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THE BODHISATTVA IDEAL

2

The Awakening
of the Bodhi Heart



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Cover Symbol:

This issue features the *mudrā* of Bodhisattva Vajrapani, the 'Holder of the Vajra', who is the embodiment of spiritual energy. His right hand is shown here holding a *vajra*, a diamond/ thunderbolt, the symbol of the energy which breaks through all barriers.

THE BODHISATTVA IDEAL

2. The Awakening of the Bodhi Heart

Part 2

Contents

Editorial	3
Seminar Extracts	4
1 Take Me Over	4
2 Life is Just One Long Pūjā!	5
3 And Others Simply Sat Down.....	6
4 Borrow a Lawn Mower and Rejoice!	8
5 A Field of Merit	10
6 Pleasing Spiritual Friends.....	12
7 Thinking of the Buddha	16
8 Seeing the Buddha.....	17
9.Tortured and Needlessly Haunted	19
10 A Painless Sympathy with Pain	19
11 Is it So?.....	20
12 Behold with Faithful Eyes	21
13 Rows and Rows of Pūjā Bowls	22
14 No Fear of Straying	25
Glossary	27
Notes	29

* Indicates refer to Glossary

Editorial

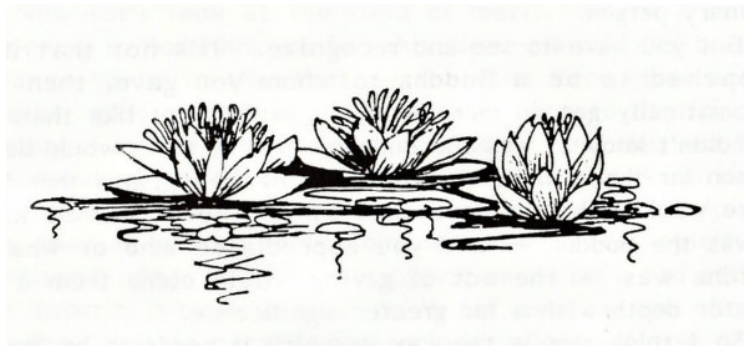
A mile away, cut into a cliff face, the 2000 year old Buddhist caves of Bhāja are clearly visible from Sadhamma Pradeepa, our retreat centre in India. 'In the late afternoon the sun shines straight down the *caitya* hall, so that one can see the stupa at its end glowing in the orange light. ... we each of us spontaneously bowed to the stupa. It was very easy to imagine the lines of yellow-robed monks and nuns chanting and meditating here.' This was the experience of Subhuti, Kamalasila and Suvajra during their recent visit to perform ordinations on behalf of the Venerable Sangharakshita.

Seated before a shrine, swathed in blankets, ten Dharmacharinis perform the 'Sevenfold Pūjā'. The setting is England's North Shropshire countryside where a spacious, rambling farmhouse has newly become Taraloka, the Women's Retreat Centre.

A meditation hall or retreat centre such as these provides an ideal environment for spiritual practice. In the language of the Bodhisattva Ideal this practice consists in establishing the conditions for the arising of the Bodhicitta. In the last issue of *Mitrata* we tried, through the seminar extracts, to get an idea of what the Bodhicitta is, or is not. Now we go on to explore how we can prepare for our Bodhi Hearts to awaken.

In the lecture which opened *Mitrata* 58 we saw that Śāntideva's method of preparation is the devotional practice of *pūjā*. We also found that Vasubandhu's four factors for the arising of the Bodhicitta include 'thinking of the Buddha'. In this issue the Venerable Sangharakshita points out that *pūjā* is in fact 'thinking of the Buddha' in the most radical way. It is being inspired by and truly receptive to the Buddha Ideal. Devotion to the Ideal is what is required of us if we are to become Bodhisattvas. Devotion which moves us to build retreat centres and to bow spontaneously.

SRIMALA



Seminar Extracts

1 Take Me Over

from The Endlessly Fascinating Cry (*Bodhicaryāvatāra*), Mixed Retreat, Abhirati, December 1973

The effect of this act is fourfold: (1) He becomes without fear of being or becoming (bhāva), of which the metaphysical implications are tremendous, ...

A Guide to the Bodhisattva Way of Life, trans. Marion L. Matics, Allen & Unwin, London 1971, p. 40

Sangharakshita: It's quite a thought that sometimes it's less trouble just to lead a spiritual life, and gain Enlightenment, than to try to put things right in the world, or even to try to have a successful and happy worldly career. You need less effort, very often, to gain Enlightenment! It's very difficult to be successful in the world, but if you follow the spiritual path you can be sure of success. In the world there are all sorts of factors which may upset your best laid plans, but that can't happen on the spiritual path.

Gotami: Now you're speaking as if it's an inevitable process!

S.: The results are inevitable once you start making the effort but if you're thinking in terms of worldly success the results are not inevitable because there are so many factors that you just don't know about that could intervene and ruin your work. On the spiritual path you know that if you make the effort, sooner or later the result will come — that *that* is inevitable.

So it's quite a thought really because, once again, we usually think of spiritual life as something very difficult and worldly life as easy — in a way it is, and in a way it isn't. In a way it's the spiritual life that is easier and this is why, perhaps, Śāntideva says, '*The effect of this act*,' that is, all this giving and *pūjā* and mental offering and self-dedication, '*is fourfold: (1) He becomes without fear of being or becoming (bhāva), of which the metaphysical implications are tremendous, ...*' The would-be Bodhisattva has got no more worries — he's just giving himself to the spiritual life. He's not bothered whether he's going to live or die, or be rich or poor, or praised or blamed, or anything like that. He's just on the spiritual path and that's that. That's all he's bothered about — so what a big load off his mind then! '*He becomes without fear of being or becoming*,' which are the two great extremes. Once your mind is made up, and you're really committed, you're free from worry. But so long as you're dithering and wondering, "Shall I or shall I not?" or "If I did this, or didn't do that, then what would happen?" or "What would be better?" or "Could I combine the two? A bit of this and a bit of that. So much time for spiritual things and so much time for worldly things" — so long as you're dithering around in this way you remain not sure and not clear, and therefore not firm and not confident. Once you've decided and committed yourself, however, that's that. Everything is looked after, in a sense — you've nothing more to worry about.

This is a different way of looking at things, though one with a great deal in it, and it has all come about simply as a result of giving. Yet important as it is, this 'giving', this making of offerings to the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas and dedicating oneself, surrendering oneself, is only the very beginning of the spiritual life. In a way it is an anticipation of the arising of the Bodhicitta — because at this stage, of course, you've not been taken possession of by these higher spiritual forces. But you want to be. So you say to the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas, at least in your own mind, "Take me over. Instead of doing the things that I want to do, from now onwards I'll do the things that you want me to do." At this stage it's still this dualistic kind of dialogue, which is the only way you can put things at this stage; but when the Bodhicitta arises then you are actually taken over — you're taken at your word, as it were, and then, of course, there's no question of, "Shall I? Shall I not?" That's that. You're functioning in a way as an instrument — though that's a rather mechanical way of putting it — of the arisen Bodhicitta. At this stage, however, you are asking for that to happen, or making yourself receptive to it happening, or even trying to help make it happen by giving, first of all flowers and incense and lights, in imagination, and then offering up yourself, saying, "Take me over. Let me be directed by the Will to Enlightenment. Let that motivate me, let that carry me along, not just my

own egoistic will." In this way *pūjā* becomes very, very important, even the making of offerings and giving of oneself in this purely symbolical and mental and ritual sort of way. *Pūjā* is quite demanding, in fact, even at the very beginning. What Śāntideva says also suggests the importance of this kind of simple, maybe mental act of *pūjā* and dedicating of oneself. Perhaps one could use the word 'dedication' for this earlier, more dualistic stage, and 'commitment' for the stage when you're actually taken over, as it were.

2 Life is Just One Long Pūjā!

from *The Sevenfold Pūjā*

Men's Order/Mitra Seminar, Padmaloka, July 1978

Sangharakshita: The spiritual beauty of the shrine, as well as its cleanliness, is very important in setting the scene for the *Pūjā*. This should never be forgotten, and it is therefore only natural that the first item of the 'Sevenfold *Pūjā*'¹ should convey that mood of spiritual beauty — a more refined kind of beauty; because, if you become aware of spiritual beauty in front of you, you will feel uplifted and devotional.

In the first section of the 'Sevenfold *Pūjā*' then, the note that is struck is of spiritual delight awoken by the experience of spiritual beauty. You feel in a calm, happy, delighted state. It is not exactly devotion in the strong, powerful, ardent sense; it's a bit lighter, more ethereal than that to begin with. But the keynote of the first stage is that when you enter the shrine and see the image, the flowers, the lamps burning, you feel, "How beautiful, how spiritually beautiful!" You feel uplifted, you feel refined. This is very important. But you can't feel it if the shrine is dark or untidy or dirty, or if not much care or trouble has been taken with the place, or if people seem dull, indifferent or unfriendly.

[When Vajrakumara and I visited New Zealand in 1974/5] we noticed one interesting thing which we had not observed in England: the New Zealand Order Members and Friends dressed up for *Pūjās*, by which I mean they not only decorated the shrine, they practically decorated themselves. Of course, it was easier in New Zealand, the climate being different, but most of them kept a special dress for *Pūjās* and festive occasions. [They wore] at least the white *upasaka*² dress, with white *lungi* and long white shirt, but some of the younger ones were not even satisfied with that — I remember Udaya in particular appearing in a long purple *kaftan*-like garment — but this added to the general festive air, and it was quite attractive, all these bright, pretty colours. It conveyed something of that spirit — a joyous, festive, beautiful occasion, for which people had dressed up. It wasn't like Mrs. Smith and Mrs. Brown wearing their best hats to church, but it did convey that happy, festive, and yes, somewhat devotional atmosphere. So even these things must not be despised, because if you turn up in the shrine room for the *Pūjā* and the room is beautifully kept and the shrine, the altar, beautifully decorated, and if you are all dirty and scruffy, it doesn't really add to the beauty or the devotional atmosphere of the occasion. So one should bear this in mind too: don't leave yourself out, you also are part of the decorations, as it were, so make sure you do look a bit decorative.

In the way they dress, at least, *bhikshus*² automatically look decorative because they are in beautiful yellows and oranges and saffrons; some *anagarikas*² too! So usually on Buddhist occasions in Southeast Asia you have the *bhikshus* in their yellows, oranges and saffrons, the laymen more often than not in white, and the ladies in beautiful *saris* and garments of that kind in bright colours. So it is very colourful. I encourage the ladies in the FWBO to try to look like offering goddesses, and some of them do on these occasions.

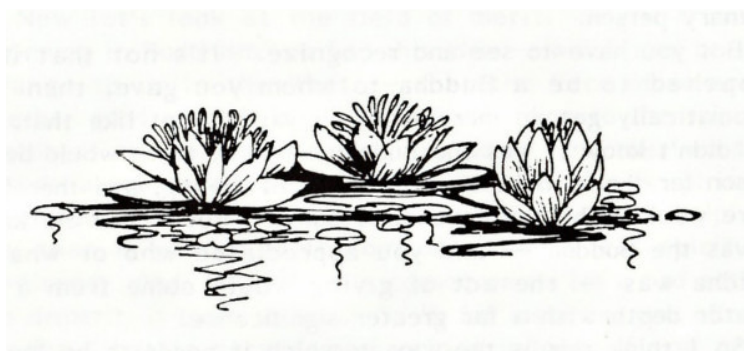
Let us go through the verses. '*With mandarava, blue lotus and jasmine,*' [this is Mrs. A. A. G. Bennett's translation from Śāntideva's *Bodhicaryāvatāra*. I have arranged passages from her translation to form the 'Sevenfold *Pūjā*' which is used in the FWBO.] For some reason or other, Matics³ renders it 'blossoms of the coral tree'. I haven't a copy of the Sanskrit text here, unfortunately, but as far as I can remember it definitely is 'mandarava'. *Mandarava* occurs in various sutras* and is usually explained as a sort of heavenly flower; it does not really grow on Earth. It is enormous, as big as a cartwheel, bright golden in colour, and usually it floats down from the heavens when the Buddha happens to give a particularly good discourse. So when you say 'mandarava' right at the beginning, at once you create a sort of archetypal atmosphere. It is not even just earthly flowers but a heavenly flower that you are offering, a *mandarava*, a sort of celestial

marigold of gigantic size; and then, not content with that, blue lotuses and jasmine. I believe blue lotuses have a special fragrance, and jasmine certainly has.

'With all flowers pleasing and fragrant,/And with garlands skilfully woven,/I pay honour to the princes of the Sages,/So worthy of veneration.' First of all you offer flowers. There are all sorts of things which one can also offer. Perhaps we ought to go into this a little, because the offerings mentioned here represent only a selection. [In my arrangement of the original text] I have rather curtailed the offering section because Śāntideva mentions so many other offerings: flowers, fruits, herbs, jewels, waters, mountains of jewels, forest places, vines, trees, fragrant incenses, wish-fulfilling trees, trees of jewels, lakes adorned with lotuses, and the endlessly fascinating cry of wild geese, harvests, crops of grain. Then he prepares a bath for the Buddhas and their sons, songs, many different water jars encrusted with jewels and filled with flowers, fragrant waters, garments, ornaments, and here he adorns all of them; so lots and lots of things are given. It is all rather lavish, but I have trimmed it down a little so as not to confuse the English-speaking Buddhist devotee with too many offerings; I have more or less cut it down to flowers, incense and lamps. Why do you think this is, apart from the general simplification?

A Voice: Those are the three things we have on the shrine.

S.: Not only that, because one can keep other things on the shrine; but these seem to be the three main offerings from earliest days. You find these three offerings in all forms of Buddhism — flowers, light and incense. All the others seem to have been added later. [In the Pūjā] there are flowers, light and incense: the flowers are living things and suggest the whole of nature, the whole of life, as it were. The light reminds you not only of the light of the sun but also the light of Enlightenment. The sweet fragrance of incense suggests the integration of even your grosser physical being into the Pūjā. So in a way the scene of the Pūjā represents a heightened mode of existence, almost like a little Pure Land,⁴ because the Pure Land is described almost as if a great *pūjā* was going on all the time. For instance, there is the Buddha himself — not just an image — on his real, live lotus throne; then there are flowers falling all the time and being offered, people sitting around and incense burning, chants being raised and the Dharma being preached. Life is just one long *pūjā*, and what could be more delightful than that? So, when you are sitting in the shrine in front of the image and engaged in *pūjā*, it should be a sort of foretaste of the Pure Land itself, of 'Sukhāvati' itself.



3 And Others Simply Sat Down

from *The Sevenfold Pūjā*

Men's Order/Mitra Seminar, Padmaloka, July 1978

Sangharakshita: [In *pūjā* or Worship, the first section of the 'Sevenfold Pūjā', you] recognize the Ideal as an ideal: you delight in it; but you haven't yet really started thinking about your own relationship to it. In the case of the *vandanā*, [the second section] you [actually] *salute* the Ideal; in other words you recognize it as being something very much higher than you are. You recognize yourself as occupying a very lowly position relative to that Ideal. You see the gulf that exists between you and it, a gulf which will have to be crossed if you want to be like that Ideal or to realize it. And in the case of the Going for Refuge you actually begin closing the gap. So it's as though in the case of the *pūjā* you delight in the Ideal and recognize it, but haven't

started thinking about yourself in relation to it and are not really conscious of the gap between you and it. In the *vandanā* [literally 'salutation'] you become conscious of this gap and recognize the Ideal, the Buddha, as something infinitely higher than yourself, so [that] the appropriate attitude on your part is of salutation, bowing down. Then, in the case of the Going for Refuge, you are determined to close the gap, to actually tread the Path leading from where you are to where the Buddha is.

This is the broad distinction between these three phases, one passing into the other: the *pūjā* represents the attraction to and delight in the Ideal; the *vandanā* represents the recognition of the Ideal as something much higher than yourself; and the Going for Refuge represents the actual commitment of oneself to the realization of that Ideal.

'I pay homage to all the shrines,/And places in which the Bodhisattvas have been./I make profound obeisance to the Teachers,/And those to whom respectful salutation is due.' 'Shrines' are the '*caityas*' or stupas. Why does one pay homage to them?

A Voice: Because of their associations.

S.: Yes, because of their associations with the life of the Buddha, with his person and actual physical body, even. *'And places in which the Bodhisattvas have been'*: in medieval India there were all sorts of *stupas* and *caityas* erected on spots which traditionally were identified with places where the Buddha had committed various noble actions or practised the '*Pāramitās*';* whilst a Bodhisattva in previous lives. For instance, there was one in Northwest India on the spot where the Buddha as Bodhisattva was supposed to have sacrificed his body to the starving tigress.

'I make profound obeisance to the Teachers'. Why 'the Teachers'?

A Voice: Well, they are the actual embodiment ...

S.: Yes, because they help you to practise the Dharma, and they take the place of the Buddha, as it were. *'And those to whom respectful salutation is due'*: that is, your *vandanā* overflows onto all worthy persons who are following the spiritual path. One should perhaps observe that the words '*pūjā*' and '*vandanā*' are sometimes interchanged, so that *vandanā* means a more distant, social sort of salutation and *pūjā* is the more heartfelt thing. However, for our purposes we will use *pūjā* for the first attitude and *vandanā* for the second.

The *vandanā* is also expressed in a bowing down, while in the *pūjā* there is an offering, a making of gifts. Now the fact that you give someone a gift doesn't mean you regard them as superior, because gifts are exchanged between equals. But by bowing down or saluting the teachers, you are definitely recognizing them as superior. In other words, in this context *pūjā* means 'making of offerings', while *vandanā* means 'bowing down'. On the [Order] Convention,⁵ when it came to *'I make profound obeisance to the Teachers'*, those who were there will remember we actually did have somebody making prostrations. In the East it is very common to prostrate before the image or before monks or teachers, and clearly in the context of the *Pūjā* it isn't really sufficient just to recite the words; there should be some appropriate action at the same time. [Although] there is the practical difficulty that in the shrine we very often don't have room for people to do more than an ordinary salutation, I think it is good to keep up the connection with tradition, where there is room. If there is only room for one person to do the prostration, well, let him do it as it were on behalf of the whole community; otherwise, leave it to people's individual feelings, rather than try to make it [obligatory]. I've mentioned before that in some of the sutras we find the Buddha seated and about to give a talk while people gradually turn up, and it's mentioned that some prostrated themselves full-length before the Buddha, while others saluted him from a distance and others simply sat down without saluting him. The Buddha never said they were to salute him in any particular way. He just left it to them. Perhaps that's what we should do. If people in the shrine genuinely and naturally feel like doing a more elaborate prostration, let them do it by all means, while if they just feel like saluting with folded hands, fair enough, let them leave it at that. But some act of salutation seems to be important to distinguish the

vandanā from the *pūjā* and to carry the whole process one stage further.

By way of comparison, suppose you're travelling, and you see a beautiful mountain peak in the distance. You admire it for its beauty, look up to it, enjoy it and delight in it. This corresponds to *pūjā*. It doesn't occur to you that you could actually climb the mountain; you are just admiring it. But then you start thinking, "That peak is so much higher than I am, if I wanted to climb it I'd have difficulty because there is the peak up there, and here am I down here." When you become very conscious of this, that corresponds to the *vandanā*. But when you decide that nonetheless you're going to climb that peak and you start walking, that is the Going for Refuge.

Lokamitra: And when you realize that there are bits that are holding you back, weighing you down ...

S.: Well, that's the Confession of Faults, (*laughter*) when you start shedding your luggage, all the things you think you need to get to the top but which actually, you find, are preventing you from climbing ... (*Laughter.*) All right, anything more about the *vandanā*?

Padmavajra: When you were talking about bowing down, were you talking in general terms, or more specifically in the context of the Pūjā?

S.: Talking more specifically in the context of the Pūjā.

Padmavajra: You might have to be quite careful with things like prostrations in Pūjās: some people can react to that.

S.: Yes, especially if you have new people, or people visiting for the first time. They might think it expressed a slavish mentality. It is interesting, in this connection, to compare the attitudes of the Ancient Greeks and the Ancient Persians. Apparently, when they came in contact with each other for the first time, one of the things that really shocked and displeased the Greeks was the fact that the Persians used to prostrate themselves in front of their kings. The Greeks thought this most unbefitting a human being, whom they thought should only salute the gods, and even then in only a quite moderate fashion. The Greeks didn't salute even the gods in the way the Persians saluted their kings. When Alexander the Great became King of Persia (after his campaign), he upset some of his Greek followers by insisting they paid him respect in the way the Persians were accustomed to do. The bluff, hearty Macedonians didn't like that at all, they thought he was getting a bit beyond himself. So it's not just in the modern West [that we have this attitude]; it goes right back to the Greeks, it's very much their attitude, and it's connected with their humanism, their respect for every individual, every human being. Beginning with themselves, for the Greeks were a very self-respecting people who didn't pay too much respect, even to the gods. So one has to bear in mind these sort of susceptibilities. Some people may be quite outraged by what seems to them to be excessive respect paid not only to images but to other human beings. I remember when I was in Kalimpong during the first few weeks of my stay there, I was at the Dharmodaya Vihara and a Roman Catholic priest came up and stayed a few days. He had quarrelled with the Church and was at that time on the run, as it were, from the Church. (*Laughter.*) (I think he subsequently found his way back.) He was an Indian, and a very interesting man in some ways, but he was really shocked and horrified by the respect the Newar Buddhists were paying to me, doing a full prostration, while I was only then a *śrāmaṇera*. He said, "Well, in the Catholic Church we don't even pay that sort of respect to the Pope!" (*Laughter.*) Well, not in the twentieth century, perhaps, but they had in earlier ages. In an account of the Popes I was reading recently, in the last century it was still the custom to kiss the Pope's toe when one had an audience with him. He put it out for the purpose! (*Laughter.*) That was only a hundred years ago. So one has to be a little careful and give consideration, not only to one's own devotional feelings, which may be perfectly valid and legitimate, but also to the susceptibilities of others who may be present.

4 Borrow a Lawn Mower and Rejoice!

from The Sutra of Golden Light, Confession, Men's Order/Mitra Retreat, Sukhāvātī, December 1976

*Those who in this Jambudvīpa and in other world-spheres do a good act I congratulate on it all.
And whatever merit has been gained by me by body, voice or mind, through that merit-root
may I touch excellent enlightenment.*

The Sutra of Golden Light, trans. R. E. Emmerick, Luzac & Company Ltd., London
1970, p. 12

Sangharakshita: So there are two sentences here, and two quite different themes. The first is what we usually call the 'rejoicing in merit' and the second is the 'dedication of merit'. So first of all, the rejoicing in merit: when you rejoice in merit, what does this essentially represent?

Vimalamitra: You approve of something; you associate with it.

S.: Yes, you approve, you associate with it. What's the value of this?

Vimalamitra: You derive strength and inspiration.

S.: Yes — strength, inspiration. Does it counteract any unskilful mental state?

Aryamitra: Jealousy.

S.: Yes — envy, greed. It encourages disinterestedness. You're just as glad if somebody else does a good action as if you'd done it yourself. In a way you feel that you've done it yourself. So you rejoice in it; it's a positive attitude of appreciation. Do you think people usually find it very easy to rejoice in the merits of others?

A Voice: No.

S.: What do you think gets in the way? What prevents us from really appreciating the good actions of other people?

Aryamitra: Not being able to appreciate our own qualities. If you feel you're good at something, in some way, then you can appreciate other people.

S.: Maybe. But what really makes us uncomfortable thinking about other people's good qualities is that we feel — not simply that we don't have those good qualities — we feel *inferior* because we don't have them. I think this is what sometimes riles us. We look at it all in a very prejudiced sort of way. Instead of thinking that that person's got such and such good qualities and just rejoicing in them, we start comparing: "He's got those good qualities; I haven't. He probably thinks he's better than I am. If others compared us, they'd say that he was the better person." So we start feeling put down. It's as though somebody else's goodness and virtue makes them superior to us in a way that puts us down. So we resist that; we try to underestimate or depreciate the other person's good qualities and virtues just so as to keep ourselves on a level with them, as we think.

Vimalamitra: That's due to not putting value on something which is beyond yourself.

S.: Yes. It means that you're very much preoccupied with yourself in fact and how you stand in relation to others. Some people seem rather sensitive to this. [They may have] the idea: "He thinks he's better than me" when such a thought may never have entered his head. He may be quite oblivious of your existence.

A Voice: Depreciating our own value seems to be an associated tendency sometimes; not rejoicing in our own merits.

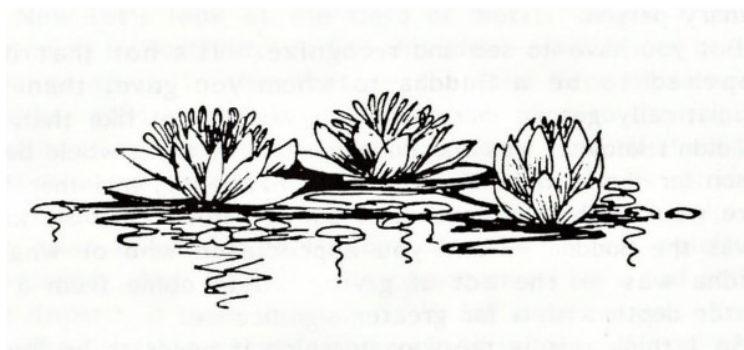
S.: It may be that if you've got some merits of your own to rejoice in it may make it easier for you to rejoice in the merits of others — just because you feel more on the level with them. But in a way that's a concession to our weakness. You should be able to rejoice in the merits of others quite regardless of whether you have any merits yourself or not. In fact, the fewer merits you have the *more* you should be prepared to rejoice in their merits and think: "Well, thank heavens somebody in the world has some merits even if I haven't!" There are merits around, in the world, so you rejoice in them, even if they don't happen to be yours.

Uttara: Sometimes I get the feeling that, if somebody is rejoicing in the actions I have done, then I'll owe *them* something. Or if they're doing something good for me, I'll owe them something for that — I have to rejoice in *their* merits.

S.: But I think the sort of merit that the text has in mind here is the merit that people are just producing in general, as it were, without reference to you personally — not as a result of good actions done with respect to you.

Some people do rather resist the idea of others doing good to them because they feel it puts them under some sort of obligation. Like with the neighbours — a husband may say: "Let's borrow the lawn mower from the people next door." But the wife says: "Oh no; we'll be under an obligation. We'll have to lend *them* something if they ask." They don't want to be under any obligation. But in the end this means they virtually cut off the relationship, because you can't help becoming involved in a network of mutual obligations if you have any contact with people at all.

So perhaps if we're unwilling or reluctant to rejoice in other people's merits it's because we're a bit too self-conscious, too conscious of ourselves in the wrong sort of way. We ought to forget about ourselves and where we stand in relation to others and just rejoice in their merits in an almost impersonal sort of way — just like when you're happy to see the sun shining. You don't feel jealous because the sun has the light and you don't; you just rejoice that there is sunshine around. So in the same way just rejoice that there are merits around. In a way it doesn't matter *who* it is producing them. [The fact is that] those merits are being produced. And the world is thereby made a brighter and better sort of place.



5 A Field of Merit

from 'The Sutra of Hui-Neng' (*A Buddhist Bible*) Mixed Retreat, Abhirati, March 1974

"May I tell Your Eminence," I urged, "that Prajñā (transcendental Wisdom) constantly rises in my mind. As one cannot go astray from his own nature one may be rightly called, 'a field of merit' (this is a title of honour given to monks as a monk affords the best of opportunities to others, 'to sow the seed of merit'). I do not know what work Your Eminence would ask me to do."

'Sutra Spoken by the Sixth Patriarch', trans. Wong Mou-Lam, *A Buddhist Bible*, ed. Dwight Goddard, Beacon Press, Boston 1970, p. 498

Sangharakshita: This idea of *puṇyakṣetra*, the 'field of merit', requires a little bit of explanation. It's very important in traditional Buddhism, perhaps more in the Theravada; it comes up again and again. '*Puṇya*' has a double meaning: it means 'merit' and it also means 'virtue' — it's got these two aspects. *Puṇya* is the karmic 'credit', so to speak, that you have in your 'account' as a result of virtuous deeds. So the idea of *puṇya* is very closely connected with the idea of karma. If you perform skilful actions there's a long-term tendency that good and pleasant things will happen to you — because you've accumulated *puṇya* under the 'law' of karma. This is *puṇya* in the sense of merit. And at the same time that you've created the *puṇya*, you've performed those skilful actions. So this is *puṇya* in the sense of virtue. So in Buddhist literature the word '*puṇya*' has this double connotation: it's your own good actions, and the good that comes to you as a result of your own good actions.

Sometimes, especially in Chinese Buddhism, *puṇya* is said to be of two kinds: red *puṇya* and white *puṇya*. Red *puṇya* is that which leads to an increase of worldly happiness, a more successful worldly life here or hereafter; but white *puṇya* is that which leads to Nirvana. Sometimes they are called impure merit and pure merit.

Ratnapani: Do they say what produces the red or the white *puṇya*?

S.: Yes. But it's not so much a question of a difference in the actual action, it's more a question of a difference in the attitude. For instance, if you engage in *pūjā* or give *dāna* hoping that this will give you a good rebirth — well, that's what you'll get. You'll create the impure merit. But if you have the strong and fervent aspiration that, by doing these things, [you're advancing towards] not just a happy rebirth, but to Nirvana, then it will be a pure merit. That's the distinction.

Ratnapani: You are still doing it for something though. I would have thought that the white *puṇya* would have been doing it just as an expression of good will.

S.: No, because then you wouldn't really be there. So you could say that those merits would be neither pure nor impure.

Now let's look at the field of merit. Right from the beginning in Buddhism you find this idea — which may be a bit strange to us in the West — that the force of an action, whether good or bad, is intensified according to the spiritual status of the person to whom it is done. In other words, if you do a good action, a *puṇya*, to someone who is spiritually developed, it is more meritorious and therefore more helpful to you than if you do it to someone who is less spiritually developed. And, similarly, the consequences [of a bad action], the demerit, is more serious. So if, for instance, you offend a Buddha, that is very demeritorious indeed; if you offend someone who isn't [quite] a Buddha, though serious, it's less so; and so on right down the scale.

So those beings who will produce a lot of merit for you if you give anything to them are called technically a 'field of merit', a *puṇyakṣetra*. And traditionally the Sangha is said to be the field of merit *par excellence*. A good monk or spiritual teacher is said to be a field of merit in the sense that anything offered to them redounds more to your spiritual benefit than something offered to somebody else. So in all Buddhist countries the tendency is to want to make your offerings to someone who has some degree of spiritual development; this is considered better for you, even if that person doesn't actually need the thing that you offer. He may not benefit from it at all, but you will benefit from your offering of it.

Chintamani: Sounds to me that if you press the right button the right thing will come out the other end.

S.: Do you really think so? Try and imagine it concretely. Suppose that you are living at the time of the Buddha and you have the opportunity of offering something to the Buddha, perhaps even something that would be useful and helpful: for instance, material food or a robe. If you know that it's the Buddha to whom you are offering and you've got at least some sort of feeling of what a Buddha is — that he is

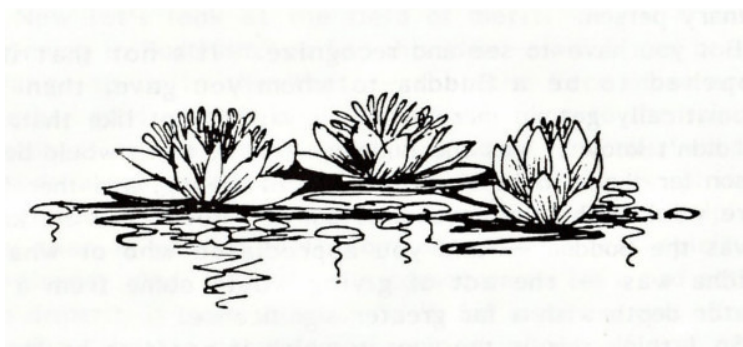
something far more than the ordinary person — then surely the feeling with which you instinctively give on that occasion will far surpass the intensity of your feeling when you are giving to an ordinary person.

But you have to see and recognize. It's not that if it happened to be a Buddha to whom you gave, then you automatically get an increase of *punya*; it's not like that. If you didn't know it was the Buddha — well, there would be no reason for there to be that intensity of feeling, and therefore there wouldn't be that excess of *punya*. But if you did know it was the Buddha — and you appreciated who or what a Buddha was — the act of giving would come from a far greater depth with a far greater significance.

So I think this is the way in which it needs to be looked at — not that, technically speaking, certain people are monks and therefore, technically speaking, if you make offerings to them, you get more merit. Sure, there are some Buddhists who think like that, but that isn't really what it's all about.

In the same way, if you can bring yourself to commit an offence against someone whom you know is spiritually developed, and you can feel it in some part of you, that's a much more serious matter. It's a sort of violation of your own nature. This is why — leaving aside Buddhas — patricide and matricide are regarded as quite serious offences in Buddhism, more so than ordinary murder. Because imagine what a mess you'd have to get yourself into to even think of taking the life of your own mother or father. What a violation of your own self — something far more terrible and catastrophic than just getting so angry with some other person that you are ready to kill them. In other words, the probability is that you would be in a far worse mental state than if you killed somebody else.

It's also rather interesting that, according to the Tradition, a Buddha cannot actually be killed by anybody. It's as though the Theravada tradition refused to contemplate the possibility of anybody being so wicked as to actually succeed in killing the Buddha — wound him, yes, but not kill him. It's as though their imaginations boggled at that; they just couldn't think of anybody doing such terrible harm to themselves, not to speak of the world, as to actually take the life of a Buddha. It went beyond their imagination ...



6 Pleasing Spiritual Friends

from 'Meeting Spiritual Friends' (*The Jewel Ornament of Liberation*), Men's Mitra Retreat, Padmaloka, August 1976

The enlightenment of a Buddha is obtained by serving spiritual friends.

(ii) 'To remain in touch with him by showing him devoted interest and reverence' is to think of a spiritual friend as the Buddha, not to disobey his commands, and to awaken in yourself devoted interest, reverence and confidence; as was done by pandit Nāropa. Also in the 'Ekāṅgarīmātā-nāma-sarvatathāgata-prajñā-pāramitā' it is stated:

You must in earnestness awaken reverence for spiritual friends; you must be bounteous towards them and please them.

Further, in your own way and status in life you must know how to act as a friend, as may be seen from the 'rGyal.po Me'i rnam.thar'.

sGam.po.pa, *Jewel Ornament of Liberation*, trans. H. V. Guenther, Rider, London
1959, Ch. 3, p. 35

Sangharakshita: The sutra says, '*The enlightenment of a Buddha is obtained by serving spiritual friends*'. This is a very strong statement, isn't it? And [yet] this is what the sutra says. No doubt there are other factors involved too, but serving spiritual friends is given this tremendous importance. So why do you think that is?

Peter Cowen: Because it's 'knocking' at our ego, isn't it?

S.: It's 'knocking' at your ego; there is that, too. Nowadays (and this is quite an important point) people often think that to serve is degrading, and personal service especially [is considered to be] degrading. So why do you think that sort of feeling has arisen? (*Pause.*)

Sagaramati: Something to do with class.

S.: Perhaps it's that, yes. For instance, supposing somebody asked you, "Well, what sort of work do you do?" And you said, "I work as a servant". What do you think their reaction or feeling would be [towards that]?

A Voice: [They'd consider it] very strange.

S.: *Very* strange. There's been a great change in social attitudes in modern times and no one likes to be called a domestic servant now. What do they call them?

Peter Cowen: Au pairs! (*Laughter.*)

S.: Home helps. It's strange the way in which this idea of service and being a servant to someone or something has been devalued.

Sagaramati: It seems to imply that you don't get anything from it.

S.: Yes, but why should that be implied?

Sagaramati: It's probably because your time is devoted not to yourself but to someone else.

S.: But people are surely familiar with other situations where you devote yourself to somebody else and get a lot out of it: [one's] children, for instance. You play with, or you serve, your children and you're quite happy to do that. You're quite happy to devote yourself to looking after them. You get something out of doing that. So why are we unable to transpose that [feeling] to other situations?

Alan Angel: You don't like to acknowledge that one person should be doing something rather than another who is better.

S.: Yes. I think it's very much connected with that. The collapse of the idea of there being a hierarchy, even a spiritual hierarchy, has probably given rise to the whole egalitarian idea that if you're all equal why should you do something for somebody else? Why shouldn't he do it for you? And that's true — *if* you are all equal, well, why not? Or at least you do it on an exchange basis, "Well, I'll do it for you today, you do it for me tomorrow".

Padmapani: Maybe some people see [serving others] as some form of defeat. Defeat for themselves ...

S.: Yes, defeat of their idea of themselves as at least equal to that other person. If you put yourself in the position of serving you are *acknowledging* that the person [you are serving], in certain respects, is *better* than you. It is this that people seem very unwilling to do. Unless you can [make this acknowledgement] you can't be receptive, and unless you are receptive, you can't grow. This is why the text says, '*The enlightenment of a Buddha is obtained by serving spiritual friends*', because there are different kinds of spiritual friends and different levels [of spiritual friendship]. So, you serve your spiritual friend and you grow in that way, and then you find that there are other spiritual friends awaiting you even further on and higher up. And so you serve them, and when you become like them you find, "Good heavens! All these Bodhisattvas to serve!" Even when you become an advanced Bodhisattva living on a high level of spirituality, you find that the universe is full of Buddhas. (*Laughter.*) In this way you go on and on, and out and out. The principle remains the same, but applied to ever higher and higher levels. There's always someone for you to serve somewhere, if not in your immediate environment then at least somewhere else.

Peter Cowen: I suppose when you become a Buddha there's all those human beings to serve.

S.: You can look at it in that way, though it's rather different isn't it? Because the Buddha doesn't literally look up to sentient beings.

Sagaramati: [This idea of serving spiritual friends] seems to be tied up with this thing of values. It's almost like people don't have any values in them that [warrant] respect.

S.: There is that, too.

Sagaramati: I certainly noticed this in the navy. Some officers you respected and you didn't mind them telling you what to do, because you had a respect for them. But other [officers] you used to really resent because you felt that, although he had rings on his arm, somehow he shouldn't be telling you what to do.

S.: Yes, you couldn't respect him, perhaps, as a man even though he was a technically well qualified officer.

Sagaramati: Yes, right. (*Pause.*) It's almost like for us to bring [the practice of serving others] back into society, we have to change the values of society.

S.: That's true. It's even quite difficult bringing it back within the circle of the 'Friends' [i.e. the Friends of the Western Buddhist Order]. Only fairly recently has there been anything of the sort around in a healthy, positive way. I've noticed this myself, in the past. Sometimes it has happened that there have been two people with me and I have wanted a cup of tea. Being busy, I have asked, "Would someone please make me a cup of tea?" And neither of them wanted to make it. It wasn't that they [really] minded making tea for me, but each thought why shouldn't the other person do it? Sometimes it has happened that although I was busy I have ended up making tea for all three of us. On such occasions I have seen a strong resistance in people's minds. This attitude of "Why should I do it rather than somebody else?" is in fact very deeply rooted and really must be overcome. It is quite opposed to the sort of attitude that sGam.po.pa and the sutras are inculcating.

'... to think of a spiritual friend as the Buddha'. What do you think this means?

A Voice: Is an aspect of it [to do with the fact] that while your spiritual friend may not be a Buddha, even the small amount that he may be more developed than you is important?

S.: Yes, it's as though behind him stands his guru, and behind his guru [stands] his guru, and actually behind the last guru of all stands the Buddha. You see a little of the Buddha shining through the first guru, and a little of what shines through that first guru shining through the second guru [and so on] right down to the present. One could look at it in that sort of way — seeing something of the original Buddha shining down through all these people who are, as it were, of varying degrees of translucency. But sGam.po.pa belongs primarily to the Tantric tradition. He was a guru of the Kargyupa school and a follower and disciple of Milarepa.⁶ He might have intended [this part of the text] to be taken quite literally, because in the

Vajrayana the spiritual friend (or guru) is often identified with the Buddha. So what do you think that means? Is one to do a mental somersault [and think that what appears to be a spiritual friend is really the Buddha]? Is there something more to it than this question of the lineage?

Mark Barret: What you were saying just then is that [the followers of the Vajrayana] think of the guru not so much as a spiritual friend, but as a 'fourth Jewel' [as in the 'Three Jewels' of Refuge: Buddha, Dharma and Sangha].

S.: Yes: right. But it's not exactly a 'fourth Jewel'. It's sometimes referred to as the *esoteric aspect* of the first Refuge, or first Jewel, in the sense that it is with the guru, not the Buddha, that you come in actual personal contact. Within your particular context, or your particular life situation, the guru stands for the Buddha, or the guru is the Buddha. In the same way the *yidam*⁷ stands for the Dharma and the spiritual companion for the Sangha. There is also the fact that since every human being is *potentially* a Buddha every human being is in a sense *now* a Buddha, so that if you could only look hard enough you would see that every human being *is* in fact a Buddha, whether they realize it or not. In the case of the spiritual friend, since he has realized [Buddhahood] at least to some extent, and has become a little bit Buddha-like, it's perhaps more easy for you to see in him the fundamental Buddha-nature which we all have.

Mark Barret: And if you see in your spiritual friend the Buddha then, in [a sense] you have a *way* to the Buddha.

S.: That's true. What one is *not* to think of here is superimposing upon the spiritual friend (who is an ordinary human being) the idea [of him being] a Buddha in an artificial way, or projecting on to him the idea of a Buddha. Do you see what I mean? Or trying to convince yourself that he's a Buddha when, in fact, your reason tells you that he probably isn't. So [seeing Buddha-nature in the spiritual friend] doesn't mean having a sort of double attitude.

Sagaramati: [By a] double attitude, do you mean that you feel something and at the same time you impose a reason, [to the contrary] on top of it?

S.: Yes. Also, of course, that you don't necessarily regard everything that he does or says as the actual action or word of a Buddha. For instance — just to take rather an extreme example, outside Buddhist tradition — you get someone like Guru Maharaj⁸ who is regarded as God by his followers. They project all that on to him and, therefore, everything he does becomes right. It's not *that* sort of attitude that the Buddhist tradition has in mind. Therefore, it is said that if the spiritual friend does anything wrong or unskilful just ignore it and direct your attention to the skilful things. Concentrate on those and ignore the others. But not that you should make the unskilful out to be skilful or that you should glorify the unskilful.

'... in earnestness awaken reverence for spiritual friends; you must be bounteous towards them and please them.' Give. Be generous and please them. But what does 'pleasing spiritual friends' mean? Does it mean a sort of egoistic gratification, or rubbing them up the right way? What does it mean? Can they be pleased? *Ought* they to be pleased? Or are they in a state of sublime indifference all the time? (*Laughter.*)

Vessantara: Because they have your best interests at heart, when you follow the Path they'll be pleased for you.

S.: Yes, you can please them in that way. But is it just that? Is there anything more to it than that?

Peter Cowen: If you are friends, it is in the nature of friendship that you try to please one another all the time. It works both ways.

S.: Right. And what happens when you please someone?

Sagaramati: Sympathetic joy [arises].

S.: There is sympathetic joy, yes. And what happens when there is sympathetic joy?

Padmaraja: You are seeing them for what they really are, as a person.

S.: Yes, you are seeing them for what they really are as a person, but even more than that.

A Voice: It's rewarding.

S.: It's rewarding — but in what sort of way?

Sagaramati: Your level of consciousness actually rises.

S.: Your level of consciousness actually rises, yes. But more than that.

Alan Angel: [You create a] basis for equanimity.

S.: Maybe, but I wasn't thinking of that.

Communication becomes possible. If you please a spiritual friend and he pleases you, you are then both in a state of sympathetic joy, and communication is established and flows. You are able to learn more from him. He is not only willing but also more able to give to you, and therefore you receive more. The important point here is that if you please the spiritual friend it makes it more easy for him to communicate with you, and the better you learn. Your pleasing of him opens the channels of communication.

There's a very interesting little passage in the Great Chapter of the *Sutta-nipāta*⁹ (which we studied a few days ago) where a certain brahmin is not sure whether the Buddha is, in fact, the Buddha, the Enlightened One, or whether he is just a great man, a 'superman' or *mahāpurisa*. So he reflects on what he has heard to the effect that the Buddhas reveal their true self, their true nature, if they are praised. It's a little bit like this. The attitude of praising is rather like the attitude of pleasing — praising is sort of pleasing in words. If you praise a Buddha he cannot but show his real nature. But even a Buddha cannot show his true nature unless the situation is positive enough to allow him to do that.

It's much the same, on another level maybe, with the spiritual friend. If you please the spiritual friend you make it possible for him to communicate with you more effectively than if you had displeased him. To displease him is to set up a barrier to communication, and to please him is to open the channels of communication. And by 'to please' is not meant to gratify in an egoistic way. It must be something on quite a different level: more open, much more free, more sincere, more genuine, more warm and so on. 'Pleasing' obviously involves genuine *metta*, genuine, sympathetic joy (*muditā*), and even genuine equanimity (*upekṣā*).

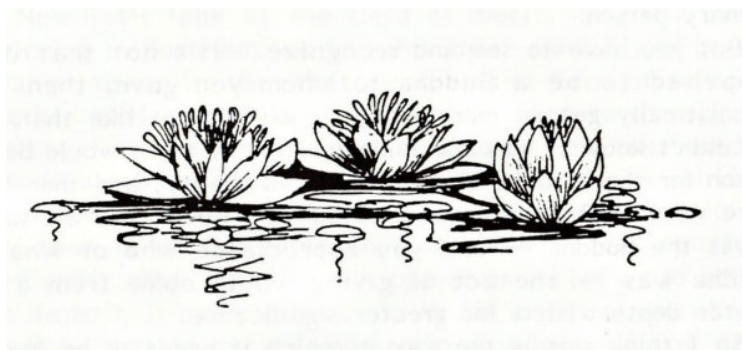
So if you please somebody you make them more open to you, and therefore communication flows more freely. If you please a spiritual friend you make it more easy for him to communicate with you and for his true nature to come out. And you are the one who benefits from that — it's you who gains in the long run.

7 Thinking of the Buddha

from 'Dhyana for Beginners' (*A Buddhist Bible*) Men's Seminar, 'Nash', June 1975

Sangharakshita: '*Constant remembrance of all Buddhas in the ten directions*'.¹⁰ [This is, according to Chih-chi, one of the ten conditions for true repentance and reform.] It is, in other words, an establishing of spiritual contact with the Buddhas and with the spiritual states and forces which they represent. Because, if you're thinking of the Buddha (and much *more* so if you're thinking of the Buddhas in the ten directions¹¹) you are mentally occupied with something *positive*, even spiritually positive, even if you're not in actual contact with the Buddha. One could say, to the extent that you *think* about the Buddha to that extent you

are in contact with the Buddha and that to think about the Buddha means that you are dwelling upon a highly positive thought. You are turning the current of your thoughts away from unskilful actions by developing what is positive within you. If you are thinking of the Buddha, it is very unlikely that you are going to have an unskilful thought or commit an unskilful action. Also, in thinking of the Buddha or the Buddhas of the ten directions, [one] experiences positive emotions such as faith, joy, serenity and peace, which are all highly skilful mental states. In this way you disconnect from the old offence, and the possibility of committing a new offence becomes more and more remote as you become more and more positive, and more and more preoccupied with the thought of the Buddha.



8 Seeing the Buddha

from 'The Diamond Sutra' (*Buddhist Wisdom Books*)
Pre-Ordination Retreat, Tuscany 1982

5. The Lord continued: 'What do you think, Subhuti, can the Tathāgata be seen by the possession of his marks?' — Subhuti replied: 'No indeed, O lord. And why? What has been taught by the Tathāgata as the possession of marks, that is truly a no-possession of no-marks.' The Lord said: 'Wherever there is possession of marks, there is fraud, wherever there is no-possession of no-marks there is no fraud. Hence the Tathāgata is to be seen from no-marks as marks.'

Buddhist Wisdom Books, trans. E. Conze, Allen & Unwin, London 1958

Sangharakshita: One could think of knowing the Buddha, or seeing the Buddha, in terms of the 'Five Eyes'. If you had been around in Northern India when the Buddha — or when Gautama the Buddha — was actually alive you would have been able to see him with the Fleshly Eye. You would have seen his physical body, or seen him as he appeared physically. But then there is the possibility of your seeing him on another level by means of your Divine Eye. You might then have seen him as possessing his 32 marks.¹² And then when your Dharma Eye opened, you might have seen the Buddha even more deeply, seen much more deeply into his being because, inasmuch as your Dharma Eye was open you would have seen the true nature of the conditioned and of the Unconditioned (which is the conditioned in its ultimate depth) and, inasmuch as the Buddha embodies the Unconditioned — he having realized the Unconditioned — you would have seen the Buddha more clearly, more fully, and more truly. This would be even more the case when your *Prajñā* Eye opened and you became an Arahant and were able to see the greater part of the Buddha's being, so to speak. But you would have seen the Buddha as he actually was only when your Buddha Eye opened. For your Buddha Eye to open, you would have to abandon the Hinayana altogether: give up being an Arahant and become a Bodhisattva, become yourself a *Samyaksambuddha*.

It's all a question of, in Lama Govinda's phrase, looking deeper: one must look deeper. The marks can be imitated, external signs can be imitated, people can be misled. One needs to be able to distinguish the apparent from the real and that means one has to look a little more deeply. Conze puts it quite pithily, '*Our conception of the Buddha must do justice to him as the unconditioned Absolute.*' It's not just a question of our conception of the Buddha's body, except to a limited extent.

So one might say we mustn't think of the Buddha as an ordinary human being; we mustn't think of the

Buddha as a sort of superman in the pre-Buddhist cultural sense. We have to think of the Buddha *as a Buddha*. I think I've pointed out before how difficult it is for someone born and brought up in the West, to get into focus this category of Buddhahood or Enlightened humanity. We either seem to fall short of it and think of the Buddha too much as an ordinary human being; or we overshoot the mark by deifying the Buddha or imagining him as a kind of incarnation of a higher principle, along the lines of Jesus Christ.

Jinavamsa: What can we do practically to try and define this category of Buddhahood, for ourselves and for people who come to our classes?

S.: Perhaps to begin with, one's approach has to be negative. One has to see clearly that the Buddha isn't just an ordinary human being, in the sense of an unenlightened human being. At the same time one has to see clearly that the Buddha isn't any kind of God, or an incarnation of God, or an avatar of God. That means one has to understand clearly those two categories which the Buddha is not. Then one has to try and imagine, try and see clearly in one's mind's eye, this third category which is quite different. (*Long pause.*)

It is of course important to have a clear understanding of this third category, that is to say Enlightened humanity or Buddhahood, because after all this is what one is supposed to be aiming at. This is supposedly one's Ideal, one's goal; so one should at least have a provisional conception of it. Perhaps it is very difficult, however, or almost impossible, to have an adequate conception of it even provisionally. Perhaps one of the best things one can do is to read the Pali scriptures and try to get some impression of the Enlightened human being in action, as it were: just moving about, teaching and talking with people, rescuing sick monks and so on.

Any further point about that? We have probably gone as far as we can with the main point, which is that the *Tathāgata* cannot be seen by the possession of his marks. In other words we've got to look deeper, as even in the case of an ordinary person whom we happen to know.

Amoghavira: What exactly is '*no-possession of no-marks*'?

S.: Seems quite clear. (*Laughter.*) I don't really see what there is that needs explaining.

Jinavamsa: Is it the same to say that you can't see the Buddha by the possession of the marks, as it is to say that you can see him with the no-possession of no-marks?

S.: If you say that a Buddha does not possess marks, it's as though you are actually perceiving the Buddha. Because if you don't perceive him you can't even say that he does not possess any marks. [But] are you actually perceiving him? When you say that you are perceiving him, even though you say that he cannot be perceived by the possession of marks, you are actually perceiving him by the possession of marks. So you haven't really seen him as not possessing marks. You have to see him as not possessing no-marks. Marks are not a real thing indicated by the word 'marks'. Marks are not a sign for marks. So it's not that the Buddha doesn't possess marks: he does not possess no-marks. It's not that there is no real possession of real marks: the marks themselves are not real. So there is no real possession of marks which do not really exist anyway. — Perhaps the Mahayana is becoming a little too much for us!

Amoghavira: Would it be better to take it as meaning that it's not the kind of question we want to get involved in, whether he has marks or not?

S.: Well, one might want to get involved in it — but one gets involved in such questions at one's own risk. I think we are safer and better off proceeding along the lines I've indicated before. That is, thinking in terms of penetrating deeper and deeper into somebody's nature and encountering them at deeper and deeper levels — whether it's another unenlightened person or whether it is the Buddha himself. If you had been around in the Buddha's day, you might have watched him every day. But unless there was a certain spiritual capacity within you, you would not have been able to appreciate the Buddha. You might have seen his physical body, his external appearance, and even heard him speak; but unless you'd had that spiritual

capacity, you would have missed the point completely: what the Buddha was and what the Buddha was saying. We know that there were people who did miss the point in this way.

9. Tortured and Needlessly Haunted

from *Outlines of Mahayana Buddhism*
Mixed Order Retreat, Abhirati, August 1974

(3) The miserable conditions of sentient beings which arouse the sympathy of the Bodhisattvas. "All sentient beings are under the bondage of ignorance. Spell-bound by folly and infatuation, they are suffering the severest pain. Not believing in the law of karma, they are accumulating evils; going astray from the path of righteousness, they are following false doctrines; sinking deeper in the whirlpool of passions, they are being drowned in the four waters of sin.

"They are being tortured with all sorts of pain. They are needlessly haunted by the fear of birth and death and old age, and do not seek the path of emancipation. Mortified with grief, anxiety, tribulation, they do not refrain from committing further foul deeds. Clinging to their beloved ones and being always afraid of separation, they do not understand that there is no individual reality, that individual existences are not worth clinging to. Trying to shun enmity, hatred, pain, they cherish more hatred." ...

D. T. Suzuki, *Outlines of Mahayana Buddhism*, Schocken, New York 1963, pp. 305-6

Sangharakshita: So what this means is that the Bodhicitta starts arising when one sees what a mess people are in. You can't really see that at all until you are a little bit out of the mess yourself — until then you are also one of those miserable sentient beings who are in a mess. Once you have started getting out of the mess, you really do start to see what a mess most people, most of the time, are in; and what a miserable time they do have of it.

What this particular passage says is really true — '*They are needlessly haunted by the fear of birth and death and old age ...*'. You can see this. You know certain people who are afraid of growing old, or who are afraid of death; and who '*do not seek the path of emancipation*', that is, they do absolutely nothing about it. '*Mortified with grief, anxiety ...*' — well, how many people are anxious? Nearly everybody is anxious, to some extent — '*... tribulation, they do not refrain from committing further foul deeds. Clinging to their beloved ones and being always afraid of separation, they do not understand that there is no individual reality.*' These are things that we see almost every day. It is on account of these things that people are in a mess. There's no spiritual orientation to their lives. There is no real clarity. There is simply reactivity and conditionality.

The great danger here is that we, from our relatively superior position, start looking down on others, and pitying them, in a superior way. This is the sort of élitism that people can object to, with validity. It is really quite wrong. "Oh, you poor people — you have never heard of Buddhism" — that sort of attitude is quite undesirable. But apart from that, one can see the majority of people *do* need the Dharma, because they are in a bad state. One can see that very clearly. And when one sees what a pitiful condition so many of them are in, so much of the time, then a certain sort of compassion develops. You wish to help, and your wish is a factor in the arising of the Bodhicitta. You want *really* to help — not just to alleviate, or palliate — but help in a far more radical fashion. And that can only be done by spiritual means, by helping people to see that there is some spiritual dimension, or higher purpose, to their lives.

10 A Painless Sympathy with Pain

from 'The Nature of Existence' (*The Three Jewels*) Community Seminar, Sukhāvati, June 1982

Kulananda: We were talking about the experience of suddenly becoming open to all the pain and ugliness and the suffering of other beings. But isn't your experience of that suffering somehow mediated by the fact that you don't experience it as painful as such, but there's a feeling of your own response to that suffering, which is not necessarily painful for you.

Sangharakshita: In this connection I sometimes quote a line of Tennyson's. He speaks of 'some painless sympathy with pain'. It's rather like that; it's the sort of sympathy – to use that word — that the Bodhisattvas feel. They're keenly conscious of the suffering of others, but they're not actually suffering themselves — not in the way that those others are suffering. Because if you were to *literally* experience the sufferings of others, it would cripple you, it would incapacitate you, it would be too much. Therefore you need a sort of ground or basis within your own experience which is so positive that even though you're fully aware of other people's suffering and are doing what you can to alleviate that, you're not overwhelmed by that suffering as a suffering of your own.

Kulananda: Wouldn't they perhaps even experience a warm response to that suffering? Because although you are receptive, you're also generating emotion?

S.: Yes. It's your positive emotion — even your positive transcendental emotion — which is able to transmute the experience and make you effective in the situation instead of being paralyzed by it.

Hridaya: So perhaps in that sense it wouldn't necessarily be a smaller suffering. If the Bodhisattva experiences the suffering of the other person, perhaps he experiences as strong a suffering; but the fact that there is so much more perspective, so much more breadth, means it can be contained.

S.: Yes. Obviously there is a whole hinterland of experience, positive experience, that the person actually suffering just doesn't have. There are accounts of people being burned at the stake but being happy and joyful nonetheless. They're able to contain, or subsume, even that experience.

Kulananda: Especially if you were in touch with something like the *Sambhogakāya*; it would be pure positivity just coming through you in relation to your experience.

S.: I think we can put the whole thing into a much more everyday context. I think when you're suffering yourself you can tell the difference between someone who comes up and sympathizes with you and is affected by your suffering, and someone who sympathizes with you but who is not actually affected by it. Do you see what I mean? Because it sometimes happens that someone sympathizes with your suffering but he's upset by it and cannot therefore really help you very much. He's sort of involved. But if someone is able to sympathize with you and genuinely feel for you, but not be involved in the way that you are involved, then he can be of greater help to you. He can affect you much more positively and help you get out of it. Otherwise he's just in it together with you and you may end up just pulling each other further down instead of helping the other up.

Hridaya: I'm reminded of the beginning of *'The Tempest'* where Miranda, having seen the shipwreck, seen all the people suffering, is obviously undermined [by experiencing] a very strong sympathy. She says to Prospero, 'O! I have suffer'd with those that I saw suffer.'¹³

S.: It's very difficult to understand the nature of the Bodhisattva's experience. But perhaps one can say that — yes — though the Bodhisattva doesn't simply observe, but experiences, the sufferings of others, the perspective within which he has that experience is such that, in a way, the nature of the experience is entirely transformed.

11 Is it So?

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

Sangharakshita: *'Just as the earth and other elements/Are serviceable in many ways'*. And Matics says, *'As the earth and other elements are, in various ways, for the enjoyment of innumerable beings'*. Yes, they are at their service, to be enjoyed by them. The meaning here is quite clear. There are many references in [Buddhist] tradition to the fact that the elements are for everybody. Everybody can stand on the earth, or breathe the air, or make use of water. They are free to all, and belong to all; they are completely at the service of all living beings. So the Bodhisattva aspires to be like that. He aspires to be of service to all living beings in the same way as earth, water, fire and air. He aspires to be available to all living beings, — to be of service to them, to be enjoyed by them, — just like the elements, without any restriction or limitation. Just as everybody, equally, breathes the air, and equally walks on the earth, so the Bodhisattva wants to be *equally* of service to all.

Kovida: You know, it sort of suggests that traditionally maybe the Six Element Practice¹⁴ [was connected to this section of the Pūjā].

S.: I don't think so, but it's obviously connected in the sense that, in the case of the Six Element Practice, you relinquish any personal appropriation. Here one gives up even one's merit or, in a sense, one's goodness. You don't want even to keep your goodness for yourself, just to get *you* to Nirvana, as it were. One might say that this is, if not *the* most difficult, certainly one of the most difficult things [to do]: to give up your own merits, your own goodness and, in a way, your reputation. You know the story of Hakuin,¹⁵ the famous Zen Master? He was wrongly accused of making a young woman in the village pregnant and [as a result of this] lost his reputation as a Zen monk and Zen Master. So what did he do? The woman, when the child was born, just put it on his doorstep (the temple doorstep), [whereupon], Hakuin took the child in and brought it up. After some years [had passed] the woman repented and confessed that she had falsely accused him of being the father of the child to screen somebody else. So Hakuin gave the child back, but he never said anything except, "Is it so?" When people said, "Well look, this girl is accusing you of being the father of her child", he said, "Is it so?" He didn't say anything more than that; and when the child was put on his doorstep and people said, "Well look, the child has been put on your doorstep. It's your child, you had better bring it up", he said, "Is it so?" And he brought it up.

When the woman came and begged forgiveness saying she'd falsely accused him and took the child back, he said, "Is it so?" In other words, he wasn't concerned about his own reputation as a virtuous Zen Master; so he had no attachment to his own merit in that sort of way which, of course, people very often do have — they are very attached to their own good name or reputation, and so on. In a way, from a human point of view it's understandable, but from the highest spiritual point of view that kind of attachment is something to be given up. So the Bodhisattva does not want to keep his own merit or his own goodness, as it were. He is not attached to his own goodness and doesn't mind appearing *not* to be a Bodhisattva or even a good person if that is necessary. He certainly doesn't want to keep his merit to himself so that he can get to heaven or to Nirvana and not other people. You can say, that if it is the ego sense that is the principle obstacle standing between you and Enlightenment, how can you get to Enlightenment if your ego is simply accumulating good actions which it regards as its own? This might have to be the base to begin with, but it can only be a base. It can't take you all the way. So [having] too strong a consciousness of how good you are — even though you may be very good — will hold you back from a higher attainment.

12 Behold with Faithful Eyes

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

*Round him like a string of jewels
Are the Gurus of the Lineage.
If you behold them with faithful eyes
You will be blessed by the rain of grace,
And fulfilled will be your wishes.*

*Interesting it may be to watch the play of goats,
But how can it compare to this wondrous game?*

The Hundred Thousand Songs of Milarepa, trans. Garma C. C. Chang, Shambhala,
Boulder & London 1977, Vol. II, p. 444

Sangharakshita: Milarepa is 'rubbing it in'! He says to Rechungpa — *'Interesting it may be to watch the play of goats,/But how can it compare to this wondrous game?'* In other words Milarepa is saying, "If you were fascinated and enthralled by the play of the goats, you should be still more fascinated and enthralled to see what I am now showing you". He also says, *'If you behold them'* — that is to say the Gurus of the Lineage who are around Marpa¹⁶ *'Like a string of jewels'* — *'with faithful eyes/You will be blessed by the rain of grace.'*

This becomes important in connection with visualization practices. It isn't enough just to visualize in the course of a *samatha* meditation. It isn't enough just to form an eidetic image. There has also got to be the corresponding feeling, on the part of the person visualizing, for what is being visualized. You haven't simply created a picture in front of yourself, like a picture on the wall, upon which you gaze without any feeling. You must not only create the picture or image of the Buddha or Padmasambhava or Milarepa, but also *feel* their qualities. Or, as Milarepa puts it, you must *'behold them with faithful eyes'*. Only then will you receive a blessing from them. It is not that they literally give you a blessing, but that you receive from the practice what you have put into it.

You can't regard the visualization simply as a concentration exercise. That is why, broadly speaking, we limit these sorts of practices to the Order. Because Order Members have, as such, committed themselves to the Buddha, the Dharma, and the Sangha, they have therefore a certain feeling toward the Buddha, Dharma, and Sangha. In particular, they have a certain feeling towards one or other of the aspects of Buddhahood as represented by the different figures in the Mahayana and the Vajrayana. It isn't enough to visualize [a Bodhisattva] in the same way as you might visualize a red disc or a blue square. You will also need to bring into the visualization the positive emotions of faith (*śraddhā*), joy, reverence and so on. Otherwise it isn't really a visualization practice.

Abhaya: You have said elsewhere that one might have to develop this emotional response [to Buddhas and Bodhisattvas] in some way other than through a visualization practice. How does that relate here?

S.: Well, let's presume that one is able to visualize — in the sense of forming or creating eidetic images of Buddhas and Bodhisattvas — but without any corresponding feelings. You will have to find out where your feelings actually are, and make some sort of contact with them. You then lead them, by degrees, to the visualized figure, by whatsoever intermediate degrees or practices or experiences are available to you. Perhaps it would be through the Arts, or through communicating with other people. But basically you have got to establish contact with your feelings and then relate those feelings to what you visualize. Otherwise it's just a cold sort of *exercise*, which is certainly not a Buddhist spiritual practice. Anybody could do it.

13 Rows and Rows of Pūjā Bowls

from *Outlines of Mahayana Buddhism*
Mixed Order Retreat, Abhirati, August 1974

To describe these conditions more definitely:

(1) By thinking of the Buddhas. *"All Buddhas in the ten quarters, of the past, of the future, and of the present, when first started on their way to enlightenment, were not quite free from passions and sins (klesa) any more than we are at present; but they finally succeeded in attaining the highest enlightenment and became the noblest beings.*

"All the Buddhas, by strength of their inflexible spiritual energy, were capable of attaining perfect enlightenment. If enlightenment is attainable at all, why should we not attain it?"

"All the Buddhas, erecting high the torch of wisdom through the darkness of ignorance and keeping awake an excellent heart, submitted themselves to penance and mortification, and finally emancipated themselves from the bondage of the triple world. Following their steps, we, too, could emancipate ourselves.

"All the Buddhas, the noblest type of mankind, successfully crossed the great ocean of birth and death and of passions and sins; why, then, we, being creatures of intelligence, could also cross the sea of transmigration.

"All the Buddhas manifesting great spiritual power sacrificed the possessions, body, and life, for the attainment of omniscience (sarvajñā); and we, too, could follow their noble examples."

D. T. Suzuki, *Outlines of Mahayana Buddhism*, Schocken, New York 1963, p. 304

Sangharakshita: As soon as it comes to a matter of practice, one speaks in terms of development and practice, becoming and change; and one even thinks of Buddhas of the past as having made that effort, and succeeded in it. But even Vasubandhu doesn't bring out the meaning of this '*thinking of the Buddha*' very fully. It is true that the Buddha acts as an example, and that by reflecting that someone has aspired to, and realized, Enlightenment in the past, we can therefore do the same. This is very helpful. But there is rather more to it than that. '*By thinking of the Buddhas*' — what is really meant by 'thinking' in this phrase? Leave aside the point that has been made about one taking the Buddhas as one's example.

Devamitra: Meditating or contemplating. Or just reflecting.

Lokamitra: *Pūjā*.

Mamaki: Being open to the symbolic aspects of the Buddha.

S.: It's a sensitivity to the Ideal represented by the Buddha, isn't it? In the Pali scriptures there are instances of people being tremendously inspired simply by *seeing* the Buddha. They have not heard a word about Buddhism perhaps, but they are simply inspired by the presence, by the aura, of the Buddha himself

Lokamitra: So *pūjā* would be an important part.

S.: Exactly! This is what I was getting at — for what is *pūjā*? *Pūjā* is thinking about the Buddha! Do you see the point? You are occupying yourself [and your mind] with the thought of the Buddha. It is not a cold intellectual thought, but it is the *Ideal* of Buddhahood which is occupying the forefront of your consciousness. When you are doing the *Pūjā*, the Buddha is there in front of you; either in the form of the image on the shrine, or very vividly present in your own mind through visualization and the Imagination. One of the reasons why the *Pūjā* is so important — and the whole devotional approach, of making offerings, giving flowers, arranging flowers and so on — is that you are thinking of the Buddha. You are being inspired by the Buddha Ideal, and opening yourself and becoming more sensitive to that Ideal. This, in turn, paves the way for the breaking through of that highest spiritual dimension, which is the Bodhicitta.

Sona: And when the Bodhicitta breaks through, do you keep on performing *pūjā*?

S.: Oh yes, indeed! According to the Mahayana sutras, no one keeps up more offerings than the Bodhisattvas. The Bodhisattvas are always making offerings in the form of *pūjās*, and praising the Buddhas, and so on. Some Bodhisattvas, we are told, have a vow that they will worship all the Buddhas in the universe. They spend all their time — millions of years — going from one part of the universe to another, and worshipping all the Buddhas that exist. This is a typically Mahayana way of stressing the importance of

acts of devotion and worship. Even if you are a Bodhisattva of the ninth '*bhūmi*', you should worship all the Buddhas — who, compared to you, would be even higher.

Devamitra: Prostrations would be very good, too.

S.: Yes, everything of that sort is useful. So, '*thinking of the Buddhas*' involves the whole of the devotional side of the spiritual life. It includes thinking of the Bodhisattvas and the great teachers. To a less developed Bodhisattva, a more developed Bodhisattva is a Buddha. To someone in whom the Bodhicitta hasn't even arisen, the Bodhisattvas are like the Buddhas. He can hardly tell the difference.

Devamitra: Can I ask you a general question about devotion? If you extend the whole idea of devotional practice into the practical things that you are doing — for instance, if one is working for the Movement — is that in itself an expression of devotion? Is it part of one's devotional practice?

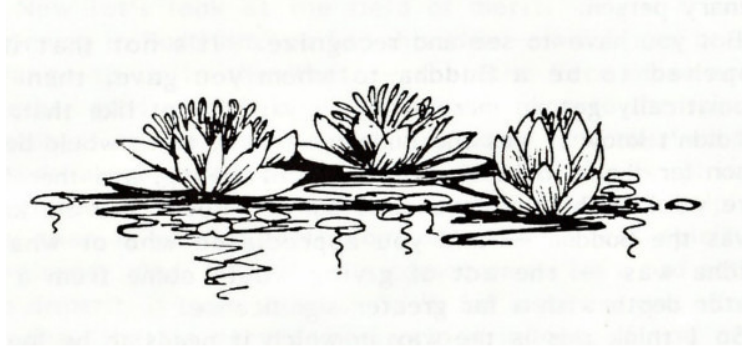
S.: It certainly can be, because one can say, or feel, "I'm doing this for the sake of the Buddha. I'm not just doing it for my own sake." In that way, it becomes something devotional. If, of course, you are doing it for the sake of other living beings, then you are doing it out of compassion. It is still an aspect of your spiritual practice, but not devotion *per se*.

Devamitra: I often find, though, that I might be doing something, and enjoying doing it, but I feel that I'm doing it just for its own sake. And yet it does happen to be something which is helping the Movement.

S.: Well, you can say: "Whatever joy I experience in doing this, I dedicate to the Buddhas!" Yes? (*Pause.*) But it is clear that unless one has this devotional attitude and thinks about the Buddhas quite a lot, there is not much hope of the Bodhicitta arising. Therefore the devotional element plays a very important part in the arising of the Bodhicitta.

Mamaki: The external forms of devotion seem very gross. I find this a great pity.

S.: There is such a thing in Buddhism as '*mental pūjā*'. You can sit and go through the Pūjā as a meditation, and visualize the offerings and so forth. If one can do this — if one has the time and the necessary powers of concentration — it is regarded as a higher level of practice. You visualize the Buddha or Bodhisattva or object of devotion, and make offerings mentally. You feel that you are offering, and even visualize the offering, in the same way that you visualize the Buddha or Bodhisattva himself. This is why you sometimes find that yogis and lamas have a minimum of devotional equipment. They might have only a picture hanging on the wall. This is because they do everything else mentally. Those who need something more concrete, or even enjoy something more concrete, may have vases upon vases of flowers, rows upon rows of *pūjā* bowls, lots and lots of images and little flags, and streamers, and hangings, and curtains, and little golden knots, and things of that sort all over the place. But one can just as well do it, if one is able, purely mentally. In fact, mentally, you can perform *pūjā* on an even grander scale, because you can visualize a thousand lamps, or end up offering the whole universe; which you could hardly do concretely, however devoted you might be. If you do *pūjā* mentally, by way of visualization, you can be completely carried away by devotional feeling, in a way that would be hardly possible were you operating through your sense consciousness.



14 No Fear of Straying

from 'Milarepa and the Novices' (*Buddhist Texts Through the Ages*), Men's Seminar, Padmaloka, July 1978

*Fearful of straying, I sought for a way,
The practice of two-in-one, this was that way,
And of straying I now have no fear.*

Buddhist Texts Through the Ages, ed. E. Conze, Harper & Row, New York 1964, pp. 267-8

Sangharakshita: What is the practice of two-in-one? I think it translates *yuganaddha* which is the unity or non-duality of Wisdom and Compassion at the highest level. This is a specifically Tantric attitude or method of practice. What does saying that you are '*fearful of straying*' imply?

A Voice: You are aware that you can still fall into lower states.

S.: You are on the path but you are not quite sure whether you are on the path. You are not quite sure whether it's the right path. You are still afraid of going off the right path. Thus there is still the duality of a right path and a wrong path. But when you practice the two-in-one, the essential non-duality of Wisdom and Compassion, then it's as though there is no distinction between path and non-path: you've gone beyond all duality. There is no possibility of going astray because there's only one path, or you could say there's no path at all. So the fear of going astray is removed. There is no question of alternatives any longer, no question of choosing between them, no question of a right path or a wrong path. You have gone beyond all dualities by uniting in your spiritual experience Wisdom and Compassion. The archetypal forms, as it were, of the right and the wrong paths are Nirvana and Samsara. Since you see Wisdom and Compassion as one, or not two, you have transcended even the distinction of Nirvana and Samsara. As there is no distinction between the conditioned and the Unconditioned, there is no question of you going astray. You can't go astray: whatever you do is the path. Needless to say this refers to a very high spiritual level indeed.

'So I, a yogin, complete with all desirable wealth,/Am happy wherever I stay.' He doesn't mind in the last resort where he stays, as far as his own happiness is concerned. He is equally happy anywhere. And then he goes on to say, *'At Yolmo in the tiger-cave or Singa-dzong/One trembles with fear at the roar of the tigress/And this sends one involuntarily to strict seclusion.'* Do you think he himself is trembling with fear, or is he talking about yogis in general?

Sagaramati: Yogis in general.

S.: Yes, he's probably talking about yogis in general. At the same time there does seem to be some reference to his own experience. It's as though he enjoys the roar of the tigress. He allows himself to feel a bit frightened and enjoys that. He doesn't suppress his natural reactions; and this sends him involuntarily to strict seclusion. Why should that be?

A Voice: It's giving him vigour.

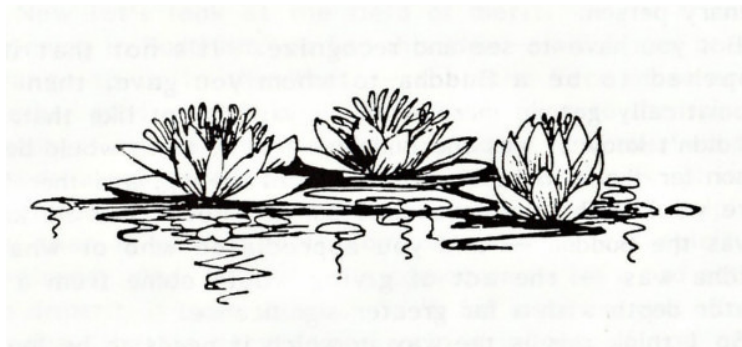
S.: Yes. There is a pleasing kind of fear which just makes you feel courageous, makes you feel heroic because of the proximity of danger. It makes one want to practise all the more, so you go into seclusion naturally, involuntarily, just so that you can practise. *'There arises compassion at the play of her cubs.'* This is the other aspect, *'And this produces involuntarily the thought of enlightenment'*. So you've got the two together, which Tsong-kha-pa¹⁷ stresses as very important: the withdrawal from the conditioned and then the arising of the Bodhicitta, the arising of Compassion. These two are to be brought together.

'The cries of the monkeys cling to one's mind'. What are the cries of the monkeys supposed to convey? In Chinese poetry they seem to convey something very touching, melancholy, mournful. You hear a monkey crying or calling in the distance, rather sadly. It is associated with the evening, with rain, with mist, with shadows. So the cries of the monkeys cling to one's mind and this causes involuntarily a pleasing kind of feeling of sadness.

'But at the chattering of their young one just wants to laugh,/And this produces involuntarily an elevation of spirit.' What's Milarepa doing here? He is using his natural reactions and turning them in the direction of Enlightenment. He doesn't allow the feeling of sadness to develop into depression or melancholy. He at once checks it, or corrects it, by attending to the chattering of the monkeys' young, so that he just wants to laugh. And then he turns that desire to laugh in a positive direction, and this produces involuntarily an elevation of spirit. When you feel happy and joyful and laughing, there is a lot of energy. There is an elevation of spirit, as he calls it, and you can use this, guide it in the right direction up the spiral.

'Sweet to the ear is the sad song of the cuckoo with its tremulous note,/And one is caused to hearken involuntarily,/And the varied cries of the raven are cheering to his neighbour the yogin'. This seems to be just a bit of poetry. He is just enjoying the place, listening to the sounds of these different birds.

'Happy is the state of one who lives in such a spot as this,/Without the presence of a single companion, and even in this one is happy.' He doesn't say in spite of this. One is happy in this. *'And now by the song of this rejoicing yogin/May the sufferings of all beings be removed.'* This is his transference of merit at the end of the song.



Glossary

Anātma (Pali *anattā*): sometimes called 'no self' or 'no soul', this term actually refers to the Buddhist denial of the Vedic conception of an *ātma*. The *ātma* is a *permanent and unchanging* self which lies within each person. It is this that Buddhism denies, not the empirical self, i.e. one's experience of oneself as a centre of action and perception with a continuing identity. The 'doctrine' of *anātma* is thus the assertion that there is no part — physical, psychological, or metaphysical — of a human being which is not constantly changing. The human being consists of a number of processes — physical, biological, emotional, psychological etc. each of which is a succession of states. Our individual identity is derived not from any single stable element within those ever-changing processes but from the continuity of conditionality which runs through them. It is this fact which makes possible development since every part of our natures is subject to change and may therefore be changed for the better. *Anātma* is one of the three *lakṣaṇas* or marks of conditioned existence, the fundamental characteristics of life: the others are *dukkha*, 'imperfection' or 'unsatisfactoriness', and *anitya*, impermanence. Unlike the other two, *anātma* is also a characteristic of the Unconditioned.

See Sangharakshita, *The Three Jewels*, Windhorse Publications, Ch. 11.

Bhūmi: lit. 'ground'. The 'Ten *Bhūmis*' are according to Mahayana tradition the stages in the spiritual career of a Bodhisattva from the first arising of the Bodhicitta (the 'Will to universal Enlightenment') to the final attainment of *Samyaksambodhi* ('full and perfect Enlightenment'). The *locus classicus* of this teaching is the *Dāsabhūmika Sutra*, the 'Discourse on the Ten Stages'. The stages given in this sutra are: 1. the Joyful (*pramuditā*), 2. the Immaculate (*vimalā*), 3. the Radiant (*prabhākarī*), 4. the Blazing (*arciṣmatī*), 5. the Very Difficult to Conquer (*sudurjayā*), 6. the Face-to-Face (*abhimukhī*), 7. the Far-Going (*dūraṅgamā*), 8. the Immovable (*acalā*), 9. Good Thoughts (*sādhumatī*), 10. the Cloud of the Doctrine (*dharmamegha*). Each stage is described in detail lavish with superlatives and each of the major formulae of mediaeval Indian Buddhism is assigned to one or other *bhūmi*, at which the Bodhisattva is supposed to bring it to completion. Bewildering and arbitrary as this may sometimes seem, the teaching of the 'Ten *Bhūmis*' poetically gives some feeling for the immense scope and lofty sweep of the Bodhisattva's career. Another important list of 'Ten *Bhūmis*', different from the above, is given in the *Mahāvastu*. The general principle is however the same: the Bodhisattva Path is shown to mount through a series of stages of almost unimaginable sublimity.

See Sangharakshita, *The Three Jewels*, Windhorse Publications, Ch. 16 and *A Survey of Buddhism*, Windhorse Publications, Ch. 4, Section VI.

Paramita: lit. 'perfection' or 'highest state'. In Mahayana Buddhism *paramita* came to refer to the qualities which a Bodhisattva must cultivate in order to attain *Samyaksambodhi* (full and perfect Enlightenment). A list of six *pāramitās* is the most commonly used, although a further four are often added to these to make ten. The six are: 1. generosity (*dāna*), 2. morality (*śīla*), 3. patience (*kṣānti*), 4. energy (*vīrya*), 5. meditation (*dhyāna*), 6. wisdom (*prajñā*). The additional four are: 7. skilful-means (*upāya-kauśalya*), 8. the vow (*praṇidhāna*), 9. power (*śakti*), 10. knowledge (*jñāna*). The Theravada school also developed a list of ten *pāramitās* to be cultivated by the Bodhisattva which overlaps to some extent the Mahayana list: 1. generosity, 2. morality, 3. renunciation (Pali *nekkhamma*) 4. wisdom, 5. energy, 6. patience, 7. truth (Pali *sacca*), 8. resolution (Pali *adhiṭṭhāna*), 9. loving-kindness (Pali *mettā*), 10. equanimity (Pali *upekkhā*). In the Mahayana tradition it was stressed that each of these qualities only becomes a *paramita* in the full sense of a Transcendental Perfection when it is joined with *prajñā* or Wisdom. It is sometimes said that there is in fact only one *paramita* — *prajñā*. In other words, the cultivation of the qualities is not an end in itself. There must be a change in one's underlying attitude to life. Mere goodness is not enough, one must break through to a way of looking at things which is not based on self-concern, however refined and positive. The cultivation of the qualities of generosity, morality etc., however, acts as the basis for the development of the *pāramitās* as a result of the arising of *prajñā*.

See *Mitrataś* 62-7; Sangharakshita, *A Survey of Buddhism*, Windhorse Publications, Ch. 4, Section VI; Sangharakshita, *The Three Jewels*, Windhorse Publications, Ch. 16.

Sutra (Pali *sutta*): lit. a 'thread' or 'string'. Usually translated as a 'dialogue' or 'discourse', sutra refers to the best known and the most characteristic of the literary forms (*aṅgas*) found in the Buddhist scriptural canons. (Nine *aṅgas* are distinguished by the Theravadins and twelve by the Sarvastivadins and, following them, by the Mahayanists.) This applied meaning presumably arose from the fact that a discourse is a connected sequence of topics 'threaded' together. Sutras vary enormously in length from a few lines to several volumes. All the sutras purport to be records of the Buddha's own teaching and usually contain some narrative framework which provide the circumstances under which the Buddha spoke. However, some sutras in the Pali Canon centre upon teachings given by the Buddha's leading disciples and later ratified by him, and in the Chinese Canon there is *The Sutra of Hui-Neng* which deals with the life and teachings of the Sixth Patriarch of the Chan School who lived many centuries after the Buddha's death.

In each of the three main complete canons — Pali, Chinese, and Tibetan — there are three piṭakas or sections (lit. 'baskets'): the Sutra, Vinaya, and Abhidharma Piṭakas, the Sutra Piṭaka containing all the discourses (some sutra-like material is however contained in the Pali Vinaya Piṭaka). Although there is some overlapping of material between the different collections, there are many sutras which are not common to all. The sutras of the Hinayana phase, of which the Pali Canon entirely consists and of which some are found in the other collections, are largely concerned with the Buddha's earthly ministry — although they are by no means devoid of the magical, the other-worldly, and the symbolic. The Mahayana sutras, found in the Tibetan and Chinese Canons, are more concerned with the Buddha as an archetypal figure and, though they each commence in an earthly setting, quickly transcend it to a dimension of myth and symbol by means of which they convey their deep spiritual truths. Both the Hinayana and Mahayana sutras may be taken as expressing the authentic spirit of Buddhism and are together a treasure house of spiritual riches.

See Sangharakshita, *The Eternal Legacy*, Windhorse Publications.

Tulku: This is a Tibetan word (correctly transliterated as *sprul-sku*) which translates the Sanskrit *Nirmāṇakāya*, lit. 'Body of Transformation', one of the *Trikāya* (see *Mitrata* 58) or Three Bodies of the Buddha. According to Tibetan Buddhist tradition *Tulkus* are highly evolved beings who have taken rebirth in human form out of compassion for humanity. Many such 'incarnate lamas' were recognized in Tibet before the Chinese invasion and several of them are now teaching in the West. (For an account of the process of recognition see Roger Hicks and Ngakpa Chogyam, *Great Ocean: an Authorised Biography of the Dalai Lama*, Element, Shaftesbury 1984.) Two kinds of *Tulku* are distinguished by the Tibetans: those who are the incarnations of great human teachers such as Sarahapada and Taranatha and those who embody archetypal Bodhisattvas and Buddhas such as Avalokiteśvara (the Dalai Lama) and Amitābha (the Panchen Lama). The *Tulku* 'system' developed in the sixteenth century in Tibet and continues to the present day. However, it is clear that at times the system has been exploited by powerful and unscrupulous families for their own ends. It is therefore important that too much reliance is not placed on the fact that someone has been declared a *Tulku*. One should see for oneself whether or not he does embody real spiritual qualities.

See Sangharakshita, *The Three Jewels*, Windhorse Publications, Ch. 16; Sangharakshita, 'The Dalai Lama: His Reincarnations', lecture available on FreeBuddhistAudio - <http://tinyurl.com/owqy3nb> ; Sangharakshita, *Tibetan Buddhism – An Introduction*, Windhorse Publications; and Guiseppe Tucci, *The Religions of Tibet*, RKP, London and Henley 1970.

Notes

¹ The 'Sevenfold Pūjā' 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 *Puja: The Triratna Book of Buddhist Devotional Texts*, Windhorse Publications.

² An Upasaka (f. Upasika) is a committed lay Buddhist as contrasted with a Bhikshu (f. Bhikshuni), loosely a 'monk'. The Upasaka, on ceremonial occasions, traditionally wears white clothes whilst the Bhikshu wears yellow, orange, red, brown, or black robes, according to the school to which he belongs. In many Eastern Buddhist traditions the distinction between Upasaka and Bhikshu has become overly rigid. The Bhikshus are often considered to be the real Buddhists and the Upasakas are simply seen as having the duty to support them without seriously applying themselves to spiritual practice. In order to overcome this split the Western Buddhist Order has stressed 'going for refuge' or commitment to the Three Jewels of Buddha, Dharma, and Sangha rather than following a particular way of life. Initially, all members of the Order (apart from the Venerable Sangharakshita) were ordained as Upasakas and Upasikas but, since Order Members functioned in a very much more wholehearted way than the average Upasaka — indeed than many Bhikshus — in the East, it was decided to discard the terminology of Upasaka and Bhikshu. Instead, all members of the Order are 'Dharmacharis' (f. Dharmacharinis), 'followers of the Dharma', regardless of whether they are single or live with their families. At the same time it is often stressed within the Order that the celibate life is generally more advantageous to spiritual practice. Some Order Members who have taken a vow of celibacy have become 'Anagarikas' (literally 'homeless'). On ceremonial occasions they wear yellow robes, without the patching which characterizes the robes of a Bhikshu.

³ *Entering the Path of Enlightenment: the Bodhicaryāvatāra of the Buddhist Poet Śāntideva*, trans. Marion L. Matics, Allen & Unwin, London 1971. This is a translation from the Sanskrit and is at times very poetic. It has an extensive and useful guide. This version was used by the Venerable Sangharakshita for the study seminar published in edited form as *The Endlessly Fascinating Cry*, Sangharakshita, Windhorse, London 1977, now available on FreeBuddhistAudio - <http://tinyurl.com/nt4tyke> - or Lulu - <http://tinyurl.com/p44mlzq>

⁴ The Pure Land is a realm of great beauty and delight where everything is conducive to spiritual progress. It is formed by the vow of a Bodhisattva that when he gains supreme Enlightenment he will create such a realm around him and that all those who supplicate him will be reborn there. The most well-known of these Pure Lands is Sukhāvātī, the Pure Land of the Buddha Amitabha. His realm is described in the *Sukhāvātī-vyūha Sutras* (see Sangharakshita, *The Eternal Legacy*, Windhorse Publications, Ch. 11, for a survey of this literature), a lengthy and representative extract from which can be found in *Buddhist Scriptures*, ed. E. Conze, Penguin, Harmondsworth 1959. Some account of the theory of the Pure Land may be found in Sangharakshita, *The Three Jewels*, Windhorse Publications; Sangharakshita, 'Building the Buddha Land', lecture available on FreeBuddhistAudio - <http://tinyurl.com/o5wf5of> – and *The Inconceivable Emancipation*, Windhorse Publications.

⁵ Every two or three years a gathering of the Western Buddhist Order is held which all Order Members from all over the world try to attend. These provide the opportunity for the individual Order Member to experience directly him or herself as part of a spiritual community which transcends nationality and race. They are a major source of inspiration for the Order and one guarantee of its unity in the future.

⁶ Milarepa was a Tibetan Buddhist master of the eleventh century from whom the various Kargyupa lineages are descended. He is famous for his asceticism, living on nettles in a cave in the snow-mountains and wearing only a thin cotton garment. His songs and the stories of the circumstances under which they were sung provide some of the best loved literature of Buddhist Tibet. Tibetan Buddhism in general and the Kargyupas in particular stress the lineage stretching from disciple to guru back through many generations to such great figures as Milarepa and even to archetypal Buddhas like Vajradhara. sGam.po.pa was one of Milarepa's principal disciples. Milarepa's story can be read in *The Life of Milarepa*, trans. Lobsang P.

Lhalungpa, Dutton, New York 1977. His songs are contained in *The Hundred Thousand Songs of Milarepa* Vols. I & II, trans. Garma C. C. Chang, Shambhala, Boulder & London 1977.

⁷ The *Yidam*, literally 'Oath Bound One' (corresponding to the Indian *Ista Devata* or 'chosen deity') is the Buddha or Bodhisattva upon whom one meditates, thus representing the Dharma in one's actual experience.

⁸ Guru Maharaj is the head of the Divine Light Mission which attracted much publicity in the 1970's, particularly because he was at that time in his early teens. Of Indian origin, his movement was widespread in the West, although there have apparently been schisms in the last few years. Maharaj was presented as an avatar of God.

⁹ The *Sutta-nipāta* is a collection of very early sutras found in the *Khuddaka-Nikāya* of the Sutta Piṭaka of the Pali Canon. See *The Group of Discourses* trans. K. R. Norman, Pali Text Society, London 1984.

¹⁰ See Charles Luk, *The Secrets of Chinese Meditation*, Rider, London 1975, p. 114.

¹¹ The ten directions are the four cardinal points, the four intermediate points, and the zenith and nadir.

¹² The 'Thirty-two Marks of a Superman' are various physical attributes (such as wheels on the soles of the feet, long ear lobes, a curl of hair on the forehead, a protuberance on top of the head) which, according to Indian tradition, were to be found on the bodies of great men. Those who possessed such marks would either become world-conquering kings or else Buddhas. The origins of the tradition concerning the thirty-two marks are obscure and their symbolical meanings are uncertain. They represent the outward signs of a great man.

¹³ William Shakespeare, *The Tempest*, Act I, scene ii, lines 5-6.

¹⁴ The Six Element Practice is a meditation in which one progressively dissociates oneself from the elements of earth, water, fire, air, space, and limited consciousness. It will be described in full in the next issue of *Mitrata, The Bodhisattva Ideal: 'The Bodhisattva Vow'*.

¹⁵ Hakuin (1685-1768) was one of the greatest of the Japanese Zen Masters. See *The Zen Master Hakuin*, trans. Philip B. Yampolsky, Columbia, New York and London 1971.

¹⁶ Marpa, a Tibetan who travelled to India a number of times to gather texts which he translated into his native language, was Milarepa's teacher and was himself the disciple of the great Indian teacher Nāropa. The Gurus of the Lineage are, in this context, those from whom Marpa is descended in pupillary succession. For details of Marpa's life see *The Life of Marpa the Translator*, trans. Nalanda Translation Committee, Prajñā, Boulder 1982.

¹⁷ Tsong-kha-pa (1357-1419) was the founder of the Gelugpa School of Tibetan Buddhism (popularly known as the 'Yellow Hat' school), to which the Dalai Lama belongs and which, at the time of the Chinese invasion, was by far the largest and most powerful in Tibet. Tsong-kha-pa was a reformer, returning to the strict observance of monastic discipline and systematizing the study and practice of the Dharma. See Helmut Hoffmann, *The Religions of Tibet*, Allen & Unwin, London 1961, pp. 160-8.