

# *The Myth of Freedom*

*and the Way of Meditation*

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# II

## Styles of Imprisonment

# Cosmic Joke

IN ORDER TO cut through the ambition of ego, we must understand how we set up me and my territory, how we use our projections as credentials to prove our existence. The source of the effort to confirm our solidity is an uncertainty as to whether or not we exist. Driven by this uncertainty, we seek to prove our own existence by finding a reference point outside ourselves, something with which to have a relationship, something solid to feel separate from. But the whole enterprise is questionable if we really look back and back and back. Perhaps we have perpetrated a gigantic hoax?

The hoax is the sense of the solidity of I and other. This dualistic fixation comes from nothingness. In the beginning there is open space, zero, self-contained, without relationship. But in order to confirm zeroness, we must create one to prove that zero exists. But even that is not enough; we might get stuck with just one and zero. So we begin to advance, venture out and out. We create two to confirm one's existence, and then we go out again and confirm two by three, three by four and so on. We set up a background, a foundation from which we can go on and on to infinity. This is what is called *samsara*, the continuous vicious cycle of confirmation of

existence. One confirmation needs another confirmation needs another . . .

The attempt to confirm our solidity is very painful. Constantly we find ourselves suddenly slipping off the edge of a floor which had appeared to extend endlessly. Then we must attempt to save ourselves from death by immediately building an extension to the floor in order to make it appear endless again. We think we are safe on our seemingly solid floor, but then we slip off again and have to build another extension. We do not realize that the whole process is unnecessary, that we do not need a floor to stand on, that we have been building all these floors on the ground level. There was never any danger of falling or need for support. In fact, our occupation of extending the floor to secure our ground is a big joke, the biggest joke of all, a cosmic joke. But we may not find it funny: it may sound like a serious double cross.

To understand more precisely the process of confirming the solidity of I and other, that is, the development of ego, it is helpful to be familiar with the five *skandhas*, a set of Buddhist concepts which describe ego as a five-step process.

The first step or skandha, the birth of ego, is called "form" or basic ignorance. We ignore the open, fluid, intelligent quality of space. When a gap or space occurs in our experience of mind, when there is a sudden glimpse of awareness, openness, absence of self, then a suspicion arises: "Suppose I find that there is no solid me? That possibility scares me. I don't want to go into that." That abstract paranoia, the discomfort that something may be wrong, is the source of karmic chain reactions. It is the fear of ultimate confusion and despair.

The fear of the absence of self, of the egoless state, is a constant threat to us. "Suppose it is true, what then? I am afraid to look." We want to maintain some solidity but the only material available with which to work is space, the absence of ego, so we try to solidify or freeze that experience of space. Ignorance in this case is not stupidity, but it is a kind of stubbornness. Suddenly we are bewildered by the discovery of selflessness and do not want to accept it; we want to hold on to something.

Then the next step is the attempt to find a way of occupying ourselves, diverting our attention from our aloneness. The karmic chain reaction begins. Karma is dependent upon the relativity of this and that—my existence and my projections—and karma is continually re-born as we continually try to busy ourselves. In other words, there is a fear of not being confirmed by our projections. One must constantly try to prove that one does exist by feeling one's projections as a solid thing. Feeling the solidity of something seemingly outside you reassures you that you are a solid entity as well. This is the second skandha, "feeling."

In the third stage, ego develops three strategies or impulses with which to relate to its projections: indifference, passion and aggression. These impulses are guided by perception. Perception, in this case, is the self-conscious feeling that you must officially report back to central headquarters what is happening in any given moment. Then you can manipulate each situation by organizing another strategy.

In the strategy of indifference, we numb any sensitive areas that we want to avoid, that we think might hurt us. We put on a suit of armor. The second strategy is passion—trying to grasp things and eat them up. It is a

magnetizing process. Usually we do not grasp if we feel rich enough. But whenever there is a feeling of poverty, hunger, impotence, then we reach out, we extend our tentacles and attempt to hold onto something. Aggression, the third strategy, is also based upon the experience of poverty, the feeling that you cannot survive and therefore must ward off anything that threatens your property or food. Moreover, the more aware you are of the possibilities of being threatened, the more desperate your reaction becomes. You try to run faster and faster in order to find a way of feeding or defending yourself. This speeding about is a form of aggression. Aggression, passion, indifference are part of the third skandha, "perception/impulse."

Ignorance, feeling, impulse and perception—all are instinctive processes. We operate a radar system which senses our territory. Yet we cannot establish ego properly without intellect, without the ability to conceptualize and name. By now we have an enormously rich collection of things going on inside us. Since we have so many things happening, we begin to categorize them, putting them into certain pigeon-holes, naming them. We make it official, so to speak. So "intellect" or "concept" is the next stage of ego, the fourth skandha, but even this is not quite enough. We need a very active and efficient mechanism to keep the instinctive and intellectual processes of ego coordinated. That is the last development of ego, the fifth skandha, "consciousness."

Consciousness consists of emotions and irregular thought patterns, all of which taken together form the different fantasy worlds with which we occupy ourselves. These fantasy worlds are referred to in the scriptures as the "six realms." The emotions are the highlights of ego,

the generals of ego's army; subconscious thought, day-dreams and other thoughts connect one highlight to another. So thoughts form ego's army and are constantly in motion, constantly busy. Our thoughts are neurotic in the sense that they are irregular, changing direction all the time and overlapping one another. We continually jump from one thought to the next, from spiritual thoughts to sexual fantasies to money matters to domestic thoughts and so on. The whole development of the five skandhas—ignorance/form, feeling, impulse/perception, concept and consciousness—is an attempt on our part to shield ourselves from the truth of our insubstantiality.

The practice of meditation is to see the transparency of this shield. But we cannot immediately start dealing with the basic ignorance itself; that would be like trying to push a wall down all at once. If we want to take this wall down, we must take it down brick by brick; we start with immediately available material, a stepping stone. So the practice of meditation starts with the emotions and thoughts, particularly with the thought process.

## *Self-Absorption*

THE SIX REALMS, the different styles of samsaric occupation, are referred to as "realms," in the sense that we dwell within a particular version of reality. We are fascinated with maintaining familiar surroundings, fa-

miliar desires and longings, so as not to give in to a spacious state of mind. We cling to our habitual patterns because confusion provides a tremendously familiar ground to sink into as well as a way of occupying ourselves. We are afraid to give up this security and entertainment, afraid to step into open space, into a meditative state of mind. The prospect of the awakened state is very irritating because we are uncertain how to handle it, so we prefer to run back to our prison rather than release ourselves from it. Confusion and suffering become an occupation, often quite secure and delightful.

The six realms are: the realm of the gods, the realm of the jealous gods, the human realm, the animal realm, the realm of the hungry ghosts and the hell realm. The realms are predominantly emotional attitudes toward ourselves and our surroundings, emotional attitudes colored and reinforced by conceptual explanations and rationalizations. As human beings we may, during the course of a day, experience the emotions of all of the realms, from the pride of the god realm to the hatred and paranoia of the hell realm. Nonetheless, a person's psychology is usually firmly rooted in one realm. This realm provides us with a style of confusion, a way of entertaining and occupying ourselves so as not to have to face our fundamental uncertainty, our ultimate fear that we may not exist.

The fundamental occupation of the god realm is mental fixation, a meditative absorption of sorts, which is based upon ego, upon the spiritually materialistic approach. In such meditation practice the meditator maintains himself by dwelling upon something. The particular topic of meditation, no matter how seemingly profound, is experienced as a solid body rather than as

transparent. This practice of meditation begins with a tremendous amount of preparation or "self-development." Actually the aim of such practice is not so much to create the solidity of a place to dwell as it is to create the self-consciousness of the dweller. There is tremendous self-consciousness, which of course reaffirms the meditator's existence.

You do get very dramatic results from such practice, if you are successful at it. One might experience inspiring visions or sounds, seemingly profound mental states, physical bliss and mental bliss. All sorts of "altered states of consciousness" could be experienced or manufactured through the efforts of self-conscious mind. But these experiences are imitations, plastic flowers, man-made, manufactured, prefabricated.

We could dwell on a technique as well—repetition of a *mantra* or visualization. One is not completely absorbed into the visualization or mantra, but instead *you* are visualizing, *you* are repeating the mantra. Such practice, based upon "me," that "I am doing this," is once again the development of self-consciousness.

The realm of the gods is realized through tremendous struggle, is manufactured out of hope and fear. The fear of failure and the hope of gain builds up and up and up to a crescendo. One moment you think you are going to make it and the next moment you think you are going to fail. Alternation between these extremes produces enormous tension. Success and failure mean so much to us—"This is the end of me," or "This is my achievement of ultimate pleasure."

Finally we become so excited that we begin to lose the reference points of our hope and fear. We lose track of where we are and what we were doing. And then

there is a sudden flash in which pain and pleasure become completely one and the meditative state of dwelling on the ego dawns upon us. Such a breakthrough, such a tremendous achievement. And then pleasure begins to saturate our system, psychologically and physically. We no longer have to care about hope or fear. And quite possibly we might believe this to be the permanent achievement of enlightenment or union with God. At that moment everything we see appears to be beautiful, loving, even the most grotesque situations of life seem heavenly. Anything that is unpleasant or aggressive seems beautiful because we have achieved oneness with ego. In other words, ego lost track of its intelligence. This is the absolute, ultimate achievement of bewilderment, the depths of ignorance—extremely powerful. It is a kind of spiritual atomic bomb, self-destructive in terms of compassion, in terms of communication, in terms of stepping out of the bondage of ego. The whole approach in the realm of the gods is stepping in and in and in, churning out more and more chains with which to bind oneself. The more we develop our practice, the more bondage we create. The scriptures cite the analogy of the silkworm which binds itself with its own silk thread until it finally suffocates itself.

Actually we have only been discussing one of two aspects of the realm of the gods, the self-destructive perversion of spirituality into materialism. However, the god realm's version of materialism can also be applied to so-called worldly concerns in the search for extreme mental and physical pleasure, the attempt to dwell on seductive goals of all kinds: health, wealth, beauty, fame, virtue, whatever. The approach is always pleasure-oriented, in the sense of maintenance of ego. What characterizes the realm of the gods is the losing track of

hope and fear. And this might be achieved in terms of sensual concerns as well as in terms of spirituality. In both cases, in order to achieve such extraordinary happiness, we must lose track of who is searching and what is the goal. If our ambition expresses itself in terms of worldly pursuits, at first we search for happiness, but then we begin to enjoy the struggle toward happiness as well and we begin to relax into our struggle. Half-way to achieving absolute pleasure and comfort we begin to give in and make the best of our situation. The struggle becomes an adventure and then a vacation or holiday. We are still on our adventurous journey to the actual ultimate goal, but at the same time we consider every step along the way a vacation, a holiday.

So the realm of the gods is not particularly painful, in itself. The pain comes from the eventual disillusionment. You think you have achieved a continually blissful state, spiritual or worldly; you are dwelling on that. But suddenly something shakes you and you realize that what you have achieved is not going to last forever. Your bliss becomes shaky and more irregular, and the thought of maintenance begins to reappear in your mind as you try to push yourself back into your blissful state. But the karmic situation brings you all kinds of irritations and at some stage you begin to lose faith in the continuity of the blissful state. A sudden violence arises, the feeling that you have been cheated, that you cannot stay in this realm of the gods forever. So when the karmic situation shakes you and provides extraordinary situations for you to relate with, the whole process becomes profoundly disappointing. You condemn yourself or the person who put you into the god realm or what brought you out of it. You develop anger and disappointment because you think you have been cheated. You switch into another

style of relating to the world, another realm. This is what is called *samsara*, which literally means "continual circle," "whirlpool," the ocean of confusion which spins around again and again and again, without end.

## *Paranoia*

THE DOMINANT characteristic of the next realm, the jealous god or *asura* realm, is paranoia. If you are trying to help someone who has an asura mentality, they interpret your action as an attempt to oppress them or infiltrate their territory. But if you decide not to help them, they interpret that as a selfish act: you are seeking comfort for yourself. If you present both alternatives to them, then they think you are playing games with them. The asura mentality is quite intelligent: it sees all the hidden corners. You think that you are communicating with an asura face to face, but in actual fact he is looking at you from behind your back. This intense paranoia is combined with an extreme efficiency and accuracy which inspires a defensive form of pride. The asura mentality is associated with wind, speeding about, trying to achieve everything on the spot, avoiding all possibilities of being attacked. It is trying constantly to attain something higher and greater. To do so one must watch out for every possible pitfall. There is no time to prepare, to get ready to put your action into practice. You just act without preparation. A false kind of spontaneity, a sense of freedom to act develops.

The asura mentality is preoccupied with comparison. In the constant struggle to maintain security and achieve greater things, you need points of reference, landmarks to plot your movement, to fix your opponent, to measure your progress. You regard life situations as games, in the sense of there being an opponent and yourself. You are constantly dealing with them and me, me and my friends, me and myself. All corners are regarded as being suspicious or threatening, therefore one must look into them and be careful of them. But one is not careful in the sense of hiding or camouflaging oneself. You are very direct and willing to come out in the open and fight if there is a problem or if there is a plot or a seeming plot against you. You just come out and fight face to face, trying to expose the plot. At the same time that one is going out in the open and facing the situation, one is distrustful of the messages that you receive from the situation, so you ignore them. You refuse to accept anything, refuse to learn anything that is presented by outsiders, because everyone is regarded as the enemy.

## *Passion*

PASSION IS THE major occupation in the human realm. Passion in this sense is an intelligent kind of grasping in which the logical reasoning mind is always geared toward the creation of happiness. There is an acute sense of the separateness of pleasurable objects from the experiencer resulting in a sense of loss, poverty,

often accompanied by nostalgia. You feel that only pleasurable objects can bring you comfort and happiness, but you feel inadequate, not strong or magnetic enough for the objects of pleasure to be drawn naturally into your territory. Nevertheless, you try actively to draw them in. This often leads to a critical attitude toward other people. You want to magnetize the best qualities, the most pleasurable, most sophisticated, most civilized situations.

This kind of magnetizing is different from that of the asura realm which is not as selective and intelligent. The human realm by comparison involves a high degree of selectivity and fussiness. There is an acute sense of having your own ideology and your own style, of rejecting things not your style. You must have the right balance in everything. You criticize and condemn people who do not meet your standards. Or else you might be impressed by someone who embodies your style or is superior to you at achieving it, someone who is very intelligent and has very refined taste, who leads a pleasurable life and has the things you would like to have. It might be an historical figure or a mythological figure or one of your contemporaries who has greatly impressed you. He is very accomplished and you would like to possess his qualities. It is not simply a matter of being jealous of another person; you want to draw that person into your territory. It is an ambitious kind of jealousy in that you want to equal the other person.

The essence of the human realm is the endeavor to achieve some high ideal. Often those who find themselves in this realm will have visions of Christ or Buddha or Krishna or Mohammed or other historical figures who have tremendous meaning for them because of their achievements. These great personages have magnetized

everything that one could possibly think of—fame, power, wisdom. If they wanted to become rich they could do so because of their enormous influence over other people. You would like to be like them—not necessarily better than but at least equal to them. Often people have visions in which they identify themselves with great politicians, statesmen, poets, painters, musicians, scientists, and so forth. There is an heroic attitude, the attempt to create monuments, the biggest, greatest, historical monument. This heroic approach is based on fascination with what you lack. When you hear of someone who possesses remarkable qualities, you regard them as significant beings and yourself as insignificant. This continual comparing and selecting generates a never-ending procession of desires.

The human mentality places a strong emphasis on knowledge, learning and education, on collecting all kinds of information and wisdom. The intellect is most active in the human realm. There is so much going on in your mind as a result of having collected so many things and having planned so many projects. The epitome of the human realm is to be stuck in a huge traffic jam of discursive thought. You are so busy thinking that you cannot learn anything at all. The constant churning out of ideas, plans, hallucinations and dreams is a quite different mentality from that of the god realm. There you are completely absorbed in a blissful state, a kind of self-stuck sense of satisfaction. In the jealous god realm you are completely drunk on competitiveness; there is less possibility of thought happening because your experiences are so strong that they overpower you, hypnotize you. In the case of the human realm there are more thoughts happening. The intellectual or logical mind becomes much more powerful so that one is com-

pletely overwhelmed by the possibilities of magnetizing new situations. Thus one tries to grasp new ideas, new strategies, relevant case histories, quotations from books, significant incidents that have occurred in one's life, and so on, and one's mind becomes completely full of thought. The things that have been recorded in the subconscious play back continually, much more so than in the other realms.

So it is a very intellectual realm, very busy and very disturbing. The human mentality has less pride than the mentalities of the other realms. In the other realms you find some occupation to hang onto and derive satisfaction from, whereas in the human realm there is no such satisfaction. There is a constant searching, constant looking for new situations or attempts to improve given situations. It is the least enjoyable state of mind because suffering is not regarded as an occupation nor as a way of challenging oneself; rather it is a constant reminder of ambitions created out of suffering.

## *Stupidity*

THE DESCRIPTIONS of the different realms are related to subtle but distinct differences in the ways individuals handle themselves in daily life—how they walk, talk, write letters, the way they read, eat, sleep and so on. Everyone tends to develop a style which is peculiar to them. If we hear a tape recording of our voice or see a

videotape or movie of ourselves, we are often shocked to see our style as someone else sees it. It feels extremely alien. Usually we find other people's point of view irritating or embarrassing.

Blindness to our style, to how others see us, is most acute in the animal realm. I am not speaking of literally being reborn as an animal but of the animal quality of mind, a mentality which stubbornly pushes forward toward predetermined goals. The animal mentality is very serious. It even makes humor into a serious occupation. Self-consciously trying to create a friendly environment, a person will crack jokes or try to be funny, intimate or clever. However, animals do not really smile or laugh; they just behave. They may play, but it is unusual for animals to actually laugh. They might make friendly noises or gestures, but the subtleties of a sense of humor are absent. The animal mentality looks directly ahead, as if wearing blinders. It never looks to the right or left but very sincerely goes straight ahead, trying to reach the next available situation, continually trying to adjust situations to make them conform to its expectations.

The animal realm is associated with stupidity: that is, preferring to play deaf and dumb, preferring to follow the rules of available games rather than redefine them. Of course, you might try to manipulate your perception of any given game, but you are really just following along, just following your instinct. You have some hidden or secret wish that you would like to put into effect, so when you come to obstacles, to irritations, you just push forward, regardless of whether or not you may hurt someone or destroy something of value. You just go out and pursue whatever is available and if something else comes

up, you take advantage of that as well and pursue it.

The ignorance or stupidity of the animal realm comes from a deadly honest and serious mentality which is quite different from the bewilderment of the basic ignorance of the first skandha. In animal ignorance you have a certain style of relating to yourself and refuse to see that style from other points of view. You completely ignore such possibilities. If somebody attacks you or challenges your clumsiness, your unskilled way of handling a situation, you find a way of justifying yourself, find a rationale to keep your self-respect. You are not concerned with being truthful as long as your deception can be maintained in front of others. You are proud that you are clever enough to lie successfully. If you are attacked, challenged, criticized, you automatically find an answer. Such stupidity can be very clever. It is ignorance or stupidity in the sense that you do not see the environment around you, but you see only your goal and only the means to achieve that goal, and you invent all kinds of excuses to prove that you are doing the right thing .

The animal mentality is extremely stubborn, but this stubbornness can be sophisticated as well and quite skillful and ingenious, but without a sense of humor. The ultimate sense of humor is a free way of relating with life situations in their full absurdity. It is seeing things clearly, including self-deception, without blinders, without barriers, without excuses. It is being open and seeing with panoramic vision rather than trying to relieve tension. As long as humor is used as a way to relieve tension or self-consciousness or pressure, then it is the humor of the animal realm, which is actually extremely serious. It is a way of looking for a crutch. So the essence of the animal style is to try to fulfill your desires with extreme honesty, sincerity and seriousness. Traditionally, this

direct and mean way of relating with the world is symbolized by the pig. The pig does not look to the right or left but just sniffs along, consuming whatever comes in front of its nose; it goes on and on and on, without any sense of discrimination—a very sincere pig.

Whether we are dealing with simple domestic tasks or highly sophisticated intellectual projects, we can have an animal style. It does not matter whether the pig eats expensive sweets or garbage. What is important is *how* he eats. The extreme animal mentality is trapped in a continual, self-contained, self-justifying round of activity. You are not able to relate with the messages given to you by your environment. You do not see yourself mirrored by others. You may be dealing with very intellectual matters, but the style is animal since there is no sense of humor, no way of surrendering or opening. There is a constant demand to move on from one thing to the next, regardless of failures or obstacles. It is like being a tank that rolls along, crushing everything in its path. It does not matter if you run over people or crash through buildings—you just roll along.

## *Poverty*

IN THE PRETA or hungry ghost realm one is preoccupied with the process of expanding, becoming rich, consuming. Fundamentally, you feel poor. You are unable to keep up the pretense of being what you would like to be. Whatever you have is used as proof of the validity

of your pride, but it is never enough, there is always some sense of inadequacy.

The poverty mentality is traditionally symbolized by a hungry ghost who has a tiny mouth, the size of the eye of a needle, a thin neck and throat, skinny arms and legs and a gigantic belly. His mouth and neck are too small to let enough food pass through them to fill his immense belly, so he is always hungry. And the struggle to satisfy his hunger is very painful since it is so hard to swallow what he eats. Food, of course, symbolizes anything you may want—friendship, wealth, clothes, sex, power, whatever.

Anything that appears in your life you regard as something to consume. If you see a beautiful autumn leaf falling, you regard it as your prey. You take it home or photograph it or paint a picture of it or write in your memoirs how beautiful it was. If you buy a bottle of Coke, it is exciting to hear the rattlings of the paper bag as you unpack it. The sound of the Coke spilling out of the bottle gives a delightful sense of thirst. Then you self-consciously taste it and swallow it. You have finally managed to consume it—such an achievement. It was fantastic; you brought the dream into reality. But after a while you become restless again and look for something else to consume.

You are constantly hungering for new entertainment—spiritual, intellectual, sensual and so on. Intellectually you may feel inadequate and decide to pull up your socks by studying and listening to juicy, thoughtful answers, profound, mystical words. You consume one idea after another, trying to record them, trying to make them solid and real. Whenever you feel hunger, you open your notebook or scrapbook or a book of satisfying ideas. When you experience boredom or insomnia or

depression, you open your books, read your notes and clippings and ponder over them, draw comfort from them. But this becomes repetitive at some point. You would like to re-meet your teachers or find new ones. And another journey to the restaurant or the supermarket or the delicatessen is not a bad idea. But sometimes you are prevented from taking the trip. You may not have enough money, your child gets sick, your parents are dying, you have business to attend to and so on. You realize that when more obstacles come up, then that much more hunger arises in you. And the more you want, the more you realize what you cannot get, which is painful.

It is painful to be suspended in unfulfilled desire, continually searching for satisfaction. But even if you achieve your goal then there is the frustration of becoming stuffed, so full that one is insensitive to further stimuli. You try to hold on to your possession, to dwell on it, but after a while you become heavy and dumb, unable to appreciate anything. You wish you could be hungry again so you could fill yourself up again. Whether you satisfy a desire or suspend yourself in desire and continue to struggle, in either case you are inviting frustration.

## *Anger*

THE HELL REALM is pervaded by aggression. This aggression is based on such a perpetual condition of

hatred that one begins to lose track of whom you are building your aggression toward as well as who is being aggressive toward you. There is a continual uncertainty and confusion. You have built up a whole environment of aggression to such a point that finally, even if you were to feel slightly cooler about your own anger and aggression, the environment around you would throw more aggression at you. It is like walking in hot weather: you might feel physically cooler for a while, but hot air is coming at you constantly so you cannot keep yourself cool for long.

The aggression of the hell realm does not seem to be your aggression, but it seems to permeate the whole space around you. There is a feeling of extreme stuffiness and claustrophobia. There is no space in which to breathe, no space in which to act, and life becomes overwhelming. The aggression is so intense that, if you were to kill someone to satisfy your aggression, you would achieve only a small degree of satisfaction. The aggression still lingers around you. Even if you were to try to kill yourself, you would find that the killer remains; so you would not have managed to murder yourself completely. There is a constant environment of aggression in which one never knows who is killing whom. It is like trying to eat yourself from the inside out. Having eaten yourself, the eater remains, and he must be eaten as well, and so on and so on. Each time the crocodile bites his own tail, he is nourished by it; the more he eats, the more he grows. There is no end to it.

You cannot really eliminate pain through aggression. The more you kill, the more you strengthen the killer who will create new things to be killed. The aggression grows until finally there is no space: the whole environ-

ment has been solidified. There are not even gaps in which to look back or do a double-take. The whole space has become completely filled with aggression. It is outrageous. There is no opportunity to create a watcher to testify to your destruction, no one to give you a report. But at the same time the aggression grows. The more you destroy, the more you create.

Traditionally aggression is symbolized by the sky and earth radiating red fire. The earth turns into a red hot iron and space becomes an environment of flame and fire. There is no space to breathe any cool air or feel coldness. Whatever you see around you is hot, intense, extremely claustrophobic. The more you try to destroy your enemies or win over your opponents, the more you generate resistance, counter-aggression bouncing back at you.

In the hell realm we throw out flames and radiations which are continually coming back to us. There is no room at all in which to experience any spaciousness or openness. Rather there is a constant effort, which can be very cunning, to close up all the space. The hell realm can only be created through your relationships with the outside world, whereas in the jealous god realm your own psychological hang-ups could be the material for creating the asura mentality. In the hell realm there is a constant situation of relationship; you are trying to play games with something and the attempt bounces back on you, constantly recreating extremely claustrophobic situations; so that finally there is no room in which to communicate at all.

At that point the only way to communicate is by trying to recreate your anger. You thought you had managed to win a war of one-upsmanship, but finally you did

not get a response from the other person; you one-upped him right out of existence. So you are faced only with your own aggression coming back at you and it manages to fill up all the space. One is left lonely once more, without excitement, so you seek another way of playing the game, again and again and again. You do not play for enjoyment, but because you do not feel protected nor secure enough. If you have no way to secure yourself, you feel bleak and cold, so you must rekindle the fire. In order to rekindle the fire you have to fight constantly to maintain yourself. One cannot help playing the game; one just finds oneself playing it, all the time.