

Vimalakirti, 6
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Good evening, bodhisattvas.

We're continuing tonight with *The Sutra That Vimalakirti Spoke*...and kept speaking and kept speaking and kept speaking. So far, the main characters in the story have been three : Vimalakirti, the householder bodhisattva who is ill; and Manjushri, the Bodhisattva of Wisdom who comes to visit him and ask him about what it's like to be ill as a bodhisattva; and Shariputra, who's one of the main disciples of the Buddha and functions a little bit as the straight man in the story. In addition to those three main people there are 32,000 observers in Vimalakirti's ten by ten foot room.

So, this is obviously an extraordinary ten by ten foot room with a lot of miraculous things in it. One of the miraculous things in this room is that there is a goddess who's been living there for twelve years, and when she sees all these people and sees this conversation going on and sees this wonderful assembly of 32,000 souls, she makes herself visible and showers down flowers upon everyone who's assembled there. And then this really strange thing happens. And I have to tell you about two kinds of people whom the flowers rained down upon. One are the bodhisattvas and the other are a group of people who are some of the disciples of the Buddha and they're known by a bunch of different names. But the best translation I've found, the English version I really love, is that they're the 'private buddhas,' which means they're the ones who think of enlightenment as a personal and individual experience. It's something they're going after for themselves. It's private to them. Throughout *The Vimalakirti Sutra*, one of the subtexts is this contrast between the private buddhas and the bodhisattvas, who, of course, yearn for enlightenment so that they can help others find enlightenment themselves.

So, the flowers come down from the goddess, and when they come down on the bodhisattvas, they sort of come down, and they keep falling, and they fall down to the ground. When they come down on the private buddhas, the flowers stick to them. They won't come off. And the private buddhas have a view that they shouldn't be wearing flowers because that's adornment and they're ascetics, and so they don't do that. So, they are madly trying to pick the flowers off of themselves and the flowers won't be brushed off. This is rather an

extraordinary thing that catches everybody by surprise, including Shariputra. And she turns to Shariputra, who's one of the people who's trying to brush the flowers off, and she says, "Tell me, sir. Why would you try to remove the flowers?" And Shariputra answers, "These flowers are contrary to the dharma, so I would remove them," because monastics were forbidden to adorn themselves like that. And the goddess replies to the idea that the flowers are contrary to the dharma by saying,

Don't say that these flowers are contrary to the dharma. Why? These flowers make no such discrimination. It is you who are generating discriminative thoughts. That's all. If you who've left the householder's life to follow the buddhadharma, makes such discrimination, *that* is what is contrary to the dharma. If you are without discrimination there's an accord with the dharma. Look at the bodhisattvas to whom the flowers do not stick. This is because they have eradicated all discriminative thoughts.

So, here's the first big teaching of the goddess. We tend to make discriminations. We tend to have views about things. We tend to have opinions. There was a physicist who said that what happened when the universe was created was that an almost infinite multiplicity of viewpoints were created. So, that's a real thing. That's a genuine thing. But, if we think that our view is the same thing as reality, that's where we get into trouble. If we think that because we have the view about flowers that says something essential about flowers, that's the problem. It's not a problem that we have views. We do that. But in the immortal words of Daniel Patrick Moynihan, "You are entitled to your own opinions, but you are not entitled to your own facts." So, we just have to recognize that what we have is views. That's all. We don't have to make them bad. We don't have to worry about them, or go to war with them, or anything like that. It's the simple recognition that what I think about the flower is a view. It has nothing really inherently necessarily to say about the flower. It may turn out that our view accords with reality, that we have a more or less realistic view of the flower, and that's great, and it may turn out we don't. The important thing is to recognize that it's a view, which means it's provisional, it's impermanent, it rises and falls, it ought to be subject to new evidence, and, at any given moment, it's our best guess. And that's as much as we get in this life. We get our best guess.

She's saying *Remember that discrimination, remember that duality doesn't actually exist in the world around you; it exists in your mind.* That's a *huge* thing. Duality does not inherently exist in the world around us. It's something our mind *does* with the world.

So, then, the goddess and Shariputra go on speaking together, and she asks him how long he's been liberated but he won't answer that question. She asks why he won't answer the question. He says, "Liberation cannot be spoken of in words, and so I don't know what I can say to you." Okay, so that sounds like Zen 101, right? Zen's a special transmission outside the scriptures, not dependent on words, and all that stuff. But she's saying something important, which is that when you do that, when you say it cannot be spoken of, you're making words special. They're in this case especially bad, instead of realizing that words are just words. And they are like anything else. They are as good and bad and capable of illuminating and capable of misuse as anything else. There's nothing inherently special about words. It depends on how you use them.

And she goes even a step further. It's not only just about how you use them :

Words and writing are manifestations of liberation. All things that exist are manifestations of liberation.

Shariputra asks what might seem to many of you like the obvious question : "Doesn't liberation mean detachment from desire, anger, folly, those kinds of things?" And so the goddess shocks him further by saying,

It is only for self-obsessed people that the Buddha says that detachment from desire, anger, and folly is liberation. For those who are not self-obsessed, the Buddha says that the very essence of desire, anger, and folly is liberation.

Okay, we're going to go some more with that later. We're going to come back to that because that's like *Woah!* For the moment, notice that she's saying it's not even your negative emotions, it's not even desire, anger, and folly that's the problem. It's when you're so self-obsessed that you think they're the most important thing. So we're returning to the point that was made earlier in *The Vimalakirti Sutra*. It's our substituting our desire, anger, and folly for the real world that gets us into trouble. They themselves, if we just let them rise and fall, along with everything else that's rising and falling in the field, don't necessarily have to be a difficulty. It's when we're so self-obsessed that we think they're the most important thing that we get into trouble. That also means we don't have to fix them! We just have to see them in their proper perspective. We don't have to eradicate them, we don't have to transform them, we don't have to scold them, we don't have to feel terribly guilty about them, we don't have to revel in them, we don't have to indulge them, we don't have to have just such a glorious time in our misery, we don't have to be miserable about our misery, we don't have to do *any* of that.

We just have to not be self-obsessed, which is, we just have to not think that they are the most important thing. They're fine! Just not driving the train.

So, then the conversation moves into a very specific real, nitty gritty application of the philosophical concept of nonduality that has to do with gender. She's saying all of these amazing things to Shariputra, and he steps into his role of straight man, again, and asks, "Why don't you transform your female body?" So, in that is a cultural assumption of that time and place, and also I'm sorry to say, of Buddhism at that time and place, which was that the only way you could be enlightened was to be in a male body. If she's so wise and she can perform magic things and do wonderful things, well why doesn't she use that power to get out of her female body and into a male body? And so, interestingly enough, *The Vimalakirti Sutra* takes that head-on, and allows the goddess, in the context of the story, to completely dismantle that kind of view.

The goddess replies, "For the past twelve years I've looked for the characteristic of being female, and have found it to be unattainable. So what is there to change? It's as if a magician conjures up a phantom woman. If someone asks her 'why don't you transform your female body?' would that person's question be reasonable or not?"

Shariputra said, "It would not. Phantoms have no fixed form, so what is there to change?"

And the goddess says, "All things are like this. Nothing has a fixed form. So why do you ask? Why don't you transform your female body?"

In the context of that time and place, the really radical message of Mahayana Buddhism was that there is no place we can locate femaleness or maleness, or race, or ethnicity, or any of the ways we divide people up. There's no way you can find the thing that makes you that, because there's nothing fixed in the world. Everything is rising and falling, and impermanent, and kind of swirling into existence and swirling out again. We may have thought more about this and had different things to say, but in that time and place, to say you have to make a distinction between what we ascribe to femaleness or maleness, and what it actually is, that they're not the same thing. That we have a view, each culture has a story and a view, each time, but that has nothing to do with any kind of fixed essence.

Feeling that she hadn't quite made the deal yet, she used her supernatural powers to change Shariputra into a goddess like herself, and she took on Shariputra's form. She then asked, "Why don't you transform your female body?" And Shariputra, still in the form of a goddess, answered, "I don't know how you transformed me into this female body, so I don't

know how to transform my way out of it.” And she says to him, “Just as Shariputra is not female but is manifesting a female body.” So, again this distinction that there are causes and conditions that we call femaleness or maleness or any of the other divisions we make of people. Although there are causes and conditions that manifest that way, that doesn’t mean that there’s an essence of that thing. Although they manifest female bodies, they are not female; there’s not something essentially specific.

Therefore, the Buddha has explained that all phenomena are neither male nor female, nor anything else. At this point the goddess withdrew her supernatural power and Shariputra returned to his previous form.” And so the goddess asks him, “Where’s the form of your female body now?” Shariputra said, “The form of my female body doesn’t exist, yet doesn’t not exist.”

So, that’s interesting. There’s a little turn there. I get that it’s gone, it’s not here, but, it’s here, also. There’s a way in which it doesn’t *not* exist. So, with that the goddess says, “All things are like that. In not existing, and yet not not existing.” So then we begin to get closer and closer into a more of a maybe a contemporary understanding of questions like gender, which is : it matters and it doesn’t matter, at the same time, and, you know, at different levels. It matters and it doesn’t matter. It doesn’t exist and doesn’t not exist. ‘It doesn’t not exist’ is the part about, yeah, it matters. It makes a difference. It has consequence. In the world of phenomena and materiality, it does matter.

So, where the conversation lands is not that gender isn’t true. It’s just not what you think it is. And that’s probably a pretty good place to land. It’s inviting us to examine whatever our assumptions are about it. And, one way I like to think about the whole interchange is : when we were doing Practices of the Night, when we were doing sleeping and dreaming together a few weekends ago, we talked about how there is a dream body that is constellated when we’re dreaming, and that dream body is capable of a lot of things that are different than what we’re capable of in our ordinary lives, most of the time (sometimes, maybe, we’re capable of those things). You can fly, you can turn blue, you can speak strange languages, animals speak to you, and all of that stuff can happen. But, one of the things that we were working with over the weekend together was that that dream body isn’t a place we go a few hours a night, or it doesn’t just come into existence in the time of dreaming, but that dream body is always there. That’s always part of us, and this is what they’re saying about gender : that it both exists and

doesn't exist at the same time, and that it's like a dream body. We each of us take a dream body with all of the specific characteristics of this life. This is our dream body for this life.

Then, she says, "You know, there are eight rare things that happen here in Vimalakirti's room." Which I take to mean, if you don't identify with your views, if you recognize that duality exists in your mind and not in the world, if you realize that things like gender are concepts that at a certain level have no inherent reality, if you know that your feelings are not the most important thing, then what's the room like? What happens as a result of that? And, I find her description of it quite beautiful, and hope you do, too. So, the eight rare phenomena in this room that comes about as a result of this kind of practice, this kind of bodhisattva vow, is : first, that the room is always illuminated with golden light, and it never changes day or night, and it has nothing to do with the sun and the moon. So, the first thing about this room that gets created when we make the bodhisattva vow, is that it's radiant all the time, and it's not dependent on circumstances and conditions. Things don't have to be good, nice, beautiful, supportive, or any of that for the radiance to be there. It's just there. It's inherent to the air.

Second thing is that the room is always filled with music made by heavenly beings, which expresses the Dharma. And that makes me think of the "Sermon of the Nonsentient," we've talked about in the past, that everything — rocks and grasses and rivers and mountains and the stars and skyscrapers and suspension bridges — is all expressing the Dharma all the time. That that music is always playing, the music of the spheres. And, it also seems to me, when we take together the rain of flowers and the goddess reminding us of the constant radiance of everything, and of the music that's always playing, her role seems to be to remind us of the beauty of the Way. In the midst of all of this philosophy, in the midst of all this hard practice, don't forget the Way is beautiful, and the world is beautiful. In the midst of our coming to terms with suffering, pain, unfairness, and difficulty, it's also true that the world is beautiful. Don't forget that. That's important, and that seems to be her particular voice in the mix.

The third rare thing about Vimalakirti's room is that those who enter the room are "never troubled by defilements." Never troubled by either the stuff in their own heart-minds, or by things coming from the world, which doesn't mean those things don't happen. It means they're not troubled by them. So, again, we'll pick that up in the next section.

The fourth thing is that in this room “all beings come together in a gathering that never ends.” So, no private buddhas here. The nature of this room is it’s the place where all beings come together in a gathering that never ends. And when they do, this is what happens.

Numbers five and six are :

Five : “In this room there’s constant exposition of the Six Paramitas and the Dharma.” Which is to say, there are constant reminders of the foundations of practice, of the stuff we do over and over again, the stuff that we’re always referring to. We’re being reminded, we’re being grounded, all the time in the practice that we know so well has just become like breathing to us.

And, six : “In this room there is constant exposition of new and deeper teachings.” So, there’s the grounding and the reminder of what we know so well, we don’t even have to think about it anymore, and there’s something new always happening, because we gather together, because we don’t think words are bad things, because we speak and listen. Something new is always happening. The Dharma is always growing and changing in relationship to circumstances, and we’re all making it. Everyone in the gathering is making it.

So, the results of that are : seven : “That from this room is access to the Pure Lands.” So, that’s what happens internally. What happens internally is in this room, we can always touch the Pure Land inside ourselves, and we can always see the Pure Land that the world is. If you remember way back to the beginning of these talks, the first thing that happens is the Buddha is saying this world is the Pure Land, and Shariputra says, “I don’t experience this as the Pure Land. I experience this as a really complicated, difficult, painful place.” And the Buddha just wiggles his toes in the earth, and suddenly Shariputra can see that this world, in all its difficulty, pain, and beauty is the Pure Land. And the Buddha says, “It’s not the world that changed. It’s your perception.” So, same point over, and over, and over again.

So, from this room that we make together in our endless gathering, the Pure Lands are accessible all the time for each of us. And, for everyone, number eight : there are inexhaustible storehouses for the benefit of all. So, one of the results of this is something is just endlessly generated for the benefit of others. There’s more than enough to go around.

Then, as the conversation between the goddess and Shariputra is coming to a close, there’s something that goes by very quickly, but it lit up for me. It seemed so beautiful. Shariputra asks her, “How long will it be until you attain *annutara samyak sambodhi*?” Which is perfect,

complete enlightenment. How long will it be until you get it? And the goddess says, “I’ll never attain annutara samyak sambodhi.” Why? Bodhi is without any fixed location and therefore cannot be attained. Well, if bodhi is without any fixed location, that means, it’s everywhere. And, that’s really important. So, let me finish what she has to say and speak to that.

And Shariputra said,

The buddhas who are now attaining annutara samyak sambodhi, those who have attained it in the past, and those who will attain it in the future, are as numerous as the sands of the Ganges River. What about all of them? Are you telling me that they are not attaining anything?

And she says,

It’s only with conventional words and numbers that we talk about past, present, and future. It’s not that there is past, present, and future in bodhi (in awakening).

So, there’s no fixed location and there’s no time. There’s no past, present, or future. So, it’s always here and that’s not a cliché. It’s here. It’s next to you. It’s inside you. It’s all around you. It’s in everybody else. It’s already here because it’s everywhere, and if it has no time, you can’t have blown it. You can’t have missed your chance, because there’s no past, present, or future. And, it’s not something that will happen in the future if I do x, y, and z. It can happen right here, right now. It is already happening right here and right now. So, it’s not a matter of working to make it happen, or worrying that it happened before, and I’ve lost it. It’s a matter of just seeing that it’s right here and it’s right now — every moment, moment after moment.

One of the nice, small corollaries of it is, as you awaken, you lose any sense of any regret for all that time you wasted, because there’s no such thing as wasted time. As awakening opens, as it comes in, it runs through the present, into the past, and into the future. Nothing lost, nothing to regret, nothing wasted. It’s all illuminated, all of it. No before. No after. No before. No after.

Okay. So, I said I was going to come back to a couple of things we talked about, and now we’re getting into something quite juicy. As opposed to what we’ve been doing! Right! Thank you. [Laughter]

So, now the dialog turns back to Vimalakirti and Manjushri. The conversation between them is now picking back up, and it picks up some of the points that the goddess has just made with Shariputra. And the gist of what I’m about to say is that Vimalakirti asserts to

Manjushri that only someone immersed in the world can attain annutara samyak sambodhi. Only someone versed in the world can have a complete awakening or enlightenment experience. A private buddha who has separated themselves out from the world cannot. That's an amazing thing to say : *can not*, has lost the connection.

I'll go through it and see if it starts to make sense.

Vimalakirti says, "Manjushri, by going to places that are the opposite of the way..." what we think of as the Way, of our ideal of the Way, by going to the places that are the opposite of all the nice, good, sincere, important, pure stuff, it's by doing that "...the bodhisattva is able to walk the Way." By going to places that are the opposite of the Way, the bodhisattva is able to walk the Way. And so, he asks Manjushri, "What may act as the seeds of the *tathagata*?" What may act as the seeds of this growing awakening inside of us? And Manjushri gives this great list. He says, "The seeds of the *tathagata*? The possession of a body constitutes this seed." That's the basic condition : you have to be embodied. "Ignorance and partiality" —partiality in the sense of choosing somethings over, liking some things better —

Ignorance and partiality constitute the seed. Lust, anger, and stupidity, the Four Confusions, the Five Hindrances, the Six Senses, the Seven Abodes of Consciousness, the Eight Heterodox Teachings, the Nine Sources of Anxiety, the 10 Evil Actions all constitute this seed.

That's kind of a startling assertion. So, Manjushri goes on, and he says, "It is only within the mud of the afflictions that sentient beings give rise to the Dharma." And he uses a couple of images for that. One of them is quite famous :

The lotus doesn't grow on the dry, upland plain; it grows in the muck and mire of a low-lying marsh.

And he also says, I love this : "If you plant seeds in the sky, they will never grow." Isn't that great? So, that's the problem with the private buddha. The private buddha is living in the sky, and you can't plant seeds there. It won't grow.

Only when you plant them in well-manured soil can they sprout and flourish. If you do not descend into the vast ocean, you can never acquire a priceless pearl.

So, Vimalakirti picks up this theme and starts to explain how could this be so? And he says,

The private buddhas, who have cut off all entanglements, are like people whose faculties are impaired.

If you cut off your entanglements with the world, if you cut off the ways in which you're enmeshed and part of the causes and conditions of the world, it's like you've impaired your faculties.

They can no longer benefit from the Dharma, nor will they ever have the desire to.

Okay, so what's that? Now we move from what the sutra actually says to what I'm saying. I just want to make that clear, because it doesn't say any more than that. So the rest is my attempt to try to amplify that : You can't benefit from the Dharma, nor will you ever desire to. I think that what Vimalakirti is saying is that if you try to separate yourself from the world, keep yourself pure, keep yourself unentangled, remain deep in a sort of unmoving samadhi, then your aspiration and your yearning can't be aroused. In that place, there is no aspiration, there is no yearning. It's unchanging and unmoving. So, you don't have bodhicitta. You don't have the bodhisattva vow to awaken, so that you can support all beings in their awakening. You lose that, and that's important. It means that your heart isn't a part of it anymore, the heart that feels, the heart that aspires, the heart that yearns isn't part of the mix anymore. You're in the sky. I think that's the first thing : that's what he means by they won't even have the desire for annutara samyak sambodhi anymore.

And, then, the second thing that I believe this means is that we can't awaken unless we're willing to come to terms with the caught or bound state that we feel being alive. We can't skip over that. We can't escape that. We have to come to terms with that in order to awaken. And what I mean by that is not endlessly indulging in misery, but noticing that in our relationships with our caught or bound places, usually we're not in a direct experience with them. Usually, we're in a second-order of experience. We're in our ideas about being caught or bound. We're in our ideas about the difficulty. So, we have to step back and come into direct relationship with the fact that there is that state of being bound.

If we, when we're doing that, haven't realized what the goddess was saying earlier — that we have views about everything — we'll think that the views are the way the world really is. And if you are stuck in a room with your particular forms of suffering, if you don't recognize that there's a difference between you and your views, if you think your views are you, there is no way out of that locked room.

It's interesting that in this sutra which is all about nonduality, it's also saying there can be a false union, there can be a false oneness. And when we identify with our views, that's a false oneness. That's an incorrect identification that's going to get us into trouble. And this is parallel to something we were talking about earlier in the series, when we identify with the conditions of our lives. If because I have had *x* experience I am *y* — I am the product of my experience, I am the product of my childhood, I am the product of what's happened to me — if we identify with our life experience in that way, if we identify with our views, those are both false oneness-es which will get us into trouble, because the only way out of the locked room is to first disidentify, to first see that our views are not us, and they are not reality.

And when we can put that little bit of space in there and say *It's a view*, the world opens up. Everything becomes possible because the false unity has been broken, and we can see that a view rises and falls. A view might change. We can explore a view. We don't have to accept it as inevitable. We can look at it as provisional, and that shift from *my view is inevitable* to *my view is provisional* is the difference between being stuck in the room and not being stuck in the room.

In this encounter with the places where we are caught and bound that is essential to awakening, this is where the heart comes in, and this where you get into trouble if you've dropped the heart, if you've let the heart go. First of all, in the form of compassion for yourself, *Oh, here's my caught, bound, stuck, locked room place, again*. Okay, so I can jump into the second order of experience and chastise myself, or feel sorry for myself, or do any of that, or I can just *Okay. Here it is. Here I am again; my heart is open even to this. My heart is open, even to this*. And, immediately, to realize that the way to go is not to get smaller and focus on *Woe is me. Here I am, again. This hurts. I hate this. I can't bear this*, but to allow this to open our hearts still further, to remind us that this is the way the world is. Not just us, we are not in our own private hell. The world is tough. The world is also beautiful. But it's tough and we make a connection between what's happening inside of us and what's happening in the rest of the world, and this is a step away from self-obsession. This is a step toward remembering that we take place in the world, and the world takes place in us.

Then, as we get that spaciousness and we remember *Right, yup, this is how the world breathes, this is how the world rolls*, we might even be able to begin to experience what's happening to us not as our private pain — in the way that a private buddha experiences their enlightenment,

as a private experience — it's the same, damn thing. It's the other side of that coin, it's just mine! Whether it's enlightenment or pain, it's the same delusion. Just depends on how you felt when you woke up that morning which way you're gonna run with that. You know?

But, if we can not do that, if we can remember that this is the rising and falling of the world, then maybe we can even begin to see that the pain that we're experiencing, the suffering that we're feeling, is a little shard of the world's suffering that's been given into our care. And, if we can heal it, if we can change it in some way, then we're doing that for the world, not just for ourselves. Imagine being in Vimalakirti's ten by ten foot room in the endless gathering if everybody were doing that, if everybody were seeing their work as taking care of some small shard of the world that has been given into their care, and we all knew that everybody else was doing the same thing, that's what we were doing together — that's what it means to be in Vimalakirti's room.

When we encounter suffering in this way, we have to be willing to be devastated. We can't try to avoid it. We have to be willing, if that's what's in the cards, if that's what's happening, to be devastated. I'm thinking about a koan that some of us were talking about yesterday, that has two stories right next to each other : one in which someone is kind of psychologically devastated, and the next one in which someone has a serious physical trauma, and the thing that links the two stories is that even in those two moments — one of psychological devastation and one of physical trauma — when a call was made, when the world called, both people responded. Both people didn't turn away.

So, this is where the transformation of suffering can happen. When we make a bridge between the suffering we're experiencing and the awakening we hope for, and we make that bridge by being willing to turn back and say *yes* instead of just fleeing. And one of the ways we do that is when we feel that our pain, our devastation, our trauma isn't the most important thing, but our bodhicitta, our yearning for enlightenment, for the benefit of all, is the most important thing. When we put that at the center, that helps us make that bridge, where we can stay with what's happening, not try to escape it, go all the way through, and find that bridge of saying *Yes. Yes. This, too.*

If awakening has no space, no location, and no time, even in such a moment, it's right there. And if we can stay there, if we can stay there with the faith that it's there, too, something amazing might happen.

Okay. I'll stop there and welcome just a few comments or questions.

Q1 : Joan, who was this dame?

JIS : The dame?

Q1 : I mean, seriously, these sutras were written by men?

JIS : This one was, yeah.

Q1 : How does this postmodern woman..

JIS : wander into this sutra? Well, you know, give the tradition more credit than people have given it. It's there.

Q1 : And it doesn't say which goddess, it just says "the" goddess.

JIS : "The goddess," yeah, which catches your attention, because everybody has a name. But she doesn't.

Q2 : Duality and yin and yang? From what you said, it seems like the balance of those things? Is that kind of what you were saying?

JIS : I would say more that the viewpoint of the sutra would be, if you have yin and yang, if you have A and B, what you are looking for is the C that includes both of them. Is that responding to your question?

Q3 : Doesn't the term 'yin and yang' come from the shady side of the mountain and the sun setting on it, so it was yin in the morning and yang at another time, not exactly fixed opposites.

JIS: Yeah.

Q1: It's almost as if there's a relationship between the goddess and Vimalakirti.

JS: Very much so.

Q1: It's an equal relationship.

JIS : Yeah. It's funny, I have this sense of this great friendliness between, this companionship between them? A sort of, like *Wow. We get to do this together.*

Q1 : Yeah.

JIS : And it's interesting to me that she says, "I've lived here for twelve years." It's specific; it's not just like *For these twelve years I have been living in this room and this is what's been going on.*

Q2 : Does this goddess appear in other places, in other sutras? Or is she like a one-shot goddess?

JIS : We don't know because she doesn't have a name, so we don't know if the name repeats, but she seems this kind of really herself, although figures like that — like there's a Naga Princess, a dragon princess who appears in another place. So, there are other figures who are similar, but I don't know if it's her.

Q1 : Well, just that she reminds me of those nuns.

JIS : Which nuns?

Q1 : You know, those ones that kick ass.

JIS : Oh, you mean, like True World? Yeah.

Okay, thank you very much.