

Tantrik Traditions in Tibet



Prof. S.K. Ramchandra Rao

The Tantrik traditional lore in Tibet incorporates the most essential details of Indian Tantra and the flowerings of the Tibetan genius. It consists of diverse strands, neatly synthesized in doctrine as well as practice. The present book seeks to trace the story of this synthesis.

The book contains two parts. Part One is on Tantrik Foundations which includes chapters on Bon and Buddhism ; The Indian Background ; The Tibetan Genius ; Definitive Tantrik Texts ; and Path of Enlightenment . Part Two deals with Tantra in Practice .The chapters included in this part are The Tibetan Outlook ; Guru-Yoga ; Tantra-Yoga ; Dhyana ; Darsana ; and Torch Bearers of Tradition. A glossary and two appendices have been included in the book.

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Prof. S.K. Ramchandra Rao

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Dedicated to my Teachers:

Venerable Nārada Mahathera of Vajirārama,
Colombo, Sri Lanka, who introduced me
to the method of Mindfulness,
Venerable Souitu Nakagawa of Toganji Temple,
Japan, who initiated me into Zazen practice,
and
Venerable Jamphel Shen-phen of Rgyud-med
Monastery, Gurupura (Karanataka), India,
who explained to me the importance
of Nāgārjuna in Vajrayāna.



BUDDHA—SAKYAMUNI
(from a Xylograph)

AUTHOR'S NOTE

The Tantrik traditional lore in Tibet incorporates the most essential details of Indian Tantra and the flowerings of the Tibetan genius. It consists of diverse strands, neatly synthesized in doctrine as well as practice. The present book seeks to trace the story of this synthesis. It is not intended to be an objective assessment, but a personal assimilation of the Tibetan teachings in my own spiritual endeavour, alongside the Vedic and Tantrik background.

I have been helped in this work by a large number of writings, in English, Hindi, Sanskrit and Tibetan. Even here, the benefit that I have derived has been synthetic and syncretistic. I owe a deep debt of gratitude to all the authors who have communicated to me the spirit of the Tibetan teachings. Likewise, for illustrating the book, I have drawn from different sources, collected over several years. I am grateful to all those who have provided this rich material, exceedingly interesting and valuable. For the illustration of Tibetan deities and saints, the most important source is the volume on Buddhist Iconography, Satta-pitaka series (Vol. 342), Bhadrakalpika Sūtra Pantheon (vol. II) by Lokesh Chandra, published by Aditya Prakashan, New Delhi (1987). I have spent hours, days, months and years contemplating on the excellent reproductions in this volume, contemplating on the spiritual and cultural values of these illustrations. This is an unrivalled treasure of visualization. Words fail to record my indebtedness to this publication.

I have prepared this volume, not so much to communicate the sublime teachings to others as to crystallize in my own mind and heart the contribution of the Tibetan Saints to the spiritual content of the Tantra. I thank my friends Shri Naresh

**Gupta and Shri Sunil Gupta of the Indian Books Centre, Delhi,
for having persuaded me to prepare this volume for publication.**

**Bangalore
December, 2001**

S.K. RAMACHANDRA RAO

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PART ONE
TĀNTRIK
FOUNDATIONS

CHAPTER ONE

Bon And Buddhism



The Bon Background

The religion that prevails in Tibet (and Tibet in fact is wherever Tibetans are) is usually described as Buddhism, or more specifically as Tantrik Buddhism. But the Tibetans themselves call their religion merely *Chos* (religion, *dharma*), even as the Hindus call theirs. There is no doubt that Buddhist

influence in Tibetan religion is both unmistakable and predominant, but it would not be correct to describe this religion simply as Buddhism. The Buddhist influence that came to colour this religion so deeply and so significantly was by no means native to the soil; it was neither a natural growth there, nor an indigenous development. In fact, Buddhism that entered Tibet had to undergo a total and spectacular transformation before it came to be accepted there, as also in the neighbouring Mangolia. We shall see, however, the seeds of this transformation were sown in India itself; and that the transformation was guided largely by Indians.

The religion that prevailed unchallenged in Tibet before the advent of Buddhist influence is known as 'Bon' (pronounced *pean*); this primitive religion persisted in its appeal and influence even when the sort of Buddhism that we find there became firmly established. There has been a suggestion, not however confirmed, that 'Bon' ('murmuring spells') and 'Bot' (Tibet, *Bod*, *Bhoṭa*) are words derived from a common source. The name "Tibet" is for a Tibetan "Bod" (pronounced *peu*) with the prefix 'STod' (pronounced *teu*), signifying "upper part of the land snows" comprising the provinces of U and Tsang. *Teu-Peu(d)*, which, thus, originally stood for what is known as Central Tibet, was transformed by the Europeans in Darjeeling into *Tibet*. The Sanskrit equivalent of *Bod* is *Bhoṭa*, the name by which Tibet was always known in India. Whatever the correspondence between *Bod* and *Bon*, *Bon* was not only native to the soil but natural to the people. It is small wonder that this religion prevailed in one form or another all through Tibetan history.

The Buddhist impact was felt only in Central Tibet; the rest of the country, especially the eastern region, continued to be the stronghold of Bon, the character of Tibetans and the course of their history. But it is not sufficiently recognised that the Buddhist ideas that were introduced into Tibet themselves succumbed to the Bon influence. Bon was never really shaken off, despite repeated and zealous attempts by kings and priests, and the adverse confrontation between the adherents

of the new religion (*Chos-Pai*) and those of the old order to survive. Buddhism came to be specified as *Saṅgs rGyas kyi 'CHos* ("The Buddha's Dharma") or in an ethnocentric connotation "*Naṅg-pai Chos*" ("The Within-Dharma" or the religion of the insiders).

It is not easy to get an accurate idea of the Bon religion that prevailed in Tibet before Indian influence made an inroad into its fortress. The survival (—mainly in Poyul and all along the high road between Nagehu and Jyerkundo, as travellers have recorded—) was camouflaged and whatever scriptures they had became 'buried treasures' (*gTer-Ma*), under successive but unsuccessful persecutions. But we may imagine how this religion must have been. No one today seriously disputes that religious beliefs of a country are to an extent conditioned by the overwhelming geographical features. Located in the dizzy Himalayan heights, oppressed by the unpredictable eccentricities of weather, battered almost continuously by relentless storms, Tibet offered to her people little by way of normal security or assured sustenance.

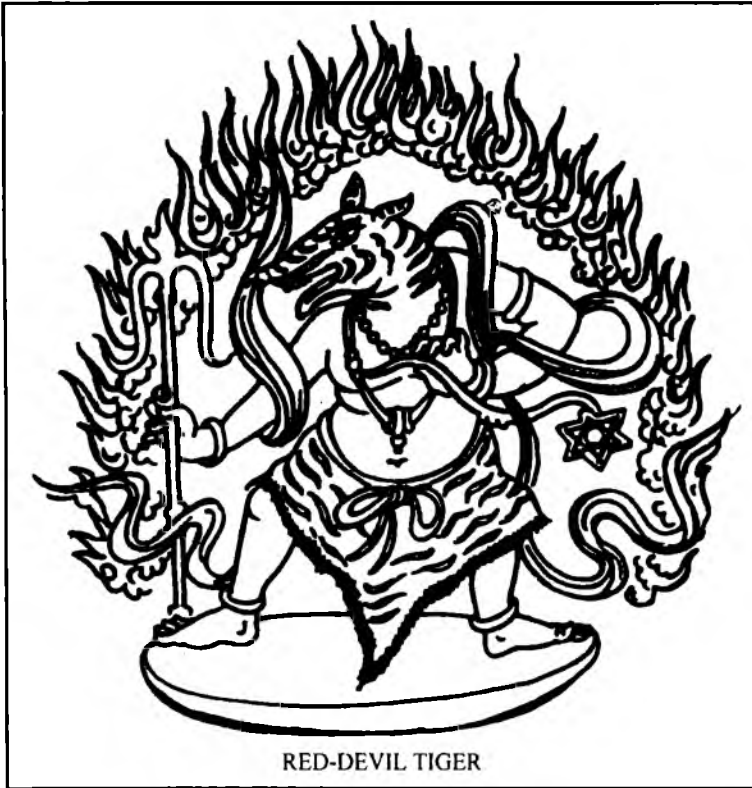
Conditions of life were so exacting and so impossible to contend against, that man there very naturally came to regard the world as peopled by capricious and hostile spirits. He could lay store not on the visible and normally manageable factors but on the unseen forces, controlled only by occult devices. Severely isolated from the rest of mankind, both by physical barriers and by their own intention, the early Tibetans, sprinkled rather sparsely over an expansive plateau, had to contend against both real and conjured terrors, all by themselves. It is understandable that they therefore developed a religion that emphasised the occult. Religion everywhere may be said to have evolved from the same source; but, in Tibet, the challenge of an uncertain and apparently malignant environment produced shamanism of an extreme variety, and secured its survival right up to the twentieth century.

The word *Bon*, which is said to be the short form of *gYung-Drung gi-Bon* means "to mutter magical spells", "to mumble secret formulae". Conningham and Rockhill may be correct

in deriving this word from the Indian *punya* in its extended sense of merit or power acquired by magical incantation. It may be noted that *punya* is another name for the mystical diagram *svastika* (gYung-Drung), which was also one of the titles of the 'founder' of Bon. Mystical utterances no doubt constituted an essential aspect of Bon, as also of the later religion. One of the titles for their wizard-sorcerer was "ah' Mes" ("Hail, ancient!"), which became in the lingo, 'Amnye.' 'Ah' is a mystical ejaculation, well-known in the Indian Tantrik tradition; it also occurs as the first part of the well-known *Aum*. The 'ancient' signifies an undying essence, even as our expression *purāṇam* does.

It was no accident that in Bon the mountain-god was also called 'Ah-Mes'. The mysterious and mystifying, snow-capped and difficult mountains, unconquered in their uncanny grandeur, were powerful presences for the Tibetans, which offered no comfort whatsoever and from which they could not escape. They were sinister, malignant and could be disastrous unless properly propitiated. The legend of the 'flying mountains' whose wings were clipped by the wizard-sorcerer (like Indra) was not peculiar to India; Bon had it. Mountains may inspire rapture in a poet, but they instil fear in the mind of the unsophisticated; his urgent need was somehow to subdue them or at least placate them. The shaman-sorcerer was the person who claimed to do this, and his weapons consisted of incantations and spells which were deemed as invincible as the diamond. The mystic mumblings would make him indefatigable, and potent enough to conquer and subdue the otherwise hostile environment.

The Bon religion is frequently described as a bundle of shamanistic beliefs, fetishism and demonolatry. The Bon priest was a sorcerer and necromancer who sang mysterious litanies. He performed weird dances and wildly attacked the unseen demons all round him. The Bon mind perceived spirits all over the place, especially in lakes and mountains, on rocks and in caves, hidden beneath the earth and hovering in the sky. There were many classes of these spirits: the *Jidg* who guarded the



cantons, the *Tsan* who lived in the under-world and vengefully attacked those who dared to dig the earth. They were all mostly malevolent; and they answer to the description of demons (*hDresh*). But there were also spirits who could be humoured and won over; they could be benevolent and protective: they were designated as 'gods' (*IHa*).

There was naturally a continuous confrontation between the two groups; and man had wisely to steer clear of the contending forces. He could save himself by coercing the 'gods' and propitiating the 'demons'. While tracking through a mountain pass, the nomad that he was, he had religiously to erect heaps of pebbles and piously walk round them, thus honouring the local spirit. While camping, he would even offer animals (mostly cocks) in sacrifice. His gods and demons



were of course a legion, but the important ones were 'the white god of the sky', 'the black goddess of the earth', 'the red tiger', and 'the furious dragon'. S.C.Das, the famous Indian pioneer of Tibetan studies, noticed that in the Bon pantheon the female divinities outnumbered the male. The cult of mother-goddesses was not an unnatural product in the primitively matriarchal society of early Tibet. Some of these persisted in the later *Bon CHos* also, like dPal-lDan-lHa-Mo (the Tibetan version of our Kali), aGrol-Ma (Tārā), and the mKHaa-aGro-Ma (ḍākinīS).

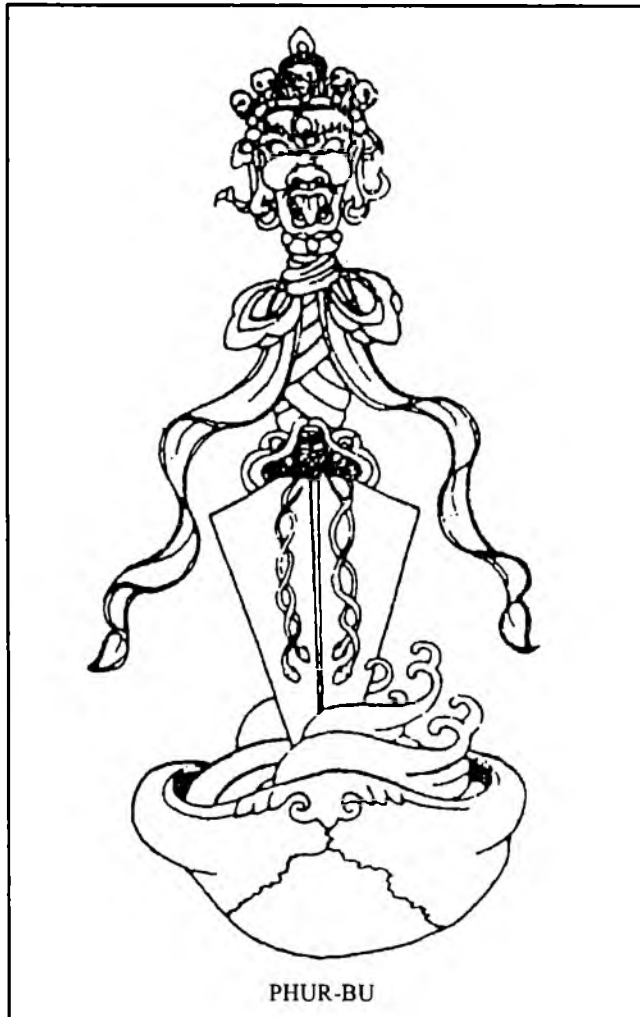
Among the numerous specific divinities, of great interest is the 'blue sky god' (*gNam*), described as "everlasting sky" (*gNam-Rtag-pa*). It appears that in the imagination of these people the blue sky was the persistent presence, and it was in the sky their heaven (which every one of them aspired to reach) was located. The sky was regarded as the mother, the womb, the source and the final place of rest. Of the many modes of disposal of the dead body in Tibet, the most meritorious was the 'sky burial', which was a sort of return of the dead one to the sky.

The belief in a supreme high god, transcending all other spirits identified with the Blue sky, was also associated with the acceptance of a vast pantheon of spirits, both good and evil, tranquil and violent, contending against each other.

In the Bon ideology, the highest divinity is the Sky-guide, *Gyer-sPungs*, later identified with the naked Yogi-god of the Mahāyāna Buddhists, Samanta-bhadra (*Kun-tu-bZang*). This latter divinity figures prominently in the *rNying-Ma* sect of Tibetan Buddhism, whose association with Bon is unmistakable. The Magic-dart (*PHur-Ba*), so commonly used in Tibet and accepted by all sects, was deified as *PHur pai lHa*. The Indian



SAMANTABHADRA, KUN-TU-BRZÑ-PO



origin of this deity is suggested by the representation of this god with a winged body and by its frequent description as Khung or Garuḍa (*mKHor-IDing*), god of wealth (Jambhala), and the destroyer rNam-par 'joms-pa (Jambhala). The spirits were to be propitiated by bloody sacrifices of animals and tormas-offerings especially to the Tiger-god or *Stag lHa*, use of magical rituals and sacred dance. Maṇḍalas were used invariably.

The Bon folk spoke of a Bon-heaven (*Bon-Nyid*) which they adored and aspired to reach after death. But they did not attach importance to virtue or merit, penance or piety, in order to reach heaven. Nor did they strive to secure the grace of the gods in their desire to be admitted into heaven. In fact, the gods of the heaven (*IHa*) were not to be feared as those of the earth (*Sa-bDag*), who could easily be roused to fury. The simple-minded folk therefore chose their personal or tutelary gods from among the latter group. The heaven was reached by a simple device: by 'seizing the rope of the sky' which the shaman could throw across.

Reaching the heaven meant in effect obtaining a wholesome body and living on happily there ever after. They were preoccupied with heaven all their life, and were eager to find a sudden passage to that happy realm.

Bon worship was a complicated affair. One of their deities was the monstrous ten-headed and twenty-armed Don-can (*Gaṇa-chakra*), which name indicates a circle of offering. The worship involved not only the 'muttering of spells' but rituals, dances and sacrifices. And, naturally, the worship necessitated the services of priests. The Bon priest was not required to be a celibate; often, however, he was a hermit, wearing his matted hair coiled on his head and living in solitude in the fastness of a jungle, or on top of a mountain-peak. While officiating in a ritual, he wore a long black-coloured mitre, decorated with feathers of a peacock or a cock; he also wore a sort of diadem of human skulls, surmounted by a pair of crossed 'thunderbolts' (*viśvavajra*). He held in his hand a small drum fashioned out of two human skulls, which was an indispensable and awe-inspiring ritualistic implement.

He was a magician, necromancer, shaman and sorcerer rolled into one. He could be 'possessed' by the gods, and thus manifest their divinity. He could employ effective magic in a variety of ways to help man against the pranks of goblins and to secure the attention of benevolent gods. There was also a certain specialization in what the shaman-priests did or could do. Some were wizards, adept in manifesting magic. For

instance, they could weave ropes between earth and heaven. Others divined the future, read the signs and made predictions; they also healed the sick and controlled the elemental fury of weather. Some others took charge of the dead, and guided the ghosts to safety. There were also shamans whose function was only to chant the spells and intone the litany. Magic was an absorbing interest in that country, where normal vocations of farming and hunting were largely ruled out; and priests were naturally all—important.

The Bon priests claimed descent from the blue-robed founder, *sShen-Rabs*, the first part of whose name suggested his shamanistic role. He is described as 'first historical person, sure of his magic', and he it was that constituted 'the body of Bon'. He was also a ruler, the archetype of the 'shaman-

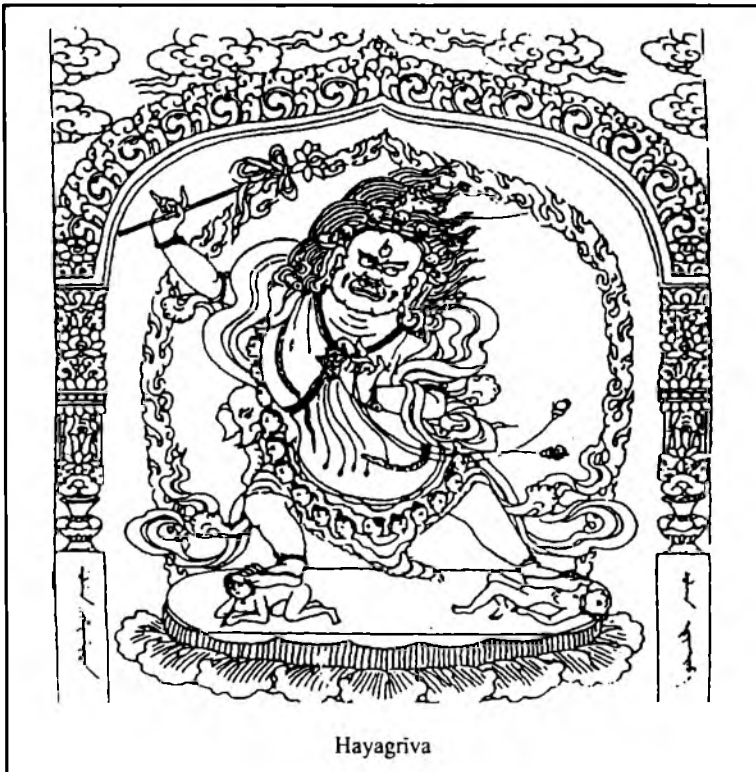


gShen - Rab
(Bon-po Teacher)

king', thus predisposing Tibet to theocracy. He is looked upon as one of the emanations of the Sky-guide, *Gyer-sPungs*, who, as noted earlier, is identical with Samanta-bhadra; and *gHen-Rabs* is spoken of by Bon folk a 'Ston-Pa' (teacher) and regarded as the same as Śākyamuni. The exploits of this priestly progenitor is the subject-matter of Bon songs, one of which says

'He pronounced the nine-vehicle doctrine
To open the heavenly gate for those that live,
To pull down the gate of destruction for the dead,
And to lead life to the *Svastika-path*'.

The Bon priests employed the svastika-sign (*gYung-Drung*) as a magic tool of great power; the expression also occurs as



a title in the founder's name. *Svastika*, the origin of which is obscure, is called a Gammadion cross, and is associated with the movement of heavenly bodies around the Great Bear. It is said to represent the solar wheel and is found used in Sun worship all over the world. It is also linked with the production of fire from the crossed *arāṇi-sticks*, as was done in India. We find the *Svastika* sign clearly engraved in a seal found in the Indus Valley. It was probably an early prototype of the adamantine weapon (*rDo-rJe*). This *rDo-rJe* (literally "precious stone", usually translated as "thunderbolt" or "diamond") is now typically Tibetan.

The *Vajra* weapon of the Indian god-king Indra may have contributed to the crystallization of the Tibetan symbolism. More interestingly, its Tāntrik association is revealed by the amalgamation of the horse-headed divinity Haya-grīva (*rTa-mGrin*, pronounced *Tamdin*), a terrible deity whose consort *Vajra-Vārāhi* (*rDo-rJe-Phag-Mo*) is carrying this magical weapon. The well-known legend that the *rDo-rJe* in this aspect, called 'rTa-mGrin-Phur-bu', belonging to an Indian, Grub-Thob mDah-Phar(?), who flew from India to the hill in Se-Ra suggests the Indian origin of this wide-spread Tibetan religious tool. This Indian *rDor-je* was housed in the Se-ra monastery near LHa-Sa, and was its proud possession. All *rDo-rjes* in Tibet are said to be modelled after this Indian prototype. The Bon *svastika*, however, is turned right to left; it is called 'left-handed', in contradistinction with the normal (Buddhist) *svastika* which is 'right-handed'. This detail is explained as an instance of the Bon habit of reversal (like their circumambulating left-ward, turning the prayer wheel left-ward and muttering the magical spell 'Maṇi padme hūm 'backwards as 's'Muh-em-pad-ni-mo').

The Bon priests did not encourage priestly organization of any sort. Although at a later period, some Bon monasteries did spring up (as the one in the north-eastern Tibet, Zogchen-gompa), these institutions were not in the true Bon spirit. They mixed with the lay-folk on an equal footing, and except on ceremonial occasions, they were indistinguishable, either in

dress or in behaviour, from the laity. The Buddhist monastic organization, on the other hand, not only emphasised the difference between the priests or *lamas* and laity, but encouraged the *Lama* prejudice that laymen were actually inferior (*minag*, 'black men').

Sacrifices formed an important part of the Bon ritual; animals and birds were killed in honour of gods and goblins. The offering-formula, probably taken from Bon and stylized in later Vajrayāna, reflects the Bon spirit: "All spirits, demons, goblins, ghosts, wicked spirits, spirits of insanity and epilepsy, male and female guardian angels, and others, receive this offering; protect the convention; and award the attainment of benefits emanating from this convention" (*sarva-yaksha-rākshasa-bhūta-preta-piśacho nmādāpasmāra-dāka-dākinyādayah imam balim grhṇantu, samayam rakshantu, samayasiddhim prayacchantu*). And the sacrifices were accompanied with a warning for the folk: "In case you break the convention, you will be cut and thrown up like these animals! Be ye, therefore, united in your thoughts and be loyal to the gods both of heaven and of earth, for they can see your thoughts clearly enough!" In the later *CHos*, the offering of *gTor-Ma* (*bali*, literally "torn-up") continued to be an important element. Effigies were made of dough and butter in various shapes (sometimes in animal shapes), placed on the altar, then broken up ceremonially, and burned or thrown up in air. It is an important requirement for a lama to know how to prepare and offer *gTor-Ma*. The background was undoubtedly in the Bon.

The offering of these sacrifices was accompanied by ritual dances and dramatic representations, which continued even in *CHos*. The special dance sequences known as *aCHam*, where trained and inspired actors impersonate gods and goblins wearing appropriate masks, and mimic mystery actions are essentially frameworks for offering *gTor-Ma*. It is not without some justification that these dances are described by Western scholars as 'devil dances', for the chief purposes of these performances, even when conducted in sophisticated and

urbane monasteries, are to exorcise evil spirits and secure blessings. Allegorically represented, bad luck is driven out and good luck ushered in. Drama is here a part of ritual. Popular all over the Lamaist Himalayas, *aCHam* (or *Maṇi-Rimḍu* as it is styled in Khumbu in Nepal) is essentially a Bon heritage.

Luther G. Jerstad who has made an excellent study of *Maṇi-Rimḍu*, has pointed out clearly the Bon influence in the present-day Buddhist shows in Nepal. Derived from the Tibetan *aCHam*, this dance-drama commences with the 'life-consecration rite', when life-spirit in the form of a consecrated liquid (*tSHe-CHang*) and magical life-giving pills (*tSHe-riḷ*) are distributed to those present. "The ceremony deals with a detachable life and the nourishment of this supernatural life (*bLa-Tshe*)" (p.103).

The expression *bLa* stands for 'soul', associated not only with human beings but with some mountains also, a typical Bon belief. In the Khumbu region, the 19,000 foot high peak Khumbila is supposed to possess a *bLa*, which, when destroyed,



would bring about the destruction of the entire population all round it. It is to guard against such calamity that ritual dances are performed by lamas in the monastery precincts. In the Bon background, such rituals and dramas invariably involved animals, and sometimes human sacrifices; the offering of blood and flesh was, however, not merely symbolic. But now, the offering of *gTor-Ma* has assumed the form of effigy cones made of dough and butter; but these cones are coloured red to symbolise blood.

Three stages in the growth of this religion have been distinguished by Tibbetan authorities. The first stage, described as the 'wild' (*rDolBon*) emphasised magic and sorcery in order to subdue or appease the fierce and wicked spirits that hovered around us all the time. The second stage, known as 'corrupted' or 'erroneous' (*Khyar-Bon*), was preoccupied with the miraculous and valorous deeds of the wizard-shamans who came to Tibet from outside (principally from Kashmir).

When the Tibetan monarch Gri-Gum-bTsan was murdered, the scared local priests, ignorant of how to handle the violently dispatched spirit, invited three foreign magicians (from Kashmir, Dusha and Shang-shung) to help them. Shang-shung is to the west of Tibet, on the Sutlej river, about 45 miles west of Mount Kailas. Indian texts reached central Tibet through this place which formed part of Guge, in the upper Sutlej valley. One of the magicians who hailed from this place could fly in the sky riding a toumbourine, discover mines by propitiating the divine Eagle (*garuḍa*), and cut iron with a feather. The other could divine future events, and tell fortune by using coloured strings. The third was an adept in fortune telling by using coloured strings. The third was an adept at performing funeral ceremonies for those whose death was violent. These priests were probably Indian Tāntriks and Siddhas. A Tibetan authority³ indicates the influence of Śaivites and Tīrthikas (heretical ascetics) in this stage of Bon development.

The third stage was termed 'reformed' or 'turned' (*bsGyur-Bon*), in the sense that Buddhist ideas were assimilated (for we must remember that the authority responsible for this



classification was a Buddhist). The Bon ideas and practices underwent a thorough wash-down so that they were in conformity with the new tide of religious outlook that was surging and had become more or less acceptable to the more powerful group, viz., the Buddhists. The votaries of Bon now sought to become "Within-ones" (*Nang-Ba*) so that their peaceful coexistence with the *CHos* folk was assured. David Snellgrove, in fact, considers Bon as a special sect of Tibetan Buddhism, albeit a very odd one. The Bon *sūtra*, which A. Schieffer rendered into German, belongs to this phase; it speaks of the five perfections that help cross over transmigration. Shen-rab, the founder of Bon religion who hailed from the Shang-shung region mentioned above was identified with Śākyamuni-Buddha; and the sky god Dran-pa-nam-kha become Samanta-bhadra. This stage continued right upto our own days, when it was reliably estimated that at least two thirds

of the Tibetan population subscribed openly to Bon, despite the religious and political ascendance of CHos for over six hundred years.

The above classification into three stages, made by an eighteenth century Buddhist historian, presumes that Bon was an inferior religion and that it improved its credentials to the extent that it succumbed to Buddhist influence. Unfortunately, we do not have a Bon historian giving his point of view. Nevertheless, one can hardly fail to notice that Buddhism became acceptable to the Tibetans only when it retained and adopted Bon ideas and its practices to a large extent. This is why Tibetan Buddhism is so obviously and enormously different from Buddhism elsewhere.

Interesting in the Bon context is the epic of king Gesar of Ling (gLing, North-eastern Tibet), the heroic saga of Tibet and Mongolia (edited by George N. Roerich), current among the Black-Tents tribes (sBra-nag) of the Kuku-nor region, mGo-Log and eastern Hor-pa tribes. The tribes worship Gesar as a protecting deity (Amnye). The epic contains folklore, fairy tales, shamanistic beliefs. It divides the world into the heavens ruled by Indra (sTeng-lHa), the world of humans (Mi-yul) and the underworld (yog-klu). The atmosphere of the epic is characteristically Bon; the itinerant rhapsodists who recite this epic wear the typical costume of the Bon exorcists, white hat adorned with the sun and the moon, and white coat (chu-sa); the hat having three triangular sides with red border. The rhapsodists in the Amdo region are avowedly Bon in their faith. And the rNing-ma-pa have adapted this epic in their own rituals in the Kham district.

However, the Buddhist elements did enter into the epic. Indra (brGya-Byin) was replaced by Padma-sambhava. Gesar in the Amdo version of the epic was the son of Indra. He was the envoy of Padma-sambhava to the country of Ling to fight evils and misfortunes. Padma-sambhava himself goes to the realm of Nāgas in search of a bride for the chief of the Ling region, who was a lady and mother of Gesar. When Gesar and the Nāgi bride were banished to the forest, owing to an

unfortunate turn, it is Padma-sambhava who advises Gesar to obtain the eight treasures and become king of Ling. Gesar becomes king, fights with and kills the demon-kings and werewolves, destroys the Black Tiger of the North, and drives away the Hor tribes. He wins over the Central Asian nomads. There is a Gesar 'thangka', depicting Gesar, on top of which is the portrayal of Samanta-bhadra (kun-tu-bzang-po), belonging to the rNing-ma faith.

THE BUDDHIST INFLUENCE

The introduction of Buddhist influence into Tibet is romantically ascribed to two women, one from Nepal (Bhrukuṭi) and the other from China (Wen chens), who married the Tibetan monarch Srong-bTsan-sGam-Pa (569-650 A.D.). The two queens, piously described as incarnations of the goddess Tārā in her two aspects white and green, and brought with them the images of Śākya-muni (the Chinese princess) and of Akshobhya-buddha and Maitreya (the Nepalese princess). Bhrukuṭi was the daughter of Aṃśu-varman of the Thākori dynasty, a feudatory of a king Harsha of Kanoj (about 637 A.D.). The monarch himself being regarded as the incarnation of her spouse, Ārya Avalokiteśvara, the great Mahāyāna hero-god, they were zealous Buddhists, and the chivalrous king took an avid interest in the new religion and strove hard to spread it in Tibet. However, Buddhism was not an entirely new religion for Tibetans. There was a legend that at least a century earlier, when lha-Tho-Tho-Ri ruled the land, the golden casket containing a relic-vase (*stūpa*, Tibetan *mCHod-rTen*) and two Buddhist texts had mysteriously descended from the sky. But there was no one then in Tibet who could read the texts or explain what the relic-vase signified, and so the new religion remained neglected.

There was also the *chintāmaṇi-dhāraṇi* (Tsinta-ma-ni'i gZungs), which fell from the heaven (sky of Bon adoration) along with the vase. The royal family was worshipping the two sacred objects. It is said that they were brought to Tibet by

a paṇḍita named Buddhirakshita and a translator Li-the -se. Since the king could not read the texts they had brought with them, they returned to India. Later dBa' gsal-snang visited Nepal and met Śāntarakshita (bLo-sems-Zi-ba-'TSHo) and procured many books, but back home in Tibet no one could read them and much less explain their contents. Thus Buddhism was there in books, but not among the people.

Of the many things that the monarch, Srong-bTsan, whose wives were both Buddhist and foreigners, did to promote Buddhism in Tibet, the most important was to send the talented Tibetan, THon -Mi 'Sambhoṭa'⁵ 'son of Anu' to India around A.D. 632 in order to bring back the art of writing. It should be said to the credit of the monarch that he appreciated the value of script for a people. Along with the *kuṭila* variety of the Magadhan alphabet (or the Khoṭanese modification thereof) the 'wise Tibetan' (Sam-Bhoṭa) brought several Mahāyāna texts (like *Karaṇḍa-vyūha-sūtra* and *Ratnamegha-sūtra*) to Tibet, and translated them into Tibetan, writing them down in the new script. Owing to this circumstance, 'religious speech' (*Chos-Skad*) was developed in Tibet as a distinct species of language, different from folk-speech; Sanskrit provided the model and content for it. Although Tibetan is, like Chinese, a Mongoloid speech and tonal, pictograph never gained ground there. The mission which led Sambhoṭa to India (from 632 to 650 A.D.) was really to develop a script and language suitable for translating Sanskrit works into Tibetan. It is little wonder, therefore, that the script (the 30 lettered alphabet) and the language were modelled after Sanskrit. This is how Tibetans got the phonetic script. In fact, on the Indian border of Tibet, the language used in Tibetan books was styled "Lha-Sa Sanskrit". Also, Tibetan books were prepared in Indian style, after the model of palm-leaves; the scroll format of the Chinese did not become popular there.

Sambhoṭa himself translated the Sanskrit text of *Ratnamegha-sūtra* (mDo Sde dkon-mcHog-Sprin), and introduced into Tibet the six-lettered mantra 'Om maṇi-padme hūm'. The

king now became 'the protector of religion' (Chos-kyi bDag-Po), and undertook to translate some texts himself. Hermitages for meditation on the spirits like Ārya-Yamāntaka (Phags-pa gsHirJe'), Dharma-pāla-nātha (Chos-kyong mGon Po) and Devī (Lha mo) were built. But there were no monasteries and no ordinations. The book *Nani-bkā-Bum*, ascribed to the king himself, claims that the king constructed 108 monasteries; but the claim can hardly be substantiated. His nephew, Khri-Srong-lDe, however, built many 'vihāras' (retreats for monks), and invited expelled monks from Khotan (Li-yul) and Ho-shang from China to these 'vihāras'. But no Tibetan is mentioned as having received ordination.

The minister of the next king was an enemy of Buddhism and turned the vihāras into butchers' shops, and sent the Lhasa Buddha image to the Nepal border; the Ho-shangs were driven back to China. It is important to note that the introduction of Buddhism in Tibet was neither sudden nor violent; it was both gradual and gentle. In fact, several stages can easily be identified. But it is significant that the legends make Buddhism descend from no source other than the blue sky—the highest of the Bon gods. Historically, however, it was borrowed from India, from India of the sixth and seventh centuries. Sambhoṭa's own teachers (bDag-Nyid kyi bLa-Ma) were Āchārya Devavit-simha (or Devavidyā-simha or Simha-ghosha) and the Brahmin Lipi-datta or Li-byin (?), according to Sha-lu Lotsa-Ba, the commentator on Sambhoṭa's grammar. Although who and where they were cannot be ascertained, Sambhoṭa's visit to Nālandā has been repeatedly mentioned. His visit to South India was mentioned by the celebrated *Bodhimur*.

Nālandā at that time was busy with numerous Mahāyāna divinities, and the one that appealed to Sambhoṭa's imagination was Avalokiteśvara, a bodhisattva who resided on mount Potalaka somewhere in South India. And Avalokiteśvara became the central divinity of the immense Tibetan pantheon. The legend has it that when the Tibetan king wanted to know what Sambhoṭa had acquired in India, he wrote down a half-verse in the new script in praise of Avalokiteśvara: "A

wholesome and full offering of fresh scent to Avalokita!” (in Petech’s reconstruction of the Tibetan *śloka*: “The face of Avalokita is completely luminous and the colour auspicious”).

The cult of Avalokiteśvara was probably conveyed to Tibet through *Kāraṇḍa-vyūha-sūtra*, which Sambhoṭa not only took to Tibet but translated into Tibetan. The popular legend that the Buddha entrusted the care of Tibet to the bodhisattva Avalokiteśvara is contained in *Mañjuśrī-pāramitā*, and Tibet came to be associated in the minds of the people with ‘the holy land of Avalokiteśvara’. It was looked upon as the lotus-*maṇḍala* with mountains as petals around the central shrine of Avalokita in Lha-Sa. Avalokiteśvara’s incarnation as the Tibetan prince now became an accepted creed, and the early Tibetan chronicles identify Srong-bTsan-sGam-Po with this bodhisattva.

The king, true to this claim, is said to have founded Buddhism in Tibet, built the temple at Lhasa and wrote numerous prophetic works. In Tibet there is a class of literature known as *gTer-Ma* (‘buried treasure’) books, which were reputed to have been concealed at the time of their composition due to a variety of reasons, and later recovered at different periods by long succession of ‘treasure-finders’, about whom some details will be mentioned in sequel. Many of such books were ascribed to this king. Atiśa, who visited Tibet about four hundred years later, is believed to have discovered the ‘will’ of this king, hidden and preserved in (or near) one of the pillars of the Lha-Sa temple. One of the works ascribed to this king, *Mañi-bKa-Bum*, which is very popular in Tibet, deals with magical accomplishments (*sādhana*), personal instructions, sermons, and ‘the story of prince Lokeśvara’, viz., Avalokita of Potalaka, whose earthly incarnation the king claimed to be.

This king was the son of a Chinese princess who had married gNyam-kHri-Srong-Ltsan-po, the founder of the Tibetan royal family. According to Bu-sTon, he lived for 82 years and ruled from Yaslung (upper valley), below yar-Lha-sam-po mountain in southern Tibet (on the Bhutan frontier). He is reputed to have built the palace on the Lhasa hill when he was

19 (he had become king when he was 13), and the Lhasa temple was built four years later. He retired from royal responsibility early, and his son Mu-Thi-Tsan-po succeeded him. But this prince was soon after his accession poisoned by his own mother; and his brother Sad-Na-legs succeeded him. It may be noted in passing that the king had four wives, two Tibetan, one Chinese (Wen cheng) and one Nepalese (Bhrukuṭi). The king had issues only from the Tibetan wives, who were not pleasantly disposed towards each other. There were therefore palace intrigues, and murder of the prince was not surprising. It was this king who was responsible for bringing the celebrated scholar Kamala-Śīla to Tibet; probably however Kamala Śīla had come earlier but gone away, and the new king persuaded the Indian celebrity to return to Tibet.

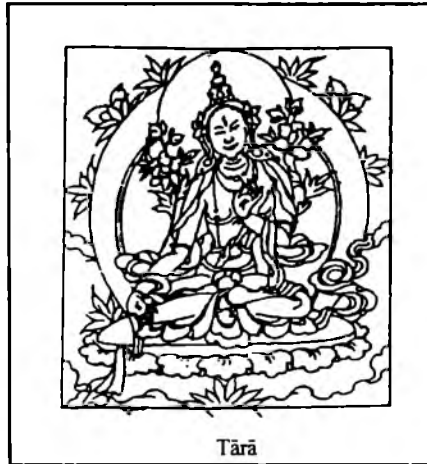
If Tibet got her patron-god Avalokiteśvara from India, more specifically from Nālandā and South India, it is likely that India got her popular cult-goddess Tārā from Tibet through Sambhoṭa. In the Mahāyāna pantheon, Tārā is the spouse of Avalokiteśvara. She became a very popular goddess in numerous forms, both mild and fierce, and her spell (*dhāraṇī*, 'Om Tāre Tuttāre Ture, Svāhā') become a favourite one for the sādhanās. There is a large number of ritualistic manuals (*sādhanaś*) devoted to her worship, composed by scholars from Nālanda and Vikramaśīla. Some of them reveal her unmistakable origin in magic and sorcery ; and her popularity with Tibetans is both ancient and a binding.

The well-known formula which one finds written, inscribed, recited, and repeated everywhere in Tibet, "Om maṇi-padme Hūm" which is curiously regarded as an invocation to Avalokiteśvara is actually a hymn to Tārā. The Tibetan origin of this divinity is more than probable. References in *Śaktisaṅgama-tantra* (5, 92), *kālī-Tantra* (12, 7, 10) *Devī-bhāgavata* (7, 38, 13), *Svatantra-tantra* and *Rudrayāmala* (Tārā--tantra) provide ample suggestions. Her forms as Ugra-Tārā 'Tārā, Nīśarasvatī, Kurukullā (a mountain-goddess) and Ekajaṭā-Tārā mentions in the colophon that its author Nāgārjuna recovered it from Tibet ("Ārya-Nāgārjunapādaiah

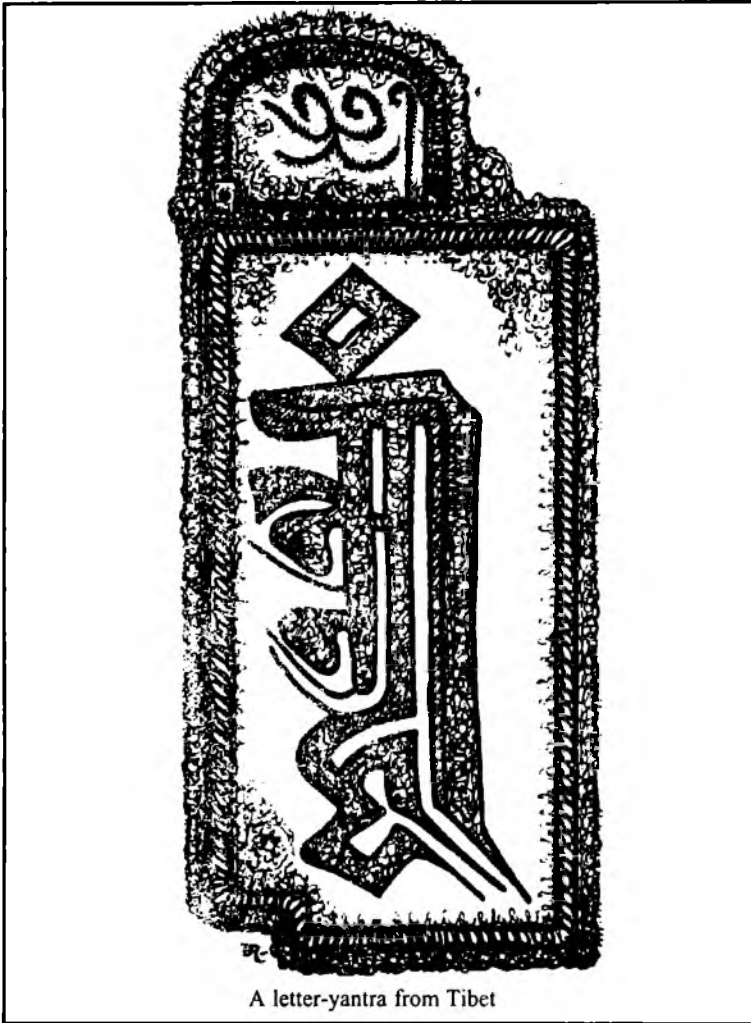
Bhoṭeṣhu uddhr tam").⁷

Even in classical Tantra, Tārā is regarded as one of the ten *Mahāvidyās*, next in importance to Kālī; and she is said to belong to the 'northern tradition' (*uttara-āmnāya*), and her worship is prescribed to be conducted according to *Mahāchināchāra* (the practice prevalent in Mahāchīna or Tibet). Vāsudeva Kavikaṅkaṇa is reputed to have extracted *Tārāvilāsodaya* from *Chinā-Karma-mantra-vāridhi*. Nālandā is supposed to have had at this time a temple dedicated to Tārā-bhaṭṭārikā, where lived the paṇḍit Sthiramati who later went to Tibet. The earliest image of Tārā in India has been recovered from Nālandā; this image incorporates also the mystic hymn to Tārā: "Om tāre tuttāre ture, Svāhā". The earliest description of Tārā is also from an inscription in Nālandā (*Epi.Ind.*, *XXI*, p. 97).

Sambhoṭa's mission marks the beginning of a long and formal series of cultural contacts between Tibet and India. India's contribution to Tibet is well known. Not so well known, however, is Tibet's contribution to India, more particularly in South India. Those that did not disappear (like the Tārā – bhagavatī temple at Banavāsi) retained their hold on people's devotion under different names (like the Kāmakōṭṭam of Kāñchi). Sarasvatī, the popular divinity, is in fact an echo of Tārā.



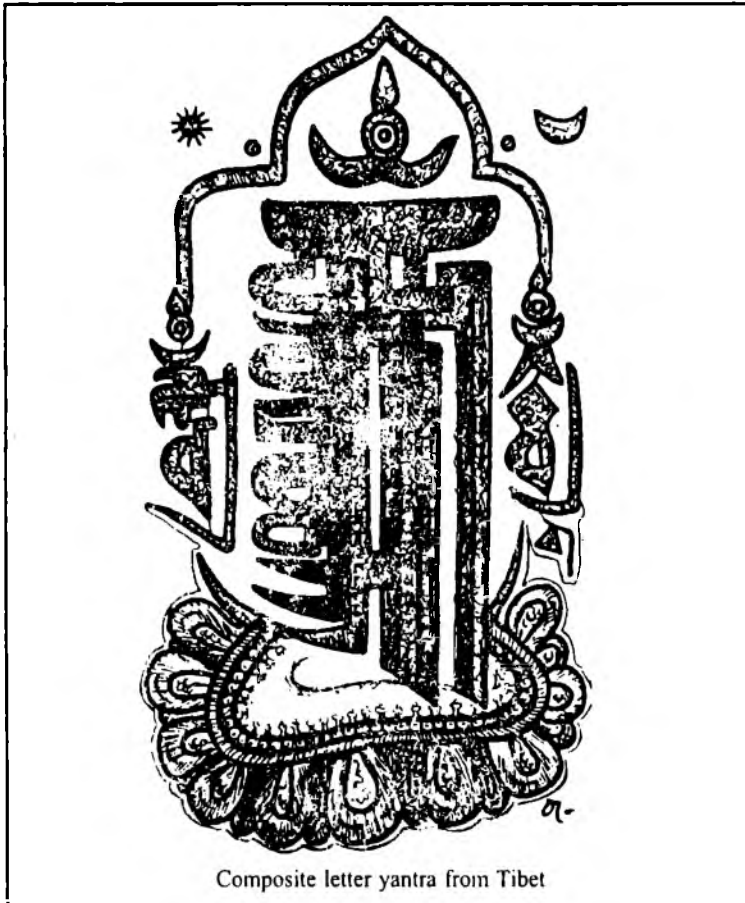
Tārā



Sambhoṭa's success with the king was so great that Sambhoṭa himself was declared to be the incarnation of another *bodhisattva*, Mañjuśrī. But we do not know how people took to the new creed for which the king had taken a great fancy; nor do we know precisely what measures the monarch took to spread it among the people. But he is known to have proclaimed a set of twenty interesting rules,⁸ not only for the subjects to follow but for his own government to adopt:

- (1) seek refuge in the Buddha, the Dharma and Saṅgha;
- (2) practice the Dharma constantly;
- (3) observe filial piety;
- (4) show respect to elders and to the aged;
- (5) help your neighbours and those who are helpless;
- (6) rectify the mind;
- (7) observe and imitate the conduct of those who are gentle, wise and superior;
- (8) do not go to extremes in matters of food and personal conduct;
- (9) harbour no grudge or ill-will against anybody;
- (10) never forget favours done by others;
- (11) never fail to pay debts when due;
- (12) never interfere in the affairs of others unless they seek your help;
- (13) have faith in the law of cause-and-effect, and be ashamed of evil;
- (14) have faith in the law of cause-and-effect, and be ashamed of evil;
- (15) do not employ measures which are unofficial and illegal;
- (16) one who kills deserves to be killed;
- (17) one who steals must not only return the article stolen, but pay a fine eight times its value;
- (18) those who are guilty of adultery must be deprived of limbs and exiled;
- (19) provide help to relatives and friends without harbouring thoughts of personal gain;
- (20) make a solemn vow before a deity, when you are uncertain as to what is right and what is wrong.

He was many ways like the Indian king Aśoka. Devoted to Buddhism, he nevertheless was tolerant of Bon. His interest was not so much to spread a religion that attracted his attention as to make his people pious and upright. It is not until the days of his grandson Khri-Srong-lDeu-bTSan ('Enthroned-straight-sovereign being-mighty') (705-755 A.D.) that we hear of Buddhist impact on Tibet in a big way. This king, one of the



greatest Tibet has produced, was regarded as Avalokitesvara's incarnation. He visited Uḍḍiyāna, Kashmir and Kulu, which were centres of Buddhism. He had married the princesses of Zhang-Zhug, Nepal and China who were all Buddhist in faith. He therefore felt committed to the spread of Buddhism (unlike his grandfather), and thought of getting from India the most celebrated Buddhist masters of the age, Śāntarakṣita. Padmasambhava and Kamalaśīla. From this time onwards, Tibet's political history was almost entirely subordinated to its religious history. Kings became less important than monks and abbots. Tibet became essentially a land of religion.

The first famous Indian paṇḍita that arrived in Tibet in response to this king's request was Śāntarakṣita (born 705, during the reign of Gopāla the first Pāla king), a professor from Nālandā who had written extensively on Mahāyāna philosophy and practice. His Tibetan name was Zhi-bu-hTsho. His *Tattvasaṃgraha* is a monumental work on Buddhist logic and metaphysics; and his *Tattvasiddhi* was a vajrayāna work. A keen logician, an erudite scholar, and an austere saint, he made an exceedingly favourable impression on the Tibetan king and on the elite: he was hailed as 'Āchārya-bodhisattva' and 'Dharma-Śānti-ghoṣa'. But he did not cut ice with the common people: he was perhaps too much of a quiet monk to appeal to the miracle-mongering Bon folk.



In fact, his visit (in 743) was resented by the Bon priests. Tibetan accounts relate that gods and goddesses became indignant and wreaked vengeance not so much on the Indian paṇḍita himself as on the renegade Tibetan king who encouraged him. For lightning struck one of his palaces, and floods carried away another; harvest was grievously damaged; epidemics broke out and raged violently; misery in a hundred forms overtook the kingdom. The calamity was promptly ascribed to the new religion that the king was attempting to establish here. The unwilling king was obliged to send the celebrated Indian teacher back to Nepal!

This perhaps suggests how the first challenge to the time-honoured Bon religion was met. The multitude of spirits and demons that got annoyed with the Buddhist master were obviously of the Bon pantheon; and those who brought pressure on the king to send the Buddhist teacher out of Tibet were Bon priests. Śāntarakṣita's brief acquaintance with Tibet convinced him that what the country needed was a teacher of a different type, and he knew that his brother-in-law who was also an academician but fiery in his temperament was likely to make a mark on Tibet.

Śāntarakṣita suggested to the king that he may invite Padmasaṃbhava from Nepal, where he was at that time : for Padmasaṃbhava was not only a great scholar, but an adept in occult lore, besides being a powerful personality. Both of them belonged to the Sarvāstivāda division, which flourished at that time in Kashmir, Gilgit and Khotan. The king sent a pressing invitation to Padmasaṃbhava, who was a professor of Tantra in the Nālandā University. The magician-scholar arrived in Tibet in 747 A.D., and a new chapter in Tibetan history was thus opened.

When the Ho-shangs were driven out of Tibet during the first persecution of Buddhism in Tibet, and when a later deputation met them to plead with them to return to Tibet, they advised them to get Śāntarakṣita- upādhyāya, who was then

in Nepal, to Tibet. gSal-Snang, who was then the minister of the palace in Mang-yul (upper gTsang), visited Nepal and met Śāntarakshita, and persuaded him to visit Tibet. The celebrated monk arrived in Tibet with a Kashmiri interpreter. As mentioned earlier, his visit was not a success, and he returned to Nepal. The most active Tibetan at that time was Sal-Nang (Jñānendra) of Ba. He went to China to collect sacred texts and when he came back to Tibet, he spoke to the king highly about Śāntarakshita (his was a respected name in China).

The zealous Tibetan was commissioned by the king to request Śāntarakshita to visit Tibet for a second time. At first, the Indian monk was unwilling, but after much persuasion, he agreed, but advised that Padmasambhava also must be invited. Incidentally it may be mentioned that Śāntarakshita hailed from Sābhār (zahor) in the Paragaṇa Vikrama-pura (Dacca district in old Bengal). He was a professor at Nālandā and also at Odantapuri in Magadha. Among his several works in Sanskrit, one *Mādhyamālaṅkāra-karikā* is available only in its Tibetan translation. He was a vajñānavādin, Svatantramādhyamaka and yogāchārin. He was a pioneer of mahāsukhavāda of Vajrayāna. His *Tattvasiddhi* begins significantly thus:

‘Vajrayānam namaskṛtvā mahāsukha-sukhākaram, tattvasiddhim pravakshyāmi sammoha-vinivarttaye’

Padmasambhava succeeded where Śāntarakshita had failed; and the people, Bon or other, were swept off their feet completely. They watched his advent in wonderment and were compelled to recognise in him ‘great precious great master’ (*Guru-Rim-Po-CHe*). He soon became the patron-saint of Tibet. Tibetans have not ceased viewing him with awe and admiration for over a thousand years! Besides the many miracles that won him his position there, Padmasambhava (Pad-Ma-hByung-gNas or Pema-Jungne, as the folk call him) performed the miracle of establishing firmly the Buddhist influence in Tibet.

But it was a minor miracle, for the Buddhism that he brought into Tibet was not very different from the religion that

Tibetans had always known. It is not that he met with no opposition at all. The same spirits and demons that drove out Śāntarakṣita attacked him also. But he appears to have come into the country like a relentless hurricane, taking people by storm, shaking the earth and renting the sky. Legends tell of his miraculous feats, his bold combats with hundreds of demons, wielding only his diamond-sceptre (*vajra*). He appeared to the people in eight different aspects: regal, wrathful, contemplative, militant, discursive, romantic, relaxed, and vengeful.

Regarded theoretically as a second Buddha, he actually came to receive in Tibet greater honour than the Buddha himself ! He is pictured in that land as a powerful person wearing a tiara-like cap decorated with sun and moon (representing perfect comprehension), a diamond (symbolising invincibility), and peacock feathers (for purity from sin). He holds in his hands a thunderbolt-sceptre and a skull-cap filled with blood. He bares his terrible fangs and wears a garland of severed human heads, rides a tiger, and sounds a hand double-drum (*ḍamaru*).

The secret of his success in Tibet may be ascribed to the fact that he was more of a Tāntrik than of a pure Buddhist. He hailed from Uḍḍiyāna (Urgyar about Ghazni, beyond the North Western frontier of India), and even his father Indrabhūti was a celebrated Tāntrik of the Chakrasaṃvara sect. He belonged to the Yogācāra school and specialized in ritualistic initiations (*abhisheka*). He is reported to have bestowed on the Tibetan king Tāntrik initiations of Vajrakīla and Hayagrīva. Although a work in Sanskrit (*Samayapañchāśikā*, preserved only in Tibetan translation) is ascribed to him, his scholarly achievements were by no means remarkable. But for his exploits in Tibet, India would have forgotten him altogether. In fact, he does not figure at all the history of Indian Buddhism. Considering the fact that his total stay in Tibet (which he visited twice) was only eighteen months (Śāntarakṣita lived in Tibet for thirteen years!) his celebrity there is astonishing.



Despite his ferocious appearance in paintings and sculpture, and despite the legends of his numerous fights and victories, he appears to have been an astute diplomat. Although he succeeded in subjugating all the gods and demons of the Bon faith, he did not destroy them. Indeed, they could not have been destroyed, even by him. He won over the more important of them, and persuaded them to change camps and be the 'guardians of the new religion' (*Chos-Skyong*, Skt. *Dharma-pāla*). That is to say, he cleverly accommodated the Bon pantheon in the new religious system that he was constructing, however odd this sounded; he incorporated all the Bon rituals (like *gTor-Ma* offering and dances) into The Buddhist cults that were grafted now into Tibet.

He even dispensed with the usual Buddhist insistence on celibacy for the monks, and permitted the 'Buddhist' lamas to marry—even as the Bon priests did. The religion that Padmasambhava planted in Tibet was by no means the religion that he found practised in India, nor was it the religion he himself probably grew up with. It was largely the religion that was native to the Tibetan soil, with necessary but minimal changes borrowed from Mahāyāna sources. If the Tibetan religion after Padmasambhava was called *Vajrayāna* ('the thunderbolt-path'), it was in a sense the creation of Padmasambhava.

In fact, Padmasambhava's father Indrabhūti had written a treatise, *Jñāna-siddhi*, which suggested the ideology of Vajrayāna and mahāsukha-vāda (The doctrine of great bliss). Padmasambhava's brother-in-law and collaborator in Tibet, the great Śāntarakṣita had propounded Vajrayāna, which was synonymous with mahāsukha-vāda, in his *Tattva-siddhi*. Indrabhūti's sister Lakṣmīkarā also was a Vajrayāna enthusiast, as evidenced by her monumental work *Advaya-siddhi*. The most effective exponent of Vajrayāna, however, was Padmasambhava. The materials and attitudes were all indigenous, but the ultimate direction which was Indian was grafted on them. Padmasambhava was a genius of synthesis.

But he was not alone in remoulding the Tibetan temperament. When Padmasambhava achieved a measure of success with the local gods and priests, Śāntarakṣita could be called back from Nepal with his help. The first Buddhist monastic centre in Tibet was established around 749 A.D. in *bSam-Yas* (Skt. 'achintya-vihāra') on the model of the Odantapura monastic college in India. Śāntarakṣita, who was invited to preside over this new establishment, lived on in Tibet for thirteen years until his death in 762 A.D. His many treatises have been preserved in the commentarial canon of Tibet.

The flashy wizard Padmasambhava was not the type to settle down anywhere for any sustained work. He left Tibet soon after the establishment of the *bSam-Yas* monastery, and died somewhere on his way back to India. But the demon-killing Na-CHung whom he brought into Tibet to guard over the *bSam-Yas* monastery remained to become the State oracle for the ruling *dGe-Lugs* sect at the Yams-Gra-gTsan monastery.

The *bSam-yas* monastery, better known as the Black Chorten, the tamarisk grove of Red crag, was a gigantic maṇḍala. It was built by day by the king, but by night it was destroyed. This happened many times, and the king was advised to invite the paṇḍitas skilled in exorcism. The monastery was thus built, but the pious believe that it was self-created. Padmasambhava arrived in *bSam-Yas* in 787-791 A.D, and made the monastery 'immovable'. The name of the shrine was Zan-yad Migyur lHung-gyi dub-pahi Tsug lHa khang, ("the academy for obtaining heap of unchanging meditation"). Situated thirty miles south east of Lhasa, near the northern bank of Tsang-po river, amidst hillocks and sand, it must have been a magnificent edifice. It is described as enclosed by a lofty circular wall, about one mile and a half in circumference, with thousands of votive brick chaityas, adorned with numerous idols in pure gold and richly ornamented. There was also a chamber of horrors, built by large boulders, with 25 gigantic demons carved on them (gon-po). It was built on consecrated ground, a magic circle called *rDo-rJe Phur-bu* (Vajra-kila with coloured stone-powders. The

wood for the monastery was supplied by the kLa-klo bribes who lived on the southern side of bSam-Yas. There was a maṇḍala drawn on the banks of the lake Mal-gro, for the edifice and Avalokita-simhanāda was worshipped for seven days prior to the establishment of the monastery. Padmasambhava, who laid the foundation worshipped the five dhyāni-buddhas (jinas) for seven days, and created incarnations of himself entering into the maṇḍala. A copy of Kāla-chakra, from Ajaṇṭā-caves was brought by an Indian monk, Bande-yeśe by name to be preserved in bSam-Yas monastery.

The monastery seems to have incorporated the three architectural styles, Indian, Tibetan and Chinese (Lugs-gSum). There were three pavilions, two inlets (gLing sun and moon) and sixteen 'islands' at the four corners were four chaityas. Around the monastery were 108 stūpas (chorten). A special hall was built for the translation of the Indian scriptures into Tibetan. Among those engaged in this work were Vimalamitra, Ānanda, Vairochana, Śāntigarbha and Kumāra (Indians) and Ye-SHes-sDe, Cog-ro.Klu-hi-rGyal, mTHan, gHags, Kha-CHe and other Tibetans. According to *The Blue Annals*, the monastery was built between 763 and 767. The site however had been chosen in 751, when the king Khri-Srong-Lde-Btsan (755-780) was twenty-one year old. It is also recorded that Śāntarakshita entered Tibet in 746 and Padmasambhava in 750. As soon as the monastery was completed, twelve monks of the Sarvāstivāda sect in Vikramaśīla monastery were invited to establish a saṃgha in Tibet (767). Later, a teacher of the Tāntrik school, Dharma-kīrti was brought to the monastery to give vajra-dhātu teachings.

It was a curious but fruitful combination of dissimilar personalities—the cooperation between Padmasambhava and Śāntarakshita in Tibet. If one could argue, thunder, coerce and threaten, the other could instruct, explain, expound and convince. One was meant for the masses, the other for the elite. One emphasized magic, rituals and success; the other insisted upon virtue, contemplation and wisdom. One stood for powerful action; the other symbolised gentle wisdom. The

two together determined the later Tibetan mentality. If Tibetans are gentle souls worshipping fierce divinities, and have accommodated the 'thunderbolt' (*vajra*) with the abiding peace of vacuity (*Śūyata*), the credit for this achievement must go to the two enterprising Indian monks, each working in his own way to accomplish the welfare of the people, whom they went to serve.

Travellers in Tibet have noted what appears as strikingly incongruous in a Buddhist monastery. The general atmosphere of a Tibetan monastery is calm, austere and serene. The inhabitants are gentle, friendly and holy. The main halls are artistically set up. But the holiest cell in the premises is dedicated to cruel and fierce gods and demons; this dark and mysterious chamber contains not only deities of terrible aspect but ancient weapons of warfare, actually used and then offered to these deities. The entrance to this cell is decorated by dead and decomposing bodies of animals like wild dogs, yak, snakes and bears; the walls are covered by pictures of demonic spirits wearing crowns of skulls, necklaces of human heads, hands and feet, holding skull-cups overflowing with blood. These deities are the ones that Padmasambhava converted and appointed as "guardians of the new religion". They are queer and eery, like Ekajaṭā, who is one-eyed, one-toothed, one-breasted, and guardian of spells; or the blood-red Za, who is half-serpent, whose body is filled with a thousand eyes, and who has a gaping face in the belly; or the black Damchen rDor-Je ('the thunderbolt found by oath'), riding a lion, holding a hammer and a blacksmith's bellow, and crowned by a bird. Fosco Maraini describes this aspect aptly as "the secret and untranslated Tibet."¹⁰ What appears as striking incongruity is really a clever reconciliation; the coöperation between Śāntarakshita and Padmasambhava is in the background.

Śāntarakshita inaugurated the Buddhist career of Tibet by initiating seven Tibetans into the monastic order. The seven Tibetans ordained by him were 'men of trial' (*sad-mi-bdun*), most talented and distinguished. The first to be ordained was Bya-Khri-gZigs. And the Tibetan who succeeded

Śāntarakṣita was the elderly lama dPal-dBans. But the most erudite and eloquent among the seven disciples of the Indian master was Vairocana (Sa-gor). It was he who was the chief among the Tibetan translators of the Indian scriptures. The Indian monks who worked on the translation at the behest of Śāntarakṣita were Vimalamitra, Buddha-guhyā, Śāntigarbha, Viśuddhi-simha, Dharmakīrti, Jina-mitra, Dāna-śīla and Ānanda (the last three from Kashmir). They were the first Buddhist monks in Tibet, committed to the ten restraints after strictly Indian fashion.

But there appears to have been a Chinese group who rejected the need for restraint and argued that deliberate effort towards enlightenment was neither necessary nor valid. The challenge from this group became pressing soon after Śāntarakṣita's passing away, when his successor Śrī-ghoṣa was presiding over the *bSam-Yas* monastery. At the suggestion of Śrī-ghoṣa, the king invited Śāntarakṣita's best pupil in Nālandā, Kamalaśīla, to Tibet. He was author of an excellent *Pañjikā* on his teacher's *Tattvasamgraha*. Kamalaśīla (about 720-780 A.D.) was one of the most celebrated of scholars in India at that time. He, together with other scholars and colleagues like Sthiramati and Buddhakīrti, was responsible for the spread of genuine Buddhist religious ideas in Tibet, and for completing the civilizing process started by Śāntarakṣita and Padmasambhava. No one who knows Tibet and who is acquainted with Tibetan culture would agree with F.Grenard's proclamation: "On the whole, Buddhism has but very little improved the manners of the Tibetans. It has added to their superstitions without removing any in return."¹¹

The grafting of Buddhist ideas on the native religious cults occurred in two stages, the first stage known as 'the initial spread' (*SNga-Dar*) commencing with the efforts of the king Srong-bTSan-sGam-Po till the persecution of Buddhism which began around 836 A.D. and the second stage, known as 'later spread' (*PHyi-Dar*) beginning from the time this persecution ended. The story of persecution is an involved one. The Tibetan wife of Srong the king, named gZa-mr-rGyal, was

pressurized by the Bon priests to Ganish Vairochana, Śāntarakshita's Tibetan disciple who was an erudite scholar in Sanskrit and influential among Tibetans, to the eastern region of Kham. But she was soon stricken with leprosy, and she imagined that the banishment of Vairochana was the cause. She got him back, and she was cured. However, Vairochana,



who was not sure of the royal favours, hid away the important scriptural texts, to be recovered later. The Tibetan king Ral-Pa-Can-gTsan was so excitedly devoted to the new religion that he is believed to have grown long hair on the plaits of which the holy monks were invited to sit during their devotions! His devotion was partly due to the fact that the Buddhist divines in the country had become so powerful as to select him for the throne.

The monastic involvement in Tibetan political affairs dates from this time. Monastic organization in Tibet and making monasteries wealthy and powerful were contributions from this king. Participation in administration inevitably resulted in an urge to gain control over it. Unfortunately, however, his zeal cost him his life, because the Bon priests took a serious view of the matter and decided to stifle the new faith which

the king had plans of making the sole religion in Tibet. They killed him, and put his brother gLang-Dar-Ma on the throne around 836 A.D.

And the obliging new king began a zealous persecution of Buddhists, which appears to have been a severe one. Indian monks were driven out, and Tibetan monks were either killed or punished; monasteries were destroyed. But the joy of the victorious faction was shortlived, for gLang-Dar-Ma was murdered by a disguised lama (dPal-gyi rDo-rJe, Śrī-vajra) in a dramatic manner. Subsequent to this event, religion in Tibet was thrown in utter disarray, and religious leadership completely disappeared. GLand-Dar-Ma's successors for three generations wisely refrained from religious involvements.

During this dark period, the indigenous Bon and the Indian Tantra interacted, and arrived at numerous unplanned and unofficial approximations, thus bringing into being a peculiar religious complex in Tibet. There is evidence that Indian influence continued even in this dark phase, but it was not specifically Buddhist; it was Tāntrik, more readily acceptable to Bon. This was the time when the Siddhas and their cults entered Tibet, and provided a foundation for what is called the 'later spread'.

GLang-Dar-Ma's descendent, Ye-Śes-Od, recovered the royal interest in Buddhism, and began not only inviting Indian paṇḍitas to Tibet, but sending Tibetans to India to learn the religion at its source. His biggest achievement, however, was the getting over to Tibet of the eminent Dipaṅkara- Śrījñāna in 1042 A.D.

THE TĀNTRIK TRADITIONS

If the Padmasambhava- Śāntarakṣita team gave Tibetans a taste of Buddhist excellence, it was Dipaṅkara-Śrījñāna (known in Tibet as Atiśa, the great master', and recognised as an incarnation of bodhisattva Mañjuśrī) who really and firmly established the Buddhist influence in Tibet.¹² A prince from Bengal, this great man became a monk early in

life, studied at Odantapura and Nālandā universities, got Tāntrik initiations, went to Suvarṇadvīpa (Burma or Malaya) and obtained wisdom-initiation from one Dharma-kīrti (who belonged to the 'broad active tradition' of Maitreya, Asaṅga and Vasubandhu), returned to India to teach at Somapura and Vikramaśīla universities, and achieved great celebrity as a teacher, scholar and author. He was president of the Vikramaśīla university when the two Tibetan scholars sent by Ye-Ses-Od arrived to invite him to Tibet.

Unwilling at first, for he was already 60 years old, he finally consented and left for Tibet in 1040. After a journey through Nepal, he reached mNa-Ris in Western Tibet in 1042. He lived in Tibet for thirteen years until his death in 1055, honoured and adored throughout the land. He was already renowned in India; great universities had honoured him and hundreds of students eagerly flocked round him; his books were studied, and his explanations memorised. When he decided to visit Tibet, he learnt Tibetan and began translating Sanskrit texts into Tibetan.



Tibet went into raptures over him; it called him in hushed reverence 'the noble lord' (*Jo-Bo-rJe*). But he was more after the mould of Śāntarakṣita than that of Padmasambhava. The three hundred years of interval between the turbulent wizard of Nālandā and the intellectual ascetic from Vikramaśīla had softened the people of Tibet and had made them better prepared to receive the austere teaching of the Buddha. Dīpaṃkara had Tāntrik initiations, and he was well-versed in Tāntrik lore. But he had been little impressed by tantra as a religious mode of life. Although he wisely refrained from openly condemning the Tibetan Tāntrik preoccupation, he subtly suggested that meditation on vacuity was more important and more productive of the really worthwhile objective, viz., enlightenment' (*bodhi*). His works, especially his 'Light on the Path of Enlightenment' (*Bodhipatha-pradīpa*) which became celebrated all over Tibet, emphasised the value of virtue, the need to keep monastic discipline, and the goal not of magical attainments but of enlightenment. He pleaded that *Vinaya* should go with *Tantra* and *Tantra* with *Vinaya*.

In other words, he recognised the need for reform in the Tibetan religion of those days; and he set out quietly to fulfil this mission. As could be expected, at first he met with resistance. But religious affairs were then in such confusion that the resistance was neither organized nor sustained. As a matter of fact, Dīpaṃkara had little difficulty in building up an austere religion, predominantly Buddhist and influenced by contemplative and virtue-oriented Indian sects. And he was lucky in securing an undoubtedly brilliant and exceedingly ascetical Tibetan disciple and successor in Brom-Ston-Pa (rGyal-Ba'i-Byung-gNas, in Sanskrit 'Jayakara').

Brom worked closely with Dīpaṃkara for ten years, and after the latter died in 1055, carried on the master's mission for another ten years till his own death in 1064. Tibetan religion before Dīpaṃkara's advent was largely Tāntrik and Bon. The survival of this phase came to be known as *rNing-Ma* ('ancient translation of the Mantras'). Padmasambhava was its patron-saint and Śāntarakṣita's Buddhist ideas were

but a thin veneer. The element of magic was all too dominant and monastic discipline was lax. The bSam-Yas monastery, with which both of them were connected, continued to be the stronghold of the *rNing-Ma* sect, although it came to be headed later by a Sa-Skya abbot. Dīpaṃkara and Brom attempted to infuse a larger and deeper influence of Buddhism into the Tibetan religion. They crystallised a tradition for the first time, which came to be known as 'bKah-gDams-pa', based on "Six basic texts", viz., *Udānavarga*, Āryaśūra's *Jātakamālā*, Maitreya's *Mahāyāna-sūtrālaṅkāra*, and *Bodhisattva-bhūmi* (revealed to Asaṅga), Śāntideva's *Śikshā-samucchaya* and *Bodhicharyāvatāra*. This tradition emphasizes the comprehensive character of the Buddha's teaching: the discourses or Sūtra (*bKha*) as well as instructions or *upadeśa* (*gDams*). It also prescribed stages in the obtainment of enlightenment.

However, the response to the call for reform was feeble, and Brom's successors did not make a big impact. In the meantime the Padmasaṃbhava-group with its heavy Bon-orientation had carved out for itself a tradition, which was strictly Tibetan in its inspiration. Dīpaṃkara's junior contemporary, Marpa 'the translator' (b.1012) had brought from India certain Tāntrik doctrines and had established the *bKah-brGyud* tradition ('the line of succession of those who transmit the words of masters'). This was Indian in its inspiration, and became celebrated not only in Tibet but in neighbouring countries because of Marpa's disciple Mila-ras-pa, the great Tibetan Yogi and poet. These two traditions were essentially Tāntrik, and reflect a fusion of Indian and Tibetan mysticism. They could be called Buddhist only in a very general sense, and were largely impervious to the reform movement initiated by Dīpaṃkara and Brom.

The small monastic community which Dīpaṃkara had led, and of which Brom was the chief spokesman, viz., the *bKah-gDams*, continued to voice the need for reform, and to stick as closely as possible to the classical Buddhist discipline. But more than three hundred years had to pass before this call for

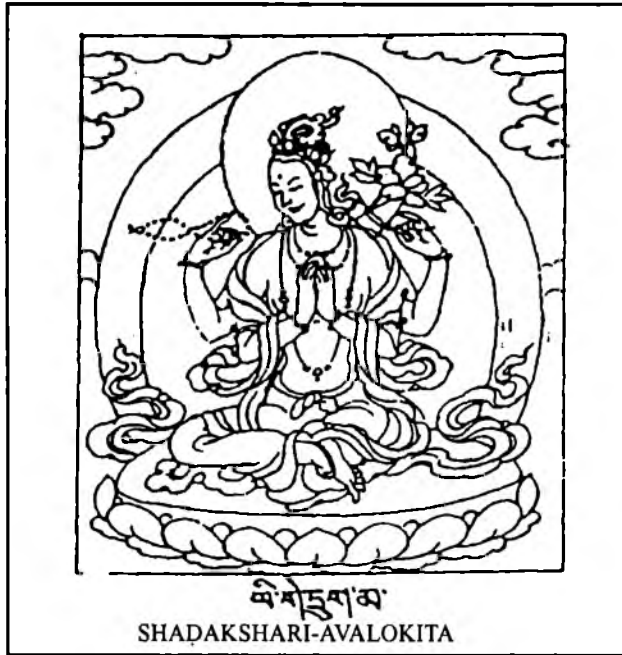
reform became powerful enough to sweep across the entire country.

The man who made this possible was Tsong-KHa-Pa (1357-1419), perhaps the most eminent of religious teachers and uncompromising in his adherence to monastic discipline, Tsong-KHa-Pa ('the man from the Onion country' in the Amdo district on the frontier; his actual name was bLo-bzang-pa, in Sanskrit, Sumati-kirti) saw the incongruity of married and wine-bibbing 'Buddhist monks' engaged in frivolous magical abracadabra. They were Buddhist only by profession and monks only in appearance, and their appeal to Śākyamuni Buddha was obviously far-fetched. Tsong-KHa-Pa had read Dīpankara's manual, 'Light on the path of Enlightenment', and had been deeply impressed by it.

He wrote *Lam-Rim Chen-Po* (*The Lamp of the Way*) along the same lines, emphasizing the value of virtuous living for a Buddhist monk (like celibacy, abstaining from meat and liquor, practice of contemplation). He was a prolific writer, and his commentaries on the major scriptural texts, streamlining the need to be close to the true spirit of original Buddhism, are justly famous. Besides being scholarly and saintly, the ascetical monk was also uncommonly energetic.

He founded his own monastery at Gah-Dan (in Sanskrit, *Tushita*, the name of Buddhist paradise), some twenty miles from Lha-Sa and organized a band of puritanical monks who took seriously all the ten 'restraints' prescribed by the Buddha (especially celibacy and mendicancy) and who were asked largely to ignore the Tāntrik rituals. Originally known as the *Gah-IDan-Pa* ('the golden ones'), this group in due course came to be known as *dGe-Lugs-Pa* ('the merit system ones' or those who followed the Virtuous Way), and was in a sense the fulfilment of Dīpankara's *Kah-Dams* tradition.

By a curious circumstance, TSong-KHa-Pa's new group became a dominant force in Tibet, not only religiously but also politically. There is no doubt that Tsong-KHa-Pa who became a monk at the age of seven was a remarkable person, earnest,



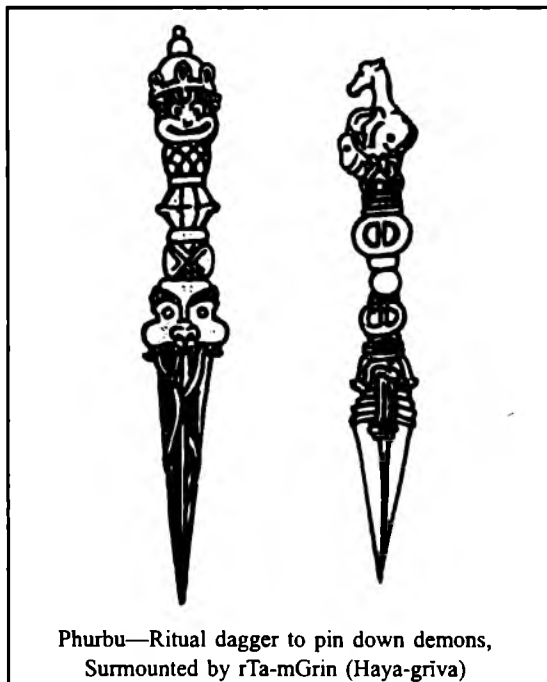
energetic, idealistic and ascetic; he was a scholar, saint, leader, reformer and organiser. His contribution was not in the field of scriptural explanation; he also wrote edifying tracts on initiation, contemplation and yoga. It is not for nothing that Tibetans have always held him in the highest esteem, calling him 'rJe Rim-po-CHe' (*Ārya-mahāratna*, 'the precious chief'). The dGe-Lugs-pas regard him as the second Buddha and as the incarnation of Mañjuśrī, and his tomb in the Gah-IDan monastery is for pious Tibetans a place of pilgrimage.

But his eminence by itself is not sufficient to explain the good fortunes of the sect. What really ushered Tsong-KHa-pa's group to limelight was the invitation for his visit from the Chinese emperor Yung-lo. He was recognised by the Chinese emperor as the head of Buddhist religion not only in Tibet but in the entire empire. He founded in 1417 the Se-Ra monastery, one of the most powerful monastic institutions in the country.

Another disciple of Tsong-KHa-Pa, mKHas-Grub-rJe, who

founded the bKra-Sis Lhung-po monastery, also achieved great celebrity, and was recognised as the incarnation of the Buddha Amitābha. It was believed that in one of his previous incarnations he was the great Indian paṇḍita Abhayākara-gupta who headed the Vikramśīla University in the region of king Rāmapāladeva (about 1070 A.D.).

TSong-KHa-Pa's nephew dGe'-Dun-Grub (1391—1478) also became a renowned abbot, and made the Gah-lDan monastery a powerful centre, although his headquarters were in Lha-Sa. It so happened that the Chinese Emperor Ch'eng Hua (1365-1488) got involved in a skirmish on the Tibet-China border, and had to enlist the support of powerful Buddhist abbots in Tibet. He naturally thought of Tsong-KHa-Pa's nephew and the abbot of bKra-Sis-Lhung-po. He recognised both of them as 'rGyal-Po', 'kings', the former as 'rGyal-ba-Rim-Po-CHe' ('the great precious victor'), incarnation of *bodhisattva* Avalokiteśvara, and the latter as 'pan-chen



Phurbu—Ritual dagger to pin down demons,
Surmounted by rTa-mGrin (Haya-grīva)

Rim-Po-CHe' ('the great precious Paṇḍita'), incarnation of Buddha Amitābha. The former's successor in office about two centuries later (in 1650), Nag-dBang-bLo-bZang, better known as 'the Great Fifth' (rGyal-ba Nang- Wang, 'the Fifth Jina'), was hailed by the conquering Mongol prince Gusri-Khan as the first Dalai Lama, temporal ruler of Tibet. Tsong-KHa-Pa's group thus rose to the heights of both religious and administrative set-up in Tibet.

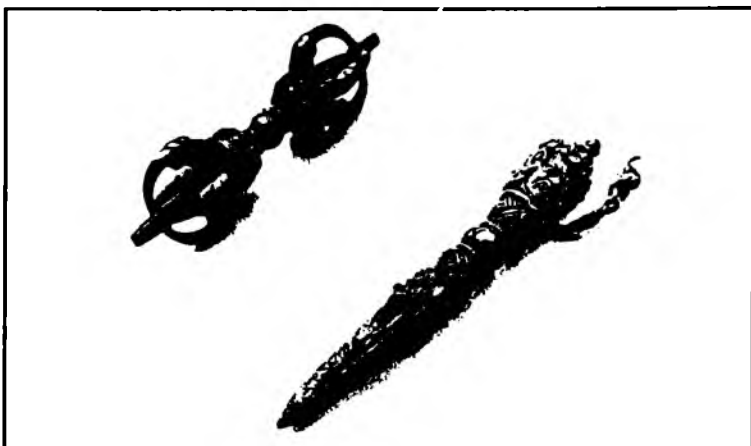
However, the involvement of monasteries in administration and politics was no new thing in Tibet. The abbots of the Sa-skya monastery founded in A.D. 1090 by Kungah Ning-Po ruled Tibet from 1270 till 1340. Sa-skya Paṇḍita (Sa-skya-Pan-CHen, born 1180) had visited the Mongol court in 1247 and had obtained political power in return for curing an illness of the Emperor. And his nephew and successor, hPHags-pa ('Ārya', in Mongolian *Bashpa*) Lodoi-Gyal-Tsan (Matidhvaja) went to China in 1261 to instruct no less a potentate than Kubilai Khan, the grandson of the head not only of all religious institution in Tibet but also of political affairs in that region; in effect, the abbot became a tributary sovereign of Tibet. But by the time Tsong-KHa-Pa began his reform from Gah-lDan, Sa-skya's political power had almost disappeared. Tsong-KHa-Pa's disciples recaptured political power for the dGe-Lugs sect, during, and with the connivance of, the Manchu rule in China.¹³

Among the achievements of Tsong -KHa-Pa, or of his early successors, was the establishment of the doctrine of ecclesiastical reincarnation of Tibetan imagination. It was an accepted Buddhist idea that consciousness (*Sems*) survived bodily death; the belief in a succession (*santāna*) of births was also an accepted doctrine. The Indian assumption that divine beings take on human forms for the good of the world, combined with the above beliefs, produced in Tibet the peculiar institution of 'incarnations' (*Khrungs-Rabs*) and 'emanation lamas' (*sPrul-sKu* or *trulku*).¹⁴ They have 'dynasties' of abbots (*sKyes-Rabs*) who being celibate had to incarnate in their successors in a mysterious manner. And there

were heads of monasteries who claimed they could recollect their previous manifestations and also tell about their future embodiments.

The recognition of mKHa-sGrub-rJe (disciple of Tsong-KHa-Pa and founder of bKra-Sis-Lhung-po monastery) as the incarnation of Buddha Amitābha perhaps provided the model. It may be recalled that the old Tibetan king Srong-bTsang-Gam-Po was regarded as an incarnation of bodhisattva Avalokiteśvara, and it is likely that this suggested that the abbot who was the temporal ruler, namely the Dalai Lama, must also be an incarnation of the same bodhisattva. The idea was later applied to all important monastic institutions and also to many minor ones in Tibet and Mongolia.

Although the *dGe-Lugs* sect became dominant, especially in Central Tibet, numerous other sects also flourished. The *dGe-Lugs*, founded by Tsong-KHa-Pa is usually referred to as the 'Yellow-Cap' sect, in contradistinction to the other older sects like the *rNing-Ma* and *bKah-brGyud*, which are described as 'Red-cap' sects. The habit of monks wearing tall, conical caps during rituals was prevalent in Nālandā and became a widespread practice in Tibet after Padmasambhava, Śāntarakṣita and Kamalaśīla. It was natural that sects were distinguished by the colour of the cap, for the robes were uniformly brick-red and worn in the same style by all sects. The Bon priests



who are otherwise indistinguishable from lay-folk wore black caps; and the *rNing-Ma-Pa* who were not very far removed from the Bon background adopted the Bon cap, but changed its colour to red.

To distinguish themselves from the *rNing-Ma-Pa*, the reformed *dGe-Lugs-Pa* changed the colour of their cap to yellow because yellow robes were characteristic of the austere Theravāda monks. Actually, however, the chief sects in Tibet have their colour associations, rather mystical in their symbolism. Bon, with its mystery cults and dark rituals, was red, because red is the Tāntrik colour. The *bKah-brGyud* was white, because Milarepa and his direct disciples wore the white, cotton robes of Yogis. The Sa-skye sect with its emphasis on the combination of path (*mārga*) and fruit (*phala*) was multicoloured. And the *dGe-Lugs* was yellow, symbolising purity and renunciation. Black and red are both cultic colours and are ritualistic in their connotation, white and yellow symbolise the primacy of wisdom.

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CHAPTER TWO

The Indian Background



The Universities

In the conflicting and confusing chronicles concerning Tibet, one detail stands out, namely the Indian origin of Tibetan religion. Not only in the obvious and general sense that the founder of Buddhism which has greatly influenced religion in Tibet, was an Indian; but the course of that religion in Tibet was almost exclusively guided by Indian Paṇḍitas. The extent of Indian influence can easily be gleaned from the following detail. The Tibetan Canon in two collections, *bKah-Gyur* and *bsTan-hGyur*¹, contains over 4,500 texts. Of them, over 4,000 are of Indian origin, mostly translations from Sanskrit works written by Paṇḍitas of Nālandā, Vikramaśīla and Odantapura. And the translators, both Indian and Tibetan, were also alumni of these universities. The portions of the two-fold Tibetan Canon considered by the Tibetans as most authoritative comprise of Indian books.

Fifth and sixth centuries after Christ were important in the history of Indian Buddhism, for it was then that the Tāntrik element entered significantly into the austere teaching of the Founder. It was natural that the Tibetans, long acquainted with Bon, were interested mainly in the Tāntrik traditions of India. It is true that the Tibetan Canon includes many Indian works on logic, rhetoric, linguistics, philosophy and grammar. But the Tāntrik interest was obviously great. Nālandā, Vikramaśīla and Odantapura Universities were well-known centres of Tāntrik studies. The number of Tibetan scholars at these centres was so large that each of these Universities had a Tibetan House (for their residence), a department of Tibetan studies (for Indians interested in Tibetan language and culture), and a provision for translation of Buddhist works in Sanskrit into Tibetan conjointly by Indian and Tibetan scholars. Indo-Tibetan contact was not only extensive but deep, not to speak of the great benefit that flowed from it.

Nālandā, of course, provided the major influence. Founded in 425 A.D., the Nālandā 'mahā-vihāra' (monastic university) soon attained unprecedented celebrity in India and in the

neighbouring countries. It flourished till 1205 when it was suddenly and totally destroyed by the Muslim army². It was the chief centre of academic Mahāyāna Buddhism, specializing in *sādhana*. Great names like Nāgārjuna, Asaṅga, Śāntarakṣita, Rāhula-bhadra, Kamalaśīla, Padmasambhava and Atiśa all of whom moulded the Tibetan talent, were associated with this institution.

It may be recalled that the Tibetan genius who gave the country its script, Thom-Mi-Sambhota, was sent by the Tibetan monarch around 640 A.D. to Nālandā for the purpose. Nālandā was very much in the imagination of Tibetans both when it was flourishing and after it was forgotten in India. Tibetan scholars were streaming in, even when the great Chinese pilgrim Hsuan-tsang was in residence there. And a great monastery that was built in Tibet in 1351 was named 'Nālandā'; this monastic University, as recorded in the *Blue Annals*, was filled with monks of different sects, even as its Indian counterpart was.

It is from Tibetan sources that we learn about the Dharmagaṇja ('Dharma-Mart') establishment in Nālandā and about the final destruction of the great centre. And a Tibetan was the last soul to bravely stick on at Nālandā, even after its devastating destruction. An interesting story of the Tibetan scholar, known by his Indian name, Dharma-svāmi, who was in Nālandā around 1230, was recovered by Rāhula Sāṅkrtyāyana from a monastery in Central Tibet. During his travel in India, this Tibetan monk settled down to study Sanskrit grammar under the 80-year old Indian Buddhist monk, Rāhula-Śrībhadrā, who was one of the very few professors who continued to reside and teach in Nālandā, when it had already been battered by the Muslim invaders.

The zeal for learning had prompted several eager students to reside with this old Paṇḍita, who was supported and looked after by a Brahmin nobleman, Jayadeva of Odantapura. Muslims were again planning to ransack Magadha, and

Jayadeva had by then got into trouble and had been thrown into prison by the Muslim overlords. But he struggled hard and succeeded in communicating the news of the impending Muslim attack to Rāhula-Śrībhadrā so that the old monk could escape in time. When the news reached Nālandā and when the Muslim hordes were in sight, the few scholars who had held on fled and deserted the premises, except the old Rāhula and his Tibetan student Dharma-svāmi. Rāhula urged the student to fly to safety; he himself was too old to run away and did not in fact care what happened to him. But the Tibetan youth refused to leave the teacher alone, and stayed on with him. Soon, however, when the Muslim army arrived on the scene, the Tibetan scholar carried his old teacher on his back along with a supply of rice, sugar and some books, and walked into hiding in a ruined temple not far from Nālandā. When the invaders ransacked the monastery and left, the Tibetan scholar and the Indian teacher returned to Nālandā to continue their study of grammar!

Nālandā's importance in the history of Indian Buddhism consists in the inspiration it provided for the development of Mādhyamaka, Yogācāra and Sautrāntika schools of Mahāyāna. Among the ruins here are found images of numerous Mahāyāna divinities, and collections of Tāntrik rituals like *Sādhanamālā* contain texts prepared by Nālandā paṇḍitas like Saraha-pāda, Advaya-vajra, Ratnākara-gupta, Anupamarakṣita, Abhayākara-gupta, Dharmākara-mati, Padmākara-mati, Harihara, Nandvāvarta Muktaka, Śāśvata-vajra and Maṅgala-sena. It is Nālandā that principally encouraged the esoteric cult of Vajra-yana. The two sources thereof, namely Mādhyamaka philosophy and Yogācāra discipline, were products of Nālandā. The former was the contribution of the great Nāgārjuna who studied under Rāhula-bhadrā in Nālandā, while the latter was the work of Asaṅga, who, according to the Tibetan historian Tārānātha, taught in Nālandā for twelve years.

The other University that made its impact on Tibet in a big way was Vikramaśīla, which was founded a little later than

Nālandā. Built upon a spacious and gigantic cliff on the banks of Gaṅgā in northern Magadha (—the exact site is uncertain—) this monastic establishment achieved eminence during the reign of King Chanaka (955—983 A.D.). Its 'door-panḍitas' (*dvāra-panḍitas*, the senior professors whose function was to examine and admit scholars coming from the four directions) were celebrated all over the country for their scholarship as well as their saintliness.

Ratnākara-śānti (Āchārya-Śānti) who guarded the Eastern gate had studied under the eminent master, Jetāri, who is said to have written a hundred books on the Tantra and whose impact on Tibetan thought was considerable, and had taken to the sādhanā of *mahāmudrā*. He was the author of thirteen works in Sanskrit (the most famous being *Vajrabhairavagaṇa-chakra-nāma*), which were all translated into Tibetan and studied in the monasteries there. The Southern gate was guarded by Vāgīśvara-kīrti of Banaras, a devotee of Tārā and Chakra-samvara; his *Mṛtyuvañchanopadeśa* ('the instruction about cheating death' available in Tibetan translation) became a popular text. Mahā-panḍita Prajñākara-mati, a devotee of Mañjuśrī, was the panḍita of the Western gate, who wrote glosses on *Abhisamayālaṅkāra* and *Bodhicharyāvatāra*. And the greatest of them all, Nāḍapāda (Nāro-pa, known as *mahāpanḍita*) guarded the Northern gate. Ratna-vajra, the Brahmin scholar from Kāshmir, and Jñānaśrimitra were panḍitas assigned to the central quarters. Both of them, being adepts in Tantra, translated numerous works into Tibetan and went over to Tibet in their old age.

All these panḍitas were authors of valuable Vajrayāna treatises. While their Sanskrit originals have been lost in India, the Tibetan Canon preserved the Tibetan translations of the works of as many as thirteen professors of Vikramaśīla. The first president of the establishment, Buddhajñāna-pāda, was mainly responsible for the development of the 'mantravajrāchāra' sect. He is known to us because nine Tāntrik works of his are preserved in Tibetan. The second



president, Jetāri (about 983 A.D.), the third president, 'Siddha-mahāpaṇḍita' Abhayākara-gupta, the fourth Dīpaṃkara-Śrījñāna, and the fifth Śākya-Śrībhadrā were all eminent masters whose writings have an honoured place in the Tibetan Canon. Vairocana-rakṣita (reputed to be a student of the great Padmasambhava at Nālandā) went to Tibet about 750 A.D. and was treated there with reverence. He was a scholar in Tibetan, and has translated numerous Sanskrit works into Tibetan. He wrote his original works in Sanskrit. His *Mantra-vivṛta-prajñā-hṛdaya-vṛtti* was composed for a Tibetan king, probably Khri-Sron-lDe-bTSan.

The most important teacher from Vikramaśīla in Tibet was, of course, Dipamkara-Śrījñāna (Atiśa, b. 982, known in Tibet as *Jo-bo-rJe*, 'the great lord'). We have already considered his

achievement in Tibet. He had studied for a while in Nālandā under teachers like Rāhula-gupta and Śārakshita and had received numerous Tāntrik initiations before he went to Suvarṇadvīpa (Sumātra, Malaya or Burma) to be introduced to the doctrine of the arousal of 'bodhichitta' (*bodhichittotpāda*). On his return to India he was appointed as president of the Vikramaśīla University by the Magadhan monarch, Nāgapāla. He had studied earlier in Vikramaśīla under Vāgīśvara-kīrti, whose three works on Tārā he translated into Tibetan.

As president of Vikramaśīla he also managed the affairs of Odantapura and Somapuri monasteries. Invited by the Tibetan King, he left for Tibet in 1042 after spending some months in Nepāl. Of the two Tibetan students of his who were mainly instrumental in taking him to Tibet (—he was 60 when he undertook this difficult journey—), Nag-TSho (Jayaśīla-bhikṣu, a monk) and brTSon-hGrusSen-ge (Virya-simha-upāsaka, a lay devotee), the latter died in Nepāl and the former was a great help to the master's work in Tibet. Dipamkara-Atiśa lived and taught in Tibet for thirteen years, till his death in 1054.

He not only wrote excellent treatises in Sanskrit, but translated as many as seventy-seven Sanskrit works into Tibetan. Among his Indian students who accompanied him to Tibet, Kṣhiti-garbha, Vajra-pāṇi (b.1017), Bhūmi-saṁgha, Virya-chandra and Parahita-bhadra contributed considerably to the spread of Tāntrik wisdom in Tibet.

Among his Tibetan disciples, the foremost was, as mentioned earlier, Brom-Ston-Pa (1005—1064, 'Jayakara'), who had a talent for organisation and who was a puritan in religious matters. He helped the master's work of cleansing the Tibetan Buddhism for ten years, and continued this work for ten more years after the master's demise. His partiality for Vinaya and distrust of Tantra have already been mentioned.

After Dipamkara, Śākya-Śrībhadra (1145—1225) became the president of Vikramaśīla. A Kashmirian paṇḍita, he was

a Tāntrik enthusiast and a Tibetan scholar. He wrote on Kālachakra and helped spread the Tārā cult in Tibet. His students, Vibhūti-chandra and Dānaśīla, were professors of Tantra at Jāgaddala University (in north Bengal, founded about 1077) before they went to Tibet and achieved renown there. It was owing to them that Jāgaddala became the favourite resort of Tibetan scholars. The two professors not only translated Sanskrit works into Tibetan, but they were so proficient in that language that they wrote independent works in Tibetan, which are now included in *bsTan-hGyur*. Another luminary, Mokshākara-gupta, was also associated with Jāgaddala.

Odantapura monastery was an earlier institution, founded in 730 A.D. on a hill near Nālandā. It had a typical Tāntrik background. Its origin was traced to the hideous ‘corpse-ritual’ (*śava-sādhana*) performed by a Tāntrik, Nārada by name. But it seems to have had leanings towards the older, puritanical Hīnayāna (under whose professor in Odantapura, Dharma-rakshita, Dīpaṅkara studied for two years) and the Mahāsāṅghika (whose teacher in Odantapura, Śīla-rakshita, gave monastic ordination to Dīpaṅkara at the age of nineteen). This mahāvihāra had become so famous that the first vihāra built in Tibet, the *bsam-Yas* (*Achintyavihāra*, built in 749), was modelled after it. Odantapura was destroyed in 1197 by the Muslim invaders led by Ikhtiyar-ud-din Ahmed Khilji.

These universities should not be described as exclusively Buddhist, although most of their renowned masters were Buddhist monks. The curriculum appears to have been comprehensive, including all the ‘orthodox’ and ‘heterodox’ schools of thought current at that time. The students were likewise drawn from many religious and ethnic groups. But these institutions were predominantly and unmistakably Tāntrik in their orientation. The association of these universities with the Tāntrik adepts known as ‘siddhas’ was an intriguing but important detail, for they brought to bear the influence from other parts of the country, especially the hilly regions of Swāt

valley, Orissa and South India. Saraha from Orissa and Nāgārjuna from South India, the most creative architects of the Siddha cult, were connected with Nālandā; Tillo-pa and Nāro-pa, the siddhas who heralded the *mahāmudrā* ('the great seal') doctrine in Tibet through the latter's pupil Marpa, and Ratnākara-Śānti (Śānti-pa) were associated with Vikramaśīla.

The Siddhas

The Siddhas constitute an interesting, if also little known, chapter in the history of Indian thought.⁴ Tradition recognises a million of them, but enumerates only eighty-four (*chaturaṣṭi*) many of whom were more or less historical, although the historical elements are buried under a mass of legendary



ॐ नमो भगवते वासुदेवाय ॥

Nāgārjuna

Nāgārjuna

the sense of rendering the body immutable with the help of occult and alchemic preparations (*rasa*). This involves transmutation of the physical body, revitalizing and spiritualizing its essence, so that it becomes a veritable 'diamond' (*vajra*), which cuts everything else, itself remaining uncut. This is described as the state of perfect liberation while one is still alive. The siddha cult thus was closely associated with the 'adamantine path' (*vajrayāna*) that principally developed in the Magadhan universities with an academic slant.

It is not accidental that the celebrated Nāgārjuna was recognised as a siddha, an alchemist, a *mahāmudrā* adept and a Mahāyāna philosopher. The modern scholarly habit of decomposing any celebrated person of tradition into several discrete personages, removed from each other in space and time, has of course introduced two or three Nāgārjunas, one the siddha, another the alchemist, and a third the philosopher. But Tibetan tradition, like the old Indian tradition, knows but one Nāgārjuna, who was in fact all there. It can hardly be gainsaid that the Siddha cult became popular and respectable as a result of its association with this celebrity.

He hailed from the southern region of India. According to the Tibetan account, he went from the South to Nālandā (Nālandā), studied under Saraha-pāda and got initiations from him in the 'Amitāyus' ritual and in the Kālachakra system, attained siddhis of *Mahāmayūrī* and *Kurukullā*, became an adept in alchemy (*rasāyana*) and made his body 'immutable' (*vajra-kāya*), went to Puṇḍravardhana (?) and produced immense quantities of gold which he gifted away, heard *Tārā-tantra* from a certain Hayaghosha, went to Nāgaloka and recovered *Śatasāhasrika-Prajñāpāramitā* and several *dhāraṇīs*, composed *Mādhyamika Kārikās* and works on alchemy like *Rasaratnākara*. Both his alchemical experiments and spiritual success were said to have been perfected on Śrīparvata (Nāgārjunakoṇḍa in Andhra Pradesh) also known as 'diamond mount' (*Vajra-parvata*).

Bhadrāpāda

northward (Rajendra Lal Mitra, edition, p. 225). Nāro-pa's *Sekoddesa-ṭika* ('*Śrīdhānye niyatamantra-nyadeśanasthāne*') the modern Dharāṇikoṭa on the banks of Kṛishṇā in Andhra Pradesh.

Dhānya-kaṭaka was in fact what gave its name to the celebrated *Dre-Pung* (Rice-Heap') monastery in Tibet, which, like its Indian model, was partial to the Kālachakra doctrine. It is interesting that the highest divinity in Vajrayāna, Avalokiteśvara, is said to reside on the Potalaka mountain (after which the Dalai Lama's palace in LHa-Sa was known, for Dalai Lama is considered to be an incarnation of Avalokiteśvara). This mountain is located by all authorities, Indian and Tibetan, in South India, although the exact location is disputed. Cunningham suggested Malakūṭa, a tract between Tanjore and Travancore; Nanda Lal Deo suggested Western Ghats, N. Dutt Kottayam in Kerala; and some located it in Dhānyakaṭaka or Śrīparvata.

The monk who took the Tāntrik tradition to China in 719 A.D., Amogha-vajra, was a Ceylonese, and his teacher



Vajrabodhi who accompanied him was a South Indian Brahmin. The teacher had translated several *Tantras* and *Dhāraṇīs* into Chinese *Mantrayāna* (*Ch'en yen tsung*) originated thus. Bodhidharma, who founded the *dhyāna* school (*Ch'an* or the Japanese *Zen*) in China around 600 A.D. was a Brahmin from Kāñchipuram (as Dharmapāla, who presided over Nālandā around 550 A.D. was) and the closeness of Zen to *mahāmudrā* in Vajrayāna is not accidental.⁶ Kāñchipuram was a well-known Tāntrik centre, and the present Kāmakōṭṭam was undoubtedly a Tārā shrine in the middle ages; its initial association with Buddhism cannot be ruled out.

Nāgārjuna's teacher Saraha (Saroruha or Saroja, also Śara-hasta) was a great Siddha in his own right. Rāhula Sāṅkrtyāyana describes him as 'the first Siddha' (*ādi-siddha*). His work *Mahāmudrā-praśnottara* contains the colophon "mahābrāhmaṇa-Saraha-pāda-prabhu". Hailing from 'the Eastern country' (Orissa?), he studied under Haribhadra of Nālandā (himself a student of the great Śāntarakṣita), a contemporary of the Pāla king Dharmapāla (786–809 A.D.). He appears to have come to Mahārāshtra and settled down there. He wrote a large number of philosophical treatises, ritual manuals, mystic poems, songs and books of instruction. In the Tibetan Canon, we have seven of his Sanskrit works and sixteen of his Apabhraṃśa pieces. Some of his *dohas* and *charyāgītis* are extant in India also.

Saraha's teachings were briefly as follows. The highest objective of human existence is to reach the 'ultimate bliss of *isness*' (*dharma-mahāsukha*). The aspirant will reach this condition when his mind is completely and unshakably peaceful, when he gets lost in bliss as salt in water. And this is a matter of private experience, which it is impossible to express or communicate. The mind, in fact, is pure and free by its very nature. There is really no sun, moon, wind, or water in it, nor anything at all. But when it is clouded, things of this world appear as projected from the mind—as water reflects objects. The reflection of mind in the phenomenal world is neither real nor unreal; but it is not ultimate. All differences

His importance in the Tāntrik tradition is ascribed to his having taught *Guhya-samāja-tantra*, a basic Vajrayāna text (with which we will deal later), to his famous pupil Nāgārjuna, and for having compiled another 'Guhya-samāja' work, *Hevajra-tantra* (which, however, is ascribed to Padmāvajra by Tārānātha) with the help of another Siddha, Kambala-pāda. He is reputed to have introduced *Buddhakapāla-tantra* and *Maṇḍala-vidhi*. He is pictured in Tibet as an ascetic holding an arrow in action, suggesting one-pointedness and quiet effort. His colleague Kambala-pāda wrote four works on the *prajñāpāramitā* cult, and eleven on Tantra in general.

Nāgārjuna's pupil Śabara-pā, another Siddha, who was

hunter (or according to another account a prince of Vikramaśīla) before he became a mystic, introduced the well-known *Kurukullā-sādhana*, a ritual concerning the mountain-goddess of the jungle-tribes, clearly a trans-Himālayan divinity, who was later identified with Tārā.

His disciple Lui-pā (Samanta-śubha), a South Indian (or a Magadhan Kāyastha, according to another account) identified with the Nātha saint Matsyendranātha, spent the main period of his life in Assam and Bengal. He achieved such celebrity that he is usually placed at the head of the traditional lists of *siddhas*. *Yoginī-sāhacharyā* (or *Yoginī-kula*), a Tantra prescribing intimate association with female ascetics, is ascribed to him. He continued Saraha's argument that the highest reality was the ultimate and unshakable bliss (*mahāsukha*). This condition is reached when mind is perfectly stilled, for when the mind moves pleasures and pains of the world appear. The stilling of the mind is achieved by the practice of void and by the understanding of the perfect vacuity of all phenomena.

An illustrious contemporary of his was Kāṇha-pā (Kṛṣṇāchārya), another South Indian, and a disciple of the Siddha Jālandhara (also a Nātha master popularly known as Hāḍi-siddha). The Nātha cult with a Śaivite bias and the Siddha cult which was more eclectic worked out numerous points of contact, and Kāṇha-pā, (reverently called 'paṇḍitāchārya' and 'Kṛṣṇārya-pāda') was the product of this synthesis. He is reputed to have written six works on philosophy and seventy-four on Tāntrik subjects; his commentary on *Bodhicharyāvatāra* was well-known. An especial contribution of his was *Samputa-tilaka*.

Kāṇha-pā, Saraha and Lui-pā, became popular because of the mystic songs (*dohas and charyāgītas*) which they composed in the Apabhramśa dialect. All the three 'mahāsiddhas' were associated with the *mahāmudrā* doctrine, which developed into a great system in Tibet. Kāṇha-pa (in Tibetan, Nag-Po sPyod-Pa), in particular, is remembered in Tibet for his esoteric doctrine of Male-Female union (*Yuganaddha*, in Tib, *Yab-Yum*), a fundamental tenet of the Tāntrik ideology.



There were other well-known siddhas like Dārika-pāda (author of Chakrasaṃvara texts), Vajraghaṇṭa (author of *Sahajasaṃvara-sādhana*, *Vajravārāhi-sādhana*, *Gaṇachakra-vidhi* and *Abhisheka-vidhi-ratnamālā*), Maitri-pāda, Taila-pāda (Tilo-pa) and Nāḍa-pāda (Nāro-pā). The last two are especially important in Tibetan history as they were directly involved in the background of *bKah-brGyud* tradition. We shall have occasion to deal with them at some length later.

Tibetans were naturally greatly attracted by the Indian siddha cult. It is possible that many siddhas visited Tibetan regions during the eighth and ninth centuries A.D. There are in the Tibetan Canon elaborate, though mythical, accounts of the career and character of the eighty-four siddhas (in Tibetan, *Grub-THob*). The Tibetan historians like Bu-STon, Gos lo-

TSa-ba, Sum-Pa-mKhan-Po and Tārānātha deal with them. There are also Nepalese traditions about them. The great Tibetologist Rāhula Sāṅkrtyāyana has reconstructed the Sanskrit text of *Chaturaśītisiddha-pravṛtti* from the Tibetan *bsTan-hGyur*.

Eighty-four possibly is a mystical number, and not all the Mahāsiddhas enumerated therein were probably historical persons. But a number of siddhas have left behind poems and treatises which have been preserved both in India and in Tibet. It is possible, therefore, to reconstruct partially the philosophical position of these siddhas. The view that is often held is that they were by conviction Buddhists belonging to the Vajrayāna sect. But this supposition is not borne out by a critical examination of their writings. Even the legends and semi-historical accounts concerning them do not support this view. It must be noted that all the teachers of the Śaivite Nātha cult (like Matsyendra, Goraksha, Jāleन्द्रa, Gāhini, Charpaṭi, Revaṇa, Chaurāṅgi, Jālandhara, Virūpa, Kāneri, Kāṇha-pā and Kaṇṭhata) are included in the traditional list of siddhas.

Some Kāpālikas also can be recognised in the list (like Anādikāla, Vaṭuka, Mahākāla, Vīranātha, Śrīkaṇṭha, Jālandhara and Kāṇha-pā). There were of course those who were evidently Buddhists (like Nāgārjuna, Āryadeva or Kaṇṇari-pa, Śāntideva or Bhusuku-pa and Ratnākarāśānti or Śānti-pā). To be a siddha, therefore, sectarian affiliation was rather irrelevant. In Indian tradition, we generally speak of groups like Nātha-siddhas and Saugata-siddhas (Buddhist siddhas); but doctrinal differences between them are altogether unimportant. And a siddha would normally not mind acquiring initiations in several sects.

Yogic practices (especially with *nāḍīs* and *chakras*), esoteric rituals and mystical ideology were the essential details of the siddha career. The human body was regarded as containing in essence all the forces in the cosmos. Sun and moon were, for him, inside the body. Some siddhas are described as “wearing them for their ear-rings”. All opposites like birth and death, growth and decay, male and female, knowledge and action, activity and passivity were accommodated within the



left and right halves of each one of us, and the understanding and realization of this play of opposites with an insight into their essential and innate union and identity was the main concern of a siddha.

The simple and straight path, which the siddhas extol, is the path of 'the central channel' steering clear of the opposites,

and integrating them in actuality through what is described variously as *sushumṇā*, *avadhūti* and *chaṇḍāli*. The apparent opposition makes for phenomenal involvement while the realization of identity leads to freedom. The siddhas speak of this integrated and transcendental condition as 'empty' (*śūnya*) in the sense of being devoid of all phenomenal content, as 'innate and inalienable nature' (*sahaja-svabhāva*, or simply *sahaja*) in the sense of being the essential source and content of all existence and experience, and as 'harmony' (*samarasa*) in the sense of inalienable identity of opposites.



Ekajāṭā, a form of Tārā

The extant songs of the sidhas (known as *dohas* and *charyāpadas* or *charyāgītis*) reveal that the siddhas were distinguished by their indifference to formal religion. Some dispensed with, and even ridiculed, meditation, asceticism and Tāntrik practices, which there is reason to believe, they all nevertheless adopted. They pleaded earnestly for simple and natural living (very much like the Chinese Taoists) and rejected the need for unnatural ascetic rigour as well as the natural urge for coarse enjoyment, as they were altogether averse to this kind of living. This detail was so outstanding in their teaching that the expression, 'the path of naturalness' (*sahaja-yāna*), was introduced to describe and identify their peculiar viewpoint. But the expression came in course of time to signify a distinct sect or cult, which obviously was an error. The siddhas were not interested in constituting a sect of their own, nor did they encourage any particular cult (although individual cults did develop around some of them).



They lived in different periods of time and in different parts of the country. They lived and practised their religion mostly in seclusion, or were given rather to a wandering life, so that crystallization of their thought or formation of a cult was impossible. Many of them were ascetics, living in jungles and burial grounds, and leading quiet, although contented, and even joyous, lives. A few of them were preoccupied with 'magical attainments' (*siddhis*) like alchemy, clairvoyance, physical immutability, rejuvenation and longevity. And they were given to such queer and outlandish practices that they attracted censure and also some undesirable publicity.

A majority of the *siddhas*, however, were normal and serious-minded; and many of them were learned and austere. The traditional list includes abbots of monasteries, professors in monastic colleges, and respectable householders, celebrated as great teachers. It is unlikely that there was at any time an organization to preserve, perpetuate or project the intellectual or practical position of the *siddhas*. The expression 'Sahaja-yāna' is therefore misleading: there never was any 'yāna' of this description.

But the impact of some of the earlier *siddhas*, like Sarahāpāda, Nāgārjuna-pāda, Luī-pāda, Kāṇha-pāda and Śabari-pāda was felt in the great universities, especially Nālandā, Vikramaśīla and Dhānyakāṭaka. It contributed to the finalisation of some esoteric trends in Mahāyāna Buddhism, in particular the trend which flowered out as Vajrayāna and spread to Tibet. The basic position of these earlier *siddhas* was that the universe is essentially a subjective projection of the individual, that the human body constituted the laboratory where spiritual experiments are to be carried out, and that ritualistic formalities are irrelevant in this context. This naturally appealed greatly to the academicians.

The view that the ultimate goal of spiritual endeavour is not the obtainment of a heaven or the possession of miraculous powers, but the realization of the innate and natural condition of undifferentiated unity and harmony was attractive to the scholars. The prestige enjoyed by Nāgārjuna who was not

only a siddha but an alchemist and a creative writer besides being a great teacher, helped spread the characteristic Mādhyamaka doctrine that the ultimate truth is 'empty' (*śūnya*). We find this idea already well-formed in the songs of his teacher Saraha, the earliest of the siddhas. Nāgārjuna developed this idea into a metaphysical doctrine, which became in due course fundamental to all schools of Mahāyāna Buddhism.

Saraha spoke of the 'death of the mind' and of 'stilling of the winds in the body' as productive of 'great bliss' (*mahāsukha*). One gets bound by the action of the mind, and when mind is silenced one is doubtless freed. Therefore, the wise should take care to render the mind no-mind, and that is a return to the innate nature, a pleasant 'home-coming'. Saraha's outpourings which expressed this idea were clothed in symbolism, for he was a mystic. We do not know if he undertook to justify this position logically, psychologically, philosophically and metaphysically. If he did, we have no evidence. It was his disciple Nāgārjuna that attempted this task and thus provided the basis for Mahāyāna theory and practice. Well-known is his work on Mādhyamaka philosophy. But little-known is his remarkable tract on vacuity (*śūnyatā*) viz., *Pañchakrama*. It deals in the main with what is known as *annuttara-yoga-tantra* in five stages of perfection. It sets out the objective of spiritual strife as perfection of body-mind-speech complex so that the individual nature becomes immutable and adamant (vajra-svabhāva). This work is said to be based on *Guhyasamāja-tantra* of which Saraha was known to have been a teacher. We will have occasion to deal with *Pañchakrama* in some detail later.

Between Saraha and Nāgārjuna, they appear to have given shape to an esoteric doctrine, which probably was current from very ancient times in secret societies (*guhya-samāja*). The Yogācāra ideology left its indelible stamp on the shape that thus developed. In Tibet, the doctrine known as *guhya-samāja* (*gSong-hDus-rGyud*) is described as a "sleeping text", i.e. the text which was secretly communicated from teacher to

student until Asaṅga (in Tibetan, THogs-Med) made it public. Born in a Brahmin family of the north-western region of India, Asaṅga was a teacher in Nālandā, and expounded what is known now as the Yogāchāra ideology, which provided the theoretical framework for Tibetan Vajrayāna.

Asaṅga was instructed by Maitreya-nātha (who lived, according to G. Tucci, around A.D. 200), the real founder of the Yogāchāra system. The Tibetan account makes this Maitreya the future Buddha in the Tushita heaven, from whom Asaṅga miraculously obtained the revelations. And these revelations were in the form of five treatises, known in Tibet as “Maitreya’s Famous Five”: *Mahāyāna-sūtrālaṅkāra*, *Madhyānta-vibhaṅga*, *Dharmādharmaṭā-vibhaṅga*, *Abhisamayālaṅkāra* and *Mahāyānottara-tantra*. Maitreya-nātha was obviously a genius of synthesis, and had a partiality for the practical aspects of the Buddha’s teaching. The merit of Maitreya-nātha was that he attempted to reconcile the various tendencies that prevailed



in the Buddhism of those days. His *Abhisamaya* ('transcendental path') included both Hinayāna and Mahāyāna *charyas*. He it was who provided the mystical foundation for Buddhism. Asaṅga carried on this spirit and wrote not only brilliant commentaries (*ṭīkāś* and *kārikāś*) on his master's works, but also independent works like *Mahāyāna-samparigraha* and *Yogācāra-bhūmi*.

Maitreya and Asaṅga held a view that was complementary to Nāgārjuna's. If Nāgārjuna emphasized on 'emptiness' (*śūnyatā*) as an extension of the old 'no-soul' (*nairātmya*) doctrine, Maitreya and Asaṅga formulated a more positive view: 'emptiness' is not 'nothing at all', but essential and total reality, which is transcendental and absolute, 'devoid of mental constructions' (*abhūtaparikalpa*). Emptiness is contained within it, and it is contained within emptiness.⁷ It is, but the two (the subjective world caused by 'the veil of attachment and passion', *kleśāvaraṇa*) do not really exist, but are projected. The expression *abhūta-parikalpa* is compounded of two words, 'abhūta' signifying that the images of things which we construct in our imagination do not in fact exist as a duality of subject and objects; and 'pari-kalpa' connoting that the objects in the world do not have in reality the forms that we construct for them.⁸

Emptiness, therefore, is not negation of all existence, but denial of subject-object dichotomy. When a rope is mistaken for a snake in dim light, what is unreal (or empty) is the form of the rope-as-snake, but not the rope itself. The snake here occurs as an event in the mind, and not as an objective phenomenon. Asaṅga's definition of *abhūta-parikalpa*⁹ fully anticipates the *vivarta-vāda* of Advaita. And like the 'pure consciousness' of the latter school, *abhūta-parikalpa* was a positive concept: it suggested undifferentiated awareness from which the phenomenal world proceeds in *samsāra*, and into which it is withdrawn in *nirvāṇa*.

It is important to note that Maitreya and Asaṅga emphasised the role of mind (*vijñāna*), not only in the projection of the phenomenal world and in the subjective apprehension thereof,

but also in the dissolution of all projections that make for our worldly involvement, viz., in *nirvāṇa*. If Nāgārjuna's argument of 'emptiness' is regarded as nihilism, the Yogāchāra view can be described as subjective idealism. *Yogāchāra* was so named because personal experience in meditation was the sole means of realizing the ultimate truth.

We find here an echo of the siddha reliance on mind to reach the state of 'no-mind' ("sovi maṇu tahi amaṇu karijjai", Saraha). Siddhas spoke of 'refining the mind, emptying the mind, making mind sky-like (*kha-sama*), eliminating the duality of subjectivity and objectivity from the mind, making it unitary. The empty aspect of the mind is emphasized in the notion of 'śūnyatā', while the productive or the projective aspect is highlighted in the idea of 'abhūta-parikalpa'. Experientially, the two ideas were in fact one; the difference between them was only a matter of emphasis. And it is probable that both ideas arose out of the Siddha thought-system.

The Vajrayāna that developed in Tibet considers itself the continuation of Yogāchāra; but all Tibetan traditions alike hold Nāgārjuna in the highest esteem, and accept the Mādhyamaka viewpoint. The *sādhana* in Vajrayāna is essentially 'cultivation of void' (*śūnyatā-bhāvanā*); the 'visualizations' of the *maṇḍalas* and of the forms of the deities are characteristic features of this *sādhana*. It may be recalled that in Nālandā, both *Mādhyamaka* and *Yogāchāra* viewpoints were subjected to Tāntrik influence under the impact of the siddha movement. It was thus that Vajrayāna emerged. During the reign of king Mahipāla of Bengal, the president of the university, paṇḍita Abhayākara-gupta (who also headed the Mahabodhi-vihāra in Buddhagayā) wrote many esoteric tracts on this subject, nine of which are included in the Tibetan Canon. His disciple Vikṛtideva continued this work, and communicated it to Tibet. A number of Indian Siddhas, subscribing to Vajrayāna appeared in Tibet during the reign of Khri-Srong-Deu-gTsan. One of them was Vairochana.



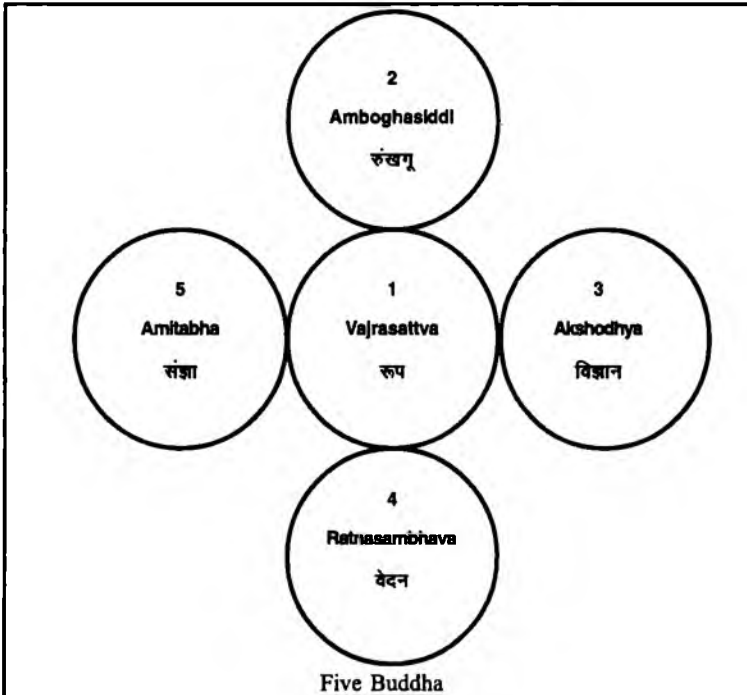
The Guhyasamāja

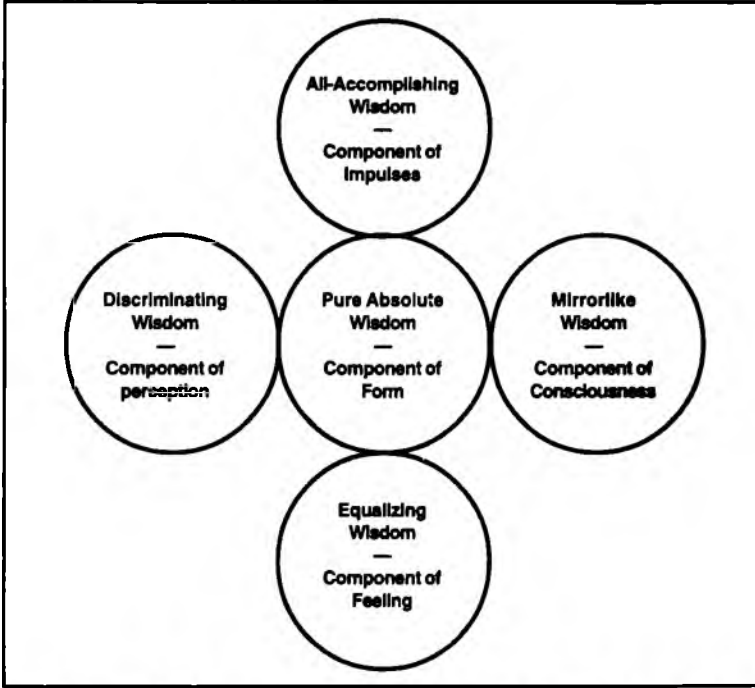
Asaṅga's name is not included in the usual lists of the siddhas; but his works betray mysticism of the siddha variety. And, being interested in the yogic practices, he naturally works with numerous Tāntrik ideas. There is, in fact, a *sādhana* devoted to Prajñāpāramitā which is ascribed to Asaṅga.¹⁰ In this background, the ascription of *Guhya-samāja-tantra* to him is not surprising, although it is somewhat improbable. There is a persistent tradition in Tibet that the esoteric teaching of Vajrayāna continued in secret from the days of Asaṅga (second or third century A.D.) till the days of Dharmakīrti (600–650 A.D.). The Chinese pilgrim, I-tsing, also refers to this tradition. There is a belief that Asaṅga was the originator of Vajrayāna; and *Guhyāsamāja-tantra* happens to be the earliest available full-fledged source-book of Vajrayāna. It should, however, be remembered that the book is also ascribed to Saraha, and to Siddha-Nāgārjuna in the Tibetan *Blue-*

Annals. 'Guhya-samāja' appears rather to be a class of works belonging to the *saṅgīti* group, meant for 'samaveta-gaṇa' ('group-singing').

We are not certain if the work we now have¹¹ is the same as the one known as *Tathāgata-guhyaka*, or the one mentioned in *Nikāya-saṃgraha* as *Samāja-tantra*, or the one mentioned as Śrisamāja by *Padmāvajra* in his *Guhyāsiddhi*, or the one which was probably known as *Tathagathā-chintya-guhyā-nirdeśa* (as can be inferred from the Chinese translation of it dated about 1000 A.D.), quoted in Śāntideva's *Śikshāsamucchaya*.

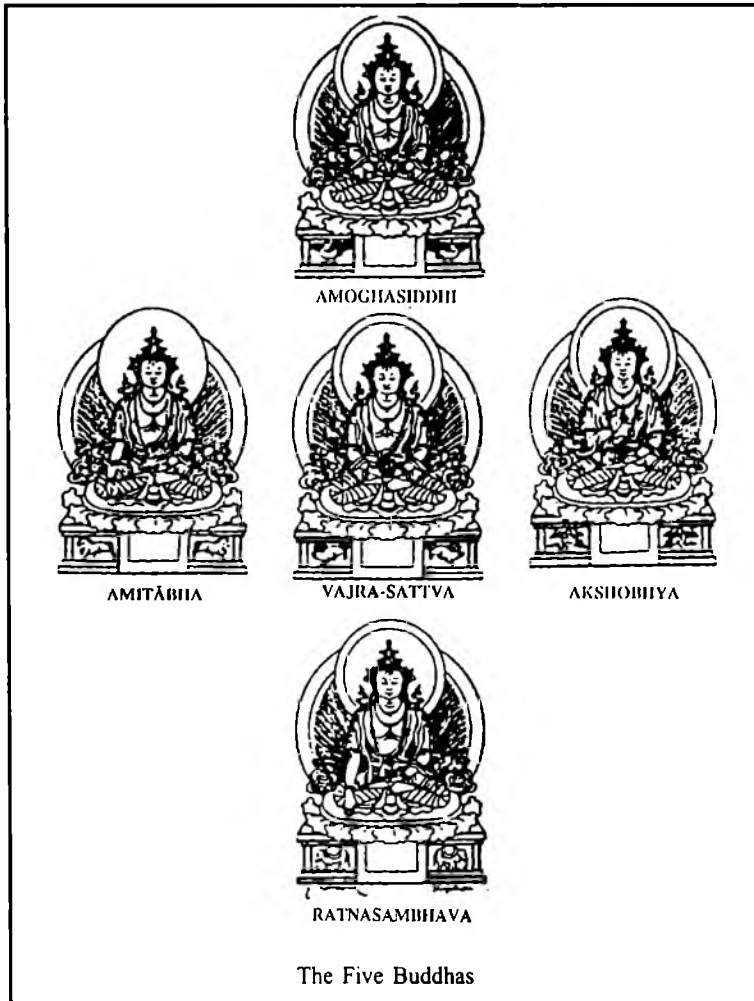
This remarkable work, which is described in the colophon as 'the great king of secret Tāntrik texts' ('mahāguhyatantrarāja'), and as the 'beyond the beyond in the tantra' ('tantrāṇām uttarottaram') is a work which specifically and elaborately deals with the 'Vajra path'. The expression 'tantra' is here defined as 'a well-knit system' (*prabandham*)





consisting of the 'ground' (*ādhāra*), 'technique' (*upāya*) and 'inalienable nature' (*prakṛti*). Among the commentators of this work are included Nāgārjuna (*Guhyasamāja-maṇḍalopāyikā*), Līlāvajra (*Nidānagurūpadeśa-bhāṣya*), Śāntideva (*Guhyasamāja-mahāyoga-tantra-bali-vidhi-nāma*), Ratnākara-śānti or Śānti-pā (*Kusumañjali*), and Dipaṅkara-Śrījñāna (or Atiśa, *Guhyasamāja-lokeśvara-sādhana-nāma*).

The translation of the title as 'Secret Congress' or as 'Secret Society' can be misleading. There is an explanation of the title in the work itself. "The three-fold entity, body, speech and mind, is known as *secret* (*guhya*); and *assembly* (*samāja*) means gathering together, it is a collective expression for all the Enlightened Ones."¹² The work commences with the question 'What is bodhi-chitta?', posed by an assembly of bodhisattvas and tathāgatas to the Blessed one (*Bhagavān*); and the burden of the answer is that the 'adamantine integration' of body, speech and mind holds the key to the highest



attainment.

The importance of the work consists in the first enumeration of five Buddhas, known as *dhyāni-buddhas*, presiding over, or representing, the five constituent-aggregates of the individual, the form, consciousness, sensation-feeling, perception and conception-organization, viz., Vairochana, Akshobhya, Ratnasambhava (called in the text Ratnaketu), Amitābha and

Amoghasiddhi.

This idea is basic to Vajrayāna. The five Buddhas are arranged in a design (*maṇḍala*) with Akshobhya in the centre and the other four in East, South, West and North respectively. They are also associated with colours (white, blue, yellow, red and green), with the five elements (ether, air, fire, water and earth),¹³ with consorts (Vajradhātviśvari or Tārā, Lochanā, Māmaki, Pāṇḍara and Ārya-tārā), with bodhisattvas (Samantabhadra, Vajra-pāṇi, Ratna-pāṇi, Padma-pāṇi and Viśva-pāṇi), with 'families' (moha, dvesha, chintāmaṇi, rāga and samaya), and with the five 'human Buddhas' (Krakuchunda, Kanakamuni, Kaśyapa, Gautama and Maitreya).

In the *maṇḍala*, it is usual to represent Akshobhya as the presenting deity, and the other four in his very form, but smaller in size. The assumption is that consciousness (*vijñāna*), over which Akshobhya presides is the essence of the other four aggregates, which are merely modes and modifications thereof. Further, Akshobhya is characterized by a miniature Vajrasattva (Diamond-essence, viz., basic vacuity which is the ultimate reality) on top. The symbolism is that consciousness (*vijñāna*), is but one of the five aggregates and is not ultimate. The ultimate principle is devoid of subject-object distinction, which normally consciousness involves.

The five Buddhas are represented in their cosmic aspect by the five elements. They are also represented in the individual body: Vairochana in the head, Akshobhya in the heart, Ratnasambhava in the navel, Amitābha in the mouth, and Amoghasiddhi in the feet. Heart is the centre for primary (or basic) consciousness, undifferentiated, initial and of the nature of a stream (*chitta-śrota*, Tibetan *gTSO-Sems*). This condition of consciousness is also symbolised by the mystic syllable *Hūm*, which is Akshobhya's seed-syllable. Akshobhya's source-deity, viz., Vajra-sattva, was looked upon as Hevajra (or Heruka), with a mystic consort, Vajravārāhi (or Prajñā-pāramitā).

However, these details are the products of later times. The *Guhyasamāja* merely provided the main and bare coördinates.

The text also underlines the importance and value of 'bodhichitta'. The 'Lord' gets into a state of mystical absorption (*Samādhi*) and describes 'bodhichitta' in a verse, which unfortunately is enigmatical and obscure. As explained (?) by Nāro-pā in his *Sekoddesa-tīkā*, the verse would mean "If you view existence from the position of emptiness (*abhāva*). There would then be no thought-construction (*bhāvanā*) whatever. Thus existence would not be existence, and thought-constructions would not arise at all".

Whatever the exact import of the verse, it is significant that bodhichitta is sought to be formulated in such an involved thought-complex. Later in the text, bodhichitta (—which originally meant simply 'thought of enlightenment' or 'mind bent on enlightenment'—) is extolled as the ultimate truth; and there are four verses with the refrain "I bow to thee, bodhichitta!" (*bodhichitta, namo'stu te*) (in the second chapter). It is described as "the essence and source of knowledge of all the enlightened ones" (*sarva-buddha-jñānānām sārabhūtam utpattibhūtam*). It is what leads one to enlightenment, being the very essence and source of it; it is the diamond (*vajra*), or the perfect unity of body-speech-mind. "Without beginning or end, tranquil, all-pervading and free from being and non-being, this bodhichitta is void (*śūnyatā*) and compassion (*karuṇā*), undistinguished."¹⁵

Vajrayāna has taken this prescription seriously, and invariably employs bodhichitta in its *sādhana* as a commitment to inspire the mind into enlightenment not only for ones own good, but more importantly, for the good of all beings. In *Trisamaya-rāja-sādhana*, for instance, we have a specimen of the formula by which the devotee must commit himself:

"The Bodhichitta must be aroused thus:

'I arouse my mind into perfect enlightenment
for enabling all embodied beings to attain
enlightenment. I walk along the auspicious path which
secures the good of all beings.'¹⁶



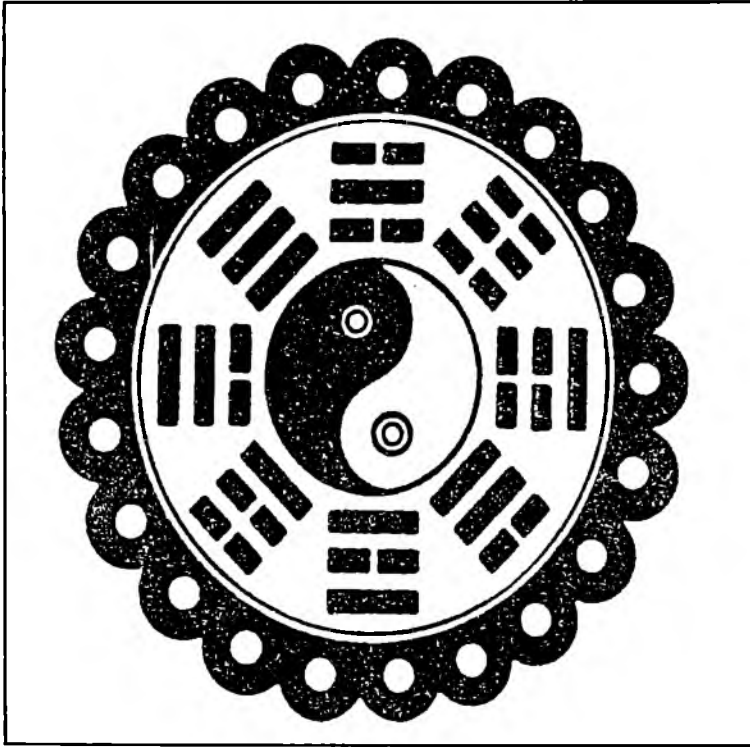
Another frequently employed formula is:

“I arouse the supreme and best bodhichitta, I invite all the beings, and I walk along the excellent path of enlightenment; may I become Buddha for the sake of world’s welfare.”¹⁷

The expression ‘bodhichitta’ occurs also in the *dohas* of siddhas. For instance, Kāṇha-pā speaks of his bodhichitta (*bohichia* in Apabhramśa) as soiled, and then washed ‘bright by *chittavajra* (the diamond-mind). He also speaks of it as the ultimate state of five elements, suggesting that it is the essence of the five *dhyāni-buddhas*. Perhaps the distinction between two states of conditions of bodhichitta is suggested even in the *dohas*: one ordinary and agitated and therefore involved in phenomena, and the other perfectly still and blissful, altogether transcendental. This distinction became functional

and meaningful in the context of *vajrayāna-sādhana* concerning the arousal and arrest of bodhichitta. The assumption is that the bodhichitta lies hidden and passive in everyone of us, very much like the kuṇḍalini of our classical Tantra, in the lowest of the centres.

The Vajrayāna speaks of four such centres (*chakras*): the lowest called *Nirmāṇa-chakra* (or maṇipūra) is situated near the navel and is pictured as a lotus consisting of sixty-four



petals, blue in colour, and represented by the seed-letter *am*. It symbolises the earth element. Bodhichitta lies here, concealed and restive. The purpose of *sādhana* is to activate it, and to make it 'move upwards' (*ut-pāda*). But, as soon as it is aroused, it tends to flow downward. The yogi must check this fall by plugging the vent known as 'jewel-bottom' ('maṇimūla-nirodham kartavyam'). When bodhichitta is thus arrested, it

moves upwards along the psychic spinal column which is linked to the 'Sumeru mountain'.¹⁸ It then reaches the next center, known as *dharmachakra*, located in the heart and pictured as a 'double-lotus' (one facing upwards and the other downwards, *viśva-padma*), with thirty-two petals.¹⁹ It symbolises the water element.

The center higher than that is the *sambhoga-chakra*, situated in the throat (in some accounts, between the eyebrows or on the forehead), and pictured as a lotus of sixteen petals, red in colour. It stands for the fire element. In the Tibetan rites of *gTum-mo*, they attend to these two centers (*dharmachakra* in the heart and *sambhoga* on the forehead) and produce the internal 'fire', which consumes not only the world of subjectivity and objectivity but transcends time. Incidentally, it warms up the body and enables the individual in the cold regions to survive in almost a naked condition.

The fourth, and the highest, center is known as the 'lotus on top of the head' (*ushnīṣa-kamala*, in Tibetan, *Dab-STon*). It consists of four petals, representing the four noble truths taught by the Buddha. When bodhichitta reaches this center, great bliss is at once experienced and, therefore, this center is called 'mahāsukha-chakra'. It is, as it were, bodhichitta gone home, utterly relaxed and restful. It is described as the 'natural form' (*sahaja-kāya*). Bodhichitta, bound to the lowest center (*saṃvṛta*) and therefore restive, is responsible for the phenomenal involvement, while the same bodhichitta in its restful and blissful state in the highest center (*vivṛta*) secures emancipation.

The integration of the opposites, which is a characteristic Tāntrik approach, renders important the distinction between these two states. The former state is active involvement (*pravṛtti*), while the latter is quiet withdrawal (*nivṛtti*). The former is the foundation of the womb of phenomenal existence (*garbha-dhātu* or *tathāgata-garbha*), while the latter is immutable, mere 'suchness' (*vajradhātu* or *tathatā*). The integration of the two is visualized in a design (*maṇḍala*), or is represented as a flame (male) arising from a lotus or vase

(female), or is imagined as the copulation of two deities (*yugandadha* or *Yab-yum*). While *Guhyasamāja-tantra* does not elaborate the above conceptions, there is no doubt that it provided ample suggestions which were later worked out by texts like *Hevajra-tantra*, *Śrīsamputikā*, *Heruka-tantra*, *Marmakalikā-tantra* and *Sekoddesa-tikā*. It should be pointed out that, as is the case with the classical tantras, the Vajrayāna Tantras differ in their accounts of esoteric structures (like the *chakra*) and processes (like *bodhichittotpāda*).

Subsequent to *Guhyasamāja*, the Vajrayāna position was crystallized by Padma-vajra's *Guhya-siddhi*. It emphasized that it was only by eschewing all opposites that one obtains emancipation in this very life; and it advocated the *mahāmudrā* method for this purpose. Anaṅga-vajra's *Prajñopāya-viniśchaya-siddhi* (about 730 A.D.), a work in twenty chapters, dealt with the union of wisdom (*prajñā*) and compassion (*kṛpā*), likening it to the mixing of water and milk. Indrabhūti's *Jñānasiddhi*, which commences with an explicit praise of Vajrayāna, provided copious explanations for the ideas contained in *Guhyasamāja*.

Advaya-vajra wrote on the same subject several short tracts like *Sekanirṃaya*, *Chaturmudrā*, *Pañchakrama* and *Yuganaddha-prakāśa*. *Guhyasamāja* presupposes scriptural texts like *Kāraṇḍa-vyūha* (which perhaps originated the Avalokiteśvara cult, and gave the famous mantra 'Om maṇi-padme Hūṃ,' along with several spells, and which was translated into Chinese between A.D. 557–581 by Yaśogupta), *Suvarṇaprābhāsā-sūtra* (translated into Chinese first by Dharmakṣema between 317–322 A.D. then by Paramārtha in the sixth century, and again by I-tsing in the seventh), and *Mañjuśrīmūlakalpa* (translated into Chinese in the tenth century and into Tibetan in the next).

The last mentioned work, composed in archaic Sanskrit style,²⁰ calls itself a 'mahāyāna-vaipulya-sūtra', glorifies Mañjuśrī, introduces Tārā, and formulates *mantras* as method. Rāhula Sāṅkṛtyāyana rightly regards this as a South Indian work. It mentions Śrī-parvata and the Dhāṇyakaṭaka monastery



as centers of *mantrayāna*. The text was recovered from Maṇalikkara-maṭṭam near Padmanābhapuram in Kerala. It may be recalled that the Tibetan *Blue Annals* (*Teb-THer-SNgon-Po*) held that Nāgārjuna introduced *Guhyasamāja*. And *Mañjuśrī-mūlakalpa* is considered to be immediately antecedent to *Guhyasamāja*. Therefore, the text appears to have finalised the *mantrayāna* ('the path of mantras') phase, which in due course brought about the *Vajra-yāna* (the adamant path), of which the *Guhyasamāja* was an early advocate.

Kālachakra-Yāna

It is useful, although it is incorrect, to distinguish between Mantra-yāna, Vajra-yāna, Sahaja-yāna and Kālachakra-yāna as so many school in the so-called Tāntrick Buddhism. However, they are not really distinct schools, but only phases of development of different aspects of the cult, and vajrayana



seems to be a collective and comprehensive nomenclature. The siddhas, whose philosophy is generally, although erroneously, identified as 'sahaja-yāna', were also responsible for the ideas that were crystallized in *Guhyasamāja*. And the impact of *Mañjuśrī-mūlakalpa* contributed to the importance attached to *mantras* within this framework.

Kālachakra-yāna, however, stands on a different footing, partly because its origin was not entirely in India, and partly because it encouraged iconographic representations of abstract concepts. Waddell regards it as an extreme phase of Tāntrik Buddhism which developed in North India and Nepāl during the tenth century. Appalled at the host of ferocious and blood-thirsty 'demonical Buddhas' in the Kālachakra system, he dismissed it as "coarse" and "unworthy of being considered as a philosophy!"²¹ This judgement is based on a profound misunderstanding. Kālachakra was a fundamental concept accepted by most of the sects including the austere and reformed *dGe-Lugs*; and it had an elaborate philosophical structure.

The Kālachakra system is ascribed to Pi-to, one of the eighty-four siddhas, and among the preceptors of this system are counted Vajraghaṇṭa-pāda, Vijaya-pāda, Kūrma-pāda, Kāṇha-pā, Bhāḍe-pā, Tilo-pā and Nāro-pā, all siddhas. Nāropa's famous work *Sekoddesa-ṭikā* is a commentary on the 'Sekoddeśa' section of the *Śrī-Kālachakra-tantra*, the only extant scriptural text of this system, the manuscript of which has been preserved in the Cambridge University. Among its commentators were, besides Nāro-pa, Mañjuśrīkīrti, Dārika-pā and Abhayākara-gupta (all between A.D. 1040 and 1200).

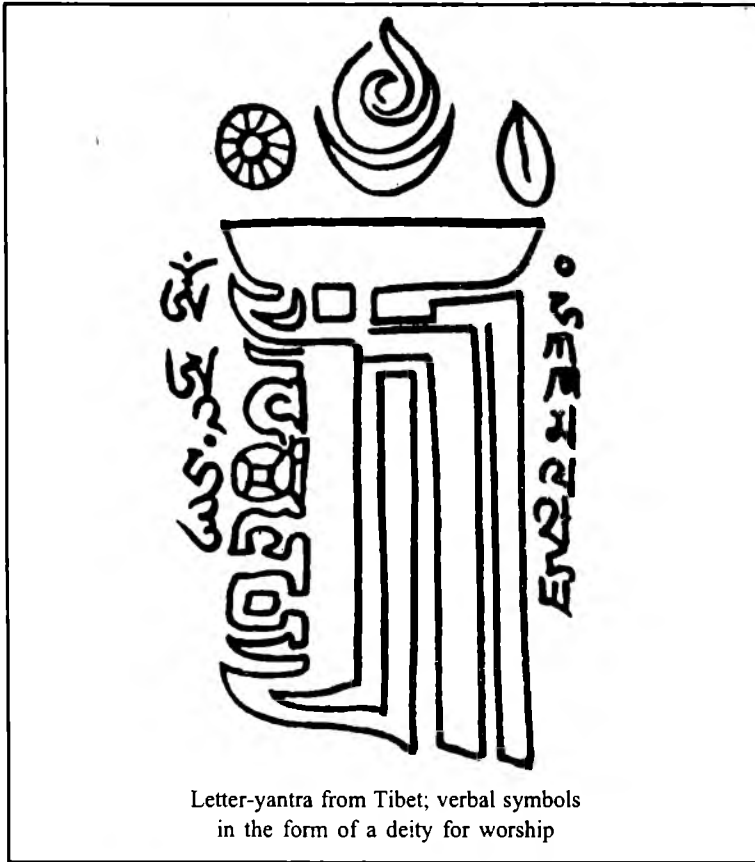
In this work, Kālachakra is hailed as a deity, as the very bodhichitta, the undistinguished union of emptiness and compassion, and as the embodiment of knowledge (*jñāna-kāya*).²² Like *Guhya-samāja*, Kālachakra was also visualized as a divinity: the blue god with four faces, three eyes, three necks, six-shoulders, and twelve hands on each side, dancing in the *ālīḍha* pose on the bodies of Anaṅga (the god of love) and Rudra (the god of destruction, Śiva). He is also

represented in the *Yuganaddha* (or *Yab-Yum*) form, embracing *Prājñā*.

There seems to have been a teacher called *Kālachakra-pāda*, who is sometimes identified with the siddha *Pi-to-pā*, and sometimes described as *Naropā's* son (as in *Blue Annals*). *Tilo-pā* is supposed to have defeated the *Nālandā Paṇḍita Nāro-pā* in an argument, and *Nāro-pā* is said to have learnt from him the *Kālachakra* doctrine. One of *Nāro-pā's* students, *Somanātha Paṇḍita*, is reputed to have been one of the well-known exponents of this doctrine. The *Kālachakra* cult spread in Nepal, Tibet and Mongolia. It may be, as *Csoma* thinks, that the cult emerged in India around 965 A.D. before it reached the Himalayan countries.

Besides the *Śrī-Kālachakra-tantra* mentioned above, the cult holds in high regard *Laghu-Kālachakra-tantra*, and a fine commentary on it known as *Vimalaprabhā (Laghu-Kālachakra-tantra-rāja-ṭika)*, translated into Tibetan in 1027 A.D. There is another work ascribed to *Abhayākara-gupta*, viz., *Kālachakrāvatāra*, which is also considered authoritative. The celebrated reformer *TSong-KHa-Pa* learnt the *Kālachakra* doctrine from an astronomer, *PHyogs-las-rNam-Gyal* (1306–1386); one of *TSong-KHa-Pa's* disciples, *mKHs-Grub* (1385–1438), wrote a work on *Kālachakra*, and so did the first *Dalai-Lama*, a nephew of *TSong-KHa-Pa*.

The third *Pañchen-Lama*, *dPal-lDan-Yes-Śis* (1738–1780), did much to popularise the *Kālachakra* cult and he wrote a book describing the route to the *shambhala* country where the *Kālachakra* doctrine is said to have originated. This *shambhala*, if indeed it was a place on earth, is generally located in the Pamir region, or somewhere in the present Russian Turkestan. But the third *Pañchen-Lama's* book specifically relates it to India. *Shambhala* may have been a country just outside Indian border, and it may well have been on the banks of the river *Jaxartes* or *Tarim* in East Turkestan (as *Alexander Csoma* thought). The legendary account concerning it describes it as an area surrounded by snow-capped mountains, with a great city in the centre; and in the centre of the city was a wonderful



palace, *Kalāpa* by name, overlooking a charming garden, *Malaya*; and the garden contained the consecrated ground, *Kālachakra-maṇḍala*. This was said to be the place of origin of the doctrine.

Suchandra, the first of the kings of Shambhala, obtained the 'yoga of *Kālachakra*' from the Buddha himself, as it was the sole means of salvation for people in this degenerate Kali age. It is with this piece of information that '*Śrī-Kālachakra-tantra*', begins. The Tibetan historian Bu-STon who wrote his *CHos hByung (History of Religion)* in 1322 mentions that, according to the *Kālachakra* calculation, 2198 years had elapsed since the Buddha taught the 'source-text' (*mūla-tantra*) of *Kālachakra*,

Ko'r-lo) became an important philosophical system and religious discipline in Tibet. The expression 'kālachakra' means 'the cycle of time'. Haraprasad Sastri took the expression to mean simply the method of getting out of the cycle of death. The first part of the word, 'kāla', signifies the state of absorption, decease, cessation; in its extended meaning, it stands for 'vacuity' (*sūnyatā*), the ultimate and immutable knowledge. And the second part, 'chakra' signifies the round of existence, or the cycle of world-process. In its extended meaning, it stands for the method (*upāya*), or the state of compassion (*karuṇā*). The former is the essence while the latter is its manifestation. The two together comprehend all knowledge and all knowability. The three worlds appear and disappear therein, manifest themselves in all their variety and merge themselves ultimately.

Nāro-pā takes *kāla* to mean phenomenal existence and *chakra* vacuity. Kālachakra is the embodiment of compassion and vacuity, one and eternal. When in a state of union, they destroy all ignorance and infatuation and produce the highest bliss.²⁶ Nāro-pā also derives the meaning of the expression from each of the letters: 'ka' denotes that causality has ceased, 'la' cosmic reabsorption, 'cha' mind that is mobile and restless, and 'kra' the method or process of worldly involvement.²⁷ The first two comprise the transcendental state (*dharma-dhātu*), while the last two denote the emergence of objectivity with sense and elements. The former is termed 'adamantine knowledge' (*vajra-jñāna*), and the latter 'the great cosmogram of adamant element' (*vajradhātu-mahāmaṇḍala*). Thus, *kālachakra* is interpreted as another expression for *bodhicitta*.

What is important in the Kālachakra doctrine is its insistence that the entire universe with all its objects and events is located really in one's own body; and time with its divisions (hour, day, night, month, year etc.) is accommodated within the vital currents (*prāṇa*) that flow in the arteries of the body. The obvious point that is generally missed, even in the scriptural texts and their commentaries, is that *kāla* means just 'time', and *chakra* is space (or field, *maṇḍala*); and thus *Kālachakra*

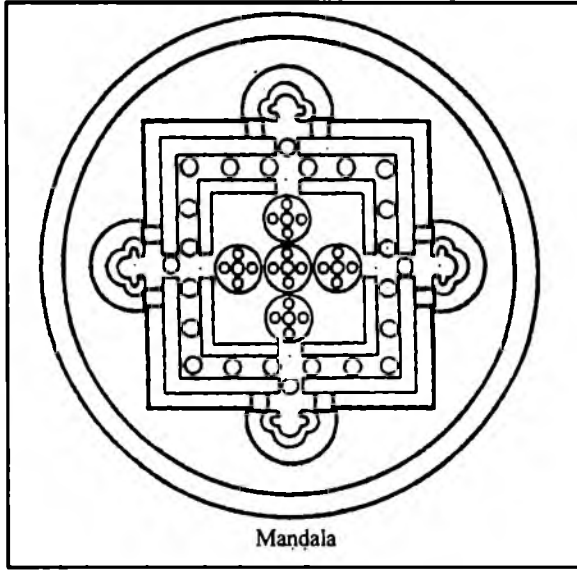
means the whole of physical and dynamic universe that moves in a cycle. The expression is tantamount to *bhava-chakra*.

But *Kālachakra* sought to work out the correspondence between the flow of the vital currents in the body and the flow of time in the universe, and postulated that the manifestation of time is possible only in the functioning of the vital currents. The *Kālachakra* theorists inferred that if the vital currents, especially the uprising and down-flowing courses (*prāṇāpāna-gati*) are checked, one would thereby stop the passage of time also; one would transcend time and overcome the phenomenal necessity of growth, change and decay. Yoga, therefore, is to be practised only inside the body (*dehamadhye samastam yogam*). The proximate goal is to render the body adamant (*vajra*) i.e. immutable and powerful. And the ultimate goal is great bliss (*makhāsukha*) that arises when all obstructions are eliminated. In other words, the purpose of *Kālachakra* discipline is to rise above *bhava-chakra* (cycle of phenomena), visualizing the entire universe in one's body, including time in terms of life-movement (*prāṇa-chalana*).

As a religious discipline, *Kālachakra* has adopted 'the six limbed yoga' (*ṣaḍaṅga-yoga*) of the Guhyasamāja-tantra (ch. 18), in particular the method of *prāṇāyāma* (checking and holding up of vital currents). It is in the context of *prāṇāyāma* that the well-known and oft-employed mystic formula in Tibet 'Om Āh Hūm' was originally coined. *Om* stands for inhalation, *Āh* for pot-like holding up, and *Hūm* for exhalation. Alternately, the three syllables signify origination, preservation and destruction respectively. Known as *vajra-japa*, it is popular in Tibet not only among sādhakās but even among the pious laity. As a result of the holding up of the vital currents, the practitioner obtains a veritable 'rebirth out of the womb of the realized vacuity'.

The 'rebirth' is characterized by immediate enlightenment which, however, is fleeting. The enlightenment here is described as 'momentary' (*eka-kṣaṇābhi-sambodhi*). For this to deepen and get unshakably established, one must continue the practice. The next stage is reached when one can, during the flash of

enlightenment, understand thoroughly and intuitively the working of the senses and the mind. He is no longer an ordinary being bound to the phenomenal world. He is now a 'great one' (*mahāsattva*), in the sense that being in the world he has already risen above it. The third stage destroys all his subtle passions and fetters, makes him realize fully the nature of vacuity, but also orients him towards his duty to the rest of mankind. He is now a bodhisattva, and is likened to a completely developed foetus, ready to come out of the womb. In the fourth and the fifth stages (called *samaya-sattva* and



vajra-yogi) one tears asunder all veils of passion, is weaned out of the urge to enjoy pleasure of sixteen kinds, and becomes progressively freed from all kinds of fetters that bind him to the world.

He now becomes purified and gets firmly established in *dharma*. The final stage is known as *Kālachakra*, where he becomes utterly blissful (*mahāsukha*) by an absolute union of 'wisdom' and 'method', of knowledge and knowability. In this stage, he is none other than the primordial Buddha (*ādi-buddha*), the ultimate principle of utter vacuity from whom the



Buddhas and the worlds evolve. The purpose of Kālachakra practice is the union with Kālachakra as the all-embracing Buddha. The stress is on *yoga*, with the physical constitution as its basis.

There are in Tibet rituals and initiations connected with Kālachakra which are heavily Tāntrik, and which are mainly communicated by oral teachings. It is interesting in this connection to note that one of the siddhas, Dārīka-pā, wrote a manual on initiation into Kālachakra ritual (*Kālachakratāntrasya sekaprakriyāpravṛtti*). Its Sanskrit original is lost, but the Tibetan translation has been preserved. Even the celebrated Paṇḍita Advaya-vajra (better known as Avadhūti-pā, another siddha) wrote a work on Kālachakra, which perhaps dealt with the 'six-limbed yoga' that was associated with it. The Tibetan translation of this work included in bsTan-

hGyur gives the title as *Śrīkālachakropadeśa-shaḍanga-yoga-tantra-pañjikā*, which suggests that it was in the nature of a commentary on an important work, now lost. In more recent times, the famous Tibetan historian Tārānātha (Kun-dGah-SNin-po of the Jo-nyin Sect, born in 1575) was an advocate of Kālachakra-yāna.²⁸

Ḍākārṇava

Another interesting treatise dealing with the same subject and held in high esteem is *Ḍākārṇava*, which describes itself as 'Mahāyoginī-tantra-rāja'.²⁹ Like *Guhyasamāja*, this is also a *saṅgīti* text (meant for collective recitation) and contains details of *yantras*, *mantras*, *mudrā*, *dhāraṇīs*, and methods of achieving *siddhis*. The distinguishing feature of this 13th century work is the description of yoginīs or female adepts consorting with the yogis in certain types of mystic rituals. The title of the work signifies "the ocean of *Ḍāka*" and the expression *ḍāka*, meaning *jñāna* (wisdom), is probably derived from a Tibetan source. The text appears as the instruction of the teacher who is styled as Bhagavanmahāvīra-vīreśvara-Ḍākinī-svāmi-Ḍākinī is the female form of *ḍāka*, meaning 'the lady of Wisdom'. Here, it represents Vārāhī-devī, who seeks instruction from 'the Lord' regarding the welfare of all sentient beings (*sattvānām upakāraṇam*). *Ḍākārṇava* is a Sanskrit work with many poetical pieces in Apabhraṃśa thrown in.

The fundamental teaching here is that the union of compassion and wisdom is generative of absolute bliss (*sukha*). There is no *nirvāṇa* outside *samsāra*. It is the mind that binds us when it is torn into multiplicity; and it is the mind that produces the liberating wisdom (*ḍāka*) when it is rendered into perfect unity (*samarasī-gatam*). The diamond (*vajra*) should delight in the lotus (*padme*) : the mind, awakened, should get lost in the concentration of vacuity (*śūṇya-samāhī* in Apabhraṃśa). It speaks of 'the yoga of maṇḍalas' which awakens the mind and dissolves it in 'śūṇya-samādhi'. The essence of the Buddha's teaching has been called in this work 'jewel' (*maṇi*); the manifold emanation of phenomenal existence

is spoken of as the 'lotus' (*padma*). The founding of the Buddha's liberating wisdom in the phenomenal world is what is meant by 'jewel in the lotus' (*maṇi padme*): the vow of bodhisattvas.

It is a very valuable text for the crystallization of the Vajrayāna cult. It propounds the thesis that the aspirant (*sādhaka*) and the objective (*sādhya*) are essentially inseparable.

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9. *Mahāyāna-sūtrālaṅkāra*, II, 31. "Abhūtakalpo na bhūto nābhuto'kalpa eva cha ; na kalpo nāpi chākalpah sarvam jñeym niruchyate."

10. *Sādhnamālā*, Vol. I, p. 321–325 (GOS) ; the colophon reads “kṛtiriyam ācaryāsaṅgapādānām.”
11. Edited by B. Bhattacharya (GOS), No. 53, 1931.
12. *Ibid*, m p. 152, “trividham kāya-vāk-chittam guhyam ity abhidhiyate, samājam milanam proktam sarva-buddhābhidhānakam” (explained in *Guhyasiddhi*, 15th chap.)
13. *Advyavajrasaṃgraha* : “rūpa-vedanā-samjñā-samskāra-skandhātma Vairochana-Ratnasambhava-Amitābhā-moghasiddhaya vijñānamātratā iti pratipādanāya Aksobhyeṇa mudryante iti” (ed. Haraprasad Sastri, GOS, No. XL); also cf. *Śrīchakra-sambhāra-tantra* and *Vajravārāhi-kalpa-mahātāntra*.
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15. *Śikshāsāmuucchaya*, I.I.17 : “sarvasattva-vimokshāya chittam bodhāya namayet”.
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CHAPTER THREE

The Tibetan Genius

The Short Path

In Tibetan Buddhism are recognised, theoretically, nine paths to enlightenment.¹ On closer examination, it may be seen that three of them were directly derived from Indian Buddhism of the pre-Padmasambhava days: the path of the attentive disciple who is bent on acquiring sufficient holiness to become an enlightened saint or *arhat* (*śrāvaka-yāna*) ; the path of the solitary hermit seeking to become a Buddha exclusively by his own effort, but not keen on sharing the fruits of his labour with others (*pratyekabuddha-yāna*); and the path of one seeks the Buddha-state but feels committed to the welfare of others (*bodhisattva-yāna*). After the advent of Padmasambhava, the three paths branched out into nine. Actually, however, it was the third alone that branched out. But the additional six were together styled as 'the path of mystical formulae' (*mantra-yāna*) which became identified with 'the adamant way' (*vajra-yāna* in Tibetan *rDo-rJe-THeg-Pa*). Although called 'paths' (*yānas*), one may recognise them as more properly stages.

The path of rites and rituals (*Kāryatantra-yāna*, Tib. *Bya-pai-rGyud*) and the path of virtuous devices (*charyā* or *upāya-tantra-yāna*, Tib. *Spyod-pai-rGyud*) are regarded as 'lower' ('*og-Ma*) although followed by a vast majority, preliminary although most of them do not pass beyond this stage, and necessary stages, followed by the path of yogic exercises and experiments (*yoga-tantra-yāna*, Tib. *rNal Byor-rGyud*).

The last stage has three phases, each however styled as a 'path'. The first phase consists of the perfection of virtue (the

six *pāramitās*: charity, chastity, valour, vigour, peace and wisdom) and prescribes the meticulous observance of all the rules of discipline and cultivation of the four 'immeasurables' (the *brahmavihāras*, friendliness, compassion, contentment, and detachment). This is known as 'the great yogic path' (*mahāyoga-tantra-yāna*). In the second phase, rules no longer hold or bind, and the practices become mostly mystical. Known as 'the unexcelled path' (*anuttara-yoga-tantra-yāna* or for short *anu-yoga*, Tib. *rNal-Byor BLa-Na-Med-pai-rGyud*), it is no doubt followed by few.

The Indian siddhas and their Tibetan counterparts are said to have been adepts in this path which is regarded as 'higher' (*Gon-Ma*). Mystical texts like *Guhyasamāja-tantra* were addressed really to those who aspired to tread this path. The third phase which is the highest in the spiritual scale, is described as 'the outstripping' or 'the beyond' (*atiyoga-tantra-yāna*). It is significant that Tibetans who preferred to translate the Sanskrit words almost as a rule (being resistant to loan-words)² retained the original *ati-yoga* in its transliterated form



(*ati-yoga-hi-THegs-Pa*). The word was as untranslatable as the experience was indescribable.

Despite this usual enumeration (ascribed to the Tibetan historian Tārānātha) it would be incorrect to say that Tibetan religion had at any time this nine-fold division in actuality. Perhaps nine was a mystical number with Tibetans as it was with many other people. Even the pre-Buddhist Bon had a 'nine-vehicle doctrine', pronounced by its founder SKug SHen.³ The classification of Tibetan teaching into three paths, 'the long', 'the not-so-long' and 'the short', is perhaps a truer picture. The 'long' path making very little demands on normal life is the one generally followed by large sections of Tibetans, following the Vinaya rules and looking forward to reaching *nirvāṇa* only after many births. Their goal is undoubtedly *nirvāṇa*; but the more immediate, and therefore the more desirable, goal is to get happier births here or to get into heavenly abodes.

The 'not-so-long' path is a little more exacting, involving as it does austerities and the practice of harder virtues. Those who follow this path study scriptural texts, listen to their exposition, worship the Buddha in his many manifestations by prayers, vows and repetition of sacred formulae which are "virtue's work with speech (*Ngag*)" (like the one to Tārā, *Om āh hūm*). They adore structural embodiments of religion like *mCHod-rTen* ('offering-base', the Tibetan version of *Stūpa*), *dGom-pa* (monastery) and *lHa-KHang* ('god-house', temple), going round them and prostrating before them; they turn the Maṇi-wheels,⁴ big and small, manual and mechanical, they tell the beads and make hand-and finger-gestures: These are regarded as "work with the body (*Lus*). And finally cultivation of moral qualities, practice of six excellent virtues (*pāramitās*) and possession of faith are regarded as "work with mind (*Sems*)". These are classified by Tibetans under virtue's conduct (*dGe-bai-Las*), and are intended to purify the constitution gradually, and ultimately (but sooner than later) lead to *nirvāṇa*.

The 'short-path' is mainly Tāntrik, and for the same reason

is resorted to by small groups of earnest and hardy devotees, who dare to put forth their utmost effort to reach the highest end within the shortest possible time, within few years, or at any rate in this very life. The choice and conflict between 'the long' (or 'gradual') path and 'the short' (or 'sudden') path were not peculiar to Tibet. It figured prominently in China after the passing away of the fifth patriarch, Hung-jan (601–675 A.D.), whose disciples branched off into northeren and southern divisions. The former was headed by Shin-Shan, who preached the gradual method of enlightenment.

The latter division was headed by Hui-neng (637–713 A.D.), who became the sixth, last and the greatest patriarch, and taught the doctrine of "spontaneous realization of mind-essence" which was independent of formalities of religion. It is likely that a follower of this camp went to Tibet and became celebrated during the reign of KHri-Srong-lDe-bTsan (705–755 A.D.), or soon after his death. His name is given as Hva-Sang (or Ho-Shang), which however, is said to be merely Chinese for 'teacher'. His teaching, according to the Tibetan account, was nihilistic. Virtue, according to him, was irrelevant to enlightenment, for both merit and sin would keep the individual within the bounds of existence; they are like white and dark clouds, both alike hiding the blue sky. All action necessarily leads only to duality, and therefore away from enlightenment. Abide in a state of utter inactivity, in a sleep like state of quiet, and enlightenment will be spontaneous and instantaneous. Mind is the major factor here, for enlightenment is mind-essence. Rituals and scriptures can only be fetters; and one who is bent on enlightenment should get out of this conventional quagmire.

Such was the teaching of the Chinese celebrity as it is represented in Tibetan books. One can see that this teaching had a strong Zen flavour. The Tibetan king, however, did not personally favour this doctrine. He favoured the teaching of the Indian teacher, Śāntarakṣita, of the bSam-Yas monastery. But he had now been dead and his successor Śrīghoṣa was not a match to Hva-Sang. The king, therefore, had to invite

from India, Śāntarakṣita's pupil Kamalaśīla, who was professor at Nālandā, to contend against the Chinese master. Tibet witnessed one of the greatest debates in its history, the one between the positivist Kamalaśīla from India and the nihilist Hva-Sang from China.

The date of the debate is given as 792 or 794 A.D. Kamalaśīla argued that mere sleep-like absence of awareness would not be able to produce a positive result like enlightenment. By stopping all intellectual activities one cannot hope to attain to the 'wisdom of no-self' (*nairātmya-jñāna*). False constructions, wrong ideas, and wild passions need to be eliminated before liberation is obtained. Wisdom has necessarily to be analytical, and enlightenment can only be gradual; and it is thus that the practice of virtue is indispensable in the Buddha's doctrine. In the end, Kamalaśīla won, and the Chinese master left Tibet. Later, Kamalaśīla wrote down his arguments in a short manual in Sanskrit, entitled *Bhāvanā-krama* (ed. by G. Tucci in *Minor Buddhist Texts*).⁵

The great debate left a deep impression on Tibetan imagination. The 'false' teachings of Hva-Sang were parodied in a comic act, 'Mi-Tshe-ring', in dance-dramas in Tibet and Nepāl.⁶ Kamalaśīla determined to a large extent the future course of Tibetan philosophy. Nāgārjuna's view-point gained currency, and the *Yogachāra* school, which perhaps Hva-Sang represented, suffered a set-back, which however was temporary. Although Hva-Sang was formally defeated, his teaching had already gained ground and Kamalaśīla had to reckon with this fact. What he subsequently taught was therefore an integrated doctrine, with the theoretical model provided by Nāgārjuna and the *Yogachāra* techniques constituting the practical outfit. Kamalaśīla's *Bhāvanā-krama* reveals this synthesis. The 'short-path' is distinguished by its emphasis on the teacher (*bla-ma* or 'guru') and on initiation (*dīkṣhā* or *abhisheka*, in Tibetan, *dBang*). The two together constitute an interesting detail. The teacher is looked upon as a possessor of *siddhi* (*gNos-gRub*), capable of transforming the pupil and determining his destiny.

The word *Lama* actually means 'without superior' (*anuttara*

in Sanskrit, *bLa* means 'superior' and *Ma* is 'without' ; *Ma* may also mean 'person', in which case lama would mean 'a superior one.') There is a suggestion that the Tibetan word is derived from the Sanskrit word 'brahma'. The three familiar Buddhist refuges (*śaraṇa-gamana*) are preceded in Tibet with refuge-seeking in one's lama. While they speak of 'four jewels' in Tibet, instead of the usual three elsewhere, the lama is regarded as the synthesis of the other three (the Buddha, the Dharma and the Saṃgha). In fact, the Tibetans hold: "Before the lama, there was no buddha," for it is only the lama that projects and preserves the Buddha ideal for us. In the pre-Buddhist Bon too, there were lamas, but the influence of Buddhism transformed their role.⁷ He not only imparts secret oral instructions, but communicates 'hidden power'.

Among the three basic necessities of this path, the teacher (with his lineage) comes first and takes precedence even over the patron-divinities and the beneficent *ḍākinīs* and *dharmapālas*. There is the conception of "root-teachers" (*rTashi-bLa-Ma*, Sanskrit *Mūla-gurus*), who are most adorable and without whom success is impossible. This devotion to, and dependence on, the teacher, is the outstanding feature of all Tāntrik cults. It is Known as 'Guru-yoga' in Tibet⁸. Among the benefits from a teacher, who is regarded as an embodiment of all the Buddhas, are listed the following. He will free the mind from ego-involvement; he will dispel the darkness of ignorance, weaken attachments and passions, remove greed, and awaken trust in dharma. He will encourage concentration, facilitate self-understanding, support the resolve to practice earnestly, and lead us along the path of freedom to the highest objective, viz., enlightenment.

kLong-rDol-bLa-Ma Nag-dBang-bLo-bZang (b. 1719) mentions that slandering one's *guru* is the first of the fourteen 'basic downfalls' for a practitioner. A teacher need not necessarily be a living person: the previous *gurus* of the lineage are equally important. And the importance attached to beneficent spirits (*ḍākinīs*), who in a mysterious manner initiate devotees into mystic doctrines, must be considered in

this context.

Initiation is the process through which the 'power' (*dBang-sKur*) is communicated from the teacher to the pupil. It denotes not only that a course of practice has been initiated, but that the practitioner has been properly 'em-powered' to go along the course. The pupil is drawn into a field (*dBang-aKHor*, 'power-circle', Sanskrit *chakra*), both physically represented and symbolically materialised. And being here, he is deemed to have had a rebirth; his old impediments, limitations, preoccupations, dispositions and relations die, and a new constitution oriented entirely to the *sādhana* on hand is generated. The value of *maṇḍala* (d Kyil-h KHor), *mudrā* (PHyag-rGya), *yantra* (CHos-h Bying) and *mantra* (*sNags*) is in this context stressed. *Maṇḍala* is fundamental to the Tāntrik way of thinking.



Described as a 'psychocosmogram', in the words of G. Tucci it "delineates a consecrated place and protects it from invasion by disintegrating forces... is much more than just a consecrated area that must be kept pure for ritual and liturgical ends. It is, above all, a map of the cosmos. It is the whole universe in its essential plan, in its process of emanation and of reabsorption."⁹ This device is undoubtedly Indian in origin, although the Tibetan symbolism is slightly different. It should be mentioned that the *maṇḍala*-offering (*mCHod*)—which is different from the *maṇḍala* we are talking about—is better known and more widely practised in Tibetan religion than in India.

This aspect of ritual is said to have reached Tibet with Atiṣa in 1042 A.D. It was communicated by him to dGon-Pa-Ba and through him to Kam-Pa, Lung-pa-ba, CHu-Mig-Pa, dPal-lDan-Gros and others in a succession by oral tradition until gNam-sKas-Brag compiled these instructions in a book-form around 1230 A.D.¹⁰ The visual arrangement of the five *dhyāni-buddhas* mentioned in *Guhyasamāja-tantra* was perhaps the inspiration for the elaborate rituals concerning the *maṇḍala*. The identification of the cosmic design with the individual's own being was achieved in ritual, and this is the essence of *maṇḍala* involved in the rites of initiation as well as in the ritualistic offering of oneself to the welfare of others.

The Tibetan *lamas* make it a habit of acquiring different initiations not only from their own teachers but from the abbots of various monasteries they visit during their tour of pilgrimage. Oftentimes, sectarian affiliation is no consideration, and loyalty to one's own *lama* is not impaired in any manner. Probably the initiation in such cases does not involve continuation of the particular practices over any great length of time. It may mean merely the acquisition of a *mantra* assigned to a divinity, or a particular method of meditation, or a visualization. That is how some *lamas* have hundreds—and the *sPrul-sKus* (the reincarnated ones) thousands—of initiations. More interesting, however, is the habit of recording all the initiations one has had in a journal form. Apparently,

the multiplicity of initiations does not seem to cause confusion or indecision in a devotee; probably he knows how to integrate all of them into his own primary initiations.

For the more serious entrant into 'the short path', however, initiation is a serious affair, and marks the beginning of a strenuous career. The teacher would help him to 'look and examine' (*lTa-ba*), and then to 'think and meditate' (*mNGom-pa*) and leaves him to 'practise and realise' (*CHyod-pa*).¹¹ The last is the most important commitment, the other two being only preparations for it. 'Practice' is independent even of the teacher and of the doctrine.

The devotee while engaged in practice will shut himself up for shorter or longer periods and practise vigorously and uninterruptedly. Isolation, silence and inactivity are found to facilitate perfect stillness of mind and body, and spiritual practice is said directly to lead to realization. In this sense, 'the short path' is also 'the direct path'; no rituals are involved here, no books and no human assistance. There can be little doubt that it is a steep and hazardous ascent; and only the bold and earnest can dare and aspire.

The 'short path' in Tibet, as in India, is frequently resorted to by devotees not entirely committed to emancipation from worldly existence but desiring acquisitions which are magical in nature. The familiar 'naljorpas' of the Tibetan travelogues belong to this class. They remind us of some of the classical Indian Nātha-Siddhas who were eccentric and devastating. Although they too are Tāntrik, they fall outside the mainstream of Tāntrik pursuit which aims at perfect emancipation. Sometimes the *siddhis* appear as epiphenomena, but the devotee is advised to ignore them and pass on, for preoccupation with such supernormal powers is likely to prevent further progress.

The 'Old' Tradition

Tibetan tradition may in a sense be grouped broadly into two categories: Bon-oriented and Buddhism-oriented. The former draws heavily upon native genius, and has responded

readily to Tāntrik impact from India. The latter, however, has resisted, more or less successfully, the Tāntrik influence. but it should be remembered that no tradition in Tibet is completely free from either Buddhist or Bon influence: it is only a matter of difference in degree, or in the direction of influence. If the arrival around 740 A.D. of Śāntarakshita and Padmasambhava marks the first point of departure, the advent of Dipamkara-Śrījñāna (Atiśa) in 1042 A.D. marks the second; and the reformatory movement of the great Tibetan divine, TSong-KHa-Pa (1357–1419), the third and the last.

The tradition whose source is traced to a period before the impact of Indian influence was largely, or purely, Bon. Śāntarakshita tried to wean Tibetans from this, but failed. Padmasambhava, on the other hand, practically confirmed the indigenous Bon way of dealing with things, and succeeded. The failure of Śāntarakshita and the success of Padmasambhava



TSong-KHa-Pa

were responsible for the emergence of the tradition known as *rNing-Ma* ('the old tradition'). This was styled 'old' in contradiction with the 'new' tradition that arose from the more definite and specific Buddhist commitments of *Dīpaṅkara-Śrījñāna*, the *bKah-g Dams-Pa* ('the sūtra-upadeśa-ones'), which was pruned further and made more emphatically and characteristically Buddhist by *TSong-KHa-Pa* in the *dGe-Lugs* ('the merit system') tradition.

The expression 'old' (*rNying-ma*) does not mean that the tradition was there in the past, and does not exist now. The tradition styled *rNying* is alive in a conspicuous way even today; it has survived not only against all odds, but has assimilated the details of other traditions that it came into contact with. The name 'old tantra' (*gSang-sñags rNying ma*) refers to the period earlier to the coming of *Paṇḍita Smṛti* (?) to Tibet. There were numerous translations of Indian texts during this period, and the canon of this tradition contains no less than twentyfive volumes (*rNying-ma'i rGyud-'bum*), most of the texts not included in the other collections. *Padmasambhava* himself is supposed to have translated some texts (like *Zla-gSang THig-Le*, which is included in volume 15 of the above-mentioned canon, and which deals with the tantra of the mind. It is interesting to note that there are many texts in this collection which are centred round the teachings of *Guhya-samāja-tantra*. The earliest translator, *Rinchen bZan-po*, died in 1055 A.D., when *Dīpaṅkara-Atīśa* was still around (he died in 1080). The translator of an important *rNying ma* tantra, named *Guhya-garbha*, was an Indian, *Vimala* by name: it was discovered by *Śākya-śrī-bhadra* (1204–1213) in *bSam-Ye* monastery. A Sanskrit commentary of *Māyā-śambara-tantra* prepared by *Indra-nīla* was also a popular *rNying-ma* text, as was also *Vajra-kīla-sādhana*, which was discovered by *Dharma-svāmi* (1182–1252) of the *Sa-Skya* group.

The attempts of both *Dīpaṅkara* and *TSong-KHa-Pa* were directed to minimise the *Tāntrik* involvement in *CHos*. But an examination of the Tibetan religion as it has survived reveals that their success was but partial. The tradition that arose

almost contemporaneously with Dīpaṃkara, *bKah-brGyud*, reinforced the Tāntrik impact and the new traditions could not escape its influence. Thus, there are numerous Tāntrik texts (*brGyud*) that are common to the older 'red' traditions (*rNying-Ma* and *bKah-brGyud*), and the later 'yellow' tradition (*dGe-Lugs*).

The old tradition developed in the first Buddhist monastery in Tibet, bSam-Yas. As mentioned earlier, founded in 749 A.D. by Padmasambhava and presided over by the brilliant and academic Śāntarakṣita, this monastery had royal patronage, and naturally became powerful. Although Padmasambhava left Tibet soon after the founding of this centre and it was Śāntarakṣita that guided its destiny for thirteen years, the tradition has Padmasambhava as its patron-saint and looks upon him as the second Buddha.

Padmasambhava is an honoured name for all sects in Tibet, but he is especially adorable in this tradition. He is worshipped in his eight forms, some benign and some violent. Śāntarakṣita who was devoted to the *Vinaya* was more interested in monastic organization. He ordained seven talented Tibetans into the monastic order; they were the first Buddhist monks in Tibet. He got several Indian monks over the Tibet to train the Tibetan monks in both *Sūtra* and *Vinaya*. They formed the nucleus for the translation of Indian texts into Tibetan. The Indian teachers Vimāla-mitra, Buddha-guhyā, Śānti-garbha and Viśuddha-simha and the seven 'selected ones' (viz., the seven Tibetan monks) did the marvellous job of translating as many as one thousand Sanskrit works, most of them bearing on Buddhism!

Śāntarakṣita's pupil Kamalaśīla who worked in the bSam-Yas monastery was a professor of Tantra at Nālandā before he came to Tibet; he naturally introduced Tāntrik cults and sects into the old tradition. Others like Sthira-mati and Buddha-kīrti, also from Nālandā, who came along with Kamalaśīla, added to the Tāntrik note. This orientation appealed to the Tibetans who could not in any case shake off Bon, and the 'old tradition' gained ground. Śāntarakṣita himself had

given it a Tāntrik slant by propagating *Tam-dPal-sKu*, one of the eight rNying-Ma Tantras.

The grandson of the king who had invited Padmasambhava, Ral-Pa-Can-gTSan (817–836 A.D.), was an enthusiastic supporter of this tradition, and one of the meritorious things that he did was to get from India eminent scholars like Surendra-bodhi, Śailendra-bodhi, Bodhi-mitra and Jina-mitra, and engage them in the translation of the Buddhist Canon into Tibetan. The Tibetan monks Jñānasena, Jayaraksha, Ratnendraśīla and Manjuśrī-varma assisted them. The king had built a nine-storeyed palace for these translators (*Lo-TSa-ba*) to carry on their work in peace. Not less than half of the existing Tibetan Canon was accomplished by them!

But, as we have already seen, the king's enthusiasm inevitably led to ministerial intrigues and the king was killed; his brother gLang-Dar-Ma (836–842 A.D.) who became king began persecuting the Buddhist monks in a fit of grateful vengeance. bSam-Yas monastery was destroyed and its scholar-monks fled, or were killed. The 'old tradition' thus fell on evil days.

But the teachings did not entirely disappear. The teachers went into hiding, and the scriptural books were buried under rocks or were concealed in caves. When gLang-Dar-Ma was assassinated, the Buddhist religion reared its head again, and the monks returned to work among the people. The books that were buried or concealed began to be recovered. They were known as *gTer-Ma*, "buried or sealed treasures", most of them ascribed either to Padmasambhava or to the sainted king Srong-bTsan-sGam-po.¹² Among those ascribed to the king were the well-known legendary account of Avalokiteśvara, (*Mani-bKah-Bum*) and the zealously guarded book of secret instructions (*bKah-rGyu-Ma*).

There was a long line of treasure-hunters ('takers-out of treasure' *gTer-bsTon*), commencing from Rong-Zom-CHen-Po Chos-Kyi-bZan-Po (about 1025 A.D.). But the excavations were intermittent and haphazard, and continued till about 1600 A.D. The books thus recovered were grouped under

'Southern Treasure' (*CHo-gTer*) and 'Northern Treasure' (*Byang-gTer*). Those who made much of these recovered treasure-books formed themselves into a distinct sect, *Rong-Lugs*, after the first treasure-hunter. They sought to introduce the old Bon teachings in disguise, although their origin was now ascribed to Padmasambhava.

But there were in Tibet many who doubted the genuineness of these 'treasure-books', and made light of them. The celebrated historian Sum-Pa-mKhan-Po (around 1782 A.D.), for instance, roundly described the 'buried treasures' ascribed to Padmasambhava as "compiled by various foolish persons by adding some terms accepted in the Buddhist texts."¹³ Among those who held this view were Indian *pañḍitas* and their Tibetan followers who relied on the orally transmitted tradition through a line of teachers belonging to the bSam-Yas monastery and its branches. This group which dated back to pre-*gTer* days called itself *Zur-Lugs*, after the eminent representative Zur-Po-CHe (about 950 A.D.), or *bKah-Ma* ("handed down from Indian masters.") There were, however, no doctrinal differences between these two groups, and both alike drew their inspiration from Padmasambhava.

Of the nine 'paths' reckoned in Tibet, and mentioned earlier, this tradition considers the last three, viz., the *mahā-yoga*, the *anu-yoga* and the *ati-yoga*, as especially relevant. The votaries of this tradition hold that this is what distinguishes *rNying-Ma* from other traditions, which claim, however, is hard to substantiate. As a matter of fact, all traditions in Tibet are agreed on essentials and techniques, and they differ only in emphasis. More often than not, traditions, schools and sects in Tibet differ not on account of doctrinal matter at all, but depend for their distinction upon the areas in which they developed and on the persons who led monastic communities there. In any case, all the major traditions in Tibet attach great importance to the last three 'paths'. *rNying-Ma*, however, being the oldest of traditions, may be credited with having provided the model for other traditions in this matter. It would therefore be worthwhile considering at some length the



account of the three 'paths' as give by the *rNying-Ma-Pa*.

(1) The three 'paths' are based on the doctrine propounded by Padmasambhava. India has not preserved any tradition of Padmasambhava, the author. But Tibet has not only numerous 'hidden treasures' (*gTer-Ma*) ascribed to him, but has some works of his included in the Canon. One of the important treatises, the 'Yoga of knowing the Mind, the seeing of Reality, called Self-Libeation'¹⁴ is in his name. The doctrine expounded here is in essence Yogāchāra.

One mind (*Sems-gCHik-Po*) encompasses both phenomenal existence and transcendental reality. It thus covers two aspects of truth (*bDen-gNyi*s), one hiding the other. When the veil is rent and the two become but one (which in fact they are), enlightenment is at once attained. The One-mind, called

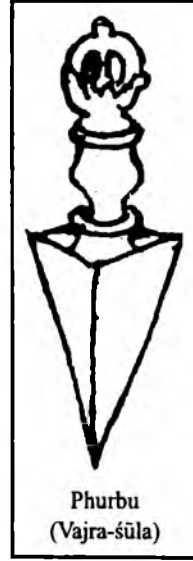
differently as *prajñā*, *mahāmudrā*, *dharmadhātu*, *ālaya* and *bindu*, is in fact sky-like vacuity (*kha-sama śūnyatā*), altogether devoid of any limiting factors or supporting conditions. The phenomenal world as well as the psychological world are in the nature of projections of one's own mind, like reflections seen in a mirror. The *dharma* is really contained in mind. All doctrine, therefore, relates only to mind, and all meditation is only in the mind. Look therefore within your mind and understand the truth of all existence. "Unless one sees the Buddha in one's own mind, *nirvāṇa* is obscured,"

This mind of course is beyond nature, not seen or grasped. But unless it is mastered, realization is impossible. Although sesame seed is the source of oil, and milk the source of butter, we do not get oil unless the seeds are pressed, nor butter unless the milk is churned. Even so, unless the mind is 'pressed and churned' realization cannot be had. To know the mind is thus to realize reality and obtain liberation. This is the yoga that is spoken of in Padmasambhava's tract.

Based on this notion of identity between the core of individual being and the ultimate reality of enlightenment (*bodhi*), the Tāntrik doctrine suggests purification of constitution (*deha-śodhana*), as a preliminary step. Cleansing the arteries through devices like *prāṇāyāma*, one works with mind, with drawing it from ordinary preoccupations and providing it with new directions. The mind, confined, cribbed and caged so long under severely limiting and conditioning factors, now frees itself, expands, and becomes immense, 'sky-like'. Mind here becomes no-mind, utterly light and absolutely free, and therefore happy. This is the significance of the expression 'mahā-yoga' (in Tibetan Ma-rGyud). It is great in the sense that mind is not only trained by meditation and other exercise (*Kriyā-yoga*, in Tibetan *kri-yog*), but it is rendered competent to fulfil the bodhisattva vow (*sevā-sādhana*, in Tibetan *bsNyen-bsGrub*).¹⁶

The procedure followed here to train, control, direct and liberate the mind involves the employment of the technique of evocation of images (or visualizations). The practice has

been stylized by an iconographic specification of the forms and functions of one hundred deities, 58 of them in their benign or serene aspect, and 42 in their malevolent or wrathful aspect. They are all alike projections from one's own mind. And no Tibetan yogi will mistake these deities for objective entities; their character of being mere 'images' is never lost sight of. Eight methods are recommended based on the images of eight deities described as 'tutelary'. Each of them has not only an iconographic form, but has a symbolic altar; the method of meditation in each case has a specific objective and seeks to eliminate one of the evil dispositions present in the practitioner.¹⁷



All of them, excepting the horse-headed *Haya-grīva*, are regarded as manifestations of Mañjuśrī, the bodhi-sattva of wisdom. 'Mañjuśrī-kāya' ('the body of Mañjuśrī, the Tibetan *hTam-dPal-sPal-sKuhI-LHa*) is mediated upon a dark yellow triangle, for eliminating haughtiness and arrogance and for bringing about comprehensive wisdom. 'Hayagrīva' ('the horse-voiced one', *Pad-Ma-gSun-gi-LHa*) has his altar in a dark blue triangle, will eliminate jealousy, and produce discerning wisdom. 'Satya-saṃkalpa' ('True Intention', *Yan-Dag-THugs-kyi-LHa*) rests on a greenish triangle, fights out anger, and bestows wisdom of the incomparable mirror which reflects completely.

'Sudhāpuṇya' ('Elilxir-Merit', *CHe-mCHog-Yon-Tan-Gyi-LHa*) wards off ignorance and awards to the devotee wisdom of realizing the true nature of phenomena; his altar is a dark brown triangle. 'Vajra-śūla-karma' ('Adamantine Pike Deed', *PHur-ba-PHrin-Las-LHa*) is similar to Hayagrīva in his altar, and he eliminates the same evil disposition, but assures the wisdom of accomplishment.

'Dāmara-preshaka' ('Demon-Sending', *Ma-Mo-rBod gTong-LHa*) wards off all untoward events and secures protection;

his altar is the sea, red with blood. 'Ugra-śāpa' ('Violent curse', *dMod-Pa-dRag-SNags-Uta*), who eliminates all evils, fights all demons and bestows protection, rests on blazing fire in the navel as his altar. And, lastly, 'Loka-pūjya' ('Worshipped by the world', *hTig-rTen-mCHod-bsTod-LHa*), who dispels all evils and demons and secures protection, is located in the 'secret cemetery'.

The last three of these deities are bound with individual constitution, while the others are more abstract in nature. The main deity among the eight is 'Elixir-Merit', who is represented with twenty-one heads (symbolising twenty-one stages on 'the path of perfection') arranged in seven tiers with three heads in each tier (seven symbolising seven aspects of the bodhisattva path), forty-two arms (symbolising so many benign moods), eight legs (symbolising eight roads to liberation) and two wings (the left symbolizing *upāya* and the right *prajñā*). The deity is seen trampling upon eight heavenly kings (representing senses) and eight dragons (symbolising states of mind). The spouse that embraces him is described as the destroyer of three 'enemies' (or 'poisons'), greed, anger and ignorance. There are manuals in Tibetan describing these deities and elaborating the procedures for their evocation.

(2) The second of the three paths is '*anu-yoga*' (*bLa-Med-rGyud*), short for '*anuttara-yoga-tantra-yāna*'. The important detail here is the group of practices which may be described as *Haṭha-yoga*, involving bodily energies, the vital current and semen. The deities employed in rituals connected with such practices are usually of the 'father-mother' (in Tibetan *Yab-Yum*, 'two-in-one', Sanskrit, *yuganaddha*) variety. Iconographic representations of a god and a goddess locked in intimate embrace (as, for instance, Heruka and Vārāhī) are numerous in Tibetan Pantheon.

The notion that reality has two aspects, complementary to each other, and together constituting a perfect unity, is an old one. Even Aśvaghoṣa suggested it in his *Śraddhotpādaśāstra*. Nāgārjuna's *Pañchakrama* elaborates on the '*yuganaddha-method*' which seeks to eliminate the normal human dichotomy

between phenomenal involvement (*samsāra*) and transcendence (*nivṛtti*). Among the siddhas, Ghaṇṭapāda (or Vajraghaṇṭa, who perhaps initiated the ritualistic representation of diamond and bell to represent the two principles) and Kṛṣṇāchārya (Kāṇha-pā, Tib., lNag-Po Skyod-Pa) were advocates of this doctrine. The early siddhas spoke of it in terms of 'non-duality' (*advaya*) and 'synthetic unity' (*sama-rasa*). Later, a mystical veneer was given to it by describing it as the union of void or wisdom (*śūnyatā* or *prajñā*, Tib. *Śes-Rab*) with its manifestation as compassion or method (*karuṇā* or *upāya*, Tib. *THabs*).¹⁸ The idea of union is sought to be realised through rituals and associated contemplations.

(3) The third 'path', 'ati-yoga' (Tib. *Ati-Yoga-Thegs-Pa*), does not use either the images used in the first 'path' or the 'energy systems' used in the second. It confines its tool to mind alone. It is known as 'ati' ('beyond'), because it transcends both visualization and use of vital currents; and thus it goes beyond the reach of sensory functions and bodily mechanism. In Tibetan, it is called as "surpassing the uppermost" (*THod-rGyal*),¹⁹ and the manuals describe how in this method the material body (i.e., the awareness of it) "vanishes in a rainbow," that is to say as colours occur and disappear in a rainbow.

As a way to enlightenment, it is somewhat like Zen. The correspondence is not accidental. It should be remembered that Vajrabodhi who took the Tāntrik cult to China around 720 A.D. was a junior contemporary of another South Indian saint, Bodhidharma, who also went to China to found the Ch' an school (which in Japan became Zen.) Both were contemporaneous with Padmasambhava, and all three subscribed to the Yogācāra philosophy. The particular sect which swears by Padmasambhava was known in Tibet as the 'doctrine of perfection of meditation or *dhyāna*' (*rDZogs-Pa-Ch'en-Pa*). Padmasambhava's manual, which we have mentioned above, reads like a Zen text. It turns round the idea of one-mind' (*Sems-CHik-Po*), unknown but clear, unrecognised but radiant, clouded but free. Padmasambhava

suggests: "To know whether this be so or not, look within thine own mind".²⁰ 'Ati-yoga' is the art of looking into ones mind for the sake of self-illumination.

This third path has a further subdivision. There is first the path concerning mind itself (*Sems-sDe*). It makes the mind as pure as possible from all phenomenal defilement. When, as a result of this, fetters fall away and the mind becomes so pure and clear that whatever arises therein is objective and radiant, there appears the path that leads to mystical perfection (*Klong-sDe*). The mind here is free and easy; and its function 'effortless'. It can now look into its own innate nature, and this is known as the 'diamond bridge' (*rDo-rTe Zam-pa*). The third path, which shows up in the wake of the second, is styled 'deep instruction' (*Man-Nag-gi-sDe*). The yogi here is face to face with the void; the world and the body together disappear 'like a rainbow', and this is the moment of enlightenment. The Tibetan manuals describe this condition as the 'supreme power of the lotus' (*padma-dBang-rGyal*).

In accordance with the three main 'paths', *mahā-yoga*, *anuyoga* and *ati-yoga*, the practical discipline emphasizes respectively visualizations of deities, physico-mental exercises and intuitional understanding of ones own inner mind. The yoga-student usually spends three years working with his teacher and learning the techniques of visualization, the formulae for evocation and methods of contemplation. He receives initiations (*dBang*) and special instructions pertaining to the worship of tutelary deities (*Lung* and *KHrid*). After this, he retires to a solitary cell or cave, cut off altogether from all contact and freed from normal human cares, and spends another three years to perfect what he had learnt, test what he had received, and complete what he had commenced, all by himself. He now depends upon his own genius, earnestness, and fortune. Thus the aspirant is said to "stay three years in the open, and another three years in the dark" to attain the perfection of meditation. Instruction from the teacher forms the foundation for the Yogic career.

The *rNying-Ma* teachers follow a common graded course, traditionally handed down, to provide general instructions, both prior to initiation and after initiation in the early stages. When the pupil is advanced enough to enter into the esoteric path, the 'work of instruction' (*KHrid-Yig*) becomes not only specialized and oral, but specifically relevant to each pupil (according to his character, ability, inclinations and destiny). The role of the teacher (*bLa-Ma*) becomes particularly significant at this stage. Guidance is also sought from the pupil's personal protective deity (*Yi-Dam*), and instructions are sometimes claimed to be got from supernatural sources such as the 'spirits of wisdom' (*ḍākini*, *mKHah-hGro-lMa*).

It can be seen that the *rNying-Ma* tradition relied heavily on Tāntrik procedures and worked freely with the indigenous Bon material. The synthesis of these two aspects constituted the stuff of Vajrayāna, although the Mahāyāna doctrine determined its shape. The shape and stuff entered into a perfect union, like the very *Yuganaddha*.

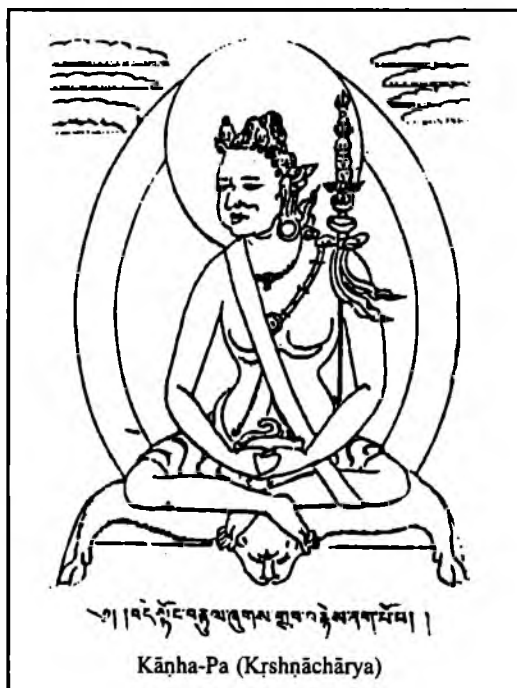
The three paths mentioned above belong to the Inner Tantra (anuttara-yoga-tantra): the first mahāyoga, to eliminate anger is said to be 'Male'; the second, anu-yoga, to eliminate desire, is 'female'; and the third, ati-yoga, to eliminate ignorance is 'non-dual'. The outer Tantra is in three divisions : kriyā, charyā and yoga. This category in the *rNying-Ma* tradition is the 'resultant' tantra, consisting wholly of Mahāyāna. The preparatory category for this is what is known as casual vehicles (*sūtra*) consisting of Hinayāna (*śrāvaka-yāna* and *pratyeka-buddha-yāna*) and Bodhisattva-yāna of the Mahāyāna pursuasion. They are stages of practice for achieving merit and insight. The *rNying-Ma* tradition recognizes three lineages:

- (1) Distant Oral tradition (Ring-gyud-kah-ma) derived from the original teachings of the Buddha;
- (2) The Intermediate Treasure lineage (Nye-gyud-gter-ma), based on the recovered treasure texts ascribed to Padmasambhava and
- (3) The lineage of profound clear vision (Zab-mo-dag-

nang), derived from the teachings of several later lamas involving deities visualized by them during meditation.

The rNying-Ma tradition relies heavily on the gTer-Ma or buried texts, which were profound and esoteric teachings, buried under the earth for the sake of protecting them from charlatons and exploiters and to preserve dharma for future times. There are two types of such texts; 'ground treasure texts' (Sa-yi-gter) composed and secreted by Padmasambhava himself; and 'allied treasure texts' (Gong-pai-gter), written by the disciples of Padmasambhava, who received the teachings in their dreams and during their meditations. Subsequently, these texts were unearthed and explained by lamas. The tradition also recognizes the role of clear visions (Dag-nang) as also that of whispered oral teachings (Nyan-gyud).

The tradition incorporates the basic teachings of Atiṣa,



Kāṇha-Pa (Kṛṣṇāchārya)

which were crystallized in the Ka-dam school. It has three lineages: (1) the graded path (ka-dam Nying-ma) as taught by Atiśa's disciple, dGon-po-ba; (2) the oral traditions (ka-dam Man-gag-pa), coming through Chan-nga-ba; and (3) textual explanations (ka-dam Zhung pa-ba) as handed down by Po-to-ba. These three lineages developed in due course as Sa-skya, bKah-brGyud (Kargu) and dGe-Lugs (Gelugpa) schools respectively, leaving rNying-Ma as the role representative of the older tradition of ka-dam. The three lineages are generally called Sar-ma tradition (or new texts), distinguished from the rNying-ma tradition (of old texts). This refers also to the distinction between the earlier translation of Indian texts till the great translator Rin-Chen-Zang-po (958–1055), and the later translations done by Rin-Chen Zang-po and others after him.



The Oral Tradition

Another important and interesting tradition in Tibet is *bKah-brGyud* (pronounced *Kargyu*). Its importance and interest is partly due to the personality and work of Tibet's great and popular saint-poet Mi-La-Ras-Pa (pronounced Milarepa). Although this tradition was formally inaugurated by the Tibetan yogi Marpa of Lhobrack, it had a definite Indian background; and its roots were explicitly in the Siddha cult. The list of teachers of the Kargyu sect commences with the legendary rDo-rJe-hCHang (*Vajradhara*), who revealed the doctrines characteristic of this sect to the Indian Siddha Tilopa (Taila-pāda), who, in his turn, communicated them to another siddha, Nāro-pā (Nāḍa-pāda or Nāro-panta), whose disciple was the Tibetan yogi Marpa. Marpa's teachers in India included two other siddhas, Maitri-pā and Kukkuri-pa. It is not surprising, therefore, that the Kargyu tradition is essentially Tāntrik.

Leaving out of account the mythical *Vajradhara*, Tilo-pa (988–1069 A.D.) seems to have been the main architect of the Indian original of this tradition, which however, is no longer



extant in India. Details of his life are obscure but he is the author of as many as eleven yoga manuals (like *Saddharmopadeśa*, *Guru-sādhana*, *Achintya-mahāmudrā*, *Āntara-bāhya-visha-nivṛtti-bhāvanā-karma* and *Tattva-chaturupadeśa-prasanna-dīpa*) in the Tibetan Canon. Some of his mystical poems (*dohas*) in Apabhraṃśa, along with Sanskrit comments upon them called *Sārārtha-pañjikā*, have been preserved in India²¹. The commentary describes him as 'the lord of the great yogis' (*mahā-yogīśvaras Tillopādah*).

Among his students were the great Dipaṅkara-Śrījñāna, (Atiśa) and the scholiast Jñānākara. The textual tradition of *Chakrasamvara-tantra* traces the lineage of *gurus* from Saraha through Nāgārjuna, Śabari-pā, Lui-pā, Guhya (?), Vijaya-pā, to Tilo-pā. Some of the names in this list also occur in the guru-lineage of the Kālachakra system, which however begins with Vajra-ghaṇṭa and through Kūrma-pāda, Kṛṣṇāchārya (Kāṇha-pa), Bhadra-pāda (Baḍe-pā) and Vajaya-pāda reaches Tilo-pā (Tillika) and Nāro (Nāḍa-pāda).

Mahā-panḍita Nāro-pā who carried Tilo-pā's tradition onward was a well-known scholar of Vikramaśīla, who succeeded the celebrated Jetāri as the *dvāra-panḍita*.²² He is believed to have been chaplain to the king of Kashmir before he came to Vikramaśīla. Legends preserved in Tibet describe how he met Tilo-pā in a crematorium, became his disciple and served him for twelve long years with intense devotion, despite innumerable troubles on account of Tilo-pā's violent and unpredictable temper. At length, he was initiated into the *Vajravārāhī* cult, in which he attained success in six months. The serene light that then emerged from his heart shone without a break for a month. He became a *yogin* and devoted his whole life to this *sādhana*.

His magical attainments were numerous. Walking along the road one day he saw the corpse of an elephant lying; he at once entered into it and made it walk into the crematorium. Another day, as he was begging for alms (with skull-cup as his bowl), a robber dropped into the bowl a knife, Nāro-pā stared at it, and the knife thereupon melted like butter, which



he quietly ate up, and walked on. Another eminent scholar of Vikramaśīla, Ratnākara-śānti (also a siddha, Śānti-pā), was engaged one day in worship-rituals and sent offerings for the manes with a pupil. When this pupil arrived at the altar to place the offerings, he beheld a terrible-looking *yogin* sitting on the altar. The pupil promptly got frightened, dropped the offerings and ran back to his master. The curious master came out and recognised Nāro-pā, at whose feet he sat and received many initiations.

Likewise, three other siddhas Maitri-pā, Ḍombi-pā and Kāṇṭha-pā, became his disciples. Dīpaṃkara-Śrījñāna (Atiśa) before he left for Tibet, was blessed by the dying Nāro-pā. It is recorded that Dīpaṃkara carried with him the relics of Nāro-pā to Tibet, and enshrined them there. *Haṭhayogapradīpikā* mentions 'Nāra-deva' as a *maḥā-siddha* (I. 5–9), and his name is honoured among the Nātha-siddhas.

He is said to have written as many as twenty-three works, and they are preserved in Tibetan. Among them are cult-

psychic heat (*gTum-Mo*); the assumption of phantom-form, (*sGyu-Lus*); the benefit of dream state (*rMi-Lam*); the obtainment of clear light (*od-gSal*); the transference of consciousness (*Po-Wa*); and the command over the intermediary state (*gRon-aJug* or *Bardo*).

Although Nāro-pā, one of the best minds a culture can produce, is forgotten in India, Tibet remembers him reverently as 'Mahāpaṇḍita' (*Na-Ro Pan-CHen*).²⁴ This is due almost exclusively to the fact that the great Tibetan master Marpa translated all his works into Tibetan and kept alive the Siddha's tradition. Marpa met him in Tirhut or Phul-hari in Magadha, where the latter was living in quiet retreat after a brilliant academic career at the Vikramaśīla University. The studentship of Marpa continued for sixteen years and seven months. It appears that Naro-pa had other Tibetan students, like PHam-Thin-Pa (who lived with the teacher for seven years) and Ri-Ri-Pa (who learnt from him the method of generation, *utpanna-krama*, and the method of accomplishment, *sampanna-karma* of chakrasamvara). But scarcely anything about him is known. They were teachers who favoured the attainment of wisdom by mediative techniques rather than by learned discussions about *sūnyatā* (as the Paṇḍitas did). Nāro-pā's death is placed around 1039 A.D.

Marpa (Mar-Pa-CHos-Kyi-bLo-gros, Lo-tSa-ba, 'the Translator'—1012–1096 A.D.) of LHo-Brag in Southern Tibet, studied under hBro-gMi (993–1078 A.D.) who had the distinction of being the teacher of the founders of two important sects in Tibet, Kargyu (founded by Marpa) and Sa-sKya (founded by dKon-mChog-rGYal-Pa, 1034–1102 A.D.). This interesting teacher lived in a tent amidst cattle, very much like one of them! He it was that inspired Marpa to seek teachings directly from India. Marpa visited India thrice and lived there altogether for eighteen years, during which period he studied not only under Nāro-pā, but also under Maitri-pā (b. 1007 A.D.), dPal-Yeses-Shing-Po and Grub-CHen-Shiwa-bZang-Po (the Indian names of these are lost). He records that he listened to 108 Indian masters (of whom Nāro-pā and

Maitri-pā were of course the foremost), studied 108 works on Sanskrit grammar and poetics, learnt 108 Tāntrik works (like *Hevajra-tantra*), and assimilated 108 oral traditions (like the *Four-word Precept*.).

Although his fame rests as a collector of Indian manuscripts and translator of Sanskrit texts, he was a great *yogin* 'having reached single-minded and one-pointed contemplation on the essence of the ultimate and excellent path, thus comprehending the utter void, both subjective and objective.' However, he lived as an ordinary householder, and was in his behaviour quite whimsical and unpredictable. He gathered a large number of students round him, of whom Mi-La-Ras-Pa (Milarepa) was of course the most celebrated. It is not generally known that this teacher of Tibet's greatest poet was himself a poet, and that he introduced a new style in Tibetan poetry.



During his second visit to India, He met Dīpaṃkara-Śrījñāna (*Atīśa*) and studied some texts with him. And when the latter went to Tibet, Marpa was one of those who eagerly welcomed him. It is recorded that Marpa was then 31 years old. But Marpa's disciples developed strange ambivalence towards Dīpaṃkara. They claim that the green Tārā cult which was transmitted to Marpa from Nāro-pā had also been transmitted to Dīpaṃkara, and Dīpaṃkara would have taught this Tāntrik tradition but for the counsel of his chief disciple Brom-STon-Pa against it. Milarepa said: "A demon had entered the heart of Tibet. That is why the venerable *Atīśa* did not preach Vajrayāna". It is to be noted that Dīpaṃkara preferred the worship of deities without their female counterparts, that is to say, without excessive Tāntrik involvements. His followers called this 'One-god worship' (*ekavīra-sādhana*) : but Milarepa described it rather caustically as "the widower aspect". While the Kargyu folk respect Dīpaṃkara, they regard his teaching as inadequate and half-hearted, illustrative of the well-known "master's fist" (*āchārya-mushṭi*).

Among Marpa's disciples four were foremost, the so-called "four pillars" : rNo-STon-CHos-sKu, rDo-rJe-mTHur-STon-dBang, Mes-STon-TSHon-Po and Mi-La-Ras-Pa. Marpa charged the first three to carry on his teaching in the matter of various esoteric doctrines, the four noble truths (sorrow, cessation of sorrow, and the method for bringing about the cessation of sorrow), origination of sorrow, idealist philosophy of 'great illusion' (*mahā-māyā*) and the inner meaning of the rites of the 'happy thunderbolt' (*dGyes-Dor*).²⁵ And as for Milarepa, he was entrusted with various meditational methods and was instructed to lead the life of solitary hermit on mountain-tops, in caves and jungles. But it so happened that it was Milarepa, and not the three others, that continued Marpa's tradition through a succession of eminent masters.

Marpa's particular doctrinal viewpoint as well as peculiar practical methods of enlightenment were crystallised in what came to be called the *bKah-brGyud* tradition. Its original name

appears to have been *dKah-rGyud* (*dKar* meaning white) : and the reference was to the habit of wearing white robes. Marpa, who was a householder and not monk, wore white robes. And his disciple milarepa, who too was not a monk although a celibate, had only a white cotton sheet wrapped round his body. They had adopted this mode of dress after Indian yogins. The name *Mi-La-Ras-Pa* means Mila (his personal name) 'the cotton-clad one' (*Ras-Pa*). His order of ascetics insisted for habit only cotton (*Ras-rKyang*), and that too white in colour. In contradistinction to the red habit of the *rNying-Ma-Pa* and the multi-coloured dress of the *Sa-SKya-Pa*, Marpa's sect was distinguished by white robes. But soon, the expression *dKa* ('white') was substituted by *bKah* ('word', 'utterance', 'command') and *bKah-brGyud* came to signify the 'line or succession of those who transmit the words of the teachers', or simply 'the oral tradition' (or 'the thread of the



Milarepa

word').

The oral tradition that was communicated to Tilo-pa by the mythical rDo-rJe-hCHung (*Vajradhara*) appears to have come in two streams, one through Nāro-pā himself and the other through his sister, Ni-Gu-Ma, who was also a disciple of Tilo-pā. Nāro-pā, Marpa, Milarepa were the architects of the first division, while Ni-Gu-Ma and her disciple KHyung-Po rNal-'Byor were responsible for the second. Ni-Gu-Ma is sometimes described as a *ḍākinī* of wisdom, and sometimes as the mystic consort (*yoginī*) of Nāro-pā, although generally she is looked upon as Nāro-pā's sister. It is not certain if she was at all a historical figure, because in the Tibetan accounts she is characterised as having one half of her body 'imponderable like a rainbow'. She is said to have taught KHyung-Po the art of acquiring a phantom body and the art of projecting multiple appearances in the sky, besides the six-fold doctrine of Tilo-pa. It is said that having perfected this art from Ni-Gu-Ma, KHyung-Po could show himself up in 128 different bodies, withdraw them all into himself again, sit in mid-air and preach to a crowd, and pass through rocks and hills as if they simply did not exist.

Whatever Ni-Gu-Ma was, KHyung-Po was a real person, albeit an extraordinary one. Born in 990 A.D. he lived to be 150. Early in life he studied Bon, got initiated in the rNying-Ma methods of *ati-yoga*, obtained proficiency in *Kāla-chakra-tantra* and went to India seven times, spending no less than fifty years wandering through India, Nepāl and Tibet. He studied under 150 teachers, but six of them left a deep impression upon him : Vasumati-panḍita, Vairochana-panḍita, Bhadra-sajjana, Rāhula-gupta, Maitri-pā and Ni-Gu-Ma. He is reputed to have studied also under Dānaśīla, who was a disāple of Nāro-pā.

The names of other teachers Yogi-Sva-Pa-hi rNal-'Byor-Pa, rDo-rJe-gDar-Pā, Lalita-Vajra and Ārya-deva are rdo-rJe-gDar-Pa, Chen-Po, Lalita-vajra and Ārya-deva are also mentioned. Accounts concerning his study under Ni-Gu-Ma vary. One account makes her teach him the 'six doctrines' of

Tilo-pa in a normal way, while another makes the teaching a mysterious initiation in an esoteric cult by a *ḍākinī*. When he returned to Tibet, he built 108 monasteries and spent in spreading what he called, Ni-Gu-Ma's teaching a little over thirty years. Later, Ko-Brag-Pa bSod-Nams-rGyal-mTShan (1182–1261 A.D.) carved out a distinct sect out of these teachings, the 'Sangs-Pa' branch of the *bKah-brGyud*.

More important than this transmission was the one through Nāro-pā, Marpa and Milarepa. Milarepa (1039–1122 A.D.) was undoubtedly one of the most eminent saints of the world. His life, as recounted by himself and as recorded by his favourite disciple Ras-CHung rDo-rJe (b. 1083), has justly become a world's classic. Most popular book in Tibet, it is a remarkable account of the spiritual unfoldment of a remarkable personality.²⁶ Milarepa's *Hundred Thousand Songs* is a monumental collection of inspired utterances, at once poetic and mystical.²⁷

Milarepa shunned publicity, frequented forlorn hills and caves, and lived the life of extreme asceticism. He did not teach in a formal manner, and did not accept disciples regularly. He changed his residence all too frequently for any organization to grow up round him. Nevertheless, many earnest souls were attracted to him, and he had a large following. Milarepa was known for his unprecedented success in the 'yoga of generating heat' (*gTum-Mo*) ; and as many as 108 students are said to have learnt this art from him.

Milarepa was an adept in other yogas as well, and about ten disciples became as well-versed in them as he was. They were instrumental in handing down the tradition. Two of his followers are prominent in the religious history of Tibet : Ras-CHung-Po (1084–1161 A.D.) known as "moon-like" and SGam-Po-Pa (1079–1153 A.D.), who was "sun-like". The former was more or less like the master, living in seclusion, and did not leave any cult or organization behind him. Milarepa sent him to India twice to get some doctrines.

According to him, there were in India, at that time nine

doctrines regarding incorporeal (*Lus-Med* 'body-less') *dākinīs*, five of which were communicated to him by his teacher Marpa; now Ras-CHung-Po was sent to fetch the other four. Ras-CHung-Po went to India, met Tiphu-Pa (?) a direct disciple of Nāro-Pā and Maitrī-pā, and obtained these doctrines and transmitted them to Milarepa. Milarepa taught them to Nam-rDSong-STon-Pa, who wrote books concerning them. This fact became the nucleus of an oral tradition, known as 'the line of Happy Hearers' (*dDem-Chog-SNan-brGyud*).

The other disciple, sGam-Po-Pa (or Dvags-Po), so called because he built a monastery (*sGam-Po*) at Dvags-po, was an interesting person. He hailed from a wealthy and influential family, studied medicine, but embraced the contemplative career when at the age of twenty-five he lost his wife. Stricken with sorrow, he became a monk of the *bKah-gDams* tradition, and practised austerities as taught by Dipamkara (Atiśa). When he was 32, he met Milarepa at Brin, and at once 'lost his heart for him.' And strangely enough, Milarepa, who normally dissuaded the prospective disciples, immediately took him as a disciple, and guided him in matters of doctrine as well as discipline. sGam-Po-Pa then retired to a cave, meditated for six months without a break, and perfected Milarepa's teachings in his own life. Although he preferred to live the life of a lone recluse, he built a monastery at Dvags-po in 1150 A.D., as desired by Milarepa, and began to teach.

Marpa had brought from India the 'mahāmudrā' doctrine (to be explained later), which he communicated to Milarepa, and he to sGam-Po-Pa. sGam-Po-Pa, however, had already been initiated into the *bKah-gDams* doctrines, and now Mahāmudrā got fused with them in sGam-Po-Pa. He wrote an excellent manual *Lam-Rim THar-rGyan* ('Graded Course to Salvation') which synthesizes the two traditions and presents practical methods of enlightenment.

A pretty story brings out the significance of sGam-Po-Pa's work. When as a *bKah-gDams*-Pa monk, he approached Milarepa, the following conversation took place between them:

Mila — ‘How long do you sit in meditation?’

sGam-Po-Pa — “Usually for six hours”

Mila — “What do you experience?”

sGam-Po-Pa — “Nothing at all.”

Mila (laughing) — “How can that be? You practise for six hours, and yet there are no signs of progress? Then you must give up this practice, and start right from the beginning another.”

sGam-Po-Pa was ready to do so, and he set about changing his monastic robes for white cotton as *Milarepa* was wearing. But *Milarepa* stopped him: “That is not what I mean! I do not want to make you a copy of myself. You must bring out your own inner teaching. My teaching is mine, yours must be yours.” Thereupon *sGam-Po-Pa* set up a hermitage three miles removed from *Milarepa*’s cave and began meditating. After six weeks, he had visions: the first day the Buddha appeared, the second day a *maṇḍala*, and so on. Each time, he reported his visions to *Milarepa*, who kept on saying “It is nothing! Go back to your practice.”

After a few more weeks, *sGam-Po-Pa* had the vivid vision of all the six worlds, and naturally he thought he had hit the mark. He ran to *Milarepa* to report, but *Milarepa* was at that time sleeping. The excited meditator woke up the master, and narrated the wonderful vision. *Milarepa* merely said : “Let me sleep! I am not a scholar like you. But I know that *Prajñāpāramitā* says that all this is mere illusion. I suggest you go back and practice!” *sGam-Po-Pa*, crestfallen and frustrated, returned to his meditation. At length, he dreamt one day that he had cut off his own head and that he saw it rolling down the hill. Thereafter there were no more visions, for the root of the ego was cut off.

sGam-Po-Pa was indeed a genius of synthesis. For instance, he is said to have received three different traditions of initiations of white *Tārā* : *Dharma-kīrti*’s through *Atiśa* to *Geshe Drepa*, *Vāgiśvara-kīrti*’s through *Amogha-vajra* to

Drepa, and Atiśa's through Nejorpa and Nyugrumopa. sGam-Po-Pa not only collected them but integrated them, and passed this in the Karma-pa line.

Being Milarepa's pupil, it was natural for him to emphasise meditation: "One brief glimpse of enlightenment born out of meditation is surely more valuable than all the knowledge acquired from reading books, listening to discourses, and thinking about them." But he was careful to caution that "a mere glimpse of reality may be mistaken for complete realization". And he also warned: "Meditation without adequate preparation through study and reflection on doctrine may lead to the mistake of losing oneself in the darkness of unconsciousness". His view of what constitutes meditation is clearly brought out in this statement: "To experience but momentarily the state of absorption (*samādhi*) wherein all thought-processes are quiescent is more precious than to experience uninterruptedly the *samādhi* wherein thought-process are still present."

How effective his instruction could be may be gleaned from the recorded fact that one of his disciples, gLing-Pad-Ma-rDo-rJe (1128–1188 A.D.), obtained enlightenment within three days. sGam-Po-Pa advocated the utilization of every event in life, however insignificant, as an aid on the path.

Milarepa's insistence that the pupil must not aspire to be a mere copy of the teacher but develop his own inner teaching bore rich fruit in sGam-Po-Pa's pupils. Each one of them formulated his own set of teachings, broadly of course within the bKah-brGyud tradition, but individualistic enough to inspire distinct sects. It is to be remembered that the personality of the teacher and his monastery are what distinguish the sects in the main.

One of sGam-Po-Pa's disciples, Karma-Dus-gSum-mKhyen-Pa of Kham (1110–1193 A.D.), who started the karma-Pa line of bKah-brGyud tradition, became a monk when he was only 16, studied under numerous teachers, got promptly perplexed, but found his problems solved when he met in his thirty-third year sGam-Po-Pa at Dvags-Po. He had also the good fortune

to meet Milarepa, practise meditation under his guidance, and learn from him the 'six-fold doctrine' of Nāro-pā and the teachings of Maitri-pā. After obtaining enlightenment, he returned to Kham and taught over a thousand pupils.

He assimilated into the tradition crystallised by Milarepa and sGam-Po-Pa the 'hidden revelations' from rNying-Ma sources. The Karma-pa sect that he thus founded came to great power and popularity not only in Tibet and Mongolia but also in parts of China, mainly due to the brilliant Karma-Pa-KSHi (which was a Mongolian expression for 'teacher', *sLob-dPon*), also known as Karma II (1204–1283 A.D.), and to Karma Rong-bYang rDo-rJe (Karma III, 1284–1339 A.D.), who originated the 'Red-cap' subsect. The latter's successor was the one who administered monastic ordination to the great TSong-KHa-Pa, the founder of the dGe-Lugs sect. The fifth Karma Master it was that introduced around 1410 the mystic dance as a sacred ritual.

Of the disciples of sGam-Po-Pa, the most earnest and most interesting was PHag-Mo-gRub-Pa (1110–1170 A.D.) He studied with every teacher he could find, and assiduously practised rituals and contemplations of all the available traditions, till he met sGam-Po-Pa. He founded the first great bKah-brGyud monastery in Tibet (gDan-Sa-mTHil), which became exceedingly wealthy after his death.

But he himself lived in a single celled little grass-hut, and spent all his time in meditation. He focussed his entire energy and attention on a single statement of his teacher, sGam-Po-Pa: "Leave the mind relaxed, it will attain tranquillity on its own. Leave the water undisturbed, it will become clear on its own." He did not care to formulate his teaching in a formal manner, nor did he nominate any successor. But eight of his many disciples founded in due course their own subsects.

One of them, Rin-Chen-dPal (1143–1217 A.D.), rendered bKah-brGyud heavily rNying-Ma-oriented. He even got busy with 'buried treasure' (*gTer-Ma*) and became well-known on this account. His meditational method involved the identification of the devotee's self with the tutelary deity by

means of stilling the mind and purging it of all discriminatory thoughts. He stressed the need for taking the vow to be reborn spiritually in this very life.

But another of PHag-Mo's disciples, bKar-Śis-dPal (1142–1210 A.D.), moved away from rNying-Ma and insisted on strict rule of discipline for the monastic community that he led. He did not allow women to enter his monastery, nor did he go out to the lay-community. He was a severe ascetic, and his model was Milarepa. He even forbade meat from the monastery kitchen.

Still another disciple of PHag-Mo, sTag-Lung THang-Pa (around 1185 A.D.), was likewise exceedingly austere. Besides no-meat and no-wine, he and his disciples did not even walk about the gardens of the monastery, much less outside ; they sat almost continuously in silent meditation.

PHag-Mo's disciples spread far and wide, and made bKah-brGyud ideas popular not only in Tibet but also in Bhutan and Sikkim. gTang-Pa rGya-lRas (around 1161 A.D.) was the disciple of one of PHag-Mo's disciples, gLing-Ras Pad-Ma rDo-rJe (1128–1288 A.D.). He had mastered the esoteric technique of generating heat in the body (*gTum-Mo*) in just seven days, and is credited with having taught this technique to as many as 50,000 students. He it was that systematized the 'eight-fold' bKah-brGyud teaching including the Nāro-Pā's six doctrines, Rin-CHen-dPal's five methods and the esoteric practices like the *gTum-Mo*.

The 'oral' tradition', depending to a great extent upon individual masters, became naturally varied in emphasis. If the Indian precursors like Tilo-pā and Nāro-pā were decidedly mystical and iconoclast, Marpa was less so. He preferred to base his teaching on 'the word of the Buddha', and believed in the efficiency of initiations. If he represented a formal 'bLa-Ma' (teacher), running a school and administering initiations, Milarepa was an ascetic and a mystic, preferring to lead a hermit's life. If his emphasis was on quiet contemplation, sGam-Po-Pa attached importance to the direct but active purification of mind.

But Karma Dus-gSum recommended breathing exercises in order to still the mental functions. If sGam-Po-Pa offered a graded course for enlightenment, PHag-Mo suggested a 'sudden' method. However, all these constitute a direct line of apostolic succession. Notwithstanding such differences in approach, the basic and common framework for the bKah-brGyud-Pa is 'the doctrine of the great seal (*mahāmudrā*), which is practically expressed in meditation. The fundamental outlook of the bKah-brGyud is best summed up in the words of sGam-Po-Pa : "With a detached mind as frame of reference (*gSHi*), using the body as base (*rTen*), surrounded by teachers and fellow-meditators as reinforcing agents (*rGyen*), employing the teacher's instruction as the main means one should seek enlightenment through the visualization and dissolution of tutelary deities; and this would help all sentient beings to be happy and safe."²⁸

The philosophical position of the bKah-brGyud-Pa is derived mainly from *Abhidharmakośa*, Maitreya's 'Five Books' (*Mahāyāna-sūtrālaṅkāra-tīkā*, *Dharmādharmatā-vibhaṅga*, *Madhyānta-vibhaṅga*, etc.), and Nāgārjuna's treatises on *Prajñāpāramitā* and *Mādhyamaka*. But the practices and rituals depend upon numerous Tantras (translated from Sanskrit into Tibetan) dealing with contemplation as well as visualization of tutelary deities. The major theoretical construct in the Tantras that bKah-brGyud-Pas work with is the *mahāmudrā*, which is described as a 'viewpoint' (*Ita*). However, *mahāmudrā* is not peculiar to bKah-brGyud-Pa. Almost all Tibetan traditions have incorporated this 'viewpoint'. But the reliance of bKah-brGyud-Pa upon *mahāmudrā* is especial and esoteric.

The viewpoint goes back to the earliest of Indian siddhas, Saraha-pāda among whose writings some (like *Mahāmudropadeśa* and *Mahāmudrāpraśnottara*) deal specifically with this subject. Another siddha, Kāṇha-pāda (Kṛṣṇāchārya), made this viewpoint popular ; he gave currency to the concept of *yuganaddha* (esoteric union, 'two-in-one', Tib. *Yab-Yum*) in the context of *mahāmudrā*. Later siddhas like Tilo-pā and Nāro-pā and saints like Nirū-pā and

Vairochana-rakshita built their doctrines principally on this viewpoint. And this is the heritage that Marpa inherited and communicated through Milarepa to Rechung.

It should be noted that Atiśa also had come under the influence of Nāro-pā and naturally incorporated the *mahāmudrā* viewpoint in his own teachings; this survived not only in the bKah-gDams tradition but also in the reformed dGe-Lugs-Pa. Thus there is a 'combined tradition' in vogue. The first Panchen-Lama, Pan-CHen bLo-bZang-CHos-kyi-rGyl-mTsan (1570–1662 A.D.), compiled 'the root-text' of the combined tradition and described it as "the main path all the Buddhas have travelled."²⁹

But the more important text relied upon by the bKah-brGyud-pa is the epitome prepared by the twenty-fourth teacher in Marpa's line, Brug-pa Padma-dKar-Po (born 1527), while he was residing in the Tibetan frontier of Bhutan for his pupil, the king of Kashmir, Zamphan Zang-Po (?). This teacher was a great enthusiast of the Tāntrik tradition, and he compiled no less than fifty-eight volumes of Tāntrik texts. Scholar, poet and saint, he achieved great celebrity in Tibet. When he went to Bhutan to do the work that Dipamkara-Atiśa did in Tibet, he was honoured there as the 'dharma-rāja' ('lord of religion'). The *mahāmudrā* viewpoint was crystallized and documented by him.

There is some confusion about what *mahāmudrā* means. *Hevajra-tantra* calls upon the devotees to adopt 'mahāmudrā' which involves the employment of one's own bodily energies; and 'mahāmudrā' is described there as "known only by one's personal experience" and as the "ultimate good."³⁰ There is little doubt that it originally meant 'the great seal', and signified a method of sealing up (or locking) the strength (physical, psychical and sexual). The well-known yogic manual *Gheraṇḍa-saṃhitā* mentions *mahāmudrā* as one of twenty-five 'seals' (like *sāmbhavi-mudrā*, *uḍḍiyāna-mudrā*, *nabho-mudrā*, *jālandhara-mudrā*, *maṇḍūkā-mudrā* and so on), employed for cleansing the central psychic passage (*sushūmṇā*).

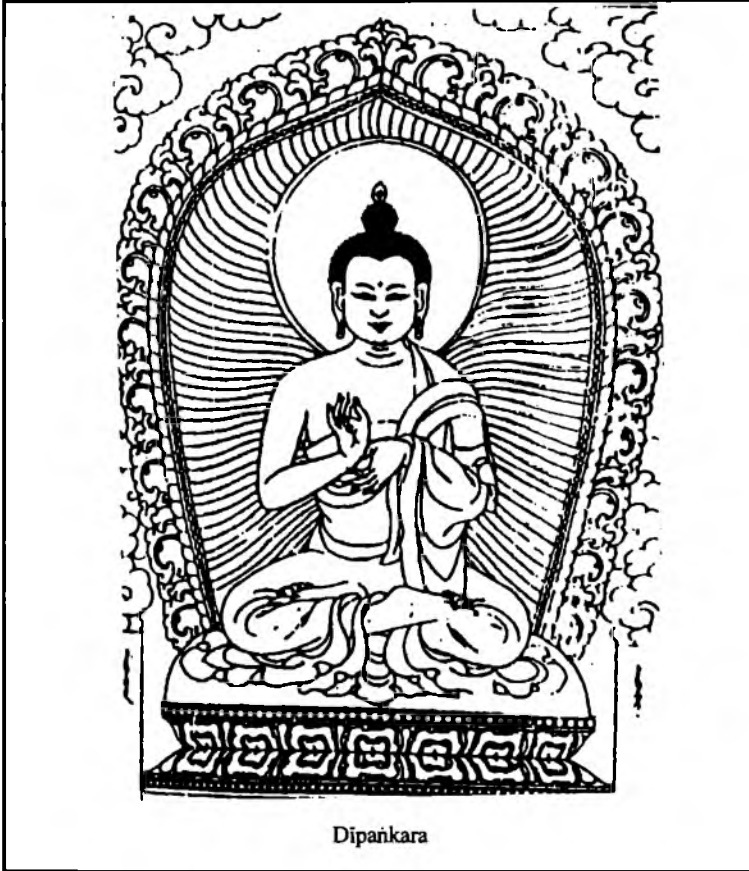
This seal was doubtless related to the techniques of breath-control (*prāṇāyāma*), artery cleansing (*nāḍī-śodha*), and no-thought exercises (*unmanī*). Saraha-pāda speaks of “the rush of wind breaking down, in the grasp of ones own mind.”³¹ Kāṇha-pāda describes the sealing-up of the door by which wind exists and the mind lighting up the dense darkness within.³² Elsewhere, he likens mind and wind (*mana-pavana*) to two drums that must be struck while he (*Kāṇha*) weds the untouchable *ḍombī-girl*.³³ The wedding that he speaks of is of course the mystic marriage that we find frequently mentioned in the songs of siddhas.

But in the prosaic and mischievous imagination of some later writers, the wedding became a physical affair, and *mahāmudrā* came to mean the passionate girl that one takes during the ritual performance of ‘secret congress’ (*guhya-samāja*). The corrupt idea and the degenerate practice got into even celebrated texts like *Guhya-samāja-tantra* (15th paṭala, p. 99), *Prajñopāya-viniścaya-siddhi* (3rd pariccheda, verses 6 to 20), and *Jñāna-siddhi* (1st pariccheda, verses 78–85). However, the ‘girl’ referred to by the siddhas was merely symbolic : the ‘no-nature’ (*niḥsvabhāva*) was the eternal female principle ; ‘compassion’ (*karuṇā*) was her body, and ‘pure bliss’ (*mahāsukha*) of enlightenment her only form. The *sādhaka* had to ‘enjoy her’ in order to experience this great bliss.

The Siddha Tilo-pā emphasises that this should be taken only in the esoteric sense: one should seek to unite with the ‘girl’ within ones own being and the ‘secret congress’ is meditation. It may also be noted in this context that the familiar symbol of sexual union in Tibetan iconography, *Yab-Yum* (Skt. *yuganaddha*), does not mean merely ‘male-female’; more specifically it means ‘father-mother’, and, therefore, it is actually a reverential expression. The positioning of the five dhyāni-buddhas in *Yab-Yum* aspect appears to have been the prototype of *mahāmudrā*.

The *mahāmudrā* tradition in Tibet is also related to other Indian sources, such as PHya-gNa (whose Indian name has

been forgotten, and who is said to have visited Tibet). Dīpaṅkara-Aṭīśa, as mentioned earlier, brought this doctrine to Tibet and stressed its esoteric significance. And his disciple Brom is reputed to have prepared his own version of *mahāmudrā*. But both of them were rather lukewarm in their



appreciation of this doctrine and did little to spread it among their followers. It was Marpa, who inherited this tradition from Nāro-pā, that was mainly responsible for the popularity of this thought-practice complex in Tibet.

The Tibetan expression for *mahāmudrā* is PHYag-rGya-CHen-Po (or - Mo in the feminine form). The first part PHYag,

connotes the sense of 'holding' or 'grasping' (the Buddhahood in, and beyond, phenomenal involvement); and the second, *rGya*, means 'to seal', 'to impress' (the phenomenal existence with enlightenment). The two together render the Sanskrit word *mudrā*, which is interpreted as encounter with ones own being, with reality, with the void nature. The lay folk are altogether ignorant of such encounter,³⁴ which is achieved by visualizations, regulation of breathing to the accompaniment of *rDo-rJe* recitation (*vajra-japa*), and the establishment of mind in pot-like posture (*kumbhaka*).

Mahāmudrā is described as the 'fire' that resides in the navel region, but scorches up the whole phenomenal being as it is rushes through the central channel (*sushumṇā*). This fire is kindled by making the 'original mind' press the breath into the central channel. The fire will not only burn up the 'dross' of the normal living but, will produce a light within that illuminates the whole being. In this illumination, the void nature (*niḥsvabhāva*) is wholly realized. And upon this realization, 'joy' results.

One may recall *Nāro-pā*'s derivation of *mudrā* from the stems *muda* (joy) and *rati* (enjoyment). The roots of the individual's entanglement with the world are here burnt up, and the individual's phenomenal existence is 'sealed' with the joy of enlightenment. The stages of 'action-seal' (*karma-mudrā*) which impresses the external reality, and 'Mind-seal' (*dharma-mudrā*), which impresses the internal reality are regarded as preparatory to *mahā-mudrā*, which goes beyond these two realities and integrates them. Following *mahāmudrā*, there occurs the 'commitment-seal' (*samaya-mudrā*), which impresses on the continuance of the career for the welfare of all beings.³⁵

In the *bKah-brGyud* tradition, *Dvags-Po* (1079–1161 A.D.), otherwise known as *sGom-Po-Pa*, who inherited the 'gret seal' from *Milarepa*, opened the doctrine and practice also to the uninitiated enthusiasts. Till the days of *Milarepa*, it was entirely esoteric, and depended wholly on initiations. But now there was an 'exoteric seal', which worked with the void nature of the mind, and employed devices to detach the mind from

external objects and to suspend its operations altogether. This seal is very similar to Zen. The 'esoteric seal', on the other hand, follows the yogic method of awakening the vital centres (*chakras*), and is very similar to the Tāntrik practices of the Nātha-Siddha tradition.

References

1. Kazi Dawa Samdup (Ed), *Śrīchakra-sambhāra-tantra*, Tantrik Texts, Vol. VIII, 1919, Introduction, pp. xxii-xxiii.
2. Robert Ekvall, *Religious Observances in Tibet*, Univ. of Chicago Press, 1964, p. 13.
3. *Ibid.*, p. 22.
4. In Tibetan *Ma-ni-CHos-aKHor* ('Maṇi-religion wheel', or *dharma-chakra*). It is a mistake to call it 'Prayer-wheel'. There is no 'prayer' involved in it, but a resolve to revolve the wheel of dharma as the Buddha did; and the pious Tibetan vows to a *bodhisattva*-career and, in ritual, makes use of hand and finger-gestures denoting 'the turning of the wheel of dharma'. He is also motivated by the Kālachakra ideal of destroying the cycle of existence (*bhavachakra*). It is true that the mystic formula "Om maṇipadme Hūm" called the Maṇi-formula is contained within the cylinder that is revolved. But this again is not a prayer but a resolve. There is a distinction made between "the mouth Maṇi" (*KHa-Mani*, i.e. recitation of the formula) and "the hand-wheel Maṇi" (*Lag-aKhor-Lo-Mani*), from both of which the pious one is not to be 'separated'; one is not a substitute for the other. The acts of virtue include thinking of Maṇi as a mental *sādhana*, muttering Maṇi as physical *sādhana* (*Lus-Las*). It is surprising that a careful author like Ekvall has written that "there is nothing to suggest that it came from India" (Ekvall, *op. cit.* p. 120). Both the idea and practice of 'revolving religion-wheels' are still current in Hindu orthodox rituals in India.
5. For this debate see S.C. Das, "Indian Pandits in Tibet", JBTS, Vol. I, 1893, Part I, pp. 1-31; and *Tattvasangraha* of Śāntarakṣita with the commentary of Kamalaśīla (Ed. E. Krishnamacharya), GOS, 1926, Foreword, pp. xvi-xviii.
6. Luther G. Jerstad : *Mani-Rimdu*, 1969, p. 129-135.
7. Also cf. N.C. Sinha, *Tibet: Considerations of Inner Asian History*, 1967, p. 40.
8. For details cf. Geshe Rabten, *The Preliminary Practices*, Library of Tibetan Works and Archives, Dharmasala, 1974, pp. 61-64.
9. Guiseppe Tucci, *Theory and Practice of the Mandala*, London, 1960; cf. also John Blofeld, *The Tantrik Mysticism of Tibet*, New York, 1970; Ajit Mookerjee, *Tantra Art*, 1968; and Herbert Guenther, *Treasures on the Tibetan Middle Way*, Berkeley, 1969.

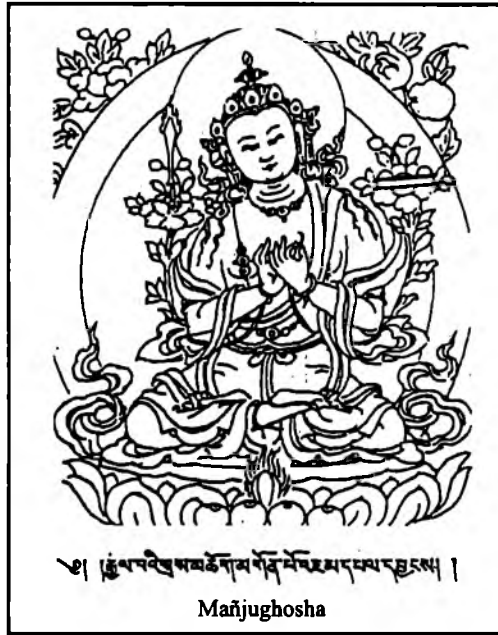
10. The Indian Manuals on *Maṇḍala*-ritual in Tibetan including Ratnākara-gupta's *Maṇḍala-vidhi*, Guhya-Jetāri's *Maṇḍala-vidhi*, Ratnākara-śānti's *Mandal-gyi-Cho-Ga* (the Sanskrit title is not available), Jayasena's *Maṇḍalavidhi-ratnāmarakāḥ*, Nishkalaṅka-vajri's *Maṇḍalavidhi*, and works with the same title by Karṇbala and Kamalaśrī.
11. cf. Alexandra David-Neel, *With Mystics and Magicians in Tibet* (Penguin edition, 1936), p. 225.
12. For an examination of these books from the 'buried treasure', cf. A.I. Vostrikov, *Tibetan Historical Literature*, pp. 27–57.
13. Cited in A.I. Vostrikov, *Ibid.*, p. 57.
14. Tr. by Lama Karma Sum-DHön dPal and Lama Lobsang Mingyur rDorJe in *The Tibetan Book of the Great Liberation*, ed. by W.Y. Evans-Wentz, Oxford Univ. Press, London, 1954, pp. 202–240.
15. *Ibid.*, p. 229.
16. *Ibid.*, p. 206, cf. footnotes 2 and 3.
17. cf. Li An-Che, "Rnin-ma-pa; the Early Form of Lamaism," *TRAS*, 1948, pp. 142–163.
18. *Yuganaddha-prakāśa*, (No. 13) in *Advaya-Vajra-Saṅgraha*, ed. H.P. Sastri, GOS No. XL "Śūnyatā-kṛpayor aikyam vidheyam na svakalpataḥ, śūnyatāyāḥ prakāśasya prakṛtyā yuganaddhatā". cf. also Herbert Guenther, *Yuganaddha, Tantrik View of Life* (Chowkambha), 1969.
19. Li An-Che, *Ibid.*
20. W.Y. Evans-Wentz: *The Tibetan Book of the Great Liberation*, p. 216.
21. *Dohakosha* (ed. P.C. Bagchi), Journal of the Department of Letters, University of Calcutta, Vol. XXVIII, 1935 "Tillopādasya."
22. cf. Herbert Guenther, *The Life and Teaching of Naropa*, Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1963.
23. *Sekoddesaṭṭhikā* (ed. by Mario E. Carelli), GOS, XC, 1941.
24. cf. Guenther, *Naro-pa*.
25. Li An-Che, "The bKah-bRgyud sect of lamaism", *T. American Oriental Society*, 1949, Vol. 69, No. 2, pp. 51–59.
26. W.Y. Evans-Wentz (ed), *Tibet's Great Yogi Milarepa* (Tr. Kazi Dawa Samdup), Oxford University Press, London.
27. A.D. Gordon (Tr) *The Hundred Thousand Songs of Milarepa* (Tuttle, Rutland), 1961.
28. *Graded Course to Salvation*, cited in Li-An-che, "The bKah-bRgyud Sect".
29. *The Great Seal of Voidness*, Library of Tibetan Works and Archives, Dharmasala, 1975.
30. "Mahāmudrām nishēveta sva-dehopāyasamyutam; svasamvedya hi sā vidyā mahāmudrā parā śubhā."
31. "Pavana-vittutthai niamanā gase" (P.C. Bagchi, ed., pp. 5–6).
32. "Jai pavana-gamana-duāre didha tala vi dijjai; ai tasu ghorāndhāre mana

divāho kijjai” (*Ibid.*, p. 128).

33. *Caryāpadāni*, ed. P.C. Bagchi, Journal of the Department of Letters, University of Calcutta, Vol. XXX, 1938. (Kṛṣṇācārya-pādānam’).
34. *Sādhana-mālā*, Vol. 2, p. 448.
35. See for a different account of the *Mudrās*, Herbert Guenther, *Buddhist Philosophy in Theory and Practice*, Pelican, 1972, p. 184.

CHAPTER FOUR

Definitive Tāntrik Texts



The classification of Tibetan Tāntrik texts into the following four groups is frequently employed, although its origin is rather obscure, and overlapping frequent. Manuals dealing with ordinary ritualistic activities (*kriyā*); those dealing with the conduct of one who intends walking the bodhisattva-path or participating in esoteric rituals (*charyā*); those dealing mostly with meditational practices, but also associated with mystic rituals and conduct (*yoga*) ; and those dealing exclusively with meditational practices (*dhyānottara* or *anuttara*). The classification being later than the Tantras, it is futile to expect the classification to be neat or complete. Ideally, however, each Tantra should contain details about the correct attitude the devotee has to develop (*Ita-Va*), meditational methods and rituals one must accomplish (*sGom-Pa*), the conduct one must



Mañjuśrī

perfect for proficiency in rituals as well as for general success in spiritual life (*sPyod-Pa*), and the fruits one should expect to obtain as a result of such practices (*lBras-Bu*). The more important of the Tantras (not more than about twenty) are found to conform to this norm.

The earliest of the Tantras, *Mañjuśrī-mūla-kalpa* (in Tibetan *hTam-dPal-rTSa-rGyud*), for instance, is a huge mass of interesting information about all the four aspects mentioned above. It is sometimes classified as a *kriyā-tantra*, sometimes as a *charyā-tantra*: it deals not only with ritualistic details (including *mudrās*, *maṇḍalas* and *mantras*), but with the devotee's conduct during consecration, while preparing for the rituals, while the rituals are being performed, and when the ritual is completed. But there appears to have been a widespread belief among scholars and aspirants that *kriyā-tantras* were inferior, and therefore very few important Tantras are explicitly included in this category.

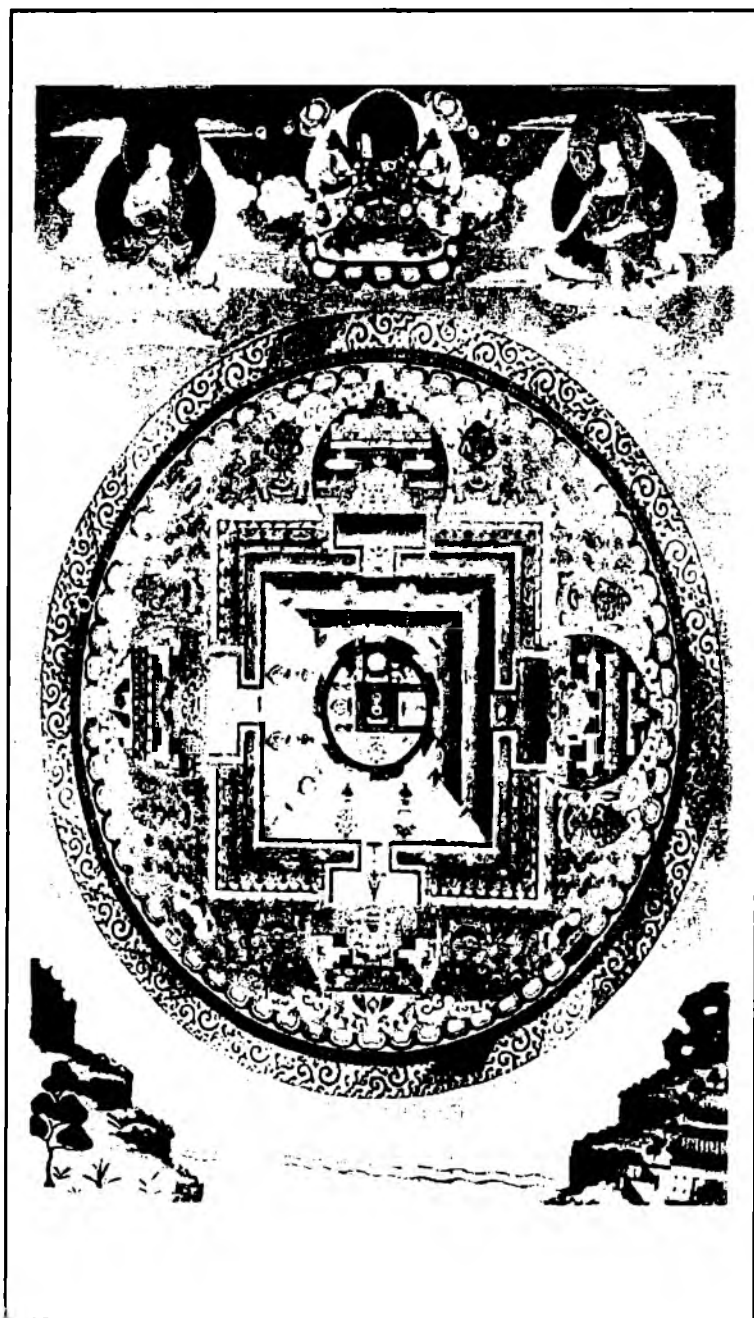
According to the Tibetan historian Tārānatha, both *kriyā* and *charyā*-Tantras were transmitted secretly to practitioners, but were made public contemporaneously with *Mahāyāna*-

sūtras. In other words, they were the first to appear. But *yoga* and *anuttara-Tantras* were later recovered (mysteriously), or composed severally, by masters like *Saraha-pāda*, *Kāmbala-pāda*, *Kukkuri-pāda*, *Kāṇha-pāda* and *Piṭo-pāda*. It is to be noted that many *anuttara*-and *yoga-tantras* are associated with *siddhas*, like *Buddha-kapāla-tantra* with *Saraha*, *Rakta-yamāri-tantra* with *Virū-pā*, *Vajradhāka-tantra* (in *Apabrahmṣa*) with *Bhāḍe-pā*, and *Guhya-garbha-tantra* with *Lilā-vajra*.

Another early Tantra, *Guhyasamāja-tantra*, is usually classified as an *anuttara-tantra* or as a *yoga-tantra*, because it mainly deals with the 'meditational Buddhas', insists on visualizations and esoteric diagrams, and describes ultimate reality as non-dual, void-like and incorruptible like the diamond (*vajra*). It rejects the necessity of both rituals (*kriyā*) and virtuous living (*charyā*) in order to achieve the highest end; it stresses the need for consecration (*abhisheka*) into 'the adamant path, (*vajra-mārga*), and suggests intense contemplation (with visualizations) in the 'cosmogram' of body-speech-mind ("kāya-vak-chitta-maṇḍala-dhyānam").

The 'proximate-means' (*upasāadhanā*) consists of mentally conjuring up the forms of deities, having settled oneself in void and by employing 'thoughts of enlightenment'. It became a basic text of *Vajra-yāna*. Known in Tibetan as *gSang-hDus-rGyud*, it was a 'sleeping text' (secretly communicated from teacher to pupil) till *Asaṅga* taught it. Still another early and important Tantra, *Mahā-vairochana-abhisambodhi*, is a *charyā-tantra*. This was translated into Chinese by a South Indian scholar of *Nālandā*, *Śubhākara-Simha*, who died in China in 735 A.D. The Buddha here appears as 'the great sun' (*mahā-vairochana*), surrounded by *Samantabhadra* and other *bodhisattvas*, and *Vajrapāṇi* and other *Vajradharas*, illumining the entire universe.

The Tantra calls upon the devotee to become one with the Buddha as 'the great sun' by means of meditations on the *maṇḍala*. He can obtain the highest end only in his own being, and by bringing into action his 'thought of enlightenment' (*bodhi-chitta*). Emancipation consists of purifying ones own



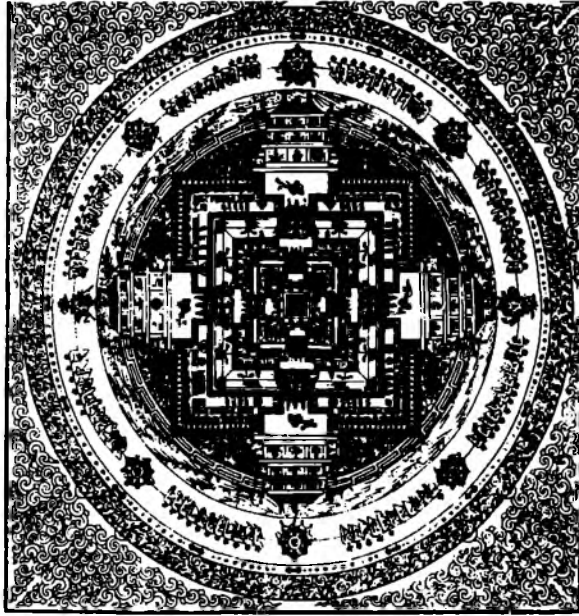
thoughts, which are in fact pure in their original, essential and ultimate nature. As a *charyā-tantra*, it elaborates on conduct, rituals, symbols and consecration. But there is also an unmistakable emphasis on *yoga*.

‘ This aspect becomes the major feature of another Tantra, *Vajra-śikhara* (alternately, or in another version, called *Sarva-tathāgata-tattva-saṃgraha*). This work was translated into Chinese by the South Indian Vajrabodhi, who went to China and spread the Tāntrik cult there, before he died in 732 A.D. These two texts, *Mahā-vairochana* and *Vajra-śikhara*, reached Tibet probably through the Chinese translations. They are justly classed there as *yoga-tantras*.

The early phase of the Buddhist Tāntrik cult was thus dominated by the four texts (*Mañjuśrī-mūlakalpa*, *Guhya-samāja*, *Mahāvairochana* and *Vajra-śikhara*), all of which incidentally were of South Indian origin.¹ The subsequent phase was characterised by the introduction of female partners in secret rituals (*yoginī*, in Tibetan *rNal-hBYor-Ma*). One of the siddhas, Luī-pāda, is credited with the recovery of a Tāntrik text which dealt with this novel idea, *Yoginī-saṃcharyā*. There is a suggestion even in *Guhya-samāja-tantra* concerning the advantage of having a ‘pretty and obliging woman’² as a partner in the ritual. Probably, this was meant to be more symbolic than actual. But there did come into being several texts that relied on the actual sexual ‘partnership with women’.

These texts styled themselves as *Yoginī-anuttara-tantras*. Important among them are *Hevajra-tantra*, *Buddha-kalpa*, *Chakra-saṃvara*, *Vajra-bhairava*, *Kṛishṇa-Yamāri*, *Chaturyoginī-saṃpuṭa* and *Mahāmāyā*. These texts work mainly with visualizations, imaginations, projections and symbolic rituals.

The impact of *Hevajra-tantra*³ was both extensive and deep. The importance of the work consists in its being the product of the movement towards integration of Mādhyamaka philosophy with *mantra-yāna*. Nāgārjuna’s formulation of Void (*śūnyatā*) and the practice of virtues (*pāramitās*) were incorporated into the yogāchāra emphasis on mind as the sole



reality, as, for instance, in the works of several scholars of Nālandā and Vikramaśīla, principally of Abhayākara-gupta (died 1125) and Ratnākara-śānti (about 1040), both held in high esteem in Tibet. It may be recalled that this fusion was the background for the emergence of what has been called 'Buddhist' Tantra.

The text of *Hevajra* ('He' is the vocative meaning the union of *prajñā* and *upāya*, and *Vajra* or 'the diamond' signifies non-duality and void) is based on the Mādhyamaka standpoint, but works mainly with ideas of meditations and visualizations; there are also spells and charms liberally introduced. In form, a dialogue between *Vajra-sattva* (the Buddha of Vajrayāna symbolising self) and *Vajra-garbha* (a bodhisattva who contains the seeds of diamond nature with himself), the Tantra pictures the Buddha in the fast and amorous embrace of his 'diamond woman'. The symbolism is the union of void and compassion, the integration of the male and female principles.

This idea is no doubt worked out in the text, but the

descriptions of approximations to such union are too vivid and too concrete to be construed as merely symbolic. The instruction to the devotee is to exercise his imagination and conjure up visions both in his own heart and in the space outside. He is to imagine himself as the youthful Heruka (the principal divinity, the Male) perched on a corpse (symbolic of phenomenal flux) and embraced by his bride (*yoginī*), Vajravārāhī (symbolising the means, *upāya*). The clasp represents phenomenal clinging; she is red and passionate (compassionate), throws her arm around Heruka concealing him (the reality); she is nude (utterly free from defilements), and holds the blood-filled skull (voidness).

The practitioner is advised to intergrate within himself 'compassion' (*kṛpā*, explained in the *Pañjikā* as the attitude that all beings are like oneself) and 'method' (*upāya*, or the technique of obtaining complete enlightenment), thereby eliminating all possibility of producing phenomena, subjective or objective.⁴

Although the various rituals leading to the ultimate realization of the Void-nature are described at great length and in all particulars, it is sought to be made clear that the devotee and the divinity do not in actuality exist, that the practitioner and the practice are in essence one, and that 'the grasper' and 'the grasped' are truly indistinguishable. It is emphasised that all this is merely 'projected' (*saṁsthita*), simply 'thought out' (*kalpita*). A *maṇḍala* is made use of: a lotus forms the base on which is laid out a triangle (*yonī*, vulva, the female organ), and inside the triangle is placed a corpse (to denote phenomenal existence), on which the practitioner, imagination) with the *yoginī*. He is the diamond (*vajra*) and she is the lotus (*padma*): and when the former enters into the latter, great joy (*mahāsukha*), also described as the innate, natural bliss (*sahāja-sukha*), results.

The practitioner himself is the embodiment of compassion as means ("kṛpopāyo bhaved yogi"), and his female consort is wisdom that is void (*prajñā-sūnyatā*). The union of the two is strictly at the level of psychological dynamism. Despite the

fact that the treatment of the topic is heavily loaded with sex terminology, the text claims that the ritual is not for sense-gratification (*bhoga*), but for enlightenment. However, the text concedes that there can be no happiness (physical or spiritual) without the body.⁵ It is true however, that the realization is not born of the body although located in the body (“dehastho’pi na dehajah”). The commentators of *Hevajra-tantra* are eager to defend that these instructions are merely metaphorical (being *neyārtha*, ‘to be drawn out’), and that they employ ‘the concealed language’ (*sandhā-bhāṣā*). But they also point out that these rituals are sometimes actually carried out, albeit by fools. While this Tantra did contribute to the development of an austere and practical outlook on enlightenment, it cannot be denied that it also encouraged licentious practices in the



name of *sādhana*—even as *Guhya-samāja* did. For after all, human happiness is both biological and spiritual; the one cannot be understood without the other.

Besides *Hevajra-tantra*, other texts like *Chakra-saṃvara*, *Durgati-pariśodhana*, *Abhidhānottara*, *Kālachakra* and *Pañchakrama* are widely studied in Tibet as basic texts. And there are numerous commentaries on them, both translations from Sanskrit and original works in Tibetan. *Chakra-saṃvara*, also belonging to the *Yoginī-anuttara* group of Tantras, is not available in Sanskrit. Its Tibetan translation made a profound impact on the Tāntrik tradition in that country. The Tibetan Canon has also preserved in translation the commentaries on it by eminent Indians like Kṛṣṇāchārya (said to be a disciple of the Siddha Kāṇha-pā who recovered the Tantra), Jayabhadra and Bhadrupāda. The Tantra is sometimes referred to as *Mahāsamvarodaya*, and sometimes as *Ḍākinī-jāla*. It may be that there were several recensions, revisions or redactions of the Tantra in Tibet. We have an edition of it by Kazi Dawa-Samdup along with its translation in English.⁶

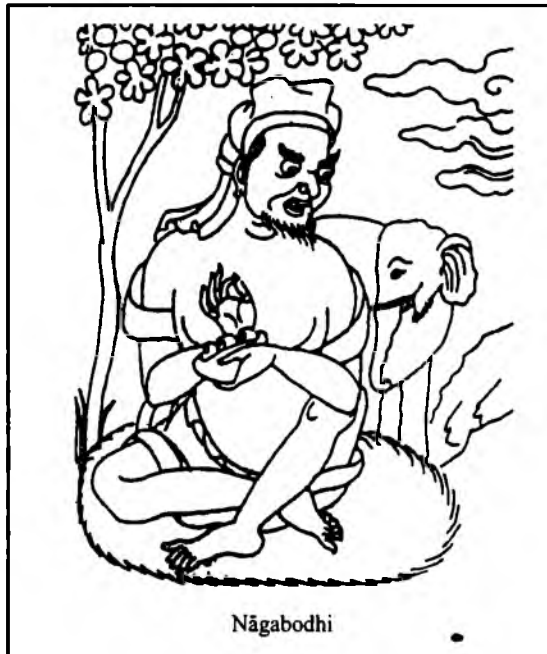
This Tantra celebrates the Vajrasattva Buddha as *Mahāsukha* ("Great Bliss", in Tibetan *bDe-mChog*) i.e. Heruka, along with his bride (vajra-yoginī) Vajravārāhī. There is a detailed account of the meditation which leads to the realization that one's own self embodies the united divinities (Heruka and Vajravārāhī), suddenly issuing from the midst of void. In contrast to *Hevajra-tantra*, the treatment here is sober, serene and restrained; there is not the slightest tinge of the outlandish. On the other hand, the deeper involvements of meditation are brought out with considerable psychological insight.

The Tantra commences with a novel suggestion. When one is about to sleep, he must imagine that his body belongs to the Buddha Vajrasattva (here Mahāsukha or Heruka), and with that thought gradually slip into the tranquil state of void. As soon as he wakes up, he should again regard himself as the Buddha Vajrasattva, and everything around him as constituting a *maṇḍala*. The title of the Tantra is derived from this detail. *Chakra* (in Tibetan *hKHo-rLo*) means the imagined *maṇḍala*,

and *samvara* (in Tibetan *sDom-Pa*) refers to the collection of deities (hence the alternate expression *sambhara*) arranged on the *maṇḍala*, with Mahāsukha as the central divinity.

Thoughts are projected on the *maṇḍala*, focussed there and then both the thoughts and the *maṇḍala* are absorbed into ones own essential and basic awareness. The identification on the part of the devotee with Heruka is sought to be achieved by intent repetition of the formula *Śrī-Heruka (h) aham* ("I am Heruka") along with the understanding of the true meaning of each syllable thereof. The various deities layed out on the *maṇḍala* are said to constitute the path, and 'the residents' are to be unified gradually with 'the residence'. The body itself is visualized as a diamond-*maṇḍala*, with various deities laid out. Then the inner *maṇḍala* and the outer *maṇḍala* are vividly brought together and deliberately fused. The Tantra curiously quotes Siddha Nāro-pā on the question of absorption of the two *maṇḍalas* into ones own self.⁷

It is likely that the Tibetan version of the Tantra incorporates



later supplements and commentaries, as Warder has suggested.⁸ The text goes on to describe the process of concentrating on Vajra-sattva by entering into a state of tranquility, where mind is devoid of all thoughts. Towards the end, two stages of concentration (*samādhi*) are mentioned: the first produced by mental effort, and the second independently of it. "By constant practice in the last, one becomes firmly established therein and gains that knowledge which transcends all worldly knowledge" (p. 67).

These Tantras, principally *Hevajra* and *Chakrasaṃvara*, crystallised the ritualistic details, hand-gestures, preparation for rituals and concentration, chanting of hymns and utterance of spells, making and offering of *gTor-Ma*, preparation of *maṇḍalas*, and processes of visualization. They also, in an indirect manner, stylized the form and content of instrumental music for ritualistic purposes and the set of dances (like *Vajra-mālā*, 'rDo-rJe-hPHreng') in the same context. They contributed to the definition of Tāntrik tradition in its theoretical as well as practical aspects in Tibet. Most of them undertook the rather difficult task of synthesizing the doctrine of void (of Mādhyamaka origin) and the practice of visualization (of Yogācāra origin). This sythesis, in fact, is what distinguishes the Tibetan Tāntrik tradition. Almost all of hundreds of *sādhana* manuals current in Tibet (a collection of which can be found in *Sādhana-mālā*, ed. by B. Bhattacharya, in two volumes, GOS, XXVI and XLI 1925–1928) reflect this synthesis.

PAÑCHAKRAMA

One of the early Tāntrik texts which achieved considerable celebrity and merited a large number of commentaries and annotations was *Pañchakrama*, classed as an 'anuttara-yoga-tantra' and ascribed to the great Nāgārjuna, who was at once the Mādhyamaka philosopher, Tāntrik author, siddha and alchemist; we have already referred to him. His *Pañchakrama*, the Sanskrit original of which is luckily available to us,⁹ deals with void, *śūnyatā* (in Tibetan *sTon-Pa-Nyid*), the main theme

also of his *Mādhyamaka-kārikā*. In the latter work, void is described as the 'middle path', because it avoids the extremes of existence and non-existence; and it is characterised by the non-origination of all self-nature of phenomena.¹⁰

Although negatively worded, Void is the ultimate reality, and the *summum bonum* (i.e. *nirvāṇa*) consists in the complete stoppage of all mental constructions concerning existence and nonexistence. Reality is both conditioned (*samvṛti*) and absolute (*paamārtha*); they are but two levels. The former is represented by the world of phenomena, while the latter is beyond it. Conditioning reality to phenomenal framework are the eight dimensions: origination and cessation, persistence and interruption, unity in multiplicity, approach and withdrawal.¹¹

These conditioning dimensions prevent the realization of the ultimate reality. It is when they are pulled down that the ultimate reality shines like the quiet but bright light of the moon-lit night. The mind, freed from all conditioning factors, leads us to this 'suchness' (*tathatā*). It can be seen that *Pañchakrama* follows the same line of thought, but in a more practical context, its approach is clearly Tāntrik.

This Tāntrik treatise of Nāgārjuna is in five sections, the third of which is ascribed to a later author, Śākyamitra (who, according to Tārānātha, was a contemporary of king Devapāla of Bengal (705–753 A.D.). Of the commentaries on this work, the one by his disciple Nāgabodhi was well-known. A south Indian, this is described in the *Blue Annals* as a teacher of Mahā-yoga-tantra (so-called 'father-tatnra', *PHa-rGyud*). Tārānātha records that after the death of Nāgārjuna, Nāgabodhi withdrew into a deep cave on Śrīparvata (in Andhra) and meditated for twelve years without a break before he attained *mahāmudrā-siddhi*. Other Indian commentators include Bhavya-kīrti and Rakshita-pāda.

It is said¹² that *Pañchakrama* is in the nature of an extract from Guhyasamāja, which Nāgārjuna learnt from his teacher Saraha-pāda. The conception of five *dhyāni-buddhas*, the doctrine of perfecting body-speech-mind complex in order to make their nature adamant, and the employment of spells

and diagrams for spiritual ends are no doubt common to both works. But *Pañchakrama* presents a more advanced stage of thought, and works with Yoga ideas and practices, quite unlike the earlier work. *Pañchakrama* ('Five-fold Passage') analyses void with respect to cause and result into four grades (more properly stages): Void (*śūnyam*), Over-Void (*sarva-śūnyam*), Great-void (*mahā-śūnyam*), and All-void (*sarva-śānyam*). The first, linked to a woman, is described as 'knowledge' (*prajñā*) and the second, likened to a man, is described as the means (*upāya*). The commingling of the two (which is a typical Vajrayāna conception) produces the third stage where 'self-base' (*svādhishṭhāna*) is obtained. Beyond that is the imponderable, unchanging, non-dual and luminous (*prabhāsvara*) Void.

It is important to note that Void here is a positive principle, a diamond (so called because it is the uncorrupt and firm essence). Its original and unconditioned expression is regarded



as 'Vajra-sattva' a deity whom *Pañchakrama* praises: "Freed from existence and non-existence but potent to assume all forms, this Vajra-sattva embodies all loveliness when reflected upon."¹³ Although like space empty, he is the 'own-nature' of all phenomena; hard to grasp and impossible to discuss: uncaused and all-pervading, he is pure and quiet; he is known only to the *yogins*.¹⁴ And the view that he is to be known in ones own being by each one of us (*pratyātmavedya*) is shared by this text.

He is removed from us, not actually but in effect, because of our phenomenal involvement. The Void-nature is ignored or forgotten, and we create a seemingly solid world out of our own thoughts and clings. We are thus trapped in the cage of our own making, and fuss about. The aspirant has to shake this off by yogic practices in gradual measures in order to 'return home', to reach the All-Void, and to enjoy the bliss of utter and unshakable tranquillity. *Pañchakrama* as a Tāntrik manual describes the major stages on this spiritual journey, from the phenomenal void to the transcendental Void. The journey (or passage, *krama*) is only metaphorical, for in the ultimate sense there is neither 'coming' nor 'going'. The stages are delineated only for the benefit of aspirants; they should not be construed as divisions or aspects either of Void itself or of Void-realization.

The first stage is described as 'lamp-light' (*āloka*), viz., the light as dependent upon the lamp (*paratantra*). Mind is busy with phenomenal presentations, gathers impressions and organizes them; it constructs its own images and projects them outward. Transactional knowledge (*prajñā*) characterizes this stage. The description that it is the 'lotus' on the lunar disc (*chandramaṇḍala-pāñkajam*), a point (*bindu*), and the first vowel (*a*) have involvements of visualization, to be explained later.

The second stage is 'mere manifestation of light' (*ālokābhasa*), independent of the lamp-base, like unto the rays of moonlight. It is called 'Over-Void' because the phenomenal presentations cease at this stage to trouble the mind; the mind

overcomes them. But the mind does not stop all its activity; it continues to be busy with constructions, imaginations and reflections (*parikalpita*). But they are all merely mental states (*chaitasika*), without an outward involvement of whatever sort.

If the first stage is *prajñā*, the second is *upāya*; if the first is female, the second is male; if the first is symbolised as lotus (*padma*, which incidentally also means vulva), the second is diamond (*vajra*, which also means penis). The union of the two is represented by the third stage, which is 'great' (*mahā*) on this very account.

There is here neither the lamp-based light nor the mere manifestation of light. There is, on the other hand, an intuitive apprehension of light (*ālokalabdhi*). It is no longer dependent, nor is it constructed, but is is unconditioned and absolute (*parinishpanna*). The important detail here is that the mind is 'self-based' (*svādhishṭhāna-chitta*).¹⁵ Freed from all factors of conditioning both within oneself and outside, mind can now



Nāḍapāda

settle in itself. But it is still only mind, and therefore there still persists some duality between subjectivity and objectivity.

The final stage, however, is altogether free from this duality, for it is now free from mind. One neither knows anything as existing, nor does one know anything as not existing. And the awareness here is impossible to be expressed anyhow. It is called All-Void, because it has no beginning, no end; nor is there any subsistence in between. It comprehends all that could be thought of. Although it is the final stage of achievement for the aspirant, it is not by any means a new condition of Void. It is so all the while, and in fact, the Void in the first three stages proceed from the All-Void.

Interesting in *Pañchakrama* is the account of mind's function. For "mind is the means alike of bondage for the fool and of Buddhahood for the wise". In the first stage of transactional Void, mind manifests its thirty-three modes. They are called defects or defilements (*doshas*), because they pervert, or hide, the true nature of Void. They include bodily sensations like introspection and doubt.

In the second stage, when the objective base has been eliminated, mind increases its functions. There are forty modes enumerated here; and they are termed 'natural dispositions' (*prakṛtayah*). However, they do not endure for long, for they are deprived of transactional strength. The modes in this category include passion, pride, pleasure, valour, courage, greed, contentment, patience and so on. In the next stage, there are seven natural defects or defilements (*prakṛti-doshas*), all of which are passive: forgetfulness, confusion, stupor, lethargy, and so on. Altogether there are eighty mental states which screen the all-Void from Void. They persist during day-time and also during night, thus making a total of one hundred and sixty mental states, keeping the transaction (*vyavahāra*) going.

Also of interest is the speculation that the vital currents in the body (lit. the winds, *vāyu*) also carry along with them the mental functions. So long as the winds move within, thoughts keep on occurring, because the vital winds necessarily carry

them along. In the first stage, the vital winds are mixed up with thoughts; thoughts are passively carried along with the main stream. But in the second stage, thoughts are not passive at all, but dominate the winds. That is to say, the vital currents are not allowed to cloud and confound, determine and dominate the thoughts. Mental processes become independent of bodily functions, freed from biological necessities. Vital winds being constantly moving, the mind that follows them is naturally in a constant state of flux. When, however, the mind is freed from this involvement, it can be on its own. But it is not until the vital currents are prevented from moving at all that the mind can cease its functions altogether. "When the wind does not arise, there is no appearance (of mind); it becomes stable."

Naturally, therefore, techniques of 'vital-current-control' (*prāṇāyāma*) figure prominently in the Tāntrik practices. *Pañchakrama* suggests an interesting method, which, however, appears to have been an old and tried technique in India. The five dhyāni-buddhas of the *Guhya-samāja* located in the body are supposed to transform themselves into five lustres; and these lustres are then fused into a mass and focussed in the region between the eyebrows (*nāsāgra*, 'the top of the nose', not the 'tip', as frequently mistaken). "The five vital currents in the body represent the five dhyāni-buddhas, and they are also made into a mass (*piṇḍarūpeṇa*) and focussed in the region between the eye-brows. The devotee meditates on the *mantra* given to him by his teacher and thus renders his mind point-like (*cittam bindu-gatam*, 'mind gone into a point')".

This is *prāṇāyāma*, according to *Guhyasamāja*, as quoted approvingly in *Pañchakrama*. The mass of bodily and mental functions are sought to be focussed on the nose-top in the form of a mustard-seed. "Imagine a mustard-seed on your nose-top, and imagine the entire world as contained within it; imagine that all knowledge rests there", is the counsel to be found in this text.¹⁷

The idea of *yuganaddha* (two-in-one, in Tibetan *Zung-hTung*) is employed significantly in *Pañchakrama* (Ch. I). The

commingling of the first two stages, the yuganaddha of *prajñā* and *upāya*, is preliminary; and the commingling of the third and the fourth, the yuganaddha of *svādhishṭhāna* and *prabhāsvara*, is the final. The final state of utter unity is realized only when the twin notions of origination and cessation (*samsāra-nirvṛti*) of phenomena and its purification (*saṅkleśa-vyavadāna*), are completely eliminated. One who has attained to this state experiences 'great bliss (*mahāsukha*) and all distinctions vanish for him. He looks upon all alike; day and night are the same for him; dream and waking are not different; pleasure and pain evoke in him the same responses. What is lost or what remains does not bother him. He regards heavens as mere waves of the ocean, unstable and quickly passing. Virtue and sin cease to exist for him. Body, speech and mind are all perfected and united; they become diamond-like. *Pañchakrama* calls this 'Vajra-yoga'.

Spiritual Cultivation

The Tāntrik rituals in Tibet have assumed a stereotyped pattern as regards the preliminaries, owing to the impact of the text mentioned above. The shorter texts included in the *Sādhana-mālā* collection bear this out clearly. It is usual for the rituals to commence with a confession of sin (*pāpa-deśanā*), made in the imagined presence of all the teachers, bodhisattvas and buddhas. The stylized formula is; "whatever sins have been committed, and caused to be committed, and approved, and are being committed, in body, speech or mind by me in this life, or in any other, while passing through the beginningless and ceaseless transmigration, all that I confess before this assembly of revered gurus, buddhas and bodhisattvas."¹⁸

This is followed by an approval of the meritorious deeds (*puṇyānumodana*) done by all the completely enlightened buddhas, solitary buddhas, lay buddhas, their spiritual children, bodhisattvas, ḍākinīs, gurus and other beings residing in all the three worlds.¹⁹ Then the devotee seeks refuge in the 'three jewels' (*ratna-traya-śaraṇa*): the Buddha, the Dharma and the Sangha. In the Tibetan practice, however, the three

are prefaced by a formal refuge sought in the guru, and at the end, one seeks refuge in one's own personal deity (*Yi-Dam*). Following this, the pleading (*yāchanā*) that the reverend ones may bestow the unsurpassed religious instruction (*anuttara-dharma-deśanā*) follows.

All the above is done in the visualized presence of, and as witnessed by, the august and vast assembly of the holy ones as mentioned above. With the transference of merit, the preliminaries are concluded, and the vision of the assembly is dismissed with the formula "Om Āh Mūh". The assembly either dissolves in the clear sky from which it emerged and in which it was projected, or dissolves into the devotee's own body. Now he is all alone, both physically and psychologically; he has a sense of utter isolation, but feels fortified, and the real work of meditation now starts.

In Tibet, it is usual for the monks of some sects like the *bKah-brGyud* to shut themselves up for shorter or longer periods (sometimes years) in what are called *TSams* ('barriers', actually acts of retiring beyond a barrier which must not be crossed by others). Cells are walled up, and the hermit inside the dark and quiet interior may have no contact whatever with fellow-human beings (although food is supplied regularly through a small inlet). He is completely silent and secluded. This is considered the best condition for the practice of void-visualization.

As a preparation for this hard practice, it is necessary to purge the ego of violent and inimical dispositions²⁰ by cultivating the 'four immeasurables' (*apramāṇāni*, boundless states of mind, also called 'divine states', *brahma-vihāras*). The classical list includes friendliness (*maitri*, Tib. *gGaṇ-va*), compassion (*karuṇā*, Tib. *dNying-rTe* or *TSHad-Med-bZHi*), cheerful contentment (*muditā*, Tib. *Byams-Paz*) and equanimity-indifference (*upekshā*, Tib. *bTang-SNyoms*).

This list has been inherited from the earliest strata of Buddhist lore. Friendliness is defined as intense love for all beings in the world: the love one would have for an only son who is of excellent conduct should be shown also for all

creatures; and it is even suggested that this love should be multiplied a thousand-fold. It is a loving desire to secure the welfare and happiness of all beings.²¹ Compassion is the urge to save all beings from the three kinds of suffering (physical, mental and spiritual), the longing to lift people above both sorrow and causes of sorrow, and the resolve to eliminate the sufferings of others and to strive towards that end.²²

Contentment is cheer born out of appreciative satisfaction at the wholesome conduct of others around, at their prosperity, and at their enjoyment of life. It also includes sympathetic joy that there are means available to work out the welfare of others, and satisfaction that one is enthusiastic about leading all beings to Buddhahood. It is described in some texts as the zealous wish that all beings be happy.²³ And finally, indifference is to indulgently ignore the defects or lapses in others, to courageously ignore the obstacles on the way to secure the happiness of others, and to carefully withdraw looking upon all beings with equanimity, being utterly indifferent to gain and loss, praise and blame, happiness and misery. It also means being indifferent to worldly transactions characterised by eight-fold dispositions (gain-loss, fame-ignominy, praise-blame, happiness-misery) and being utterly disinterested in everything unconnected with ones spiritual progress.²⁴

With this, the devotee is prepared to concentrate on the main part of the *sādhana*, viz. void-cultivation. There are in it four well-defined stages: generation of enlightenment-thought (*bodhichitta-utpādāna*); reflection on, or contemplation of, the void nature of things (*śūnyatā-chintana*); visualizations (*drīṣṭi-mārga*, Tib. *mTHong-Ba-hi-Lam*): and withdrawal into void (*samhāra-krama*). Sects differ in their emphasis on one or other of the four stages, although every *sādhana* involves all four. The more conservative of the sects place absolute emphasis on the first stage, and rely on Śāntideva's great manual *Bodhi-charyāvatāra* ('Descent into the road to enlightenment').²⁵ TSong-KHa-Pa described bodhicitta as the threshold to the house of Mahāyāna, and quoted with approval Atiśa's query "What is the use of all the Tāntrik initiations

without bodhichitta being awakened?"

Bodhichitta originally meant merely the thought of enlightenment. We have already mentioned how at the hands of the siddhas it acquired a technical complexion, and how in *Guhya-samāja-tantra* it achieved unprecedented importance. It became a typical Mahāyāna concept, emphasizing the vow of helping humanity by one's own enlightenment. It is said to be rooted in the four 'immeasurables', described above.

Śāntideva's distinction between the thought of the vow or aspiration (*bodhi-praṇidhi-chitta*) and the resolve to march towards enlightenment or entrance (*bodhi-prasthāna-chitta*) when once bodhichitta has been aroused, was of practical significance. The dGe-Lugs-pa regard bodhichitta-arousal as all important inasmuch as it eliminates all obstacles, physical and mental, and it helps 'collect merit' (*TSHogs-Lam*) and 'develop insight' (*mTHong-Lam*). In its essence, it is cherishing others before oneself; but it is an urge to develop merit in oneself and develop his own insight in order to help others. This is the theme of the great work, *A Lamp on the Path to Enlightenment* (Tib. *Lam-Rin-CHen-Mo*), by the reformer TSong-KHa-Pa.²⁶

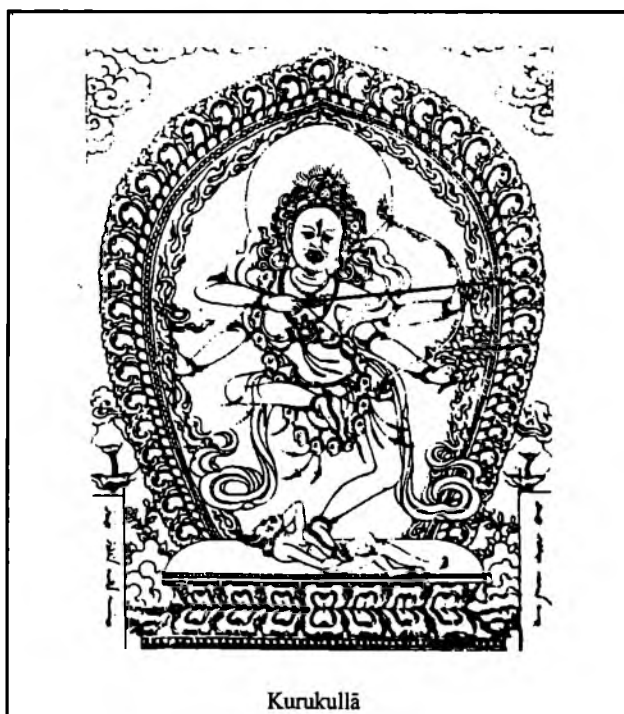
Without this initial equipment, the other two 'holy' things in every Tāntrik ritual, viz., the void-contemplation and merit-dedication (which marks the final phase of the ritual), would be ineffective. Bodhichitta is described as productive of 'physical merit'²⁶ which provides the basis for the balances, the mental merit to be acquired by void-contemplation. In the analysis of TSong-KHa-Pa, bodhichitta-arousal in 'intentional thought' of enlightenment: the two are like two wings that lift the devotee to the heights of enlightenment.

Contemplation of void is, of course, the heart of the *sādhana*. Void is the emptiness of characteristics both of the percipient subject and the perceived object: non-dual and undifferentiated awareness.²⁸ It is free from the stains of subjectivity and objectivity, like unto the clear sky of summer noon.²⁹ It is said to comprehend in itself the essence of the nature of all things.³⁰ It is devoid of own-nature (*nih-*

svabhāva), and altogether unsupported (*nirālamba*), but projected or created (*nirmīti*).

One of the methods of void-contemplation is to intently reflect that “all things are supported by mind.”³¹ *Heruka-sādhana* explains “Everything is sky-like, and the sky is devoid of characteristics. All things are like magical presentations; whatever one sees, or touches, or experiences in this world. With such thoughts one must abandon the one and the many, and regard his own body and every object around him entirely empty; and then his entire mind or consciousness should be attenuated to the subtle form of the letter ‘a’, exceedingly small, unagitated by the waves of thought. This letter is no doubt an imagination but a helpful one (*bhrānti-madapyupakāryah*).”

The help spoken of here is with regard to visualizations that constitute the next stage of the practice. Another ritual manual,



Ratnākara-gupta's *Dvidhuja-Śambaro-padeśa*, prescribes "even as the breath goes to the mirror and spreads all over (its surface) and disappears, the *yogin* must enter into the myriad of beings again and again."

There are two formulae that are employed invariably in void-contemplation. One is "I am of the nature of the adamantine wisdom of Void" (*śūnyatā-jñāna-vajra-svabhāvātmako'ham*) and the other is "all things and events are pure by nature; I am pure by nature" (*svabhāva-śuddhas sarva-dharmah, svabhā-śuddho'ham*). These two formulae are actually meant to reinforce (*dṛḍhikaraṇārtha*) the void-contemplation: they are employed as props for contemplation.

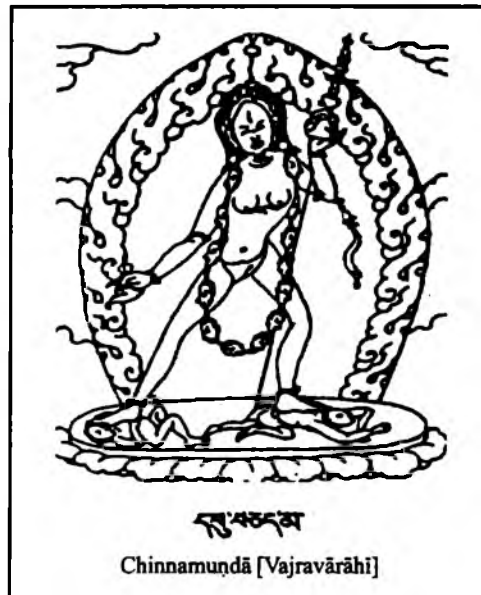
The explanation offered by TSong-KHa-Pa takes into account the ego-context of the first formula (*ātmakah*, 'the self', and *aham*, 'I'). It is no doubt an egoity (*ahamkāra*) that



is generated, as many *sādhana*s explicitly mention. But the egoity here is characterised by the wisdom of void ("mind of one taste with the void, altogether empty, without identifiable marks and devoid of desires and urges," TSong-KHa-Pa). The purpose of the practice is to rid the self of all content, make it pure (which it essentially is), and attune the mind to the idea of void.

The void and attunement together constitute the adamantine wisdom. It signifies according to TSong-KHa-Pa, indissolubility of emptiness of the objective world and the wisdom of the subjective world. It is described as diamond because it is stable, unaltered by adversity, capable of overcoming all adverse conditions, and free from cause or effect.³²

The application of these two void-formulae to the bodhichitta already aroused and made alert results in effective meditation where the void is not only realised, but cultivated. Meditation now becomes 'productive' or 'creative' (*Skyed Rim*). Visualization of deities involved here is not only the major element of Tibetan Tantrik *sādhana*, but its peculiar feature.



The Value of Visualizations

The Tibetan yogins spend long stretches of time trying to perfect their faculty of visualizations. Most of them spend several (three to seven) years over this, with single-minded devotion, and doing little besides this practice. They acquire initiations into the worship of various deities from several masters, and accomplish the visualization of each deity in the specific and stylized manner. Perhaps we should remind ourselves here that initiations (*dīkshā*, *seka* or *abhisheka*, Tib. *dBang*) are important in the Tāntrik tradition for a variety of reasons. The student receives a deity for worship, a formula for repetition, a ritual for practice, guidance for visualization, and, more significantly, the power that the master chooses to impart. It is more correct to speak of this process as 'empowerment', as some writers (like John Blofeld)³³ have done. The transmission of power facilitates success in visualizing the deity.

Nāro-pā speaks of initiation or empowerment in terms of "sprinkling the cool waters of mystic instruction (*seka*) to remove the heat (*Tsa-gDung*) of moral impurities." The purpose of these empowerments is either the attainment of various magical powers (*siddhis*) for which purpose there are seven 'inferior' empowerments; or the perfect attainment, viz., the release from transmigratory necessity (*the siddhi*), for which there are four 'higher' empowerments. The former were of course widely resorted to, in Tibet as in India and China of yore. The more earnest, however, resort to the latter. The major involvement in empowerments of this variety (*dBang-sKur*) is not rituals, but symbols which lead the one initiated into higher planes of consciousness.

Symbols take the form of simple geometrical patterns (*yantra*, Tib. *CHos-hByung*) involved designs with areas and assemblies elaborately layed out (*maṇḍala*, Tib. *dKyil-hKHor*), seed-syllables (Tib. *rDo-rTe-hi-TSHig*), deities of personal choice (*ishṭa-daiva*, Tib. *Yi-Dam-lHa*, or simply *Yi-Dam*), beneficent fairies or mysterious esoteric instructors (*ḍākinī*,

Tib. *mKHaa-aGrol-Ma*, 'the sky-going lady'), or divinities, serene, heroic or furious. It is important to note that Tibetans do not mistake these divinities, deities or designs to be objective realities. They are fully aware that they are only voluntary emanations from the devotee's mind and that they are symbols (*mTShan-Byed*). The divinities with objective



reality are different: the heavenly gods (*lHa*), the earth-spirits (*Nyen*) and divinities of the nether-regions like the *nāga* (*Klu*); there are also ghosts (*Jung-Po*) and 'red' sprites (*TSen*).

Although it is true that some of these (especially the ones 'bound with oath' by Padmasambhava, the so-called 'guardians of religion', *dharmapāla*) have contributed to the form and temperament of the 'mind-emanations' mentioned above, the symbolic character thereof is never lost sight of. It is estimated that Tibetan empowerment involves no less than sixty-two 'gods', twenty-five 'heroes' (*vīra*), and thirty-seven 'fairies' (*dākinīs*). Their iconographic peculiarities as well as functional significance have been crystallized only in meditations (*sGom*)

of masters. There are, likewise, innumerable *maṇḍalas* that are sought to be realized in meditation.

The four 'higher' empowerments are (1) 'vase-empowerment' (*kalaśābhisheka*) in which the teacher not only authorizes the disciple to evoke visualizations, but explains the details thereof; (2) 'mystery-empowerment' (*guhyābhisheka*), in which the disciple becomes aware that 'the original mind' (the field of experience) is actually void; (3) 'wisdom-empowerment' (*prajñābhisheka*), where the disciple experiences void as great bliss; and finally (4) 'diamond-empowerment' (*vajrābhisheka*) in which the true essence of 'the original mind' is clearly, absolutely and unshakably realized.

Each of these empowerments is a necessary stage in the onward march towards enlightenment. The first cleanses the disciple's physical constitution of all the various defects and obstructions (mostly from kārmiic sources), so that his deeds become correct. The second confers on him the power that is necessary to advance. It cleanses his speech faculty or the faculty of expressions, vocal and other. Here the mantras (*ḥKaa*, 'words') become effective. The third makes the disciple eligible to receive the higher wisdom in its theoretical as well as practical aspects. It cleanses his mind so that his thoughts can pierce into the very essence of phenomena. The fourth empowers the disciple to relate himself adequately and properly with his personal or tutelary deity or with the *maṇḍala*-deities. It is in this stage that his visualizations become effective.

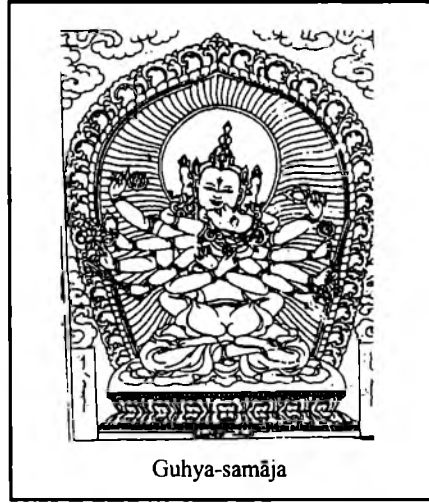
In the empowerments, and also in the practices following them, one uses 'diamond-words' (*rDo-rJe-hi-TSHig*), 'sacred syllables' (*dhāraṇī*, Tib. *gZungs*), 'sacred formulae' (*mantra*, Tib. *sNags*), 'diagrams' (*yantra*, Tib. *CHos-hByung*), 'gestures' (*mudrā*, Tib. *PHyag-rGya*) and *maṇḍalas* (*dKyi-l-hKHor*). All these are aids to visualization, and the meditative absorption (*Ting-Nge-hDZin*) here is described as 'artificial' (*sPros-Beas*). But when the visualizations are withdrawn into the void, the absorption is 'natural' (*sPros-Med*); and all the aids are then dispensed with.

Of great psychological interest is the process of visualization. Abiding in the cultivated Void, the devotee compresses his entire awareness into a seed-syllable, and this 'mind-essence' (*Thig-le* 'innermost essence', 'seed', 'semen') becomes capable of manifesting the forms of deities and designs. "From the wisdom of void emerges the seed (*bijam*), and from the seed emanates the icon (*bimbam*)."³⁴ Visualization is a highly creative process where 'vision' no doubt plays an important role, although the process is entirely subjective and psychological. However, it is not to be mistaken for mental aberrations like hallucinations or delusions.

Tibetan texts clearly distinguish between 'optical illusions' like mirage (*sMig-rGyu*) and 'mental pictures' (*sNang-ba*). The former are passive, involuntary presentations, while the latter are active, deliberate creations.

Visualizations belong to the latter category, with the subject being clearly aware of the artificiality involved in it. The reality of the visualized deities or designs is confined to meditational sessions, and it does not intrude into the world of transactional reality. This is why the Tibetan yogin is advised to completely isolate himself for long stretches of time without a break, until the visualizations fulfil their function (viz., enabling him to realize that the things of the world are in essence empty, merely mental projections). When he finally emerges from his seclusion, after perhaps years, he will no more be a victim to the phenomenal attractions and repulsions. He knows in a very effective manner that all that appears is only in mind, that the wide world outside is in fact a projection of the mind within, and that the 'original' mind is of the nature of void. One may recall that this is the main thesis of Yogāchāra, on which Vajrayāna is raised.

One of the frequent subjects for the devotee's visualizations is the tutelary, or personal, deity (*Yi-Dam*), like Tārā. But the devotee behaves towards it as though it was real, as though it was a continuous presence. And there are ritualistic prescriptions for its worship, and the devotee goes through all the details with faith. And the *Yi-Dam* is regarded as a live



Guhya-samāja

being, protecting the devotee from all manner of harm, and bestowing on him not only success in *sāadhanā* (*sGrub-THabs*), but prosperity and security in daily life. It is even represented in an icon, and honoured as the most important item of the 'triad': scriptural texts, *mDo*, wrapped in yellow cloth, representing *speech* and the image of *stāpa* or *mchod-rūTen*, representing *mind* flanking on left and right respectively, the *Yi-Dam*, representing *body*, placed in the centre of the worship table.

Notwithstanding this involvement, as was said earlier, the devotee does not for a moment forget that the *Yi-Dam* is after all an emanation of his own mind, a mere play of his consciousness. The adept is aware that he has externalised and reified an internal entity,³⁵ bliss; and finally (4) 'diamond-empowerment' (*vajrābhisheka*) in which the true essence of 'the original mind' is clearly, absolutely and unshakably realized. Although the novice is likely to regard it as an internalization of the externally real.

But the important detail in the worship of the *Yi-Dam* is the act of identification of the devotee with it. The sequence of visualizations starts with conjuring up several deities to attend on the *Yi-Dam*; sometimes a vast assembly of them are

invoked. Then all these deities are dissolved in the *Yi-Dam*, and finally the *Yi-Dam* is withdrawn into one's own heart, and there it merges with void. The withdrawal of *Yi-Dam* into oneself is accompanied by a formula of identification, as for instance "I am Tārā", or "I am Avalokiteśvara". The *Kāraṇḍavyūha* prescribes in this context: "The devotee should then evoke the egoity (*ahamkāra*).³⁶"

The purpose is to regenerate oneself as the deity and thereby become the repository of great power, and also realise one's essential purity. The normal ego with its limitations is 'cut off' (according to TSong-KHa-Pa) and the vivid image of the deity is substituted for it. In another explanation (of bKah-brGyud persuasion), the normal ego is expanded to embrace the universal ego of the deity. But the significant point is that unless one leaves behind, or turns away from, one's ordinary everyday ego he may not make a headway in the cultivation of void. The vivid visualization of the deity and its identification with the devotee are meant to secure this objective.

After a formal identification, the devotee concentrates not only on the visual form of the deity but on "making firm its ego". During this process, the initial feeling of artificiality will gradually lead to a certain naturalness about the identification of the deity with one's own ego, and about the isolation and employment of one's ego.

The techniques suggested include separating the 'outer' form of the deity from its 'ego', and substituting the deity's ego with one's own ego. The ability to abstract the ego from the visualized deity will enable the practitioner to abstract the ego from his own body-mind complex. Concentration upon the abstracted ego is calculated to generate void-realization. The mind monitored will at a point get lost. Visualizations then cease, the deity disappears and the ego lapses: it is then void inside and outside.

The other visualization frequently employed in Tibetan Tāntrik rituals involves the *maṇḍalas*. Taken directly from Indian sources, the word itself has been retained in Tibetan in transliterated form. But there are two categories of *maṇḍala*

in actual employment. One is the *maṇḍala* that is offered; and the other is employed for identification of ego and extension of consciousness. The latter, however, has another Tibetan word for it, *dKyil-hKHor*, which is explained as 'the circle of residences and residents'. The celebrated *maṇḍalas* are usually of this latter type. The *maṇḍala*, known as 'Vajra-*maṇḍala*', is an excellent illustration. It represents the five dhyāni-buddhas, each attended by the bodhisattvas, positioned in the four directions with one of the dhyāni-buddhas, Vajrasattva, in the centre, all enclosed in a squarish fortress with gates on four sides. The whole is enclosed by a circle representing the universe.

This type of *maṇḍala* is either drawn on the consecrated earth or altar, or painted on a scroll, with elaborate but stylized designs. The use of such *maṇḍalas* is essentially ritualistic, and the visualizations they evoke are not altogether dependent on the devotee's imagination or ability. The assemblies of buddhas, bodhisattvas, gurus, dākinis and other beings that the devotee visualizes for witnessing his refuge-seeking, confession of sins, approbation of virtue and assumption of bodhisattva vows, are also sometimes painted, although they are more often freely visualized.

The *maṇḍala* for offering belongs to a different category. Its special significance is in Guru-Yoga. The old Indian idea that the disciple should dedicate to the master all that he possesses, even his body and mind, is the basis for this practice. The devotee here visualizes the entirety of the world with mount Meru in the center and the eight continents around it with all the best things of the world as constituting a *maṇḍala*, and then offers it to the master with the formula: "master, I offer this *maṇḍala* unto you!" ("guru, idam maṇḍalakam niryātayāmi"). The preliminaries to the Tāntrik *sādhana* include the offering of such *maṇḍala* to the guru and his lineage as many as 100,000 times.

The body itself is visualized as a *maṇḍala*: a mansion where all the deities are invoked and installed. In front, at the back, to the right and to the left are the four sides of the body

maṇḍala. The mouth, the nose, the anus and penis are the gates. The five-sense-organs are the walls: arms and legs the pillars. The nose-tip, heart, navel and the penis the entrance doors. Eyes are the mirrors, nose the flower-garland, tongue



the bells, stomach the sacred vase, mind the lotus in the centre, and so on. The number of deities visualized in this body-mansion are thirty-two. Usually, a text enumerating all the parts of the body and the deities is read and the visualizations occur simultaneously. However, considerable practice is a necessary precondition. It is said that oftentimes a year's daily practice would be necessary before prompt visualizations can occur.

As an aid to the visualization of the *maṇḍala* for offering, and also as a symbolical representation of it, the hand- posture (*mudrā*) is employed. The two hands are brought together, palms upward, interlocked by means of thumbs and little-

fingers; the ring-fingers are joined back to back and held up erect (to represent the mount Sumeru) and the rest of the fingers are joined to form four mounds (representing the four major continents around Sumeru). The offering in such a case is known as the 'adamantine ground' (*Vajra-bhūmi*), which is ritualistically protected against inimical and malevolent forces by the pronouncement 'Hūm'. The adamantine character of the ground itself is product of visualization (to the accompaniment of the formula 'Om Vajrabhūmi Āh Hūm.')

Visualization by the *maṇḍala* is described as composed of five aspects, or rather stages. The first is the visualization of *vacuity* (*śūnyatā*) in ones own heart with the aid of the formula "Om Śūnyatā-Vajrasvabhāvātma'ham" ("I am of the nature of the diamond of emptiness."). Out of the womb of the visualized emptiness, or from the visualized seed-letter *a*, emerges a *white moon*, representing the ego floating on the clouds of the mind. The moon shines brilliantly, and the light radiating from it absorbs the phenomenal world. This is said to represent the 'dharma-dhātu' which is the basis of all phenomena which are essentially mental. Above the moon emerges the seed-syllable (*Om*, *hrīm*, *Pam*, *Tam* etc.,) which again shines brilliantly and light from it spreads all round. The texts prescribe that in this light one must examine ones own constitution and eliminate attachment and aversion.

When this is done, the five aggregates (*skandhas*) assume the form of the five dhyāni-buddhas, and after a while they dissolve into the seed-syllable. The seed-syllable transforms itself into an *emblem*, like the five-pronged *vajra* marked in the middle, with the formula "Om āh hūm, Vajrasvabhāvātma'ham," "I am of the adamantine nature." And, finally, this *emblem* will transform itself into the well-formed shape (or body) of the deity meditated upon. This is known as 'the visualization of the perfected body.' Iconographic stylization plays an important role at this stage.

The deity thus visualized is worshipped elaborately (but mentally), and it is identified with the devotee himself. Then

the visualized deity is formally dismissed. The perfected body dissolves into the emblem, the emblem into the seed-syllable, the seed-syllable into the moon, and the moon into vacuity. The perfected body of the deity which is the culminating point of visualization is 'neither real nor yet unreal, but a clear image like the one present in a mirror'.³⁷ But the important detail is that the devotee identifies himself with deity, meditates in this state of identity, and looks upon the world with the eyes of the deity. In one of the *śadhanās*,³⁸ the devotee becomes the bodhisattva Mañjuśrī, looks upon the world with wisdom and compassion, and renews his vow to liberate all beings.

The visualization sequence may also involve the transformation of the seed-syllable (e.g., *pam*, which has emerged out of void) into a white lotus, from which another seed syllable (viz., *ah*) arises, and transforms itself into a white moon-disc. The seed-syllable of the deity (e.g. *tām* in the case of Tara) is contemplated upon this moon-disc. This seed syllable gradually gets lost in the middle of blue lotus (*kumuda*, which opens out at night), visualized, and exceedingly luminous. Ritual worship is conducted at this stage. The light is then focussed again in the middle of this blue lotus, and the seed-syllable of the deity arises again. This bigger, and more brilliant, image of the seed-syllable transforms itself, all at once, into the full-fledged image of the deity, iconographically complete and visually vivid. The heart of the deity would contain the seed-syllable in the centre of the white moon-disc enclosed in a lotus. The image of the deity disappears into a lotus enclosing the *mantra* of the deity patterned around the seed-syllable. In due course, the *mantra* and the lotus disappear into the seed-syllable, which itself gradually fades away in the void.

The practice of visualization is a highly intriguing development of Tibetan Tantra. It helps not only to intuitively apprehend that the phenomenal world is merely a projection of one's own mind, but to actively reorganize one's inner constitution so as to speedily achieve freedom in this very life, which in fact is the goal of the Short Path.



References

1. A.K. Warder, *Indian Buddhism*, Motilal Banarsidass, 1970, pp. 482–489.
2. “yoshitam prapya vidhinā chāruvaktram hitaishinim,” 15th Patala, 98.
3. Ed. and Tr. by D. Snellgrove, in two volumes, London, 1959; this utilises Kṛishṇāchārya’s commentary thereupon *Yogaratanmālā*. *Hevajratāntra* has an excellent gloss (*Pañjikā*), which is widely studied in Tibet.
4. *Hevajra-tāntra*, 10th Patala: “kṛipopāyo bhaved yogī mudrā-hetuvīyogataḥ,” *Pañjika* explains ‘kṛipā’ as “sarvasattveshu ātma-samatā chittam” and ‘upāya’ as “samyak-sambodhi-prasāadhanah”, and the latter part of the half-verse is explained as follows: “sarva-dharmānām anutpādah (...anutpāda-lakṣhaṇa śūnyatā); katham? ‘hetu-vīyogataḥ’, svataḥ parataḥ ubhayato’ nubhayato sarvabhāvānām anutpatteh’.
5. *Ibid.* “dehābhāve kutah saukhyam?” cf. also *Śrī-kālachakra-tāntra*: “kāyā-bhāve na siddhir na cha paramasukham.”
6. *Śrichakrasambhāra-tāntra*, ed. by Kazi Dawa-Samdup. *Tāntrik Texts*, Vol. VII (Luzac and Co., London), 1919.
7. *ibid.*, p. 47

8. A.K. Warder, *op. cit.* p. 552.
9. Ed, La Vallee Poussin, Louvain, 1896; cf. S.B. Dasgupta, *An Introduction to Tantrik Buddhism*, pp. 43–46.
10. “bhāvābhāvā-nta-dvaya-rahitatvāt sarvabhāvānūtpatti-lakṣhaṇa śūnyatā madhyamā pratipad madhyamo mārga ity uchyate,” *Mādhama-kā-ṛtti*, 24; cf. quoting *Ratnāvalī*: “bhāvābhāvā-parāmarśa-kṣhayonirvāṇam uchyate.”
11. “anirōdham anutpādam anucchedam aśāśvatam; anekārtham anānārtham anāgamam anirāgamam.”
12. By La Vallee Poussin, cited in M. Witernitz, *History of Indian Literature* (University of Calcutta, 1933), Vol. II, p. 395 fn.
13. “bhāvābhāvā-vinirmukto vajrasattvah suchintitah; sarvākāra-varopetah asechanaka-vigrahah”.
14. “gagana-sama-gatam sarva-bhāva-svabhāvam, durbodham durvichāram yogināmeva gamyam”.
15. *Pañchakrama-ṭippanī* explains “Self-base is to be based on itself; it means that the knowledge comprehending *prajñā* and *upāya* is opened up”, cited in S.B. Dasgupta, *op. cit.*
16. “etāh prakṛtayah sūkṣmāh ... divārātrau chāpi pravartante vāyuvahanahetunā,” cf. S.B. Dasgupta, *op. cit.* for an excellent account of this idea.
17. “nāsāgre sarśhāpam chintayet sarśhāpe sacharācharam; bhāvayed jñānapādam ramyam...”, *ibid.*
18. “yat kinchid asyām jātavanyāsu jātisvanādinidhane jātisamsāre samsaratā mayā pāpakam karma kāyena vāchā manasā’ pi kṛtam kārītam kriyamāṇam anumoditam tat sarvam bhagavatām guru-buddha-bodhisattvānām puratah pratideśayāmi.”
19. “sambuddha-pratyekabuddha-śrāvaka-buddhānām tatsutānām api bodhisattvānām sattvānām trailokyodaravartinām yadeva kuśalam tat sarvam anumodayāmi”.
20. Manoratha-rakṣita’s *Vajrasarasvatī-sādhana*: “maitryādibhāvānām evam kuryād dveshādi-śāntaye”.
21. “sarva-sattvesu atīṣayita-hitaikaputraka-sneha-lakṣaṇa” (Anupama-rakṣita); “jagadekaputra-premata” (*Muktaka*); “para-hita-chintā”; “parasaukhyasampad-icchā” (Śrī-Vardhana-pāda); “satputra-sampṛiti-sahasra-guṇitam jane” (*Vajrayoginī-bhāṣhitam Vādirāja-Maṇjuśrī-Sādhana*); and ‘hitasukhopasamhārakara’ (Anupama-rakṣita).
22. “tridukṣha-dukhhitānām sattvānām samsāra-sāgarād uddharaṇa-kāmatā” (*Muktaka*); “dukhṣha-hetor dukkhach cha uddhartukāmatā” (*Vādirāt-Sādhana*); “paradukṣha-nāśana-kriyā (anon).
23. “utpādita-kuśala-mūla-para-bhogaiśvaryaḍisu hr̥ṣṭachittatā” (*Muktaka*);

- vyavasāya-samsiddhyupāya-darśanāt praharshaṇam”; “parasukhatuṣṭi”; “asadṛṣe buddhatva tadupāya cha sāra eva samsāriṇaḥ sattvā mayā pratishṭhāpayitavyā ity adhyavasāyah; viśveshām yāni kuśalāni teshu tad bhogaiśvaryādishu cha ākrṣṭachittatā” (Anupama-rakṣita); “modantām sattvā ityākāra-Ratnākara-sānti).
24. “paradoshopekshā”; “kleśapratipakṣa-mārgopasmmhārakara” (Ratnākara-sānti); “asadvayāśng-parihāni” (Muktka); “samatayā sattvamātram etad ityākṛtiḥ” (Śrī-Vardhana-pāda); “lābhālabha-yaśo”-payaśa-nindā-stuti-sukha-duhketyady-ashṭa-lokadharma-pramukha-sakalaprastuta-vyāpāropekshaṇam” (Anupama-rakṣita); “nija-kāryam-anālochopeksham-anyārthakāritā” (Vajra-yoginī).
25. *Bodhicharyāvatāra* with Prajñākaramati’s *Pañjikā*, (ed) Vallee Poussin, Asiatic Society, Calcutta, 1901–1904. also *Entering the Path of Enlightenment* (Tr. by Marion L. Maties), Allen and Unwin, London, 1971. In Tibetan, *sPyod-hTug-CHo-Tug*, along with a supplement *Bodhisattva-charyāvatāra* (bSlab-bThus).
26. cf. Alex Wayman: “The Bodhisattva Practice according to Lam-Rim-Chen-Mo”, *The American Theosophist*, 1972, Spring Special Issue, pp. 13–142.
27. Geshey Ngawang Dhargyey: *Tibetan Tradition of Mental Development* (op. cit.) p. 124.
28. *Svādhishṭhāna-Kurukullā-sādhana of Hevajra-tantra-krama*: “dharma-pudgalayoh grāhya-grāhaka-svabhāvayoh abhāvasvabhāvam advayaviññapti-lakṣaṇam sūnyatām vibhāvya...”
29. *Dvibhuja-Heruka-sādhana* “dharma-pudgalādi-vikalpa-kalaṅka-varjita-rūpaṃ śaraṇ-nirmala-madhyāhna-nabhonibham”...
30. *Mañjuśrī-sādhana*: “sakala-tattva-sāra-saṅgrāhaka-bhūtam...”
31. *Pañcharakṣhā-vidhāna*: “sarva-dharmān manasāvalambya...”
32. The explanations of TSong-KHa-pa are cited from Beyer, *The Cult of Tara*.
33. John Blofeld: *The Way of power*, Allen and Unwin 1970.
34. *Advaya-vajra-samgraha*, p. 50 “sūnyatā-bodhito bijam, bijād bimbam prajāyate”.
35. cf. John Blofeld, *The Way of Power, A Practical Guide to the Tantrik Mysticism of Tibet*, Allen and Unwin, 1970, pp. 176–182.
36. “Tato’hamkāram kuryāt”.
37. *Śrīmad-Vādirāṭ-sādhana* of Paṇḍita-Chintāmaṇi-datta: “na satyam nāpya-satyam mukura-talam iva spāṣṭa-bimbāyamaṇam”.
38. *Vajra-Yoginī-bhāṣitam Vādirāja-maṇjuśrī-sādhanaṃ*.

CHAPTER FIVE

Path Of Enlightenment



In the Tibetan hagiology, the name of TSong-Kha-Pa (1357-1419), the author of *Lam-Rim CHen-Mo*, is an honoured one. He is variously described as ‘the valuable all knowing’ (*sarvajña*), as the second Buddha and as an incarnation of the celebrated Bodhisattva Mañjuśrī. He is usually referred to as the ‘most precious master’ (rJe-Rim-Po-Che, *ārya-mahā-ratna*), and as ‘the most excellent teacher’, rJe-bTsun-Dum-Pa, or *parama-bhaṭṭāraka-śrī*). He is worshipped to this day as a living presence, next only to the Buddha, in the monasteries

belonging to the dGe-Lung –pa sect (which he founded). His tomb in the dGah-IDan monastery (which he established) continues to be a place of pilgrimage for the pious Tibetans.

One of the factors which contributed to the celebrity of TSong-Kha-Pa was the secular and religious power which the sect he founded came to wield in Tibet. His nephew, who was also an abbot of renown, dGe'Dun-Grub (pronounced Geden-dub, 1391-1478) was honoured by the Chinese emperor with the title 'precious monarch' (rGyal-po) and was recognised as an incarnation of the great Bodhisattva Avalokites-vara, the patron divinity of Tibet. His successor in 1650 was given the all-powerful status of Dalai-lama by the Mongolian emperor. Since then, the abbots who succeeded him have been absolute rulers over Tibet in religious and secular affairs.

But this factor is really not as important as the reformation that he brought about in the Buddhist monastic organisation in Tibet. The Mahāyāna Buddhism, which was introduced in Tibet as early as 640 A.D. had fallen on evil days owing to the heavy impact of the occult and the bizarre Bon cults (indigenous to Tibet). Most of the Buddhist monasteries had become dens of licentious living; and even serious-minded monks spent all their time and energy in magical abracadabra. The hold of the Tāntrik practices had become strong, and both the monastic fraternity and the laity were more preoccupied with mundane and magical accomplishments than with austerity or enlightenment.

TSong-Kha-Pa set out with a missionary zeal to correct this condition and to bring back the ideas of austere and ethical living, earnest aspiration for enlightenment, and a deep commitment to the welfare of the suffering folk. The monastery that he established in 1409, dGah-IDan (Tibetan for the Buddhist paradise, Tushita) contained only monks who were earnest, austere, learned and totally committed to spiritual progress. The appeal of the Tāntrik practices were minimal for them. And the sect that TSong-Kha-Pa founded, the dGe-Lugs-Pa (pronounced Gelugpa) or "The Way of the Virtuous Ones", insisted on the strict observance of the liberating

wisdom and compassion only within the context uncompromising adherence to monastic discipline as laid down by the Buddha. Thanks to the untiring efforts of TSong-Kha-Pa, “the teaching of Vinaya shone like the Sun in this country of Tibet” (*Blue Annals*, I,83).

TSong-Kha-Pa (meaning “the man from the Onion Country”) was not his real name. He was so called because he hailed from the Tshong-KHa area (meaning “the onion –bank”) in the Amdo district of Central Tibet. His monastic name was Blo-bZang Grags-Pa'i dPal (being the Tibetan version of the Sanskrit Sumatī-kīrti-śrī). He took the monastic vows at the tender age of seven, and began learning Sanskrit soon after. He was recognised as an authority on the vast Mahāyāna Sanskrit literature by the time he was twenty-two years of age.

The Vinaya aspect of the Buddha’s teaching, which he studied under Don-Grub Rin-CHen of Amdo, made a deep impression on his mind, and so did the five treatises of Maitreya-nātha as received by Asanga. *Abhisamayālaṅkāra* impressed him as the best ornament of the liberating wisdom (‘*prajñāpāramitā*’); *mahāyāna-sūtrā-lāṅkāra* gave him an insight into the path and practice of the bodhi-sattva ; *MahāyānaSūtrālaṅkāra* revealed how *samsāra* provided he foundation for *nirvāṇa* and *Mahāyānottara-tantra* opened his vision into the pure nature of consciousness which lies hidden in all living beings (‘*tathāgata-garbha*’). Thus was he provided with an “armour of knowledge”. He became convinced that the practice of wisdom (*prajñā*) alone was the path for emancipation, and that Vinaya was the sure foundation for it.

He also studied all the extant tantras, and obtained several initiations. He found *Śrī-guhya-samāja-tantra* to be the chief of all the tantras, and he searched for its essence. He also wrote a Tibetan commentary on this text. He meditated in solitary hermitages and realised the patron-god of the wisdom and compassion, Mañjuśhoṣa, who became his unfailing guide for the rest of his life. An erudite scholar who was also saintly in personal life, he began to teach; and he gathered round him a band of devoted students. As recorded in the *Blue Annals*,

“he purified the minds of three kinds of human beings, and by a mind filled with disgust towards all phenomenal existence (he and his disciples) transformed the ordination vows into the very essence of the pratimoksha monastic code.” (I,83) “He has been a being with a straight-forward Mind, dwelling on a lofty stage (of spiritual evolution), who had come here for the welfare of living beings.” (*ibid.*, II,1079)

Among the Indian texts that he studied under Las-Kyi rDo-rJe, (Karma-vajra), a great abbot of his days, was one that made a profound and lasting impression on him: *Bodhi-patha-pradīpa* (“Light on the Path of Enlightenment”) by Dīpaṅkara-Śrījñāna, more familiarly known as Atiśa (982-1054 A.D.). TSong-KHa-Pa not only tried to put into practice the teachings of this great work and founded a new sect (reformed bKa-gDams-Pa) to propagate these teachings, but wrote an enormous treatise to explain, illustrate and defend the message of Atiśa to the Tibetan aspirants. This work became famous as *Lam-Rim CHen-Mo*, or the Great “Book on the Stages of the Path to Enlightenment”.

The immediate inspiration to write this monumental work was the accidental access that he had to Gro-Lung-Pa’s *bsTan-Rim* (“Instructions Concerning the Stages”) at Lo-Ro, as he was planning to visit India on a pilgrimage. The author of this work was a disciple of the disciple of ‘Brom (1005-1064), who was a disciple and colleague of Atiśa himself. This work sought to explain Atiśa’s teachings in the light of *Abhisama yālaṅkāra*, which TSong-KHa-Pa had studied earlier; and this opened a new line of thought for him. Learning that there were oral traditions concerning Atiśa’s *Manual* to be had in the monasteries of LHo-Brag, he abandoned the idea of going to India and instead went in search of these oral traditions.

After obtaining oral instructions, Tsong -KHa-Pa retired to the solitude of the monastery of Rva-sG reng (pronounced Rading, established in 1056 A.D. by Atiśa’s disciple ‘Brom) for writing *Lam-Rim CHen-Mo*, which he completed in 1402 A.D. He was a prolific writer, and amongst his works are commentaries and glosses on several important Mahāyāna

works in Sanskrit, and compendium of the tantras. But his celebrity justly rests on this *Lam-Rim CHen-Mo*. There are in Tibetan many works called 'Lam-Rim, explaining stages on the path to enlightenment, according to different traditions. They are generally known as 'path literature', distinguished from works on logic, philosophy and metaphysics. But Tsong-KHa-Pa's *Lam-Rim* is not only the most outstanding among them, but the most popular among Tibetan students and scholars.

TSong-KHa-Pa's *Lam-Rim* cannot be understood unless one is acquainted with Atīśa's *Bodhipatha-pradipa*, which serves as the core text for the Tibetan treatise. Dīpaṃkara-Śrījñāna (the monastic name of Atīśa), the saintly and scholarly abbot of the Vikramaśīla university in Bengal, was earnestly entreated to visit Tibet to help in the translation of Indian texts bearing on Mahāyāna into Tibetan. He was not only proficient in the Sūtra aspect of the Buddha's teaching, but was well-versed in the Tantra. He had himself received tāntrik initiations and was a famous master in India, celebrated alike for his erudition and austerity. He arrived in mNa-Ris in Tibet in 1042 A.D. after spending a year in Nepāl. He had agreed to spend only three years in this country, but at the expiry of the stipulated period, he chanced to meet hBrom-Ston-Pa (1005-1064), a remarkable Tibetan student who was fired with a missionary zeal to restore Buddhist practices (which had become corrupt in Tibet with magical involvements) to their original purity. Atīśa changed his mind and stayed on in Tibet till his death in 1054. hBrom who was his chief disciple worked with him for ten years, and after the master's death, continued his cleansing operations for another ten years.

This combination of the Indian master and the Tibetan pupil gave Buddhism in Tibet a popular appeal. Till then, only kings, noblemen and chieftains had espoused the cause of Buddhism, mostly for political reasons. But now the mass got interested in this religion. hBrom founded a new sect known as the bKa-gDams-Pa (the School of Oral Precepts) on the basis of the techings of his master Atīśa. This was the closest among the

Tibetan schools to Indian Buddhism. The watchword of this sect was that Tantra (spiritual practices) must be combined with Vinaya (monastic discipline), and Vinaya with Tantra. TSong-KHa-Pa belonged to this sect, before he founded his more austere and rigorous sect, originally known as “the new bKa-gDams-Pa” but later identified as the deG-Lugs-Pa (“The Way of the Virtuous Order”).

Atiśa, while sojourning in the monastery of Gu-ge wrote *Bodhi-patha-pradīpa* (‘The Light on the Path of Enlightenment’) at the request of his good disciple, Byang-Chub-‘od, to explain the common basis of Sūtra and Tantra. A small poetical work in Sanskrit consisting of sixty-six verses, and equipped with the author’s own commentary known as *Pañjikā*, it explains the idea of emptiness (*śūnya-vāda*) and brings out the value of quiet meditation, as distinguished from wild tāntrik practices. Moral conduct, devotion to the guru, practices of calming (*śamathā*), generation of super-normal faculties and the perfection of the natural equipments of merit and knowledge are explained as constituting a graded series.

The text underlines the need to generate thoughts committed to enlightenment: the *bodhi-chitta*. And this is derived from Asaṅga’s teaching in *Yogā-charyā-bhūmi*. Atiśa gave in this work a balanced approach to the goal of enlightenment giving due importance to the practice of the *pāramitās* (perfections) as well as to the tāntrik initiations. It was this approach that appealed to TSong-KHa-Pa. The burden of his *Lam-Rim CHen-Mo* was to show that this approach had the sanction of all the masters of Mahāyāna, and that all the great books constituting the Mahāyāna canon commended this integrated approach.

TSong-KHa-Pa’s book is in fact a monument of immense erudition. He cites from almost all the Mahāyāna classics; many of them were of course from Tibetan translations, but quite a few were directly from Sanskrit sources. Many of the Sanskrit works that he cites from are no longer available to us in their original form. His acquaintance with the Mādhyamaka, Yogāchāra, Prāsaṅgika and other schools is

found to be intimate and extensive. He was well versed in the entire range of Mantra-yāna. However, his wide scholarship does not interfere with his attention to the essentials. The whole work presents a unitary and methodical character despite frequent references to the views of a large number of earlier masters and an even larger number of manuals.

In the concluding stanzas of the work, he gives expression to his own idea of how the work should be: "I tried to draw all the essentials of the meaning, without verbosity, though not incomplete, so that even a person with slight intelligence could understand it easily, and do this by way of the path of methodical pondering with scripture and principle." (Alex Wayman's translation, p. 428). He held that knowledge of the scriptures was indispensable for understanding the principles of bondage and release, of *samsāra* and *nirvāṇa*. But scriptural knowledge must be reinforced by earnest reflection on the ideas got from the texts. Reflection to be effective needs to be methodical. "Methodical pondering" is thus prescribed as a path. TSong-KHs-Pa has here not only brought together a variety of scriptural views, but has sought to weave a meaningful fabric out of the whole mass.

In the invocatory as well as the concluding verses of the work, TSong-KHa-Pa pays homage to the three masters, to whom he is most indebted and whom he regards as most authoritative in the Mahāyāna tradition: Nāgārjuna, Asaṅga and Dipaṁkara-Atiśa. We have already acquainted ourselves with the significance of Dipaṁkara, Atiśa to TSong-KHa-Pa's work. *Lam-Rim*, in fact, opens with an account of the development of *dharma* in Tibet, culminating in the advent of "the great Paṇḍit Dipaṁkara (i.e., Atiśa), who illumined the snowy range". TSong-KHa-Pa says that, thanks to the work of this great Paṇḍit in Tibet, the "eye which views the good path of the victor did not close for a long time."

If Dipaṁkara-Atiśa may be regarded as almost his immediate predecessor in the path-literature, and as having a direct bearing on the Tibetan sect to which Tong-KHa-Pa owed allegiance Nāgārjuna and Asaṅga were more distant. But

TSong-KHa-Pa regards them as “head-ornaments of all the learned ones in India, the famed emblems of victory, shining for all the living beings”, and as comprising “the essentials of all the scriptures of the Victor (the Buddha)” (cf concluding stanzas). It is a fact that TSong-KHa-Pa relies, not only in *Lam-Rim* but in his other works as well, on the views of Nāgārjuna (and of his sixth century commentator, Chandra-kīrti) and of Maitreya-nātha-Asaṅga.

According to Tibetan tradition (*Blue Annals*, Bu-Ston and Tārānatha), Nāgārjuna was born in Vidarbha (in Maharashtra), was ordained at Nālandā and was taught by Rāhulabhadra (whose date is around 119 A.D., as he lived during the reign of Kanishka II). Then he went to ‘Nāga-loka’ or “the dragon world” and recovered the Prajñā-pāramitā literature of a hundred-thousand (*śata-sāhasrikā*). He travelled all over the country, teaching and writing books, but returned to Andhra during his last days. His Mādhyamaka viewpoint, expounded in his several works in Sanskrit, was systematised by Chandra-kīrti who lived in the sixth century. To his credit is the consistent treatment of the two levels of truth (empirical, *saṃvṛti*, and transcendental, *paramārtha*), and exposition of ‘emptiness’ (*śūnyatā*) as the highest philosophical principle. Chandra-kīrti wrote elaborate commentaries on Nāgārjuna’s works, but his *Mādhyamakāvatāra* made a great impression on TSong-KHa-Pa.

Nāgārjuna, in fact, may be regarded as the ‘father-figure’ for Mahāyāna. It may also be mentioned in passing that Nāgārjuna as well as his chief disciple Āryadeva are associated with South India, for it was in South India that Mahāyāna originated. *Aṣṭa-sāhasrika-prajñā-pāramitā*, one of the earliest of Mahāyāna texts (translated into Chinese as early as the second century A.D.), mentions that Mahāyāna (*pāramitānaya*) arose in South India, then spread to the East, and then to the North. The other early works like *Gaṇḍa-Vyūha*, *Laṅkāvatāra-sūtra*, and *Ratna-kūṭa-sūtra* are all associated unmistakably with South India. Nāropā’s *Sekoddesa-tikā* locates the origin of *mantra-naya* in Śrīdhānyakaṭakā (modern

Dharaṇikoṭa, on the banks of the river Kṛishṇā in Andhra Pradesh). The only available manuscript of *Ārya-Maṇjuśrīmūla-kalpa* was recovered only from South India. There is a Japanese tradition that the Buddha instructed Vajra-sattva to deposit the 'mantra-naya' in a pagoda in South India, so that they remain hidden until capable men recover it, and that Nāgārjuna recovered it.

The concepts of the *pāramitās* ("stages of perfection") and the *bodhichitta* ("the will to enlightenment") were crystallised in South India, principally by Nāgārjuna and his followers. This gave an esoteric turn to the otherwise purely intellectual Buddhism that prevailed in the North. The Siddhas, among whom Nāgārjuna figures prominently, bridged the gap between academic discussions and praxis (*prayoga*).

If Nāgārjuna represents the emergence of the Mādhyamaka viewpoint emphasising the praxis, Asaṅga (about 290-350 A.D.) from Purushapura in Gandhāra (presently Peshawar) in North India represents the emergence of the Yogācāra viewpoint emphasising the idealist outlook (*viññānavāda*). Asaṅga's master Maitreyanātha (author of *Abhisamayālaṅkāra*) is credited with ideas that made Vajrayāna a system of thought, and not merely a set of practices as it was with the early Siddhas. Asaṅga, who taught for a long time at the Nālandā university before he passed away at Rājagṛha, wrote several works which projected the integrated Mahāyāna approach, combining the *pāramitās* with the 'bodhi-sattva' ideal (taught initially by Ārya-deva, disciple of Nāgārjuna in his works *Chatuh-śataka* and *Śatasāstra*). Among Asaṅga's works, his commentary on *Sandhi-nirmochana*, and his independent works *Mahāyāna-sūtrālaṅkāra* and *Yogācāra-bhūmi-śāstra*, became very popular. Asaṅga was also the first to compose invocatory verses comprising *Sādhana* texts, which in due course became indispensable aids in Vajrayāna.

TSong-Kha-Pa, even as a student, was exposed to the Maitreyanātha-Asaṅga literature. He was told by his teacher Don-Grub Rin-Chen that *Abhisamayālaṅkāra* of Maitreyanātha was 'the ornament of the three "mothers" (viz. The large,

middle and abridged versions of the *Prajñāpāramitā*’ and that it must be studied earnestly, for “if you become learned in it, you will be able to master all the Scripture” (*Blue Annals*, II, 1074). The impression created in the young TSong-KHa-Pa’s mind by the study of the five treatises of Asaṅga (however attributed to Maitreya-nātha) has already been mentioned.

It was thus that Nāgārjuna and Asaṅga represented to TSong. Ktta-pa the entirety of Mahāyāna tradition : *śūnyavāda*, *pāramitas* and *bodhi-Chitta*. It was a perfect unison of sūtra and Tantra that the two masters together signified. *Lam-rim* which expounds this approach, naturally owes heavily to these two masters. Bong-ktta-Pa declares that the steps to the path of enlightenment (have descended from Nāgārjuna and Asaṅga, “by the gathering in the thousand rivers of texts and schools, it is the ocean of glorious well-expressed teachings” (colophon to *Lam-Rim*).

The short title of TSong-KHa-Pa’s treatise, *Lam-Rim Chen-Mo*, literally means great book (CHen-Mo) of the stages (Rim) on the Path (Lam). The expression ‘Rim’ is Tibetan for the Sanskrit ‘krama’: order, succession, series, degrees or stages. And the ‘Path’ refers to the Path of Enlightenment (*bodhi-patha*) , as spelt out in the title of Atiśa’s little book which inspired this large treatise (*Byang-Chub Lam-gyi Rim-Pa*). The full title of TSong-KHa-Pa’s work, when translated, reads “Stages of the Path to Enlightenment” clearly illustrating all the stages which must be taken to heart by the three classes of persons.”

The three classes of persons are (1) the ‘lesser’ ones, who seek their own pleasures at all costs; (2) the ‘midling’ ones, who are averse to material enjoyments and therefore refrain from sinful action, but with the intention of obtaining tranquility for themselves; and (3) the ‘superior’ ones who aspire to work for the right cessation of suffering of others, and do not mind suffering for themselves in the bargain. This division is made by Atiśa at the very beginning of his work, and there is a suggestion that he has adapted this idea from Asaṅga’s *Viniśchaya-saṃgrahāṇi*.

TSong-KHa-Pa devotes an entire chapter for each of these classes, preceded by a chapter containing general precepts for all the three classes. According to him, the 'superior' ones are eligible for the teachings concerning the *bodhi-sattva* path.

The title of the book also contains a reference to what these three classes of persons must 'take to heart' in order finally to attain to enlightenment. The expression 'taking to heart' (Nams su Blang-ba) is taken to refer to the actual practices that must be undertaken by the aspirant.

The word 'Nams' actually means spirit, soul, thought or idea; 'Su' is a terminal suggesting direction; and 'Blang-ba' is "to receive or take". The whole phrase, thus, means 'received in the spirit', 'accepted by the soul'; viz. 'taken to heart'. The significance is the earnest application of practical procedures in order to accomplish a goal that has already been set. It is different from mere intellectual understanding or academic approval; it involves a definitive will for enlightenment.

Given this will for enlightenment, the three classes of persons differ not so much in the appreciation of the goal as in the practices that enable them to move in the direction of the goal. The thesis that TSong-KHa-Pa puts forward is that a correct understanding of the scriptural texts and methodical reflection on the principles contained in them are indispensable tools for one who is committed to the goal. In one of the introductory stanzas, he regrets: "In our day, practitioners of Yoga have little learning (lit. 'hearing'), and those who are learned are ignorant of how to put into practice what they have learnt" This is what meant by the Sutra being devoid of Tantra, and Tantra being divorced from the Sutra. The two together function like the two wings of the bird, conjointly helping its flight in the air.

Lam-Rim explains in some detail how bondage is caused when insight or wisdom (*Śes-Rab*, *prajña*) is divorced from practical application, or means of spiritual progress (*Thabs*, *upāya*), or when practical application is divorced from insight. The Aspirant is advised to avoid onesidedness. This explanation

occurs in the context of the cultivation of the 'wisdom-gone-beyond' (*prajna-poramita*), without which there can be no elimination of obscuration of reality, or freedom from bondage. While TSong-KHa-Pa insists on the paramount value of knowledge (viz study of the scriptures and methodical reflection on the principles), he recognises the necessity of getting initiated into Tāntrik practices so that one obtains the Buddhahood in this very life.

Thus the expression 'taking to heart' (*Nams su Blang-ba*) means a total reception of the theory-practice complex as it comes from a competent Guru, (technically called a *Kalyāṇa-mitra*, or spiritual guide, who is regarded as "the root of the path"), with an eagerness to put into practice. The treatise also explains that what is really 'taken to heart' is guidance in the matter of training, in the form of exorcism or discrimination (*Blo-Sbyong*). 'Blo' means "to train the mind"; and 'Sbyaong-pa' is "to remove", "to clean," "to wash away", "to exorcise" (in Sanskrit, 'prakṣhālana'). The idea is that the mind (viz. The stream of individual consciousness), which is originally pure (being of the nature of the void), gets contaminated owing to ignorance, actions and consequently unfavourable states of phenomenal existence. Spiritual endeavour consists in cleaning this mind, and to restore its purity. this is exorcism. To recognize the innate and essential purity or void nature of the mind is discrimination. This does not happen naturally. It presupposes training.

The purpose of *Lam-Rim* is to provide the framework for this training for the three classes of persons mentioned above. The 'lesser' person must seek out a competent spiritual guide, and develop an earnest desire to accomplish the 'favourable states' (*Dal-ba*) before he dies (for otherwise an opportunity would be lost). He must think of the fearful consequences of negligent or wicked actions, and must take refuge in the three 'jewels' (the Buddha, the Dharma and the Saṃgha). In order to intensify the faith, he recalls and regrets his prior transgressions of the moral code, rejoices that in this life he has fortunately been led to the good path, pleads for the

continued turning of the wheel of Dharma by the Buddhas, and feels anxious to transfer whatever merit he has acquired to the welfare of his fellow-beings.

The 'midling' person must dwell on the evils of the phenomenal existence (*samsāra*) and the causes thereof (viz. the *karma* and its consequences), and develop an earnest desire to stop the cycle of phenomenal existence. He must then apply himself seriously to liberate himself, by faithfully observing the rules of monastic discipline (*prātimoksha*). He must realize that unless the mind is trained to be tranquil (*śamatha*, calming, a precondition for *samadhi*, or meditative absorption), supernatural faculties like personal achievement, craving for doctrine, moderation in food, morality, mindfulness etc. cannot arise, and unless these are aroused, perfection of merit and wisdom are impossible.

The 'superior' person is characterised by the realization that there are other beings like himself, who are oppressed by phenomenal existence and are eager to get liberated, and that it is his duty to work for their welfare. He also realises that the best way to save them is to arouse in them the will for enlightenment (*bodhi-chitta*). He therefore prepares himself for this mission by practising the five perfections (*pāramitās*): generosity (*dāna*), right conduct (*śīla*), forbearance (*kṣhānti*), striving for spiritual welfare (*vīrya*), and the development of insight by meditation (*dhyāna*), which are collectively called the 'Means' (*upāya*).

Lam-Rim is functionally divided into two distinct parts, although the Tibetan text itself does not suggest this division. Alex Wayman who has translated into English the second part (*Calming the Mind and Discerning the Real*, Columbia University Press, 1978, reprinted by Motilal Banarsidass, Delhi, 1979) claims that this division is justified by the Mogolian translation of this text (*Bodhi Mor*) which is annotated and printed in two parts.

The first part comprises of three chapters giving details of guidance (*Blo-sbYong*) with respect to the three classes of persons (viz. the 'lesser', the 'midling', and the 'superior'),

besides an introductory chapter tracing the development of the Buddhist doctrine in Tibet until Atiśa's days, and giving the reasons for the preparation of this treatise, and another chapter containing general precepts for all the three classes of persons. The chapter on, guidance given to the 'superior' person expatiates on the 'perfections' (*pāramitās*) that must be cultivated. The first four of these (viz. *dāna*, *śīla*, *kṣānti* and *vīrya*) are accommodated in this chapter.

The fifth 'perfection' (viz. *dhyāna*) is taken up for detailed treatment in the second part of the book. And this is followed by another chapter on the intuitive wisdom which liberates (*prajñā*). This final chapter presents the Mādhyamaka approach to the right understanding of reality. Calming the mind (*Zi-Gnas*, *śamatha*) and the discernment of reality (*Lhag mTHong*, *upāsanā*) are to be practised together, and hence their combined treatment in the second part of the book.

TSong-KHa-Pa gives an excellent illustration. If one wants to look at an icon in darkness, he has to have a lamp which burns brightly. But this is not enough. The lamp must be free from the influence of breeze. Likewise, to understand the profound reality, one must have discernment (*vipaśyana*), but must also take care to see that the mind is not swayed by the distraction of sense, but is calm (*śamatha*), for otherwise mind strays, and the discernment gets lost. Discernment is calculated to eliminate erroneous ways of looking at the world and also wicked attitudes; and calming is to make the mind 'immobile'.

TSong-KHa-Pa quotes from *Chandra-pradīpa-sūtra* (otherwise called *Samādhi-rāja-sūtra*): "By the power of calming (*śamatha-balena*), it becomes immobile *akampyam bhavati*; by means of discerning (*vipaśyanayā*) it becomes like a mountain (*śailopamo bhavati*)" (op. int., p. 89). He also cites a passage from the celebrated *Śikṣhā-samucchaya* (where the passage is in turn cited from *Dharma-saṅgīti* : "The vision of reality is possible only for one whose mind is tranquil" ('*samāhita-manaso yathābhūta-darśanam bhavati*').

The book naturally closes with a section on the practice of calming and discernment together, and this is entitled 'The

Method of Pair-yoking' (Zung-du-hBrel-pa, *yugaddha*). There is an exhortation that this method must be understood only according to the traditional explanations given in works like *Śrāvaka-bhūmi* and *Prajñā-pāramitopadeśa*. TSong-KHa-Pa has laboured hard to provide the correct perspective by citing hundreds of passages from authoritative sources.

There is a short note on Vajrayāna at the end of the book. It may be recalled that Vajrayāna (the Diamond Vehicle) is the peculiar brand of Mahāyāna Buddhism that originated in South India and spread to the North, especially in the universities of Nālandā, Vikramaśīla and Odantapuri, before it entered into Tibet. It took its roots in Tibet, Mongolia and China. It is characterised by a large involvement Tāntrik practices, principally incantations (*mantras*) and visualisation of deities (*sādhana*). Hence, the alternate name for Vajrayāna is 'mantra-yāna'. The ideology of Vajrayāna as it spread in Tibet tended to ignore not only the Sūtra aspect of the Buddha's teaching but also the monastic regulations and obligations of morality. This paved the way for degeneration of religion in Tibet and deterioration in the spiritual standards. Atīśa and his disciple hBrom were concerned about this state of affairs, and attempted to remedy it by suggesting a combination of Sūtra and Tantra.

TSong-KHa-Pa took up this lead and attempted to revive the efforts of Atīśa and hBrom. He pleaded for the complete and unremitting observance of the *prātimoksha* rules by the monastic community, and he emphasized the value of the study of scriptural texts and methodical reflection on the principles contained in them. But he was also an adept in Tāntrik practices and recognized that if one wished to become a Buddha in this very life: Tantra was the only way. But Tāntrik practices become effective only on the sure foundation of proper conduct. He quoted *Mañjuśrī-mūla-tantra* to the effect that the Buddha declared that there could be no success in the *mantra-path* by one whose conduct was improper ('duuśilasya munīndrena mantra-siddhir na choditā').

In this short note, he brings out the significance of proper initiation by a competent master, guarding of all the pledges and vows, purification of the discursive thoughts by the stage of generation (bsKyed-Rim, *utpanna-krama*), eligibility to the next stage of completion (rDZogs-Rim, *sampanna-krama*), and the obtainment of the correct knowledge of reality in the Tāntrik practices. He proposes to play down the wild fancies that usually characterize the Sādhana of various divinities, and to eliminate the outlandish and obscurantist involvement in the Tāntrik practices.

The two stages are distinguished by the relevance of the first to the “path” (*mārga*) and of the second to the ‘fruits’ (*phala*). The former is the developmental stage and consists in the purification of body, mind and speech through meditation on *maṇḍala* and employment of *mantra* in accordance with one’s own preceptor’s guidance. The latter signifies the realization of the void (*śūnyata*) by yogic practice on the *avadhūtikā* (viz. *sushumṇā*) for the obtainment of pure, blissful and free consciousness. The two stages belong to class of spiritual practices known as the highest (*anuttara* or *ati-yoga*), which represents the balanced employment of body, speech and mind (in contradistinction to *kriyā-tantra*, which represents the body, *charyā-tantra* which represents speech, and *yoga-tantra*, which represents mind). This complex of spiritual practices emphasizes the original nature of consciousness (*chitta*), which is likened to the clear and cloudless sky.

The tantras which crystallized this approach are usually grouped into “Father-tantras” dealing with the stage of generation (bsKyed-Rim) and the “Mother-tantras,” dealing with the stage of completion (rDZogs-Rim). The former ‘tantras’ invoke the aid of male divinities (and hence called “Father-tantras”) for the perfection of what is known as the projectional body (*māyā-deha*, rGyu-Lus), while the latter tantras invoke the aid of female divinities (and hence called “Mother-tantras”), for the perfection of clear and bright insight (*prabhā-svara*, ‘od Gsal). There is also a third group of tantras

which are described as 'non-dual', where the two sets of divinities are together invoked for the integrated benefits of both the stages.

This distinction obtains in the 'New System' (gSar-Ma), which was crystallized by Atiśa, and which provided the basis for TSong-KHa-Pa's reformations. In this system, as distinguished from the 'Old System' (rNYing-Ma), which prevailed from the earliest of times till Rin-chen bzang-po (958-1051 A.D.), the emphasis was on the 'graded path'(Lam) as illustrated by the great text of Atiśa, viz. *Bodhi-patha-pradipa*. The idea of the 'pah' or 'way' involved the attitudinal facility as well as the mental ability to see things differently from how the ordinary people see, or how the practitioner himself saw before he entered the stage of generation. It is a matter of cognitive transformation together with a widening of the spiritual horizon. TSong-KHa-pa views this as a noetic experience, involving detachment from wordly cares, cultivation of an enlightened attitude, and unprejudiced and free outlook.

In the Tibetan lineage of the "Path'-makers beginning with Atiśa, there are three principal division. One of them relies exclusively on the interpretation of the teachings of Atiśa as provided by his direct disciple, hBron-Ston-Pa and as preserved by the famous saint dGom-Po-Pa (1079-1153); and this is represented by the Sa-Skya school of Tibetan Buddhism. The second division (represented by the Ka-Gyus school of Marpa and Milarepa) prefers to rely on the oral traditions as received by Chan-nGa-Pa. Th third division, which is known as Kadam Zhung-pa, relies on textual explanations as trasmitted by Po-To-Ba. It is this division which TSong-KHa-Pa's work represents : "by gathering in the thousand rivers of texts and schools, it is schools, it is the ocean of glorious, well-expressed teaching" (Colophon).

The immediate inspiration for TSong-Kha-Pa to prepare this great treatise appears to have been the work known as *bStan-Rim* by the celebrated translator (lo-tsa-ba), Blo-IDan-Ses-Rab (1059-1109). disciple of hBrom-STon-Pa (disciple of Atiśa).

TSong-KHa-Pa acknowledges the importance not only of this work but of a gloss on it by gRo-Lungs-Pa (a disciple of the author of *bsTan-Rim*). While Atiśa's Sanskrit work is no doubt the core-text, the organization of the "steps" of the Path is principally due to these two authors. TSong-KHa-Pa made the organization more broad-based and inclusive. He not only explained many a concept that was but implicit in the previous "path-writings", but added illustrations and cited supporting passages from a large number of Sanskrit texts pertaining to Mādhyaṃaka and Yogācāra systems.

It was also TSong-KHa-Pa's contribution that he interpreted the Path largely in terms of "engagement and disengagement" (Blang dang dor bya'i dNos Po, acceptance-rejection), which he described as the "very life of the Path". The human being, whose present existence was an excellent opportunity to work out his destiny, needs to apply himself to the doctrines and practices leading to welfare (viz. the 'good') and at the same time to withdraw from aspects of life which would result in bondage and sorrow (viz. the 'bad'). He should constantly accept the virtuous way (*upādeya*) and reject the vicious way (*heya*); and this incessant, discriminating and careful pursuit of spiritual life constitutes the 'Path'. TSong-kHa-Pa's *Lam* appears to have been specially written to dilate on the dimensions, indeed, and dialectic of this acceptance-rejection praxis, which is a matter of "pair-yoking" (viz. "mutually bound", "without gap").

Although TSong-KHa-Pa sought to integrate Sūtra and Tantra in the *Lam*, he indicated that the Tantra is more relevant to the practice of the Path. In fact, he undertook to compile, immediately after the preparation of the *Lama*, a sort of source-book of the four classes of Tantra (*Kriyā*, *Charyā*, *Yoga*, and *Anuttara*), in *SNags-Rim Chen-Mo*, and also as many as 135 short manuals on Tāntrik subjects collectively called 'Thus-Bu'. He himself prescribes at the end of the *Lam* that one should finally "enter the Tantra, because "this path is a more rare *dharma* than other *dharma*s and speedily fulfills the two collections" (*op.cit.*, p. 475). Elsewhere, he describes

the *Lam-Rim*, and the *sNags-Rim* as but two stages: the former being ‘the shared path of the two vehicles’ (viz. Vajrayāna and Pāramitā-naya), and the latter being ‘the unshared path’ (cf his *Rang-nyid kyi rTogs brJod* or ‘Personal Narration’, tr. by Alex Wayman, Translation of classical Tibetan, p.175).

It is interesting to discern the stages of development of TSong-KHa-Pa’s own understanding of the Path. His brief text known as *Personal Narration* (mentioned above) allows us as insight into this. He first acquainted himself with the writings of “the six ornaments of India” (viz. Āryadeva, Vasubandhu, Dignāga, Dharmakīrti, Guṇaprabhā and Śākyaprabhā), and the teachings of “the two best” (viz. Nāgārjuna and Asaṅga). He then exerted himself with many efforts in the difficult spots in these texts. He realized that mere studying was not of much help in the practice; he then delved deep into “all the essentials of Nāgārjuna’s textual school that lead in perfect theory through the path of fine principles to the opening of the Deep”. His doubts thereupon cleared up.

Subsequently he exerted himself in the Vajra-yāna (viz. the *mantra-path*), which far surpasses the vehicle of perfected and altruistic virtues (*pāramitā*). He concluded that Anuttarayoga-tantra was the chief of the Tantra divisions, after becoming conversant with the Kriyā, Charyā, and the Yoga-tantra, in that order. He benefitted by works such as *Subāhu-paripṛcchā* and *Dhyānottara* (of the Kriyā division), *Mahā-vairochanābhī-sambodhi* (of the Charyā division), *Vajra-śekhara* (of the Yoga division), and *Guhya-samāja-tantra*, *Hevajra-tantra*, *Śrī-chakra-saṁvara-tantra* and *Kāla-chakra-tantra* (of the last division).

It was then that he “prayed and persevered in all the set of reasons so as to get the textual matter to arise (in my mind) as counsel”. He contemplated on Mañjuśhoṣa, “who dispels the darkness of cognition in the candidates”. Thus he obtained “uncommon certainty in the stages of the Path to Enlightenment, descended in sequence from Nāgārjuna and Asaṅga”. He perfected his cognition of the Path by collating ‘two fine compositions’ (*Bodhisattva-bhūmi* and *Sūtrālaṅkāra*), and studying once again the works of Maitreya-nātha and Dharma-

svāmin. He profitted greatly from Śāntideva's *Śikshā-samucchaya*, Buddhaguhya's gloss on *Dhyānottara*, *Mahā-Vairochanābhi-sambodhi* and *Śrītattva-saṁgraha*.

He became in due course "a treasury of counsel". The doorway to discrimination was opened for him ; and he "exercised with engagement on the Path". The 'auspicious preparation' (*mDun-Legs-Ma*) was thus completed.



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PART TWO
TANTRA IN PRACTICE

CHAPTER ONE

The Tibetan Outlook



The Indian Context

India and Tibet have been in continuous cultural contact since very ancient times. Tibet has looked upon India as its sacred land, the land of its religion; and India has looked upon 'Bhoṭa' (the Indian name for Tibet) as its religious frontier. But the formal Indianization of Tibetan religion began around 700 A.D. Of the Indian yogis who then made a deep impact upon

the Tibetan imagination, the foremost was Padmasambhava, whom Tibetans to this day revere as the 'precious guru'. With him entered into Tibet not only Indian magic and metaphysics but also Indian spirituality.

Tibetan spirituality, is essentially Indian in its orientation as well as background. But some of its aspects have disappeared from the Indian context. The reason for this strange occurrence is to be sought in the total destruction of the medieval Indian Universities (like Nālandā, Vikramaśilā and Jāgaddala) in Magadha during the Muslim invasion in the thirteenth century. These centres of learning were the scenes of intensive literary and Tantra-Yoga activities of some of the eminent Siddhas (like Śānti-pā, Nāro-pā, Atiśā-Dīpaṃkara and Maitrī-pa), who had reconciled the traditional Yoga with the Yoga of Mahāyāna innovation. The Vajrayāna that emerged as a result of this confluence was undoubtedly the continuation of Indian tradition, although its spread was on the other side of Himalayan ranges.

The Indian Siddhas, battered by the severity of religious persecution in Magadha, fled to the security, if also isolation, of the Himalayan region, with their books and their practices. Tibet not only welcomed them warmly, but eagerly accepted their religious leadership. This was because hundreds of Tibetan scholars were already acquainted with this brand of Tantra-Yoga as students in the Māgadha Universities. In fact, many Sanskrit texts had already been translated into the Tibetan language; and there were many Tibetans who were excellent scholars in Sanskrit. The Siddha who went to Tibet then, somewhat like the Tibetan Lamas who have come to India now, felt at home in Tibet and continued the Vajrayāna tradition there. Many Sanskrit texts concerning the Tantra-Yoga were translated into Tibetan, and numerous new treatises were written by Indian Paṇḍitas and Siddhas in the Tibetan language expounding the Vajrayāna synthesis in Indian tradition. This explains how a large number of Sanskrit works which are no longer extant in India are available in Tibet, some in original but most of them in translations.

There was a break in the continuity of Tantra-Yoga tradition

in India during the unsettled period after the seventh century A.D. But, fortunately, the reconstruction of this phase is to an extent possible with the aid of the religious history of Tibet. Although possible, it is by no means an easy task, because of ramifications and altered emphasis on certain aspects in that country. An initial look would suggest that the Tantra-Yoga tradition in Tibet was almost an indigenous one, because of the vast differences in details and forms from its Indian model. But a closer look would convince one that it is essentially Indian, and that it was assimilated into the Tibetan tradition. While the basic manuals and guide-books, and the theoretical presuppositions and arguments are no doubt Indian, there has been a remarkable development in this field in Tibet, owing to the genius of the Tibetan masters. Saved from the uncertain political wrangles that were then so peculiar to India, they could concentrate on the practical aspects of the Indian tradition in the quiet seclusion of their monasteries.

A land of silence and loneliness, Tibet perhaps was peculiarly set to develop a mystical and meditational religion. Many of the saints in that country were remarkable for their perseverance in practice, for their extraordinary introspective bent of mind, and for their striking originality in expounding meditational methods. A rich literature concerning Tantra-Yoga has therefore grown steadily in Tibet; and luckily a valuable bulk of it has been preserved, despite historical vicissitudes.

There have been both elaborate and brief commentaries in Tibetan on all the major texts of Indian origin. What are more valuable, however, are the 'oral precepts' and 'personal notes' in the zealous possession of many lama-masters. They are naturally looked upon as precious and confidential; they are communicated to the practitioner only after initiation and successful completion of preliminary practice. Some personal notes have indeed been made public. Much of such material, however, is in manuscripts and in the personal possession of lamas.

In the Tibetan way of thinking, living beings are classified under three broad divisions. Each division is described as



meeting place (*hDu*) of kindred spirits, viz, beings with similar faculties of perception and action. But it is also a combination of particular aspects of life. The distinguishing feature in the divisions is the presence or absence or 'conscious conception' (*hDu-Shes*, in Sanskrit *saṁ-jñā*), the capacity to think and reason, to be aware of oneself and the surrounding. The world is a concatenation of these divisions and aspects; it is indeed a 'confection' (*hDu-Byid*, in Sanskrit *saṁ-skāra*). The basic idea is one of coming together, a patterning of factors and events.

The first division of living beings is characterized by the obvious presence of the thinking faculty, of the capacity to reason (*Shes*). Human beings are included in this group. The second is distinguished by the absence of this faculty, and it

includes higher animals that operate not on reason but on the basis of instincts and impulses. The third division comprises of the lower animals that do not appear to have even instincts or impulses. The Tibetan nomenclature for the last division, “without either the presence or absence of thinking “ (*h Du-Shes-med-Min*), suggests the inapplicability of the criterion of reason for this group. The first division is rational and moral, the second arational and amoral; and for the third group the ideas of reason or morality do not apply.

Among the human beings who constitute the first division, there are again three groups described in Tibetan as the three ‘ways’ (*CHen-pai Lam*). First, there are the ‘natural’ persons. Although they can reason, they hardly ever bother to exercise that faculty beyond the common problems of daily life. They follow their natural inclinations, and seek to satisfy their bodily urges and appetites; they are mere worldlings, with no higher aspirations. Their spiritual orientations are minimal, if not totally absent. The second group consists of more advanced folk, who are not only aware of higher values in life but strive towards them to a limited extent. They are religious, but they are also involved deeply in the world. Their concern is to strike the most advantageous bargain between this world and the values beyond. The third group is composed of more evolved human beings, who can reasonably be called saints. They are devoted to the religious goal to the entire exclusion of worldly involvement.

There is an interesting parallel in Buddhist philosophical thought. The context of course is different, but the division is similar. It is the notion of ‘three-fold fields’ (*KHams-gSum*) or what may be styled levels of reality. The ‘field of Desire’ (*Kāmadhātu*, *aDod-pai KHams*) is composed of the external physical world as well as the heavenly regions which can be obtained by desires. This is the normal world, and the first group of ‘natural’ folk abides in this sphere. Above this is the ‘field of Form’ (*rūpaloka*, *Tib. GZugs-kyi Khams*), composed principally of mental formations (thoughts and images) and private reconstructions of the external world. This is the world

of values and meanings, relations and judgments. It is here that the second group of advanced folk function. Higher than this level is the 'field of Non-form' (*arūpaloka*, *Tib.gZugs-med-pahi Khams*). This sphere is nearer to reality, inasmuch as it is free both from objective presentations and subjective representations. The phenomenal aspect of reality has here almost been suspended. The third of the above groups of human beings, composed of saints, can perceive this sphere and abide in it.

It is to be noted, however, that no text, Indian or Tibetan, contains any suggestion of the correspondence between the three groups of human beings and the three fields of functioning. It is only in the oral tradition that the parallelism is indicated.

The religion in Tibet, being Tāntrik in essential orientation, naturally idealizes the status of the saint, and attaches great value to meditational practices. But there is a ready recognition that the first group of human beings are the most numerous; the bulk of mankind anywhere in the world gets in here. Religion addresses itself to them with grave misgivings. But the second group, while not so numerous, is considerably vast. Religion is more hopeful of them, although limitations are of course there. The religion prescribed for them is mainly a pattern of virtuous living, pious transaction, prayer and worship. Faith in mind (*Dad-pa*), recitation of texts or religion in speech (*Chos-hDon*), and in body prostrations (*Phyag*) and circumambulations (*bsKor-ba*), together with offerings (*mCHod-pa*): these constitute the essential functional religion for the Tibetan laity. Meditational practice is not obligatory for them. Even among the ordained monks, its employment may be said to be minimal.

But those who come together in the third group are the more earnest among the laity as well as among monastic settlement. Meditation occupies in their life a favored position. They are well on the 'way' (*Lam*), in the direction of the goal. For them the 'road is open' (*Lam-Tar*); there are no obstructions either from the field of Desire or from that of Form. It is necessary



for such a wayfarer to choose, accept, and follow ‘the guide on the road’ (*Lam-mKhan*), viz., a teacher, usually within monastic settlements.

Theory And Practice

There is in every religion an inevitable distinction between theory and practice. And although all religions emphasize the greater value of practice, the theory invariably succeeds in dominating. It is, therefore, that the strict Tāntrik outlook prescribes exclusive attention to practice. But practice should draw its inspiration and sustenance from theory. Like India,

Tibet also has encountered this paradox.

Tibetan canon is relatively vast; it comprises of hundreds of texts which are practical in import, besides a much larger quantity of purely theoretical literature. And there are hundreds of manuals which seek to explain the canonical texts of practical import. There are scholars who specialize in this aspect of the Canon, and their help is invaluable for hermits who devote themselves exclusively to practice. There are teachers who explain texts, prepare manuals, and instruct the practitioner. There are also masters, who are more involved in practice. But more important than these two classes of guides are the 'secret preceptors' (*gSang-sTon*), who can explain practical details on the basis of their own experiences and relate them to theoretical formulations in the texts.

Tibetan Buddhism, being Tāntrik, has solved this problem of Theory-Practice (*rTogs-sPyod*) with an emphasis on the latter. The serious student is recommended to plan his career in three phases: study (*Thos*, 'hearing', Skt *śravaṇa*), reflection (*bSam* - 'thinking,' 'considering', Skt *manana*), and contemplation (*sGrub*- 'carrying out', 'performing', or *sGom*, meditation', Skt. *nidhidhyāsana* or *dhyāna*). The usual advice is to study the doctrine first, then master it, and finally set about to practise it. Study is a necessary preparation, and its value is not ignored. BLa-Ma Sangs-Pa counseled rMog-CHog-pa, who was only 17:

You should study in your youth. If you begin to meditate without having first studied, the demons may carry you away!

The import is that meditational exercises without intelligent direction may lead one astray; instead of focussing the aspirant's life purposefully, it drives him to get lost in a hopeless maze. It is important that the experience and judgment of previous masters must be available for the beginner, both to prompt and warn him. Meditation is designed to bring about a change in the interior of the aspirant's life. The change must be orderly and beneficial.

Urgyan-Pa (born 1230), who was celebrated as a *mahāsiddha* ('eminent adept') resolved even as a boy:

I shall study first. And, then, practice. I shall, then, know the difference between the present state of my mind and the state of my mind in meditation.

Meditation is described as "removal of the wall that separates this life from the next".

Books are, therefore, considered an important equipment of every lama, even if he intends becoming a hermit. Every monastery guards its library with remarkable zeal, and the fame of a monastery is to a considerable extent dependent upon the size of its library. Books of practical value are carefully secreted, and are not readily made available to the uninitiated. During initiation, it is customary to place such a book on the head of the aspirant, signifying a formal transmission of wisdom contained in it. An advice that is frequently repeated is:

There is no benefit of a *kalyāṇamitra* except in books.

But this importance accorded to books is not unqualified. There is a warning frequently given that too much of involvement with books is likely to render one indifferent to meditation. Sharpening the mind may deaden the heart; and preoccupation with acquisition of bookish knowledge may preclude wisdom from dawning. The *Blue Annals* records the words of the eminent master KHu (born 1191 A.D.):

Images and books are too numerous! We should practise meditation. A single hermit is better than a hundred *Prajñāpāramitā* texts in a hundred thousand verses (*śatasāhasrikā*), written in gold!

There is a pretty story to illustrate the relative value of books and meditation. rNa of sPar-Phu, proud of his learning, went to meet the meditation master hGro-mGon (1110-1170 A.D.) at the Phag-Ma-Gru monastery. The master welcomed him and



made an imprint of a splendid lotus flower in brown sugar, and offered it to the visitor. The visiting scholar turned it over and over in his hands, and admired its beauty. However, he would not eat it, because he could not bring himself to cut that charming piece into bits. Thereupon, the master took the piece from the visitor's hands, broke it into two bits, and gave the bits back to him, saying "Now, eat". The scholar ate the pieces and enjoyed their taste. The master explained:

Your studies are like this imprint of the lotus flower. You could hold the imprint in your hand and admire its form. But you could not enjoy its taste until you broke it up and put it into your mouth! Scholarship is a mere form; it would be useless unless it is brought into your own experience by meditation. The purpose of all this learning is to help meditation. You must focus your attention on that.

The teaching of hGro-mGon came to be known as "the taste of brown sugar." rNa took lessons from him in meditation and soon became as adept (*siddha*). Later, as many as five hundred hermits gathered round him to learn meditation. He was celebrated as "the greatest in wisdom". Because of the monastery he established at sPar-Phu, he became known as sPar-PHu-Ba. Towards the close of his life he not only wrote manuals on Nāgārjuna's *Six Treatises*, but preached extensively. He used to say: "First meditate, and then preach and continue the lineage."

Theory thus would be proper only when practice has accomplished its end. It can never be a substitute for practice. Such was the insistence of the old masters on practice that long years were diligently spent in seclusion before an involvement with theory could begin. Preaching was the necessary duty on the part of a lama, because his compassion towards all beings must be expressed in transmitting the excellent doctrine. This is a familiar Mahāyāna attitude. The vow of the bodhisattva (and of every earnest lama that seeks to reach this status) is to labour for the welfare of all beings. And preaching is the major mode so far as a lama is concerned. But, for preaching to be effective, it is necessary to "meditate first, and then preach."

It may, however, so happen that meditation covers the major period of life of a serious student. For instance, sGro, the eminent master, took to meditation when he was forty, and finished it only when he was seventy-one: and then he preached for four years, before he passed away in 1153 A.D. Preaching was prescribed also in order "to continue the lineage", which was necessary to preserve the saving grace of the doctrine for the benefit of the suffering humanity. When a master was asked, "What is more profitable? To stay in seclusion (and meditate) or to labour for the welfare of beings", he replied: "By entering into seclusion, you will also be labouring for the welfare of beings!"

In order to emphasize the necessity and value of practice,

ures was roundly discouraged. His famous successor to the Indian Counsellor sPyan-sNa: "It is 100 sections of the Doctrine. Only!" There is also the story of books on his back beating him, commenting that years of study had been 'wasting master' La-sTod advised

... can never be reached! It is like drinking
... the books, meditate!

end that study and meditation should supplement the other. The latter is described as “completing the



CHAPTER TWO

Guru-Yoga



Vajrayāna Teaching

Meditation is essentially practical and personal. It comprises of techniques that are carefully graded and patterned. They are selected so as to be most effective for the individual practitioner considering his equipment, attitudes and aspirations, his strengths and his weaknesses, his background and his

make-up. These are not what the individual himself can determine, but usually it is the teacher or guide that selects and prescribes, after a careful and comprehensive study of the aspirant.

The human intellect that normal life prizes so highly is of little aid here. It can, on the other hand, block and baffle. The practitioner is frequently advised to suspend his reason and judgment during the practice of these techniques. The yawning emptiness must be filled with an unwavering faith in the ability of teacher to guide him successfully through. In practice, the teacher not only selects and prescribes the most appropriate techniques for the practitioner, but periodically evaluates his performance, encourages or admonishes when necessary, corrects and suggests changes when they are indicated.

The practitioner's attitude to his teacher is an important aid in progress and success. Humility before one's teacher has been valued highly in the East. Total and unquestioning acceptance of his system and method is held out as a necessary prerequisite. The student approaches the teacher not in the spirit of giving him trial, but in order to give himself a chance. Arrogance and doubt have often marred the chances of success in many a misguided pupil. Subjugation of the ego and its surrender to another person are extremely hard for an intellectually alert individual; but this is clearly unavoidable in this enterprise. The Indian texts recommend that the spiritual student must be a 'slave' of the teacher, for the teacher holds in his closed fist the power to grant success. It is therefore necessary to seek the "teacher's method" (*PHyag-bZes*) by serving him diligently and happily.

There are three kinds of teaching that are recognised in Vajrayāna. The first is called "Thought-transmission" (Thought-lineage, *Gongs-brGyud*): it is direct communication of mind to mind, telepathic. The second is "Sign-transmission" (*brDah-brGyud*), employing mere signs and gestures, without a single spoken word. These two are naturally rare of occurrence: the first one needs to be a Buddha to communicate, while the

second would require to be an adept of a high order (*mantra-dhara*). The third kind, however, is more usual and more practicable. It is “transmission which is ear-whispered” (*Nan-brGyud*): it is oral transmission from teacher to pupil, and is confined to direct precepts that the teacher’s mouth pours into the pupil’s ears. It precludes the teachings that are written down and are contained in books: this transmission relates to specific instructions regarding a contemplative procedure, and to certain revelations that are meant for particular pupils.

There are also “text-transmissions”. The teacher here merely permits the pupil to read a text, recite some passages from it, or chant a magic formula (*dhāraṇī*) during a ritual. It is not enough if a book is handed over to the pupil; the teacher must first read or recite, and the pupil has to repeat after him. The entire proceeding follows a ritual sequence. Or, the teacher will read a text, translate the passages, and explain some points. This is also “textual transmission”, but of a superior order. The third variety of transmission in this context is “instruction” with regard to a ritual or meditational practice. In all three, a teacher is indispensable but his role in the third is obviously most valuable.

The teacher “dispels the dark clouds of ignorance, shows the way towards freedom, cures us of the poison of five-fold passion and saves us from the quagmire of worldly involvement.” The numerous benefits the pupil receives from the teacher have often been enumerated. The following are the frequently occurring ideas:

- He awakens our faith in the path of Dharma.
- He acts as a wise and benevolent friend for one in distress.
- He cuts off our greedy thoughts.
- He frees our minds from ego-bound impulses.
- He uproots our unbecoming attachments.
- He helps us to achieve one-pointedness of mind.
- He deepens our commitment to the path of meditation.
- He makes firm the fleeting benefits of meditation.

He makes us incline towards meditation throughout our lives.

He enables us to understand our true nature.

He helps us achieve our goal, and strive to help others.

The teacher is, for the student, more than a human being. He represents the entire lineage of teachers that have mastered the method and transmitted the wisdom. In Tibet, the Tāntrik cult of *guru-yoga* has been preserved and developed. It is a systematic involvement with one's teacher, a gradual cultivation of an attitude that aids progress. The teacher is first looked upon as a human being, as another person related to oneself by periodical instructions. Then, the teacher is viewed as the representative of the entire line of teachers commencing from the primordial Buddha himself (*guru-paṅkti*). So far as the pupil is concerned, he is the sole representative; and his importance consists in linking the pupil directly with the Buddha himself. The *guru-yoga* culminates in the development of the attitude that the teacher is essentially identical with the pupil's own self. The thought that the teacher is not outside but inside helps in tapping one's own resources. And here the teacher is identical with the core of the doctrine. He symbolizes the Doctrine which the student desires to explore and experience. Oftentimes, an ordinary teacher (*upādhyāya*), one who teaches without realizing the truths himself, is distinguished from the teacher who transmits the truths on the strength of his own realization (*āchārya*). The latter is obviously superior and is of greater help to the aspirant. Sometimes, one who seeks to practice esoteric rites would be obliged to have a third teacher, the so-called 'secret preceptor' (*gSang sTon*), who specializes in the hidden precepts.

Notwithstanding the enormous importance attached to the teacher, it is recognized that real help can only come from within. "The best *Kalyāṇamitra* is your own mind." The Buddhist expression for the guru or guide is an interesting one: *Kalyāṇamitra* is 'the friend who works for your welfare.' He works with you intimately, and with perfect understanding and sympathy. Here is a piece of counsel that a Tibetan master (Dam-pa) gave to his pupil who asked him "When in doubt,

whom should I ask, when you are gone?”:

The best *Kalyāṇamitra* is your Mind! The teacher, who is capable of ridding you of your doubts will arise from within your own Mind. Should you be in need of another *Kalyāṇa-mitra*, that would be the excellent scripture *Prajñāpāramitā*. Study the text carefully. The human *Kalyāṇa-mitra*, the individual who teaches, is indeed the lowest kind of *kalyāṇa-mitra*, because his help is limited.

(Blue Annals, XI, 146).

When the mind of the practitioner is ripe, it is believed that the proper teacher arrives, prompted by the inexplicable Kārmic pressure. The Mind may even materialize the teacher! The effective teacher is not one who merely knows and is still practising, but one who has already “gone there” and experienced directly. Tibetans distinguish between the written or spoken explanations of a text by a mere scholarly teacher (‘Black Instruction’, *Nag-KHrid*) and the explanations based on one’s own experience (‘White Instruction.’ *dMar-KHrid*). The latter are doubtless more valuable.

Many details of the ‘White Instruction’ naturally are not written down, but remain ‘oral precepts’. To obtain them, one should approach a master, receive initiation from him, and begin practising. It is said that the Doctrine that enlighten and liberate is in four major streams:

- (1) elaborate commentaries on the basic texts;
- (2) oral precepts and personal notes;
- (3) initiations and practical guidance; and
- (4) the practice (meditation and worship)

They are here arranged in order of increasing importance. The teacher’s role consists in making the pupil increasingly competent to pass from one stream to the other. Reliance on the teacher, therefore, does not absolve the pupil of the necessity to exert so as to become ultimately independent of

the teacher. The Buddha said: "The enlightened ones only show the way: the going is your own concern!" The accepted system is the firm ground on which we set out; the chosen teacher directs our attention and lights up the path: but our resolution, wisdom, and energy must take us across.

Initiation

Before one launches on any serious enterprise, adequate preparation is necessary. One needs not only to be informed about the modes and methods to be pursued and the goals to be reached, but also to be prepared and primed. Priming in spiritual matters takes the form of initiation. An aspect that is common to all religions, it assumes an especial significance in the Tāntrik framework. An intense religious career is heralded by initiation, which is both a commitment and an equipment. "To make ripe a raw individual, initiation is necessary", said Kun-dGa.

Initiation (*dīkṣhā*, Tib. *DBabg-bsKur*) in practice is a procedure whereby the power of one is transmitted to the other. The Sanskrit expression is made up of two roots, the former (*dī*) signifying "endowment, gift, equipment" and the latter (*kṣha*) indicating "elimination, removal, destruction". The import is that the hindrances in the individual must be removed before he can pursue the path successfully. And, concurrently, a clear insight and a firm trust are to be generated in him. In effect, one seeking initiation must cease to be a normal individual with natural inclinations and passions, but be ready to be 'reborn' into a new life of higher values. It is a total transformation that occurs; the coördinates of the initiate become altogether different. He begins a career of intense devotion and extraordinary effort. He becomes 'consecrated' to the path.

Initiations take many forms. And even objects and places can come within its impact. Blessing a vase or a house, a scroll-painting, the image of a deity or a lama-teacher, a diagram (*maṇḍala*) for contemplation or worship, a rosary, or

a *rDo-rJe* bell, and infusing charm into a thread of wool or a piece of paper, essentially partake of the nature of transmitting of power. But initiation in the present context is transaction between the teacher in whom the power resides and the pupil who is ready to share it with him. It is usually a rite (although not necessarily so), involving ritualistic purification of body and mind (*kriyā-dīkṣhā*), awakening of the psychic centres (*chakra-śodha*) and transmission of a formula for incantation or a method for contemplation. And as the rite consists in the employment of consecrated water with which the initiate is given a ceremonial bath or which is merely sprinkled on the head and limbs of the devotee, the rite is also called (*abhiśheka*).

The initiation not only cleanses the body, speech and mind of the initiate, but places some power at his disposal, thus making him capable of receiving the higher wisdom that comes either from the *guru*, or from contemplation. In this sense, it authorizes him to obtain advanced instructions or special teachings in a secret text. At the same time, there is a firm commitment on the part of the initiate (*samaya*, 'pledge', 'oath') with regard to certain observances and abandonments; his behaviour is now strictly stylized, and he enters into a peculiar relationship with his teacher who has endowed on him the initiation. This is described as an intense mental effort which obviates the difference between the doctrine and his own teacher.

The teacher's precepts are useless if they are received and retained only in the manner of pouring water from one vessel into another. And those precepts fail to enter the depths of consciousness because of what is called 'the sealed knot of the mind' (or 'the knots of the heart', *hṛdaya-granthi* in the Upanishads). Unless this knot is loosened, hesitation torments the devotee. Initiation is a procedure for this loosening of the mind's knot. Tying a knot or loosening it, is a magical rite, intended to heal the sick. Mind's sloth and ailments are removed here. There is a saying recorded in the *Blue Annals*:

Hesitation is greatest among creations of the devil. One should perform initiation right now, even if necessary provisions are not available.

It is in this sense that initiation has been explained as the direct contact between the mind and the doctrine.



Tibetan imagination described this as 'contact between the stone and the bone' (*rDo-Rus-Phrag*). "If one wishes to eat the marrow of the bone, he should crush the bone with the stone." Mind is the bone, and enlightenment is the marrow contained in it; the doctrine is the stone. Applying the stone to the bone is the act of initiation. The bone is hard and does not yield the marrow readily. It needs repeated crushing, and the initiation marks the commencement of this procedure.

In the Tāntrik cults, there is a belief that each doctrine is zealously guarded by a group of supernatural beings (*dharmapāla*, Tib. *Chos-sKýongs*). There is also a supposition that hidden aspects of the doctrine are communicated to the

initiate by 'sky-traversing fairies' (*dākinī*, Tib. *mKHa-gro-Ma*). There is a belief that Padmasambhava entrusted "hidden texts" to the *dākinīs* who preserve them for hundreds of years before communicating them to the *sādhakas*. Although externalized in iconographically stylized forms, the fairies are actually spontaneous promptings within the deeper layers of one's own being. They emerge from levels far beyond ordinary awareness, and bring with them insights that are normally not accessible. Because the Tibetan artistic imagination has fixed the forms of these 'fairies', the initiate will conjure them up in the familiar forms. An initiate may attach himself to one or more of them for the purpose of integrating his natural constitution with the new experiences that he will receive during the period of practice. He is "bound in pledge" to them. His loyalty and devotion to them will determine the frequency and excellence of the intimations that he will receive from them.

Legends relate how one 'fairy' introduces an ascetic to his own mind, and leads him to perceive the original nature of mind where distractions are altogether absent. Another 'fairy' (*sukhasiddhi-dākinī*) reminds the meditator when his mind wanders: "Keep your mind without object, O Yogin!" Still another (*jñāna-dākinī*, Tib. *Yeś-Śes-PHab-Pa*) enters into the meditator dancing and singing the *mantra*, and fills him with insight. The 'fairy' named *Sukhakarā* brings to the practitioner a state of utter happiness that he had never before experienced, and thereby strengthens his resolve to continue the practice. Another 'fairy' named *Chintā* dips the ascetic in a vale of worry and drives him to seek comfort in meditation. *Loka-dākinī* assumes a fierce aspect and strikes the initiate when he breaks his vow. *Vimalā* gently enters into the devotee, and suffuses him with an unprecedented feeling of purity. There are sometimes male counterparts of these 'fairies' also (called *Vīra*, Tib. *DPa-Bo*), doing a similar service. They represent the valorous aspects of practice: perseverance, patience, endurance, courage and adventure.

The 'guardians', on the other hand, represent abstract but insistent commands for the initiate to fulfil all his pledges, discharge all his vows, and keep to the chosen path. These are in the shape of 'the terrible conscience', which will not brook any lapse or laxity. Their role becomes clear in the following anecdote. It is said that the great translator, Rin-CHen bZang-Po, obtained initiation when he was eighty-five from the Indian saint Atiśa-Dīpaṃkara and practised uninterrupted meditation for ten years. For this practice he erected a house with three doors. Over the outer door, the inscription ran: "Should, within this door, even a single thought of self-interest arise in me, may the Guardian of the Doctrine split my head!" Over the middle door, the inscription ran: "Should within this door, even a single thought of self-interest arise in me, may the Guardian of the Doctrine split my head!" And, over the inner door: "Should, within this door, even a single ordinary thought arise in me, may the Guardian of the Doctrine split my head!"

The practitioner's commitment to the pledge must be unflinching. There are rituals, a sequence of which involves the drinking of consecrated water (with the mystic syllables *Om-Āh Hūm*) and reciting a formula: "In case I break my pledge, may this water be the waters of hell, may it consume me, or toss me in terrible agony! If, on the other hand, I keep my pledge, may this water turn into adamantine nectar, and may it grant me what I seek!"

The Guardian of the Doctrine will not only watch over the fulfilment of the pledges and vows; he will also protect the practitioner from the forces both within himself and outside that seek to distract and frustrate. The Guardian has thus a terrifying aspect (demanding strict fulfilment of the pledge and driving away the disintegrating forces) as well as a benevolent one (protecting the devotee from distress and disappointment).

The Chosen Deity

Tibetan religion is peopled with deities, divinities, demons, 'guardians' and 'fairies'. They are not without significance.

The wrathful aspect and the benevolent aspect, the postures and weapons, the body and ornaments, have all their spiritual significance and psychological import. In fact, they are externalized representations of elements within man's psychic constitution. They are of particular relevance to those who take to contemplative life. Tibetan imagination has exquisitely portrayed the contending and commingling forces that make their appearances during sessions of contemplation in seclusion. The aspirant should be warned against them, and should be guided with regard to them; some he should fight, some dismiss, some sought, and some befriended. The purpose is to successfully complete the task he has undertaken.

We are not here concerned with the magical and sorcerial rites which involve them. Their value alters in such undertakings. But in meditation, they help a better understanding of oneself, and facilitate a firmer hold on the impulses and hindrances that are imbedded in our own nature. They make for integration, and the pursuit is rendered not only uninterrupted but effective. When the mind settles down comfortably and fixedly in contemplation, these images disappear. The serious Tibetan never mistakes their reality to be external; he is all the while aware that they are creatures of imagination, not his own imperfect imagination but the powerful imagination of the adepts who have spent years grappling with internal forces.

During initiation, the teacher bestows on the pupil a 'chosen deity', chosen in consideration of the pupil's strengths and weaknesses. This is called in Tibetan *Yi-Dam*, which has been translated by Snellgrove as a "guarantor". The Tibetan expression refers to the fact of being bound to vows or oaths or solemn promises (*Dam*). The term more correctly is *Yi-Dam-LHa* (Skt. *iśhṭa-daiva*), the divinity watching over the vows of the practitioner, or the deity which is committed to his welfare. This a personal 'god', guide, or mentor. And there obtains a secret and sacred bond (*Dam*) between this deity and the practitioner. The bond is intimate, inviolable and personal.

Each practitioner has his own *Yi-Dam* which is either chosen for him or by himself. He keeps it throughout his life, or until the stipulated period of austerity is completed.

The practitioner is said to have three "hidden treasures" (*mDZod*): the guru, the 'fairy' (*ḍākinī*), and the chosen deity (*Yi-Dam*). The last one is often believed to incorporate the other two. The *guru* communicates the truth and bestows initiation. He represents the Doctrine; he is in fact the living embodiment of it. The 'fairy' provides hidden intimations from deeper layers of one's own being. Stag-Lung-THang-Pa (born 1142 A.D.) explained that 'precepts' are what one gets by one's own meditative experience. The picturesque way of speaking about the latter is that he gets them from a *ḍākinī*. Relating what one obtains from the teacher with what is got from his own experience during sessions of contemplation, is the function of the *Yi-Dam*.

CHAPTER THREE

Tantra-Yoga



Vajrabhairava

Preliminaries

The practitioner must prepare himself adequately before he launches on the contemplative session. He spends four weeks in so doing. The first week he spends reflecting continuously and deeply about the great good fortune that has come to his

lot in being born as a human being. He impresses it on himself that it is a rare opportunity, extremely difficult to obtain in this world of myriad kinds of creatures; and he feels grateful to the happy chance that has made him sound in body, sound in mind, intelligent, and interested in higher values in life. He tells himself that if he lets this opportunity go, he may never get another, and it would be matter for great grief. To have been born a human being, to have heard of the Buddha, to be interested in walking along the path he has shown, to have secured a good teacher to guide him, and to have an opportunity to practice are thoughts that fill him with earnest zest, without which the practice is not likely to succeed.

The second week is spent on thoughts concerning misfortunes like disease and infirmity, and concerning death. For one that is born, death is certain; and for one that is living, illness and old age are unavoidable. Accidents may overtake anyone and cut short his life, or render him disabled. It is therefore necessary for one to practice meditation when he is well and alive. The third week is occupied by an intent reflection on the *law of karma*, on the fact that every occurrence presupposes an adequate and appropriate cause, and on the truth that no deed will be without its reward or punishment. The fourth and the last week in the preparatory period is spent on ruminating over the miseries that abound in the world, and the terrors a human heart is filled with when evil fruits mature and begin to bear fruit. No creature on earth is free from anxiety, and at the human level the intensity and variety of anxiety are indeed staggering.

The four weeks thus spent are designed to make the aspirant realize the urgency with which the practice has to be undertaken. He should understand that meditation is the only technique by means of which the anxieties and stresses of existence are eliminated. These four preparatory reflections are regarded as "common", in the sense that they are common to both Mahāyāna and Theravāda.

Then there are the four preliminaries which prepare the individual directly for a meditational session, more especially

for visualizations. These four are looked upon as “uncommon”, in contradistinction to the four “common” ones detailed above, inasmuch as they are unique to Mahāyāna. The first preliminary is a composite of three distinct details: the refuge-going (or resorting to the Buddha, the Doctrine, the Community and the Teacher as ultimate and sure refuges), the vow-making (or taking the pledges of the compassionate saviour-saint or a *bothisattva*), and the development of ‘the thought of enlightenment’.

The third detail is not only interesting but significant. All sects and schools of Buddhism pin their faith on ‘the thought or resolve concerning enlightenment, ’(*bodhi-chitta*, Tib. *Byang-CHab*), It merely means the mind (*Sems*) intent on obtaining the Buddha’s perfect wisdom in order to be of service to humanity. The vow to save all beings in the world (the *bodhi-sattva*’s vow) is the central idea in the concept of *bodhi-chitta*. Overcome by compassion for the sorrowing humanity, groaning in the pit of misery, forlorn and desperate, the practitioner is asked to resolve to help them and extend his firm arm in that direction so that the hapless folk may be rescued and comforted. Such is the instruction contained in a text, entitled *Abhidharma-dīpā*. The thought of enlightenment is justified by the resolve to be the ‘mother and nurse’ for the suffering folk. It implies that of the two essential ingredients of enlightenment , viz., compassion (*karuṇā*) and wisdom (*prajñā*), compassion is more important and urgent. The actualization of this emphasis is to be seen in the image of Avalokita, the patron-Saint of Tibet, who is pictured as the merciful *bodhi-sattva*.

The development of this ‘thought of enlightenment’ involves the cultivation of some essential virtues. Vasubandhu mentions the following:

- (1) Gather round you friendly helpmates to encourage you and support you in the spiritual career.
- (2) Be devout and honour the memory of the Buddhas and other Saints.

- (3) Do whatever good you can, and acquire thereby the 'roots of merit'.
- (4) Be ever compassionate and considerate.
- (5) Endure with a smile whatever misfortune falls to your lot; do not regret or curse.
- (6) Remain friendly to all living beings, and be ready to help them whenever they are in distress.
- (7) Be even-minded, tranquil and dispassionate.
- (8) Think well of yourself on the count that you have taken to the great path shown by the Buddha.
- (9) Seek with diligence the right doctrine.
- (10) Aspire to obtain the Buddha-wisdom.

(*Bodhichittotpāda-sūtra-śāstra*)

In Tibet, the 'thought of enlightenment' is further regarded as the 'diamond' (*vajra*), which is the same as 'void' (*śūnyatā*) and in which is contained the essence of all Buddhas. It is hidden in the very core of individual existence, and its nature is that of 'great bliss' (*mahā-sukha*). It is looked upon as a mystic union in one's own body of the two principles of existence, wisdom and compassion. In this sense, there is a frequent identification of *bodhichitta* with sexual energy (semen), which has two forms: involvement with the phenomenal world (*samvṛti*) and an absolute isolation (*vivṛti*). The latter form is 'great-bliss'. It occurs when the natural downward flow of *bodhichitta* is arrested either by the six-limbed yoga (*ṣaḍaṅga-yoga*) consisting of withdrawal of the senses (*pratyāhāra*), focussing of mind (*dhyāna*), regulation of breathing (*prāṇāyāma*), mindfulness (*anumṛti*) and trance (*samādhi*); or by the four-fold bodily yoga comprising of gestures (*mudrā*), posture (*āsana*), knots (*bandha*) and restraint of breath (*prāṇyāma*). The basic idea is that the downward flow leading to the discharge and dissipation of sexual energy is injurious to the constitution inasmuch as it leads to phenomenal involvement. It is necessary not only to check its descent, but prompt its ascent. Meditation is the technique of securing this inversion of the flow of vital energy. When this

energy successfully streams up and reaches the highest centre, viz., the 'lotus on the crown of the head' (*uṣṇīṣa-kamala*), it melts and suffuses the entire organism. It is in this state that one experiences it as 'great bliss'. It also becomes intensely effulgent (*prabhāsvara*), whereupon the highest wisdom dawns. This is the enlightenment one is looking for.

The development of the *bodhi-chitta* is the favourite theme of numerous manuals. Many Sanskrit-texts have been preserved carefully in their Tibetan translations. The originals unfortunately have been lost, as for instance *Bodhichitta-bhāvanā* by Kamalaśīla, translated by Dharma-pāla and included in the Tibetan Canon, *Tangyur*; another work with the same title by Mañjuśrī-mitra and included in the *rGyud-hGrel* (Tantra gloss) section of the Tibetan Canon, *Bodhichitta-vivaraṇa* by Nāgārjuna, translated by Guṇākara and Rab-Shi-bSes-gNen, and included in the same section; *Bodhichitotpādaśādhī* by the same authority, translated by Surendrabodhi and included in the same section; *Bodhichitta-vāyu-charaṇa-bhāvanopāya* by Tali (?), *Bodhichitta-asampramoṣa-samādhī*, *Bodhichitta-bindūpadeśa* by karma pa, *Bohdhichitta-bhāvanopadeśa* by, Mañjuśrī-mitra and *Bodhichitta-mahāsukhāmnāya* by Atiśa-Dīpaṅkara. These works provide practical guidance in the matter of arousing the 'thought of enlightenment', making it firmly established, preventing its natural lapse, relating it to one's own chosen deity (*Yi-Dam*), absorption of the deity into the seed-syllable 'a', and the establishment of light in one's own heart; they also describe the nature of *bodhi-chitta* and enumerate the benefits of the practice.

The development of *bodhi-chitta* is followed by a ritual designed to clear away the impediments and defects which may prevent successful practice. Usually this involves the continuous repetition of a *mantra* (given by the teacher) for several thousand times, all the while visualizing the chosen deity and the teacher. The next ritual in sequence is *maṇḍala-offering* to his teacher and the line of teachers represented by him. Atiśa-dīpaṅkara is believed to have introduced this

ritual into Tibet, and there are several Sanskrit manuals in Tibetan translation which give details of this ritual. Many of these works bear the simple title: *Maṇḍala-vidhi*; and among the authors are Jayasena, Kamala-śrī-, Nishkalamka-vajra, and Ratnākara-śānti, all eminent *paṇḍitas* of the Nālandā and Vikramaśīla monastic colleges. Closely associated with this ritual is a visualization known as *guru-yoga* which is a mystic absorption of the teacher into oneself.

The concluding ritual dedicates the merit acquired by the preliminary sequence of rituals to the welfare of all living beings. It is important to note that all these involve visualizations, which are effective techniques of training the mind. Intimately involved in visualizations are the sacred formulae (*mantra*, *Tib. Ngag Sang*), the mystic diagrams (*maṇḍala*, *Tib. dKyi-l-Khor*) and dispositions of hands and fingers (*mudrā*, *Tib. Chug-ja*).



Ascetic Approach

Although the Buddha advocated the Middle Path, eschewing the extremes of severe asceticism and careless enjoyment, unrelenting self-mortification and unconcerned self-indulgence, and total denial and total acceptance, he nevertheless emphasized the necessity of an austere life, the need for seclusion and the advantages of a contemplative life. He advocated thirteen ascetic practices (*dhutaṅga* for purposes of self-purification by shaking off defilements. In all the countries which have accepted Buddhism, monasteries are essentially places for quiet and secluded meditation. Monasticism itself is an ascetic practice. Withdrawal from the world necessarily involves privations and affliction of pain. Endurance of pain and indifference to comfort become distinguishing features of a monk. But asceticism in Buddhism was not driven to the point of torture and immolation. Food, posture and society were brought under discipline. In Tibet, where the approach to Buddhism is Tāntrik, there is an arrangement both within the monastery and outside it for considerable stretches of absolute isolation and uninterrupted meditation, involving necessarily considerable curtailment of natural impulses and acquired habits.

There is also an importance attached to austerities and asceticism, sometimes of an extreme kind, in Tibet which appears rather inconsistent with the Master's teaching. The explanation offered is that while these austerities by themselves are not important, they must be observed because the Great Sage (*muni*, the Buddha) had observed them. And because the Buddha practised austerities for six years, it is suggested that the ascetic who follows him must also observe a six-year period of austerities, after which he is free to continue them or give them up. But the real reason seems to be the impact of the Indian Yogis on the Tibetan religious life, which already had a predisposition to severe shamanistic practices under Bon influence. Magical rituals and austerities go together. The path to obtain and employ power (what in old Buddhism is called *iddhipāda*) is opposed to the path of ease and pleasure. Fasts,

functional sensory deprivations, postural rigidity, refusing to lie down in order to sleep, ceaseless and frenzied circumambulations, intent repetition of the sacred formulae for hours on end, keeping of vigils during night, the practice of rites in burning or burial grounds, the vow of complete silence, periodical isolation, voluntary poverty and mutilation are associated with both magic and religion everywhere in the world. The Indian impact only strengthened it.

The sect founded by Marpa (1012-1097 A.D.) in Tibet, known as Kagyu (bKah-brGyud), incorporates the essential elements of the ascetic traditions of India. The ascetics of this sect have a seven-fold vow to keep:

- (1) The ascetic should not visit his home on any pretext.
- (2) He should not in any circumstance cross the threshold of a layman's house.
- (3) He should not come down from the mountain retreat (where he has retired for practice) until the stipulated period is over, even if it means disaster or death.
- (4) He should sit up continuously in the meditational posture (of crossed legs and joined palms) and not "loosen the meditation belt" for the stipulated period.
- (5) He should not lie down during nights; he should snatch moment of sleep even as he sits.
- (6) He should wear but a single white sheet of cotton, whatever the vagaries of the weather, even in blizzards and snowfalls.
- (7) He should remain uninterruptedly silent, without communicating his thoughts or desires even by facial expressions or hand gestures.

In addition, some ascetics will undertake regularly to visit the haunted places at nights and practise meditation there (*gNam-KHrod*).

Together with such rather severe and especial vows, there will be many minor ones to observe in common with other monks of the Order. These are regarded as three-fold 'efforts'

(*Bad Pa*) : of the body (*Lus*), of the mind (*Sems*), and of speech (*gNag*). It is obvious that this is a direct borrowal from Indian sources. 'Bodily efforts' include salutations and prostrations, circumambulations, turning the Maṇi-wheel, and offering of ritual pieces. Telling the rosary, although a physical act, is regarded as a speech-expression. Like the Indian rosary, the Tibetan rosary consists of 108 (the Sa-sKya group prefers 111) beads, which are moved in a circular fashion to the accompaniment of a sacred formula (usually *Om Maṇi padme Hūm*) or a seed-syllable for each bead-movement. This movement of beads in practice, however, is not always accompanied by verbalization. With the laity, it becomes a mechanical affair, and can be regarded only as 'bodily-effort'. But when it is seriously taken up, the movement of the beads is a substitute for utterance of the formula. When the count is measured upto 10,800 tolls during the course of a day, or in a sitting, it becomes an act of asceticism. Similarly, transcription of sacred texts and inscription of the Maṇi-formula on stone slabs can be substitutes for verbal-effort, although the major involvement is the physical act.

Speech-efforts include chanting of selected texts, and preaching of sermons. Recital and exposition of scriptural texts, discussion and debate concerning doctrinal matters, reading and writing of sacred literature, even wood-block printing of the 330 volumes of Canonical texts (which practice, borrowed from the Chinese, has been in vogue in Tibet since the eleventh century) are regarded as 'mouth-religion' (*KHa-dPe* and *CHos-sKad*), notwithstanding the bodily effort involved in them. Reading aloud of scriptures, muttering of the Maṇi-formula, utterance of mystic or magical spells while offerings are made, preparation of *maṇḍala* for sacramental purposes, and intoning the sacred formulae while telling the beads on the rosary are illustrations of the verbal expressions of religious activity (*CHos-hDon*).

In the Tibetan way of thinking (as in the Indian) man's existence has three aspects : body, speech and mind. And mind is said to be the king, while the other two are servants.

Therefore, mental effort is considered supremely important in religion. Mind is distinguished by its capacity to have faith (*Dad-pa*) : reliance on the Doctrine, devotion to the 'three perfect ones' (the Buddha, the Dharma, and the Sangha), reverence for the saints and gods, desire for emancipation (*THar-ba*), and the altruistic vow of the bodhisattva are all so many expressions of faith. Mind (*Sems*) is naturally and normally filled with 'sin' (*sDig-pa*). It is not accidental that the Tibetan expression also means, 'scorpion' which is known for its sting, and 'crab' which is well-known for its hold. Evil not only holds the mind under its clutches, but produces pain by its sting. Religion is an attempt to relieve the mind of this 'sin'. And faith is the first effort to clear the mind of its hold and sting.

Studying the doctrine, understanding its tenets and developing an insight into its import are likewise efforts of the mind. Bu-sTon urges that one must study the Doctrine with a sense of urgency; for it is only in the present time that the Buddha has appeared, and when our minds are favourably disposed towards his Doctrine we must, without losing time, take advantage of it. Procrastination may deprive us of the present opportunity of a favourable condition of existence. Health, leisure, presence of a teacher, absence of a distraction, and the mood are conditions that may soon pass off. Preparatory for study, and a precondition to it, is faith in the Doctrine, reverence for the teacher and confidence in our ability to understand. Symbolic hand-gestures (*PHyag-rGya*), conceptualizing thought processes during certain rites and mental offerings in ceremonial sequences are also included in the same category: they position the mind in a favourable mood for study and practice. A rite is essentially a preparation.

All these are relatively minor and routine. Although they do involve withdrawal in various degrees from normal biological and social activities, and effort of varying intensity, they can hardly answer to the description of ascetic practices. The ideal of an ascetic is always prized highly; the Buddha himself is regarded as a 'great ascetic' (*mahāśramaṇa*). And

even normal folk periodically turn into ascetics now and then, albeit for a stipulated (and usually brief) period. A monk who cares to live in large conformity with the ascetic ideals ingrained in Indian and Tibetan Tāntrik tradition merits great reverence and adoration from his fellow-monks as well as from the pious lay folk.

The two goals of the Tāntrik way of life are pleasure and power. The urge for pleasure both here and hereafter is of course the more popular motivation; but all the practices that somehow involve it are regarded as 'lower' Tantra. The longing for power (power over others, power to accomplish things quicker and better, power to secure wealth, and so on) has resulted in a whole complex of magical practices which are included in the 'midling' Tantra. But the utter unison of pleasure and power, but altogether divorced from the phenomenal context, occurs as 'emancipation' or 'freedom', the urge for which constitutes the 'higher' Tantra. Whatever the grade of the Tantra, the ascetic involvement is not only indispensable, but considerable. Even to secure pleasure or power, one must undertake a strenuous course of asceticism, denying oneself smaller pleasures in the hope of obtaining greater pleasures, or forsaking in the expectation of higher power. Giving up in order to get, abandoning in order to obtain, suffering now in order to be later comforted, and welcoming pain as a prelude to happiness are necessarily involved in the Tāntrik approach.

The Tibetan ascetics of olden days usually adopted the six-limbed yoga (*Shāḍaṅga-yoga*, Tib. *sByor-ba Yam-lag Drug*) according to the method taught by the Indian master Anupama rakshita. It consists of bodily postures, regulation of breathing, withdrawal of sense-functions, fixed attention, stilling of thought and absorption in a trance. It was usual to devote three years, three months and three days (adding another half-month to make up for possible lapses) over this yoga, in a forest-retreat or on a solitary mountain. This Indian method is said to have been communicated to Tibet in a long line of teachers beginning with Avalokiteśvara and Anupama-rakshita,

the latter a historical personage. The actual teacher who brought it to Tibet appears to have been Vana-ranta (in Tibetan dPal Nags-kyi Rin-CHe), the last and the most popular of Indian Paṇḍitas to visit Tibet. He was born in 1384 A.D. and hailed from Bengal. He is said to have been initiated in yoga by Nāgabodhi (disciple of the celebrated Nāgārjuna) at Dhānya-kaṭaka monastery in Andhra-Predesh.

Work in the open

Higher mammals are not designed for isolated existence. They are therefore by inclination gregarious; group life not only offers them security but contributes to their development and well-being. This tendency has reached its culmination among the *Homo sapiens*, viz. in the human beings, for whom society is an indispensable cover and prop. Man is truly a social animal, and his survival is inextricably bound with processes of social facilitation. He matures and fulfils his impulses only within the social context. Being a biological imperative and a social necessity, the need for group life is fundamental to man. When he is denied group involvement by force or by accident, he feels lost and may go crazy. Solitary confinement can indeed be a disastrous punishment for a majority of human beings.

It would, therefore seem unnatural for an individual to voluntarily immure himself, or isolate himself from all group coordinates. But Yoga would insist on such voluntary withdrawal, repeatedly and for brief or long stretches of time. This is meant not only to curtail his natural and outward orientation but to facilitate the development of the necessary inward attention. When we are caught in the processes of the world, acting and reacting, receiving and responding, we are to that extent alienated from ourselves. We cease to be ourselves and put on a succession of masks, each of which is situationally determined. We are busy with what in modern jargon is called 'input processing.' We continually select our sensations, plan our perceptions, programme our responses, project our feelings, make judgments, and order our values.

All this would happen so automatically and so massively that our awareness is almost sidetracked and submerged.

Spiritual practice is in a valid sense a counter-current to worldly involvement. Therefore the practitioner is advised to “turn off the input processing” and periodically withdraw into seclusion. However, it is not seclusion as such that benefits; it is the attitude which sustains the seclusion that is important. All religions have a contemplative aspect, and isolation is advocated in all religions as a factor that facilitates contemplation. Eastern religions attach a greater value to contemplative seclusion; they hold that solitude is a necessary condition in which meditation can successfully be practised.

Tibet, in particular, developed a philosophy of seclusion. The physical features of the land as well as the peculiar characteristics of the people there provide ample opportunity for the earnest to dwell in complete isolation for relatively long stretches of time. It does not, however, mean that Tibetans are by temperament lonely or seclusive. They have as avid and fine a sense of social life as any other people in the world. But those who have committed their lives to religious fulfilment can easily pass their time in strictest seclusion; this ability comes to them naturally. They do not feel oppressa if they do not sight another human being or hear a human voice for days or months or even years.

Important in this context is the Tibetan expression *mTHSams* which literally means “boundary-line”, “border”, “demarcation”, “frontier”. It is what marks off an area, a kind of partition within which one must stay, and beyond which one may not stray. The word is employed to indicate the outer limits of one’s property, as well as a line of demarcation drawn in a magical rite to mark off the consecrated area. In the latter sense, the space enclosed within this line is regarded as endowed with magical power; any act done here, and any person staying here would be extraordinary, consecrated, magically equipped, and mysteriously potent. The same thing when done, or the same person when staying, beyond these limits would be ordinary, and lack all magical power. The

Tibetan word has also a secondary meaning: “to plan”, “to resolve”, “to settle one’s mind”. In the meditational context, the two meanings are fused. It means resolving to set up a fence or boundary for oneself, to draw a barrier round oneself, and to cut oneself off from the surrounding (*mTHsams gCHod-pa*).

This is achieved by several devices. One of the most frequently employed procedures is to retire into a distant hermitage, a solitary house, hut, or cell in a monastery, or to a cave in some mountain fastness, and to vow never to go out of it, nor admit any one within it. The withdrawal is voluntary and deliberate; or it may be at the suggestion of his *guru*. During this period there is an arrangement priorly made to supply some scanty food and water (never much) to the person who enters into seclusion through a narrow window or a small opening (called *Bug-Go*), without, however, affording an opportunity to see him or talk to him. If the ascetic is a well-to-do layman he may arrange with his own family, or with a family in the vicinity of his seclusion by paying for the service. There are ascetics who vow to what is known as “water and stone fasting”. They are said to drink small quantities of water and munch tiny pebbles! There are accounts of saints (like Dharmasvāmi, Zig-Po) who sit down for the practice of mind-purification (*bLo-sByong*) for 23 days at a stretch without even bothering to eat food.

The period of seclusion may last several months, sometimes it may extend to a couple of years. The Kālachakra ascetics observe seclusion for three years, three half-months and three days. The underlying belief is that the human constitution normally undergoes a significant change during this period. The Kagyu hermits prefer a seven-year or twelve-year seclusion. It is more usual for monks or serious laymen to retire every year to seclusion lasting a few weeks. It is also an accepted practice to snatch brief moments of seclusion everyday in the morning, noon, evening, and night. Some hermits wander into cemeteries and spend the nights under a lonely tree or an empty cave in the neighbourhood of the

village. Seclusions are occasionally observed in the waning moon. Not infrequently it happened in olden days that meditation covered the major period of life. For instance, sGro (b. 1078 A.D.), the eminent master, took to meditation when he was forty and finished it when seventy one; he preached only for four years before he died.

While in seclusion, the ascetic must consecrate himself to meditational practice and related study. The purpose of seclusion is to enable the ascetic to apply himself to practice with the same zeal as that of the parents bringing up their only child, or that of a "wool-cleaner washing the wool". Frequent descriptions of steadfast practice are "without loosening the belt", "without placing head on pillow for years", "till his waist became sore" and "till the buttocks wore out". There is an interesting story concerning the famous ascetic-poet Milarepa.

When his disciple sGam-Po-Po was leaving Milarepa's hermitage after his study and practice, Milarepa accompanied him as far as a stream (for that was the customary send-off). He halted there, and told sGam-Po-Pa: "Child, I have a secret. Shall I reveal it to you now?" sGam-Po-Pa was eager to know. Milarepa turned and uncovered his own buttocks. sGam-Po-Pa was shocked to find his teacher's buttocks in such a terrible plight. They had completely worn out and blackened and were altogether devoid of flesh, because of constant sitting in meditation. Milarepa then told his disciple:

Son, the secret of success in meditation is diligence!

Another celebrated master, Dam-pa, advised his equally celebrated disciple Kun-dGa:

Live in a cave which can hold one person only, and wear clothes just enough to cover your shame. Your food should not be more than what is sufficient to keep you alive. And practise meditation until and you begin to hate it!

The final remark is a common expression for saying: Practise continually and with a single-minded devotion. The import is a total and exclusive preoccupation with meditation practice. Seclusion is not merely a physical barrier excluding the ascetic from all normal contact with the surrounding. It is also a psychological barrier keeping away the normal mental processes. It is indeed a "turning off". Cut off from the outside, it is a voyage into one's own interior. It is a kind of death so far as the individual's participation in the world is concerned. He is 'dead' for the world is 'dead' for him. But this death means a new life. Prevented from going forward, he starts going backward. Time stands still for him, and space is excluded from his consideration. Habitual sensations and perceptions, conceptions and feelings, plans and cares are shaken off, and he begins to delve deep into his own psyche. Zang Rin-Po-Che (born 1123 A.D.), one of the 'three jewels of Tibet', recounted: "I have given up the world in my mind. The link between me and the world is completely severed. I am absorbed in the heavenly nature of non-origination."

Work in the Dark

We are often troubled by the surroundings; our minds are unable to get into contact with reality because it is in the nature of the presented world to veil, obscure and distort. There is, therefore, a need to escape from phenomenal involvement before we can rest our mind on reality. Not to attend to the world is difficult when the world moves us, and moves around us. Mind is like a "mad dog barking at anything that moves, even at the faintest rustle of leaves". It is necessary to shut the mind up, and free it from distractions if we aspire to make mind discover its own natural modes and links. Seclusion is thus a technique favoured for self-discovery.

Having secured physical seclusion, it is of paramount importance to obtain psychological freedom also. Although the world in its physical and social aspects is left outside the 'barrier', the world in its mental and emotional aspects can still plague the practitioner. The world as known and

remembered, as felt and experienced, continues to be a lump, too difficult to swallow. In order to train his mind to settle down, a series of practices are prescribed.

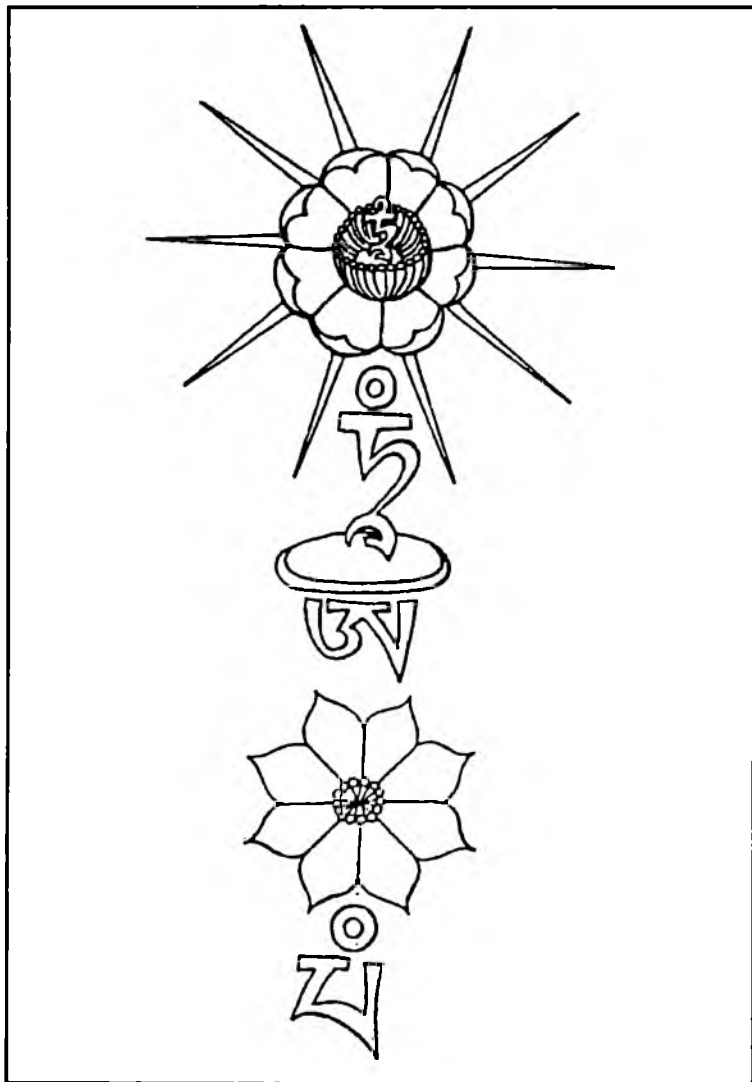
Isolation is always well-planned. It is not a mere sinking into oblivion or losing oneself in emptiness. In the Tibetan reckoning, "the work in the dark" comes only after "work in the open". The latter consists of studying the relevant texts, getting explanations from the teacher, and observing the general rules of virtuous conduct. The practitioner, even while immured is not continuously "in the dark". He can have a lamp (for which butter is supplied along with food periodically) and some books with him. He can break the 'barrier' when he feels like consulting his teacher, although it is usually not approved or encouraged.

"Work in the dark" is independent of books and teachers, it is essentially an encounter with one's own interior, exploiting one's own resources. Seclusion is described as "dark", and the *mTHaSams* that the Tibetan yogi enters is indeed physically dark. It is not without a reason that darkness is prescribed as favourable to meditational practice. Seclusion denotes withdrawal from the light of the day, the light which not only illumines the objects and aspects of the phenomenal world but facilitates transaction in it, but holds man a helpless captive in phenomenal involvement.

The Tibetan word for light, viz., *sNang-ba*, means "to emit light", "to shine". In this sense, it comprehends everything that is visible, all things that the organs of sense can apprehend. It also means "mental appearance", "thought", "idea of the world". In an extended sense it means "apparition", "phantom" (*sNang-gyi sHrul-ba*). The light outside not only shows up the objects of the world, but creates a net of appearances, conceptions and meanings within the mind. And conversely, the light of the mind illumines the world around, and weaves for each one of us a meaningful context. It is the interplay of these lights that makes our existence a weird but enticing maze of mystery and a bundle of suffering.

The outer light so constantly and so glaringly shows up the

external world that one can hardly dare look within. The light of the mind is naturally overwhelmed by the light streaming from outside. One who would look within must, therefore, necessarily shut off the outer light. The practitioner would meditate during the day closing his eyes, but the outer light thereby is not directly excluded. Although the physical objects



are not directly perceived, their reflections, partly visual and partly mental, would still be there. It is for this reason that darkness is described as helpful to meditation. In a sense, the light outside would restrict the light within to shine brighter and more steadily. And what is important, darkness would emphasize the isolation of the practitioner from the world.

In a well-known and oft-used Mahāyāna text, *Sūraṅgamasūtra*, there is an interesting dialogue between the Buddha and his disciple Ānanda. The Buddha ties a knot on a piece of cloth, while Ānanda watches, and ties another, and another. Seven knots are thus tied, Ānanda agrees that not all the knots are the same, for they are tied in a specific order. The Buddha tells Ānanda that in order to untie the knots, one must know how the knots are tied. Knowledge of the origin helps the accomplishment of dissolution. And prompted by the Master, Ānanda says that to untie the first knot one must start with the last, that one must proceed in a reverse order. The seven knots refer to the seven psychic centres (*chakras*) in the human constitution: and the tying of knots is the body which is positioned in the world. The first knot is hidden in the deepest layers of the mind. In order to move in the direction of the first knot, we must follow the reverse order by shutting off the outer light and beginning to 'work in the dark'. Thus, this is an active process of 'opening up' one's awareness to internal modes which structure the external world and determine our involvement in it. It is an effort to posture the mind in itself. It marks a major shift in the mode of consciousness.

CHAPTER FOUR

Dhyāna



Sitting Up

Meditation is an exercise of intense activity; it is described as 'supreme effort'. And the physical foundation for this heightened activity is, paradoxically, the postures of sitting perfectly still. Iconographically, it is the typical Buddha posture. And the posture is universally accepted as most

helpful in all Yoga, Hindu as well as Buddhist (including Zen).

In Tibet, the assumption of less this posture is known as the 'seven aspects of Vairochana'. First of the five *dhyāni*-Buddhas, Vairochana represents the body, the corporeality, material aggregation. He is also the sun, the "illuminator" (*rNam sNang*). As a divinity, he enables his devotee to realize the true nature of all existence and the illusory nature of all phenomena. The body of the meditator when postured properly will ultimately lead to this realization. In the Tāntrik framework, the body and mind are indistinguishable, and the body is essential for enlightenment. Hence the involvement of Vairochana's name in this context. The seven details of the posture are described as follows:

- (1) Sit up, crossing the legs, with both knees touching the ground, and both feet opening out like petals of a lotus. This is described as 'lotus-posture' (*padmāsana*) in India and as 'adamantine posture' (*vajrāsana*) in Tibet. A wide and firm base is thus provided for the body. It fixes the animal core of the body, and loosens roots of consciousness around the navel region.
- (2) The hands are brought together, the left palm resting on the right, and held steadily just below the navel with the bends of the wrists firmly pressing against the thighs. This is the familiar contemplative posture in the Buddha images. The benefit is the equalization of bodily heat. Usually the hands are held perfectly horizontally, but sometimes they are cupped also. It is a practice with some hermits to bring thumbs into contact, either in line with the upper palm or to form a slight circle.
- (3) Sit perfectly erect, keeping the spinal column straight. The Tibetan texts illustrate the erect spinal column "like unto a pile of Chinese brass coins, one on top of the other". The explanation is that it should ward off slumping, which would distribute pressure unequally in body and thus be a source of disturbance to the mind. Erect posture does not mean stiff in a ramrod fashion;

that would be an undue strain, and therefore, a distraction for the mind. Sitting erect in an easy manner relaxes the torso, arms and head; it regulates the flow of the vital currents in all parts of the body.

- (4) Expand and thrust the chest forward, pushing the shoulders a little backward, but not stiffly. This is to facilitate full and deep breathing, and to enable the air within all the cavities to move out.
- (5) Bend the neck so that the chin touches the top of the chest. This position is likened to the iron-hook or elephant-goat. In Yoga, it is known as *jālandhara-bandha*. The texts formulate its purpose as facilitating the expulsion of foul air from within the body. Stretching and bending the neck will quicken the mind's activity. It is to be noted that the usual practice is to keep the head upright, ears in line with the shoulders and the tip of the nose in line with the navel.
- (6) Touch gently the roof of the mouth or back of the upper row of teeth with the tip of the tongue, and hold it there. This will eliminate the rush of thoughts. All thoughts involve speech, and all speech entails movement of the tongue, when the tongue is held steady but not pressed, thought is considerably curtailed. And the life-force is sucked by the tongue and is made to go upwards.
- (7) Lower and settle your gaze at a distance of about three feet (or a little over five feet, 'the distance of yoke') in front of you. But do not focus your attention on any object. The gaze must be relaxed and free. However, it is important that the gaze must not shift; when the eyes wink and wander, thoughts are formed and dissolved, for vision guides the thinking process. Opening the eyes or closing them altogether present difficulties for meditation, and they involve strain. Lowering the gaze will be found to be restful. Tip of the nose is often indicated for settling the gaze; or the sky-line right in front of the practitioner, if the practice is in the open.

By this seven-fold 'method of Vairochana', the body achieves stability and tranquility at the same time. There are some lamas who hold that this method is in itself sufficient to induce states of meditative absorption. Their stand is similar to that of the Zen teachers who emphasize the advantages of *shikan-taza* ("just sitting") in Zazen. But it is more usual to regard this method as merely preparatory to the actual meditational sessions such as breathing, visualization, or void-cultivation. The immediate benefit of this method is to silence the bodily distractions by gathering all bodily parts and vital forces together into a steady posture. "Now", Kun mKHyen-Pa the master told the initiate, "you should assume a posture like me, and keep your mind free from thoughts (*mi-rTog-pa*)".

A device known as the meditation-belt (or band) is sometime used to make the posture firm and easy. The prescribed length is said to be "measuring , when twice doubled, about the circumference of one's head". It is secured encircling the body, across the shoulders and under the knees in the normal meditational posture. This will keep the body steady even when the ascetic enters into a trance state. The usual expression for diligence in practice is "without loosening the belt". The other aid to meditation is the meditation-cushion, a soft padded seat usually one cubit square and "four fingers' thick". Keeping it continually warm (by sitting on it) is another expression signifying persistence in practice. The value of cushions is also emphasized in Zen.

Watching The Breaths

Having integrated the body, speech is to be tackled before the mind can be conquered. Indian and Tibetan thought do not regard the distinction between the vocalizations which are bodily processes and the ideations which are mental, as absolute. The two processes are indistinguishably involved in speech; and respiration (breathing) is an integrated function of body, speech and mind.

Tibetan Buddhism being Tāntrik, breathing here assumes an especially important role. Watching the breath and counting the breaths without however controlling it in any manner are techniques adopted both in the Theravāda branch of Buddhism and in the Zen schools. Even in the Pāli Canon, there are discourses entirely devoted to this manner of stabilizing the mind (*sati-paṭṭhāna*). But in Vajrayāna, the active control of breathing is also advocated, and thus forms a necessary part of such practices as the *gTum-Mo*.

The theoretical foundation of the Tibetan techniques of breath - control is borrowed from Indian Tantra. There are notions of the 'life-force' (*THig-Le*, Skt. *Prāṇa-śakti*), its 'pathways' (*rTSa*, Skt. *nāḍī*) and its 'movement' (*rLung*, Skt. *prāṇa*). The 'life-force', both in the Indian and Tibetan contexts, is the mysterious essence of one's being. It is the 'seed' all forms that the being takes. It is spoken of as sex energy or the 'semen virile' of individual existence, in its practical and procreative aspects. But in its own essential and inalienable nature, it is 'zero', 'naught'. It lacks the dimensions of existence, and is thus not grasped. It is a mere 'point' (*bindu*), although it gives definition to whatever appears. In the mystical vocalization of phonemes, the dot (*m̐*) above the letter (like in *am*, *hrīm*, *om*, *klim*, *gam*) represents the involvement of the life-force'. The same principle consists of the restraint of air within the body.

The 'pathways' are the three veins that are supposed to branch out from the 'heart' (which, and not the physical heart, is the 'seat of the life-force'): *rKyan-ma* (Skt. *iḍā*) to the left, *Ro-ma* (Skt. *piṅgalā*) to the right, and *dBu-ma* (Skt. *sushumṇā*, also called *aduti*, Tib. *Srong-rTSa*) in middle. The vein is here defined as the 'root of life'; it is the pathway along which the vital current moves. It should, however, not be mistaken that this is in the nature of a vehicle or a channel through which the current courses. It is actually a mode of the life-force itself, the modal aspect of the vital current. The significance becomes clear when the nerve-paths are in Tantra regarded as so may

vowels and consonants which are all modes and modifications of the one primal sound, 'a'. In fact, the three veins are symbolized by the three-lettered formula *OM—ĀH—Hū-M*.

The movement is likened to the 'wind' or breeze (*rLung*, Skt. *Vāyu*) and its association with Mind is a persistent idea in Yoga and Tantra. Tibetan expressions like "Breath is the courser and Mind is the rider" and "*rLung* (breath) and *Sems* (Mind) are joined into one" make this association clear. Tibetans employ two expressions *Sems* (Mind, Skt. *chitta*) and *Yid* (Mind, Skt. *manas*) without much confusion. The former has sometimes been used as the equivalent of the Sanskrit *sattva* (animated being), as in *Sems-Chan* ('animal', having the faculty of consciousness) and *Sems-dPa-CHen-Po* ('great being', a person of great worth and vitality). The latter term, however, is often used in the sense of thought-processes, conceptualization (Skt. *manasikāra*): it is mind in the ordinarily accepted usage, and approximates the *vṛtti* idea in Yoga. Like Yoga, Tibetan meditation also seeks to suppress the mind (or the mental modes). Meditative absorption is described as *Yid-La-Mi Byed-Pai* (a state of no-mind, or non-conceptualization, Skt. *-amanasikāra*). It is not, however, the absence of Mind, but the commingling of Mind with the Breath, when the mind-movement is suppressed. This is the Tibetan notion of 'Breath-control' (*rLung-rTSol*).

This is sought to be achieved by withdrawing the breath from the two side-veins (to the left and to the right) and forcing it into the middle vein (*dhuti*). This is making the wind in the body 'pot-shaped'. The Tibetan practice (*Srog-rTSol*) is very similar to the Indian *prāṇāyāma*. It is described as comprising of four methods:

- (1) 'Breathing in' or inhalation. The air is slowly, gently and noiselessly sucked in through the nostrils from about sixteen fingers' distance.
- (2) 'Filling', or 'pot-making'. The inhaled air is drawn in and forced into the abdominal region, thus swelling it to resemble an earthen pot.

- (3) 'Equalizing' or 'lung-expansion'. When the practitioner finds that he can no longer preserve the 'pot-shape', the breath is broken up into two units, one unit being forced into the left lung and the other into the right. The air within the body is thus equalized, the lungs being suffused with breath.
- (4) 'Shooting the breath'. When it is found impossible to continue the above any longer, the bodily breath is shot out through the nostrils like an arrow. The 'shooting' is done gently first, but later with great force. The 'dead' air is thus completely expelled.

While this method is usually adopted by the practitioner's desire for magical powers or by those who pursue the 'Short Path', it is more common to employ the sequence of inhalation retention-expulsion of breath to facilitate visualization. In such a practice, the expulsion of 'dead' breath often becomes the initial stage, although the practice is flexible. The practitioner breathes out gently through the nostrils reciting mentally the seed-syllable *Om*; visualising at the same time the form of the letter as white. Then he inhales the air slowly and steadily, reciting *Hūm*, and visualizing it as blue or black in colour. Then, the inhaled air is retained within the body a while, reciting *Āh*, and visualizing the form of this seed-syllable as red in colour. There is an interesting explanation that the three parts of the practice symbolize the three sects in Tibetan: exhalation which is white is the Kagyu sect (founded by Marpa); inhalation which is red is the Nyingma (rNying-Ma founded by Padmasambhava); retention of breath is the gelugpa sect.

But the important aspect of this method is the association of what is called 'the adamantite recitation' (*rDo-rJe-hi-bZlas-pa*, *Skt. vajra-japa*) with the practice which is not so much breath-control as breath-regulation. The recitation of the three-syllabled formula *Om-Hūm-Āh* is done inaudibly, while one breathes (exhalation, inhalation and retention). The purpose is to render the breathing process even, regular and rhythmic

on the one hand and full of mystical power on the other. Serious practitioners count up to 21,600 breathings sitting. The order of the syllable is changed by some practitioner to *Om* (for inhalation), *Āh*, (for retention) and *Hūm* (for exhalation). It is more usual either to count the breaths or to repeat the syllables; seldom are the two done together.

The Tibetan Yoga also prescribes mere watching of the breathing process, without any attempt to regulate, much less to control. This is in common with Theravāda Buddhism and Zen. The benefit envisaged here is 'tranquillity'. The Tibetan word *SHi-Ba* means 'to die' or 'to go out' (*SHi-Kha Ma* is death, and *SHi-gNas* is a death-like state or condition). It is a sphere where the fire of mind has gone out. It corresponds to the Pāli expression '*sītibhūto*' ('cooled'). The practice involves the cultivation of tranquillity by means of 'bare awareness of breathing'. If the mind is wild and thoughts many, it would be an advantage to begin the practice by counting each breath:

- (1) Watch the breath as it goes out of your nostrils. Do not hurry it; make it slow and long. When the breath has completely gone out, count 'One'. Watch the breath as it enters your nostrils, and when it reaches the pit of your stomach, count 'Two', When again the breath courses out, count 'Three' and so on. Continue till 'Ten', and begin again with 'One'. If you continue beyond 'Ten', you are likely to attend more to the counts than to the breath.
- (2) Now, as you watch the out-going breath, you extend yourselves mentally, as if you are opening out along with the out-breath, and when the out-breath is about to finish, say mentally 'Out' count 'One'. Watch the in-breath, with no involvement whatever, but when the in-breath starts, extend yourself again mentally, and as it is drawing to a close, say, 'Out', and count 'Two'. Continue till 'Ten', and then begin again with 'One'

The second exercise will start after you have achieved a fair degree of success with the first. When a count is lost, because of some distraction, begin again with 'One'; do not try to resume from the last number. Let not the counting be mechanical. Employ your whole attention and entire energy to the business of counting while watching the breaths. Let not breath escape your awareness.

While you are watching and counting, do not allow yourself to be split into two parts: "in-breathing I" and the "out-breathing I". And do not vocalize the counting: do it entirely mentally. Try not to disturb the natural rhythm of your breathing.

When calm breathing has been established, when each breath could readily be watched, and when the counting is done without an error (that is, without getting distracted by stray thoughts), the practitioner is ready for the next phase of meditation, viz., 'insightful understanding' (*LHag-THow SKt. vipaśyanā*). An old instruction runs:

Link the thought-process with the breathing process; and forcibly control the mind.

The explanation is that thoughts appear and disappear in the period that elapses between an in-breath and an out-breath. Attention must be focussed on this interval, ignoring both the incoming and the outgoing breaths. Watching the movement of breaths should be abandoned, and the mind fixed on the 'natural retention' of the breath, which is an exceedingly brief span. Counting of the breaths is dispensed with at this state, and after a preliminary exercise of 'following' the breath-movements, one begins to observe the mind's working without in any way attempting to interfere with it. This is the practice of 'letting go'. Here is what a teacher explains:

Mind is like a lake, a sheet of water, muddy and agitated; waves and ripples constantly cover the surface. You can

hardly catch your reflection on such a surface, nor can you see the bottom of the lake.

You cannot clear the surface and calm the turmoil by beating the water with a stick or by stirring it with a rod. The ordinary man is always attempting to still his mind and see its bottom in this very manner. The more he tries, the less are the chances of success.

Why not leave the lake alone! Just forget about it, think something else. Do not try to grapple with the mind; you will only make it more difficult to handle. Watch your breath instead! When the mind does attract your attention, that is to say, distracts you from your breath-watching, merely register the thought, become barely aware of it, and return immediately to your breath-watching.

Look, Reflect and Work

Meditation in Tibet goes by the name of sGom-pa (Skt. *bhāvanā*), which word originally meant 'to imagine', "to fancy". "to produce or generate something (sKyed-pai) in mind". It came to signify 'contemplation' or 'meditation' because it was essentially a mental culture, a creation, a cultivation. The term was employed in the sense of holding one's attention on a deity (*LHa*), as well as in the sense of contemplating upon the formless. Among the forms, the 'non-breathing' objects like the image or deity, or tiny ball, or a lamp are distinguished from 'breathing' objects like in-breaths and out-breaths. The watching and counting of the breaths explained above, are grouped under preliminary practices. Meditation proper deals essentially with the 'formless'. Three stages are recognised here:

1. 'Viewing' (*lta-Ba*). The Tibetan word signifies an act of will; it is an attentive, energetic, deliberate looking at, or into, something. The usage of the word in the context of the physician 'looking' at the pulse of patient (*rTSa-lta-Ba*) is significant. It is 'feeling' the pulse, an intent examination or a close investigation by one who is not only competent but

deeply and practically interested. The other frequent imagery employed to illustrate the significance of 'viewing' is climbing to the mountain-top and looking at the village from that height.

The ability to 'view' in this sense follows a skill in bestowing non-participant and bare attention upon the breaths, acquired in the preliminary practice. 'Viewing' is different from musing, or reflective and discursive thinking. It is a steady flow of awareness, more or less completely denuded of content. While this is essentially a practical and meditational approach, there is also a suggestion (more commonly accepted) that 'viewing' approximates to the study of the scriptures and the development of a viewpoint (*darśana*), as the first stage in systematic meditation. In this sense, it is the obtainment of an effective outlook.

2. 'Reflecting' (*sGom-Pa*). This may be regarded as meditation proper. It is contemplation, but not employing words and forms. Āśvaghosha describes this stage as 'mirror-like awareness' (*The Awakening of Faith*, Richard's Tr.). When the mirror reflects an object, it does not accept, nor does it reject; it does not modify, nor does it judge. When the object is removed from its presence, it does not remember, nor does it anticipate. It merely receives, and does not hold on to it. Whatever object is presented, it is uniformly and accurately reflected. The mirror remains the same whatever the objects; and it does not matter to it whether objects come near it or go away from it. Mind in this stage is transformed into a clear mirror, not clinging to the phenomenal presentations, nor evaluating them in one way or another. The saint Nāro-pā, the disciple of Tilopa and teacher of Mar-pa, is credited with this advice:

Do not negate; do not suspend your thought; do not find fault; do not fix your mind on something; and do not judge. Just let it be !

When a thought holds on to an object, it is the normal life of bondage; when, however, the thought lets go, or lets the object just be, it is enlightenment. It is in this sense that

meditation is said to be 'mirror-like'. It is in this sense that the great reformer TSong-Kha-pa described meditation as "the means of helping one to reject all imaginative thoughts together with their seeds". It is a matter of uprooting or burning such constructive mental processes which fill our minds, so that the mind is not cluttered and overwhelmed. Meditation is also called a "clearing technique."

There are two exercises which have been prescribed in order to accomplish this 'clearing'. The first exercise involves active but non-participating and non-interfering observation of the mind's working; one is here aware of the thoughts as they arise from apparently nowhere, and as they disappear into oblivion, he watches their uncanny spontaneity, and fleeting transience. But he does not 'think' about them, judge them, accept them or reject them. He merely 'looks at' them. The second exercise is more deliberate. It inhibits the random straying of the mind, focussing it on a chosen object. But it is not an object-bound contemplation in the usual sense of the term. There are two phases of it; the first gets involved with the chosen object to the exclusion of other objects and accomplishes a vivid mental image of the object. The second phase methodically eliminates all the details and characteristics from the object, and frees mind from the commitment to forms and matter.

This stage is necessary in order to undo the 'rule of imagination'. Our mind is exceedingly fertile; it can throw up thoughts and feelings in an interminable succession. We are, therefore, ceaselessly troubled and tormented, disturbed and distracted. To make the mind sterile is difficult, and impossible without persistent and intelligent effort. The meditational 'reflection' is an attempt to recover the essential nature of mind which is passive reception. The Tibetan texts give three characteristics of 'reflection' at this stage: it should be clear and distinct (*gSal*), it should be free from deliberate inquiry and reasoning (*Mi-rTog*), and it should be steady (*Mar gYengs*). The Tibetan expression denoting the last characteristic is interesting. *gYengs* means "swift movement to and fro",

“distraction”, “disturbance”. Thus the characteristic mentioned involves not only freedom from distraction, but alertness and sustained attention. It may be described as ‘meditative absorption’, or tranquillity of no-thought.

3. ‘Working’ (*sTod-Pa*). This stage consists of exercises and practices in order to perfect the second stage as well as behaviour in the world, in the light of the gains of such practice. It is frequently suggested that *sTod-pa* is the opposite of *lta Ba*, ‘viewing’. If the latter is theoretical viewpoint, the former is practical behaviour. Sometimes ‘working’ is regarded as realization, the result of the two aforesaid stages. In this sense, it becomes ‘understanding’ or ‘insight’ (*rTogs-Pa*).

The three stages of meditation are calculated to transform the normal man, who is confused, blind and passionate into a saint who is clear-headed, wise and cool. The first stage, viz. ‘viewing’, is meant to release him from the stronghold of senses so that his confusions cease. The second state, viz. ‘reflecting’, is designed to eliminate the rule of imagination which obscures reality and projects illusory forms. The mind will attain not stability but sight of reality. The third state, viz. ‘working’, is described as undoing the rule of passion. The practitioner is now tranquil and cool.

In accordance with these expected benefits, the meditator is warned against three normal inclinations:

If one lives in luxury, eating plentiful and rich food (*eZa*), Viewing is impossible. If one inclines to pomp and splendour (*Byin*), merriment (*rGod*) and wild living (*Yod*), Reflecting is impossible. If one desires excessively (*Dor*) of attachment and aversion, Working is impossible.

The celebrated ‘six precepts’ of the Indian founder of the Kagyu sect in Tibet, Tilo-pā, are significant in this context. The Sanskrit original of the cryptic philosophy of naturalness has been lost; but the precepts have been retained in Tibetan:

(1) ‘Do not imagine’ (*Mi-mNo*). Imagination is fancy, thought

which is far removed from the object, a mere mental process (*manana*).

- (2) 'Do not design' (*Mib-bSam*). Designing is based on desire and is tied to an objective; it is plan based on resolve(*saṃkalpa*).
- (3) 'Do not analyse' (*Mib-PHYeḍ-CHing*). Analysis is the discursive activity of the mind, involving reasoning (*mīmāṃsā*).
- (4) 'Do not reflect' (*Mib-gSom*). Reflection is contemplative consideration, involving sustained attention (*bhāvanā*).
- (5) "Do not intend" (*Mi-Sems*). Intention is energetic and purposeful thinking involving volition (*chetanā*).
- (6) "Abide in natural state" (*Rang-Babs-bZHugs*). *Rangi* means 'self', 'spontaneous', 'natural': *Babs* is 'form', 'appearance', 'shape' or 'condition'. The two expressions together correspond to the Sanskrit word 'svabhāva' (natural disposition). *BZHugs* is 'to dwell'. 'to reside'.

CHAPTER FIVE

Darśana



Visualization Exercises

It appears rather paradoxical that Tibetan meditation which seeks to realize void prescribes visualization as an expedient device. However, it is not without a reason that this prescription has been made. And it rests on a perfect understanding of the mind's modes and manners. In a work ascribed to the great Padmasambhava we read:

Mind is uncreated and radiant. It rests on no objective support and its nature is vacuous like the sky. And it is free like clouds in the sky. The world of external appearances is nowhere save in the mind; and the appearances, like clouds, will fade away into their sources. Mind is transparent, without quality. To know whether this be so or no, look within your own mind. The *dharma* being nowhere save in the mind, there is no other place of meditation than the mind.

Visualization as a technique is peculiar to Vajrayāna and its practice is perfected in Tibet. It is derived from the Mahāyāna Buddhist conception of 'three aspects' (*tri-kāya*, Tib. *sKu-gSum*) of the 'One Essence of Mind'; its own essential vacuous nature likened to the calm and still expanse of the ocean (*dharma-kāya*, Tib. *Chos-kyi sKu*) the 'bright' aspect that is compared to the mist, clouds and rainbow over the ocean (*sambhoga-kāya*, Tib. *Longs-sPyod-rZogs-sKu*), and the 'flowing out' aspect, likened to the clouds being colourful because of the rainbow and their descending as rain (*nirmāṇa-kāya*, Tib. *sPrul-pahi sKu*). This is an elaborate doctrine on which a large literature exists both in India and in Tibet. This is no place to give even a summary of the doctrine. It should be sufficient here to point out that visualization belongs to the third of these aspects.

The 'flowing out' aspect has been described as generative and creative. But the essential nature of Mind is vacuous (*sTong-pa-Nyid*) and, therefore, formless. What is it, then, that flows out? A mere appearance, altogether illusory (*sPrul-ba*), but an 'emanation' nevertheless. This is occasioned by the 'bright' aspect of the Mind. Basic to the technique of visualization is the theory of light or visibility (*sNang-ba*). The phenomenal world of appearance is called the 'illuminated or visible whirl of events' (*sNang-Srid*). It is, however, not real, in the ultimate, or absolute, sense; it is a mere transformation of the One Formless Mind. Its only characteristic is that it comes to view; it comes to be seen; it shines before us.

There is an interesting Tibetan theory, probably an echo of some Indian doctrine now difficult to identify, about the three phases in the manifestation of this visibility (called in Tib. *sNang-Ba gSum*); it relates the phenomenal emanation with psychic processes. The first stage (*hCHad-Pa*) indicates cutting asunder, drifting away, a split into subject and object. It is the onset or emergence of the developmental processes. It is a 'shining forth' (*sNang-Ba*). It is symbolized as red in colour, because in the Indian analysis of the *guṇās* 'rajas'(activity) is red. The second stage (*mCHed*) is the diffusion or spread of the initial glow. But there is here a dependence on the objective side of the split. It is described as 'the vision of darkness'. The glow is here dimmed by the encounter of the objects. The third stage is the settled 'glow'. The glow gets very dim here; that is to say, awareness is lost. The subjective side of the split gets submerged in the objective, which alone now becomes visible. The world becomes bright in proportion to the Mind getting dim. In this sense, this stage has been called 'luminous', 'bright' (*hOd gSal*, Skt *ābhāsvara*).

In the practice of visualization, Mind's ability to project visions is made use of. This ability is said to rest on three preparations: postural perfection (*āsana*, Tib *Lus-sbYong-Drug*), skill in the restraint of breath (*kumbhaka* Tib. *Srog-rTsol*) and capacity to direct and sustain thought (*dhāraṇā*). In particular, breathing exercises and the practice of visualization go hand in hand. Exhalations are employed as vehicles for the visions to go out of the individual, and inhalations for withdrawing these visions into oneself. And as a preparatory requisite, time is spent in fixing the moving thought:

Assume the seven postures of Vairochana. Do not let the mind turn back and pick up the past; let it not gallop into the future either. Nor should it freely give shape to the present. Fix your gaze at the empty space in the sky.

Your mind will begin to throw up forms: there will be thoughts and feelings, doubts and decisions. You will also 'see' things out there, but they are from your own mind.

They will dance about, tumble, hurry, and chase each other. They gather and scatter. They change and agitate.

Bring this moving mirage to a stillness by watching and restraining the breaths and fixing your gaze. The vision will now settle down; the diversity of forms diminishes and their activity is lessened. Gradually they all merge into a single tiny spot (*THig-Le*). Some people will see it as dark; for others, it will be a small ball of light. But this spot will not rest at a place; it will shift its position.

Fix the spot now. Make it remain motionless; do not allow it to change its colour or size. This can be achieved by breath-restraint, gaze-fixtured and thought-elimination. You will find that the spot will disappear in the surrounding darkness, and reappear. It will eventually come into yourself, and re-emerge from yourself, and go out.

Visualization exercises are all based on this general method. And the technique of 'evocation' is taught during initiation and it is accompanied by an effective ritual. Usually a deity with a well-known and stylized form is selected, and the practitioner is taught to direct his devoted attention to this deity, externalize clearly its conventional form in a dot, and after the image; his mind flows out and assumes that deity's form. In this identification, the ego of the practitioner is transformed (or rather transmuted) into the core of that deity. The deity is now not merely imagined: it is not just a vision or a phantom. It is as real as the practitioner himself. In fact, the two together constitute one reality. Later, by another careful effort, he takes the deity out of himself, disentangles it from his ego, and projects it again into the space outside him. He then contracts the deity's form and accommodates it within the dot he started with. The deity dissolves in the dot, and the dot returns to the practitioner's mind, and there gets lost in a void.

The mind is thus taught to project deliberate forms, and withdraw them as deliberately. From a pregnant but amorphous dot (which is the mind's essence), an elaborate and complex

deity is made to emerge, and the entire thing is made to dissolve into the inside of the practitioner, and emerge out at will. Sometimes, during visualization, out of the body of one deity, several other deities are made to emerge and arrange themselves round the original deity in a stylized design (*maṇḍala*) and later they are all again absorbed into the dot. The entire vision, in all its colour and complexity is an emanation from one's own mind and the whole thing sinks into his mind again.

The involvement of breathing in visualization, which has already been mentioned, is an interesting detail. When the dot of light has been formed in the mind, as the practitioner breathes out, he visualizes the rays of light from this dot go out into the empty space in front of him, previously selected, and when he breathes in, the rays of light are visualized to re-enter the practitioner's body. In a variant practice, the rays of light are transformed into the mystic syllable *Hūm*, which is pictured as blue in colour, like the sky. The form of the deity emerges from this syllable, because each syllable is looked upon as the embodiment of a deity. The deity is seen to grow out of the syllable, the syllable itself remaining in the heart of the deity that has thus emerged. Or while breathing out, the numerous rays of light that dart out are changed into so many *Hūms* which seem to fill the world. The *Hūms* are transformed into as many deities, which are withdrawn into the practitioner's mind when he breathes in.

Visualization of an *Yi-Dam* is accomplished with the help of an appropriate 'seed-syllable' (*bija-mantra*). Every deity has its own 'seed-syllable', a collection of several syllables known as the 'heart-syllable' (*hrdaya-mantra*), and a formula (*mantra*) containing the name of the deity and certain ejaculations like *Hūm*, *Hrīh*, and *Om*. The practitioner learns to visualize the 'seed-syllable', the outline of which would be "fine like the filament of the lotus stalk". He achieves the visual representation of this seed-syllable alone in spotless void, filled with glowing light. From the centre of the light a lotus will emerge supporting the letter " as a king on his throne". Then the letter

will gradually be transformed into the likeness of the *Yi-Dam* (whose form will be familiar to the practitioner, because of its stylistic and iconic representation). Within the heart of the *Yi-Dam* will glow the seed-syllable, encircled by the syllable comprising the 'heart-syllable'. The latter syllables would revolve round the seed-syllable, shedding light all round. A steady stream of light will rush into the practitioner's body. In the subsequent phase, the form of the *Yi-Dam* diminishes, and entering into his body through the crown of his head, settles down in his heart. He then feels his own form diminishing gradually, until it is of the same size as the *Yi-Dam*'s. The two bodies will merge into a perfect unison, and in the unified hearts the 'seed-syllable' and the 'heart-syllables' now shine forth. In the next stage, the 'heart-syllables' will be withdrawn into the 'seed-syllable', and the 'seed-syllable' dissolves in the dot; when the dot also disappears, the practitioner will be in a state of trance.

The visions are never mistaken for reality. They are regarded as if they were reflections on a clean and bright mirror, or "like moon's reflected form in water". And when they are withdrawn, they vanish "as a rainbow vanishes". But they are not mere hallucinations. They are said to become "substantial enough to touch", and they are life-like, although the practitioner never groups them alongside the rest of life. It is an experience strictly confined to meditational sessions, and the vision in every case is voluntarily and deliberately conjured up, the practitioner being fully aware of its nature, meaning and function. The important aspect is that the practitioner expects to learn to regard the so-called reality of the world as essentially a vision, far from mistaking his vision for reality. The practice is likely to bring home to him experientially that the phenomenal world with all its objects, joys and sorrows, is nothing more than a transformation of the One Mind, whose essence is vacuity (*sTong-Pa*).

This is brought home by (CHos-dByins-Pa (b.1324 A.D.) when he recounted: "Through (meditation) on the inseparable

nature of void and Mind, which represents the Absolute (*CHos-Nyid*), which pervades the entire world and the living beings, like colour covering the edge of a book. I have opened my eyes on the cause and effect of the phenomenal existence and Nirvāṇa. I have eliminated the doubts, and I have reached the depth. I have dug the foundation and removed the floor”

While visualization is taking place, it is necessary that the practitioner should remain perfectly calm, detached, and alert. The texts warn that should any aspect of the vision ‘delight’ or ‘bother’ him, the vision will fade away. He will suppress not only his feelings, but value judgements. He is advised to be a non-participant observer. Chanting of the texts or recitation of appropriate formulae during the process helps minimize his emotional involvement in the evocation. The categories of thinking can also be distractions; they are described as ‘subtle’, in contradistinction to the distractions from the outside world which are ‘coarse’. The texts insist that sloth, drowsiness, and a casual attitude are inimical to success in the practice. If there is sloth, details of the vision will fade; in drowsiness, the vision’s clarity will disappear; when the attitude is casual, the vision slips away.

The Ego Exchange

The great reformer Tsong-Kha-Pa, who was instrumental in the ascendance of the dGe-Lugs sect, explained in great detail the value of visualization for the practitioner in regard to ego-modification. According to him, the core of visualization is the practitioner’s identification of the deity with himself, the exchange of the ‘ego of the deity’ for his own ego:

In this practice, the ability with which one can cut asunder his own ordinary ego is important. To concentrate one’s efforts on clearly fixing the form of the deity is to attend to the deity’s body. But attention must be paid to the deity’s ego also; it must be firm and vivid. Its ego must then be exchanged for the ascetic’s normal ego. This is not possible unless he is able to give up his normal ego, to abandon the clinging to his own ego.

It is clear from the above account that visualization is a dynamic process involving readjustment of egos, one the ordinary and weak ego of the practitioner, and the other an extraordinarily powerful ego of the Deity. Among the objectives of visualization are included the substitution of the normal ego with the Deity's ego. Important here is the willingness to forsake one's own ego, however weak and ordinary. And it is a difficult procedure, for one has lived with it for so long and one has come to regard it as his precious possession, in fact, his all: it is regarded as his substance, sustenance and support. The fear of its loss would result in a breakdown of normal personality. It is only the intense and earnest desire for enlightenment that can generate this willingness. The preliminaries mentioned earlier are designed to strengthen this willingness.

The abandonment of the normal ego has to be achieved in stages and must be accomplished with great care and skill. The aid of a competent and understanding teacher here is invaluable. The aspirant must 'take refuge', take the vows of a *bodhisattva*, 'arouse the intention of enlightenment', and 'offer 100,000 maṇḍala offerings to the line of teachers'. Without such preparation, he is not only unlikely to achieve his goal but invite distress and malady; his teacher too would come to grief. In the words of Mila-repa: "Led by a deep ravine which presages destruction, yoked yaks fall together into the abyss".

Substituting for the ordinary ego the ego of the deity is an elaborate process and requires training and guidance. The first step is to achieve a vivid image, a clear mental picture, of the deity's form and nature. Manuals of meditation give detailed instructions as to how this is accomplished. It is an important step inasmuch as it is the foundation. And it depends upon complete concentration, freed from both distractions and drowsiness while the vivid image of the deity has been obtained, one must discern the ego of the deity. Concentration upon the form of the deity without attention to the nature of its ego would render the practice useless. When the ego of the deity has been firmly established, one acquires "the ability to

cut of one's ordinary ego". But the manuals say that it is not until one turns away from his own normal ego, that he can substitute for it the deity's ego.

The practice at this stage involves intent reflection that the practitioner is in fact the deity. There will no doubt be initially a sense of artificiality and unnaturalness about this identification, but concentrated reflection will eliminate this hindrance. The whole idea in so constructing an ideation (*abhūta-parikalpa*, as the *Yogācāra* school of Mahāyāna describes it) is to 'drive home the void nature of all phenomena, which consists in negating the difference between subjectivity and objectivity. The several formulae that the practitioner is taught to recite frequently centre round this constructive ideation:

Om svabhāva-śuddhā sarva-dharmāḥ; svabhāva-śuddho'
ham

(All things are in their nature void; I too am void in my nature)

Om śūnyatā-jñāna vajra-svabhāvātmako' ham
(I am of the nature of wisdom-diamond of the void)

The immediate purpose of this practice is to draw into oneself the extraordinary power of the deity, so that the liberating insight may dawn fully and effectively. This insight helps in the total transformation of the ordinary consciousness.



ཨ། མཁའ་ལྷོ་ཆེ་འདི་འདྲེས་པའི་རལ་བྱང་པ།

Ras-Chun Rdo-rje-grags-pa

CHAPTER SIX

Torch-Bearers of Tradition



Marpa the Eccentric Master

The venerable Marpa of LHo-Brag (1012-1097) was an illustrious, if also somewhat eccentric, son of Tibet. His continued celebrity, however, rests on his having been the teacher of the more illustrious poet-saint of Tibet, Milarepa. Marpa visited India several times, studied under many Indian

masters, and founded the well-known Kagyu (bKah-brGyud) tradition in Tibet, which was a continuation of the Indian tradition of Nāro-pā. He is celebrated as the 'Translator' (*Lo-Tsa-Ba*), for he not only brought into Tibet a large number of Sanskrit Texts on Yoga and Tantra, but translated many of them into Tibetan. He was also a poet.

Marpa (Mar-Pa) hailed from LHo-Brag, ("South Rock"), an area in Southern Tibet bordering on Bhotan. That was his family name. Tibetan religious annals know four or five kinsmen of his, all scholars and teachers, who were also known as Marpas. This Marpa, therefore, is usually referred to as the person from LHo-Brag, or as the Translator. His family name, however, was bLo-Gras. He was born in 1012 A.D. as the second son of his parents, not much about whom is known. He was a bright child, but grew up to be troublesome boy. His mischievous pranks were an unending source of anxiety for the entire village. His parents, in consequence, were nearly boycotted in the small village.

Marpa's father thought seriously of sending the boy away from the village, but had the wisdom to think of a good teacher to take charge of the boy, who was hardly fifteen. He had heard that a certain teacher, who had visited India, was running a sort of boarding school, not very far from LHo-Brag. This teacher and his school were the talk of the whole region. The father took the boy there, and made arrangements with the teacher. He returned to his village with a two-fold satisfaction: the boy was away, and the teacher would make a man of him.

The teacher was Brogmi (hBrog-Mi, 'The Dweller of the Pasture-land', 993-1078 A.D.). He was known in that part of the country as "the precious master" (*bLa-CHen-Po*). He was proficient in Sanskrit, the sacred language of India, having learnt it from the excellent scholar Śāntibhadra, in Nepal. He had also studied the Indian religious lore for eight years in India, under no less a teacher than the great Ratnākara-Śānti, the celebrated paṇḍita of the Vikramaśīlā monastic college in Magadha. He had become an adept in Buddhist Philosophy,

and had been initiated into the 'Diamond doctrine' (*Vajra-yāna*) by Prajña-Indraruchi. Returning to Tibet, he had settled down as a translator. He translated several Sanskrit texts on Tantra into Tibetan; and his translations became famous. He opened a school for teaching Sanskrit and explaining Tāntrik texts in his Myu-gu-Lung monastery (near Sa-Skya in gTSang in Central Tibet). Many brilliant young men of Tibet joined this school.

Brogmi was a clever teacher, stern in the matter of discipline but kind-hearted otherwise. He had, however, a streak of eccentricity. He preferred living in a tent among his cattle. He spent most of his time in the open, day and night. When Marpa was brought to him, he not only perceived that a little devil had come to him, but understood that the boy had a great future. Brogmi attended to Marpa's education with especial care. The boy's unruly nature soon underwent a remarkable change. He had found his vocation; and, therefore, took to his studies assiduously.

He mastered Sanskrit in a couple of years. Sanskrit was called 'the language of translation'. Its knowledge was indispensable for one who aspired to take up translation of sacred texts as his vocation. While the entire mass of religious texts which were held as sacred and authoritative in Tibet was in Sanskrit, its knowledge was by no means common in that country. A translator's profession was therefore highly prized. It also brought considerable wealth. It was natural for Marpa to emulate his master and aspire to become a translator like him. Brogmi had brought from India several Tāntrik texts. Many of them were incomplete, and most of them were unrelated to each other. This left Marpa rather dissatisfied. He resolved, therefore, to visit India to acquire the complete versions of the texts, and to discover the relations among them with the help of oral traditions current in that country. For it was an accepted practice in the field of Tantra that not all the teachings were to be reduced to writing. The most essential doctrines were only orally communicated by the teacher to the deserving among his students.

After completing his studies with Brogmi, Marpa returned home. But, collecting about fifteen golden *sraṅgs* (*sraṅg* is a Tibetan weight, about an ounce), he at once set out on a journey to India. He spent three years in Nepāl, to get used to the tropical climate of India. But he did not waste his time during this period. He studied several Tāntrik texts under Nepālese monks. One of his teachers here, Benda-Pā, accompanied him to India and took him to the illustrious paṇḍita, Nāropā (Nāḍa-pāda) in Magadha. Nāropā was the



most eminent of Tāntrikas in India in those days. Scholar, writer, teacher, mystic, recluse—he was indeed a phenomenon.

He was a professor of Tantra at the Vikramaśilā and Nālandā monastic colleges; he was also famed as a *yogi* and *siddha*. He had learnt the 'great seal doctrine' (*mahā mudrā*) from an equally eminent master, also a *siddha*, Tilopa (Taila-pāda), and was the sole exponent of that esoteric doctrine in the country. And he was adored by hundreds of students who eagerly gathered round him to listen to his expositions of Tāntrik texts and to obtain initiations from him. There were also many Tibetans who studied under him.

When Marpa arrived in Magadha, Nāropā had been living in retirement in his native village, Phula-hari, on the outskirts of Nālandā. He was engaged in some secret practice, and was therefore in seclusion. But he came out for Marpa's sake. Impressed by the young Tibetan's zeal and brilliance, he readily accepted him as a resident student, and taught him the *Hevajra Tantra* with many hidden precepts. He also gave Marpa as many as seven initiations into Tāntrik rites, before resuming his seclusion.

When Nāropā retired once again to his contemplative seclusion, Marpa proceeded to Tulakshetra in the Western region in search of other *siddhas*. He met one, a famous *siddha*, Jñāna-garbha (Kukkuri-Pā by name), and studied *Guhyasamāja-Tantra* with him. He was greatly impressed by the symbolism employed in this Tantra, and when he was told that only Nāropā had them, Marpa returned to Nālandā, and waited for Nāropā to come out of his retreat. While he waited, he prayed fervently that Nāropā should accept him as his disciple in 'the inner circle'. Marpa composed numerous poems in Tibetan and in Sanskrit, eulogizing the greatness of Nāropā. When Nāropā came out after a few weeks, he taught Marpa the *Guhyasamāja-Tantra* with the aid of an extremely abstruse but indispensable commentary called *Pradīpodyatana*, and gave him all the 'hidden precepts' connected with this Tantra.

When Marpa found that his funds had begun to dwindle, he returned to Tibet. But his heart was set on coming back to India before long for learning some more texts from

Nāropā. When, therefore, he arrived in Tibet, he hit upon an ingenious plan to acquire sufficient quantity of gold to enable him to return to India. He set himself up as a magician in the northern part of Tibet, and specialized in conducting 'child-protecting' rites for wealthy families, charging ten golden *sraṅgs* for each rite. He soon became very popular, and rich folk clamoured to get his services. Marpa's fortune was quickly made. As luck would have it, a kinsman of his (Marpa mGo-Yags) who had struck on a gold mine at a place called Mam-ra became his client. Marpa now had bagfuls of gold. He could now without a care set out on his second journey to India.

He went directly to Nālandā to resume his studies with Nāropā. But Nāropā had just left his village and gone away to an unknown forest retreat for some Tāntrik practice! Marpa was naturally disappointed, but he was unwilling to return to Tibet without meeting his great teacher. Marpa wandered about the forest in the eastern region in search of Nāropā. During the course of his search many were the mystics and saints that he met. An eager student that Marpa always was, he enriched his store of hidden precepts. One of the hermits whom he met told that Nāropā was in a forest in South India. Marpa immediately set out for the South. After a diligent combing of numerous jungle retreats he located at last the great teacher on a mountain top.

Finding Nāropā, Marpa fell at his feet and offered him as gift all the gold that he had brought with him. Nāropā, however, threw away the gold in undisguised disgust. He kicked a rock with his foot, and the entire rock turned into glittering gold. He turned to Marpa and said: "Son, the whole earth here is gold!" With these words he abruptly disappeared behind the ramparts of the forest, leaving the Tibetan utterly bewildered. That was the last that Marpa saw of his teacher.

Although Marpa was sorry that he could obtain no more instructions from the master, he was glad that he could at least see him. He was filled with feelings of gratitude for this good fortune. He spent the whole day worshipping the spot where



Nāropā stood, and singing hymns that acknowledged the great blessing that Nāropā had showered upon him. He burst out into numerous songs of adoration. And since then, poetry came to him with effortless facility. And he dedicated his poetic muse to the praise of his *guru*.

Marpa was at that time 42 years of age. He resolved to spend the rest of his life teaching the doctrines that he had learnt from Nāropā. He returned to Tibet, settled down at his village in LHo-Brag, and opened a school for teaching the Indian Tantras. He married and set up as a householder teacher. Although he did not receive monastic ordination, he was known as a *lama*; he continued to be a *yogi*. He specialized in teaching *Guhyasamāja-Tantra* as expounded in Jinadatta's *Pañjikā*, in Sthagaṇa's *Vivaraṇa* and in Jñāpāda's

Nibandha (Kusumāñjali. But this exposition, which was rather metaphysical, lacked mediative orientation. Marpa, therefore, supplemented the exposition with Nāropā's analysis which was "hidden". Marpa formulated a five-fold scheme of meditation based on the traditional exposition and Nāropā's analysis of *Guhyasamāja-Tantra*:

- (1) Solitude of body (*Lus-dBen*),
- (2) Solitude of speech (*Nag-dBen*),
- (3) Solitude of mind (*Sems-dBen*),
- (4) Illumination (*od-gSal, Skt. ābhāsvāra*), and
- (5) Merging of body and mind (*Zung-Jug, Skt. Yugandhha*).

The last stage was meant to be the immediate precursor to complete enlightenment. Marpa also taught *Hevajra-Tantra*.

His school became popular, and Marpa became to a celebrity all over Tibet. His expositions of Indian texts and initiations into esoteric practices attracted a large number of brilliant students. Although himself a famous lama now, his eagerness to acquire more knowledge and gather further initiations never abated. When, for instance, he heard from an acquaintance that a great *siddha*, Maitripā was teaching hidden texts pertaining to 'The great Seal' (*mahāmudrā*) doctrine in the Eastern region of India, he at once got ready to leave for India.

Marpa met Maitrī-pā in Bengal and obtained from him the hidden teachings and initiations. This gave him a sense of fulfilment. He acknowledged: "By the grace of my venerable master, my mind has now been set at rest, and my mind has at last been freed from doubts. I have realized the essential nature as non-origination and I have an insight into the relative nature of mind." His mind became clear like a quiet lake in clear moonlight; his heart became cool like snow on mount Kailas.

This was his third and last visit to India. In all, he had spent about eighteen years here. But he was a tireless pilgrim. After

he returned to Tibet, he made two more visits to Nepal in order to collect texts and meet mystics. Just as he was about to return home after his second visit, political trouble broke out in Nepal, and Tibetans in Nepal were harassed by the local chiefs. Marpa decided to turn this detention to his advantage, and entered into a contemplative retreat in a cell. While so engaged in perfecting the meditative techniques he had so assiduously acquired in India, he dreamt one night that he was carried by a fairy to Śrī-parvata in South India, where the wellknown Indian *siddha*, Sarah-pāda, gave him initiations into many secret rites, thus integrating *Guhyasamāja-Tānta* and *Hevajā-Tānta*. When he woke up, his mind had been brilliantly illumined, and his heart was utterly tranquil. He now understood that the two basic texts had 'the same flavour'; and he developed a perfect insight into 'the unalterable one-flavour' of all phenomena.

When the political clouds cleared, Marpa returned to Tibet and resumed his teaching in a place called Gro-bo-Lung. He established a sort of monastery (although he was not a monk himself) in Lower Lung. Hundreds of students gathered round him; they lived with him and learnt from him. His wife, an affectionate and efficient lady, ran the house for him and students. She not only helped in the initiations that Marpa bestowed on the students, she herself bestowed minor initiations.

Marpa was as eccentric as he was celebrated. He was a splendid teacher, but had a terrible temper. He was most exacting with his students: uncompromisingly severe and unreasonably demanding. He would frequently burst out: "I have obtained this marvellous teaching from Indian masters after untold suffering and sacrifice. Do you want me to throw it away for the sake of miserable money, and before such ease-loving fools?" He would scare away light-hearted students; only those who were really earnest remained. His wife was as sober as he was irascible; she was unfailingly gentle and kind and generous, and amply made up for all the severities his students experienced under the great teacher.

It was widely known that Marpa's ways were beyond comprehension. He was a saint, and spent hours in serene meditation. But he readily quarrelled with almost everyone that he met. His exterior was forbidding; it suggested a greedy and garrulous worldling. He had a sharp tongue, and his wit was taunting. He apparently spent the major part of the day looking after his extensive farm, an occupation altogether unsuited to a contemplative disposition. And he had a fondness, which almost bordered on the abnormal, for building odd houses and pulling them down. This avocation kept him continually busy.

But this was only a mask. The earnest students that remained were rewarded by an uncommon love and generosity from him. He spared no pains to help them in various ways. He would teach them without holding back a single detail. He was, in fact, kind, austere, unworldly, and benevolent. He had perfected the art of uninterrupted contemplation, wherever he was and whatever he was doing. His wife often reassured the students: "The master is unpredictable, even crazy. But have patience; he is only testing you. There is no one who is kinder than him in all Tibet. He would even teach a dog that came to learn from him!"

Once a young man, Nyog (rNog-CHos-rDor) approached Marpa with a request to be taught a text. He had brought an ordinary horse as a present for the teacher. Marpa looked at the horse, and flared up: "Is this your fee for my teaching you the entire text? Do you know what trouble I have gone through to get this text from India? Go away! It is too small a present! Or, did you want merely to meet me? In that case, it would be too big a present!" Nyog was bewildered at this strange reception. Marpa's wife who knew that Nyog was earnest made a sign for him to remain. Soon Marpa not only agreed to teach Nyog the text that he had come to learn, but offered to teach him several initiations, and transmitted to him the entire tradition of the Great Seal. This Nyog (1036-1102) became in due course one of 'the four great pillars' of Marpa. It was he who continued in the main the 'teaching lineage of



Marpa as Milarepa (another of the 'pillars') did the 'meditation lineage'.

Nyog had set up as a teacher in his own right at a distant town, after he left Marpa. He had also become famous and wealthy. It so happened that once, Marpa had built a new house for his son who had come of age. He invited Nyog to come and officiate as a priest in the feast he had arranged. Nyog arrived at Marpa's village, bringing with him all the cattle and sheep that he possessed as presents to his teacher. A lame sheep alone had been left behind, for it could not make the long journey. He sent a student of his ahead to inform Marpa about his coming, expecting the teacher to arrange some sort of a reception for him. But when Marpa was



informed, the flew into a rage: "What does he expect? Does he expect a great teacher like me to go and receive him, merely because he has brought a couple of cows and sheep for me. If that is what he expects, let him go back! I will have nothing to do with him." But Marpa's wife who knew Nyog very well and had a regard for him prepared some change and went to meet Nyog outside the village. When Nyog arrived in Marpa's presence, he presented all the cattle that he had brought with him, bowed before the teacher, and humbly said: "Master, it is needless to say that all that I possess is yours; my prosperity has been entirely due to your compassion and grace. Still, I have brought all my cattle as token of my gratitude to you. Only a lame lamb has been left behind, for it could not make this long journey." Marpa, however, said: "Very well, Nyog,

I am very happy you came, and I am glad you have brought this present. But you could have carried that lame lamb on your back and brought it! Please go back, and bring it along!" Poor Nyog had to return all the way to his home-town and bring the lame lamb, carrying it.

Everyone thought the teacher was heartless and crazy. What would he do anyway with a lame lamb? But when Nyog returned, Marpa said "Nyog, you are an ideal disciple! I shall bestow on you a rite that I acquired after you left me. In fact, I invited you mainly for that. That is why I made you return to your home and bring on your back the lame lamb. I have indeed no use for that animal! But your offering is now complete".

Besides the 'four great pillars', Marpa had four 'spiritual sons' and ten 'large heads' who spread Marpa's teaching all over the country. One of his 'spiritual sons' was Mes-TSHon-PO, who became a monk and presided over the Ba-Do monastery. He wrote extensive Tibetan commentaries on *Hevajra-Tantra*. He had a large retinue of students and many wealthy patrons.

Marpa died in 1097, when he was eighty-six. His relics were enshrined in a beautiful casket made of acacia wood. Marpa had two sons, one of whom (Jo-Rim Khor-Lo) was given to gambling. Once he pledged this precious casket, and lost it. The winner threw it away. A niece of Marpa's who learnt about this sacrilege, ran to Nyog and informed him. Nyog immediately arranged to get the relics carefully gathered and got them enshrined in a silver tomb. People believed that this temple safeguarded the fortunes of the country for long years. Marpa was regarded as the incarnation of the Vajrayāna divinity, Dombi-Heruka. He is said to have been an adept in the art of 'transference of consciousness' which he learnt from Nāropā. However, he did not transmit this art to any of his disciples. He had transmitted it to one of his sons, who unfortunately predeceased him.

Marpa was among those who welcomed the 'precious lord' Atiśa-Dīpaṃkara, when the latter arrived in Tibet in 1042 to

begin his celebrated reform of Tibetan religion. Marpa was at that time a young man of 31, who sympathised with the 'mission' of Atiśa. Marpa too carried out a religious reform in his own way, and became the founder of a sect known as Kagyu (*bKah-brGyud*), which emphasizes meditation in seclusion as the road to enlightenment.

Mila the Cotton-clad

Tibet knows Milarepa (Mid-La Ras-Pa, 1040-1123 A.D.) as 'the venerable lord' (*rJe-BTSun*) and as the 'lord of ascetics' (*rNal-Byor-gyi dBang-PHYug*, Skt, *Yogeśvara*). There is no saint of Tibet who is more loved and adored by his countrymen than this cotton-clad ascetic. His life-story, especially as recounted by his favourite disciple, Rechung (*Ras-CHung rDorJe Grag-Pa*), is the best-known among Tibetan classics. Milarepa's songs have a universal appeal; and there are hundreds of them still on the lips of his people.

Milarepa's family name was *Mila* (*Mid-La*), *Repa* (*Ras-Pa*) means 'cotton-clad'. He was so called because of the habit of wrapping his body with a thin cotton sheet even in biting cold. The expression has reference to the yogic technique of generating 'internal heat' (*gTum-Mo*), in which his ascetic and his followers were adepts. His personal name was Thos-Pa-dGa ('a delight to hear'). He was so named because he had a sweet voice, and later in life, when he used to sing his own songs, even animals were said to be spell-bound.

Mila was born in 1040 A.D. as the son of a rich merchant, belonging to the KHyung-Po ('the Sacred Eagle') clan. When the boy was seven years old his father died, leaving the mother and child in the care of his brother. The property which was considerable was arranged to be managed by this brother until the boy came of age. The brother, however, was a wicked sort. He wanted to marry the widow of his brother, and when she refused, he swore an eternal enmity towards her and her son. He began ill-treating them, summarily snatched away their property, and reduced them to a pitiable plight.

The mother courageously bore the hardship, eagerly awaiting her son's reaching his fifteenth year. When he did reach it, he wanted the brother of her husband to hand back the property to her son. But the wicked brother disclaimed all knowledge of this arrangement, and refused to part with the property which he claimed was his own. Because this brother was both wealthy and rough, the villagers were scared of taking the side of the poor widow, although they knew that her claim was just. The widow had no alternative but to continue in penury.

Mila in the meantime had started learning to read and write under the village teacher. One day there was feast in a neighbouring village, to which this teacher was invited. The teacher went there with Mila. Mila partook freely of the wine that was being served in the feast. When he returned in the night to his own village he found himself in unusually high spirits. He was singing merrily when he reached home. His mother who heard him rushed out to see, and found him in a hilarious mood. She was shocked. She could not make out how he could possibly be in such a gay mood when they were steeped in such deep misery. She took a stick, belaboured him soundly and shouted: "Shame on you! You are a blot on the family! A disgrace indeed to your dead father! How can you possibly sing so merrily when we are what we are? You should be busy learning sorcery to destroy your devil of an uncle and his whole family! Let me tell you, I shall not be happy until you avenge the injustice he has wrought on us!"

The rebuke went straight into Mila's heart. He resolved at once to proceed to Yar-KLungs (in a dUs were) where there were reputed sorcerers. His mother gave him the necessary provisions, and bade him not to return until he had destroyed his uncle. Although young, he braved the long and arduous journey and settled down to study the black arts under Nyags, whose powers of magic and witchcraft were feared all over the region. After learning the general practice for a year, Mila appraised the master of the real purpose of his study. The sorcerer thereupon sent him to a colleague of his own, sNubs-

CHung of Tsang-Rong, who had specialized in destructive magic. Mila retired, under instruction from sNubs-CHung, to an underground cell, and practised magical rites for a fortnight. He came out when he saw signs of success.

In the meantime, Mila's uncle was celebrating his son's wedding in his own house, and about thirty friends and relatives had gathered to partake in the festivities. The house suddenly caved in and all the people were killed, save his uncle and aunt, who were at that time outside. Mila's mother knew that this was her son's doing, and she was overjoyed. The villagers were not pleased with her satanic glee, and they kept away from her. The widow became vindictive, and sent a letter to her son to send a terrible hailstorm so that the villagers may see what her son could do, and learn a lesson. Mila obtained from his teacher instruction with regard to compelling hailstorms. Within a month, and just at harvest time, a devastating hailstorm raged in the locality and brought untold suffering to the people.

Mila's mother was satisfied, but Mila himself was sad. He was troubled with the thought that he was only piling up sin upon sin, all because of a foolish woman's vengeful nature. While he was still residing with the teacher of sorcery, a friend and patron of the teacher suddenly died, leaving the teacher in gloom and dejection. The sorcerer called Mila and said, "Son, we have been assiduously acquiring sins. We have nothing but suffering in store for us! You are young, and it will not profit you to pursue this career. Why don't you take to religious life and help all creatures? If you are willing, I shall support you. It will spell good for me too." Mila was delighted at the suggestion.

When he told the sorcerer that he was willing, in fact eager, the sorcerer sent him to Rong (valley) to study under an acquaintance of his (Bre-Ston), the purificatory rites. When Mila achieved a measure of success in this branch of learning, he desired his teacher to instruct him in the art of meditation so that he might realize the ultimate essence of the great doctrine. Bre-ston was not skilled in this, and so he advised

Mila to approach the venerable Marpa of LHo-Brag in Southern Tibet. As soon as Mila heard the name of Marpa, his mind fluttered with elation; a strange delight filled his being. He at once left in search of Marpa.

Marpa was camping at that time in CHu-Kyer, Mila went there. Strangely, Marpa knew about Mila's arrival, and had offered special prayers to his tutelary deities to invoke blessings upon Mila. He was eagerly waiting for him, and had in fact gone to the outskirts of the village to receive him, of course, concealing his purpose. But when Mila appeared at his home and bowed before him, he appeared indifferent and spoke harshly. When Mila settled down, he set him lay tasks like ploughing the barren fields, building odd houses (which incidentally was his well-known craze) on lands that were not his own, and erecting useless stone-walls. Marpa was especially severe and exacting where Mila was concerned. He made the young man labour until his body as bruised. Whenever Mila begged for initiations, Marpa only rebuked him and refused to do anything of the sort. He always taunted Mila reminding him of his flirtation with sorcery. In fact, Marpa always referred to Mila as a 'the great sorcerer', much to his discomfiture and dejection.

Mila reached the limit of his endurance. He planned to leave, and when the kindly Damema (Marpa's wife) was informed of his plan, she counseled patience. She pleaded with her husband on Mila's behalf, in vain. Then, she took a bold step. She sent with Mila a letter with Marpa's seal to one of the chief disciples of Marpa, Nyog (rNog), asking him to bestow initiation on Mila. By way of payment therefore she sent him a precious stone, given to Marpa by Nāro-pā and therefore especially esteemed by Marpa. All this was unknown to Marpa.

When Nyog heard about Mila's past as sorcerer, he wanted Mila to send a hailstorm against the villagers of a neighbouring tract who had stolen his cattle. Reluctant though Mila was to repeat the sinful practice, he did send a hailstorm for the sake of obtaining precepts from Nyog. But he felt extremely

unhappy. When Nyog noticed Mila's depression, he reassured him, and bestowed on him the initiation into *upāya-mārga*. Mila entered into seclusion and began meditating.

In the meantime, Marpa sent an invitation to Nyog to come to LHO-Brag and participate in the consecration ceremony of a nine-storeyed house he had lately built. Nyog took Mila with him to Marpa's festivity. As soon as Marpa sighted Mila, he feigned annoyance and demanded from Nyog how he gave initiation to Mila (who was Marpa's student). When the bewildered Nyog mentioned about the letter and the present, Marpa seemed to fly into a rage and rushed upon Damema to belabour her. She, however, ran out in fright. And, immediately, Marpa cooled down, smiled pleasantly, and asked Damema to serve Chang liberally to the honoured guests. Marpa then revealed that Mila was in fact his favourite disciple, who had however to cleanse himself of his sins before he became worthy of initiations. He explained that all the suffering which Mila had to undergo was only calculated towards this end. The odd houses that he made Mila build with such effort and distress were actually *maṇḍalas* which purified him progressively. Nyog and Damema heaved sighs of relief.

Marpa now took Mila under his care, and gave him hidden precepts and initiations. He sent him to a cave in rTa-Nag PHug ('Black Horse Cavern') for meditation. Mila put forth extraordinary effort and obtained an insight into the ultimate and undifferentiated essence of all phenomena. He then returned to Marpa, and began studying the texts of the 'great seal' (*mahāmudrā*). He lived with the teacher, following him like a shadow, for six years and eight months. When he left Marpa to return home, Mila was forty-four.

Mila arrived at his village, only to find that his mother had in the meantime died. The villagers were scared of him, and would not talk to him or go near him. He was for them a dangerous sorcerer, a hated magician who had brought upon the village untold suffering. Mila went to his house, which had fallen into decay, and discovered the remains of his mother in a heap of bones in one corner. People were too frightened



of her son and too annoyed with her to attend to the old woman in her last days, or to give her a proper funeral. Mila spent the night in his home, resting his head on the remains of his mother and meditating intensely in order to bring peace and fortune to the departed spirit of his mother.

His mother had still owned a small patch of farm, after all the property was snatched away by her wicked brother-in-law. But no one dared to cultivate it, or go near it for fear of Mila's magical powers. His uncle too had died. The wily aunt, however met Mila and volunteered to cultivate the farm if Mila made it over to her, and in return provide Mila with some provisions so that he might engage himself in meditation without a worry. Mila agreed, although he knew it was greed to grab that patch of land that had prompted his aunt. He made

over the patch of land to her.

Mila moved to the outskirts of the village and settled down at the foot of a mountain. He spent six months meditating, and mastered the art of generating 'internal heat' (*gTum-Mo*). Even in the severest winter, he went covering himself with nothing more than a thin cotton sheet. He came thus to be called "Mila the Cotton-clad" (*Mid-La-Ras-Pa*). The aunt, however, was eager to get rid of him, and began troubling him in various ways. He, therefore, moved on southward. He selected a mountain recess on the Nepāl border, and spent nine years there in strict seclusion, practising *prāṇāyāma* and other meditation techniques. During this period, he subsisted only on the green nettles that grew abundantly and wild in that area. The result was that his body took on a greenish hue. Although his body was emaciated by asceticism, his face was radiant with peace and fervour. At the end of the period, he obtained the realization that made him a second Buddha.

After perfecting himself in this manner, he decided to come down to human settlements in order to help his fellow-creatures. For this was the vow that every *bodhisattva* kept. He proceeded towards mount Everest, preaching to the nomads and pilgrims on the way. A large number of devotees gathered round him, and heard his religious discourses. Many studied texts under him. Although he soon became a well-known teacher all over Tibet, and, therefore wealth was within his easy reach, he remained an uncompromising ascetic. He spurned gifts, rejected comfort, and lived like a destitute mendicant. He had turned his back on the world finally.

He wandered about alone in difficult valleys and on mountain heights, and spent most of his time meditating. He loved nature, and the Himalayan scenery inspired him to many a song. He had not formally taken the monastic order, nor did he establish a school as his teacher Marpa had done. But whenever earnest folk approached him for instruction, explanations, or initiations, he readily gave them. If people came to him, he would preach to them, and sing religious songs he himself had composed. He had a fine voice, and

when he sang, the message travelled far. His songs have been preserved in a collection called "A Hundred Thousand" (*gLu-Bum*). They reveal not only his spiritual eminence, but also his keen appreciation of nature.

He died in 1123 A.D. when he was eighty-four. Being an extraordinarily interesting personality, numerous brilliant disciples were attracted to him.

Famous among them were Rechung (Ras-CHung-Pa, 1083-1161) who was reputed to be 'moon-like', and Gampopa (sGam-Po-Pa) who was 'Sun-like'. The former who met Mila when he was only eleven was stricken with leprosy and had to live in utter seclusion. But he luckily met three Indians who took him to India and got his ailment cured at the hands of a Tāntric expert, Bālachandra. On his way back, he lived for some years in Nepal as a disciple of the Yogi Atuladāsa. Returning to Tibet, he became a student of Mila and adopted the life-pattern of his master. He lived like a wandering ascetic, dwelling in empty houses and meditating all the while. He had attended on Mila diligently, and had obtained from him an especial yogic insight (*rTogs-Pa*). He visited India twice at Mila's instance, and brought to Tibet four teachings to complete the 'nine classes of doctrines from 'formless dākinis'. He received many hidden precepts and initiations from Tipūpa (a disciple of Nāropā) during his visits to India and Nepāl. His oral 'Samvara' instructions continued in a distinct lineage, within the general framework of bKa-brGyud sect (founded by Mila's master Marpa). Rechung composed an elaborate biography of Mila, which has justly become famous, *Jetsun Kahbum*. He was seventy-eight when he died in Central Tibet (*dBus*), and many celebrities of the region were among his disciples.

Gampopa the Sun-like

Among the disciples of Milarepa, Gampopa (sGam-Po-Pa, 1079-1153 A.D.) is described as the foremost. He was popularly called 'the sun-like' disciple of Mila, because he revealed the hidden precepts of Mila, and illuminated Tibet

with Mila's light. His personal name was Nyi-ba (sNi-ba), but was better known as "The venerable one of the Dvags-Po hermitage" (*Dvag-Po LHa-rJe*), also *sGam-Po-Pa* after his monastic settlement. He bore the title, "without an equal" (*mNam-med*). He was believed to have been an incarnation of the celebrated emperor, Srong-TSan-sGam-Po (who died in 650 A.D.)

He was born in 1079 as the second son of his parents in LHa-rJe of Dvags-Po in Eastern Tibet. As a young man, he studied medicine and became not only rich, but famous as a physician. He married early in life, but in his twenty-fifth year his wife died. He had loved her very dearly and he became so dejected that he gave up lay life and became a monk. His monastic name was "the Jewel of Merit" (*bSod-Nams Rin-Chen*, Skt. *Puṇya-ratna*). He studied Buddhist texts under Kadampa hermits, (*bKa-hgDam-Pa*, a sect founded by Atiśa-Dīpaṃkara and his disciple Brom). But the sorrow of bereavement still dogged him. He left his home-town and travelled northward. He received initiation into contemplative absorption from Byang-Chug Sams-dPa, who was celebrated as a *bodhisattva*. He shut himself in a cell for thirteen days, and without getting up from his mat, practised meditation. He attained the first stage of meditative trance. His sorrow was to a considerable extent assuaged. He returned home.

As he was nearing his village, it so chanced that three beggars were walking a little ahead of him. He could listen to their conversation. One of them said: "How I wish I had plenty of barleyflour and green vegetables!" Another broke in: "If it is a matter of wish, why don't you wish to be a King?" The third protested, "Why a King? What good is he? You should rather wish to be a Milarepa, who has no need to eat, or clothe himself, who is always singing merrily although possessing nothing at all, and who can fly across mountains!"

As soon as Gampopa heard the name of Milarepa a strange tremor of happiness ran through his limbs. His heart became peaceful as never before. He was eager to know more about this Milarepa. He offered some provisions to the beggars and

asked them who this Milarepa was and where he was residing. They told him that he was a yogī, who was given to wandering in mountainous tracts and valleys. They also told him that they had found him on the hill-top of Brin Nyenam.

Gampopa immediately turned and set out to Brin. It was a long and a difficult journey. But his faith was so great, and his eagerness to meet Milarepa so intense that he covered the distance soon. But just outside Brin, he took seriously ill, and had to rest for a while. He fervently prayed that his body may be spared at least until he had a look at Milarepa. He at once felt better, and so soon as he was able to walk, he entered Brin. When he stepped into the confines of Brin, a monk accosted him and said: "Are you Gampopa? Welcome to you! You are indeed lucky. Master Milarepa has been waiting for you!"

When Gampopa heard these words, his heart was naturally elated; he even felt proud. He accompanied the monk and went to where Milarepa was residing. But Mila did not come out to greet him, not did he meet him for a fortnight. Gampopa waited in vain, and waited eagerly. At length he realized that his pride it was that came in the way of meeting the Great One. At once he regretted it, and felt humble. Immediately, Mila sent for him.

Gampopa bowed before him and placed at his feet a piece of gold and a packet of tea as gifts. But Mila laughed, and said: "Gold and I do not agree. We have never agreed ever since I was born! And, what use is this packet of tea to me, for I have not utensils at all to make tea! Please take back both of them. I am content with your greting." Then Mila inquired of Gampopa what his name was. When Gampopa mentioned his monastic name, "Jewel of Merit", Mila closed his eyes, repeated, "Merit, Merit, Merit," and broke into a song which ended with this refrain: "Come out of the confines of Merit, for you are a jewel among men!" He then told Gampopa "That is my welcome to you!"

Gampopa then begged Mila to bestow on him an initiation. Thereupon the following conversation took place between them:

Mila: "Did you have any initiation earlier?"

Gampopa: "Yes."

Mila: "How long do you sit for meditation?"

Gampopa: "Usually for six hours."

Mila: "What do you experience?"

Gampopa: "Nothing at all!"

Mila: (laughing) "How can that be? You practise each day for six hours, and yet there are no signs of progress! Well that is a sign that you should give up this practice, and try another!"

Gampopa: "Master, I am willing to try your method."

Mila: "Then you must start right from the beginning!"

At this, Gampopa began to take off the Kadampa monastic robe which he was wearing (for he was still a monk of this sect), and sought to be given a white cotton sheet (like the one Mila was wearing). Mila laughed, and stopped him; "No, no. That is not what I mean! You need not change your clothes. I do not want you to be a replica of myself. You must in fact bring out your own teaching. My initiation is mine. Your teaching must be yours!"

Mila then bestowed on Gampopa hidden precepts and initiation, then and there. This was an unusual proceeding, for Mila was given to delay much in the matter of initiations and hidden precepts. Gampopa thus became Mila's spiritual son. Mila at that time was an old man of seventy-one, while Gampopa was thirty-two years of age. Mila asked Gampopa to immediately enter seclusion, and gave him instructions regarding *Vajra-vārāhī* Cycle. Gampopa arranged with a householder for the supply of food during his seclusion in exchange for some pieces of gold, built for himself a hut at the foot of a mountain three miles from Brin, and retired into it.

After six years of retreat, Gampopa began to have mystic visions. He saw the luminous form of the Buddha and the clear representation of a *maṇḍala*. And several other signs also occurred to him in succession. Each time a sign appeared

Gampopa imagined that he had attained the highest degree of meditative trance, and ran to Mila to get confirmation. Mila, however, kept on discouraging him. Every time Gampopa came, Mila would say, "That is nothing! Go back to your practice!"

After a few more weeks, Gampopa had a vivid vision of the six worlds. He was now sure that there was no mistake about the highest attainment. He ran to Mila in Brin, but Mila was asleep at that time. Gampopa was all excited, and was in no mood to wait until the master got up on his own. Gampopa woke him up, and excitedly reported to him the details of the vision he had. Mila merely said: "Let me sleep! I am not a scholar like you. But I know that *Parjñāpāramitā* says that all this is mere illusion. I suggest you go back to your hut and continue the practice!"

Gampopa was disheartened; his face fell and his courage began to fail him. Mila noticed it, and reassured him: "Son, all these are signs (*rTogs*) that some psychic centers in the body are drawing the vital current (*rLung*, Skt.*prāṇa*) to themselves. They are no doubt signs that you are advancing. But you should not stop at them. They are not benefits in themselves. You must, in fact, ignore them, and persevere! A mere glimpse of reality must not be mistaken for complete realization."

Gampopa took courage at these words and went back to his hut. He resumed the meditation with greater vigour; the signs no longer tempted him, nor did they scare him. In due course he was able to sustain himself for an entire day with a single breath; he could feel the air entering his body and going out through the tips of his fingers. Sometime later, Gampopa had a vision of the sun being eclipsed by the demon Rāhu. At the very moment, Mila walked into his hut and bestowed on him the final initiation into the highest degree of "inner hear" (*gTum Mo*). He left the hut, saying "Worthy son, you have done well! You will soon become a great hero! Continue the practice." Gampopa persevered and, as the master had predicted, soon obtained the advanced stage of

trance.

Mila now asked him to come out of the hut. He congratulated him, and said: "You have practised enough in my presence. You may now go back to your village. But you must promise me that you will continue this practice for three more years. The gains must be properly consolidated; otherwise they may slip away! Keep carefully out of mundane matters. Avoid the company of worldlings. Beware of lust, anger and sloth. Dwell in seclusion. Move about in solitary haunts. And persevere in your practice!" He also gave him many hidden explanations, and accompanying him till the bridge outside Brin, bade him farewell. As Gampopa bowed before the master and turned to go, Mila said, "Come here after twelve years! You may then teach others, bestow precepts and initiations on those that seek."

Gampopa left Brin and arrived at Nyal. He set up a hermitage there and practised meditation for three years, without leaving his mat, or loosening his belt. He realized the true nature of mind and the essential nature of all phenomena. He discovered that everything had but one flavour. He now realized that his master, Mila, was not merely a *siddha*, but verily the *dharmakāya*. He followed the instructions of the master and wandered about in solitary places for twelve years, spending most of his time in meditation.

After twelve years, he returned to Brin, as his master had commanded. But he was delayed on the way. By the time he reached Brin, Mila had just passed away. But he had instructed his disciple to preserve a share of his relics for Gampopa. Gampopa received the relics and moved in the direction of Gampo (sGam-Po) or Dvagspo. He knew that his own end was fast approaching, and that he had no more than three years to live. He would have been happy to spend the rest of his days quietly meditating in mountain retreats. But his Master, Mila, had asked him to teach and bestow precepts and initiations on those that sought them. People indeed were coming to him, and they urged him to set up a monastery at Gampo. Gampopa, however, was not eager to undertake this

mission because his life had almost been completely spent. At the insistence of the people, he underwent a life-prolonging rite (of Tārā).

with life thus renewed, Gampopa settled down to work for the benefit of living beings. He set up a monastery at Gampo and began teaching texts, giving initiations, and instructions for meditations. He preached to the lay folk as well as monastic brethren. He also composed several manuals and guide-books for contemplation. He naturally attached great importance to meditation. He used to say "One fleeting glimpse of great wisdom that arises during meditation is more precious than loads of knowledge got from books or by listening to sermons." But he did not ignore the value of books or teachers. He said "Meditation, without sufficient preparation by hearing the doctrine and reflecting upon it, is likely to land one in darkness; he would not know what to look for, and he would fail to recognize it even when it stands right before him!"

He had a large following. Among his disciples were anchorites, ascetics, monks, and laymen. He himself was austere in his habits, a recluse by preference, and loved solitude. But whenever anyone asked for precepts or explanations he would readily give them. It is recorded that when he lay on his deathbed, two monks came to discuss with him some metaphysical issue. He did not want to be disturbed. Then they asked for initiation into the Great-Seal (*mahāmudrā*). Gampopa at once asked his attendant to admit them!

He died in 1153 A.D. at the age of seventy-five. When his body was cremated it was found that his heart had not been consumed by fire. A golden cairn was set up to house this wonderful relic.

Phagmo the Blessed and Brikhung the Leper

Among Gampopa's disciples, the most celebrated was PHag Mo-Grub-Pa (1110-1170 A.D.), who was principally responsible for the spread of the Kagyu sect in Tibet., Before he met Gampopa he had studied with every teacher he could find, and

had practised all the rites and contemplations that were available to him. He had initiations from thirteen yogis, and had discussions with all scholars well-known in Tibet at that time. But Gampopa was the only teacher who gave him lasting peace.

Phag-Mo-Grub-Pa (meaning 'Made Perfect by the Sow-goddess or Vārāhi') was not his real name; he came to be so called because of his monastery with that name. His name was hGron-mGon ('Protector of Beings'). Dissatisfied with all the teachers he had tried, he came to Gampopa, who was eating his lunch. Phagmo bowed before him and described all that he had learnt till then; Gampopa lifted a ball of parched barley-flour, half-eaten and said : "Surely, this (ball of barley-flour) is much better than all that you have acquired!"



Needless to say, Phagmo was downcast with shame and regret.

Gampopa noticed his discomfiture and said, "Well, young man, do not grieve! We will see what we can yet do. But my students are awaiting me for a class immediately after my lunch. Have a stroll on the hill-side outside the village and come back in the evening." And he patted Phagmo's head as he bowed to withdraw. Phagmo went to the foot of the hill and began to wander about. He was alone, and he began to turn round in his mind all the doctrines that he had learnt. A couple of hours passed in such intent recollection. He suddenly realized that all that learning was only the chaff, the outer covering, the husk. And at the same time he obtained a profound insight into the nature of things. He felt as if his mind was suddenly freed and moved in the sky without obstructions, even as a spear could be swung freely in the open air.

About the time the sun set he returned to the residence of Gampopa. Gampopa looked at him, and exclaimed: "Well, my man, I could not have taught you better!" He had understood the change that had come over Phagmo. He accepted Phagmo as his disciple and gave him many secret precepts. Phagmo immediately retired into a cell and meditated for eight months at a stretch. His entire body was suffused with a feeling of wellbeing that he had never before experienced. When he came out of his cell, a thorn pricked his foot and blood oozed out. But Phagmo experienced a pleasant sensation thereby, and his insight was further illumined.

After he left Gampopa, he built his own monastery in sGan-Sa-mTHil, which became famous as the first great Kagyu monastery in Tibet. But Phagmo himself lived in a small grass hut, engaged almost uninterruptedly in meditation. But whenever he taught, he taught so well, and whenever he preached he preached so effectively that he became popular, and large numbers of students gathered round him. Although he did not formulate his own teachings and did not establish a sect of his own, his disciples branched out into several subsects. Eight of them became well-known, one of the

subjects was founded by Gluigs-Ras Padma-rDo-rJe (1128-1288 A.D.), who went to Phagmo and obtained the highest realization within three days.

Phagmo was celebrated for his interesting and effective ways of teaching. There was once a student learning meditation from him: he had made very little progress. Phagmo had an insightful understanding of the nature of the hindrance that prevailed in this student. One day, Phagmo asked him to keep with him a sword while meditating. And in front of his meditation hut, he made a net of ropes so that the student would not come out easily. When the student's meditation session was about to end, Phagmo brought before the student the man who had murdered the student's father. The student was promptly enraged upon seeing him, rushed out with the drawn sword. Phagmo who was in hiding called out: "You are angry! Look into the source of anger!" The student stood back, and within seconds a perfect understanding arose in him. (This story is also told of the teacher CHan-bu rGya-Ras and the student sGom-Rings).

Phagmo had an encounter with the proud scholar, later called sPar-Phu-Ba. when the scholar visited Phagmo in his hut, Phagmo gave him a piece of brown sugar carrying an imprint of a charming lotus flower. The scholar took it in his hand, admired the design, but did not eat it. Phagmo thereupon took it from his hands, broke it into two bits and gave them back to him, saying "Now, Sir, eat!" The Scholar ate. Phagmo explained: "All your studies are like this beautiful imprint: meditation is like the taste of sugar. There is a difference between information and formation. Information rests in the head! But formation deals with the whole life! The purpose of all learning is to aid meditation, which is the very essence of the Doctrine." The scholar settled down as a pupil with Phagmo.

At first Phagmo did not give him any directions for meditation. He just said: "Enter into seclusion, and meditate." The scholar entered the cell, and began to reflect: "What is this? The teacher did not give me any precepts. He merely told

me to meditate!" He sat for a while considering the difference between precepts and meditation. The mind gradually got loosened, and suddenly he obtained an insight into the nature of things. Later, Phagmo explained to him that each practitioner must develop his own precepts. In due course, the scholar became a *siddha*, and he taught as many as five hundred monks. His monastery at sPar-Phu became celebrated as a meditation center.

Another illustrious student of Phagmo was hBri-KHung-Pa (b.1143). hBri-Khung ('yak-cavity') was the name of a sect, and he was known only as a member of this sect: his real name has been forgotten. His parents were sorcerers belonging to the older Nyingma group. There was a famine which raged in the area where he was born, and even as a young boy he had to move southward. He got into the company of wandering priests and learnt how to recite some scriptural texts. He also meditated sometimes. He heard of Phagmo and at once resolved to meet him. With difficulty he acquired a small quantity of tea and a rather expensive horse and approached Phagmo with these presents. Phagmo, however, smiled and said: "My dear young man, It is not my custom to accept living beings as presents. Please take back your horse. I will gladly take the tea that you have brought." And Phagmo boiled the small quantity of tea and prepared the beverage. About eighty monks of the monastery partook of this!

He listened to many of Phagmo's sermons and developed a theoretical understanding of the nature of things. About two years after his arrival, Phagmo passed away. The young man retired to a cell and meditated. But suddenly he became a victim of leprosy, a dreaded disease which was incurable. The disciple decided to wander off into the impenetrable valleys and die there so that no one could even see his dead body. He made preparations to go, left his cell, took his leave and moved out of the village. But he had grown too weak to proceed further. One evening, he sat under a tree, took out his tutelary icon of Avalokiteśvara and made prostrations before it. He sat down before it and recollected minutely all

his sorrows and suffering. He also thought compassionately of the untold misery to which other beings are also subjected. As he thought of the woe of others, he began to shed copious tears; he forgot his own misery. He spent the whole night like this. Towards dawn, he saw a dark dragon (*nāga*) take form from his body and move out. Soon after, he found that his health was restored.

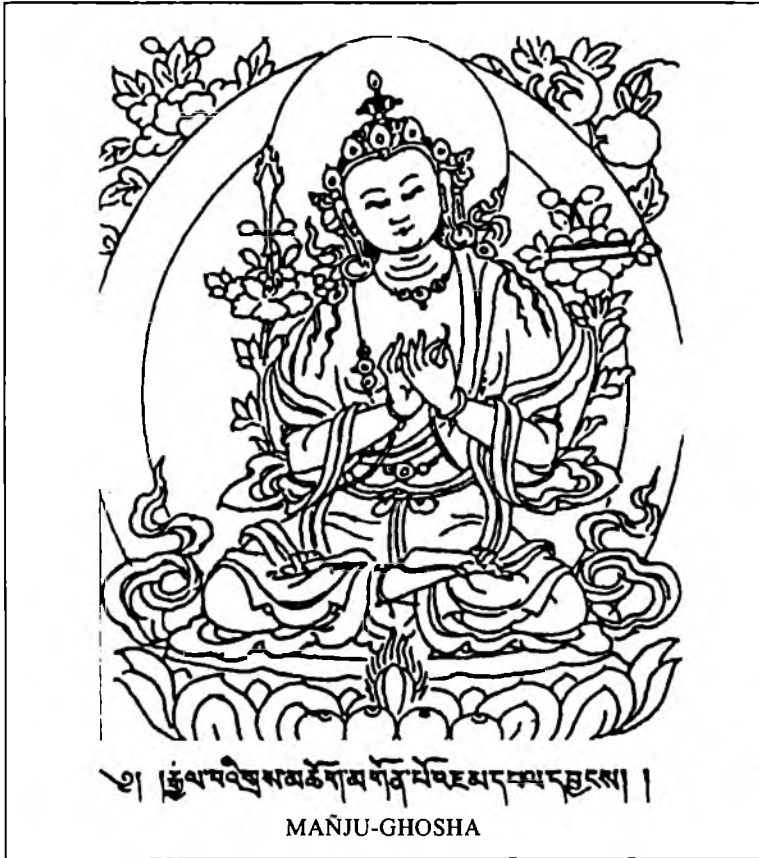
He now returned to the village and entered the monastic order. He was only thirty-five at that time. He strictly followed the Vinaya regulations, and never touched meat or wine. His austere life and high realization brought him a large number of disciples. It is said that at a festival that he arranged, there were as many as 55525 disciples! He was especially known for the cures that he effected on lepers by his compassion alone. People looked upon him as an incarnation of the great *bodhisattva Nāgārjuna*.

He died at the age of seventy-five in 1218 A.D. Just before he died, one of the disciples asked him: "Master, where are you going from here?" He replied: "I am not going anywhere! I will stay in your minds."

Dampa the Oath-bound

Dampa (Dam-pa, "the holy one", "one bound by an oath") who died in 1117 was celebrated as a 'dharma-svāmī' ('master of religion'). Although widely involved in Tibetan lineages, he was actually an Indian, hailing from the Southern region. His Indian name and identity have been lost, but he has always been known in Tibet as the Indian *ācārya* and *siddha*. The Tibetan chronicles such as the *Blue Annals* have preserved some details of his life and career. He is said to have been a disciple of Dharmakīrti, the eminent Buddhist master.

He is also reputed to have heard discourses from great teachers like Nāgārjuna, Asaṅga, Āryadeva, Śāntideva and Guṇaprabha. He is also credited with having received an initiation into the 'the Great Seal' (*mahāmudrā*) from Saraha-pāda himself, who was one of the earliest and most celebrated



among the *siddhas*. Dampa practised austerities for several years, and had had visions of many tutelary deities. He is said to have possessed extraordinary magical powers.

We do not know what prompted him to go to Tibet, but he visited that country five times. During his fifth visit he went to China, where he lived for twelve years. An account relates that he died in China, but a more reliable account makes Tibet the place of his death. While in Tibet, although he travelled all over the country, his favourite place of residence was Dingri, where he is said to have spent as many as twenty-one years. It was in this place that he met the great Tibetan poet-saint Milarepa.

He must have been a sort of genius, with a variety of talents. His work in Tibet became almost legendary. Besides being an excellent and popular teacher, he was well-known as a physician. He cured even physical ailments by what we would now call psychotherapy; he evolved a method of introducing the patient to his own mind. He was honoured by his contemporaries for having eradicated epidemics by the employment of spells (*dhāraṇī*). He could not read the thoughts of others, but could influence them. His students vouchsafed that a mere look of his would be enough to bring a blessing into their lives. While camping in the Gyal monastery, he is credited with a curious invention: a stove that could be ignited and kept burning without needing to be blown. This stove was named after him, and became popular in Tibet.

Being a fine teacher, he gathered round him an exceedingly large number of students. His disciples have been likened to stars in the sky; too numerous to be counted. And, like the stars, most of them were lone lights, shining unto themselves, and did not continue his lineage. He gave instruction and precepts mostly to individuals, and others did not know about them. The one exception was Kun-dGa, whom we will consider at length shortly. Dampa had four principal disciples, described as “Yogi gate-keepers” (*sGo-pai rNal’ Byor-Pa-bZi*, “the four who guard the treasure of the door of tranquillity”). To the North was Kunga (Kun-dGa), to the West Phyar-CHung, to the South Vajrakrodha, and to the East Dampa Phyar-CHen.

He believed in teaching each student individually. He examined him and analysed his personality before imparting to him the instructions, explanations and precepts appropriate to his need, temperament and capacity. He gave to Kunga the precepts of mind-purification by a gradual development. He considered Vajrakrodha suited for the ‘the way of blessing’ and therefore asked him to pray incessantly. Another disciple (rGya-sGom-Pa) was asked to look carefully into his own mind, identify every thought and separate the ‘odour’ (*dre*) of

the thought itself. Still another disciple (CHug) was made to understand and perfect the symbols, and reflect upon the explanations given by the teachers.

Dampa developed a method of teaching by means of which the student was methodically guided through five stages. In the first stage, the instruction and precepts were given to the student (*sByin-pa*, “to bestow”, “to deliver”, “to gift.”). In the second stage, the student was encouraged to think for himself (*sNam-pa*, “to think”, “to suppose”, “to imagine”). The third stage was to be distinguished by an examination of the precepts (*Don-dPyod*, “to sense or examine”). In the final stage, called ‘sense-gathering’ (*Don-hTHun*) there was an attempt at integrating the meaning of the precepts with ones own thoughts.

When he admitted a disciple, he administered to him three vows (*rTen-sDom-Pa gSum*, “three supports and bindings”): the vow of perfecting one’s conduct (*prātimokṣha-samvara*), the vow of practising meditation (*tantra-samvara*), and the vow of working for the welfare of all creatures (*bodhisattva-samvara*). He explained that the three vows were complementary to each other. He stressed the value of oaths in contemplative life. This is how he came to be known widely as Pha Dam-Pa (“Father Oath-bound”). He founded a sect which was predominantly Tāntrik, known as *ZHi-Byed*. He had numerous women disciples also. He transmitted his wisdom and lineage principally to Kunga.

sKam, well-known as the follower of the *Prajñāpāramitā* school, was another disciple of Dampa. sKam one day asked the teacher: “Master, whom should I ask when I am in doubt, when you have gone?” Dampa answered:

The best friend-and-guide (*kalyāṇamitra*) is your own mind. The teacher that can remove your doubts will surely emerge from your own mind! The second aid is the scripture. Read, therefore, *Prajñāpāramitā* diligently. The lowest kind of friend-and-guide is a human being who

offers to teach you!

sKam was a sick person, with tumours in his abdomen. He was introduced by Dampa 'into his own mind by the practice of meditation; this cured him of his ailment. Dampa believed that understanding the nature of the ailment and taking the ailment itself as a subject of meditation will provide the cure for it while at the same time furthering the cause of realization.

Kunga the Cheerful

Kunga was born in 1062 A.D. as Tsha-Gung, to the east of Ding-ri the place which had almost become the headquarters of Dampa in Tibet. As a child he used to call himself 'Kun-dGa'(meaning 'all cheer') and the name stuck to him. It is also said that Dampa called him so the very first time he met him, and so the name stuck to him. Kunga soon lost interest in wordly affairs and began to withdraw from normal. He even gave up the small job that he had, and the family was left in a difficult situation. His wife and son had to beg from others. But Kunga remained unmoved and unconcerned.

One day, Kunga suddenly decided to leave home. He told his wife that he would go with a party of brigands who were planning to raid the region of sNe-Nam La Kha. Raids among the nomadic tribes were a usual feature, and brigandage was accepted as one of the modes of livelihood for many people. Kunga left home, but proceeded straight towards gLung-'Khor, where Dampa was at that time camping.

That morning, Dampa got up early, roused the disciples at the monastery and told them to make all preparation to receive an honoured guest. The disciples were puzzled when no one turned up till that afternoon. As they were planning to give waiting, a dirty man in rags walked in, and some disciples joked about his being the honoured guest. But they were dumb-stricken when the teacher came out rushing, and welcomed him: "What a delight to see you, Kunga!" He took him in and bade the disciples prepare a high seat for the guest.

While the disciples stood staring, unable to comprehend what was indicated. Dampa himself heaped up pile of ashes placed on top of it four arrows crossed, and beckoned Kunga to sit on it. As soon as Kunga was seated, there was an instantaneous question that came out of him:

Kunga: "Of what nature is this phenomenal existence?"

Dampa: "It is an insect in the excrement of a dog!"

Kunga: "Can a being in this world attain happiness?"

In answer, Dampa made the sign of a chain with his interlocked fingers, and said:

Suffering is like this chain! When the chain is broken, there can be happiness.

As soon as this dialogue ended, Kunga closed his eyes and began praying mentally for the entrance into the path. He could feel Dampa's blessing enter his whole being. And he was filled with faith.

Dampa then said: "Come, I shall make a hero of you!"

Whereupon Kunga protested: "But where are my sword, my shield, my armour and my steed?"

Dampa replied: "Retire to a small cave, and avoid all contact with others. That will be your armour. Eat food that enables you barely to survive, and wear clothes just enough to cover your body. That will be your shield. Practise meditation until you are sick of it! That will be your sword."

Kunga: "How am I to meditate?"

Dampa: "Let your gaze be upward. That is the posture of Prajña-pāramitā."

Kunga immediately set off and entered a cave nearby. He practised meditation with zeal and fortitude and obtained the first trance in which he perfectly understood the nature of phenomenal existence. Dampa came to his cave and called,

“Come out, Kunga!” When he came out, Dampa asked him: “In case you are chosen as a prince, will you sit on the throne? If a magic rope is placed in front of you, will you climb up? If the world is given to you, will you rule it as an emperor?”

Kunga answered: “No, no and no! I was never successful with the world, and I do not want to succeed in the world! But I am now capable of understanding, if you will teach me!”

Dampa was pleased with the answer and took him to his hut and bestowed on him the hidden precepts. He told Kunga, “Son, did you not set out to raid? You should now raid the King’s palace, and you should have keys to open all the doors there ! I shall give you hidden precepts which will make you understand the sublime truth. The King’s palace is not open to all, and one has to force one’s way into it. The great truth is hidden from ordinary folk, and one who would obtain it must put forth great effort!”

Kunga lived with Dampa like his shadow for eighteen years. When Dampa was about to pass away, the disciples that gathered round him were greatly agitated. Dampa, however, pointed to Kunga, and told the disciples: “When the sun sets, the moon will rise. There is no cause for sorrow!”

Kunga survived him for seven years and passed away in 1124 A.D.

Pashab the Careful

Kunga placed his mantle on Pa-TSHab sGom-pa, and thus the mystic teachings of Dampa continued in Tibet. Pa-TSHab was not only a great scholar, but a writer of distinction.

Pa-TSHab was born in 1077 A.D. in Yung-po in Lowar Phan-Yul. At the young age of eleven, he entered a monastery as a novice, and when he was nineteen, he was ordained as a monk. He then settled down to a serious study of Buddhist scriptures under eminent teachers. This went on till he was thirty-seven, when he reflected: “Enough of studying! I should now start practising!” And he set out in search of

a competent master.

He heard that a teacher, sKam-sGom, was proficient in *Prajñāpāramitā* method of meditation. Pa-TSHab went to the hermitage of sKam and obtained from him the preliminary entrance into the meditational method. He felt that a light had been placed within his dark interior. When he wanted further initiation, sKam told him "I am not your real teacher. You should go to Ding-ri, and get the precepts from Dampa. The teacher and the student must be related by *karma*, if the teaching is to be effective"

PA-THSab collected some gold, turquoise and silk, and went to Ding-ri only to find that Dampa had just passed away, and all that Pa-TSHab was able to see was the funeral pyre of the great Master. He could not bear this misfortune, and at once he swooned away. When he woke up, he found an old woman in rags nursing him. She told him: "Do not grieve! You will surely achieve your purpose. Dampa is dead, but Kunga is an exact replica of his! Take him as your master." She directed him to the hut where Kunga was residing, and when he bowed before him, Kunga at once inquired of him; "Are you not tired after a long journey?" The words filled Pa-TSHab with faith. He related how he came to Ding-ri in order to obtain precepts from Dampa, and how the old woman had directed him there. He presented gold *songs* to Kunga and requested him for hidden precepts. Kunga said, "This present is fine! But a disciple of the great Indian master does not need gold. However, I shall accept them, because my acceptance will be favourable to you!" He took the gold coins and threw them up in the air. Then he asked Pa-TSHab to get ready for initiation. "Initiation is necessary to ripen a raw individual. Spend the night in a cave and come to me in the morning."

The following morning Kunga gave him the combined initiation according to Dampa's method, and asked him to spend a year in seclusion. Pa-TSHab developed an insight into the nature of phenomenal existence. When Kunga was appraised of this, he asked: "You were a scholar before you came to me, I gave you the initiation and you have

mediated for a year. Tell me if the insight that you have developed is due to your learning or due to the practice.” Pa-TSHab replied: “Master. I did have a knowledge pertaining to the nature of phenomenal existence before I came here. But it was like touching an object in the dark. But now I could see it in broad daylight !”

Because he was learned, he was asked by Kunga to write manuals and guides. Pa-TSHab wrote what is called the “Black Guide” (*Nag-KHrid*) and explained the hidden meaning of numerous texts. He also explained orally his own experiences in relation to them (*dMar-KHrid*). And combining the two, he prepared “conclusions” (*Phra-Tig*). Then he discussed them with other disciples and *yogis*, and revised the conclusions.

Pa-TSHab sought Kunga’s permission for continuing to reside in Ding-ri with the teacher. But Kunga said: “No, I suggest you go home. Your people are worried about you. You must attend to them. But do not get involved in worldly affairs. Practise meditation for twelve years, and then, you may do what you like!”

Kunga gave him books and also a magic stone for a safe journey. He accompanied him till the outskirts of the village and bade him goodbye.

Pa-TSHab returned home in dbUs and practised meditation for 13 years, a year more than what his mater had suggested. He then commenced working for the happiness of all beings. Many hundreds of students gathered round him. But he was strict about admission of students, and although he himself was learned, he emphasized the importance of meditation. His advice to one of his pupils, Ten-Me was:

Meditate for ten years. If you should be inclined to continue for a longer period, by all means do. There will be no harm in it. But if you feel that you cannot continue it any longer, then come out and preach. But preach only the ordinary doctrines. Do not communicate the hidden techniques of bKa-dzi to any one who is not likely to devote himself entirely to religion and become a master in his own turn. Do not impart the details of mystic rites of rTen-’Brel to anyone who is not interested in the welfare of others. And

do not introduce any one who is not committed to contemplation into the *rTen-'brel-gyi Khang-pa*. Limit your students. Do not accept more than about four or five disciples. You must spend most of your time in meditation and exert your utmost to obtain enlightenment in this very life. Meditation is the essence of the Doctrine. Teaching and preaching must be done only to secure the welfare of other human beings, not for any other gain. Do not be a 'merchant of the Doctrine'!

Pa-TSHab passed away in 1158 A.D. in his eighty-second year.

Sami the Hermit

There are many tales about the hermit sMon-Lam-hBar (meaning the 'Bloom of the Wishing Prayer'), who was popularly known as Sa-Mi ('The Meaty Man'). But the tale concerning his enlightenment is most interesting. Born in 1085 A.D. , he went to the teacher So-CHung-Ba even as a young man. He served him diligently for several years, and did ungrudgingly all the hard work that was assigned to him. But he did not get any precepts, and he was sorely disappointed. One evening, it occurred to him: "Perhaps this man is a pretender and has no precepts. Otherwise, he should have given me. I am probably wasting my time here; I should seek another teacher." He continued to exercise his mind in this matter, and about midnight, it again occurred to him: "But this man is not a common man. Sometimes he seems to read my thoughts! It may be that he has some precepts. I wonder why he does not impart them to me!" Towards dawn he thought, "Well, I suppose I should continue to serve him. It is likely he will give me some precepts."

When he got up in the morning and came to his teacher as usual, the teacher told him: "Oh my young man, your thought in the evening was useless and incorrect: your thought at midnight was better and helpful ; and the thought at dawn was correct and proper." Sami was nonplussed. The teacher continued: "Young man, we are having our lunch today with a householder in the neighbouring village; he has invited me.

Let us start as soon as I am ready." Sami bowed and returned to his room to make preparations. In the meantime, the teacher ate his fill and sent word to Sami that he was ready.

The two started out, the teacher well-fed and the student hungry. Having reached the village, the teacher pointed to a house and said: "That must be house. Let us go and knock!" But as soon as they came near the door, he said, "No, I do not think this is his house." He pointed to another house and said: "That must be the one! Let's go there." Again, he changed his mind when they stood in front of that house, and pointed to another house. And so on they moved from house to house until evening. The whole day poor Sami as starving. At last, the teacher said "I have forgotten his house. Let us go back!" and returned to his monastery. While they were returning, Sami was very indignant. He thought it was odd that the teacher should not have bothered to ascertain the exact location of his host's house. He did not, however, suspect that it was a trick played upon him by the teacher.

But the teacher got up and ran out of the room. He went into another room, and bolting the doors from within, shouted at Sami, "Young man, your mind is now filled with anger. Look at the source of that anger!" Sami stood there and did as he was told. A realization suddenly dawned on him that the mind was indeed a void. He knelt down before the closed doors and, bowing again and again, praised his teacher: "My master, pardon my ignorance and impatience! You are wise, clever and compassionate ! It is my good fortune that I have come to you!"

Thereupon, the teacher opened the door and came out of the room. He lifted up Sami who had clasped his feet and said: "I knew all along that you deserved the precepts. But your interior was not ready yet. I have often tried to make you angry, but you were not till now sufficiently angry at any time. It is only when the inner constitution is burning and boiling that any lasting benefit can be had. You are now ready for precepts." The teacher immediately made arrangements for bestowing the initiation on Sami; and he imparted to the happy

student a complete set of hidden precepts.

Sami served his teacher for altogether thirty-four years, until the teacher's death in 1128 A.D. And then he built a monastery of his own at bZang-Grong. But his monastery was a mere hut. He spent his time playing with children, tending the sheep and gathering cow-dung. But no one could fail to notice that his interior was perfect. He became a celebrated hermit. He died in 1171 A.D. at the age of eighty-seven.



༢། རྟོགས་པ་མཐའ་ཕྱི་པ་མཁུང་དག་གི་དབང་། །

Glossary of Tibetan Terms



། ཀུན་ལ་ཕྱག་ལེན་པའི་བྱུང་ཆེན་ཏི་པུ། །

Ti-phug Gsain-Snags-sdon-po

Ah mystic ejaculation.

Amnye corruption of “Ah Mes” (Hail, Ancient), a magical call by the wizard-sorcerer, esp. Bon-Po.

dBang power, potency, might (spiritual and mystical).

dBang-aKHor power-circle, Skt. *chakra*, mystical diagram for ritualistic performance and for contemplation.

dBang-bsKur power-communication or transference, consecration, initiation (Skt. *dikshā*, *abhisheka*).

Bar-Dob between-state, intermediary space between heaven and earth, (Skt. *antariksha*), more usually condition between death and rebirth, interval between two existences.

dBen solitary place.

Bod Tibet, Skt. *Bhoṭa*.

Bod-sKad the Tibetan language, esp. in religious books.

Bon the early religion of Tibet. The exact derivation of the word is uncertain, but is etymologically related to the Skt. *puṇya* ("virtue", "merit"), which is also a name for the favourite symbol in Bon, *svastika*. *Bon* and *Bod* may be equivalent expressions, the terminals *n* and *d* being interchangeable.

Bon-Po, followers of Bon.

Byang-CHub enlightenment, illumination (Skt. *bodhi*).

Byang-CHub-Sems-Pa Skt. *bodhisattva*.

aCHem a dance sequence in a symbolic ritual, usually wearing masks.

CHe, CHen great, honoured. (Skt. *mahā*-).

mCHod offering-base, receptacle of offerings (Skt. *pūjā*).

mCHod-rTen offering-base, receptacle of offspring (Skt. *stūpa*), a construction to hold oblations. Cf. *gDung-rDung-rTen*, a vase or building to contain the relics of a saint. *rTen* may even be a representation of the Buddha. It should, however, be distinguished from *THo-Yor*, a cairn or "stone-heap".

mCHog perfect, excellent, best. *mDe-mCchog*, great bliss (Skt. *mahāsukha*).

mCHog-hi Dang-pohi Sangs-rGyas primordial Buddha (Skt. *Ādibudha*).

CHos religion, doctrine, law (Skt. *dharma*). Usually, however, Buddhism as in *CHos dang Bon* ("Buddhism and Bon").

Dad-Pa faith with confidence and devotion.

bDe-mCHog (Skt. *Samvara*).

dDe-sKyid happiness. Cf. **rDe-Ba** (Skt. *śubha*), bliss of *nirvāṇa*.

mDo discourse (Skt. *sūtra*), aphorism, rule.

mDo-sDe, a collection of discourses in *bKaa-Gyur*.

Don-dam pahi Den-Pa the real or transcendental state (Skt. *paramārtha*).

rDo-rJe precious stone, Skt. *vajra*, diamond, symbol of the highest attainment, the supreme state of undifferentiated tranquillity; a ritualistic implement denoting the effecting way.

rDo-rJe-sKu, adamant body, obtained by mystic methods.

PHyag-ña rDo-rJe, Skt. *Vajrapāṇi*, **rDo-rJe PHag-Mo**, Skt. *Vajravārāhī*, **rDo-rJe Tigs-Byed**, Skt. *Vajrabhairava*, etc. **rDo-rJe-THeg-Pa**, Skt. *Vajrayāna*.

aDre (hDre) demon, gnome, goblin.

gDug-Pa evil, poison, misery (Skt. *duhkha*), opposite of **bDe-Ba**.

hDul-Ba to subdue, conquer, discipline, Skt. *Vinaya*, texts included in the *bKaa-Gyur* of the Tibetan Canon.

Dus-kyi Kor-Lo the religion and philosophy of *Kālachakra*, the wheel of time.

dGe virtue, merit (Skt. *śubha*), **dGe lDan**, virtuous, meritorious.

dGe-Lugs-Pa merit-way-ones (*Lugs*, fashion, method, way, manner, established custom, school or sect; *Lugs-kyi*, relating to manners, ethical, moral). The prevailing sect of Tibetan Buddhism, which was also in temporal power until recently; the expression is a later transformation of **Gah-lDan-Pa** (the Galden-ones, after a monastery twenty miles from LH-Sa built by the great reformer TSong-KHa-Pa (1357–1419) and made powerful by his nephew dGe-lDun-Grub).

sGom, (rNGom-pa) to think, reflect, contemplate.

sGom-Pa is a graduated course of meditation (Skt. *bhāvanā*).

dGon-Pa solitary retreat, jungle hermitage; usually, monastery.

sGrol-Ma Skt. *Tārā*, the delivering goddess. Also **sGrol-Yum**.

Cf. **Grol-pa**, emancipation from the misery of existence (Skt. *mukti*).

sGrub-Pa coercing the divinity to yield a boon, more specifically *Lha-sGrub-Pa*. Prayers, incantations, *sGom-Pa*, asceticism and magical rites are involved in effective coercion (*sGrub-THabs*, procedures of coercion). Also accomplishment, fulfillment; carrying out of a difficult task, like extracting silver from silver-ore.

sGu-Lus phantom-form (Skt. *māyā-śarīra*); more correctly, **sGyu**, illusory, false imaginary. Sometimes, Skt. *liṅga-śarīra*, subtle body accompanying the spirit in its transmigration.

rGyal-Po (*gyalwa*) kings, chieftains, conquerors; usually, the abbots of the Gah-lDan and bKra-Sis-Lung-Po who were recognised as such by the Chinese emperor Cheng-Hua (1365–1488); Skt. *jina*.

rGyud thread which is continuous and unbroken (Skt. *tantu*); **rGyud-pa**, to fasten on the thread or string. Also, tradition, transmission (Cf. **brGyud**, Skt. *paramparā*), as in bKah-rGyud-Pa. Also, text, treatise, manual (Skt. *tantra*).

Hūm mystical syllable of Indian origin; regarded as the seed syllable of Akshobhya; symbolises the condition of the flow of consciousness (Cf. *gTso-Sems*, Skt. *chitta-srota*).

dJam-dPal Skt. *Mañju-śrī*; also **aJam-mGon**, Skt. *Mañju-nātha*.

rJe lord, master, nobleman (Skt. *ārya*); usually, high priest or monk.

Jo-Bo-rJe noble lord, reverend master; usually, title of Atiśa-Dipankara (1042–1055, sojourn in Tibet).

dKah-gDams-Pa, the sect founded by Atiśa-Dipankara (above), based on discourses or commentaries (**bKah**, Skt. *sūtra* or *pañjikā*) and on instructions (**gDams**, Skt. *upadeśa*).

bKah-rGyud-Pa sect founded by the translator Mar-Pa (b. 1012) on the basis of the Indian teachings of Nāro-Pā, a siddha. Originally, it meant the thread or tradition (**rGyud**) of the words of the Buddha (**bKah**), or the oral tradition; later, it signified the tradition of the “white” (**dKar**), which expression stood for moral goodness as

well as the white garments worn by the ascetics of this sect (after Milarepa).

bKah-hGur (*Kaṅjur*, Mongolia) the words of the **Buddha** (**bKah**) translated (*hGyur*) into Tibetan (**Boḍ-du**); a collection of 108 volumes, mostly of Indian origin, constituting the basic aspect of the Tibetan Canon ; Skt. *śruti*.

mKHaa-aGro-Ma Skt. *ḍākinī*, wise women of divine status who assume roles of instructors and guides to devotees; feminine helpmates in *sādhana*; fairies; fiendesses.

mKHan-Po instructor, master (Skt. *upādhyāya*); expert (Skt. *paṇḍita*).

KHrid-Yig instruction-exhortations, practical guidance.

aKHrul mistake, illusion, delusion (Skt. *brahma*).

aKor-Lo disc, wheel, circle, roundish, globular (Skt. *chakra*); **Od-Kor**, luminous disc, **Pad-kor**, hand gesture representing the lotus, **Dus-kyi Kor-Lo**, the wheel of time (Skt. *kālachakra*).

aKrul-Ba to stray, to be mistaken (Skt. *bhramaṇa*); **aKrul-sNang**, illusion, delusion.

Kun-brTags erroneous supposition.

Kun-rDZob-kyi bDen-Pa Skt. *saṃvṛti-satya*, phenomenal reality, empirical existence, subjective truth; **Kun** (all, altogether), **rDZob** (vain).

BLa-Ma 'supreme-without' the high one, the superior person; usually, preceptor-priest (Skt. *guru*). **Bla**, space above or something above, **Ma**, without: Skt. *anuttara*, the highest or one with none higher (**BLa-na med-Pa**). The mystical method or way which is supreme is **BLa-na med-pai Lam**. The root-teacher (Skt. *mūla-guru*) is **rTashi-BLa-Ma**.

Lam road, way (Skt. *gati*), usually, religious: as in **CHen-pai Lam**, the three-fold way (of ordinary humans, of the advanced ones and of the saints), **Tar-pai Lam**, the path of emancipation (Skt. *vimukti-mārga*). It also signifies stages or steps of advancement along the path, **Lam-Rim**.

Las activity, undertaking, deed, work; usually, religious work as in *Las-bZan* (excellent work).

LHa god, a being superior to the humans (Skt. *deva*); **LHa-Mo**, goddess; protective spirit; **Yul-LHa**, country-gods that were converted by Padmasambhava into guardians of Buddhism; **Nang-LHa**, within-gods, i.e. spirits within the kitchen, the hearth-divinities. **LHa-KHang**, god-house, temple (Skt. *deva-grha*).

Lo-TSa-Ba translator, usually of Indian works into Tibetan.

Ma-rGyud the great Tantra (Skt. *mahāyoga*)

Maṇi-formula “Om maṇi padme Hūm” (six-syllabled). **Maṇi-CHos-aKor**, the wheel or cylinder containing the formula or which is turned or twirled reciting the formula. **Maṇi-Dong**, wall on the face of which the formula is inscribed. An early work, **Maṇi-bKa-Bum**, ascribed to Srong-bTsen-sGam-Po (A.D. 569–650) the Tibetan king, is devoted to the cult of Avalokiteśvara; the **Maṇi-formula** is regarded as an invocation to this deity. However, it is probable that it was actually addressed to the consort of this deity, Tārā (*Maṇipadme* as vocative), like the other formula: *Om Tāre Tuttāre Ture Svāhā*. Later, the formula was interpreted as the essence of the Buddha’s teaching: the jewel of enlightenment (*maṇi*) in the lotus of the heart (*padme* in the locative). Cf. *Ḍākārṇava*. It is also interpreted as the vow of a *bodhisattva*.

rMi-Lam dream state, unreal but significant.

sMig-rGyu mirage, optical illusion, phantom.

sNad-Pa opinion, attitude, idea, view-point.

rNal tranquillity of mind, peace of emancipation, passionlessness, rest. Also *yoga*, or occult practices, as in **rNal-aByor-Pa** (*Naljorpa*), yogi or occult practitioner of miraculous powers.

gNam sky, space above, heavenly vault. Also **Nam-mKa**.

sNang-Ba illumination, enlightenment, vision (Skt. *darśana*, *āloka*).

sNang-Ba, mental picture.

Nang-Pai Chos within-Dharma, the religion of the insider or

those who are within the fold, usually Buddhism. But **Nang** is inward, interior, esoteric: and therefore it is the religion which emphasizes the inner transformation, the offerings of thoughts and faith as opposed to outward rituals, external observances and offering of material things. **Nang** is to be regarded as opposed to **PHyin** (outside).

No-Bo-nyid-Med-Pa non-entity, (Skt. *niḥsvabhāvatā*), also essential nature. **Med-Pa**, not to be; **No**, personality; **No-Bo-nyid**, entity.

rNying-Ma, old or ancient sect of Buddhism in Tibet that emerged soon after Padmasambhava's arrival. It is described as the ancient tradition of *mantras*.

Pad-Ma lotus (Skt. *padma*).

Pad-Ma-dBang-rGyal the yogic state of supreme power of the lotus, mystical condition in *sādhana*.

dPal splendour, prosperity, abundance (Skt. *śrī*); Cf. **gYang-dPal-Po**, illustrious person.

PHra-Men magic, witchcraft, sorcery. Also, **aPHrul**, magic, jugglery.

PHag-rGya hand-gesture (Skt. *mudrā*), seal, especially gestures by the fingers to seal or confirm a ritual act; highly symbolic and subtle procedures to secure the benefits and to eliminate evil in magic and witchcraft. Tāntrik tradition employs a variety of *mudrās* for mystic accomplishment. **PHyag-rGya-CHen-Po**, Skt. *mahāmudrā*.

sPrul-Ba juggling, making phantoms appear, transforming oneself. Usually, the expression signifies emanation, appearance of an essence in a changed form. Hence **sPrul-sKu** (pronounced *tulku*), an emanation body, holy spirit embodying itself in a new material outfit, reincarnated saint.

sPyod-Pa to perform effectively, to practice successfully.

Rabs lineage, family.

Rig-Pa understanding, knowing. Cf. **Ma-Rig-Pa**, ignorance (Skt. *avidyā*).

Rig-sNags spell, magical incantation (Skt. *dhāraṇī*).

Rin-Po-CHe very precious master (Skt. *mahā-ratna*), **Rin**, jewel; a title.

RLung wind (Skt. *vāyu*), breath (Skt. *prāṇa*), **RLung-aDZin-Po** holding of the breath (Skt. *kumbhaka* in *prāṇāyāma*) in order to attain to mystical states, as in the **gTum-Mo** practices. The control of the vital currents within the body is an accepted tantrik procedure for obtainment of supernatural powers (**mGyongs-RLung**).

Sa-bDag earth-owner, the spirit inhabiting the earth.

Sambhala the mythical country to the north of India, where the Kālachakra doctrine is said to have been preached by the Buddha to the first king of the place, Suchandra. **dPal-IDan-Yes-sis** (1738–1780); the third Panchen Lama popularized the view that it was situated in the Northern border of India, probably in *Uḍḍiyāna* from where Padmasambhava hailed. It is the Buddhist version of Utopia.

bSam-Pa thought, contemplation (Skt. *saṃkalpa*). Hence, **bSamGTan**, meditative absorption (Skt. *saṃādhi*).

gSang-Pa hidden, secret, mysterious, esoteric. Hence, **gSang-pai CHos**, secret doctrine, esoteric religion. also **gSang-sNags**, secret charms.

Sangs-rGyas-kyi-CHos. The Buddha's religion (Skt. *buddha-dharma*).

Śes-Rab great wisdom (Skt. *prajñā*), hence **Ses-Rab-kyi-pHa-Rol-tu PHyin-Pa** (*Prajñāpāramitā*), doctrine as well as collection of texts in **bKah-aGyur**. **Ses Rab** is also employed to denote void (*śūnyatā*).

Sems (Sem) mind, thought; to meditate, to reflect; also, being, spirit.

gShen-Rabs the great shaman, founder of the Bon creed.

SLobs practice, exercise, esp. religious, (Skt. *charyā*). Also **sPod-Pa**, mode of conduct, exercise.

Srid-Pa world, as in **Srid-gSum** (the three worlds), **Srid-pai aKor Lo**, the wheel of existence; also life or individual being.

ITa attitude, viewpoint; to inquire, examine and reflect; doctrine. Also **ITab**, philosophical system as well as mystical corpus.

rTa-mGrin the horse-necked divinity (Skt. *Haya-grīva*)

bsTan-aGyur commentarial collection of the Tibetan Canon.

rTen base, support, refuge (Skt. *gati, āśraya*); **LHa-rTen**, godbase or image, also temple; **mCHod-rTen**, offering-base, *stūpa*.

gTer-Ma treasure that is concealed (Skt. *nidhi*), usually, hidden texts or buried books. The books ascribed to Padmasambhava and the king Sron-bsTan-sGam-Po were hidden away in caves or safely buried during periodical persecution. There is a story that Vairocana, one of the first seven lamas (initiated by Śānta-rakṣita), not only translated many Sanskrit works into Tibetan and thus helped spread the new creed, but also hid numerous Bon scriptures and thus stifled Bon influence. These hidden books were later said to be unearthed or discovered. But many of the "treasure-hunters" produced fake texts of dubious antiquity and uncertain authority.

Ting-nye-aDZin-du aJug-Pa profound meditation, perfect absorption (Skt. *samāpatti*). Three stages are distinguished in the attainment of this state: (1) **ITa-Ba**, inquiry and examination; (2) **sGom-Pa**, contemplation, reflection; and (3) **sPyod-Pa**, effective practice. The first stage eliminates sensual dominance, the second mental waywardness, and the third elemental inclinations and passions.

sTong-Pa-nyid vacuity, void (Skt. *śūnyatā*)

gTor-Ma Skt. *bali*, sacrifices or offerings to gods and fiends as part exorcism or appeasement. Cf. **gLud**, a sort of ransom, a gift in anticipation of a benefit; sometimes man's own image (**Mi-gLud**) is offered as symbolic of self-sacrifice.

gTum-Mo (**gTum-Po**) psychic heat consequent on breathing exercises, mainly holding of breath and pushing it along the central artery (which is straight and erect like the

second part of the Tibetan letter *a*; hence *a-SHAD gTum-Mo*).

THig-Le innermost essence, seed; semen, generative energy; contemplation, mystic state of absorption.

THeg-Pa carriage, vehicle, (Skt. *yāna*), course of religious practice, philosophical discipline. *THeg-Pa dMan-Pa*, Skt. *Hinayāna* ; *THeg-Pa CHen-Po*, Skt. *Mahāyāna* ; *rDo-rJe-THeg-Pa*, *Vajrayāna*. *THeg-Pa-gSum*, (three paths, Skt. *trīyāna*), viz. *Hinayāna*, *Mahāyāna* and *Mantrayāna* (SNangs-kyi *THeg-Pa*).

mTHong-bahi-Lam the way of mystic visions, techniques of visualizations (Skt. *dr̥ṣṭi-mārga*). *mTHong-Pa*, power of vision.

aTHob-Pa obtainment, possession (of faith), becoming (the Buddha), the fruits. Skt. *pratilābha*, *phala*.

TSan spirits, gnomes, usually the vindictive ghosts that haunt temples and monasteries.

Yab-Yum father-mother (Skt. *yuganaddha*, two-in-one, Cf. Tib. *Zung-aJug*).

Yi-Dam personal or tutelary deity (Skt. *iṣṭa-devatā*).

gYung-Drung the *Svastika* sign, sacred to both Bon-Pos and Buddhists in Tibet.

bZang excellent, good (Skt. *bhadra*).

gZungs holding (Skt. *dhāraṇā*); also spell, sacred formula (*dhāraṇī*).

Zung-aJug two-in-one (Skt. *yuganaddha*). *Zung*, two, pair, couple (female and male); *aJug*, unison, fusion, entering into. Representations of male and female divinities in copulation symbolise the mystic union of *prajñā* and *upāya*. In the traditional Tātrik interpretation of the word *aJug*, the technique of forcing the breath-mind complex (*Sems*) into the central artery (Skt. *sūṣumṇā*) so that the being is in a state of perfect poise and power is suggested.

Appendix One

More About Padmasambhava

It is rather strange that Padmasambhava, one of the most remarkable of Indians, whom all Tibet holds in the highest esteem as its 'precious patron-saint', is little known in his own country. In the middle ages, however, he was well known in the academic circles of Nālandā, Vikramaśīla and Odantapuri. He was among those who carved out the mantra-yāna and Vajrayāna ideologies; and he was counted among the Siddha celebrities. He was also an author of tāntrik texts in Sanskrit. But none of his works has survived, and his renown has almost entirely been forgotten here. Tibet has preserved his works in the Tibetan version, and has glorified his life and achievements, especially in that land of snows.

The principal source for information concerning his life and career are said to be *Pad-ma THang-yig*, a collection of legends, and several 'buried texts' (gTer-Ma) like *THug-yig gSer-PHreng* ('Golden Treasury of Displayed letters') recovered by Sang-rGyas-gLing-pa; *Ka-Tang Zang-gLing-ma* ('Lamp enlightener of Prophecy'), ; *Padmā-bKah-THan* ('Displayed Lotus-orders'), discovered by Orgyan-gLing-pa; *Gyur-mei Nami rGyal* (Lepcha version by a king of Sikkim); and *U-rGyan Guru Padma-Hbyung-gnas...*, by Lady Ye-Še TSHo gyal, a disciple of Padmasambhava, who was acclaimed as an incarnation of goddess Sarasvati. Those who have consulted these books tell us that not much information of any historical value is forthcoming.

There is quite some confusion about Padmasambhava's nativity. There are textual references to his having hailed from Uḍḍiyāna 'uḍḍiyāna-uinīrgata') which was a celebrated tāntrik

centre along with Jālandhara. But where this uḍḍiyāna was is not certain. Usually it is identified with Urgyan near Ghazni, beyond the former North-Western frontier of India. This identification becomes plausible when we consider that the Tibetan monarch had visited Uḍḍiyāna, Kabul and Kandahar.

There is a suggestion that Padmasambhava's origin was in Nepal valley. Mandi (Za-hor), on the road leading to the Kulu Valley is a town celebrated for the sacred lake, Riwalsor lake, where the future Padmasambhava is said to have manifested himself (Padma-mTSho). There was a shrine to this saint on the banks of this lake. There are also several sites in the vicinity associated with the saint's travels, and where the saint's footprints were worshipped. There was a monastery at Gandhola (above the junction of the rivers Bhagā and Chandrā), associated with Padmasambhava. Nako in lower Spiti valley has an ancient temple containing Padmasambhava's footprints. The lotus-lake (Padma-C'an), where the saint was reputed to have appeared is also shown near Hardwar. His hermitage is shown at Halāsi in Nepal, on the banks of the river Dudh-Kāsi. In Gyangtse, two days' journey from Nepāl, is a rock-cut cave of Padmasambhava (Kyil Kor-ta-Dub). And in Sikkim four caves are reputed to be abodes of this saint. It is invariably related that Padmasambhava was in Nepāl when the Tibetan king sent his envoy to invite him to Tibet. His brother-in-law Śāntarakshita also was in Nepāl.

Uḍḍiyāna is also identified with Orissa (Oḍissa). Śāntarakshita is claimed to have hailed from Bengal (Sabar in Vikramapura paragaṇa), and his close association with Padmasambhava is well-known. The Hajo Hill in Assam (Kāmarūpa) has a chaitya where stood a colossal stone image of the Buddha, to the left of which was represented Padmasambhava (Urgyan-Guru). It was a site said to have been visited by the saint during his travel from lower Assam to Tibet.

Maṇi-dvīpa (Norbu-gTen), where Padmasambhava appeared, is located by *Blue Annals* in a country 230 yojanas to the north of Magadha. Blessed by many ḍākinīs, this was where mantra-

yāna originated, according to this text (p. 367). It is usual for Tibetan texts to describe him as a native of Urgyan (Udyāna or Oḍḍiyāna), and it is also usual to associate the place with some place like Ghazni, northwest of Kashmir, north of Peshawar on the Swat river.

Padmasambhava is known to Tibetans as 'the Guru' (Lopon), 'the precious master' (Guru Rim-Po-CHe) and as Pe-Ma Jung-Ne (Padma-sambhava). The last expression is strictly Pad-ma (lotus) bYung (to come out, emerge, manifest, spring forth) gNas (place, above, dwelling, spot). He is said to have been born on the tenth of the month (Tse-chu, daśamī), and therefore every tenth day in the Tibetan calendar is celebrated as the "Guru's day" But subsequently, the observance shifted to the fifteen day of the month (pūrṇimā). It was hailed as the 'blessed day for the world' (Jamling-chisang)

Padmasambhava is remembered in the scholarly world as an exponent of Yogācāra and as the author of *Samaya-pañchāśikā*, which he also translated into Tibetan. He is said to have studied under Buddha-jñāna-pāda, who was the first āchārya of Vikramaśīla university. His celebrity consists in transforming the inimical powers into 'guardians of dharma' (dharma-pāla). During his journey to Tibet, it is said that twelve local feminine guardian spirits (bsTan-ma bettu-gNis)) attacked him and wanted to destroy him. But he subdued them with his magical power and made them pledge to be the guardians of dharma. When he arrived in bSam-Yas, many spirits and demons were hostile to him and conspired to harm his plans. But he won them all over to be supporters to his cause. They became 'bondkeepers' (Dam-Can', Chokyongs).

Among his achievements in Tibet were the laying of the foundation of the first vihāra (787–791), getting Śāntarakṣita-āchārya (a-tsa-ra) invited again, and bringing back the image of Buddha (LHasa-Buddha) from Mang-Yul (on the Nepāl border) in gTSang province, where it been sent away during the persecution of Buddhism; Padmasambhava got it reinstalled in Phrul-Snang temple. It was that codified the four tantras of Vajrayāna, two 'lower' and two 'higher'. Kriyā-tantra (Bya-



The Golden image of 'Padmasambhava'

rGyud) and Charyā-tantra (Spyod) were 'lower'; Yoga-tantra (rNal-bYor) and Anuttara-tantra (bLa-Nya med-pahi rGyud) were 'higher'. He transplanted many Indian divinities on the Tibetan soil, like Viṣṇu (Khyab-jub), Mahādeva (LHa-CHen), Vaiśravaṇa (rNam-THos-sRas), Eka-jāṭā (Dur-KHrod-LHa-Mo), Vajra-Kumāra or Skanda (rDo-rJe gZhon-nu) and Rāhula (gZa-LHa). He transformed numerous local gods (Yul-lHa) and 'Lords of the soil' (gZi-bDag) into the Gods of universal appeal and power. What he did in Tibet was indeed a revolution, reformation and renaissance rolled into one. No wonder, Tibetans even today, repeat the charm 'om vajra guru padma siddhi hūm'.

He is described as the son (or adopted son) of King Indrabhūti of Uḍḍiyāna. There is a story that the king was blind but beloved of the people. He suffered a major tragedy in his life, when his son died. And the country suffered from the calamity of a long drawn drought. The prayers of the king and the people became effective when Amitābha-Buddha restored the sight of the king and promised to incarnate himself as his son. The King now could behold the lake nearby, and lying on a lotus in this lake was seen a lovely babe. The King received this babe as the promised gift of Amitābha, and the babe grew up in the palace. There is another account, a more prosaic one if also more trustworthy, that Padmasambhava was the second son of Indrabhūti.

There is some confusion about Indrabhūti. There is an Indrabhūti who is a prolific writer of Tantras, the author of *Jñāna-siddhi*, a remarkable treatise on Vajrayāna and mahāsukhavāda. Śāntarakṣita's *Tattva-siddhī*, as already mentioned, is an eloquent exposition of this creed. There is another Indrabhūti, who is the author of *Chakra-samvara-sādhana*, which belongs to the yogāchāra persuasion. Whether these are different individuals, or they were identical with the King of Uḍḍiyāna is not certain. The probability is that they were the same individual. The King may also have been a tāntrik author and an adept. In fact, Indrabhūti's sister Lakṣmīkarā, wrote the celebrated tāntrik text Advaya-siddhi,

which exounded the Sahaja-yāna creed. Between this sister, her brother (Indrabhūti), the brother's son (Padmasambhava) and his brother-in-law (Śāntarakṣita), Vajrayāna was crystallized, and the Vajrayāna which took roots in Tibet was directly fashioned by Padmasambhava and Śāntarakṣita, both of them authors of tāntrik treatises. The date of Indrabhūti has been given as 687–717 A.D.

The name Padmasambhava is usually traced to the story of Indrabhūti sighting the babe on the lotus. Padmasambhava's miraculous birth is in keeping with his marvellous career. But Padma signifies in the Vajrayāna ideology one of the three families (prototypes or protectors, rigs gSum dGon-po), the other two being Tathāgata and Vajra. The deities that preside over these families are the Buddha-forms: Avalokiteśvara, vairochana (or Mañjuśrī) and Vajra-pāṇi. Avalokiteśvara has lotus in his hand as his sign and is the foremost of the Buddha-forms. His mantra is 'Om maṇi-padme hūm' ('om vāgiśvari hum' is the mantra of Mañjuśrī and 'om vajrapāṇi hūm' of Vajrapāṇi). According to *Mañjuśrī-mūla-kalpa*, the lotus (padma) represents wisdom. Padmasambhava is the incarnation of this form of the Buddha. Hayagrīva, the fierce protector of faith, belongs to the same family (padma), as also the five transmitters of mystic teachings (dākinis).

Padmasambhava is regarded as the effective manifestation of Avalokiteśvara. And both Padmasambhava and Avalokita contain the essence of the dhyāni-buddha, Samanta-bhadra (Vairochana). The rNying-ma sect, which adores Padmasambhava as the supreme master represents him as flanked by Avalokita (to his right) and Amitābha or Mañjuśrī to his left. In the trikāya ideology, Padmasambhava, represents nirmāṇa-kāya (Sprul pahi SKu) even as Samantabhadra is dharma-kāya and the five dhyāni-buddhas or Heruka the sambhoga-kāya). He signifies the world of clearly formed clouds (desire, Kāma) (even as the sambhoga-kāya represents the mist-laden clouds or form, and the dharmakāya the clear sky with no clouds at all). Alternately, there is a school which considers Padmasambhava as the dharma-kāya (rNying-ma),

Vajradhara or Jina-Śākyamuni as *nirmāṇa-kāya*, and Vajrapāṇi *sambhoga-kāya*. More commonly, however, Padmasambhava represents the *nirmāṇa-kāya*, Avalokita the *sambhoga-kāya*, and Amitābha the *dharma-kāya*. The three deities belong to the same family (*padma*).

The families of the *dhyāni-buddhas* are five in accordance with the directions and other details:

Colour Family Head

1. Centre	white	śathāgata	Vairocana	Form
2. East	Blue	Vajra	Akshobhya	consciousness
3. South	Yellow	Ratna	Ratna-sambha	feelings
4. West	Red	Padma	Amitābha	Perceptions
5. North	Green	Karma	Amoghasiddhi	Impulses

From the *dhyāni-buddha* Amitābha, who heads the Padma family, Avalokita is the spiritual emanation while Padma-sambhava is the physical manifestation. Tārā, the savioress, is Avalokita's consort, and both of them hold lotus in their hands (*padma-pāṇi*). They have variant forms: Lokeśvara and Bhagavatī in Nepāl, Matsyendranātha and Kumāri in the Natha cult. The *vidyā* (*tāntrik* formula) for them in worship is the six-lettered mantra: 'om maṇi padme hūm', a feminine vocative celebrating the jewelled lotus.

In iconographic representation, Padmasambhava is visualized in the 'union of the precious ones' (*dKon-mCHog-Spyi-'dus*), where both his lineage and manifestation are spelt out. On top is the *dharma-kāya* Amitābha (naked, dark and devoid of ornaments); below him is Avalokita, the *sambhoga-kāya* (seated in a lotus posture). Below him is Padmasambhava, the *nirmāṇa-kāya*, with his two consorts who are shown as offering libations of blood and wine in skull-bowls.

Padmasambhava has two variant forms of representation: one is *tāntrik* (*Sprul-Sku*), incarnate deity and the other iconographic (physical manifestation). or (*Sprul-pa*, magically

projected forms) . The former has three forms (trilogy) : as the spiritual teacher (lama) or protector (Ma-ning); as the tutelary deity (Yi-dam), the fierce master (Guru Drak-po) looking like Hayagriva; and as the mystic partner (Kandroma), also fierce but like the lion-faced *dākinī* (Senge-ge-Drong-Ma). They are taken to signify the three 'jewels' : Buddha, Dharma and Sangha respectively.

The latter is a set of eight worshipful forms, "by his skill in use of right means, he manifests a form suitable for those he intends to help; by his compassion, he produces and sends forth these phantom forms".



- (1) Guru Padma Jingne (Pad-ma bYung-gNas), born out of the lotus for the welfare of the three worlds; this form appeared among the flesh-eating demons (*rākshasa*) and this is in the yuganaddha form (*yab-yum*).



mTSHan brGjad Guru Padma Sambhava

(2) Guru Padmasambhava, as the saviour of religion; seated in the maharājalīlā posture, in regal dress, and holding the hand-drum, skull-cup and begging bowl. In this form he preached in Sa'hor ('lank peak cemetery inhabited by low spirits), and subjugated many evil spirits.



Padma rGyal-po

(3) Guru Padma Gyelpo, as the master of the three collection of scriptures (tri-piṭaka). He manifested this form in Uḍḍiyāna, where he lived for five years in the 'god-peak cemetery, and received instruction from a ḍākinīs in the area.



Guru Dorje-Do-Lo

(4) Guru rDorje Do Lo (grod lod), as the diamond comforter of all. He preached in this form among the heretic yoginīs (tīrthikas)



Guru Nyima

(5) Guru Nima (Nyi-ma 'od zer), as the sun-ray. 'enlightening the sun of darkness'. He appeared in this form in Khotan and taught in a cemetery a solitary dākinī. He is shown holding a khatvanga and seated on a deer-skin.



Guru Śākya Seng-ge

(6) Guru Śākya Seng-ge, as the lion of the Śākya race, (Śākya-simla), manifesting this form in Bodh-Gayā and accomplishing the work of eight sages.



Guru Seng-ge DaDok

(7) Guru Seng-ge Da dok (Sgra-sGrog), as the roaring lion. He appeared in this form in Nepāl, and taught various classes of beings and won mastery over them. He also become the propagator of religion in his roaring lion's voice in all the six realms.



bLo-lDan-mCHog-Sred

(8) Guru Lo Ten CHog-Se (bLo-lDan-mCHog-Sred), as one who communicates wisdom (jñāna) to the entire world. He manifested this form in Kashmir, and taught dharma to Gauri-mā and other dākinīs.

In some of these forms he appears in the garb of a royal personage, in some as a peacher, in one as a professor bare-footed and wearing the Nālandā headgear and assuming a teaching attitude. Padmasambhava depicted in the painted scrolls (thangkas) is accompanied by the three forms of the former variety (incarnated deity) and the eight forms of the latter (magically projected aspects). He is also associated with Mahākāla (Nag-po CHen-po Ma-Ning) flanked by two consorts, one the lion-faced dākinī (Senge-gDong-ma) and the other raven-headed dākinī (PHo-ro-gDong-ma). Mahākāla is of Indian origin, a ferocious enemy of religion, but was subjugated by Padmasambhava and transformed into the chief defender of the faith.

Mahākāla became an equivalent of Yama as well as Dharma-rāja. He was regarded as the wrathful manifestation of Avalokita. He was visualized as heaving the body of a yak head of a lion and Legs like serpents.

He is usually visualized as seated cross-legged and enveloped in the great bliss of universal sameness (mahāsukha). His countenance is white in complexion, lustrous and smiling with compassion. He is seated on a lotus and holds in his hands *varja* and *kapāla* with the precious vase of life (wisdom and compassion, the end and means in one). He wears on his head a cornered cap with waving plume, hanging ribbons (probably modelled after the ceremonial headgear of the Nālandā academics). He may carry the magical weapon called *khaṭvāṅga*, which symbolises cutting off the three poisons (desire, hate and ignorance). He dons a red robe with criss-cross designs in gold, and an upper garment of silk. Upon his forehead is inscribed 'om', at his throat is 'āh', and on his heart 'hūm', the three seed-syllables of the most effective magical spell. "In this body of light, with its essence of wisdom, the rays of compassion of pure vacuity shine equally on all."

In magical rites, he is shown wearing a garland of skulls, and the spell intoned then is 'om āh hūm vajra-guru padma vajra-samayajah siddhim phala hūm āh'.

Padmasambhava's deified tutelary deity is said to be the adamant dagger used in magic for offence as well as defence, called PHur-bu (Vajra-Kīla). The word literally means a peg stuck on earth or an iron-nail, but in the Tibetan magical practices it is a short dagger (ornamented with a fierce deity) stuck into the ground to drive away evil spirits; and during the ritual the piercing glance of the priest's eye is also a dagger. This is to seek a favour earnestly. The magical spell used on the occasion is usually 'PHur-bu gDab-Bo (cast, throw, strike by articulating a spell against person, Skt. *uchchāṭana*) Thobs (hammer or mallet), brDung (strike, hit, beat), No (look, face), Phyag rGyas (confirm, seal, Skt. *mudrā*), mNan-No (press, keep under, conquer).' The Phur-bu is said to

be specially effective on a Thursday (gZa)

Padmasambhava was especially devoted to Hayagrīva, a tāntrik deity of exceptional ferocity. It was his Yi-Dam (ishṭa-daiva). When he went to Tibet at the invitation of the king, he bestowed on the king two initiations (dikshā), one of Vajrakīla (PHur-bu) and the other of Hayagrīva. Magic rituals of Hayagrīva were invariably employed while clearing the place of hostile forces. Dealing with malignant spirits, Padmasambhava would assume a fierce aspect, invoking on himself the spirit of Hayagrīva, and offerings were violently thrust outside the door and scattered, uttering the spell 'om hrīh padmānta-kṛta vajra-krodha hayagrīva halu halu hūm phaṭ'. When the mighty Hayagrīva neighs "the three spheres, the three worlds would tremble and all the malignant spirits would be crushed to dust".

Appendix Two

The 84 Indian Siddhas In Tibetan Tradition



ལུའི་པཱ་ལོ་ཅེ་པ་ལྟུང་། ༩༩༩

1. LUI-PĀ



ལི་ལོ་པཱ་ལོ་ཅེ་པ་ལྟུང་། ༩༩༩

2. LĪLĀ-PĀ



འུ་རུ་པཱ་ལོ་ཅེ་པ་ལྟུང་། ༩༩༩

3. VIRŪ-PĀ



དོམ་བེ་པཱ་ལོ་ཅེ་པ་ལྟུང་། ༩༩༩

4. DOMBHI-PĀ



5. ŚĀBARĪ-PĀ



6. SĀRAHA-PĀ



7. KAMKĀLI-PĀ



8. MĪNA-PĀ



9. GORAKH-PĀ



10. CHAURANGĪ-PĀ



11. VĪNĀ-PĀ



12. ŚĀNTI-PĀ



13. TANTI-PĀ



14. CHAMARĪ-PĀ



15. KHADGA-PĀ



16. NĀGĀRJUNA



17. KARĀH-PĀ



18. KARNARI-PĀ



19. THAGAN-PĀ



20. NĀRO-PĀ



ॐ नमो भगवते वासुदेवाय ॥ ७३० ॥

21. ŚALI-PĀ



॥ अथ मन्त्रः ॥

22. TILO-PĀ



॥ इति श्रीमद्भगवत्पुस्तके ॥ अथ श्रीकृष्णस्य वचनम् ॥

23. CHATRA-PĀ



ॐ नमो भगवते वासुदेवाय

24. BHADRA-PĀ



25. DOKHANDI-PĀ



26. AJOGI-PĀ



27. KALA-PĀ



28. DHOMBHI-PĀ



29. KANKANA-PĀ



30. KAMARI-PĀ



31. ĐÔNG-PA



32. BHADE-PĀ



33. TANDHE-PĀ



34. KUKKURI-PĀ



35. KUSŪLI-PĀ



36. DHARMA-PĀ



37. MAHĪ-PĀ



38. ACHINTA-PĀ



39. BHALAHA-PĀ



40. NALIN-PĀ



41. BHUSUKU-PĀ



42. INDRĀBHŪTI-PĀ



43. MEKO-PĀ



44. KUDDALI-PĀ



45. KARMĀRA-PĀ



46. JĀLANDHARA-PĀ



47. RĀHULA-PĀ



48. GHARBARI-PĀ



49. DHOKARI-PĀ



50. MEDINĪ-PĀ



51. PANKAJA-PĀ



52. GHANṬĀ-PĀ



53. JOGI-PĀ



54. CHELUKA-PĀ



55. GUNḌARI-PĀ



56. LUCHIKA-PĀ



57. NIRGUNA-PĀ



58. JAYĀNANTA-PĀ



59. CHARPATĪ-PĀ



60. CHAMPĀKA-PĀ



མཁའ་ལྷ་པོ་ལྷ་པོ་ལྷ་པོ་

61. BHIKHAN-PĀ



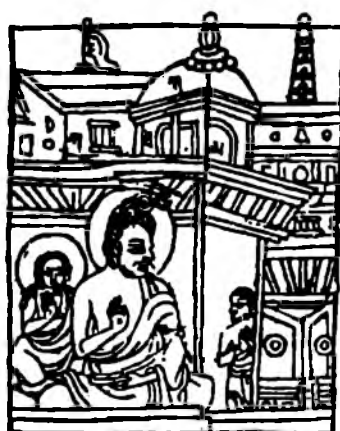
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62. BHALI-PĀ



མཁའ་ལྷ་པོ་ལྷ་པོ་ལྷ་པོ་

63. KUMVARĪ-PĀ



མཁའ་ལྷ་པོ་ལྷ་པོ་ལྷ་པོ་

64. JAVARI-PĀ



65. MANI-PĀ



66. MEKHALĀ-PĀ



67. KANAKMALĀ-PĀ



68. KALAKALA-PĀ



69. KANTALI-PĀ



70. DHAHULI-PĀ



71. UDHALI-PĀ



72. KAPĀLA-PĀ



ཇི་ལགས་ཇི་ལ་ཡ། །

77. DĀRIKA-PĀ



ཇི་ལགས་ཇི་ལ་ཡ། །

78. PUTULI-PĀ



ཇི་ལགས་ཇི་ལ་ཡ། །

79. PANAHA-PĀ



ཇི་ལགས་ཇི་ལ་ཡ། །

80. KOKILA-PĀ



ཏཱ་ལཀ་མཉམ་པ་ལྟ་བུ་ལྟོས།

81. ANANGA-PĀ



ཏཱ་ལཀ་མཉམ་པ་ལྟ་བུ་ལྟོས།

82. LAKSHAMĪMKARĀ



ཏཱ་ལཀ་མཉམ་པ་ལྟ་བུ་ལྟོས།

83. SAMUDA-PĀ



ཏཱ་ལཀ་མཉམ་པ་ལྟ་བུ་ལྟོས།

84. BHALI-PĀ

!

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Vidyāṅkara. Sastra-Chudāmini. Sangita-Kālaratna. Professor
Sāligrama Kṛṣṇa

Ramachandra Rao. is a well-known scholar who combines traditional learning with modern research. Well versed in Sanskrit, Pali, Ardhmagadhi and several modern Indian languages and acquainted with Tibetan and some European languages, he has written extensively on Vedānta, Buddhism, Jainism, Indian Culture, Art and Literature. In his professional career, however, he was a Professor of Psychology. He has headed the Department of Clinical Psychology in the National Institute of Mental Health and Neuroscience's, Bangalore and the Department of Indian Culture in the Collision College Study Center of the University of the Pacific (U.S.A.) He was the senior associate of National Institute of Advanced Studies (Indian Institute of Science), Bangalore, and Guest Faculty, Indian Institute of Management, Bangalore and member of the Governing Council of TTD (SVCL Research Center), Tirupati.

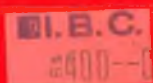
He has been member of Karnataka State Lalitha Kala Academy and Sangita Nritya Academy and Sangita Nritya Academy; he has served on the Agama Board (Govt. of Karnataka). He is President of Silpa-Kala Pratisthana. The Govt. of Karnataka has honored him with the 1986 Rajyotsava Award. He has received awards from Lalita-Kala Academy and Sangita Nritya Academy. He has been Awarded the Veda-Sanman for the year 2000 by the Govt. of India (Ministry of HRD, Sandipani Mahavidhyalaya, Ujjain).

He has written more than Sixty Books in Kannada, a Play in Sanskrit, and a Pali Commentary on a Buddhist classic. One of his books on Iconography in Kannada has won the State Sahitya Academy Award, as also another of his Book on the Tirupati Temple.

Among his numerous English Publications are three Vols. of Encyclopaedia of Indian Medicine, Tibetan Tantrik Tradition and Tibetan Meditation, Consciousness in Advaita, and a series of Six Books on Indian Temples Origins of Indian thought; Kalpatharu Research Academy has published his Pratima Kosha in Six Vols. Agama Kosha in Twelve Vols. Art & Architecture of Indian Temples in Three Vols. He is present engaged in a project on Rgveda-Darsana (Eight Volumes of which have appeared). He is also Musicologist, a Sculptor and Painter, and has held some one man shows.

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