

tibetan tantrik tradition



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s k ramachandra rao

TIBETAN TANTRIK
TRADITION



BUDDHA—SAKYAMUNI
(from a Xylograph)

TIBETAN TANTRIK TRADITION

S.K.RAMCHANDRA RAO



ARNOLD-HEINEMANN

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RELIGION IN TIBET

PREDISPOSITION

The religion that prevails in Tibet (and Tibet 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 brand 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, 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 and in the neighbouring Mangolia. We shall see that the seeds of this transformation were sown in India itself.

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

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 were mischievous gnomes sauntering on rocks and living in caves, the gloomy and hideous *Sa-bDag* 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 (*hDreh*). But there were also spirits who could be humoured and won over; they could be benevolent and protective: they were designated as 'gods' (*lHa*). 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 trekking 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



1. Red-Devil Tiger



2. Dakini

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 (Tara), and the mKHaa-aGro-Ma (*dakinis*).

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 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.

In the Bon ideology the highest divinity is the Sky-guide, *Gyer-sPungs*, later identified with the naked Yogi-god of the Mahayana 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-Bu*), so commonly used in Tibet and accepted by all sects, was deified as *PHur pai lHa*. The Indian origin of this deity is suggested by the representation of this god with a winged body and by its frequent description as Garuda (*mKHor-lDing*).

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 (*lHa*) 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 pre-occupied with heaven all their life, and were eager to find 'a sudden passage' to that happy realm.

Bon worship was a complicated affair. It involved not merely '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 jungles, 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' (*visvavajra*). 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, *gShen-Rabs*, the first part of whose name suggested his shamanistic role. He is described as the '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-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 *gShen-Rabs* is spoken of by Bon folk as 'STon-Pa' (teacher) and regarded as the same as Sakyamuni. The exploits of this priestly pro-

genitor 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’.¹

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 Gammodion 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 *arani-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 Tantrik association is revealed by the amalgamation of the horse-headed divinity Haya-griva (Tib. *rTa-mGrin*, pronounced *Tamdin*), a terrible deity whose consort Vajra-Varahi (Tib. *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 (?) flew from India to the hill in Se-Ra suggests the Indian origin of this wide-spread Tibetan religious tool. This Indian *rDo-rJe* 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 'Mani Padme hum' backwards as '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-east Tibet, Zogchen-gompa), monastic institutions were not in the 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 manners, 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 Vajrayana, 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-yaksa-raksasabhuta-preta-pisaco-nmadapasmara-daka-dakinyadayah imam balim grhnantu, samayam raksantu, 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 the ritual. Popular all over the Lamaist Himalayas, *aCHam* (or *Mani-Rimdu* as it is styled in Khumbu in Nepal) is essentially a Bon heritage.

Luther G. Jerstad who has made an excellent study of *Mani-Rimdu*,² 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-ril*) 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 animal, 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 Tibetan authorities. The first stage, described as the 'wild' (*rDol-Bon*) 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-Shang) to help them. One of them could fly in the sky riding a toumbourine, discover mines by propitiating the divine Eagle (*garuda*), 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 performing funeral ceremonies for those whose death was violent. These priests were probably Indian Tantriks and Siddhas. A Tibetan authority³ indicates the influence of Saivites and Tirthikas (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."⁴ The Bon *sutra* which A. Schieffer rendered into German belongs to this phase; it speaks of the five perfections that help cross over transmigration. 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 practices to a large extent. This is why Tibetan Buddhism is so obviously and enormously different from Buddhism elsewhere.

SUPER IMPOSITION

The introduction of Buddhist influence into Tibet is romantically ascribed to two women, one from Nepal and the other from China, who married the Tibetan monarch Srong-bTsan-sGam-Po (569-650 A.D.). The two queens, piously described as incarnations of the goddess Tara (the monarch himself being regarded as the incarnation of her spouse, Arya-Avalokitesvara, the great Mahayana hero-god), 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 golden relic-vase (*stupa*, in 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.

Of the many things that the monarch, whose wives were both Buddhist and foreigners, did to promote Buddhism in Tibet the most important was to send the talented Tibetan THom-Mi 'Sambhota'⁵ to India around A.D. 640 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 *Kutila* variety of the Magadhan alphabet (or the Khotānese modification thereof) the 'wise Tibetan' (Sam-Bhota) brought several Mahayana texts (like *Karanda-vyuha-sutra* and *Rathnamegha-sutra*) 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 Sambhota to India was really to develop a script and language suitable for translating Sanskrit works into Tibetan. It is little wonder, therefore, that the script 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.

It is important to note that 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. Sambhota's own teachers (bDag-Nyid kyi bLa-Ma) were Acarya Devavitsimha (or Devavidyasimha or Simhaghosa) and the Brahmin Lipidatta or Li-byin (?), according to Sha-lu Lotsa-Ba, the commentator of Sambhota's grammar. Although who and where they were cannot be ascertained, Sambhota's visit to Nalanda has been repeatedly mentioned. His visit to South India was mentioned by the celebrated *Bodhimur*. Nalanda at that time was busy with numerous Mahayana divinities, and the one that appealed to Sambhota's imagination was Avalokitesvara, a bodhisattva who resided on mount Potalaka somewhere in South India. And Avalokitesvara became the central divinity of the immense Tibetan pantheon. The legend has it that when the Tibetan king wanted to know what Sambhota had acquired in India, he wrote down a half-verse in the new script in praise of Avalokitesvara: "A wholesome and full offering of fresh scent to Avalokita!" (in Petech's reconstruction of the Tibetan *sloka*: "The face of Avalokita is completely luminous and the colour auspicious"). The cult of Avalokitesvara was probably conveyed to Tibet through *Karanda-vyuha-sutra*, which Sambhota not only took to Tibet but translated into Tibetan. The popular legend that the Buddha entrusted the care of Tibet to the bodhisattva Avalokitesvara is contained in *Manjusri-paramita*,

and Tibet came to be associated in the minds of the people with 'the holy land of Avalokitesvara'. It was looked upon as the lotus-*mandala* with mountains as petals around the central shrine of Avalokita in LHa-Sa. Avalokitesvara'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 LHa-Sa 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. Atisa, 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, *Mani-bKa-Bum*, which is very popular in Tibet, deals with magical accomplishments (*sadhana*), personal instructions, sermons, and 'the story of prince Lokeshvara', viz., Avalokita of Potalaka, whose earthly incarnation the king claimed to be.

If Tibet got her patron-god Avalokitesvara from India, more specifically from Nalanda and South India, it is likely that India got her popular cult-goddess Tara from Tibet through Sambhota. In the Mahayana pantheon, Tara is the spouse of Avalokitesvara. She became a very popular goddess in numerous forms, both mild and fierce, and her spell (*dharani*, 'Om Tare Tuttare Ture, Svaha') became a favourite one for the *sadhakas*. There is a large number of ritualistic manuals (*sadhanas*) devoted to her worship, composed by scholars from Nalanda and Vikramasila. Some of them reveal her unmistakable origin in magic and sorcery; and her popularity with Tibetans is both ancient and abiding. The well-known formula which one finds written, inscribed, recited, and repeated everywhere in Tibet, "Om mani-padme Hum" which is curiously regarded as an invocation to Avalokitesvara is actually a hymn to Tara. The Tibetan origin of this divinity is more than

probable. References in *Saktisangama-tantra* (5, 92), *Kali-tantra* (12, 7, 10), *Devi-bhagavata* (7, 38, 13), *Svatantra-tantra* and *Rudra-yamala* ('Taratantra') provide ample suggestions. Her forms as Ugra-Tara, Nilasarasvati, Kurukulla (a mountain goddess) and Ekajata are also non-Indian in origin and content. A *sadhana* for Ekajata-Tara mentions in the colophon that its author Nagarjuna recovered it from Tibet ("Arya-Nagarjuna-padaiah Bhoteshu uddhrtam").⁷ Even in classical Tantra, Tara is regarded as one of the ten *Mahavidyas*, next in importance to Kali; and she is said to belong to the 'northern tradition' (*uttara-amnaya*), and her worship is prescribed to be conducted according to *Mahacinacara* (the practice prevalent in Mahacina or Tibet). Vasudeva Kavikankana is reputed to have extracted *Taravilasodaya* from *Cina-Karma-mantra-varidhi*. Nalanda is supposed to have had at this time a temple dedicated to Tara-bhattachika, where lived the pandit Sthiramati who later went to Tibet. The earliest image of Tara in India has been recovered from Nalanda; this image incorporates also the mystic hymn to Tara "Om tare tuttare ture, Svaha". The earliest description of Tara is also from an inscription in Nalanda (*Epi. Ind.*, XXI, p. 97). Sambhota'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 in the matter of crystallisation of folk-cults. In the wake of Sambhota's visit, there sprang up several centers of Tara-worship in India, more particularly in South India. Those that did not disappear (like the Tara-bhagavati temple at Banavasi) retained their hold on people's devotion under different names (like the Kamakottam of Kanchi). Sarasvati, the popular divinity, is in fact an echo of Tara.

Sambhota's success with the king was so great that Sambhota himself was declared to be the incarnation of another *bodhisattva*, Manjusri. 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



3. Bon-Po priest
(from an old drawing)



4. gShen-Rab
(Bon-po Teacher)

for his own government to adopt:

- (1) seek refuge in the Buddha, the Dharma and Sangha;
- (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) make yourself active and responsible in important and proper matters;
- (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 right and wrong.

He was in many ways like our Asoka. 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 (705-755 A.D.) that we hear of Buddhist impact on Tibet in a big way. This king, one of the

The secret of his success in Tibet may be ascribed to the fact that he was more of a Tantrik than of a Buddhist. He hailed from Uddiyana (Urgyar about Ghazni, beyond the North Western Frontier of India), and even his father Indrabhuti was a celebrated Tantrik of the Cakrasamvara sect. He belonged to the Yogacara school and specialized in ritualistic initiations (*abhiseka*). He is reported to have bestowed on the Tibetan king Tantrik initiations of Vajrakila and Hayagriva. Although a work in Sanskrit (*Samayapancasika*, 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 in the history of Indian Buddhism. Considering the fact that his total stay in Tibet (which he visited twice) was only eighteen months, 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-pala*). 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 Mahayana sources. If the Tibetan religion after Padmasambhava was called *Vajrayana* ('the thunderbolt-path'), it was in a sense the creation of Padmasambhava. The materials and attitudes were all indi-

genous, 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, Santarakshita 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. 'acintya-vihara') on the model of the Odantapura monastic college in India. Santarakshita, 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-king 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.

It was a curious but fruitful combination of dissimilar personalities—the cooperation between Padmasambhava and Santarakshita 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 (*sunyata*) 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 Ekajata, 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 cooperation between Santarakshita and Padmasambhava is in the background.

Santarakshita inaugurated the Buddhist career of Tibet by initiating seven Tibetans into the monastic order. 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 Santarakshita's passing away, when his successor Sri-ghosa was presiding over the *bSam-Yas* monastery. At the suggestion of Sri-ghosa, the king invited Santarakshita's best pupil in Nalanda, Kamalasila, to Tibet. He was the author of an excellent *Panjika* on his teacher's *Tattvasamgraha*. Kamalasila (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 Buddhakirti, was responsible for the spread of genuine Buddhist religious ideas in Tibet and for completing the civilizing process started

by Santarakshita 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 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 gLand-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 burnt and pillaged, and the scriptures brought from India were destroyed. But the joy of the victorious faction was short-lived, for gLand-Dar-Ma was murdered by a disguised lama (dPal-gyi rDo-rJe, Sri-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 refrain-

ed 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 Tantrik, more readily acceptable to Bon. This was the time when the Siddhas and their cults entered Tibet, and provided a foundation for the 'later spread'.

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

THE TRADITIONS

If the Padmasambhava-Santarakshita team gave Tibetans a taste of Buddhist excellence, it was Dipankara-Srijnana (known in Tibet as Atisa, 'the great master', and recognised as an incarnation of bodhisattva Manjusri) 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 Nalanda universities, got Tantrik initiations, went to Suvarnavipa (Burma or Malaya) and obtained wisdom-initiation from one Dharma-kirti (who belonged to the 'broad active tradition' of Maitreya, Asanga and Vasubandhu), returned to India to teach at Somapura and Vikramasila universities, and achieved great celebrity as a teacher, scholar and author. He was president of the Vikramasila 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 Santarakshita than that of Padmasambhava. The three hundred years of interval between the turbulent wizard of Nalanda and the intellectual ascetic from Vikramasila had softened the people of Tibet and had made them better prepared to receive the austere teachings of the Buddha. Dipamkara had Tantrik initiations, and he was well-versed in Tantrik lore. But he had been little impressed by Tantra as a religious mode of life. Although he wisely refrained from openly condemning the Tibetan Tantrik 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-pradipa*) which became celebrated all over Tibet, emphasise 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, Dipamkara 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 Dipamkara 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 Dipamkara's advent was largely Tantrik and Bon. The survival of this phase came to be known as *r.Ning-Ma* ('ancient transla-

tion of the Mantras'). Padmasambhava was its patron-saint and Santarakshita'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. Dipamkara 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., *Udanavarga*, Aryasura's *Jatakamala*, Maitreya's *Mahayana-sutralankara*, and *Bodhisattva-bhumi* (revealed to Asanga), Santideva's *Siksha-samuccaya* and *Bodhicaryavatara*. This tradition emphasizes the comprehensive character of the Buddha's teaching: the discourses or Sutra (*bKah*) as well as instructions or *upadesa* (*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 Padmasambhava-group with its heavy Bon-orientation had carved out for itself a tradition, which was strictly Tibetan in its inspiration. Dipamkara's junior contemporary, Marpa 'the translator' (b. 1012) had brought from India certain Tantrik 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 Tantrik 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 Dipamkara and Brom.

The small monastic community which Dipamkara 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 organisers in Tibet. A puritan by taste, austere in habits, 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, Sumatikirti) 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 Śakyamuni-Buddha was obviously far-fetched. TSong-Kha-Pa had read Dipamkara's manual, 'Light on the path of Enlightenment', and had been deeply impressed by it. He wrote *Lam-Rim Chen-Bo* (*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 Tantrik rituals. Originally known as the *Gah-lDan-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 Dipankara'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 only 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' (*Arya-maharatna*, 'the precious chief'). The dGe-Lugs-pas regard him as the second Buddha and as the incarnation of Manjusri, and his tomb in the Gah-lDan 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 himself could not go, but sent one of his disciples, Byams-CHen-CHos-rJe, whose mission achieved a large measure of success. 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 Amitabha. It was believed that in one of his previous incarnations he was the great Indian pandita Abhayakara-gupta who headed the Vikramśīla University in the region of king Ramapaladeva (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. Herecognised both of them as 'rGyal-Po', 'kings', the former as 'rGyal-ba-Rim-Po-CHe' ('the great precious victor'), incarnation of *bodhisattva* Avalokitesvara, and the latter as 'pan-chen Rim-Po-CHe' ('the great precious Pandita'), incarnation of Buddha Amitabha. 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-



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



6. Avalokitesvara
(from Nalanda)

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 Pandita (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, hPhagspa ('Arya', 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 great Genghis-Khan, in *Hevajra-vaśita* and to anoint him emperor. The admiring emperor made the Sa-skya pontiff the head not only of all religious institutions 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 this 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 in Tibetan imagination. It was an accepted Buddhist idea that consciousness (*Sems*) survived bodily death; the belief in a succession (*santana*) 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 mKHas-Grub-rJe (disciple of TSong-KHa-Pa and founder

of the bKra-Sis-Lhung-po monastery) as the incarnation of Buddha Amitabha perhaps provided the model. It may be recalled that the old Tibetan king Srong-bTsan-sGam-Po was regarded as an incarnation of bodhisattva Avalokitesvara, 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 Nalanda and became a widespread practice in Tibet after Padmasambhava, Santarakshita and Kamalasila. 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 Theravada 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 black. The *rNing-Ma*, with its heavy Tantrik involvement, was red, because red is the Tantrik colour. The *bKah-brGyud* was white, because Milarepa and his direct disciples wore the white cotton robes of Yogis. The Sa-skya sect with its emphasis on the combination of path (*marga*) and fruit (*phala*) was multi-coloured. And the *dGe-Lugs* was yellow, symbolising purity and renunciation. Black and red are both cultic colours and are ritualistic in their connotation, while 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 Panditas. 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 Panditas of Nalanda, Vikramasila 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 Tantrik 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 Tantrik traditions of India. It is true that the Tibetan Canon includes many Indian

works on logic, rhetoric, linguistics, philosophy and grammar. But the Tantrik interest was obviously great. Nalanda, Vikramaśīla and Odantapura Universities were well-known centres of Tantrik 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.

Nalanda, of course, provided the major influence. Founded in 425 A.D., the Nalanda 'maha-vihara' (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 Mahayana Buddhism, specializing in *sādhana*. Great names like Nagarjuna, Asanga, Santarakṣita, Rahulabhadra, Kamalasīla, 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 Nalanda for the purpose. Nalanda 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 'Nalanda'; this monastic University, as recorded in the *Blue Annals*, was filled with monks of different sects, even as its Indian counter-part was.

It is from Tibetan sources that we learn about the 'Dharma-ganja' ('Dharma-Mart') establishment in Nalanda and about the final destruction of the great centre. And a Tibetan was the last soul to bravely stick on at Nalanda, even after its devastating destruction. An interesting story of the Tibetan scholar, known by his Indian name, Dharmasvami, who was in Nalanda around 1230, was recovered by Rahula Sankrtyayana

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, Rahula-Sribhadra, who was one of the very few professors who continued to reside and teach in Nalanda, when it had already been battered by the Muslim invaders. The zeal for learning had prompted several eager students to reside with this old Pandita, 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 Rahula-Sribhadra so that the old monk could escape in time. When the news reached Nalanda and when the Muslim hordes were in sight, the few scholars who had held on fled and deserted the premises, except the old Rahula and his Tibetan student Dharmasvami. Rahula 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 Nalanda. When the invaders ransacked the monastery and left, the Tibetan scholar and the Indian teacher returned to Nalanda to continue their study of grammar!

Nalanda's importance in the history of Indian Buddhism consists in the inspiration it provided for the development of Madhyamika, Yogacara and Sautrantika schools of Mahayana. Among the ruins here are found images of numerous Mahayana divinities, and collections of Tantrik rituals like *Sadhanamala* contain texts prepared by Nalanda panditas like Sarahapada, Advayavajra, Ratnakaragupta, Anupamaraksita, Abhayakaragupta, Dharmakaramati, Padmakaramati, Harihara, Nandyavarta Mukta, Sasvatavajra and Mangalasena. It is Nalanda that principally encouraged the esoteric cult of Vajra-

yana. The two sources thereof, namely Madhyamika philosophy and Yogacara discipline, were products of Nalanda. The former was the contribution of the great Nagarjuna who studied under Rahulabhadra in Nalanda, while the latter was the work of Asanga, who, according to the Tibetan historian Taranatha, taught in Nalanda for twelve years. The story told in the Tibetan chronicles about the destruction by fire of the vast library complex in Nalanda ('Dharmaganja') has an interesting detail. When the nine-storeyed building where Mahayana and Tantra works were stored was engulfed by fire, water miraculously gushed out of two books that were preserved in the topmost storey, and only these two were thus saved. The two books were *Prajnaparamita* and *Guhyasamaja*. It is precisely these two books, especially the latter, that contain the seeds of Vajrayana. The meaning of the story is that when Nalanda was destroyed, it was only Vajrayana that remained. And, in a curious manner, Tibet continued the Nalanda tradition.³

The other University that made its impact on Tibet in a big way was Vikramasila, which was founded a little later than Nalanda. Built upon a spacious and gigantic cliff on the banks of Ganga in northern Magadha (—the exact site is uncertain—) this monastic establishment achieved eminence during the reign of King Canaka (955–983 A.D.). Its 'door-panditas' (*dvarapanditas*, 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. Ratnakarasanti (Acarya-Santi) who guarded the Eastern gate had studied under the eminent master, Jetari, 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 sadhana of *mahamudra*. He was the author of thirteen works in Sanskrit (the most famous being *Vajrabhairavagana-cakra-nama*, which were all translated into Tibetan and studied in the monasteries there. The Southern gate was guarded by Vagisvarakirti of Banaras, a devotee of Tara and Cakrasamvara; his *Mrttyuvancanopadesa* ('the instruction about cheating death' available

in Tibetan translation) became a popular text. Maha-pandita Prajnakaramati, a devotee of Manjusri, was the pandita of the Western gate, who wrote glosses on *Abhisamayalankara* and *Bodhicaryavatara*. And the greatest of them all, Nadapada (Naro-pa, known as *mahapandita*) guarded the Northern gate. Ratnavajra, the Brahmin scholar from Kashmir, and Jnana-srimitra were panditas 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 panditas were authors of valuable Vajrayana 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 Vikramasila. The first president of the establishment, Buddhajnanapada, was mainly responsible for the development of the 'mantravajracara' sect. He is known to us because nine Tantrik works of his are preserved in Tibetan. The second president, Jetari (about 983 A.D.), the third president, 'Siddha-mahapandita' Abhayakara-gupta, the fourth Dipamkara-Srijnana, and the fifth Sakya-Sribhadra were all eminent masters whose writings have an honoured place in the Tibetan Canon. Vairocana-arakshita (reputed to be a student of the great Padmasambhava of Nalanda) 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-prajna-hṛdaya-vṛtti* was composed for a Tibetan king, probably KHri-Sron-lDe-bTSan.

The most important teacher from Vikramasila in Tibet was, of course, Dipamkara-Srijnana (Atisa, 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 Nalanda under teachers like Rahulagupta and Silarakshita and had received numerous Tantrik initiations before he went to Suvarnadvipa (Sumatra, Malaya or Burma) to be introduced to the doctrine of the arousal of *bodhicitta* (*bodhicittotpada*). On his return to India he was appointed as president of the Vikramasila University by the Magadhan monarch, Nagapala.

He had studied earlier in Vikramasila under Vagisvarakirti, whose three works on Tara he translated into Tibetan. As president of Vikramasila he also managed the affairs of Odantapura and Somapuri monasteries. Invited by the Tibetan king, he left for Tibet in 1040 in the company of 20 students, reaching mNa-ris in 1042 after spending some months in Nepal. 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 (Jayasilabhiksu, a monk) and brTSon-hGrusSen-ge (Virya-simha-upasaka, a lay devotee), the latter died in Nepal and the former was a great help to the master's work in Tibet. Dipamkara-Atisa 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, Kshiti-garbha, Vajrapani (b. 1017), Bhumisamgha, Viryacandra and Parahita-bhadra contributed considerably to the spread of Tantrik 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, Sakya-Sribhadra (1145–1225) became the president of Vikramasila. A Kashmirian pandita, he was a Tantrik enthusiast and a Tibetan scholar. He wrote on Kalacakra and helped spread the Tara cult in Tibet. His students, Vibhuticandra and Danasila, were professors of Tantra at Jagaddala University (in north Bengal, founded about 1077) before they went to Tibet and achieved renown there. It was owing to them that Jagaddala 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,

Mokshakara gupta, was also associated with Jagaddala. Odantapura monastery was an earlier institution, founded in 730 A.D. on a hill near Nalanda. It had a typical Tantrik background. Its origin was traced to the hideous 'corpse-ritual' (*savasadhana*) performed by a Tantrik, Narada by name. But it seems to have had leanings towards the older, puritanical Hinayana (under whose professor in Odantapura, Dharmarakshita, Dipankara studied for two years) and the Mahasanghika (whose teacher in Odantapura, Silarakshita, gave monastic ordination to Dipamkara at the age of nineteen). This mahavihara had become so famous that the first vihara built in Tibet, the *bSam-Yas* (*Acintyavihara*, 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 Tantrik in their orientation. The association of these universities with the Tantrik 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 Swat valley, Orissa and South India. Saraha from Orissa and Nagarjuna from South India, the most creative architects of the Siddha cult, were connected with Nalanda; Tillo-pa and Naro-pa, the siddhas who heralded the *mahamudra* ('the great seal') doctrine in Tibet through the latter's pupil Marpa, and Ratnakara-śanti (Santi-pa) were associated with Vikramasila.

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 (*caturasiti*) many of whom were more or less historical, although the

historical elements are buried under a mass of legendary matter. Siddhas are, by definition, those who have attained miraculous powers (*siddhis*) like clairvision, invisibility, movement at will on earth and flight in sky, resuscitation of the dead, drawing away life, entering another body, omniscience, unfailing utterance, divination of buried treasure, and interminable life. There are long and various lists of such achievements in books of Hindu and Buddhist preferences. The extraordinary powers such as these are reputed to be obtained by some by the mere fact of superior birth (*janma*), by others with the help of drugs (*ausadhi*), by still others by the employment of magical spells (*mantra*), by others again by severe austerities (*tapas*), and lastly by some by contemplative devices (*samadhi*). Siddhi is usually taken in 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' (*vajrayana*) that principally developed in the Magadhan universities with an academic slant.

It is not accidental that the celebrated Nagarjuna was recognised as a siddha, an alchemist, a *mahamudra* adept and a Mahayana 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 Nagarjunas, one the siddha, another the alchemist, and a third the philosopher. But Tibetan tradition, like the old Indian tradition, knows but one Nagarjuna, who was in fact all three. 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 Nalendra (Nalanda), studied under Saraha-pada and got initiations from him in the 'Amitayus' ritual and in the Kalacakra system, attained siddhis of *Maha-*

mayuri and *Kurukulla*, became an adept in alchemy (*rasayana*) and made his body 'immutable' (*vajrakaya*), went to Pundravardhana (?) and produced immense quantities of gold which he gifted away, heard *Taratantra* from a certain Hayaghosa, went to Nagaloka and recovered *Satasahasrika-Prajnaparamita* and several *dharanis*, composed *Madhyamika-Karikas* and works on alchemy like *Rasaratnakara*. Both his alchemical experiments and spiritual success were said to have been perfected on Sriparvata (Nagarjunakonda in Andhra Pradesh) also known as 'diamond mount' (*Vajraparvata*).

That South India contributed considerably to the crystallization of Vajrayana appears to be based on solid facts.⁵ The 'Paramita path' which brought in its train the 'Mantra path', which in its turn produced the 'Diamond path', was clearly of South Indian origin. We have clear mention in the oldest Prajnaparamita text, *Astasahasrika*, that the 'Paramita-naya' first spread in South ('dakshinapathe pracarisyanti') then spread in the East ('vartinyam', which according to Haribhadra's *Aloka* means 'purvadesa'), and thence it moved northward (Rajendra Lal Mitra edition, p. 225). Naro-pa's *Sekoddesatika* (a Magadhan work) mentions that the 'Mantra-naya' originated in Sridhanyakataka ('Sridhanye niyata-mantra-nayadeśanasthane') the modern Dharanikota on the banks of Krishna in Andhra Pradesh. Dhanya-kataka 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 Kalacakra doctrine. It is interesting that the highest divinity in Vajrayana, Avalokitesvara, 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 Avalokitesvara). This mountain is located by all authorities, Indian and Tibetan, in South India, although the exact location is disputed. Cunningham suggested Malakuta, a tract between Tanjore and Travancore; Nanda Lal Deo suggested Western Ghats, N. Dutt Kottayam in Kerala; and some located it in Dhanyakataka or Sriparvata. The monk who took the Tantrik 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 *Dharanis* into Chinese before he died in 730 A.D.; and the pupil, who died in 774 A.D., had translated as many as 108 Tantric texts. The Chinese *Mantrayana* (*Ch'en yen tsung*) originated thus. Bodhidharma, who founded the *dhyana* school (*Ch'an* or the Japanese *Zen*) in China around 600 A.D. was a Brahmin from Kanchipuram (as Dharmapala who presided over Nalanda around 550 A.D. was); and the closeness of Zen to *mahamudra* in Vajrayana is not accidental.⁶ Kanchipuram was a well-known Tantrik centre, and the present Kamakottam was undoubtedly a Tara shrine in middle ages; its association with Buddhism is undisputed.

Nagarjuna's teacher Saraha (Saroruha or Saroja, also Sara-hasta) was a great Siddha in his own right. Rahula Sankrtyayana describes him as 'the first Siddha' (*adi-siddha*). His work *Mahamudraprasnottara* contains the colophon "mahabrahmana-Saraha-pada-prabhu." Hailing from 'the Eastern country' (Orissa?), he studied under Haribhadra of Nalanda (himself a student of the great Santarakshita), a contemporary of the Pala king Dharmapala (768-809 A.D.). He appears to have come to Maharashtra 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 Apabhramsa pieces. Some of his *dohas* and *caryagitis* 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*' (*dharmamahasukha*). 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 are obviated in the essential nature of mind, which is devoid of form, free from attribution, straight and perfectly natural (*sahaja*). It can be called the 'nectar of deathlessness' (*amrta*). His importance in the Tantrik tradition is ascribed to his having taught *Guhya-samaja-tantra*, a basic Vajrayana text (with which we will deal later), to his famous pupil Nagarjuna, and for having compiled another 'Guhya-samaja' work, *Hevajra-tantra* (which, however, is ascribed to Padmavajra by Taranatha) with the help of another Siddha, Kambala-pada. He is reputed to have introduced *Buddhakapala-tantra* and *Mandala-vidhi*. He is pictured in Tibet as an ascetic holding an arrow in action, suggesting one-pointedness and quiet effort. His colleague Kambala-pada wrote four works on the *Prajnaparamita* cult, and eleven on Tantra in general.

Nagarjuna's pupil Sabara-pa, another Siddha, who was a hunter (or according to another account a prince of Vikramasila) before he became a mystic, introduced the well-known *Kurukulla-sadhana*, a ritual concerning the mountain-goddess of the jungle-tribes, clearly a trans-Himalayan divinity, who was later identified with Tara. His disciple Lui-pa (Samantasubha), a South Indian (or a Magadhan Kayastha, according to another account) identified with the Natha saint Matsyendra-natha, 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*. *Yogini-sahacarya* (or *Yogini-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 (*mahasukha*). This condition is reached when mind is perfectly stilled, for when 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 Kanha-pa (Krsnacharya), another South Indian, and a disciple of the Siddha Jalandhara (also a Natha Master, popularly known as Hadi-siddha). The Natha cult with a Saivite bias and the siddha cult which was more eclectic worked out numerous points of contact, and Kahna-pa, (reverently

called 'panditacharya' and 'Krsnacharya-pada') was the product of this synthesis. He is reputed to have written six works on philosophy and seventy-four on Tantrik subjects; his commentary on *Bodhicaryavatara* was well-known. An especial contribution of his was *Samputatilaka*. Kanha-pa, Saraha and Lui-pa, became popular because of the mystic songs (*dohas* and *caryagitas*) which they composed in the Apabhramsa dialect. All the three 'mahasiddhas' were associated with the *mahamudra* doctrine, which developed into a great system in Tibet. Kanha-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 Tantrik ideology.

There were other well-known siddhas like Darika-pada (author of *Cakrasamvara* texts), Vajraghanta (author of *Sahaja-samvara-sadhana*, *Vajravara-sadhana*, *Ganacakra-vidhi* and *Abhiseka-vidhi-ratnamala*), Kukkuri-pada (author of *Mahamaya* treatises), Pito-pada (author of *Kalacakra* system), Gambhira-vajra (author of *Vajramrta*), Maitri-pada, Taila-pada (Tilo-pa) and Nada-pada (Naro-pa). 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 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 Taranatha deal with them. There are also Nepalese traditions about them. The great Tibetologist Rahula Sankrtyayana has reconstructed the Sanskrit text of *Caturasitisiddha-pravrtti* from the Tibetan *bs Tan-hGyur*. Eighty-four possibly is a mystical number, and not all the Mahasiddhas 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 Vajrayana 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 Saivite Natha cult (like Matsyendra, Goraksha, Jalendra, Gahini, Charpati, Revana, Chaurangi, Jalandhara, Virupa, Kaneri, Kanha-pa and Kanthata) are included in the traditional list of siddhas. Some Kapalikas also can be recognised in the list (like Anadikala, Vatuka, Mahakala, Viranatha, Srikantha, Jalandhara and Kanha-pa). There were of course those who were evidently Buddhists (like Nagarjuna, Aryadeva or Karnari-pa, Santideva or Bhusuku-pa and Ratnakarasanti or Santi-pa). To be a siddha, therefore, sectarian affiliation was rather irrelevant. In Indian tradition, we generally speak of groups like Natha-Siddhas, Rasa-Siddhas, Mahesvara-Siddhas, Saiva-Siddhas and Saugata-siddhas (Buddhist siddhas); but doctrinal differences between them are minor. And a siddha would not mind acquiring initiations in several sects. Yogic practices (especially with *nadis* and *cakras*), esoteric rituals and mystical ideology were the essential details of siddha career. He regarded the human body 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 *sushumna*, *avadhuti* and *candali*. The apparent opposition makes for phenomenal involvement while the realization of identity leads to freedom. The siddhas speak of this integrated and trans-



7. Tara
(from Nalanda)



8. Ekajata, a form of Tara.

cidental condition as 'empty' (*sunya*) in the sense of being devoid of all phenomenal content, as 'innate and inalienable nature' (*sahaja-svabhava*, 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.

The extant songs of the siddhas (known as *dohas* and *carya-padas* or *caryagitis*) reveal that the siddhas were distinguished by their indifference to formal religion. Some dispensed with, and even ridiculed, meditation, asceticism and Tantrik 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' (*sahajayana*), 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 undersirable 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 'Sahajayana' is therefore misleading: there never was any 'yana' of this description.

But the impact of some of the earlier siddhas, like Sarahapada, Nagarjuna-pada, Lui-pada, Kanha-pada and Sabari-pada was felt in the great universities, especially Nalanda, Vikramasila and Dhanyakataka. It contributed to the finalisation of some esoteric trends in Mahayana Buddhism, in particular the trend which flowered out as Vajrayana 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 Nagarjuna who was not only a siddha but an alchemist and a creative writer besides being a great teacher, helped spread the characteristic Madhyamika doctrine that the ultimate truth is 'empty' (*sunya*). We find this idea already well-formed in the songs of his teacher Saraha, the earliest of the siddhas. Nagarjuna developed this idea into a metaphysical doctrine, which became in due course fundamental to all schools of Mahayana Buddhism.

Saraha spoke of the 'death of the mind' and of 'stilling of the winds in the body' as productive of 'great bliss' (*mahasukha*). 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

Nagarjuna that attempted this task and thus provided the basis for Mahayana theory and practice. Well-known is his work on Madhyamika philosophy. But little-known is his remarkable tract on vacuity (*sunyata*) viz., *Pancakrama*. 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-svabhava). This work is said to be based on *Guhyasamaja-tantra* of which Saraha was known to have been a teacher. We will have occasion to deal with *Pancakrama* in some detail later.

Between Saraha and Nagarjuna, they appear to have given shape to an esoteric doctrine, which probably was current from very ancient times in secret societies (*guhya-samaja*). The Yogacara ideology left its indelible stamp on the shape that thus developed. In Tibet, the doctrine known as *guhya-samaja* (*gSong-hDus-rGyud*) is described as a "sleeping text", i.e. the text which was secretly communicated from teacher to student until Asanga (in Tibetan, THogs-Med) made it public. Born in a Brahmin family of the north-western region of India, Asanga was a teacher in Nalanda and expounded what is known now as the Yogacara ideology, which provided the theoretical framework for Tibetan Vajrayana. Asanga was instructed by Maitreyanatha (who lived, according to G. Tucci, around A.D. 200), the real founder of the Yogacara system. The Tibetan account makes this Maitreya the future Buddha in the Tusita heaven, from whom Asanga miraculously obtained the revelations. And these revelations were in the form of five treatises, known in Tibet as "Maitreya's Famous Five": *Mahayanasutralankara*, *Madhyantavibhanga*, *Dharma-dharmata-vibhanga*, *Abhisamayalankara* and *Mahayanottara-tantra*. Maitreyanatha was obviously a genius of synthesis, and had a partiality for the practical aspects of the Buddha's teaching. The merit of Maitreyanatha was that he attempted to reconcile the various tendencies that prevailed in the Buddhism of those days. His *Abhisamaya* ('transcendental path') included both Hinayana and Mahayana *caryas*. He it was that provided the mystical foundation for Buddhism. Asanga carried on this

spirit and wrote not only brilliant commentaries (*tikas* and *karikas*) on his master's works, but also independent works like *Mahayanasamparigraha* and *Yogacara-bhumi*. Maitreya-Asanga held a view that was complementary to Nagarjuna's. If Nagarjuna emphasized on 'emptiness' (*sunyata*) as an extension of the old 'no-soul' (*nairatmya*) doctrine, Maitreya-Asanga 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' (*abhuta-parikalpa*). 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', *klesavarana*, and the objective world caused by 'the veil of knowables', *jneyavarana*) do not really exist, but are projected. The expression *abhuta-parikalpa* is compounded of two words, 'abhuta' 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. Asanga's definition of *abhuta-parikalpa*⁹ fully anticipates the *vivarta-vada* of Advaita. And like the 'pure consciousness' of the latter school, *abhuta-parikalpa* was a positive concept: it suggested undifferentiated awareness from which the phenomenal world proceeds in *samsara*, and into which it is withdrawn in *nirvana*. It is important to note that Maitreya-Asanga emphasised the role of mind (*vijñana*) 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 *nirvana*. If Nagarjuna's argument of 'emptiness' is regarded as nihilism, the Yogacara view can be described as subjective idealism. *Yogacara* 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 manu tahi amanu karijjai", Saraha). Siddhas spoke of refining the mind, purifying the mind, sharpening the mind, emptying the mind, making mind sky-like (*khasama*), 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 'sunyata', while the productive or the projective aspect is highlighted in the idea of 'abhutaparikalpa'. 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 Vajrayana that developed in Tibet considers itself the continuation of Yogacara; but all Tibetan traditions alike hold Nagarjuna in the highest esteem, and accept the Madhyamika viewpoint. The *sadhana* in Vajrayana is essentially 'cultivation of void' (*sunyata bhavana*); the 'visualizations' of the *mandalas* and of the forms of the deities are characteristic features of this *sadhana*. It may be recalled that in Nalanda, both *Madhyamika* and *Yogacara* viewpoints were subjected to Tantrik influence under the impact of the siddha movement. It was thus that Vajrayana emerged. During the reign of king Mahipala of Bengal, the president of the university, pandita Abhayakara-gupta (who also headed the Mahabodhi-vihara in Buddhagaya) wrote many esoteric tracts on this subject, nine of which are included in the Tibetan Canon. His disciple Vikrtideva continued this work, and communicated it to Tibet.

THE GUHYASAMAJA

Asanga'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 Tantrik ideas. There is, in fact, a *sadhana* devoted to Prajnaparamita which is ascribed to Asanga.¹⁰ In this background, the ascription of *Guhya-samaja-tantra* to him is not surprising, although it is somewhat improbable. There is a persistent tradition in Tibet that the esoteric teaching of Vajrayana continued in secret from the days of Asanga

(second or third century A.D.) till the days of Dharmakirti 600–650 A.D.). The Chinese pilgrim, I-tsing, also refers to this tradition. There is a belief that Asanga was the originator of Vajrayana; and *Guhyasamaja-tantra* happens to be the earliest available full-fledged source-book of Vajrayana. It should, however, be remembered that the book is also ascribed to Saraha, and to Siddha-Nagarjuna in the Tibetan *Blue-Annals*. ‘Guhya-samaja’ appears rather to be a class of works belonging to the *Sangiti* group, meant for ‘samaveta-gana’ (‘group-singing’). We are not certain if the work we now have¹¹ is the same as the one known as *Tathagata-guhyaka*, or the one mentioned in *Nikaya-samgraha* as *Samaja-tantra*, or the one mentioned as *Srisamaja* by Padmavajra in his *Guhyasiddhi*, or the one which was probably known as *Tathagata-cintya-guhyanirdesa* (as can be inferred from the Chinese translation of it dated about 1000 A.D.), quoted in Santideva’s *Sikhasamuccaya*.

This remarkable work, which is described in the colophon as ‘the great king of secret Tantrik texts’ (‘mahaguhyatantra-rajā’), and as the ‘beyond the beyond in the tantra’ (‘tantranam uttarottaram’) is a work which specifically and elaborately deals with the ‘Vajra path’. The expression ‘tantra’ is here defined as ‘a well-knit system’ (*prabhandham*) consisting of the ‘ground’ (*adhara*), ‘technique’ (*upaya*) and ‘inalienable nature’ (*prakṛti*). Among the commentators of this work are included Nagarjuna (*Guhyasamajamandalopayika*), Lilavajra (*Nidana-gurupadesa-bhasya*), Santideva (*Guhyamaja-mahayoga-tantra-bali-vidhi-nama*), Ratnakara-santi or Santi-pa (*Kusumanjali*), and Dipankara-Srijnana (or Atisa, *Guhyasamaja-lokesvara-sadhananama*). 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* (*samaja*) 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 tathagatas to the Blessed one (*Bhagavan*); and the burden of the answer is that the ‘adamantine integration’ of body, speech and mind holds the key to the highest attain-

ment. The importance of the work consists in the first enumeration of five Buddhas, known as *dhyani-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), Amitabha and Amoghasiddhi.

This idea is basic to Vajrayana. The five Buddhas are arranged in a design (*mandala*) 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 (Vajradhatvisvari or Tara, Locana, Mamaki, Pandara and Arya-tara), with bodhisattvas (Saman-tabhadra, Vajrapani, Rathnapani, Padmapani and Visvapani), with 'families' (moha, dvesha, cintamani, raga and samaya), and with the five 'human Buddhas' (Krakucunda, Kanakamuni, Kasyapa, Gautama and Maitreya). In the mandala, it is usual to represent Aksobhya as the presiding deity, and the other four in his very form, but smaller in size. The assumption is that consciousness (*viññana*), over which Aksobhya presides is the essence of the other four aggregates, which are merely modes and modifications thereof. Further, Aksobhya is characterized by a miniature Vajrasattva (Diamond-essence, viz., basic vacuity which is the ultimate reality) on top. The symbolism is that consciousness (*viññana*) 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, Amitabha 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-srota*, Tibetan *gTSo-Sems*). This condition of consciousness is also symbolised by the mystic syllable *Hum*, which is Akshobhya's seed-syllable. Akshobhya's source-deity, viz., Vajrasattva, was looked upon as Hevajra

(or Heruka), with a mystic consort, Vajravarahi (or Prajna-paramita).

However, these details are the products of later times. The *Guhyasamaja* merely provided the main and bare coordinates. The text also underlines the importance and value of 'bodhichitta'. The 'Lord' gets into a state of mystical absorption (*samadhi*) and describes 'bodhichitta' in a verse, which unfortunately is enigmatical and obscure. As explained (?) by Naro-pa in his *Sekoddesatika*, the verse would mean "If you view existence from the position of emptiness (*abhava*), there would then be no thought-construction (*bhavana*) 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-jnananam sarabhutam utpattibhutam*). 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 (*sunyata*) and compassion (*karuna*), undistinguished."¹⁴ Santideva prescribes: "Mind must be bent on enlightenment for the sake of freeing all beings from sorrow."¹⁵ Vajrayana has taken this prescription seriously, and invariably employs bodhichitta in its *sadhana* 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 *Trisamayarajasadhana*, 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 a Buddha for the sake of world's welfare."¹⁷

The expression 'bodhichitta' occurs also in the *dohas* of siddhas. For instance, Kanha-pa speaks of his bodhichitta (bohichia in Apabhramsa) as soiled, and as then washed 'bright by *chitta-vajra* (the diamond-mind). He also speaks of it as the ultimate state of five elements, suggesting that it is the essence of the five *dhyani-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 *Vajrayanasadhana* 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 kundalini of our classical Tantra, in the lowest of the centres. The Vajrayana speaks of four such centres (*cakras*): the lowest called *Nirmana-cakra* (or *manipura*) 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 *sadhana* is to activate it, and to make it 'move upwards' (*ut-pada*). 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' ('*manimulanirodham 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 *dharma-cakra*, located in the heart and pictured

as a 'double-lotus' (one facing upwards and the other downwards, *visvapadma*), with thirty-two petals.¹⁹ It symbolises the water element. The center higher than that is the *sambhogacakra*, 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 (*dharma* 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' (*ushnisha-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 'mahasukhacakra'. It is, as it were, bodhichitta gone home, utterly relaxed and restful. It is described as the 'natural form' (*sahaja-kaya*). Bodhichitta, bound to the lowest center (*samvṛta*) 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 Tantrik 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 (*garbhadhātu* or *tathagatagarbha*), while the latter is immutable, mere 'suchness' (*vajradhātu* or *tathata*). The integration of the two is visualized in a design (*mandala*), or is represented as a flame (male) arising from a lotus or vase (female), or is imagined as the copulation of two deities (*yuganadha* 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*, *Srisamputika*, *Heruka-tantra*, *Marmakalika-tantra* and *Sekoddesa-tika*. It should be pointed out that, as is the case with

the classical Tantras, the Vajrayana Tantras differ in their accounts of esoteric structures (like the *cakra*) and processes (like *bodhichittotpada*).

Subsequent to *Guhyasamaja*, the Vajrayana position was crystallized by Padmavajra's *Guhyasiddhi*. It emphasized that it was only by eschewing all opposites that one obtains emancipation in this very life; and it advocated the *mahamudra* method for this purpose. Anangavajra's *Prajnopayaviniscyasiddhi* (about 730 A.D.), a work in twenty chapters, dealt with the union of wisdom (*prajna*) and compassion (*krpa*), likening it to the mixing of water and milk. Indrabhuti's *Jnanasiddhi*, which commences with an explicit praise of Vajrayana, provided copious explanations for the ideas contained in *Guhyasamaja*. Advayavajra wrote on the same subject several short tracts like *Sekanirnaya*, *Caturmudra*, *Pancakram* and *Yuganaddhaprakasa*. *Guhyasamaja* presupposes scriptural texts like *Karanda-vyuha* (which perhaps originated the Avalokitesvara cult, and gave the famous mantra 'Om mani-padme Hum' along with several spells, and which was translated into Chinese between A.D. 557-581 by Yasogupta), *Suvarnaprabhasa-sutra* (translated into Chinese first by Dharmaksema between 317-322 A.D. then by Paramartha in the sixth century, and again by I-ting in the seventh), and *Manjusrimulakalpa* (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 'mahayana-vaipulya-sutra', glorifies Manjusri, introduces Tara and formulates *mantras* as method. Rahula Sankrtyayana rightly regards this as a South Indian work. It mentions Sriparvata and the Dhanyakataka monastery as centers of *mantrayana*. The text was recovered from Manalikkara-mattam near Padmanabhapuram in Kerala. It may be recalled that the Tibetan *Blue Annals* (*Teb-THer-SNgon-Po*) held that Nagarjuna introduced *Guhyasamaja*. And *Manjusri-Mulakalpa* is considered to be immediately antecedent to *Guhyasamaja*. Therefore, the text appears to have finalised the *mantrayana* ('the path of mantras') phase, which in due course brought about the *Vajra-yana* (the adamant path), of which the *Guhyasamaja* was an early advocate.

KALACHAKRA-YANA

It is usual, although it is incorrect, to distinguish between Mantra-yana, Vajra-yana, Sahaja-yana and Kalachakra-yana as so many schools in the so-called Tantrik Buddhism. However, they were not really distinct schools, but only phases of development of different aspects of the cult, and Vajra-yana seems to be a collective and comprehensive nomenclature. The siddhas, whose philosophy is generally, although erroneously identified as 'sahaja-yana', were also responsible for the ideas that were crystallized in *Guhyasamaja*. And the impact of *Manjusri-mulakalpa* contributed to the importance attached to *mantras* within this framework. Kalachakra-yana, 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 Tantrik Buddhism which developed in North India and Nepal during the tenth century. Appalled at the host of ferocious and blood-thirsty 'demonical Buddhas' in the Kalachakra system, he dismissed it as "coarse" and "unworthy of being considered as a philosophy!".²¹ This judgment is based on a profound misunderstanding. Kalachakra 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 Kalachakra system is ascribed to Pi-to, one of the eighty-four siddhas, and among the preceptors of this system are counted Vajraghantapada, Vijaya-pada, Kurma-pada, Kanha-pa, Bhade-pa, Tilo-pa and Naro-pa, all siddhas. Naro-pa's famous work *Sekoddesa-tika* is a commentary on the 'Sekoddesa' section of the *Sri-Kalachakra-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 Naro-pa, Manjusrikirti, Darika-pa and Abhayakara-gupta (all between A.D. 1040 and 1200). In this work, Kalachakra is hailed as a deity, as the very bodhichitta, the undistinguished union of emptiness and compassion, and as the embodiment of knowledge (*jñanakaya*).²² Like *Guhyasamaja*, Kalachakra 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 *alidha* pose on the bodies of Ananga (the god of love) and Rudra (the god of destruction, Siva). He is also represented in the *Yuganaddha* (or *Yab-Yum*) form, embracing *Prajna*. There seems to have been a teacher called Kalachakra-pada, who is sometimes identified with the siddha Pi-to-pa, and sometimes described as Naro-pa's son (as in *Blue Annals*). Tilo-pa is supposed to have defeated the Nalanda Pandita Naro-pa in an argument, and Naro-pa is said to have learnt from him the Kalachakra doctrine. One of Naro-pa's students, Somanatha Pandita, is reputed to have been one of the well-known exponents of this doctrine. The Kalachakra 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 *Sri-Kalachakra-tantra* mentioned above, the cult holds in high regard *Laghu-Kalachakra-tantra*, and a fine commentary on it known as *Vimalaprabha* (*Laghu-Kalachakra-tantra-rajā-tika*), translated into Tibetan in 1027 A.D. There is another work ascribed to Abhayakaragupta, viz., *Kalachakra-avatara*, which is also considered authoritative. The celebrated reformer TSong-KHa-Pa learnt the Kalachakra doctrine from an astronomer, PHyogs-las-rNam-Gyal (1306-1386); one of TSong-KHa-Pa's disciples, mKHas-Grub (1385-1438), wrote a work on Kalachakra, and so did the first Dalai-Lama, a nephew of TSong-KHa-Pa. The third Panchen-Lama, dPal-lDan-Yes-Sis (1738-1780), did much to popularise the Kalachakra cult and he wrote a book describing the route to the Shambhala country where the Kalachakra 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 Panchen-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, *Kalapa* by name, overlooking a charming garden, *Malaya*; and the garden contained the consecrated ground, *Kalachakra-mandala*. This was said to be the place of origin of the doctrine.

Sucandra, the first of the kings of Shambhala, obtained the 'yoga of Kalachakra' 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 *Sri-Kalachakra-tantra* begins. The Tibetan historian Bu-STon who wrote his *CHos-hBYung* (*History of Religion*) in 1322 mentions that, according to the Kalachakra calculation, 2198 years had elapsed since the Buddha taught the 'source-text' (*mula-tantra*) of Kalachakra, and that the Buddha taught it a year before his passing away.²³ There is also a tradition that the Kalachakra doctrine was enunciated in the *Abhinihsrayana-sutra* on the basis of the Buddha's instruction in Dhanyakataka. As mentioned above, TSong-Kha-Pa heard the Kalachakra doctrine from an astronomer. It is likely, therefore, that the system had its origin in some astronomical speculation that was current in India and was introduced into Tibet, as Laufer suggests.²⁴ The 'wheel of time' (*Kalachakra*) is, in fact, closely related to the sexagenary system derived from the combination of five elements (wood, fire, earth, iron and water) and twelve animals (monkey, hen, dog, pig, mouse, bull, tiger, hare, dragon, serpent, horse and sheep). This system seems to have entered Tibet in the year 1027 A.D., the very year in which the commentary on *Laghu-Kalachakra-tantra* (*Vimalaprabha*) appeared in Tibetan,²⁵ although it became an accepted mode of reckoning only around 1241 A.D.

Whatever the genesis, Kalachakra (in Tibetan, *Dus-Kyi-Ko'r-lo*) became an important philosophical system and religious discipline in Tibet. The expression 'kalachakra' 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, 'kala', signifies the state of absorption, decease, cessation; in its extended meaning, it



9. Santarakshita



10. Padmasambhava
(sLob-dPon)

stands for 'vacuity' (*sunyata*), 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 (*upaya*), or the state of compassion (*karuna*). 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. Naro-pa takes *Kala* to mean phenomenal existence and *chakra* vacuity. Kalachakra 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 Naro-pa 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 (*dharmadhatu*), while the last two denote the emergence of objectivity with senses and elements. The former is termed 'adamantine knowledge' (*vajrajnana*), and the latter 'the great cosmogram of adamant element' (*vajradhatu-mahamandala*). Thus, kalachakra is interpreted as another expression for bodhichitta.

What is important in the Kalachakra 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 (*prana*) 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 *kala* means just 'time', and *chakra* is space (or field, *mandala*); and thus *Kalachakra* means the whole of physical and dynamic universe that moves in a cycle. The expression is tantamount to *bhavachakra*. But *Kalachakra* 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 Kalachakra theorists inferred that if the vital currents, especially the uprising and

down-flowing courses (*pranapanagati*) 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 adamantine (*vajra*) i.e. immutable and powerful. And the ultimate goal is great bliss (*mahasukha*) that arises when all obstructions are eliminated. In other words, the purpose of Kalachakra discipline is to rise above *bhavachakra* (cycle of phenomena), visualizing the entire universe in one's body, including time in terms of life-movement (*pranachalana*).

As a religious discipline, Kalachakra has adopted 'the six limbed yoga' (*sadangayoga*) of the *Guhyasamaja-tantra* (ch. 18), in particular the method of *pranayama* (checking and holding up of the vital currents). It is in the context of *pranayama* that the well-known and oft-employed mystic formula in Tibet 'Om Ah Hum' was originally coined. *Om* stands for inhalation, *Ah* for pot-like holding up and *Hum* for exhalation. Alternately, the three syllables signify origination, preservation and destruction respectively. Known as *vajra-japa*, it is popular in Tibet not only among sadhakas 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' (*ekakshanabhi 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' (*mahasattva*), 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 *samayasattva* and *vajrayogi*) 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 *Kalachakra*, where he becomes utterly blissful (*mahasukha*) by an absolute union of 'wisdom' and 'method', of knowledge and knowability. In this stage, he is none other than the primordial Buddha (*adi-buddha*), the ultimate principle of utter vacuity from whom the Buddhas and the worlds evolve. The purpose of Kalachakra practice is the union with Kalachakra 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 Kalachakra which are heavily Tantrik, and which are mainly communicated by oral teachings. It is interesting in this connection to note that one of the siddhas, Darika-pa, wrote a manual on initiation into Kalachakra ritual (*Kalachakratantrasya sekaparakriyapavrtti*). Its Sanskrit original is lost, but the Tibetan translation has been preserved. Even the celebrated Pandita Advayavajra (better known as Avadhuti-pa, another siddha) wrote a work on Kalachakra, which perhaps dealt with the 'six-limbed yoga' that was associated with it. The Tibetan translation of this work included in bs Tan-hGyur gives the title as *Srikalachakropadesa-sadanga-yoga-tantra-panjika* 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 Taranatha (Kun-dGah-SNin-po of the Jo-nyin Sect, born in 1575) was an advocate of Kalachakrayana.²⁸

DAKARNAVA

Another interesting treatise dealing with the same subject and held in high esteem is *Dakarnava*, which describes itself as '*Mahayogini-tantra-raja*'.²⁹ Like *Guhyasamaja*, this is also a *sangiti* text (meant for collective recitation) and contains details of *yantras*, *mantras*, *mudra*, *dharanis*, and methods of achieving *siddhis*. The distinguishing feature of this 13th century work is the description of yoginis or female adepts consorting with the

yogis in certain types of mystic rituals. The title of the work signifies "the ocean of *Daka*" and the expression *daka*, meaning *jñāna* (wisdom), is probably derived from a Tibetan source. The text appears as the instruction of the teacher who is styled as Bhagavanmahavira-viresvara-Dakini-svami. Dakini is the female form of *daka*, meaning 'the lady of Wisdom'. Here, it represents Varahi-devi, who seeks instruction from 'the Lord' regarding the welfare of all sentient beings (*sattvanam upa-karakam*). *Dakarnava* is a Sanskrit work with many poetical pieces in Apabhramsa thrown in.

The fundamental teaching here is that the union of compassion and wisdom is generative of absolute bliss (*sukha*). There is no *nirvana* outside *samsara*. It is the mind that binds us when it is torn into multiplicity; and it is the mind that produces the liberating wisdom (*daka*) when it is rendered into perfect unity (*samarasigatam*). The diamond (*vajra*) should delight in the lotus (*padme*): the mind, awakened, should get lost in the concentration of vacuity (*śūnya-samāhita* in Apabhramsa). It speaks of 'the yoga of mandalas' which awakens the mind and dissolves it in 'śūnya-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 Vajrayana cult. It propounds the thesis that the aspirant (*sādhaka*) and the objective (*sādhya*) are essentially inseparable.

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Chapter

Three

THE GREAT TRADITIONS IN TIBET

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* (*śravaka-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 who 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 adamantine 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 (*karyatantra-yāna*, Tib. *Bya-pai-rGyud*) and the path of virtuous devices (*carya* or *upaya-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-yana*, 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 *paramitas*: 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 *brahmaviharas*, friendliness, compassion, contentment, and detachment). This is known as 'the great yogic path' (*mahayoga-tantra-yana*). In the second phase, rules no longer hold or bind, and the practices become mostly mystical. Known as 'the unexcelled path' (*anuttara-yoga-tantra-yana* 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 *Guhyasamaja-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-yana*). 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 Taranatha) 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 SKu-gSHen.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 Vinaya rules and looking forward to reaching *nirvana* only after many births. Their goal is un-

doubtedly *nirvana*; 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 addressed to Avalokitesvara, *Om mani-padme-hum*, or the one to Tara *Om Tare ture tuttare svaha*, or the one that is known as 'vajrajapa', *Om ah hum*). They adore structural embodiments of religion like *mCHod-rTen* ('offering-base', the Tibetan version of *Stupa*) *dGom-pa* (monastery) and *lHa-KHang* ('god-house', temple), going round them and prostrating before them; they turn the Mani-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 (*paramitas*) 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 *nirvana*.

The 'short-path' is mainly Tantrik, 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 a 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 northern 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, Santarakshita, of the bSam-Yas monastery. But he had now been dead and his successor Srighosha was not a match to Hva-Sang. The king, therefore, had to invite from India, Santarakshita's pupil Kamalasila, who was professor at Nalanda, to contend against the Chinese master. Tibet witnessed one of the greatest debates in its history, the one between the positivist Kamalasila from India and the nihilist Hva-Sang from China. The date of the debate is given as 792 or 794 A.D. Kamalasila 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' (*nairatmya-jnana*). 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, Kamalasila won, and the Chinese master left Tibet. Later, Kamalasila wrote down his arguments in a short manual in Sanskrit,

entitled *Bhavanakrama* (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 Nepal.⁶ Kamalasila determined to a large extent the future course of Tibetan philosophy. Nagarjuna's view-point gained currency, and the *Yogacara* 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 Kamalasila had to reckon with this fact. What he subsequently taught was therefore an integrated doctrine, with the theoretical model provided by Nagarjuna and the *Yogacara* techniques constituting the practical outfit. Kamalasila's *Bhavanakrama* reveals this synthesis. The 'short-path' not only survived the great debate but grew to great dimensions after the event, and strangely, Kamalasila himself contributed to this.

The 'short path' is distinguished by its emphasis on the teacher (*bLa-Ma* or 'guru') and on initiation (*diksa* 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 (*sarana-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 Samgha). 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 instru-

ctions, 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 *dakinis* and *dharmapalas*. There is the conception of "root-teachers" (*rTashi-bLa-Ma*, Sanskrit *mula-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 Tantrik cults. It is known as 'guru-yoga' in Tibet.⁸ 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 practise 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 (*dakinis*), 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 *cakra*), both physically represented and symbolically materialised. And being here, he is deemed to have had a rebirth; his old impediments, limitations, pre-occupations, dispositions and relations die, and a new constitution oriented entirely to the *sadhana* on hand is generated. The value of *mandala* (*dKyil-hKHor*), *mudra* (*PHyag-rGya*), *yantra* (*CHos-hByung*) and *mantra* (*sNags*) is in this context stressed. *Mandala* is fundamental to the Tantrik 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 *mandala*-offering (*mCHod*)—which is different from the *mandala* 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 Atisa 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 *dhyani-buddhas* mentioned in *Guhyasamaja-tantra* was perhaps the inspiration for the elaborate rituals concerning the *mandala*. The identification of the cosmic design with the individual's own being was achieved in ritual, and this is the essence of *mandala* 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 of a particular method of meditation, or of 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 Natha-Siddhas who were eccentric and devastating. Although they too are Tantrik, they fall outside the mainstream of Tantrik 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 traditions 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 Tantrik impact from India. The latter, however, has resisted, more or less successfully, the Tantrik 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 Santarakshita and



11. Dipankara—Atisa



12. TSong-KHa-Pa

Padmasambhava marks the first point of departure, the advent of Dipamkara-Srijnana (Atisa) 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. Santarakshita 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 Santarakshita and the success of Padmasambhava 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 Dipamkara-Srijnana, the *bKah-gDams-Pa* ('the *sutra-upadesa*-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 attempts of both Dipamkara and TSong-KHa-Pa were directed to minimise the Tantrik 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 Dipamkara, *bKah-brGyud*, reinforced the Tantrik impact and the new traditions could not escape its influence. Thus, there are numerous Tantrik texts (*brGyud*) that are common to the older 'red' traditions (*rNing-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 Santarakshita, this monastery had royal patronage, and naturally became powerful. Although Padmasambhava left Tibet soon after the founding of this centre and it was Santarakshita 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. Santarakshita 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 to Tibet to train the Tibetan monks in both *Sutra* and *Vinaya*. They formed the nucleus for the translation of Indian texts into Tibetan. The Indian teachers Vimalamitra, Buddhaguhya, Santigarbha and Visuddhasimha 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! Santarakshita's pupil Kamalasila who worked in the bSam-Yas monastery was a professor of Tantra at Nalanda before he came to Tibet; and naturally he introduced Tantrik cults and sects into the old tradition. Others like Sthiramati and Buddhakirti, also from Nalanda, who came along with Kamalasila, added to the Tantrik note. This orientation appealed to the Tibetans who could not in any case shake off Bon easily. The Indian Tantra interacted with the Tibetan Bon and the 'old tradition' gained ground. Santarakshita himself had given it a Tantrik slant by propagating *Jam-dPal-sKu*, one of the eight rNing-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 Surendrabodhi, Sailendrabodhi, Bodhimitra and Jinamitra, and engage them in the translation of the Buddhist Canon into Tibetan. The Tibetan monks Jnanasena, Jayaraksa, Ratnendrasila and Manjusrivarma 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-b Tsan-sGam-po.¹² Among those ascribed to the king were the well-known legendary account of Avalokitesvara, (*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 panditas 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 *maha-yoga*, the *anu-yoga* and the *ati-yoga*, as especially relevant. The votaries of this tradition hold that this is what distinguishes *rNing-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'. *rNing-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 given by the *rNing-Ma-Pa*.

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-Liberation'¹⁴ is in his name. The doctrine expounded here is in essence Yogacara. One mind (*Sems-gCHik-Po*) encompasses both phenomenal existence and transcendental reality. It thus covers two aspects of truth (*bDen-gNylis*), one hiding the other. When the veil is rent and the two become but one (which they in fact are), enlightenment is at once attained. The One-mind, called differently as *prajna*, *mahamudra*, *dharmadhatu*, *alaya* and *bindu*, is in fact sky-like vacuity (*kha-sama-śūnyata*), 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, *nirvana* is ob-

scured.''¹⁵ This mind of course is beyond nature, not seen or grasped. But unless it is mastered, realization is impossible. Although sesamum 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 Tantrik doctrine suggests purification of constitution (*dehasodhana*), as a preliminary step. Cleansing of the arteries through devices like *pranayama*, one works with mind, withdrawing 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 'maha-yoga' (in Tibetan, *Ma-rGyud*). It is great in the sense that mind is not only trained by meditation and other exercises (*kriya-yoga*, in Tibetan *kri-yog*) but it is rendered competent to fulfil the bodhisattva vow (*seva-sadhana*, 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 *Hayagriva*, are regarded as manifestations of Manjusri, the bodhi-sattva of wisdom. 'Manjusri-kaya' ('the body of Manjusri', the Tibetan *hJam-dPal-sKuhi-LHa*) is meditated upon a dark yellow triangle, for eliminating haughtiness and arrogance and for bringing about comprehensive wisdom. 'Hayagriva' ('the lotus-voiced one', *Pad-Ma-gSun-gi-LHa*) has his altar in a dark blue triangle, will eliminate jealousy, and produce discerning wisdom. 'Satyasamkalpa' ('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. 'Sudhapunya' ('Elixir-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-sula-karma' ('Adamantine Pike Deed', *PHur-ba-PHrin-Las-LHa*) is similar to Hayagriva in his altar and he eliminates the same evil disposition, but assures the wisdom of accomplishment. 'Damara-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-sapa' ('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-pujya' ('worshipped by the world', *hJig-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 bodhi-sattva path), forty-two arms (symbolising so many benign moods), eight legs (symbolising eight roads to liberation) and two wings (the left symbolizing *upaya* and the right *prajna*). 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.

The second of the three paths is 'anu-yoga' (*bLa-Med-rGyud*), short for 'anuttara-yoga-tantra-yana.' The important detail here is the group of practices which may be described as *hatha-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 Varahi) 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 Asvaghosha suggested it in his *Sraddhotpadasastra*. Nagarjuna's *Pancakrama* elaborates on the 'yuganaddha-method' which seeks to eliminate the normal human dichotomy between phenomenal involvement (*samsara*) and transcendence (*nivrtti*). Among the siddhas, Ghantapada (or Vajraghanta, who perhaps initiated the ritualistic representation of diamond and bell to represent the two principles) and Krsnacarya (Kanha-pa, Tib., Nag-Po Skyod-Pa) were advocates of this doctrine. The early siddhas spoke of it in terms of 'non-duality' (*advaya*) and 'synthetic unity' (*samarasa*). Later, a mystical veneer was given to it by describing it as the union of void or wisdom (*sunyata* or *prajna*, Tib. *Ses-Rab*) with its manifestation as compassion or method (*karuna* or *upaya*, Tib. *THabs*).¹⁸ The idea of union is sought to be realised through rituals and associated contemplations.

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 Tantrik 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 Yogacara philosophy. The particular sect which swears by Padmasambhava was known in Tibet as the 'doctrine of perfection of meditation or *dhyana*' (*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-rJe 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', *maha-yoga*, *anu-yoga* and *ati-yoga*, the practical discipline emphasizes respectively visualizations of deities, physico-mental exercises and intuition 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 *rNing-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 'word 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' (*dakini*, *mKHah-hGro-lMa*).

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

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 Tilo-pa (Taila-pada), who, in his turn, communicated them to another siddha, Naro-pa (Nada-pada or Naro-panta), whose disciple was the Tibetan yogi Marpa. Marpa's teachers in India included two other siddhas, Maitri-pa and Kukkuri-pa. It is not surprising, therefore, that the Kargyu tradition is essentially Tantrik.

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 *Siddharmopadesa*, *Guru-sadhana*, *Acintya-mahamudra*, *Antara-bahya-visha-nivrtti-bhavana karma* and *Tattva-caturopadesa-prasanna-dipa*) in the Tibetan Canon. Some of his mystical poems (*dohas*) in Apabhramsa, along with Sankrit comments upon them called *Sarartha-panjika*, have been preserved in India²¹. The commentary describes him as 'the lord of the great yogis' ('*mahayogisvaras Tillopadah*'). Among his students were the great Dipankara-Srijnana (Atisa) and the scholiast Jnanakara. The textual tradition of *Cakrasamvara-tantra* traces the lineage of *gurus* from Saraha through Nagarjuna, Sabari-pa, Lui-pa, Vajra-ghanta, Kaccha-pa, Jalandhari-pa, Krsnacarya (Kanha-pa), Guhya(?), Vijaya-pa, to Tilo-pa. Some of the names in this list also occur in the guru-lineage of the Kalachakra system which however begins with Vajra-ghanta and through Kurmapada, Krsnacarya (Kanha-pa), Bhadra-pada (Bade-pa) and Vajaya-pada reaches Tilo-pa (Tillika) and Naro (Nada-pada).

Maha-pandita Naro-pa who carried Tilo-pa's tradition onward was a well-known scholar of Vikramasila, who succeeded the celebrated Jetari as the *dvara-pandita*.²² He is believed to have been chaplain to the king of Kashmir before he came to Vikramasila. Legends preserved in Tibet describe how he met Tilo-pa in a crematorium, became his disciple

and served him for twelve long years with intense devotion, despite innumerable troubles on account of Tilo-pa's violent and unpredictable temper. At length he was initiated into the *Vajravaraḥi* 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, Naro-pa stared at it, and the knife thereupon melted like butter, which he quietly ate up, and walked on. Another eminent scholar of Vikramasīla, Ratnakara-santi (also a *siddha*, Santi-pa), 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 Naro-pa, at whose feet he sat and received many initiations. Likewise, three other *siddhas* Maitri-pa, Dombi-pa and Kanta-pa, became his disciples. Dipamkara-Srijñana (Atisa) before he left for Tibet, was blessed by the dying Naro-pa. It is recorded that Dipamkara carried with him the relics of Naro-pa to Tibet, and enshrined them there. *Hathayogapradīpikā* mentions 'Nara-deva' as a *maha-siddha* (I. 5-9), and his name is honoured among the Natha-siddhas.

He is said to have written as many as twenty-three works, and they are preserved in Tibetan. Among them are cult-manuals like *Kriyavajra-varaḥi*, and *Jñāna-vajra-varaḥi*. His *Sekoddesa-tika* is the only Sanskrit work from his pen that is available in India. Discovered by G. Tucci in Nepal,²³ this work deals with the rituals of initiation by sprinkling (*seka*), based upon the Kalachakra doctrine. In fact, this work is in the nature of a commentary (*tika*) upon a section of the *Sri-Kalachakra-tantra*. But the most important of his works, so far as the Tibetan scholars are concerned, is *Naro-pai-CHos-dRug*

(‘The six laws of Naro-pa’), now preserved only in the Tibetan, which has been described as a manual for ascetic *yogins*. Although a Kargyu text, it had the honour of being commented upon by the celebrated TSong-KHa-Pa himself, founder of the ‘yellow’ puritanical Gelugs sect, which normally looks askance at the red Kargyu-pa. Associated with Naro-pa, and developed extensively in Tibet, are the six-fold Tantrik techniques: the generation of 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 Naro-pa, one of the best minds a culture can produce, is forgotten in India, Tibet remembers him reverently as ‘Mahapandita’ (*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 Vikramasila 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-krama*, of *Chakrasamvara*). But scarcely anything about them is known. They were teachers who favoured the attainment of wisdom by meditative techniques rather than by learned discussions about *sunyata* (as the Panditas did). Naro-pa’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 teach-

ings directly from India. Marpa visited India thrice and lived there altogether for eighteen years, during which period he studied not only under Naro-pa, but also under Maitri-pa (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 Naro-pa and Maitri-pa were of course the foremost), studied 108 works on Sanskrit grammar and poetics, learnt 108 Tantrik 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 Dipankara-Srijnana (*Atisa*) 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 a strange ambivalence towards Dipamkara. They claim that the Green Tara cult which was transmitted to Marpa from Naro-pa had also been transmitted to Dipamkara, and Dipamkara would have taught this Tantrik 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 *Atisa* did not preach Vajrayana". It is to be noted that Dipankara preferred the worship of deities without their female counterparts, that is to say, without excessive Tantrik involvements. His followers called this 'One-god worship' (*ekavirasadhana*); but Milarepa described it rather caustically as "the widower aspect". While the Kargyu folk respect Dipamkara, they regard his teaching

as inadequate and half-hearted illustrative of the well-known "master's fist" (*acarya-musti*).

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, origination of sorrow, cessation of sorrow, method for bringing about the cessation of sorrow), idealist philosophy of 'great illusion' (*maha-maya* 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 a 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 *dKar-rGyud* (*dKar* meaning white): and the reference was to the habit of wearing white robes. Marpa, who was a householder and not a 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 *rNing-Ma-Pa* and the multi-coloured dress of the *Sa-SKya-Pa*, Marpa's sect was distinguished by white robes. But soon, the expression *dKar* ('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 word').

The oral tradition that was communicated to Tilo-pa by the mythical *rDo-rJe-hCHung* (*Vajradhara*) appears to have come down in two streams, one through Naro-pa himself and



13. Nagarjuna



14. Siddha Saraha-pada

the other through his sister, Ni-Gu-Ma, who was also a disciple of Tilo-pa. Naro-pa, 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 *dakini* of wisdom, and sometimes as the mystic consort (*yogini*) of Naro-pa, although generally she is looked upon as Naro-pa'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 *rNing-Ma* methods of *ati-yoga*, obtained proficiency in *Kalachakra-tantra* and went to India seven times, spending no less than fifty years wandering through India, Nepal and Tibet. He studied under 150 teachers but six of them left a deep impression upon him: Vasumati-pandita, Vairocana-pandita, Bhadra-sajjana, Rahula-gupta, Maitri-pa and Ni-Gu-Ma. He is reputed to have studied also under Danasila, who was a disciple of Naro-pa. The names of other teachers, Yogi-Sva-pa (Swa-Pa-hi rNal-'Byor-Pa), rDo-rJe-gDan-Pa CHen-Po, Lalitavajra and Aryadeva 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 *dakini*. When he returned to Tibet, he built 108 monasteries and spent in spreading what he called Ni-Gu-Ma's teachings 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 Naro-pa, 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' (*g Tum-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') *dakinis* 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 Naro-Pa and Maitri-pa, 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' (*bDem-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 Dipankara (Atisa). 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 'mahamudra' 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 Mahamudra 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 to 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 *mandala*, 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 *Prajnaparamita* says that all this is mere illusion. I suggest you go back and practise!" 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 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 Tara: Dharmakirti's through Atisa to Geshe Drepa, Vagisvarakirti's through Amoghavajra to Drepa, and Atisa's through Nejpörpa 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 (*samadhi*) wherein all thought-processes are quiescent is more precious

than to experience uninterruptedly the *samadhi* wherein thought-processes 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-DusgSum-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 Naro-pa and the teachings of Maitri-pa. 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 rNing-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 rNing-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-Sis-dPal (1142-1210 A.D.), moved away from rNing-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 Naro-Pa'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-pa and Naro-pa 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 efficacy 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 apostelic succession. Notwithstanding such differences in approach, the basic and common framework for the bKah-brGyud-Pa is 'the doctrine of the great seal (*mahamudra*), 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 *Abhidharmakosa*, Maitreya's 'Five Books' (*Mahayana sutralankara-tika*, *Dharmadharma ta-vibhanga*, *Madhyanta-vibhanga*, etc.), and Nagarjuna's treatises on *Prajnaparamita* and *Madhyamika*. 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 *mahamudra*, which is described as a 'viewpoint' (*lTa*). However, *mahamudra* is not peculiar to bKah-brGyud-Pa. Almost all Tibetan traditions have incorporated this 'viewpoint'. But the reliance of bKah-brGyud-Pa upon *mahamudra* is especial and esoteric.

The viewpoint goes back to the earliest of Indian siddhas, Saraha-pada among whose writings some (like *Mahamudropadesa* and *Mahamudraprasnottara*) deal specifically with this subject. Another siddha, Kanha-pada (Krsnacarya), made this viewpoint popular; he gave currency to the concept of *yuganaddha* (esoteric union, 'two-in-one', Tib. *Yab-Yum*) in the context of *mahamudra*. Later siddhas like Tilo-pa and Naro-pa and saints like Niru-pa and Vairocanarakshita 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 Atisa also had come under the influence of Naro-pa and naturally incorporated the *mahamudra* 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-rGyal-mTsan (1570-1662 A.D.), compiled 'the root-text' of this 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 Kashmere, Zamphan Zang-Po (?). This teacher was a great enthusiast of the Tantrik tradition, and he compiled no less than fifty-eight volumes of Tantrik texts. Scholar, poet and saint, he achieved great celebrity in Tibet. When he went to Bhutan to do the work that Dipankara-Atisa did in Tibet, he was honoured there as the 'dharma-rajā' ('lord of religion'). The *mahamudra* viewpoint was crystallized and documented by him.

There is some confusion about what *mahamudra* means. *Hevajra-tantra* calls upon the devotees to adopt 'mahamudra'

which involves the employment of ones own bodily energies; and 'mahamudra' is described there as "known only by ones 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 *Gheranda-samhita* mentions *mahamudra* as one of twenty-five 'seals' (like *sambhavi-mudra*, *uddiyana-mudra*, *nabho-mudra*, *jalandhara-mudra*, *manduka-mudra* and so on), employed for cleansing the central psychic passage (*susumna*). This seal was doubtless related to the techniques of breath-control (*pranayama*), artery cleansing (*nadi-sodha*), and no-thought exercises (*unmani*). Saraha-pada speaks of "the rush of wind breaking down in the grasp of ones own mind."³¹ Kanha-pada describes the sealing-up of the door by which wind exits and the mind lighting up the dense darkness within.³² Elsewhere, he likens mind and wind (*manapavana*) to two drums that must be struck while he (*Kanha*) weds the untouchable *dombi-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 *mahamudra* came to mean the passionate girl that one takes during the ritual performance of 'secret congress' (*guhya-samaja*). The corrupt idea and the degenerate practice got into even celebrated texts like *Guhya-samaja-tantra* (15th patala, p. 99), *Prajnopaya-vinischayasiddhi* (3rd pariccheda, verses 6 to 20), and *Fnana-siddhi* (1st pariccheda, verses 78-85). However, the 'girl' referred to by the siddhas was merely symbolic: the 'no-nature' (*nihsvabhava*) was the eternal female principle; 'compassion' (*karuna*) was her body, and 'pure bliss' (*mahasukha*) of enlightenment her only form. The *sadhaka* had to 'enjoy her' in order to experience this great bliss. The Siddha Tilo-pa emphasised 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 dhyani-buddhas in *Yab-Yum* aspect appears to have been the prototype of *mahamudra*.

The *mahamudra* 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) and Asu (who visited the U region in Central Tibet). Dipamkara-Atisa, 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 *mahamudra*. 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 Naro-pa, that was mainly responsible for the popularity of this thought-practice complex in Tibet.

The Tibetan expression for *mahamudra* 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 *mudra*, which is interpreted as encounter with one's 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*). *Mahamudra* is described as the 'fire' that resides in the navel region, but scorches up the whole phenomenal being as it is rushed through the central channel (*sushumna*). 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 (*niḥsvabhava*) is wholly realized. And upon this realization, 'joy' results. One may recall Naro-pa's derivation of *mudra* 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-mudra*) which impresses the external reality, and 'Mind-seal' (*dharma-mudra*), which impresses the internal reality are regarded as preparatory to *maha-mudra*, which goes beyond these two realities and integrates them. Following *mahamudra*, there occurs the 'commitment-seal' (*samaya-mudra*), 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 'great 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 operation altogether. This seal is very similar to Zen. The 'esoteric seal', on the other hand, follows the yogic method of awakening the vital centers (*chakras*), and is very similar to the Tantrik practices of the Natha-Siddha tradition.

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1. Kazi Dawa Samdup (Ed), *Srichakra-sambhara-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* ('Mani-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 Kalachakra ideal of destroying the cycle of existence (*bhavachakra*). It is true that the mystic formula "Om Manipadme Hum" called the Mani-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 Mani" (*KHa-Mani*, i.e. recitation of the formula) and "the hand wheel Mani" (*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 Mani as a mental *sadhana*, muttering Mani as verbalized *sadhana* (*CHos-aDon*) and turning Mani as physical *sadhana* (*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 Santarakshita with the commentary of Kamalasila (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 *Mandala*-ritual in Tibetan including Ratnakara-gupta's *Mandala vidhi*, Guhya-Jetari's *Mandala-vidhi*, Ratnakara-santi's *Mandal-gyi-CHo-Ga* (the Sanskrit title is not available), Jayasena's *Mandalavidhi-ratnamarakala*, Niskalanka-vajra's *Mandalavidhi*, and works with the same title by Kambala and Kamalasri.
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-DHon 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," *JRAS*, 1948, pp. 142-163.
18. *Yuganadha-prakasa*, (No. 13) in *Advaya-Vajra-Sangraha*, ed. H.P. Sastri, GOS No. XL "Sunyata-krpayor aikyam vidheyam na svakalpatah, sunyatayah prakasasya prakrtya yuganaddhata". cf. also Herbert Guenther, *Yuganaddha, Tantrik View of Life* (Chowkamba), 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 "Tillopadasya."

22. cf. Herbert Guenther, *The Life and Teaching of Naropa*, Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1963.
23. *Sekoddesatika* (ed. by Mario E. Carelli), GOS, XC, 1941.
24. cf. Guenther, *Naro-pa*.
25. Li An-Che, "The bKah-bRgyud sect of Lamaism", *J. 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.K. 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. "Mahamudram nisheveta sva-dehopayasamyutam; svasamvedya hi sa vidya mahamudra para subha."
31. "Pavana-vittutthai niamana gase" (P.C. Bagchi, ed., pp. 5-6).
32. "Jia pavana-gamana-duare didha tala vi dijjai; jai tasu ghorandhare mana divaho kijjai" (*Ibid.*, p. 128).
33. *Caryapadani*, ed. P.C. Bagchi, Journal of the Department of Letters, University of Calcutta, Vol. XXX, 1938. (Krsnacarya-padanam').
34. *Sadhanamala*, Vol. 2, p. 448.
35. See for a different account of the *Mudras*, Herbert Guenther, *Buddhist Philosophy in Theory and Practice*, Pelican, 1972, p. 184.

THE VOID

DEFINITIVE TANTRIK TEXTS

The classification of Tibetan Tantrik texts into the following four groups is frequently employed, although its origin is rather obscure, and overlapping frequent. Manuals dealing with ordinary ritualistic activities (*kriya*); those dealing with the conduct of one who intends walking the bodhisattva-path or participating in esoteric rituals (*charya*); 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 (*lTa-Va*), meditational methods and rituals one must accomplish (*sGom-Pa*), the conduct one must 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, *Manjusri-mula-kalpa* (in Tibetan *hJam-dPal-rTsa-rGyud*), for instance, is a huge mass of interesting information about all



15. Naro-pa



16. Marpa

the four aspects mentioned above. It is sometimes classified as a *kriya*-tantra, sometimes as a *charya*-tantra: it deals not only with ritualistic details (including *mudras*, *mandalas* 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 wide-spread belief among scholars and aspirants that *kriya*-tantras were inferior, and therefore very few important Tantras are explicitly included in this category. According to the Tibetan historian Taranatha, both *kriya* and *charya*-Tantras were transmitted secretly to practitioners, but were made public contemporaneously with *Mahayana-sutras*. 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-pada, Kambala-pada, Kukkuri-pada, Kanha-pada and Pito-pada. It is to be noted that many *anuttara*-and *yoga*-tantras are associated with siddhas, like *Buddha-kapala-tantra* with Saraha, *Rakta-yamari-tantra* with Viru-pa, *Hevajra-tantra* with Saroruha (Saraha?) and Kambala, *Mahamaya-tantra* with Kukkuri-pa, *Chakra-samvara-tantra* with Kanha-pa, *Vajradaka-tantra* (in *Apa-brahmsa*) with Bhade-pa, and *Guhya-garbha-tantra* with Lila-vajra.

Another early Tantra, *Guhyasamaja-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 (*kriya*) and virtuous living (*carya*) in order to achieve the highest end; it stresses the need for consecration (*abhiseka*) into 'the adamant path, *vajra-marga*', and suggests intense contemplation (with visualizations) in the 'cosmogram' of body-speech-mind ("kaya-vak-chitta-mandala-dhyanam"). The 'proximate-means' (*upasadhana*) 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 *Vajrayana*. Known in Tibetan as *gSang-hDus-rGyud*, it was a 'sleep-

ing' text (secretly communicated from teacher to pupil) till Asanga taught it. Still another early and important Tantra, *Maha-vairochana-abhisambodhi*, is a *charya*-tantra. This was translated into Chinese by a South Indian scholar of Nalanda, Subhakara-Simha, who died in China in 735 A.D. The Buddha here appears as 'the great sun' (*maha-vairochana*), surrounded by Samantabhadra and other bodhisattvas, and Vajrapani 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 *mandala*. 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 *charya*-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-sikhara* (alternately, or in another version, called *Sarva-tathagata-tattva-samgraha*). This work was translated into Chinese by the South Indian Vajrabodhi, who went to China and spread the Tantrik cult there, before he died in 732 A.D. These two texts, *Maha-vairochana* and *Vajra-sikhara*, reached Tibet probably through the Chinese translations. They are justly classed there as *yoga*-tantras.

The early phase of the Buddhist Tantrik cult was thus dominated by the four texts (*Manjusri-mulakalpa*, *Guhya-samaja*, *Mahavairochana* and *Vajra-sikhara*), all of which incidentally were of South Indian origin.¹ The subsequent phase was characterised by the introduction of female partners in secret rituals (*yogini*, in Tibetan *r.Nal-hB'Yor-Ma*). One of the siddhas, Lui-pada, is credited with the recovery of a Tantrik text which dealt with this novel idea, *Yogini-samcharya*. There is a suggestion even in *Guhya-samaja-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 *Yogini-anuttara*-tantras. Important among

them are *Hevajra-tantra*, *Buddhakalpa*, *Chakrasamvara*, *Vajrabhairava*, *Krishna-Yamari*, *Chaturyogini-samputa* and *Mahamaya*. 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 Madhyamika philosophy with *mantrayana*. Nagarjuna's formulation of Void (*sunyata*) and the practice of virtues (*paramitas*) were incorporated into the yogacara emphasis on mind as the sole reality, as, for instance, in the works of several scholars of Nalanda and Vikramasila, principally of Abhayakara-gupta (died 1125) and Ratnakarasanti (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 *prajna* and *upaya*, and *Vajra* or 'the diamond' signifies non-duality and void) is based on the Madhyamika 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 Vajrayana symbolising self) and *Vajra-garbha* (a bodhisattva who contains the seeds of diamond nature within 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 (*yogini*), Vajravaraḥi (symbolising the means, *upaya*). 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' (*krpa*, explained in the *Panjika* as the attitude that all beings are like oneself) and 'method' (*upaya*, 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' (*samsthita*), simply 'thought out' (*kalpita*). A *mandala* is made use of: a lotus forms the base on which is laid out a triangle (*yoni*, vulva, the female organ), and inside the triangle is placed a corpse (to denote phenomenal existence), on which the practitioner, imagining himself to be Heruka, stands or sits and unites (in imagination) with the *yogini*. He is the diamond (*vajra*) and she is the lotus (*padma*); and when the former enters into the latter, great joy (*mahasukha*), also described as the innate, natural bliss (*sahaja-sukha*), results. The practitioner himself is the embodiment of compassion as means ("krpopayo bhaved yogi"), and his female consort is wisdom that is void (*prajna-sunyata*). 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 *neyartha*, 'to be drawn out'), and that they employ 'the concealed language' (*sandhabhasa*). 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 *sadhana*—even as *Guhya-samaja* did. For after all, human happiness is both biological and spiritual; one cannot be understood without the other.

Besides *Hevajra-tantra*, other texts like *Chakrasamvara*, *Durgati-parisodhana*, *Abhidhanottara*, *Kalachakra* and *Panchakrama* 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-samvara*, also belonging to the *Yogini-anuttara* group of Tantras, is not available in Sanskrit. Its Tibetan translation made a profound impact on the Tantrik tradition in that country. The Tibetan Canon has also preserved in translation the commentaries on it by eminent Indians like Krshnacarya (said to be a disciple of the Siddha Kanha-pa who recovered the Tantra), Jayabhadra and Bhadrarapada. The Tantra is sometimes referred to as *Mahasamvarodaya*, and sometimes as *Dakini-jala*. 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 *Maha-sukha* ("Great Bliss", in Tibetan *bDe-mChog*) i.e. Heruka, along with his bride (vajra-yogini) Vajravarahi. There is a detailed account of the meditation which leads to the realization that ones own self embodies the united divinities (Heruka and Vajravarahi), 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 Mahasukha 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 *mandala*. The title of the Tantra is derived from this

detail. *Cakra* (in Tibetan *hKHo-rLo*) means the imagined *mandala*, and *samvara* (in Tibetan *sDom-Pa*) refers to the collection of deities (hence the alternate expression *sambhara*) arranged on the *mandala*, with Mahasukha as the central divinity. Thoughts are projected on the *mandala*, focussed there and then both the thoughts and the *mandala* 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 *Sri-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 *mandala* 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-*mandala*, with various deities laid out. Then the inner *mandala* and the outer *mandala* are vividly brought together and deliberately fused. The Tantra curiously quotes Siddha Naro-pa on the question of absorption of the two *mandalas* 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 Vajrasattva by entering into a state of tranquillity, where mind is devoid of all thoughts. Towards the end, two stages of concentration (*samadhi*) 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 *Chakrasamvara*, 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 *mandalas*, 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 *Vajramala*, 'rDo-rJe-hPHreng') in the same context. They contributed to the definition of Tantrik 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 Madhyamika origin) and the practice of visualization (of Yogacara origin). This synthesis, in fact, is what distinguishes the Tibetan Tantrik tradition. Almost all of hundreds of *sadhana* manuals current in Tibet (a collection of which can be found in *Sadhana-mala*, ed. by B. Bhattacharya, in two volumes, GOS, XXVI and XLI 1925-1928) reflect this synthesis.

FIVE-FOLD VOID

One of the early Tantrik texts which achieved considerable celebrity and merited a large number of commentaries and annotations was *Pancakrama*, classed as an 'anuttara-yoga-tantra' and ascribed to the great Nagarjuna. Whatever the scholarly conjectures concerning the multiplicity of Nagarjunas, Tibet knows only one Nagarjuna, who was at once the Madhyamika philosopher, Tantrik author, siddha and alchemist; we have already referred to him. His *Panchakrama*, the Sanskrit original of which is luckily available to us,⁹ deals with void, *sunyata* (in Tibetan *sTon-Pa-Nyid*), the main theme also of his *Madhyamika-karika*. 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. *nirvana*) consists in the complete stoppage of all mental constructions concerning existence and non-existence. Reality is both conditioned (*samvrti*) and absolute (*paramartha*); 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 eight dimensions: origination and cessation, persistence and interruption, unity and 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' (*tathata*). It can be seen that *Pancha-*

krama follows the same line of thought, but in a more practical context: its approach is clearly Tantrik.

This Tantrik treatise of Nagarjuna is in five sections, the third of which is ascribed to a later author Sakyamitra (who, according to Taranatha, was a contemporary of king Devapala of Bengal (705-753 A.D.). Of the commentaries of this work, the one by his disciple Nagabodhi was well-known. A South Indian, this Nagabodhi is described in the *Blue Annals* as a teacher of Maha-yoga-tantra (so-called 'father-tantra', *PHa-rGyud*). Taranatha records that after the death of Nagarjuna, Nagabodhi withdrew into a deep cave on Sriparvata (in Andhra) and meditated for twelve years without a break before he attained *mahamudra-siddhi*. Other Indian commentators include Bhavyakirti and Rakshitapada.

It is said¹² that *Panchakrama* is in the nature of an extract from *Guhyasamaja*, which Nagarjuna learnt from his teacher Saraha-pada. The conception of five *dhyani*-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 *Panchakrama* presents a more advanced stage of thought, and works with Yoga ideas and practices, quite unlike the earlier work. *Panchakrama* ('Five-fold Passage') analyses Void with respect to cause and result into four grades (more properly stages): Void (*sunyam*), Over-Void (*ati-sunyam*), Great-Void (*maha-sunyam*) and All-Void (*sarva-sunyam*). The first, likened to a woman, is described as 'knowledge' (*prajna*) and the second, likened to a man, is described as the means (*upaya*). The commingling of the two (which is a typical Vajrayana conception) produces the third stage where 'self-base' (*svadhisthana*) is obtained. Beyond that is the imponderable, unchanging, non-dual and luminous (*prabhasvara*) 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 *Panchakrama* 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 (*pratyatmavedya*) 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. *Panchakrama* as a Tantrik 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' (*aloka*), 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 (*prajna*) characterizes this stage. The description that it is the 'lotus' on the lunar disc (*candramandala-pankajam*), a point (*bindu*), and the first vowel (*a*) have involvements of visualization, to be explained later. The second stage is 'mere manifestation of light' (*aloka-bhasa*), independent of the lamp-base, like unto the rays of moon-light. 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 *prajna*, the second is *upaya*; 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' (*maha*) 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 (*alokopalabधि*). It is no longer dependent, nor is it constructed, but it is unconditioned and absolute (*parinishpanna*). The important detail here is that the mind is 'self-based' (*svadhishtana-chitta*).¹⁵ Freed from all factors of conditioning both within oneself and outside, mind can now 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 *Panchakrama* 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 hunger and thirst, emotions like sorrow, compassion, envy, affection and sympathy, and also intellectual activities 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' (*prakrtayah*). 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 (*vyavahara*) going.

Also of interest is the speculation that the vital currents in the body (lit. the winds, *vayu*) 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 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' (*pranayama*) figure prominently in the Tantrik practices. *Panchakrama* suggests an interesting method, which, however, appears to have been an old and tried technique in India. The five dhyani-buddhas of the *Guhya-samaja* 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 (*nasagra*, 'the top of the nose', not the 'tip', as frequently mistaken). "The five vital currents in the body represent the five dhyani-buddhas, and they are also made into a mass (*pindarupena*) 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 *pranayama*,

according to the *Guhya samaja*, as quoted approvingly in *Panchakrama*. 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-hJung*) is employed significantly in *Panchakrama* (Ch. I). The commingling of the first two stages, the *yuganaddha* of *prajna* and *upaya*, is preliminary; and the commingling of the third and the fourth, the *yuganaddha* of *svadhishthana* and *prabhasvara*, is the final. The final state of utter unity is realized only when the twin notions of origination and cessation (*samsara-nirvrti*) of phenomena and its purification (*sanklesa-vyavadana*), are completely eliminated. One who has attained to this state experiences 'great bliss' (*mahasukha*) 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. *Panchakarma* calls this "Vajra-yoga".

VOID-CULTIVATION

The Tantrik 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 *Sadhanamala* collection bear this out clearly. It is usual for the rituals to commence with a confession of sin (*papadesana*), 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 (*punya-numodana*) done by all the completely enlightened buddhas, solitary buddhas, lay buddhas, their spiritual children, bodhisattvas, dakinis, gurus and other beings residing in all the three worlds.¹⁹ Then the devotee seeks refuge in the 'three jewels' (*ratna-traya-sarana*): 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 (*yacana*) that the reverend ones may bestow the unsurpassed religious instruction (*anuttara-dharma-desana*) 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 Ah Muh". 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' (*apramanani*, boundless states of mind, also called 'divine states', *brahma-viharas*). The classical list includes friendliness (*maitri*, Tib. *gGah-va*), compassion (*karuna*, Tib. *dNying-rJe* or *TSHad-Med-bZHi*), cheerful contentment (*mudita*, Tib. *Byams-Paz*) and equanimity-indif-

ference (*upeksha*, 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 *sadhana*, viz. void-cultivation. There are in it four well-defined stages: generation of enlightenment-thought (*bodhicitta-utpadana*); reflection on, or contemplation of, the void nature of things (*sunyata-cintana*); visualizations (*drishti-marga*, Tib. *mTHong-Ba-hi-Lam*); and withdrawal into void (*samhara-karma*). Sects differ in their emphasis on one or other of the four stages, although every *sadhana* involves all four. The more conservative of the sects place absolute emphasis



17. Milarepa



18. sGam-Po-Pa

on the first stage, and rely on Santideva's great manual *Bodhi-charyavatara* ('Descent into the road to enlightenment'.²⁵ TSong-KHa-Pa described bodhicitta as the threshold to the house of Mahayana, and quoted with approval Atisa's query "What is the use of all the Tantrik initiations without bodhicitta being awakened?" Bodhicitta originally meant merely the thought of enlightenment or the mind directed towards enlightenment. We have already mentioned how at the hands of the siddhas it acquired a technical complexion, and how in *Guhya-samaja-tantra* it achieved unprecedented importance. It became a typical Mahayana concept, emphasizing the vow of helping humanity by one's own enlightenment. It is said to be rooted in the four 'immeasurables', described above. Santideva's distinction between the thought of the vow or aspiration (*bodhi-pranidhi-citta*) and the resolve to march towards enlightenment or entrance (*bodhi-prasthanā-citta*) when once bodhicitta has been aroused, was of practical significance. The dGe-Lugs-pa regard bodhicitta-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 Tantrik ritual, viz., the void-contemplation and merit-dedication (which marks the final phase of the ritual), would be ineffective. Bodhicitta is described as productive of 'physical merit'²⁶ which provides the basis for and balances, the mental merit to be acquired by void-contemplation. In the analysis of TSong-KHa-Pa, bodhicitta-arousal in 'intentional thought' while void-contemplation is 'actual 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 *sadhana*. Void is the emptiness of characteristics both of the percipient subject and the perceived object: non-dual and undifferentiated.

ed 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-svabhava*), and altogether unsupported (*niralamba*), but projected or created (*nirmiti*). One of the methods of void-contemplation is to intently reflect that "all things are supported by mind."³¹ *Heruka-sadhana* 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 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 (*bhranti-madapyupakaryah*)." The help spoken of here is with regard to visualizations that constitute the next stage of the practice. Another ritual manual, Ratnakaragupta's *Dvibhuja-Sambaropadesa*, 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 adamant wisdom of Void" (*sunyata-jnana-vajra-svabhavatmakoham*) and the other is "All things and events are pure by nature; I am pure by nature" (*Svabhava-suddhah sarva-dharmah, svabhava-suddho'ham*). These two formulae are actually meant to reinforce (*dridhikaranartham*) 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 formulae (*atmakah*, 'the self', and *aham*, 'I'). It is no doubt an egoity (*ahamkara*) that is generated, as many *sadhanas* 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 bodhi-citta 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 *sadhana*, but its peculiar feature.

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 (*diksha*, *seka* or *abhisheka*, Tib. *dBang*) are important in the Tantrik 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.

Naro-pa 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, resorted 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 (*mandala*, Tib. *dKyi-l-hKHor*), seed-syllables (Tib. *rDo-rJe-hi-TSHig*), deities of personal choice (*ista-daiva*, Tib. *Yi-Dam-lHa*, or simply *Yi-Dam*) beneficent fairies or mysterious esoteric instructors (*dakini*, 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 *naga* (*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', *dharmapala*) 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' (*vira*), and thirty-seven 'fairies' (*dakinis*). Their iconographic peculiarities as well as functional significance have been crystallized only in meditations (*sGom*) of masters. There are, likewise, innumerable *mandalas* that are sought to be realized in meditation.

The four 'higher' empowerments are (1) 'vase-empowerment' (*kalasabhisheka*) in which the teacher not only authorizes the disciple to evoke visualizations, but explains the details thereof; (2) 'mystery-empowerment' (*guhyabhisheka*), in which the disciple becomes aware that 'the original mind' (the field of experience) is actually void; (3) 'wisdom-empowerment' (*prajñabhisheka*), where the disciple experiences void as great

bliss; and finally (4) 'diamond-empowerment' (*vajrabhisheka*) 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 karmic 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 (*bKaa*, '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 *mandala*-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' (*dharani*, Tib. *gZungs*), 'sacred formulae' (*mantra*, Tib. *sNags*), 'diagrams' (*yantra*, Tib. *CHos-hByung*), 'gestures' (*mudra*, Tib. *PHyag-rGya*) and *mandalas* (*dKyil-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 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 can 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 Yogacara, on which Vajrayana is raised.

One of the frequent subjects for the devotee's visualizations is the tutelary, or personal, deity (*Yi-Dam*), like Tara. But the devotee behaves towards it as though it was real, as though it was a part of the external world, and 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 being, protecting the devotee from all manner of harm, and bestowing on him not only success in *sadhana* (*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 *stupa* or *mCHod-rTen* 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

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 Tara", or "I am Avalokitesvara". The *Karanda-vyuha* prescribes in this context: "The devotee should then evoke the egoity (*ahamkara*).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 Tantrik rituals involves the *mandalas*. Taken directly from Indian sources, the word itself has been retained in Tibetan in transliterated form. But there are two categories of *mandala* in actual employment. One is the *mandala* 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 *mandalas* are usually of this latter type. The *mandala*, known as 'Vajra-mandala', is an excellent illustration. It represents the five dhyani-buddhas, each attended by the bodhisattvas, positioned in the four directions with one of the dhyani-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 *mandala* is either drawn on the consecrated earth or altar, or painted on a scroll, with elaborate but stylized designs. The use of such *mandalas* 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, dakinis 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 *mandala* 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 middle and the eight continents around it with all the best things of the world as constituting a *mandala*, and then offers it to the master with the formula: "Master, I offer this *mandala* unto you!" ("guru, idam mandalakam niryatayami"). The preliminaries to the Tantrik *sadhana* include the offering of such *mandala* to the guru and his lineage as many as 100,000 times. The body itself is visualized as a *mandala*: a mansion where all the deities are invoked and in-

stalled. In front, at the back, to the right and to the left are the four sides of the body-*mandala*. 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, naval 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 *mandala* for offering, and also as a symbolical representation of it, the hand-posture (*mudra*) 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-bhumi*), which is ritualistically protected against inimical and malevolent forces by the pronouncement 'Hum'. The adamant character of the ground itself is a product of visualization (to the accompaniment of the formula 'Om Vajrabhumi Ah Hum.')

Visualization by the *mandala* is described as composed of five aspects, or rather stages. The first is the visualization of *vacuity* (*sunyata*) in one's own heart with the aid of the formula "Om Sunyata-Vajrasvabhavatmakoham" ("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-dhatu' which is the basis of all phenomena which are essentially mental. Above the moon emerges the seed-syllable (*Om, Hrim, Pam, Tam* etc.) which

again shines brilliantly and light spreads from it 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 dhyani-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 the formula "Om ah hum, Vajra-svabhavatmak'o'ham," "I am of the adamant 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 in 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 *sadhanas*,³⁸ the devotee becomes the bodhisattva Manjusri, 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. *tam* in the case of Tara) is contemplated upon this moon-disc. This seed syllable gradually gets lost in the middle of a 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.

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2. "Yositam prapya vidhina caruvaktram hitaisinim," 15th Patala, 98.
3. Ed. and Tr. by D. Snellgrove, in two volumes, London, 1959; this utilises Krishnacharya's commentary thereupon *Yogaratanmala*. *Hevajra-tantra* has an excellent gloss (*Panjika*), which is widely studied in Tibet.
4. *Hevajra-tantra*, 10th Patala: "Kripopayo bhaved yogi mudra-hetuviyogatah;" *Panjika* explains 'kripa' as "sarvasattveshu atmasamata cittam" and 'upaya' as "samyak-sambodhi-prasadhanah", and the latter part of the half-verse is explained as follows: "sarva-dharmanam anutpadah (... anutpada-laksana sunyata); Katham? 'hetu-viyogatah', svatah paratah ubhayato'nubhayato sarvabhavanam anutpatteh'.
5. *Ibid.* "dehabhave kutah saukhyam?" cf. also *Sri-kalachakra-tantra*: "kaya-bhave na siddhir na ca paramasukham."
6. *Srichakrasambhara-tantra*, ed. by Kazi Dawa-Samdub. *Tantrik 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 Tantric Buddhism*, pp. 43-46.
10. "Bhavabhava-nta-dvaya-rahitatvat sarvabhava-nutpatti-lakshana sunyata madhyama pratipad madhyamo marga ity uchyate," *Madhyamika-vrtti*, 25; cf. quoting *Ratnavali*: "bhavabhava-paramarsa-kshayo nirvanam ucyate."
11. "anirodham anutpadam anucchedam asasvatam; and anekartham ananartham anagamam aniragamam."

12. By La Vallee Poussin, cited in M. Winternitz, *History of Indian Literature* (University of Calcutta, 1933), Vol. II, p. 395 fn.
13. "bhavabhava-vinirmukto Vajrasattvah suchintitah; sarvakara-varo-petah asechanaka-vigrahaḥ".
14. "gagana-sama-gatam sarva-bhava-svabhavam, durbodham durvicharam yoginameva gamyam".
15. *Panchakrama-tippani* explains "Self base is to be based on itself; it means that the knowledge comprehending *prajna* and *upaya* is opened up", cited in S.B. Dasgupta, *op. cit.*
16. "etaḥ prakrtayah suksmah ... divaratrau chapī pravartante vayuvahanahetuna," cf. S.B. Dasgupta, *op. cit.* for an excellent account of this idea.
17. "nasagre sarshapam chintayet sarshape sacharacharam; bhavayed jnanapadam ramyam...", *Ibid.*
18. "yat kinchid asyam jatavanyasu jatisvanadinidhane jatisamsare sam-sarata maya papakam karma kayena vaca manasa' pi krtam karitam kriyamanam anumoditam tat sarvam bhagavatam guru-buddha-bodhisattvanam purataḥ pratidesayami."
19. "sambuddha-pratyekabuddha-sravaka-buddhanam tatsutanam api bodhisattvanam sattvanam trailokyodaravarttinam yadeva kuśalam tat sarvam anumodayami".
20. Manoratha-rakshita's *Vajrasarasvati-sadhana*: "maitryadibhavanam evam kuryad dvesadi-santaye".
21. "sarva-sattvesu atisayita-hitaikaputraka-sneha-laksana" (*Anupama-rakshita*); "jagadekaputra-premata" (*Muktaka*); "para-hita-cinta"; "para-saukhyasampad-iccha" (*Sri-Vardhana-pada*); "satputra-sampriti-sahasragunitam jane" (*Vajrayogini-bhashitam Vadiraja-Manjusri-Sadhanam*); and 'hitasukhophasamharakara' (*Anupama-rakshita*).
22. "triduhkha-duhkhitanam sattvanam samsara-sagarad uddharana-kamata" (*Muktaka*); "duhkha-hetor duhkhac ca uddhartukamata" (*Vadirat-Sadhanam*); "paraduhkha-nasana-kriya" (anon).
23. "utdpadita-kusala-mula-para-bhogaisvaryadisū hrstacittata" (*Muktaka*); vyavasaya-samsiddhyupaya-darsanat praharsanam"; "parasukhatusti"; "asadṛse buddhatve tadupaya ca sarva eva samsarinah sattva maya pratisthapayitavya ity adhyavasayah; visvesam yaṇi kuśalāṇi tesu tad bhogaisvaryadisū ca akrstacittata" (*Anupama-rakshita*); "modantam sattva ityakara" (*Ratnakara-santi*).
24. "Paradospeksha"; "Klesapratipaksa-margopasamharakara" (*Ratnakara-santi*); "asadvyasanga-parihani" (*Muktaka*); "Samataya sat-tvamatram etad ityakrtiḥ" (*Sri-Vardhana-pada*); "labha-labha-yaso'-payasa-ninda-stuti-sukha-duhkhetyady-asta-lokadharma-pramukha-sakalaprastuta-vyaparopeksanam" (*Anupama-raksita*); "nija-karyam-analocyopeksam-anyarthakarita" (*Vajra-yogini*).
25. *Bodhicharyavatara* with Prajnakaramati's *Panjika*, (ed) Vallee Poussin, Asiatic Society, Calcutta, 1901-1904. also *Entering the Path of Enlighten-*

- ment (Tr. by Marion L. Matics), Allen and Unwin, London, 1971. In Tibetan, *sPyod-hJug-CHo-Jug*, along with a supplement *Bodhisattva-charyavatara (bSlab-bTus)*.
26. cf. Alex Wayman: "The Bodhisattva Practice according to Lam-Rim-Chen-Mo", *The American Theosophist*, 1972, Spring Special Issue, pp. 134-142.
 27. Geshey Ngawang Dhargyey: *Tibetan Tradition of Mental Development* (*op. cit.*), p. 124.
 28. *Svadhithana-Kurukulla-sadhana* of Hevajra-tantra-krama: "dharma-pudgalayoh grahya-grahaka-svabhavayoh abhavasvabhavam advaya-vijnapti-laksanam sunyatam vibhavya..."
 29. *Dvibhuja-Heruka-Sadhana* "dharma-pudgaladi-vikalpa-kalanka-varjitarupam saran-nirmala-madhyahna-nabbonibham"...
 30. *Manjusri-sadhana*: "sakala-tattva-sara-sangrahaka-bhutam..."
 31. *Pancaraksha-vidhana*: "sarva-dharman manasa-valambya..."
 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. *Advayavajra-samgraha*, p. 50 "sunyata-bodhito bijam, bijad bimbam prajayate".
 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'hamkaram kuryat".
 37. *Srimad-Vadirat-sadhana* of Pandita-Cintamani-datta: "nasatyam napyasatyam mukura-talam iva spashta-bimbayamanam".
 38. *Vajra-Yogini-bhasitam Vadiraja-manjusri-sadhanam*.

GLOSSARY OF TIBETAN TERMS

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. *cakra*, mystical diagram for ritualistic performance and for contemplation.

dBang-bsKur power-communication or transference, consecration, initiation (Skt. *diksha*, *abhisheka*).

Bar-Do 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. *Bhota*.

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. *punya* ("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. *maha*-).

mCHod offering, honour or sacrifice. (Skt. *pūja*).

mCHod-rTen offering-base, receptacle of offerings (Skt. *stupa*), a construction to hold oblations. Cf. *gDung-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-mCHog*, great bliss (Skt. *mahasukha*).

mCHog-hi Dang-pohi Sangs-rGyas primordial Buddha (Skt. *Adibuddha*).

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*).

bDe-sKyid happiness. Cf. *rDe-Ba* (Skt. *subha*), bliss of *nirvana*.

mDo discourse (Skt. *sutra*), aphorism, rule. *mDo-sDe*, a collection of discourses in *bKaa-Gyur*.

Don-dam pahi Den-Pa the real or transcendental state (Skt. *paramartha*).

rDo-rJe precious stone, Skt. *vajra*, diamond, symbol of the highest attainment, the supreme state of undifferentiated tranquillity; a ritualistic implement denoting the effective way. *rDo-rJe-sKu*, adamant body, obtained by mystic methods. *PHyag-na rDo-rJe*, Skt. *Vajrapani*, *rDo-rJe PHag-Mo*, Skt. *Vajravarahi*, *rDo-rJe Jigs-Byed*, Skt. *Vajrabhairava*, etc. *rDo-rJe-THeg-Pa*, Skt. *Vajrayana*.

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 *Kalacakra*, the wheel of time.

dGe virtue, merit (Skt. *subha*), *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. *bhavana*).

dGon-Pa solitary retreat, jungle hermitage; usually, monastery.

sGrol-Ma Skt. Tara, 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, fulfilment; carrying out of a difficult task, like extracting silver from silver-ore.

sGu-Lus phantom-form (Skt. *maya-sarira*); more correctly, *sGyu*, illusory, false, imaginary. Sometimes, Skt. *linga-sarira*, subtle body accompanying the spirit in its transmigration.

rGyal-Po (*gyalwa*) kings, chieftains, conquerors; usually, the abbots of the Gah-lDan and bKra-Sis-Lhung-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. *parampara*), as in bKah-rGyud-Pa. Also, text, treatise, manual (Skt. *tantra*).

Hum mystical syllable of Indian origin; regarded as the seed syllable of Akshobhya; symbolises the condition of the flow of consciousness (Cf. *gTSo-Sems*, Skt. *citta-srota*).

aJam-dPal Skt. *Manju-sri*; also *aJam-mGon*, Skt. *Manju-natha*.

rJe lord, master, nobleman (Skt. *arya*); usually, high priest or monk.

- Jo-Bo-rJe* noble lord, reverend master; usually, title of Atisa-Dipankara (1042–1055, sojourn in Tibet).
- bKah-gDams-Pa*, the sect founded by Atisa-Dipankara (above), based on discourses or commentaries (*bKah*, Skt. *sutra* or *pañjika*) and on instructions (*gDams*, Skt. *upadesa*).
- bKah-rGyud-Pa* sect founded by the translator Mar-Pa (b. 1012) on the basis of the Indian teachings of Naro-Pa, 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-hGyur* (*Kanjur*, Mongolia) the words of the Buddha (*bKah*) translated (*hGyur*) into Tibetan (*Bod-du*); a collection of 108 volumes, mostly of Indian origin, constituting the basic aspect of the Tibetan Canon; Skt. *sruti*.
- mKHaa-aGro-Ma* Skt. *dakini*, wise women of divine status who assume roles of instructors and guides to devotees; feminine helpmates in *sadhana*; fairies; fiendesses.
- mKHan-Po* instructor, master (Skt. *upadhyaya*); expert (Skt. *pandita*).
- KHrid-Yig* instruction-exhortations, practical guidance.
- aKHrul* mistake, illusion, delusion (Skt. *bhrama*).
- aKor-Lo* disc, wheel, circle, roundish, globular (Skt. *cakra*); *Od-Kor*, luminous disc, *Pad-kor*, hand gesture representing the lotus, *Dus-kyi Kor-Lo*, the wheel of time (Skt. *kalacakra*).
- aKrul-Ba* to stray, to be mistaken (Skt. *bhramana*); *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. *mula-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 and of the saints), *Tar-pai Lam*, the path of emancipation (Skt. *vimukti-marga*). 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-griha*).

Lo-TSa-Ba translator, usually of Indian works into Tibetan.

Ma-rGyud the great Tantra (Skt. *mahayoga*)

Mani-formula "Om Mani padme Hum" (six-syllabled).

Mani-CHos-aKor, the wheel or cylinder containing the formula or which is turned or twirled reciting the formula.

Mani-Dong, wall on the face of which the formula is inscribed. An early work, *Mani-bKa-Bum*, ascribed to Srong-bTSen-sGam-Po (A.D. 569-650) the Tibetan king, is devoted to the cult of Avalokitesvara; the *Mani*-formula is regarded as an invocation to this deity. However, it is probable that it was actually addressed to the consort of this deity, Tara (*Manipadme* as vocative), like the other formula: *Om Tare Tuttare Ture Svaha*. Later, the formula was interpreted as the essence of the Buddha's teaching: the jewel of enlightenment (*mani*) in the lotus of the heart (*padme* in the locative). Cf. *Dakarnava*. 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*), a yogi or occult practitioner of miraculous powers.

gNam sky, space above, heavenly vault. Also *Nam-mKa*.

sNang-Ba illumination, enlightenment, vision (Skt. *darsana*, *aloka*).

sNang-Ba, mental picture.

Nang-pai CHos within-Dharma, the religion of the insiders 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. *niḥsvabhavata*), 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 *sadhana*.

dPal splendour, prosperity, abundance (Skt. *sri*); Cf. *gYang*.
dPal-Po, illustrious person.

PHra-Men magic, witchcraft, sorcery. Also, *aPHrul*, magic, jugglery.

PHyag-rGya hand-gesture (Skt. *mudra*), 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. Tantrik tradition employs a variety of *mudras* for mystic accomplishment.
PHyag-rGya-CHen-Po, Skt. *mahamudra*.

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 practise successfully.

Rabs lineage, family.

Rig-Pa understanding, knowing. Cf. *Ma-Rig-Pa*, ignorance (Skt. *avidya*).

Rig-sNags spell, magical incantation (Skt. *dharani*).

Rin-Po-CHe very precious master (Skt. *maha-ratna*), *Rin*, jewel; a title.

RLung wind (Skt. *vayu*), breath (Skt. *prana*). *RLung-aDZin-Po* holding of the breath (Skt. *kumbhaka* in *pranayama*) 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 Kalacakra doctrine is said to have been preached by the Buddha to the first king of the place, Sucandra. *dPal-lDan-Yes-Sis* (1738-1780), the third Panchen Lama, popularized the view that it was situated in the Northern border of India, probably in *Uddiyana* from where Padma-sambhava hailed. It is the Buddhist version of Utopia.

bSam-Pa thought, contemplation (Skt. *samkalpa*). Hence, *bSam-gTan*, meditative absorption (Skt. *samadhi*).

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*).

Ses-Rab great wisdom (Skt. *prajna*), hence *Ses-Rab-kyi-PHa-Rol-tu PHyin-Pa* (Prajnaparamita), doctrine as well as collection of texts in *bKah-aGyur*. *Ses-Rab* is also employed to denote void (*sunyata*).

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. *carya*). Also *sPyod-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.

- lTa* attitude, viewpoint; to inquire, examine and reflect; doctrine. Also *lTab*, philosophical system as well as mystical corpus.
- rTa-mGrin* the horse-necked divinity (Skt. *Haya-griva*).
- bsTan-aGyur* commentarial collection of the Tibetan Canon.
- rTen* base, support, refuge (Skt. *gati*, *asraya*); *LHa-rTen*, god-base or image, also temple; *mCHod-rTen*, offering-base, *stupa*.
- 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 Santa-rakshita), 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. *samapatti*). Three stages are distinguished in the attainment of this state: (1) *lTa-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. *sunyata*)
- 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. *yana*), course of religious practice, philosophical discipline. *THeg-Pa dMan-Pa*, Skt. *Hinayana*; *THeg-Pa CHen-Po*, Skt. *Mahayana*; *rDo-rJe-THeg-Pa*, *Vajrayana*. *THeg-Pa-gSum*, (three paths, Skt. *triyana*), viz. *Hinayana*, *Mahayana* and *Mantrayana* (SNangs-kyi *THeg-Pa*).

mTHong-bahi-Lam the way of mystic visions, techniques of visualizations (Skt. *drsti-marga*). *mTHong-Pa*, power of vision.

aTHob-Pa obtainment, possession (of faith), becoming (the Buddha), the fruits. Skt. *pratilabha*, *phala*.

TSan spirits, gnomes, usually the vindictive ghosts that haunt temples and monasteries.

Yab-Yum father-mather (Skt. *yuganaddha*, two-in-one, Cf. Tib. *Zung-aJug*).

Yi-Dam personal or tutelary deity (Skt. *ista-devata*).

gYung-Drung the *Svastika* sign, sacred to both Bon-Pos and Buddhists in Tibet.

bZang excellent, good (Skt. *bhadra*).

gZungs holding (Skt. *dharana*); also spell, sacred formula (*dharani*).

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 *prajna* and *upaya*. In the traditional Tantrik interpretation of the word *aJug*, the technique of forcing the breath-mind complex (*Sems*) into the central artery (Skt. *susumna*) so that the being is in a state of perfect poise and power is suggested.