

SANGHARAKSHITA IN SEMINAR

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS WITH SANGHARAKSHITA

on 'THE BUDDHA' from the "MITRATA OMNIBUS"

Women's Preordination Retreat, July 1986 held at 'Rivendell'

Those Present: Ashokasri, Vidyasri, Pat Jilks, Christine Robertson, Carla Remyn, Sanghadevi, Varabhadri, Kathryn Boon, Vajragita

Sangharakshita: All right, so how many questions? Twelve questions, some of them subdivided. The first question is:

To what extent was the word 'Buddha' in use prior to the Enlightenment of Sakyamuni? Did Sakyamuni redefine the word by virtue of what he was, and communicate something greater than its original meaning?

In this connection we have to remember that the Buddha did after all have to use the language that was current in his day, but clearly, inasmuch as he had had a deeper experience than any of the other people who used that language in his time, he modified the meanings of many words - sometimes even changed them completely - by the way in which he used them. And 'Buddha' is one of those words. 'Buddha' comes from a root meaning simply 'to understand'; so 'Buddha' literally means, or literally meant originally, simply 'one who understands', and it came to assume the meaning of 'a wise man' - but not 'an Enlightened man' in the strictly Buddhist sense. It seems to have acquired that usage during the Buddha's lifetime.

Perhaps we should also remember that the Buddha was known, so far as we can tell, during his lifetime, by quite a number of different terms. quite a number of different names. He wasn't simply called 'the Buddha'. It is doubtful if 'Buddha' was the most common word that was used for him during his own lifetime; it seems that 'Tathagata' was very common, 'Bhagavan' was very common, especially as a mode of address; 'Jina' was very common; 'Mahavira' was very common. All these terms were used of him; 'Sakyamuni' was very common. So in the West we tend to think of the Buddha just as 'the Buddha', but in the Buddha's own day and in the East today, perhaps, there's a much wider variety of terms for him. So, yes, one can say, in the words of the question, that Sakyamuni did redefine the word by virtue of what he was. We know that language is in any case changing all the time, as people's experience extends and expands. The meanings of words are changing. If, for instance, you look words up in Dr. Johnson's Dictionary, if you have a copy, you will find that he sometimes gives rather different meanings to words with which we are familiar today, because during the 200 years that have passed since his time the meaning of the word has changed. For instance, the word 'nice': in his day it meant sort of precise, exact, particular, fastidious. It wasn't used as a general term of approbation at all, it didn't have that meaning. And 'polite': polite in his day meant cultured or cultivated. 'He is a very polite man' meant he was a cultivated man. So we [2] have to be quite careful when we read Johnson, otherwise there are subtle misunderstandings, because we take the words that he uses in their modern sense.

Sanghadevi: ... the story, for instance, of somebody who meets some of the Buddha's

disciples, and he hears the word 'Buddha' and he says 'Did you say "Buddha"?' - as if the very word ...

S: Right. As though it did have a special meaning. That was Anathapindika.

Sanghadevi: ... looking for a Buddha.

S: A wise man. Yes. Though it's doubtful, perhaps, if he attached to that term the full meaning that it came to have at a later time. He could have meant simply 'Did you say a wise man?' Do you see what I mean? Because even wise men were rare. Well, they still are. I think this suggests we have to be very sensitive to the meanings of words in the sense that we realize that meanings can change, and that the context in which a word is used can make quite a difference to the word itself, the meaning of the word itself. It's not enough just to understand a word in its ordinary straightforward dictionary sense. This is one of the merits of Johnson's Dictionary, by the way, because he gives a number of quotations from standard English authors, illustrating the way in which the word is used. I believe he was the first to do that, though it has subsequently become the usual thing in the case of really big dictionaries. All right, let's go on to No. 2. This is rather more complicated. It comes from Tertu, it says.

On page 18 of Mitrata Omnibus , you say, following the dictionary definition, that 'an archetype is the model of a work.' This sounds practical, like something we make, not just a mental image or symbol. What is this work? What is this making? What is the relationship between this practical level of activity and the imagination?

So 'an archetype is the model of a work'. 'This sounds practical, like something we make, not just a mental image or symbol.' Hm. I think we can say that an archetype is the model of a work in two different ways or two different senses; because one can take the term archetype and the term model in two quite different ways. One can use 'archetype' or 'model', or archetype in the sense of model, as meaning a model or a pattern which is in the mind but merely in the mind. Just a mental idea; something that you imagine in the more ordinary sense of the term. But you can also take 'archetype' in the sense of model in another sense. You can take it in the sense of something actually existing in a higher world, not just in your mind; something actually existing in a higher world, which is or becomes the model or pattern of a work. Do you see the distinction?

What would be an example of the first kind - that is to say, archetype in the sense of a model, just an idea in your mind? Well, it could be a picture that you wanted ...

Christine: ... the archetype of the old man, that sort of archetype?

S: No, I'm thinking in a way in more simple terms than that. Supposing you have an idea of something that you want to paint. Supposing you think you'd just like to paint a picture of a flower, and you have a pretty clear idea of the sort of flower that you want to paint - well, the idea that you have in your mind of the flower is the archetype or model of the flower that you actually paint. But supposing you want to paint a picture of Manjusri - not just the idea of him that you have in your mind, but a painting of Manjusri as he actually is, so to speak, in the higher spiritual and Transcendental realm. Well, there, obviously, you would be - the work that you produced would be based on or modelled after an archetype which actually existed, which didn't exist merely in your own mind. But obviously, in order to represent that

archetype you'd have to experience it; and what, say, painters of pictures of Manjusri usually do - they don't experience the archetype and then paint it; they get their ideas [3] either from paintings which other people have made, with or without experience of that archetype, that Manjusri archetype, or they just base it on ideas. For instance, they know that Manjusri is the Bodhisattva of wisdom, and they know that traditionally he has a yellow colour, and they know that traditionally he is sixteen years old and he looks like this and he looks like that; well, they don't have any actual experience of the archetype.

So one can say that there are two kinds of archetype and therefore there are two kinds of ways in which an archetype can be the model of a work. The work can be modelled just on an idea which you have in your own mind, and nothing more than that, or it can be modelled on something belonging to a higher spiritual realm which you actually experience. Of course, you could also say that there is perhaps no absolutely hard and fast line between the two things as between two, say, sets of things. I mentioned the example of a flower; well, you can have an idea of a flower and simply draw the idea, but could there not also be a flower archetype - just like a Manjughosa archetype? Because Manjughosa after all has blue lotuses, hasn't he? So perhaps one could say that - leaving aside particular examples - a work can be modelled on an archetype in two ways or in two senses: either modelled on an idea which is in your own mind, regardless of what it is an idea of, or modelled on something which does exist in a higher spiritual or Transcendental realm which you do actually experience, regardless of what it actually is, whether it's a human form or a flower or a tree or a precious stone or whatever; because all these things, one might say, are archetypes or have archetypes existing on that higher level. So is that difference clear?

So 'This sounds practical, like something we make, not just a mental image or symbol.' So obviously you can make both; you can make a work which is modelled on an idea, and you can make a work which is modelled on an experience of an archetype in the higher sense. So 'What is this work? And what is this making?' Well! [Laughter] Well, I suppose one can take the example of the 'work' of art. You can produce a work of art which is based upon ideas. It does seem, in the history of art, especially modern art, that quite a few painters did paint in accordance with their ideas rather than in accordance with their actual experience, whether archetypal or something else... Blake was an example of an artist who painted in accordance with his experience, whatever the level of that experience may have been. So, yes, one's work may be something that one produces out of one's mental ideas or based on one's mental ideas, or one's experience of something higher. Also, of course, one can speak of the work that is one's own life; because your life, or what you make of your life, can be modelled on an idea or it can be modelled on - you can draw a distinction here and say an ideal, drawing a distinction between idea and ideal. Usually an ideal means something which reflects the nature of an archetype or has something of the archetypal in it - something which does ...

_____ : ... ideal.

S: Yes, something which does reflect a higher level of reality. D.H. Lawrence unfortunately uses the term 'ideal' in the sense of 'idea', as I've just described it, so one has to be very aware of the context when one comes across these sort of words. But one could say that one's work is to model one's life upon the archetypal, not just upon ideas - not even ideas about the archetypal, but on actual experience of the archetype. And no doubt you have an actual experience of the archetypal only when you develop imagination in the real sense, as distinct from fancy - or, in other terms, when you begin to have some experience of Insight. Only then

can you start really modelling your life in accordance with that archetype.

Vidyasri: I think that was what Tertu was getting at somewhere like this, when you talked about creating a work - did you just mean a work of art, or did you mean more like one's life and one's activities?

S: I can't remember at the time. Have you got the 'Mitrata Omnibus'?

[4]

Tertu: When we practise we create something. It can be a whole practice with our practice created - archetypal form - if we - is it like ... is when we practise it's creating these forms, these archetypal forms?

S: Well, it's as though, first of all, through one's imagination or one's vision or insight, one gets some glimpse of that archetypal form, and then you try to model your life on that in the sense of bringing your life into accordance with that, or bringing your life into harmony with that, to such an extent that your life begins to manifest that. For instance, supposing someone meditates on Tara: well, it doesn't just mean thinking about Tara, it means actually having a vivid experience of what is meant by Tara - or you could say the Tara archetype. And then gradually embodying that in one's life, so that one becomes very kind, sympathetic, wise and so on, and in such a way that that is noticeable by other people - to begin to be a sort of reflection or embodiment of Tara for other people too.

Pat: Where do dreams come in? You get many artists and poets inspired by dreams. Is that idealism?

S: Well, it seems to me that dreams are of many different kinds, they come from many different levels. You can get some dreams made up of bits and pieces of everyday experience; it's very clear. You can get dreams which do come from a quite different source, which are sort of archetypal. And sometimes in a particular dream the two elements can be mixed up. So one can say that the dreams which are based on ordinary waking experience are just a bit like the ideas which you take for the model, as distinct from an actual experience of an archetype. But inasmuch as some dreams can be archetypal you can work them out, you can base your work on them, a work of art, or even in a way your own life, because sometimes our dreams do influence our lives very strongly. So I think there's no difference in principle between dream experience and waking experience. There's a higher kind of dream experience and a lower kind, just as there are, say, ordinary thoughts, ordinary ideas, and experience of ideals.

Perhaps people need sometimes to take dreams more seriously. I don't mean the trivial dreams which are clearly reflections of everyday happenings, but dreams which are of a more archetypal significance and which do really affect you emotionally.

So 'what is the relationship between this practical level of activity and the imagination?' I think I have explained this - that you do in some way or other, whether through meditation or dreams or the experience of works of art, you have some experience of the archetypal, of images with a capital I; and you try to embody those either in the work of art that you produce, which can be a painting or a poem or a piece of architecture or a house, or the arrangement of a room; or in your own actual work.

3. Would you agree that we can understand and resolve opposites only through being in touch with the level and dimension of archetypal symbolism?

I suppose that opposites are ultimately resolved only through the experience of the Transcendental, because opposites, one could say, are a production of the mind, one's more limited experience. But certainly, in the case of the archetypal symbols, perhaps, rather than symbolism, one is, so to speak, halfway there. The archetypal symbols or the archetypes themselves belong to the rupaloka, as I think we also see. The rupaloka, you could say, roughly speaking, is halfway between the kamaloka, the ordinary world of sense experience and ordinary thought, and the Absolute or the Transcendental. So, yes, certainly, through the experience of archetypes or archetypal symbols, one is on the way to resolving the opposites - the opposites seem to be brought into a harmonious configuration. The Pure Land is rather like that, isn't it? You get all the things that you find in the human world, the mundane world - you get human figures or human-type figures; you've got trees and you've got [5] ponds and you've got flowers and birds, but everything is sort of harmonized.

4. In 'Journey to Il Convento', you describe the rupaloka as the plane of archetypal form ...

fair enough, that's straightforward ...

Do you mean by this the plane on which archetypes, whether of a mundane or transcendental nature, manifest through form?

Hm. I wouldn't say here that you can distinguish between an archetype and the form through which it manifests. An archetype is the form, the form is the archetype. But you can speak of the Transcendental manifesting through form. So you can say that in the rupaloka you have archetypes or you have forms, in that higher sense, so they can either be mundane or they can be transcendental. And in themselves, so to speak, they are only mundane, though pertaining to a higher level of reality or higher level of experience; but they can be vehicles of an aspect of the Transcendental, and then they become transcendental terms or transcendental archetypes. It is not as though in the rupaloka you've got two kinds of archetypes, one labelled mundane and the other labelled transcendental - not that. They are just archetypes, which are just forms, which don't manifest anything in a sense; they just manifest themselves. They are themselves. They are what their form is. Their form is their meaning.

For instance, part of form is colour; so you look at green and you have the experience of green. But what does green mean? Green doesn't mean anything; green is just green. Is there a meaning which is manifested in this green? No, there's just green. The form is the meaning, the meaning is the form. Its inside is its outside. It is what it appears to be. But this is form just as form, this is what happens, so to speak, on the level of the rupaloka, but the archetype, the rupaloka form, can be the vehicle, as it were, for the manifestation of an aspect of the Transcendental, and then that archetype which was formerly non-transcendental becomes Transcendental. And this is the difference between - in meditation, in the Vajrayana - between the Samayasattva and the jnanasattva. The Samayasattva and the jnanasattva are the same form, as form, but the jnanasattva - because I think someone questioned ... when I was talking about that - is that Samayasattva which is informed by something transcendental. So that when, instead of experiencing, say, Manjusri as Samayasattva, you experience Manjusri as a jnanasattva, you don't experience a different kind of form: the form remains exactly the same, but it's infused with an altogether different significance. Or you could say you experience it

much more deeply.

Ashokasri: It's a sort of matter of degree of reality ...

S: Yes, you could say that, yes.

Vidyasri: So would you say that some archetypal forms are more conducive for manifesting reality than others?

S: It would seem so, though one can't be sure of this. It would seem that archetypes which are as it were in human form are, let us say, more appropriate or more helpful vehicles of some aspect of the Transcendental. But can we be sure? - because think of the ancient Egyptians, or even the symbolism of the Vajrayana: there are animal-headed figures. And perhaps for some people, so-called primitive peoples, an animal form can be the vehicle of the Transcendental. Or even an entirely inanimate thing, so-called: a jewel. Think of how powerfully things like, for instance, the Grail symbol can affect us. It's not a human being, it's not even a flower. It's just an artefact. Or think of the Jewel in the Lotus; that can affect some people very powerfully. So though perhaps, broadly speaking, it's the archetype in human form, so to speak, which is the most usual or most appropriate vehicle of the Transcendental, it's not so exclusive. Remember that in the early days of [6] Buddhism there was no Buddha image. It would seem that people were just as emotionally moved by the bodhi tree or the Dharmachakra or the stupa as now we are by the Buddha image itself. I remember a few years ago I went to the Hayward Gallery to an exhibition of Tantric art - that was the great Tantric art exhibition in London. Did anyone go to that? Must have been ten years or more ago; you were all probably still at school, eh? (Laughter.)

Christine: Not quite.

S: But it was extraordinary. It was a very vast, rich exhibition, with all sorts of wonderful things. But the things that impressed me most, strange to say, were the shonigramas(?) - [Laughter] I thought I'd catch you! Shonigramas are amazing, mysterious things. They are Hindu things, not Buddhist things. But what are they? They are black stones. They are a very special kind of black stone, which is supposed to be a symbol of the god Vishnu, but found in the beds of rivers in the Himalayan area. They are black. Those that I saw were so big - though you usually get them much smaller. They are black; completely smooth; and with a sort of almost metallic gleam. And they really have a sort of personality. I don't know whether it's because they have been worshipped, perhaps, for hundreds of years. Those particular ones, but they actually seemed quite alive. One could really quite understand people regarding these as symbols of the god Vishnu, symbols of some divinity: just as much as a beautiful image. So I felt this was quite extraordinary, they were really very impressive. There were, I think, five or six of them, and all quite large. So perhaps we should be careful not to limit our conception of the archetypal. Think of some old rocks, or even perhaps trees - certainly some rocks or strange rock formations - can affect us quite powerfully and mean something, speak to us, in a way. Wordsworth seems to have felt this, doesn't he?

And you could say that this is, well - because if you take, for instance, Sukhavati, the happy land or Pure Land, as an example of the archetypal world, not just an archetypal object, just an archetype, but the whole archetypal world in the sense of the sum total of all the archetypes, which is the rupaloka, everything is represented there. And not only human forms,

but as I said trees, flowers, birds, water, precious stones, and so on. So it's a whole higher archetypal world, and presumably we can contact that archetypal world through any of its constituents, either through a Buddha or Bodhisattva form, or a flower - Perhaps when you really appreciate a flower you are seeing in that flower some reflection of the archetypal flower; perhaps it is an archetypal flower. Well, must be. The mandarava, in a way, is the archetypal flower.

Ashokasri: If you, say, in meditation, have an image not a human form that really does affect your emotion, should you pursue it or just regard it as an interesting thing?

S: I think if it attracts you very strongly one can certainly pursue it, because you would be having to make an effort not to do so; you'd be having to thrust this down, which perhaps wouldn't be good. There's no reason why one shouldn't pursue it. I think some of Jung's patients did have dreams in which they saw, or perhaps they drew, these sort of abstract figures that seemed to have a very powerful as it were perhaps archetypal significance for them. Then the question goes on - it's the same question ...

Can the Sambhogakaya only be experienced through the medium of forms we conjure up on this plane?

So one could say that the Sambhogakaya represents the archetypal human form par excellence as the vehicle of Absolute Reality. This is what the Sambhogakaya really represents.

Ashokasri: Would you say that again?

[7]

S: Well, first of all, to break it up into bits, first of all what is the Sambhogakaya? The Sambhogakaya is a sort of perfect, resplendent human form; so in that sense it belongs to the rupakaya, but it is that perfect, that resplendent human form as imbued with the significance of Ultimate Reality or the Dharmakaya. So that is the Sambhogakaya. So the Sambhogakaya is the most perfect imaginable human form, the most brilliant human form, the most beautiful human form, but infused or imbued with Ultimate Reality and expressing that. That is the Sambhogakaya. The Nirmanakaya is the same thing in the world of space, time, and matter. Therefore the Dharmakaya is still in a way present, but much more heavily veiled.

When in visualization practices we speak of the jnanasattva, is this the same as the Sambhogakaya?

In principle, yes. Because you could say that all the different Buddha and Bodhisattva forms are different aspects, different facets, of the one Sambhogakaya.

Can you elaborate at all on what the archetypes of the archetypes are? Are they dimensions of the Dharmakaya?

This is something that I sort of threw off at the time, but what I meant was this: you could have hierarchies of archetypes, and you can regard the archetypes of a higher level as being so to speak the archetypes of the archetypes. You could think, for instance, of the Sambhogakaya Buddha as being the archetype of the lesser archetypes, so to speak, which are the different Bodhisattvas. So I was using the expression in that way; not too seriously, though - you

mustn't try and work it out, say, in very Jungian terms. I'm just taking up these terms and using them in my own way, so to speak, to express something more Buddhistic.

Sanghadevi: You said that you might leave behind even those images and reach the archetypes of which they are the symbols - ... - and it would be like reaching the archetypes of the archetypes. Is the suggestion that you get ...

S: Well, a hierarchy of archetypes. Also perhaps - but I can't be sure, because I said those things a long time ago, I can't remember what I said or why I said it - but I imagine what I was getting at was this: let's take, for instance, Manjughosa again. One mustn't limit, say, the real Manjughosa archetype to the particular form with which we are familiar in Buddhist art. You see? Yes, no doubt the form that we are familiar with in Buddhist art does represent, say, a good part of that Manjusri or Manjughosa archetype, but we shouldn't regard it as fully exhausting it. Because other aspects are represented, let us say, by the Egyptian Thoth, or by the Greek Apollo, and so on. We mustn't think that because we've got a nice Buddhist picture of Manjughosa, there we've caught the archetype; Buddhism has got that archetype. No, that is not the case. The archetype is something which transcends these particular manifestations on this plane. These manifestations on this plane only very faintly reflect certain aspects.

5. On page 35 you say: 'In fact, without any exaggeration, the Buddha's begging bowl occupies in Buddhist legend and history a position analogous to that of the Holy Grail in Christianity, and carries very much the same significance.'

Well, the grail is regarded in various ways. There is quite a bit of controversy as to what it actually is, if it 'is' anything in that quasi-historical sense. It is sometimes described as a chalice, and is identified with the chalice used at the Last Supper by Christ. But it is also spoken of as a dish, a flat dish, a platter; and again it's sometimes said to have originated from the magic cauldron - the wish-fulfilling cauldron of Celtic mythology. But in any case it is a receptacle of some kind, which is associated with eating and/or drinking. So there is clearly a similarity to the Buddha's bowl, which is round, which is hollow, and which is used to contain food. But the Buddha's bowl seems to be an example [8] of what Jung calls, I think, the archetype of wholeness - doesn't he use some such expression? Or the archetype of integration. Because I'm reminded of one of the legends about the Buddha's bowl, which is supposed to have been made of lapis lazuli - again, according to the legend; it's very doubtful whether it actually was, it would have been rather heavy, a bowl of lapis lazuli. You know what lapis lazuli is, don't you? It's a deep blue semi-precious stone, rather beautiful.

The legend goes that at the time of his Enlightenment or after his Enlightenment, the Buddha didn't have a begging bowl, so the four kings of the four quarters, the four guardian kings, each brought him a bowl, one from each quarter - one from the north, one from the east, one from the south, one from the west. So the Buddha had four bowls; so what to do? He took them, and he merged them, he joined them into one bowl. So that's a clear symbol, you could say, of integration, isn't it? Even union of opposites, union of north-south axis representing one pair of opposites, the east-west axis representing another pair of opposites, horizontal and vertical opposites. So the Buddha unified those. One could take it in that way. So clearly it's a symbol of integration. I think Yuan-Cha'n(?) tells of legends that persisted in his time about the Buddha's begging bowl, so yes, I think certain kings were supposed to have - I think Kanishka(?) was supposed to have possessed the Buddha's begging bowl. Sometimes it was said to be of crystal, and to emit light. And it seemed to have travelled around the Buddhist

world: different kings were always going in search of it, because they felt it was a sort of talisman, in a sense it would bring good luck to them at an ordinary level. So there's a bit of similarity to the Grail, that the Knights of the Round Table were going in search of. There's never been a proper study of this, only ... references to the Buddha's begging bowl here and there in Buddhist literature. But then the whole story has never been properly put together. But for these sort of reasons, I felt that there was a definite parallelism between the Grail stories and the stories of the Buddha's bowl.

_____ : Where do you find these stories of the Buddha's bowl?

S: Oh dear. Well, they aren't really collected anywhere. But ... I haven't looked it up - I wonder if it's in the Buddhist Encyclopedia? I could look and see whether it says 'Bowl, begging, Buddha's'[Laughter] - you might have to ... papra (?), which is a bowl.

6. Are there any devotional practices you would like to see developed more in the Movement, either in terms of individual practice or collective practice?

I must say that I'd like - I was think this at Wesak(?) - I think I'd like to see more Pujas, on a grander scale: pujas for particular Buddhas and Bodhisattvas and so on. They have these in Tuscany quite a lot. People spend sometimes the whole day making a special shrine, and throughout the retreat there were days - an Avalokitesvara day and a Manjusri day and a Tara day, a Padmasambhava day, and so on. And as the years have gone by more and more care and trouble have been taken setting up the shrines and decorating the shrines in the appropriate colours. So I have sometimes thought I'd like to see, for instance - for instance, we had a Tara ...

(end of side 1 side 2)

... image in a golden robe and have lots of greenery, perhaps with white flowers. And you have green flower vases and green water bowls, and green hangings, and perhaps you wear a green robe. And you'd have stotras in praise of Tara, and readings about Tara, and you'd chant the Tara mantra a lot. And perhaps the festival could last a whole day. I think it would be very good if we were to have more pujas or puja-type festivals of this sort, centring around the bodhisattvas. I've also thought that - this is putting it at a rather lower level, but I think it's a level that's important - I think polytheism, so to speak, is a very good idea. I think a lot of harm has been done in the West by [9] having, as it were, just one god. It narrows everything down too much. It makes reality as it were unicentric, whereas it's as it were polycentric, if you see what I mean. In Catholicism, the rigidity of the system is tempered by all the saints, the ... gods - well, practically gods and goddesses. That's quite a good thing. But the official theology, of course, is otherwise.

So I think it's quite good that in Buddhism we've got all these Buddhas and Bodhisattvas belonging to the archetypal realm, and you can concentrate on one or another of them as you, so to speak, feel like it. But I think the Roman and Greek polytheism was a good thing. Well, in a way Hindu polytheism - in India, if you want wealth you pray to Lakshmi, and if you want removal of obstacles you pray to Ganesha, and if you are more inclined to asceticism you worship Shiva, if you are more inclined to devotion you worship Vishnu or one of his incarnations. So there's a great spread, more possibility of choice. But in Christianity you've just got this one God, quite narrow. It's like, in the spiritual community, only having the

possibility of one person as your kalyana mitra - and they may not be your type, so to speak. Whereas God is everybody's type. [Laughter] You're landed with him, whether you get on with him or not - well, there's nobody else, not officially anyway.

But it's not like that in Buddhism. You've got all these wonderful Buddha and Bodhisattva figures. And so I think we should try to counteract this monotheistic tendency - monotheism means religion centralized - try to counteract it and break it up a bit by encouraging the worship, the Puja, of all these different, colourful archetypal figures. I think it would be much better for us. Even if we just take it on an ordinary polytheistic level, even if we don't always fully appreciate the more spiritual or transcendental ... figures. Anyway, that's something I've been thinking of for some time and haven't had a chance to say. Maybe it isn't completely relevant, but anyway I've said it, and it's on tape now. (laughter) . But, yes, I'd like to have more Pujas on this sort of scale.

Vidyasri: On this retreat we had some Pujas to different Bodhisattvas and different shrines, and we developed a thing of nearly all of us wearing the colour, and it does conjure up a whole ...

S: Right. If you haven't got a complete dress, at least a scarf or a jacket or something of that sort. (Voices.) You can't expect to have a whole rainbow wardrobe - (Voices.) While we're on the subject, I would like the offering goddesses to look more like goddesses, please: no dungarees - not that there were any dungarees, but you see what I'm getting at. If possible, they should wear long, trailing pre-Raphaelite type garments - scarves floating out behind.

Vidyasri: Even if they're masculine?

S: They're masculine women, you mean? (Laughter.)

_____ : No, ... male!

S: We haven't come around to male offering gods yet. I'm talking about goddesses. But that's another question, what ... men. But there's a reason - I hope I'm not guilty of sexism here - but there seems to be a reason why you have goddesses and not gods in this particular context. Why are the ladies singled out as favoured in this way? I'm sure there must be a psychological and spiritual reason for this. Offering goddesses, rather than offering gods: what do you think the reason might be?

Ashokasri: Naturally more devotional?

S: I suppose that is the reason. Rightly or wrongly - because one is dealing with psychology, not with as it were Ultimate Reality - but conventionally, at least, women are regarded as more devotional. So people find it easier to associate the idea of devotion with female figures than with male figures. Supposing you had - really to take it to the extreme - eight stout middle-aged [10] men walking forward making offerings: would it really help? I'm not saying that those eight middle-aged men may [not] actually be very devoted, full of devotion, but would they be the appropriate figures to express devotion, if you're going to express it in that way at all?

Vidyasri: I can see what you mean, but - if they really were devotional, wouldn't you feel

that?

S: I think you would, but I think their appearance would be against them. And you'd have to be yourself quite spiritually developed and sensitive to see through the external form; just ignore the middle-aged spread and the grey hair and all the rest of it, and see the devotion there; see as it were the offering goddess inside the man. You'd need to be quite highly developed. But if you just wanted to enact that role for the benefit of ordinary not-so-developed people, I think the youthful female form, with all its associations, is probably more appropriate.

_____ : You could almost say that's an archetype there.

S: Hm, yes. The youthful female form is a more appropriate bearer of that particular archetype. It so to speak calls down that archetype more easily, at least so far as ordinary people are concerned. So, in much the same way, for many people the wisdom archetype is perhaps called down more easily by an old man with a long white beard and all that sort of thing. Ordinary people wouldn't find it easy to associate wisdom with a young man or a young woman, for that matter. So perhaps when you want to play on people's feelings or evoke their feelings you have to pay some regard to ordinary psychology and even to some sort of cultural conventions, one might say. So - OK, if you can get eight offering gods I suppose it's all right, but it doesn't seem to have quite the same significance as offering goddesses. So that therefore I think that the offering goddesses should really look, as well as possible, like offering goddesses. I think you have to get them as young as possible and as graceful as possible; and if possible with long, flowing hair - etc., etc...

Ashokasri: Do you think we should keep a few special people?

S: Perhaps you could! You could have offering goddesses in a special cloister, like the ancient Romans had the vestal virgins.

Ashokasri: Any offers?

S: Holy ...! Sixteen years old, preferably. Or at least looking sixteen. But do you see what I mean? - you have to take into account people's actual psychology and what is the most appropriate bearer of the archetype. Anyway, that's in passing, but in connection with this question of these large and more elaborate Pujas I'd like to see more people taking part in them, not just having them on retreat, I'd like them to be much more public and better known.

Vidyasri: I think sometimes at public centres people have been cautious about that sort of thing, thinking that for beginners you should have just the Buddha on the shrine. But you are suggesting that maybe we could be a bit more adventurous.

S: Perhaps we could. Obviously sounding people out, and letting people know what they are in for. Some people really do respond to that, so sometimes we're not always perhaps giving them everything that they need. Clearly, there would need to be quite a body of people who would appreciate and benefit from that kind of thing; and probably many beginners just wouldn't.

Christine: It would make the Centres much more colourful in a way... symbolic content ...

[11]

S: Yes, right. And we'd need to develop music much more - that's something I'm very conscious of. Unfortunately I've no gifts myself in this way. I appreciate music and I enjoy music, but I don't play any instrument, I can't read it and I can't write it. So we seem to be falling rather by the wayside. I've tried to encourage certain people, but not much is happening. We haven't been able to make a start with Buddhist music. We've done quite well so far on a small scale with Buddhist art: we've got some beautiful images and paintings created by members of the Order, but we don't have any Buddhist music to incorporate with our Pujas. I hope we really do have before very long - ..., I think.

Vidyasri: You would like to have music at Pujas?

S: - I would like, but it must be appropriate. It mustn't just be a bit of Bach played at an appropriate moment; no, it must be something that we actually produce ourselves. We could have, even - say, on retreat at least - some appropriate Western music. We have had in the past Bach played, or we've had Japanese flute music played at a particular point in a Puja. Yes, perhaps sometimes we can do that, but I think that's a bit of a makeshift. We need to have our own music, and I think we need to have it live; I think live music is quite important, it shouldn't be something we just switch on. But when I say music, I mean also devising better tunes for chanting the mantras or texts. We just need to experiment, perhaps.

Why are the wrathful forms of the five Dhyani Buddhas much less highly individualized than the Buddhas themselves?

I wonder if they are less highly individualized, or whether it's because we're not so familiar with them? For instance, it's a well-known thing that white people say that black people all look alike, and black people say the same thing about white people, because they're not so familiar with them. So maybe we have to familiarize ourselves sufficiently with the wrathful forms of the five Dhyani Buddhas. So, yes, there are some sets which are much of a muchness, like the Herukas, where they differ really only in their colour - and clearly they aren't very individualized. But there are lots of wrathful forms which are, I would have thought, very highly individualized, like Yamantaka, Vajrabhairava and so on - with all the different numbers of heads and legs and arms they've got, they are pretty individualized. Maybe we're just not familiar enough with them, we don't ... them, in most cases.

Sanghadevi: We were thinking specifically of the Herukas.

S: Ah, yes. The Herukas perhaps are not so individualized.

Ashokasri: Do you know why? Is it their function?

S: I imagine that there have not been, in the past, devotees to concentrate upon them and gradually evolve, so to speak, or perceive their distinctive individuality. For instance, there are twenty-one Taras, but does every one of those Taras stand out as a quite distinctive personality, so to speak? I don't think so. Perhaps it's because not enough people have concentrated on them; whereas the Green and the White Taras do stand out quite distinctively, don't they? Let's hope they do. Not just that they've got a different colour, or a different posture, asana, but that they've got different personalities, as it were, even though they are both Taras.

Do the five female Buddhas ever appear on their own besides Tara? Are there visualization practices for them?

I don't remember seeing any of them on their own just individually, say Mamaki or Pandaravasini. So far as I know they always appear with their Buddhas, and nearly always in the context of the Five Buddha Mandala. But in principle there's no reason why they shouldn't appear separately. It's just a matter of how much importance any individual sadhana gives to them, and to what extent he or she concentrates on them.

[12]

Is there a visualization practice of the Mandala of the Five Buddhas?

Yes, there definitely is. Though it doesn't seem to be a very common one. Technically, it belongs to the Yoga Tantra. It also features in Japanese Shingon. I've sometimes thought that we ought to pay more attention to the Mandala of the Five Buddhas; I think it would be a very good practice.

Ashokasri: Do you have it? I mean, do you have a copy of it? Do you know it?

S: Not - well, in a sense there isn't a proper sadhana, because it's in a way so simple. It's as though not much attention has been given to it. It's just those five Buddhas arranged in that particular way. One knows what their colours and symbols are. Though some years ago I did devise a sort of sadhana for the Five Buddha Mandala; I haven't really thought about it very much since, but I did devote some attention to this, but I don't think I ever wrote it down. Perhaps I should give some more thought to it.

Sanghadevi: What mantra would you chant?

S: Well, you would chant each one in turn. You'd go as it were round the mandala. Presumably starting in the east, and going right round up to the north and then down to the centre. Perhaps we should give it more attention.

10. The vajra is associated with the Wisdom family of Akshobhya, and the lotus is associated with the Compassion family of Amitabha. However, in the symbolism of the male/female Buddhas, the vajra is associated with the male form, compassion, and the lotus bell is associated with the female form, wisdom. Which aspect of Enlightenment is the vajra most commonly associated with, and the bell/lotus?

I think it's very difficult to say, if you take into account the whole field of Buddhism. I was thinking about this a few minutes ago, and then it occurred to me that the vajra is associated with Vajrasattva, and he represents absolute or primordial purity; so there's another concept, not just the concept of wisdom but purity. So it's as though these symbols don't have the same fixed meaning for all contexts; they differ. It's as though they have double meanings. For instance, you could say that - well, sometimes we know wisdom is associated with the masculine, as it were, sometimes it's associated with the feminine; but one could say that wisdom has a number of different aspects. One could say that perhaps the more dynamic aspect of wisdom is associated with the masculine, and the more receptive aspect of wisdom with the feminine. Though again, one mustn't forget that Tara is said to represent 'the wisdom that is quickly achieved' - so there is an exception even there. I don't think you can establish

an invariable one-to-one correspondence. It's all very fluid.

Sanghadevi: So you really just ... ?

S: Yes, right. For instance, the lotus is usually considered a feminine symbol; but what about Padmavarteshvara, the Lotus Lord of Dance, who holds a lotus in all of his, I think, sixteen hands? He is a decidedly masculine figure. Or Padmapani, which is Avalokitesvara - the Lotus in Hand - again, it's masculine. So we have to look to the context for the meaning. We can't have a dictionary of symbols - this symbol means this, that symbol means that; well, sometimes it does, but sometimes not. Sometimes it means exactly the opposite. So we should perhaps be more aware or more sensitive to the - what do they call it? - the multi-meaningfulness of these symbols. There is a technical term beginning with 'multi' - what is it?

_____ : Dimensional?

S: No, not dimensional. But I said 'multi-meaningful', perhaps that will do.

[13]

Taking the dictionary definition of imagination ...

here we come back to imagination ...

as 'the faculty or action of producing mental images of what is not present or has not been experienced' and considering that the faculty of imagination is utilized by all human beings at some level to enable them to pursue their own existence, would you like to attempt another definition of imagination which would demonstrate its essential nature and significance in leading a spiritual life, i.e. raising our level of consciousness?

I think here we have to say that there are two meanings of the word imagination corresponding to the difference between, say, idea and ideal. There is imagination in the sense of the faculty that constructs mental pictures or mental images, but there is also imagination in the sense of that faculty which is able to contact and experience spiritual or even transcendental archetypes. Imagination has that double meaning. Sometimes the word fancy is used for the imagination in the first sense: Coleridge distinguishes between fancy and imagination on that sort of basis. So, yes, the dictionary definition of imagination isn't enough. And when we speak of the imaginal faculty or the imaginal world, we are speaking of the faculty of imagination in the higher sense, or world of imagination, world of archetypes, in the higher sense.

So there's a parallel between, say, imagination in the lower sense and the ordinary kind of dream, which is put-together bits and pieces from our waking experience to make something which is sort of new; imagination in the sense of fancy does just that. But imagination in the higher sense puts us in contact with the archetypal realm. I think it's important to distinguish between those two usages of the term imagination. Perhaps we should use Imagination with a capital I for the second; that's rather a clumsy way of distinguishing them, but at least it does make it clear.

I think in modern times that distinction has been lost. I don't know if you are familiar with

that magazine called 'Temenos', edited by Kathleen Raine? Well, this is her whole point, as it were: she is speaking in terms of the imagination, following Honore Cobain(?), the great French Islamic scholar. And she is arguing or working for arts, including poetry, which are based on and derive their inspiration from archetypes in the higher sense, or from imagination in the higher sense; which of course is going completely against the current of art and literature at the present time. This is what she is trying to do, and this is why she attaches so much importance to Blake ... I think she calls it 'A Magazine of the Imagination', doesn't she? - something like that, ...

Kathryn: It would seem very important to make that distinction, because - for instance, the word culture can be - well, there are a lot of things which are lumped under this umbrella, terminology - culture. In fact, how we see as Buddhists use culture, ... culture, is in terms of the spiritual life, which we ... moving towards a higher level of consciousness.

S: We see ordinary products of culture as perhaps reflecting very faintly the archetypes of the spiritual world or the imaginal world. We don't see them as ending in themselves or having no significance beyond this. I hope this is being brought up to some extent through our Arts Centre in Croydon, and this is what we should be trying to do, or one of the things we should be trying to do.

12a. Do you still think it is helpful to use Jungian terms in the way you have done in 'The Mitrata Omnibus'?

Again, I'm not sure. This is all years and years ago, when most of our Friends were very much into Jung. I'm not sure how many of them are. I think some [14] of them are, because he still continues to be read and we sell him through our bookshops, don't we? A lot of Jungian terminologies have passed into general usage - introvert/extrovert, archetype, anima/animus, shadow; we are using these terms all the time, and they are quite useful terms. But I think probably as we use them, and as I use them, we've slightly modified their meaning, which is quite natural and quite acceptable. I think nowadays I don't use Jungian or Jungian-derived terminology very much, do I? I think I only use these terms when I'm asked questions based on lectures I gave years ago. I do use the word archetype still, don't I?; that is not just confined to Jungian psychology. That has a much broader significance, it was used before Jung in a less psychological sense.

So I think on the whole - I'm not sure whether it's helpful or not; perhaps it is helpful for some people to use Jungian terms, but I think I use them less now than I used to. But that's not to say that they aren't ... useful.

12b. It would seem that it is not just men who have to call up and integrate the Earth Goddess. Many women do also, whereas you imply in the 'Omnibus' that this archetype only relates to men.

This is because Jung uses the term anima for as the it were repressed part of a man's consciousness, doesn't he? He says that the anima assumes various female forms, and the earth mother is one of those; so in Jung's terms the Earth Goddess is a form of the anima, therefore by definition, so to speak, a woman wouldn't have an anima, therefore wouldn't have to contact the Earth Mother within, as it were. Whether one can stick within the limits of Jung's terminology in that way is a different matter. If a woman, say, feels the need to get in

touch with the Earth Mother, let her do so and not bother that she's not supposed to have an anima! Work out the theoretical implications in terms of Jungian psychology afterwards.

Ashokasri: I think that's where it gets a bit confusing.

Vidyasri: I would have thought in a way that the symbol of the Earth Goddess - Jung might call it an anima figure, but I'd have thought that in a way it's more than that, that it's a universal figure, archetype, that both men and women could relate to, 'cause like in the 'Sutra of Golden Light' there's the symbolism of the Earth - Drdha, sort of putting her head to the Buddha's feet, which seems to me a sort of similar symbolism that must, I'd have thought, would apply in the process of a woman as well as a man in terms of nature.

S: Yes. Well, if one takes it in that sense, clearly one is expanding beyond the limits of Jungian psychology, which one is at liberty to do. But if you're using that terminology it can lead to confusion. The question goes on to ask about animus:

Would you agree that a more masculine woman would be more likely to have to integrate an anima-type figure than an animus figure?

Well, I think not according to Jung, because I think according to Jung it's exactly her animus that a masculine woman has to integrate. A masculine woman is a woman who is possessed by her animus, which is quite different from being integrated, or integrating her animus; so she's got to integrate it, as distinct from having it merely possess her. In the case of a man, he tends to be possessed by his anima and has got to integrate it as distinct from merely being possessed by it. So all this is quite sound and quite logical, but I think one can expand beyond the Jungian analytical framework, and one can speak of, say, the Earth Mother as a much more universal figure than just an aspect of the masculine anima. If one thinks of her in that more universal way she becomes applicable to both men and to women.

But one mustn't forget that Jung's anima and animus are as it were unconscious; it's because they are unconscious that they are able to possess you, and you've got to integrate them which means bringing them into [15] consciousness. But if one starts thinking of, say, the Earth Mother or Earth Goddess in a more universal sense, it's already on the spiritual level, which is not quite the level that Jung is on when he speaks of anima and animus. Because there he is speaking in terms of the integration of an unconscious content. Whereas when you're speaking in terms of the Earth Goddess perhaps you've gone beyond that altogether; so you've gone beyond masculine psychology and feminine psychology. Otherwise you have to end up saying 'Why should women meditate on Tara? That's only for men' - which is ridiculous, because Tara represents a Bodhisattva or even Buddha figure, so how can the significance of that be restricted to one sex?

Vidyasri: So you wouldn't call Tara in any way an anima figure?

S: Oh no. I think that's a great mistake, to think of the Bodhisattvas in terms of Jungian psychology, because Tara goes far beyond Jung's conception of anima. If someone thinks of Tara in that way, fair enough; they're just making a connection, so one shouldn't quarrel with that and shouldn't say that they shouldn't do it. But as a Buddhist one will know that Tara can't just be reduced to an anima figure; Tara is an embodiment of Bodhisattvahood and even Buddhahood.

Sanghadevi: There's a little bit more to that question, on the back.

S: Oh yes.

12c. What sort of images would you suggest reflect the animus? Do you think only more feminine women would have to integrate the animus?

Well, again it seems to be the other way round: it's the more masculine women that need to integrate the animus, according to Jung, because they are possessed by the animus. I think Jung goes into the whole process in this way: he says a man is possessed by his anima when he just gets into moods, irrational moods, that he can't account for. This means that his whole emotional side is repressed and can emerge, as it were, and manifest only in the form of his irrational moods which are not under his control. So therefore as I sometimes say - this is my own idea and not Jung's - that contrary to general belief men are more emotional than women (giggles from hearers) - do you see what I mean?

Varabhadri: Because they're moodier, do you mean?

S: They're moodier. I think actually men are moodier. Well, ordinary men. Because - that is to say ordinary men in the sense of those who suppress or do not acknowledge their more emotional side. You can't suppress it altogether. So it manifests in the form of irrational moods, they sort of take possession of you. I think a lot of men are very subject to that. I think probably, looking outside the FWBO, on the whole women are more equable in temperament, less subject to moods as far as I can see. Anyway, that's perhaps controversial, ... as usual.

According to Jung, a woman is possessed by her animus when she is possessed by or becomes a vehicle of opinions which are not really hers. When a woman becomes opinionated, and picks up from somewhere, maybe from the man in her life, this or that opinion, idea, ideology, and is possessed by it and even becomes quite shrill and insistent about it; but she has not really integrated that point of view or that philosophy into her life. She is then said to be possessed by her animus, in Jung's terms. Because normally, at least according to conventional wisdom or belief, a woman tends to suppress her more intellectual or rational side. So that manifests by a sort of possession as just - well, possession by ideas. I must say I've known some women who were really animus-ridden in that way - not, I hasten to add, in the FWBO but in my pre-FWBO experience. It's really a dreadful thing. And you know it's possession; it doesn't ring true, it is not that woman's conviction, it's [16] something that she's just taken on and not really made her own, she's possessed by it. And it can change very quickly and easily, depending - if the man in her life, which is usually the case, changes, she can take on a quite different set of opinions.

So man is possessed by his anima, which makes him moody, woman possessed by her animus which makes her opinionated. And each has to integrate the anima in the one case and the animus in the other. So this is how Jung looks at it. So therefore, according to Jung, a feminine woman, in the conventional sense, would not be as it were possessed by her animus in the same way that a masculine woman would be. A feminine woman - what's her name? the lady who has written all those books about women? - (suggestions) - not Barbara Cartland - what's her name? ...

_____: Greer.

S: No, no, much earlier.

_____: Simone de Beauvoir?

S: No, no. Not nearly so up to date.

_____: It isn't Marie ..., but there's - do you mean somebody like that, a Jungian ...

S: She's sort of Jungian. What's her name?

Ashokasri: Esther Harding.

S: Esther Harding, that's the one. She speaks of the anima woman, the woman who is anima, especially for men, who attracts men's anima projections, the so-called feminine woman: she doesn't usually bother about opinions, far from being possessed by them she doesn't bother about them at all. So in her case there is no question of integrating the animus; she hasn't even got a repressed animus, you can say. She's got to develop that whole side of herself. Just as in the case of a man, he may not be possessed by his anima because it's so as it were rudimentary there's not enough of it even to make him moody, he's completely one-sidedly rational and intellectual. You sometimes meet that kind of man.

Sanghadevi: So you couldn't use those archetypes in a positive sense - because that's what I was meaning, that, yes, the woman who was, say, completely female in a certain sense has to develop her masculine qualities so she needs more contact [with] some archetype that has a masculine quality, which ... the anima.

S: Yes, it's going a bit beyond Jungian psychology, though one is using the same terms, but what you say is correct. It's like the difference between, say, a person who is somewhat one-sided and in whom the suppressed side is occasionally active, and the person in whom the other side is not developed at all, it's not even suppressed, it just isn't there. So the onesidedly, the really feminine woman or the really masculine man, are people who are much more onesided than the woman who suppresses her masculinity and the man who suppresses his femininity. With some men and with some women you just feel that there isn't that other element there; it's so rudimentary. The woman strikes you as completely and almost exclusively a woman without any trace of masculine quality and the man strikes you as completely masculine without any trace of feminine quality, it's so deeply buried.

Sanghadevi: Then how would such a woman contact and bring out masculine qualities?

S: Maybe in some cases she couldn't in this life because she's so onesided. If you try to think of a woman - if you know a woman, outside the Friends, [17] presumably - who is completely as it were womanly or feminine or female, could you for instance develop in her, let's say to take an extreme example, an interest in the philosophy of Kant? (Giggles.) Could you in this lifetime? Could you even, however hard you try, hammer a few ideas into that pretty little head?

Christine: Probably on washing machine maintenance.

S: It's the same with extremely or excessively rational men. It's like trying to get a lorry driver

to take an interest in Shelley, or something like that. In some cases, you see, they are so one-sided you doubt if it can be done in this lifetime. I remember there was a rugged character - I'm not going to mention any names - came from New Zealand a few years ago (laughter), and one of the things he just wasn't going to do, he wasn't going to let these English FWBO people do, was to make him read poetry! Needless to say, he reads it now and writes it too! So there was some hope for him; he wasn't as rugged as he seemed. But I'm sure there are some men you'd never get reading and writing poetry in this life.

So in other words, the distinction between people in whom there is a serious imbalance between the so-called masculine and so-called feminine qualities, and those people, those men and women, in whom the opposite qualities - the feminine qualities in the case of men and masculine in the case of women - just don't seem to exist at all, even in a rudimentary form. Presumably they're so deeply buried, it's as though they're not going to get dug up in this lifetime.

Pat: Why? Why are they actually like that?

S: Oh dear; maybe some were born like that, it may be something to do with their karma, maybe some have been brought up in a particular way from a very early age to think of themselves as being this or being that. But we know there are degrees, don't we? There are some women who've got quite masculine elements in their personality reasonably well integrated, so with men. And others in whom that opposite or complementary quality is very undeveloped, even deeply buried.

Sanghadevi: That's what I meant by 'masculine' on the first page - thinking more of the sort of women he talks about who are more masculine ... that aren't animus-possessed figures, ... I got more ...

S: Yes. who are genuinely more like men, who tend towards the masculine end of the scale.

Sanghadevi: So that the men very much contact - they're more likely to need contact. Or is it that they are more likely to contact their ...

S: I think one would give them the same sort of advice in that case that one gives to men, to become more aware of their feelings, spend more time with things like poetry and music. Some women, quite a lot of so-called ordinary men ...

(End of tape)

[No record has ever been found of there being a tape 2 and as it was said at the beginning of the session that there were 12 questions I assume that this was the only tape - Silabhadra.]

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