

General Introduction to Sangharakshita's Seminars

Hidden Treasure

From the mid-seventies through to the mid-eighties, Urgyen Sangharakshita led many seminars on a wide range of texts for invited groups of [Order members](#) and [Mitrās](#). These seminars were highly formative for the FWBO/Triratna as Sangharakshita opened up for the still very young community what it might mean to live a life in the Dharma.

The seminars were all recorded and later transcribed. Some of these transcriptions have been carefully checked and edited and are [now available in book form](#). However, a great deal of material has so far remained unchecked and unedited and we want to make it available to people who wish to deepen their understanding of Sangharakshita's presentation of the Dharma.

How should one approach reading a seminar transcription from so long ago? Maybe the first thing to do is to vividly imagine the context. What year is it? Who is present? We then step into a world in which Sangharakshita is directly communicating the Dharma. Sometimes he is explaining a text, at other times he is responding to questions and we can see how the emergence of Dharma teachings in this context was a collaborative process, the teaching being drawn out by the questions people asked. Sometimes those questions were less to do with the text and arose more from the contemporary situation of the emerging new Buddhist movement.

Reading through the transcripts can be a bit like working as a miner, sifting through silt and rubble to find the real jewels. Sometimes the discussion is just a bit dull. Sometimes we see Sangharakshita trying to engage with the confusion of ideas many of us brought to Buddhism, confusion which can be reflected in the texts themselves. With brilliant flashes of clarity and understanding, we see him giving teachings in response that have since become an integral part of the Triratna Dharma landscape.

Not all Sangharakshita's ways of seeing things are palatable to modern tastes and outlook. At times some of the views captured in these transcripts express attitudes and ideas [Triratna has acknowledged as unhelpful](#) and which form no part of our teaching today. In encountering all of the ideas contained in over seventeen million words of Dharma investigation and exchange, we are each challenged to test what is said in the fire of our own practice and experience; and to talk over 'knotty points' with friends and teachers to better clarify our own understanding and, where we wish to, to decide to disagree.

We hope that over the next years more seminars will be checked and edited for a wider readership. In the meantime we hope that what you find here will inspire, stimulate, encourage - and challenge you in your practice of the Dharma and in understanding more deeply the approach of Urgyen Sangharakshita.

Sangharakshita's Literary Executors and the Adhithana Dharma Team

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This transcript has not been checked by Sangharakshita, and may contain mistakes and mishearings. Checked and reprinted copies of all seminars will be available as part of the [Complete Works Project](#).

don't have children perhaps, there's a tendency to settle down and just to be comfortable and to follow a steady routine and have everything pretty well laid on, pretty well sorted out, pretty well established. Not necessarily your carpet slippers in front of the fire and all that sort of thing, but you know what I mean. And you don't necessarily as I've said escape this automatically simply because you don't have a wife and family. In fact you can~e so sure that you are escaping that, actually it really does overtake you without your knowing it. So one needs to remain much on the alert, otherwise I get the impression that if we are not careful we'll almost no longer be an expanding movement, we'll be a movement that is sort of consolidating,~perhaps even hardening a little more and more around the core as it were, or the cores, in the form of the existing well established centres or communities. Especially I would say that if your whole FWBO career (for instance) had been within a particular centre or particular community or in connection with a particular centre or as part of a particular community, then having gone back wherever you came from, and having sort of established yourself as an Order member, then you should start quite seriously thinking in terms of at least seeing something of some other centre or community for quite a while, so that you don't identify the whole movement just with your particular centre or your particular community. This is especially important for an Order member. You can understand a mitra being identified with a particular centre. But in the case of an Order member he's ordained into the whole Order, and the whole Order could exist without any centres, or even perhaps without any communities at all, certainly any centres. So inasmuch as one is ordained into the Order, well one belongs primarily to the Order. As an Order member one does not really, when it comes to the point, belong to a centre, you belong to the Order. And you function in connection with this centre, or as part of that community, in accordance with the needs of the situation. Not because you exclusively identify yourself with this particular centre or that particular community, but human nature being what it is there is bound to be a tendency of this sort. So if one's whole FWBO life has been lived out in connection with a particular centre or community you need to counteract that tendency by moving away from it - after a reasonable period after ordination.

Padmavajra: What would you call a reasonable period? Or would that vary?

S: It would vary. But give yourself a year, I would say. I'm not suggesting that you then go and start up a centre anywhere but move on, move around if you like, to another centre or another community. I mean have a bit more experience, a broader experience of the movement. And you won't do that just by paying the odd visit or reading about other centres and communities in the Newsletter. Sometimes I'm surprised by the extent to which Order members and mitras belonging to one particular centre are ignorant of what is going on in other centres and communities. It's really sometimes quite surprising. Maybe not quite so much in the case of mitras but certainly in the case of Order members. Sometimes I've been really surprised in this connection. In the case of some people it was almost as though other centres and other communities didn't exist. They just didn't know anything about them at all, about what was actually going on. Anyway were there any further questions?

BI 11 19 302

Vessantara: About three.

S: What sort of questions? And what is the time?

Vessantara: It~ five past nine.

S: Well perhaps then we should stop, because we don't seem to be getting quite so many questions as before. I don't remember quite how many sessions we've got left.

Vessantara: We've got one more.

S: One main session, yes. All right, let's see, well if we don't get through them all then, we can have an additional session. Anyway, that seemed a good note to end on so let's end there.

BIQ/A Tusc 85 18~ 1

Vessantara: So this evening is our last session on the Bodhisattva Ideal series. We will deal with the last lecture but there are a few questions left over from previous lectures so we will start with those. We'll start with Phil.

Phil Shann: In your talk "Journey to 11 Convento" you were talking about the way archetypal images manifest in different ways to suit cultural and personal needs. I was thinking about the way in which the depiction of Buddhas and Bodhisattvas became very strictly depicted on a matrix and was wondering whether this indicated a degeneration?

S: By the matrix you mean the sort of mathematical grid~ Thhil: Yes) I must say that I've had my personal doubts about this grid system for some time. I remember discussing the matter with Chintamani at some length quite a number of years ago. And I think I can say that in the way that that principle has been applied in Tibet, at least in recent times, has been productive of some rather strange results, aesthetically speaking. Clearly, the aesthetic criterion is not the ultimate one, but nonetheless one must not find the image offensive or odd, or grotesque, especially the proportions of the figure, grotesque. And one certainly does if that matrix principle is applied, at least in some cases. Having said that I must also say, I must at least also refer to something I am aware of but I haven't actually been able to investigate it, and that is the significance of certain proportions. Let us say, even the spiritual significance of certain arithmetical or mathematical proportions. There has been a certain amount of research done in this field. In the West it is associated especially with Neo-Platanism, and Neo-Pythagoreanism. But I can't say that I've studied this, though I am aware of the subject and aware of the literature. So one would have to bear that in mind too, that it was certainly not impossible that there actually was a definite mathematical relationship between the different parts of a two dimensional or three dimensional image or icon. But it would seem, again judging by results and judging quite empirically and intuitively, the Tibetans hadn't, so to speak, hit upon the right proportions. One is aware that those sort of scales are used generally in art. For instance the ancient Greek sculptors had a rule of thumb propofon, didn't they. I think it was the school of..., who was it? Polyclitus?, had a proportion that the head was one seventh of the proportion of the length of the body. Others thought it was one fifth and so on. So yes, what I actually see of Tibetan thankas and images leads me to wonder whether they are on the right track with their matrix or their grid system. But does that not necessarily lead me to repudiate the general principle involved, but perhaps only that particular application, or even in a sense, misappli- cation.

Phil Shann: You don't think it was a reflection of the whole thing becbming more rigid?

S: That would depend how they derived. Supposing, for instance Wust for the sake of argument, there were certain admired images or thankas and suppose someone had simply tried to work out a system of proportions quite empirically by looking at them.

BIQ/A Tusc 84 l8-- 2 304

So as to make it easy for people to reproduce that sort of pattern. I think that would indicate a degeneration. But if one was to deduce one's proportions correctly from certain philosophical principles, well that would not represent a degeneration.

Abhaya: No additional Bodhisattva forms have emerged from spiritual practice, as far as I know, since the flourishing of the Mahayana and Vajrayana. Do you think this is because spiritual practice has never reached that peak since? That's~the first part! and the second is:- Is it true that other Bodhisattva forms could emerge from, say, our spiritual practice or the practice of the Western Buddhist Order or Buddhism at large?

S: I would say in principle, decidedly, yes. But I must say That your question probably needs a bit of qualification. Because the Vajrayana tradition does continue down to our own day and it would seem that new, as it were, Bodhisattva forms, or at least new Dharmapala forms or Dakini forms have emerged comparatively late within that tradition. Usually, of course, I think they are affiliated with one or another of the existing widely recognised Bodhisattvas, recognised as a special form of him, of her.

Also, one finds in Japan there was an interesting develop- ment because indigenous Japanese deities were identified with Bodhisattvas, and the Bodhisattvas were represented, so to speak, with the

features of the indigenous divinities, and that lead in a sense almost to the emergence of new Bodhisattva forms. For instance there was Hakyman, I think that is how you pronounce it, an indigenous Japanese divinity apparently having originally some phallic significance. But anyway he was absorbed into the Japanese Buddhist pantheon and he came to be regarded as a Bodhisattva figure, I am not quite sure what his exact affiliation was. He might for instance have been regarded as a form of Avalokiteshvara, but that would be simply to give him an official place, an official connection, but really it represents the emergence within Japanese Mahayana Buddhism of a quite distinctive Bodhisattva form, having his origins in the Japanese psyche. Similarly with the figure of Achala. Achala is a Vidya-rajā He is of Indian origin but in Japan he assumes a very distinctively Japanese form. The form being, in a sense, old, the image being old, in this particular respect, on this level you can speak of a new Bodhisattva form, a new Bodhisattva image. In Tibet he is represented as a strange sort of figure, he is represented almost like a sort of athlete, a boxer like figure, quite husky with a loin cloth and tremendous muscles. And one of his characteristics features a sort of lock hanging down which I think wrestlers or boxers in Japan, or something like that, wore. And he is accompanied by two small boys whose significance is obscure, they seem to be like assistants or servitors. And he is associated with mountains and waterfalls and hermits. And apparently Japanese Buddhists who are devoted to the cult of this Japanese form Achala have recourse to the mountains, they resort to the mountains and they practice austerities there invoking this particular Bodhisattva. And especially they perform austerities under waterfalls. So it is

BIQ/A Tusc 84 ~8~ 3 3o5

a very Japanese development. The name Achala is of Indian origin, technically he is an Indian Vidya-rajā but he has taken on a very distinctively Japanese form. He has, by the way, glaring, bulging eyes. He carries something..., maybe it's a noose or something of that sort, something unpleasant. But the main point is that he is outwardly quite grim, from appearance, but inwardly he is supposed to be very very kind. And again, yes, the Japanese psyche, you could say, has produced; the Japanese collective unconscious has produced this very interesting figure. There's no reason why the West shouldn't produce its own Bodhisattva figures. In a sense, almost, the West has produced its Bodhisattva figures. Almost in the sense of almost the West, because if you look, if you turn to central Asia, and if you examine some of the archeological remains of Buddhist sites, you will find that there are images and paintings of Bodhisattvas that have a Persian appearance, they come from the Sassanion period, I think it is the Sassanion. They are not Indian, they are not Chinese, they have moved a little further West. This is, of course, not to speak of the Gandharan art, where Bodhisattvas have assumed some Western features. So in principle, yes, it is to be expected that Bodhisattvas will take on different forms in the West, because people will perceive them and experience them differently. This leads me to a rather important point, it is something that I have given quite a bit of thought to, I think I have spoken about it once or twice and it is this. We start off of course with the traditional Eastern Buddhist iconography. We're familiar now with the more prominent examples of that iconography, I think practically every Order Member and probably every Mitra and a lot of Friends would be able to identify the figure of Manjugosha, Avalokiteshvara, Tara, Vajrapani. That is, in a way, quite an achievement. I don't know whether you realise that, because upon my arrival in England, in 1964, there were very, very few Buddhists who would have been able to identify those Bodhisattva figures, they weren't at all familiar with them. Partly because some Buddhists were Theravadins and wouldn't have thought it proper to look in the direction of a Bodhisattva. Others, of course, were followers of Zen and regarded themselves as way beyond anything of that sort, they were properly occupied exclusively with the Void. (laughter) But since the inauguration of the FWBO things have rather changed, at least as regards the FWBO itself. We are now very familiar with these figures and these forms and they have come to mean, now, quite a lot to us. And on these Tuscany courses we have talks on the Bodhisattvas, and we have talks on other occasions too, on the Bodhisattvas. And people are not only familiar with their forms but familiar with their mantras. This is quite an achievement in itself and probably, being as it were in the midst of it and not realising what the situation was like only a few years ago you don't quite realise the extent or the significance of that achievement. Because it means that to some extent we begin to be aware of if not actually to move in this archetypal world as represented on a very high level by the Bodhisattvas. But there is a point to be made here, there is a reservation, even, to be made here, which is this: that in a sense the forms or the figures that we are familiar with don't in the

least look like the Bodhisattvas concerned, the Bodhisattvas whose names they bear. And sooner or later we have to start thinking in those terms. In other words what are doing is to try to work our way from the traditional appearance of a Bodhisattva in the traditional iconography, to what that Bodhisattva represents. We have got, say, the beautiful golden colour of Manjugosha, we have got his uplifted sword and so on and so forth. But actually what has that got to do with Manjugosha as a spiritual principle, or even, if you like as a spiritual being, or spiritual entity. What is the actual connection, can you take it that literally Manjugosha does look like that. Well in a sense, yes, but again certainly in a sense no. So what one has to do after a time is to forget all about the traditional iconography. One has to put, in a sense, all that aside and one has to ask oneself, 'what is Manjugosha, what does this term Manjugosha really represent, what is the reality behind this term Manjugosha?' And you have to try to get some feeling for that as distinct from, as quite distinct from any particular traditional Manjugosha form, you have to get a definite feeling for what I can only call the Manjugosha principle. Though not principle in the sense of something abstract which is not a person, but get some inner feeling for, some inner sense of that Manjugosha principle and then you have to ask yourself, what would that principle look like if it assumed human form? And you have to try to see that, and that will give you, as it were, a much truer, I was going to say insight into but it is more like vision of, what in a manner of speaking, Manjugosha actually looks like. The traditional iconography is very definitely only a stepping stone, but it is certainly a stepping stone and an indispensable stepping stone to us, to begin with. But after a while we have to look at things, we have to proceed in the way that I have suggested, in the way that I have outlined.

Abhaya: How would you do that?

S: Well that is what I have just, in a sense, explained. Thou put aside the traditional iconography, you forget all about that.

Abhaya: And you just try to feel it, feel...?

S: First of all you..., to take the example of Manjugosha What does Manjugosha represent? Well Manjugosha is wisdom, that's essentially what Manjugosha is, so you try to get a feeling for, a sense of, an experience of wisdom. Just wisdom. Then you imagine, I am using the word imagine now in it's (how shall I say) it's non pejorative sense, in the sense of the imaginal faculty. And you try to see, as it were, that principle that you are intuiting taking on a concrete human form, an ideal form. So that you are building up or creating the form out of your experience or realisation of the principle, Not trying to arrive at it by simply visualising the form as represented in traditional iconography, which may be many many removes from somebody's actual experience. The artist may have represented Manjugosha according to tradition, but he may not have had any feeling for the Manjugosha principle, so to speak, at all. And the artist whose painting he copies may not have had any feeling and so on. You may have to go back fifteen or twenty generations before you come to someone who had actual feeling, or who actually saw Manjugosha

in some kind or way on a visionary sort of level. So a time will therefore come when you need to try to create Manjushri, so to speak, or to perceive Manjushri or Manjugosha independently, with your own imaginal faculty. And you surely should be able to, otherwise it is rather like actually going to meet someone as distinct from looking at his photograph, and not even photograph. Because you might have photographs of photographs of photographs, or paintings of paintings of paintings. So that might have carried you quite a long way from the original person and what they actually looked like. But if you actually go and see them for yourself, then that is something rather different. So that is what you have to do, to begin with you have to know who to recognise so yes, the photograph or the painting does give you some idea, a very rough idea of what the person looked like, but when you actually putting aside the photograph or the painting and go and find him and look at him, then you

have got a better idea. It's somewhat like that.

Padmavajra: You say, after a time....

S: With some years, some years. At least, if you practiced regularly, I would say, this is just of the cuff, at least four or five years.

Padmavajra: Then after that Do you think in a visualisation you could actually try and do that as you actually came to visualise the Bodhisattva in the practice? Instead of trying to visualise according to the iconography you actually, as it were, just try to feel that principle?

S: You can do it at that particular time. I mean, instead of having recourse to the traditional text and its iconography you can just try to see, to try and conjure for yourself, but it actually isn't as simple as that. It is much more likely to come about if you stay with that principle, for want of a better term, all of the time and you are in a sense working on it all the time. I think by the time you reach that stage it isn't possible to 'do it' (inverted commas) as an exercise. You are concerned with something quite different, with a matter of experience. Something into which you not only have to feel yourself but into which you are feeling yourself all the time.

Padmavajra: So when you say all the time, take the example of Manjugosha, you would be trying to feel that, or be in contact with the wisdom principle just in every. ...?

S: Yes, one can say that but I don't want you to take that too literally or rigidly as a sort of practice or exercise. In a way it is something you get into naturally. It is something you are concerned with, not something you do because it is time to do it, but something you can't help doing, it's something that's not really in your mind but on your mind in a quite positive sense. So that you can't help thinking about it or trying to get into it.

Phil Shann: Would everybody's Manjugosha be different or would they be contacting something Universal?

BIQ/A Tusc 84 I8~ 6

308

S: Well it would be universal and it would be different. How different we don't as yet know as regards any possible Western iconography, we would have to wait and see.

Phil Shann: So you suspect that the Western Manjugosha would be very different from?

S: Perhaps one shouldn't anticipate, perhaps that is the last thing that one should do. Because as I have said, put aside the traditional iconography when you reach that point, put aside and presuppositions or any speculations of what it might be like or could be like or should be like. Because you are wanting actually to see something, as it were. Or at least to perceive something with what I have called the imaginal faculty, perceive something on quite a higher level. So you want that faculty to be purged of any sort of conditioning coming from any sort of lower level. So close your art books and so on and so forth. What I was saying, with some of the illustrations I was giving from Western art, from Italian Renaissance, are quite relevant. One does see different artists perceiving things, in a manner of speaking, in a different way. Perhaps not quite at a visionary level but certainly there was some exercise of their imagination.

Vessantara: Would it necessarily be that you'd feel the need to visualise a form different from the traditional one?

S: You wouldn't be thinking of the traditional image, so therefore you wouldn't be thinking of reproducing that, nor would you be avoiding that, you wouldn't be thinking about it at all.

Vessantara: So it would be as if you'd just be starting from scratch (S: Yes) just concentrating on the principle (S: Yes) and if the tradition form

S: It might so happen that you saw a form exactly the same as the *thanka* that has been in your possession for the last ten years, or it might be a subtle modification. Or it might be something very different. One could only wait and see. I know there are people within the Movement, people within the Order who have had visionary experiences in some cases, amounting to visions of Bodhisattva like figures. So I think that the seed is already there. But it is, to go back to what I said a few minutes ago, quite important that one does recognise the limitations at the same time as one recognises the usefulness of the traditional iconography. It is important that one realises that that simply provides one with a stepping stone. And that a point will come when you have, in a manner of speaking, to lay that aside. Because is you yourself experience, as you yourself know that particular form, it belongs to the *karmaloka*. It may, in a sense be, or it may have been a reflection or a reflection of a reflection of a reflection of something archetypal, belotWging to a higher level. But even then it's only a reflection and you want to see the original, so to speak, directly, and that is what you have to do eventually.

BIQ/A Tusc 84 ;8-- 7 3o9

It could be of course, that in the course of your practice you do come to find that you do have a sort of experience of, let's say the Bodhisattva principle, within the context of your actual traditional, reproduced, visualised form. And you may experience the Bodhisattva principle in forming that form. You may well then also find that the fact that principle informs that form menas that the features, so to speak, of that form, are subtly modified, so that the same things happens in the long run.

Pete Dobson: So that it could end up with no form?

S: Well, yes. In later Vajrayana practice the form does merge into no form, but then again at a still later stage the form emerges from the no-form. And the form that emerges from the no form is the real form, not a super-induced form, not a conventional form. This is, in technical language this is the *jnana-sattvas* as distinct from the *samaya-sattva*. The awareness being as distinct from the conventional being, let's say. But then of course after that happens one has to practice in such a way as to realise the non-difference of those two. You musn't have a one sidedly abstract, or one sidedly concrete view of things. One has to see form as the absolute expression of the principle, so to speak, and the principle as the essence of the form and the two as in fact inseparable. Just like the wave in the ocean and the ocean in the wave. No ocean without waves and no waves without ocean.

Padmavajra: Are you equating the principle, then, with the *jnana-sattva* and the traditional form with the *samaya-sattva*? Because you equated those two.

S: Tes, I am equating the traditional iconic as actually visualised with the *samaya-sattva*, that is in fact what it is. And what I have in a sense been talking about when I have been speaking in terms of seeing the Bodhisattva for yourself, is the *jnana-sattva*, one might say. Or at least corresponds, perhaps at a lower to the *jnana-sattva*.

Vessantara: Dipankara had a question in this area.

Dipankara: Well the second question that I was going to ask was:- You mentioned that we touch on the archetypal world in meditation and dreams and aesthetic experiences of a visionary nature...

S: Not that we necessarily do, but we mmy do.

Dipankara: With practice.

S: Yes, I mean not every dream is an archetypal dream, obviously, for instance. But some dreams are of an archetypal nature.

Dipankara: What my question was, was: In visualisation practice how would you recognise that you have contacted the archetypal plane?

S: Oh well it is quite easy because it is a completely Wifferent sort of experience. For instance,

just to take the

BIQ/A Tsuc 84 I8~ 8

310

example of dreams. There are ordinary dreams, let's say, and there are archetypal dreams. Ordinary dreams are dreams made up of bits and pieces of waking experience. In other words they are just sort of memories in a very odd sort of way of your experience on the karma-loka level. But archetypal dreams are really quite different. And I take it that everybody probably has had at some time or other what I call archetypal dreams. One of the differences is that ordinary dreams are usually black and white and archetypal dreams are brilliantly colours. And archetypal dreams have a tremendous effect on you, the impression that they make on you is sometimes quite extra-ordinary. They really are more of the nature of spiritual experiences but they take place in the sleep state and are (in way of the an awareness of the nature of dreams ?) So if you have an archetypal dream experience you can't possibly mistake it for an ordinary dream. And it is much the same in the case of the difference between your experience when as a practice you visualise a Bodhisattva form, or whatever and even manage to see him, in a sense; and your experience when you have a real, genuine vision. It is just another level, another dimension. The whole emotional tone is different, you couldn't possibly fail to recognise that here was something new and quite different.

Greg Shank: Is there a hierarchy in these forms at all? In the sense that some would be more difficult to contact?

S: There is definitely a hierarchy because there the arupa and rupa lokas themselves are subdivided, corresponding to the dhyanas and so on. So yes, there is a hierarchy of these forms which are more and more subtle and according to tradition more and more brilliant and therefore more and more difficult to perceive. But again it is not that you could say necessarily that there are separate forms on different levels, in a sense it is the same form which you perceive more deeply, or more truly, more clearly.

Mike Shaw: What would you say in the case of..., where you recognise St. Jerome as being an archetypal being? ?)

S: Well St. Jerome originally a historical figure, and a historical figure is usually a rather low level sort of embodiment just from the fact that he is a historical figure. Whereas in the case of the Bodhisattvas and the angels, they are non-historical, they are trans-historical, so they usually represent subtler or higher archetypes.

Vessantara: You refer in the paper that you gave to..., at one point you talk about a hierarchy of archetypes or even contacting the archetype of archetypes. Could you enlarge a little on what you meant by the archetype of archetypes?

S: Well clearly I am trying to establish or to speak in terms of a hierarchy. At the back of mind I had some such distinction as..., say a distinction between angels and archangels or devas and Bodhisattvas. If you are using this Jungian language or taking over Jung's language of archetypes you can perhaps speak of archetypes and archetypes of archetypes. Do you see what I mean?

BIQ/A Tusc 84 I8~ 9 311

Vessantara: So you could perhaps think of the archetype of Enlightenment as being in a sense an archetype of archetypes?

S: Yes. If you take, say, the Buddha as representing the archetype of Enlightenment, well that

archetype could be the archetype of the archetypes which are represented by or embodied in different Bodhisattvas. One could look at it like that. It is, by the way, rather interesting that in Tibetan Buddhism at least, in its iconography as it eventually developed, every deity - to use that word for the time being, corresponding to the Tibetan (?) - has three forms or exists on three levels. The Dharmakaya form, the Dharmakaya level, a Samboghakaya form and a sort of deva form. So there is a Buddha form a Bodhisattva form and a deva form. So you could say that the archetype of the archetype, the archetype and the image. One existing on the level of reality, one on the archetypal level and one on the mundane level. For instance in the case of Tara. The Dharmakaya of Tara is Samantabhadri, who is a sort of Adi Buddha-es, one might say. Tara is the archetypal, familiar Tara form, as a Bodhisattva and her deva form, or form in the lower realm in the karma-loka, so to speak, is Ekajati, who is a rather quaint form, from our point of view. She has one lock, Ekajati, one tooth, and one eye. In other words she is a sort of symbol of integration, one-pointedness. One pointedness, one might say, of body speech and mind. This has only just occurred to me, I haven't thought of it before, but you could say that the one lock is one pointedness of body, integration of body. The one tooth integration of speech and the one eye the integration of the mind.

Devamitra: Would you correlate those three forms with three of the eyes of the chakras. There's the divya-caksu and I don't know the next one.

S: Well there are five eyes altogether. When one speaks of a deity possessing a Buddha form, a Bodhisattva form and a deva form, that deva form exists on the..., one might say the..., here I am hypothesising slightly, but I imagine the upper reaches of the karma-loka, or the lower reaches of the rupa-loka. So one would be able to perceive that deva only with the divya-caksu, not with the material, the physical eye. And of course the Bodhisattva form one would be able to perceive only, let's say, with the dharma-caksu, at least. It represents some kind of insight. And of course the Buddha form only when that insight has become complete, only when it has become full. In other words only with the Buddha eye itself. The wisdom eye is sort of inbetween the two, at least according to some reckonings, in between the Dharma-eye and the Buddha-eye. But actually, of course, you can't our you need not divide into steps or stages too rigidly, in a sense it is continuous. You can divide and subdivide in all sorts of ways. There can be three eyes, there can be five, there can be even more. There could be an eye for each of the rupa-dhyanas, an eye for each of arupa-dhyanas, you could have eight eyes then. Plus the ones at the very top and the ones at the very bottom.

BIQ/A Tusc 84 '8i- 10 /~9 - 1

312

Vessantara: What would be the practical application of the deva forms in spiritual practice?

S: I think, going by what I know of, what experience I have 7 Tibetan tradition, I think that people feel, as it were closer to the deva forms. Yes, in a sense the deva form is nearer, after all. I think, though I can't be completely sure about this, but I think and my impression is that the deva form is invoked, as it were, for material purposes, for material blessings. Whereas the Bodhisattva is invoked more for spiritual purposes and spiritual blessings.

(end tape 8)

Prassanasiddhi: In your lecture 'The Journey to 11 Convento' I think you mentioned that the Bodhisattva was the angel par excellence. Is that actually what you said?

S: I am not sure, I won't be completely certain, it was something of that sort. What I was meaning was that in the case of the Bodhisattva archetype the particular principle - to change the language - involved becomes manifested all the more clearly, more clearly than in the case of the angel or archangel. In this sense the Bodhisattva, one might say, represents a purely spiritual principle. The Bodhisattva represents an embodiment of the Transcendental. That's not quite the case with the angels and archangels. When I compare angels and archangels with Bodhisattvas I am not, as it were, comparing them theologically. I am comparing them psychologically, though I am not comparing them psychologically in the psychological sense. In other words I am speaking of comparable experiences. At least comparable visionary experiences, leaving aside the specific, theological or philosophical or metaphysical interpretations of those experiences or those images or those figures.

But, to go into that a little. In the case of the angel, in Christianity, well what are the angels?

They are messengers of God etc. etc., but looking into it a little more closely, a little more theologically, the angels are always represented as having been created by (?) . They are usually said to have been created before the human race. So angels are created by God, that means angels are creatures, angels are not Gods. They are not a part of God, they are not a manifestation of God. They are creatures, they are created, by God exactly,~one might say, in principle, as man was created. So they are totally dependent upon God, their nature is completely contingent. Archetypal Bodhisattvas are not like that. They are purely Transcendental. In Christianity you have the distinction between the creator and the created. God is the creator and the angels are created. In Buddhism you have the distinction between the conditioned and the unconditioned. The Buddha is unconditioned, the Bodhisattvas are unconditioned too. So in as much as creature corresponds to conditioned and creator corresponds to unconditioned, in as much as Bodhisattva corresponds to unconditioned Bodhisattva cannot correspond to angel, could correspond to created or to who is created. So there is very important theological - cum - philosophical - cum - metaphysical difference between an angel and a Bodhisattva. So they are not really comparable in that sort of way. But none-the-less, iconographically, psychologically,

BIQ/A Tusc 84 19 - 2

313

emotionally, there is a very definite correspondance. As though, in a way, angels don't really quite fit into Christianity. It's almost as though Christianity has not known quite what to do with them. And this is very interesting. Because angels are not a part of - I was going to say of official Christian belief, but I must tread a little warily here, I am not completely certain. I am not sure whether you are for instance in the case of the Catholic church, you are obliged to believe in the existence of angels. Angels are certainly not mentioned in the Apostle's creed. 'I believe in God the Father Almighty, maker of heaven and earth etc. etc.' Angels are not mentioned. So they are not among the primary objects of faith, at least one can say that. In the case of Islam they are. They are one of the (how many is it?) it's five principle objects of faith. What are they?, God, that he is one; Mohammed, that he is a prophet of God; the angels; the last day - and what's the other one? (pause) Padmavajra: The Koran?

S: No. Heaven and hell. Those are the five, so belief in angels is an integral part of the Muslim faith in a way that it is not part of the Christian faith, and it is rather interesting that over the centuries belief in angels has gradually faded away. They aren't very prominent. You do get churches named after St. Micheal the Archangel, however. I doubt very much whether any newly built church would be named after St. Micheal the Archangel, it would be very interesting if one was. They don't occupy a very prominent place in Christian, in any of the Churches. Whereas in the Mahayanistic East, or far East, Bodhisattvas play an enormously important part. So there is some difference in the connection~ The parallel I have drawn between angels and archangels on the one hand and devas and Bodhisattvas on the other is a parallelw~ich is iconographic and in a sense psychological, rather than what I call theological-cum-philosophical-cum- metaphysical. I don't think that the idea of the Bodhisattva in Buddhism corresponds to the idea or concept of an angel in Christianity. No, they are not really comparable. But in terms of images they are very comparable. So there must be certain things that they have in common despite the, as it were theological differences. And as I mentioned also in that talk, in that paper, that kind of image is universal. I don't know if you do know, many of you, that book on angels, which I mentioned. It would certainly be worthwhile just to look through it, look through the illustrations. It really is remarkable, because Egyptian tomb paintings had winged figures very much like angels. Classical Greek representations of Eros, with enormous wings, very much like an angel. Then Assyrian representations of winged figures, and what else is there, yes, Islamic representations of winged figures. And Buddhist flying figure, Gandharva like figures, they are all very, very similar. They clearly all belong to the same family. Even angels in Christianity are intermediaries between God and man. Do you see what I mean? They are messangers and often that is taken very literally, but as an intermediar~.

BIQ/A Tusc 84 ~9 - 3

314

So in the same way, in a way a Bodhisattva or a deva is an intermediary. Because they belong to the archetypal world which is intermediate between the world of sense experience and the world of absolute reality. They mediate that to us, we approach that through them, through that archetypal realm or imaginary realm. So sometimes the facts of spiritual experience cut across official - what shall I say, - the lines of official theological difference. This whole question of the disappearance of angels, let's say from Europe or the angels leaving Europe is, in a way quite significant. Because it also suggests the disappearance of the archetypal world. So you are left only with the sense world which you experience all the time and the absolute realm, let us say, the realm of absolute reality, which in the absence of the imaginal world you can't even imagine. So in effect, in the long run, as has actually happened, you are left only with the sense world. And of course in terms of faculties, your imagination withers. Imagination becomes fancy. The romantic philosophers and poets, they did their best to revive the concepts so to speak of the imagination in the original sense. They didn't have much success because they had so little support from the prevailing culture and philosophical tendencies and so on.

Wade McKee: Do you think that is why fantasy literature is quite popular today?

S: Yes it could be a sort of substitute for some genuine Th~agulative - at least one might say in some cases a relatively low level - imaginative experience. I haven't read much Science Fiction though some of my friends have pressed me to. I did read a little bit at one stage, but it is in some respects quite highly imaginative. But not very archetypal, to use that term, not very refined. I think that the last batch, or at least the small batch of Science Fiction literature that I read as a result of.., I think it was my first visit to New Zealand. These Kiwis are responsible for quite a lot... (laughter) I met in New Zealand two friends, and they were only friends, I don't think they are even Friends now (with a capital F) who were what I believe is termed Science Fiction buffs. And they were off to a Science Fiction conference in Australia. This was all news to me, I had no idea that there were such things as Science Fiction conferences, so they told me that yes, thousands of people came to them, they were very, very popular, they were very big events. And famous Science Fiction writers were invited from all over the world to give lectures and autograph their books for ten days. And they Science Fiction buffs would really get together, seminars on this famous Science Fiction book, seminars on that and lectures on something else. There is a whole world of it, its own magazines and its own groups and organisations and even its own politics. And as I said this was news to me. So anyway I got to know these two people in New Zealand on my first visit and they strongly urged me to read some really good Science Fiction. I think privately they were rather appalled at my ignorance. Because I hadn't read anything since reading years and years before at Anandas suggestion 'Sirius', which

BIQ/A Tusc 84 19 - 4

315

I quite enjoyed. And years and years before that in Bombay at the suggestion of a Polish friend of mine, and ex-Jesuit, I read 'Starmaker', which I also very much enjoyed and to which I have referred more than once. Anyway these two people in New Zealand suggested that I read 'Dune', which I did. I must say I quite enjoyed it, I found it quite interesting and quite imaginative in a fantastic sort of way. And I believe I read the sequel and I believe there is a third and fourth sequel but I haven't read any Science Fiction since, so I might be missing something. But it is interesting that so much Science Fiction is sold. You go into a bookshop and usually the whole place is packed with Science Fiction. Some of it no doubt is escapist but I don't think you can explain in terms of escapism.., or if you can or perhaps you can but only taking the word escapism in a comparatively positive sense. Why shouldn't people want to escape from the karma-loka, why shouldn't they want to escape from sense experience? What a sensible thing to do! (laughter) What a rational thing to do. Meditation is in a sense escapism, pure and simple. Of course it is, it should be. Treading the path to Enlightenment, to Buddhahood is escapism, pure and simple. Who wouldn't want to escape from old age, disease and death. And suffering. Anyway we won't go into that (laughter) now. But yes one could well take the view that this Science Fiction literature did represent a desperate attempt to escape into some sort of, or even slightly higher realm. To have some sort of contact even on a Very low level, with something archetypal, with something out of this world. No doubt there is Science Fiction and Science Fiction. You have got the.., I believe, I don't really know anything about these things, but I get the impression that you have got the Science Fiction type Science Fiction and then the...., what shall I call it? (V: Fantasy) Not even just fantasy but something that gives you just... I mean Science Fiction in the strict sense seems to represent an extrapolation of technology to, as it were fantastic lengths, maybe

to distant planets, distant ages. Whereas Science Fiction in the more imaginative sense, and I believe they might even have another term for this.

Vessantara: I believe it is called Science Fantasy.

S: Is it? Ahh, well in that it is unfortunate that they use the word fantasy. But it does seem to be more genuinely imaginative, more colourful, and perhaps the emotional tone is more positive and more inspired. Someone did give me, only a couple of years ago, one of the works of Ursula someone or other.

V's: Ursula Le Guin

S: I started on it but I couldn't carry on, I am afraid it didn't grip me at all, it seemed very feeble to be quite honest. In Lord of the Rings, yes I did read that, I don't know whether that is classified as ..., no it's not Science Fiction.

Phil Miller: That's fantasy.

BIQ/A Tusc 84 19- 5

316

S: Just fantasy pure and simple, but there are touches of the archetypal there, I felt sometimes. Especially when the elves came upon the scene. You know, there were those episodes in..., where was it, it is some years since I read it, in that sort of elf...

Vessantara:

S: Yes, where the Queen...

Vessantara: Galadriel

S: Galadriel. Those seem to have a touch of the archetypal and a few things later on. But it is as though people are desperate to establish some kind of contact of that kind. If they can't get it in one way they will get it in another. But it is interesting, this is going off on a slightly different take but it may be illustrative. It is interesting that in some of the novelists of the last century, for instance in Dickens, anything to do with circuses seems to suggest the world of imagination. Because what is a circus, it is something out of the ordinary run of things, circus people are different. They lead a different kind of life, they are gay and wild and free and do all sorts of interesting things and all sorts of colourful things. Everything is brightly painted and everything is rather gaudy and there is lots of gilt and glass and all that sort of thing around you. There are all sorts of possibilities of prizes. So the circus, for instance in Dickens's 'Hard Times', the circus is contrasted the world of Coketown. Yes, so the circus and the circus people and circus life represents almost something like the world or the life of the imagination, in a somewhat distorted form. It's as though that is as near as people who live and work in Coketown can ever get to the imaginal world, they can go to a circus once in a while. It's interesting that the proprietors, so to speak, of Coketown are really down on circuses, they disapprove of them strongly because they believe in utilitarian philosophy. They are firm believers in fact, imagination is something which they quite consciously, quite explicitly reject. There is that quite famous opening scene of 'Hard Times' which really illustrates this. If you haven't read 'Hard Times' I suggest you do read it when you are in a novel reading mood and you have time for such things. In between co-op meetings and study groups (laughter) Anyway that is by the way a bit. But again it illustrates this same point, an almost desperate search on the part of so many people, quite ordinary people, for some echo, some reflection of the archetypal world. And sometimes the reflection is on quite a low level and even quite distorted. But to quote the Bible 'Man doesn't live by bread alone'. There's a very fine saying attributed to the prophet Mohammed, it is one of his (?) He says 'if you have a loaf of bread sell half of it and buy a rose'. Which is quite good really, the bread representing the mundane necessities and the rose one's imaginative needs, or even imaginative world. So don't forget your rose. Alright, let's carry on.

Vessantara: Padmavajra had a question about the Tantra.

Padmavajra: You me'ntioned the Tantric Path the other evening and gave the' modern egui'valent for the four stae's of Tantric practice. Is' there a'n'y place, o'r will there ever be a pla'ce with'in the' FWBO ♦ or in modern Bu'ddhism, for that matter, for Tantric prac'tice in all o'f its stages as traditionally practiced ♦ in' India and Tibet? In a way what I am asking is, does' the Tantra have a future?

S: Well this of course raises the question, what is the Thantra? For instance to give you a very small example. In Tibet they have tormahs, I don't know if you know what a tormah is, it corresponds to the Sanskrit bali, which means an offering, especially a sacrificial offering. So if you were to go to Tibet, or even if you were go to Kalimpong or perhaps even to London or Paris now, you might be able to visit a Tibetan shrine or see a Tibetan Puja in operation, in progress. And you see that on the alter, as they call it, they have these tormahs. Tormahs are of all sorts of shapes and sizes, they can be very elaborate. They are made of barley flour kneaded together almost like clay and moulded into different shapes. Every particular ~uddha, Bodhisattva, Dharmapala, has his or her own particular tormah, or particular pattern and some are very, very elaborate indeed. And they are decorated with discs of butter. The butter is put into a bowl of water and you mould it in the cold water, so that the warmth of your hands doesn't melt the butter, so you can go on moulding into these beautiful discs which are put on, in the case of some tormahs. Then the butter discs are very beautifully decorated so that in the end you get quite elaborate works of art. So all this is part of Tibetan Tantric Puja. But what is the Indian origin of the tormah, what did the Indians offer? The Indians didn't offer these elaborate constructions of barley flour and butter, painted. The Indians offered a small chapati. That is what the Tibetan tormahs have grown out of. In Tibet the little crumbled chapati swelled up and grew and assumed all these weird and wonderful shapes. So were the Indians, were the Indian Vajrayanis less Tantric than the Tibetans? Do you see what I mean? What is the principle? The principle is an offering. The form that the offering takes, the particular concrete form is a quite different matter, it may be a quite humble chapati, or cake, or bun, or scone (laughter) or it may be the fully blown Tibetan tormahs. So if you don't have Tibetan tormahs, you don't therefore necessarily have less tantra. You don't even have to have a chapati, you have to have an offering of some kind, some kind of sort of cake. So if one looks at it in this way one can certainly have Tantra in the full sense, in the ritual sense, in the West, without necessarily introducing all the specifically Tibetan developments, which are admittedly very beautiful and even very inspiring, but not necessarily having a place in the West.

To give you another example, this is now the other way around, in India in the course of puja they offer flowers. They love offering flowers, there are garlands of flowers. Lots and lots of flowers, and flower offerings are quite a feature of Indian worship, whether Hindu or Buddhist, including Tantric worship. But when you go to Tibet what happens? In Tibet they

don't have any flowers so what are you to do? Does it mean you can't perform your worship, does it mean that you can't have the Vajrayana. Supposing the Vajrayana text says at this point you offer, say, ten (javal crusons ?) , big red flowers that you get in India which are so beautiful, what do you do? So the Tibetans, I am afraid they just had to compromise, they had (gau-po-medoc ?), so what is (gau-po-medoc ?)? (Gau-po ?) is white, (medoc ?) is flower, so they had white flowers. But what were these white flowers, don't think that they were flowers, they weren't, they were seeds. And where did they come from, of course they came from India, the holy land. In India there is a tree that produces a great bean about so long, inside this bean there are big white seeds which are surrounded by big white paper discs or frills. This is the (gau-po-medoc?). So these were exported to Tibet and they used these in the place of flowers. Does that mean that their Tantric was any the less than that of the Indians who were

actually using flowers? So, therefore, I say, well what does one mean by the Tantra, what is Tantric practice? One has to be concerned, if one is concerned with anything at all, with the essentials of the Tantric path, the principles of the Tantric path, not with specific cultural developments, or just specific cultural settings. So the principles of the Tantra are, I am sure, highly relevant for Buddhism in the West, but the more specifically Tibetan and Indian developments which have a decorative, cultural significance, rather than a spiritual significance, may or may not find a place here. I am not saying that they necessarily won't find, that remains to be seen. Some of them may find, just because they are intrinsically beautiful and also suitable and appropriate.

Vessantara: Mike had a question about time which arises out of this.

319 BI 19~

Mike Shaw: It's to do with the Buddha being beyond time, or Buddhahood being beyond time. In our study group I wondered if there were any actual explicit statements of this in traditional sources, and Padmavajra thought there probably was in early prajnaparamita literature. I wonder if you could say, first of all, if there are any other specific statements, especially in Pali literature.

S: Well, yes. In the Abhidharma for instance, it is well established, or well recognised, that time is what is called *apunya* (?) or *prajñapti* (?), it is just a concept. That time has no existence in Reality. That in the unconditioned (so to speak) there is no time. So inasmuch as a Buddha is, one might say, the embodiment of the unconditioned, the Buddha would not be in time, he would have transcended all *prajñaptis* (?) and thereof transcend time, which is not of Reality, but only a mode of perceiving things. One gets really the same point of view, in sort of mythic terms, in the White Lotus Sutra. What the White Lotus Sutra asserts... you know, it speaks of the Buddha's eternal life. It's not that the Buddha, certainly not the historical Buddha, in fact goes on living for ever and ever, but though it is, (you know) a myth being presented in those sort of terms, what it's really trying to say is that Buddhahood has got nothing to do with time whatever. So one might say, yes, this fact that the Buddha or Buddhahood is beyond time, is, yes, established in tradition, is even quite explicitly recognised. There is of course Nagarjuna's discussion of Reality, of time and space. He shows them to be self-contradictory, and therefore to be *Sunya*.

Voice: Where is that?

S: Madhyamika Karikas, it shows that time is self-contradictory. Also the point of the relativity of time is often to be referred to in the sense that tradition does attribute a different time to each of the planes of existence. For instance it is said that for each of the different *devalokas* and *brahmalokas* there is a different time scale from the human time scale. This again suggests that time is, as we would say, subjective, and not an objective reality. Your time is related to the nature of your experience. This is in fact a part of general Indian thought. For instance a hundred years of human life is equivalent to a day in the life of Brahma. Of course in Buddhism there's a whole hierarchy of *brahmas* above a whole hierarchy of *devas*. And they all have their different times. In a way of course you get a very faint echo of this in Christianity where the hymn says, I think paraphrasing a psalm, "A thousand ages in Thy sight are like an evening done. Short as the watch that ends the night before the rising sun." Some of you must have sung that in your younger days - maybe they don't sing it any more.

Will Spens: When they speak of the course of a Bodhisattva's career being over thousands and thousands of lifetimes is that on a different time scale?

S: This would seem to be intended to be taken quite literally. That a Bodhisattva's total career covers three *asamkheyyas* of kalpas. Though of course again it's interesting that *asamkheyya* means unreckonable. So it's an unreckonableness of kalpas! So... I was going to say it's not a strictly mathematical expression, but then -you do have a branch of higher mathematics which deals with

320 BI 19-')

infinitesimals and infinitudes. I don't know whether that is the expression, but anyway, that is the idea. That you can in fact have twice infinity, in mathematics, though of course philosophically speaking it's

nonsense. You can divide infinity by infinity, or you can have ten infinities squared or cubed or... (laughter) all sorts of things. So, since one has this kalpas, this (let us say) unreckonable-ness of kalpas, it does suggest it's not a (sort of) finite period perhaps, that is intended to be conveyed.

Lalitavajra: Coming a little more down to earth, the concept of time is expressed in a linear fashion - between (sort of, like) birth and death... What happens in the case of, like with déjà-vu experiences and sometimes prophetic dreams, where one... like the conditionality of which the linear time id (unclear) seems to be functioning in quite a different way.

S: But does the déjà-vu type experience necessarily negate (so to speak) the concept of linear time? Because you're still moving in a line. It's more that you're (sort of) jumping about along that line, if you see what I mean.

Lalitavajra: It seems to express more like a flexibility or fluidity...

S: Well, I mean, there are these déjà-vu experiences. There's a difference of opinion of what they mean or how they're to be interpreted. But clearly they do have some bearing upon this question of time. They do seem to support the idea of time being subjective rather than objective. There are not only déjà-vu experiences, there are also pre-cognitive experiences. There are some which are well attested. It has been suggested that the déjà-vu experience comes about when one has, or has had, a pre-cognitive dream which one has forgotten. That seems to me the most likely explanation because, yes, one has dreams - yes, one can have pre-cognitive dreams, one can have pre-cognitive waking experiences, and if one can pre-cognitive waking experiences, why not pre-cognitive dreams? And of course one can forget dreams. So it is quite possible that one should have a pre-cognitive experience in a dream which you proceed to forget. So then, when you experience the actual thing itself, well, clearly you have an uneasy feeling of, "I've experienced this before". Well, yes, you have, in your dream, that is to say in your pre-cognitive dream. And that could explain the nature of déjà-vu type experience.

But that explanation of course presupposes pre-cognition, which as I've said, can take place during the waking state. And that, I would say, is a well attested fact. It does, you know, call into question the whole question of the objectivity of time. It does suggest that time, or time-sense (so to speak) is related to consciousness, or is (so to speak) subjective. Not that time is a mental state and nothing but a mental state, but that it cannot be understood apart from mental states, or it's inseparable from mental states. It's not a thing (as it were) out there, quite independent of the mind.

Vessantara: Is there anything useful which can be said to explain the relationship between your emotional state and your experience of time and space?

S: Well, it would seem... I'm not sure about space but take, for the moment time. It's well known that when we're happy time seems to pass more quickly. When we are concentrated time seems to pass more quickly.