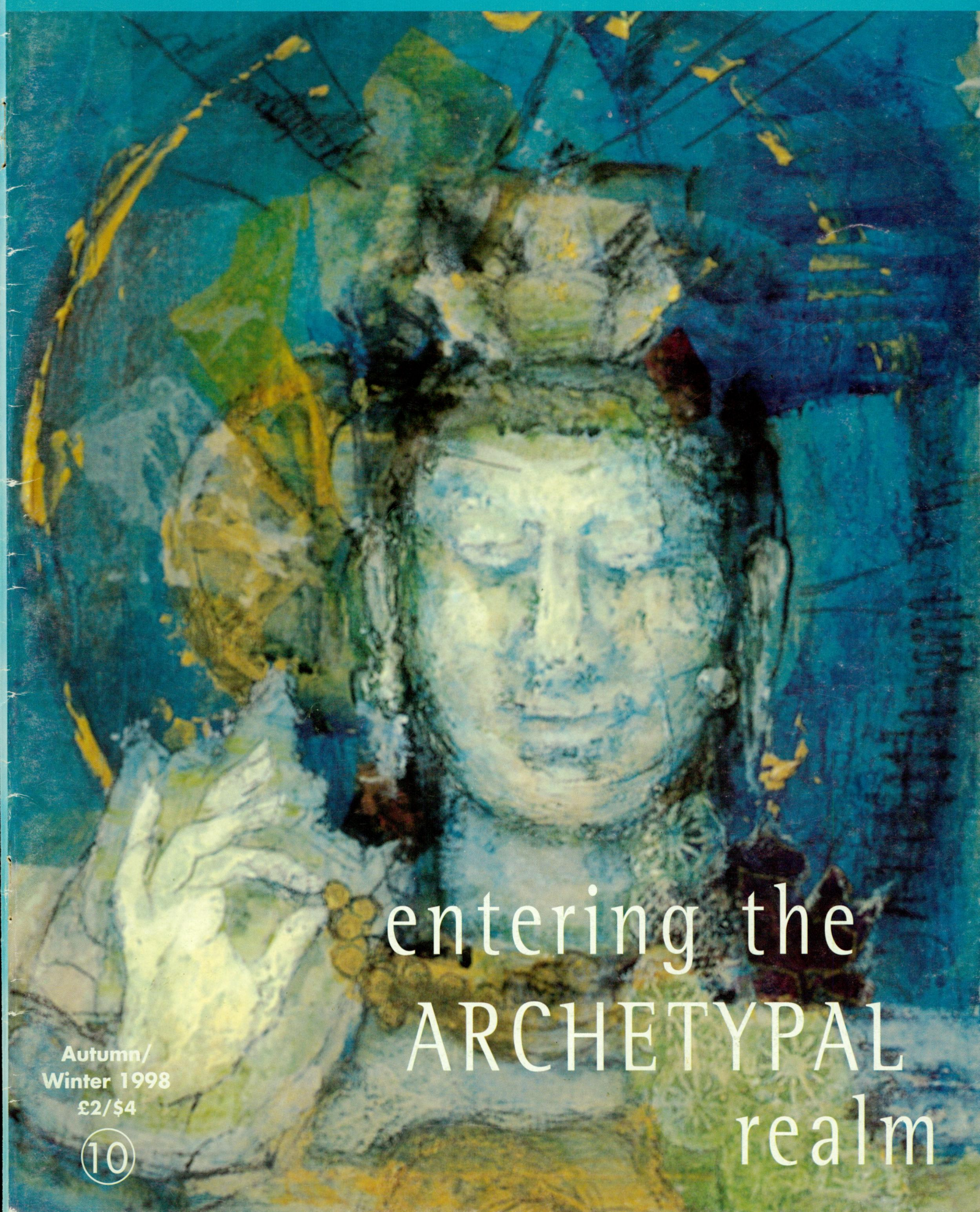


# LOTUS REALM

*a new voice for buddhist women*

An abstract painting featuring a central, pale, and somewhat indistinct face, possibly representing a Buddha, set against a background of vibrant blue, green, and yellow brushstrokes. The face is rendered with soft, blended colors, while the surrounding areas are more dynamic with visible brushwork and splatters. The overall composition is vertical and expressive.

entering the  
ARCHETYPAL  
realm

Autumn/  
Winter 1998  
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**'Bodhisattva'**  
by Sara Meidan

**LOTUS REALM**  
is produced by women members of  
the Western Buddhist Order and  
their friends. It appears twice a year in  
May and November

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**The Friends of the Western Buddhist Order (FWBO)**

is one among many Buddhist movements seeking to establish Buddhism as a genuine path for modern people to follow. It was established in 1967 by Ugyen Sangharakshita, an Englishman who lived for many years in India, where he studied, meditated and worked for the good of Buddhism. There he came into contact with accomplished teachers from all the main Buddhist traditions.

In setting up the FWBO\*, Sangharakshita wanted to establish a new Buddhist movement that responded to contemporary needs, whilst keeping faithful to the ancient and unchanging essence of the Buddha's 'Dharma' or spiritual vision.

**The Western Buddhist Order (WBO)** is at the heart of the FWBO, and includes men and women of many different nationalities who are committed to following the Buddhist path in fellowship with one another.

A radical aspect of the WBO is that it goes beyond the age-old monk-lay divide, recognising that it is commitment to the realisation of Enlightenment that is the crucial aspect of ordination. Lifestyle - whether 'monastic' or as a 'householder' - is secondary. The WBO is also radical in that there is no distinction between the ordinations of men and women. In participating in the work of the Order, women can - and do - hold the same responsibilities as men, including the responsibility for ordaining other women.

Members of the WBO work together with others to run public Buddhist Centres. Some run rural retreat Centres; others are full-time artists; whilst others (especially in India) are engaged in social projects. Some work in team-based Right Livelihood businesses; and many work in a whole variety of 'ordinary' jobs. Some live in single-sex residential communities, a radical alternative to family life. Others live with partners and children, bringing Buddhist values into their homes.

**The Lotus**

is a universal symbol of spiritual growth and development. The realm of the Lotus is a realm where spiritual values are supreme. It is this realm that members of the WBO seek to bring into being.

**Lotus Realm**

is produced by Dharmacharinis, that is, women members of the WBO. It is firstly a magazine for women (and interested men) involved with the FWBO, for Friends, mitras\*\*, and Order members. It is also published with the desire to share the experience we are gaining as women practising the Buddhist teachings under modern conditions with women Buddhists from other traditions, as well as interested women (and men) everywhere.

\* In India the FWBO is referred to as TBMSG, an acronym which translates something like 'the Community of Helpers of the Buddhist Order of the Three Worlds'.

\*\* A mitra is someone who has declared their intention of following their spiritual path within the context of the FWBO.

**For Buddhist Women**

Lotus Realm is produced by and mainly for women out of the recognition that men and women have a somewhat different experience of and approach to life - even to spiritual life. At the same time we recognise that men and women - especially men and women following a spiritual path - have far more in common. We hope therefore that the struggles, aspirations and inspirations which inform these articles will be of universal interest, and will stimulate and sometimes inspire both men and women, Buddhist and non-Buddhist.



# 'Give it up! Give it up! Give it up! ...'

**THUS RING PADMASAMBHAVA'S WORDS** of exhortation to two 'fortunate women' who asked him for a teaching just before he left Tibet. If they wanted to dedicate themselves to the Dharma, they would have to give up - everything! Renunciation is the hall-mark of spiritual life.

If it's the real thing, done in the right spirit, and for the right reasons, renunciation brings with it a sense of freedom, lightness and joy. Not immediately, perhaps, for sometimes there is a struggle to give up the lower pleasure for the higher. But in the long run the thing we thought we could not do without turns out to have been only a burden that never brought us real fulfilment anyway.

Renunciation is one way of viewing the spiritual path. But the human mind with its tendencies to eternalism and nihilism is likely to err from the Middle Way, and renunciation may become an end in itself. Should such be the case (and I must admit I do not see much evidence among my friends, at least, that we overstretch ourselves in the practice of renunciation) - or should we find the idea of renunciation somehow doesn't really grab us, doesn't inspire us - perhaps another approach is needed. Perhaps then we need something that speaks less in terms of *giving up* than of *growing into*, less of *breaking free* and more of *becoming*.

It is for this reason that we decided that this issue of *Lotus Realm* should explore the realm of the archetypal, to remind our readers (in case they need reminding) of the richness and value of such exploration; a reminder that human growth and development, even spiritual growth and development, can be seen in terms of the conscious integration of energies currently buried in the unconscious mind through discovering the archetypal forms of which those energies are an expression.

This way of seeing things has become widely known in the West through the work of C. G. Jung and his followers. For women practising the Dharma, Jung's analytical psychology raises two important questions. The first is, if we speak, as Jung did, in terms of an 'individuation process' from immaturity and unintegration to maturity and integration, what are the archetypal forms that are associated with that process? And are they different for men and women? And secondly - and more importantly - to what extent do Jung's ideas of human development overlap with or reflect the ideas

and experiences of Buddhist tradition? To what extent can we have recourse to them?

A concept of the - psychologically, if not spiritually - 'mature masculine' and the processes by which a man may mature from 'boy psychology' to 'man psychology' seems to be emerging with some clarity, largely as a result of the work of Robert Bly and other American advocates of a 'men's movement'. But there is, perhaps, less understanding or consensus of what the process towards 'mature womanhood' or 'the mature feminine' might consist in. Indeed, such terminology is fraught with some difficulties. The pitfall in seeking out a genuinely authentic psychology of the feminine seems to be the glorification of the female per se, which identifies with the earth mother - a symbol of the cyclic existence from which Buddhists are seeking to break free. For a Buddhist any symbol of the mature and integrated self must be one of transcendent creativity.

I have been thinking recently how difficult it is to contemplate that which is much, much greater than oneself. Modern culture does nothing to help in this, denying as it does the hierarchical nature of existence. (Existence, regarded from the standpoint of spiritual values, embodies hierarchy in every sphere.) Perhaps 'female psychology' doesn't help in this particular area either, since it is less inclined to look up and beyond, and to contemplate greatness.

I was struck as I read through the articles for this current issue by a quotation from Sangharakshita's writings: '...the archetype of which the Bodhisattva is the embodiment, and which the image of the Angel reflects in a different cultural context and on a lower spiritual level, is in fact nothing less than the Archetype of Enlightenment, and as such immeasurably transcends the archetypes that were the subject of Jung's discoveries.'

Jung may have opened up for westerners a new and dynamic way of looking at the mind. He very valuably drew attention to the whole rich world of archetypes which can play a vital role in our personal maturation. But if we take Sangharakshita's statement at face value, we would be led to conclude that here, as in other areas of western culture, its vision falls far short of the Enlightened vision that the Dharma seeks to communicate.

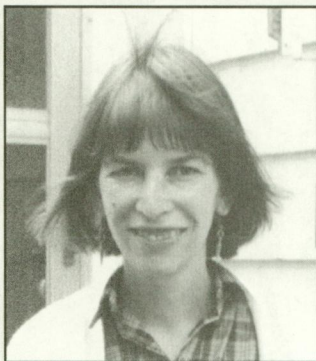
Kalyanaprabha □

#### Note:

1. Sangharakshita, 'The Journey to Il Convento' in *The Priceless Jewel*, Windhorse, Birmingham 1993, p56

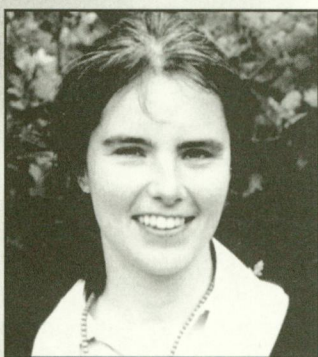


# Contributors



**Amritadevi** was born in West London in 1956. She studied art psychotherapy from 1986-7, and went on to become a social worker involved in family work. She qualified in 1993. She was ordained into the Western Buddhist Order the previous year, and in 1994 moved to Bristol where she now works full time for the Bristol Buddhist Centre. She has continued to develop her interest in myth, shamanism and exploring traditionally sacred sites.

**Shantachitta** was born in 1953 and grew up south of London. She studied medicine at the London Hospital of Whitechapel from 1973-8. She came across the FWBO in Brighton in 1980 and was ordained into the Western Buddhist Order in 1990. Since her ordination she has continued to work in general practice, as well as following up her interest in analytical psychology. She is currently training as a Jungian analyst.

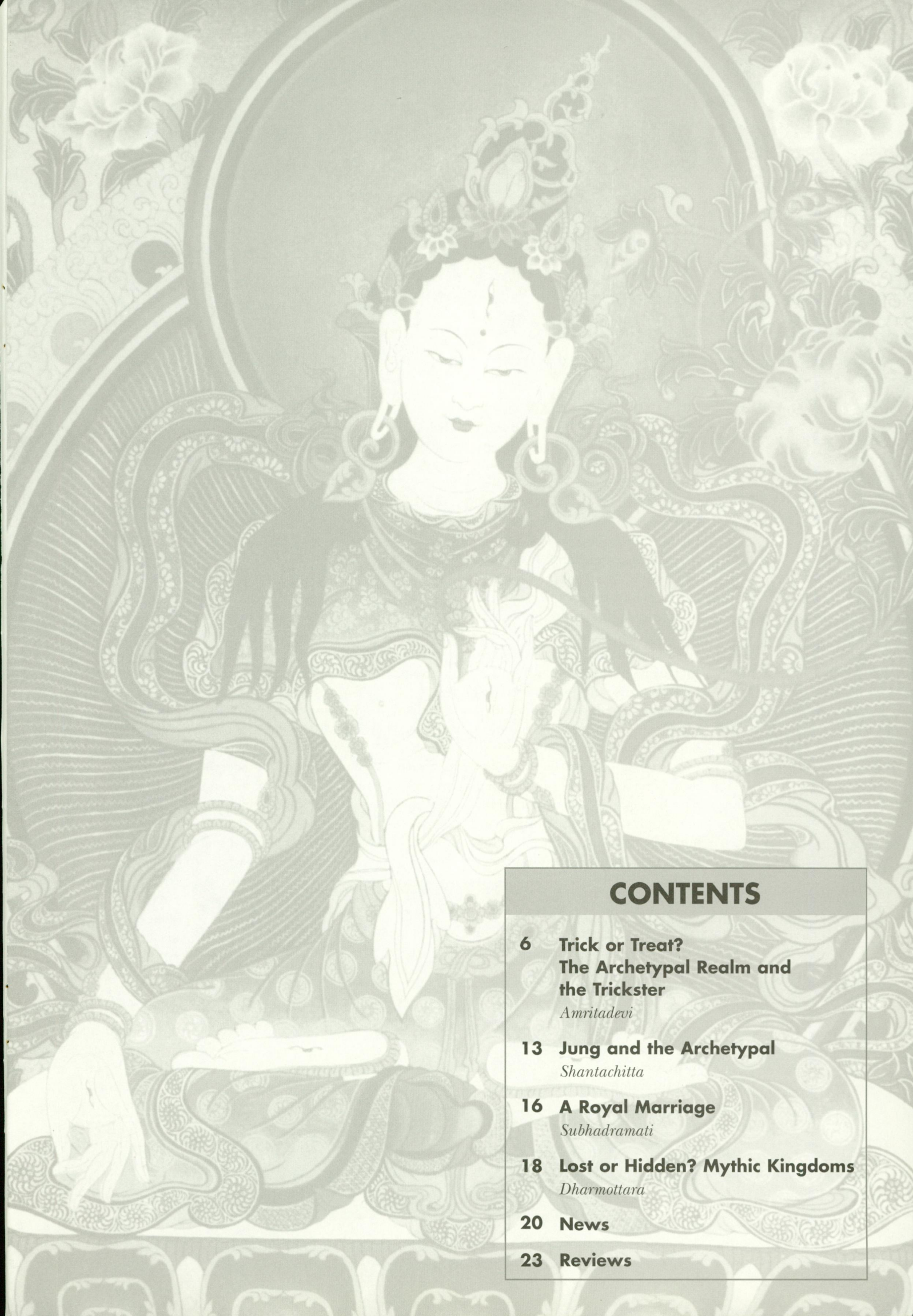


**Subhadramati** was born in 1963 and grew up in Motherwell, Scotland. She studied physics, and then worked as a sub-editor for the Royal Society of London. For the last ten years she has pursued her passion for team-based Right Livelihood at the Cherry Orchard Restaurant in East London which is run by a team of women in association with the London Buddhist Centre. She was ordained in 1995. Subhadramati has a keen interest in contemporary poetry, and is a writer of poetry herself.

**Dharmottara** was born in London in 1943. She studied art in Reigate before going on to do a degree in history at Exeter and studying art history at the Courtauld Institute in London. She married and moved to Birkenhead where she brought up two children and taught art history at the Liverpool School of Art. She came across the FWBO in 1992 and was ordained in 1996. She has taken early retirement in order to devote herself fully to the activities of the Manchester Buddhist Centre and the Liverpool Meditation Centre. Whilst continuing her appreciation of art and literature, she has also been developing a keen interest in the Pali Canon.







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# Trick or Treat?

## *The Archetypal Realm and The Trickster*

Amritadevi

**For many  
years I  
have been  
fascinated  
by and  
explored the  
realm of  
imagination,  
finding myself  
responding to  
a number of  
archetypal  
images and  
situations**

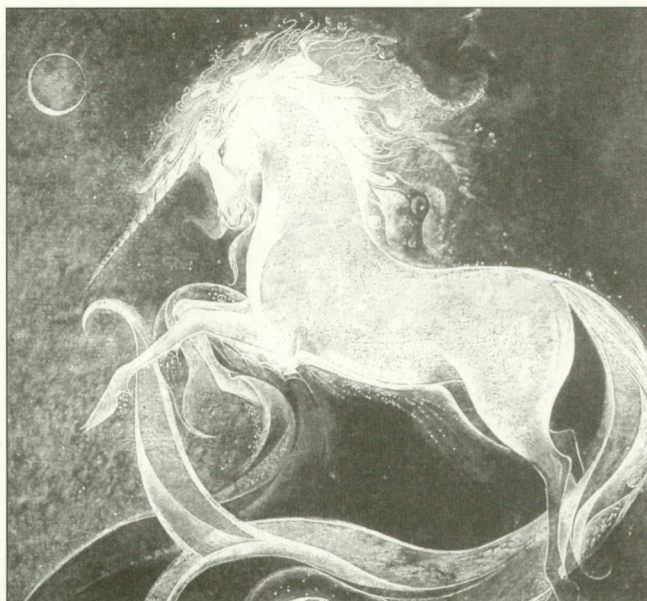
SIX YEARS AGO, on Halloween, I was ordained into the Western Buddhist Order. It seems appropriate that my spiritual rebirth occurred on the eve of the walking spirits. Halloween is an ancient festival which marks the mysterious transition from light to darkness occasioned by the earth's movements in relation to the sun. For our ancestors the lengthening nights, the loss of the abundance of summer, the coming of cold, the benign earth turning frigid and barren, the realities of famine and death required physical endurance and the ability to adapt to straitened circumstances. They had to deal with their fears of darkness and find the resources to make sense of life and its vicissitudes. Traversing the boundaries of life and death has been an important element in my life to date and I have been helped in this process by engaging with myth and archetypes. I have long been aware that both myth and archetype have played a crucial role in the development of human consciousness and culture; and for many years I have been fascinated by and explored the realm of imagination, finding myself responding to a number of archetypal images and situations, more recently to the archetype of the Trickster or Fool.

Here I want to first explain the term archetype, and the value and meaning of exploring the archetypal realm. There are questions to be asked about what kind of archetypes have relevance and

meaning for women in particular. The second part of this article will enter into the world of the Trickster/Fool who I believe has some of the qualities associated with the Shaman. (It is worth noting that Shamanic Studies have become a highly popular field of research at the end of this volatile century.)

It was Carl Gustav Jung (1875-1961), the Swiss psychologist and psychiatrist, who first formulated a theory of archetypes. The word archetype derives from the Greek *archetypos*, meaning 'beginning or first pattern' - an original model whose nature determines how things are formed. Jung posited that the unconscious mind can be sub-divided into two layers comprising firstly, the personal unconscious, and secondly, the collective unconscious. His theory was that fundamental or key human experiences have been encoded and transferred to successive generations genetically through the collective unconscious. He suggested that these primordial experiences arose before the emergence of logic in human thought, and that our ancient ancestors learnt to contain emotional-

ly charged experience through what eventually became universal archetypes and symbols. The majority of archetypes are associated with our most basic and challenging experiences such as birth, death, rebirth, power, sex, magic, unity and chaos. Archetypal images appear in many forms - as persons,





e.g. the hero, the child, the wise old man or woman, and the earth mother; in various animal forms that hold our imagination, e.g. the aboriginal rainbow snake, the unicorn, the dragon; supernatural figures, i.e. gods/God, and demons; geometrical shapes; magical numbers; and as significant situations and places, e.g. sacred mountains such as Mount Meru, Kailas, Golgotha, Shasta, or as World Trees at the centre of the universe.

Most cultures throughout the world have been consistently informed and developed out of archetypal material. In *The Face of Glory*, William Anderson describes this archetypal heritage as a 'tribal or historical dowry bestowed on every individual'.<sup>1</sup> In the West we have the ancient Greek myths and legends that contain much archetypal imagery and situations. These myths have had a profound influence on our civilisation through our thinking, philosophy, models of the universe, science, politics and the arts down to the present time. Closer to home we have the Celtic myths, remnants of which have been extensively romanticised and popularised in Arthurian stories and films.

Jung held that there is a deep psychic predisposition within us to achieve psychological and spiritual integration, so that our imagination can leap beyond present fears and inhibitions towards wholeness. He called the path to wholeness the Individuation process, and repeatedly taught that we need to develop a working relationship between the conscious and unconscious aspects of ourselves in order to unite our energies. Although his theory is not as fully developed, we can see some overlap between it and the idea of the True Individual or 'Arya' of Buddhist tradition.

### Encountering Archetypes

Where will we meet archetypes besides those found within the myths and legends of the world? Archetypes repeatedly emerge in dreams, in childhood and adult fantasies, in delusions, in fairy stories and in the myths, doctrines and rituals of all religions. Jung helped his patients resolve their psychic disturbances and spiritual crises through finding the meaning behind their fantasies and dreams and even their art work. He also analysed his own dreams and entered visionary states akin to a shamanic journey through which he encountered a guardian spirit named Philomen - in the guise of an ancient Gnostic figure with a long white beard, the horns of a bull, and the wings of a kingfisher. Jung believed this hybrid figure represented the faculty of superior insight.

We find the figure of the wise old man

with a long white beard appearing in the life of Sangharakshita. This time the figure comes from the pages of history and is St. Jerome the translator. On a journey to Italy in the summer of 1966, Sangharakshita visited many beautiful historical towns, churches and museums. He was struck by the various representations of St. Jerome in paintings, particularly those depicting him in a scholar's cell or cave.

Sangharakshita relates how he identified with the archetype of the wise old man as translator because: *'I was living in the desert. I had left the 'Rome' of collective, official, even establishment, Buddhism, and was seeking to return to the origins of Buddhism in the actual life and experience of the Buddha and his immediate disciples. Not only that. I was trying to teach Buddhism in the West, which meant I was trying to communicate the spirit of the Dharma in terms of Western rather than in terms of Eastern culture. I was thus a translator, with all that implies in the way of seeking to fathom the uttermost depths of what one is trying to translate so that one may translate it faithfully, i.e. bring its meaning to the surface, or from darkness into the light.'*<sup>2</sup>

Here is an example of a devoted practitioner of the Dharma who is receptive to the insights to be gained from immersing oneself in the realm of archetypal form and to fully and courageously allow his imagination to explore his cultural dowry. That, along with his deep experience of traditional Buddhist practice, has led him to conclude that Buddhist archetypes such as that of the Bodhisattva 'immeasurably transcend the archetypes that were the subject of Jung's discoveries.'<sup>3</sup>

### What Moves Us?

As Buddhists we encounter archetypes and symbols arising out of the spiritual and mystic experiences of the religious devotees of the East. In addition, our own Western cultural heritage can be viewed as a deep well



St Jerome

**I was ...  
seeking to  
fathom the  
uttermost  
depths of  
what one is  
trying to  
translate so  
that one may  
translate it  
faithfully, i.e.  
bring its  
meaning to the  
surface, or  
from darkness  
into the light.**





Aphrodite

brimming full of archetypes. However, many of the archetypes we are exposed to nowadays in popular culture are comparatively crude - I am thinking here of the archetypal content of popular literature, cartoons, the characters in television series, or in the fantasy games and books which delight our children, and in computer games.

The important question is, what archetypes do we relate to? I know that many Western Buddhists find it hard to relate to the archetypal imagery originating in the East, and much prefer the soaring spaces of European cathedrals and the abstractions of Bach's music. I would say that it is important to acknowledge what we do actually respond to and that it does not necessarily involve embracing Eastern forms prematurely. It's more a matter of discovering our own authentic responses to what moves us. For many of us the archetypes that we respond to may not be from a very refined level and may even be quite crude and basic. We may need to refine our sensibilities in order to be more comfortable and at home in the realm of beauty.

#### Men and Women, Male and Female

Another question pertains as to whether women and men respond differently to the various archetypes, or have different archetypes that hold meaning for them. Recently there has been a spate of books targeting a male readership exploring the archetypes of the warrior, king, magician and lover. Some masculine archetypes can have a feminine equivalent, e.g. the lover can come in a specifically female form such as Aphrodite. However, even in their masculine form, these archetypes are not exclusively the preserve of men. From my own experience and from talking with others, I know that women do relate to the qualities that these archetypes represent - either as qualities that are already developed or ones that are latent within ourselves and which we admire or are repelled by in others.

There are archetypes that primarily come in a feminine form and have influenced both women and men adversely as well as beneficially. Many archetypes can have both a negative and a positive aspect. The principal feminine archetype is that of the goddess which appears in many forms. The goddess has diverse and contradictory attributes, and is

called by many names. The main division seems to be between the 'kore' or maiden who is one-in-herself, self-sufficient or not married; the mother, who is engaged in the world, wife, mature, sexual, fecund, and pro-creative; and the crone, who represents retirement from active engagement in the world, the wise old women, healer, and shaman - a bridge to the beyond, particularly to whatever may lie beyond death. There are other feminine archetypes that do not easily fall into any of these three categories, but the above division holds good for many. The basic types of kore, mother, and crone contain a diverse and opposing range of qualities and can be seen as phases in a woman's development and maturation. When we are engaged in a training course, vocation, establishing and maintaining a home and family, involved in a diversity of relationships, going forth from ties and responsibilities, embarking on a voyage, or experiencing major life changes such as conception, pregnancy and birth, menopause, bereavement or death, it is possible that a particular archetype or myth may emerge as having a deep resonance with the core of our being. It is then up to us to work with the archetype as a means to integration and a deeper understanding of ourselves.

Since the foundation of analytical psychology and anthropological studies there has been a wave of literature devoted to exploring the realm of the goddess. An early classic was *Woman's Mysteries* by M. Esther Harding. Other popular and influential books in recent times have been *Goddesses in Every Woman* by Jean Shinola Bolen, and *Women Who Run With the Wolves* by Clarissa Pinkola Estes. However, my task is not to explore the different ramifications of the goddess archetypes. I would say the value of exploring such archetypes comes from playing with different perceptions of ourselves and the roles we may perform in life as mentioned above. But we do have to guard against fixing these archetypes and taking them too literally.

#### The Wise Fool and the Shape-shifting Trickster

The Trickster and the Fool are slightly different but related archetypes that usually come in a masculine or animal form, rarely in feminine form. My first conscious awareness of these archetypes came from studying the plays of Shakespeare at school in which I encountered figures such as the Fool in the tragedy *King Lear*, and Touchstone in the comedy *As You Like It*.

European tradition is rich in material regarding the Fool archetype as a mythic figure. As well as being a mythic figure, there

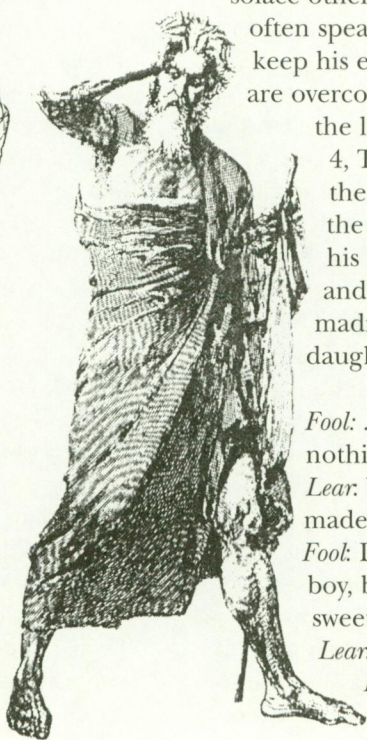
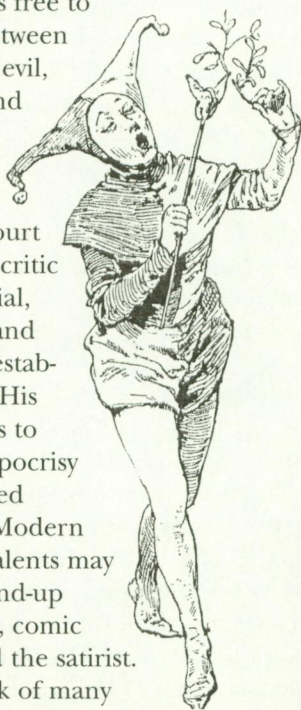


were celebrated Fools, historically documented in letters and writings, who actually made a career out of buffoonery. In medieval times there were religious festivals of the Fool and the Lord of Mis-Rule. There was also the court Fool who appears in literature, especially in Elizabethan drama; as well as various harlequin figures such as Punch, Pierrot, and the Clown.

There are Holy Fools in many of the world's religions. Fools can be Wise Fools or Foolish Fools, and we need to know the difference. Enid Welsford, in her early study of this subject, asks 'what is a Fool?', and replies 'he is a man who falls below the average human standard, but whose defects have been transformed into a source of delight, a main-spring of comedy, which has always been one of the great recreations of mankind. The nature of this transformation of folly into happiness is surely worthy of scrutiny. Does comedy act on the spiritual system as a vitamin or as a narcotic? Does the enjoyment of it involve deeper insight, keener criticism or deliberate evasion of reality? I suggest that we should go to the Fool for an answer to these not unimportant questions.'<sup>4</sup>

Can we define some of the main characteristics of the Fool? The Fool lives from his instincts not his reason. He is uninhibited, a footloose traveller. He appears in the Major Arcana of the Tarot, where he is sometimes called The Jester and symbolises a carefree, inexperienced person who is open-minded and innocent in the ways of the world, setting off on his quest with his few possessions on his shoulder. He gains experience along the way, and is free to choose between good and evil, wisdom and foolishness.

The Fool as Court Jester is a critic of the social, political, and religious establishment. His function is to deflate hypocrisy and inflated rhetoric. Modern day equivalents may be the stand-up comedian, comic actors and the satirist. I can think of many twentieth-century script-



writers and actors in this tradition that I have been entertained by, some of my personal favourites being Charlie Chaplin, Buster Keaton, Lucille Ball, Spike Milligan and Tony Hancock. There are many examples of people who are considered to be eccentric in everyday life who may have something of the Fool archetype playing through their various activities, such as the Parliamentary candidates who represent 'The Raving Monster Loony Party', who not only inject humour into the proceedings but also have some serious criticisms to make regarding government policy.

In Shakespeare's plays we meet a number of fools or characters given over to foolishness, e.g. Feste in *Twelfth Night*; Lavache in *All's Well that Ends Well*; even Hamlet, who feigns madness as a protective cover while he tries to bring to light treachery, but becomes mad in the process, has a foolish element. Then there is Bottom in *A Midsummer Night's Dream* - a decidedly buffoonish man who is the only character in the play able to traverse the three worlds of the court, fairy-land and the world of the lowly working-man. But it is the Fool (definitely a Wise Fool) in *King Lear* that most fires my imagination.

#### Lear's Fool

Lear's Fool in particular does not forsake humanity, and the capacity to speak the truth when all others have lost their ability to respond in this way. The Fool is the object of derision and affection depending on the mood of the courtiers. He is there to entertain, to keep company, and to provide the solace others are unable to give. The Fool often speaks in riddles but is able to keep his ethical sensibility when others are overcome by unconscious drives and the loss of reason. In Act I, Scene 4, The Fool confronts Lear with the folly of his abdication and the giving over of his kingdom to his malevolent daughters, Goneril and Regan (two harpies), and the madness of banishing his favourite daughter Cordelia:

*Fool: ...Can you make no use of nothing, uncle?*

*Lear: Why no, boy. Nothing can be made out of nothing.*

*Fool: Dost know the difference, my boy, between a bitter fool and a sweet fool?*

*Lear: No, lad. Teach me.*

*Fool [sings]: The lord that counselled thee*

**The nature  
of this  
transformation  
of folly into  
happiness is  
surely worthy  
of scrutiny.  
Does the  
enjoyment of  
it involve  
deeper insight,  
keener  
criticism or  
deliberate  
evasion of  
reality?**



**The 'Holy Fool'**  
**... challenges**  
**our value**  
**systems and**  
**religious**  
**orthodoxy ...**  
**Such charac-**  
**ters are not**  
**just being**  
**individualistic,**  
**they are**  
**attempting to**  
**be wholly**  
**authentic and**  
**are genuinely**  
**seeking**  
**Enlightenment**  
**... prepared to**  
**give away**  
**everything**  
**except their**  
**allegiance to a**  
**higher Reality.**

To give away thy land,  
 Come, place him here by me;  
 Do thou for him stand.  
 The sweet and bitter fool  
 Will presently appear,  
 The one in motley here,  
 The other found out there.

*Lear:* Dost thou call me fool, boy?

*Fool:* All thy other titles thou hast given away.  
 That thou wast born with.

*Kent (to Lear):* This is not altogether fool, my lord.

*Fool:* No, faith; lords and great men will not let me. If I had a monopoly out, they would have part on't, and ladies too, they will not let me have all the fool to myself - they'll be snatching.

The Fool dares to imply that Lear is a fool, and is surrounded by fools - all the lords and ladies are lacking in wisdom. The Fool's banter rarely wins him any comfort and he is always under the threat of a good whipping or verbal lashing from the King or his fearsome daughters. Is it foolish to speak the truth? Is fear the reason that so many of us hold silent when we should speak out?

The Fool archetype in his less sophisticated manifestations can be crude and given to not hiding basic bodily functions. However, he performs a useful function in attacking overly polite and constipated communication, pomposity and pretensions to grandeur. He is not easily embarrassed unless it is by the inability to retort to senseless cruelty and torture, as in the case of the Fool in King Lear, when at times he is rendered mute by the unfolding events he is powerless to prevent.

### **The Holy Fool**

A separate article could easily be written on 'Holy Fools' (perhaps not the best term to use.) This category would include spiritual non-conformists - men and women religious practitioners who live in the wilds, in deserts, mountains and forests and turn ordinary religious conventions on their head. They challenge our value systems and religious orthodoxy. At the highest level such characters are not just being individualistic, they are attempting to be wholly authentic and are genuinely seeking Enlightenment. No doubt there are many charlatans and false gurus, too, who use the trappings of the Fool. Genuine practitioners delve into insecurity and doubt, are prepared to give away everything except their allegiance to a higher Reality, and refuse status and position despite their spiritual attainments. We have a good

example in Milarepa whose behaviour was often considered eccentric by members of the ordinary Tibetan society. Also, Milarepa wasn't beyond using a little trickery (as skilful means.) Crazy wisdom teachings can be seen as a vital branch of spiritual practice that seeks to circumnavigate the defences put up by the ordinary mind which bind us to conditioned existence. All the major religions have their crazy adepts.

### **The Trickster**

The Trickster appears as a key archetype in so many cultures around the world, that it can be said to be a universal archetype. In *An Open Life*, Joseph Campbell describes how the Trickster breaks in, he represents the unconscious forces which are prepared to smash fixed and stagnant lifestyles and to profane over-inflated institutions and situations.<sup>5</sup>

The Trickster is basically mischievous and can be any of the following: anti-hero or clever hero, boundary figure, bungling host, numskull, demiurge, old man or Picaro, selfish deceiver, swindler and transformer. One of the Trickster figures I especially enjoy is Anancy Spider-Man who survives on his wit and cunning like an 'inspired handyman, tacking together bits and pieces of experience until they become... ..a web of many-layered being,'<sup>6</sup> in his battles with the much larger and more powerful Tiger. Originating in Ghana, the tales of Anancy were carried to the Caribbean during the period of the black diaspora occasioned by the slave-trade. The stories have no doubt been embellished by those who had further tales to weave in.

We generally view trickery as unskilful but it can have its useful aspect. For our ancient ancestors trickery involved focused attention and creativity in the survival skill of hunting. For the ancient Greeks trickery was socially sanctioned as a means of masculine success in warfare, love affairs and commerce. This does not mean that it is morally right to deceive, but illustrates how such traits gathered power through an archetype that activated the human imagination.

### **Hermes, the hilarious cheat**

In Greek mythology Hermes displays traits that put him within the range of the Trickster archetype, and is described by William Doty as 'a hilarious cheat' who sits at 'the golden tables of the deities.' In Roman myth Hermes is known as Mercury or quick-silver. Hermes is a complex figure, and I will attempt to look at just a few of his qualities. His marginal or liminal aspect is a trait to be found in many Trickster figures. The term liminal derives



from the Latin word *limen* meaning threshold and is associated with magical disruptions to awareness of space and time, particularly through ritual. The Trickster archetype is liminal because it stands on the margins of social institutions, whereby it can bring in fresh possibilities and greater awareness than those who are deeply imbedded in the heart of things. Hermes' image was to be found at entrances to buildings, bedrooms (he can bring or withhold dreams) and cross-roads, and was the patron of the road and travellers. Hermes has a protective function arriving at the boundaries of one place or state to another, helping others making dangerous transitions. He is an ambiguous figure either appearing as a youth or an old man, or as more or less masculine or feminine. Hermes acts as a mid-wife assisting at unusual births. A paradoxical, polymorphous figure (shape-shifter), he is associated with language and speech, particularly metaphor - oh, the ambiguities of language! He is a willing intermediary between the divine and humanity.

We must not side-step the issue of the robust phallic symbolism that is a key attribute in the figure of Hermes as clearly depicted in many of the two- and three-dimensional images of him, the powers of which have to some extent been displaced onto the winged caduceus (staff), itself rich in symbolic meaning. Like all healthily functioning Trickster figures, he helps humanity to readjust to shifting social boundaries and identities.

### The Body

I believe that the Trickster can be a valuable archetype in its ability to help us come to terms with our bodily and sexual appetites in a tension-releasing function. This can be seen in many of the North American Indian myths where the Trickster can appear as a mischievous Blue Jay, Crow, Raven, Fox or Coyote, who is consistently on the scrounge for a free meal, or after his neighbour's wife, besides many other kinds of pranks. Usually the Trickster comes off the worst for his own trickery and has to learn his lessons the hard way. Many of the stories graphically describe bodily functions and distress. This does not seem to be far removed from the descriptions of the human body by Shantideva. Nowadays in the West there can be over concern with the body and its functions as evidenced by the vast amount of popular literature and products involving health and beauty matters. I think the Trickster archetype can be useful in acknowledging humorously and compassionately that our bodies don't always behave

as we would have them do, and that no amount of camouflage and treatments will hide away the fact that we are ultimately subject to decay and death.

### Transforming the Shadow

In *Four Archetypes*<sup>7</sup> Jung looks at the archetype of the Trickster, and suggests that a crucial aspect of this archetype is in transforming the 'meaningless into the meaningful'. He also believed that the

Trickster is a remnant of a collective Shadow figure, recalling our primitive, less civilised origins. On an individual level the Shadow is those aspects of ourselves of which we are deeply ashamed: unpleasant and immoral aspects, our inferiority complexes, and aspects of ourselves we don't want others to see. Such anxiety-provoking material can be forcibly suppressed. However Jung noted that this suppressed energy will erupt unexpectedly in neurotic behaviour or nightmares when the psyche can no longer hold the Shadow at bay.

Jung wrote that the myth of the Trickster has been 'actively sustained and fostered by consciousness' as a means of evaluating the shadow side of our experience and to reduce the tendency to lose ourselves in our basic instincts. He saw the Trickster cycle of stories in many cultures as being part of a civilising process through which the conscious mind learns to let go of compulsive and destructive processes by seeing unconscious drives and fears for what they are. Jung strongly believed that the denial of our shadow, the denial that we trick ourselves and others leads to destructive behaviours. This denial of our own unconscious energy can easily lead to



Coyote reading a candy wrapper : Washington, US

**The Trickster can appear as a mischievous Blue Jay, Crow, Raven, Fox or Coyote, who is consistently on the scrounge for a free meal, or after his neighbour's wife, besides many other kinds of pranks.**



**The Trickster ...  
resonates  
precisely  
because it  
contains both  
the bestial  
and the  
divine, sym-  
bolising the  
complicated  
business of  
trying to be  
human, and  
the puzzle of  
how to tran-  
scend our  
animal and  
less civilised  
origins without  
denigration.**

projecting onto others what we don't want to recognise in ourselves and has led to the process by which social groups conduct witch-hunts, persecutions, and trial by mass media in a demonisation process.

On a cultural level, the Trickster archetype has allowed societies to explore primitive instincts and thinking through the safeguards of ritual story-telling, performance and shamanic activity, acting in many respects in a tension-releasing function, more likely to induce laughter than destructive acts against human life and culture.

Once we begin to explore an archetype it is likely to uncover a whole realm of experience, which could be taken to different levels and take diverse directions. From my own experience of becoming acquainted with archetypal forms it is often the animus (according to Jung the masculine contra-sexual archetype for women) in the guise of either the Lover, the wise old Shaman or the Trickster which most consistently appear in my dream life. At other times I have had encounters with feminine archetypes such as the puella or the naive young woman, the Amazon or female warrior and wild-woman, and the 'Mother' as either life-giver or devourer. From my own knowledge of the Trickster archetype I agree with Jung when he states that it can be disturbing and unsettling because it does contain some contradictory qualities.

The Trickster is a primitive 'cosmic' being of divine-animal nature, on the one hand superior to man because of his superhuman qualities, and on the other inferior to him because of his unreason and unconsciousness. For me the figure resonates precisely because it contains both the bestial and the divine, symbolising the complicated business of trying to be human, and the puzzle of how to transcend our animal and less civilised origins without denigration. I am also fascinated by the overlap between the Trickster/Fool and the Shaman, as they all seem to be liminal figures traversing the same territory between the sacred and the profane, order and disorder, serious and playful communication, the real and the unreal. Both the Trickster/Fool and the Shaman are shape-shifters taking on different guises, and both descend into chaos, disintegration and death-like experience in order to emerge with new powers and strengths in a process of re-integration.

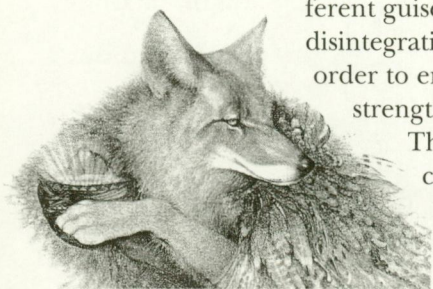
The Trickster/Fool like the Shaman can have a role in curing disease, and working with disharmonious elements, and can create new values. In *Shamanism, Mind and*

*No-Self*,<sup>8</sup> Joan Halifax looks at where Shamanism and Buddhism have common ground, and focuses on the role of healing and compassion in the activity of the Bodhisattva and the Shaman. She highlights how both shaman and Bodhisattva descend into the depths and into chaos to benefit those who are endangered through all kinds of sickness, whether on a physical, mental/emotional, social, ecological, moral or spiritual level.

If the archetype of the Trickster/Fool can make us more conscious of our own and others' foolery, and, like the Shaman, can help us cross boundaries of disease and sickness towards wholeness and integration, and to act more for the benefit of all, then I think we can say the archetype may have relevance for us as Buddhists. This could particularly be the case when we are engaged in the struggle of moving from conventional morality (where our sense of what is right and wrong is conditioned by outside influences) to natural morality (when what guides our ethical behaviour comes more from an inner apprehension of the reality of things.) Buddhist practice can help us to find the middle path between extremes, and to evolve beyond such painful contradictions that the Trickster archetype seems to represent. We can allow the archetype to trick us if we remain unconscious of our Shadow and project our demons onto others; or it can be a treat when we allow the archetype to transform our energy in the direction of good humour, speaking the truth, natural ethics, being authentic, healing and compassionate activity.

#### Notes:

1. Anderson, William, *The Face of Glory: Creativity, Consciousness and Civilisation*, Bloomsbury Publications, 1996, p179
2. Sangharakshita, 'The Journey to Il Convento' in *The Priceless Jewel*, Windhorse, Birmingham 1993, p53-4
3. *Ibid*, p56
4. Welsford, Enid, *The Fool, his Sacred and Literary History*, Faber & Faber, 1935.
5. Campbell, Joseph, *An Open Life* cit. W. J. Hynes & W. G. Doty (eds.). *Mythical Trickster Figures: Contours, Contexts and Criticisms*, The University of Alabama Press 1993
6. Melton, Robert, *Anancy Spiderman*, in Hynes & Doty, op cit.
7. Jung, C. G., *Four Archetypes: Mother, Rebirth, Spirit, Trickster, Collected works, Vol 9*, Bollingen, Princeton 1973
8. Halifax, Joan, *Shamanism, Mind and No Self*, ed. Shirley Nicholson, Quest Publication 1987





# Jung and the Archetypal

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*Shantachitta*

*I have never lost a sense of something that lives and endures beneath the eternal flux....In the end the only events in my life worth telling are those when the imperishable world irrupted into this transitory one. C. G. Jung*

**'ARCHETYPE' IS A TERM** that is used quite widely in the FWBO. Its usage, however, is not always specifically Jungian. Sangharakshita has taken the concept and adapted and expanded it to help in his teaching of the Dharma in the West and his thoughts and ideas have influenced the use of the term amongst his followers and disciples. My aim here is to explore some of Jung's ideas and see how they may be of use to us as practitioners of the Dharma today.

I became interested in Jung through references to him in some of Sangharakshita's writings and felt a desire to study his work in greater depth. I had in any case developed an interest in psychotherapy through my work as a doctor; and through grappling with my own psychological issues as a Dharma practitioner. I thought analytical psychology could be useful for some people trying to grow and develop psychologically and spiritually within an otherwise Buddhist context.

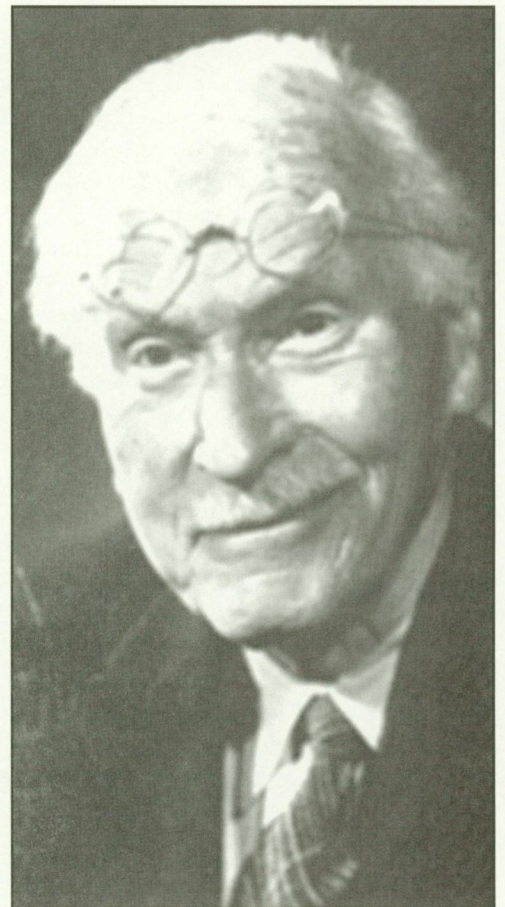
## **Jung's Theory of Archetypes**

Jung's theory of archetypes begins with the unconscious, a notion that is basic to Jung's model of the mind. The unconscious is not directly knowable. We can only know of its existence through the way it manifests itself to the conscious mind. The conscious mind can be likened to a thin skin on the surface of the great mass of the unconscious. Without the separation of the two, the conscious mind would be completely swamped by the contents of the unconscious, particularly the collective unconscious, (as in the case of psychotic breakdown).

Analytical psychology further divides the unconscious mind into two aspects: the personal unconscious and the collective uncon-

scious. The content of the personal unconscious is more superficial in comparison with the collective, and is, as its name implies, of a personal nature. The contents of the collective unconscious, on the other hand, is that of the archetypes. The collective unconscious is far greater than the personal, and is said to contain the vestiges of the psychological development of man since the dawn of time. Contained within it are patterns of behaviour or blueprints, primordial images which have been laid down over thousands of years. These blueprints or prototypes Jung called the archetypes - a term which he was to develop throughout his lifetime.

Archetypal theory often causes confusion. There are the archetypes themselves, and the archetypal images (which are sometimes referred to simply as 'archetypes'.) The archetype proper is the formless which underlies the form. Jung likened it at one point to the crystalline structure in the mother solution before the crystal begins to take shape. Archetypes are universal, manifesting in different cultures and at different times. They are beyond time and space. However, the archetypal image or form is clothed in the cultural attributes of a particular time and place and in the personal material of the person perceiving it, in whose consciousness it appears. The archetype itself, like the unconscious in which it is contained, is not directly knowable.



C. G. Jung

*In the end  
the only  
events in my  
life worth  
telling are  
those when  
the imperish-  
able world  
irrupted into  
this transitory  
one.*



**Within  
spiritual life  
there can be a  
danger of  
becoming too  
one-sided in  
our practice,  
too much  
caught up with  
ideas, finding  
ourselves  
dwelling so  
much on the  
ideals to which  
we aspire that  
we become  
alienated from  
the experience  
of who and  
what we  
actually are.**

### **Aspects of Archetypal Images**

Archetypal images usually have the quality of fascination for us, they have a numinous, awe-inspiring quality. They are either beautiful or terrible, but highly significant. They are beyond rational comprehension and usually have a profound effect on us. They tend to have an all or nothing quality. There is something stark and absolute about them.

### **Bipolarity**

An important aspect of the archetypes in Jung's concept of the term is their bipolarity, that is the quality of containing two opposites within: positive versus negative e.g. the nurturing, providing mother on the one hand and the all-devouring, possessive mother on the other, the virgin and the whore etc. An important bipolarity in the human psyche is that which includes the 'instinctual' and the 'spiritual'.

The Dharma teaches us that we have to transcend duality, that ultimate Reality is non-dualistic, that apparent dualities such as that between 'body' and 'mind' are not ultimately valid. Jung did not have a concept of the Transcendental and saw things very much in a dualistic framework. But given that we generally experience ourselves within this fundamental duality, clearly we have to begin working with ourselves within a dualistic framework - bearing in mind that we have to move beyond that eventually.

Using the above example of the mother archetype, we can see how we initially experience things dualistically when encountering Buddhist images that ultimately point to the non-duality of Transcendental experience. For instance, there is the figure of Prajnaparamita, the Great Mother who symbolises the mother archetype at its very highest level - it is she who matures all Bodhisattvas to Enlightenment through her great Wisdom. However, in encountering her image what we may see is earth mother or heavenly mother or both these aspects of the 'mundane' mother archetype.

If we look further at the bipolar aspect of archetypes, they can be seen to have a compensatory balancing function within the psyche. If someone is very unbalanced in the way they are living their life, they might be in the grip of one pole of an archetype, the other pole manifesting in their dreams or meditation practice or in fantasy. A very passive person may experience themselves as very aggressive in a dream. An independent person may experience themselves being looked after and cared for etc. By making the other pole of the archetype more conscious, integrating it into

the conscious sense of self, the personality becomes enriched and growth takes place.

Within spiritual life there can be a danger of becoming too one-sided in our practice, too much caught up with ideas, finding ourselves dwelling so much on the ideals to which we aspire that we become alienated from the experience of who and what we actually are, neglecting the bodily aspect of ourselves or the parts we do not like, the shadow side that does not conform to our ideals and needs to be transformed. Jung's ideas about the compensatory function of the unconscious, and the archetype of the shadow are useful concepts in understanding the functioning of our own minds and can help us to keep in touch with aspects of ourselves we would rather not know about. Acknowledging and transforming our 'shadow' is vital for growth both psychologically and spiritually. Archetypal images act as a bridge between the conscious and unconscious mind.

### **The Archetype as Blueprint**

Looking at the more instinctual end of the spectrum of human existence, archetypes can be seen as blueprints for basic behaviour patterns which are given expression throughout each individual life cycle - from being nurtured and fed as an infant, to growing up and exploring the world, participating in initiation rites, adolescence, moving into society, partnering, child-rearing etc., before moving towards old age and preparation for death. According to Jungian theory, all these phases in human life can be seen as phylogenetically determined by thousands of years of evolution, the blueprints being buried deep within our psyches. The actual expression of each behaviour is modified by the culture in which we live and our own personal experiences as we move through our lives.

This process could be likened to the 'lower evolutionary' process that Sangharakshita describes as the precursor to the 'higher evolution' of the individual who embarks on a spiritual path.<sup>2</sup> Jung's archetypal theory, however, takes us beyond the merely biological. Jung clearly recognised the need in human beings to grow and develop. He saw (as his own teacher, Freud, had not) that there is a spiritual aspect to mankind that needs satisfying.

### **The Bodhisattva as Archetype**

When we take on a sadhana practice, we prepare to enter the archetypal realm each time we sit to meditate.<sup>3</sup> It is here we meet our chosen Bodhisattva figure or 'yidam'. It is



quite likely that when we first choose or meet our yidam we are relating to that archetype at the more mundane end of the spectrum. It is only through the spiritual practice of meeting the yidam every day that we start to work through many of our psychological issues and prepare the ground for - ultimately - a meeting in the highest archetypal realm known to Buddhist tradition as the 'Sambhogakaya'.

My initial attraction to *Prajnaparamita* was the fact that she was a mature woman, a mother figure, who, though mysterious and fascinating, could also somehow nurture me on a basic, psychological level. As my practice has deepened, my experience of her has changed in a way I find difficult to put into words. She has become more enigmatic, a beautiful figure from the Transcendental expressing a deep wisdom that I find ungraspable with my rational mind. My experience continues to change as I struggle to get to know her, a practice which hopefully will continue for the rest of my life. Others may be attracted to figures such as Tara because she represents to them the anima archetype within them (the feminine aspect of the male psyche); or Manjughosha, the sword-bearing Bodhisattva of wisdom may be seen as an animus figure - the possibilities are infinite and include all the multifaceted aspects of the human psyche. It does not really matter what that initial attraction is, as long as there is one. A connection has to start somewhere no matter how basic it is.

In the Bodhisattva ideal, bipolarity manifests itself in the tremendous tension between self and other which provides the central work of the human Bodhisattva's spiritual practice. Here we have gone far beyond positive and negative bipolarity (for the Bodhisattva has integrated those

aspects of himself) to the more fundamental duality of human existence, that of 'self' and 'other'. To go beyond that duality is an archetypal struggle which cannot be solved on the level it is first experienced. The problem has to be transcended. The enormity of that tension is demonstrated in the myth of the archetypal Bodhisattva Avalokiteshvara who falters for just a few moments in his efforts to respond to the suffering of all living beings. Thereupon he shatters into a thousand pieces. Crying out in agony, Amitabha, his spiritual father, Buddha of Infinite Light, of Love and Compassion, comes to his aid. He re-forms him with eleven heads so that he can look out in all directions of the world; and a thousand arms that can respond in a thousand ways to the sufferings of living beings.

To conclude, I would say that Jung's contribution is valuable for us as a way of working to integrate ourselves psychologically so that we can progress on the higher stages of the spiritual path. Admittedly Jung's theory is limited in ways which I hope I have been able to indicate in this article. However, despite its limitations, the theory is open ended. Jung worked on it for most of his life and towards the end concentrated on the more spiritual aspects. When he died he left it for others to

pick up and develop, which many people - including Sangharakshita - have done, for the enrichment and benefit of many people's lives.

#### Notes:

1. Jung, C. G., *Memories, Dreams, Reflections*, Flamingo, London 1983, p18
2. Cooper, Robin, *The Evolving Mind*, Windhorse, Birmingham 1996
3. A 'sadhana' is a visualisation meditation which focuses on a particular Buddha or Bodhisattva figure. Members of the Western Buddhist Order take up a sadhana practice at the time of their ordination.

*General Reading*  
Jung, C. G., *Collected works*, Vols. 8 & 9  
Stevens, A., *Archetype: A Natural History of the Self*, Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1982  
Samuels, A., *Jung and the Post-Jungians*, Routledge 1990



**As my practice  
has deepened,  
my experience  
... has  
changed ...  
She has  
become more  
enigmatic, a  
beautiful  
figure from the  
Transcendental  
expressing a  
deep wisdom  
that I find  
ungraspable  
with my  
rational mind.**



# A Royal Marriage

Subhadramati

Historically,  
kings have  
always been  
sacred ...  
It is the  
kingship, or  
the King  
energy itself,  
that has been  
important.

WHEN I CAME TO LIVE in London thirteen years ago as a young graduate (having spent the rest of my life in Central Scotland) several things surprised me. One was the preoccupation with the Royal Family. My office overlooked The Mall (the road that leads from Buckingham Palace). Whenever the queen rode by, everyone would gather excitedly at the windows. Except me. I remained pointedly at my desk, conditioned I am sure by my Scottish working-class upbringing: what had the Royal Family ever done for us?

Imagine my embarrassment, then, on discovering I was fighting back the tears when I found myself watching a film of the queen's coronation. It was all so splendid and so solemn. The young queen looked beautiful yet serious. The pomp and ceremony were tremendous - the best musicians, the finest jewels and robes and so many people witnessing it all. You were left in no doubt that something important and meaningful was taking place.

So what is the significance of a queen or a king being crowned? What had turned my cynicism to tears? In *King, Warrior, Magician, Lover*, Moore and Gillette put forward the idea that 'historically, kings have always been sacred. As

mortal men, however, they have been relatively unimportant. It is the kingship, or the King energy itself, that has been important'.<sup>1</sup>

What then is this 'King energy'? And is there 'Queen energy' too - and if so, is it different? And - perhaps most importantly, as a Buddhist - can connecting with these archetypes play a part in leading a spiritual life? I set out to investigate.

## The King

For my first clue I looked at the insignia handed down, in the West, to each new sovereign. Most obviously there is the crown. At primary school we got to wear a golden paper

crown on our birthdays. A crown singles you out as someone special. It is so much associated with sovereignty that the words have come to mean the same thing. It is a solar symbol, golden, its points representing the rays of the sun - the sun having the twin attributes of being at the centre and being all-pervasive.

Then there are the orb and sceptre. The orb, held in the left hand, represents the far-reaching domain of the sovereign. Being a circle and therefore self-contained, it also represents imperial dignity. The sceptre is power and ministerial authority. It also represents transmission of life force. Going back to Moore and Gillette we can see that these more or less correspond with the two functions of King energy as described in their book: ordering; and fertility and blessing.

In the case of ordering it is interesting that what is stressed is that the king must not just take right order to his realm in the form of laws, etc., but must embody it. In fact this is his first responsibility. This recalls my own initiation into the Western Buddhist Order. My fellows and I were reminded of our duties now that we were Order members. Our first duty, we were told, must always be to our own practice. Of course, of particular interest to those of us leading the spiritual life is the ordering or governing of oneself. As the *Dhammapada* says, 'One who conquers himself is greater than another who conquers a thousand times a thousand men on the battlefield'.

It can be easy to shrink away from this sort of idea fearing that we will be limited or repressed. But Buddhism says that unless we are Enlightened, our actions will not, cannot, be totally skilful all of the time so we need to govern them, and we do this by undertaking to follow the ethical training principles or precepts. One way of looking at these precepts is as a description of the natural behaviour of an Enlightened being. As Buddhists we respond to the ideal of Enlightenment, and our practice is trying to bring all of ourselves all of the time into line with that vision. Practising like this we are taking responsibility for ourselves, and our actions become permeated with awareness just as the good king would be aware of his realm and take responsibility for it. We move away from the poles of blaming outside forces for our own happiness or unhappiness or blindly and wilfully trying to impose ourselves on the world. Moore and Gillette would identify these poles as being the passive and active poles of the shadow





king - the weakling and the tyrant.

The second function is that of fertility and blessing. We have the example in mythology of Zeus whose liaisons with goddesses and mortal women produced many offspring, but prosperity also comes as a natural fruit of ordering. In the *Udana* the Buddha tells a group of householders, 'the immoral unvirtuous man through negligence suffers great loss of wealth' while 'the moral virtuous man through diligence obtains a great mass of wealth'. The king also gives his blessing, affirming others and knowing them in their true worth. He nurtures people towards their own fullness of being, never envious because he is secure in his own worth. We could say then that the king was the true friend, the spiritual friend, the *kalyana mitra*.

The king archetype is, of course, not just for men to contemplate. Women can also access and develop King energy. But what about the archetype of the queen? Whereas the king archetype, being one of Jung's four masculine archetypes, is fairly widely written about, that of the queen is much more elusive. My hunch was that there would be some overlap, as both exercise sovereignty, but that there would be some important differences.

### The Queen

The historical queen Boadicea led her people into battle against the Romans after the death of her husband. She was described by a contemporary as 'huge of frame, terrifying of aspect and with a harsh voice. A great mass of bright red hair fell to her knees...' 'But I wondered whether what she displayed was Queen energy or actually King energy? Queen Victoria, on the other hand, seemed to bring in a different element when she sent 100,000 boxes of chocolate as her personal gift to the soldiers fighting in the Boer war. She was also indefatigable in sending encouraging messages to the front and writing letters of condolence to the relatives of officers who lost their lives, often requesting a photograph and enquiring into the position of their families. Here the queen has become the mother - not just of her own children but of all her subjects. I am reminded of the Buddhist figure Mamaki, consort of Ratnasambhava. Her name means mine-maker, the spiritual attitude that regards everyone and everything as dear to oneself. There is also a resonance with the *Metta Sutta* which exhorts us to love all beings as a mother loves her only child.

### The King and Queen

Looking at the king and the queen together proved interesting. In chess, whereas the king is the most important piece, the queen is the most powerful. His moves are limited by his role, while she moves at will. In alchemy the king is sulphur and the queen quicksilver or mercury. They are described as together being the basic generative forces of the universe, quicksilver being the womb of all metals. Alchemists call

quicksilver 'steadfast water' as it is both solid and fluid and it is supposed to act upon the masculine principle so liberating it from its limitations.

Returning to Buddhist imagery, another Buddha and consort pair are Vairochana and Akashadateshvari. He sits at the centre of the five Jinas or conquerors, indicating that he is the most important and contains the qualities of all the others. He holds a golden wheel, which, among other things, is a symbol of sovereignty. His name means 'The Illuminator' and he radiates the light of Buddhahood. She is the Queen of the Sphere of Infinite Space. They are a perfect complement to each other as for light to radiate there must be space for it to pass through.

I respond to the notion that the king and queen exist not separately but as a pair. The king is the vision, the light; the queen is the space wherein that vision manifests, the conditions that it needs to shine. The king takes definite, even defined steps; the queen dances spontaneously. The king takes responsibility for his whole realm; the queen relates to each of her subjects individually like a mother.

Thinking of my own main spiritual practice, that of being part of a women's team that runs a Buddhist restaurant, I can see that thinking of King and Queen energy functioning in partnership could be a helpful model. We have to have vision - the desire to be always going beyond where we are at the moment, as individuals, as a team, and in our collective task. For this to happen there must be an attitude of care for each other, flexibility, spontaneity and enjoyment. Sometimes it can feel as if it's a choice between one or the other. In my own case I relate more to the energy of the king. The trick is to see that these energies are not in opposition, that there can be a 'marriage' between them which will enable them to enhance each other. Coming to the end of my exploration, I'm still not sure why I cried seeing the coronation, but I'm sure I have something to learn from the archetype of the queen.

### Note:

1. Moore, R., & Gillette, D., *King, Warrior, Magician, Lover*, Harper Collins 1990, p49



**The king is the vision, the light; the queen is the space wherein that vision manifests, the conditions that it needs to shine. The king takes definite, even defined steps; the queen dances spontaneously.**



# Lost or Hidden?

## Mythic Kingdoms

*Dhamottara*

**DO THE WORDS 'LOST CITY'** or 'hidden kingdom' stir the imagination. Do they still resonate in those deep caverns of feeling and thought which we hold within us? I think they do.

The lost and the hidden are rich and intriguing ideas; that which has been lost was at one time available, that which is hidden can be found. What caused the removal from our grasp, in the case of the lost in terms of time; and in the case of the hidden in terms of space? If something has been hidden, an immediate sense of its value is conveyed, and maybe of its vulnerability or of its hidden danger for those who are unprepared. If something is lost, don't we straight away want to go off in search of it?

Then there is the image of the city or the kingdom, which can carry either positive or negative connotations. For Longchenpa, writing in fourteenth century

Tibet, the city symbolises all that he rejects in his journey towards beauty and spiritual truth. In his stirring poem 'The Story of Wildwood Delights' he says,

*'This story about my resorting to the edges of the wildwood of inner calm after my mind had been filled with grief in the city of samsara, I write as a message to my mind from my mind.'* He uses this contrast of city with wildwood again: *'Having been wracked by the virulent plague of worldliness, with the turmoil of its cities full of fiery pits of passionate desires, you ever and again return to it and traverse the narrow defiles of worldliness. Having seen this state of affairs, I go to the wildwood.'*<sup>1</sup>



The image of the city appears very differently in the twelfth chapter of the *Samyutta Nikaya*. The Buddha is discoursing on conditioned co-production, as he tells his followers what came to him as he sat beneath the Bodhi Tree at the time of his Enlightenment. He says that vision, knowledge, insight, wisdom and light arose in him,

*'just as if, brethren, a man faring through the forest, through the great wood, should see an ancient path, an ancient road traversed by men of former days. and he were to go along it, and going along it he should see an ancient city, an ancient prince's domain, wherein dwelt men of former days, having gardens, groves, pools, foundations of walls, a goodly spot.'*<sup>2</sup>

Here, far from being a symbol of the poisons and passions of samsara, the city stands for that which was realised by the Buddha at his Awakening. We see the same object, treated as symbol or myth rather than literally as fact, becoming fluid or transparent and revealing opposite truths with equal clarity. Notice how just a couple of key words, 'ancient' and 'former', are dropped into the narrative, expand as we take in their implications, and open our minds to the idea that the Buddha re-discovered the Way rather than created it. The dimension of time is instantly extended, our mind leaping after the suggestion. Two small words here prepare us for the teaching of the *White Lotus Sutra*, that the Buddha, or rather Buddhahood, is beyond time and space. This is one of the ways in which myth and symbol work on us, drawing us in by brevity and allusiveness to question and discover for ourselves.

Experiences like this can offer a resounding 'yes' to the question of whether the symbolic and mythic is of value to us now. It is not just our intellects which are stirred to action, but our emotions too which are engaged because we are doing it for ourselves, feeling and thinking our own way into meaning rather than having it all apparently laid out for us by someone else. I say apparently, because so much of value lies beyond the conceptual, and therefore also beyond words. A relish for myth alerts us to the limitations of our intellect by taking us out beyond the literal and thereby feeding our imaginations and deepening our understanding.

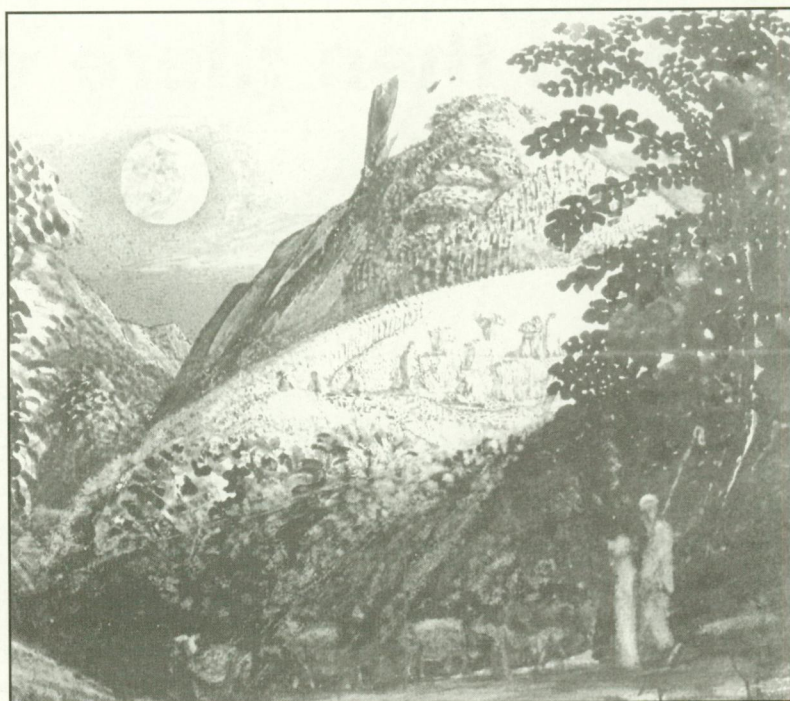
Literalism is the death of myth and symbol, and, it could be said, of meaning too. I think this becomes clear if we look at some of the ways in which Shambhala has been approached in our



own period. Shambhala is one name for the mythical, or maybe actual, kingdom which many different cultures have over a long period placed somewhere north of the Himalayas, in the huge trackless spaces of Central Asia - or even further north in the icy wildernesses of the polar region. 'Guidebooks' have been written over the centuries about the route to Shambhala, starting from readily identifiable places like Bodhgaya in northern India and so giving a sense of actuality to the journey which gradually dissolves as directions involve more and more obscure landmarks, such a forest of trees so tall that they touch the clouds, packs of killer animals with eyes like sparks of fire, and mountains resembling heaps of luminous emeralds.<sup>3</sup> If Shambhala is seen in terms of an actual, if hidden or lost, kingdom, and sought in Central Asia, Siberia, Mongolia or even on other planets as aerial surveys fail to locate it on earth, it is all the more easily dismissed as nothing but a superstitious and worthless fantasy. The explorer Sven Hedin spent years wandering in Central Asia and found a lost city buried in the sand. Nicholas Roerich set up an expedition specifically to seek out traces of Shambhala. James Hilton's perennially popular novel *Shangri-La* was possibly influenced by Roerich's writing about the lost kingdom. Sir Charles Eliot is quoted as saying that 'Shambhala is seen *only* through a haze of myth' (my emphasis).<sup>4</sup> These approaches arise from the devaluation of the mythic and the loss of a sense of the symbolic. The significance of Shambhala is not weakened but strengthened if we understand it as myth because then the symbol of this hidden kingdom can become as it were transparent and we can see through it to the wide and deep landscape of spiritual journeying.

Shambhala has been described in Tibetan texts since the eleventh century CE. It has nine island-like regions arranged in the form of an eight-petalled lotus, with the central part surrounded by a ring of snow mountains and the whole guarded by another larger ring. At the centre is the capital, with the jewelled palace of the king of Shambhala. This all sounds familiar. It is of course a mandala, with details of beauty and riches and a completely harmonious lifestyle which are reminiscent of descriptions of Pure Lands. The inhabitants are not enlightened, but they all strive towards awakening and have developed many powers through their heightened awareness.

Seen in the context of myth, there is more to the seeking of Shambhala than the simple quest for treasure or a leisured life. One of the implications of a lost or hidden kingdom is the journey required to find it. The way in which the guidebooks to Shambhala describe this journey in progressively more subjective and visionary terms powerfully suggests that it is a metaphor for the inner journey of spiritual progress. Geographical barriers like ice cold rivers and mountain ranges replete with ferocious demons are readily translated into inner barriers to spiritual development thrown up by the threatened ego. The traveller is advised to seek outside help at the start of the journey from particular Bodhisattvas and is required to have developed a degree of altruism, clarity and faith before even considering setting off. Dhardo



Rimpoche is reported to have said that the texts describe Shambhala in the form of a lotus so that meditators can visualise it as a mandala in their hearts.<sup>5</sup> The myth cultivates this building of bridges between objectified narrative and inner experience; at the same time it discourages misunderstandings of the 'language of immanence' by revealing in graphic detail the difficulties and hazards of the journey.

There are a number of Tibetan stories concerning hidden places which carry within them the idea that the outer journey is not in itself enough to change us, that we have to develop our awareness in order to make the journey in the first place or to sustain our discovery of that which was hidden. The gist of these stories is that someone, a hunter or herdsman, finds by accident a way into a hidden valley they had known nothing about. The valley may contain beautiful trees and grass and plentiful pure water, or it may be inhabited by happy and prosperous people. The visitor will feel the attraction of the place, but will want to leave in order to bring back his family or tell his neighbours of his discovery. Despite marking the entrance, he will never find it again. Different meanings can be drawn out of these haunting tales. Some might be inclined to see them as uncompromising warnings against worldly distractions. Others may sense in them a truth which they have themselves glimpsed through their own experience; that we can have a flash of insight, a momentary parting of the mists which reveals a wide and magnificent view which stuns as it delights us. But the mists close in again, the insight loses immediacy and becomes a memory. We cannot yet sustain our vision, and must go back to the path of transformation.

It is in the nature of myth to stir resonances and echoes from within our own experience. Myth touches us in terms of what we already know, but it leads us beyond that to what we do not yet know and can only glimpse as 'through a glass darkly.'

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#### Notes:

1. Longchenpa, transl. H. V. Guenther, *A Visionary Journey*, Shambhala Publications, Boston 1989, pp1-2
2. *The Book of Kindred Sayings*, transl. Mrs Rhys Davids and F. H. Woodward, Pali Text Society, Oxford 1990, p74
3. Bernbaum E., *The Way to Shambhala*, Jeremy P. Tarcher Publications, Los Angeles 1989, pp198-200
4. Bernbaum, *op cit*, pp40-41
5. Bernbaum, *op cit*, p146



# And then there were three ...

## New Public Preceptor

*Two new Public Preceptors, Padmavajra, who lives and works at Padmaloka men's Retreat Centre in Norwich; and Dhammadinna who lives and works at Tiratanaloka women's Retreat Centre in Wales were recently appointed to the College of Public Preceptors. Dhammadinna joins Srimala and Sanghadevi as women members of the College.*

*Here Vimalachitta recalls something of Dhammadinna's life and work within the Western Buddhist Order:*

### IN THE PACKED SHRINE

room at Tiratanaloka all eyes were on Dhammadinna as she placed the kesa around the neck of the new Dharmacharini. 'This is the point where you really become an order member,' she reminded her. 'And where I really become a public preceptor!' It was a special moment to have witnessed - a dear friend taking on this new spiritual responsibility.

Dhammadinna first made contact with the FWBO in 1970 after studying for a science degree in London. She soon became a leading figure in the

formative years of the FWBO, holding responsibilities both in the wider movement and at the London Buddhist Centre (LBC) where she was based for nine years. It was at the LBC that we first met and afterwards we both lived in a small women's community nearby. I am still very grateful to have felt the influence of Dhammadinna's kindness and wisdom.

'Dhammadinna' actually means 'giver of the Dharma'. She has, in fact, spent many years sharing and communicating her love of the Dharma, both publicly in her talks and teaching, as well as through her individual contacts and friendships. With a flexible mind that is capable of clear logic and poetic intuition alike, she is a very engaging Dharma teacher.

In 1991 she left London for her next important project: that of forming an ordination team community which would run retreats for women who had requested ordination. Through the efforts of that team we now have a successful ordination

process for women and a beautiful retreat centre in Wales.

Dhammadinna has always been very directly involved in helping women to deepen their Dharma practice and develop their spiritual potential, so it seemed only natural that in 1996 she was given the responsibility of performing the private ordinations for some of the women with whom she had a particular link, thus becoming a 'private preceptor'. Since

that time I noticed a change in her: a stronger element of self-reflection and confession. Not in a dramatic or self-absorbed way, but it simply became a stronger part of her daily life and communication. She seemed to be seeking out and letting go of things that obscured her spiritual growth, like a traveller lightening her load so as to move more swiftly and freely.

When the news came this spring that Dhammadinna was to become a public preceptor there was a wave of delight that rippled through the sangha - it seemed obvious - yes, of course she was!

### Tuscany Ordinations

AS LOTUS REALM GOES to press, another nineteen women have entered the Western Buddhist Order. Their ordination retreat took place in Tuscany at an old monastery known as 'Il Convento' (well-known in the FWBO for the men's ordination retreats held there some years ago.)

The journey to Il Convento takes on something of a mythic quality as women from a very great diversity of backgrounds and nationalities converge on the place where their Going for Refuge to the Buddha, Dharma and Sangha is witnessed and affirmed in the private and public ordination ceremonies.

This year the ordinations took place in the context of a six-week retreat - the longest retreat for women so far in the history of the FWBO.

The new Order members include women who had travelled from America and Spain - the latter being the first woman to enter the Order from the Valencia sangha. There were also women of various nationalities living in Britain including - as well as English - Dutch, Finnish, Irish, Scottish, and Spanish. No doubt their contributions to the life and work of the Order will be much felt and appreciated in the coming years.





# Final Farewell

## SHUBHAVAJRI WAS TAKEN

**INTO** St Joseph's Hospice on Saturday June 6th, too frail to be nursed in the Auckland Women's Community that had become her home - too weak even to lift her head from the pillow.

Jan Allen - as she was - had learnt on Christmas Eve 1997 that she was probably suffering from cancer. She was living in Norwich, England, working in a Right Livelihood business, and living in a Women's Community. A week later she arrived in Auckland to be with her partner, Dharmadhara, and with others with whom she felt the closest links; and to be in the place she loved most, Auckland.

Over the following weeks the diagnosis was confirmed and treatment started. Her friends watched her changing under the new circumstances of her life. Jan became more focused, more out-going, clearer and brighter.

In early February she was ordained into the Western Buddhist Order and given the name Shubhavajri, 'She of Diamond Beauty' - a name which reflected her own beauty, her love of beauty; and her determination to die with openness and authenticity. The visualisation practice which she chose to take up was the meditation on the Buddha Ratnasambhava, the yellow Buddha of Beauty.

I had known Jan for about eight years, had worked with her in the Women's Right Livelihood in Auckland, sharing many of her struggles. Now I was to share her final struggle.

Dharmadhara and I took it in

turns to be with Shubhavajri at the hospice day and night for the final ten days of her life. Each day saw her slipping further from this life as the disease, like a medieval torture, had its final fling.

Tuesday June 16th - the day Shubhavajri was to die - dawned yellow-gold across the harbour. We had slept that night, my bed pushed close to hers, my hand on her arm, and as I stirred to watch the dawn, so too did Shubhavajri. Did she take in the beauty there in the sea and sky that shone like a pale reflection of Ratnasambhava - I like to think so.

Dharmadhara and I meditated, chanted, recited a Ratnasambhava Puja - at times lapsing into silence as tears overwhelmed us. At 3pm Shubhavajri took her last breath in and out. What a peaceful, graceful death, the boundaries between living and dying gossamer thin. For an hour Dharmadhara read aloud readings for those who have died, and then we gently laid her out.

That evening other members of the Sangha arrived. We chanted and meditated, then took her body home to the women's community. Members of the sangha meditated beside her body, recited puja, and read from the Tibetan Book of the Dead, firstly at the women's community and later at the

Auckland Buddhist Centre, a constant vigil through the days and nights.

Then on June 20th we held a special Celebration at the Auckland Buddhist Centre. Members of the sangha rejoiced in Subhavajri's merits, celebrated the puja together, and then six women pall bearers, accompanied by drumming, carried her yellow coffin to the waiting car. The last stage of her journey was to Sudarshanaloka, the land on the Coromandel Peninsular used for retreats, and now for the first time for a cremation and final farewell.

The following morning, June 21st, the Winter Solstice, about 30 Order members and mitras gathered to process up the hill to the Stupa where a pyre had been built. Yellow balloons were released and it seemed to some of us that they briefly formed the shape of a TRAM, the seed syllable of Ratnasambhava, as they floated ever upward into the clear blue of the sky.

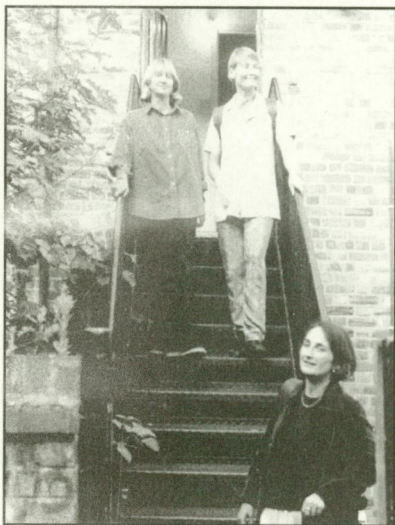
Dharmadhara lit the pyre. After two hours of fierce flames and intense heat, just a few bone fragments remained.

Shubhavajri's consciousness had left, I believe, soon after her death. Any remaining part of her had now soared into the immense blue sky with the golden balloons. Go well dear friend, wherever you are.

*Dharmanandi*







**OBSERVANT RESIDENTS OF TOOTING**, London, may have noticed some new neighbours this summer: six women living above a dress shop in Mitcham Road. As the evening rush-hour arrived, they could be seen stepping out in pairs, walking purposefully to bus stops and tube stations with identical bags on their backs. Four or five hours later, still watchful neighbours might have seen them returning, looking tired or energised, bright or down-hearted, talking, or walking quietly: the team for this year's Karuna Trust Women's Doorknocking Appeal.

We lived together for six weeks and went out each evening to ask people to give money to Karuna. The Karuna Trust receives nearly 75% of its income from the regular donations of individuals. Most of these supporters are recruited through doorknocking appeals which are held each year. This year our women's team knocked at approximately eight thousand doors over six weeks. We recruited 87 new supporters who, between them, will give over £16,000 a year for the work of the charity. The money will go to projects run by Buddhists in India to fight the degradation of caste.

At the heart of the work of Karuna is the belief that, given the right conditions, human beings can grow. The caste system in India has meant that millions of people are born into poverty, with little access to education and little hope of change. Karuna's projects include promotion of education for children, women's literacy, health projects in the slums, cultural projects and Dharma teaching. Our task was to communicate to people the worthwhile nature of this work and

# Life-changing Appeal

*Padmaprabha*

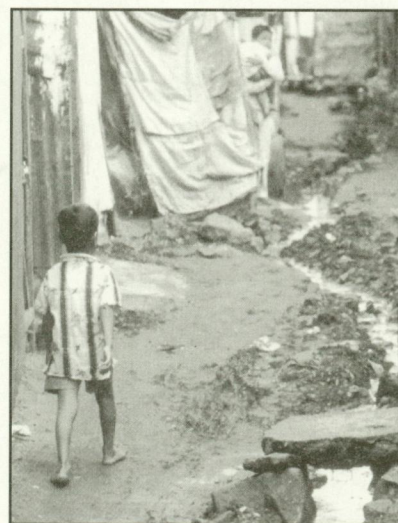
to encourage regular donations to Karuna.

A doorknocking appeal is neither like doing a job nor being on retreat. It is a unique experience. The appeal team lives together as a community. The daytime programme resembles that of a retreat. Each evening the team members walk out into busy London and encounter hundreds of people: people travelling, people on the streets, people behind their doors. Doorknocking is a spiritual practice. Like any spiritual practice, different aspects will stand out for any individual at different times. Like any spiritual practice, one repeats and repeats it, experiencing success and failure, concentration and distraction, being reflected back to oneself again and again. The unique nature of this spiritual practice is the direct involvement of so many other human beings. Each door one knocks is a new experience and we do not know what will be behind it: dogs, cats, children, a tired mother, a business man just arrived home, someone just out of the bath, a youth with a pierced eyebrow, an old woman just recovering from an illness, a person with a look of curiosity and interest, someone angry for the interruption.....We have to meet whoever we find there. We try to be both present and open, wanting to communicate with that person. The interchange we have on each doorstep, and our responses and reactions to it, are an exquisite snapshot of ourselves in relation to the world. If we are prepared to look at these snapshots, it is a brilliant opportunity to change and grow.

One team member likened doorknocking to the story of Kisa Gotami. The Buddha sent her from door to door to find the mustard seed which would return life to her dead son. At each doorway she was shown impermanence and her delusion was reflected back to her. We move from door to door in the same way and the people there give us a message. What do we need to hear from them to

purify our interaction with the world?

One message I heard this year was 'be rich'. I learned how to approach doors with the attitude of generosity rather than 'I want something from you'. Fundraising became giving people the opportunity to be generous. When I was able to be generous with my time, my presence, my interest and my heart as I met people on their doorsteps, I was rewarded with rich communications and, at times, money for Karuna. In the community my teammates continued the lesson with their generosity in friendship. I found I was living in an abundant world. 'You're so brave!' people often said to us. 'I don't know how you do this work!' Sometimes I felt the same way. For an intense taste of the joys, struggles and mysteries of the spiritual life - try a doorknocking appeal.



*The next women's doorknocking appeal will be held June-July 1999 in Cambridge. For further details contact the Karuna Trust.*

*If you are interested in finding out more about the Karuna Trust or would like to support the charity's work, please contact: The Karuna Trust, St Mark's Studios, Chilingworth Road, London N7 8QJ Tel: 0171-700 3434*



# A Great Tradition

*MEDITATION* is sometimes said to be the essential practice of Buddhism and periods devoted to intensive meditation practice have been recommended through the ages. At the end of this year two women will be setting off to embark on meditation retreats of three and four years respectively. Varachitta, currently living in London, will be flying out to New Zealand to start a three-year solitary retreat. **Aryadakini** will be moving from Wales to Scotland to a small hut above Dhanakosa retreat centre. She plans a year-long solitary retreat followed by a three year retreat with a neighbouring friend. She writes:

I have long dreamt of living

the life of a full-time meditator following in the tradition established by the great yogic adepts such as Milarepa and Padmasambhava's disciple Yeshe Tsogyal.

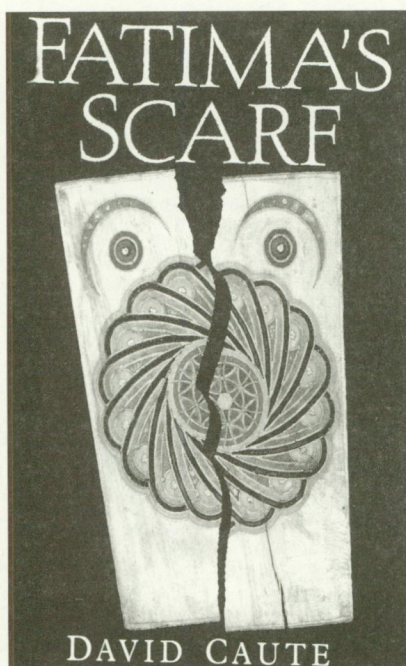
My first extended solitary retreat was in 1991. That lasted for six months and you could say it gave birth to Aryadakini. Now I want to set up those conditions again for a longer period for I have found them to be the very best for pursuing my meditation practice.

I want to more and more embody my name - to become a real Arya (stream entrant) and a Dakini. I have great faith that I



can do that through meditation. However, I'm aware that I am lazy when it comes to 'applying clear consciousness to everything that I do' - that is, mindfulness outside of sitting meditation. So it is my intention to practise preserving the state of meditative contemplation continuously. This will be my greatest challenge during my retreat!

Review



*Fatima's Scarf*  
David Caute  
Totterdown Books 1998  
£15.99 pp560

The streets are full of furious Asian men. Stones are being

## A Clash of Values

thrown, insults hurled.

As Salman Rushdie emerges from total hiding, we can re-visit the angers of the fatwa and the so-called Rushdie Affair in fictional form. David Caute's *Fatima's Scarf* uses them as the context for his narrative, set in an imaginary 'Bruddersford'. Sharp and murderous, this novel raises vital questions about liberalism, multiculturalism and common values: is co-existence between a secular/Christian West and Islam a doomed affair? What hierarchy of rights exist within a secular state? And does Islam carry within it an intractable gene that will inevitably give birth to bigotry, violence and blood on British streets?

*Fatima's Scarf* is not a comfortable read (apart from being overlong, at 560 pages). It paints

a world in which self-interest rules, neuroticism thrives and the powerless are easy targets for cynical manipulation. The trigger for the downward slide is - as with *Satanic Verses* - a book. *The Devil: an Interview*, written by an exiled Egyptian writer, Gamal Rahman, is complex, sophisticated and allegedly disrespectful of Islam. It inflames Muslim Bruddersford and sets the wheels turning for terrible outcomes. For the town is - despite its illusory calm - ripe for the shaking. The old alliances between old Labour Party bosses and Asian community leaders have begun to wear thin. Newer ambitious men are massing, impatient for their turn in the sun, no longer respectful of the gatekeepers. To topple them, they use the handy weapon of religion (not for the first time in



history): 'Our Muslim men forgot about God and worshipped Council jobs...wheeling and dealing.' Why should they continue to vote obediently for the sitting Labour MP, a self-satisfied Yorkshire bigot? And why should there be only five Muslim councillors out of a hundred and one?

Young Fatima Shah, teenage daughter of one of the old Muslim power brokers, provides the discontented forces with their cause celebre. Off her own bat, she decides she must wear the Muslim hijab (or head covering) to school, runs foul of school rules (as she knows she will) and is sent home. In no time, her scarf and the infamous book become entangled in an escalating sequence of events. Television and newspapers happily fan the flames and fragile relationships and *modus vivendi* crumble in their heat. The liberal no-nonsense headmistress finds herself publicly branded as an adulteress. The elder statesman, touted as the voice of Muslim reason, lapses into alcoholism. Fatima herself acquires a band of highly-strung and hysterical hijab-clad girls who scream resistance to any form of rational debate.

Something deeper than individual reputations is destroyed in the flames. The affair exposes what looks like an irreconcilable divide between cultures. For what is tolerance to the 'Christians' - that is, the white community - is scorned as shallowness by Bruddersford Muslims ('the passive fatalism of a defeated religion'). What is whole hearted devotion to the Muslims ('a 24-hour religion') is loathed as extremism by the Christians. What is repression of women to the Christians is protection of women to the Muslims. Meanwhile, powering it all, fester the ancient bruises and resentments, set up in colonial rule and reinforced by the unthinking racism of present day Britain. Actions - however buried in history - have consequences.

How prescient is this disquieting and adroitly written book? It could be read in a number of ways: as an indictment of immigration history; as a strong warning as to the effects of fundamentalism with its appeal to primitive emotionalism and the promotion of unthinking adherence to authority; or as a critique of liberal multiculturalism which insists that all groups have equal rights to retain and express their own culture.

Clearly all rights are not equal. Where is the line to be drawn between free speech and censorship - if your book insults me? And if what I consider to be my right conflicts with yours, then who wins out?

These are troubling and confusing times, and - given the prevalence of cultural misconceptions - likely to become even more so. However, they are also times in which the Dharma, with its impeccable clarity and its sound ethical foundation, offers an invaluable perspective. It provides an instrument with which to tease apart the many confusions and ambiguities: the distinction between the real tenets of a religion and those that are claimed for it; the definition of 'freedom', the notion of 'rights'. As Sangharakshita makes clear in his essay, *Rights and Duties*, the whole notion of 'rights' is based on power, and in the end no action that springs from the power mode can be helpful - unless it is genuinely subordinate to the great and universal ethical principle of non-violence. Book burning and censorship as manifested in *Fatima's Scarf* break the first precept (to abstain from taking life) because they kill independent thought and individual creativity, the basis of any transcendental enquiry.

Buddhist clarity would also prevent people from succumbing to the all too common temptation of seeing Islam simply as a menacing alien force. The notion of 'the enemy without'

has always made easy converts and indeed powered innumerable wars. The easy duality of polarised categories - them/us, civilised/barbaric, favoured/outcast - are dangerous crutches and cannot be a basis for judgement. The Buddha did not in fact condemn the religions of his day. When spiritual practitioners insisted on the rightness of their way, he did not throw them bodily out of the metaphorical temple. He made his point by practice and example, proceeding by positivities: by asserting the primacy of the individual conscience that Goes for Refuge, by teaching the dire effects of destructive behaviour, and by expounding (and exemplifying) the need for compassion.

And because the Buddha would be wiser than our popular press, he would also be alert to the complex mesh of historical conditioning that is tangled up with Islam in the mind of the average Westerner. In the Rushdie Affair, the conflation of the two has resulted in political issues being confused with religious ones. Many of the troubles of the fictional Bruddersford were rooted more in political powerlessness and social disadvantage.

But while inclusiveness is a proper aim for the politicians and the law-makers, it is not the guiding principle for personal choice. Islam in its higher reaches approaches Transcendentalism. It has many fine and upright adherents (born into a Muslim family I know many directly).

But in the ultimate analysis, no way of life that vests final authority in an outside force - whatever its name - can lead to real freedom. One of David Caute's characters claims, 'There is only one God. The damage is done by Religion.' Buddhists would contest even that.





# An Impressive Debut

## *Fugitive Pieces*

Anne Michaels

Originally published in Canada

by McClelland & Stewart, 1996

First published in Great Britain

1997 by Bloomsbury

ISBN 0 7475 34969

£6.99 pp296

*Fugitive Pieces* by Canadian Anne Michaels is an amazing first novel. Published in 1996, it has become a bestseller in many countries and won various prizes, including The Guardian Fiction Award. The novel took her fifteen years to write; during this time she wrote two volumes of poetry that are also highly acclaimed, *The Weight of Oranges* and *Miner's Pond*. At the heart of the novel is the Holocaust, the event that will most haunt the twentieth century, and what people lived through and endured.

Ann Michaels was in Seattle this summer and I attended a reading and question and answer session about *Fugitive Pieces*. She said that there were three reasons why she wrote the book. First, she had what she called a 'visitation' from the three main characters: Jakob, Athos and Ben. They appeared to her and would not go away. She managed to ignore them for five years and then began the novel that would take her another ten years to complete. The second reason was an image of a boy digging a grave every night to save himself from the German soldiers. The third were photos from the war showing Nazi soldiers laughing while they were killing Jews. She became obsessed with unlocking that split second, with everything leading up to that moment and everything that followed it. 'The photos capture again and again this

chilling moment of choice: the laughter of the damned. When the soldier realized that only death has the power to turn "man" into "figuren", his difficulty was solved. And so the rage and sadism increased: his fury at the victim for suddenly turning human; his desire to destroy that humanness so intense his brutality had no limit.'

Within *Fugitive Pieces* many stories are woven into one as the narrative moves from Poland to Greece, then to Canada and back to Greece. The first story is Jakob's, seven years old when he is rescued by Athos, a Greek geologist excavating the sunken city of Biskupin in Poland. Jakob's parents and his beloved sister Bella have been killed by the Nazis - he survives by hiding in the forest, digging graves to hide himself in the day, moving on at night. One day he emerges at Biskupin and Athos smuggles him to Greece and to safety. 'Bog-boy, I surfaced into the miry streets of the drowned city....No one is born just once. If you're lucky, you'll emerge again in someone's arms; or unlucky, waken when the long tail of terror brushes the inside of your skull.'

The second narrative is Ben's, growing up 'safe' in Canada with parents who survived the Holocaust. 'Images brand you, burn the surrounding skin, leave their black mark. Like volcanic ash, they can make the most potent soil. Out of the seared place emerge sharp green shoots. The images my father planted in me were an exchange of vows. He passed the book or magazine to me silently. He pointed a finger. Looking, like listening, was a discipline. What was I to make of the horror of these photos, safe in my room with the cowboy curtains and my rock collection?'

With extraordinary insight and skill, Anne Michaels evokes

the intertwined lives of these two men, of their friendships, their families, the women they love, their memories, the search for some understanding in the midst of so much horror. There is the poet's love of language in her prose and her themes are big: the complexity of heroism, the terror of certain moments in history, the threads of feeling that run through our lives and connect us with the past. 'If the evil act can't be erased, then neither can the good. It's as accurate a measure of any of a society: what is the smallest act of kindness that is considered heroic? In those days, to be moral required no more than the slightest flicker of movement - of eyes looking away or blinking, while a running man crossed a field. And those who gave water or bread! They entered a realm higher than the angels' simply by remaining in the human mire.'

There were a few parts of the novel where I felt the author strayed from the narrative, almost as if the intensity could not be sustained. And while the men are portrayed with great care and feeling, the women characters didn't always come to life for me. But this is her first novel and it is an impressive debut. She has important questions to put to us, and she asks them with an elegance that is sometimes breathtaking. I look forward to her next book.

Virya Prabha □



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## MIXED RETREATS/RETREATS FOR WOMEN

### November:

20 - 27 Tai Chi and Meditation

### December:

28 - 4 Jan Women's Winter Retreat

### January:

22 - 29 Yoga and Meditation\*

### February:

12 - 19 Writing Retreat

26 - 28 Women's Weekend

### March:

5 - 12 Women's Walking Retreat

12 - 19 Yoga and Meditation\*

19 - 26 Tai Chi and Meditation

### April:

2 - 9 Spring Open Retreat

16 - 23 Working Retreat

(\*it may be possible to book for the weekend only on these Retreats)

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How do you go for refuge in  
the context of family life?

How can you love and nurture  
without attachment?

Does giving birth and having  
children tie you irrevocably  
to samsara and an ignoble path?

How does being around children  
challenge or inspire your practise?

## jataka newsletter

invites your discussion of these questions and any  
issues about practising around children. Please  
send contributions by late January 1999 to:

Jataka Newsletter, North London Buddhist Centre  
St Marks Studios, Chillingworth Rd, London N7 8SJ  
Email 106114.57@compuserve.com  
Tel Francesca Iliffe 0171 209 1249

Jataka is a newsletter for those practising with  
children in the FWBO. The first issue came out in  
summer '98, with contributions from individuals  
reporting in from around the country. To order copies  
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Newsletter") to the above address, or ask at your local  
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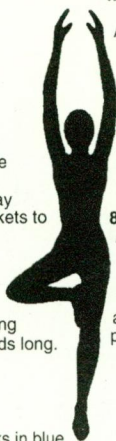
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# AN IMAGE OF FREEDOM

- an aura of flames
- a necklace of skulls
- a clear blue sky
- a renunciant's bowl
- the purity of colour

## Taraloka Winter Retreats

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28 - 4 January

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