

# The Place of Imagination, Beauty, and Ritual in the Spiritual Life

## Week three

### *The Psychology of the Spiritual Life*

Subhuti, *Sangharakshita: A New Voice* p273 – 284

## Objectives for Week Three

- Two kinds of truth: scientific and poetic
- Understand relationship between dimensions/realms within Reality and the degree of refinement or levels of consciousness
- Know Sangharakshita's definition of an archetype on the Transcendental level
- Understand the importance of the 'imaginal faculty' and its relationship to sraddha and the spiritual life
- Idea of our 'gestalt' unfolding in/through us as the reflection of the Dharmakaya
- Appreciate the need for a context (i.e. a public myth) for our personal myth

# The Place of Imagination, Beauty, and Ritual in the Spiritual Life (Handout 3.1)

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## Questions

1. In what ways might our Western cultural conditioning affect our ability to trust in the possibility of other dimensions of consciousness?
2. What experiences of the imagination have been significant in your spiritual life?
3. How do you relate to the existence of other realms e.g. preta realm, hell realm
4. 'Dreams, meditations, visions, and 'ordinary' waking experiences are all equally valid as perceptual situations. None of the different worlds or realms is any more or less real than any other'. (p276) Do you agree? Do you believe you can gain Enlightenment in every situation?
5. Is it essential to have access to the higher possibilities of consciousness to 'see things as they really are'? e.g. How can dwelling in the rupa loka help us, say, 'realize' impermanence?
6. How can we move from the world of the gross physical senses to more subtle and visionary senses? What would be the benefits of doing so?
7. What does it mean to say that 'the archetypes ultimately exist on the Transcendental level, only fully realised in Enlightenment' (p279)
8. If other realms are acting upon us all the time (p279) 'helping to shape our experience', how can we open up more to the realms we want to influence us? What part can our reason play here?
9. What does it mean for our gestalt as 'the reflection of the dharmakaya in the individual' to be the dominant power within our lives? Is this what we truly want?
10. Do you feel part of a 'public myth' that gives your personal myth a place to unfold? What could be this wider context?

## **The Place of Imagination, Beauty, and Ritual in the Spiritual Life (Handout 3.2)**

### **The Psychology of the Spiritual Life**

#### **Home Practice for following week**

If you wish, you could spend some time `just looking' at an image or object or something in nature that holds some significance for you already. Notice what is being communicated? Notice the effect of doing this on the mind.

#### **Optional further reading for week 3:**

1. **Archetypal symbolism in the Biography of the Buddha**, pp39-50 *Guide to the Buddhist Path* Sangharakshita
2. *Sangharakshita: A New Voice in the Buddhist Tradition* Subhuti p266-273