

148 - The Way of Non Duality

Mister Chairman and Friends - and enemies if I have any!

Tonight, as you've already heard, tonight we come to our sixth talk and when it's finished in an hour or an hour and a quarter's time we shall be three quarters of the way through our present Autumn series of talks, and we will have dealt with six out of our seven themes from The Vimalakirti Nirdesa, a Mahayana Buddhist Scripture.

By this time we've got, I think, some idea of the nature of The Vimalakirti Nirdesa. We've had perhaps, even, some experience of the magic of a Mahayana Sutra, and one of the things that we've noticed, I think, is that The Vimalakirti Nirdesa is a very rich work indeed. It contains quite a number of different elements. It contains pieces of straightforward, doctrinal exposition in which some of the profoundest philosophical themes of Buddhism are adumbrated. It contains also passages of lavish description including descriptions of all sorts of magical feats and happenings. It contains poetry, even poetry in the more formal sense of the term. It contains specimens of biography and autobiography and reminiscence. We might even say it contains episodes of high drama, and it even contains - believe it or not - quite a bit of humour. So that altogether it is a very rich, a very complex, work indeed. Especially when one considers how short in fact The Vimalakirti Nirdesa is. It consists of only fourteen quite brief chapters. And the English translation of the whole work consists of about one hundred pages, that's all. The Vimalakirti Nirdesa is no longer in fact than a long short story. Yet at the same time it's full of insights, it's full of inspiration, and it brings together quite a number of very important 'themes', as I've called them. And in the course of this series we've time to consider only seven of these themes taken from seven different chapters of the work.

So tonight we come to 'The Way of Nonduality', and this theme, tonight's theme is taken from chapter nine of the work which is entitled 'The Dharma Door of Nonduality'. Last week's theme most of you I think will recall was 'History versus Myth in Man's Quest for Meaning' and it was taken from chapter five where Vimalakirti and Manjusri come face to face, where they have their vigorous dialectical exchanges, where Vimalakirti explains that he's sick because beings are sick, and where he explains also how a sick Bodhisattva should control his mind. Since then quite a lot has happened. Quite a lot has happened that is to say in the three intervening chapters. At the beginning of chapter six entitled 'The Inconceivable Liberation' or 'Inconceivable Emancipation' Sariputra has a problem. You may recollect that Vimalakirti by his magical power has made his house with its furniture and all his attendants, disappear, so that all that can be seen is Vimalakirti himself lying on his couch. But quite a number, in fact an immense number of Bodhisattvas and Arahats have accompanied Manjusri on his visit to Vimalakirti, and amongst them is our friend, Sariputra. So Sariputra cannot help wondering where they are all going to sit, all these thousands of Arahats and thousands of Bodhisattvas. He just can't help wondering, apparently, where they're all going to sit. After all perhaps he is thinking Bodhisattvas and Arahats shouldn't remain standing while Vimalakirti is lying on his couch, even though he is sick. Guests in any case according to Ancient Indian etiquette, Buddhist etiquette, shouldn't be kept standing.

Now Vimalakirti of course knows what Sariputra is thinking. He has this uncomfortable faculty. He is telepathic. So knowing what Sariputra is thinking, he puts to him quite a pointed question. He says,

"Reverend Sariputra, did you come here for the sake of the Dharma or did you come here for the sake of a chair?" Well you can probably imagine Sariputra's feelings. Sariputra very humbly replies,

"I came for the sake of the Dharma, not for the sake of a chair."

And Vimalakirti then continues, saying,

"Reverend Sariputra, he who is interested in the Dharma is not interested even in his own body, much less in a chair",

and he goes on in this way in this vein, for several paragraphs! There's no need for us to follow him because his initial question gives us quite enough to think about. Did you come here for the sake of the Dharma or did you come here for the sake of a chair? After all just use your imagination, just consider the situation. Here is this great assembly of Arahats and Bodhisattvas. Here is the wise elder Vimalakirti. Here's Manjusri, the Bodhisattva of Wisdom himself. They've just had a discussion, Vimalakirti and Manjusri have just had a discussion of tremendous spiritual significance. Everybody has been highly delighted by it, everybody has been greatly uplifted in their hearts. Nobody knows what's going to happen next but everybody is wondering what's going to happen next, but what does Sariputra do? He starts wondering about where everybody is going to sit, he starts worrying about chairs. So what does this little incident illustrate? What does it warn us against? It warns us against the danger of getting sidetracked. We get sidetracked due to the operation of the gravitational pull, and it's no use our laughing or even smiling at poor old Sariputra - we have to apply the warning to ourselves. Because what happens? We go along say to a meditation class at the centre; we go along to a lecture on the Dharma; we even go

away on retreat, perhaps in the depths of the countryside and perhaps we get quite deeply immersed, immersed in the meditation, immersed in the lecture, immersed in the retreat experience, but then, what happens? What happens is that our attention wanders. We get sidetracked. We start wondering when the tea and biscuits are going to appear, or we start wondering whether a certain attractive person that we saw last week is going to be there again, or we start wondering, especially if it's a cold day, whether the central heating is going to be turned up.

So, we might well ask ourselves the same sort of question that Vimalakirti asked Sariputra, 'Did you come for the sake of the Dharma or for the sake of the tea and biscuits?' 'Did you come for the sake of the Dharma or for the sake of that attractive person? Did you come for the sake of the Dharma or for the sake of the central heating?' There's nothing easier than to get sidetracked in this sort of way. There's nothing easier than to succumb to the operation of the gravitational pull. There's a lot more that could be said on this particular subject but sidetracking is not our theme tonight, and in any case I don't want to get sidetracked.

So let's pass on to what happens next, happens next of course in the Sutra, in the text. What happens next is that there's a great display of magical power. Sariputra has been worrying about chairs, so all right, Vimalakirti gives him chairs. He gives him thirty two hundred thousand (3,200,000) of them. Not chairs but thrones in fact and he brings them by his magical power from a distant Buddha land in the eastern direction. And all these thrones, these thirty two hundred thousand thrones, fit into his house without crowding. The house in fact seems to enlarge itself accordingly. And this gives Vimalakirti the opportunity of explaining the Inconceivable Liberation or Inconceivable Emancipation. The Bodhisattva, he says, who lives in this emancipation thoroughly realises the relativity of space and the relativity of time. He can put Mount Sumeru into a mustard seed without making the one smaller or the other bigger. He can make a week seem like an age and an age like a week. He has the power, the magical power of transforming any one into any one and any thing into any thing.

In Chapter seven which is entitled simply, 'The Goddess' Sariputra is again in trouble. First of all though Vimalakirti answers various questions put by Manjusri and there's another vigorous dialectical exchange between them. And at this point a certain goddess appears. This goddess, we are told, lives in Vimalakirti's house and she's so delighted with the teaching that she's been hearing that she showers the whole assembly, the Arahats, Bodhisattvas, everybody, with flowers, and these flowers strange to relate - do not stick to the bodies of the Bodhisattvas but they do stick to the bodies of the Arahats, and of course Sariputra is an Arahata and Sariputra is greatly embarrassed by this fact, by the

circumstance, and he tries unsuccessfully to brush off the flowers that have fallen on him, because after all he is a monk and a monk is not supposed to wear flowers.

Well a little later on Sariputra becomes still more embarrassed because quite suddenly he undergoes a change of sex! First of all from male to female, which is bad enough, and then from female back to male which is even worse! And all in the space of a few minutes. Well no doubt there are several themes here but once again we must pass on.

Chapter eight is entitled 'The Family of the Tathagatas', that is to say the family of the Buddhas, and first of all, in reply to a question by Manjusri, Vimalakirti explains how the Bodhisattva follows the way to attain the qualities of the Buddha, and Vimalakirti's reply is highly paradoxical. Vimalakirti himself then asks Manjusri what is the family of the Tathagata or what is meant by the expression 'family of the Tathagata', and Manjusri too replies to Vimalakirti's question in a highly paradoxical fashion, and this reply of his is applauded by Mahakasyapa.

A Bodhisattva called Sarvarupasandarshana then intervenes. His name means by the way universal manifestation, and he asks Vimalakirti a question. In fact he asks him a whole series of questions. He asks or he says,

"Householder, where are your father and mother, your children, your wife."

because don't forget Vimalakirti is lying there on his couch and nobody else can be seen.

"Your servants, your maids, your labourers and your attendants? Where are your friends, your relatives and your kinsmen? Where are your servants, your horses, your elephants, your chariots, your bodyguards and your bearers."

This as those of you who have been to India will appreciate, is a typically Indian enquiry, and Vimalakirti replies in a long series of very beautiful verses and these verses make up the longest verse passage in the whole of The Vimalakirti Nirdeśa. They last until the end of the chapter. I'm going to read the first twelve verses just to give you a taste of the whole series:

Vimalakirti says,

"Of the true Bodhisattvas,
The mother is the transcendence of wisdom,
The Father is the skill in liberative technique.

The Leaders (that is to say the Buddhas themselves) are born of such parents.

Their wife is the joy in the Dharma,
Love and Compassion are their daughters,
The Dharma and the truth are their sons;
And their home is deep thought on the meaning of voidness.

All the passions are their disciples,
Controlled at will.
Their friends are the aids to enlightenment,
Thereby they realise supreme enlightenment.

Their companions, ever with them,
Are the six transcendences.
Their consorts are the means of unification,
Their music is the teaching of the Dharma.

The incantations make their garden,
Which blossom with the flowers of the factors of enlightenment
With trees of the great wealth of the Dharma,
And fruits of the gnosis of liberation.

Their pool consists of the eight liberations,
Filled with the water of concentration,
Covered with the lotuses of the seven purities -
Who bathes therein becomes Immaculate.

Their bearers are the six superknowledges,
Their vehicle is the unexcelled Mahayana,
Their driver is the spirit of enlightenment,
And their Path is the eightfold peace.

Their ornaments are the auspicious signs,
And the eighty marks;
Their garland is virtuous aspiration,
And their clothing is good conscience and consideration.

Their wealth is the holy Dharma,
And their business is teaching,
Their great income is pure practice,
And it is dedicated to supreme enlightenment.

Their bed consists of the four contemplations,
And its spread is the pure livelihood,
And their Awakening consists of gnosis,
Which is constant learning and meditation.

Their food is the ambrosia of the teachings,
And their drink is the juice of liberation.
Their bath is pure aspiration,
And morality their unguent and perfume.

Having conquered the enemy passions,
They are the invincible heroes.
Having subdued the four Maras,
They raise their standard on the field of Enlightenment."

In this way we come to chapter nine entitled, 'The Dharma Door of Nonduality.' We come to the theme of the Way of Nonduality. The structure of this chapter is very simple. Vimalakirti asks the Bodhisattvas a question and

all the Bodhisattvas in turn answer the question. The text actually gives thirty one of these answers. The Bodhisattvas then put the same question to Manjusri and he answers it too. Manjusri then puts the same question to Vimalakirti and he answers it.

So what is the question? The question is, 'How do the Bodhisattvas enter the Dharma Door of Nonduality?' or 'What is the Bodhisattvas Dharma Door of Nonduality?'

We've no time for all their replies. I'll give just a few of them.

"The Bodhisattva Sriganta declared, 'I and mine are two. If there is no presumption of a self there will be no possessiveness. Thus the absence of presumption is the entrance into Nonduality.'

The Bodhisattva Bhadradyotis declared, 'Distraction and attention are two. When there is no distraction there will be no attention, no mentation, and no mental intensity. Thus the absence of mental intensity is the entrance into Nonduality.'

The Bodhisattva Subahu declared, 'Bodhisattva spirit' and 'disciple spirit' are two. When both are seen to resemble an illusory spirit there is no Bodhisattva spirit nor any disciple spirit. Thus the sameness of nature of spirits is the entrance into Nonduality.'

The Bodhisattva Sinha declared, 'Sinfulness and sinlessness are two. By means of the Diamond-like Wisdom that pierces to the quick, not to be bound or liberated is the entrance into Nonduality.'

The Bodhisattva Pratyaksadarshana declared, 'Destructible and indestructible are dualistic. What is destroyed is ultimately destroyed. What is ultimately destroyed does not become destroyed. Hence it is called indestructible. What is indestructible is instantaneous and what is instantaneous is indestructible. The experience of such is called the entrance into the principle of Nonduality.'

The Bodhisattva Vidyudeva declared, 'Knowledge and ignorance are dualistic. The nature of ignorance and of knowledge are the same. For ignorance is undefined, incalculable and beyond the sphere of thought. The realisation of this is the entrance into Nonduality.'

The Bodhisattva Aksayamati declared, 'The dedication of generosity for the sake of obtaining omniscience is dualistic. The nature of generosity is itself omniscience and the nature of omniscience itself is total dedication. Likewise it is dualistic to dedicate morality, tolerance, effort, meditation and wisdom for the sake of omniscience. Omniscience is the nature of wisdom and total dedication is the nature of omniscience. Thus the entrance into this principle of uniqueness is the entrance into Nonduality.'

The Bodhisattva Santendriya declared, 'It is dualistic to say 'Buddha', 'Dharma' and 'Sangha'. The Dharma is itself the nature of the Buddha. The Sangha is itself the nature of the Dharma and all of them are uncompounded. The uncompounded is infinite space and the processes of all things are equivalent to infinite space. Adjustment to this is the entrance into Nonduality.'

The Bodhisattva Srigarbha declared, 'Duality is constituted by conceptual manifestations. Nonduality is objectlessness. Therefore nongrasping and nonrejection is the entrance into Nonduality.'"

Well in this way the Bodhisattvas give their replies to the question and they then ask Manjusri for his reply. So what does he say? What does Vimalakirti say? The text says,

"Manjusri replied, 'Good sirs, You have all spoken well. Nevertheless, all your explanations are themselves dualistic. To know no one teaching, to express nothing, to say nothing, to explain nothing, to announce nothing, to indicate nothing and to designate nothing. That is the entrance into Nonduality.'

Then the crown prince Manjusri said to the Licchavi Vimalakirti, 'We have all given our own teachings noble sir now may you elucidate the teaching of the entrance into the principle of Nonduality.' Thereupon the Licchavi Vimalakirti kept his silence saying nothing at all."

And this is the famous thunder-like silence of Vimalakirti. The silence that is more powerful, more expressive than any words. And this silence, this thunder-like silence of Vimalakirti represents the climax of the chapter, even the climax of the entire Vimalakirti Nirdeśa.

Now there's quite a lot that needs a little bit of explanation in all this, at least a little bit of comment. So I'm going to do four things: I'm going to say a few words about the question itself; I'm going to comment briefly on a few of

the Bodhisattva's replies; I'm going to suggest a few alternative Nondualities and I'm going to consider, very briefly, Vimalakirti's silence.

But first of all a few words about the expression Dharma Door. Some of you may not have encountered this expression before, Dharma Door, though it occurs frequently in Mahayana texts. In the original Sanskrit it's Dharmamukha. Dharma of course is the teaching or the doctrine, that is to say the teaching or doctrine of the Buddha. Mukha is door, entrance, opening or mouth.

So in what way, in what sense is the Dharma a door? It is a door in the sense that it is a means of entrance to the Ultimate Truth, to the actual experience of Enlightenment. But we mustn't forget that a door, any door, has a twofold function. It opens into but it also shuts out from. In the same way the Dharma, the teaching, can open out into Ultimate Truth; it can be a means of entrance into Ultimate Truth, but it can also shut one out from the Ultimate Truth. It can be a means of entrance to Ultimate Truth when it is taken as being just that, that is to say taken as being a means to an end, and it can shut one out from the truth when it's taken as an end in itself, because the door or what should have been the door becomes just part of the wall. And maybe we even forget that it was ever meant for going through.

Now just as a door has a double function, the word Dharma itself has a double meaning. It means the teaching or the doctrine, yes, but it also means the truth or reality indicated by that teaching, by that doctrine. The Dharma is the door to the Dharma. That is to say the Dharma as teaching is the door to the Dharma as reality, provided it is not taken as an end in itself.

Now we come to the question. The question which Vimalakirti asks the Bodhisattvas at the beginning of the chapter; "How do the Bodhisattvas enter the Dharma Door of Nonduality" or "What is the Bodhisattva's Dharma Door of Nonduality?".

We can now understand the question a little better perhaps though still it may not be entirely clear. The Dharma or teaching is expressed in terms of concepts. Each of these concepts has its opposite. The Dharma, the teaching, is therefore expressed explicitly or implicitly in terms of pairs of opposites. That is to say in terms of duality. Concepts are of course the creation of the mind. In Yogachara terms they are the creation of the Klisto Mano Vijnana or soiled mind consciousness. This consciousness, the soiled mind consciousness sees everything, sees reality itself, in terms of pairs of opposites, in terms of duality, especially in terms of the duality of subject and object. Reality however is Nondual, Adviya. In the state or experience of reality all duality is transcended. Even the duality between duality and Nonduality. That duality is transcended in its absoluteness. It's not that dualism is wholly obliterated as it were so that one is left with a blank featureless unity. There can be no question of a real obliteration of something which in reality does not exist. We ourselves are creatures of duality. Our consciousness is dualistic. Our experience is dualistic, our thoughts, words and deeds are dualistically based. Our understanding of the Dharma is dualistically based. Our understanding of the Dharma is dualistically based. Our practise of the Dharma is dualistically based. The Dharma itself as a teaching is expressed in terms of concepts which are pairs of opposites: Skilful and unskilful; mundane and transcendental; conditioned and unconditioned; bondage and liberation; defilement and enlightenment etc., etc. Yet we have to use this dualistic Dharma as a means of realising that nondual reality. We have no alternative in fact.

The Nondual has to be realised by means of the dualistic and this is possible because in reality there's no absolute duality between duality and Nonduality. If there were no emancipation would be possible.

So how are we going to do this? How are we going to realise the nondual by means of the dualistic? How are the Bodhisattvas going to do it? This is what Vimalakirti is asking them.

He says, 'Good sirs, please explain how the Bodhisattvas enter the Dharma Door of Nonduality', that is to say how the Bodhisattvas make a dualistic Dharma function in a nondualistic way, or how, being themselves riddled with dualism, they actually follow the way of Nonduality.

Each Bodhisattva speaking from his own individual point of view therefore states a pair of opposites, states a duality, and he then shows how that duality can be transcended by means of the duality itself. By means if you like of the contradictions inherent in the duality itself. How that duality can be transcended in terms of the duality itself. So let me give a few examples. Let me take just four of the replies already quoted and make a few comments on them from this point of view.

I'll take four of the more simple replies.

'The Bodhisattva Bhadradyotis declared, 'Distraction and attention are two. When there is no distraction there will be no attention, no mentation and no mental intensity. Thus the absence of mental intensity is the entrance into Nonduality'.

This is Thurman's translation. Lamotte's translation makes the meaning a little clearer. Lamotte says,

'The Bodhisattva Bhadradyotis said, 'Distraction and attention are two. If there is no distraction there is neither attention nor reflection nor interest. The absence of interest is the entry into Nonduality.'

But what does this mean? Exactly what is the entry into Nonduality here? The opposites are distraction and attention. The word for distraction is Viksepa which means floundering or the floundering, the tossing, the wandering of the mind, and the word for attention is manyana in the sense of paying attention. We could also perhaps render the word as concentration but it's not exactly the same thing. It's more like what makes concentration possible.

So this is the pair of opposites - distraction and attention - and this pair of opposites as I'm sure everybody knows very well is experienced especially within the context of meditation. Because what usually happens? We pay attention for a while. We pay attention to our object of concentration whatever that may be - breath, mantra, whatever - but then after a while the mind gets restless. It feels uncomfortable and it starts wandering. And sooner or later we become aware of this. We become aware what has happened, what is happening. We pull ourselves up, we start paying attention again. And in this way we oscillate between the two - distraction and attention - distraction and attention - and sometimes we don't get very far with our meditation.

What then are we to do? Well we have to find the entry into Nonduality within the situation. How are we to do this? We have to question the very terms of the situation. That is to say we have to question their absoluteness. We have to realise that it's not enough to try to sustain attention by means of a forcible act of will. If distractions persistently arise within the context of meditation it means that we have not understood ourselves deeply enough, not understood ourselves deeply enough. It means that there are factors at work within us, psychological factors, of which we are not conscious. And what we have to do is to become conscious of them. We have to take them into consideration. In other words or in a word we have to become more integrated. If we are more integrated the different elements of our being will form an harmonious whole. They will all pull or push in the same direction. They'll no longer be in conflict with one another. We'll no longer have to oscillate between them. So in the case of distraction and attention integration is the entry into Nonduality. Not that integration, that is to say integration within the context of meditation practice, is synonymous with the experience of Nonduality in the highest sense, but it's certainly a step in that direction.

Now I've said that it's not enough to try to sustain attention by means of a forcible act of will, but we should be careful not to misunderstand this. I don't mean that we should never try to concentrate, never try to get rid of distractions. This may be necessary as a provisional measure. In fact it almost certainly will be necessary. But in the long run the opposition between distraction and attention which plagues so much of our meditation practice, can be resolved only if we become more integrated. Integration itself is a form of Nonduality. Now for our second example.

The Bodhisattva Subahu declared, 'Bodhisattva spirit and disciple spirit are two. When both are seen to resemble and illusory spirit there is no Bodhisattva spirit or and disciple spirit. Thus the sameness of natures of spirits is the entrance into Nonduality.'

This is Thurman's translation. Here spirit does not mean spook. It means something more like mental attitude. It translates the Sanskrit citta and its equivalents.

Lamotte's translation again is clearer. It reads,

'The Bodhisattva Subahu said, 'Bodhisattva mind and listener mind are two. If it is seen that these two minds are the same as an illusory mind there is neither Bodhisattva mind nor listener mind. This sameness of the mark of minds is the entry into Nonduality.'

In the original Sanskrit illusory spirit or illusory mind is mayacitta, Illusory mind is not a mind that is absolutely non existent. It is a mind that cannot be defined in terms of existence or non existence, just like the magical show. It is a mind that has a relatively real existence. This relatively real mind sees things in a relatively real way. it sees things in terms of pairs of opposites which are mutually exclusive. For instance self and other, good and bad, pure and impure. The illusory mind, the mayacitta, therefore corresponds in a way to the Klisto Mano Vijnana or soiled mind consciousness. And one of the ways in which the illusory mind sees things is in terms of gaining emancipation for oneself alone or gaining emancipation for others. If the illusory mind identifies itself with the latter it becomes the Bodhisattva mind. If it identifies with the former it becomes the Sravaka mind, the listener or disciple mind. But the truth is that in the ultimate sense the distinction is unreal. It's only relatively real. One cannot progress spiritually oneself without paying attention to the needs of others, without developing friendliness and compassion. One cannot help others to progress spiritually unless one has progressed oneself. Bodhisattva mind and disciple mind are therefore not mutually exclusive. The Bodhisattva ideal and the Arahat ideal are not mutually exclusive. Hinayana and Mahayana are not mutually exclusive. They are products of the same illusory mind. Both represent attempts on the part of this illusory relative and dualistic mind to apprehend the nature of the nondual spiritual ideal.

If we understand the limitations of that mind we'll understand the limitations of Bodhisattva mind and disciple mind considered as mutually exclusive. The realisation that Bodhisattva mind and disciple mind are both the

same as an illusionary mind will be the entrance into Nonduality.

This doesn't mean that we shall no longer use terms like Bodhisattva Ideal and Arahant Ideal but it will mean using them realising that they have only a relative validity. They are not ends in themselves. Their function is simply to help us grow.

All right, third example.

The Bodhisattva Sinha declared, 'Sinfulness and sinlessness are two. By means of the diamond like wisdom that pierces to the quick, not to be bound or liberated is the entrance to Nonduality.'

The word for sinfulness is Savadya. Lamotte translates blamable. That's more literal, but who blames us? Who says we are sinful? It could be the group, it could be the individual. Let us take it for the moment that it is the group. What happens when we are blamed by the group, especially when it's by our own group, that is to say the group to which we consider we belong? How do we feel? Well I think everybody knows, we feel very wretched and miserable indeed and we are ready to do almost anything to regain, to recapture, the approval of the group. We may be ready to do anything in fact quite literally. We are completely at the mercy of the group. We oscillate between wretchedness when we are blamed, and elation when we are not blamed. These are the opposites. This is the duality, and the situation becomes even worse when God comes into it. Then we are found or may be found not simply blamable but actually sinful. But we're not going into all that now. That's too horrible even to think about! The situation is quite bad enough as it is anyway. So how do we get out of it? What is the entry into Nonduality in this sort of situation? It is the development of transcendental individuality, that is to say an individuality which is not at the mercy of the group. Which does not feel wretched when found blamable by the group and elated when found blameless. Which is in a sense indifferent to the opinion of the group.

But how do we develop transcendental individuality? It's difficult enough to develop ordinary individuality. How do we develop transcendental individuality? We develop it by means of transcendental wisdom, transcendental knowledge, by means of the transcendental wisdom that cuts like a diamond. Ordinary mundane wisdom is not enough. The impact of the group on the individual is very powerful and very persistent. We cannot help weakening sometimes. We cannot help giving in even. It's only transcendental individuality which is strong enough to resist, Strong enough not to feel the pressure even. Strong enough not to be affected by the group's blaming us or not blaming us, and this is quite a sobering thought because it means that until we have entered the stream, and it's only then that transcendental individuality begins to develop, until we have entered the stream we shall oscillate between the blamable and the blameless, wretchedness and elation, at least to some extent. Only the development of transcendental individuality is the way, is the entry, to Nonduality in such a situation. No doubt other more metaphysical interpretations of Sinha's declaration are possible but the one that I've given seems particularly appropriate.

I'm reminded in this connection of a remark by Saint Augustine. He was once told that a certain other saint, apparently a rival saint, had interpreted a passage in the Bible differently from the way in which he - Saint Augustine - had interpreted it. He was told about this, so what did he say? He said, calmly,

'The more interpretations, the better.'

So this principle is particularly applicable to a text like The Vimalakirti Nirveda. The more interpretations the better.

Now for the fourth and last example.

The Bodhisattva Santendriya declared, 'It is dualistic to say 'Buddha', 'Dharma' and 'Sangha'. The Dharma is itself the nature of the Buddha. The Sangha is itself the nature of the Dharma and all of them are uncompounded.'(or as we usually say, unconditioned). 'The compounded is infinite space and the processes of all things are equivalent to infinite space. Adjustment to this is the entrance into Nonduality.'

So here there are two pairs of opposites - Buddha and Dharma, and Dharma and Sangha. Dharma is the middle term so to speak. Here Dharma is to be taken in its more 'metaphysical' - inverted commas - sense. Not in the sense of the Buddha's actual teaching as embodied in words and concepts. In the sense of the ultimate truth or reality of which that teaching is the expression and towards which it points. The Dharma here is the unconditioned itself. This unconditioned the Buddha has realised. He's the living embodiment by virtue of his enlightenment experience of the unconditioned. Hence there is no duality between them.

Similarly in the case of the Sangha, that is to say the Arya Sangha, the Sangha or spiritual community, of Bodhisattvas, Arahants, Non-returners, Once-returners and Stream Entrants - all are following the transcendental path. All approximate in varying degrees to the unconditioned. In some cases they've actually reached the unconditioned. Hence in principle there's no duality between them and the Dharma either. Thus there's no difference between the Buddha and the Dharma, no difference between the Sangha and the Dharma, no difference therefore between the Buddha and the Sangha, because all three are essentially unconditioned. Or rather are essentially the unconditioned. The Dharma is the unconditioned itself. The Buddha is the unconditioned as fully

realised by the individual and the Sangha is the unconditioned in process of realisation.

So in this case, in the case of the two pairs of opposites which make up the Three Jewels, the entry into Nonduality is the realisation that the Buddha, the Dharma and the Sangha are essentially unconditioned. So long as we see them as conditioned we see them as three. So long as we see them as the unconditioned we see them as one, or not even as one. From this point of view when we go for refuge we go for refuge, we commit ourselves, not to three different things, but to the one unconditioned nondual ultimate reality.

Now all this sounds rather metaphysical, not to say rather abstract. In fact the replies of all the Bodhisattvas to Vimalakirti's question sound rather metaphysical, that is to say their replies to his question 'How do the Bodhisattvas enter the Dharma Door of Nonduality?'. I've in fact selected as my examples four of the less metaphysical replies. However, metaphysical or not the general drift I think of the Bodhisattvas' replies is clear enough. Dualities are created by the mind. The pairs of opposites are created by the mind, including those pairs of opposites which are the doctrinal categories of Buddhism itself. One enters the Dharma Door of Nonduality when one realises that the pairs of opposites are created by the mind. When one realises that they are therefore not ultimately valid. Realises that they are not ends in themselves, that they are only means to an end. Means to the spiritual development of the individual.

Moreover, any pair of opposites, any pair of opposites whatsoever, can be a Dharma Door to Nonduality. Duality itself is the means to Nonduality because the duality between duality and Nonduality is not ultimate. However we are still being rather metaphysical and in any case we've spent rather a long time over the Bodhisattvas' replies. So let me now suggest a few alternative nondualities. These alternative nondualities that I'm going to suggest are certainly not so sublime as those of The Vimalakirti Nirdeśa. But no doubt they come closer to our own actual experience, and as such may be useful. They may not carry us as far into the depths of Nonduality as the Bodhisattvas do but at least they'll help us move in the direction of Nonduality from where we actually are now. I'll give these alternative nondualities in the same, as it were, aphoristic form as the Bodhisattvas and I hope that they won't bring everybody down to earth with too much of a bump!

Masculine and feminine are two. Individuality is the entrance into Nonduality.

Organiser and organised are two. Co operation is the entrance into Nonduality.

Teacher and taught are two. Communication is the entrance into Nonduality.

God and man are two. Blasphemy is the entrance into Nonduality!

Male and female are two. Celibacy is the entrance into Nonduality.

Individual and group are two. The spiritual community is the entrance into Nonduality.

I don't propose to offer any comments on these. I'll leave you to think about these alternative nondualities for yourselves.

Now for Vimalakirti's silence. This silence has of course a tremendous significance but we can't understand that significance fully, can't even begin to understand it without reference to the last reply to Vimalakirti's original question. That is to say Manjusri's reply. What does he say in reply to the other Bodhisattvas when in their turn they put Vimalakirti's question to him? He says, you may remember,

'Good sirs, you have all spoken well. Nevertheless all your explanations are themselves dualistic. To know no one teaching, to express nothing, to say nothing, to explain nothing, to announce nothing, to indicate nothing, and to designate nothing. That is the entrance into Nonduality.'

'All your explanations are themselves dualistic' - This is what he tells them. So why does Manjusri say this? Why are the Bodhisattvas' explanations all dualistic? They are dualistic because they are expressed in terms of concepts. Concepts are essentially dualistic. We can't therefore explain the Bodhisattva's entry into Nonduality by means of concepts. If we want truly to explain it we have to abstain from concepts altogether, we have to abstain from speech altogether, we have to remain silent.

However, in order to explain all this Manjusri himself has to make use of concepts. He has to speak. He has to say that silence is the Bodhisattva's entry into Nonduality. So there's a contradiction here. Manjusri's explanation itself is not entirely free from (non) duality. There is still one more step to be taken and this step is taken by Vimalakirti.

When Manjusri asks him for his explanation what does he do? He remains completely silent. He puts into actual practice what Manjusri has only expressed in terms of concepts.

But here a question arises. Is not Vimalakirti's reply also dualistic? Speech and silence are opposites. So to explain the Bodhisattva's entry into Nonduality in terms of silence is surely as dualistic as explaining it in terms of speech, in terms of concepts. What is the entry into Nonduality here? Well the answer is that Vimalakirti does not have a concept of silence. He acts spontaneously according to the circumstances. That is why his silence is meaningful. After all there is silence and silence.

In chapters three and four the Arahats and Bodhisattvas were reduced to silence when they encountered Vimalakirti, but theirs was the silence of stupefaction. Vimalakirti's is the silence of understanding, the silence of enlightenment. Vimalakirti uses silence, not that he has any concept of using it of course. He uses it as a means to an end. He uses it in order to communicate but he also uses speech whenever necessary. He does not stick to silence. After all he does speak quite a lot in the course of The Vimalakirti Nirdeśa, and not only that, speech and silence are not his only means of communication by any means. He communicates also by means of marvellous magical displays. The means of communication are in fact infinite. We shall be going into this a little next week when our theme will be 'The Mystery of Human Communication' Meanwhile this week what have we seen? We've seen the danger of getting sidetracked. We've seen what is meant by Dharma Door. We've seen how the Bodhisattva enters the Dharma Door of Nonduality. The Bodhisattva enters the Dharma Door of Nonduality when he uses speech to transcend speech, silence to transcend silence, duality to transcend duality. Duality can be used to transcend duality, can be used as a means to Nonduality, because the duality between duality and Nonduality is not absolute and this is the way of the Bodhisattvas, this is the way of Manjusri, this is the way of Vimalakirti, this is the way of Nonduality.