication, if necessary with the help of what we call the communication exercises. Then again we find meditation helps - quite a lot of blockages get resolved, as it were automatically, spontaneously, in the course of meditation practice. Waste is also stopped through awareness, awareness of the fact that one is indulging in negative emotions. And waste is also stopped by cultivating the opposite emotion, say, love instead of hate, confidence instead of fear, and so on. As regards the verbal expressions of negative emotions, these just have to be stopped by an act of will. There's nothing else that one can do about them. They don't deserve any better treatment. And as I've observed on more than one occasion, if we can only be silent, if we can only stop talking, not just verbal expressions of negative emotions but all verbal expressions whatsoever. If you can just stop for a while - a few minutes, a few hours, maybe a few days. Some of us have done this in the retreats, at least for a day, or say half a day. And one finds that when one cuts off, when one shuts off, verbal expression, energy accumulates within. It's quite wonderful. And those who have had this experience will know this, that an enormous amount of energy goes out of us because we have to talk. And probably most of you know that if you can spend a day quietly at home, all by yourself, not talking to anyone, you experience an accession of energy.

So not only can we save energy by shutting off, by stopping the verbal expressions of negative emotions, but by stopping for a while, for a time, for a period, verbal expressions altogether. One feels calm, one feels peaceful, more aware, more mindful. And then you find, gradually, that it's as though a little spring of energy - a fresh clear spring of energy - was bubbling up inside you, pure, and (as it were) virginal, not touched, not tainted, because it was just kept within you and not expressed outwardly in any form, in any manner.

Now the coarser emotional energies are refined in two ways. One through practices of faith and devotion, like our Sevenfold Puja, and also through the fine arts, through music, painting, poetry, and so on. And this incidentally is one of the reasons why we have an arts group. Some people may wonder, well, what's a Buddhist movement doing with an arts group, might think the two were a bit incompatible, but it isn't so at all. This is just one of the ways in which the emotional energies can be refined and made more readily available for the spiritual life. So in this way too, energy is released and becomes available for the spiritual life.

So we refine the energies, we stop waste and so on, and in this way energy becomes available for the living, for the practise of all the *paramitas*, all the perfections which the Bodhisattva must practise to attain, to realise Buddhahood. So there's no split, there's no division, of energies. The Bodhisattva becomes the embodiment of energy. But at the same time there's no hurry, there's no fuss, there's no restlessness or anything of that sort. There is (we may say) just smooth, uninterrupted activity for the sake, for the benefit, of all sentient beings. And Shantideva may be quoted here, again, in this connection. Shantideva says the Bodhisattva is like an elephant. In Indian literature if you're compared with an elephant it's highly complimentary, by the way. They say for instance of a beautiful woman, that she walks

just like an elephant (laughter) and this doesn't mean that she's clumsy or a bit well built, or anything like that. It means that she has a graceful, slow, swinging, stately movement. So it's a great compliment if you're compared to an elephant. So Shantideva says the Bodhisattva is like an elephant. And in what way is he like an elephant? The elephant (I don't know whether you know this) is very playful, especially the male elephant, a very playful beast indeed. And he loves to bathe. He loves to bathe in lotus ponds and to squirt water over himself and trumpet gaily, and pluck up great bunches of lotus flowers and washes them carefully, and then he eats them. In this way he passes the day very happily. So Shantideva says he's just like the elephant, or the Bodhisattva is just like the elephant. Just as the elephant, as soon as he's finished playing and sporting in one pond, plunges into another lotus pond; in the same way, he says, with equal happiness, with equal delight, the Bodhisattva, as soon as one work is finished he plunges into another. Well, I hardly need to remind you, with us it isn't like that. One work is finished, we like to have a good rest, have a cup of tea, or something like that. But not the Bodhisattva, as soon as one work is finished he plunges straight away, joyfully, into the next. At the same time the Bodhisattva doesn't really think that he is doing anything. He doesn't think "well, I'm working, I'm doing this, and I'm doing that". His activity is functioning, his manifestation of energy is selfless. It's a spontaneous activity, it just comes bubbling up, just like a fountain, just like a flower unfolding. And sometimes the Bodhisattva's activity is spoken of in the Indian languages as a "*lila*", which means it's a game, it's a sport, it's a play, a sort of game that the Bodhisattva plays, just like a child plays, spontaneously manifesting energy in the same way the Bodhisattva plays, manifesting the perfections, manifesting the different aspects of the path to Enlightenment, and eventually playing the great game of Buddhahood and manifesting Enlightenment. So there's no time to dwell upon this, but this idea of spiritual life being a sort of playfulness, a sort of bubbling up of spiritual, of transcendental energy. This is very prominent in some forms of Indian thought, and Indian religious life. In this country we tend to take religion very, very seriously, we've got Sabbath faces and Sabbath gloom, and things of that sort. We think the more serious you are, well the more religious, and the more religious the more serious. You never laugh in church, huh? But the Bodhisattva's life isn't like that, it's a game, it's a play, it's a sport. And in the East, religious life, spiritual life, is very often compared to this sort of game, because in a way it's an end in itself, it's self-contained, it's complete in itself. It doesn't in a way look beyond. And it's spontaneous, it's free from egotism, it's natural, and it's enjoyed.

So much then for the *virya paramita*, so much for the perfection of vigour which represents, as we've seen, the masculine aspect of the spiritual life. So now we've completed our account of both *ksanti* and *virya*, both patience and vigour. That is to say the third and the fourth *paramitas* or perfections or transcendental virtues to be practised by the Bodhisattva. We've seen the masculine and the feminine aspects of the spiritual life. Our account of them hasn't been exhaustive, but I hope at least sufficient to indicate the specific nature, the specific quality of each of these *paramitas*. And also sufficient to make it clear why one is described as 'masculine' and the other as 'feminine'. Vigour is of course clearly the more active, the more assertive, the more creative *paramita*. And therefore it's said to be 'masculine'. And patience is the more passive, the more receptive, the more quiescent, and therefore it is said to be 'feminine'. And this distinction represents a very important polarity in the spiritual life. We may even say that there are two radically different approaches to the spiritual life itself. One approach stresses self-help, do-it-yourself, self-exertion. The other approach stresses reliance upon, dependence upon a power outside oneself - in some cases, in some systems reliance upon, dependence upon, divine grace. One approach, we may say, represents the attitude of getting up and doing things oneself. The other approach represents the attitude of just sitting back and letting things happen, letting them do themselves (as it were). And in India they've got two rather charming expressions for these two religious attitudes. One they say is the monkey attitude, and the other they say is the kitten attitude.

Now what does this mean? They say that the baby monkey, when it's born, clings onto its mother's fur. It clings on tightly, with a very tight grip. So this represents self-help, self-reliance. The mother admittedly is moving about and carrying the monkey, but the baby monkey has to hold on itself, with its own strength, with its own energy. But the baby kitten is completely helpless. The kitten, as you know, has to be picked up by the scruff of its neck by the mother and carried everywhere. It's completely helpless, it can't do anything for a while. So this represents the approach of dependence on another power, reliance on divine grace, and so on. And in the Indian traditions, the first approach, that of the little monkey, the monkey type of approach, is associated with *jnana* or Wisdom. The wise man is the self-reliant man, tries to find things out, understand things for himself. But the attitude of the kitten, this is associated with *bhakti*, the path of devotion, which consists in a feeling of dependence upon some divine power, or divine ideal, superior to oneself.

No time to go into this so far as Indian religion is concerned in general. But in Japanese Buddhism we find that these two different approaches, of reliance on oneself, reliance on some divine power outside oneself, these are represented respectively by Zen Buddhism and Shin Buddhism. Zen, as is well known, represents, or stresses even, reliance on the self-power, as it's called, *jiriki*, in Japanese. Whereas Shin, the Jodo Shin Shu especially, represents reliance upon the other power, or *tariki*, as it's called in Japanese. In other words the power of Amitabha, the power of the Buddha, the spiritual power of the Buddha of infinite light and eternal life. And these two approaches, that is to say the approach of the baby monkey and the kitten, of the intellectual and the devotee, reliance upon self-power (*jiriki*), reliance upon other-power (*tariki*), these are generally held to be contradictory, generally held to be mutually exclusive. That if you follow one path you can't follow the other. Either you depend on your own efforts, or you depend upon another power to do it for you. In fact Buddhism itself is usually held to be a religion of self effort, of self-help, as opposed to being a religion of self-surrender. But this (we may say) is not strictly true. In the Buddhist texts, in Buddhist literature, we've a number of references to the helpful spiritual influences which emanate from the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas. If one is receptive to these one feels them. And these are sometimes called "grace waves" which come (as it were) wavering down, vibrating down, from the higher spiritual regions, from Buddhas, from

Bodhisattvas. And can be felt by those who, as I said, are receptive to them. This isn't like the grace of God in Christianity, because in Buddhism of course there is no God, no supreme being.

These spiritual forces, these "grace waves" we may say, arise, essentially, within oneself, but again, not within oneself. In other words they arise, or appear to arise, or appear to descend from heights (if you like to call it heights) or depths (if you like to call it depths) of which one is not usually aware, not usually conscious, but to which one's awareness can be extended, and which can, in a sense, be included within one's greatly enlarged self.

Now the Bodhisattva combines both approaches - combines both approaches. And for this reason the Bodhisattva practises patience and vigour. He synthesises the masculine and the feminine aspects of the spiritual life. In fact we may say that both approaches are necessary. Sometimes in the course of our spiritual life, as in the course of our worldly life, it's necessary to hang on - to hang on (if you like) for grim death. It's necessary to make an effort, it's necessary to do, it's necessary to strive and to exert and to struggle and to resist. But sometimes also it's necessary to let go, to let things look after themselves, to let them even drift (if you like). To let them just happen, without one's interference, without one's initiative. And there's no hard and fast rule. Sometimes you have to do, to exert. But on other occasions you have to just let things (I won't say slide, but) let them look after themselves, think, well, it isn't my responsibility, it isn't my duty. Let whatever is going to be done, be done. Sometimes one has to adopt one attitude, sometimes the other, according to circumstances, and there's no hard and fast rule. But broadly speaking, very broadly speaking, one may say, it's safe to assume that a lot of self-help, a lot of self-effort, a reliance upon self-power is necessary - at the beginning. And later on perhaps, after a great initial effort has been made, one can begin to rely more upon the help (if you like), the power, the force, which comes apparently from somewhere outside oneself, or at least outside one's present conscious self. But one can't start relying upon that prematurely, or thinking that one is relying upon that prematurely, otherwise one will just drift in a purely negative sense.

Again there's an Indian illustration: In India they say, well, when you leave the shore in a little boat, a little rowing boat, you have to row yourself first with a great deal of effort, with a great deal of straining of muscle. Rowing perhaps against the current, against the stream. But when you get out into the middle, when you've got out into the middle of the river by your own effort, then you can hoist your sail, and then the breeze, then the wind will come along, it will fill the sail, and it will carry the boat along. In the same way, they say, a great deal of effort is necessary in the early stages of the spiritual life. But a time comes, a point comes, when you contact forces which (in a sense) are beyond yourself, in another sense part of your greater self. And these begin to bear you, to carry you along.

Now there's just one more very important point before we close. The active and the passive aspects of the spiritual life have been termed 'masculine' and 'feminine'. And I observed at the outset that the use of these terms was, more or less, metaphorical. At the same time it must also be said that the use of them is not entirely metaphorical. One may say that there is in fact a real correspondence between biological and psychological masculinity and femininity on the one hand, and spiritual masculinity and femininity on the other. But one must bear in mind, one must recollect, that the Bodhisattva combines both. We come therefore to the rather, or what may appear to be to some people to be the rather curious fact, or the rather curious statement, that the Bodhisattva is, for this reason, what we may describe as psychologically and spiritually bisexual. And this means that the Bodhisattva integrates the masculine and the feminine elements at each and every level of his own psychological and spiritual experience. And this fact is reflected very clearly in Buddhist iconography. We find in some representations of the Buddha and of various Bodhisattvas that it's sometimes very hard, from a Western point of view, to distinguish whether the figure is masculine or whether it is feminine. And I know that I've sometimes had the experience of showing for instance an image or a picture of Avalokitesvara to a friend who perhaps didn't know very much about Buddhism, and I'd say, "Isn't this a beautiful figure?" And they'd say, "Yes, she's lovely". And then I'd say, "No, it isn't a female figure, it's a male figure." And they looked a little more closely and they saw, yes, it was a male figure, but it seemed to have certain feminine characteristics at the same time. And this iconographical representation reflects this sort of principle, this sort of idea, of the psychological and spiritual bisexuality of the Bodhisattva, indeed of the spiritual person in general.

Now this idea, or even ideal, of psychological and spiritual bisexuality is rather unfamiliar to us in the West. But it was known to the ancient gnostics - one of the heretical sects of early Christianity - but the teaching was of course rather quickly stamped out by the Church. But anyway there's an interesting passage in a work known as the Gospel of Thomas. We know the gospel of Matthew and of Mark and Luke and John, but there's another one, in fact there are several others. This one is called the Gospel of Thomas, and it's a gnostic work. Not an orthodox Christian work at all, and it consists of a hundred and twelve sayings attributed to Jesus after his resurrection. And the text was discovered in Egypt only in 1945. And there's a very interesting passage, because in Saying twenty three, Jesus is represented as saying:

*"When you make the two one,
and make the inside like the outside,
and the outside like the inside,
and the upside like the underside,
and (in such a way) that you make the man (with) the woman a single one,
in order that the man is not the man and the woman is not the woman;
when you make eyes in place of an eye,*

*and a hand in place of a hand,
and a foot in place of a foot,
an image in place of an image;
then you will go into the Kingdom"*

This is not the sort of teaching that one normally encounters in church, but you can see its obviously profound significance and import.

Now within the context of Buddhism, this idea or this concept, or even practice, of spiritual bisexuality is dealt with especially by the Tantra. And Buddhahood, Enlightenment itself, is represented in these terms. In other words, Buddhahood or Enlightenment is represented as consisting in a perfect union of Wisdom, on the one hand, and Compassion on the other. And here, in this union, Wisdom represents the feminine aspect of the spiritual life, and Compassion represents the masculine aspect, both at the highest possible level, the highest possible pitch of perfection. And this sort of representation, this sort of symbolism (if you like) is often represented in Tantric Buddhist art. And it's then that one gets, it's then that one encounters, representations, for instance, of the Buddha accompanied by what some writers describe as his female counterpart. And both figures are represented as being in the act of sexual union. But one must notice, one must observe, that though there are two figures, there are not two persons. There's only one person, one Enlightened person, one Enlightened mind, within which are united reason and emotion, or Wisdom and Compassion. And this sort of representation, this sort of iconography, a Buddha with female counterpart, one representing Wisdom, one representing Compassion, within the Enlightened mind, represented as being in sexual union, this sort of representation in the West would be regarded as possibly obscene, perhaps even as blasphemous. And you certainly wouldn't encounter this sort of thing in a church anywhere. But in the East, especially in Tibet, this sort of Tantric representation, this sort of symbolism, is regarded (one may say) as extremely sacred. These representations are called *Yab-Yum*. *Yab* means literally father, *Yum* means mother, so father-mother representations, or representations embodying the ideal of Enlightenment, of Wisdom and Compassion united under the form of sexual symbolism. But here of course one has nothing to do with sexuality in the ordinary sense. It is (one may say) a representation of the highest consummation of 'masculinity' and 'femininity', Wisdom and Compassion, in the spiritual life.