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THE BODHISATTVA IDEAL

2

'Masculinity' & 'Femininity'
in the Spiritual Life



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Cover Symbol:

The symbols on the covers of the issues in this series are from original lino-cuts by Dharmachari Aloka based upon the *mudrās* of the eight principal Bodhisattvas of Mahayana tradition. This issue features the *mudrā* of the Bodhisattva Sarva-nīvaraṇa-viśkambhin or 'He Who Destroys the Hindrances'. His right hand is shown here holding the lotus (lower with the Wheel of the Dharma resting on it). He holds his left hand in the *karuṇā mudrā*, which is directed against the forces of evil.

THE BODHISATTVA IDEAL

5 'Masculinity' and 'Femininity' in the Spiritual Life

Part 2

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*Indicates refer to Glossary

Editorial

'Dharmacharinis are so rare in the world ... and especially so here in India.' With these words Dharmacharini Anagarika Ratnasuri introduced the ordination ceremony and two Indian women became members of the Western Buddhist Order — Jnanasuri and Vimalasuri. '*Śūrī*' means heroine and heroic they indeed were. I had the pleasure, the honour, of being present at the occasion. During the days leading up to this momentous one I had watched the two women. I had witnessed their devotion. I had seen them attentive and receptive. I knew how sincerely they had asked for ordination. I saw how energetically they put the teaching into practice. The Venerable Sangharakshita has frequently been heard to admire Indian women for their supportiveness and these were no exception. But not only were they supportive, they could also lead. They were able to stand alone, to encourage and inspire others. Sitting facing the shrine, heading a crowd of four to five hundred, publically declaring their commitment to the Three Jewels they radiated the qualities of *kṣānti* and *vīrya*.

The ceremony was held at Sadhamma Pradeepa, our Retreat Centre in India. Now I have seen it for myself. Nestled into the edge of a sun-drenched valley it is overshadowed by the ancient Buddhist caves of Bhāja. Some say it was nuns who dwelt there. But whether it was monks or nuns, their influence penetrated down to those who would receive it. Sadhamma Pradeepa was built to help rekindle the light of the Dharma. An enormous amount of energy has been exerted to revive Buddhism in the land of its birth. Once again people can open themselves to the teaching of the Buddha whose disciples had lived in the caves overlooking us. *Kṣānti* and *vīrya* were alive in the atmosphere. A truly auspicious setting for our two heroines to embark on their spiritual career.

The terms 'masculinity' and 'femininity' have been, for many people it seems, quite difficult to appreciate or to relate to. Without labouring the point I hope that the Venerable Sangharakshita's forthright comments in this issue of *Mitrata* will serve once again to clarify points of confusion.

SRIMALA

Seminar Extracts

1 Stand Up For Buddhism

from Questions and Answers on the Bodhisattva. Ideal, Pre-Ordination Retreat, Tuscany 1984

Phil Shann: How much do you tolerate intolerance? The examples I'm thinking of are: the Jesuits who went into Tibet and apparently had a very divisive effect; and also the National Front today and the effect that they have. And how much censorship, therefore, should be applied?

Sangharakshita: How does a tolerant belief or teaching or organization protect itself from an intolerant one? This is really an incredibly difficult question, because usually the one who believes in tolerance believes in nonviolence. So it's not really open to him, on principle, perhaps even to defend himself by violent means. But then what does he do? Does he allow himself to be completely overcome and overwhelmed?

The only sort of answer that I can see — and it may not be a complete one — is that you must be very far-sighted, perhaps very diplomatic, and even cunning up to a point. You must see the danger coming and take steps to counteract it, before it reaches the point where it can be counteracted only by violent means. I think also you've not got to hesitate to take full advantage of the law where it is in fact on your side. And I think you've got to engage very freely and vigorously in debate, and present and argue your point of view, not let your case go by default.

I found this in India. I'll give an example: When I was in Kalimpong¹ I happened to walk through the bazaar one day when I saw some posters. These posters had clearly been put up by a Christian missionary organization and they were addressed to the local Tibetans; they were in Tibetan. One depicted a ravine or chasm over which was a bridge. One side of the chasm was labelled 'sin' and the other side was labelled, in Tibetan, 'salvation'. And the bridge was labelled 'The Bridge of Faith in Jesus Christ'; underneath the bridge there was a cobweb spun by a spider and this was labelled 'The Path of Buddhism', and there was a lama standing on the hither bank labelled 'sin' and pointing to this cobweb and advising people to cross by that instead of by this great strong bridge above -- 'The Bridge of Faith in Jesus Christ'. Then the other poster depicted a great cross that was let into a rock face. And there was a beautiful young Tibetan girl running to take refuge in this cross-shaped cleft in the rock and hide there; and running after her was an evil-looking lama, hand raised with a knife, about to stab her in the back and prevent her taking refuge there. I don't think this had any caption; it didn't need one.

When I saw these I was very annoyed and very upset. I at once talked to my Tibetan and other Buddhist friends and said that we must do something about it. But to my surprise they hesitated. They didn't exactly say that it would be wrong to protest; they felt very upset and very hurt that these posters had been put up. They felt in fact quite insulted. But they felt very afraid to try and take any steps about it. To some extent I could understand the Tibetans hesitating; some of them were refugees and didn't want to get into trouble. But even those who were residents and Indian citizens just didn't feel like protesting or taking any action. So I wrote a very strong letter to the Deputy Commissioner in Darjeeling — he being the head of the administration for the whole district — that these were insulting to the Buddhist faith and I feared that if they were allowed to continue there could even be a disturbance of the peace. I thought, well, I'll make one even if nobody else does! In fact, I told my friends that if nothing happened I was going to tear them down myself! But anyway the Deputy Commissioner ordered these posters to be taken down forthwith, which they were. So I got that action taken just by having recourse — not even to the law — but to the administration. But the significant part was that all my Buddhist friends were afraid to do anything.

Phil Shann: Why do you think that was?

S.: It's difficult to say. In the case of the Tibetans, maybe it was due, to some extent, to the fact that they'd always lived under an autocracy and weren't accustomed to initiating any action in that sort of way. I think

in the case of the non-Tibetans it might have been due to all sorts of wrong ideas about tolerance — that it would somehow be intolerant of them to get those posters taken down. But I was really quite surprised and quite disillusioned.

There were a number of instances like that. If any misrepresentation of Buddhism came out in a newspaper or magazine I'd be sure to protest against it in a letter or article, or get some of my contacts to take action about it. It was well known that if there was anything to be protested about of a Buddhist nature, it was always Sangharakshita who did it. Nobody else did. The others would applaud me and even egg me on, but they would never do anything themselves! They would never stick their necks out. I can't say that I even stuck my neck out, because I never got into the slightest trouble, though I did gradually acquire a reputation for intolerance.

Some of my bhikshu friends in Calcutta used to say to me, "Go on, you say it; we can't say these things. We don't dare say these things." But there was no reason why they shouldn't. They were just as much able to say them as I was — in fact in some cases they were better placed, especially those who were Indian citizens. After all, I was a foreigner; I could have been asked to leave the country, whereas they couldn't have been.

I'll give you another example. In the early '50s I was down in Calcutta and I was invited to do one of those 'fellowship of faiths' meetings. This one happened to be presided over by the then Governor of West Bengal, who was actually a Christian. And this chairman made some quite inappropriate and unnecessary remarks — about Buddhism being the same as Hinduism, and also about everyone believing in God and so on and so forth, and calling on everyone to unite on a common platform of faith in God and the brotherhood of man and all the rest of it.

So I happened to write in the Maha Bodhi Journal, which I was then editing, a little editorial in which I took this man to task. And some of my Buddhist friends — not my non-Buddhist friends — were quite upset that I'd ventured to do this. I think their motives were rather mixed. Partly they felt that, as he was the Governor of West Bengal, we ought to keep on the right side of him, that we shouldn't offend him. But partly it was as though they felt we didn't have any right to protest against any misrepresentation of the Dharma. And I just couldn't understand that.

The Buddhists often struck me as a very pusillanimous lot, not understanding their Dharma properly — because the Buddha certainly corrected misunderstandings of his teachings, there's no doubt about that! And one can do that without becoming irate or hysterical and so on and so forth.

Will Spens: Do you think it's this sort of attitude that prevents the Dalai Lama from making a clear distinction between Buddhism and Christianity?

S.: Well, he must surely know the distinction. I think probably that he's just being diplomatic; but I think he doesn't need to be. I don't think he really gains anything by being diplomatic in that sort of way. You can disagree with somebody or say, "No, that is not what Buddhism teaches," but do it so nicely and kindly that, if they are reasonable people, they don't take offence. And the Dalai Lama has got a very good and friendly manner; I don't see why he shouldn't point out where necessary that such and such is not actually what Buddhism teaches. *(Pause.)*

In India it was only Sangharakshita who got a reputation for being intolerant, but of course in England it's the FWBO that's got the reputation. Well, we just stick up for Buddhism and for ourselves — but that has, in some quarters, given us the reputation for being intolerant.

Devamitra: In the Buddhist movement generally the FWBO does seem to have quite a reputation for being intolerant. Can you think of any instances or incidents where that may have been justified to some degree?

S.: Well, I think [someone who says that] must define [what they mean by] intolerance. I did hear a little story some years ago concerning a meeting at the Buddhist Society. It was given by someone I used to

know in the old days; he was speaking on Tibetan Buddhism, about which he knows quite a lot. But just before he started he was informed that two members of the Western Buddhist Order were in the audience. And this information upset him so much that he had difficulty giving his lecture! I must say, I was quite pleased when I heard this. It meant that people realized that when members of the WBO were around they had to be careful what they said, because they were not going to 'tolerate' any misrepresentation of the Dharma. I think it's quite a healthy thing that we've got this reputation. It does rather keep people on their toes. But we've acquired it just by standing up for ourselves, which means no more than speaking our minds or writing what we think. It doesn't go any further than that; but that has been sufficient.



2 If You Want Something - Ask!

from *The Sevenfold Puja*, Men's Order/Mitra Seminar, Padmaloka, July 1978

Sangharakshita: What essentially is happening, what essentially is one doing, in this section [of the Sevenfold Puja]?² What is one's mood or feeling? What do entreaty and supplication really represent?

A Voice: It's a bit like an invocation.

S.: Yes. In what way?

A Voice: It's being courteous with reverence at the same time.

Sagaramati: It's as though you want something.

S.: Yes.

A Voice: Developing receptivity.

S.: Developing receptivity; yes, that's the essential point. So how does that connect with what has gone before?

Lokamitra: Well, you ought to be in a receptive state by now! (*Laughter.*)

S.: Yes — but more precisely than that? Well, what does the *punyanumodanā* consist in?

A Voice: You've been rejoicing in the good qualities of Buddhas and Bodhisattvas, and now you're making yourself receptive to them.

S.: Yes, exactly. First of all, you're rejoicing in the good deeds done by all beings. Then in particular you rejoice in the very nature — not just the activities, but the very nature — of the Bodhisattva and the Buddha, in the arising of the Will to Enlightenment, and in the teaching. So now in the Entreaty and Supplication you're making yourself receptive as it were to all those things, and especially of course to the Buddha and the Dharma. So to those things in which you formerly rejoiced, you're now making yourself

receptive. This introduces the whole question of receptivity, but before we go into that let's just see what the antecedents of this section of the Sevenfold Puja are:

*Saluting them with folded hands
I entreat the Buddhas in all the quarters:
May they make shine the lamp of the Dharma
For those wandering in the suffering of delusion!*³

Which particular episode in the scriptures, in the Pali and Sanskrit texts, does this recall?

A Voice: The request by Brahmā Sahampati.⁴

S.: The request by Brahmā Sahampati, yes. It's as though, here, you are adopting Brahmā Sahampati's role or attitude of respectful entreaty and are requesting the Buddha to teach or to preach. You are making yourself receptive. So does this mean or suggest that the Buddhas don't teach unless they are asked to? Why should it be necessary to entreat them and supplicate?

Sagaramati: In a sense it's true.

S.: In a sense it's true. What sense?

A Voice: Well, they won't teach you yourself unless you are open to their teaching.

S.: Yes, but suppose you are already open, then surely you don't need to ask them? Can't they see that you are open and then just teach?

A Voice: The active element of receptivity.

S.: The active element in the receptivity, yes.

Lokamitra: But if you are open to them, surely that means that you are always requesting them anyway?

S.: Yes, you *show* your openness as it were, you express your openness. The expression is in a way part of the openness. If you really want something, you ask for it. The asking is a natural extension of the wanting. If you don't even ask for it, the assumption is that you don't really want it. It's not exactly that the Buddhas *need* to be asked — they are always ready — but you have to be open and receptive, and you have to show your openness, show your receptivity, and in a way the showing is part of the openness and receptivity itself. Supposing you want something from someone, but you don't like to make it clear to them that you want that, what does that suggest?

A Voice: Woolly-mindedness.

A Voice: Lack of openness.

S.: Lack of openness, yes. Supposing you want to borrow some money — just a couple of pounds, quickly, from somebody. You know that they've got it and that they would be quite willing to lend it to you, but somehow you hesitate to ask them, to make known the fact that you want that from them. What does that suggest? We often find this sort of situation.

Sagaramati: Deceitful.

S.: I wouldn't say it was deceitful.

A Voice: Reserve — holding back.

S.: Yes. In other words?

A Voice: Guilt. (*Laughter.*)

S.: Well, a sort of lack of confidence. You know, in a way, that they are quite willing to lend it to you, but you don't quite like to put yourself in the position of possibly being refused. That means you haven't got *real* confidence that they are going to give it to you. This is one reason why you might hold back and not express your need or want. So do you think there's anything analogous to that in our reluctance sometimes to ask for spiritual teaching?

A Voice: We don't feel that we're worthy of it.

S.: That element could come in too — that we might get more than we bargained for! We might get some spiritual teaching instead of a little pat on the head! That's especially the case with Zen masters, isn't it? If you ask them for a teaching you really do take your life in your hands. But people say that they want to be taught, that they want to learn, but it isn't all that easy to find people who really do want to learn, in a spiritual sense. So it's good to express willingness and readiness to learn and give expression to receptivity in this way; make it absolutely clear that you are open, that you want to be receptive.

A Voice: Like asking for ordination.⁵

S.: Like asking for ordination, yes. But sometimes you find that people adopt the attitude of "Well, I won't actually *ask*, because when I'm ready, people will know and they'll just tell me." That also perhaps suggests a *certain* lack of openness in that way.



3 The Place of Prayer

from 'Rechungpa's Repentance' (*The Hundred Thousand Songs of Milarepa*) Men's Seminar, Padmaloka, November 1980

"I will now pray the Dākinīs to give me back my books". He sat and prayed, and in a short while the Formless Dākinīs Teachings⁶ together with other books that were beneficial to the Dharma and to sentient beings, all miraculously returned to Rechungpa's hand. He was delighted beyond all measure.

The Hundred Thousand Songs of Milarepa, trans. Garma C. C. Chang, Shambhala, Boulder & London 1977, Vol. 11, p. 453

Sangharakshita: What does this incident mean, do you think? (*Pause.*)

Jayadeva: I would have thought it meant 'meditate' rather than 'pray'.

S.: One would have thought so. But perhaps we shouldn't be too scared of the word 'pray'. It doesn't necessarily have a mundane theistic connotation. What, for instance, is actually happening when a Tibetan Buddhist engages in an activity which he renders as 'prayer'?

Mike Chivers: It's an invocation.

S.: I would say that the word 'prayer' suggests that you are actually *asking* for something, that what you say takes the form of a request. But why do you think that the request is in the form that is taken here, [as] a petition almost? (*Pause.*) For instance, let's say that a Tibetan Buddhist is praying. He's not praying to God because he doesn't believe in God. Maybe he is praying to the Buddha, the Bodhisattvas or the *Dākinīs*⁷, but he's not praying in the sense that he is asking for any material thing. He's praying in the sense that he is asking for blessings, for higher understanding, for wisdom, for compassion. What is really happening, what is his attitude? Why is what he's saying taking the form of a request or prayer? Why is he asking for something? What does that mean?

Devaraja: It means [he's in] a position of receptivity.

S.: Yes, it is a position of receptivity.

A Voice: Also he feels he hasn't got [that particular quality].

S.: Yes, [his prayer] expresses the fact that he hasn't got it and that he would like to have it. It's a question of the limitations of language. [For instance], if there is some material thing that you haven't got and that you want, you just say to someone, "Please pass me the toast", or "Please give me some money". In the case of the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas, they have got Wisdom and Compassion, which you haven't got but would like to have. So your aspiration to develop wisdom and compassion takes the form of a request to the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas to *give* you them. Actually you know, as an informed Tibetan Buddhist, that wisdom and compassion are not qualities that can be just handed over to you by the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas like a slice of toast or like money. You know that very well, but nonetheless you continue to use the language of request, of petition. Do you see why that is?

Jayadeva: It's harnessing the mundane to the Transcendental end.

S.: Yes, it is. (*Pause.*) You cannot help but think of wisdom and compassion as qualities that can be acquired or received, or even given; language almost compels you to think [in this way]. So you *use* that sort of language, [because] it has a certain emotive value, and it does express an openness and receptivity. But it's not that you really do literally believe that you can be actually given those qualities by Buddhas and Bodhisattvas. In any case, of course, you understand that those Buddhas and Bodhisattvas aren't really separate from you. They can be regarded as representing or symbolizing unrealized states of one's own being, which one is trying to activate [through prayer]. Therefore, prayer, understood in this way, is not out of place in Tibetan Buddhism, even in Buddhism generally. And it is a very different attitude from that of meditation. Do you see that? It's not the same thing as meditation.

A Voice: But [prayer] does seem to give one the feeling of where one's at. It deflates any inflated idea [you may have of yourself]; if you're actually asking for something, you really are emphasizing that you haven't got it and that you are in need of it.

S.: Yes.

Jayadeva: Meditation [can have] that element of devotion when you meditate in a shrine room, which is a place devoted to meditation and higher things than yourself.

S.: Yes, right.

Abhaya: It sounds like prayer is a psychological need from the way it's put. [One's attitude] seems to be, "I know there's not really anything that can be acquired or anything I can get from outside me, but this is the way the mind works".

S.: I think, though, you need to bear in mind the Tibetan Buddhist's experience. It's not that he thinks, "I'll just make a pretence of asking, but I know that I've really got to do it myself". At the time of praying he actually *feels* that he hasn't got [what he wants] and that he is to be given it and therefore has to ask. He may [indeed] have an intellectual understanding that it's all within him, and he may be convinced that this is a true understanding, but that's not his actual experience at the time.

Kulamitra: In other words, he's trying to work on the metaphysical level, [rather than on the merely psychological].

S.: I wouldn't say just psychological, though, in a narrow sense.

Abhaya: This suggests that if you're really doing the Puja [wholeheartedly] and you're praying to the protectors,⁸ you really do experience the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas as definitely 'out there', and they have something which they can give you in a very real way.

S.: Yes, yes. I think one shouldn't inhibit that experience or prevent oneself from experiencing it fully just because one has a purely rational understanding of the fact that the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas are not really 'out there'.

Devaraja: Yes, it seems that praying is almost like a theatrical or dramatic need. It's a need for ritual which very few of our activities enable us [to satisfy]. And it's really important.

S.: Yes, quite a few people over the years, mainly within the 'Friends', have told me that sometimes they actually do feel like praying to the Buddha or Bodhisattvas. But then they inhibit that and write to me [asking what I think]. [They say], "So far as we understand, in Buddhism there is no such thing as prayer. There's only meditation. In any case, what can the Buddhas do for you? They can't *give* you anything; you shouldn't ask them for anything mundane, and as for spiritual things, well, you've got to earn those by your own efforts. So even though we feel like praying, is it perhaps just a weakness that we've got to suppress?" I always reply that if you feel like praying, if that is your actual experience, go ahead with that, and work out the 'theology' of it afterwards. Do you see what I mean? If it is your genuine aspiration, don't suppress it.

One mustn't forget also that [prayer] is a means of concentrating one's emotional energies. And after all, one is operating within the subject/object duality; one is actually experiencing [this duality], and it's as though one has to go through that, rather than just try to negate it on purely rational grounds.

Voices: Yes.

Simon Chinnery: I have experienced in the Puja feeling very much that I am actually asking for strength, for guidance, and not that I just flop down and it's all going to be given to me. But I've [also experienced] the other extreme: part of you really blocks your feelings and you think, "No, I shouldn't be doing this." It's almost a sort of Christian thing. Sometimes I've got into quite an unhappy state from doing that because it's very solidly blocking off a source of emotion which, when I do let it run, is really preparing a very receptive feel.

S.: Also perhaps one could say that it is as true to say that the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas are outside you as that they're inside you. Because whatever you say, you're still operating within the subject/object duality. It's not that they are really inside you, but not outside you, because that assumes that the subject is more real than the object, which it isn't. Both are equally real and equally unreal. You can think of that reality which is neither subject nor object either as a sort of superobject (*laughs*) outside you or as a super-subject inside you. It doesn't really make any difference. It's a bit like the Bishop of Woolwich's New Theology, the

'Ground of Being' and all that.⁹ [Somebody] asked a rather caustic commentator if he thought it was a tremendous change, and he said, "No, it's just a change over from Sky-Father to Earth-Mother". It's a bit like that.

Jayadeva: We touched on it yesterday to some extent. We were talking about the *Dākinīs* and the Muses, forces of inspiration which you do experience to a certain extent as coming in from outside.

S.: Yes, that is the actual experience of many poets. It can be interpreted as something that is welling up from within, but their actual experience is of a force definitely from outside coming into them.

Abhaya: [When poets] at the beginning of a poem invoke the Muses, sometimes you read it just like a pure formality, something that [poets] do; but in fact, maybe, they really feel this, and actually do invoke the Muses.

S.: [Yes], some poets anyway. Milton seems to have had a genuine experience of that sort,¹⁰ and Nietzsche certainly did,¹¹ though he didn't speak in terms of the Muses exactly.

A Voice: The religious prophets and people like that definitely have an experience of something higher entering their lives from outside, but then they rigidly interpret it in the light of theistic tradition.

S.: Yes, right.

Jayadeva: It would seem to be almost impossible to build great works of art and things like that if you felt that it all came from within yourself, because there would be no need to give expression to it, somehow.

Devaraja: It's a bit limiting, isn't it? If [what you create] comes from your crummy, everyday self, it's very boring. (*Laughter.*) There's no expansiveness to it. No vast kind of stage peopled with [magical beings]. (*Laughter.*)

Jayadeva: If you took all the archetypal Bodhisattvas and just thought of them as being aspects of yourself...

S.(*interrupting*): Well, that is true, they are aspects of your deeper self, but that is assuming that you are speaking of the reality which is neither subject nor object, in terms exclusively of 'subject'. And it's no less valid to think of [that reality] exclusively in terms of 'object'. [The archetypal Bodhisattvas] are just as much 'out there', in reality, as they are 'in here'. It's not any more valid to think of them as existing in the depths of your own being, than to think of them in terms of existing way beyond anything that you can experience or conceive of.

Abhaya: So would you say that the need or urge to pray, in this sense, would continue until the Bodhisattva has become a Buddha, or until a very high level of spiritual attainment?

S.: Oh yes, I would, definitely! It's as though one can either try to call up from within or call down from above; it comes to the same thing. Language has severe limitations here. You are trying to introduce into your experience within the subject/object duality something which is beyond, and which can be thought of either as 'below' the subject or 'above' the object. If you think of it as being below the subject, you think of it as something emerging from within the depths of your own being. And if you think of it as something beyond the object, you think of it as something Transcendentally aloof, to which you must direct your prayers and aspirations.

Abhaya: This is what annoys me rather about, I wouldn't say normal Christians, but Christian intellectuals, who are now going away from God as Supreme Being. If one spoke to them in this sort of way their retort would be, "Oh, that's God then! Oh yes, we agree, we're on the same ..."

S.(*interrupting*): There is a difference in several ways. Firstly, we do not postulate the Buddha, even conceived of as a Buddha to whom you can pray, as exercising any sort of cosmic function as creator and

preserver, and so on. Also, for Christians, the God to whom they pray is genuinely object, part of the objective universe, so to speak. But for the Buddhist, the Buddha, though experienced as object, in reality is only what I call a symbolic object, or a pseudo-object. That is to say, Ultimate Reality is conceived of in Buddhism as neither object nor subject, in that Ultimate Reality the subject/object distinction does not exist. But at the moment our experience and our expression is entirely within the subject/object framework. The minute we think of that which is beyond the subject and object distinction, we make it an object. If we postulate an object, that is to say, the Buddha, which symbolizes that which is neither subject nor object, that Buddha-object is an object only in a purely *formal* and *symbolic* sense. Whereas the God of Christian theology is an object in a real sense. Do you see the difference?

Jayadeva: They reify their 'Ground of Being'.

S.: Yes, so if you pray to the God of Christianity you are a real subject praying to a real object, but in Buddhism, if you, as a Buddhist, pray to the Buddha, you are a symbolic subject praying to a symbolic object so as to transcend altogether the subject/object duality. That is the difference. [Although] you will experience yourself as a real subject praying to a real object, you will know, on reflection, that that is not so and when you have a more ultimate experience, that [dichotomy] will be transcended.



4 An Aunt Who Wore Trousers

from 'The Working Basis' (*The Jewel Ornament of Liberation*), Women's Order/Mitra Seminar, Padmaloka, May 1982

Paula Turner: If in the process of growing you are trying to unify the opposites [of male and female in yourself], should you not be trying to develop the ability to function in either way?

Sangharakshita: Yes, but, as Dhammadinna said at the beginning, it's a question of really developing and unifying, not mixing or confusing or blurring in an undeveloped state. That is the real point. For instance, on a more psychological level, you may sometimes hear talk among men about having to get in touch with their femininity, or among women about having to get in touch with their masculinity. But some men need to get more in touch with their masculinity first before they start trying to get in touch with their femininity. And vice versa: some women need to get more fully in touch with their femininity and then try to get in touch, so to speak, with their masculinity.

Rosie Ong: When you talk about harmony, with the two different modes operating, do you mean you still operate in two ways, depending on the circumstances, or ...?

S.: Yes and no. By harmony I mean that you reach a sort of higher level or higher mode of operating, which, in a way, is neither the one nor the other but blends the two. But, when circumstances require it, you are capable of operating in that situation in an apparently one-sided manner — not because you are limited to that way of operating, but you use it because the situation requires it, even though you may be a completely balanced person. You may not need to exercise all your talents, so to speak, in every situation; just a selection of them may be sufficient. So it isn't a question of having both at your disposal, using now one, now the other. No, you reach a higher level where they are unified, but a particular situation may require you to operate through one or another of those modes of functioning. I hope this isn't getting too abstract.

Vajrasuri: It's a very important point: that they are not just side by side, they're actually unified.

S.: Yes. They are not just conjoined externally, they are really unified and integrated.

Dhammadinna: So you respond appropriately to different situations, and it may be in one or the other way.

S.: Yes, right. It may appear to others that you are operating in a predominantly masculine or predominantly feminine way in a particular case, but so far as you are concerned, you are just being you, as an integrated, as it were, psychologically androgynous individual, just responding to circumstances. You don't feel, "Now I am being very masculine", or "Now I am being very feminine". You are aware of the particular mode of functioning, but you are just *you*.

Dhammadinna: If there is [a degree] of gender confusion not on the biological level but the psychological, which I think is where it affects most people — when you say one has to start from one's base, if one is confused, it's difficult to know...

S.: Well, you have first of all to find what is your base.

Dhammadinna: Yes, to clarify. I mean you may not be able to distinguish too much between the different types of energy, and may just be confused as to what really being a woman or really being a man is. I suppose the process of meditation itself might begin to sort that out as it puts you more in touch with yourself.

S.: Well, yes. It helps you to see things more clearly, or it may help to put you in touch with your feelings.

Dhammadinna: Do you think that spending time with your own sex might [help you to] learn what that's all about ...

S.: Provided you are clear as to what is your own sex! Maybe you should clarify that first, in some cases — or at least really feel at one with your own sex. There are some women who feel, you know, not very much at home in the company of other women, and some men who feel not very much at home in the company of other men, as though they don't have much in common with them.

Dhammadinna: So would you say that was a confusion?

S.: It could be a confusion but sometimes, in the first case, the woman may naturally be, let's say, a more masculine type of woman. There is no confusion; she just doesn't enjoy women's company particularly. The same, let's say, of a more feminine man who doesn't particularly enjoy men's company and conversation. Because — despite the trend in the discussion so far -- it's not as though there are in fact just female women and male men; there's a whole intermediate range. But you need to know where you stand in this respect and proceed from there. That seems to be the basic message. You may just have been confused by your culture, your upbringing, your ideology and so on. So it seems you need to sort that out.

Annie Murphy: Would it be all right, Bhante, not really to bother to sort out whether you were a more masculine woman or whatever [as long as] you had a really positive response to the fact that that was your gender — that you were a male [or a female], that that was all right, that was really good, and just get on with it rather than ...?

S.: I think, in many cases, you need to feel that, whatever you are, it's OK; provided it's a sort of natural phenomenon and not just brought about by social and cultural conditioning and distortion. As if to say, "Well, if that is the way nature made me, that's OK, that's my starting point. If nature made me a very female woman, that's my starting point. Nothing wrong in that! If on the other hand nature made me a rather masculine woman, I am naturally that; well, never mind! That's my starting point. That's me. I go forward from here."

Kay Tremayn: Would she then try to develop her masculine side once she realized that she was naturally a feminine type [for instance]?

S.: Well, this does raise the difficulty: What do we really mean by 'masculine' and 'feminine'? Well, we'll be here the rest of the retreat if we get on to that ...! So what can one say? What does one usually mean by 'the masculine woman'? Are there such people? What does that mean, then?

Dhammadinna: Usually someone who's got more drive and aggressiveness — what one labels as that sort of thing ...

S.: This seems to mean that men normally have aggressiveness and all those other qualities. Sometimes one means by 'a masculine woman' one who approximates in appearance to a man — who could be mistaken for a man in the distance, who walks like a man, holds herself like a man -- yes? no? but sometimes -- You seem confused about this. (*Laughter and mutterings.*)

A Voice: To me that isn't a masculine woman, that's something else!

S.: This is what *has* been regarded as a 'masculine woman' — she seems to have certain characteristics which are usually regarded as masculine, but they may, of course, be characteristics which are masculine only in a quite conventional social sense. I mean it isn't an essential feature of masculinity that men wear trousers, because in some cultures they don't, with no prejudice to their masculinity. So if a woman wears trousers, she's not necessarily a masculine woman, but she may be a woman who wishes to be considered masculine. You see, I think one has to make those sort of distinctions.

Dhammadinna: No wonder we're all confused! (*Laughter.*)

S.: In our culture, women seem to have appropriated masculine garments but men have not appropriated feminine garments. I mean it's quite in order for a woman to go around in trousers, but it's not in order for a man to go around in skirts. Why? There seems to be sexual prejudice somewhere, on somebody's part, not to say discrimination! A woman walks around in trousers and nobody turns a hair. But I can remember — and I'm not all that old — when a woman who went out in trousers was considered not quite nice! I can see the change that has taken place. I remember as a boy I had an aunt who wore trousers. She didn't go out in them; she wore them inside the house. And people were really scandalized. My mother was scandalized. Now my mother at the age of eighty-five goes out in trousers; doesn't think anything of it! Things have changed. So one has to take that into consideration, too. There is what is regarded as a more socially masculine and socially feminine behaviour which doesn't necessarily have much to do with actual psychological masculinity and psychological femininity. But it is rather odd that women are allowed this sort of freedom and men apparently are not.

Dhammadinna: It seems that, if you're a woman, you can explore the range, at least in your dress, and even in your behaviour, from feminine to masculine within your own gender and that's OK; nobody really bothers about it. But if you're a man, you've got quite a limited expression, in our society. You've got only a very narrow [range in which to] express yourself. In that way, women are freer, in a sense.

S.: Yes, they are allowed, so to speak, greater freedom. Whether they avail themselves of it is another matter, but the freedom is there.

Rosie Ong: Bhante, I don't know if I'm mistaken, but in the scriptures there seem to be quite a lot of derogatory references to women. They often put women down.

S.: Well, in a way that's true. There are two things to be borne in mind there. One is that usually in the scriptures the Buddha is addressing monks rather than nuns, men rather than women. Second, one has to examine the meaning of the word 'derogatory', because something may be regarded as derogatory in one culture but not in another. For instance, in the West, we tend to regard it as derogatory to serve, but in India it's not regarded as derogatory to serve. So if someone from the West goes, say, to India and sees a

woman serving her husband in the way that is traditional there, they may think she's being treated as lower [than men], that she's being used as a servant. But she does not see it like that. The culture does not think like that. She regards serving, including serving her husband, as noble. She enjoys serving. We might think that was very derogatory [or demeaning], but they wouldn't agree with that.

We must not confuse our cultures. What may be derogatory in one culture is not regarded as derogatory in another. Do you see what I mean?

To come back to more general terms: we have to be very sure what our actual present position is because that is our starting point. We go forward from here.

Kay Tremayn: But once we've found our starting point, would it be good to develop the other sides of us ...?

S.: Yes, I think once we've found our starting point, we go forward from that. But one aspect of going forward is that, in the course of development as an individual, one becomes more and more integrated — that is, expresses more and more aspects of oneself so that, in the end, in this particular context, we are at least psychologically androgynous.

It may be that you remain physically male or female and function through that aspect, but psychologically you are not limited or confined by it. When you become psychologically androgynous you don't become physically hermaphrodite. You remain a man or you remain a woman, but your mental attitude, your spiritual attitude, changes. You may continue to function as a woman or you may continue to function as a man, but you don't identify yourself exclusively with that particular 'role', so to speak, as perhaps you did formerly.



5 A Bunch of Flowers

from Question and Answers Pre-Ordination Retreat, Tuscany 1981

Sangharakshita: Don't be too misled or confused by all this talk about 'masculinity' and 'femininity'. It is best to think in terms of developing all spiritual qualities in a rounded sort of way. Develop understanding, develop sympathy, develop sensitivity, develop tact, develop heroism, develop courage, develop everything.

Murray Wright: Do you think, though, that in terms of the visualization practices¹² of Padmasambhava and Tārā,¹³ that Tārā would specifically develop more one's femininity? And, in order to be able to visualize Padmasambhava properly, wouldn't you have to be in touch with femininity or receptivity, [and thus be visualizing Tārā as well]?

S.: There is quite a bit of confusion in people's minds about the qualities associated with these different visualized forms of Bodhisattvas. Tārā, though very female in *form*, is nonetheless a Transcendental figure; and so cannot herself really be female, or even feminine, in the narrow sense. Tara herself transcends these distinctions of male and female. She assumes a female form because those who — especially men —

meditate upon her and visualize her need to develop and experience the feminine qualities before they can hope to approach that Transcendental Wisdom represented by Tārā. Just because Tārā appears in a feminine form, we must not think of her as representing feminine qualities in a narrow sense. She actually represents that which transcends all such distinctions, as do all other Bodhisattvas. In 'essence', Tārā is no more feminine than Mañjuśrī¹³ is masculine. Tārā is no more Compassion than Manjuḥṣa is Wisdom, or than Padmasambhava is Energy.

Sometimes people like to take up the visualization of Padmasambhava. They think: "Oh, he has lots of energy". But they are completely missing the point. It is not that Padmasambhava is a bundle of Energy which excludes Compassion and Wisdom; and that, for Compassion and Wisdom, we have to go to Tārā and Mañjuśrī. It is not like that at all. Padmasambhava is simply a particular aspect [of the Transcendental] turned towards us, which, because of the limitations of our own approach, represents the particular attributes and qualities we especially need to develop. Though *all* these qualities are present in *all* those Bodhisattvas to a superlative degree, tradition does present individual Bodhisattvas to us under one or another particular aspect — as though Compassion were separate from Wisdom, or Energy separate from Wisdom, and so forth — in order to accommodate our limitations.

Murray Wright: So it is very much a matter of starting from where you are?

S.: Yes, start from wherever you are, and whenever you can.

Murray Wright: So, if energy is what you have going for you, rather than, say, humility, perhaps it would be better to take Padmasambhava as a visualization practice, because at least you have an affinity with that aspect?

S.: If the figure of Padmasambhava appeals to you, and you feel that Padmasambhava represents Energy, that is fair enough. Though it is quite a limited view, at least it is an approach; and later on, when you have explored that Energy aspect, you can then begin to see and realize that there is Compassion and Wisdom too in Padmasambhava. You begin to see Padmasambhava not merely as the embodiment of Energy, but as the embodiment of *all* Enlightened qualities. You see him more and more truly.

A Voice: But at the same time I have heard you say that a visualization practice can develop a quality [which is not yet apparent in one], but is only latent and beneath the surface.

S.: That is true, because the particular aspect of the Buddha or Bodhisattva is meant to function in that way.

A Voice: I find a conflict in trying to work out whether it is better to develop what is already fairly apparent in me, or whether to develop what is actually suppressed. Which is the better thing to do?

S.: You have to start with that which is developed to some extent. Otherwise, if you are trying to develop a quality which you do not have, and, in a sense do not experience at all, you will find it very difficult, if not impossible, to make the connection. Supposing, for the sake of an example, that you feel there is no compassion whatever in you. As far as you are concerned you have never felt compassionate — that quality is just not there. You are cold, hard, cruel, and perhaps even sadistic. (*Laughter.*) But you recognize intellectually that you need to develop compassion, and so you think that you will take up the visualization of Avalokiteśvara.¹⁴ But if you take it up merely on an intellectual basis, without any connecting thread of compassion coming from yourself, you will never be able to get on with the practice. Fortunately, very few people have such an extreme experience as that, because there is usually a little bit of compassion, or energy, or wisdom [already present within them], and through that they can make a connection with this or that Bodhisattva.

Gerald Burns: Isn't the mistake that may be made be that we see masculinity and femininity as being mutually exclusive? For example, a man might be afraid to develop his femininity because in doing so he might feel he is going to lose his masculinity. He may feel that if he gives up being competitive he will lose touch with his energy and drive.

S.: Well, of course, in these more distorted forms masculinity and femininity are mutually exclusive; but in their naturally healthy forms they are not exclusive, but complementary. In fact, they are *more* than complementary: they blend and interfuse. It is not that they are just lying comfortably and happily side by side, but they are interpenetrating each other.

Alan Angel: You spoke, Bhante, about developing *all* the spiritual qualities. Taking that statement of yours on a more practical level, I have been thinking about homemaking: because the term used for a lot of men's communities I have resided at, is 'barrack-room'. To me it is very ...

S.(*interrupting*): Speaking as one who has spent three years in the Army, I think that to use that term is an insult to the Army! (*Laughter.*) Barrack-rooms are neat and tidy, and inspected every morning. (*Laughter.*) I won't go so far as to say that a barrack-room is homely, though it can be a bit homely sometimes in the evenings, but it is certainly not untidy or dirty or anything of that sort. That would *never* be tolerated — you would have all the people in the barrack-room up on a charge if that were the case. Anyway, let us carry on.

Alan Angel: I was going to say, I feel that developing those more homely aspects could ...

S.(*interrupting*): I would rather you didn't say 'homely': let us call them 'community' aspects.

Alan Angel: They could go some way towards developing that femininity we seem to lack.

S.: To the extent that feminine qualities are linked to the actual female, they are nurturing qualities. Biologically speaking, it is the female that actually nurtures and cares for the young, rather than the male, who protects them from a comparative distance. So these nurturing qualities are female as well as feminine, and they need to be developed by men. Many men living in men's communities are very lacking in these qualities.

In many men there is not much tendency to look after one another, and some do not even look after themselves or their own environment. To care for yourself and for your environment, and to like to see things looking beautiful, is a form of metta. If your surroundings are not beautiful, then it induces a certain state of mind; and if they are beautiful, it induces a certain other state of mind. This is the great point of people like William Morris,¹⁵ who insisted that machine-made things should not be ugly, and that we should not be surrounded by mass-produced things that look hideous, because that has a [deleterious] effect on our minds.

If the rooms in a community are untidy, dirty, and not cared for, this definitely produces an effect on the minds of the people who are living there. If one has been accustomed to living with women and leaving all that sort of thing to them, and then one moves into a men's community, what one has to do then is develop those 'womanly' qualities and fulfil those functions oneself. I am not saying that *all* women have this very good aesthetic feeling. Very often they do not; they only tidy up, or titivate with a bit of cloth, so that the house is at least a little bright and pleasing. But you really cannot say more than that. It should be possible to go further than that and pay some attention to the colour scheme of the rooms, and to whether or not there are curtains, and to see the plants that you have are watered. So often, at Sukhavati,¹⁶ I have seen people buy plants which just seemed to get neglected. You visit a month later, and most of the plants are dead. It is as though people think that it is enough to go along to the market on Saturday and buy a few potted plants, and put them around — and then forget all about them. But plants have to be nurtured and looked after, and that means you have to possess some feeling for the plants and for the community environment as such, and then also have some feeling for the people around you.

Often there is not much care for *other* people, and seeing whether they are getting what they need. One notices this in men's communities especially at mealtimes. Unless it is a special occasion, everybody simply gets his grub and 'digs in'. It is really like a whole row of animals of some kind, just digging their noses into their little troughs and ignoring everybody else. (*Laughter.*) It is hardly a human occasion.

And then there is the question of supporting and being supportive. Supportiveness is much more of a feminine, in a sense of a *female*, quality than a masculine one. Men have really got to make effort in order to be genuinely supportive. I'll give you an example. Suppose it is a question of leading a class or a Puja. There is a male Order Member leading it; and there is another male Order Member there in a supporting role, i.e. he is not out front conducting the class or leading the chanting. He is there to support the Order Member who is doing those things. One has got to have a very positive, affirmative attitude towards that supporting role, and be able to really put one's heart into it. You cannot be inwardly not very pleased that you are not the one who is out front — maybe saying to yourself, "Well, I could do just as well as him, so why do I have to support him?" — and you sit there, not mentally supporting, looking around somewhat cynically, and sometimes casting your cynical look at him. That is simply an inability to control your competitiveness and be genuinely supportive. If you are genuinely supportive, you go in beforehand and make sure that everything is all right, and that the one who is going to lead has everything he needs, such as texts from which to lead the chanting. In suchlike ways you would demonstrate an attitude of genuinely supporting him.

Men are usually very lacking in this sort of way. They do not want to support other men because they themselves want to be 'top dog', out there in front and in the lead. This is a natural male tendency, which on the biological level is quite healthy and normal. It only becomes neurotic when you become so one-sided that you *always* have to be first, always have to be out front and 'top dog', regardless of the requirements of the situation or whether you are suitable or not. As a basic male characteristic there is nothing wrong with competitiveness, but when a man comes into the spiritual life, he has to develop the complementary qualities and be able not only to lead — yes, do not lose your capacity to lead — but also to develop his capacity to support.

Most men Mitras and Order Members really need to pay a lot of attention to this area, [so that they are able not to] resent the fact that somebody else seems to be 'top dog'. These two things — developing much more care in [respect to] your immediate environment, and being much more supportive of other men when they are taking the active and prominent part — are actual practices that you can do to develop these complementary qualities, that is, qualities which are complementary to your normal healthy masculine qualities. They will prevent your competitiveness getting out of hand.

A Voice: Then will we experience ourselves more as individuals?

S.: You will indeed be more individual, because you are more integrated and less one-sided.

A Voice: And will we then relate to each other as individuals?

S.: Indeed.

Ratnaguna: Do you think that it might be more helpful to think in terms of leading and supportive roles, rather than 'masculine' and 'feminine'? — because I do get muddled up.

S.: Yes, in certain contexts, such as centre activities and classes, one can think in terms of leading in a positive way and supporting in an apposite way. One need not think in terms of 'masculine' and 'feminine' roles, as that perhaps makes the whole business a bit 'loaded'. One Order Member is leading the class and the other is supporting; and both functions are equally necessary to the success of that particular class.

Alan Angel: What comes to mind, [when thinking about supporting someone], is the word 'service'.

S.: Yes, it is partly on account of our Western pseudo-egalitarian ideas that this whole concept of serving is so very much in abeyance. By contrast, you notice that in India people do serve each other. The women serve the men, without being subservient; and the men serve other men. Younger men serve older men very happily — they are always very pleased to serve. But in the modern West, and certainly in England, it seems that people, and especially men, avoid opportunities of serving others. They think that if you serve you are being subservient, and somehow inferior; and then all their hackles rise at the very thought of their

being inferior to somebody else. Even women are affected, and don't like the idea of serving any more. For instance, I have heard of some women in one of the cafes saying that they were 'not into being waitresses'. Again this is the same sort of attitude: an unwillingness to serve, because serving is thought of as something demeaning. You can see how far astray we have gone.

Alan Angel: One theme that I have come up against when talking about service, is that people think that you are trying to somehow impose a group mentality upon them.

S.: They could come back with that sort of objection for various reasons and from various points of view. Usually when people speak of one trying to impose a group attitude upon them and making them 'toe the line', they are really defending their pseudo-individuality. They are being individualistic rather than individuals.¹⁷ One has to handle such a reaction quite carefully, because someone can be very reactive if they come to the point of raising these sorts of objection.

A Voice: Bhante, during my schooldays if you displayed openly any kind of qualities that were at all feminine, supportive, and of service, you were very often ridiculed as being a 'pansy', or some other such aptly descriptive term. So I deliberately denied my feminine qualities in order to avoid myself being ridiculed. And even in my twenties, I had to work very hard to express femininity, because there were still people in the world who would call you names.

S.: Nonetheless, I think that for the average young boy the more masculine qualities naturally develop first, because they are biologically linked; and then later they develop the feminine qualities. It is not in any way unnatural or unhealthy that young boys of the age of nine to thirteen, say, have rather negative attitudes towards all that is feminine. It is because they are in a process of establishing their masculine identity. They have to do this first, before they can think in terms of incorporating the more feminine qualities. But of course, [after this age], you must not continue to follow a one-sidedly masculine life.

Very young children are pre-sexually androgynous. Then comes the tremendous upheaval of adolescence, with sex rearing its ugly, or beautiful, head. You are really thrown, and perhaps it is at that stage that you think in terms of being very masculine, or very feminine, as the case may be. You do not want to have much to do with members of the opposite sex. But next, if your development is healthy, there comes a further stage. You start thinking in terms of complementary qualities. And if you are following a spiritual path, then you are thinking in terms of integrating these qualities on successively higher and higher levels.

A Voice: It was not until I was twenty-four or twenty-five, when I came into contact with the FWBO, that I even realized that feminine qualities were actually necessary for a balanced and integrated life. Until then I had been suffering from a hangover from my grammar school days.

S.: A lot of qualities come to be closely associated with one or other of the sexes. For instance, if you were found walking into your boys' school with a bunch of flowers, which you then proceeded to arrange in your room, you would be described as effeminate, 'namby-pamby', 'sissy', and so forth. But there is no more connection of flowers and arranging flowers with the female sex, than there is with the male sex. It is just that we have come to look at it in that sort of way. In India you can go out for a walk in the evening with a flower stuck behind your ear, if you are a man, and no-one regards it as any reflection of your [lack of] masculinity. But in this country, only on formal occasions can you carry a bunch of flowers in your hand, for instance if one is obviously going to present them to a young lady. (*Laughter.*) You certainly would not wish to be seen plucking them in an open field purely for one's own pleasure.

There has been quite a lot of talk, among men in the FWBO, about developing one's 'femininity', but so far very little has actually happened of that nature. I think one has to work quite hard, on quite concrete practical measures, to achieve a more balanced sort of individuality. A few of the things which I have suggested are: that one could be much more careful about one's immediate environment, cultivating a much more positive, creative, and aesthetic attitude towards it; and that one can also develop a quality of supportiveness or serviceability. It is important to think of such qualities in much more positive terms than one usually does.



6 Married to All Beings

from 'Patience and Strenuousness' (*The Jewel Ornament of Liberation*), Women's Seminar, Padmaloka, June 1980

The fifth idea means to accept all sentient beings as my wife, thinking that I shall work for their benefit in developing an attitude directed towards enlightenment. When we accept them in this way we show patience, because we reflect that it is not proper to retaliate for the smallest harm done.

sGam.po.pa, *The Jewel Ornament of Liberation*, trans. H. V. Guenther, Rider, London 1959, Ch. 14, p. 177

Sangharakshita: In Tibetan Buddhism it is said that one must regard all living beings as one's mother. One should reflect that all sentient beings, at some time or other in the course of previous lives, have been one's mother and [that] therefore one should have the appropriate attitude of loving-kindness towards them. But here the statement is made that one should accept all sentient beings as one's *wife*, '*thinking that I shall work for their benefit in developing an attitude directed towards enlightenment*'. What does this mean? How does one accept all sentient beings as one's wife or wives? How does this work?

Anoma: Is it something to do with [the fact] that as a husband you take care of and look after certain aspects ...?

S.: Yes indeed. This is after all the Indo-Tibetan context, presumably not the context in which there are working wives. It's as though you as a Bodhisattva are working towards Enlightenment for the benefit of all living beings. In the same way, the ordinary husband is working to gain wealth and money for the sake of his wife and family; so even though between husband and wife various little difficulties and disturbances may arise, they're contained within that framework; they're incidental. I mean, the husband doesn't stop working and earning money for the sake of the wife just because of some little passing tiff; he goes on working and earning as usual. In the same way the Bodhisattva, even though other living beings may do him harm, goes on working just in the same way to gain Enlightenment so that he can benefit them. Do you think this is a very realistic attitude to adopt towards other living beings?

Sanghadevi: Easier for a man!

S.: Easier for a man — presumably yes, in psychological terms — I suppose.

Anoma: Do you think for a woman [this approach] could be a bit dodgy because of the more maternal aspect that comes in, the way a mother looks after her children?

S.: As you say it's 'dodgy' just because this whole thing of maternity is so dodgy and difficult to transpose from the biological to the psychological, and from the psychological to the spiritual. If one can be a spiritual mother to all living beings, what could be better than that? But one must be sure that one is doing it in a spiritual sense and not just 'mothering' people in order to satisfy an unfulfilled biological urge, or even a psychological urge.

Sarah Child: To me it suggested an element of something new in this lifetime, because if you treat all sentient beings like your mother, you have your mother anyway — naturally. But with a wife, although in India [your marriage] might be arranged to quite a large extent, in a sense it's something that you will could be involved in, so it would be 'new' ...

S.(interrupting): Well, you gladly *accept* [the situation], even if you haven't chosen it; you go along with it very willingly and happily. [In India] you gladly accept the wife or husband, as the case may be, provided for you by your parents. You have full confidence in their choice. That is what usually happens.

Sarah Child: But it's something more to do with choice than your mother.

S.: Yes. You've no choice as regards your mother, except in purely karmic terms, of course! ¹⁸

Anne McMillan: It is very difficult to relate to this whole passage in this day and age, I think — even probably for men.

S.: You could look at it in another way. I may be getting into rather dodgy ground myself here, but we'll see! (*Laughter.*) You could for instance think of the Order in masculine terms, that is, the Order including both Upasakas and Upasikas,¹⁹ and the FWBO in feminine terms. In this sense the Order works for the whole Movement, just as the Bodhisattva works for all sentient beings. Could you not think in those sort of terms? [It's] as though the Order is collectively the husband and the rest of the Movement collectively is the wife. (*Laughter.*) Because the Order in relation to the rest of the Movement does take more initiative and does accept a greater responsibility -- just as the Bodhisattva does in relation to sentient beings. Of course, there's always a possibility of crossing over. After all, the supply of sentient beings is inexhaustible.

Liz Pankhurst: I don't quite understand what role the feminine side would play. I see femininity maybe as being something quite cosy, quite intimate.

S.: Well, one could define the feminine as the supportive. If one thinks of the Movement (apart from the Order) as being feminine, one thinks of it as supportive, that is to say, whether in the case of men or women who are not Order Members but part of the Movement, they are supportive rather than take the initiative. Whereas in the case of the women Order Members, even though they are women, predominantly they take initiative in relation to the non-Order Members, whether *they* are male or female. In that sense one could say that the Order was the husband, and the Mitras and Friends the wife.

Liz Pankhurst: I don't know whether I could agree with the fact that it's always the masculine that takes the initiative. I would say that the feminine has a different way of initiating things.

S.: That is true, if you are thinking in terms of individual women. But one can use 'feminine' as a sort of symbol for the supportive, and use 'masculine' as a symbol for that which takes initiative, because, as I've said, in the case of the Order, [it] collectively takes initiative and comprises women as well as men. In the case of the rest of the Movement, which is supportive, it comprises men as well as women.

Sarah Child: For the sake of the present feeling of women, it's best to redefine the terms and not always attach supportiveness to femininity.

S.: One doesn't in a way, because one says that within the context of the Movement it is the Mitras and Friends, regardless of whether they are male or female, who are predominantly supportive. So one does not attach 'supportiveness' to females but to males as well in accordance with their spiritual attitudes.

(Pause.) One could redefine the feminine as that which takes the initiative and the masculine as that which is supportive, but perhaps that would be too far from the facts of psychology, and certainly [far from] our cultural heritage, for it to be at all convincing. In other words, the distinctions aren't altogether arbitrary. (Pause.) But 'all sentient beings as my wife'? (Pause.) Maybe it is more difficult for a woman to feel that, [but] in a way there's no reason why she shouldn't. If a woman's committed herself spiritually, she's taken an active role — not a one-sidedly active role, but an active role spiritually-speaking. So presumably one should be able to think of all sentient beings who aren't taking that role, including men as well as women, as being her or his wife. (Laughter.) (Pause.) It just goes to show that we mustn't identify with gender too closely. If we start getting a bit confused, it means we have identified rather strongly with a particular gender. If we're an Order Member we're spiritually the husband, so to speak; if we're not, we're spiritually the wife, regardless of our actual sex. (Laughter.) Of course, that's just one way of looking at it! (Laughter.) Looking at it from another point of view, as an Order Member you're expected to be spiritually androgynous: you're expected to balance the so-called 'masculine' and the so-called 'feminine' qualities. But just from the point of view of spiritual initiative and responsibility, the Bodhisattva — whether male or female technically — thinks of himself as the husband and all sentient beings as the wife, for whom he must care, for whom he must *earn* the riches, the wealth, of Enlightenment or Buddhahood.

A Voice: It does fit in with the other verses, treating people [with patience] who come up and give you a kick and [then] run away.

S.: If you regard all sentient beings as your wife even if they do commit some hurt, it's just like your own wife throwing the rolling pin at your head; [it's a serious matter], but it's no occasion for a permanent breach, or doing her real injury. You go on working and earning for her just the same. It's just an incidental thing.

Anne McMillan: It implies some kind of connection, doesn't it?

S.: Yes. It implies commitment, because husband and wife [are] married and marriage is presumably a commitment. It's as though you are wedded to sentient beings, you can't divorce them. You're landed with them, just as you're landed with your wife (*laughter*), for better or for worse! You're landed with sentient beings and you've got to work for them and look after them. This is how the Bodhisattva should look at it.



7 Beams of Light

from *The Tibetan Book of the Dead*, Men's Seminar, Padmaloka, September 1979

Sangharakshita: ... Let's concentrate on the distinction between the devas of the *kāmaloka* and the devas of the *rūpaloka*.^{*} What is at least one important difference between them?

Sagaramati: The pleasures experienced in the *kāmaloka* are definitely to do with the five physical senses.

S.: Yes, in a subtle form. But there is another difference, connected with this.

Devamitra: [The devas of the *rūpaloka* have] more subtle bodies and there are differences in the means of sexual fulfilment.

S.: Yes. The *kāmaloka* devas are distinguished according to sex, the *rūpaloka* and *arūpaloka* devas are not. In the *kāmaloka* you have the *asuras* who are definitely distinguished by sex [and who are, in fact, completely polarized]. Then the devas of the lowest god realms, under Indra, are also distinguished by gender [although more subtly]. But there is no sexual differentiation among the devas of the *rūpaloka* and *arūpaloka*.* So what does that suggest or imply?

Sagaramati: A certain amount of unintegration on the lower, [kāmaloka] levels.

S.: Yes. Lama Govinda has made the point that the higher you go in the dhyanic realms the higher becomes the level of integration. He suggests that this is illustrated by the fact that in the ascending series of the *dhyānas*, according to the Abhidharma, fewer and fewer mental factors are involved. This, he suggests, implies an increasing unification, an integration, and therefore a simplification.²⁰ It's as though you begin with either the masculine or feminine aspect [being dominant], and as you go higher and become more integrated the opposite comes into play a little bit more. Then at higher levels still they both come into play, either in different situations or both together. At even higher levels they are completely integrated and you become an androgynous being; an angelic being.

You could say that the angel is a kind of deva, although there is an interesting distinction between the deva and the angel. (*Pause.*) We have got this concept of angels in the West, in the Christian tradition. We've even got it in modern Western literature. Rilke, for example, developed the concept of the angel in his own way.²¹ In Victorian England all we had was 'The Angel in the House'! There's a long poem of that name by Coventry Patmore,²² celebrating the angelic nature of wifedom.

But in the Christian tradition, what is an angel, in the broadest sense?

A Voice: A sinless being.

S.: Yes, an angel is a sinless being, a being who has not sinned, [though] not a being who is incapable of sin. Angels, being created beings are *capable* of sin, but they have *not* sinned. There are fallen angels who have sinned, but when one speaks of angels one usually means the good angels not the bad ones.

What else are they? How are they represented, what do they look like?

A Voice: [They are] usually androgynous.

S.: What is the more general significance of this particular feature, i.e. that the angel is androgynous? What does that really mean?

Devamitra: [That there is a] complete balance.

S.: Yes, [the androgynous state is] completely balanced. [It is] complete in itself, having no polar opposite to which it is irresistibly attracted in a projective and dependent sort of way.

Now we come to something else. Again, in the Christian tradition, the monastic life is very often spoken of as the angelic life, monks being supposed to live like angels. Why is that? (*Pause.*) It is not simply that monks abstain from sex, though it is often taken to mean that. The *angel* does not abstain from sex. That statement has no meaning in relation to an angel, because an angel *is*, as it were, both sexes. In a way you could say that the angel is in constant enjoyment of sex within himself. This is also the significance of the *yab-yum* figure²³ — there is constant enjoyment of union within oneself. This is the *yuganaddha*²⁴ state, in the Tantric sense. So the angel is both male and female, masculine and feminine, and is in a state of constant enjoyment within himself. He *needs* no external partner; his partner is within himself, as it were. Therefore when it is said that the monk is leading an angelic life it doesn't mean that he, being a man, abstains from sex and has nothing to do with women. This is absurd. This is, strictly speaking, a travesty of monastic life.

What does it mean, and what should it mean?

A Voice: That he's developing, or has developed, those feminine qualities in himself.

S.: Yes, exactly. In much the same way — and here we come back to India — we have the concept of brahmacarya: living like brahma. The brahmas are the gods of the *rūpaloka*, so what does 'living like Brahma' mean? What are the brahmas like? They're androgynous. So the *brahmacarya* is not the life of celibacy; it is the androgynous life. In modern Indian parlance *brahmacarya* often means celibacy, just in the sense of chastity, but that is not the *real* meaning. [It is] not that you, being a member of one sex and identifying yourself with that particular sex, have no sexual contact with members of the opposite sex. It means that you are complete in yourself. *This* is what is meant by *brahmacarya*, the Brahma-like life. It is the androgynous life, the angelic life, not enforced and reluctant celibacy. (*Laughter.*)

This is what must be aimed at, by one means or another. Not [simply] abstention from sex, but the enjoyment of sex within yourself, as it were, because you have fully developed these two polar aspects of your being and they are in complete harmony, and in complete mutual contact. Which means your enjoyment is within. This doesn't exclude contact with others, *possibly*, even sexual contact, but then it would be contact between two wholes, not the coming together of two halves to make a whole in some uneasy kind of way.

In Milton's *Paradise Lost* there is an interesting passage — a passage which some literary critics have found rather odd — in which Adam asks the Archangel Raphael if the angels love and, if so, how they express that love. Raphael replies, in effect, that their love is a complete interpenetration of each other.

*Whatever pure thou in the body enjoy'st
(And pure thou wert created) we enjoy
In eminence, and obstacle find none
Of membrane, joint, or limb, exclusive bars.
Easier than air with air, if Spirits embrace,
Total they mix, union of pure with pure
Desiring, nor restrained conveyance need
As flesh to mix with flesh, or soul with soul.* ²⁵

This is quite interesting. It has analogies with general Buddhist thought about the mutual interpenetration of all things — the interpenetration being, not one part of oneself entering into another vacant part of the other person, but a complete interfusion of the total being, in all respects. [It is] as though you were both transparent [to each other], or like two beams of light intersecting.

So one speaks here of realizing one's individuality, and [an] individuality which is androgynous is of a much higher, more developed nature, than that which is non-androgynous.



Glossary

Alienation: This is not a traditional term but comes from psychiatry, where it is used to describe a state of mind in which 'a person's feelings are inhibited so that eventually both the self and the external world seem unreal.' (*Collins English Dictionary*). In the FWBO, the word is used, first of all, with a similar meaning, to refer to a state of mind in which the emotions are inhibited or experienced only weakly, if at all. It is important not to confuse the experience of the doctrine of *anātman* or 'no-self' with this state of alienation. The common misconception that spiritual development involves the eradication of all 'desire' may also have the effect of intensifying such alienation.

In FWBO usage, the term can also refer to a state of non-integration, in which aspects of the personality are divorced from one another, so that they do not blend together when expressed. The term also refers to the apparent lack of contact between our conscious mind and the deeper, spiritual aspects of our being. Several of the myths and parables of *The White Lotus Sutra* are relevant to alienation in this sense.

Alienation, in each of these senses, is overcome through spiritual practice. Meditation, spiritual friendship and devotional practices such as *pujā* all help one to experience, transform and integrate one's emotions, awakening and strengthening the skilful and weakening the unskilful. Spiritual practice does make one aware of one's unskilful emotions; it is important to acknowledge these honestly to oneself, with a sense of self-acceptance but without indulging them further. Based on such awareness, honest acknowledgement and self acceptance, one can eradicate the unskilful, develop the skilful, and thus get rid of alienation altogether.

See Sangharakshita, 'From Alienated Awareness to Integrated Awareness', Tape Lecture no. 84, (*Aspects of the Higher Evolution of the Individual*), Dharmachakra, London 1970; and Sangharakshita, *Parables, Myths and Symbols of Mahayana Buddhism in the White Lotus Sutra*, Tape Lecture nos. 95-102, Dharmachakra, London 1971; *Mitrata 17, The True Individual*, Windhorse, London 1978, 'Dragons head - Snake's body', pp. 14-20; A. Kennedy, (Dharmachari Subhuti), *The Buddhist Vision*, Rider, London 1985.

Rūpaloka /Arūpaloka (Skt.): The *rūpaloka*, lit. 'the world of form', i.e. archetypal form, and the *arūpaloka*, lit. 'the formless world' are traditionally the two highest worlds of the 'threefold world system' or the mundane universe according to Buddhist cosmology the third and lowest world being the *kāmaloka* or 'world of sense desire'. Each of the three worlds is subdivided into a number of levels or realms. In the case of the *kāmaloka* and the *rūpaloka*, these realms are inhabited by beings of one kind or another. The *kāmaloka* includes the realm of the hungry ghosts and the realm of the *asuras* (see *Mitrata 62, 'Altruism and Individualism in the Spiritual Life - Part 1'*, Windhorse, London 1986, Glossary, p. 53) at the lower extreme and the realms of the sense-desire devas or heavenly beings at the upper extreme, with the human realm roughly in the middle; the realms of the *rūpaloka* are occupied by the higher devas.

Each of these levels can be seen as the external counterpart of particular states of consciousness. In the experience of the *rūpa dhyānas*, it is possible to enter into the corresponding deva world, just as, when one is in a very unskilful state of mind, one can 'inhabit' or 'dwell in' the lowest realms of the *kāmaloka*. Thus the 'Four *Rūpa Dhyānas*' correspond to the *rūpaloka* and the 'Four *Arūpa Dhyānas*' to the **arūpaloka**. In the experience of the arupa dhyānas, the state of consciousness is of such a high degree of refinement that the objective pole of the experience is correspondingly refined and subtilized.

The *rūpaloka* is the world of archetypal form in the sense that it is a level of subtle experience beyond that of sense experience, perceived more directly through the mind, containing subtle forms, imbued with clarity and radiance, which embody emotionally and even spiritually significant qualities. Both the *rūpa*- and *arūpalokas* are experienced as the result of skilful actions, but the experience of both is temporary and mundane, in the sense that insight, the goal of the path, is still to be achieved.

Śūnyatā (Pali *suññatā*): lit. 'emptiness' or 'voidness'. The direct experience of the doctrine of *śūnyatā*, on progressively deeper levels, is the practical goal of the spiritual life, effecting complete liberation from cyclic existence. The word itself first occurs in what is probably the oldest section of any Buddhist text, the

Pārāyanavagga of the *Sutta-Nipāta*, in the Pali Canon, the scriptures of the Theravada school, where the Buddha tells a layman to see the world as 'empty' in order to escape Māra (the King of Death). However, the Pali Canon does not have much to say about it; it is in the sutras and other texts of the Mahayana schools that the doctrine of *śūnyatā* is fully developed. It is the principal subject of the *Prajñā-pāramitā Sūtras* (the Sūtras on the *Perfection of Wisdom*) and the writings of the Mādhyamika school (see *Mitrata* 64, "Masculinity" and "Femininity" in the *Spiritual Life - Part P*, Windhorse, London 1986, Note 13, p. 50).

The term has various related levels of meaning, depending on the context in which it is used. Essentially, it means that all '*dharmas*' (the basic, 'irreducible' constituents of Reality according to the Hinayana) are 'empty', that is, all phenomena whatsoever, including persons and things, are devoid of any enduring substance or independent selfhood; they arise in dependence on conditions and cannot be described as either truly existent or non-existent. Applied to the human personality, this becomes the doctrine of *anātman*, or 'no-self' (see *Mitrata* 59, 'the Awakening of the Bodhi Heart - Part 2', Windhorse, London 1986, Glossary, p. 53).

The doctrine of *śūnyatā* is the fundamental expression of the Middle Way between the extremes of nihilism and eternalism, and is intended to point towards a truth beyond the grasp of conceptual discriminations and dualistic awareness. As such, on the conceptual level, it can have apparently contradictory meanings; the *Perfection of Wisdom Sūtras* are replete with paradox. In a famous passage in *The Diamond Sūtra*, the Buddha informs his disciple Subhuti that, on the one hand, the Bodhisattva must save all beings; on the other hand, he must realize that there are no beings to save. In much of the teaching, it seems that *śūnyatā* should be regarded as no more than an 'operational concept' (see *Mitrata* 61, 'The Bodhisattva Vow - Part 2', Windhorse, London 1986, Note 9, p. 49), and care should be taken not to reify it. To say that an object is empty of inherent existence does not imply that there is a 'thing' called 'emptiness of inherent existence' (in the same way that an empty salt-cellar does not contain a thing called 'emptiness of salt'). On the other hand, the opposite extreme of nihilism is to be avoided; that is, the doctrine must not be taken to mean that nothing exists in any sense at all. Phenomena arise in dependence on conditions; on the level of conventional truth it is reasonable to impute the empirical 'existence' of a phenomenon when conditions are appropriate. Thus, though we apply the label 'table' to a collection of pieces of wood arranged together in a way that can be discerned by the mind to fulfil a particular function, no independently existing thing, over and above the arrangement of pieces of wood as discerned by the mind, has come into existence to which the label 'table' applies.

The term can also mean that phenomena are devoid of other characteristics as well, such as 'permanence'. When applied to the Unconditioned, it refers to the ineffability and lack of determinate nature of the Unconditioned, and here the term has apparently a more positive reference to the Reality beyond appearances. In this sense, *śūnyatā* is non-different from Nirvana, Transcendental Compassion, the Buddha, Great Bliss, 'Absolute Mind' and even the phenomenal world. However, one must be very careful not to fall into the error of eternalism and conclude that *śūnyatā* is a 'thing' which stands under the world like the 'Ground of Being' as conceived by theists. (See Note 9.)

In terms of spiritual practice, the significance of *śūnyatā* depends on the level of spiritual development of the individual. There are progressive meditations on *śūnyatā*, such as 'the five meditations on emptiness':

1. Meditating on *śūnyatā* as the absence of real selfhood;
2. Meditating on conditioned *dharmas* as being devoid of the characteristics of the Unconditioned;
3. Meditating on the Unconditioned as being empty of the characteristics of the Conditioned;
4. Meditating on the emptiness of all discriminations, especially that between 'Conditioned' and 'Unconditioned';
5. Meditating on the Emptiness of Emptiness.

The Hinayana schools restricted themselves to the first three, while the Mahayana used all five. The most highly developed practitioners of the Vajrayana made special efforts to realize the fifth level within a single lifetime.

See Sangharakshita, *A Survey of Buddhism*, Shambhala & Windhorse, Boulder, London 1980; Sangharakshita, 'The Nature of Existence', (*The Three Jewels*), Windhorse, London 1977, Ch. 11; *Mitrata* 54 and 55, 'Perfect Samadhi 1 and 2', Windhorse, London 1985; *Buddhist Wisdom Books*, containing *The Diamond Sutra* and *The Heart Sutra*, trans. Edward Conze, Allen & Unwin, London 1958.



Notes

¹ The Venerable Sangharakshita spent fourteen years in Kalimpong, a town in Northeast India, studying and teaching the Dharma, from 1950 to 1964.

² The 'Sevenfold Puja' is a devotional ceremony conducted frequently within the FWBO. Its basis is an arrangement by the Venerable Sangharakshita of extracts from Śāntideva's *Bodhicaryāvatāra*, commonly used in Tibetan Buddhist *pūjās*. The text of this ceremony is contained in The FWBO Puja Book, Windhorse Publications; See also *Mitrata* 58 in this series, 'The Awakening of the Bodhi Heart - Part I'; Sangharakshita, 'Poetry and Devotion in Buddhism: The Sevenfold Puja', available on FreeBuddhistAudio <http://tinyurl.com/ojqebpt>

³ The FWBO Puja Book, Windhorse Publications.

⁴ See '*Mahāvagga*', Section 1, p. 7-10, *The Book of the Discipline*, Vol. 4, (*Sacred Books of the Buddhists*, Vol. XIV), trans. I. B. Horner, Pali Text Society, London 1982; also Samyutta Nikāya (*The Book of Kindred Sayings*), VI, I, trans. Mrs Rhys Davids, Pali Text Society, London 1950.

⁵ This is asking for ordination into the Western Buddhist Order or asking to become an Order Member; in other words, asking to Go for Refuge to the Three Jewels, the Buddha, the Dharma and the Sangha. If people feel ready to do so, after a certain amount of involvement in the FWBO, they formally ask the Venerable Sangharakshita for ordination. How long it takes to reach this point varies from person to person. It is a purely voluntary step and not one that everyone seriously involved in the Movement necessarily takes.

⁶ See *Mitrata* 61 in this series, 'The Bodhisattva Vow - Part 2', Note 10.

⁷ The word '*dākinī*' is derived from a Sanskrit root meaning 'direction', 'space', 'sky'. The masculine form of the word is '*dākā*'. Rendered into Tibetan as 'khadoma', it is usually translated as 'sky-walker' or 'walker in space'. Empty space represents absence of obstruction, freedom of movement. A *dākinī* is a being who enjoys such freedom. 'Sky' also represents mind in its Absolute aspect; so the *dākinī*, therefore, represents that which moves about freely in mind, the energies of the mind itself. In this sense the *dākinīs* symbolize powerful energies rising up from the depths of the mind.

In Tantric Buddhism there are three orders of *dākinī*: (a) the *dākinī* as female Buddha form; (b) the *dākinī* as embodiment of one's own upsurging energies; (c) the *dākinī* as a spiritual companion. The third order represents the esoteric, Tantric form of the third of the 'Three Refuges', that is, the Sangha or Spiritual Community. More generally speaking, '*dākinī*' also means a witch or a kind of demoness. See Sangharakshita, 'The Symbolism of the Cremation Ground and the Celestial Maidens', available on FreeBuddhistAudio <http://tinyurl.com/gdxrw3f> or Sangharakshita, 'Creative Symbols of the Tantric Buddhism', Windhorse Publications.

⁸ The verses recited in 'Going for Refuge', the third section of the Sevenfold Puja, which is regularly performed in the FWBO, begin with the lines

*This very day
I go for my refuge
To the powerful protectors
Whose purpose is to guard the universe; ...*

The 'protectors' here are the Buddhas and the Bodhisattvas, that is the Bodhisattvas such as Avalokiteśvara and Vajrapāṇi, whose mantras are chanted at the end of the Puja; they are archetypal embodiments of aspects of Enlightenment. Three of these Bodhisattvas, namely, Avalokiteśvara, Mañjuśrī, and Vajrapāṇi,

are known in Tantric Buddhism as the Three Family Protectors. The Buddhas and Bodhisattvas do not protect from worldly disasters but rather from all kinds of unskilful states of mind.

⁹ In the early nineteen sixties, a booklet which attracted much interest and debate in theological circles and beyond was *Honest to God* by John Robinson, the then Bishop of Woolwich. In it, he dismisses the concept of a personal God either 'up there' or even 'out there' and posits instead the idea of God as ultimate reality or 'the Ground of Being'. His thesis was strongly influenced by the German theologians Paul Tillich and Dietrich Bonhoeffer. John A. T. Robinson, Bishop of Woolwich, *Honest to God*, SCM Press Ltd., London 1963.

¹⁰ In *Paradise Lost*, Milton invokes or refers to his Muse at different points. The epic begins, in the opening lines of Book I, with an invocation to the Muse. In Book IX, he says his Muse

... deigns
Her nightly visitation unimplor'd
And dictates to me slumbring, or inspires
Easy my unpremeditated verse.

Poetical Works: John Milton, ed. Douglas Bush, Oxford University Press, London 1966, Book IX, 11. 21-4.

¹¹ Nietzsche spoke in terms of inspiration. His moving description of inspiration is to be found in *Ecce Homo*. Friedrich Nietzsche, *Ecce Homo*, trans. R. J. Hollingdale, Penguin Books, 1985, pp. 102-3.

¹² See *Mitrata* 57 in this series, 'The Origin and Development of the Bodhisattva Ideal - Part 2', Glossary.

¹³ Padmasambhava, Tārā and Mañjuśrī (or Manjughosa) are prominent figures in Mahayana and Vajrayana Buddhism, highly revered by both monks and lay people. Padmasambhava is the great Tantric guru mainly responsible for establishing Buddhism in Tibet in the eighth century C.E. He is regarded by the Tibetans as a Buddha (see *Mitrata* 57, 'The Origin and Development of the Bodhisattva Ideal - Part 2', Windhorse, London 1985, Note 12, p. 51.) Tārā also figures prominently in the devotional and meditational aspects of the spiritual life among Tibetan Buddhists. Tārā is a Bodhisattva in female form, an emanation of Avalokiteśvara, the Bodhisattva of Compassion. Her name means 'Saviouress' or 'She Who Ferries Across' (i.e. across the ocean of suffering). Mañjuśrī (or Manjughosa) is the Bodhisattva of Wisdom. Tārā and Mañjuśrī have no historical reality; they are purely archetypal figures, symbolizing aspects of the Transcendental. Each member of the Western Buddhist Order is given, at the time of ordination, a special visualization and mantra recitation practice associated with a particular Buddha or Bodhisattva figure. Among such practices are those connected with Padmasambhava, Tārā and Manjughosa.

¹⁴ See *Mitrata* 58 in this series, 'The Awakening of the Bodhi Heart - Part I', Notes 4 and 15.

¹⁵ William Morris (1834-1896), the famous Victorian poet and artist. As well as writing and painting, he founded his own manufacturing workshops, in which he designed and supervised the production of stained glass, tapestries, carpets and other kinds of decorative fabrics and papers, all of which made a significant contribution to the rising of standards in the decorative arts.

¹⁶ 'Sukhāvati' was the name given to the Old Fire Station on Roman Road, Bethnal Green, East London, which was converted in the late nineteen seventies by the FWBO into a men's community and a Buddhist Centre. Though 'Sukhavati' (the name of the Pure Land of the Buddha Amitābha, 'the Realm of Bliss') originally referred to the whole complex, it is now the name of the Community. The Centre is known as 'The London Buddhist Centre'.

¹⁷ See *Mitrata* 58 in this series, 'The Awakening of the Bodhi Heart - Part 1', Glossary.

¹⁸ Buddhism teaches rebirth. In the final section of *The Tibetan Book of the Dead* there is a description of how rebirth takes place. After a period of wandering in the *Bardo*, the 'in-between state', the disembodied stream of consciousness is envisaged as interposing itself between a male and female in the act of

copulation; thus all the necessary factors for rebirth have come together. In this sense, all beings born into the human realm choose their parents, by a deliberate act of volition. This is an expression of a teaching accepted in principle by Buddhists generally, showing how one can be said to choose one's mother 'in the karmic sense'. *The Tibetan Book of the Dead*, ed. W. Y. Evans-Wentz, Oxford University Press, London 1960.

¹⁹ Until 1982 members of the Western Buddhist Order were known as Upasakas (male) and Upasikas (female). Since then they have been called Dharmacharis and Dharmacharinis. For an explanation of the titles and of the significance of the changeover, see *Mitrata* 59 in this series, 'The Awakening of the Bodhi Heart - Part 2', Note 2.

²⁰ See Lama Anagarika Govinda, *The Psychological Attitude of Early Buddhist Philosophy and its Systematic Representation According to Abhidhamma Tradition*, Rider & Co., London 1969, p. 84.

²¹ For Rilke's 'concept' of the angel, see Rainer Maria Rilke, *Duino Elegies*, trans. J. B. Leishman and Stephen Spender, Chatto and Windus, London 1978. The commentary on the first elegy (p. 101) offers an interpretation of what Rilke meant by the Angels.

²² 'The Angel in the House' from *The Poems of Coventry Patmore*, Oxford University Press, London 1949.

²³ See *Mitrata* 64 in this series, "Masculinity" and "Femininity" in, the Spiritual Life - Part 1'.

²⁴ In Tantric Buddhism, the term '*yuganaddha*' (Skt. '*yug*' = 'yoke') denotes the unification of opposites in the experience of Enlightenment. It signifies the unification of intense bliss and very clear, penetrating Insight, or the inseparability of Wisdom (*prajñā*) and Compassion (*karuṇā*) as complementary aspects of the Enlightened Mind.

²⁵ *Poetical Works: John Milton*, ed. Douglas Bush, Oxford University Press, London 1966, Book VIII, 11. 622-9.