

Lecture 110: The Symbolism of the Five Buddhas: 'Male' and 'Female'

I'm going to start this evening with a few words of reminiscence, not to say autobiography. So far as I remember, my first conscious contact with Buddhism took place when I was about nine or ten years of age. And by the time I was about sixteen I had come to the realisation, or come to the understanding that I was in fact a Buddhist. Not that I became one, but that I realised, that I understood that I was one, and in fact had been one all the time. So this being the case, I may say that I have now been involved with Buddhism, or what we in the West call Buddhism and what is known in the East as the Dharma, or the Buddha Dharma, for rather over thirty years. And when I say 'Involved', I don't mean casually involved, or superficially involved, or involved from time to time. I mean deeply involved and continuously involved, and involved in all sorts of ways. Involved by way of study, study of Buddhist literature, scriptures, canonical languages. Involved by way of personal contact with other Buddhists of many different schools or traditions. Involved by way of participation in organised Buddhist activities, Buddhist movements of various kinds, and involved also by way of writing and teaching, and so on. Now roughly half-way through this thirty year period, that is to say roughly fifteen years ago I came in contact with the Tantra. And when I came in contact with the Tantra I was living in a place called Kalimpong. Kalimpong is a small town as many of you know, by this time, situated in the foothills of the Eastern Himalayas some 4,000 feet above sea-level. And it's situated within sight of the tiny Himalayan principality of Sikkim, the Kingdom of Bhutan, the Kingdom of Nepal, and also Tibet. Now when I say I came in contact with the Tantra I don't mean as one might mean here in the West, - I don't mean that I started reading books about it. In any case, there were at that time no books in English on the Tantra, or at least no really reliable ones, none that were really worth reading. When I say that in Kalimpong fifteen years ago I came in contact with the Tantra, I mean in the first place that I came in contact with followers of Tantric Buddhism, followers of the Vajrayana - people who were actually engaged in the practice of the Tantric Path. I mean that I came in contact also, a little later on, with Tantric art, with Tantric ritual, and eventually came in contact with a number of great Tantric gurus - eventually came in contact with Tantric initiation and with Tantric practice. And as I look back - as I look back to that period of first coming in contact with the Tantra, as I look back on those days, on those years, I can well remember my early impressions, my early impressions of the Tantra. And I remember that my predominant impression as I came into contact with the Tantra, and tried to penetrate a little into it, tried to understand it, tried to see what it was all about, tried to see how it connected with other forms of Buddhism with which I was familiar, tried to see even how it connected with modern thought, modern psychology, comparative symbolism and so on, my first predominant impression was that the Tantra was a jungle. That it was a jungle in which moreover one could very easily get lost. Because after all, as I came in contact with the Tantra - as I came in contact with more and more practitioners of it, teachers of it, there seemed to be so many different traditions within the Tantra. Traditions of meditation, higher spiritual practice, traditions of ritual observance and so on. So many different kinds of offerings, even so many different kinds of robe and dress used on different ceremonial occasions. And even I may add just as a sort of lighter touch, there seemed to be so many different kinds in the Tantra, of ceremonial hats. Hats which were worn for various ritual purposes by various people in different traditions. So much so was this the case that I remember I used to tell some of my Tibetan friends who were followers of the Tantra that I found the Tantra far too vast and far too complicated to study as a whole, and that I was going to confine myself to the study of one little corner. I said that I was going to confine myself to a study of the hats. Some of which were very weird and wonderful indeed. And I used to say that I intended making a collection of these hats, and I saw at least a hundred I'm sure, very, very different, and very, very interesting. I used to say that I would make a collection of at least a hundred different kinds of Tantric hats, and then write a book about them. Not only that, but

there were so many different images in the temples, - Tantric images - so many paintings, scroll paintings,. There were so many figures of Buddhas and Bodhisattvas, and gurus, and dakas and dakinis, and dharmapalas. So all these things - encountering all these things - on the occasion of my first contact with the Tantra made me feel that the Tantra was a vast jungle.

Now in the course of the last seven weeks we've been concerned with just one aspect of the Tantra, one aspect of that very rich and complex tradition. We've been concerned simply with the Creative Symbols of the Tantric Path to Enlightenment. Simply with this particular aspect. But it may well be that some at least of those of you who've attended all these lectures may have already received the same kind of impression of the Tantra as I received ten to fifteen years ago. You may have received an impression of incredible richness and variety, an impression of growth, an impression of fertility, an impression of an abundance of material. In other words you may have received an impression that the Tantra was like a jungle, - that it was difficult to find one's way around in the Tantra, - that the Tantra was something in which it was very easy to get lost. Now if one has been feeling like this, if in fact one feels like this, or is feeling like this towards the end of this series of lectures, then one should not be at all worried. One should not be at all concerned. In fact, in a sense, one should congratulate one's self, because this feeling, this feeling of being lost, - lost among the Creative Symbols of the Tantra is by no means a bad thing. In fact we may say it's a good thing. It's a positive thing. Because although we feel lost, and though in a sense we are lost, we are not really lost. All that has happened is that we've become, as it were, intellectually lost. Rationally lost. All that it means that we find ourselves unable to account rationally for whatever it is that we've been encountering, - whatever it is in fact that we've been experiencing. As some of the Creative Symbols were evoked we may have felt moved, we may have felt stirred, - but by what, and in what way? Why? That, perhaps we have been unable to explain.

So all that in fact has happened when we feel lost is that we're just unable to account rationally for the effect of these Creative Symbols on us, unable to make sense of them and our experience of them in terms of our ordinary everyday conscious experience. So that we find on further reflection, on deeper reflection, we find that the Tantra, jungle like though it may appear at first sight, is not really like a jungle at all. We may say that the Tantra is in fact much more like a garden. But like a sort of Multidimensional garden, or even we may say, the Tantra is like a system, a whole system of multidimensional intersecting mazes which are themselves gardens. In other words, despite the richness of the Tantra, despite its incredible profusion, despite its superabundance of material, despite its exuberance, there is running through the Tantra, a pattern. Or we may say even a number of patterns, a number even of interlocking patterns. And these patterns that we find in the Tantra, these patterns are not intellectual, - but spiritual. They're not imposed from the outside on the Tantra, as on some foreign body of material, but they unfold from within the Tantra, expressing its innermost essential nature. And it is with one of these patterns, one of these patterns within the Tantra, that we are concerned tonight. We're concerned with the symbolism of the Five Buddhas, "Male" - in inverted commas, and "Female" - again, inverted commas.

And this pattern, the pattern of the Five Buddhas, is one of the most important patterns that we find in the whole range of the Tantra. Unless we are familiar with it, even very familiar with it, not just intellectually familiar, not just familiar by way of information, but emotionally familiar, spiritually intimate, if you like, then we have little hope of finding our way about in the apparent jungle of the Tantra.

Now I'm going to begin by going back to fundamentals, to fundamentals not only of the Tantra,

but of Buddhism itself, going back to the idea of Buddha, even THE Buddha. Back to the idea of Buddhahood. We hear about Buddhism, and we're told, we're informed that Buddhism is named after the Buddha. So we want to know who the Buddha is. We're told it's not a personal name - it's a title. So we want to know what a Buddha is. What THE Buddha is. And we're told of course, we come to understand, we come to see that in the first place a Buddha is a human being. This is the first thing that we have to understand, and it's very important that a Buddha is a human being. But a Buddha is not just an ordinary human being. A Buddha is a special kind of human being. In fact a Buddha is the highest kind of human being. So far as we know, a Buddha is, we may say, is one who in his spiritual development so far transcends the ordinary run of humanity as to be in a sense no longer a human being at all. This is what we mean by a Buddha. A Buddha is a human being who has attained Bodhi. Or more technically, attained Samyaksambodhi. 'Bodhi' means knowledge, understanding. 'Bodhi' means even awakening. And Samyaksambodhi is supreme perfect knowledge, or understanding, or awakening. But 'Bodhi' is not just knowledge, not just understanding. Not even just spiritual knowledge. Not even just transcendental understanding. It's much more, even, than that. And, very broadly, very roughly speaking, we can say that 'Bodhi' is that which makes a Buddha a Buddha. Bodhi has three main aspects. And we can call these, for the sake of convenience, the cognitive aspect, the volitional aspect, and the emotional aspect.

So first of all, the cognitive aspect, the cognitive aspect of Bodhi. From this point of view, Bodhi is a state, Bodhi is a condition of Insight, - a state, a condition of Wisdom. A state of Awareness. But Insight into what? Wisdom with regard to what? Or Awareness of what? In the first place, this Bodhi, this cognitive aspect of Bodhi consists of Insight into, clear understanding of, one's own self. Seeing one's own self thoroughly. Seeing one's own self deeply. Seeing it, to begin with in all its conditionedness. So in the first place, this cognitive aspect of Bodhi consists in taking a very deep clear profound look at oneself. And seeing how on all the different levels of one's being one is simply conditioned. Not free. Seeing how one is reactive. Reacting, responding mechanically, automatically, - on account of past psychological, emotional conditionings of which only too often one is largely unconscious. Seeing moreover the extent to which one is governed, dominated, directed even against one's will, often without one's knowledge, by the negative emotions. So this is the first aspect of this cognitive aspect of Bodhi. See oneself, seeing through and through oneself, seeing one's own conditionedness, one's own reactivity, mechanicalness, and so on.

And then, Insight into others. Extending one's view, extending one's vision, taking in others as well, and seeing the way, or ways, in which they are conditioned. Even as oneself is conditioned. And then ranging even further afield than that. Taking into account, including in one's view, one's vision, the whole of phenomena, the whole of nature, the whole of conditioned existence, the Universe itself on all its levels, and seeing how in various ways, this too is conditioned. This too is, as it were, not free. Seeing - this too, to use the widest possible terms - as transitory, ever changeable, frustrating, and unreal.

And then turning to the second main aspect of this cognitive aspect of Bodhi, one has, or one develops, Insight into the unconditioned. Insight consists not only in seeing the conditioned, not only in seeing how one is oneself conditioned, how other beings are conditioned, how the Universe as a whole is conditioned in different ways, but it consists in seeing not just into, but seeing through this conditionedness, - even seeing right through the conditionedness. Penetrating into the depths of the conditioned, and finding in the depths of the conditioned what is called the unconditioned. Seeing in the depths of the transitory, the eternal. Seeing in the depths of the unreal, the real. Seeing even, ultimately, the two as one, - as different facets of one and the same

ultimate absolute reality. This is Insight, this is Awareness. This is Wisdom, this is the cognitive aspect of Bodhi.

And then secondly the volitional aspect of Bodhi. Bodhi is not just a state of knowledge. It's also a state of freedom, of untrammelled freedom, a state of emancipation. And this freedom, this emancipation, is both subjective, we may say, and objective. Subjectively, it's a state of freedom from all moral and spiritual defilement. Freedom from all negative emotions. Freedom from for instance - the five mental poisons. Freedom from the whole process of the reactive mind. And then objectively this volitional aspect of Bodhi consists in freedom from the consequences of defilement. Freedom from the consequences of the mental poisons. In other words, freedom from karma, and freedom from rebirth, freedom from the turnings of the Wheel of Life and Death, and Rebirth. And more positively, we may say, that this freedom, this freedom aspect, or volitional aspect of Bodhi consists in a state of uninterrupted creativity, especially spiritual creativity, and spontaneity.

And then, thirdly and lastly, the emotional aspect of Bodhi. Bodhi is also a state of positive emotion, or perhaps we should say - of spiritual emotion. And this emotion can also be described as both subjective and objective. Subjectively it consists in a state, an experience of supreme joy, bliss, happiness, ecstasy, - whatever else one might care to describe it as. And objectively, as it were in manifestation, it's a state of unbounded love and compassion. Love and compassion for all living beings. So this in brief is what we mean, what we connote when we pronounce the word Bodhi. Bodhi is a state of perfect Insight, Insight into self and others. Insight into conditioned and unconditioned. A state of absolute freedom, inner and outer, a state of supreme bliss, infinite love, and unbounded compassion. This is what we mean by Bodhi.

So Buddha, THE Buddha, A Buddha, means - a human being who has attained, who has achieved this state. A Buddha therefore is the embodiment, the human embodiment one may say, of Insight, freedom, happiness, and love. Now I've been using the expression, 'A Buddha', but at the beginning, at the beginning of Buddhism, at the beginning of the Buddhist tradition there was only one Buddha, the Buddha that we usually refer to as THE Buddha. That is to say the human historical Sakyamuni. The Indian or Nepalese prince who gained enlightenment, Bodhi, Samyaksambodhi, two thousand and five hundred years ago. Now even during this Buddha's lifetime, even during the lifetime of the historical Buddha, we find that a certain important distinction was drawn. It seems that the Buddha himself drew this distinction. So what was this distinction? It was a distinction. So what was this distinction? It was a distinction, a rather fine but spiritually important distinction between the enlightened individual, the enlightened human individual on the one hand, and the principle, if you like, the abstract principle of enlightenment on the other. In other words the distinction drawn was the distinction between Buddha on the one hand, and Buddhahood on the other. And this distinction, this distinction between Buddha and Buddhahood, found expression even during the Buddha's lifetime in certain definite technical terms. The enlightened human historical personality, as it were, was known as the rupakaya, or Form body (Rupa is form, kaya is body or Personality). And the principle of enlightenment itself, if you like, independent of the person realising it, this was known as the Dharmakaya, the Body of Truth, or the Body of Reality. Now though this distinction was made, we must not consider that there is a difference. Both the form body and the Dharma body were bodies of, in a sense, the Buddha. So though the distinction was made, it was not as it were insisted on very strongly in the course of the Buddha's own lifetime. Because in his case as it were, the two were blended, united; one had when the Buddha was alive both Buddha, and Buddhahood. Both rupakaya and dharmakaya. But after the Parinirvana, after the Buddha's decease, it seems that the distinction, the distinction between form body and dharma body became more pronounced. Because after all,

the form body, that is to say the human historical Buddha in the flesh as it were, was dead, and gone. He no longer existed, or existed only in the form of relics in stupas. But the Dharma body of course was eternally present. It was as much present after the Buddha's decease as during his physical lifetime.

Now we can imagine the Mahayana, the early Mahayana rather, thinking in this connection as it were, vertically. We can imagine as it were the Mahayana seeing the Form body as it were 'down there'; in time' in past time. And we can imagine the Mahayana as seeing the Dharma body 'up there', out of time, transcending time. So that one has the form body THERE, the Dharma Body THERE. Immediately above it as it were. So that there is a sort of vertical relationship between the two, a sort of vertical relationship between the enlightened individual, and the principle of enlightenment. Between Buddha, and Buddhahood. Now late Mahayanists continued to think vertically, continued to think as it were, in terms of down here, and up there. But within that thinking, within that vertical thinking, even that vertical experience, a change took place, or rather a development took place, an elaboration took place. And this development, this elaboration, was that a third Buddha appeared. Or rather a third kaya appeared, a third body appeared. And where did it appear? It appeared right in between the other two, between rupakaya and dharmakaya. And this third body to appear in between the first two bodies, the first two Buddhas, this was known eventually as the Sambhogakaya (which means literally - the body of mutual delight, or mutual enjoyment). Now this term, although it has a very profound meaning of its own, is not very helpful in this context, and it could be better interpreted, or interpretively rendered as 'Ideal Buddha', or even if you like, 'Archetypal Buddha'. Now this Ideal Buddha, this Buddha who appears in the middle as it were, in between the form body and the dharma body, in between the Buddha and Buddhahood, this ideal Buddha, this Archetypal Buddha, is not an impersonal, as it were, abstract principle. Like the Dharmakaya, the Dharma body. The Ideal Buddha, the Archetypal Buddha is definitely a person. But at the same time, not a human historical person, not a historical individual. One could even say that the Ideal Buddha is the Ideal Person, the Archetypal Person. Below the level of the Absolute, but above and beyond history. So we now have at this stage of development, we now have three kayas, or three bodies, all vertically aligned, from top to bottom we have dharma body, body of Mutual Delight, and thirdly, Created Body, as it is now called, or Nirmanakaya. The old term 'rupakaya' is now at this stage of development applied to the Ideal Buddha and the historical Buddha collectively or jointly. So what we now have, what has now arisen, what has now developed is the famous Trikaya Doctrine, the doctrine of the Three Bodies, inverted commas, of the Buddha. And this doctrine, this teaching, or this experience if you like, of the Trikaya, the Three Bodies, or three Personalities of the Buddha, is very, very important for the whole of Mahayana Buddhism, as well as Vajrayana Buddhism. But we've not time at present to go into it any further, we're more concerned with the fact that this Trikaya teaching or tradition of the Mahayana became the basis for further developments, further developments in both the Mahayana and the Vajrayana. And it's with some of these developments that we're now concerned.

Something rather dramatic happened now, at this stage. The human historical Buddha disappeared into the past. Goes almost out of sight. In Mahayana countries you'll find the historical Buddha, Sakyamuni, occupies a comparatively unimportant place. So this occurs from about this time, this stage of development. The human historical Buddha, the Rupakaya, the Nirmanakaya disappears into the past, and Buddhahood recedes into the background. After all, that's rather abstract, not to say vague. Rather, as it were, out of sight. Difficult to grasp, difficult to understand. So all that we've got left occupying the centre of the stage is the Ideal Buddha. Historical Buddha has disappeared, Absolute Buddha, if you like to use that expression, receded into the background. Only the Ideal Buddha is left, only the Archetypal Buddha. And this is of

course the Buddha of the Mahayana, as for example in the White Lotus Sutra. In the White Lotus Sutra of course, this Ideal or Archetypal Buddha is called Sakyamuni, but it is obviously no longer the ordinary human historical personality of the Buddha. It's the Ideal Buddha, the Archetypal Buddha, of Infinite Light, or Eternal Life.

But the Mahayana didn't rest there. A further development took place. So far the Mahayana had been thinking vertically, but it now started thinking horizontally. What does this mean? In what way did the Mahayana start thinking horizontally? It started thinking horizontally in the sense that at this stage two more Buddhas appeared. And where did they appear? They appeared on either side of the Ideal Buddha. One on his right side, or on our left, and the other on his left, our right. On his right appeared the Buddha Amitabha, the Buddha of Infinite Light. And on his left appeared the Buddha Akshobhya, the Imperturbable. So, we've three Buddhas now in a row as it were. The original Ideal, Archetypal Buddha in the middle, Buddha Amitabha here, Buddha Akshobhya there. So what was the reason for this development? What did these two Buddhas represent? Why have they appeared? What very briefly and broadly speaking these two Buddhas appearing on the right and left respectively of the one central Buddha figure, these two Buddhas represent the two principle aspects of Buddhahood itself, and they represent them, they represent these two principle aspects, (they embody them as it were), in the form of further Ideal Buddha figures. Now what are these aspects, these two principle aspects of the Ideal Buddha, of Buddhahood itself? Well, a clue to this is provided by the emblems, the respective emblems of these two new Buddhas. So what are these emblems? The emblem of Amitabha, the Buddha of Infinite Light, who appears on the right hand of the Ideal Buddha, is the Lotus Flower. And the emblem of Aksobhya who appears on the Ideal Buddha's left, is the Vajra. So the symbolism begins to be a bit obvious. The Lotus flower is soft, tender, delicate. The Vajra is hard, strong, powerful. The Lotus flower is as it were, passive, receptive. The Vajra is active, dynamic. So we may say putting it into rather conceptual terms, perhaps over conceptual terms, we can say that Amitabha, the Buddha of Infinite Light is the embodiment of the Love aspect of enlightenment, the Love aspect of the Ideal Buddha, whereas Aksobhya is the embodiment of the aspect of Wisdom, transcendental Wisdom. So one has at this stage these three Buddhas horizontally aligned. In the middle, in the centre, the Ideal Buddha, the Archetypal Buddha himself; complete, integral, perfect. And on one side, the Buddha of Love, on the other the Buddha of Wisdom. Now there are several variations of this very basic, very fundamental pattern. One can have for instance a Buddha in the middle flanked by two Bodhisattvas. Here the Buddha figure represents the Ideal Buddha, the Archetypal Buddha. The two Bodhisattvas represent Love and Wisdom, his two principle aspects. There are many variations on this theme. I've no time to go into all the details. We have now to proceed to developments in the Tantra, in the Vajrayana. Now how did the Tantra think? The Tantra thought both horizontally and vertically. And as a result of this horizontal and vertical thinking, two more Buddhas appeared. One appeared above the Ideal Buddha, the other appeared below the Ideal Buddha. For the time being we can call the first, the one that appeared above the Ideal Buddha, the Buddha of Action, and the second, the one appearing below the Ideal Buddha, the Buddha of Beauty. Five Buddhas; one in the centre, one on the right, one on the left, one above, one below. And these five Buddhas make up what is called a mandala, or The Mandala, the Mandala of the Five Buddhas. And all five are Ideal figures, Ideal forms. The one in the centre, the centre of the Mandala, is the Ideal Buddha himself, the Archetypal Buddha himself. Buddhahood as it were, as a person. The others represent his principle aspects: represent his love, his wisdom, his activity, his beauty. And each aspect is itself, or himself, a Buddha, a Buddha figure. And these are the five Buddhas with whose symbols we're concerned tonight. Alright, now for the symbolism of the Five Buddhas individually.

First, the Buddha at the centre, then round the Mandala in clockwise direction. And as the Buddhas are described one should try to see them. Try to visualise them. I'm not going to offer much by way of explanation, for the most part I shall leave the symbols, the creative symbols, to create their own impressions. After all the symbols are 'creative', they're quite capable of acting directly, producing a direct impression without having to be rendered into their conceptual equivalents, equivalents which are in any case only approximate.

So the five Buddhas: the symbols, the symbolism of the Five Buddhas. First of all, Vairocana: Vairocana occupies the centre of the mandala. He's seated of course cross-legged, he wears monastic type robes, but richly embroidered. Because one is now on the Archetypal plane). Black curly hair, closely cropped. And long ear-lobes. Sometimes he has a slight protuberance on the top of the head, and a brilliant white curl, curl of hair, between the eye-brows. All the Buddhas by the way, are depicted in the same manner. So when we come to them, I don't propose to repeat this part of the description. And Vairocana is of course, brilliant white in colour. Like pure white light. And white, as we saw some time ago, white in the Tantra is the colour of the Absolute. It's the colour of centrality, the colour of the centre, and we find if we study some of the symbols of the Tantra, we find that the colour white, the white colour, is assumed by other Buddhas and Bodhisattvas, as it were, leaving aside their own proper colour, as they tend to move towards the centre of the Mandala. Either literally, or metaphorically. Two very good examples of this sort of process re Avalokitesvara, and Tara. Avalokitesvara technically speaking is a Bodhisattva, the Bodhisattva of Compassion, and his real colour is red. But in the course of time, in Tibet especially, Avalokitesvara became more and more important. So important that he became a sort of Buddha. So important that many people worshipped him, meditated upon him, to the exclusion of all the other Buddha and Bodhisattva figures. So he became as it were, all in all, he occupied the centre of the mandala, as it were, so far as their spiritual life was concerned. So to indicate this fact, to indicate as it were, his absoluteness, the colour of Avalokitesvara was changed from red to white. That is why we usually see Avalokitesvara depicted as white. And in the case of Tara the same sort of thing happens. The colour of Tara is really green, but Tara too became the object of the same sort of development. Her position (?) as a Bodhisattva, of a particular Buddha family was as it were forgotten and she moved into the centre of the picture, became more and more important. So as she became more and more important she took on the white colour of the centre. The colour of Absoluteness. She became, as it were, THE Buddha form. So this is why we have in Tibetan Buddhism, and Nepalese Buddhism, the so-called two Taras, White Tara and the Green Tara. The Green Tara we can say, is the relative Tara, Tara as it were, keeping her proper place in the Mandala; the white Tara is that same Tara moving to the centre of the Mandala, and there one assuming the white colour, and becoming for her particular devotees and meditators, all in all. So these are just two examples of this sort of process. The way in which a Bodhisattva even, assumes the white colour, the colour of centrality and absoluteness when moving towards the centre of the Mandala. Whether literally or metaphorically. But to come back to Vairocana, the white Buddha, the Buddha the colour of white light, his name literally means - The Illuminator, The One who Sheds Light, sheds radiance, distributes light. Distributes radiance, even pours it forth on the Universe. And the name Vairocana was originally from Vedic times an epithet of the Sun. And we find in fact that in Japan, where the cult of Vairocana spread, we find that in Japan Vairocana is generally known as 'The Sun Buddha'. Because Vairocana is a sort of sun of the Spiritual Universe, or as it is called, the Dharmadhatu. And Vairocana has his own special emblem, or personal symbol. And his emblem is the wheel. Especially, the eight-spoked golden wheel. The Wheel of the Dharma. The Wheel of Truth, the Wheel of the Teaching. And sometimes in Buddhist art, in Tantric art he's depicted holding this wheel, this golden wheel of the Dharma in both hands against his chest. And Vairocana also has a special mudra. And his mudra is Dharmachakrapravatana, which means the mudra of turning the wheel

of the Dharma. Now this word 'mudra' may be new to some of you. So far in this series though mudra does occupy a very important place in Tantric practice, so far, as far as I recollect, there has been only one reference to 'mudra'. 'Mudra' we may say very provisionally, is a sort of symbolic ritual gesture. It represents a sort of permeation of one's whole being by the Truth. When one makes a mudra one puts one's fingers in a particular position. And one does it as it were, originally, spontaneously one may say. In other words, what happens is one has a sort of spiritual experience, in the depths of one's being, and one starts being transformed. And one is transformed bit by bit. On all levels of one's being, in all aspects of one's being. Spiritual, emotional, intellectual, even physical. So eventually, the experience, the realisation, permeates, penetrates, as it were, even to the finger-tips. So even the very way you walk, the very way you stand, the very way you express yourself, especially in gesture, is expressive of your inner spiritual realisation. So mudra essentially means this expression, as it were, in the remotest, or to the remotest ramifications of one's being, in the farthest reaches of one's expressiveness, of what one has innerly realised and understood and experienced. It's just like the sap in the tree, the sap rises up through the trunk of the tree, spreads through all the branches, and eventually it penetrates, permeates, even the tiniest twig. So this is what mudra represents, mudra represents the expression at the very remotest aspects of one's being of one's deepest and profoundest realisation. So this particular mudra, the Dharmachakrapravartanamudra, the mudra of turning the wheel of the truth, or the teaching, this particular mudra, is associated, or was associated originally, with the historical Buddha's, Sakyamuni's initial proclamation of the Truth at Sarnath, in the Deer Park. And we find in early Buddhist art, when the Buddha is depicted, when the historical Buddha is depicted teaching for the first time, in that deer park, he is shown in this Turning of the Wheel of the Dharma Mudra, which is just like this. Many of you must have seen it, in representations of the Buddha at this stage of his career. So this is the mudra of Vairocana. And he has also an animal, and Vairocana's special animal is the Lion. And the Lion is also associated with the proclamation of the truth. If we read the Buddhist scriptures, we find that the Buddha's utterance is every now and then referred to as his Singhanada; Singha is Lion, nada is sound or roar. So the Buddha's utterance, the Buddha's proclamation of the Truth, is said to be his Lion Roar. What does this mean? It means that the lion roars in the jungle at night, without fear of any other beast. Many other beasts are afraid to make a sound because they might be pounced on and eaten by their enemies, but the lion isn't afraid of anyone. So he roars out loud, in the jungle at night, and he roars, according to myth and legend, to proclaim his kingship, of the whole jungle. So the Buddha's fearless proclamation of the Truth, his proclamation as it were of his spiritual sovereignty, his sovereignty in the spiritual universe, is compared to the roaring of a lion, is even spoken of as his 'Lion Roar'. His Singhanada. So the lion is Vairocana's animal. And Vairocana is also the head of the Tathagata family, or Buddha family. And this is very significant, that his particular spiritual family is called the Tathagata or Buddha family. Because it suggests that Vairocana is THE Buddha; that the others are only aspects. And one of the most important members of Vairocana's Tathagata family is Manjusri, the Bodhisattva of Wisdom, the Bodhisattva with whose visualisation we concluded last week. So much then for Vairocana, the illuminator, the Buddha of the centre.

Now, Aksobhya. Aksobhya occupies the Eastern quarter of the Mandala. And he is dark blue in colour. The colour of the midnight sky. The midnight sky that is, in the tropics. And his name means, 'Unshakeable', 'Immoveable', 'Imperturbable'. And his emblem is the Vajra. In other words, the sacred thunderbolt, or diamond sceptre, of the Lamas, to the symbolism of which we devoted the third lecture in this series. And his mudra, his symbolic ritual gesture is the Bhumisparsha, or Earth-touching, and this recalls another important incident in the life of the historical Buddha. We're told that the Buddha before his enlightenment had taken his seat on the diamond throne. In other words, on the central point of the whole universe. The axis if you like,

of the whole universe. And was on the threshold of Enlightenment. So, what happened? What usually happens when you're on the threshold of enlightenment'. Well, the forces of evil appear. Mara challenges you. The Evil One challenges you. And this is what happened in the Buddha's case. Mara said, 'what right have you to sit on that spot'. 'The spot where the Buddhas-of-old sat when they gained Enlightenment. WHO are YOU? Do you really think you are ready?'. So the Buddha said, 'Yes, I have the right, I am ready. I've spent so many lives as a Bodhisattva, practising the perfections, and I feel ready; I feel that I am about to gain Enlightenment.' But Mara was very sceptical. And he said, 'Well, you can talk about all these previous lives in which you've been a Bodhisattva, practising the perfections. But who has seen all these previous lives? Where is your witness!' So the Buddha said, (or the Buddha-to-be said), 'The Earth is my witness!' 'Because all these lives I've lived on Earth. The Earth has seen my practice, of the perfections, the Earth will be my witness.' So with the tips of his fingers he touched the Earth. Even, he tapped the Earth. And according to the accounts, according to the legends, up rose the Earth Goddess, Vasudhara, or Vasundhara. Bearing a golden pitcher. And she bore witness. She said, 'Yes, I have seen it all, I am the Earth, I see all. From generation to generation, from age to age, I have seen all the hundreds and thousands of lives, during which he practised the perfections. He is ready; he is worthy to sit on that spot, on that diamond throne.'

So Mara was discomfited, and the Buddha proceeded to gain Enlightenment, but that of course is another story, we're not concerned with that at the moment. But this is why we have this Earth-touching mudra. And the Earth-touching mudra is the mudra of Aksobhya, the Unshakeable, the Imperturbable. And his animal is the Elephant. The Elephant is the biggest and strongest of all land mammals, and according to tradition, the wisest. It's not every easy to push an elephant around! And Aksobhya is the head of the Vajra family, a family that includes the Bodhisattva, the Buddha, Vajrasattva. Also includes many wrathful divinities. That is to say Buddhas, Bodhisattvas, guardians, in wrathful form. For instance, Shamvara, Heruka, Hevajra and Bharava. In fact there appear to be more wrathful divinities in Aksobhya's vajra family, than in the family of any other Buddha. This may of course be due to the powerful association of Aksobhya's emblem, the Vajra.

Thirdly, Ratnasambhava. Ratnasambhava occupies the southern quarter of the Mandala, and he's golden yellow in colour. His name means, 'The Jewel Born One', or 'Jewel Producing One,' and his emblem naturally is the jewel. And his mudra, his symbolic ritual gesture is the Varada mudra, the symbolic gesture of Supreme Giving. Which is just the open hand, like that. And it represents unlimited generosity. Both material and spiritual. It represents especially the gift of the Three Jewels. And Ratnasambhava's animal is the horse. The horse is associated with the historical Buddha's departure from home. He left home on horseback at night. In darkness. Accompanied only by his faithful charioteer, running behind. And the horse in Buddhist symbolism generally is the embodiment of speed and energy. Vigour. Especially energy in the form of Prana or Vital Breath. The horse very often symbolises Prana. And in Tibetan Buddhist art, one very often finds the figure of a galloping horse, a horse seeming to rise through the air, carrying the Three Jewels on his back. And this figure suggests that only through the concentration, and proper direction of all one's energies can one gain Enlightenment or Bodhi. And Ratnasambhava is the head of the Jewel Family, which includes the Bodhisattva Ratnapani, as well as Jambhala, the so-called god of riches, and Vasundhara, the Earth Goddess.

Fourthly, Amitabha. Amitabha occupies the Western quarter of the Mandala, he is red in colour, and his name means Infinite Light. And his emblem is the Lotus flower, and the Lotus Flower signifies, Spiritual Rebirth. Also Spiritual Growth. Spiritual development. And Amitabha occupies a particularly important position in Japanese Buddhism, right down to the present day,

particularly in the Shin school. In connection with Japanese Buddhism we used to think of Zen. But actually the biggest school of Japanese Buddhism is the Shin school. And in the Shin school they worship only Amitabha, only the Buddha of Infinite Light and Eternal Life. They don't worship any other Buddha or Bodhisattva. And the Shin school recommends the invocation of the name of Amitabha in a spirit of gratitude. Gratitude for what Amitabha has done spiritually for us. In other words the repetition is not in order to gain Enlightenment, but an expression of gratitude for the gift of Enlightenment, as it were, already received. And the devotee in the Shin school aspires to be reborn after death in the Pure Land of Amitabha. And this Pure Land is known as Sukhavati, which means the land or the realm of Bliss. And it's said to be situated in the Western quarter of the Universe. And these devotees aspire to be born there after death because conditions for gaining enlightenment are said to be much more favourable there than they are on Earth. One doesn't have to bother about food and drink; it appears automatically. One doesn't have to bother about clothes; the climate is beautiful, and all the time you hear the Buddha Amitabha teaching. So spiritual progress is assured. And the mudra, the symbolic ritual gesture of Amitabha, the Buddha of this realm of happiness, is the Dhyana mudra, which is one hand on the other, the mudra of meditation. Amitabha, as we've seen is associated with the West. The Western direction, the Western quarter. The West is associated with the setting sun, with eventide, associated with the disappearance of light. And in much the same way in meditation, the mind withdraws from external objects. External objects disappear. The mind enters a sort of darkness. Enters into a higher state of consciousness. A state which is as it were, unconsciousness to the lower mind. So in this way, the Dhyana mudra, the mudra of meditation comes to be associated with Amitabha. And his animal, or rather bird, is the peacock. The most splendid of all birds. Why peacock is not quite clear. Various explanations have been offered. Sometimes an account of its eyes, the eyes in its tail, the peacock is associated with consciousness. But that doesn't seem to be very relevant here. The association may be on account of the fact that the peacock lives, indeed thrives on snakes. Including poisonous snakes. So the peacock suggests as it were immunity from poison. Immunity from contamination and defilement. In fact we find that peacock feathers are quite often used in Tantric ritual. For instance they're stuck like flowers in the jug which contains the consecrated water. Now Amitabha is the head of the Lotus family. And the Lotus family includes quite a number of well known spiritual figures. The most important of these of course is Avalokitesvara, the Buddha of Compassion, but there is also Kurukule, Padmanartesvara and Padmasambhava. We might have some words to say on some other occasion about the more unfamiliar of these figures. Now fifthly and lastly, Amoghasiddhi.

Amoghasiddhi occupies the Norther quarter of the Mandala. And he is green in colour. And his name means 'Infallible Success,' or 'Unobstructed Accomplishment'. And his emblem is the double-vajra. In other words, two vajras crossed. And this is a very powerful and very mysterious symbol indeed. And this isn't the time or the place perhaps to say anything about it. But among other things one may say, it is connected with a special aspect of the union of opposites. Now the mudra here, the mudra of Amoghasiddhi is the abhaya mudra; abhaya is 'Fearlessness'. The abhaya mudra says 'Don't fear;' Fearlessness as we saw some time ago is one of the Heroic Virtues. And it's greatly emphasised in all forms of Buddhism, most of all perhaps in the Tantra, as we saw in lecture five, when we dealt with symbolism of the Cremation ground. Amoghasiddhi's animal, or creature rather is the Bird-man. The Bird-man is a sort of fabulous hybrid creature; from the waist upwards it's human, and it can be either male or female, and the feet and wings are those of a bird. Now Amoghasiddhi is the head of the Karma, or action family, and action is symbolised by a sword. The best-known member of the action family is Tara, that is to say the green Tara. Tara proper, as it were.

Well, so much for the symbolism of the five Buddhas. Vairocana, the Illuminator, Amitabha, the

Imperturbable, Ratnasambhava, the Jewel-born, Amitabha, the Infinite Light, Amoghasiddhi, the Infallible Success. It's time now that we turned to some more general aspects, of this five-fold Buddha patter. Time we took notice of further developments of this pattern within the Tantra, developments within the esoteric Tantra. We mustn't forget that we are concerned with the symbolism of the five Buddhas, male, inverted commas, and female, inverted commas. You'll remember that the Mahayana first thought as it were, vertically. Envisaged the Ideal Body, the Body of Mutual Delight, in between the Dharma above, and the Created Body below. Envisaged therefore these three in vertical alignment. We saw that the Mahayana then started thinking horizontally, saw that on either side of the Ideal Body appeared two more Ideal Buddha figures, one embodying Wisdom, the other embodying Love. Wisdom aspect, Love aspect of Enlightenment. We saw further that the Tantra continued this horizontal thinking. Continued it within the context of it's own three-dimensional approach. Not only continued, but developed. And we may have noticed that while the developments were going on, that all five Buddhas were envisaged in male human form.

The original Buddha, the historical Buddha, was of course an enlightened human being, of the male sex. But nevertheless, the esoteric Tantra took now a dramatic new step. What happened was that it started envisaging the two principle aspects of Enlightenment in male and female form respectively. So one aspect as male Buddha as it were, and the other as female Buddha, as it were. And after this, (this took even a further step) it envisaged these two figures, male Buddha, and female Buddha, as locked in sexual union. Now what does this mean? At this point we have to be very careful not to misunderstand. Misunderstanding is very easy. At this level we're not concerned with sex in the ordinary human sense. We're concerned with sexual symbolism, which is a very different thing. What the Tantra is trying to express in this way, by means of this sort of symbolic shorthand as it were, this male Buddha, and female Buddha in sexual union, what the Tantra is trying to express is the inseparable two-in-one-ness of Love and Wisdom. Prajna, and Karuna. And it's saying, or at least it's suggesting the very essence of Enlightenment, the very essence of Buddhahood. The Tantra we may remember, we must remember, the Indian Tantra, the Tibetan Tantra, had no particular hang-ups about sex. So it saw no objection to expressing itself, to expressing its meaning, communicating its meaning, in sexual terms. Those are just as valid as any other terms. The content of the terms however was not itself sexual. In Tibet, and in the cultural and religious dependencies of Tibet, the male and female Buddha figures in sexual union are known as 'Yab-Yum'. Yab is father, Yum is mother. It's as it were the archetypal Father-Mother. And one finds many scroll paintings, many images, very beautiful scroll paintings, very beautiful images, depicting the Father-Mother. Female Buddha, Male Buddha, in sexual union in the monasteries and temples. And one may say very clearly and definitely that for the Tibetans in these sort of representations, representations of the Yab and the Yum, the Father Buddha and the Mother Buddha, as it were, the male Buddha and the female Buddha, sexually united, there's no erotic, no sexual suggestion whatsoever. And one can see this, one can observe this as one sees Tibetan Buddhists moving around their temples, moving around their monasteries, and coming upon these figures. Which are considered in some ways especially sacred, inasmuch as the symbolism pertains to the highest level of spiritual experience, the level of Enlightenment, the level on which love and wisdom are completely and finally integrated. And in fact one has seen Tibetans going around their temples, and when they come across a picture or image of this sort, far from reacting in the way that a Westerner often does, they seem to feel and to express more reverence and more devotion than ever. For them these figures, and these representations are a symbolic representation of a profound spiritual truth. This is the only way in which they see them. The truth of the inseparable two-in-one-ness of Love and Wisdom. And one may say that, now that these representations, now that these Yab-Yum figures have become known in the West, it's a great pity that they are often regarded as simply examples of Eastern

erotic art. Not to say even pornographic art. This only goes to show that hardly anybody in the West perhaps, is free from sexual hang-ups. Thanks largely to our Judaeo-Christian heritage. Incidentally, now that we are on the subject, one might have thought if one was not being particularly careful, one might have thought that the male Buddha figures represented the wisdom aspect of Enlightenment, and the female Buddha figure the Love aspect. But not at all. In the Tantra, in the Buddhist Tantra it's the other way around. The female Buddha embodies the Wisdom aspect, the male Buddha embodies the Love and Compassion aspect. Which is also incidentally, the action aspect. And this provides us with further evidence of the fact that this symbolism has got nothing at all to do with ordinary sexual differences. So one finds now at this stage, the Ideal Buddha divided into two figures, one male, one female, inseparably united. And these two figures thus united are sometimes symbolised by the Vajra, or Dorje, and the Lotus. Or by the Vajra, or Dorje, and the Bell. But we've not yet reached the end of the development. Not only does the Archetypal Buddha divide in this way, into two figures, male, female, sexually united, but all the other four Buddhas similarly divide. So now we've got not just five Buddhas, but ten Buddhas. We've got five so-called male Buddhas, and five so-called female Buddhas, and the female Buddhas are regarded as the consorts of the male Buddhas. As spiritually united with them. So now a few words about each of these so-called female Buddhas in turn. After that we'll just refer to the final development in this five-fold, or now ten-fold symbolic pattern, and then conclude.

The first of the female Buddhas is Akashadatesvari. She is the consort of Vairocana, the white Buddha, the Buddha of the centre. Akashadatesvari. And her name means, 'The Sovereign Lady of the Sphere of Infinite Space.' We recollect that Vairocana himself is the Sun, the 'Sun Buddha', he's the Sun of the Whole Cosmos, the whole spiritual cosmos. He's radiating light, radiating heat in all directions. The light of Wisdom, the heat of Love. And Akashadatesvari, the Lady, the Sovereign Lady of the Sphere of Infinite Space, she represents, she embodies the infinite space through which the rays of the light of Vairocana fall. She represents unlimited spiritual receptivity. Or she represents the whole of the phenomenal world, the whole of the phenomenal universe, as pervaded, completely pervaded, absolutely pervaded, by the influence, by the influence if you like of the Absolute. In the language of 'The Awakening of Faith' she represents the whole of phenomenal existence as thoroughly perfumed by the Absolute. And like Vairocana, Akashadatesvari is white in colour. And she's represented in Dakini form. That is to say she's represented with loose flowing garments, and long dishevelled hair.

Secondly, Locana. Locana is the consort of Aksobhya, the deep blue Buddha, the Buddha of the East. And her name means 'The Clear Visioned One'. Or literally, 'The One with an Eye.' In Tibetan her name is translated as 'Lady of the Bigger Eye,' or 'Lady Possessing the Bigger Eye.' And Locana, 'The One with the Eye', is the embodiment of clear awareness. She represents, or she embodies, pure simple direct awareness of things. And Aksobhya whose consort she is, Aksobhya is especially connected with Transcendental Wisdom. He's practically the only Buddha who appears in the Sutra of Transcendental Wisdom, especially the one in eight-thousand lines; and what does this association suggest? It suggests, - there's no wisdom without Awareness. No Awareness without Wisdom. The two are inseparably connected. In a sense are different aspects of the same spiritual experience. And Locana is light blue in colour.

And then thirdly, Mamaki. Mamaki is the consort of Ratnasambhava, the yellow Buddha, the Buddha of the South. And her name means, 'Mine Maker.' She's the one who makes everything 'Mine', not in of course, a selfish egoistic sense, as one is now on the level of Enlightenment; makes everything her own. Mamaki is that spiritual attitude that regards everything, everyone, as mine, my own. In the sense of my VERY own. Near and dear to me. Precious to me. Valuable

to me. So Mamaki actually experiences everybody as it were, enjoys everybody. Delights in everybody. Rejoices in everybody. Even, one might say, regards everybody as her own self. Sees no difference between herself and others. They're all mine. Or even 'me'. And her colour is yellow.

Fourthly, Pandaravasini. Pandaravasini is the consort of Amitabha, the red Buddha, the Buddha of the West. And her name means 'The White Robed One.' It suggest one who is as it were, vested in purity. Even, insulated by purity. And the imagery here recalls that, which is connected with, the fourth Dhyana, the fourth state of meditation. Or higher consciousness. You may remember that the Buddha symbolised this by saying that one's experience in this Dhyana, this state of higher consciousness, was like that of a man who on a hot day, for he was tired and dusty, had taken a bath. And after taking a bath. And after taking a bath, of course not under a tap, or in a bathroom, but in a beautiful pond, full of lotuses, after taking this bath, had come out and wrapped himself in a pure white sheet. So this wrapping in a pure white sheet, in the white robe, represents as it were the concentration and gradual accumulation of one's energies, especially emotional energies, one's insulation of them from possibly harmful outside influences. So Pandaravasini is the White Robed One. The one isolated, insulated, from outside influences. And she's light red in colour.

And fifthly and lastly we come to Tara. Tara is the consort of Amoghasiddhi. The deep green Buddha, the Buddha of the North. And her name means, 'The One who Ferries Across.' Ferries across the river, ferries across the river of birth and death, river of Samsara. And she recalls, in her function, the Buddha's 'parable of the raft'. When the Buddha said the teaching, the Dharma, is like a raft. It's to help you to get across. Across the river of Birth and Death. The name Tara is often translated as 'Saviouress', but this can be rather misleading, we may say that Tara represents the attitude of helping people to help themselves. So these are the five so-called female Buddhas. Akashadatesvari - The Sovereign Lady of the Sphere of Infinite Space, Locana - the One with the Eye, Mamaki, the Min-Maker, Pandaravasini, the White Robed One, and Tara, the Helper, the One Who Ferries Across. And these five female Buddhas, together with their male counterparts, represent different aspects of the one integral Enlightenment experience. An experience which is essentially, in its depths, in its essence, an experience of the inseparable two-in-one-ness of Wisdom and Love.

We come now to the final development in the symbolic pattern with which we're concerned tonight. A development which has been anticipated to a limited extent in one at least of the previous lectures. We described the five male Buddhas, described the five female Buddhas, but they've been described, all of them, in just one particular way. Under one particular aspect. We've described them all, male and female Buddhas alike, under their peaceful aspect. But this is just one aspect. As I mentioned last week, in the esoteric Tantras, the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas appear under a double aspect. Under two aspects. There's a peaceful aspect, and there's a wrathful aspect. So this applies to the five Buddhas too. To the five male Buddhas, and the five female Buddhas. So I'm going to say a few words about them in their wrathful form and then conclude. These wrathful forms are much less highly individualised than the peaceful forms.

And in their wrathful forms, the five Buddhas are known as, 'The Five Herukas.' That is to say that the five male Buddhas are known as 'The Five Herukas.' And they're all named after their respective Buddha families. There's the Buddha Heruka, the Vajra Heruka, the Ratna Heruka, the Padma Heruka, and the Karma Heruka. And each one is represented as strongly, powerfully, even massively built, represented as naked, except for a tiger skin or an elephant hide, and they all wear garlands of human skulls. And round their bodies and round their arms are twined snakes.

They usually possess at least six arms, sometimes very many more. And each has three eyes. Three bulging enflamed eyes. And each has a wrathful expression. And they're usually represented as trampling on their foes. The enemies of the Dharma. And as moving violently to the right. And they're surrounded each one, by a halo of flames. The Buddha Heruka is dark blue in colour, or black. The others are blue, yellow, red and green respectively. Now the consort of the Buddha Heruka, the equivalent female Buddha is known simply as Crodesvari, which may be translated as 'Our Lady of Wrath.' And the consorts of the other Herukas are also named after their respective Buddha families. So one has the Vajra Lady of Wrath, the Jewel Lady of Wrath, the Lotus Lady of Wrath, the Action Lady of Wrath, all depicted in the same kind of way. They're all depicted naked, or practically naked, of the same colour as their consort, but lighter, and as somewhat smaller in size. And in each case they cling on to the front of their consort. Sometimes with their arms clasped round his neck.

Such then we may say, is the symbolism of the Five Buddhas, the male and the female, the peaceful and the wrathful. Such, one of the most important, one of the most beautiful and meaningful patterns in the whole range of the Tantra; a pattern that organises part at least, of the riches of the Tantra into a form that we can appreciate and perhaps assimilate. And in the midst of all these forms, while envisaging, even visualising these forms, we must never forget that all of them, whether male or female, peaceful or wrathful, all of these symbols represent different aspects of the Enlightenment experience. Different aspects of Buddhahood. Must never forget that they all embody spiritual experiences, are the product indeed of spiritual experiences. If we remember this, that these symbols embody spiritual experiences, then perhaps we shall be able to respond to them, if we respond to them we shall be helped by them. We shall be helped in fact, we may say, by all the creative symbols of the Tantric Path to Enlightenment.