

Transcript ~ In Search of Shamballa: Isle of the Blessed

A Podcast by Kirk Gradin

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"If even a few theophilanthropists would now serve the Bodhi-Tree and the City of Man, the Isle of the Blessed would be grateful beyond measure."

Raghavan Iyer

In 1933, a work of fiction by English writer James Hilton was published, titled "Lost Horizon". Perhaps many, if not all of you, have heard of it. It was not only the first paperback ever published, but also became one of the most popular novels of the 20th century. It was also the basis of the well-known Frank Capra film of the same name released in 1937. As you may recall, the story line narrates a group of travelers fleeing by plane from Baskul, India in 1931. The plane is hijacked but then crashes in the western Kun-Lun mountains of Tibet. The pilot, severely injured in the crash, instructs the passengers with his dying breath to seek refuge in a nearby lamasery called Shangri-La. Shortly thereafter, a convoy of monks from Shangri-La unexpectedly appears, and guides the group through a raging snow storm and cliff-side pathways to a lush, protected valley where a peaceful community resides in a sunlit utopia. The community is governed by a wise, telepathic abbot who is later discovered to be 250 years old, revealing one of the magical properties of Shangri-la: people still age, but at a much slower rate. The author, James Hilton had been to the Himalayas, and by his own account, derived his inspiration for Shangri-La from the isolated communities he visited amidst the peaks. His semi-fictional account of Shangri-La seems to have struck a deep chord in the soul memory of humanity for the novel gave rise to the use of the term "Shangri-La" as a common name for any utopia. Famously, President Franklin Roosevelt called the Maryland presidential retreat Shangri-La, though it was later renamed Camp David by President Eisenhower. For all we know, Hilton may also have been familiar with the writings of H.P. Blavatsky who repeatedly referred to the sacred mysteries of an imperishable Sacred Isle and the community of White Adepts and Masters of Wisdom residing there. A center of dateless and deathless wisdom, it is known in both Hindu and Buddhist texts as Shamballa and according to Theosophy, it is no mere fantasy, though the details differ significantly both from those given by Hilton and the Hollywood Christianized movie version by Capra.

In Tibetan and Sanskrit, the word Shamballa is translated as "Source of Happiness". In the Vishnu Purana (4.24), a text whose date of origin is unknown, a prophecy is given. The Kingdom of Shamballa is the birthplace of all the Avatars of Vishnu (ii, 48) and Kalki, the next or 10th

avatar, is forecast to arrive amid fire and flame to usher in a golden age. Blavatsky left little doubt that it is exactly this avataric impulse that is behind the Theosophical Movement, the Masters designating her as their Direct Agent.

“Arghyanath is a title of the Maha-Chohan, meaning “the Lord of Libations;” and Arghya Varsha — “the land of libations” — is the mystery name of that region which extends from Kailas mountain nearly to the Shamo Desert — from within which the Kalki Avatar is expected...”

S.D., ii, 416n

Argya is an ancient Sanskrit word meaning that which is “invaluable or venerable”, “which is worthy of being honored” and water as a form of sacred offering made to a deity. Blavatsky also referred to the Maha-Chohan as her “Master’s Master” and the *Para-guru*.

The Kalki Avatar by another name is the Maitreya Buddha, exoterically referred to as the fifth Buddha, though both HPB and Tibetan Buddhism make it clear that there is a long succession or lineage of Buddhas that have incarnated in the last 1 million years alone. Exoterically, Maitreya is due to arrive “at the culmination of the Great Cycle” (i, 384), wherein “The minds of those who live at that time shall be awakened, and become as pellucid as crystal.” (ii, 483) Similarly, while some Hindu texts state that the Kalki-Avatar will arrive only at the end of Kali Yuga, others offer differing accounts. Some refer to him as an invisible force, others as a conqueror leading an army, re-establishing righteousness and providing a new start for humanity. **12)** The Bhagavata Purana mentions twenty-two Avatars of Vishnu (rather than the standard 10), but after enumerating them, adds: “The incarnations of Vishnu are innumerable, like the rivulets flowing from an inexhaustible lake...” H.P.B. says the same, that Avatars as the self-conscious descent of the divine logos—“the Word made flesh” are countless, their cycle of incarnations providing a central key to the meaning of the Old Testament, the Zodiac and the cycle of Races and Rounds. And while also speaking of greater and lesser avatars, in *The Secret Doctrine*, HPB also equates them with the Mahatmas:

These personages...may just as well be called Rishis, or Avatars, etc., as they are...great Mahatmas, or Buddhas, (and) are a universal and common property: they are historical sages — at any rate, for all the Occultists who believe in such a hierarchy of Sages, the existence of which has been proved to them by the learned ones of the Fraternity.

S.D., i, 423

In Tibetan Buddhism, a prophesy similar to that found in the Puranas is contained in the Kalachakra tantra, said to have been telepathically transmitted by the historical Buddha to the entire community of Shamballa. Kala in its spiritual meaning, is not just “time” but boundless

time or eternal duration which embraces all beings past, present or future. In Tibetan history, the Kalachakra teaching was never given out publicly until 1981 when the 14th Dalai Lama first offered preliminary initiations at the Deer Park in Madison Wisconsin on behalf of world peace. But students of *The Secret Doctrine* have found many key elements of it given in Blavatsky's teaching and elaborated in the 1975 cycle, shown by both to be part of that esoteric tradition which far preceded the historical Buddha.

The pinnacle principle of Kalachakra is Adi-Buddha, the non-dual union of Fire and Water, of wisdom and compassion, of boundless pristine awareness and skillful means. In her articles on the Mystery of the Buddha, HPB states that whether called Adi-Buddha or Maha-Vishnu, it is the seed of all divine incarnations of whatever tradition, linked to the first logos, called *Vajradhara* in *The Voice of the Silence*. Also called "the Lord of all Mysteries" and the "Silent Watcher", he is said to be ever-awake even during the Mahapralaya and has been awake since beginning-less time. As the root essence of all Buddhas, Bodhisattvas and Adepts, he is also called the Great Initiator in *The Secret Doctrine*, he who holds spiritual sway over all adepts. He is that nameless one, who has been given many names, who ever-remains at his self-chosen post, on the threshold between Light and Darkness, between the timeless and the timebound, for the sake of all pilgrim souls who would fain find their way to that region of freedom and light from which he is a voluntary exile. He is also therefore "the highest innate gnosis, the root ...wisdom encircling and pervading the minds of all sentient beings, transcending both samsara and nirvana." Reminiscent of both sutra and mandala depictions, Raghavan Iyer spoke of a galaxy of Mahatmas ever-present within the aura of the Avatar. This great Brotherhood of Bodhisattvas is depicted in Theosophical texts as inseparable from the logoic light and sound that is the hidden foundation, intelligence and moral order of the cosmos, at one with the immortal higher Self of every human being.

The beings emanated from the triune logos have their representation and correlation in every tradition. From the "mind-born sons of Brahma" of Hinduism, to the music of the spheres and the eternally existing numbers of Pythagoras, the seven Sephiroth of the Kabbalah, and the Elohim of Christianity, "THE FIRST SEVEN BREATHS OF THE DRAGON OF WISDOM are known as the Dhyanis or Dhyan Chohans in *The Secret Doctrine*. In the Cosmogogenesis of Stanza IV they are depicted as arupa centers of enlightened consciousness, emerging from the Word, as the active emanating agents of the Divine Mind (Mahat or Maha-Buddhi) and Divine Will (Kamadeva or Divine Eros). They are the pinnacle and culmination of vast hierarchies of beings who willingly descend into diverse limitations of each macrocosmic and microcosmic system from the countless solar systems to the ephemeral snowflake. Through a process analogous to

what we call Dhyana, they also repeatedly take birth in human form as great spiritual teachers, guides and reformers.

In *The Secret Doctrine*, Shamballa is in this way linked to the One Life, the Silent Watcher, the arupa three becoming the arupa seven and the manifesting logoi seven, as a perfectly ordered, radiant and harmonic plane of consciousness, an akashic constellation of divine preceptors, Dhyanis, Bodhisattvas, Buddhas and Adepts who watch over, instruct, serve and protect humanity and the whole evolutionary stream of our planetary chain for the entire manvantara. This suggests why meditation upon Cosmogogenesis as given in the *Stanzas of Dzyan* and its commentaries can lead to an intuitive grasp and eventual activation of true spiritual imagination and boundless, noetic creativity. Long before the Lunar Pitris had sacrificially gestated the astral basis of the human terrestrial form in this Round, these divine preceptors were actively at work in our Planetary cycle.

The intuitive individual who turns inward, giving reality to the secret wisdom within the sanctuary of immortal consciousness, will necessarily turn back far beyond the confines of recorded and unrecorded history, beyond manifested events and finite memory. One must thus return to the primal fount of one's deepest kinship with enlightened beings on the Imperishable Sacred Land who were the divine guardians that nursed and protected the First Root Race. No poetical description, philosophical account or scientific scheme could do justice to that primordial state of collective consciousness. It is not to be located in the mists of antiquity, but lies in a realm transcending ordinary conceptions of past, present and future, perpetually present during the vast epoch of a *manvantara*. This is the noumenal basis for all theological or poetical conceptions of paradisaic consciousness.

R. Iyer

" Evolution and Consciousness"

The fifth class of these Dhyanis, also called the Kumaras, are a host of beings from previous theatres of evolution whose dharma it is to voluntarily descend into the earliest ethereal human forms in order to guide nascent humanity. They are linked with the zodiacal sign Capricorn and symbolized by the Egyptian/Hindu/Buddhist Makara, the crocodile or sea-dragon as well as the five-pointed star. In the Hindu Vaishnavite tradition, these "Sons of the Fire Mist" would be seen as aspects of Krishna known as *Adhiyagna*, the Great Sacrifice. As the incarnating agents of *Itchasakti*, *Kriyashakti* and *Jnanashakti*, divine will, divine imagination and divine knowledge, in the early 3rd Race they are said to have emanated in unison a Banyan Tree of Bodhisattvas known as the "Sons of Will and Yoga", who formed the nursery for all future human adepts in our cycle. This would seem to link Shamballa, not only with the First Race North Pole, but with

Hyperborea, the Second Race continent associated with Northern Asia, Greenland, Norway and Sweden towards which the 3rd Race Lemurians are said to have gravitated.

The crucial role of this fifth class of Dhyanis is also that depicted in the Greek myth of Prometheus. Most contemporary Darwinian mythologers see the Promethean myth as a primitive tale about cavemen discovering the uses of fire and technology. Theosophy sees it as an allegorical expression of great spiritual truths. Out of pity for the human race, Prometheus defies the will of Zeus by stealing the fire of Hephaistos, the creative fire of direct spiritual awareness and self-consciousness, of foresight and insight, of universal ideation, benevolent choice and responsibility and delivers it to mankind. This is the awakening of the human soul, the immortal fifth principle of manas in conjunction with Buddhi, associated with the Agnishvatta Pitris or Solar Fathers. It is that which makes each human being a potential god, which bridges the earthly to the cosmic, the quaternary to the purely spiritual Atma-Buddhic Monad. All students of Theosophy recognize this pivotal juncture in the scheme of evolution as occurring at the midpoint of the third root race, 18.75 million years ago. But to isolate it to a distant epoch is illusory, as it continually reverberates in every human heart throughout the globe. It constitutes another peak golden age in which the radiant garment of Shamballa was known to all. For this initial awakening of the white light of manas brought with it a luminous awareness of the living reality of the seven-fold Lords of Light, the Dhyanis within and their fully realized Buddhas and Bodhisattvic emanations "who walked freely" among mortals. The mysteries of nature were shared with all humanity via one universal language and one common religion rooted in effortless solidarity with the entire monadic stream embracing every kingdom. The natural and irrepressible receptivity and devotion which arose from that awareness, made possible the transmission of divine wisdom as the seminal basis of all the arts and sciences, the first foundation stone of humanities most ancient civilizations.

In setting out the broad and complex scheme of Anthropogenesis in book II of *The Secret Doctrine*, HPB began with a reference to the Sacred Isle of the Blessed and the beings who provided the initiating seed of manasic awakening.

This "Sacred Land"...is stated never to have shared the fate of the other continents; because it is the only one whose destiny it is to last from the beginning to the end of the Manvantara throughout each Round. It is the cradle of the first man and the dwelling of the last *divine* mortal, chosen as a *Sishta* for the future seed of humanity. Of this mysterious and sacred land very little can be said, except, perhaps, according to a poetical expression in one of the Commentaries, that the "pole-star has its watchful eye upon it, from the dawn to the close of the twilight of "a day" of the GREAT BREATH."

The Secret Doctrine, ii 6

From this “Imperishable Land”, also called the “White Island”, every greater or lesser Avataric incarnation has descended. Every great initiate, spiritual teacher and moral reformer, from those of the Divine Dynasties to the messengers of the Great Lodge who have invariably appeared in the last 25 years of every century of our current epoch, were linked to or instructed by the dateless and deathless *Sishta* of Shamballa. This is why *Theosophia* will one day be seen as the common basis of the esoteric teaching of the Vedas and Upanishads, of Hermes Trismegistes, of Krishna, Buddha, and Shankaracharya, of Lao Tse, Pythagoras, Plato and Jesus, and a long lineage of mystics, philosophers and sages, known and unknown throughout history.

This is why Shamballa, like the Garden of Eden, also refers to every true Mystery School wherever they have emerged on the globe in time and space. HPB indicated that Tibet is only one of several such esoteric schools, “the seat of which is beyond the Himalayas, and whose ramifications may be found in China, Japan, India...and even in Syria, besides South America...” Her infamous travels crisscrossing the globe were no doubt drawing magnetic lines of intercommunication between these centers. By her own prophesy, she prepared the way for the 20th century messenger and the re-establishment of the Mystery Schools in the West as the corner stone of the distant 6th sub-race now forming on American soil. (S.D., i, xxiii).

In her letters later published in *The Theosophist* (Oct. 1907) she stated,

There is beyond the Himalayas a nucleus of Adepts, of various nationalities, and the Teshu (Panchen) Lama knows them, and they act together, and some of them are with him and yet remain unknown in their true character even to the average lamas My Master and KH and several others I know personally are there, coming and going and they are all in communication with Adepts in Egypt and Syria and even Europe.

Blavatsky also revealed that it was in the hidden libraries and retreat of the Eighth Panchen Lama in the vicinity of Tashi Lunpo that she, in the company of Masters, was given access to the texts which she translated in *The Voice of the Silence* and the Stanzas of *Dzyan* as found in *The Secret Doctrine*.

The golden age that arose with the descent of the Promethean host was eventually forgotten by humanity. In the process of descent and individuation, the divine light of spiritual awareness was naturally eclipsed by the differentiation of the senses and the cultivation of the capacity for reason and experience on the astral and physical planes. But this clouding of inner vision was compounded by the mis-use of newly awakened faculties. By the fourth or Atlantean race, great portions of humanity had already succumbed to misidentification with the lower self, the vestures of incarnation rather than the Spirit of nature above. As natural devotion to preceptors

devolved into self-worship, the third eye, the divine eye of spiritual perception, closed. The imperishable Buddhi yoga spoken of by Krishna was neglected and forgotten. We obscured our own ability to see and understand the deeper truths and laws of nature, the reality of our true Self and our responsibility to serve the whole. Atlantean self-worship, wrote H.P.B. led to all the anthropomorphic and tribal religions we see around us today and our inability to recognize authentic Mahatmic currents, true spiritual teachings and its teachers when they walk amongst us. Instead, we persecute and crucify them. This is an old and repeated tragedy of the human race, dramatically illustrated in Dostoevsky's *The Grand Inquisitor*.

In the *Gospel According to Thomas*, we find an archetypal dialogue in which even the disciples of a great Initiate can fail to recognize his or her true stature:

Jesus addressed his Disciples,

"Compare me to someone.

Tell me whom I resemble."

Simon Peter said:

"Like a just angel."

Matthew answered:

"You are like a wise philosopher."

But Thomas replied:

"Truly Master, my mouth

Cannot bring itself to utter comparisons."

And Jesus said: "I am no longer your Master.

You have drunk from the bubbling fountain

Which I brought

—And you are drunk.

He took Thomas aside,

And said three words to him.

When Thomas returned,

His companions asked:

"What did Jesus tell you?"

And he replied,

"If I related even one of the words

He told me,

You would gather stones,

And hurl them at me, whereupon fire would leap from

The stones, and burn you.

The Gospel According to Thomas, 13

As the Buddha taught in the Fire Sermon, we also fail to recognize the illusory and afflictive state of the skandhas constantly aflame with the fire of sense experience, of separative egotism, of illusion and delusion, of passion, greed, lust and anger. Called kama manas in Theosophical teaching, the lower ego dissipates the fohatic energy of the spiritual will which otherwise would naturally draw us toward a higher life and deeper perceptions. In the Greek myth, this was symbolized by the angry and despotic Zeus, who kept Prometheus chained to the rock of matter, tortured daily by the vulture of insatiable desires. This is one way of describing the fundamental predicament of our age, a form of psychic global warming.

But there is a fire which destroys and a fire which purifies and uplifts. When such a fire is voluntarily and self-consciously cultivated it is called *tapas* in Sanskrit and *tumo* in Tibetan. This is that Promethean fire which dispels illusion, alchemically transforming us through purification, self-correction and self-regeneration. HPB called Prometheus the first philanthropist, the flame of natural, sacrificial devotion to the needs of others and to universal enlightenment. Called bodhichitta, in Buddhism, this flame of altruistic devotion can be re-kindled by each one. And what begins as a tiny spark can rise into a mighty flame capable of showing the way to many others. An outline of the seven-fold path by which this is done was given by H.P.B. in her translation of *The Voice of the Silence*, a series of fragments from a much larger treatise fresh from the hidden libraries of Shamballa. In 1889, it was also the first rendition in the English language of the esoteric *Paramita* path offered for the daily use of disciples. The beginning step and first portal, called Dana, the key of charity and love immortal, is reflected in the soul-nourishing words of the Kwan Yin pledge.

Never shall I seek nor receive private individual salvation, never will I enter into final peace alone, but always and everywhere will I live and strive for the redemption of every creature throughout the world from the bonds of conditioned existence.

At one level, Kwan Yin is the Chinese term corresponding to the Sanskrit Avalokiteshvara, the Tibetan Chenrezig, who is not only the preceptor and guardian of Tibet but the whole of manifestation. In Stanza III of the S.D., Kwan-Yin is neither male nor female, but “Bright Space, Son of Dark Space” the paradigm and pristine source of all creativity in the cosmos, the Logos or Verbum of Parabrahm, and the BLAZING DIVINE DRAGON OF WISDOM, spoken of earlier.

Kwan Yin is connected with...the hidden power in every human being to produce a result that is beneficent.... There is a latent Kwan Yin in every human being. It is the voice of conscience at the commonest level. It is the *Chitkala* (the voice of the guiding Dhyanis) of the developed disciple. At the highest level it is Nada, the Voice of the Silence, the Soundless Sound, that which is comprehended in initiation, and ceaselessly reverberates in the *Anahata*, the deathless centre of the human body, transformed into a divine temple.

The enlightened ones who preside over Shamballa are immortal in consciousness, though not in body, forming a bridge between the divine and human world systems. They are an ever-living Brotherhood, all of whom have the capacity to veil or unveil themselves. Like the portal of entrance to Shamballa, they will be recognized by some and not by others, as karma allows. They are said to embody all the highest virtues and excellences of the 10-fold Paramita Path manifesting on inner planes all the highest shaktis while wholly resonating to the Demiurgic Logos, the highest needs and purposes of our planetary system as a whole and the particular needs of the epoch into which they incarnate. The timeless truths of Theosophia are eternally enacted in the heart of this Ever-Living Human Banyan. And it is one of the avowed purposes of HPB’s great mission and the Theosophical Movement in its broader scope, to educate, prepare and inform the Western mind regarding the living presence and nature of these Mahatmas.

For this age, as one of them has already said, “is an age of transition”, when every system of thought, science, religion, government, and society is changing, and men’s minds are only preparing for an alteration into that state which will permit the race to advance to the point suitable for these elder brothers to introduce their actual presence to our sight.

The whole of the Movement then, can be seen as a preparation for that day when such beings could walk the earth without being hunted as devils by some or worshipped as gods by others. And part of the indispensable role of a true Master of Wisdom or Avatara was given in this vivid allegory by Robert Crosbie:

A *Siddha-Purusha* (perfect man) is like an archeologist who removes the dust and lays open an old well which has been covered up by ages of disuse. The *Avatara*, on the other

hand, is like an engineer who sinks a new well in a place where there was no water before. Great Men give salvation to those only who have the waters of piety hidden in themselves, but the *Avatara* saves him too whose heart is devoid of love and dry as a desert.

Robert Crosbie

The path to the constituting ourselves as servants, disciples and aids to such beings was summarized by Mahatma KH in this way:

If you would know us, study our philosophy. If you would serve us serve our humanity.

Mahatma KH

Like the Master's behind the Theosophical Movement, like HPB and Judge, Raghavan Iyer often referred to the moment of choice that faces humanity in the current epoch. In the cycle of Seven Rounds in our planetary system as outlined by Theosophy, it is only in the Fifth Round, many millions of years in the future, that manas will be fully developed, and humanity as a whole will be able to knowingly choose between good and evil, between eternal life and death. If humanity chooses the path of altruism and brotherhood, of benevolence and unity, we are told, it will ascend by progressive stages to its innate divinity and immortality as a Dhyan Chohan host. Out of loving service to the whole of life, it will joyously cultivate and manifest its Nirmanakaya vesture in dulcet harmony with the whole of nature and with the Great Brotherhood of Bodhisattvas. On the other hand, those egos who choose to continue serving the separative soul, a form of spiritual materialism, moral indifference and ingratitude, will be blocked from participation in the upward arc of human evolution in the grand manvantaric cycle and any progress made by those egos will be tragically lost.

This is the crucial juncture which is being anticipated by analogy in the Fifth Race of the Fourth Round right now. Owing to the enormous retardation in evolution in the past, it became absolutely necessary for the original vibration of the Planetary Spirit, the Avataric vibration of eighteen million years ago, of a million years ago in the time of Rama, of five thousand years ago in the time of Krishna, to be resoundingly struck again so that the resultant karma would force a widespread quickening of choice.

Shri R. Iyer

For this reason, he wrote, this 5,000 year transition cycle within Kali Yuga, at the dawn of the Aquarian Age and the culmination of the seven-century plan, is one in which the stakes are very high. It is a time of immense suffering of a type that could only be understood by a Buddha, a Jesus or a Shakespeare. It is also a time of immense opportunity for courageous individuals and communities of seekers who aspire to become spiritual and moral benefactors and creative

pioneers of the civilization of the future. The titanic struggle between benevolence and malevolence, between universal altruism vs. materialism, sectarianism and separatism which would otherwise be resolved in the Fifth Round is taking place right now in the Fifth Race. We saw it reflected in Hilton's novel as each of the characters rescued by the monks of Shangri-La were brought to a climatic confrontation with their own selfish character defects and moment of choice. Like the heating of base metal, all the impurities must rise to the surface, be faced and dispelled. We see the same playing out on the world stage. Institutional religion is collapsing, and mainstream scientific presumptions and paradigms are rapidly shifting. The predominant mind forms of the age, whose pseudo-morality justifies violence on a vast scale, disregards the marginalized, which co-opts and mis-uses knowledge and the gifts of nature for creed, caste or corporate gain, are in their death throes. In succumbing to them or passively drifting along without confronting and dispelling their seeds in our own psyche, we risk being stranded and stranding countless others. For as the Masters wrote, it is not materialism that will have the upper hand. This is why *Theosophia*, the compassionate program of the Bodhisattvas radiating from Shamballa is crucial and indispensable. The life-giving sacred lore is the destroyer of dogmatism, designed to awaken soul memories and the voice of conscience, to keep alive humanities intuitions, to awaken the noetic, boundless heart, to draw all towards Truth, and thus aid humanity in saving itself from itself.

In *The Epitome of Theosophy*, William Quan Judge points out that it is a misuse of terms to say that the spiritual nature can be cultivated. The real object to be kept in view, he says, is to so open up or make porous the lower nature so that the spiritual may shine through it and become the guide and ruler. The immortal god within us is "cultivated" only in the sense of having a vehicle prepared for its use, into which it may descend. For most people, he says, the divine triad is not in the person, but hovers, so to speak, above us. It is always joyous, blissful and peaceful, unconcerned and independent of all internal and external conditions and circumstances of the incarnated being. And it overflows with a boundless ananda, joy and bliss, absolute knowledge and universal compassion. It continually partakes of the Divine state "conjoined with the Gods", he says, feeding upon ambrosia. The aspiration of the student is to allow that light of knowledge to shine through and animate what we call the personality. While this is clearly the alchemical work of many lifetimes, it is also said that because of our divine heredity, even a beginning student is innately capable of releasing, through true benevolence and noetic thought, vibrations that can help, heal and uplift all life-atoms thus contributing to the work of the Great Brotherhood.

The idea that an unenlightened human being can effectively generate a seed of enlightenment is the central assumption behind the compassionate teaching of Mahatmas and Bodhisattvas, of the Buddhas and Christs. A drop of water is suggestive of an ocean; a flashing spark or single flame is analogous to an ocean of light; the miniscule mirrors the large. Herein lies the hidden strength of the Kwan Yin pledge. What may seem small from the standpoint of the personal self, when it is genuinely offered on behalf of the limitless universe of living beings and of all humanity past, present and future, can truly negate the finality of finitude, the ultimacy of what seems urgent, the immensity of what appears immediate. The human mind ceaselessly creates false valuations, giving ephemera an excessive sense of reality, to uphold itself in a world of flux. To negate this tendency in advance and to assign reality only to the whole requires a profound mental courage. It requires, while one is alive, a recognition of the connection between the moment of birth and the moment of death, of the intimate relationship between the pain of one human being and the sorrow of all humanity. But it also involves a recognition that greater beings than oneself have taken precisely such a vow, have affirmed this pledge again and again. Therefore, one can invite oneself, however frail, however feeble, into the family of those who are the self-chosen, unacknowledged but unvanquished friends of the human race.

R. Iyer

"The Pledge of Kwan Yin"

May all beings discover Shangri-La!

K. Gradin

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