

Mandala of 21st Century Perspectives

Proceedings of the International Conference on Tradition and
Innovation in Vajrayana Buddhism

Edited by Dasho Karma Ura, Dorji Penjore & Chhimi Dem



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Centre for Bhutan Studies & GNH

Mandala of 21st Century Perspectives: Proceedings of the International Conference on Tradition and Innovation in Vajrayana Buddhism

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Preface

The Central Monastic Body and the Centre for Bhutan Studies and GNH are delighted to present the compilation of selected papers presented at the international conference titled *Tradition and Innovation in Vajrayāna Buddhism: A Mandala of 21st Century Perspectives*, on 1 to 3 July 2016 in Thimphu, Bhutan. The papers discuss the issues of continuity and change within contemporary expressions of Vajrayāna Buddhism, its creative response to changing socio-cultural conditions, and how it has shaped the art, culture, and consciousness as well as addresses Vajrayāna's dialogue with 21st century medicine and science and the role of body-mind yogic practices within Vajrayāna Buddhism and their applicability within an increasingly transcultural and technologically driven world. For this publication, no themes or categorization were attempted.

We appreciate the dedicated involvement of John Arudssi, Senior Research Fellow (University of Virginia), board member and Editor-In -Chief of the International Society for Bhutan Studies (ISBS) and Seiji Kumagai San, *Uehiro* Associate Professor (Kyoto University), board member and Secretary General of the International Society for Bhutan Studies (ISBS), for reviewing and editing some of the papers.

The Centre for Bhutan Studies and GNH and the Central Monastic Body would like to acknowledge and thank the participants for their valuable contributions. We would like to mention that the convening of this conference enabled us to auspiciously receive a number of great spiritual leaders and

scholars in Bhutan, thus establishing important contacts and beginning a rich dialogue for advancing the global reach of Buddhism in the 21st century.

The Oganizers would like to submit our deepest gratitude to His Majesty the King of Bhutan for blessing this joint initiative. Equally, His Holiness the Je Khenpo and Their Eminences, the Lopens of the Central Monastic Body have provided their wise counsel, direction and material support in preparing the conference. The Fourth Majesty of Bhutan is increasingly revered throughout the Buddhist world as a wise and compassionate monarch whose visionary leadership and policies have relevance far beyond the boundaries of Bhutan. More than any previous Bhutanese monarch or ruler, His Majesty's reign had witnessed the crucial effort to harmoniously blend development and modernization in Bhutan with spiritual values in the face of accelerating globalization. This conference is but a small contribution to help strengthen the role and practice of Buddha dharma in Bhutan and to foster it in the larger world.

The Centre for Bhutan Studies and GNH are indebted to the Hon'ble Prime Minister of Bhutan, Lyonchhen Tshering Tobgay. His unstinting and decisive support for the conference not only reveals his spiritual temperament, but his unquestionably broader view that the severe challenges facing humanity require a re-catalysation of spiritual values and traditions.

Lastly, we would like to acknowledge and thank the Tourism Council of Bhutan for their logistical support. We could not have held this conference in the serene atmosphere of the Royal Institute of Tourism and Hospitality, Motithang without their support.



Welcome Address

By Dasho Karma Ura

Most Bhutanese present this evening would know very well that today is the end of a budget year in Bhutan, and so it must have been a hectic day trying to close all books of accounts. Given this very important preoccupation and continually pressing matters, the organizers are very pleased that the guests from within the country have come to grace this humble occasion and honour the arrival of the participants.

The Central Monastic Body and the Centre for Bhutan Studies & GNH are very pleased that this conference has materialized at last. We are pleased that all of you, especially those coming from abroad from around 37 nations, are finally here. We wish to acknowledge the gracious participants by their country in alphabetical order: Australia, Brazil, Bangladesh, Canada, Cambodia, Cameron, China, Czechoslovakia, France, Hungary, India, Italy, Ireland, Indonesia, Japan, Malaysia, Mongolia, Myanmar, the Netherlands, Nepal, Peru, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Russia, Singapore, Sri Lanka, Sweden, Taiwan, Thailand, United Kingdom, USA, and Vietnam.

We are very grateful to the Tourism Council of Bhutan and the Royal Institute of Tourism and Hospitality for allowing us to have the conference in their lovely ground. All Buddha's teachings were held in natural formations and micro-niches like caves, panoply of big forests, cliff faces, bamboo groves, river banks, and hill-tops. Perhaps this is true of all great thinkers. Inspired by stories of such stimulating locations, though they are pleasurable appearances of samsara, we are delighted to hold the conference in this super-gir, giant glass tent that has echoes of a much richer Pleasure Dome of Kublai Khan

pitched in open pastures in the 13th century. We are indebted to the thoughtful generosity of His Revered Majesty the King for the gift of the use of this tent under which we are meeting.

Talking of *gir*, the mongol tent, we are particularly pleased that His Eminence Khamba Lam Gabju, the Supreme Head of Mongolian Buddhism who also holds the throne-title of Chief Abbot of Gaden Tegcholing Monastery in Ulan Bataar, could spare his precious time to be present in our humble conference. Mongolia and Bhutan are the last two Vajrayana states out of many that populated extensively Asia at one point of history. It is a pleasure to facilitate a meeting between the two last Mahayana states and I am sure that this is of symbolic and spiritual importance.

We are equally appreciative of the participation of His Excellency Manamperi Bandula S. B. Yalagama, Minister of Health, Indigenous Medicine, Social Welfare, Probation and Child Care Services of Central Province, Sri Lanka.

Time does not allow me to express my gratitude to all distinguished participants. I would like to welcome, most respectfully and warmly, all the distinguished participants to our country. In 1355, the great Nyingma Saint Longchen Rabjampa came to practice at the holy and empowered sites of Guru Rinpoche in Bhutan. He appreciated the glory of Bhutan because of it being inhabited by historic kings and ministers, being populated by wondrous temples; being the place of the descendants of great scholars and yogis; and being captivating and haunting with its physical beauty. From a spiritual point of view, Bhutan has been a place that only the fortunate spiritualists had the chance to inhabit and experience; Bhutan has had peace—both internal and external—continuously in its known and unknown history.

The great saint-phenomenologist and poet Longchen's description about the kings and ministers sound quite contemporary. The description is resonant especially with the lives of Kings of Bhutan who manifests the Boddhisattva qualities of compassion, ceaseless and splendid energy, and strength. Their deep empathy with the lives of ordinary people and other sentient beings has led them to refine Bhutan as a Buddhist welfare and ecological state in the direction of the first welfare state set first in India by Ashoka Devanama Priyadasi (Beloved to Behold, Beloved of Gods) who began his rule in 270 BC.

One of the reasons for the continuity of Buddhist state is that the Central Monastic Body, which was first established in 1623 or so, has endured in a stable, undimmed and uninterrupted way with a long succession so far of 70 Chief Abbots. The Central Monastic Body is the mother of all institutions in Bhutan because of its chronological age and timeless relevance. We are very happy that this conference is a product also of this oldest institution since Bhutan was founded although there are other official institutions that predate it.

It has been noted that the word Vajrayana appears in tantric texts only in the late 7th century. Soon after that, by mid 8th century, Vajrayana came to Bhutan. Sometimes in the middle of the 8th century, for the first time in Bhutan in a place called Nabji, Guru Rinpoche delivered the teachings and empowerment of Kaged Desheg Duspa to entourages of two kings. This is by way of pointing out how far Vajrayana goes back in Bhutan.

What is the responsibility of a Vajrayana state like Bhutan? I would like to propose that it is to hold up the vision, method and techniques for realizing the Vajrayana view of human potential. The responsibility of Vajrayana state is to preserve and promote various special profound philosophies, vision, method and techniques according to various Vajrayana schools. That is why, the Central Monastic Body, the principal agency of Vajrayana in Bhutan with support of the Centre for Bhutan Studies & GNH thought it our responsibility as well as privilege to host this conference.

But it could not have been done without the gracious blessing of His Majesty the King and the decisive financial and logistic support of the government, in particular the Hon'ble Prime Minister who was extraordinarily supportive of the idea of hosting this conference. In his usual quick grasp of larger importance of even small events, Hon'ble Prime Minister in fact, immediately mooted the idea of a regular Vajrayana conferences and activities under a Centre which will be created for this specific purpose. I am truly pleased that Hon'ble Prime Minister could fit into his very very busy time to address all of us tonight. I therefore would like to thank Hon'ble Prime Minister for sharing his time with the conference participants.

For the Centre for Bhutan Studies & GNH of which I am the empty and impermanent head, this is the fourth international conference within the last eight months which we had the honour to co-organize. In November 2015, we organised the largest ever international conference on Gross National Happiness attended by over 400 participants from abroad. Then, in April 2015, along with the Tourism Council of Bhutan we hosted a dialogue, 'North East India-Bhutan High-end Tourism'. Just two weeks ago, we co-hosted with the Centre for Escalation of Peace a conference in celebration of the Birth Anniversary of Guru Rinpoche, drawing participants from South Asia. Our humble office has become an efficient engine linking worldwide participants and our researchers have turned into hardened logistic planners. We have also engaged extremely motivated volunteers to create this conducive venue. However, there is bound to be failings, and I seek your pardon for them.



Keynote Address

His Excellency Tshering Tobgay, Hon'ble Prime Minister of Bhutan

It is wonderful to see so many people gathered here in Thimphu from as many as 34 countries for this important conference. First, I wish to welcome all of you to our country.

This is a special year for Bhutan for three reasons. It is a special year, firstly, because it is the birth anniversary of Guru Rinpoche who is the key figure in the spread of Vajrayāna in the Himalayan region, where he has created a lasting spiritual and cultural impact. Close to the middle of the eighth century, Bhutan was blessed to receive repeated visits and stays of Guru Rinpoche. Since he set foot some 1,270 years ago in our country and blessed it, the people in this land have largely enjoyed happiness and peace, and lived in harmony with nature.

Second, this year marks the 400th anniversary year of the arrival of Zhabdrung Rinpoche who started the process of unification of Bhutan into a larger State in 1616.

And thirdly, it is special year because of the birth of His Royal Highness the Gyalsey Jigme Namgyel Wangchuck to His Majesty the King and Her Majesty the Queen.

The celebratory mood of the country is enhanced further by events of this nature, which, over the coming three days, will explore the history and future directions of Vajrayāna Buddhism, a spiritual tradition that has defined the culture and civilization of Bhutan for more than a thousand years.

I have an immense pleasure to welcome you all here on behalf of the Royal Government to participate in this great exchange in this auspicious year in Bhutan. We hope that such exchanges will become a periodic event that will both draw on and enrich the experience of scholars and practitioners from across the world as the Vajrayāna Buddhist tradition continues to grow and expand globally. I believe that greater awareness and applications of the core principles that underlie the diverse expressions of Buddhist doctrine, both historically and in the contemporary world, will be the broad objective of the conference.

In a very familiar story from the Dhammapada, the Buddha advised his followers to test his words to be sure that they follow the Dharma after experiencing its truth themselves. The Buddha said: “O monks and wise men, just as a goldsmith would test his gold by burning, cutting and rubbing it, so must you examine my words and accept them, not merely out of reverence for me.” In this sense, the Buddha advised us to take nothing on faith, but to investigate all things with intelligence and discernment. This is also the essence of the scientific worldview. The bold objective of this conference is thus to discover where the worlds of modern science and the profound philosophical and existential insights of Buddhism may come together in a new synthesis that enriches and expands our collective lives and endeavours.

As you will all surely come across in the days ahead in the conference, this expansive and inclusive view is what characterizes Buddhism in its Tantric, or Vajrayāna form. What will be presented during the conference may challenge some of your cherished assumptions, but expanding your minds and imaginations and taking all these diverse perspectives and points of view into account is what the conference is all about. This objective is clearly stated in the conference’s subtitle: ‘A Mandala of 21st Century Perspectives.’

Almost all of you present here tonight will know what a mandala is. But some of the youth audience might wonder what a Mandala is. As Your Eminences and Venerables would explain more clearly, a mandala is a central concept within Vajrayāna Buddhism that expresses in visual form a unified worldview. It is a space that is unified and permeated by positive values. It takes into account seeming opposites and reveals their complementary natures.

In its simplest sense, a Mandala is a circle that represents both a totality and a focused intention. It is in this sense that the organizers of this conference invoked this image to define the conference’s ultimate purpose of exploring diverse points of view within a sacred space of openness and mutual appreciation.

As you will all come to see during your time in Bhutan, mandalas are recurring images on the walls of our monasteries and temples and on painted scrolls called Thangkas. You will see them in shops and galleries. Mandalas unify all the forces and energies in the universe and the human mind and are thus seen

in all the religious structures. Mandalas are, in this sense, fundamental icons of Vajrayāna Buddhism. Mandalas remind us that everything in life is interconnected. Our habitual division of life into sacred and profane is quite shortsighted. It is this more expansive view of Vajrayāna that the conference, in all its diversity, will help to reveal.

Allow me also to say something about the word Vajrayāna itself. Its deeper meaning is often obscure even to youth who have been brought up within a Vajrayāna world, such as Bhutan. In brief, the word 'vajra' refers to the indestructible element in human nature, while 'yāna' refers to the vehicle by which that indestructible, diamond-like nature, is most readily revealed. Vajrayāna is also known as Tantric Buddhism, Tantrayāna, Mantrayāna, Secret Mantra, Esoteric Buddhism, Diamond Way, Thunderbolt Way, or the Indestructible Way. In essence, all these terms refer to a complex and multifaceted system of Buddhist thought and practice that evolved over many centuries as an accelerated path to freedom from human suffering.

As you are aware, one of the deeply distinguishing features of Vajrayāna Buddhism is that it developed as a means for reaching enlightenment without having to renounce the world or even life's ephemeral pleasures. At the heart of the Vajrayāna world view is the idea that all aspects of our experience can be fundamentally transformed, so long as we approach them with insight and compassion.

The actual methods by which this transformation can be most readily achieved are what we have all gathered here to discuss. Bhutan offers an ideal context for this discussion, as it is the last remaining Himalayan Buddhist Kingdom where the Vajrayāna teachings have continued unbroken since the 8th century. For this, we are grateful for the blessings of Guru Rinpoche, the legacy of Zhabdrung Rinpoche, the Revered Founder of Bhutan, and the enlightened leadership of His Majesty the Fifth and the Fourth Kings.

According to Bhutanese history, Vajrayāna, or Tantric Buddhism, was established in Bhutan in the 8th century by Guru Rinpoche, the 'precious teacher'. He is also known as Padmasambhava, the 'Lotus Born'. He is revered in eight different manifestations that reveal the multidimensionality of human consciousness.

Padmasambhava's diverse manifestations offer us a way of understanding that, as the Buddhist saying goes, there are as many ways to achieving enlightenment as there are human beings. In other words, Vajrayāna is not a 'one form fits all' approach. As you will see in temples and on wall paintings throughout Bhutan, Guru Rinpoche, the 'Precious Teacher', manifested as a monk, an ascetic, a scholar, a lover, a spiritual warrior, and as a king to show that our innermost Buddha Nature, or Vajra Nature, can ultimately be discovered in any existential circumstances.

This was the essence of the Vajrayāna Buddhist teachings revealed by Tantric Buddhist masters such as Padmasambhava, Yeshe Tsogyal, Bhutanese consort of Guru Khando Monmo Tashi Chidren, Mahasiddha Saraha, Tilopa, and Naropa, as well as by later Vajrayāna masters in Bhutan such as the spiritual treasure revealer, Tertön Pema Lingpa, who you will also be hearing about in the coming days.

However, this conference is not only about what we Bhutanese can share with all of you who have come from across the world to experience Vajrayāna Buddhism in its living context. We ourselves will benefit greatly by learning more about the forms that Vajrayāna Buddhism has adopted in Mongolia, India, Nepal, Myanmar, Russia, Australia, Brazil, Japan, China, European countries, and the United States.

This creative adaptability is, of course, the very essence of the Tantric tradition, with the root meaning of the word ‘Tantra’ being to stretch and expand. But those of us who have been exposed to Tantric Buddhism only in Bhutan may sometimes fall into a narrow view and think that only here in our country is Vajrayāna being preserved in a ‘pure’ form.

To be honest, we will also see that we have adapted Vajrayāna to suit our own unique social, political, environmental, and historical circumstances. As we will no doubt be hearing, the same is true for the Vajrayāna Buddhist traditions in Tibet, Nepal, Mongolia, India, Japan, Australia, Europe and America. This mutability is not a fault, but rather Vajrayāna’s greatest strength. But unless we discern the core principles of Vajrayāna, its innermost essence could be misrepresented.

Ladies and Gentlemen, what do we mean when we speak of ‘Tradition and Innovation in Vajrayāna Buddhism’?

Tradition, as we know, gives structure, meaning, and continuity to human life. But without innovation and creative change we may find ourselves perpetuating outmoded forms that no longer serve our highest intentions.

The contemporary world of technology offers a dramatic example of this principle when we discover that the I-Phone or personal computer that we thought was state-of-the art has suddenly become obsolete. Unless we regularly upgrade our technologies, both on a personal and cultural level, we may find ourselves quite literally left behind in a world in which the Internet reigns supreme as an extension of human consciousness. Although we often find fault with it, modern technology is quite a wonderful thing, and there are few of us who, however deep our spiritual yearnings, would be willing to forgo our mobile phones and email accounts.

But just as outer technologies are continuously being upgraded through constant creative innovation, is there no scope for our traditional technologies

of inner transformation to also be upgraded? This is one of the challenging questions that the conference will address.

If we really examine the Buddhist traditions of the Himalayan region, we may discover that they are based on radical transformations of earlier Buddhist doctrine. The celestial Buddhas that we see in Vajrayāna, for example, have no precedent in early Buddhism, yet they are entirely compatible with the Vajrayāna Buddhist view of using all aspects of human experience and imagination as a means of freeing ourselves from unnecessary suffering and discovering a transcendent state of happiness that can be shared with others.

Similarly, the Vajrayāna Buddhist tradition of Terma, or 'revealed treasure', that is so central to the Nyingma, or early translation school of Himalayan Buddhism, continues to be a way in which new technologies, or skilful means, can enlarge upon earlier models.

In truth, human history is a continual process of preserving through tradition and advancing through innovation. Both processes are fundamental not only to human life, but to all of nature. It is this dialectic of continuity and change within one of the most sophisticated systems of human thought and practice ever devised that we are all here to explore.

Buddhism has always been about enlarging the scope of our vision and overcoming our conditioning rather than unconsciously perpetuating outmoded forms. This was of course the example shown by Buddha Sakyamuni himself when he rejected the social structures and religious institutions of his time and outlined a comprehensive path to psychological and spiritual emancipation.

Buddha Sakyamuni also recognized how quickly we tend to grasp on to what we take to be the most precious, even Dharma, and perpetuate forms that may no longer serve. One of the most famous teachings the Buddha gave on this point was in the parable of the raft when he asked his disciples whether it would be sensible for them to carry on their back a raft that they had made to cross a river once they had reached the other side.

The Buddha counselled them that once they had crossed over they should lay down the raft gratefully and continue with their way unencumbered. He concluded the parable by saying in the Dhammapa:

And so it is with my teachings, O monks. My teachings, too, are like a raft, they are for crossing over; they are not for seizing hold of.

The opportunity of this conference is to explore, open-mindedly, the nature of the multi-faceted and fascinating raft that is Vajrayāna, the diamond vehicle that points out that the far shore and the one on which we are standing are ultimately one and the same. There is a bold and wonderful statement in

Vajrayāna that Samsara and Nirvana are of the same essence. Making it true within our own experience and in the experience of others is the essence of the Vajrayāna way.

The days ahead may give us all some valuable tools for working together towards the realization of this exalted goal.

Many of you coming to Bhutan have been introduced to the concept of GNH, or Gross National Happiness, developed by His Majesty the Fourth King. You could almost say that GNH has become Bhutan's brand image in the modern world. Advocating Gross National Happiness is not to denigrate other forms of development in any way. But it clearly emphasises the central importance of psychological wellbeing as a measure of national health and as a foundation for sustainable economic advancement. The Centre for Bhutan Studies & GNH, which initiated this conference, is entrusted by the Royal Government of Bhutan to articulate the ways in which Gross National Happiness can be actively promoted through government policies.

This conference is equally the result of the Central Monastic Body's shared commitment to the sustainable wellbeing of the Bhutanese people through the active propagation of Vajrayāna Buddhist teachings and sacred art forms such as masked dance rituals that, like all Vajrayāna Buddhist practices, operate on multiple levels to ensure harmony between humankind and the larger environment and to develop the full range of our human capacities.

It is to this final goal of comprehensive human thriving that the conference is dedicated, drawing on all aspects of Bhutanese society, as well as shared international perspectives.

I would like to conclude by pointing out that the space in which the conference will unfold is itself very auspicious. We are the precinct of the Royal Institute of Tourism and Hospitality, which is an institution for advancing international exchange and education in this field. The Institute's modern, state-of-the-art facilities and serene environment thus offer an ideal venue for the current conference. I express my appreciation to the Royal Institute of Tourism and Hospitality for allowing the conference to be hosted here.

I believe I speak on behalf of all Bhutanese, when I say that I deeply hope that your time in Bhutan and exposure to our living traditions of Vajrayāna Buddhism will deepen your appreciation for the contributions that Vajrayāna can make to the modern world, not only as a spiritual practice devoted to realising the full potential of the human mind, but with practical applications that can help address the current global environmental crisis and transform education, healthcare, and social services in general through the active cultivation of creativity, wisdom, and compassionate action.

I would like to remind you all again that, while you are here, we are all part of a single Mandala. And yet, as Vajrayāna Buddhism teaches, this single Mandala

is connected to all other spheres of human activity, and the thoughts we express will radiate outward into the world at large.

So think well, enjoy our hospitality, and forgive us for all the inevitable oversights that will have occurred in trying to accommodate so many people for this wonderful event! As we all know too well, life is far from perfect, but we can nonetheless perfect our lives by striving for that impossible ideal. Thank you all again for being here for this historic occasion!



Empowerment, Oral Transmission, and Verbal Instruction in Vajrayāna Buddhism: An Opening Address

by Lopen Kinley

Firstly, I would like to extend ‘Tashi Delek’ greetings to everyone gathered here on this auspicious occasion. I rejoice at the fact that all of you have spent precious time and effort in coming here to engage in the discussions on the Great Secret Vajrayāna – the pinnacle of all the Vehicles in the Buddhist teachings.

So, elucidators of the realization and scriptural teachings - your eminences, learned scholars and practitioners participating from different countries, expounders of the Dharma teachings - khenpos, lopens, and scholars within the country, I welcome you all!

I would also like to warmly welcome the President of the Centre for Bhutan Studies and GNH, Dasho Karma Ura, the staff of CBS, and the representatives of Central Monastic Body who have jointly organized this significant event.

To commence, I would like to very briefly touch upon the Secret Mantrayāna, the subject of today’s discussion, and how it was established and continues to flourish in this country.

Guru Padmasambhava, the second Buddha established the Secret Mantrayāna in Bhutan during his arrival in Bumthang in the 8th century. Later, in the middle years, numerous lamas from both the Old and New translation schools

(the Nyingma and Sarma) as well as non-sectarian schools known as Rime, who were all adepts with great spiritual qualities such as clairvoyance and magic displaying abilities as well as with profound spiritual legacies, came and founded their respective monastic seats in this nation. The strong foundation of the Vajrayāna teachings was thus further strengthened unceasingly over time, up to this day, as the Wheel of Secret Mantrayāna continues to be turned through the mode of ripening empowerments and liberating instructions.

Bhutan is today revered as an auspicious and sacred nation-state that upholds Vajrayāna Buddhism. This auspicious legacy was instituted by our prophesied Guru of destiny, our ultimate source of refuge, the Glorious Palden Drukpa Zhabdrung Ngawang Namgyal who was a combined emanation of Avalokiteshvara and Guru Padmasambhava when he ‘turned his horse towards the south’ in 1616. This is an idiomatic way of saying that he arrived in the land of Bhutan by travelling southwards from Tibet.

Zhabdrung Ngawang Namgyal thereafter established the Sangha in Bhutan by instituting the central dzongs and a network of branch monasteries throughout the region.

Zhabdrung Rinpoche went on to introduce and lay the foundation of a Dharma nation by instituting the spiritual and secular affairs of a new nation state. In an idiomatic phrase— ‘Zhabdrung Rinpoche bequeathed law and order to the lawless southern land alike providing a handle to the handle-less pot.’

After thorough analysis and through realization of his wisdom mind, Zhabdrung Rinpoche proceeded to establish the Buddha Dharma in general and the tradition of conferring ripening empowerments, supporting oral transmissions and liberating instructions by placing special emphasis on ‘Pha chos’ and ‘Bu chos’, which are the quintessence of the Secret Mantrayāna teachings. “Pha chos” is the Dharma that is passed down from the lineage of Gurus and “Bu chos” is the Dharma that is transmitted by successive disciples. The Pha chos comprises *Dam-Ngag Dongpo Sumdril* or “The Three Interwoven Instructions” and the Bu chos comprises *Gar Thik Yang Sum* or the art of “Ritual dance, creation of Mandalas and Ritual Chants”.

With regards to empowerments, by the fortunate karma of being born in our sacred Vajrayāna land, I have received the empowerments on *Lama, Yidam, Khandro and Dharma Protectors* in their entirety through the unbroken line of successive lineage lamas till my most benevolent Root Guru. And I am contributing towards the transmission of all these empowerments in my humble ways.

If I may offer a brief explanation about the pith instructions, mainly on the *Nine Deity Generation Stage* practice and the *Five Secret and Profound Completion Stage* instructions, they are:

Explanations on Mahamudra that explicitly teaches the View.
The Six Yogas of Naropa that explicitly deals with meditation.
The Six-Fold Cycle of Equal Taste that explicitly teaches the conduct
The Seven-Fold Teachings on Interdependence that explicitly teaches the fruition state.

And finally, the profound path of Guru Yoga and other related meditation instructions is the most essential instruction to all the practices.

All these transmissions and instructions are taught and practised in the twenty-seven retreat centres under the auspices of the Central Monastic Body.

Similarly, about the reading transmissions, I have received the transmission of the actual words of the Buddha endowed with the *Four Qualities of Purities* in addition to the *Shastras* written by the Indian Panditas that rectify and render protection. I have received the reading transmission that has come down to us all the way from two sublime seers—Tilopa and Naropa and all the collected writings of their successive lineage lamas. I have been imparting them to others to the best of my ability.

Finally, I would like to conclude by making a humble and earnest request to all the learned scholars and practitioners gathered here today. We are living in a time where there is rapid development of external resources and modern conveniences throughout the world. At the same time, the internal attitude and behaviour of people are degenerating, which is giving rise to more and more distractions towards the sensual pleasures, and thereby they are losing interest in the sacred Dharma. At this crucial point in time, I would like to request all of you to engage in discussions with the zeal of a Bodhisattva to bring about the restoration of the Vajrayāna teachings, if there are any lapses, and to continue to preserve and promote the already flourishing tradition of the Secret Mantrayāna tradition.

I would like to also convey my hopes and prayers that all of you will continue with your noble activities so that the teachings and practices of the Great Secret Vajrayāna flourish through space and time.

The Vajrayāna Tradition in Mongolia: An Opening Address

by Khamba Lam Gabju

First of all, I am extremely happy to have come to the Kingdom of Bhutan, the land where the Vajrayāna tradition spread in its full pattern, for attending the international conference on “Tradition and Innovation in the Vajrayāna Buddhism” organized by the Central Monastic Body and the Centre for Bhutan Studies and GNH. On behalf of the monastic community of Gandan Tegchenling Monastery, the Centre of Mongolian Buddhists, Mongolian Buddhist devotees and myself, I solemnly congratulate the organizing committee of this international conference for their initiative and implementation that has brought everything this far. I wish you the best of luck in your further endeavours with putting my folded hands. Also, I wish to thank everyone who is making this conference important with his/her presence.

By the way, here I wish to emphasize that Mongolia and the Kingdom of Bhutan have established the diplomatic tie in 2012.

Please let me deliver you my very brief presentation.

According to the Shakyamuni Buddha’s prophecy that “My Dharma will spread north to the further north”, Buddhism was introduced to the territories of the Mongols via the Silk Road 2,000 years ago. Certain archaeological evidences like a stupa of Kherlen Bars City, an ancient city, and Buddha images, with Sanskrit scripts, of the Gandhara Style have been found. We divide the

introduction of Buddhism into three periods; the ancient, the middle and the latter.

The ancient spread of Buddhism was based on the Sutric Tradition. But **the middle spread** going back to the 13th century consisted of both the sutric and tantric traditions. Chinggis Khan's direct successors invited many highly-qualified Buddhist masters of Sakya and Kagyupa traditions from the Land of Snow Mountain to the Great Mongolian State for spreading the Buddha-Dharma. Some of them were enthroned as state tutors by Mongolian kings. From this period, Mongolian scholars supported by Dharma kings began translating sutric and tantric texts such as "Saddharma Pundarika Sūtra", "Bodhicharya-Avtara", "Manzusri Nama Samgiti", "Pancha Raksha" and so on into their own languages.

The latter spread goes back to the 16th century. When the Gelugpa Tradition began to spread in Mongolia, the educational system of the Nalanda University was introduced to Mongolia in its full pattern. The founder of the latter spread and the introduction of the five minor and five major subjects of Buddhism is the spiritual head of Buddhism in Mongolia is His Holiness Jnanavajra, the first incarnation of the Jetsuntampa lineage of Mongolia. Also, there were many highly recognized Mongolian monks like Ngawang Balten Dorje, Khalkh Tamshig Dorje and so on whose works on the tantric tradition have been studied as one of the most comprehensive and important texts in other countries. The uniqueness of the latter spread is Buddhism, which was adopted by the whole nation for the time being. Therefore, Mongolia was a 100% Buddhist country at the earliest of the 20th century.

Due to the communist purge in the 1930s, this profound Buddhist system developed and inherited century-to-century almost entirely disappeared. 17,000 highly educated Buddhist monks, tulkus were brutally executed and approximately 1,500 monasteries and temples were completely destroyed together with their tangible and intangible heritage. Fortunately, the current monastery – Gandan Tegchenling – was reopened due to certain reasons and began its religious functions under a strict supervision of the communist regime. It became the only Buddhist temple running religious functions in Mongolia.

And after the dramatic democratic change in politics in 1990, the fact that the religious freedom was granted by the national constitution of Mongolia became the very foundation of reviving Buddhism. In order to revive the long-lost Buddhist education system, we have been giving a significant attention to training hundreds of young monks in and outside Mongolia particularly in India. Although the religious freedom was obtained, there are many foreign various religious sects targeting Mongolia in the name of human rights. It is because there was a gap in the national security policy of nations which transited from the former communist system to the new democratic system. My wish is that traditionally Buddhist Asian countries choosing the democratic

system must pay serious attention to their own tradition and religion that strengthen their national identities.

We Mongolian Buddhists have been doing many things in order to plant Buddhism as the national immunity in the mind of people. At the same time, we have been paying significant attention to certain circles of human lifespan, giving a name to a newborn baby, cutting hair of children, moving into a new house, wedding and funeral ceremonies. Paying attention to these is very helpful to direct social relations and people's psychology to Buddhism.

There are many similarities between Mongolia and the Kingdom of Bhutan. For example, each of us has a small population and Buddhism is very influential in both. Also, there are many similar challenges; how to combine the democracy and tradition in the new millennium, how to inherit this policy to the later generations, how to decide religious issues independently, how to estimate an outsider's interference and how to react in response. Therefore, in my opinion, there is a crucial need for us to learn from each other and to work together on many issues in the future. As Buddhist practitioners, we could send our monks to the Kingdom of Bhutan on exchange programs for learning from the experience of Buddhist institutions. We know that the Kingdom of Bhutan is one of the very few countries where the Vajrayāna Tradition has not been broken since its establishment.

Therefore, I, as the abbot of Gandan Tegchenling Monastery and the head lama of the Centre of Mongolian Buddhists, accompanied by Dr. Bataa, the advisor to the President of Mongolia, am attending this conference by giving very much significance. I wish our participation would open the door to bilateral ties on religious and cultural collaborations of the two countries.

Finally, I thank the Kingdom of Bhutan for your warm hospitality. I feel the Gross National Happiness that has been, century-to-century, built based on the genuine Buddhist values and I admire your eco-friendly attitude – the right understanding of interdependence – that is bringing you to the international recognition!

Thank you for your kind attention!

May Bodhicitta, precious and sublime,
Arise where it has not yet come to be,
And where it has arisen may it never fail,
But grow and flourish even more.

From Monks to Yogis: Historical Transformation Within the Vajrayana Buddhist Sangha: An Opening Address

by Tsugla Lopen

Lord Buddha first generated the bodhichitta, accumulated merit and perfected the paths for countless aeons, and finally attained the complete enlightenment. He taught thousands of different teachings to lead all the followers to higher realms and nirvana. Lord Buddha's teachings if summarized can be categorically grouped into two: i) the sutrayana system of defining characteristics and ii) the vehicle of Secret Vajrayana.

In the teachings of sutra and tantra, many different paths are being taught, but the real meaning of the paths can be categorized into threefold vows.

The classification of the threefold vows is pratimoksha (individual liberation); the foundation of all the path is the outer pratimoksha vow. The main source of all paths is the inner bodhisattva vow, and the secret mantrayana vow is the main pillar of the path.

Those three vows are all interdependent, giving rise to one another depending on each other, thus giving rise to higher and lower levels. The three vows each inside have many categorization, with sub-division and different methods of receiving vow, etc.

In general, we say monk or bikshu to those ones merely wearing the outer attire of monk and also to those wearing clothes similar to that of a monk. In reality, a bikshu or full monk is a person who has been ordained into full order

of bikshu vows, one of the eight kinds of vows of pratimoksha. Examples of a monk are Nagarjuna and Naropa in ancient India who are all great panditas and accomplished siddhis, and many great Kagyu masters in Tibet and Bhutan

A person with pure and perfect vow of a bikshu /monk, who takes on bodhisattva vow, and also takes on the sacred mantrayana vow altogether is, A Person possessing the three vows, can be named as A bikshu, Bodhisattva, or Tantrik without contradiction. However, since the sacred mantrayana vow is said to be higher vow than other, the monk who has entered the mantrayana field and mainly practices mantrayana, he can be called tantrik or yogi.

In general, the term yogi has many meaning and significance; however, it can be also applied to all who practice shamatha and vipashyana or calm-abiding and clear-seeing concentration, and to those who practice and the experience the two-fold generative and completions stage practices.

Opening Address

by Venerable Lama Lobzang

It is my great privilege and pleasure to be invited to this “International Conference on Tradition and Innovation in Vajrayāna Buddhism: A Mandala of 21st Century Perspectives”, organized by the Central Monastic Body and the Centre for Bhutan Studies and GNH.

Today, as we discuss tradition and innovation in Vajrayāna Buddhism, it would not be out of place to outline, briefly, the history of Buddha Dhamma itself. 2,600 years ago, Lumbini in Nepal witnessed a historic event – the birth of Siddhartha Gautam. 35 years later, another defining moment of history occurred under the sacred Mahabodhi tree in Bodh Gaya, in the present day Indian state of Bihar. This was the moment that transformed Siddhartha Gautam, a prince to Buddha, the Enlightened One. Thereafter, for four-and-a-half decades beginning with the Dhammachakkapavattana at Sarnath, Buddha preached his undying message of peace, love, compassion and harmony, bestowing upon humanity the blessings of the Triple Gem, the Four Noble Truths and the Noble Eightfold Path.

Three months after Buddha’s mahaparinirvana at Kushinagar, the First Council met in Rajgir to discuss both, the Dhamma and the Vinaya. This was followed by the Second and the Third Councils in Vaishali and Pataliputra respectively. It was only after this that the Emperor Ashoka, having renounced warfare and adopted the Dhamma, started to send emissaries to spread the Dhamma, beginning with Sri Lanka, and thereafter to Myanmar and Thailand, and across the Hellenistic empire, through Afghanistan, the Middle East and Northeast Africa, possibly up to Greece itself. Thus, originating in the Gangetic plains of

northern India, Buddha Dhamma spread and became a way of life for millions of people around the globe. This is a universally acknowledged fact of history.

While more and more people in different parts of the world took to Buddhism, the Dhamma itself was evolving. The Theravāda, Mahayāna and Vajrayāna traditions, while fully accepting the teachings of Buddha, chose to interpret them differently. Thus, even though there may be only a slight difference in their respective philosophies, their practices are different. In effect, they are nothing but different expressions of the same teachings of Buddha.

Over the centuries that followed, these three major traditions took root in other parts of Asia as well, and developed, absorbing in the course local traditions and influences. Meanwhile, Guru Rinpoche brought Vajrayāna Buddhism to Bhutan. As in the case of the other major traditions, the monasteries that he founded, and those that came up later, became the repositories of the Vajrayāna tradition. As followers of the Buddha Dhamma, we owe our gratitude to the great royal lineage as well as the learned religious leaders of the Kingdom of Bhutan for preserving this great ancient tradition, and ensuring that its wisdom remains available to all humankind.

In fact, at the International Buddhist Confederation (IBC), it is our earnest endeavour to draw upon their age-old wisdom and bring all Buddhist traditions to a common platform, so that followers of the Dhamma can present a united voice in the ongoing global social, political and economic discourse. This is clearly outlined in our motto, “Collective Wisdom United Voice”.

IBC’s commitment to bringing our ancient traditions together under one roof can be gauged from the “Dialogue on Vinaya” organized by us between senior monks of the Nalanda tradition based in India, and those of the Theravāda tradition from Sri Lanka. Besides that, an example of our humble endeavours to ensure that all humankind gains from Buddhist values and principles was “SAMVAD: A Global Hindu-Buddhist Initiative on Conflict Avoidance and Environment Consciousness” held in New Delhi and Bodh Gaya in September 2015. In the same vein, IBC took the lead in procuring endorsements from the leading lights of the Buddhist world for the Buddhist Climate Change Declaration and Statement to World Leaders that were presented at the COP-21 in Paris in November 2015. Now we look forward to partnering with the Centre for Bhutan Studies and GNH in a project that we hope will help redefine the idea of wealth and remodel the way in which economies around the world are managed.

Indeed, as a global umbrella, Buddhist body with over 300-member organizations spread across 39 countries, this will not be our first interaction or association with Bhutan. We are privileged to have among our Presidents, Her Royal Highness Ashi Kesang Wangmo Wangchuck, on whose guidance and wisdom we have relied, and will continue to rely for taking our organization forward and furthering its mission.

I would like to end by congratulating and thanking the Central Monastic Body and the Centre for Bhutan Studies and GNH for organizing this conference on a subject that is extremely pertinent. It is our firm belief that with the progress of time, in order to remain relevant, religions and traditions must adapt and innovate to accommodate the changing needs and demands of societies, without of course compromising on their fundamental value.

Flourishing of Vajrayāna Buddhism in Bhutan and its Way Forward: An Opening Address

by Leytshog Lopön

I would like to talk briefly about the status of Vajrayāna Buddhism in Bhutan and its way forward. There are two different traditions of Vajrayāna Buddhism, the old and the new tradition.

The Nyingma (Old) Tradition

First, let me introduce the arrival and propagation of the old tradition of the Vajrayāna Buddhism. It was during the Iron Tiger Year in the 8th Century AD that Guru Padmasambhava arrived in Bumthang from India. Guru Rinpoche restored the life-soul of King Sindhu Raja and saved his life, took the princess Tashi Khewdren as his consort and blessed the barbaric land.

Towards the end of the 8th century, Guru Padmasambhava came to Bhutan. He founded and blessed many sacred sites including Singye Dzong and Paro Taktshang Singye Samdrup. He spent at least three months in these sacred sites, practicing and teaching the sacred teachings of the Three Yogas benefitting innumerable fortunate practitioners. Besides, for future disciples he left Mandalas, selfcreated images of deities, hid numerous artifacts, and left body, hand and footprints and scriptural treasures beyond imagination.

In brief, he travelled all over the country, thereby turning this country into a sacred and ideal place for practicing Vajrayāna.

Guru Rinpoche said:

Just by being in the area one will achieve accomplishment
Therefore, my disciples and followers practicing the Buddha Dharma
Go to the sacred hidden land in the south.

And....

Find secluded caves in the sacred southern land and practice;
That way, accomplishment requiring seven years in Tibet
Will be achieved within seven days in that place.

Over the period of time, in accordance with their respective prophesies, among the 25 disciples of the Canonical and Terma traditions, several including Langchen Pelgi Singye, Omniscient Longchen Rabjampa, Tertön Sherub Mebar, Terchen Dorji Lingpa, Drubthob Thangthong Gyalpo, Tertön Tshering Dorji, Terchen Pema Lingpa and his successors propagated the so-called “distant transmission” lineage, the direct lineage of the revealed treasures and the profound lineage of the pure vision. These saints contributed immensely to the propagation of the Nyingma tradition in this country, which flourishes even to this day.

The Sarma (New) Tradition

Second, let me introduce how the “New” Vajrayāna tradition came and flourished in Bhutan. Buddha Shakyamuni first generated the wish to attain enlightenment and develop Bodhicitta. Gradually he perfected the completion, ripening and accomplishment stages and perfected the four paths of learning and crossed the Ten Bhūmis (“levels of attainment”). Finally, he achieved enlightenment under the Bodhi Tree in Bodhgaya and turned the wheel of Dharma consisting of 84,000 teachings in accordance with the requirements and ability of the disciples.

These teachings can be summarized into two distinctive approaches, the causal philosophical vehicle or dialectical approach, and the resultant vehicle or the method of taking fruition as the path. The latter known as the Vajrayāna tradition was taught by the Buddha at the age of seventy-nine at Amravati. A vast set of teachings were taught that were received and later written in different languages including Sanskrit, and were preserved in the pure realm of Vajrapani, Shambhala and the celestial world.

Later these sacred teachings were revealed and made available in our world by great Mahasiddhas like King Visukalpa, Saraha and Nagarjuna. One such master was great Indian adept Tilopa (988–1069), who was believed to be an emanation of Cakrasamvara, and who had symbolically received these teachings from four great Gurus representing four different traditions.

During the renunciation practice, he went to Oddiyana, revealed and brought the three jewel lineages of the so-called “Whispering Dakini Transmission” of

the Cakrasamvara teachings. On the way back to East Bengal, he picked up the nine teachings of the “Formless Dakini Hearing Lineage”. Contemplating these teachings while he pounded sesame, he finally attained enlightenment or Siddhi.

He went to the pure realm of Akanishtha, Tilopa met Buddha Vajradhara, and received many teachings of the contemplation stages condensed into four and six stages, and the realization stages abridged into five and four courses. He returned to the human realm and started the Kargyud tradition. There are stories that he had three times liberated all sentient beings living in the thirteen provinces of East Bengal into the celestial realm.

Among Tilopa’s disciples, the most outstanding was Pandit Naropa, the crown jewel of all scholars, who had taught at Nalanda University for many years. Through blessings and prophecy of the Wisdom Dakini and Cakrasamvara, he finally met Tilopa, and propitiated him with twelve minor and twelve major hardships and services. Naropa also attained Siddhi after Tilopa hit him with his sandal. He received all teachings and thereafter the two became equal in realization. Thus, they were referred to as the Two Excelled Ones.

Then, as per the prophecy left by Guru Padmasambhava that “an emanation of Drombipa (one of the 84 Mahasiddhas), who will be known as a translator Named as Lodre will be born in the southern region,” the Tibetan adept Marpa Choki Lodre (1012 – 1097) with great courage and effort went to India three times and spent over twenty-five years studying under hundreds of great masters, but principally by Naropa and Maitripa (1007-1078). Finally, at Phulahari, he received teachings on Hevajra, Whispering Dakini and Rongyom (process of equalizing taste) from Naropa, practiced and attained Siddhi.

He also received the essence of meditational instructions from Maitripa, the Father Tantra from Yeshe Nyingpo, the Mother Tantra from Zhiwa Zangpo, and the Denzhi (the “Four Seats” or Catuhpita, an Anuttara Mother Tantra) from his Lady, Cham Niguma, etc. Thus, after receiving so many teachings and becoming a reservoir of Dharma, he became master of the five Kayas. With numerous collections of sutra books, he returned to Tibet and began to tutor many disciples including those who came to be known as “the four pillars.”

A disciple of one of the four pillars was the great Milarepa (1040? – 1123?) from Gungthang. He was the upholder of the oral instruction of the six treatises of Naropa including “the union of mixing and ejecting of consciousness”. In the beginning, he was put to a rigorous purification process to annihilate all of his accumulated sins, then gradually initiated into the sacred practices, and finally given the responsibility of upholding the practice lineage, like filling the vase to the brim. He also practiced rigorously at Tanyaphug, Drakartaso, and Lachigang and, spreading the practice lineage far and wide, he became the crown jewel of all practitioners. Whoever heard his name generated deep

devotion and attained liberation. Thus, he contributed immensely to the propagation of the Buddha Dharma.

Then, among the heart-sons of Milarepa, the most excellent one was the great, Gampopa (1079-1153), the Sun-like disciple who was prophesized by Guru Padmasambhava in the words:

I will be born as the great physician of lower Nyel
There will appear a host of practitioners of essence.

To him, Milarepa bestowed all teachings, in their totality, like ‘filling the vase to the brim’ including the sacred Whispering Dakini teachings. He became accomplished in the practice and achieved realization. He propagated the combined tradition of the Kadampa and Mahamudra teachings later known as the Dagpo Kargyud tradition. Thus, the conceptual principal philosophy of the Mahamudra known as “Gampopa’s tradition of realization” came into existence.

Milarepa’s “Moon-like” disciple Rechung Dorji Drakpa went to India as per his command of Guru. He received teachings on the practice and propitiation of Amitayus from Machig Drupai Gyalmo, and sacred teachings of the formless Dakinis and the six treatises from Tiphupa, and then returned to Tibet. He also realized the ultimate nature and attained Siddhi. Both “Instruction manuals of Rechungpa” and “Gampopa’s tradition of realization” eventually were passed down to Tsangpa Jare.

Tsangpa Jare (1161-1211) was the undisputed dual reincarnation of the Indian scholar-adapt Panchen Naropa and the crown jewel of all Kargyud tradition, Gampopa. He was prophesized by Buddha in the words:

In the place called Sa
A person with the name Ja [rGya]
Will appear, who is emanation of Naropa.

As per the directives of the Dakini, he went to Tsari and opened the sacred site. Cakrasamvara and Vajrayogini blessed him. Meditating for three months without releasing his crossed leg, he was blessed by the seven Buddhas from whom he received the seven teachings of interdependent origination. Later the teachings came to be known as “Tsangpa Jare’s classified teachings on interdependent origination”. Thus, he propagated the union of these three lineages.

Within this tradition, it was said that “the Upper Drukpa spread like the stars in the sky; the Lower Drukpa spread like the silt of the earth; and the Middle Drukpa spread like the dust mote in a sunbeam.” Gradually the tradition spread far and wide, proverbially “as far as eighteen days of a vulture’s flight”. During that period, it was also said that “half of the Tibetan population were

Drukpas, half of the Drukpas were mendicants and, half of the mendicants were Siddhis.”

From the Middle Drukpa, the family and throne holder of the Drukpa tradition, Zhabdrung Ngawang Namgyal, the unison emanation of Avaloketeshvara and Padmasambhava was born.

As per Guru Padmasambhava’s prophecy:

Drukpa Tsangpa Jare, who is the emanation of Namkai Nyingpo
Who will be known as Ngawang will come to the southern land.

Again, Padmasambhava said in the text “stag sham khog dbub” that:

The person named “Ngag” mastered in the Tantric art
Will rule the South-Western land and bring peace in the region.

From the “sku lha mkha’ ri” prophecy:

From the Ja [rGya] clan prevailing in Tsang,
A wisdom embodiment of Pema Gyalpo will appear briefly in the Ngari and Tsang region;
He will be heard far and wide like the Thunder Dragon in the region of U-Tsang and the southern land.

Therefore, as per the above prophecy, and as reiterated by Mahakala’s offering of the region as his domain of influence, Zhabdrung Rinpoche came to Bhutan in 1616 AD.

He propagated the Buddha Dharma and the Palden Drukpa tradition in particular, emphasizing the subtle phase of creative meditation on the Nine Deities and realization instructions on the five completion stages. In addition, he adopted the rule of law based on the ten virtuous deeds and sixteen codes of conduct in line with those Bodhisattva incarnate kings of India and Tibet. Thus, he brought the whole country under the golden yoke of one political administration and gently bound the people together with the silken scarf knot of religious administration.

During this period, as per the command of Zhabdrung Rinpoche, in addition to the tradition of the founding masters known as the “*Pha Chos*”, unique traditions of the sons or the successive followers known as the “*Bu Chos*” were added by Desi Umzey. He established the three unique traditions of Gar (dances), Thig (arts) and Yang (ritual performances). Along with the traditional system, new suitable features and permissible textures were added to make them unique Bhutanese traditions.

Future Prospect of Vajrayāna Tradition

Third, let me address the future of Vajrayāna in Bhutan and its way forward. Through the benevolence and farsighted guidance of our successive kings, Bhutan is giving due consideration and emphasis on our unique culture, which is based on Buddhist principles. In addition, the Bhutanese population believes in the principles of Karma and interdependent origination. We are aware of the fact that our culture originated from Buddhism. The development policy of His Majesty the King, cabinet and the public is Gross National Happiness (GNH). The main means to achieve GNH is also the Buddha Dharma. For, in order to make sure that the source, the Sangha flourishes for all times to come, Zhabdrung Rinpoche appointed Je Khenpos as his spiritual successors. A chain of succession to the golden Vajra throne continues until today. His Holiness Trulku Jigme Choeda is the 70th Je Khenpo.

In order to promulgate the three sacred sources of teachings of the *Pha Chos*, Their Majesties the Kings and Their Holiness the Je Khenpos opened several institutes for higher Buddhist learning, led by Tango Buddhist University. Several meditation centers were also opened led by the Cheri Drubdey Tewa. This ensured sustenance and continuity of the sacred teachings and instructions.

Similarly, in order to safeguard and promote the *Bu Chos* comprising the arts of dances, creations and chants, the performing arts division led by the Chant Master maintained the continuity of the chants, Mudras and music. Likewise, the Kilkhor (Mandala) Division and Lhadri (Painting) Division continued teaching and learning these unique arts. The Choengyer took control of the Dance Division and has gained coverage and popularity in all Rabdeys (District Monk Body) in all 20 districts due to annual Tsechu (Mask Dance) Festivals.

Conclusion

In conclusion, looking at the sustenance and growth of all our religious tradition of the great founding masters and the unique tradition of successive followers, the Vajrayāna tradition of Buddhism is likely to prevail in Bhutan for many more centuries to come.



Vajrayāna Buddhism: Its Place in Traditional Bhutan and Its Future Prospects

Geoffrey Samuel

There are two main things that I hope to do in this paper. The first is to provide a brief introduction to Vajrayāna Buddhism, and to its place in the Bhutanese society of the past. The second is to ask whether Vajrayāna Buddhism might have a place in the Bhutan of the future, and in the world as a whole.

From a Vajrayāna Buddhist point of view, the Vajrayāna teachings are an expression of the wisdom of the Buddha in one or another of his Tantric forms. This revelation of the Buddha's wisdom takes place beyond and outside our ordinary world of space and time. Although it is sometimes spoken of as manifesting in particular places and times, such as the Dhānyakaṭaka stupa in South India where the Kālacakra and other Tantras were said to have been revealed.

For the Gsar ma pa or 'New Tantra' traditions, dating from the 11th and 12th centuries C.E. onwards, this revelation of the Buddha's wisdom is preserved in many Tantric lineages, initially transmitted from India to Tibet and Bhutan in the 11th to 12th centuries. These New Tantra traditions include the 'Brug pa Bka' brgyud pa, who are intimately bound up with the creation of the Bhutanese state and remain the official tradition throughout the country. The Rnying ma pa or Old Tantra traditions, which are also widespread and important within Bhutan, claim to go back to the earlier period of the early spread (*snga dar*) of the Dharma in the Himalayan regions, in the 7th and 8th centuries C.E. For the Old Tantra traditions, there are teaching lineages that were brought to Bhutan

by the great lama Gu ru Rin po che (Guru Padma 'Byung gnas, Padmasambhava) and his associates and disciples in the 8th century, as well as many further revealed treasure teachings or *gter ma* that have been transmitted in later times, and are also believe to have their source in Gu ru Rin po che.

There are different ways of understanding these processes of transmission and revelation. For both Rnying ma and Gsar ma traditions, however, the Vajrayāna is an expression of the Buddha's enlightened nature, the Dharmakāya. That enlightened nature is present not only in the historical activity of the Buddha Śākyamuni. It is also an intrinsic part of the world in which we live. Ordinarily we see the world from the perspective of impure vision, clouded by the *nyon mongs*, *kleśas* or obscurations, which form part of the ordinary human condition, of which desire, hatred and ignorance are the most fundamental. However, there is always the possibility of achieving the state of pure vision and seeing the world in its true nature, that of the Dharmakāya, within which *bodhicitta*, the altruistic motivation of Buddhahood, the desire to bring all beings to awakening in order to relieve them from suffering, is the central motive force.

This true inner nature of the world is expressed through the activity of the Tantric deities. We can seek to contact those deities and to evoke them within ourselves, within our mind-body complex, our body, speech and mind to use the usual Vajrayāna formulation. This is a vital step on the path to reducing and eliminating the *kleśas*, and making our body mind into a pure channel through which the *bodhicitta*, the compassion that is at the centre of the Buddhist teachings, can flow freely and effectively. Along with other practices such as the various purificatory and preparatory exercises (*sngon 'gro*), and the various yogas of dreaming, *bar do*, psychic heat generation (*gtum mo*) and so on, this is the core of the Vajrayāna path to Buddhahood.

Vajrayāna is thus in a sense outside time, but always accessible. But we can ask why Vajrayāna Buddhism might be taken up and adopted in a particular part of India, Central Asia or the Himalayas at a specific time. What did Vajrayāna Buddhism mean to those people, at that time, such that they were prepared to commit to it the massive human and economic resources that supported the great monasteries of Buddhist Asia? Western scholars are perhaps more likely to ask this question than are traditional Buddhist scholars from Asian societies. Such questions form part of the disciplinary training of a Western academic, whereas for a traditional Buddhist scholar the value of Buddhism tends to be taken for granted. Nevertheless, the question is not trivial. The future of Vajrayāna, at least for the foreseeable future, does not depend only on the intrinsic value of the teachings, but also on whether the world in which we now live will appreciate that value and provide the level of support needed for Vajrayāna to become a vital and ongoing part of the new global civilization within which we live today. If we understand how such an appreciation and

support developed in the past, in Bhutan and elsewhere, this can perhaps help us to see the possibilities for the Vajrayāna in today's world.

One part of the answer to why Vajrayāna Buddhism was valued and supported in Bhutan and other Himalayan countries is that it was seen as a source of practical help in daily life. The Vajrayāna was not only seen as a form of wisdom that could lead to Enlightenment, to the ultimate goal of Buddhahood. It was also understood to be a source of practical techniques to maintain prosperity and good health among the human beings of countries such as Bhutan. Vajrayāna rituals protected the fields from hail and maintained fertility among crops. Vajrayāna practices defended communities against the attacks of human beings or of the spirit-world. Himalayan communities came to accept the need for such ritual practices as part of their ongoing existence, and the masters of the Vajrayāna largely replaced, or incorporated under their supervision, the village priests and spirit-mediums who had dealt with such concerns in earlier times.

Local and regional rulers also accepted the need to support the Vajrayāna. Among such rulers were the kings of Gu ge and Mang yul who played such an important part in the early years of the *phyi dar* or later spread of the Dharma in Tibet, the Rlangs dynasty which dominated central Tibet in the 14th and 15th centuries, the various local and regional rulers of Bhutan before the coming of the Zhabs drung Ngag dbang dbang rgyal in the 17th century, and many others, including the Mongol and Manchu emperors of China. These emperors, kings and local big men were doubtlessly often motivated mainly by Buddhism as an ethical system that could help maintain stability and order within the lands where they had authority, but the historical record suggests that many of them were also impressed by the personal qualities of Vajrayāna gurus and lamas, and developed personal faith in the Vajrayāna teachings. In these ways Buddhism in Bhutan and other Himalayan countries became part of the fabric of everyday life, and part of the way in which people understood the world in which they lived. In the course of this process, the central ethical dimension of Vajrayāna Buddhism, the altruistic impetus of *bodhicitta* also became an integral part of these societies, along with the ideal of Buddhahood as the ultimate goal of human existence.

As Vajrayāna Buddhism became established within a country such as Bhutan, the landscape also became conceived of in ways that reinforced a sense of a specifically Buddhist universe. The mountains and lakes were now homes of protector deities that had vowed to guard the Buddhist teachings. The holy places of Bhutan became sites of temples, *stūpas*, monasteries, and meditation-caves, infused with the ideas and personalities of Vajrayāna Buddhism. If you grew up in traditional Bhutan, Vajrayāna Buddhism made sense in a way that it does not, if you grow up in contemporary London, New York or Sydney.

Even today, though Bhutan is in many ways a modern country, many ancient temples and meditation sites that are associated with Gu ru Rin po che, Zhabs

drung Ngag dbang rnam rgyal, Padma gling pa and their successors are still a constant reminder of a power that is intrinsic in the landscape, and that could be accessed by the lamas and yogis of later times. The stories of these lamas and holy men of the past are still a strong presence within the land, familiar in one form or another to most Bhutanese people.

There are many other ways in which someone living in pre-modern Bhutan would have been constantly reminded of the truths and teachings of Vajrayāna Buddhism. Proverbial wisdom, folk songs and dances, the stories of yogis and lamas and their powers, the *ma ni* walls around *stūpas* or along mountain passes, the various clothing of lay and monastic practitioners, all these were part of the texture of daily life. The great monastic and civic festivals of the *tshe chu* demonstrated the presence and power of the *yi dam* and protector deities (Samuel and David, 2016). Life and death were understood in terms of *karma* and rebirth. Buddhist expressions and ideas pervaded the everyday languages of the peoples of Bhutan. This is important because when a Bhutanese, especially in pre-modern times, took up an interest in Buddhist practice he or she had grown up in a world that supported that interest in many obvious and also more subtle ways.

Consider for example a practice such as the 'Chi med srog thig, a well-known Tantric practice (*tshe sgrub*) for achieving long life and health (Samuel, in press, 1). The 'Chi med srog thig was discovered or revealed in Bhutan in 1904 at the sacred location of Seng ge Rdzong by the *gter ston* lama Zil gnon Nam kha'i rdo rje, and passed on by him initially to the 15th Rgyal dbang Karma pa and then to the well-known Rnying ma pa lama Bdud 'joms rin po che ('Jigs bral Ye shes rdo rje, 1904-1987). Bdud 'joms rin po che wrote liturgical and explanatory texts for the practice and transmitted it onwards to his family members and disciples, many of them are active in Bhutan in the present day.

If one receives the empowerments for this practice, studies the liturgical and commentarial texts, and undertakes the practice itself, even at a basic level, it soon becomes clear how undertaking such a yogic regimen is supported by and interlaced with the wider spiritual energies and assumptions of the Bhutanese world. The main text of the practice is introduced, like many *gter ma* texts, by the words of Gu ru Rin po che himself, who tells the reader and practitioner of his spiritual activities in the Himalayas of which this specific revelation is a part. The text itself is infused with references to the wider pantheon of deities of Rnying ma pa Buddhism. These names would be very familiar to a Bhutanese practitioner undertaking the 'Chi med srog thig, particularly in the past, as would the caves and other locations where Gu ru Rin po che practiced in Bhutan and the Himalayas, and the temples and monasteries where his activities have been continued throughout the centuries.

In the course of undertaking this practice, the environment around is transformed through pure vision into a transfigured landscape inhabited by Tantric deities, which can act as a source of replenishment and nourishment

for the practitioner and be passed on its turn to others (Samuel 2013a; Samuel in press, 1). That transfigured landscape is understood and something deeper and more real than the everyday world around us, as closer to the intrinsic Buddha-nature underlying all apparent phenomena. Yet the ability to bring about such a transformation is surely reinforced and catalyzed by the practitioners' awareness of the history of sacred activity within the everyday world around them, and the many places, legends, buildings and images that bear witness to that activity.

Similarly for the yogic practices of the 'Brug pa Bka' brgyud tradition, with their own grounding in the stories of Mar pa, Mi la ras pa, Sgam po pa and Gtsang pa rgya ras, the original founding figure of the 'Brug pa Bka' brgyud tradition, or Pha 'Brug sgom Zhig po who first established the tradition in Bhutan in the 13th century, the great Zhabs drung Ngag dbang rnam rgyal who created the 'Brug pa state in Bhutan, and the many other lamas, yogis and sacred locations associated with the 'Brug pa in Bhutan.

This kind of presence of power within the landscape which can be accessed to assist and support those who live their today has a specifically Vajrayāna expression, but it is of course something shared by most, if not all, cultures of the past. It was particularly strong and alive within Australian Aboriginal cultures, for example, where the sense of 'country' was intimately linked to the identity of the people who were born in and lived in that country (e.g. Strehlow, 1947; Stanner, 2011). Much of that sense of connection still survives today and animates the struggles of indigenous Australians to defend what is left of their ancestral homelands and to retain a viable life and identity in the present world. So it is also for many other indigenous cultures and societies.

The people of Europe too once had a similar grounding in the land where they lived. Living as I did in many years in South Wales, I gradually discovered how the mythology of the past, of Arthur, Myrddin (Merlin) and the heroic figures of the *Mabinogion*, was still marked on the British landscape in pre-Christian sacred sites throughout the region. Much the same is true of Ireland, where the mediaeval Dindsenchas stories have preserved a sense of how stories and legend were layered within the land and its ancient monuments. It was doubtless truth of many other parts of Europe as well. Christianity added its own layering of places of power, sacred sites, shrines and pilgrimage centres throughout these lands, associated with the great saints of the past. Yet today this background has lost its meaning for most of those who dwell within these countries. Even for those who are aware of the power that was understood to be within the landscape, there has been a drastic break of continuity. Myrddin may once have been a figure of power with more than a passing likeness to Gu ru Rin po che. There are no living lineages of initiation and understanding, however, that have come down to us from that time as there are from Gu ru Rin po che in Bhutan and other Himalayan countries. The fragmentary texts that have been passed down to us are at best material for an imaginative

reconstruction of a long-lost past (see for example Dames 1992 for Ireland, Dames 2002 for Wales).

In any case, while the landscapes of Europe might in the past have supported the spiritual practices of European paganism, or of Christianity, they did not encode messages about the transformative power of the Buddha. And much of the fabric of ideas, practices, buildings, ways of behaving, which it once supported, vanished into the past long before the memory of present generations.

I make these points in part to emphasise that Bhutan is a special place, both for its own people and for the rest of the world. Indeed, as far as Vajrayāna Buddhism is concerned, since the incorporation of most of Tibet into the People's Republic of China, and the devastation of the Cultural Revolution, Bhutan is one of the very few locations where a deep and meaningful connection of this kind has survived, and has some chance of retaining its viability into the future. We need to recognize nonetheless that even in Bhutan much is changing, and at a very rapid pace. The great religious sites and festivals of the past are being transformed into resources for the tourist industry, while the growing social problems among the unemployed and underemployed youth of Thimphu and other urban centres witness a rapid process of disaffiliation from the Buddhist universe of the past. We may regret the change to a universe where mobile phones are of deeper value and significance than Buddhist *mālās*, but there is not a great deal that we can realistically do to prevent it. Indeed most of us are thoroughly complicit with it.

So we have a big question about the Vajrayāna in the future. The methods of the Vajrayāna may well be beyond time, place, and culture, but can the Vajrayāna survive without a world that supports it, without people whose world is built around it? If we live in the materialist world of most modern science, can we get beyond the superficial Buddhism of Happiness Festivals and of Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction? These things may not be useless, but they do not necessarily go very deep (Samuel, 2015b; Samuel, in press, 2). There are many dharma centres and numerous lamas scattered throughout the world today, but there is also real doubt about how much serious practice is possible and is taking place. One reason for that doubt, surely, is that Westerners, and increasingly most citizens of our globalised world, do not live in an environment in which spiritual practice has much meaning.

If Vajrayāna Buddhism is to continue as a source of wisdom and enlightenment within the contemporary global environment, and even within lands like Bhutan which have still preserved some of the Vajrayāna's past grounding in the living landscape, then this will happen because the Vajrayāna will be seen as having something real and necessary to offer to today's world, as it had something real and necessary to offer to the Bhutanese and other Himalayan peoples in the eighth to twelfth centuries, when it initially became established

in those regions. Since for most people ultimate concerns such as Buddhahood are relatively distant from their everyday lives, that is likely, as in Bhutan, to be something that is more directly relevant to people's everyday lives.

I am not suggesting that we discount the Vajrayāna's ultimate goal of the liberation of all beings from suffering. I think however that it is worth looking at ways in which the Vajrayāna's deep wisdom in dealing with more proximate and pragmatic matters might serve as a basis for it to gain a more prominent and respected place within our secularized society. That in its turn, as in Bhutan in the past, could help provide the basis on which people might find their way to deeper levels of practice within the Vajrayāna Buddhist tradition. In the remainder of the paper, I would like to suggest four areas in which the Vajrayāna could have some real traction in today's world, and which might help to build up a background of understanding within which Buddhist spiritual practice could seem more meaningful.

The first is **health and illness**. The Vajrayāna has a great deal of practical and effective technology in relation to healing. I have mentioned above the *tshe sgrub* longevity practices. Elsewhere I have suggested that we can see the *tshe sgrub* and related practices such as the empowerment of medicinal substances (*sman sgrub*), and the *tshe dbang* or life-empowerment rituals performed by lamas and yogic practitioners on behalf of others, as very sophisticated ways of awakening and encouraging the intrinsic healing powers of the human mind-body complex (Samuel, 2008; 2012; in press, 1).

Western medicine of course itself includes a very advanced body of therapeutic practices, and most of us have reason to be genuinely grateful for its achievements. I would argue though that Vajrayāna has developed its own complementary approach, an approach that can liberate natural healing powers that are often inhibited or blocked by the highly technological nature of contemporary biomedicine (Samuel, 2015a). As the very procedures of 'evidence-based medicine' make clear, even the most advanced and sophisticated medical technology cannot guarantee a successful outcome. Healing also depends on the inner strength and resources of the patient. Such resources can be strengthened or weakened, intentionally or unintentionally, by the environment within which treatment takes place, by the words and behavior of medical staff, and so on. Studies of the role of subjective meaning within the so-called 'placebo effect' indicate the immense contribution that such factors can make to the success or failure of medical procedures (Moerman, 2002; Wilce, 2003). Skillful doctors learn to encourage and assist the healing process through their own behavior; they attempt to address the patient's illness as well as to treat the disease (Kleinman, 1980). Arguably, *tshe grub* practices such as the 'Chi med srog thig' operate in the same realm of meaning, and in a highly-sophisticated way. They bring together the complex symbolic resources of Vajrayāna Buddhism to promote ongoing health. Increasingly, too, they are being used both in traditional Buddhist societies and

elsewhere to reinforce the healing procedures of contemporary medicine, to bring about within the patient the will to recover and the conviction that recovery is possible. For the skilled practitioner, they also offer the ability to channel and direct the inner flows within the body and so aid the healing process directly.

Health is important to all of us, and as people around the world come to appreciate the deep wisdom of Tantric methods of healing, I believe that the Vajrayāna as a whole will be taken more and more seriously. I think that the huge popularity of mindfulness-based approaches within psychiatry and increasingly also within other areas of medicine, and the growing interest in neuroscientific approaches to consciousness, is only the beginning of a shift of this kind (Samuel, 2015b; Samuel, in press, 1). As the riches of the Vajrayāna's approach to healing become part of many people's everyday experience, then the Vajrayāna's wider horizons will also become less alien and more approachable for many millions of people.

The second area is **death and dying**, the area of what is nowadays rather evasively called 'end of life care'. The inadequacies of Western materialistic understandings of death and dying have long been clear. Death and rebirth have always been important matters for Buddhism, but the Vajrayāna has a depth of knowledge and experience in relation to the process of dying, and is becoming a growing presence in contemporary societies around the world. Western societies have alienated themselves from the experience of dying, and from much of their own traditional spiritual resources. The Vajrayāna is already beginning to fill the gap. The salience of the Bar do thos grol ('Tibetan Book of the Dead') as probably the best-known and most-translated of all Vajrayāna texts in Western languages is perhaps not accidental (e.g. Karma Lingpa 1987, 2005). This is an area where many people in the West have looked to Tibetan Buddhism for both understanding and practical help. The *'pho ba* practices, in which people learn how to direct consciousness at the time of death, are culturally specific, but they also have potential for adaption to people from many different backgrounds (e.g. Tromge 2003). As this happens, Vajrayāna Buddhism will become less foreign and more of a natural presence within global societies.

A third area is perhaps less obvious, that of our relationship to the **planetary environment**, both physical and living. I suggested that much of the sense of the landscape as animated, as encoding spiritual messages, has vanished into the past in contemporary societies. It has not vanished entirely, perhaps, but it is hard to recapture. But the Vajrayāna has another aspect, to which I have already alluded, which has a strong environmentalist potential.

This is the idea of pure vision, which forms a key part of all Tantric practices, including the *tshe sgrub* and *tshe dbang*, the long life attainment and empowerment practices. At the centre of these practices is the transfiguration of our experience of our universe – of ourselves and the surrounding

environment of people and places - into the pure vision of deities and of the mandala. It is this that enables us to access the healing power of the deities. This same process also trains us into seeing the environment as potentially sacred, as a source of healing and nourishment, as something essential to our being (Samuel, 2010; 2013a).

But a similar kind of awareness is also arising more generally in relation to the environment, as people, especially the younger generations, come to think of themselves as living on a finite and vulnerable planet that is essential to our being, the source of health and nourishment, and in need of our constant awareness and protection. We are learning, through necessity, to regard the earth as sacred, and of all the world's major religious traditions, the Vajrayāna is one that has a great deal to say about this. This too, I think, has the potential to move the world in directions in which Vajrayāna Buddhism may start to seem to many people as a natural and obvious way in which to develop spirituality relevant to contemporary times.

A fourth area is as yet more tentative, but may in time prove particularly significant. This is the dialogue between **Western science and Vajrayāna understandings of reality**. This has been under way for many years by now, and it is a more difficult process than some of its initial proponents may have envisaged. There are certainly points of convergence between these two bodies of knowledge, but there are also deep differences in their fundamental assumptions about the nature of reality. This focus in particular on the dominance of the materialistic reduction within central areas of Western science, and the explicit denial within the Vajrayāna that consciousness can be reduced to physical processes within the body (Samuel, 2014). The evidence against the materialistic reduction as a default position is however beginning to seem increasingly convincing (Kelly et al., 2007), and the likelihood of a major paradigm shift seems likely.

If this happens, then the bodies of knowledge possessed by traditional Asian cultures are likely to be primary resources on which Western science will need to draw to understand the new territories into which it is moving. It is unlikely that the Vajrayāna will prove to have all the answers here, but it is certainly one of the most complex and sophisticated of these traditional bodies of knowledge. We are already seeing significant numbers of Western scientists who are taking concepts such as the subtle body and the associated flows or currents within and beyond the human organism much more seriously (Samuel, 2013b). If these developments continue, we can expect traditions of knowledge such as the Vajrayāna, which have a long history of exploring such concepts, to become much more central to ongoing developments within the Western and global economy of knowledge. That in its turn will make it much easier and more natural for people to see the Vajrayāna as a source of useful and valid wisdom in a wider sense.

I hope that these ideas may be useful to some of you in thinking about the future of the Vajrayāna within its new global environment. The issue is, I think, not just about how our own appreciation of the value of the Vajrayāna, but of how the world might be transformed in a way such that people will increasingly be drawn naturally towards the depths and resources within the Vajrayāna tradition, as so many were in Bhutan in the past. We could see such a development as part of the richness of methods, the skill in means, which is a traditional attribute of all Mahāyāna Buddhism, but also as the working through in its new global context of the compassionate force of *bodhicitta* which has always been at the centre of the Vajrayāna's vision for the liberation of sentient beings.

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Padmasambhava, Yeshe Tsogyal, and the Sacred Geography of Bhutan

Dasho Karma Ura

Guru Pema Jungney was a Mahaguru, the great mantra-ist (*sngagspa chenpo*) but also a great traveller, making an old saying ring true: by forsaking one's birthplace, one becomes a yogi by circuiting foreign lands. Guru's terma hagiography in pulsating poetry by Ugyen Lingpa¹ or Sherab Odzer traces his journeys in places that perhaps include current regions of Kashmir, Pakistan, Xinjiang, Nepal, Bhutan and Tibet and India. The hagiography mentions Guru's journey further afield into China and Lanka and Cannibal Lands, though we have to be open to the thought that this may be a mix of physical or metaphysical journeys. Even in this age of global tourism we are struck by cosmic awe at the journeys of Guru criss-crossing linguistic, racial, cultural and political boundaries. Kapstein (2000) notes that Buddhism was 'the most prominent cultural system' (p. 59) present in India, Tibet, Nepal, China, Central Asia (that included "Khotan, the Tarim Basin, Lop Nor, and other places with Iranian and Turkic populations") and Monyul as Bhutan was known in those days. So perhaps there was a big cultural space through which he treaded. If so, Guru was thus operating at the height of Buddhism, which he

¹ Terchen Urgyan Lingpa. 1326. *Ugyan Guru pad ma 'byung gnas kyi skyes rabs rnam par thar pa rgyas par bkod pa pad bka' i thang yig*. This biography has been translated first into French by Gustave-Charles Toussaint as *Le Dict de Padma* in 1912. It was translated from French into English as Kenneth Douglas and Gwendolyn Bays. 1978. *The Life and Liberation of Padmasambhava*. Dharma Publishing.

served to elevate as the second Buddha. In theory, all of these places where Guru's actions were distributed should be hallowed because Guru was there.

Because Guru was in so many places, different segments of his life were observed by different societies. There are seven biographies I am aware: by Nyangrel Nyima Yoeser (1124-1192),² by Guru Choewang (1212-1270),³ by Jonang Taranatha's (1575-1634), by Jamyang Khyentse Wangpo (1820-1892), by Pemalingpa (1450-1526).⁴ Both Taranatha's and Jamgon's versions of the Guru's life have been translated into English by Ngawang Zangpo in his book titled *Guru Rinpoche: His Life and Times*.⁵ The most dominating one in popularity is Ugyen Lingpa's (Sherab Ozer) *Padma bka' i thang yig* revealed as *ter* in 1326. Quite unexpectedly, it was translated as *Le Dict de Padma* in 1912 into French, and retranslated from French into English in 1978. It took 15 years to translate into French because it was difficult and long. Both Nyangrel and Guru Chowang took *ter* from Bumthang. Guru Chowang also left a genealogical line in Lugchu in Khoma. Guru Chowang was reincarnated as Gyalsay Tenzin Rabgay in Bhutan according to the later's biography.⁶ Guru Chowang's entombment chorten near Lhodrag was built by the late Ashi Phuntsho Choden, Queen of the Second King.

Guru's life in Bhutan was illuminated additionally by three pertinent terma literature. First one is 'the Hagiography of Sindharaza and Clear Mirror of Prediction' by terton Ugyen. The second one is the surviving fragments of biography of Terton Sherab Member.⁷ Sherab Member's biography show how

² *mnga bdag myang nyi ma 'od zer gyis rnam thar gsal wai me long bzhugs so//*
See also *Ngyang Ral's phur pa yang gsang bl med kyi sgrub ldang lha khra mo*
brag gi gter ma.

³ *Guru rnam thar mzad pa bcu gcig bya wa/ sprul pai sku thams cad las khyad*
par lngas 'phags pa/ mthu dang rzu thrul du mas 'dro wai don mzad pa/ U rgyan
slo dpon pad ma 'byung gnas kyi rnam par thar pa/ mzad pa bcu cig cas bya wa/
bzhugs pai dbu phyogs legs so/

⁴ *Peling 'ka 'bum. U rgyan pad ma 'byung gnas kyi 'khrung rabs sang bstan pai*
chos 'byung mun sal rgon me stod cha bzhugs//

⁵ Ngawang Zangpo. 2000. *Guru Rinpoche His Life and Times*. Snow Lion. Ngawang's book contains a full translation of Jamyang Khyentse Wangpo's work in this regard as it was reprinted in Jamgon Kongtrul's *Catalogue of Treasury of Rediscovered Teachings*.

⁶ *Mtshung med chos kyi rgyal po rje rinpoche'i rnam par thar pa bskal bzang legs*
bris 'dod pair s skong dpag bsam gyi snyema zhas by aba bzhugs so

⁷ *gter ston shes rab me 'bar gyi rnam thar le'u gsum cu so gcig pa bzhugs so he*
he// (n.d).

Guru and Trelchung Dorji, who was Sherab member in his previous life hid The Garland of Views: As Esoteric Precept (*Man ngag lta ba'i phreng ba*), on which Guru gave teachings at Drakmar in Tibet. The third source is the biography and works of Ratna Lingpa (1403-1478). There is also oral tradition of Monpas of Tongsa, which shows the geographic route details of Guru during his first entry into Bhutan. However, for my presentation here, the biography of Yeshey Tshogyal by Gyalwa Jangchub and Namkhai Nyingpo⁸ is the basic reference. Yeshe Tsogyal's visits to Bhutan were propelled by Guru's instruction.

What was the purpose of Guru's ceaseless and incredible journeys? The purposes can be reinterpreted as peace maker, of internal and external peace, as a wider healer-practitioner of longevity and health, and of reveler and trainer towards of absolute truth in Dzogchen tradition which Khenchen Namdrol defines as the basis for all appearance of samsara and nirvana to arise, as opposed to definition of absolute truth in Madhyamaka understanding as freedom from all conceptual elaborations (Roy, 2010, p. 128). I will not dwell on the very heavy last point: that of the absolute truth in Dzogchen.

But as Geshey Ngawang Samten (2016) has said, the purpose of Guru's journeys can be summed up in three Ts: translation, transmission and transformation (p. 52). Let me give an example of each starting with translation. In Ugyen Lingpa's hagiography, Chapter 87 is a catalogue of sutras and commentaries Guru translated while Chapter 88 gives a catalogue of translations of secret mantra or Vajrayāna texts (Douglas & Bays, pp. 430-437). It lists about 250 texts of sutra and tantras translated in Samye by Guru, with help of 108 Tibetan translators and 21 Indian panditas. Tibetans were sent off for language training in Kashmir. Therefore, Samye became the main hub of translation, and a great of library and archive for transmission of knowledge.

Then, let me give an example of transmission and empowerment. The word Vajrayāna is said to appear in tantric texts only in the late 7th century. Soon after that, by mid 8th century, Vajrayāna came to Bhutan. Sometimes in the middle of the 8th century, The 'Roundtable Peace Conference' between the two warring parties (*thang chenpo gcig la 'thugs nas/ dbyen zlum zhing 'cham par bya ste*) was concluded by Guru at Nabji with the erection of the Immortal Stone Pillar of Peace (*'chi med zhi wai rdoring btsugs*) on which Guru, Sindharaja and Nauche swore on reconciliation and peace.⁹ For the first time in

⁸ *Rgyal ba Byang chub dang nam mkha'i snying po. Mkha 'gro ye shas mtsho rgyal gyi rnam thar*. Reprinted in 2005 by KMT: Thimphu

⁹ Terton Ugyen. *rgyal po sindha ra dza'i rnam thar dang lung bstan gsal ba'i me long*. In the introduction, Denma Tshemang remarks that the text of *gsal wai me long* (clear mirror of prediction, will be retrieved from the rock Dorji Tsegpa (resembling a pile of vajra) by his incarnation named Urgyan.

Bhutan in a place called Nabji, Guru Rinpoche delivered the teachings and empowerment of Druba Kagyed or the Eight Great Herukas (*sgrub pa bka brgyad*, which is the main teaching of Guru, to the two kings and their entourages, making them get the fruits of enlightenment on the spot.¹⁰ This is by way of pointing out how far Vajrayāna goes back in Bhutan, also to point out that this stone pillar exists still intact. But the main point is that there was a direct transmission.

Another kind of transmission and empowerment involved could have been Guru as healer and source of longevity in relation to the wider, not only organ level illness of Sindharaja. As in Chimi sogthig ritual (Cantwell & Mayer, 2008), his recovery included examination of (1) the decline of life force and breath, (2) the loss of body and mood, (3) the interruption in the subtle neurological, respiratory and libido processes (*rtsa-rlung-thigle*) (Dudjom 1999: pp. 110-122). Accordingly, a comprehensive method of recovering longevity encompasses five elements (Samuel, 2008b): (1) ritual seeking *jinlab* (*byin rlaps*) from the assembly of Amitayus Buddhas and protector deities; (2) burnt offerings to the fire gods of wisdom (*yeshey kyi me lha*); (3) casting away of effigies of scapegoat as substitutes for meat, blood and life force to repurchase *bla* and life force (*sha rin khrag tsab srog gi glud*, see Dudjom 1999: 354); (4) consumption of herbal pharma products and other essences such as that of minerals (Dudjom 1999: 449-450); (5) the ultra secret practice of union following *sbyor dnyos rje gsum* (Dudjom 1999: 492-506); (6) longevity blessing (*tse dbang*), and (7) psycho-physical yogic exercise to work on subtle parts of neurological, respiratory and libido systems; and, more importantly, (8) visualisation and meditation that activates perceptual mechanism in a different way and reorients consciousness. In the case of longevity blessings with longevity nectar (*'chimed rdud tsi*), longevity arrow-silk (*tse dhar*) and longevity pill (*tse ril*), the recipient visualizes Amitayus blessing the recipient with healing power and energy through the performing lama.

In terms of teachings and transmission for his disciples including 21 *rje 'bang*, 32 *mchen bu*, and seven *rigs ldan ma*, they were aligned with the distinct capacities of each person suggesting almost tailor made life programme for his numerous disciples. The sadhanas Guru prescribed for different individuals ranged from *sdrub chen bka' brgyad*, *ma mshin phur pa*, *dgongs 'dus*, *zhi khro*, *snying thig*, *man ngag*, *thugs bsgrub*, etc. For Tshogyal, Guru specifically instructed her to practice mandala of guru and *rtsa-rlung-thigle* at places where there are Guru's body prints, especially at Onphu Taktshang, Kham Taktshang and Paro Taktshang, and Tildro (KMT 2005: 82).

Then, I want to point out also transmission and teachings in the forms of terma texts hidden and later found in Bhutan. Yeshey Tshogyal is the author of

¹⁰ 'O rgyan bdag gi snying gi thigs pa rzogs pa chenpo gsal wai melong/

many texts, as colophons of texts confirm, containing the teachings of Guru which were concealed in many parts of Tibet and Bhutan during her multiple trips to Bhutan. Thangtong Gyalpo retrieved 10 scrolls of yellow paper and Dorji Lingpa (1346-1405 according to Kongtrul 2003; 439) retrieved Serthurma from Paro Taktshang. The late Dudjom Rinpoche, Jigrel Yeshey Dorji (1904-1987), the emanation of the disciple of Guru, Nanam Dorji Dudjom, retrieved terma of Phurpa Pudri Regphung (Samuel 2008); many extraordinary individuals have been thrown into visionary states when they were at Taktshang). Chogyam Trungpa (1940-1987) and Dilgo Khyentse (1910-1991), both composed at Taktshang in visionary states as had many Bhutanese masters.

As far as literary evidence is concerned, Terton Sherab Member seems to have been an early visitor to Singye dzong. Ratna Lingpa, a great terton, of the 15th century (Gyatsho, 1981, p. 84), also visited Singye Dzong. He retrieved a text titled '*glong gsal snying tig*' from Singye Dzong-Rolmoteng valleys, Longsel Korsum from a cave called Zangphug behind Singye Dzong and a scroll from a stone box from a rocky place above Singye dzong. More recently, in 1904, Terton Zilnon Namkha Dorji (1874-1904) (Samuel G, 2008) Chimi Sogthig ('*chi med srog thig*') from the cave of Yeshey Tshogyal in Singye Dzong.

Yeshe Tsogyal

Yeshe Tsogyal, was an unhumanly beautiful, often attracting unwanted attentions, and who transcended ordinary dualistic existence, left behind a candid biography with a degree of realism that we often do not have in modern literature. Her rich literary biography unfolds with a drama played at different levels. It is a multi-dimensional account of court intrigues, subtle cultural clash, doctrinal conflicts, philosophical and pure visions, commitment to the bonds of inner tantra at physical and moral levels, physical and psychological sufferings, achievement of abnormal, but certainly possible, bodily abilities. But it dwells mainly on teachings, though this is not the focus here.

Along with her companions she left for the secret caves at Tildro in Tibet, Singye Dzong and Paro Taktshang, in that order. Yeshe Tsogyal and Archarya Saleh took retreat in a secret cave in Lhodrag for seven months soon after they came from Nepal and discovered the four blisses. Saleh and Penlgye Singye were identified by Guru as liberating ritual partners (*thabs kyi grogs dpa'o*), for Yeshe Tsogyal. Just before she passed away much Yeshey Tshogyal emphasized strongly to Kalasiddhi that if bliss is not combined with voidness through mutual support between male and female, the Secret Mantrayāna is rather meaningless (KMT 2005: 222).

At Tildro, Tsogyal and Acharya Saleh practiced rigorously leading them to various meditative successes and visionary experiences. Her reports to Guru after these metaphysical experiences brought additional instructions for her to overcome the eight super adversities (*bka' chen brgyad*). Thus, this brings me

to refer to Bhutan as a place for transformation, the last of the three Ts, but with reference to Yeshe Tsogyal.

In a moving poem, Guru explained the eight super adversities to Tsogyal at Tildro (KMT 2005: 88-90). Let me briefly outline what the eight adversities. The first one is the adversity of food (*zas kyi dka' ba*) by living sheerly on wind, and on essence of herbs and rocks-essence. The second one is the adversity of cloth (*gos kyi dka' ba*) by generating body heat through *gtum mo* exercise, while being clad first in a thin cotton, then being unornamented except only for human bones, and finally being naked. The third one is the adversity of speech (*ngag gi dka' ba*) by maintaining a vow of silence except for mantra recitations. The fourth one is the adversity of body (*lus kyi dka' ba*) by sitting in lotus position in meditative absorption and by performing prostrations and circumambulations. The fifth one is the adversity of mind (*yid kyi dka' ba*) by training on inseparability of meditative concentration (*zung 'jug ting 'zin*), through generations and completion stages, with training on essence-drops of bliss and emptiness (*bde stongs thig le sbyang*). Just before she passes away, Yeshe Tsogyal herself emphasizes the strong point to Kalasiddhi that if bliss is not combined with voidness through mutual support between male and female, the Secret Mantrayāna is rather meaningless (KMT 2005: 222). The sixth one is the adversity of promoting doctrine (*bstan pa'i dka' ba*) by explanation, debate and writing about Buddhism. The seventh one is the adversity of altruism (*gzhan phan dka' ba*) by wishing well for others in the Mahayāna way and by giving away, if necessary, life and body. The eighth one is the adversity of compassion (*rnying rje' dka' ba*) by loving others more than oneself, and by equating one's enemies with one's children, and by equating gold with anything bulky (*dgra dang bu mnyam gser dang bong wa mnyam*). In an unequivocal tone, Guru told her that Tsogyal would be indistinguishable from a nihilist (*mu stegs rgyang 'phan*) if she didn't practice and assail these adversities.

Archarya Saleh the Indian and Tibetan girl Dewamo accompanied Yeshe Tsogyal came to Singye dzong. Monbu Saleh, another male companion was also present at Paro Taktshang with Yeshe Tsogyal later. Singye Dzong has been regarded since the time of Guru as the special place for practice of Vajarakila sadhana desirable for promoting and succeeding in any intended 'activity' (*'phrinlas*).

Tsogyal visited Singye Dzong and Paro Taktshang to act on, and overcome some of these adversities, after a few years of practice in Tildro, at the instruction of Guru. She received a kind of transfer order for further spiritual maturation. Having promised Guru to practice all adversities, Yeshe Tsogyal took them up one by one.

Guru chose Singye Dzong and Rolmoteng (Phugmochey) valleys because of their efficacious attributes for spiritual progress. The price of practice was nearly too high. Yeshe Tsogyal admittedly came close to death three times in

Tildro (KMT 2005: 91, 93, 114). It happened once in peak of snow clad Tildro during a year of practicing heat generation with only one cotton robe. She nearly died for the second time during the one year practice of emaciated living on water and essence of rocks. The third risky incidence took place during another year of living on wind while naked with bone ornaments on. Her fourth nearly death experience occurred in Paro Taktshang while she was training on the inseparability of bliss and emptiness (*bde stongs zung 'jug thig le' dka' wa*) while living on essence of herbs. We can make out the toughness of the regime from the fact that her fellow practitioners, Acharya Saleh, Acharya Pelyang and Mon boy Saleh, became mentally disturbed and physically ill at Paro Taktshang before they succeeded. They nearly perished from such physical illnesses of various kinds and mental disturbances. Her seven-month long practice resulted in witnessing in revelation or pure vision the divinities of Amitayus (*Tshe dpa' med*), and the promise (*lung stan*) of long life. Yeshe Tsogyal and her group of six, reached Onphu Taktshang in Tibet, after she left Paro Taktshang, to meet Guru. She described her experiences at Paro Taktshang to Guru, which pleased him. Guru told Yeshe Tsogyal that the signs of her experiences at Paro Taktshang suggested that the time was opportune for her to practice Vajrakila and Amitayus sadhanas.

There is far less information about what she did in other places in Bhutan besides Taksang and Singye dzong and Khenpajong. But there are many other sites, which we know from oral traditions, like Minjay Churtsal Lhakhang, and Aja linked to the life of Yeshey Tshogyal while she was in Bhutan.

In the later half of her life, aged around 80, after Guru left Tibet possibly in the reign of Mutri Tsenpo, she travelled to the 108 main meditation places and countless subsidiary places of Guru. A large number of these places are listed by their names along with the duration of her stay and the number of ter she deposited in each of these places (see for details KMT 2005; 196-201). Scanning her biography, I could count 631 ters deposited by Tsogyal in 35 major places, most of them in Tibet. I could identify some places in Bhutan. One of the places in Bhutan she visited was Khenpalung where she lived for one and half year and deposited 10 ter (*gter kha bcu krag gcig sbas so*). She lived for more than a year in a place called Mon Budumlung and an unspecified period again in Nering Singye dzong. These visits were additional to her previous stays in Bhutan for an unspecified period in Sengyi Dzong and seven months in Paro Taktshang, when she was younger and Guru was still in Tibet. Thus, it is clear that Tshogyal herself was in Bhutan at least three times at different points in her long life.

Tashi Chidren

Yeshe Tsogyal's biography mentions that during the seven days of practice of Kila Sadhana by the *Guru-Yab-Yum gsum*, Yeshe Tsogyal was the main consort (*rtsa ba'i gzungs ma*) and Tashi Chidren was the consort at the conclusion of the practice (*sgrol ba'i gzungs ma bkra shis chos sdron gyis mzad nas*) (KMT

2005; 122). Tashi Chidren became part of the sadhana of Unity of Emptiness and Bliss (*bde stong zung 'jug thig le*) practiced in ONphu Taktsang. King Hamray (*Ham Ras*) was the father of Khidren (spelt in the text sometimes as *khi 'dren* and at other times as *khyi 'dren*) later renamed by Jomo (lady) Yeshey Tshogyal as Tashi Chidron (*Trashi sPyi sdron*).

We know about Guru's activities in Bhutan more clearly from Tsogyal. It was the first time in Himalayas when women were intellectuals and spiritual liberator at the same time. Guru told her that provided there is higher motivation, women can exceed men in spiritual progress (*sems bskyed ldan na mo lus lhag* (KMT 2005:114)). As his principle adherent, Yeshe Tsogyal was the first widely known liberated Himalayan woman to prove it. Tsogyal passed away in rainbow body form at Pama Gang, leaving behind mortal remains of ears, teeth, nails, head-hairs and body-hairs. Five days before that, she spoke to us all, through Monmo Tashi Chidren, a Bhutanese and daughter of Mon King Hamray, whom Tshogyal met first at Singye Dzong:

Ma nga yi rjes su 'jug pa kun.
Ma nga yi nam thar brtul shugs bsten.
De yi don brnyes 'bras bu 'drub.

Those who follow me, I, mother:
Study mine, mother's, liberated behaviour
That person will find meaning and fruit.

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lngas 'phags pa/ mthu dang rzu thrul du mas 'dro wai don mzad pa/ U

*rgyan slo dpon pad ma 'byung gnas kyi rnam par thar pa/ mzad pa bcu
cig cas bya wa/ bzhugs pai dbu phyogs legs so/*

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Yoga and Physical Culture in Vajrayāna Buddhism and Dzogchen, with special reference to Tertön Pema Lingpa's 'Secret Key to the Winds and Channels'

Ian A. Baker

If the body is not mastered, the mind cannot be mastered.

If the body is mastered; mind is mastered.

Majjhima Nikāya Sutta 36

Vajrayāna, the Tantric form of Buddhism prevalent in Bhutan and Tibet, presents itself as offering the swiftest path to spiritual liberation, but the dynamic mind-body practices at the heart of the tradition are rarely revealed even to advanced initiates. As a result, Vajrayāna is better known for publically enacted monastic rituals than for the psychophysical disciplines that distinguish Vajrayāna from earlier forms of Buddhist practice.

This essay introduces the overlooked subject of yoga and physical culture within Vajrayāna Buddhism and Dzogchen, the 'Great Perfection', with reference to an exposition of twenty-three sequential yogic movements revealed by the fifteenth-century Bhutanese *tertön*, or spiritual 'treasure revealer', Orgyen Pema Lingpa (orgyan padma gling pa) (1450–1521) as "keys" for realizing the self-liberated nature of mind and body. In the last decade of the seventeenth-century, nearly two hundred years after its revelation, Pema Lingpa's treatise entitled 'Secret Key to the [Body's] Channels and Winds' (*Rtsa rlung gsang ba'i lde mig*) was illustrated on the walls of the private meditation chamber of Tibet's Sixth Dalai Lama, Rinchen Tsangyang Gyatso (tshang dbyangs rgya mtsho) (1683–1705), Pema Lingpa's direct descendent and lineage

holder. These previously hidden images in the Lukhang Temple in Lhasa illuminate the essence of Tantric Buddhist practices for realizing the full potential of the human mind and body, and bring renewed attention to the spiritual legacy of Bhutan's great treasure revealer Pema Lingpa.¹

Embodying Enlightenment

Vajrayāna Buddhist practices of bodily cultivation emerged within the larger context of Indian Tantrism, and especially within the *yoginītantra* class of Tantric Buddhist texts between the eighth and tenth-centuries. The crowning literary development of Indian Buddhism's Vajrayāna, or 'Adamantine Way', the Yoginī, or 'Mother' Tantras share common features with Tantric Śaivism and involve imaginal emulation of ecstatic, multi-limbed Tantric deities that signify the bliss-emptiness (*bde stong ye shes*) at the heart of all existence.² Transforming early Buddhism's ascetic disposition into compassionate engagement, Vajrayāna expanded Buddhism's influence and applicability beyond its monastic institutions. As the eighth-century Buddhist *Hevajra* Tantra famously proclaims, "One must rise by that by which one falls ... By whatever binds the world, by that it must be freed."³ Central to this endeavor

¹ The Sixth Dalai Lama was a direct descendent of Pema Lingpa through his father, the Nyingma master Rigdzin Tashi Tendzin (rig 'dzin bkra shis bstan 'dzin) (1651–97), who hailed from the mountainous regions east of Bhutan and disseminated Pema Lingpa's lineage of non-celibate lay ordination to others of his Nyo clan, the progenitors of Bhutan's nobility and eventual royal family. For a full translation of Pema Lingpa's 'Secret Key to the Winds and Channels', see Baker 2012 and 2017.

² The 'Mother' Tantras are contrasted with earlier 'Father' Tantras that invoke more pacific, royally attired Buddhas such as Guhyasamāja (*gsang ba 'dus pa*) associated with 'illusory body' (*sgyu lus*) practices for attaining the light body of a Buddha. Tibetans classified the 'Mother' (*ma rgyud*) and 'Father' (*pha rgyud*) Tantras together as 'Unexcelled Yoga Tantra' (*bla ma med pa'i rgyud*, Skt. *anuttarayogatantra*), sometimes adding a third 'Non-Dual Tantra' (*gnyis med rgyud*) category when both aspects are combined. As a whole, the Anuttarayoga Tantras, or *Yoganiruttaratantra*-s as originally known in Sanskrit, were devoted to transforming sensual pleasure into enlightened activity through techniques focused on dissolving vital winds (*prāṇavāyu*) into the body's central channel (*suṣumnā*). In Tibetan rNying ma, or 'Old School' presentations of the Indian Tantras, the Anuttarayoga Tantras correspond to Mahāyoga, or 'Great Yoga', to which the successive categories of Anuyoga, 'Unsurpassed Yoga', and Atiyoga, 'Supreme Yoga' (also called Dzogchen, or 'Great Perfection') were added later. For comprehensive accounts of the origins and development of the Hindu and Buddhist tantras and their social and institutional contexts, see Samuel 2008 and Davidson 2002 and 2005. For a clear exposition of the Yoginī Tantras' debt to Śaivite sources, see Mayer 1998 and Sanderson 2009.

³ See Farrow & Menon 1992: 173. As the *Hevajratantra* further indicates; "the one who knows the nature of poison dispels the poison utilizing the poison itself."

was a revalorization of the body as an essential vehicle, rather than an obstacle, to existential and spiritual freedom.

The eighth-century Buddhist Tantra, the *Guhyasamāja* or ‘Secret Assembly’ (Tib. *Gsang ’dus rtsa rgyud*) is the first Indic text to use the term *haṭhayoga*. The word appears in the Secret Assembly’s eighteenth chapter and is presented as a “forceful” means for inducing noetic visions (*darśana*) as well as for achieving “awakening” (*bodhi*) and “perfection of knowing” (*jñānasiddhi*).⁴ The word *haṭha* recurs in the tenth-century *Kālacakra*, or ‘Wheel of Time’ Tantra as *haṭhena* (“forcefully”) and is elaborated upon in Puṇḍarīka’s 966 C. E. commentary on the *Kālacakra* entitled ‘Stainless Light’ (*Vimalaprabhā*) which defines Haṭha Yoga as a means for concentrating vital energy (*prāṇavāyu*) and seminal essences (*bindu*, Tib. *thig le*)⁵ in the body’s central channel (*madhyānāḍī*, Tib. *rtsa dbu ma*), thereby inducing unaltering present-moment (*akṣarakṣaṇam*) awareness and engendering the blissful adamant body of a Buddha within one’s own subtle anatomy.

The Kashmiri pandit Somanātha brought the *Kālacakra* teachings from India to Tibet in 1064 where they influenced the development of Buddhist practice as well as Tibet’s emergent medical tradition.⁶ According to the contemporary Tibetan doctor Nyida Chenagtsang, Yuthok Yönten Gönpö (gyu thog yon tan mgon po) (1126–1202) drew on the *Kālacakra*’s exposition of the subtle body and tantric physiology in his revision of the ‘Four Medical Tantras’ (*rGyud bzhi*) and condensed its accounts of psychophysical yogas in the ‘Turquoise Heart Essence’ (*Gyu thog snying thig*)⁷, his guide to spiritual practice for non-ordained Buddhist medical practitioners. Butön Rinchen Drup (bu ston rin chen grub) (1290–1364), the renowned scholar and abbot of Shalu Monastery in central Tibet, further systematized physical exercises deriving from the *Kālacakra* Tantra into practices with both therapeutic and yogic applications, including “wind meditation” (*rlung gom*) and techniques of “swift walking”

⁴ See Birch 2011: 535.

⁵ *Bindu* (Tib. *thig le*) has multiple meanings depending on context. Within tantric practice it customarily refers to the energetic potency of male semen or related hormonal secretions. As the interface between consciousness and matter within the physical body, *thig le* can also be usefully compared with neuropeptides, the amino acid based molecules including endorphins that are distributed throughout the body and associated with subjective states of well-being. Candice Pert (1999) notes that information-bearing neuropeptides are concentrated on lateral sides of the spinal cord paralleling the energetic currents of the *iḍa* and *piṅgala* (Tib. *kyang ma* and *ro ma*). She also suggests that, as the physiological correlate of emotion, “peptide substrate [in the body] may provide the scientific rationale for the powerful healing effects of consciously controlled breathing patterns” (Pert 1999: 187).

⁶ Nyida Chenagtsang, personal communication, September 2014.

⁷ See Chenagtsang 2013.

(*rkang mgyogs*) that purportedly allowed adepts to cover vast distances on foot by modulating the effects of gravity.⁸

The most direct source of Haṭha Yoga-related practices in Tibetan Buddhism is a corpus of eleventh to twelfth-century texts entitled *Amṛtasiddhi*, or ‘Perfection of the Immortal Elixir’ (Tib. *bdud rtsi grub pa*) which scholarly opinion currently considers the source text of India’s subsequent Haṭha Yoga tradition.⁹ Despite the *Amṛtasiddhi*’s explicitly Śaiva orientation, it was disseminated in Tibet from the twelfth until at least the sixteenth-century¹⁰ and was incorporated into the Tibetan canon in 1322 by Butön Rinchen Drup.¹¹ The *Amṛtasiddhi* expounds a system of internal yoga focused on uniting the solar “female” energy (*rajas*) in the pelvic cavity with the lunar *bindu*, or seminal “ambrosia” (*amṛta*), in the cranium towards the attainment of a divinized human condition.¹² The Haṭha Yoga techniques of “great seal” (*mahāmudrā*), “great lock” (*mahābandha*), and “great piercing” (*mahāvedha*)

⁸ The “body exercises” called Lujong (lus sbyong) and “vital point exercises” called Nejong (gnas sbyong) that were transmitted by Butön Rinchen Drup reputedly derive from the Kālacakrantra and were classified as “outer” exercises to be used both by Buddhist practitioners and physicians for maintaining personal health (Nyida Chenagtsang, personal communication, September 2014). Nejong, as transmitted today by Nyida Chenagtsang, consists of twenty-four sequential exercises each of which is performed with a held “vase breath” (bum pa can, Skt. kumbhaka) with the intent of balancing the body’s internal energies, unblocking obstructions in the channels (rtsa, Skt. nāḍī), and pacifying diseases of mind and body (personal communication, Nyida Chenagtsang, London, September 2014). Tibetan physicians prescribe specific exercises from the series to their patients in modified forms that omit the held “vase breath”. Nejong is also undertaken as a preliminary practice to more demanding Trulkhör (‘khrul ‘khor) exercises that concentrate the flow of psychophysical energy within the body’s central channel and lead to vibrant, coalescent states of consciousness and reputed paranormal abilities (siddhi). Popular accounts of “trance walkers” were reported by Lama Anagarika Govinda in *The Way of the White Clouds*, by Alexandra David-Néel in *Mystics and Magicians in Tibet*, as well as by Heinrich Harrer, the author of *Seven Years in Tibet*, in his personal diaries. The practice was reputedly maintained at Samding and Shalu Monasteries in Tibet until the depredations of Chinese occupation in 1959. Based on controlling the body’s internal energy flows through specialized breathing techniques (rlung gom) and yogic locks (gag, Skt. bandha), “swift walking” was described by Alexandra David-Néel as follows: “The man did not run. He seemed to lift himself from the ground, proceeding by leaps. It looked as if he had been endowed with the elasticity of a ball and rebounded each time his feet touched the ground.” See David-Néel 1937: 186.

⁹ See Mallinson 2016 and Mallinson and Singleton 2017.

¹⁰ Schaeffer 2002: 520.

¹¹ Ibid., p. 518.

¹² Mallinson 2012: 332.

are described for the first time in the *Amṛtasiddhi* as methods for opening the body's inner energy channels (*nāḍī*), reversing the natural downward flow of vital energy, and severing the three knots (*granthi-s*) along the body's medial axis (*madhyamā*).¹³ In consequence, "the life force flows to all places [and] mind, luminescent by nature, is instantly adorned [with the qualities] of fruition ... Such a yogin is made of everything, composed of all elements, always dwelling in omniscience ... Delighted, he liberates the world."¹⁴

The *Amṛtasiddhi* makes no mention of either *cakra-s* or *kuṇḍalinī*, but is clearly based on principles of Tantric yoga whereby elements of a subtle anatomy are controlled through physical, respiratory, and mental discipline leading to a divinized psychophysical state. At the heart of this process are techniques for causing the body's vital essences to infuse its axial core (*madhyamā, suṣumnā*, Tib. *rtsa dbu ma*)¹⁵ so as to induce a self-transcendent awakening of one's indwelling Buddha Nature (*tathāgatagarbha*). In its perceived transformation and optimization of physical, emotional, and mental processes the *Amṛtasiddhi* embodies the tantric ideal of *jīvanmukti* (*srog thar*), or "living liberation",¹⁶ that

¹³ Ibid., p. 332.

¹⁴ For a detailed introduction to the *Amṛtasiddhi* corpus and the source of this quotation, see Schaeffer 2002. For an account of the Haṭha Yoga techniques central to the *Amṛtasiddhi* see Mallinson 2012: 332. In the *Amṛtasiddhi*, the practitioner imaginatively transforms into the Hindu deity Śiva who is often presented within Vajrayāna as having been converted into a Buddha by the bodhisattva Vajrapāṇi. Within the Trika Śaivism of Kashmir, Śiva is synonymous with "pure consciousness" and non-dual awareness.

¹⁵ The body's central channel is invoked as the unconditioned self-transcendent core of human embodiment in both Hindu and Buddhist Tantra. Within non-dual traditions of Śaivism, it is referred to as the "channel of consciousness" (*cittānāḍī*) and is likened to "a line without thickness", symbolizing both infinity and non-duality. Independent of its psychophysical effects, drawing vital "winds" and "essences" into the body's central channel metaphorically describes a process of psychosomatic integration in which *nāḍī* can be seen to represent an open heuristic structure, *prāṇa* primordial motility, and *bindu* innate somatic creativity. The process culminates in a regenerated unitary awareness in which self-organizing somatic intelligence aligns with conscious experience or, more simply, an integration of somatic and cognitive intelligence.

¹⁶ The ideal of *jīvanmukti* is referred to in a twelfth-century *Amṛtasiddhi* text compiled by Avadhūtacandra. See Schaeffer 2002: 521 for further explication of this concept. As Schaeffer further points out, Avadhūtacandra's edition of the *Amṛtasiddhi* promotes an ideal of unrestricted access markedly distinct from earlier and later tantric lineages based on secrecy and exclusivity. A similarly open ethos at the origins of Haṭha Yoga can be discerned in another early Haṭha Yoga work, the thirteenth-century Dattātreya yogaśāstra that advocates its practices irrespective of ethnicity or caste. For more extensive commentary on the Dattātreya yogaśāstra and *Amṛtasiddhi* in the context of the historical roots of Haṭha Yoga, see Mallinson 2016. Other examples in early Vajrayāna of yogic exercises being presented openly as preliminaries to meditation

lies at the heart of the Vajrayāna Buddhist understanding of ‘yoga’, a word translated into the Tibetan language as *Neljor* (*rnal 'byor*), or “union with the natural [unaltering] state”.

Magical Gymnastics

The *Amṛtasiddhi*, or ‘Perfection of the Immortal Elixir’, makes the first known reference to the well-known Hatha Yoga techniques of *mahāmudrā*, *mahābandha*, and *mahāvedha*.¹⁷ In his autobiography, the Tibetan Shangpa Kagyu master Nyenton Chökyi Sherap (*gnyan ston chos kyi shes rab*) (1175–1255) elaborates on these foundational yogic practices from the *Amṛtasiddhi* after reputedly learning them from an Indian teacher who attributed them to a master named *Ṛṇadeva*.¹⁸ Described as a ‘Magical Wheel of [yogic movements for realizing] Immortality’ (*'chi med kyi 'khrul 'khor*), the physical practices of the *Amṛtasiddhi* were further codified by Nyenton Chökyi Sherap’s successor, Sangye Tönpa Tsondrü Senge (*sangs rgyas ston pa brtson 'grus seng ge*) (1213–1285), and were subsequently transmitted within Tibet’s Shangpa Kagyu suborder.¹⁹

Transformative exercises for amplifying innate somatic processes and expanding vitality and awareness within the body’s medial core (*suṣumnā*, Tib. *rtsa dbu ma*) are referred to in Tibetan as *Tsalung Trulkhor* (*rtsa rlung 'khrul 'khor*), literally “magical wheel of channels and winds”, with the Tibetan root word *'khor* inferring “wheel” (*'khor lo*) or “cyclical movement” and *'khrul* implying “magical”, in the sense that all phenomena, from a Buddhist perspective, lack true existence while simultaneously “magically” appearing. *Trulkhor*’s breath-synchronized movements are also commonly referred to as *Yantra Yoga* (*'khrul 'khor gyi rnal 'byor*), with the composite *rtsa rlung 'khrul 'khor* translating the Sanskrit *nāḍīvāyuyantra*, or ‘instrument of channels and winds’, and implying a transformative device or technology, in this case, for reconfiguring human experience.²⁰

include Drakpa Gyeltsen’s (*rags pa rgyal mtshan*) twelfth-century ‘Miraculous Channel Wheel of the Thirty-Two Auspicious Actions’. Drakpa Gyeltsen specifically indicates in his colophon that the movements remove obstacles to spiritual practice and “are suitable for beginners as well as advanced students” (Davidson 2005: 358).

¹⁷ Mallinson 2016: 6.

¹⁸ Schaeffer 2002: 520.

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ Following Lokesh Chandra, another Sanskritized rendering of *Trulkhor* is *vāyavadhisāra*, derived from the Sanskrit root *adhi-sr* “to move, go, run, flow towards something” (personal communication Karin Preisendanz, January 2017) and attested in Chagme 1998: 69. *Trulkhor* is alternatively spelled *'phrul 'khor*, which can be interpreted as “magical wheel”, with reference to the fact that the yogic exercises are to

Although the root texts of eighth-century Yoginī Tantras such as the Hevajra and the Cakrasaṃvara Tantra describe internal yogic practices connected to *nāḍī*, *prāṇa*, and *bindu* (Tib. *rtsa*, *rlung*, *thig le*), accounts of associated physical exercises and yogic “seals” (*mudrā*) seem only to have appeared in later commentaries and redactions rather than in the original root Tantras. However, the Hevajra Tantra makes repeated reference to the importance of transformational dance for embodying the qualities of the deity and purifying a specified thirty-two subtle energy channels within the body. As the Hevajra Tantra states; “When joy arises if the yogin dances for the sake of liberation, then let him dance the vajra postures [of Hevajra] with fullest attention ... The yogin must always sing and dance”.²¹ Such statements suggest that the origins of Trulkhor, as a means of embodying the qualities of Vajrayāna deities and supporting internal psychophysical processes, may lie not only in early Haṭha Yoga-like techniques, but also in traditions of Tantric dance, such as the yogic *tāṇḍava* dance form transmitted within Kashmiri Śaivism and the Newar Buddhist tradition of *caryāṇṛtya*.²²

The sixteenth-century Tibetan scholar-adept Tāranātha (1575–1634) described Trulkhor as “esoteric instructions for dissolving the energy-mind into the central channel and for releasing knots in the channels, primarily using one’s own body as the method”.²³ In his ‘Eighteen Physical Trainings’ (*Lus sbyong bco brgyad pa*), Tāranātha consolidated yogic exercises attributed to the

be undertaken while visualizing oneself in the non-ordinary form of a “hollow”, i. e., insubstantial, Tantric deity which, though appearing, is not held to be intrinsically real and can thus be considered as appearing “magically”. For further elaboration of the etymology of *phrul* 'khor and *'khrul* 'khor see Chaoul 2007: 286.

²¹ Farrow & Menon 1992: 64 – 65. The Hevajra Tantra further states that “the dance is performed assuming the postures of the divine Heruka [Hevajra], emanating them with an impassioned mind within a state of uninterrupted attention” (ibid.: 209) and that the movements “reveal the adamant nature of the Buddhas, Yoginīs, and Mother Goddesses.” (ibid.: 230). The Hevajra Tantra also states that “The protection of the assembly and oneself is by means of such song and dance” (ibid.: 230).

²² Although no firm dates can be established for when they first became part of Newar tradition, the ritual dance movements of *caryāṇṛtya* associated with the Cakrasaṃvara Tantra can be considered a form of Trulkhor in their intended purpose of embodying the qualities of Vajrayāna deities. As Cakrasaṃvara’s consort is the tantric meditational deity Vajravārāhī, several movements of *caryāṇṛtya* involve direct emulations of her visualized form, including the raising to one’s lips of an imagined skull cup brimming with ambrosial nectar. In all forms of *caryāṇṛtya* consecrated dancers embody the qualities of specific Vajrayāna deities with the express intention of benefitting all living beings. A similar conception is central to the Tibetan ritual dances known as Cham (*'cham*) that, prior to the thirteenth century, were performed only within an assembly of consecrated initiates.

²³ Quoted in Harding 2010: 184.

eleventh-century Kashmiri female *mahāsiddhā* Niguma that had been disseminated in Tibet through the Shangpa Kagyu lineage originating with Khyungpo Naljor (khyung po rnal 'byor) (c. 1050–1140).²⁴ A separate transmission of external yogic exercises in Tibet is said to have originated with Niguma's consort, Nāropadā who, in turn, ostensibly received them from his Bengali teacher Tilopadā (988–1069). The dating of these practices, however, is problematic.

The 'Oral Instruction on the Six Doctrines' (*Ṣaḍdharmopadeśa*, Tib. *Chos drug gi man ngag*) ascribed to Tilopa is non-extant in Sanskrit, but said to have been translated into Tibetan by Nāropa and his Tibetan disciple Marpa Chökyi Lodrö (mar pa chos kyi blo gros) (1012–1097) in the eleventh century. But the 'Oral Instruction on the Six Doctrines' only became part of the Kagyu transmission from the fifteenth century onward, implying a possible later origin. Similarly, 'Vajra Verses of Oral Transmission' (*Karṇatantravajrapāda*, Tib. *sNyan brgyud rdo rje'i tshig rkang*), with a colophon attributing the text to Nāropa, is also non-extant in Sanskrit, but widely held to have been translated into Tibetan by Marpa Chökyi Lodrö.²⁵ However, it only appears as a transmitted text from the time of Rechungpa (ras chung pa) (1083/4 - 1161), a century later.²⁶ The verses make passing reference to six "root" Trulkhör with thirty-nine "branches", suggesting that, as with the 'Oral Instruction on the Six Doctrines' attributed to Tilopa, the transmission of Trulkhör within the Kagyu lineage was not primarily based on texts, but on oral transmission and physical demonstrations to select initiates.

The earliest datable descriptions of external yogic practices in Tibetan Buddhism appears to be those of Phagmo Drupa Dorje Gyalpo (phag mo gru pa rdo rje rgyal po) (1110–1170), the twelfth-century Kagyu and Sakya master whose 'The Path of Fruition's Thirty-two Auspicious Actions' (*Lam 'bras kyi 'phrin las sum bcu so gnyis*) used Sanskrit and pseudo-Sanskrit names to describe sequential yogic movements.²⁷ Phagmo Drupa also wrote 'The Path of Fruition's Five-Branch Yoga' (*Lam 'bras kyi yan lag lnga sbyong*), which consists

²⁴ Harding 2010: 184. Harding's book includes translations of Niguma's foundational yogic exercises, which are ascribed with both medical and emancipatory effects.

²⁵ Kragh 2006: 135. See also dnz.tsadra.org for details concerning 'Cakrasamvara's Oral Transmission of Miraculous Yogic Movements for Fierce Heat and the Path of Skillful Means' (bDe mchog snyan brgyud kyi gtum mo dang thabs lam gyi 'khrul 'khor) attributed to Marpa Chökyi Lodrö (mar pa chos kyi blo gros).

²⁶ Ibid: 138. See also the anonymously authored *gtum mo'i 'khrul 'khor bco brgyad pa* in the *gdams ngag rin po che'i mdzod*, Volume 007 (ja), 537–541. Folios 19a4 to 21a2. New Delhi: Shechen Publications, 1999, listed at dnz.tsadra.org and connected with the oral transmission of Rechungpa (ras chung snyan brgyud).

²⁷ Wang-Toutain 2009: 29.

of basic instructions for loosening the neck, head, hands and legs, as well as a manual entitled ‘Supplementary Verses on the Path of Method’ (*Thabs lam tshigs bcad ma’i lhan thabs*) which describes six physical exercises²⁸ for removing obstacles and preparing the body for advanced internal yogas based on drawing psychosomatic “winds” into the body’s central channel.

All traditions of Tsalung Trulkhor extol the remedial healing benefits of the physical disciplines while emphasizing their more profound transformative effects on the body and mind, including the reputed development of supranormal powers (*siddhi*).²⁹ Trulkhor is further distinguished from the medically-oriented exercises of Lujong (*lus sbyong*) and Nejong (*gnas sbyong*)³⁰ that Butön Rinchen Drup derived from the Kālacakra Tantra in its emphasis on sequentially performed movements with the breath retained “in a vase” below the navel (*bum pa can*, Skt. *kumbhaka*) while visualizing oneself in the form of one or another non-material Tantric deity, in accordance with the practice’s line of transmission. As a method of self-consecration combining the development phase (*utpattikrama*, Tib. *skye rim*) and completion phase (*sampannakrama*, Tib. *rdzogs rim*) of Vajrayāna practice, Trulkhor is traditionally undertaken in strict secrecy with prescribed garments that symbolize interconnected psychophysical energies.³¹ Vigorous and, at times, acrobatic movements combined with expanded respiration and associated visualizations direct neurobiological energies into the body’s central channel (*suṣumnā*, Tib. *rtsa dbu ma*), quelling obscuring mental activity and arousing the blissful “fierce heat” of Tummo (*gtum mo*; Skt. *caṇḍālī*) that facilitates

²⁸ Wang-Toutain 2009: 29.

²⁹ The attainment of supernal powers associated with yogic cultivation is rarely an admitted or admired goal within Vajrayāna Buddhism, although provisionally useful worldly *siddhi*-s such as clairvoyance, invisibility, and control of natural phenomena are claimed to this day to arise spontaneously as a result of dedicated practice. Vajrayāna’s more transcendent goal, however, remains the *mahāsiddhi* of transforming egotism, greed, and aggression into empathic wisdom and unconditional compassion (thugs rje chen po, Skt. *mahākaruṇā*). Attaining this awakened disposition in the most expedient manner possible is viewed as the essential intent of Śākyamuni Buddha’s Eightfold Path to Nirvāṇa. Dynamic, physically-based yogic practices thus infuse the expansive “path of method” (*thabs lam*) central to Vajrayāna Buddhism.

³⁰ See n. 8. Trulkhor is further distinguished from Lujong in its tripartite purpose of clearing the body’s subtle energy system, drawing seminal essence (*bindu*, Tib. *thig le*) into the central channel, and distributing it throughout the psychophysical organism to prepare it for internal Tantric practices such as Fierce Heat (*caṇḍālī*, Tib. *gtum mo*).

³¹ Practitioners of Tsalung Trulkhor typically wear short pleated kilts called *ang rak*, the colors of which symbolize the elemental energies of space, air, fire, and water.

diverse possibilities during recurring cycles of wakefulness, sleep, sexual activity, and dream.³²

Within the Nyingma (*rNying ma*) tradition, the earliest transmission of Vajrayāna Buddhism in Tibet, the first textual evidence of Tsalung Trulthor practices appears in the ‘Turquoise Heart Essence’ (*g’Yu thog snying thig*), a “subtle pure vision” (*zab mo dag snang*) compiled by Sumtön Yeshe Zung (sum ston ye shes gzungs) beginning in 1157 based on original writings and teachings of Yuthok Yönten Gönpö (*g’yu thog yon tan mgon po*) (1126–1202), the Tibetan physician and yogic adept credited with the compilation of the earlier ‘Four Medical Tantras’ (*rGyud bzhi*) which consolidate Tibetan medicine’s approach to the prevention, diagnosis, and treatment of disease. The Yuthok Nyingthik, or ‘Turquoise Heart Essence’ was reputedly compiled after Yuthok’s second of five trips to India where he presumably received direct instructions from Indian tantric masters. The text outlines the process of spiritual development to be undertaken by non-monastic practitioners, condensing the core elements of Vajrayāna Buddhism into forty root texts, the twentieth of which describes a sequence of eighteen Trulthor exercises for refining the body’s subtle energy channels in preparation for practices of Fierce Heat (*gtum mo*, Skt. *caṇḍālī*) and the Yoga of Sexual Union (*sbyor ba, las kyi phyag rgya*, Skt. *karmamudrā*). As expounded in the Yuthok Nyingthik, the latter practices support the realization of Mahāmudrā and Dzogchen and the ultimate attainment of a dematerialized body of rainbow light (*‘ja’ lus*). The Yuthok Nyingthik’s concise treatise on Trulthor entitled ‘The Root-Text of the Miraculous Movements for Supreme Mastery which Clear the Darkness of Suffering’ is supplemented with a longer commentary written by Nyi Da Dragpa (*nyi zla grags pa*) entitled ‘A Concise Synopsis of the Supreme Accomplishment of the Profound Path of the Miraculous Wheel of Yogic Movements that Clear the Darkness of Suffering’ (*bLa sgrub sdug bsngal mun sel gyi zab lam ‘khrul ‘khor zhin bris ni*) and elucidates the therapeutic and yogic applications of the Turquoise Heart Essence’s Trulthor teachings.³³ The first two of the eighteen exercises are said to clear obscuring karmic imprints from the subtle anatomy of the body, while the following five assist in generating the transformative heat of Tummo. The subsequent eleven exercises directly prepare the body for the Yoga of Sexual Union, held by non-monastic traditions within both Nyingma and Kagyu to be

³² The unification of the body’s energetic poles through the merging of agni, as “divine fire”, and soma, as “cosmic nectar”, through the medium of psychophysiological “winds” (*vāyu*) in a subjectively experienced “central channel” is arguably the common goal and praxis of yoga in both Vajrayāna Buddhism and Tantric Śaivism, an ideal prefigured in ancient Vedic fire rituals (*agnihotra*) and embodied in Vajrayāna rites that customarily begin with the ritual invocation of fire, wind, and water through the resonant seed syllables (*bīja*) *ram*, *yam*, *kham*.

³³ See Chenagtsang 2013 and Naldjorpa 2014 for further details on the transmission and content of the Turquoise Heart Essence.

the most efficacious means for achieving the supreme realization of Dzogchen or Mahāmudrā, as prefigured in early Vajrayāna works such as the Guhyasamāja Tantra.³⁴ The Turquoise Heart Essence's twelfth century exposition of an eighteen-set Trulkhör is roughly contemporary with Phagmo Drupa's description of sets of six and thirty-two yogic exercises connected with the Path of Fruition. Both Yuthok's and Phagmo Drupa's works slightly predate Tibetan accounts of yogic exercises associated with The Perfection of the Immortal Elixir (Amṛtasiddhi) and thus, taken together, can provisionally be considered the earliest datable evidence of Haṭha Yoga-like practices within Tibetan Buddhism.³⁵

Although Indian Yoganiruttara, or Yoginī Tantras such as the Hevajra and Cakrasaṃvara date to the eighth century or earlier, these systems only rose to prominence in Tibet during the second wave of Buddhist transmission from the late tenth century onward. As with the Kālacakra Tantra that was introduced in Tibet in 1064, the root texts of the Hevajra and Cakrasaṃvara do not describe sequenced yogic exercises although, as noted above, the Hevajra Tantra does advocate transformational dance movements.³⁶ The Hevajra Tantra was translated from Sanskrit into Tibetan from 1041 until 1046 by Drokmi Sakya Yeshe ('brog mi shakya ye shes) (993–1072) in collaboration with the Indian master Gayādhara who is also said to have introduced the associated

³⁴ In its later monastic contexts in Tibet, the tantric axiom “without Karmamudrā [the yoga of sexual union] there is no Mahāmudrā [supreme attainment]” – attributed varying to both Saraha and Tilopa – was interpreted symbolically and celibate monks and nuns practiced instead with visualized “wisdom consorts” called ye shes kyi phyag rgya, (Skt. jñānamudrā) in order to generate “four joys” (dga'ba bzhi, Skt. caturānanda) of coalescent emptiness and bliss. The Four Joys are partly tantric reformulations of the Four Jhānas of Theravāda Buddhism which are held to lead to a “state of perfect equanimity and awareness” (upekṣā sati pārisuddhi) without reliance on an actual or imagined consort.

³⁵ This does not take into account the possible earlier dates of Bön Trulkhör. Furthermore, Robert Mayer has pointed out (personal communication, November 2014) that no mention can be found of Tsalung Trulkhör practices in the Nyingma and proto-Nyingma texts from the Dunhuang caves that were sealed in the early eleventh century. He notes that the only complete tantric scriptural texts to survive at Dunhuang are the thabs kyi zhags pa padma 'phreng ('The Noble Lotus Garland of Methods') and the Guhyasamāja Tantra and that only passing reference is made to other important Nyingma Tantras such as the 'Secret Nucleus' (Guhyagarbhatantra, Tib. gSang ba snying po) and the Śaivite derived eighth to ninth century 'Supreme Blissful Union with All Buddhas through the Net of the Sky Dancers' (Sarvabuddhasamāyogaḍākinījālasaṃvara, Tib. Dpal sangs rgyas thams cad dang mnyam par sbyor ba mkha' 'gro ma sgyu ma bde ba'i mchog ces bya ba'i rgyud bla ma). Sexual union practices are described in these pre-eleventh century works, but not in the context of nāḍī, prāṇa and bindu (Tib. rtsa, rlung, thig le) or Tsalung Trulkhör. See Mayer & Cantwell 2012: 84ff.

³⁶ See n. 24 above.

Lamdre (*lam 'bras*), or 'Path of Fruition' cycle of teachings connected with the ninth-century *mahāsiddha* Virūpa. Although the Hevajra root Tantra does not describe external yogic exercises, the Lamdre teachings associated with Virūpa do.³⁷ Phagmo Drupa Dorje Gyalpo's early works on Lamdre Trulkhor were elaborated later in the twelfth century by Drakpa Gyaltsen (*grags pa rgyal mtshan*) (1147–1216) as the 'Miraculous Channel Wheel of Thirty-two Auspicious Actions' (*'Phrin las sum cu rtsa gnyis kyi 'khrul 'khor*), and he included them in his extensive 'Yellow Book' (*Pod ser*) as the last of four texts for removing obstacles (*gegs sel*) on the Path of Fruition.³⁸ Drakpa Gyaltsen described the medical benefits of the various exercises as well as their supporting function within the completion phase (*sampannakrama*, Tib. *rdzogs rim*) of the Hevajra and Cakrasaṃvara Tantras.³⁹ Like Phagmo Drupa before him, he assigned Sanskrit-derived names to the various yogic movements⁴⁰ (See Plate 1 for an example) and emphasized their importance in cultivating the yogic power of Fierce Heat (*gtum mo*) and other completion phase

³⁷ See Wang-Toutain 2009: 28. There is no mention of Trulkhor practice in the Hevajra root tantra, only a name list of thirty-two energy channels (*nāḍī*) (see Farrow & Menon 1992: 13). The occurrence of Trulkhor within the Hevajra Lamdre (*lam 'bras*) thus seems to be a later development, either attributable to Virūpa, as Sakya tradition maintains, or possibly influenced by the propagation of the Kālacakra Tantra during roughly the same time period. However, the Lamdre cycle was introduced in Tibet twenty-three years before Somanātha brought the Kālacakra teachings in 1064, thus making Lamdre one of the most fertile areas for further research in regard to the development of physical yoga within Vajrayāna and Tibet. For further information on the cycles of Trulkhor within Lamdre, see the *lam 'bras slob bshad* collection edited by Jamyang Loter Wangpo (*'jam dbyangs blo gter dbang po*) (1847 – c. 1914) and listed in the *Lam 'bras* catalogue of Lama Choedak Yuthok (available at <http://www.sacred-texts.com/bud/tib/sakya-la.htm>). The Trulkhor texts associated with Lamdre are also catalogued at the Tibetan Buddhist Resource Center (TBRC) as item W23649, Volume 20, pp. 205–267. The text, in English translation, is given as 'The Profound Stages of the Path of Enlightenment of Vein, Channels, Yantra and Blazing and Blissful Heat of Caṇḍālī Yoga' (*rtsa rlung 'khrul 'khor zab lam byang chub sgrub pa'i rim pa bklags chog ma dang gtum mo'i bde drod rab 'bar ma gnyis*).

³⁸ See Stearns 2001: 26–34. The sequence of thirty-two Trulkhor exercises in Lamdre is significant in its reference to the thirty-two subtle energy pathways listed in the Hevajra root-tantra as well as to the thirty-two *nāḍī* that reputedly radiate from the eight petals of the heart cakra.

³⁹ Wang-Toutain 2009: 29. The Tibetan title of Drakpa Gyaltsen's work is given as *Kyai rdo rje'i rnal 'byor las rtsa rlung*.

⁴⁰ See Stearns 2001: 31, Wang-Toutain 2009: 29. The names of Drakpa Gyaltsen's Trulkhor movements use, at times, semi-corrupted Sanskrit words to refer to animals such as lion (rendered as *singala* instead of *simha*), goose (*haṃsa*), peacock (*mayūra*), and tortoise (*kūrma*), but also to auspicious objects such as vajras, wheels, and immortality vases (*kumbha*), as well as to *mahāsiddha*-s such as Jālandhara and Caurāṅgī, who were also prominent Nāth adepts (Wang-Toutain 2009: 33).

practices. He also advocated practicing the set of thirty-two exercises once in a forward direction, once in reverse, and once in random order to make a prescribed set of ninety-six movements.⁴¹ As Drakpa Gyaltsen assures his audience at the end of his Yellow Book: “If one trains oneself [in the yogic exercises] as much as one can, one will achieve Buddhahood.”⁴²



Plate 1: “Position of the Peacock” (Skt. *mayūrāsana*) as shown in a Qing Dynasty manuscript from the Imperial Treasury illustrating number twenty-eight of a sequence of thirty-two ‘*khṛul*’*’khor* exercises from the *Hevajra Lamdre* as presented by Drakpa Gyaltsen. Photograph courtesy of Library of the Palace Museum, Beijing, China. (Originally published in Wang-Toutain 2009).

Phagmo Drupa’s initial elaboration of yogic exercises also influenced Tsongkhapa Lobzang Drakpa (*tsong kha pa blo bzang grags pa*) (1357–1419), the founding figure of the reformed Gelug order of Tibetan Buddhism. In his ‘Book of Three Certainties: A Treatise on the Stages of Training in the Profound Path of Nāropa’s Six Yogas’ (*Zab lam nāro’i chos drug gi sgo nas ‘khrid pai rim pa yid chos gsum ldan zhes ba*) and in ‘A Brief Treatise for Practicing the Stages of Meditation in Nāropa’s Six Yogas, compiled from the teachings of Jey Rinpoche by Sema Chenpo Kunzangpa’ (*Nā ro’i chos drug gi dmigs rim lag tu len tshul bsdus pa rje’i gsungs bzhin sems dpa’ chen po kun dzang pas bkod pa*), Tsongkhapa describes in detail six preliminary physical exercises based on

⁴¹ Wang-Toutain 2009: 32.

⁴² Quoted in Wang-Toutain 2009: 32. Drakpa Gyaltsen further claims that practicing the thirty-two exercises will result in acquiring the thirty-two major body characteristics (*lakṣaṇa*) of a Buddha (Wang-Toutain 2009: 46).

Phagmo Drupa's twelfth-century accounts.⁴³ Jey Sherab Gyatso (rje shes rab rgya mtsho) (1803–1875), in his commentary to the 'Book of Three Certainties', remarks that even though there are an impressive variety of exercises, "there seems to be no great advantage in doing more than the six recommended by Phagmo Drupa [as taught by Tsongkhapa] for accomplishing the inner heat [*gtum mo*] yogas."⁴⁴ Further indicating Phagmo Drupa's enduring influence, Muchen Konchok Gyaltsen (mus chen dkon mchog rgyal mtshan) (1388–1471) included a chapter entitled 'Thirty-two Auspicious Yogic Movements' ('*Nal 'byor gyi phrin las sum cu rtsa gnyis*) in his 'Little Red Volume' (*Pu sti dmar chung*), based on a prior book of oral instructions (*zhal shes*) by Lama Dampa Sönam Gyaltsen Pelsangpo (bla ma dam pa bsod nams rgyal mts'an), (1312–1375) that is almost identical to Phagmo Drupa's 'The Path of Fruition's Thirty Two Auspicious Actions' (*Lam 'bras kyi 'phrin las sum bcu so gnyis*).⁴⁵

Over subsequent centuries Tsalung Trulkhör continued to evolve within all schools of Tibetan Buddhism, as well as within Bön. Its most celebrated exemplar, however, remains the mountain-dwelling yogi poet Jetsun Milarepa (rje btsun mi la ras pa) (1052 – c. 1135) who reputedly reached enlightenment through his committed practice of Fierce Heat (*gtum mo*, Skt. *caṇḍālī*) in conjunction with Trulkhör exercises to keep his energy channels open and supple.⁴⁶ (See Plate 2) Although not named as such, the physiological "seals"

⁴³ See Mullin 1997: 58–60, 107–109. As is customary with Trulkhör, each movement is performed while visualizing oneself as a luminously transparent Tantric deity. The first exercise, "filling the body like a vase", consists of expanding the breath in the lower abdomen with a held "vase" breath. The second exercise, "circling like a wheel", involves churning the solar plexus while the third exercise, "hooking like a hook", involves stretching the arms and snapping the elbows against the rib cage to drive the lateral "winds" into the central channel. The fourth exercise, "the mudrā of vajra binding", draws vital energy down through the crown of the head while the fifth, "heaving like a dog", involves kneeling on the ground with the hands extended in front and the spine horizontal and forcibly expelling the air from the lungs. In the final exercise, the practitioner shakes the head and body, flexes the joints, pulls on the fingers to release stagnant "winds", and rubs the hands together. Textual analysis suggests that these six "proto-yantras" were a later addition to the Six Yogas of Nāropa practice and not originally taught by Tilopa, Nāropa, or even Marpa, but this does not take into account the possibility of a well-developed oral tradition outside of written texts.

⁴⁴ Quoted in Mullin 1997: 58. Jey Sherab Gyatso further notes that "when stability in these practices is achieved, one will experience a sense of subtle joy that pervades the body" (see Mullin 1997: 59).

⁴⁵ See Wang-Toutain 2009: 29.

⁴⁶ Although there is no direct evidence of the specific yogic exercises that Milarepa practiced in conjunction with his practice of Fierce Heat, the Kagyu, or "lineage of oral transmission", for which he was the seminal figure, continues to transmit a set of six exercises to release blockages in the *nāḍī*-s and improve the flow of *prāṇa* during the practice of Tummo (*gtum mo*). These yogic exercises are also practiced in support of

and associated breathing methods used in the cultivation of Fierce Heat are an elaborated practice of the Haṭha Yoga method of *mahābandha* in which the *mūladharabandha*, or “root lock” at the perineal floor, and *uḍḍiyānabandha* in the abdominal cavity move the “illuminating fire” upward through the body’s axial channel while the application of *jālandharabandha* at the throat facilitates the downward flow of “nectar” from the cranium.⁴⁷ Fierce Heat in turn, is the foundation of six psychophysical yogas (*rnal 'byor drug*) undertaken during recurring phases of waking, sleeping, dreaming, and sexual activity as well as in preparation for death.⁴⁸ These “Six Yogas of Nāropa” (*na ro'i chos drug*)

the subsequent Six Doctrines of Nāropa (Nā ro'i chos drug) in order to prevent obstructions in the channels during yogas of sexual union and more subtle practices undertaken during states of dreaming, sleeping, and dying.

⁴⁷ As noted by Wang-Toutain (2009: 35), Drakpa Gyaltsen refers to bandha-s and mudrā-s in the context of his twelfth-century ‘Thirty-two Actions of the Miraculous Wheel of Channels’ (Phrin las sum bcu rtsa gnyis 'khrul 'khor).

⁴⁸ Distinct from the roughly contemporary Six-Fold Vajra Yoga of the Kālacakra Tantra and analogous systems within Hevajra Lamdre, the Six Doctrines of Nāropa (nā ro'i chos drug) originate with the Bengali mahāsiddha Tilopadā (988–1069) and distill the core Completion Phase (sāṃpannakrama, Tib. rdzogs rim) practices of India’s principal Buddhist Tantras into an algorithm for awakening dormant capacities of mind and body and cultivating lucid awareness within normally autonomic states of consciousness. Tilopa’s original introductory text on these six interconnected practices refers to them as six dharma-s (śāddharmopadeśa, Tib. chos drug gi man ngag), but they are commonly referred to as a system of “yoga” (rnal 'byor) for unifying consciousness with the total expanse of reality (dharmadhātu, Tib. chos kyi dbyings) during states of waking, dreaming, sleeping, sexual union, and death. Tilopa presents the Six Yogas as the pith essence of the most prominent Buddhist Tantras, leading to an expanded experience of reality culminating in the liberating realization of mahāmudrā, interpreted to derive etymologically from rā, “to bestow”, and mud, meaning “bliss”. Although variant presentations exist, the series commonly begins with Illusory Body Yoga (sgyu lus, Skt. māyākāya) through which the practitioner recognizes his/her body and mind as transmutable constructions of consciousness. Tilopa describes this yoga as deriving from the Guhyasamāja Tantra. The second yoga, the Yoga of Fierce Heat (gtum mo, Skt. caṇḍālī), on which all of the subsequent yogas are based, correlates with Śaivite practices for arousing the primordial energy of kuṇḍalinī and first appears, in Buddhist tradition, in the Hevajra and Cakrasaṃvara Tantras. The auxiliary Yoga of Sexual Union (las kyi phyag rgya, Skt. karmamudrā) in which the practitioner engages sexually with a partner, either real or visualized, is said to derive from the Guhyasamāja Tantra while the subsequent Yoga of Radiant Light ('od gsal, Skt. prabhāsvara) is based on a synthesis of the Guhyasamāja and Cakrasaṃvara Tantras. The Yoga of Dream (rmi lam, Skt. svapnadarśana) was further said by Tilopa to derive from the Mahāmāyā Tantra while the Yoga of Liminality (bar do, Skt. antarābhava) that prepares the practitioner for a posited postmortem experience develops out of the Guhyasamāja Tantra. The Yoga of Transference ('pho ba, Skt. saṃkrānti), in which consciousness is projected beyond the bar do at the time of death into one or another Buddhafield, is said to originate both from the Guhyasamāja Tantra as well as from the Catuṣpīṭha Tantra. A similar, but more

subsequently became the basis of Tibet's Kagyu (*bKa' rgyud*), or “orally transmitted lineage”.⁴⁹ Trulkhör practice within the Kagyu School subsequently diversified from the sets of six and thirty-two yogic exercises advocated by Phagmo Drupa to over one hundred and eight within the Drigung Kagyu (*'bri gung bka' brgyud*) suborder.⁵⁰ These longer and more complex systems were also periodically condensed, emphasizing five core movements combined with retained “vase” breaths (*kumbhaka*, Tib. *bum pa chen*), visualization, and internal neuro-muscular “seals” (*mudrā*-s, Tib. *gag*)

condensed exposition of the Six Yogas attributed to Nāropa's consort is entitled the Six Yogas of Niguma (Ni gu chos drug) and, after its transmission to the Indian yogini Sukhasiddhi and her Tibetan disciple Khyungpo Naljor (khyung po rnal 'byor) became the basis of the Shangpa Kagyu (shangs pa bka' brgyud) school of Tibetan Buddhism. Within the Nyingma tradition, the Six Yogas are referred to as the “Six Yogas of the Completion Phase” (rdzogs rim chos drug) and are considered as revealed teachings of Padmasambhava. These and other versions of the Six Yoga doctrine, such as those found in the Kālacakra and Yuthok Nyingthik, customarily begin with cycles of physical exercises for amplifying and directing the flow of subtle energy into the body's central channel to enhance the practice of more internal yogas.

⁴⁹ The Shangpa Kagyu lineage originating with Kyungpo Naljor is based on an analogous system of Six Yogas associated with Nāropa's consort Niguma. The Six Yoga doctrine was also transmitted separately by Marpa Chökyi Lodrö in a condensed form known as “mixing and transference” ('se 'pho) in connection with the Hevajra Tantra. Marpa transmitted these practices to Ngok Chokdor and they subsequently became known as the Ngok Transmission, or Mar rñgog bka' brgyud. According to Marpa scholar Cécile Ducher the 'se 'pho texts make no specific mention of Trulkhör although several other texts in Marpa's collected works (gsung 'bum) do. See Ducher 2014. As Jamgön Kongtrul Lodrö Tayé ('jam mgon kong sprul blo gros mtha' yas) (1813-1899) points out, the “mixing and transference” instructions are based on a core verse attributed to Nāropa: “Mixing refers to awakening through meditation and transference to awakening without meditation.” Kongtrul further explicates that inner heat and illusory body practices are used for awakening through meditation while transference of consciousness beyond the body ('pho ba) and sexual union with a consort (las kyi phyag rgya, Skt. karmamudrā) are used for awakening without meditation. See Harding 2007: 150.

⁵⁰ Trulkhör practice in Drigung Kagyu is based primarily on 'Chakrasamvara's Oral Transmission of the Miraculous Wheel of Channels and Winds' (bDe mchog snyan rgyud kyi rtsa rlung 'khrul 'khor) and texts such as 'The All-Illuminating Mirror: Oral Instructions on the Miraculous Wheel of Yogic Movements for Training the Body to Progress in the Practice of Fierce Heat from among the Six Yogas of Nāropa' (Nā ro'i chos drug las gtum mo'i bogs 'don lus sbyong 'phrul 'khor gyi zhal khrid kun gsal me long) (oral communication, Choeze Rinpoche, Lhasa, Tibet, July 2010). Drigung Kagyu also includes a cycle of thirty-seven Trulkhör revealed by the Second Karmapa, Karma Pakshi (1204/6-1283) (karma pakshi'i so bdun) (oral communication, Ani Rigsang, Terdrom, Tibet, August 2014). The Drigung Kagyu order was founded by Jikten Gonpo Rinchen Pel ('jig rten mgon po rin chen dpal) (1143-1217), Phagmo Drupa's principal disciple.

for activating and harmonizing the body's five elemental winds (*rtsa ba rlung lnga*).⁵¹



Plate 2: As revealed by this contemporary practitioner from Bhutan – his identity concealed behind a mask representing Milarepa – the practice of Trulkhor, or ‘magical gymnastics’, includes forceful ‘drops’ (*beb*) that concentrate vital essence and awareness in the body's central channel (*susumnā*) to facilitate the practice of ‘fierce heat’ (*gtum mo*). Photo courtesy of Dasho Karma Ura.

Nyingthik: Heart Essence of Tibetan Yoga

Tsalung Trulkhor and versions of the six associated yogas (*sbyor drug*) developed within all schools of Tibetan Buddhism as advanced Completion Phase (*rdzogs rim*, Skt. *sampannakrama*) practices in both monastic settings and among non-celibate male and female yogins (*sngags pa*). Within Tibet's Nyingma tradition, Tsalung Trulkhor and the “Six Yogas of the Completion Phase” (*rdzogs rim chos drug*) closely paralleled analogous practices in the

⁵¹ Oral communication, Tshewang Sitar Rinpoche, Bumthang, Bhutan, May 2013. Each of the body's five elemental winds (*rtsa ba rlung lnga*) supports a specific function. The “life-supporting wind” (*srog 'dzin rlung*) located in the brain regulates swallowing, inhalation, and mental attention. The “upward-moving wind” (*gyen rgyu rlung*) in the chest and thorax regulates somatic energy, speech, memory, and related functions. The “all-pervading wind” (*khyab byed rlung*) in the heart controls all motor activities of the body. The “fire-accompanying wind” (*me mnyam gnas rlung*) in the stomach and abdomen area regulates digestion and metabolism. The “downward-clearing wind” (*thur sel rlung*) located in the rectum, bowels, and perineal region regulates excretion, urine, semen, menstrual blood, and uterine contractions during labour. For further elaboration of the Five Winds, see also Wangyal 2002: 76–110.

Tantras and commentaries of the “new” (*gsar ma*) translation schools, but were expediently presented as revealed “treasure texts” (*gter ma*) attributed to Nyingma’s iconic eighth-century patron saint Padmasambhava. The imaginal anatomy of winds and channels and the practices based on them were presented differently, however, in light of the Nyingma’s emphasis on the Dzogchen, or Atiyoga view of “self-liberation” (*rang grol*), which is held to supersede all effort-based Development and Completion Phase approaches. In Nyingma’s division of the highest Vajrayāna teachings into Mahāyoga (*rnal 'byor chen po*), Anuyoga (*rjes su rnal 'byor*), and Atiyoga (*shin tu rnal 'byor*), practices connected with the psychophysical channels, winds, and vital essences (*rtsa, rlung, thig le*, Skt. *nāḍī, vāyu, bindu*) are categorized as Anuyoga, “unexcelled yoga”. When such techniques are used in support of the direct realization of one’s intrinsically awakened Buddha nature, the conjoined approach is often referred to with the Sanskrit-derived term “Ati Anu” (*shin tu rjes su*), or “supreme unexcelled”, representing a synthesis of Atiyoga and Anuyoga methods.⁵²

⁵² Personal communication, Chatral Sangye Dorje, Yolmo, Nepal, August 1987. Vajrayāna Buddhist practice customarily consists of a Development Phase (*bskyed rim*) based on mantra recitation and visualization followed by a Completion Phase (*rdzogs rim*) focused on the body’s metaphysical anatomy of channels, winds, and essences. Dzogchen differs in its approach by “taking the goal as the path” and fusing Development and Completion Phase practices into unitary awareness (*rig pa*) of their ultimate inseparability. Dzogchen practices thus work directly with physiology and optical phenomena to reveal reality as an unfolding heuristic and creative process. Dzogchen is presented in Tibet’s Nyingma School as the culmination of nine successive vehicles for transcending afflictive fluctuations of consciousness and uniting with all-encompassing awareness. The first two vehicles refer to the Hīnayāna stages of Śrāvakayāna and Pratyekabuddhayāna that lead to the solitary realization of the arhat, as promoted within Theravāda Buddhism. The third vehicle, the Bodhisattvayāna, introduces the Mahāyāna, or greater vehicle, and cultivates enlightenment not just for oneself, but for all beings. The fourth, fifth, and sixth vehicles are the so-called Outer Tantras of Kriyātantra, Caryātantra, and Yogatantra, all of which are part of Vajrayāna, the third turning of the wheel of doctrine, but remain dualistic in their orientation. The three Inner Tantras (*nang rgyud sde gsum*) were transmitted to those deemed of higher capacity and consist of Mahāyoga (*rnal 'byor chen po*), which emphasizes the Development Phase (*bskyed rim*) of imaginal perception, Anuyoga (*rjes su rnal 'byor*) which cultivates co-emergent bliss and emptiness through Completion Phase (*rdzogs rim*) practices based on a meta-anatomy of channels, winds and essences, and Atiyoga (*shin tu rnal 'byor*), the resultant non-duality of Dzogchen with its liberating view of primordial, self-existing perfection. The three Inner Tantras of the Nyingma further correlate with the Unsurpassed Yoga Tantras (*Anuttarayogatantra*) of the Kagyu, Sakya, and Geluk lineages, all of which culminate in the non-dual (*advaita*) view of reality as expressed in Essence Mahāmudra (*ngo bo'i phyag rgya chen po*) which is often presented as being identical to Dzogchen in terms of view, but differing in its method.

Although no descriptions of Trulkhor can be found in original texts associated with Tibet's earliest Vajrayāna lineage, early Nyingma masters such as Rongzom Chökyi Zangpo (*rong zom chos kyi bzang po*) (1012–1088) and Nyang Ral Nyima Özer (*nyang ral nyi ma 'od zer*) (1124–1192) were closely associated with early “New School” proponents such as Smṛtijñānakīrti and Padampa Sangye (*pha dam pa sangs rgyas*) and are likely to have received transmissions from them of Tsalung Trulkhor, thus gradually introducing codified practices of breath and movement into the Nyingma corpus. This new material was introduced into the Nyingma tradition through the expedient means of revealed “treasure texts” (*gter ma*), “mind treasures” (*dgongs gter*), and “pure visions” (*dag snang*) that allowed Trulkhor to be recontextualised within Dzogchen's view of self-existing enlightenment. However, none of the earliest Nyingma treasure texts such as the Seventeen Dzogchen Tantras (*rDzogs chen rgyud bcu bdun*) revealed by Neten Dangma Lhungyal (*gnas brtan ldang ma lhun rgyal*) in the eleventh century make any reference to prescribed sequences of transformative physical exercises.⁵³ In keeping with Dzogchen's non-gradualist approach to yogic practice, the Nyingma treasure texts advocate in their place spontaneous and unchoreographed physical practices that, from a Dzogchen point of view, preempt the codified regimens of Trulkhor. The fully embodied practices of Korde Rushen (*'khor 'das ru shan*) that facilitate realization of the unbound altruistic mind of enlightenment (*byang chub kyi sems*) are described in detail in the following section of this essay.

The clear absence of Trulkhor regimens in early Nyingma “treasure teachings” (*gter chos*) is further evident from an examination of the ‘Heart Essence of Vimalamitra’ (*Bi ma snying thig*), a three-volume compilation attributed to the eighth-century Indian master Vimalamitra, but revealed by his followers from the late tenth or early eleventh century until the middle of the twelfth century.⁵⁴ The two-volume ‘Heart Essence of the Sky Dancers’ (*mkha' 'gro snying thig*) attributed to Padmasambhava and revealed by Tsultrim Dorje (*tshul khri ms rdo rje*) (1291–1315/17) in the early fourteenth century also omits any mention of Trulkhor practices. Yet, like the Vima Nyingthik before it, it does describe body mandala practices of channels, winds, and vital essences (*rtsa rlung thig le*) based on sexual union practices.⁵⁵

⁵³ Chögyal Namkhai Norbu (personal communication, Glass House Mountains, Australia, March 2012) maintains that the descriptions of spontaneous physical movements in the root text of the Seventeen Tantras, the Dra Thal Gyur (*sgra thal 'gyur*), represent a form of Trulkhor.

⁵⁴ See Germano & Gyatso 2001: 244. The “Seventeen Dzogchen Tantras” date to the same time period and also describe body-based practices, although more synoptically than the Vima Nyingthik.

⁵⁵ Germano & Gyatso 2001: 244.

Apart from the cycle of eighteen yogic exercises described in the twelfth-century Yuthok Nyingthik, Trulkhor seems to have formally entered into the Nyingma corpus through the literary work of the fourteenth-century Dzogchen master Longchen Rabjampa Drimé Özer (klong chen rab 'byams pa dri med 'od zer) (1308–1364). Longchenpa synthesized earlier Nyingma treasure texts in his composite Nyingthik Yabshi (*sNying thig ya bzhi*) that quotes widely from the Seventeen Dzogchen Tantras, but makes no mention of Trulkhor within its multiple volumes. It is in Longchenpa's 'Wishfulfilling Treasury' (*Yid bzhin mdzod*) – later catalogued as one of his 'Seven Treasuries' (*mdzod bdun*) – that the first formal evidence occurs of Trulkhor practice in the Nyingma tradition subsequent to the Turquoise Heart Essence.⁵⁶ The Wishfulfilling Treasury elucidates Buddhist cosmology and philosophical systems, but the concluding section of its final chapter, 'The Fruition that is the Culmination of Meditation' (*bGom pa mthar phyin pa 'bras bu*), describes twenty physical exercises (*lus sbyong*) for clearing obstacles (*gegs sel*) according to the "profound meaning vajra essence, the ultimate instruction of the Wishfulfilling Treasury" (*Yid bzhin mdzod kyi don khrid zab don rdo rje snying po*). These exercises include bodily massage (*sku mnye*) and sequenced stretching exercises in support of the Dzogchen contemplative technique of Kadag Trekchö (*ka dag khregs chod*), or "cutting through [discursive mental activity] to primordial purity". Unlike preceding forms of Trulkhor presented within Tibetan Buddhism, Longchenpa's rendition is not based on visualizing oneself as a Tantric deity, but on vibrant awareness (*rig pa*, Skt. *vidyā*)⁵⁷ of one's innate Buddha Nature (*tathāgatagarbha*).⁵⁸

⁵⁶ Personal communication, Tshewang Sitar Rinpoche, Bumthang, Bhutan, April 2013.

⁵⁷ *Rig pa* is also rendered as "primordial awareness" and is experientially related to the spontaneous "recognition" (*pratyabhijñā*) of the nature of mind central to non-dual Kashmiri Śaivism.

⁵⁸ In most Nyingthik, or Heart Essence systems of Trulkhor, there is no visualisation of oneself as a Tantric deity because all divine forms arise from primary seed-syllables (as "vibrations") in the luminous expanse of the heart which is the ultimate deity (oral communication, Chatral Sangye Dorje Rinpoche, Pharping, Nepal, September 1992). The Trulkhor exercises described in chapter twenty-two of Longchenpa's *Yid zhin dzod* are less elaborate than later Nyingthik renditions for which they form the basis. The movements include interlocking the fingers against the chest and stretching them outward (no. 3), twisting the shoulders down to the hands and knees (no. 4), pushing outward from the chest with the hands held as fists (no. 5), twisting the body with the arms crossed and the hands on the shoulders (no. 6), drawing the hands along the arms as if shooting a bow (no. 8), pushing the fists outward as if against a mountain (no. 9), bending forward and backward (no. 10), joining the little fingers of the hands and forming a *mudrā* on the top of the head (no. 11), etc. For further details see the final volume of the *Yid zhin dzod* (p. 1579 in the edition published by Dodrupchen Rinpoche).

Having established a clear precedent, subsequent revealed treasure texts connected to the Dzogchen Nyingthik, or “Heart Essence of Great Perfection” transmission, largely all include cycles of Trulkhör. For example, in 1366, two years after Longchenpa’s death, Rigdzin Godemchen (rig ’dzin rgod ldem can) (1337–1408) revealed his highly influential “Northern Treasure” (*byang gter*) with a Trulkhör cycle called *Phag mo’i zab rgya rtsa rlung*, based on the meditational deity Vajravārāhi. These teachings were expanded upon by the treasure revealer Tenyi Lingpa (bstan gnyis gling pa) (1480 – 1535) whose writings elaborated on the movement of energy through the channels during sexual union and the discipline of *vajroli*, in which sexual fluids are circulated through the body’s yogic anatomy.⁵⁹

Longchenpa’s renowned fifteenth-century Bhutanese reincarnation, Orgyen Pema Lingpa (orgyan padma gling pa) (1450–1521), further clarified the “Ati Anu” practices of the Heart Essence tradition in his revealed treasure text ‘Compendium of All-Embracing Great Perfection’ (*rdzogs chen kun bzang dgongs ’dus*), a chapter of which entitled ‘Secret Key to the Channels and Winds’ (*Rtsa rlung gsang ba’i lde mig*) describes a sequence of twenty-three Trulkhör exercises within the context of Dzogchen’s visionary practice of “Leaping over the Skull” (*thod rgal*).⁶⁰ The practices are performed with the breath retained in a “vase” (*bum pa can*, Skt. *kumbhaka*), in combination with *mūladharabandha*, and are described as “clearing hindrances” (*gegs sel*) to contemplative practice while also ensuring optimal health. The practices were eventually illustrated on the walls of the Sixth Dalai Lama’s private meditation chamber in Lhasa in the late seventeenth century.⁶¹ (See Plate 3).

⁵⁹ Tenyi Lingpa’s elaboration of Rigdzin Godemchen’s Trulkhör, as first revealed in the Gongpa Zangthal (*dgongs pa zang thal*)– the highest Dzogchen teachings of the Northern Treasure lineage –reputedly consists of twelve preparatory exercises, thirteen principle movements, and twelve concluding movements. Oral communication, Kunzang Dorje Rinpoche, Pharping, Nepal, July 1985 and correspondance with Malcolm Smith, November 2016.

⁶⁰ ‘Compendium of All-Embracing Great Perfection’ is one of three texts revealed by Pema Lingpa that elucidate the Great Perfection (*rdzogs chen*) and the only one that describes practices of Trulkhör. For a full inventory of Pema Lingpa’s revealed treasures, see Harding 2003: 142–144. Pema Lingpa’s system of Trulkhör expands on the simpler exercises described by Longchenpa in his ‘Wishfulfilling Treasury’, in which there are neither forceful “drops” (*’beb*) nor the “adamantine wave” (*rdo rje’i rba rlabs*) practice of pressing on the carotid arteries at the neck to induce altered states of awareness. For a full translation of Pema Lingpa’s ‘Secret Key to the Channels and Winds’, see Baker 2012 and 2017.

⁶¹ For an account of how Pema Lingpa’s text came to be illustrated on the walls of the Sixth Dalai Lama’s meditation chamber in the late seventeenth century under direction of Tibet’s political regent Desi Sangye Gyatso (*sde srid sangs rgyas rgya mtsho*) (1653–1705), See Baker 2012 and 2017 as well as Baker & Laird 2011.

Following Pema Lingpa's revelation, further cycles of Trulkhor in the Nyingma tradition emerged in the form of 'The Universal Embodiment of the Precious Ones' (*dkon mchog spyi 'dus*), a seventeenth-century treasure text revealed by Rigdzin Jatson Nyingpo (*rig 'dzin 'ja' tshon snying po*) (1585–1656), as well as within the approximately contemporaneous 'Accomplishing the Life-Force of the Wisdom Holders' (*Rig 'dzin srog sgrub*) revealed by Lhatsun Namkha Jigme (*lha btsun nam mkha'i 'jigs med*) (1597–1650/53).⁶² The trend continued with the revelation of the 'Sky Teaching' (*gNam chos*) by Namchö Mingyur Dorje (*gnam chos mi 'gyur rdo rje*) (1645–1667) that contains a Trulkhor cycle with over sixty movements based on the Buddhist deity Vajrakīlaya (*rdo rje phur pa rtsa lung 'khrul 'khor*).⁶³

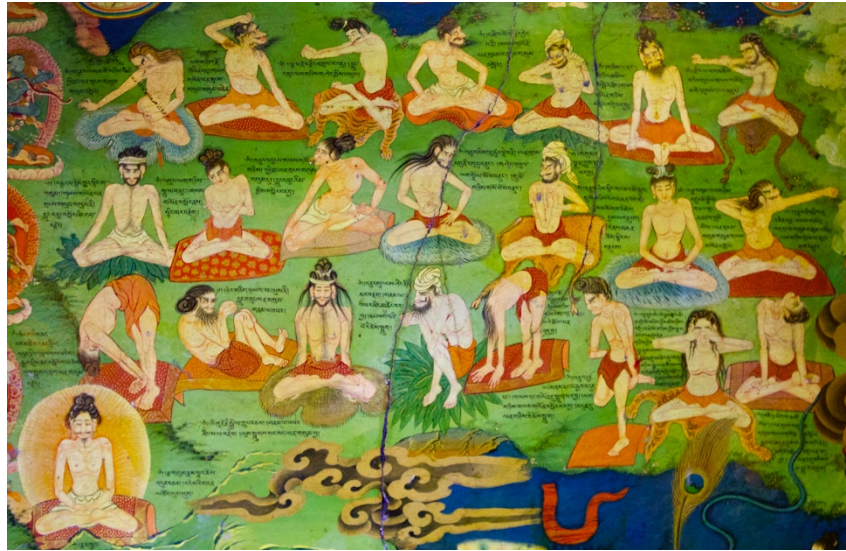


Plate 3: Late seventeenth century mural in the Sixth Dalai Lama's private meditation chamber in the Lukhang Temple in Lhasa illustrating a sequence of twenty-three yogic movements revealed two centuries earlier by Orgyen Pema Lingpa in his 'Secret Key to the Channels and Winds'. Photo by Ian Baker.

Trulkhor's place within the Nyingma Heart Essence tradition became even more firmly established with the visionary treasure revelation of Jigme Lingpa ('jigs med gling pa) (1730–1798) whose 'Heart Essence of the Vast Expanse' (*Klong chen snying thig*) includes the 'Miraculous Wheel of Wisdom Holders' (*Rig 'dzin 'khrul 'khor*), a Trulkhor cycle of twenty-one movements elaborating

⁶² Oral communication, Kunzang Dorje Rinpoche, Pharping, Nepal, May 1985.

⁶³ Oral communication, Lama Tashi Tenzin, Thimphu, Bhutan, July 2014. According to Lama Tashi, this cycle concludes with *bkra shis 'beb 'khor*, or "auspicious circle of drops", in which the adept performs a clockwise series of yogic "drops" and also jumps while in lotus posture from one padded yogic seat (*'beb den*) to another.

on Longchenpa's yogic exercises in his Wishfulfilling Treasure, the *Yid zhin dzod*. The Rigdzin Trulkhör practices consist of five initial exercises for clearing the body's elemental winds followed by eight movements that embody the qualities of eight Indian "wisdom holders" (*vidyādhara*, Tib. *rgya gar rig 'dzin brgyad*), acclaimed as enlightened contemporaries of Padmasambhava.⁶⁴ These and subsequent exercises in the series include symbolic gestures and vestiges of ritual dance together with forceful movements reminiscent of Chinese systems of *wei gong* and Yang-style *taijiquan*.⁶⁵ As in other later transmissions of Trulkhör, the series also includes intermittent controlled "drops" (*'beb*) of increasing complexity that purportedly direct the body's subtle energies into the central channel to promote expanded states of awareness. The most demanding, and potentially injurious, "drops" involve leaping into the air from a standing position and landing cross-legged on the ground in the lotus posture with the breath held in a "vase" in the lower abdomen.⁶⁶ (See Plate 2)

Beyond the forceful "drops" that punctuate the movements of Trulkhör, an even more invasive exercise for opening the central channel is often used at the conclusion of Trulkhör sessions. Known as the "adamantine wave" (*rdo rje'i rba rlabs*), it involves pressing on the carotid arteries at the sides of the neck to reciprocally increase blood flow through the cranial arteries in the brain stem, engendering a non-conceptual experience of the indivisibility of Saṃsāra and Nirvāṇa (See Plate 4). This technique, which is also used in non-dual Śaivism to

⁶⁴ Personal communication, Tulku Tenzin Rabgye, Lobesa, Bhutan, October 2013. The eight Vidyadhāras are Vimalamitra, Hūmkāra, Mañjuśrīmitra, Nāgārjuna, Prabhāhasti, Dhanasamkṛta, Guhyacandra, and Śāntigarbha. Sometimes Padmasambhava is added as a ninth, or as part of the eight in place of Prabhāhasti.

⁶⁵ Personal observation. See also Mroz 2013.

⁶⁶ *'beb*, or forceful "drops", are categorized as "small" (*'beb chung*), "medium" (*bar 'bep*), "big" (*'beb chen*), and "adamantine" (*rdor 'beb*) during which the legs are crossed in the vajra posture in mid air (*rdo rje dkyil dkrungs 'beb*). There are also *kyang 'beb* in which the body is extended and one drops on one's side, *chu 'beb* which are performed after first spinning in a circle, and "ornamental" *gyen 'beb* performed at the end of a Trulkhör series. It's likely that *'beb* evolved from originally gentler Haṭha Yoga practices such as *mahāvedhamudrā* which is central to Trulkhör practice in the Amṛtasiddhi and Yuthok Nyingtik. *Mahāvedha*, the "great piercer", is normally performed with the legs crossed in *padmāsana*, or lotus posture, the palms pressed against the ground, and the throat pulled upward in *jālandharamudrā* while holding the breath below the navel and successively dropping the backs of the thighs and buttocks on the ground to cause *prāṇavāyu* to leave the two side channels (*iḍā* and *piṅgalā*) and enter the *suṣumnā*, or central channel. James Mallinson notes, however, that *mahāvedhamudrā* as practiced in the Amṛtasiddhi differs from the later Haṭha Yoga version and does not involve dropping onto the thighs and buttocks but sitting on the heels of the feet, which are joined and pointing downwards (personal communication, Vienna, September 2013). A similar exercise called *tāḍanakriyā*, or "beating action", is performed in Kriyā Yoga with the eyes concentrated at the point between the eyebrows in *śāmbhavīmudrā*.

“astonish” the mind, is given as the sixth of Phagmo Drupa’s thirty-two Trulkhor exercises, with the idiosyncratic appellation “*tsarang gagna*”.⁶⁷



Plate 4: A Tantric master presses on a disciple’s carotid arteries to induce an altered state of awareness associated with emptiness and bliss. An illustration of the “Adamantine Wave” (*rdo rje rba rlab*s) practice from Pema Lingpa’s “Pearl Garland of Introductions”, Lukhang temple, Lhasa, Tibet. Photo by Ian Baker.

Some subsequent Heart Essence treasure works such as the exclusively Dzogchen oriented *Chetsün Nyingthik* (*lce btsun snying thig*) revealed by Jamyang Khentse Wangpo (*’jam dbyangs mkhyen brtse’i dbang po*) (1820–1892) make no mention of Trulkhor, whereas the roughly contemporary ‘All-Perfect Heart Essence’ (*Kun bzang thugs thig*) revealed by Chokyr Dechen Lingpa (*mchog gyur bde chen gling pa*) (1829–1870) contains a Trulkhor series connected with the Tantric Buddha Achala Chandamaharoshana (Tib. *mi gyo*

⁶⁷ Wang-Toutain 2009: 114. An analogous technique to the “adamantine wave” occurs within non-dual Kashmiri Śaivism in connection to *plavini*, or “floating” *kumbhaka*, during which the preceptor or an assistant presses on the sides of the neck to “surprise” or “astonish” the mind. The method is used in conjunction with *śāmbhavī mudrā*, in which the eyes are directed towards the middle of the eyebrows, and *khecarī mudrā*, in which the tongue is curled back and inserted into a cavity at the top of the pharynx. The practice is widely used among Śaivite yogins in Bali (personal observation 2010). The wave-like pulsations that spread throughout the body often provoke spontaneous body postures and are identified as manifestations of *spanda*, the primal vibration through which consciousness recognizes its divine nature. The near passing out experience is presented as a death-rebirth process, induced through controlled, hormetic stress.

ba) that is practiced within both Nyingma and Karma Kagyu traditions.⁶⁸ The later “mind treasure” (*dgongs gter*) ‘Heart Essence of the Sky Dancers’ (*mKha’ gro’i thugs thig*) revealed by Dudjom Jikdral Yeshe Dorje (bdud ’joms ’jigs bral ye shes rdo rje) (1904–1987) in 1928, contains a Trulkhör cycle of sixteen movements that is widely practiced today both in the Himalayan world and beyond and held to have been influenced by the *Phag mo zab rgya* revelation of Rigdzin Godemchen.⁶⁹ Similarly, the ‘Profound Instructions of Vajravārāhī’ (*Phag mo’i zab khrid*) revealed by Kunzang Dechen Lingpa (kun bzang bde chen gling pa) (1928–2006), based on prior teachings of Rigdzin Godemchen and Tenyi Lingpa, contains an extensive Trulkhör cycle with elaborate “drops”.⁷⁰

The most globally recognized contemporary form of Trulkhör is the revealed teaching of Tibetan scholar and Dzogchen master Chögyal Namkhai Norbu known as “Yantra Yoga”, based on Chögyal Namkhai Norbu’s 1976 commentary to a Trulkhör text entitled ‘Magical Wheel of Yogic Movements Uniting Sun and Moon’ (*Khrul ’khor nyi zla kha sbyor*) that was reputedly composed in the eighth century by the Tibetan translator Vairocana (*bai ro tsa na*), a contemporary of Padmasambhava. According to Namkhai Norbu, Vairocana’s original text is part of a larger collection known as the ‘Oral Transmission of Vairo’ (*Bai ro snyan brgyud*)⁷¹ and describes seventy-five breath-sequenced yogic movements, many of which are well known within later systems of Haṭha Yoga. According to Namkhai Norbu’s commentary, ‘A Stainless Mirror of Jewels’ (*Dri med nor bu’i me long*) which was published in 2008 as *Yantra Yoga: The Tibetan Yoga of Movement*⁷², Vairocana is said to have received these yogic practices directly from Padmasambhava who, in turn, is said to have learned them from a Nepalese *mahāsiddha* named Hūṃkāra who himself reputedly learned them from Śrīsimha, an early Dzogchen lineage holder who lived for a considerable period at the sacred mountain Wutai Shan in western China where similar Taoist-Chan Buddhist methods of what is now called *qigong*

⁶⁸ Oral communication, Tulku Urgyen Rinpoche, Nagi Gompa, Nepal, May 1987.

⁶⁹ Oral communication, Lama Nyingku Kunzang Wangdi, Bhutan, October 2011.

⁷⁰ In practice, however, Kunsang Dechen Lingpa simplified the Trulkhör exercises revealed by Rigdzin Godemchen and Tenyi Lingpa as he recognized that they could be harmful if not begun at an early age. Oral communication, Karma Lhatrul Rinpoche, Bangkok, Thailand, January 2014.

⁷¹ The “Oral Transmission of Vairo” is part of Vairocana’s collected works (*Bai ro rgyud ’bum*) which were compiled in the twelfth century, thus making it speculative to date the ‘Miraculous Wheel Uniting Sun and Moon’ to the eighth century. The text invites further independent investigation for understanding the origins and evolution of postural yoga practices in India and Tibet.

⁷² Clemente and Lukianowicz (trans.) 2008.

were transmitted from before the eighth century.⁷³ The close parallels of the ‘Magical Wheel [of Yogic Movements] Uniting Sun and Moon’ with Indian Haṭha Yoga and its potential links with Chinese systems of *dao yin* and *qigong* invite further comparative research and may eventually indicate greater transcultural origins for Tibet’s Trulkhör practices than has so far been supposed. Namkhai Norbu’s commentary elaborates Vairocana’s system of poses and breathing practices into one hundred and eight interconnected movements adapted to a contemporary western context, giving further evidence of the heuristic nature of the Tsalung Trulkhör system which, like Haṭha Yoga, continues to evolve through its interactions and exchanges with analogous practices and increasing global knowledge and awareness of biophysical processes.⁷⁴

Korde Rushen: Yoga of Spontaneous Presence

The physically embodied practices of Tsalung Trulkhör were a core component of the Vajrayāna forms of Buddhism that developed in Tibet from the eleventh century onward and, as the revealed treasure texts in the Nyingma tradition clearly indicate, Tsalung Trulkhör has been a supporting element in the transmission of Dzogchen as well. Dzogchen is also referred to as Ati Yoga, or “Supreme Yoga” (*shin tu rnal ’byor*) and, within the Nyingma tradition represents the culmination of the Development Phase (*utpatti krama*, Tib. *bskyed rim*), otherwise called Mahā Yoga, and the Completion Phase (*sampanna krama*, Tib. *rdzogs rim*), otherwise called Anu Yoga, of Vajrayāna Buddhism.⁷⁵ Dzogchen differs from Vajrayāna as a whole in its view of Buddha Nature (*tathāgatagarbha*, Tib. *de bzhin gshegs pa’i snying po*) as an innately present wakefulness rather than an indwelling potential that needs to be deliberately cultivated in order to attain freedom from Saṃsāra. Dzogchen thus characteristically “takes the end as the means” and dispenses with more gradual methods for realizing Buddhahood (*buddhatva*, Tib. *sangs rgyas nyid*). Although practices based on the body’s “inner maṇḍala” (*nang pa’i dkyil ’khor*) of subtle energy channels are included in Dzogchen, such disciplines are traditionally viewed either as methods for removing psychophysical obstacles (*gegs sel*) or for intensifying realization of the mind’s “natural state” (*gnas lug*). Ultimately, however, the “illusory body movements” of Tsalung Trulkhör, when practiced from a Dzogchen perspective, are considered to be direct

⁷³ Personal communication, Vivienne Lo, London, September 2011.

⁷⁴ Like other purely Dzogchen-oriented Trulkhör systems, Chögyal Namkhai Norbu’s Yantra Yoga does not involve Anuttarayogatantra methods of deity visualisation, but envisions the body as a luminous network of energy channels. Unlike earlier forms of Trulkhör, Yantra Yoga does not include forceful “drops”.

⁷⁵ See n. 2.

expressions of enlightenment (*samyaksaṃbodhi*) rather than specific means for attaining it.⁷⁶

Dzogchen is presented within Tibetan and Bhutanese tradition as “beyond all mental concepts and free of both attachment and letting go; the essence of transcendent insight and the coalescence of meditation and non-meditation; perfected awareness free of all grasping.”⁷⁷ While the unitary consciousness of Dzogchen can be directly realized without modifying the body or altering the mind in any way, its formal practice nonetheless traditionally begins with demanding physical exercises and culminates with prescribed postures and associated breathing techniques for entraining consciousness towards an incisive realization of the primordial non-dual unity (*gnyis su med pa*) of enlightened awareness.⁷⁸ As Rigdzin Jigme Lingpa (rig 'dzin 'jigs med gling pa) (1730–1798) wrote in ‘Supreme Mastery of Wisdom Awareness’ (*ye shes bla ma*), one of the most revered manuals (*khrid yig*) on Dzogchen practice: “Unless the vitally important body is compliant and energy flowing freely, the pure light of consciousness will remain obscured. So take this physical practice to heart!”⁷⁹

⁷⁶ Personal communication, Tulku Tenzin Rabgye, Lobesa, Bhutan, October 2013. From another perspective, Dzogchen considers Trulkhör exercises to be contrived means appropriate only in less direct approaches to enlightenment. As the fourteenth-century Dzogchen master Longchenpa writes in Canto 31 of his ‘Precious Treasury of Natural Perfection’ (*gNas lugs rin po che'i mdzod*): “Exhausting exercises involving struggle and strain are of short-lived benefit, like a sand castle built by a child.” As he further explicates: “we strive in meditation because we desire excellence, but any striving precludes attainment ... remaining constantly at ease in uncontrived spontaneity ... non-action is revealed as supreme activity.” (see Dowman 2014: 23).

⁷⁷ From ‘Nying tik, the Innermost Essence’ (*Yang gsang bla na med pa'i syning thig*) by Rigdzin Jigme Lingpa (rig 'dzin 'jigs med gling pa), quoted in Trungpa 1972: 21.

⁷⁸ The transpersonal modes of consciousness cultivated in Vajrayāna Buddhism and Dzogchen are subjects of contemporary neuroscientific research, leading to new linguistic and conceptual formulations. Some of these initiatives correlate specific meditative states with parasympathetic dominance in the brain's frontal cortex and concomitant activation of a biologically based mode of consciousness in which slow wave patterns originating in the limbic system project into the frontal parts of the brain, thereby inducing increased hemispheric synchronization and more integral states of awareness. See Winkelman 1997: 393–394. Winkelman further argues that by the “use of information modalities normally repressed or ignored in the waking mode, altered states of awareness provide new means of integration of symbolic and physiological systems” (Winkelman 2000: 128).

⁷⁹ This translation and subsequent ones from the Yeshe Lama (*ye shes bla ma*) are partially adapted from Chönam & Khandro 2009 and Dowman 2014, but are more indebted to Duntse Thinley Norbu Rinpoche's oral commentary in Kathmandu in July 1987.

Initiation in Dzogchen formally entails “empowerment into the dynamic energy of awareness” (*rig pa'i rtsal dbang*). To actualize this experientially, practitioners traditionally undertake rigorous foundational practices called Korde Rushen (*'khor 'das ru shan*) to differentiate Saṃsāra (Tib. *'khor ba*), or bounded consciousness (*sems*), from the spontaneous self-liberating awareness (*sems nyid*) of Nirvāṇa (Tib. *mya ngan 'das*). The ‘Continuity of Sound’ (*sgra thal 'gyur*)⁸⁰, the root text of Dzogchen’s esoteric “instruction cycle” (*man ngag sde*, Skt. *upadeśavarga*), counsels accordingly: “Perform bodily yantras [Trulkhör] while twisting and turning and alternately while prone and moving. Stretch and bend the limbs and push the body beyond its accustomed limits. Physically act out the behavior of the six kinds of elemental beings.”⁸¹ As Rigdzin Jigme Lingpa reiterates in his eighteenth-century ‘Supreme Mastery of Wisdom Awareness’ (Yeshe Lama): “Then, run and jump, twist and turn, stretch and bend and, in brief, move your body in whatever way comes to mind – beyond purpose or design.”⁸² He further clarifies that; “Finally you will be physically, energetically, and mentally exhausted and thus totally relaxed.” Within this unbounded unitary sphere beyond the binary operations of thought, “all spontaneous actions of body, speech, and mind arise as the unity of Saṃsāra and Nirvāṇa, and thus as unobstructed Buddha-Body, Buddha-Speech, and Buddha-Mind.”⁸³

Customarily undertaken in solitary wilderness settings, the practices of Korde Rushen are divided into Outer, Inner, Secret, and Ultimately Secret methods

⁸⁰ The ‘Continuity of Sound Tantra’ is associated with the eighth-century Indian Dzogchen master Vimalamitra and is the basis of the ‘Seventeen Tantras of the Innermost Luminescence’ (*Yang gsang 'od gsal gyi rgyud bcu bdun*) which provide the collective literary foundation for the esoteric “instruction cycle” of Dzogchen teachings known as the Dzogchen Nyingthik, or “Heart Essence of Great Perfection.”

⁸¹ Dowman 2014: 11. Besides the physical body, the exercises of “outer” Korde Rushen engage the voice through “chattering non-sensically or speaking in the tongues of [imagined] mythic beings”, and the mind by consciously evoking positive and negative thoughts that ultimately resolve into uncontrived, non-dual awareness. (See Dowman 2014: 11).

⁸² Dowman 2014: 11. A Dzogchen treatise entitled ‘Flight of the Garuḍa’ by Shabkar Tsokdruk Rangdrol (zhabs dkar tshogs drug rang grol) (1781–1851) further instructs: “With the conviction that Saṃsāra and Nirvāṇa are of one taste ... walk, sit, run and jump, talk and laugh, cry and sing. Alternately subdued and agitated, act like a madman ... Beyond desire you are like a celestial eagle soaring through space ... free from the outset like bright clouds in the sky.” (Quoted in Baker & Laird 2011: 115).

⁸³ Translation based on Dowman 2014:12. Gyatrul Rinpoche further clarifies this essential point in his commentary to ‘Spacious Mind of Freedom’ by Karma Chagmé Rinpoche (karma chags med) (1613–1678): “If you wish to stabilize the mind, first subdue the body with the *adhisāras* [yantra yoga] ... although you are ostensibly working with the body, you are indirectly subduing and stabilizing the mind.” (See Wallace 1998: 69).

for distinguishing the contents of consciousness from wakeful awareness itself until they arise indivisibly as having “one taste” (*ro gcig*, Skt. *ekarasa*). In Outer Korde Rushen, mind and body are pushed to unaccustomed extremes by acting out imaginary existences as animals, hell beings, demi-gods, or whatever the mind conceives, leading to the spontaneous recognition of the self-created, and thus mutable, nature of conditioned existence. When the capacity for physical and imaginative expression is exhausted, the practitioner enters a natural state of ease (*rnal du dbab pa*) in a posture corresponding to an open-eyed “corpse pose” (*śavāsana*) in Haṭha Yoga. The thought-free mental state is identified as the “primal purity” (*ka dag*) of the mind’s essential and abiding nature rather than its transient, and potentially deceptive, expressions.⁸⁴

The subsequent Inner Korde Rushen practices build on the cathartic dramatizations of Outer Rushen and focus inwardly on six numinous seed-syllables along the body’s central channel and on the soles of the feet associated with inhibiting karmic traces and subconscious imprints.⁸⁵ The practitioner clears each point in turn by visualizing white, red, and blue light issuing from the antidotal seed syllables *om āḥ hūm* as consciousness shifts from identification with the body’s materiality to direct experience of its corporeal luminescence (*nang gsal*).⁸⁶ As with Outer Rushen, practice sessions alternate with motionless phases of concept-free awareness in which thoughts subside within the luminous expanse of primordial awareness (*rig pa*).

⁸⁴ Although many Dzogchen treasure texts and commentaries elucidate the practices of Korde Rushen, the summary presented here draws substantially from oral instructions given in July 1987 in Kathmandu, Nepal by Dilgo Khentse Rinpoche and Dhungtse Thinley Norbu Rinpoche.

⁸⁵ The precise instructions for Korde Rushen practices vary between different Dzogchen lineages. In some, the “Purification of the Six Lokas” as described here is performed prior to the Outer Rushen described above. As with all aspects of Dzogchen, the key point is never technique but the end result: integrating awareness of the mind’s innermost non-dual nature within all circumstances and experience. Generally, in Inner Rushen the seed-syllables *ah*, *su*, *nri*, *tri*, *pre*, and *du* correlate with the forehead, throat, heart, navel, base of the trunk, and soles of the feet.

⁸⁶ Bioluminescence within humans has been associated with photon emission resulting from metabolic processes in which highly reactive free radicals produced through cell respiration interact with free-floating lipid proteins. The thus aroused molecules can react with chemicals called fluorophores to emit “biophotons” and thus produce a subjective experience of light.



Plate 5: A Bhutanese manuscript illustrating the “secret” phase of Korde Rushen as described in the ‘Heart Essence of the Vast Expanse’. The standing “vajra position” is pictured to the left and practices of the Voice, using the seed-syllable *hūṃ*, on the right. Image courtesy of Pelden Dorji, Bumthang, Bhutan.

Outer and Inner Korde Rushen’s clearing of physical and psychosomatic obstructions prepare the bodymind for the practices of Secret Rushen, which are divided into three progressive stages of Body, Voice, and Mind. The Body phase begins with a highly strenuous isometric balancing posture – the “position of the vajra” (*rdog stang*). Standing with the heels together and knees bent and stretched out to the sides, the practitioner pulls his or her chin towards the larynx, straightens the spine, and places their palms together above the crown of the head while visualizing themselves as an indestructible blazing blue vajra (See plate 5). Observing the flow of energy and sensation within the body while pushing through barriers of exhaustion, pain, and perceived futility, the practitioner maintains the position until his or her legs collapse and then continues in a modified posture while sitting on the ground until capable of resuming the standing posture.⁸⁷ At the end of the session one utters the seed-syllable *phaṭ* and lies down on the ground in a state of unconditioned concept-free awareness “like a corpse in a charnel ground.” When thoughts arise, one repeats the process in continuing cycles of effort and repose until the tenacious illusion of an abiding self yields to an all-pervasive, endorphin amplified awareness. As Jigme Lingpa explains in ‘Supreme Mastery

⁸⁷ The development of increased mental and physical capacities by pushing through habitual limits relates to the biological phenomenon of hormesis whereby beneficial effects such as increased strength and resilience, growth, and longevity can result from deliberate and systematic exposure to therapeutic stress.

of Wisdom Awareness', "exhausting the physical body exhausts the discursive tendencies of the mind" and leads ultimately to realization of the mind's essential nature.⁸⁸

The intensity of the Dzogchen *vajra* position alters the flow of psychosomatic energies and encourages the emergence of adaptive mental and physical capacities as the mind progressively disengages from non-productive adventitious forms of consciousness and recovers its innate dimension of bliss, lucidity, and non-conceptual awareness. Secret Korde Rushen then continues with Voice practices involving sound and vibration⁸⁹ that involving visualizations and intonations of the alpha seed-syllable *hūṃ* to enter into direct experience of the pure potentiality, or "emptiness" (*stong pa nyid*; Skt. *śūnyatā*) that underlies perception and represents the ultimate Nature of Mind. (See Plate 5) Dissolving all appearances into effulgent light, the practitioner remains in a unified state of luminous cognition, or absolute relativity, beyond conventional conceptions of time and space.

The following "Ultimately Secret" (*yang gsang*) phase of Korde Rushen dynamically unifies Body, Voice, and Mind "in order to free what has been stabilized". In a fully embodied enactment of the Deity Yoga (*lha'i rnal 'byor*) associated with Vajrayāna's Development Phase (*bskyed rim*), the practitioner manifests as a wrathful Tantric deity, representing the creative volatility of sensation, thought, and emotion. As the texts prescribe, the practitioner stands with hands formed into horned *mudrā*-s while pivoting from left to right with heels rooted in the earth. With eyes rolling in the sky, loud thought-subduing laughter is emitted from the core of one's being, filling all of space with the syllables and sounds of *ha* and *hi*. As in all of the Korde Rushen practices that proceed Dzogchen's more widely known and practiced contemplative techniques of "cutting through" (*khregs chod*) and "leaping over the skull" (*thod rgal*), the body is used to its fullest capacity to facilitate lucid, all-pervading awareness and freedom within all experience. As Longchenpa warns, however, no ultimate release can be obtained through deliberate, purpose driven action: "When everything is impermanent and bound to perish, how can a tight mesh of flesh, energy, and consciousness reach out to touch its

⁸⁸ See Dowman 2014: 15.

⁸⁹ In the Voice phase of Secret Rushen the practitioner visualizes and intones a blue seed-syllable *hūṃ* that multiplies until small *hūṃ*-s imaginatively fill the entire universe. The syllables and sounds of *hūṃ* then fill one's entire body propelling it imaginatively through space. The *hūṃ*-s then act like razors, dissolving all outer appearances and, turning inward, all semblance of one's physical body. At the end of the session one again lies down as in the practice of the Body phase and remains in vivid open presence. When thoughts arise one begins the practice anew, using the primal energy represented by the seed-syllable *hūṃ* to alter habitual perceptions and attachments to consensual appearance.

indestructible core?”⁹⁰ He argues that all contrived yogas serve only to estrange us from the supreme state of being: “If we aspire to the ultimate state we should cast aside all childish games that fetter and exhaust body, speech, and mind ... and realize the uncontrived unity of every experience.”⁹¹ From a Dzogchen point of view, the forceful actions of Tsalung Trulku are thus only useful in so far as they support the direct and ultimately effortless experience and perception of the self-effacing effulgence at the heart of every moment.⁹² It is to this self-perfected and spontaneous yoga of illuminated vision that the practices of Korde Rushen and the “Miraculous Wheel of Channels and Winds” ultimately lead.

Tögal: Yoga of Integral Perception

Dzogchen concurs with the larger Vajrayāna perspective that Tsalung Trulku practices can improve health and wellbeing and prepare the body for transformative Tantric practices such as Fierce Heat. But the primary function within Dzogchen of all such physical practices is to harmonize the body’s psychosomatic “winds” (*rlung*, Skt. *vāyu*) so that the non-dual nature of awareness becomes directly manifest through the Heart Essence (*snying thig*) contemplative technique of *lhun grub thod rgal*, literally “leaping over the skull into a spontaneous state of perfection”, a method involving quiescent body postures, mudrā-s, subtle breathing techniques, and focused gazes (*lta ba*, Skt. *dr̥ṣṭi*).⁹³

⁹⁰ Translation from Canto 19 of Longchenpa’s ‘Precious Treasury of Natural Perfection’ (*gnas lugs mdzod*), based on Barron 1998 and Dowman 2010.

⁹¹ Translation from Canto 20 of Longchenpa’s ‘Precious Treasury of Natural Perfection’ (*gnas lugs mdzod*), based on Barron 1998 and Dowman 2010.

⁹² The seventeenth-century Dzogchen master Tsele Natsok Rangdröl echoes this view in his statement that for ultimate realization of the nature of mind “you must mingle every moment of walking, sitting, eating, lying down [and thinking] with meditation. It is therefore not necessary to always maintain a specific posture or gaze” (See Schmidt 1993: 92).

⁹³ Just as Trulku and Korde Rushen work on the principle that intentional somatic states – from fluent postures to spontaneous movements – can influence cognition and affect not only the contents of consciousness but its primary function, the quiescent body postures and associated breathing techniques used in Tögal reconfigure visual perception, thereby altering subjective representations and experience of reality. Early Tögal texts, such as those in the eleventh-century Vima Nyingthik, also describe the use of a psychotropic decoction of *Datura* (*dha dhu ra*, Skt. *dhattūra*) to accelerate the manifestation of visions, the final distillate to be introduced directly into the eyes using a hollow eagle’s quill. See Baker 2004: 194. Tögal gazing techniques can also be compared with the well-known Hatha Yoga practice of *tr̥ṭaka* in which the practitioner stares unblinkingly at an external object.

Lhündrup Tögal (*lhun grub thod rgal*) inverts the foundational yogic practice of sensory withdrawal (*so sor sdud pa*; Skt. *pratyāhāra*) in which sense consciousness is turned resolutely inward and instead extends perception outward, “leaping over” conventional divisions to unite experientially with a sensuous field of self-manifesting visions, based initially on entoptic phosphenes and related phenomena within the eye.⁹⁴ In Supreme Mastery of Wisdom Awareness, Jigme Lingpa points out that the sublime visions of Tögal bear comparison with the “empty forms” (*stong gzugs* Skt. *sūnyatā-bimba*) that arise as visual manifestations of consciousness during the practice of sense withdrawal in Kālacakra. Similarly, the Kālacakra Tantra (4.195) refers to “garlands of essences” (*thig le'i phreng ba*) that appear when gazing into the sky. The fact that the Kālacakra Tantra and the Seventeen Dzogchen Tantras seminal to Dzogchen's esoteric “instruction cycle” (*man ngag sde*) both appeared in written form in the eleventh century⁹⁵ suggests that later Dzogchen doctrines may have been directly influenced by the Kālacakra's elucidation of visual forms that are neither wholly subjective nor wholly objective and, as such, illuminate the perceptual process itself. The initial visionary appearances associated with Tögal practice are vividly described by the Dzogchen master Dudjom Lingpa (bdud 'joms gling pa) (1835–1904) in his “mind treasure” (*gong gter*) ‘The Vajra Essence: From the Matrix of Pure Appearances and Pristine Consciousness, a Tantra on the Self-Originating Nature of Existence’ (*Dag snang ye shes drva pa las gnas lugs rang byung gi rgyud rdo rje'i snying po*):

At the beginning stage, the lights of awareness, called vajra-strands, no broader than a hair's width, radiant like the sheen of gold, appear to move to and fro, never at

⁹⁴ From the Greek *phos*, meaning light, and *phainein*, to show, phosphenes refer to visual events that originate within the eye and brain, either spontaneously through prolonged visual deprivation or intentionally as a result of direct stimulation of the retinal ganglion cells. A perceptual phenomenon common to all cultures, phosphene patterns are believed by some researchers to correlate with the geometry of the eye and the visual cortex. Tögal visions, however, often correlate more directly with entoptic (i.e., “within the eye”) phenomena such as myodesopsia, the perception of gossamer like “floaters” suspended with the eye's vitreous humor, as well as leukocytes, or white blood cells, transiting through the eye's retinal capillaries and appearing subjectively as self-existing translucent orbs.

⁹⁵ The Seventeen Dzogchen Tantras are traditionally held to have originated with the semi-legendary figure of Garab Dorje (dga' rab rdo rje) and to have been transmitted through the subsequent Dzogchen masters Mañjuśrīmitra, Śrīsiṃha, Padmasambhava, Jñānasūtra, and Vimalamitra. In the eighth century, Vimalamitra's Tibetan student, Nyangban Tingzin Zangpo (myang ban ting 'dzin bzang po) was said to have concealed these teachings for future generations and it is only after their ostensible rediscovery in the eleventh century by Neten Dagma Lhungyal (gnas brtan ldang ma lhun rgyal) that the Seventeen Tantras became the basis of Nyingma's Dzogchen Nyingthik, or Heart Essence tradition.

rest, like hairs moving in the breeze ... Then as you become more accustomed to the practice, they appear like strung pearls, and they slowly circle around the peripheries of the bindus of the absolute nature, like bees circling flowers. Their clear and lustrous appearance is an indication of the manifestation of awareness. Their fine, wavy shapes indicate liberation due to the channels, and their moving to and fro indicates liberation due to the vital energies.⁹⁶

Dudjom Lingpa clarifies that, as a result of continued practice, the visions gradually stabilize and “appear in the forms of lattices and half-lattices, transparent like crystal, radiant like gold, and like necklaces of medium-sized strung crystals.” Once the beginner’s phase has passed, Dudjom Lingpa continues, “the visions of the absolute nature become beautiful, clear, and stable, and they take on various divine forms.”⁹⁷

The visions of Tögal gradually expand and encompass the “three bodies” (*skugsum*, Skt. *trikāya*) of Dharmakāya, Sambhogakāya, and Nirmāṇakāya, referring, in Dzogchen, to Buddha Nature’s inconceivable totality, luminous clarity, and spontaneous creativity. The visions arise through applying “key points” of posture, breath, and awareness associated with each of the three dimensions of reality. In distinction to the moving yogas of Tsalung Trulkuhor, Tögal practice is performed while maintaining “three-fold motionlessness of body, eyes, and consciousness”.⁹⁸ “Garland of Pearls” (*mu tig rin po che’i phreng ba*), one of the principal Seventeen Dzogchen Tantras, emphasizes the importance of three body positions (*bzhug stang*) described as “the postures of lion, elephant, and sage”, corresponding to the Dharmakāya, Sambhogakāya, and Nirmāṇakāya, and by association with emptiness, clarity, and sensation (See Plate 6).⁹⁹ In the Dharmakāya posture of a seated lion (*chos sku bzhugs stang seng ge lta bu*) the torso is held upright (to allow the free flow of energy) with the soles of the feet placed together and the hands behind the heels in *vajra* fists (with the tips of the thumbs touching the base of the ring finger). The upper body is extended upwards with the chin tucked slightly inward (to suppress discursive thought) and the spine and back of the neck straightened so as to allow the free flow of vital energy through the cranial arteries and associated “light channels” connecting the heart and eyes. With the breath extended outward through gently parted teeth and lips and the abdomen

⁹⁶ Wallace 2004: 302.

⁹⁷ Wallace 2004: 302.

⁹⁸ The earliest textual descriptions of Tögal are found in the Seventeen Dzogchen Tantras and their primary source, the ‘Continuity of Sound’. All subsequent accounts of Tögal such as Jigme Lingpa’s ‘Supreme Mastery of Wisdom Awareness’ quote extensively from the original Dzogchen Tantras while offering additional commentary.

⁹⁹ Personal communication, Chögyal Namkhai Norbu Rinpoche, Kathmandu, Nepal, December 1993.

pulled slightly inward, the eyes are rolled inward (*ldog*) and upwards past an imagined protuberance at the crown of the head into the limitless expanse of inner and outer sky.¹⁰⁰ In the Sambhogakāya posture of a recumbent elephant, one's knees are drawn towards the chest (to increase metabolic heat) with the feet pointing backward and the elbows placed on the ground with the hands either positioned in front as *vajra* fists or supporting the chin (to inhibit coarse energy flow) as the spine elongates and the eyes gaze with soft-focus (*zur*) to the sides and ahead into pure visions reflecting the innate activity of conscious perception. In the Nirmāṇakāya posture of the sage (*rṣi*), one sits straight up (to open the channels and release the diaphragm) with the soles of the feet on the ground (to suppress the water element), one's knees and ankles together, and the arms crossed in front with elbows resting on the knees and the hands optionally tucked into the arm pits. As Jigme Lingpa clarifies in Supreme Mastery of Wisdom Awareness, "pulling the knees against the chest allows fire energy to blaze as luminous awareness. Slightly retracting the lower abdomen towards the spine inhibits discursive thought [presumably through the associated stimulation of the vagus nerve and the parasympathetic nervous system] while ... placing the elbows on the knees with the hands in vajra fists and using them to support the throat equalizes heat and cold."¹⁰¹ In the Sage posture the gaze is directed slightly downward through half-closed eyes to control the body's vital energies and still the mind. Jigme Lingpa points out that there are many other additional postures suitable for Tögal, but that "for the innumerable heirs of tantra who prefer simplicity, the three described here are sufficient."¹⁰²

¹⁰⁰ This gaze associated with the lion posture correlates with *sāmbhavīmudrā* in Hatha Yoga, which is popularly held to synchronize the two hemispheres of the brain and lead directly to samādhi. In regard to the three postures as a whole, the 'Continuity of Sound' specifies that "the crucial method is to apply reverted, lowered, and indirect gazes." As a result, in the lion posture "you will see with the vajra eye." In the posture of the recumbent elephant "you will see with the lotus eye" and in the posture of the squatting sage "you will see with the dharma eye." (Personal communication, Dhungtse Thinley Norbu Rinpoche, Kathmandu, Nepal, July 1987).

¹⁰¹ See Dowman 2014: 49.

¹⁰² Ibid.

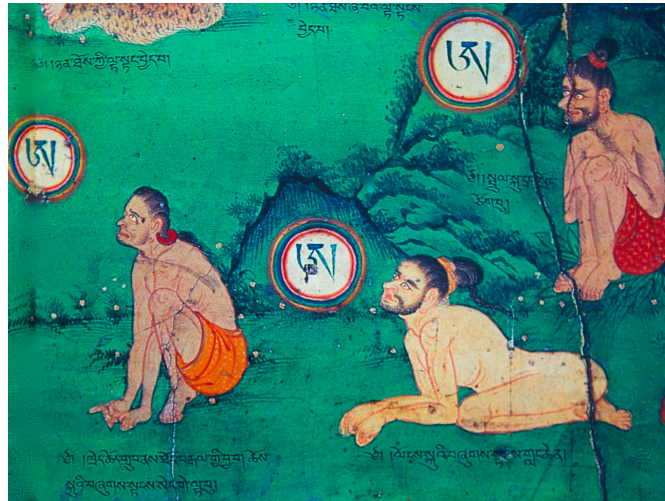


Plate 6: The primary Tögal postures of lion, elephant, and sage, as illustrated on the western mural of the Lukhang temple in Lhasa, Tibet, circa 1700. The seed-syllable *āḥ* in the rainbow-encircled nimbus symbolizes the mind's primordial "alpha" state. Photo by Ian Baker.

In distinction to the nasal breathing that is predominantly used during the dynamic movements of Trulkhör, Tögal postures are combined with extended and almost imperceptible exhalations through the mouth, with the lips and teeth slightly parted and the body in absolute repose.¹⁰³ Breathing in this way diminishes the amount of oxygen circulating in the lungs and is held to free consciousness from its conditioned "karmic winds" (*las kyi rlung*) so as to more effectively reveal the postulated "wisdom wind" (*ye shes kyi rlung*) in the heart through which consciousness ultimately transcends the physical body. For while Vajrayāna as a whole brings body, mind, and respiration into a renewed functional unity, Dzogchen ultimately maintains the supremacy of an integral awareness transcendent of the physical body. As such, the postures, breathing methods, and gazes associated with Tögal practice are ultimately designed to dissolve the physical constituents of the body at the time of death, transforming it into self-illuminating rainbow light. Central to this emancipating agenda are the embodied visions and progressive stages of "leaping over the skull" (*thod rgal*).

¹⁰³ Exhalation and inhalation in Tögal practice are ideally naturally suspended as in the Hatha Yoga technique of *kevala kumbhaka* in which both breathing and mental activity are spontaneous stilled.



Plate 7: A practitioner of Tögal contemplates the “vajra chain”, manifesting as a “string of pearls” backlit by the sun. Northern mural, Lukhang Temple, Lhasa, Tibet. Photo by Ian Baker.

Tögal practice relies on reflexive awareness of a unitary dimension transcendent of mental experience (*khregs chod*). It is also based on sustained awareness the body’s interactive “channels of light” (*’od rtsa*) through which the innate luminescence of heart-consciousness (Skt. *citta*) is perceived outwardly in progressive, self-illuminating displays (See Plates 7 and 8).

As Padmasambhava declares in a chapter of the Khandro Nyingthik entitled “The Hidden Oral Instruction of the Dākinī”: “Other teachings differentiate between channels, energy, and subtle essences; [in the “heart essence” teachings] these three are indivisible.”¹⁰⁴ Padmasambhava goes on to describe the human body as a Buddha Field infused by luminescent wisdom (*’od gsal ye shes*; Skt. *prabhāsvarajñāna*) in the same way that “oil [pervades] a sesame seed”. The oral instructions further clarify how, in the practice of Tögal, the body’s elemental constituents manifest as five lights (*’od lnga*) and four illuminating lamps (*sgron ma bzhi*),¹⁰⁵ held to be purified and expanded

¹⁰⁴ See Lipman 2010: 38.

¹⁰⁵ The four lamps represent somatic sources of illumination and are most commonly listed as the “all-encompassing watery eye lamp” (*rgyang zhags chu’i sgron ma*), the

expressions of Buddhahood (*sangs rgyas kyi go 'phang*). Through the specific postures, breathing methods, and gazing techniques of Tögal, the body's inner luminescence projects outward into the field of vision as spontaneously forming *maṇḍala*-s and optic yantras inseparable from innate enlightenment. As Padmasambhava summarizes: "The nature of one's body is radiant light."¹⁰⁶ Rising from its center is the "great golden *kati* channel" (*ka ti gser gyi rtsa chen*)¹⁰⁷ which issues from the heart and through which the five lights of one's essential nature radiate (*gdangs*) outward as five-fold wisdom (*ye shes lnga*) and four successive visions (*snang ba bzhi*) leading ultimately to the body's dematerialization at the time of death into a "rainbow body" (*'ja' lus*).



Plate 8: A detail from the northern mural in the upper chamber of the Lukhang temple which illustrates Pema Lingpa's 'Secret Key to the Winds and Channels'. The "yak eye" manifesting within pellucid space at the right center of this image highlights the recursive vision characteristic of Tögal practice. Photo by Ian Baker.

The Four Visions (*snang ba bzhi*) integral to Tögal practice occur sequentially and are said to arise from the heart as visible expressions of the innate dynamism of unconditioned awareness. They also represent the manifestation of the body's channels, winds, and vital essences in their subtler reality as primordial purity, spontaneous accomplishment, and radiant compassion (*ka*

"lamp of empty essences" (*thig le stong pa'i sgron ma*), the "lamp of the pristine dimension of awareness" (*dbyings rnam par dag pa'i sgron ma*), and the "lamp of naturally originated wisdom" (*shes rab rang byung gi sgron ma*).

¹⁰⁶ Lipman 2010: 57

¹⁰⁷ For an elaboration of light channels in Dzogchen see Scheidegger 2007.

dag, lhun grub, thugs rje) that correlate, in turn, with the interconnected triune Bodies of Enlightenment (*trikāya*). The visionary experiences are said to appear due to the “wind of luminosity” (*’od gsal gyi rlung*) that arises from the pristine “awareness wind” (*ye shes kyi rlung*) located in the heart. The four successive phases are described as the Direct Perception of the Ultimate Nature, the Vision of Increasing Experience, the Perfection of Intrinsic Awareness, and the Dissolution [of Phenomena] into the Ultimate Nature. Pema Lingpa points out in his fifteenth-century treasure text ‘Secret Key to Channels and Winds’ (*Rtsa rlung gsang ba’i lde mig*) that, as the visions are physiologically based, they only arise by maintaining the key points of physical posture, “just as the limbs of a snake only become apparent when it is squeezed.”¹⁰⁸ The first vision arises as a result of turning one’s attention to naturally occurring phenomena within the “watery lamp” of the eye, as described above by Dudjom Lingpa. Although the garlands of pearls, gossamer threads, *vajra* chains, and transiting orbs that initially appear within one’s field of vision may have naturalistic explanations as eye “floaters” and magnified red and white blood cells¹⁰⁹ transiting through the retinal capillaries, the entoptic events nonetheless focus awareness towards normally overlooked phenomenological processes and illuminate the ways in which a shift in perspective, or change in the way one views things, can fundamentally alter subjective experience. Central to this process is what Jigme Lingpa clarifies as “inner spaciousness shining visibly outward” within a coalescent awareness in which boundaries between inside and outside no longer obtain. The visions of the innate (*lhun gyis grub pa*) radiance of the heart develop as shape-shifting phosphenes and optical symmetries that gradually manifest anthropomorphically as male and female Buddhas within spheres of rainbow-colored light. Penultimately they resolve into four spheres – signifying the photonic essence of the four primary elemental processes within the human body – surrounding a larger central orb signifying “space”, or

¹⁰⁸ For a translation of Tertön Pema Lingpa’s ‘Secret Key to the Channels and Winds’, see Baker 2012 and 2017. Pema Lingpa’s treasure text illuminates the fundamental dynamics of mind and body at the heart of the Dzogchen tradition, specifically the ways in which primordial unitary awareness (*rig pa*) arises vibrantly and unconditionally in response to physiology and perception pushed beyond their accustomed limits in states of waking, sleeping, dreaming, sexuality, and near-death experiences.

¹⁰⁹ Tantric Buddhist physiology describes the body in terms of polarized red and white essences (*bindu*, Tib. *thig le*) that join at the heart at the moment of death or through tantric yogic praxis. This principle of complementary is anticipated in verse sixty of the *Yoga Chūdamani Upaniṣad*: “The *bindu* is of two types, white and red. The white is *śukla* (semen) and the red is *maharaj* (menstrual blood). The red *bindu* is established as the sun; the white *bindu* as the moon ... When the red *bindu* (*Śakti*) moves upwards (the ascent of *kuṇḍalinī*), by control of *prāṇa*, it mixes with the white *bindu* (*Śiva*) and one becomes divine. He who realizes the essential oneness of the two *bindus*, when the red *bindu* merges with the white *bindu*, alone knows yoga” (verses 60–64).

boundless potentiality.¹¹⁰ The central circle dilates through steady foveal gaze, expanding beyond circumference or periphery as the inherent luminescence of unmodified consciousness. Practiced in environments of total darkness and expansive light, Tögal optimizes sensory perception and leads ultimately to the posited awakening of all-encompassing luminescent and spontaneously compassionate awareness, or Buddha Mind.¹¹¹

Conclusion

As this essay has hoped to emphasize, the word *haṭhayoga* first appears in Vajrayāna Buddhism's Guhyasamāja Tantra where it serves as an adjunct practice for facilitating visionary experience.¹¹² Although the specific method of that initial Haṭha Yoga technique remains obscure, its stated optical intention relates it with the recursive visionary practices of Tögal. More characteristic Haṭha Yoga practices involving physiological mudrā-s were introduced to Tibet through the Amṛtasiddhi while the practice of Fierce Heat (*gtum mo*) central to Tibetan Buddhist lineages from the time of Milarepa is based on the intensive application of the "great seal" (*mahābandha*) which combines *mūlabandha*, *uḍḍiyāṇabandha*, and *jālandharabandha* in conjunction with retained "vase breaths" (*kumbhaka*, Tib. *bum pa chen*) and auxiliary "magical movements of the wheel of channels and winds" (*rtsa lung 'khrul 'khor*). Although the sequenced movements of Trulkhör predate the development of sequenced postural yoga in India and may have been directly influenced by indigenous Bön traditions, ritual dance, and yet unexplored historical connections with Chinese traditions of *dao yin*, they share a common soteriological method with

¹¹⁰ Comparisons can be made with "Haidinger's brush", an entoptic phenomenon in the visual field correlate of the macula in response to polarized light and associated with the circularly arranged geometry of foveal cones. The phenomenon appears most readily against the background of a blue sky and was first described in 1844 by the Austrian physicist Wilhelm Karl von Haidinger.

¹¹¹ For further details see Baker 2012 and 2017 and Baker & Laird 2011. As a practice of integral presence and recursive perception, Tögal can be considered a form of *sāmarasya* – the simultaneous practice of *dhāraṇā* (focused attention), *dhyāna* (contemplative meditation), and *samādhi* (coalescent unity) – leading to self-transcendent integration with the spontaneously arising visionary forms. From a Dzogchen perspective, the visionary phenomena are considered autonomous naturally unfolding perceptual processes based on the non-duality of subtle physiology and somatic awareness, resulting in a subjectively liberated experience of perception and reality.

¹¹² See Birch 2011: 535. "Visionary experience", in this context, can be associated with bringing conscious attention to subliminal perceptual events normally below the threshold of awareness. Research may ultimately suggest correspondences between interoceptive perception, i.e., supraliminal perception of autonomic physiological processes, and structural modifications of the anterior cingulate and, by extension, corresponding alterations of conscious awareness itself.

Indian Haṭha Yoga and rose to prominence during roughly the same time period, as exemplified in the murals depicting Pema Lingpa's mid-fifteenth century Trulkhor cycle entitled 'The Secret Key to the Channels and Winds' (*Rtsa rlung gsang ba'i lde mig*).¹¹³

As with Indian Haṭha Yoga, the somatic practices of Vajrayāna Buddhism use dynamic means to harmonize polarized modes of consciousness through the symbolic medium of the body's central channel (*madhyamā*, *madhyanāḍī*, *suṣumnā*, *avadhūti*).¹¹⁴ They progress, in Dzogchen, to a reorientation of somatic and attentional processes and an awakening of the heart's posited potential as an organ of recursive perception. By directing attention to what is commonly overlooked the mind becomes increasingly aware of normally subconscious processes and thereby develops insight, clarity, and adaptability that contribute to an openness of being and expanded experience of human embodiment. Yoga and physical culture as described in Vajrayāna and Dzogchen ultimately transcend their Indian and Tibetan contexts and point towards the awakening of collective, if unrealized, human capacities. Forceful Haṭha Yoga-like practices ultimately matter less in this process of self-transcendence than the expanded consciousness represented by "leaping over the skull" (*thod rgal*). As a deeply embodied practice, Tögal literally alters physiological processes through changing the way bodily processes are perceived, intensifying subjective experience of the bodymind as well as one's relationship with the physical world.¹¹⁵ The liberating reorientation of consciousness at the heart of Tögal is expressed concisely in the 'All Creating King Tantra' (*Kun byed rgyal po'i rgyud*, Skt. *Kulayarāja tantra*), one of Dzogchen's earliest texts: "With no need of transformation or purification, pure presence [within the body] is perfected in itself."¹¹⁶ Jigme Lingpa

¹¹³ See Baker 2012 and 2017.

¹¹⁴ The central channel can be partly understood in contemporary medical terms in relation to the hypothalamic-pituitary-gonadal axis that regulates the flow of mood-altering hormones within the human body. Tibetan yogic practices such as Fierce Heat (Tib. *gtum mo*) cultivate proprioceptive sensation along a bioenergetic current paralleling the spine and linking the pelvic region with the interior of the brain, thus subjectively uniting experiential poles of consciousness associated with these contrasting regions of human anatomy.

¹¹⁵ It echoes, for example, Gregory Bateson's concept of "creative subjectivity" in which one, in part, functions as "an artist creating a composite out of inner and outer events" (quoted in Brockman 1977: 245).

¹¹⁶ See Norbu & Clemente 1999: 146. The *Kun byed rGyal po* is considered the most important of the twenty-one texts of the "mind" series (*sems sde*) of Dzogchen, all of which emphasize the innately pure and expanded consciousness that is inseparable from enlightenment (*byang chub kyi sems*). The *Kun byed rgyal po* elaborates on more concise renditions of self-existing enlightenment such as found in the earlier six-line root text of 'The Cuckoo of Awareness' (*Rig pa'i khu byug*).

elaborates as follows: “The pith essence of the Great Perfection is to dwell in the natural radiance of all that occurs, at one with actions, energies, and thoughts and beyond all contrived boundaries of view and meditation; at ease in the naked clarity of the present moment.”¹¹⁷

Awakening to transpersonal dimensions of consciousness absent of cognitive and emotional strife lies at the heart of Vajrayāna and Dzogchen, a process that involves seeing through the eyes of the heart into a world that is forever renewed by our perceptions and interactions. As this essay has hoped to show, Vajrayāna Buddhism, and its culmination in Dzogchen or ‘Great Perfection’, was originally infused with physical practices that, by pushing the mind and body beyond accustomed limits, revealed dormant human capacities, including enlightenment itself. Conventions of secrecy have caused these practices to become nearly extinct, whereas they are the very life essence of the Vajrayāna tradition. It’s hoped that increased research and attention to the deeply embodied yogic practices at the roots of Tantric Buddhism in India and the Himalayan world will result in renewed interest in methods and techniques that have great relevance in the contemporary world and across cultures. As Pema Lingpa himself proclaimed in his *Secret Key to the Winds and Channels*, “By seeing reality just as it is, the conceptual mind naturally comes to rest ... Free of conflicting views, everything arises in its intrinsic Luminescence ... [and] the body itself is naturally enlightened!”

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¹¹⁷ See Dowman 2014: 36.

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A Visual Transmission: Bhutanese Art & Artists from the 17th-19th Centuries

Ariana Maki

For initiated viewers, the murals, thangkas, and sculptures visible in Vajrayana Buddhist temples and shrines illustrate key rituals, deities, and lineage masters that provide important supports to practice. Yet while these objects carry additional, deeper meanings that can only be understood by initiates, there are additional levels of meaning available when we take into account the artists and patrons who contributed to the creation of a particular piece, as well as the specific imagery selected for display. Drawing on recent research, this paper focuses on particular artists who created works for display and use in Bhutanese ritual environments, with special attention paid to objects created in the early post-Zhabdrung era. By highlighting select surviving works made by artists active in the early phase of post-unification Bhutan, my hope is to provide illumination as to how some Buddhist masters created inspiring works of art as well as conducting rituals and initiations, practicing meditation, and authoring texts.¹

¹ This paper is one facet of a larger, longer term research project undertaken in collaboration with the National Library and Archives of Bhutan that seeks to identify, examine and analyze those individual artists whose creations provide key touchstones to Bhutanese art history with the aim of tracing the ways Bhutanese art evolved to fit a new nation, and how resulting works employed Vajrayana Buddhist imagery to reflect a distinctly 'Bhutanese' identity and artistic style. The project, 'Historical Artists of Bhutan', builds upon valuable

This article takes as its point of departure one of the foremost artists in Bhutanese history: Tsang Khenchen Penden Gyatso (gtsang mkhan chen dpal ldan rgya mtsho; 1610-1684), who arrived in Bhutan in the second half of the 17th century (Figure 1). Tsang Khenchen —and the Bhutanese students he trained—constitutes a major foundation of what might be termed ‘Bhutanese art’ on a national scale, and this paper analyses the impacts of Tsang Khenchen and his atelier in highlighting important Vajrayana Buddhist rituals, practices, and lineage masters through their artistic output. After following the Tenth Karmapa Choying Dorje into exile in Bhutan ca. 1645, Tsang Khenchen stayed in the region at the behest of Zhabdrung Ngawang Namgyal, who was in the midst of consolidating the nascent nation. Tsang Khenchen settled in Paro, building his main center at Menchuna (sman chu nang). There, he took on many students, many of whom went on to significant renown and to train their own students using Tsang Khenchen’s style.

Tsang Khenchen’s arrival in the country from Tibet coincided with the last years of the life of Zhabdrung Ngawang Namgyel (1594–1651; hereafter, the Zhabdrung) (Figure 2), the Drukpa Kagyu Buddhist master who began the process of unification during what was, broadly speaking, a turbulent time in the history of the Himalayas. The Zhabdrung, and by extension the Drukpa Kagyu tradition itself, had been embroiled in a controversy over who was the legitimate incarnation of the master scholar-practitioner and fourth Drukchen (head of the Drukpa Kagyu lineage in Tibet), Pema Karpo (1527–92). At stake was control over the monastic seat at Ralung in Central Tibet and the far-flung lands which offered it tribute. By 1616, the conflict between the Zhabdrung and

initial contributions to Bhutanese art history by John Ardussi, Terese Tse Bartholomew, David Jackson, E. Gene Smith and Khenpo Phuntsok Tashi, and has amassed data on nearly fifty artists active between the 17th and 19th centuries. I would like to acknowledge and thank both the National Museum of Bhutan and the National Library and Archives of Bhutan for generously allowing me to study and benefit from learned scholars. In particular, Dr. Yonten Dargye, a direct collaborator on the project, has been an invaluable research partner and colleague. We also had the good fortune of having some time in the field with Lopen Kunzang Thinley, whose encyclopedic knowledge is both inspiring and humbling. Research support in various capacities has been extended by the Shelley and Donald Rubin Foundation and an American Academy of Religion International Collaborative Research Grant. Special thanks are extended to Dr. John Ardussi, who first brought Menchuna to my attention, and to the late E. Gene Smith, for generously sharing his resources. All photographs are by the author unless otherwise stated.

Paksam Wangpo (1593–1641) had become increasingly contentious, and circumstances induced the Zhabdrung to head southward to the lands that would become Bhutan. Drawing upon a local Drukpa Kagyu network established early in the 13th century, the Zhabdrung was installed there as a religious and political leader. Shortly thereafter, in 1623, Zhabdrung went into a three-year retreat and emerged in 1626 to declare he was going to institute the two-fold system (lugs gnyis) across the region.



Figure 1: Tsang Khenchen Penden Gyatso (1610–84), with attendants Sangngak Gyatso (b. 17th century) on the viewer's right and Drakpa Gyatso (1646–1719) on the left. Menchuna Temple, mid 18th century. Mural painting, ground mineral pigment on plaster



Figure 2: Zhabdrung Ngawang Namgyel (1594–1651); Bhutan, late 17th century. Ground mineral pigment on cotton, 123 x 69 cm. Collection of the National Museum of Bhutan. (Image courtesy of Lobzang Norbu)

By 1629, Zhabdrung had overseen the construction of Simtokha Dzong, the first of many fortified structures that housed both secular and religious authorities for a particular region (Figure 3). A skilled artist himself, the Zhabdrung recognized that in order to fulfil the necessary ritual functions each *dzong* required *ten* (rten), or supports for practice, a need that triggered large numbers of commissions for murals, thangkas, sculptures and implements. These works overwhelmingly emphasized Drukpa Kagyu transmission lineages and practices, and their thematic unity resulted in a recognizable and unified visual language that reflected the sources of authority within the newly centralized state.



Figure 3: Punakha Dzong, founded 1637

At the same time, the political instability in Central Tibet was developing into civil war. In 1642, numerous Karma Kagyu practitioners fled Lhodrak in southern Tibet into Punakha, then under Drukpa Kagyu control, to escape persecution by the Gelukpas and the Mongols. Among them was Tsang Khenchen, whose younger brother had been killed by Mongol soldiers. While from the general Bhutanese perspective Tsang Khenchen might perhaps best be recognized as the author of an important biography of Zhabdrung², Tsang Khenchen was also a renowned artist who was very close to the 10th Karmapa Chöying Dorje.³ On Tsang Khenchen's arrival in Punakha, the Zhabdrung

² Tsang Khenchen authored the Zhabdrung's namthar at his densa at Menchuna. It was his last written work before he died in 1684.

³ They travelled together as part of a group for many years leading up to the Tibetan civil war, and Tsang Khenchen is referred to in 10th Karmapa's biographies and elsewhere as the Rimdrowa Kuntu Zangpo, or attendant Samantabhadra. As Shigatse fell, Tsang Khenchen was giving the Tenth Karmapa teachings in Lhodrak that same year. Two years later, Tsang Khenchen and the Karmapa were able to escape their encampment just ahead of the Mongols' arrival. According to Tsang Khenchen's biography, Tsang Khenchen was traveling with the Tenth Karmapa between 1651-52, which was when the Zhabdrung passed away during his retreat. Tsang Khenchen, likely unaware of the Zhabdrung's passing, continued his travels, with his biography noting he received a painting from the Karmapa in 1654 and his making a stupa for two of the Karmapa's teeth in 1657. For more information on Tsang Khenchen's identification as Rimdrowa Kuntu Zangpo, and the life of the Tenth Karmapa see Irmgard Mengele, *Riding a Huge Wave of Karma: The Turbulent Life of the Tenth Karma-pa* (2012).

personally welcomed him, recounting to his guest that when Tsang Khenchen was six years old, his family had offered the Zhabdrung shelter for a week. The Zhabdrung interpreted their reconnection in Bhutan as an auspicious omen and encouraged him to remain as an abbot; however, Tsang Khenchen respectfully expressed a preference for teaching and retreats. Although Tsang Khenchen would return to Tibet⁴ he would also undertake multiple sojourns in Bhutan, even establishing a seat at Menchuna in Paro (Figure 4). There, his biography states, in addition to embroidery, woodworking and sculpting, Tsang Khenchen taught his students painting, described in his *Collected Works* as primarily in the Tsangri and Menri styles.⁵



Figure 4: Menchuna Temple, founded ca. 1656

The *Religious History of Bhutan* lists his students as the Gyatso Namdru, or the ‘Six Gyatsos’, as receiving the tradition; however, only one of these six individuals, Dragpa Gyamsto, is listed both there and in Tsang Khenchen’s *sungbum*.⁶ Each of the Gyatso Namdru listed in *Religious History* was an active

⁴ Tsang Khenchen’s biography is unclear as to when he first returned to Tibet, though it does mention he was back in the company of the 10th Karmapa by 1651.

⁵ Tsang Khenchen Penden Gyatso, 1976, volume 1, *passim*. See also Ardussi, “Gyalse Tenzin Rabgye (1638-1696), Artist Ruler of 17th-century Bhutan”, 90, and Smith, *Among Tibetan Texts*, 125-126.

⁶ The *Religious History of Bhutan* (*lho ‘brug chos ‘byung*) lists the six as: Dragpa Gyatso (1646-1719), aka Sangye Drakpa; Sangngag Gyatso (b. 17th c.); Thadrak Tulku Kunga Gyatso (b. 17th c.); Chokyi Gyatso (d.u.); Lodro Gyatso (d.u); Ngawang Gyatso (1759-

artist who created paintings, sculptures, embroideries, woodworking and/or ritual items, many of which survive to the present. If we trace subsequent generations of Tsang Khenchen's students, we find that the artistic lineage extends to some of the most important figures in the early phases of Bhutanese national governance and authority, including seven Je Khenpos⁷, the Tshamdrak Lama and the Komdrang Lama traditions, as well as the first Speech Incarnation of the Zhabdrung himself. The pervasiveness of Tsang Khenchen and his tradition amongst so many traditions speak to the roles that he, his texts, and his arts played in Bhutan's nation-building processes during the later 17th century, but also the embeddedness of the visual arts as a necessary quality of many respected masters.⁸

Two of Tsang Khenchen's foremost pupils were Drakpa Gyatso (1646–1719) (Figure 5) and Sangngak Gyatso (b. 17th century). Though both studied at Menchuna, each eventually founded seats near Paro. Drakpa Gyatso was born in Chirikhar in Paro, and moved to Menchuna to begin his studies with Tsang Khenchen at the age of 16. Like his teacher, Drakpa Gyatso became adept in several media, and was soon the preferred artist of the Fourth Druk Desi Tenzin Rabgye (1638–98), who was serving as the Zhabdrung's representative. At the time, it was a closely guarded secret that the Zhabdrung had passed away in 1651, and Tenzin Rabgye was spearheading multipronged cultural and political efforts to implement the late master's vision of a unified, sovereign nation.

1812). The sungbum provides Dragpa Gyatso (1646–1719), aka Sangye Dragpa; 3rd Je Khenpo Pekar Lhundrup (1640–99); Ngawang Drugyel (b. 17th c.); Tshamdrak Lama Ngawang Drukpa (1682–1748). It should be noted that there is likely an issue with Tshamdrak Lama Ngawang Drukpa being Tsang Khenchen's student as Tsang Khenchen passed away when Tshamdrak Lama Ngawang Drukpa was no more than two years old. It could be that the student was Ngawang Dorje, founder of Tshamdrak Densa, rather than Ngawang Drukpa. Ngawang Dorje also had connections with Tsang Khenchen's student Dragpa Gyatso. Additional research is required to definitively clarify the disconnect.

⁷ This high number of Je Khenpos in these early generations is of little surprise, as in order to qualify for the post of Je Khenpo candidates had to demonstrate artistic aptitude among other skills. The Venerable Udzin Kunzang Thinley also spoke to this in his conference presentation.

⁸ In addition to Tsang Khenchen's tradition, there are additional painting lineages addressed in the larger project, including that of Tulku Mipham Chophel.



Figure 5: Detail of Figure 1 showing Drakpa Gyatso (1646–1719)

Drakpa Gyatso ended up making remarkable contributions to this effort, as in 1692 he was given the commission to paint the famous cliff-side Taktsang Monastery in Paro, which was being extensively expanded and refurbished to emphasize Drukpa Kagyu imagery.⁹ Drakpa Gyatso was also responsible for the elaborately embroidered thongdrel (mthong grol) on display in 1680 when Tenzin Rabgye had his enthronement ceremony at Punakha Dzong before a crowd that included guests invited from as far away as Sakya Monastery in Tibet and Ladakh.¹⁰ These thongdrel displays, as well as the festivals and sacred dances that accompanied them, were annual performances organized and systematized by Tenzin Rabgye in part to help cultivate a sense of national identity and unity. However, not all of Drakpa Gyatso's artistic works were so public or so large-scale. One of the most remarkable pieces attributed to his hand is a large and detailed thangka of biographical scenes of the Kagyu yogi and poet Milarepa (ca. 1051–1135), the main figure in which Drakpa Gyatso is said to have painted with blood from his own nose (Figure 6).



Figure 6 Milarepa (ca. 1052–1135) surrounded by life scenes (detail). Bhutan, attributed to Drakpa Gyatso (1646–1719), ca. late 17th century. Ground mineral pigment on cotton, dimensions unknown. Girikha Temple

⁹ See Ardussi, “Gyalse Tenzin Rabgye and the Founding of Taktsang Lhakhang”, 38–39 and 54.

¹⁰ Ardussi, “Gyalse Tenzin Rabgye (1638–1696), Artist Ruler of 17th-century Bhutan”, 92.



Figure 7: Enthroned Buddha surrounded by life scenes. Bhutan, attributed to Drakpa Gyatso (1646–1719), ca. late 17th century. Ground mineral pigment on cotton, 145 x 72 cm. Tsamdrak Temple

Additional works attributed to Drakpa Gyatso survive at Tsamdrak, a formerly Drigung Kagyu site associated with the first Tsamdrak Tulku Ngawang Drukpa (1682–1748), who followed a combination of Nyingma and Drukpa Kagyu practices and, at the behest of Tenzin Rabgye, studied sculpture in the tradition of Tsang Khenchen. Among Drakpa Gyatso's paintings at Tsamdrak is a set of *thangkas* showing scenes from the biography of the historical Buddha, Shakyamuni. One example from the set shows the Buddha enthroned beneath an unusual pavilion, around the slender columns of which are twisting dragons that clutch at the architectural supports and adornments (Figure 7). The overall composition illustrates the artist's dexterity with the Tsangri style, reflected in the billowing, pastel-coloured clouds, the shading conventions on the blue and green rock outcroppings, the generally asymmetrical composition, the solid deep blue sky and the numerous secondary figures, depicted in a variety of non-frontal poses.¹¹ Additional works attributed to Drakpa Gyatso found at Tsamdrak and elsewhere similarly tend strongly toward the Tsangri style, reinforcing the current theory that this style maintained a prominent place amongst the Drukpa Kagyu in Bhutan.

Whereas Drakpa Gyatso shifted seasonally between Chirikhar and his other seat at Jagar Jangchupling, Sangngag Gyatso founded his summer seat at Thadrak as per the instruction of Tsang Khenchen, who had dreamt of a dagger-shaped cliff that he envisioned as a manifestation of his tutelary deity, Dorje Phurbu (Skt. Vajrakīlaya) (Figure 8).¹² Interpreting his dream as an omen, Tsang Khenchen instructed Sangngag to find the cliff and construct a temple on it so that the built structure would appear as the 'head' of the dagger; by extension, the inhabitants would be occupying the mind of the deity and receive the benefits thereof.

Dorje Phurbu is a rather ubiquitous figure in Vajrayana Buddhism, and in Bhutan, many Dorje Phurbu-related practices are traced to the tradition of the renowned Nyingma lineage tertön (treasure-revealer) and Bumthang native Pema Lingpa (1450–1521) and his revealed teaching *Lama Norbu Gyatso* (bla ma nor bu rgya mtsho) discovered in 1483 at Lhodrak Mendo in Tibet. Pema Lingpa's Dorje Phurbu cycle, along with other Nyingma teachings, was later incorporated into the state monastic curriculum systematized and instituted by the Fourth Druk Desi Tenzin Rabgye, probably with an eye to fostering unity between the Drukpa Kagyu powers seated in the west and the Nyingma, who held sway in parts of eastern and central Bhutan. It seems, however, based on evidence at Thadrak and other related sites, that Tsang Khenchen followed

¹¹ Jackson, *Place of Provenance*, 157–64.

¹² Thadra Gonpa was founded by Tsuglag Gyatso and Sangngags Gyatso, the latter of whom was considered to be the Thadra Tulku. Tsuglag Gyatso is not the same as the 3rd Pawo by the same name, who lived 1567–1630.

a distinctive Dorje Phurbu practice¹³, and according to the *Religious History of Bhutan*, the *Lhodruk Chöjung*, the master passed this specific tradition on to 'Eight Phurba Naljorpas', or 'Eight Phurba Practitioners', the identities of whom have yet to be definitively identified.



Figure 8: Thadrak Temple, founded 2nd half 17th century

Textually attested as one of Tsang Khenchen's main meditation deities, the relative importance of Dorje Phurbu at Thadrak is reflected in the comparative scale of his depiction in the temple, which encompasses the innermost retinue figures as well as the animal-headed attendants inhabiting the mandala's outer boundaries (Figure 9). This elaboration of the full ritual cycle stands in marked contrast to the imagery seen in the mural opposite, wherein numerous advanced meditation deities (*yi dam*)—including Dorje Jigje (Skt.

¹³ One iconographic shift seems to have taken place in the course of Tsang Khenchen's dissemination: in the Pema Lingpa form of Dorje Phurbu, the yum embraces the yab with both legs, whereas in sites related to Tsang Khenchen and his lineage, the yum clearly has one leg extended to the ground. This distinction is related in the fourth volume of Tsang Khenchen's *sungbum* (*rdo rje phur pa'i chos 'byung rgyud sde mang po'i gleng gzhi*), however, I have not yet conclusively determined whether this specific text is the definitive origin for the difference; also, there is a second candidate text written by Tsang Khenchen, a history of Dorje Phurbu practices (*rdo rje phu pa'i chos 'byung rgyud sde mang po'i gleng gzhi dang sbyar ba*), that also requires additional study.

Vajrabhairava), Kye Dorje (Skt. Hevajra), Sangwa Düpa Jampe Dorje (Skt. Guhyasamaja Manjuvajra) and Khorlo Dechok (Skt. Chakrasamvara)—are shown in extremely condensed form without any supporting retinue figures and interspersed in solitary and/or *yab-yum* forms amongst wealth deities, long life deities and depictions of the historical Buddha and lineage masters (Figure 10). Comparatively, the fuller composition of Dorje Phurbu clearly attests to an emphasis on and the importance of Dorje Phurbu at Thadrak, a pattern of emphasis that is repeated at numerous sites related to Tsang Khenchen and his followers.



Figure 9 Dorje Phurbu and retinue. Thadrak Temple, late 17th–early 18th century. Mural painting, ground mineral pigment on plaster (Image courtesy of Yeshe Lhendrup, NLAB).



Figure 10 Dorje Jigje surrounded by meditation deities, protectors and long life figures. Thadrak Temple, late 17th–early 18th century. Mural painting, ground mineral pigment on plaster (Image courtesy of Yeshe Lhendrup, NLAB).

The Tsang Khenchen-related Dorje Phurbu practice can be easily distinguished visually through a set of its subsidiary figures, specifically, red-faced, three-eyed males wearing warrior garb and whose lower bodies are constituted of three-sided daggers (Figure 11). Each figure wields a dagger in his right hand and a blood-filled skull bowl in his left. Thus far, these half-warrior, half-dagger figures remain unattested in Bhutan outside of Tsang Khenchen-related traditions, though additional research remains to be done. Further testimony to the association of Tsang Khenchen with Dorje Phurbu can be read in a

lengthy inscription at Thadrak that includes the statement that “Jamyang Penden Gyatso [Tsang Khenchen] gave the oral instructions [of Phurbu] in order to provide the power to overcome obstacles”. Clearly, the master felt that Dorje Phurbu-related practices were most efficacious in achieving this goal, evidenced by its comprehensive treatment within the temple. Further, Thadrak’s *gönkhang* houses a set of ritual daggers attributed to the hand of Sangngak Gyatso that are displayed during the temple’s kuchoe, an annual celebration of a past master that includes the performance of key rituals associated with the deceased. At Thadrak, the kuchoe rituals are conducted in honour of Tsang Khenchen and Sangngag Gyatso, and include practices of both Dorje Phurbu and Chenrezig (Skt. Avalokiteshvara)—specifically, a yellow form of Chenrezig Chagzhipa (Skt. Chaturbhuja Avalokiteshvara) that is part of a larger eleven-headed Avalokiteshvara practice unique to Tsang Khenchen as recounted in his sadhanas and as depicted in murals at a number of sites associated with the Tsang Khenchen lineage (Figures 12 and 13). Tsang Khenchen’s specific practice is iconographically distinguished by the presence of a small gem emerging from the lotus at Chenrezig’s shoulder.



Figure 11: Subsidiary figures, Dorje Phurbu cycle. Thadrak Temple, late 17th–early 18th century; Mural painting, ground mineral pigment on plaster (Image courtesy of Yeshe Lhendrup, NLAB)



Figure 12: Chenrezig Chagzhipa, Chirikhar Temple, late 17th–early 18th century.

Mural painting, ground mineral pigment on plaster.



Figure 13: Chenrezig Chagzhipa, Menchuna Temple, mid 18th century, Mural painting, ground mineral pigment on plaster.

The influence that Tsang Khenchen had on Bhutanese art is difficult to overstate. Tracing the earliest generations of his students, we find seven individuals who served as Je Khenpo, Bhutan's highest-ranking religious authority. As mentioned above, one of the Je Khenpos, Shakya Rinchen (1710–59), was considered to be the direct incarnation of Tsang Khenchen (Figure 14). Accordingly, Shakya Rinchen assumed control of Menchuna and commissioned new murals depicting himself, his former incarnation and the Zhabdrung, surrounded by forms of Chenrezig. As noted above, Tsang Khenchen's traditions continued through the Tsamdrak Tulku lineage, the Komdrang lamas, and the first Speech Incarnation of the Zhabdrung, Chokle

Namgyel, among others. It bears repeating that the extent to which Tsang Khenchen is intertwined with many of the foremost religious offices in Bhutan emphasizes his prominence and impact in the early phases of Drukpa Kagyu governance and authority, and reinforces the textually based assertion that mastery of the visual arts was considered a crucial skill for those assuming positions of religious leadership. Yet Tsang Khenchen is but one master artist-practitioner active during the often-turbulent years of Bhutan's early history, at which time the Drukpa Kagyu were consolidating their authority, repelling military actions by the Tibetan and Mongol armies, and seeking to engender unity within a new nation-state. Additional lineages are traced through the Newar sculptor Panchen Deva (b. 17th century), the sculptor Tulku Dzing (b. 17th century) and the Tibetan painter Lopen Mipam Chögyel (1543–1604), as well as through locally cultivated Bhutanese masters. While much work remains to be done, it is hoped that the material generated will foster an increased interest in and appreciation of the distinctive styles and personalities that have contributed to Bhutanese art history.¹⁴

As a concluding note, the roles of visual arts in creating sacred space, transmitting lineage and religious history, and offering support for practice are quite remarkable. Often, practitioners rely on texts and living masters for the understanding and undertaking of Vajrayana practices. And while both of these are obviously crucial and ought not be undermined, viewers might consider lending more attention to the visual and artistic legacies that past masters have left behind for us. Though an understanding of iconography, iconology, meaning and context, practitioners and scholars alike can cultivate a greater understanding of the many treasures Bhutanese art has to offer.

¹⁴ In addition to the 'Historical Artists of Bhutan' project, other current and recent initiatives include a multi-year conservation project undertaken by the Courtauld Institute, a current project focusing on Tashi Gomang (multi-doored portable shrines) being carried out under royal patronage, the National Library and Archives' Cultural Heritage of Bhutan project, the National Museum's ongoing symposia focusing on tangible cultural heritage, and a five-year cultural documentation project being carried out by the Shejun Agency and Loden Foundation in collaboration with the University of Virginia with support granted by the Arcadia Fund.



*Figure 14 Ninth Je Khenpo Shakya Rinchen (1710–59); Menchuna Temple, mid 18th century;
Mural painting, ground mineral pigment on plaster.*

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When a Return to Tradition Appears as Innovation: Establishing the ordained non-monastic Vajrayāna sangha in the West

Ngakma Mé-tsal Wangmo & Naljorpa Ja'gyür Dorje

Vajrayāna as it was first transmitted in India and Tibet bears little resemblance to the institutionalised forms that are current in the contemporary world. As a result, the essence of Vajrayāna insight and practice has often been obscured by secondary cultural and political developments. This paper illuminates the original ethos and practice of Vajrayāna, prior to later culturally determined modifications. Central to this is the advanced psychology expressed in the lives and teachings of the Mahasiddhas – and, its application to contemporary working life. This paper will aim to establish the cogent relevance of the original Vajrayāna teachings in the world today – and, the importance of the non-monastic sangha in manifesting and preserving these teachings. We will include a brief early history of the *gos dKar lCang lo'i sDe* (ngakpa sangha), as distinct from the more widely known tradition of Buddhist monasticism; and also outline practices from a contemporary Western non-monastic gTérma lineage – the Aro gTér. The practices outlined will include the *mKha' 'gro dPa bo nyi zLa me long rGyud* (Khandro Pawo Nyi'da Mélong Gyüd) - essential teaching on vajra romance as an approach to the nondual state of liberated awareness, and *grub chen brGyad bCu bZhi* – the drüpthabs of the 84 Mahasiddhas as visualisation and mantra practices, from the revealed treasures (gTérma) of Jomo Pema 'ö-Zér, which, along with their associated hagiographies, bring out the principle and function of individual life in the process of liberation.

We were honoured to present this paper at the ground-breaking international conference in Bhutan ‘Tradition and Innovation in Vajrayāna Buddhism: A Mandala of 21st Century Perspectives’ in July 2016. We were particularly honoured to be at the conference representing the first gö kar chang lo (gos dKar lCang lo) or non-monastic, non-celibate Vajrayāna sangha from the West. **Gö kar chang lo dé means the stream of those who wear white skirts and keep long, uncut hair**, as opposed to the shaven heads and red skirts of the monastic sangha. We are a teaching couple within the Aro gTér and disciples of the Western-born Nyingma gTértön Zértsal Lingpa – usually known as Ngak’chang Rinpoche, who teaches with his wife Khandro Déchen.



Ngak’chang Rinpoche and Khandro Déchen

They are the current lineage holders of the Aro gTér, a pure vision gTérma which primarily contains teachings from Dzogchen Long-dé – the series of space. Ngak’chang Rinpoche was recognised as the incarnation of Aro Yeshé – the son of the female mahasiddha and gTértön Khyungchen Aro Lingma who lived and practised in Southern Tibet from 1886 – 1923.



Aro Yeshe

In 1975 Dūd'jom Rinpoche Jig'dröl Yeshe Dorje asked Ngak'chang Rinpoche to establish the gö kar chang lo'i dé, the non-monastic sangha of ngakpas and ngakmas, in the West – and he and Khandro Déchen have dedicated the last 40 years to doing so. The current Dūd'jom Rinpoche, Dūd'jom Sang-gyé Pema Zhépa remembers Ngak'chang Rinpoche and the promise he made in 1975 – and expressed pleasure that he and Khandro Déchen's work has led to the increased visibility of non-monastic ordained practitioners, and the foundation of a thriving gö kar chang lo'i dé in the West.



Members of the Aro sanghas on pilgrimage to Katmandhu, Nepal 2012



Aro sangha practitioners – New York 2010

For the continuance of the lineages and teachings of Vajrayāna, it is clear that a coherent, sustainable, Vajrayāna Buddhist culture will need to emerge over the next century – and although monasticism is the dominant form of this culture – Vajrayāna is not a monoculture. Non-monastic traditions have also always been present, if less visible. If Vajrayāna is to survive – both in the East and the West it needs to be seen in its diversity, including the non-monastic heritage established by Padmasambhava and Yeshé Tsogyel. It is important that Dharma survives in its countries of origin but it is also important that Dharma takes root in the soil of western culture – as the need for it is increasingly evident – particularly for the teachings of Vajrayāna. There are already second and third generation Vajrayānists in the west who need the support of the sangha and the guidance of Lamas.

It is crucial that the Dharma continues as a complete means of liberation, and that people are offered the opportunity to realise non-duality. This style of ordination and practice within the non-monastic sanghas translates well to the West, with its emphasis on integration with daily life, careers, marriage, and families. There are a large number of committed practitioners in the West, and many more with a potential interest in practising, for whom monasticism is neither inspiring nor possible. The stream of ordained non-monastic practice however, has a long history of being relegated to obscurity. In the 1980s for example, many academics held the view that Ngakpas were a fabrication, and then when *their* existence was conceded, we were told that there had never been Ngakmas – white skirt wearing, long haired ordained female practitioners. That is now also understood to have been mistaken with the emergence of photographs and study of great female gö-kar chang lo practitioners such as Ngakma Rigtsang of Pemakö, and the Ngakmas of Repkong for example.



Aro sangha members on pilgrimage to Katmandhu, Nepal 2012



Ngakma Rigtsang of Pemakö



The Ngakmas of Repkong

There have in fact been monastic and non-monastic practitioners from the very inception of Dharma. The division of the sangha into 'dülwa'i dé (celibate Sūtrayāna practitioners) and ngak kyi dé (non-celibate Vajrayāna

practitioners) was not unique to Tibet. The **'dülwa'i dé** and **ngak kyi dé** date back directly to Shakyamuni Buddha. Shakyamuni Buddha's principle followers were by no means all of the **'dülwa'i dé**. Dri'mèd Drakpa (*dri 'med grags pa / Vimalakirti*) is one excellent example of a major non-celibate practitioner. Dri'mèd Drakpa was not simply a non-celibate practitioner, but a merchant by livelihood – and it was he who defeated the great monastic scholar Shariputra in debate on the subject of emptiness (*tongpa-nyid - sTong pa nyid - shunyata*).



Dri'mèd Drakpa wall painting from Dunhuang 8th Century

It could be said that Dri'mèd Drakpa was the prototype Mahasiddha, for not only was he non-celibate, but he was also a householder and a businessman – thoroughly outwardly immersed in the world of commerce. That his attainment was unimpaired and unimpeded by his so-called 'worldly' involvement is the original and most powerful precedent for the non-monastic sangha. Dri'mèd Drakpa was the author of the highly esteemed Drima 'mèd-par Dragpa Tenpa'i mDo (*dri ma med par grags pas bsTan pa'i mdo - Vimalakirti Nirdeśa - Vimalakirti's Teaching Sūtra*). Dri'mèd Drakpa challenged the understanding of every major disciple of Shakyamuni Buddha and every one was found wanting at some point on their path. All disciples of Shakyamuni Buddha were in agreement that Dri'mèd Drakpa had the highest understanding of the disciples, and concurred that they had been corrected through his unparalleled nondual wisdom and insight. Dri'mèd Drakpa stands at the beginning of Buddhist history as the definitive argument against monasticism as the 'one and only true path'. The following account from

Kyabjé Künzang Dorje Rinpoche, of Dri'mèd Drakpa's teaching may help to illustrate his importance in the history of non-monastic Dharma.

Dri'mèd Drakpa happened to be ill at one time, and no sangha members came to see him to enquire after his health. When Shakyamuni Buddha became aware of the fact he said: '*Shari'i bu (Shariputra) go and visit Dri'mèd Drakpa. Enquire about his health – we should not neglect this fine disciple.*' Shari'i bu was visibly disconcerted and replied: 'I am somewhat reluctant to ask Dri'mèd Drakpa about his illness. As to why that should be, I must explain that I was once sitting meditating under a tree in the forest when Dri'mèd Drakpa appeared. He said:

"Shari'i bu, this is not the way to meditate. You should meditate without reference points. Without straying from emptiness, you should manifest the entire range of ordinary behaviour. Without abandoning your cultivated spiritual nature, you should meditate manifesting as an ordinary person. With regard to external forms - your mind should not settle internally nor move externally. Without abandoning the passions of the world - your meditation should release all phenomena into liberation. So Shari'i bu - those who meditate thus are pronounced by Shakyamuni to be authentically meditating."

When I heard this teaching, I could not reply. I remained silent, and am now reluctant to go to ask Dri'mèd Drakpa about his sickness.'

That monastic disciples such as Shari'i bu and Mo'u 'gal bu (*Maudgalaputra*) were in awe of Dri'mèd Drakpa is a clear indication that the highest level of attainment is available within every sphere of life – if one is a genuine practitioner. Shari'i bu and Mo'u 'gal bu are the Nyèntö Chog-nyi (*nyan thos mChog gNyas - two supreme shravakas*) and the two closest disciples of Shakyamuni Buddha. Shakyamuni Buddha's Dharma cannot be confined or limited by the monastic approach. The monastic approach is undoubtedly of great value and of high renown – but its value and renown should not exist at the expense of access to the non-celibate, non-monastic approach; if we are concerned with the survival of Dharma in the world.

In India the '**dülwa'i dé** were associated with the Sthaviras, and the **ngak kyi dé were contained within a division of the** Mahasanghikas. 20th Century Buddhist academics have commented in their written works on the differences within the early Buddhist sanghas in respect of the 'yellow robed Sthaviras' of the monastic community and the 'white robed practitioners' within the sangha of the Mahasanghikas.

This information is well known and accepted. It is also well known that both Sthaviras and Mahasanghikas possessed authentic lineages which can be traced back to Shakyamuni Buddha - although they differed in their emphases with regard to practise.

A century after Shakyamuni Buddha's parinirvana a schism became evident at the Vaisali Council between the views of the Sthaviras and the Mahasanghikas. The Sthaviras maintained that liberation from cyclic entrapment necessitated male rebirth and becoming a monk. In contradistinction, the Mahasanghikas held that enlightenment was available to men and women; and to celibate and non-celibate alike. Their view was based upon the nondual nature of each individual – and this precluded any sense in which any human existence could be seen as lacking in the primary qualification for liberation. The Mahasanghika sangha was thus the womb of Mahayāna and in that tradition it was eminently possible for non-celibate men and women to be fully fledged Dharma practitioners rather than suffering relegation to an inferior position in relation to monasticism.

The next historical development—the epoch of the Mahasiddhas—occurred in Northern India between the 3rd and 13th Centuries. This period is crucial with regard to the development of the **Ngak kyi dé** in Tibet. The Mahasiddha tradition was founded on the revelations of Mahayāna Sūtras of the Madhyamaka, Cittamatra, and Yogachara philosophical trends, but their meditational methodologies differed radically from the methodologies which paralleled them in the monastic institutions.

The Mahasiddhas (*Drüpchén - sGrub chen*) were 'masters of accomplishment'. A Mahasiddha can be defined as a person who practises drüpthab (*sGrub thabs - method of accomplishment*) and who attains both nondual realisation and paranormal capacities. The methodology of the Mahasiddhas arose from visionary revelations. These revelations were the Tantras which were received from Buddha Shakyamuni manifesting in the form of various Sambhogakaya yidams.

The word drüpthab is often mistakenly taken to mean a liturgical text or chant manual which accompanies the practice of visualisation and mantra. This is indeed a form of drüpthab, indeed the major form of drüpthab – but drüpthab has a wider meaning. Drüpthab means 'method of accomplishment', and the genius of the Mahasiddhas lay in the fact that their teaching *conjured* with essential Vajrayāna principles in relation to the individual and the individual's predilections. A thief who became the disciple of a Mahasiddha was instructed to steal the entire phenomenal universe in this mind. An indolent was given recumbent practices. Whatever the orientation—be the person a glutton, wastrel, prostitute, king, moron, musician, arrow maker, —all a person required was devotion to the teacher and utter willingness to apply the exact nature of the drüpthab.

This unstructured and amorphous interpersonal web of Mahasiddhas was the womb of Vajrayāna revelation. The eighty-four Mahasiddhas received the entire corpus of Vajrayāna from Shakyamuni Buddha. They in turn returned it to Padmasambhava who brought the complete Vajrayāna to Tibet. The Mahasiddhas had little interest in the Buddhist codified monastic conventions

of their time, and abandoned institutional settings in favour of the mountain caves, uninhabited islands, forests, and charnel grounds. They also dwelt in remote villages in the Himalayan and Karakorum ranges. In contrast to the monastics, the Mahasiddhas adopted itinerant life-styles and often lived beyond the bounds of common social and religious convention.

In contradistinction to the external renunciate discipline of Sūtrayāna, the inner discipline of Vajrayāna provided a methodology of transformation and self-liberation, through which the dualistic neuroses were not renounced but specifically cultivated as the context for energetic transformation. Vajrayāna held that the dualistic neuroses were simply dualistically distorted forms of nonduality, and were therefore the supreme opportunity in terms of discovering the nondual state. Through the transformative nature of drūpthab, the Mahasiddhas transformed their neuroses into yeshé (*ye shes- jnana*) – primordial wisdom. Alcohol, meat, and sexuality—renounced by Sūtrayāna ascetics—are enjoined by Vajrayānists who embrace the fields of the senses in order to realise the nondual state.

During the earlier centuries of the Second Spread this approach was discredited as a rationale which supported unrestrained hedonism – deliberately ignoring the fact that Vajrayāna contained a strict inner discipline.

In India, the Inner Tantras were not practised in the monasteries because of their incompatibility with the monastic vows. This was also the case within the First Spread (*Nga-dar - sNga dar*) of Buddhism in Tibet. In the Second spread (*chi dar - phyi dar*) however—in order to subsume Vajrayāna within the monastic structure—Vajrayāna was modified. It was modified in such a way as to make it practicable in terms of maintaining the vinaya. The Mahasiddha tradition—which existed in parallel to the monastic tradition in India—was brought to Tibet in the 8th Century by Buddha Padmasambhava thus heralding the Nga-dar – the First Spread of Dharma in which Vajrayāna was taught and practised exactly as it was in India. The Vajrayāna teachings were also brought by Mahasiddhas such as and Dri'mèd Shé-nyen (*dri med bShes gNyen Vimalamitra*). Vajrayāna teachings and practices were then adopted as the principal practice of the **Ngak kyi dé** by the twenty-five disciples – famous amongst whom was Nubchen Sang-gyé Yeshé (*gNubs chen sangs rGyas Ye shes - 9th Century ngakpa, married man, scholar, and translator*). There were significantly more female practitioners during the Nga-dar, but women were not so well regarded within the Second Spread due to the emphasis away from manifest Vajrayāna, and the adaption of Vajrayāna to concur with monasticism. Vajrayāna gives great value to women and to female practitioners – and in fact within the tantric phases of Vajrayāna women are considered more qualified for visionary practice than men. Sūtrayāna however does not have this emphasis, and it is a short step—for those who wish to take it—from 'lack of emphasis' to the relegation of women to an inferior rôle.

The five most prominent female disciples of Padmasambhava were Yeshé Tsogyel, Mandarava, Tashi Chhi'dren, Kalasiddhi, and Shakya Devi – but there were many others. The female siddhas were astonishing – although little is currently known of them. Their siddhis were of no lesser degree than the 24 male siddhas, and occasionally they were more remarkable in terms of the exuberant flamboyance of their manifestations. According to Phurtak Rinpoche, Yeshé Tsogyel had over 3,000 female disciples in Tibet after Padmasambhava had departed – and most were Ngak kyi dé practitioners. It is to be hoped that texts will eventually come to light, which enumerate these women and their lives.

It is evident that a high percentage of practitioners during the Nga-dar belonged to the Ngak kyi dé and that a significant number of the most famous of the 25 disciples began their spiritual training by taking monastic vows – but at that time in Tibet this was considered normal. During the Nga-dar training involved progressing through the yantras according to experience. In the phase of Sutric study and practice it was deemed valuable to live as a monastic, and Yeshé Tsogyel herself spent a period of time as a nun. In the many pictures of the Siddhas of Chhimphu one can see that there is no great conformity in who is presented as Ngak kyi dé and who as 'dülwa'i dé. Some thangkas show them all wearing the gö-kar-chang-lo, and some relatively few. These differences are by no means contradictory, because whether one siddha was presented as a member of the **'dülwa'i dé or ngak kyi dé** would depend on which phase of their lives were being presented. Certainly, at the close of their lives most—if not all—were Ngak kyi dé practitioners.

The Nga-dar (*sNga dar*) - the 'First Spread of Buddhism' in Tibet was characterised by the dynamic and dramatic presence of Padmasambhava and Yeshé Tsogyel who imbued the entire TransHimalayan region with the entire uncompromised gestalt of Vajrayāna. The Nga-dar was characterised also by widespread and far reaching spiritual attainment, by the most enthusiastic endeavour with regard to the translation of Buddhist texts, and by the establishment of the two Sanghas: the Gendün Gyi-dé (***dGe 'dun gyi sDe***) and the **Ngak kyi dé** (***sngags kyi sDe***).

The Ngak kyi dé is also known as:

1. The gö kar chang lo'i dé (*gos dKar lCang lo'i sDe*) the series or division of long hair and white skirts'
2. The Gendün Karpo (*dGe 'dun dKar po*) the White Sangha – it contradistinction to the Gendün Marpo (*dGe 'dun dMar po*) the Red Sangha of monastics
3. The Ngak'phang Gendün (*sNgags 'phang dGe 'dun*) the mantra hurling assembly. Ngak'phang is an archaic term and not widely understood even within the Nyingma Tradition



Unidentified mural from Tibet showing gö kar chang lo'i practitioners

During the Nga-dar, the **ngak kyi dé** was comprised of two streams of practice. The ngakpa and ngakma (*sNgags pa* and *sNgags ma* or *sNgags mo*) ordination was based in Mahayoga and the naljorpa and naljorma (*rNal 'byor pa* and *rNal 'byor ma*) ordination was based in Anuyoga. Dzogchen was common to both streams.



Mahasiddha Jalandhara from the Aro gTér

These two streams of ordination continue today in lineages such as the Aro gTér which maintains teachings and practices of the Mahasiddha tradition of Vajrayāna. In the Aro gTérma the advanced psychology expressed in the lives and teachings of the Mahasiddhas is explored in the drüpthabs of the 84

Mahasiddhas as visualisation and mantra practices, where each of the 84 can be practised as yidam.

There are more female mahasiddhas here than are listed in the usually cited set of 84, they come from the revealed treasures of Jomo Pema 'ö-Zér – the originator of a small gTérma nested within the Aro gTér.

Here, the stories are slightly more concerned with real life in that the situations are not as idealistic nor are the motivations of the aspirants. There is also an absence of beatific vision and mahasiddhas becoming Buddhas in the visionary sense, with the interactions between the aspirants and their teachers being more personal and often humorous – the teachers can be tricksters too. These drüpthabs and their associated hagiographies, bring out the principle and function of individual life in the process of liberation and are uniquely suited to practice in a secular Western context. Arguably the most important aspect of the Aro gTérma in terms of relevance to contemporary practice - both in the West *and* the East - however is the practice of Vajra Romance from the mKha' 'gro dPa bo nyi zLa me long rGyud – the *Tantra of the Mirror which Reflects the Sun and Moon of the Khandros and dPa'wos* – an essential teaching on vajra romantic relationship as an approach to the nondual state of liberated awareness.



Jomo Pema 'ö-Zér thangka from the Aro gTér



mKha' 'gro dPa bo nyi zLa me long rGyud thangka from the Aro gTér

Family environments in which kindness, openness and an enthusiasm for life are exemplified, are needed for there to be peace and harmony in the world and for these qualities to exist as examples for children, men and women need greater respect and appreciation for each other. The term 'vajra romance' does not correspond directly to a Tibetan phrase. This can give the mistaken impression that the Aro teachings on vajra romance are a departure from established Buddhist doctrine. Vajra romance is, in fact, taught in every Vajrayāna lineage. It is one of the fundamental principles of Tantra. It played a particularly central rôle in the early days of Tantra in India. It was the main practice of Mahasiddhas such as Saraha and Dombipa, who founded the principal Tantric lineages. It was also a primary practice of various Tibetan Mahasiddhas, such as the Sixth Dala'i Lama, and of innumerable lesser-known Indians and Tibetans. In Tantra, vajra romance is part of the two-person practice called *karma mudra*. Historically karma mudra was regarded as essential to attaining Buddhahood (although various traditions interpret this in different ways). Karma mudra has two aspects. First, one regards one's lover as a fully enlightened Buddha. Second, while in sexual union, the couple engages in highly technical exercises that manipulate the psychophysical energy of the 'subtle body'. The first aspect is 'vajra romance'. Vajra romance is nothing more nor less than the practice of regarding one's lover as enlightened. One of the Fourteen Root Vows—the fundamental prerequisites to Tantra—is 'never to denigrate women'. This is a statement of the principle of vajra romance from a male perspective. The detailed explanation of why one should not denigrate women depends on the lineage – but essentially it relates to the first aspect of karma mudra: vajra romance. If a man regards women as inherently defective in any way, karma mudra is impossible. The main unusual feature of the Aro gTér is that it presents all Buddhist teachings from the point of view of Dzogchen. Karma mudra is usually presented as Tantric practice. The Aro teachings on vajra romance describe the same material as Dzogchen practice.

Dzogchen men-ngag-dé is largely concerned with practices of 'viewing as'. Aro gTér teaches 'viewing one's lover as a Buddha' in men-ngag-dé style. Dzogchen long-dé is largely concerned with practices of the energies of the subtle body. The Tantric karma mudra practices belong to Anuyoga, in which these energies are deliberately manipulated according to intricate set patterns. Long-dé instead teaches one to experience the sensations resulting from these energies as they naturally arise, without specifically directing them. The Aro gTér teachings on vajra romance discuss the energetic interactions of lovers in long-dé style.



Kyabje Künzang Dorje Rinpoche and Jomo Sam'phel Déchen Rinpoche

According to the teachings of the Khandro dPa'wo Nyida Mélong Gyüd for a Ngakpa, one of the most important vows is never to disparage women. For Ngakpas, women are the source of wisdom, and the practice of a Ngakpa is to see the phenomenal world as female – as wisdom-display. When the world is seen as the scintillating dance of the khandros, the inner khandro is incited. The vow for a Ngakma is to regard the entire phenomenal world as male – as method-display. Men and women who enter into this reality, relate with each other through appreciation of the dance of inner and outer qualities. When we waken to the nature of our inner qualities, we are able to mirror each other. We are able to undermine each other's conditioning rather than entrenching each other in dualistic patterns. If we can catch the reflection of our inner qualities before we have begun to concretise them, then romantic relationship is the most remarkable opportunity that life has to offer. The Khandro dPa'wo teachings provide the methodology for realising this opportunity.

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Kundalini from the Edge of Science

Jeanne Lim

Introduction

Kundalini has been a phenomenon cloaked in the mystery and myth of ancient traditions, and continues to be a subject that fascinates ancient sages and modern scientists alike. It is ironic that in the East, Kundalini is perceived as a spiritual awakening to be revered, but in the West, Kundalini has sometimes been diagnosed as a physical or psychological disorder. Lee Sannella (1987), in *Kundalini: Psychosis or Transcendence*, says the spiritual process often triggers alterations in thoughts and emotions and bodily symptoms that “result in this process frequently being mistaken for mental illness” (p. 10).

Spiritual traditions and culture play an important part in creating this dichotomy in perception and interpretation between the East and the West, but another reason is in spite of an increasing body of theories and experiential accounts about Kundalini in the West, there are no academic institutions governing and validating this knowledge, and there seems to be a lack of funding for proper research. In a survey of published information, there have apparently been many attempts in piecing together physical, mental, and spiritual interpretations of the Kundalini awakening experience, but relatively few explorations on the origin of Kundalini as energy and the actual cause of the awakening phenomenon. As a result, the Kundalini phenomenon has remained very much a mystery.

What is Kundalini?

An attempt in answering the simple question: *What is Kundalini?* Uncovered a myriad of different interpretations and definitions of Kundalini. A key problem seems to be that Kundalini is a word from Hindu scriptures and there is no real equivalent for the word in English. Even the translations of many of the Hindu texts are either incomplete or incorrect as they try to fit Eastern spiritual concepts into the Western construct.

The word Kundalini is derived from Sanskrit: *kund*, which means *to burn*; and *kunda*, which means *to coil or to spiral*. It is often described as the primordial dormant energy present in three-and-a-half coils at the base of the spine in a triangular bone called the sacrum. Kundalini is usually presented as sexual energy that is with us from birth, in either a manifested or un-manifested form. It is said that as one progresses through life, Kundalini becomes increasingly blocked and diverted from its normal path through conditioning and behavioral patterns that one memorizes consciously and unconsciously.

There are some who make references to different Kundalinis. In his book *Spiritual Nutrition* (2005), medical doctor and spiritual teacher Gabriel Cousens distinguishes three types of Kundalini: *Spiritual Kundalini*, *Shakti Kundalini*, and *Mundane Kundalini*. In his view, Spiritual Kundalini is the universal vibrational cosmic energy called cosmic prana. He says this energy condenses into a physical form and manifests as a residual cosmic energy in the body, which he calls Shakti Kundalini. In a potential energy state, it is said to be *coiled like a serpent* below the first chakra near the base of the spine. Shakti Kundalini is the potential energy that powers the energy that runs in the body, which Cousens calls Mundane Kundalini. A discernment of Kundalini energies is also made by Mary Scott (2006) referencing ancient Hindu texts. In *The Kundalini Concept*, she distinguishes *Kundalini-Shakti* or *Kundalini-Prakriti* as the specialized energy located at the base of the spine, and *Mahakundalini* (Great Kundalini) or *Kundalini-Shabdabrahman* as the cosmic force.

Kundalini rising is the theoretical construct often used to describe the forceful sensations that usually start at the base of the spine, which then progress rapidly with a powerful surge upwards through the body to the crown of the head. The full Kundalini awakening experience is said to lead to higher and more desirable states of awareness, such as mystical consciousness, and even the manifestation of paranormal phenomena.

Stripped of its esoteric connotations and symbolism, Kundalini is viewed by some as simply the life force energy that emanates from all living things. McCartney (2001) says:

Every human being has Kundalini energy within. It is an essential and vital current that animates the potential of evolutionary change . . . and because Kundalini is always present in your body, you may have already felt its power (p. 57).

This is echoed by John White (1988), who mentions “Kundalini is at work all the time in everyone, and is present from birth in mystics and seers, but in most people there is only a ‘dripping’ rather than a ‘steaming’” (p. 79).

The Source of Kundalini Energy

The Sun as the Source of Light Energy

What is the origin of Kundalini energy? In order to trace back causation to find an origin, we would first need to ask where all energy comes from. Textbook science says we receive energy from the sun indirectly by eating plants, or eating animals that eat plants. However, evidence has started to emerge that we may be able to receive energy from the sun by directly taking in the sun’s electromagnetic waves. In *Eat the Sun* (2011), a documentary about the practice of sun gazing, director Peter Sorcher portrays individuals who fasted for long periods of time and may have been nourished only by direct sunlight.

In addition, recent researches into the pineal gland may hold the key as to how we can absorb energy directly from the sun. They seem to point to the possibility that the pineal gland directly senses light energy and absorbs photons. The pineal gland is a pea-sized gland that produces melatonin, which is a neurotransmitter that is responsible for making us relaxed and putting us to sleep by enabling us to sense light and darkness. The pineal gland is called the *third eye* in spiritual traditions, and is connected with spiritual and psychic abilities. Russian scientists studying embryology discovered that a two-month old human fetus develops a third eye with photoreceptors, lens and nerve cells that are similar to the retinas. Furthermore, an article in Russian online media *Pravda.ru* (Pravdivtsev, 2005) says there seems to be a link to the pineal gland from the retina. In his book *The Source Field Investigations*, David Wilcock (2011) cites research that says the cells of the pineal gland closely resemble the photoreceptor ganglion cells (nerve cells) of the retina. Wilcock also says many sub-mammals, such as fish, frogs and birds, already detect light with their pineal glands. He also quotes A. F. Weichmann as saying that “the presence of proteins in the pineal which are normally involved in phototransduction (light sensing) in the retina, raises the possibility that direct photic events may occur in the mammalian pineal gland” (p. 58). Wilcock interprets Weichmann as saying that the cells in the pineal gland are detecting photons and sending them to the brain through phototransduction.

The retina in the back part of our eye contains two types of specialized cells called photoreceptors that respond to light. These are called rods and cones. Rods and cones are known as classic photoreceptors that convert light into

signals that stimulate biological processes and enable sight. In a landmark discovery in 2007, scientist Farhan Zaidi et al. (2007) found a non-rod, non-cone photoreceptor in humans. These photoreceptors can synchronize circadian rhythms to the twenty-four-hour light/dark cycle as well as enable sight. This non-rod, non-cone photoreceptor is a special type of photosensitive ganglion cell that responds directly to light by increasing the rate at which it fires nerve impulses. Unlike other retinal ganglion cells, these photosensitive ganglion cells are intrinsically photosensitive, which means they are excited by light even in the absence of classic photoreceptors. From these discoveries, Zaidi et al concluded that there are two parallel and anatomically distinct photoreceptor pathways: One through the classic photoreceptor located in the outer retina of the eye, the other through a non-rod, non-cone photoreceptor that seems to be activated by light first.

It also appears that the pineal gland has other interesting but not well-known functions. In *Energy Medicine: A Scientific Basis*, James Oschman (2000) says:

The pineal gland is the primary magnetoreceptor. Between 20 and 30% of pineal cells are magnetically sensitive. Exposure of animals to magnetic fields of various intensities alters the secretion of melatonin, the electrical properties of pineal cells, and their microscopic structure (p. 102).

Hence, he believes pulsations of the geomagnetic field, caused by Schumann resonance, may be detected by the pineal gland.

Light and Sound in Our Cells

Russian embryologist Alexander Gurwitsch and German physicist Fritz-Albert Popp discovered that the cells of all living beings emit a weak glow in the form of ultraviolet light. Popp and Cohen (1997) calls these biophotons, and says that although they are ultra-weak, they are highly coherent, so they have a laser-like light and quality. They believe biophoton emission connects cell, tissues, and organs within the body and serves as the main communication network and regulator for all of life's processes. In her book *The Sage Age*, MaAnna Stephenson (2008) states "this was an astounding discovery. What Popp suggested was that light, in some manner, was responsible for life" (p. 53). Physicist David Bohm says "all matter is frozen light" (McCartney, 2005, p. 217).

Popp identifies DNA as the source of biophoton emissions and calls DNA the "master tuning fork in the body" (McTaggart, 2001, p. 44). He demonstrates that DNA gives off a large range of light frequencies that would cause a variety of frequencies in other molecules of the body. From this, he postulates that different functions of DNA are performed based on different frequencies, and that cells may use light to self-repair. He also found that living organisms exchange light emitted from each other, and concludes that wave resonance is

used to communicate between living things. Also, the biophotons create a biophoton field that is described as:

A holographic field of standing waves which is able, through a broad spectrum of frequencies and polarizations and in close interplay with all material structures, to transmit signals with the speed of light to any place in the organism and to activate or to inhibit biochemical processes, to organize matter, and much more (Bischof, 2005, p. 3).

The biophoton field may well be the field that B. Rubik (1994) calls *the Human Biofield*.

How does DNA store light? Wilcock discusses findings by Russian scientist Peter Gariaev that DNA absorbs all light in its vicinity by apparently creating a vortex that attracts the light. Even more interesting, even after the DNA molecule is removed, there seems to be a force that holds the spiraling light in the same place for up to thirty days. This phenomenon is known as “The DNA Phantom Effect” (Wilcock, 2011, p. 161). Wilcock believes that the DNA molecule creates a duplicate energy field of itself within the universal energy source, which entrains the light even in the absence of the DNA. In Wilcock view, The DNA Phantom Effect means a perfect hologram of our physical body can be created. He calls this “one of the most significant scientific discoveries in modern history” (p. 162). Wilcock also reports of a phenomenon called *delayed luminescence*. When light is shone on living cells, they would “first absorb it, and then release an intense burst of new light after a brief period of time” (p. 171). Wilcock believes that the DNA has a light energy store with a given capacity; if there is too much light, it would send it back out. He posits that this is for a specific purpose—to transmit information that heals and establishes order in the body.

Even more interesting, Rein and McCraty (2001) states that coherent brain wave patterns such as those produced by intention can change the structure of DNA. Emotions such as anger, and fear, can contract or compress DNA. On the other hand, emotions such as joy, gratitude, and love can unwind or decompress DNA. Rein also found that people with coherent heart energy can wind or unwind the DNA at will, while those with incoherent heart energy cannot do so. Furthermore, it seems as if the change is effected by first energetically changing the DNA phantom, which then changes the physical DNA molecule itself.

In addition, Gariaev’s experiments show that acoustic waves radiated by DNA can also create The DNA Phantom Effect. Dale (2009) refers Leonard Horowitz’s research that demonstrates DNA actually emits and receives both photons (the energy from light) and phonons (the energy from sound). Other researchers say sound stimulates the DNA to create information signals that spread through the body, and that the primary function of DNA is “not to synthesize proteins, but to perform bio-acoustic and bio-electrical signaling”

(Dale, 2010, p. 143). Research conducted by Richard Miller shows that superposed coherent waves in the cells “interact and form patterns first through sound, and secondly through light” (Dale, 2010, p. 143).

Gariaev’s research also shows that DNA can be activated by sound, as well as can transmit sound. In an article entitled “The DNA-wave Biocomputer,” Gariaev and his associates postulate that the DNA-wave functions as a *biocomputer*. They conclude that DNA can convert laser light into radio waves by producing solitons, which are ultra stable waves, to form diffraction patterns first in the acoustic domain and then in the electromagnetic domain to create a quantum hologram, which enables the translation between acoustical and optical holograms. Gariaev also shows that sound in the form of language frequencies such as words can repair chromosomes damaged by X-rays. He concludes that the “DNA can be activated with linguistic expressions, such as mantras, affirmations, or other meaningful sounds, like antennae. In turn, this activation modifies the human bioenergy field that transmits radio and light waves to bodily structures” (Dale, 2010, p. 143).

The Universal Energy Source

Many scientists believe the vacuum of the universe, including the vacuum within our cells, is not empty at all. Quantum scientists also hold that there is a pervasive sea of quantum energy in the universe. Nobel Prize winner and father of quantum theory Max Planck, in a 1944 speech given in Florence, Italy, stated:

All matter originates and exists only by virtue of a force which brings the particle of an atom to vibration and holds this most minute solar system of the atom together. We must assume behind this force the existence of a conscious and intelligent mind. This mind is the matrix of all matter.

This universal energy provides a scientific basis and validation of the belief in many spiritual traditions that we are connected to each other and to a universal consciousness. It is likely this energy that has been known for thousands of years in many ancient spiritual traditions. In an article entitled: “Senses, Filters, and Sources of Reality,” Robert Jahn and Brenda Dunne (2004) postulate the existence of a source of reality that they call *source* but which has been given different labels in different cultures. They identify these labels as: “*tao, qi, prana, void, akashic record, unus mundi, unknowable substratum, terra incognita, archetypal field, hidden order, aboriginal sensible muchness, implicate order, zero-point vacuum, ontic (or ontological) level, undivided timeless primordial reality*” (p. 4). Contemporary theorists and researchers used other names to describe the universal energy source. These include *The Field* by Lynn McTaggart, *The Source Field* by David Wilcock, and *universal consciousness* by quantum physicist Amit Goswami, *quantum plenum* by Mark Comings. This is

also likely to be the *collective unconscious* described by Carl Jung and the *morphogenetic field* of Rupert Sheldrake. It may even be the *unified field* that Albert Einstein had long postulated but had not been able to prove. Many others call it *the zero point field*. For the purpose of this paper, I will use the term *the universal energy source* to denote this energy.

In her book *The Field*, Lynne McTaggart (2003) says the universal energy source connects all matter in the universe by waves. Citing research by physicist Hal Puthoff, McTaggart describes the universal energy source is a “repository of all fields and all ground energy states and all virtual particles--a field of fields” (p. 25). She also believes this field is the basis of the interconnectedness of all things. “If all matter in the universe was interacting with the zero point field, it meant, quite simply, that all matter was interconnected and potentially entangled throughout the cosmos through quantum waves” (McTaggart, 2007, p.13). It is believed that the universal energy source is in a state of perfect balance so that it appears as a vacuum, since all the energies cancel each other out, and that any imbalance will create a disturbance that will eventually manifest as matter. Hence, even tiny fluctuations of energy can disturb the field. Furthermore, perhaps it is the universal energy source that keeps the structure and the very existence of the atom intact. Research scientist Daniel Dzimano (2003) sheds light into how this process may occur. He cites Puthoff as saying that if an electron is orbiting too far out from the nucleus, it radiates more energy than it receives from the universal energy source and spirals inwards to the position of stability. However, if the electron is orbiting too far in, it receives more energy from the universal energy source than it is radiating, and so it moves outwards to a stable position. Dzimano believes that the stability of matter itself is mediated by the universal energy source.

The universal energy source is believed to have virtually unlimited energy. Michael Talbot (1992), in *The Holographic Universe*, quotes David Bohm that “every cubic centimeter of empty space contains more energy than the total energy of all the matter in the known universe” (p. 51). Nobel Prize physicist Richard Feynman, in his attempt to give some idea of the magnitude of the energy within the universal energy source mentions, “the energy in a single cubic meter of space is enough to boil all the oceans of the world” (McTaggart, 2001, p. 24).

What exactly is this universal energy? There is some evidence that ultraviolet light at a specific frequency may be an energy carrier of the universal energy source. Wilcock (2011) reports of experiments by Gurwitsch which demonstrate that ultraviolet light may be a signature of the universal energy source, but not the actual source itself, “much like the ripple in the surface of a lake, from a stone you just dropped in, is not the stone itself” (p. 159). McTaggart (2001) reports of an experiment where DNA can absorb and scramble ultraviolet light and send it back out at a different frequency. Popp found that cells can be

destroyed with ultraviolet light, but if they are then given a very weak pulse of the same wavelength, especially at 380 nanometers, the cells can almost completely recover in a process known as *photo repair*. Hence, Popp postulates that energy from the universal energy source is strongest and most healing at the 380-nanometer wavelength. Rollin McCraty (2003) from the Institute of HeartMath suggests that information is enfolded outside the space/time world in the energy waveforms of the universal energy source.

The Origin of Kundalini Energy

Kundalini as the Combined Light from Individual and Universal Consciousness

As discussed above, many theorists and researchers believe there is an input of energy or an energy exchange with the universal energy source at the quantum level. McTaggart (2001) postulates that our electrons may be constantly “refueling by tapping into these fluctuations of empty space” (p. 25). In *Toward a Deeper Meditation*, Edgar Cayce and John Van Auken (1992) mentions that the “virtual photon cloud is the electric field of energy and light that the mystics describe and correlate to their chakras and Kundalini energy” (p. 113).

I hypothesize that Kundalini energy originates from the combination of light energy from universal energy source and our biophotons at the quantum level. This happens when virtual photons at the same frequency manifest from the universal energy source and interact with the electrons in our body. Philip Ball, in a 2003 article in *Nature*, says that Heisenberg’s Uncertainty Principle holds that subatomic particles or photons can appear spontaneously in empty space, provided that they disappear promptly again. David Shiga, in a 2010 article published in *New Scientist*, states that physicists predicted in the 1930s “a very strong electric field would transform virtual particles into real ones that we can observe. The field pushes them in opposite directions because they have opposite electric charges, separating them so that they cannot destroy one another” (Shiga, 2010). Perhaps our biofield, which is energized by vibratory thoughts and sound, induces virtual photons to stay in the physical world permanently and interact with the electrons in our cells.

The energy input from virtual photons causes our electrons to become excited, resulting in the release of a large number of biophotons from our cells. One of the bases for this postulation is Popp’s assertion that unstable atoms in our body cause the release of light energy in the form of photons. He maintains that biophotons are constantly being emitted from our cells, but says that energy from an external energy source causes us to emit more biophotons in order to achieve an equilibrium energy state.

What is the mechanism by which biophotons are emitted? The electrons in our atoms exist in orbitals representing discrete energy states. Electrons always

first seek the nearest electron orbital, representing the lowest energy state, which is called the ground state. At the ground state, the spins of both the electron and the proton are in opposite directions. When there is energy input, in this case virtual photons at a specific frequency, electrons will absorb the virtual photon and jump up to the next orbital and enter into an excited or unstable state. When an electron *de-excites* and drops back down to lower energy states, it meets another electron in the same energy state in another atom, and another photon of the same frequency is released.

The vibration of virtual photons and biophotons at the same resonant frequency produces an intense, coherent, laser-like light that is Kundalini. Since both the triggering virtual photons and emitted biophotons are in phase, has the same polarization, and travel in the same direction, a quantum leap in light energy is produced. As a matter of fact, this is the amplification process that produces laser light. Stephenson (2008) says “a laser produces light waves that are all in phase with one another, which radically amplifies the signal, making it highly coherent. Some of this coherent light beam is fed back into the system making it even more coherent and thus more powerful” (p. 227). Oschman (2000) reports that as early as the late 1960s, physicist Herbert Fröhlich predicted that the body’s living matrix would produce laser-like oscillations. Stephenson (2008) describes an experiment in which Fröhlich applied energy to excite molecules, causing them to emit light in the form of photons. When he increased the energy input, the molecules began to vibrate in unison and eventually became so coherent that “they transmitted light as one unified antenna” (p. 81).

I believe this coherent laser-like light energy is stored in our DNA from birth, and may be considered the potential form of Kundalini energy prior to activation. However, this does not necessarily mean that Kundalini energy remains constant throughout our lives. McTaggart’s (2001) postulation that our electrons may be constantly “refueling by tapping into these fluctuations of empty space” (p. 25) may also hold true for Kundalini energy—that it is replenished through constant interaction with virtual photons from the universal energy source.

Earlier, we discussed the delayed luminescence phenomenon, where the cells first absorb light, and then release it as an intense burst of new light, and how this light is believed to contain information for healing and balancing the body. Can this be the process by which Kundalini energy is stored and released from our DNA? Interestingly, the sensing of light is often reported during spiritual experiences, including Kundalini awakening. In her book *Energies of Transformation*, Bonnie Greenwell (1988) says “experiences of light are commonly reported by mystics during extremely heightened states of consciousness, but also occur in lesser degree to meditators, and spontaneously to those in Kundalini processes” (p. 57). It has always fascinated me as to why the symbol of Kundalini is often presented as two coiled serpents.

Perhaps this symbol refers to light stored in the double helix of the DNA molecule, before it is released as a burst of Kundalini energy to heal and elevate our entire system in order that we can reach our highest potential?

I call Kundalini energy *the combined light from individual and universal consciousness* as it arises from the integration of our individual energy with the universal energy. The process integrates universal energy that spans time and space, which may be why Kundalini awakening often generate immense force through the body as well as produce a nonlocal, unitive experience.

Furthermore, Kundalini may have long-term, transformational effects. As a coherent, laser-like light, it may be strong and focused enough to change the very structure of our DNA, causing it to unwind and replicate, effecting permanent changes to our cells and our collective evolutionary path. I surmise this is the reason why Kundalini energy seems to lie dormant in us prior to activation, that is, when the photons are coiled in the double helix of our DNA; why it needs to go through an integration process after activation; and why it seems to be an energy that leads to permanent changes in our psychophysiological states.

It is also sometimes reported that Kundalini energy is individualized. Popp's research shows that DNA has the capability of absorbing ultraviolet light and sending it back out at a different frequency. Perhaps each of us, within our DNA, can scramble the light and send it back out at a slightly different frequency based on our genetic code?

I would also like to mention an alternative hypothesis of Kundalini energy that is proposed by dark energy and plasma researcher Jay Alfred. In an article entitled "Subtle Bodies and Dark Matter," he makes a bold claim that "the dark matter and energy of physicists is the subtle matter and energy of metaphysicists" (Alfred, 2007). He claims that *qi* or *prana* comes from the sun and Kundalini originates from the core of the earth, and that they are all dark energies; and eventually these energies will be explainable by science under dark matter and energy theories. From my preliminary research, there do not seem to be other researchers or sources that lend direct support to his hypothesis, so I will not attempt to discuss his theory in this paper. Nevertheless, I believe Alfred's postulation is extremely interesting and may become a credible theory with further scientific validation.

Kundalini and Other Forms of Energy

Kundalini may be only one of many universal energies we can generate, resonate with, and emit through our bodies. In fact, our DNA may contain instructions for collecting, using, and emitting different forms of energies. The genes in our DNA contain instructions for making all the different cells in our body, so it seems reasonable to consider that our DNA also contains

instructions for energies. If we assume other energies are also universal in nature and extend beyond time and space, it is likely that they all involve an energy exchange with the universal energy source. However, I postulate that there are three key differences between Kundalini and other energies: Frequency, form of interaction, and whether the energy is temporarily or permanently integrated in us.

The first point of differentiation is frequency. Frequency is defined as the number of complete oscillations per second of energy (as sound or electromagnetic radiation) in the form of waves. As Kundalini is hypothesized as a photon exchange, this postulation that Kundalini is light energy vibrating at a specific frequency is supported by the quantum theory that only photons with the same frequency can interact with each other. In 2011 article published in *New Scientist* entitled: "They Do It with Mirrors," under a principle called stimulated emission, only photons of a given frequency can trigger the emission of photons of the same frequency.

Other researchers have also found that frequency plays an extremely significant role in the biosystem all the way down to the DNA level. In his book *The Biology of Belief*, Bruce Lipton (2005) mentions that cell receptors read vibrational energy fields such as light, sound and radio frequencies, and if the receptor is attuned to the particular frequency it can alter the proteins and change the shape of the receptor. This is one of the ways our cells are impacted by the universe.

Specific frequencies and patterns of electromagnetic radiation regulate DNA, RNA and protein syntheses, alter protein shape and function, and control gene regulation, cell division, cell differentiation, morphogenesis (the process by which cells assemble into organs and tissues), hormone secretion, nerve growth and function (p. 80).

Other researchers also believe frequency is of prime importance in biological processes. Gariaev (2000) says "semantic resonances in the biosystems' space are realized not at the wavelength level, but at the level of frequencies and angles of twist of the polarization modes" (p.4).

Also, from her years of direct experience as an energy healer and educator, Francesca McCartney observes that different energies carry different color frequencies. She says Kundalini energy always carries the color of opalescent sheen, an observation McCartney uses to decode the various types of energy frequencies that are vibrating in a person's field. Since color comes in frequency bands, perhaps color is our perceptual shortcut to discern specific frequencies of electromagnetic energy.

The second point of difference between Kundalini and other universal energies is the form of interaction. In an article entitled "Bioscalar Energy: The Healing Power," Valerie Hunt (2000) describes scalar energy, which she calls *bioscalar*

energy, as being created when two electromagnetic waves at the same frequency come together from two different angles so that they cancel each other out, leaving a standing wave. She claims that thought and intent can create and direct scalar energy for healing purposes, and calls scalar energy a “force by expansion” (Hunt, 2000) as intent can expand it throughout the body. She also cites Tom Bearden that scalar energy is a repository for information and posits that intent can make major changes in tissue by creating and informing the scalar energy at the microscopic level--the nucleus of the atom.

I posit that Kundalini energy arises from a photon exchange at the quantum level whereas other energies arise from the interaction between our electromagnetic fields and scalar waves from the universal energy source, where information is enfolded into the scalar waves and distributed to our body’s many electromagnetic fields. In her book *The Biology of Kundalini*, Jana Dixon (2008) states that scalar waves transmit information, not energy, and may be the point of fundamental intersection where matter and consciousness influence each other. Oschman (2000) has an interesting perspective about scalar waves. He says when the body comes into anatomical and energetic balance with the field of gravity, the biomagnetic fields may partly cancel each other out, creating scalar and/or vector potentials. He speculates that “an individual capable of generating significant scalar waves would be relatively protected from negative effects of environmental energies” (p. 208).

Interestingly, Hunt says scalar energy cannot be stored indefinitely and must be re-created every time, which may infer a third point of differentiation between Kundalini and other universal energies--that other energies are temporarily generated and emitted whereas Kundalini is permanently integrated within us.

The Cause of Kundalini Awakening

To trace the cause of Kundalini awakening, it is useful to understand what activities or events typically occur prior to awakening. A number of pre-awakening activities are listed in the book *Kundalini Rising* and the book *Energies of Transformation*, as well as in an extensive questionnaire developed by Kundalini Research Network. These may be summarized into the following types: Brain activities (meditation, prayer); sound (chanting, music); initiation by a spiritual person (shaktipat diksha); and specific body posture and movement (yoga, tai chi).

Although the diversity of pre-awakening activities may indicate that there is more than one mechanism that triggers Kundalini awakening, there is an intrinsic commonality among the activities—coherent vibration. Scientists and spiritual thinkers alike believe vibration is a major component of life. Dale (2009) says that “everything in the world vibrates, and everything that vibrates imparts or impacts information (the definition of energy)” (p. 13). Lipton

(2005) mentions “we are immersed in living fields of vibrational information” (p. 80). Cayce and Van Auken (1992) say raising one’s physical and mental vibrations causes the stimulation of electrons and movement of charged particles, resulting in “energy output, field generation, luminous radiation heating effects, and other manifestations so typical of electrical and electromagnetic activity” (p. 113). They claim that mystics’ description of their spiritual experiences closely resembles heightened electrical and magnetic activities.

Dixon (2008) observes that Kundalini “doesn’t really start anywhere, but starts everywhere” (p. 21). I believe that Kundalini *starts everywhere* as it is initiated at the quantum level.

Coherent Heart Vibrations and Resonant Entrainment as the Primary Cause

My hypothesis is coherent heart vibration that creates resonant entrainment in the heart, the brain, and the breath is the primary cause of Kundalini awakening. And heart-based activities such as meditation, chanting, the generation of love and positive emotions can produce these coherent heart rhythms.

How does this process occur? Coherent heart rhythms oscillating at a given resonant frequency activate the electromagnetic field of the heart, which modulates brain activities and creates entrainment of brain waves and respiration. McCraty et al (2009) explains that heart rhythm coherence is associated with “increased order, efficiency, and harmony in the functioning of the body’s systems” (p.23). Coherence describes the ordered distribution of energy within a waveform. The more stable the frequency and shape of the waveform, the higher the coherence. Resonant frequency is the maximum-amplitude frequency that an object vibrates at that is natural to it and most easily sustained by it. At resonant frequency, even small forces can produce large-amplitude vibrations because vibrational energy is stored. Resonant entrainment is when two or more objects that vibrate at nearly the same frequency become coupled so that they all vibrate at the frequency of the dominant rhythm.

The premise that coherent heart vibrations that create resonant entrainment in the heart, brain, and breath is the primary cause of awakening is based on several sources, many of which are studies conducted by HeartMath that highlight the important role of the heart in orchestrating our entire system. McCraty (2003) states “the heart generates the largest electromagnetic field in the body. The electrical field is about 60 times greater in amplitude than brain waves, and the heart’s magnetic field is around 5000 times stronger than that produced by the brain” (p.1). He also says the heart “is the most powerful generator of rhythmic information patterns in the body, acts effectively as the

global conductor in the body's symphony to bind and synchronize the entire system" (McCraty et al, 2009, p. 15).

There is apparently a strong correlation between heart rhythm and emotional state. McCraty (2003) says particular emotional states are correlated with measurable changes in heart rate. He explains that natural fluctuations in the heart rate or what he calls "heart rate variability" (2009, p. 20) is a measure of the naturally occurring beat-to-beat changes in heart rate. The feelings of love and appreciation lead to a more regular variation in heart rate, which is referred to as coherence. This is further explained by Oschman (2000), who says coherence reflects "a balance and coherence between the heart rate and the rhythms of the two branches of the automatic nervous system--the sympathetic and parasympathetic--that regulate heart rate" (p. 238). Furthermore, he says the absence of variation signifies:

A calm, peaceful, harmonious, and highly intuitive feeling state, in which one becomes aware of one's electrical body and of the minute currents flowing throughout. This state is associated with a coupling, or entrainment, or phase-locking of a variety of electrical and mechanical rhythms, including the heart, respiration autonomies, and the baroreceptor feedback loop to the brain (p. 239).

The heart appears to have direct and immediate effect on brain activities. McCraty says the heart is in a constant two-way communication with the brain, but in fact it sends many more signals to the brain than vice versa. There are approximately 40,000 sensory neurites in the human heart involved in relaying information to the brain, and the input from the heart to the brain directly affects the activity of frontocortical areas and the thalamus, driving our perceptions, thought processes, and emotional experiences. It appears that brain rhythms, especially alpha, beta, as well as lower frequency brain rhythms, naturally synchronize to the heart's rhythm. Therefore, a change in heart vibrations can directly affect brain activities and our entire physiology. In addition, the heart communicates information to the brain and throughout the body via electromagnetic field interactions, and electromagnetic waves generated by the heart are immediately registered in the brain waves.

In addition, research by HeartMath highlights how certain emotions create coherent heart rhythms that entrain the brain and the breath. McCraty (2003) found that "positive emotions are associated with a higher degree of coherence within the heart's rhythmic activity (autocoherence) as well as increased coherence between different oscillatory systems (cross coherence/entrainment)" (p. 4). In an article entitled: "Brainmapping the Effects of Deeksha," researcher Eric Hoffman (2006) found spiritual beings have a much stronger neurological communication between the brain and the heart and decreased metabolism coupled with an increase in cell membrane voltage.

How does the heart create these system-wide effects? According to McCraty, the heart generates a pressure wave with each heartbeat, creating what is known as the pulse. Pressure wave patterns vary with the rhythm of the heart. Furthermore, information is encoded in the inter-beat intervals of the heartbeat that orchestrate body-wide effects. McCraty explains that the heart generates continuous electromagnetic waves that give rise to fields within fields, which interact with other structures and encode information within the interference patterns of the waves.

Even more interesting, McCraty further believes that the heart's energy field is coupled to a field of information that is not bound by the limits of time and space. His studies show that both the heart and brain appear to receive and respond to information about a future event, and even further, the heart appears to receive intuitive information before the brain. He believes that the heart is directly coupled to energetic fields of information including that of the universal energy source. McCraty also says information about a person's emotional state is communicated throughout the body and into the external environment via the heart's electromagnetic field. Positive emotions, such as love or appreciation, are associated with a sine wave pattern, denoting coherence in the heart's rhythms. In turn, these changes in the heart's rhythms create corresponding changes in the frequency of the electromagnetic field radiated by the heart.

McCraty et al (2009) and his team found that "sustained, self-induced positive emotions generate a shift to a state of system-wide coherence in bodily processes, in which the coherent pattern of the heart's rhythm plays a key role in facilitating higher cognitive functions" (p. 15). A study of long-term Buddhist practitioners shows that while they meditated in a state of unconditional loving-kindness and compassion, increases in gamma band oscillation were observed. In addition, different emotions are associated with different degrees of coherence in the activity of the body. Positive emotions such as appreciation, care, and love drive the systems of the body toward increased coherence.

Furthermore, McCraty et al (2009) found that coherence can be sustained for an extended period if the individual has the intention to maintain a *heart-focused* positive emotional state, because "this appears to excite the system at its resonant frequency, and coherence emerges naturally, making it easy to sustain for long periods" (p. 26).

McCraty's research also shows that the heart manufactures and secretes oxytocin, which is often referred to as the *love hormone*. Recent research indicates that this hormone is also involved in cognition, tolerance, trust, sexual and maternal behaviors, the learning of social cues, and bonding.

As discussed before, Rein and McCraty (2001) found that coherent heart energy generated during the loving state can alter DNA. Wilcock believes Rein's

experiment shows that *love* is the key quality of the universal energy that can generate coherence in our brain waves. Furthermore, he claims that this gives us a “scientific definition of love...that love can now be seen as a basic principle of universal energy. The more coherence, the more structure, the more harmony we have, the more love there is” (Wilcock, 2011, p. 173).

Meditation and Prayer

An activity that is frequently reported to trigger Kundalini awakening is meditation. I believe that meditation is intrinsically a heart-based activity even though it can directly influence physiology in the brain and the entire body. And it appears that focused thought, or intent, can direct and amplify the effects. Bentov (1988) says that prolonged practice of meditation causes many physiological changes in the body including a change in the mode of functioning of the nervous system. He also draws a link between meditative states and resonance. He says one of the meditative techniques is to slow down breathing so as not to disturb the natural resonance of the heart-aorta system, which then entrains the entire body to resonate at the natural frequency of about 7 cycles per second. He also says meditation causes “elevation of levels of consciousness” (p. 43) which for different people will be at different rates. Bentov also believes that meditation produces coherent waves in the body, and that the body’s micromotion (small body motions accompany the motion of blood through the circulatory system) is similar to the resonant frequency of the planet’s electrostatic field. Therefore, a person in a meditative state will produce waves that propagate through the planet’s electrostatic field and entrain others who have similar vibrating frequencies. Based on this, Bentov postulates that a group of “meditating bodies” will emit harmonic sounds of approximately 7 Hz through the electrostatic field of the planet, and that “the more bodies are locked in, the stronger the signal becomes” (p. 44).

There is also evidence that meditation has significant effects on brain physiology; these effects include increased blood flow in the prefrontal cortex, interior parietal lobes, and inferior frontal lobes (Newberg et al, 2003). In addition, Dixon (2008) believes meditation increases blood flow to parts of the brain that activate the sympathetic nervous system.

Another theory says meditation causes changes in brain physiology because it integrates the right and the left brains. Sannella (1987) reports of a study by Hiroshi Motoyama showing that in ordinary consciousness, the micromotion on the left brain is 50% greater than the right. However, when subjects go into deep meditation, the micromotion in the right brain and the left brain becomes nearly equal. Furthermore, when the brains are in perfect balance, the subjects feel “profound peace and tranquility” (p. 50). Other researches seem to support this. An electroencephalography (EEG) brain mapping study was conducted in 2006 by a research team that includes Erik Hoffmann, Harald Kjellin, and Inger Spindler. They found that the two brain hemispheres of

meditators function more symmetrically after meditation. This balancing of the left and the right brain was most pronounced in the posterior (occipital-parietal) areas.

Neuroscientist Andrew Newberg (2008) discusses various developments in what he calls *the yogic brain* in the book *Kundalini Rising*. He says focusing on a mantra or an image of a sacred object activates the frontal lobes, and once the frontal lobes are activated, they interact with other brain structures such as the thalamus, which then affects the parietal lobe and reduces the sensory information that it takes in, which he says is responsible for creating “a sense of our self, and orients that self in the world...Hence, one experiences the losing of the sense of self and a sense of space and time that are commonly reported during spiritual practices” (Khalsa et al, 2009, p. 169). Newberg says brain-imaging studies of practices such as meditation and prayer have shown a decreased activity in the parietal lobes. He also says the hypothalamus plays a key role in spiritual experiences as it controls the automatic nervous system that regulates the sympathetic and parasympathetic functions in our body. In particular, he believes the autonomous nervous system directly causes arousals and intense feelings throughout our body during spiritual awakenings as it is connected to virtually every organ in our body. He also found that meditating Tibetan Buddhists seem to have their neocortical areas functionally disconnected from the rest of the brain, while both the limbic hippocampus and amygdala remain active.

There is also some evidence that meditation causes entrainment of the breath, heartbeat, and brain waves. Stephenson (2008) says studies on meditating monks shows that when their breath forms a steady rhythm, the heartbeat comes into synch, then the brain waves also comes into synch, so that eventually all three are entrained with each other.

Shaktipat Diksha

The heart may also play a role in the Kundalini awakening that is said to be initiated by a spiritual person--a practice called *shaktipat diksha*. Shaktipat is a Sanskrit word that means descent of grace, and diksha means initiation. Shaktipat diksha infers that the presence of a spiritual person initiates the transmission of spiritual energy, which is said to awaken Kundalini in the receiver. The transmission of energy may be made through a sacred word or mantra, or by a look, thought or touch. Dixon (2008) calls shaktipat “the contagion of spirit between individuals” (p.15) and posits that it is due to quantum wave functions that extend beyond time and space. She claims that in shaktipat, the opening of the heart is what initiates Kundalini awakening. Perhaps love is the enabling force behind shaktipat? In a paper called “Kundalini Yoga Through Shaktipat”, Yogi Amrit Desai (1990) says shaktipat involves “complete surrender and love for the guru, accompanied by a special technique of meditation on the guru. The link that binds guru and disciple in

divine love grows, creating an almost irresistible pull on the aspirant to be near his master. Shaktipat opens an inner door which enables him to experience a tremendous amount of love” (p. 71). Recent research at HeartMath may lend credence to this view. In his book *The Energetic Heart*, McCraty (2003) says the heart acts as “a synchronizing force within the body, a key carrier of emotional information, and an apparent mediator of a type of subtle electromagnetic communication between people” (p. 17).

Thoughts as Brain Waves

Meditation is sometimes more narrowly defined as a thought pattern that translates into brain waves. What is thought? In his book *stalking the Wild Pendulum*, Itzhak Bentov (1988) describes thought as “energy that causes the neurons in the brain to fire in a certain pattern” (p. 100). Greenwell (1988) says that certain states of consciousness promote waves of movement through the brain that sets off patterns of physiological and emotional responses. She reports that researchers have noticed unusual brain wave patterns when Kundalini is activated.

Rael Cahn (2006) says meditators show slower alpha and theta brain waves, corresponding to lower brain frequency (p. 191). Penny Peirce in her book *Frequency* holds that brain waves correlate to different awareness levels and that lower the brain frequency, the higher the awareness level. She says that slow brain waves, like those arising from meditation, correlate with heightened awareness, and also facilitate the production of neuropeptides and hormones (for example, endorphins, serotonin, acetylcholine, and vasopressin). Fast beta waves correlate with daily reality; alpha waves correlates with perception of subtle energy; theta waves correlate with the realization of one’s true self where the ego dies and soul awareness arises, and a feeling of unity; delta waves correlate with out-of-body experience, and a collective and universal feeling.

Oschman (2000) suggests that the healing energies emitted by healers involve conditioning of the brain waves and other body rhythms with the slow electrical and magnetic rhythms of the earth’s atmosphere. This is echoed by Richard Alan Miller and Iona Miller in a paper entitled “Schumann’s Resonances and Human Psychobiology,” which describes the characteristics of the different brain waves. Fast beta waves (14 cycles per second and above) are said to be associated with the normal waking state of consciousness when attention is directed towards cognitive tasks and the outside world. Alpha waves (7-13 cycles per second) are associated with dreaming and light meditation. Theta waves (4-7 cycles per second) are associated with sleep and the deepest state of mediation where senses are withdrawn from the external world. Slow delta waves (0-4 cycles per second) are associated with the deepest meditation and dreamless sleep. Other studies indicate that low frequency fields, specifically at the frequency of the Schumann Resonance, can

synchronize brain waves and have predictable effects on behavior. In an article entitled: “Planetary Harmonics and Neurobiological Resonances in Light, Sound, and Brain Wave Frequencies,” Nick Anthony Fiorenza reports that the Schumann Resonance of 7.83 Hz frequency is often detected in the brain waves of psychics in their intuiting mode.

Another interesting finding is there is an increase of fast gamma wave activity (25-42 Hz) in the frontal lobes after meditation. This aligns with research by Professor Richard Davidson, which is reported in a 2004 *Wall Street Journal* article entitled: “Scans of Monks’ Brains Show Meditation Alters Structure, Functioning” (Begley, 2004, p. B1). Davidson found that in spiritually evolved Zen monks, there is a dramatic increase in high-frequency brain activity called gamma waves during compassion meditation. Gamma waves are thought to reflect higher mental activity such as consciousness. Davidson postulates that high gamma levels, especially in the left prefrontal area of the brain, reflect *enlightenment*.

Other researchers say brain waves can lead to coherence in the entire body. Oschman (2000) says the brain’s magnetic wave can cause the entrainment of the body’s living crystalline matrix. The molecules in cell membranes, connective tissues, muscle, and DNA molecules orient themselves in the same direction, which leads to the entire system being more coherent.

Thoughts beyond the Brain

However, thoughts are likely to be much more than brain waves. Furthermore, recent research shows that brain waves are not confined to the brain. In the movie *Living Matrix*, McTaggart says: “a thought is a physical energy.” As early as the late 1800s, Edwin Babbitt (1967) posited that around the brain there are “magnetic curves circulating in almost infinite numbers in a vast variety of directions” (p. 217).

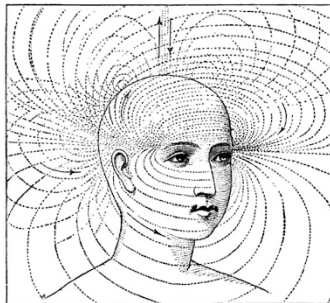


Fig. 187. The Magnetic Curves.

Fig. 187: The Psycho-Magnetic Curves.

From the Principles of Light and Colour (Babbitt, 1967, p. 219)

Recent research seems to confirm Babbitt's belief. In an article entitled: "Magnetic Energy of the Brain," Michael Bukay and George Buletza (2009) says "our brain generates an ever-changing electromagnetic aura that extends into the environment. Theoretically, these electromagnetic fields have no boundaries as they travel outward into an electromagnetic universe" (p. 138). Oschman (2000) also describes thought as not simply a brain wave, but as a pattern of magnetic energy. And Bentov (1988) says "when we think, our brains produce rhythmic electric currents. With their magnetic components, they spread out into space at the velocity of light...They all mingle to form enormous interference patterns, spreading out and away from the planet" (p. 32). This is echoed by Oschman, who says that the fields of all organs spread throughout the body and into the space around it, so the brain field extends far beyond the brain.

Sound as Vibrational Energy

Sound is a vibrational energy that takes the form of waves. Dale (2009) says sound functions as a field and also vibrates, and since all matter vibrates, all matter makes sound. Bentov (1988) says rhythmic vibration affects the environment, be it air, water, solids, electromagnetic, or gravitational fields, and all these disturbances are called sound even though they may be sound that we cannot perceive. Furthermore, he says:

We could actually associate our whole reality with sounds of one kind or another because our reality is a vibratory reality, and there is nothing static in it. Starting with the nucleus of an atom, which vibrates at enormous rates, the electrons and molecules are all associated with characteristic vibratory rates. A most important aspect of matter is vibratory energy (p. 32).

Sound can affect us at many levels and even organize matter. Bentov (1988) demonstrates that sound can turn a disorganized suspension of particles into highly ordered crystals. As a matter of fact, he infers that the orderly pattern of atoms in matter is the *result* of the interaction of sound waves in matter. Furthermore, Bentov believes sound has another very important function—the ability to store information in the form of a *hologram*, which he calls a record of superposed sounds, which is an interaction that creates "a complex pattern that is called an interference pattern of waves" (p. 15). Stephenson (2008) says sounds "not only strike our ears, they also strike our bodies including the internal structures" (p. 208). She explains that the wave motion of sound directly impacts piezoelectric crystals, especially those found in the bones, teeth, and intestines, and that deep, low tones especially impacts the internal body cavity. Oschman (2000) also draws a link between sound and piezoelectricity. He says a very important aspect of sound is it produces phonons that spread through the living matrix, affecting every part of our body. Dixon (2008) even suggests that cerebrospinal fluid produced in the roof

of the lateral ventricle creates sound waves and may be the physical source of the sound heard in the *om* mantra. The relationship between sound and piezoelectricity is discussed more extensively in a later section on the propagation of Kundalini energy.

As a matter of fact, sound may be pre-programmed into our very being. Recent research provides evidence that sound and language are integrated into our genes. In *Potentiate Your DNA*, Sol Luckman discusses the discovery by J. Delrow that the four nucleotides of DNA have fractal structures closely related to human speech patterns, which means human language may have emerged from the structures of our DNA. This is further expanded by Gariaev through his research on *junk DNA*, the portion of the DNA genome for which no function has been identified but which accounts for over 90% of our overall genome. Gariaev found that the genetic code in junk DNA follows uniform grammar and usage rules that are virtually identical to those of human language, and hypothesized that genome has a capacity for recognizing semantically meaningful phrases.

Chanting

The chanting of mantras is often reported as a trigger of Kundalini awakening. Mantras date back to ancient times. Stephenson (2008) identifies some of the sacred sounds in ancient cultures: *Kung* for the Chinese, *om* for Hindus, *AMN* for the Egyptians, which became *amen* today.

Earlier, we identified meditation as a form of heart-based activity that can trigger Kundalini awakening. Chanting has deep emotional and healing impact because it is often conducted in meditation; but in addition, chanting also produces sound with resonant frequency that can synchronize the rhythms of brain waves, heartbeat, and breathing. This synchronization is through resonant entrainment, where a rhythmic vibration of a wave or an object changes the rhythmic vibration of another wave or object, causing them to vibrate at the same frequency. This is also the mechanism by which tuning forks work.

Even further, chanting may create harmonic resonance that results in even more powerful vibrations. Stephenson (2008) explains how harmonic tones are produced:

When one vibrant note is sustained in close, reflective surroundings...a standing wave is created. This intensifies the volume of the sound. The delayed echoes begin to interfere with the standing wave and a new sound is created, namely the second harmonic (p. 147).

Since mantras are typically repeated continuously, chanting would produce increasingly more harmonic tones. A series of harmonic tones lead to

harmonic resonance, which can produce very powerful vibrations. Another important aspect of resonant frequency is it produces standing waves in an enclosed system. Standing waves are created when “two identical waves with the same frequency, wavelength, and phase are travelling toward each other from opposite directions” (Stephenson, 2008, p. 219). As such, a standing wave is essentially a wave and its reflection where energy is transferred back and forth between its two parts. As we will discuss later, standing waves are an important component of the Kundalini awakening process since they are a key propagating carrier of Kundalini energy throughout our body.

Dixon (2008) says that high and low pitch tones of mantras resonating within the body can enhance cerebrospinal fluid flow, in that lower pitch tones resonate in the chest and abdomen areas, facilitating the flow of the fluid within the spinal column, whereas higher pitch tones resonate in the head, and therefore impact the fluid around the cranium.

Conclusion

The purpose of this research is to develop a theoretical model to explain the origin of Kundalini energy and the cause of awakening from a scientific viewpoint. Below is the summary the key postulations of this paper:

Kundalini energy is the combined light energy from the universal energy source in the form of virtual photons and our biophotons, and is stored in our DNA from birth. The integration of the two produces an intense, coherent, laser-like light energy that is Kundalini. Kundalini is stored and activated as light energy in the form of photons, but propagates through our body as sound energy once activated. The conversion from light into acoustic waves can either be through the DNA quantum hologram translating between acoustical and optical holograms, or through piezoelectric connective tissues within our living matrix. As the acoustic waves are carried through our body, piezoelectric crystals in our connective tissues, skeleton, brain, and pineal gland facilitate entrainment of heart rhythms, brain waves, respiration, facilitating awakening. Piezoelectricity also carries phonons and amplifies acoustic waves throughout our body. They are carried in solitons, which through resonant frequency, propagate into a series of increasingly powerful standing waves that reach all levels of our body through the living matrix. As the standing waves move through our nervous and endocrine systems, a series of psychophysiological processes are activated. Hence, Kundalini awakening process is a complex, multi-level, nested process that is initiated at the quantum level and propagates to the psychophysiological level.

Also, as Kundalini is a coherent, laser-like light, it is strong and focused enough to change the very structure of our DNA, which effectively changes the course of our individual and collective evolution. The difference between Kundalini and other universal energies that we can generate, resonate and emit through our bodies is Kundalini energy vibrates at a specific frequency and

involves a photon exchange with the universal energy source at the quantum level, and its integration creates permanent changes to our DNA and physiology, whereas other universal energies involve scalar waves from the universal energy source interacting with our electromagnetic fields.

The primary cause of Kundalini awakening is hypothesized to be coherent heart vibrations oscillating at a resonant frequency that create resonant entrainment between the heart, the brain, and the breath. These coherent heart rhythms are triggered by heart-based activities such as meditation, chanting, the generation of love and other positive emotions. Furthermore, focused thought, or intent, can direct and amplify the effects.

These postulations have not been proven within the realm of mainstream science, and admittedly there are many gaps and some of the hypotheses are at best speculations, although a sincere attempt was made to leverage the spirit and intent of scientific investigation when developing these ideas. It may also seem like more questions were raised than answers provided. The only thing I can really say for sure is there is a pressing need for further research, especially one that brings together cross-disciplinary experts who can explore the Kundalini phenomenon from the perspectives of both science and metaphysics. Being a scientific exploration, this research attempts to discover and understand Kundalini in energetic and physiological rather than in metaphysical terms. However, I do believe Kundalini is a much greater phenomenon than what science can define and explain. In its very essence, Kundalini is likely to be much more than energy and experience.

Christopher Hills (1990) has a unique insight about Kundalini. In his view, Kundalini is not energy at all, but a basic component of life that we only perceive as energy when it moves. He even calls Kundalini a *byproduct of consciousness*, and compares it to light prior to being absorbed or released as energy. He explains his view:

Only when it (Kundalini) moves through the system can it be described as Kundalini because only then do we become conscious of its existence as ambrosia which melts and burns. To describe Kundalini in chemical or energetic terms alone is to avoid the real cause and look only at the effects. Without the light of consciousness moving through our receptors we would not see, smell, taste, hear, or touch anything. Yes we do not see Kundalini described as ordinary consciousness but always as something special. Kundalini is a basic component of life and it is only when it moves from one place to another that we sense it or feel it as 'energy.' To call it 'Kundalini energy' is therefore a misnomer... Kundalini is actually made of consciousness and the actual sensation is merely a message of our consciousness passing through the psychic veil or skin which acts as a membrane between one world of experience and another (pp. 110-112).

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Reflections on Pema Lingpa's *Key to the Eight Principal Tantric Medicines*, and its relevance today*

Cathy Cantwell

Abstract

The category of the Eight Principal Tantric Medicines (sman rtsa brgyad) is ubiquitous in tantric sources, such as the regular medicinal cordial offerings (sman mchod) found in many tantric sādhanas. These substances form some of the key ingredients to be included in medicinal accomplishment (sman sgrub) practices, when sacred medicinal pills are compounded and consecrated in the course of a Major Practice Session (sgrub chen), conducted over a number of days. The category is referred to in early sources, such as in the works of the

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ancestral forefathers of the Nyingma school, the twelfth century Nyang ral Nyima özer (nyang ral nyi ma 'od zer) and the thirteenth century Guru Chöwang (gu ru chos dbang). In the revelations of the national saint of Bhutan, Pema Lingpa (padma gling pa, 1450-1521), we find a short pithy text relating to this classification: "A Key to the Eight Principal and Thousand Varieties of Medicines" (rtsa brgyad yan lag stong gi lde mig), which reiterates a revelation of the earlier Ratna Lingpa (ratna gling pa, 1403-1479). This article explores the text, and the themes which live on in later works and contemporary practice.

This article introduces a short text, which was revealed by Pema Lingpa (padma gling pa, 1450-1521) [see *image 1*] in Bumthang and is presented at the beginning of his medicinal accomplishment (*sman sgrub*) cycle in the Dudjom edition of his *Collected Works*.¹



Image 1: Pema Lingpa, Early 20th century painting from Bhutan, Collection of Ariana Maki Photographic Archive, Himalayan Art Resources Item No. 43737.

It is in fact almost identical to a text revealed earlier by one of Pema Lingpa's famous predecessors, Ratna Lingpa (*ratna gling pa*, 1403-1479), who similarly had a lasting impact on Bhutan's religious heritage. However, for this article, I

¹ A Key to the Eight Principal (Medicines) and Thousand varieties (rtsa brgyad yan lag stong gi lde mig).

focus primarily on Pema Lingpa's version, which includes a few annotations not found in Ratna Lingpa's revelation.² Ratna Lingpa's text has a longer version of the title, but both include the element of "*The Key to the Eight Principal and Thousand varieties*" (*rtsa brgyad yan lag stong gi lde mig*, hereafter, *The Key*; Pema Lingpa's version referred to as PL, Ratna Lingpa's as RL).

It is worth adding briefly here that the recurrence of a virtually identical text in a new revelation is not considered to represent a later compilation or re-working of the earlier text, but a fresh presentation stemming from the revealer's buried memories of Guru Rinpoche's teachings in his previous life, and carrying Guru Rinpoche's direct blessings, as well as those of the revealer. Thus, even though a teaching may carry the same content as previous texts, it will be valued for its special place in the new cycle of revelations, and in effect, may be given a new lease of life and expanded range of influence.

The text is a small commentary on the category of the "Eight Principal Medicines and the Thousand varieties" (*smān rtsa brgyad yan lag stong*). Now, this classification appears to be unknown in Tibetan and Himalayan medical sources, yet it is ubiquitous in Nyingma tantric sources. It occurs widely in the regular medicinal cordial offerings (*smān mchod*) found in many tantric sādhanas [see *image 2*].



² The content of the two texts is largely the same, apart from minor scribal variants. They differ also in their titles; in the dākinī symbolic script (*mkha' 'gro brda' yig*) with which they both open; and in their revelation colophons, which identify the different *gter stons*, and the separate revelation sites and occasions. As mentioned here, Pema Lingpa's version also adds some annotations, at least one of which is marked by the revelation punctuation.

Image 2: The elixir offering; performed by the Head Lama and the Master of Offerings, facing the mandala within the temple, Major Practice Session, Pema Yoedling Dratsang, Gelegphu, Bhutan, 2013 (copyright Cathy Cantwell)

A classic offering formula is typically used, with a verse line, "medicines compounded from the eight principal and thousand (varieties)" (*rtsa brgyad stong la/las sbyar ba'i sman*). The twelfth century ancestral forefather of the Nyingma school, Nyang ral Nyima Özer (*nyang ral nyi ma 'od zer*) [see image 3] includes some discussion of this line in a commentary on tantric terms (*gsang sngags bka'i tha ram*), within his *Eightfold Buddha Word* (*bka' brgyad*) cycle (Volume 4: 287), and he also gives it within recitations for his medicinal accomplishment practice (in particular, see: *bdud rtsi sman bsgrub thabs lag khrid du bsdebs pa*, Volume 8: 483, 506).



Image 3: Nyang-ral Nyima Özer (nyang ral nyi ma 'od zer, 1124-1192), Himalayan Art Resources, Detail of Item 9

Similarly, the line is given and the eightfold category discussed in the medicinal accomplishment section of the *Eightfold Buddha Word* (*bka' brgyad*) cycle of Nyang ral Nyima Özer's recognised rebirth and successor, the thirteenth century Guru Chöwang (*gu ru chos kyi dbang phyug*, 1212-1270).³ [See *image 4*] Moreover, this class of eight principal medicines and a thousand varieties is referred to in other early sources, including root tantric texts for the Elixir class of Mahāyoga, such as the *Eightfold Division* (*bam po brgyad pa*).⁴



Image 4: Guru Chöwang (gu ru chos kyi dbang phyug, 1212-1270), Himalayan Art Resources, Item 73029.

The classification is not purely a ritual category without specific content: these "Eight Principal Medicines" form some of the key ingredients to be included in sacred medicinal pills which are compounded and consecrated in the course of a medicinal accomplishment (*sman sgrub*) session.

³ Guru Chöwang 1979, Volume 3: 280, 290.

⁴ The text's full title is: thams cad bdud rtsi lnga'i rang bzhin nye ba'i snying po'i bdud rtsi mchog gi lung bam po brgyad pa. For this reference, see the mtshams brag edition of the rNying ma'i rgyud 'bum, "... rtsa ba brgyad dang yan lag stong du 'dus shing sbyar dang/ bskul tshig 'di brjod do/", Volume 34 Ngi: 56. Note also that this important text is not only found in editions of the rNying ma'i rgyud 'bum, but also in editions of the mainstream bKa' 'gyur.

So, what exactly *are* these eight principal medicines, how do they connect with the thousand varieties, and how should we understand their purpose? This doubly revealed short text gives us a clear outline of different levels for understanding these tantric medicines. *The Key* structures discussion of the eight into the standard tantric levels of outer, inner and secret. The outer level refers to eight natural substances considered to have medicinal qualities. Yet the opening phrase of the list, as well as the associations given for each ingredient reference, is the tantric myth of the Elixir tree. In this origin story, medicinal substances pervaded the world thanks to the tantric deity's subjugation of the personification of evil, Rudra. When Rudra's body disintegrated, the parts were scattered throughout the universe, so that elixir seeds took root and became a wish-fulfilling tree. Various versions are found in different Nyingma texts, in the hagiographies (*rnam thar*) of Guru Padma, and in root tantras of the Elixir Qualities class (*bdud rtsi yon tan*). *The Key* refers to the eight medicines comprising, "the serpent heart sandalwood (tree)" (*tsandan sbrul gyi snying po*), a term for the wish-fulfilling elixir tree found in the *Padma bka' thang*. To cite that source, when Rudra was subjugated:

A terrifying voice reverberated:
(Your) corruptions are finished,
Fallen into the nāga ocean abode,
And the wish-fulfilling tree, the *serpent heart king sandalwood*, has sprouted.
The roots of the tree have been planted in the nāga land:
The leaves have become dense in the asura land:
The fruits are ripening in the land of the gods:
The name of the tree is Elixir Amṛta.⁵

In *The Key*, each part of the tree is then identified with one of the eight medicines, which are rather loosely but not systematically connected with the parts of each plant used. For example, saffron is the elixir tree's flowers, while nutmeg is its fruit. Moreover, several items on the list are specified in other versions of the Rudra story, although not necessarily linked to the elixir tree. Sometimes, different parts of Rudra's body dropped in different places, producing specific elixir substances, and these may include several of outer medicines listed in *The Key*.⁶

⁵ 'jigs pa'i sgra ni rab tu 'byin par byed: zag pa tshar gcig rgya mtsho klu gnas lhung: dpag bsam shing rgyal tsandan sbrul snying skyes: shing gi rtsa ba klu yi yul du zug: lo 'dab lha ma yin gyi yul du 'khrigs: 'bras bu lha yi yul du smin par 'gyur: ming ni bdud rtsi a mṛ ta zhes bya:, O rgyan gling pa 1985: 72-73.

⁶ One root tantra specifies four of the eight: Rudra's hair, scattered on the earth, became ghandapa tra (= ghandabhadra); Rudra's liver blood became the supreme medicine of saffron (gur kum), which protects the whole country of Kashmir; his testicles were scattered, falling as elixir, and producing nutmeg ('dza ti), with good smell and potency; from scattering Rudra's spleen blood, cloves (li shi) were generated, known as spikes of

It is not entirely straightforward to identify the whole list given in *The Key*, and it seems likely that at least two have been understood to refer to different substances at different times. The first item is the wish-fulfilling tree's roots, "mulapati" (*rtsa ba mu la pa ti* in PL; *mu la bha ti* in RL), which is presumably equivalent to the Sanskrit loan word, *mūlapatra*, which we find explicitly in later sources (Terdak Lingpa Volume Ta 9: 111r). However, Pema Lingpa's text gives an annotation specifying it as, white sandalwood (*tsandan dkar po*), which as we shall see below, is different from the understanding of *mūlapatra* found in some later texts, such as Terdak Lingpa's (Volume Ta 9: 111r) or Dudjom Rinpoche's medicinal accomplishment works (e.g. Volume Tha: 309). *The Key*'s second item is the trunk, maroon sandalwood (*tsandan smug po*), while third, the branches are cloves, and fourth, the leaves are *gandha pa tra* (*gha la pa tra* in RL), presumably equivalent to the Sanskrit loan word, *gandhabhadra*, meaning, "good fragrance". This item also seems not to have a consistent identification: Pema Lingpa gives an annotation suggesting white gentiana (*spang rgyan dkar po*).⁷ The final ingredients are straightforward: fifth is the flowers, saffron (*gur gum*); sixth is the fruit, nutmeg (*dza ti*); seventh is the bark, cinnamon (*shing rtsa* in PL, surely intending *shing tsha*, given in RL); and eighth is the sap, camphor (*ga bur*).

The next section of *The Key* lists the eight inner principal medicines, again linking them to the parts of the wish-fulfilling elixir tree. These consist of human body parts,⁸ and connect to the tantric offerings. For instance, the flowers are the five senses (*me tog dbang po lnga*), which are one of the wrathful tantric offerings. Although they do not seem quite to line up with the specific associations in the Rudra stories of the origin of elixir, it seems that the list here are intended as Rudra's body parts, and there is some relationship between some of the items and the associated part of the tree. Thus, the limbs are the branches, and the skin is the bark.

blood, warming, with the post-digestive potency of spreading heat, and praised for (treating) spleen diseases. thams cad bdud rtsi lnga'i rang bzhin du 'khrungs shing skye bar byed pa'i 'bras bu rin po che'i 'od ltar bstan pa'i rgyud, mtshams brag edition of the rNying ma'i rgyud 'bum, Volume 34 Ngi: 727ff.; the extracts here are from 744-746.

⁷ Drungtso and Drungtso [2005: 252] give gentiana algida, which would seem appropriate here. Tshul khriims skal bzang gives as gentiana kurroo, but then gives a photo which seems to be of a white variety of the plant. We cannot, of course, be certain in any case that Pema Lingpa's use of the plant name corresponds to contemporary understandings of the name.

⁸ The roots are the navel; the trunk the flesh and bones; the branches, the two legs and two arms; the leaves, the fingers and fingernails, hair and body hairs (PL gives kha spu, moustache, in place of ba spu, but this is probably a scribal error); the flowers, the five senses; the fruit, the five inner organs; the essences, marrow, brains, bone grease, fat; the bark, the skin.

The text then gives the eight secret or private principal medicines, which relate to the sexual fluids and processes within the body, four male and four female, and presumably imply the potencies generated by tantric sexual practices.

The next section of *The Key* complicates the category of the eight principal medicines, in part by explaining how they connect to the thousand varieties, and thus introducing further interpretations of the eight. The first explanation is that each of the eight has one hundred and twenty-five assistants, making a total of one thousand. But then, the text explains that the eight principal medicines can also be understood in terms of eight sets of five substances, which are then sub-divided to create the thousand varieties. The first set of five consists of the five tantric elixirs, excrement, urine, rakta, human flesh, and bodhicitta, while the second set are the five essences (*snying po*), which are the eyes, ears, nose, tongue, and heart. The third set is the five fruits (*'bras bu*), consisting of different groups of sentient beings, and the fourth is the five qualities (*yon tan*), which are important substances also in Tibetan and Himalayan medicine, the three types of myrobalan, as well as bamboo pith, and cloves.⁹ The fifth and sixth sets also consist of medicinal substances, which are commonly used, in making tantric pills,¹⁰ but the seventh and eighth sets are quite different types of items. The seventh set is of the five roles or tasks (*dgos don lnga*), which are key roles in the tantric performance, such as the vajra master, and the regent.¹¹ The eighth is five of the necessary articles (*dgos ched = dgos chas*) for conducting a practice session, such as the mandala and coloured sands.¹² [See *image 5*] The final section of the text discusses the

⁹ a ru ra; ba ru ra; skyu ru ra; cu gang; li shi.

¹⁰ The fifth set (*sdud pa lnga*): camphor (*ga bur*), saffron (*gur gum*), sandalwood (*tsandan*), musk (*gla rtsi*), amṛta fermenting agent (*a mṛ ta'i phab*). The sixth set (*dul ba lnga*): aloe wood (*a ga ru*); agarwood resin (*du ra ka*); himalayan marsh orchid (*dbang lag*); *li ga dur* (PL gives *lig dur*, presumably in error); uncertain identification; Drungtso and Drungtso [2005: 467] give *Geranium pratense*; it may refer to the root; my notes from Gelegphu *sman sgrub* 2013 suggest that it resembled a small red bean, but I am entirely uncertain of the species of plant); cardamom (*sukmel = sug smel*). Note that we cannot necessarily be confident about identifications, even with contemporary understandings of identification, let alone in the case of substances given in Ratna Lingpa's and Pema Lingpa's works. Note also that in these lists, there is one item, which is not simply the name of a medicinal substance deriving from a specific plant. *Amṛta fermenting agent* (*a mṛ ta'i phab*) is considered a crucial or even *the* crucial ingredient in medicinal pills, consisting of consecrated medicinal pills from earlier batches, made or passed on by lineage lamas.

¹¹ The five roles/tasks: the master (*slob dpon*); the regent (*rgyas thebs = rgyal thebs*); the ritualist (*karma*); the *ging* deity (*ging pa*); the *dharaṇī* consort (*yum gzungs ma*).

¹² The five necessary articles: mandala and coloured sands, coloured threads and threads for the (maṇḍala) lines, a kapāla with the right characteristics.

various ways in which the eight sets can be expanded to create the thousand varieties.



Image 5: The two-dimensional mandala of coloured sands being prepared for the Major Practice Session, Pema Yoedling Dratsang, Gelegphu, Bhutan, 2013 (copyright Cathy Cantwell).

I conclude with a few short reflections on this text in relation to our theme of twenty-first century perspectives, and continuity and change. The first is that for the increasing numbers of Vajrayāna followers who need and expect some intellectual explanation of the tantric mandala categories, we have plenty here to think about. The second is that even in principle, in this system there is room for multiple understandings and layers of interpretation. The third is a little more complicated. The category of these eight principal tantric medicines incorporate assumptions about the natural potencies of certain species of plants, which feature in the outer list of the eight medicines, a list which is given prominence at the beginning of the text. Some of these lists occur also in the other broader interpretation of the list of eight, which gives three sets of five plant based ingredients. At the same time, what is striking is that these medicines are not simply lists of organic substances. Their potencies owe as much to their symbolic framing as to their natural qualities. The first list is conceptualised not so much according to any schema of natural attributes, but in accordance with their varied connections to the symbolism of Rudra's subjugation. The inner and secret levels of understanding are even more clearly referencing tantric symbolism. But perhaps most interesting of all is the alternative understanding of the eight medicines in terms of the eight sets of five. At the head of the list, we have the set of five tantric elixirs, a group which

is fundamental in Nyingma Mahāyoga practice, yet which would not otherwise seem to fit with the eightfold classification. The next five sets feature both tantric items and natural ingredients. However, the final two sets have moved to an entirely different type of list. Instead of anything which one would normally define as "medicinal", we have the roles played by the principal tantric practitioners in the ceremonies for Major Practice Sessions, and the tantric ritual paraphernalia required for the performance. These are items, which can only be seen as "medicine" by the broadest possible definition of *sman* or "medicine" as something beneficial. What is drawn attention to here is the necessity of placing the eight principal medicines within the context of a Major Practice Session (*sgrub chen*), or an elaborate communal ritual conducted over a number of days, in which tantric medicines are compounded and consecrated.

Very briefly, I would like to broach two subjects arising from these reflections on Pema Lingpa's text. First, there is the question of the efficacy of such tantric medicines, and here I would like to suggest that we might heed *The Key's* framing which emphasises the tantric spiritual dimension, as well as the plant-based ingredients. In a global context in which there is interest in the real physiological effects, for instance, of placebos and other manipulations of the whole body/mind complex, it may be that it is crucial to take account of the Vajrayāna ritual context in understanding Tibetan and himalayan medicinal substances, a context which has perhaps been rather neglected in some modern academic studies of Tibetan and Bhutanese medicines, which have often focused primarily on the rather more secular medical traditions of *gso ba rig pa*, as practised today. Second, on the issue of continuity and change, it is clear that there is considerable continuity between Ratna Lingpa's and Pema Lingpa's texts and contemporary practice. Most of the themes of *The Key* are reflected in the subsequent literature, such as the extensive commentarial manual on medicinal accomplishment rituals written by the seventeenth century Terdak Lingpa (*qter bdag gling pa*, 1646-1714). He also has the three categories of outer, inner and secret, with largely the same content. His outer list differs slightly in ordering, and two of the items are identified differently in the accompanying annotations,¹³ but we find the same link to the story of the

¹³ Items 1 and 2, and items 7 and 8, are in reversed position in Terdak Lingpa's list (Volume Ta 9: 111r). Terdak Lingpa gives the annotation, ma nu, for mū la pa tra, and rgya shug lo ma for gandha bha dra. This order and the annotations are given also in Dudjom Rinpoche (Volume Tha: 309). Ma nu seems to indicate the roots of a species of inula, most probably, inula racemosa (Inula racemosa Hook f.), while Indian juniper needles (perhaps ideally, Juniperus indica Bertoloni, Misc. Bot., but I am uncertain of the exact species, or the extent to which usage is consistent) are used for rgya shug lo ma. Note that Dudjom Rinpoche's Medicinal Accomplishment text for Nyang ral's Eightfold Buddha Word (bka' brgyad) cycle gives a slightly different version of the list (tsandan dmar po/ ma nu'am ru rta/ li shi/ rgya shug lo ma/ kha che'i gur gum/ dzā ti/ ga bur/ shing tsha, Volume Za: 134). This version agrees with Pema Lingpa's ordering of

origin of the elixir tree. This tradition is then reflected in the medicinal accomplishment rituals of the twentieth century Dudjom Rinpoche, which are thriving in Bhutan today. [See images 6, 7, 8] On the question of their viability in the future, I have heard the sceptical comment that such elaborate, lengthy and labour-intensive rituals are not likely to find a niche in the world's ever busier modern urban environments. I am not so sure. In fact, tantric Major Practice sessions, which pack a huge amount of communally generated spiritual energy into a ten day period, and open up access to the most profound levels of tantric accomplishment to practitioners who are not able to follow a full-time contemplative life, can even be seen as a short intensive course which can act as an alternative to the traditional three year retreat.¹⁴ And an annual attendance at such an event can act to re-charge the batteries and to re-connect with the spiritual community for those who have graduated from a monastery or tantric training college, and integrated into householder life.¹⁵ Therefore, it may transpire that these practices have long-term viability in Bhutan and elsewhere in the world.

items 1 and 2, it confirms the identification of *mūlapatra* as *inula racemosa* (*ma nu'am ru rta*), and replaces *gandhabhadra* with the interpretation of Indian juniper needles (*rgya shug lo ma*), found only in an annotation elsewhere. The text goes on to give a different listing of the thousand varieties from those discussed here, including items related to the six different tastes, types of precious stones, rocks and minerals, medicines sourced from the different parts of trees, herbal medicines sourced from the different parts of plants, the white substances, such as milk, types of seeds, water sources, and medicines deriving from different geographical locations, such as India, China, Nepal, Bhutan, different parts of Tibet etc.

¹⁴ According to Lama Kunzang Dorjee of the Dudjom communities of Jangsa Dechen Choling Monastery, Kalimpong, West Bengal, and Pema Yoedling Dratsang, Gelegphu, Bhutan, this was one of the reasons motivating Dudjom Rinpoche to promote the regular practice of Major Practice Sessions in his communities of practitioners (personal communication, March 2009).

¹⁵ Lama Kunzang Dorjee (see note above) informed me (personal communication, November 2013) that he requires the graduates of his training programmes, who may return to their own villages in Eastern Bhutan following completion of the three-year retreat, to attend one of the annual Major Practice Sessions, as a condition of retaining their association with the Jangsa Monastery community.



Images 6, 7, 8: Medicinal Accomplishment (*sman sgrub*), practised in the context of a Major Practice Session (*sgrub chen*). Final preparation of the medicinal containers, and their placement to the sides of the mandala. Pema Yoedling Dratsang, Gelegphu, Bhutan, 2013 (copyright Cathy Cantwell).

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The Mind Mandala

David Verdesi

The very perception of our being is defined by the mind space within which we experience ourselves.

Mind space is the vast unbounded space element which contains all other elements, the formless form, the womb and the matrix where all forms arise from, dance and abide in and dissolve into, it is the Mandala of the mind.

We will see through this introduction that this statement is far from being a disembodied speculation, for in fact it is something we as an individual constantly live in, it is innate and not conceptually created.

How the mind Mandala appears and what is it?

Whenever we walk into any space, outer, inner, innermost or secret, there is a twofold process taking place:

1. Your mind is expanding to fill the space
2. Your mind is literally taking in the space

There are two simultaneous events happening as one:

1. Projection - the mind fills up the space
2. Absorption - the space is taken in

This happens to ensure the perception of your being within that space.

The Mind Mandala

It is only when these two events simultaneously happen as they weave a continuum of one into the other, projection or absorption to an even yet dynamic equilibrium that the dependent and simultaneous perception of our being takes form.

The elegance of the process is that it does not need our conscious attention; this is something our mind does automatically, yet in making this process conscious we learn to recreate ourselves in to a Buddha or Mahasattva and dissolve our deluded selves.

You are in the Mandala

Imagine that you walked into the room you are presently in: what your mind did is that suddenly it expanded to fill the space and then by filling the space it gave you the sense of where you are in relation to space.

❖ The same happens at birth:

When the constructed sense of “I” takes over the body-form by expanding in the inner and outer space through sense-object interaction, the inner Mandala experience of self and others is created and appears as ordinary deluded perception of self and others.

❖ The same happens during the innermost secret tantric practices:

The body and space is filled by mind spaciousness revealing the empty and infinite nature of inner space, not in fact separated with outer space for both inner and outer are conceptual labels. It is not pertaining to all pervasive and all-embracing mind nature.

In a very literal sense we are creating Mandalas in every moment -a space of time-of our lives.

Inner and outer, outer and inner

We perceive our self-existence because of the Mandala we constantly create; we just don't know we are inside them.

Quite literally we are led to believe by ordinary default perception that our mind, our self, exists framed within the body even to the point of experiencing the homunculus in our head delimited by the skull bones as the seer of life.

Yet this ordinary default perception represents in my view only 50% of complete reality of being, for in fact it is not really the mind that is inside the body in so much as the body is inside the mind.

This is a theory to be experienced and realized. The various practices Vajrayāna created and before Vajrayāna other forms of Buddhism, are fundamentally skillful means to realize this.

From theory to practice

So let us try and experiment together, you are now sitting in a room; as I told you the very moment you walked in, your brain has mapped this room, so your brain has created tridimensional representation of the room to give a sense of being in it.

1. Comfortably sit and just look around to have a sense of the space of this room
2. Now close your eyes and still try to have a sense of the space
3. For the experiment to work, repeat twice the above two sets for four to six times in a row
4. Keep your eyes closed and keep an expanded perception of your mind to fill up the boundaries of space
5. Now use your hands, your hands are the magicians' magical wand, hands are what we use to expand and direct our intent and articulate our intent.
6. Using your hands, I want you to push forward and touch the boundary of the wall that is in front of you, I am sure you can reach it, can't you? You can feel that you have touched the wall in front of you
7. Now take your hands from the wall, and I want you to stretch your arms on your side touching the walls. You can extend the hands to the boundary of space and then, open your eyes
8. Try to do the same with eyes open and reach in front of you, of course physically you are not reaching or touching the wall in front of you

But when you close your eyes you experience that you did, why? Because when you close your eyes you are living in the representation the mind has made of the space you exist in. In that moment, you are Hevajra or Cakrasamvara, Yamantaka, Hayagriva, Guyhasmaja or Vajrakilaya or any other deity-mind form.

Arising as Tantric Deity

1. You are the centre of the Mandala
2. The Mandala is mind itself
3. You are in the mind itself
4. Meaning that every person around you, I, anyone or anything around you is included, the chairs and tables or other people that are inside the Mandala are also inside the mind
5. They are not parted from it
6. The implication of this is profound because it means that the experience of separation, of otherness, is flawed

Dreams

If this was a dream, right now if you are dreaming to be in this conference and you are seeing all the people here, you see them as I see you, out there, and then when you wake up from the dream and I ask you, if people you saw in your dream were out there? Clearly no, as this is because they appear in your dream.

So they appear within your own mind, which means they are your own mind.

This become very clear when you learn to experience reality as the mind Mandala -the space within which everything exists.

What is perceived by mind as other than mind is in fact mind. But again this is not a theory it has to be lived; I reached this conclusion without Vajrayāna, for all the matter without Buddhism, because these are inherent experiences of the mind appearing upon investigation and enquiry, reflection and concentration, beyond labelings.

Vajrayāna give us the tools to do that, but the point remains; the tool is just a skillful mean, it is pointing the way, but did you experience it? So this is ultimately the message, those practices in their ideal diversity should lead to concrete experiences. The rituals, dogmas, beliefs and visualizations are skillful means to deliver an experience, a grand show if you wish to create the magic, the emotion, the belief, but often they are given an importance and a reality far beyond their meaning, while sacrificing the result and experience which they point to.

Anuttara yoga tantra is now

This experience does not have to be removed from the reality; you have a chance to practice anuttara yoga tantra every day. Every day you walk into any room and if you were conscious, you would know what happens; your mind in that moment has filled up that space.

If it is not contracted in its little delusion, confusion and thoughts – I, this, that, he, she, you, me constantly neurotically contracted in to a little point creating solid sense of separation and otherness.

Unfolding the Mandala of Mahamudra

If you give chance to mind to fill the space of the reality it will unfold into the Mandala, Vajradhatu the diamond realm, and in this Mandala all beings are, just like you are here and I am here, we are inside this mind Mandala.

If we realize that the mind that expand and fills up the space and brought in it all of you, and therefore apparent separation is just apparent, this is Mahamudra. In it all delusion of aversion, clinging and difference are resolved.

Illusory body

The illusory body is the same body that allows you to fill the space of mind with mind when you close your eyes, it allows you to touch the walls, because you are touching the wall of your own mind, the mind that you extended to fill up the space, that is why you can touch. It is the same body you appear within dreams.

This conceptually created body is a body of action, the body that acts within the mind, is the illusory body.

This body - self-identity has the belief that is separated from mind, just like a wave believing to be separated from the sea, but this simple experiment proves you that your body is within the mind, and if you live your life just with its simple knowledge all the time.

This body, this mind experiencing them as separated and experience separation of others, and I gradually start to dissolve, the sense of separation start to dissolve and then clear light emerges.

Clear light

Clear light is bliss, is very physical, blissful experience that arises as the result of this realization. Again I came to these experiences without knowing anything, meaning that everyone can experience this.

The sense of bliss arises when:

1. You realize this body is within the mind
2. The very I who experience this body is also within mind
3. When this I is realized to be within the mind, it loses its self-perceived reality
4. Then this bliss arises and luminosity arises, which is what you experience every day when you go to sleep

When you are in a dream, you see the light? Sometime you see the sun, you see the objects just like you see this room, but most of the time when you are sleeping, and the world is dark, isn't it?

At night, there is no light, and yet you see the light in your dreams; you see the sun, object and colours but where does that light come from?

How can you see the light when there is no light, how can you see the sun in dream is because of the inherent luminosity of the mind, Prabhavasvara.

When the mind is realized to be the Mandala and the body and "I" is experienced to be within the mind and the illusion of separation is gone, that Prabhavasvara becomes self-evident, as the light that creates distinction and discernment of form and identity.

When that emerges, the mind is known to be a mirror upon which thousand forms are reflected and all these forms are but display of luminosity that are never parted or separated from mind.

This is the unfabricated reality of our mind -Mahasanti- the great peace, which most of you know in the Tibetan translation Dzogchen.

I invite everyone to realize this, it is truly wonderful, natural, uncontrived, matter of fact, direct and available to you at the times.

Margaphala

The principle of mimesis is necessary in development at all levels, from children emulating parents to those tantric methods emulating some figure of authority such a great guru or a Buddha or a tantric deity.

Undoubtedly as humans we learn by emulation and mimesis, for which in tantrism there is a term Margaphala -taking the result as the path.

This is all good and natural if it leads to emancipation and liberation of critical thinking and analysis, deconstruction and eventually transcendence of those outer models once they fulfilled the educative and inspirational role.

Upadesha

All the transmitted methods, actions, rituals, objects, visualization orders and such, in my view, should be treated in the view of the theory of mimesis or Margaphala.

They were originally someone else's experience, which we emulate. We emulate his or her mind, quality and traits to a certain extent because we have imbibed them with an hermeneutical meaning, something that can randomly be done with anything in daily life, from a phrase to a book to an action and object, substituting its meaning with another meaning. Therefore, transforming and transcending its function, this is the magical mind of children who can turn their parents and idols into super beings ascribed with all sort of powers, sticks and puppets into gods and goddesses, swords and stone into amulets and, a dress into a cape. This is what we are invited to do with our guru and their props.

We transform each of their looks, their words, their most banal actions and the bell and other implements they hold even their dresses into something other than it is, and imbibe it with a magical power, the power come from our investment in it, from the hermeneutical meaning with discover in it, and that help us to transfer our identity, we identify with it, and this help us transcend our limits, we reinvent and reimagine ourselves to be other than we are.

Like children do, we dress with capes and and hold sticks but we truly see and feel ourselves fearless knights with magical swords.

It is all good, it works and it proves the method, but again it is not different from what we did as children, it's a magical process, and yet there is nothing secret in it in fact, it is natural and it is not created or revealed by some deity or kept by some lineage: it is the way our mind works.

And true to the meaning that innately we have Buddha nature, that nature and its mode of revealing itself is repeated and enacted since birth.

What changes is simply the level of awareness of what is happening and what is it we do free from primitive limiting belief, this is the clarity of view, terse clear logical rational, as Lord Buddha clearly declared his Dharma to be.

Abhisheka

As we observe first our teachers as mesmerizing stage magicians and then go through the magical gestures and phrases and images ourselves we reenact them with greater identification of the hermeneutical meaning juxtaposed and with greater forgetfulness of what we and they are in their bare simplicity we are transported in to a realm of renewed view and experience.

This is the Abhisheka—empowerment—overtime we allow those transformed images, colours phrases and such leave a deliberate imprint on our mind continuum so gradually reshaping, recreating the form of our mind in emulation of this or that quality and trait.

As such the images and visualizations and, specific orders of events are guidelines rather than dogmas. Blue channel, red channel, red dot, green dot, left leg up or right leg up, left nostril breath right nostril breath could very well be any other color or pose chosen to represent this or that aspect of the mind.

When we give consensus to visualize paradise or pure land or Buddha form with that specific suggest form or colour we give consensus to the image of paradise first seen by someone else based on his or her memories, aspirations, needs, projections, unique character nature and karma.

By adjoining his or her stream of experience, we co-create and sustain it, to all extent making it more real.

But to all extent, it must be known with discernment that it is all just a magical display of illusion, a child magical castle, a dream that can easily change and be as real and as valid as any other.

Different people will find different expedients to be more effective. For some people, it is more effective to use physical means, or abstract means and for others those means are unnecessary.

This is because those are but skillful means, to facilitate the clarification of nature and function, substance and essence of your own mind and the sense of being arising in it.

Let us remember that the Lord Buddha himself and many realized Zen master and the ancient orders of monk such as Ananda and Kassapa the 16 arhats, did not do any extreme tantric practices.

There was no need of knowledge or consensus perceived need of tummo or candali or kundalini to be enlightened nor knowledge of channels, drops and essence, nor were there preliminary practices and 1,000,000 of mantras to be done to be liberated. There is not one single instance where Lord Buddha has ever recommended the practice of mantra in the historical sutras.

All traditions and belief systems concerning the perceived need of the so called preliminary practices as well as Tummo appeared very late in time in the wake of tantrism nearly 1,000 years after Lord Buddha parinirvana.

In the light of this dissertation we clearly see what those methods are, skillfull means of empowerment and transformation. We clearly see why those methods appeared, how they work, why they gained consensus, what is their educational and practical purpose, which is wide in scope and efficiency in term of both relative and ultimate results, but by no means they should become a dogma without which buddha hood cannot be known.

Lord Buddha's revolution was just that, to free people from the rules of magical thinking, dogmas, rituals empowerment and mantras and offerings to gurus and deities without which people thought Moksha or liberation could not be known. This was the widespread belief and view during his lifetime in Vedic India.

He made us free through the terse non-religious and yet all inclusive logic of his view.

He proved that to be enlightened nothing else is needed but the direct and immediate noble eightfold path. So why are we falling back in the trap he dedicated his life to liberate mankind from?

Skillfull means and empowerment, deities and rituals, channels winds and drops, magical implements and tantric sex, even guru devotion, or lineage fixation, mantra secrets and such, all these marvellous tools should be carefully looked and known for they are, no less, but also no more.

There is no Buddha but in the mind of Buddha

My experience arose without any prior knowledge of Buddhism and Vajrayāna, proving that, although we can rely on the established tradition, those are constructed artificial means aiming at preserving an experience and later a tradition, they are not the experience itself nor are strictly necessary by everyone.

We should use all upadesha to generate insight on their very nature, causation and function instead of giving them axiomatic and often dogmatic values; they were called upadesha for a reason.

Your mind, not my mind

Ultimately, we do not need to rely on anything but our immediate experience, creating or reenacting someone else experiences serves as tool to achieve a transformation through:

- Mimesis
- Guided projective identification and transfer
- Putting us in someone else place and mind
- Exchanging self and others
- Release grip of self grasping
- Separation of "I" and all that it implies

But once understand the scope, you must let go of, for beyond its educational scope it leads to dogmatism, obscure the view and defy purpose. It is an obstacle on the path to liberation and a conceptual attachment.

We should rely and see what is moment to moment for that is the content and form of our mind. Ultimately it is our mind; we aim at realizing mind in its five attributes:

1. Nature
2. Form
3. Quality
4. Essence
5. Function

Dharma is a living experience of what it is, the reenactment and memory of someone else experiences, no matter how lofty it is but a memory, construct.

In it, no liberation nor ultimate refuge can be found as Lord Buddha said treat all such things as:

Not I, not mine, not myself

No two Buddhas are the same

We must become who we are,

not someone else,

nor something else,

just who we are,

as we are.

The suchness of Buddha's nature is one it has samarasa -the same taste- in all Buddhas, yet it manifests differently.

No two Buddhas are same.

Conclusions

In my view, the practice of liberation aims at recognizing and then seeing what always is as it is.

To conceptually generating or confabulating what is not into a reality, a dance of appearances, is a powerful tool if it is done with knowledge and clarity of:

1. The four foundation of mindfulness
2. Madhyamaka
3. Especially both sunyata and bodhicitta

Enabling one to know what one is doing and recognizing what appears makes the difference between a tool of immediate liberation and a conceptual fetter.

Without this clarity and discernment one is entering the realm of magic, power and illusions; a tantra territory that often overlaps with natural borders.

Yet, the distinction is clear, magic conceptually creates what is not making it appear as what it is.

This is an aspect of the application of tantra as the continuum of the twofold truth, relative appearance and actual being.

However, it by itself does not lead to liberation; when the same knowledge aims at liberation it becomes the illuminating vision that makes it appear.



Mindfulness of Dream and Sleep: A Bridge to Dream Yoga?

Charlie Morley

Mindfulness of Dream and Sleep is a holistic approach to lucid dreaming and conscious sleeping that I have created with Buddhist meditation teacher, Rob Nairn. This new approach is not just about learning how to lucid dream; rather, it is about how to use all areas of falling asleep, dreaming and waking up for spiritual and psychological growth.

Mindfulness of Dream and Sleep is comprised of three main practices: mindfulness meditation, lucid dream training from both Western and Tibetan Buddhist traditions and, conscious sleeping techniques called 'hypnagogic and hypnopompic mindfulness'. Our hope is that by combining Western and Eastern techniques, we can bridge the gap between often superficial scope of Western lucid dreaming practices and often inaccessible Tibetan dream yoga practices. Mindfulness of Dream and Sleep is for people who want to go beyond lucid dreaming into something much deeper.

Lucid Dreaming

To start by clarifying terms, a lucid dream is a dream in which we are actively aware that we are dreaming as the dream is happening. However, do not be deceived by this dry definition. Lucid dreams are commonly described as among the most thrilling experiences to be had. A fully lucid dream is not a hazy, imprecise phantasmagoria, but a full-colour, high-definition and hyper-realistic experience. It can profoundly reconfigure our perceptions of reality.

Lucid dreaming is a form of mind training in which we learn consciously to recognize our dreams as dreams while we are dreaming. As with all forms of mind training, the aim is to be more aware and more awake, to switch off the autopilot and to wake up to life. To dream lucidly is to live lucidly. The term 'lucid dream' was supposedly coined by Frederick van Eeden, a Dutch psychiatrist, 100 years ago, but is misleading.

My workshop participants sometimes describe a particularly intense, vivid dream they have had and ask whether this could be classified as a lucid dream. My answer is always that if you should ask whether a dream was lucid, it probably was not. When you have had a fully lucid dream, you would not be left wondering if it qualified. To avoid this confusion, some have put forward the alternative term 'conscious dreaming'. But the word 'lucid' originally conveyed the meaning of 'having insight', rather than describing the perceptual quality of the experience. It is this element of insight that is the cornerstone of the lucid dream. In fact, it reveals the profound potential of the mind in a way that few other states of consciousness can, because through lucid dreaming we become aware of awareness itself.

This awakening of awareness within the dream state is not accompanied by any physiological awakening. To all outward appearances, we are still sound asleep and 'unconscious', yet internally, in our dreaming mind, it could be said that we are wide awake. Van Eeden commented, 'In lucid dreams the sleeper remembers his daily life [and] reaches a state of perfect awareness... Yet the sleep is undisturbed, deep and refreshing' (Eeden, 1913). It seems a contradiction to be both aware and asleep at the same time. This neurological paradox means that it was only in the late 1970s that lucid dreaming came to be verified by Western scientific means. More recently, studies from Frankfurt University's neurological clinic and the Max Planck Institute of Psychiatry have found that specific alterations to brain physiology appear once a dreamer becomes lucid. Using brain-imaging technology such as magnetic resonance tomography and EEG, scientists can now pinpoint the actual 'Aha! I'm dreaming!' moment of lucid awareness and its neurophysiological correlates. The researchers concluded that 'lucid dreaming constitutes a hybrid state of consciousness with definable and measurable differences from the waking state and from the REM [rapid eye movement] dream state' (Gesellschaft, 2012). They discovered that when lucid consciousness was attained within the dream, activity in areas associated with self-assessment and self-perception increased markedly within seconds.

This means the apparent paradox of being both aware and asleep, which had previously caused a lot of resistance and scepticism from the scientific establishment, was simply a failure to understand how two distinct brain regions could be activated simultaneously. The thing that surprises most first-time lucid dreamers is the fact that fully lucid dreams are not very dreamy at all. The lucid dream state both looks and feels real. It is a meticulously intricate

mental construct that often appears as realistic as our waking reality. It may, in fact, seem so real that we come to question our perceptions of waking reality and stand in awe of the creative aptitude of the human mind.

Since I started training, I have had hundreds of lucid dreams and yet am still struck by the infinite potential of lucid dreaming and its capacity to facilitate entire dimensions of 'reality' within our own minds. The lucid dream environment is often so meticulously realistic that some new lucid dreamers come to the audacious conclusion that it cannot be a dream at all and they must have travelled to another dimension. Indeed they have – a dimension within their own mind. Does this mean lucid dreamers stand to lose touch with reality? No, in fact quite the opposite – once we can penetrate the persuasive reality of the dreamscape and know it as an illusion, we become better equipped to recognize self-deception in the waking state. This makes us more grounded and more aware.

Dream Yoga

Dream yoga is a collection of transformational lucid dreaming, conscious sleeping and what in the West we refer to as out-of-body experience practices aimed at spiritual growth and mind training. Lucid dreaming may form the foundation of dream yoga, but using advanced tantric energy work, visualizations of Tibetan iconography and the integration of psycho-spiritual archetypes or yidams, dream yoga goes way beyond our Western notion of lucid dreaming. If we translate the Sanskrit word yoga as meaning 'union', we get a clue as to what dream yoga is about: the union of consciousness within the dream state. It is a yoga of the mind that uses advanced lucid dreaming methods to utilize sleep on the path to spiritual awakening.

Within Buddhism, illusion and ignorance are two of the most unbeneficial mind states and there are thousands of practices that aim to transmute them. One of these is dream yoga. Once we are fully lucid in a dream, ignorance is challenged as we recognize that what we thought was real is in fact not real. At the same time, illusion is shattered as we recognize that the entire dreamscape is formed from a mental projection. As ignorance and illusion dissolve, two highly beneficial states of mind can arise in their place: insight and wisdom. Insight arises as we see clearly that we are dreaming, and wisdom dawns as we understand that our mind is creating our experience. Through dream yoga we can transmute ignorance and illusion while generating wisdom and insight, all while we are sound asleep.

Messing with the mind?

One concern we should address at the outset is the fear that by lucid dreaming, we may be interfering with the integrity of the unconscious by bringing

awareness into an area of our mind that normally seems to function autonomously. Thankfully, this fear is groundless.

Rather than lucid dreaming polluting the pure message from the deeper part of ourselves, it allows that message to be heeded more easily, which I believe is exactly what the unconscious mind wants. The unconscious enjoys lucidity, because finally a line of direct communication is being set up between it and the conscious mind takes joy in dealing with greater awareness and greater consciousness. Finally, it can talk to us face to face. With every dream, the unconscious mind is offering us a hand of friendship. But far too often this is an offering we ignore, either by not remembering our dreams or by failing to acknowledge their value.

Once we become lucidly aware within the dream, however, we are extending a hand towards the unconscious mind and finally making friends with it. As Rob Preece says in *The Psychology of Buddhist Tantra*, 'When we are willing to take the psyche seriously, and listen to its symbolic expression, we can gain greater clarity and insight into the forces that influence us. We will no longer be victims of the unconscious' (Preece, p. 107, 2012). This is one of the core benefits of lucid dreaming: making friends with ourselves. We do not get lucid so we can try and control the unconscious mind or boss it about, we get lucid so that we can make friends with it, commune with it and finally start listening to it.

As with any friendship, we must learn to accept our new friend on equal terms, not censoring or arguing with them, but listening to them with an open heart. This is the most important friendship we may ever have, and it is a friendship that will spill over into our waking state, too, in sudden bursts of creativity or spontaneous insights which let us know our new friend is always with us – even when we are not dreaming. Although this friendship may be on equal terms, the unconscious has been running the dream state for much longer than we have been having lucid dreams and so it will always be the stronger force. We are not talking about taking some drug that compels the unconscious mind to accommodate lucid awareness, but a process by which the dreaming mind opens the door and allows lucidity into its domain. This means that if it does not like what we are doing in the lucid dream it will simply block our attempts to do whatever it is, so to think that we can 'mess with the unconscious' just because we are lucid is to ascribe an inflated degree of influence to our conscious mind.

Mindfulness of Dream and Sleep

Mindfulness of Dream and Sleep is essentially about bringing mindful awareness into all stages of our sleep cycle, allowing us to make use of the full 30 years we spend asleep, rather than just the six years we spend dreaming. By developing our training across all phases of sleep, rather than just within the

lucid dream state, we can offer a far more holistic and wide-ranging system with benefits that extend well beyond our dream world into our waking life.

Much like lucid dreaming, Mindfulness of Dream and Sleep may sound like a paradox, because we are so accustomed to thinking of dream and sleep as unmindful processes. However, it is possible to be aware during most periods of dream and sleep, and this awareness will paradoxically lead to more refreshing and beneficial sleep. The final aim is to allow mindful awareness to gently infuse all stages of our sleep cycle. This leads to a deep deconditioning process that will also permeate our waking state, allowing us to 'wake up' to life with more awareness and to live as we dream: lucidly.

Fundamentally, Mindfulness of Dream and Sleep is about 'knowing what is happening as it is happening' and developing the power of recognition in all states of sleep and dream. With this in mind, let's take a moment to learn about the land in which we spend a third of our lives. These days, most sleep scientists break sleep up into four sections or stages.

The Journey into Sleep

We don't just fall asleep. Sleep is a cyclical journey, from waking-state drowsiness to the depths of deep sleep and then up into the realm of dreaming.

Let's look at our sleep road map. When we first fall asleep, the initial progression from stage 1 to stage 3 takes about half an hour or so. After hanging out in deep sleep for another 30 minutes or so, we travel briefly back up into stage 2, but then, rather than continuing back to stage 1 hypnagogic, we enter REM and begin to dream.

Our eyes display rapid movements (REM), our body becomes paralysed and we experience the succession of imagery, narrative and emotional experience that we call dreaming. As we learned earlier, dreaming is an active sleep state – we are not resting while we dream.

Our first dream period is only about 10 minutes long, and so the whole cycle, from the hypnagogic state to the end of our first REM period, usually takes about 90 minutes. We repeat this 90-minute cycle multiple times throughout the night, but with each cycle we spend increasingly more time in REM and less time in deep sleep. As our REM periods get longer, the last two hours of our sleep end up consisting almost entirely of dreaming.

The last few hours of our sleep cycle are also when we enter dreams most easily from the waking state. This makes it prime time for lucid dreaming. While you can have lucid dreams in the first few hours of your sleep cycle, the dream periods will be short and your mind may be quite groggy. However, in the last few hours you will not only have longer dream periods but also a fair few hours

of sleep under your belt, so your mind will feel fresh and ready to engage lucidity.

When you wake up (at any point in your sleep cycle) you always pass through a state called the hypnopompic. This much-overlooked state of consciousness is the gateway from sleep to waking, and, if we can harness it, holds some of the highest rewards.

Stage 1: Hypnagogic - This is the first stage of sleep: the hypnagogic state. It is very light sleep, experienced by many as more of a heavy drowsiness than sleep, and it is often accompanied by alpha brain wave patterns of relaxed wakefulness. The most recognizable aspect of stage 1 sleep is the hypnagogic imagery: the dreamy hallucinations that flash and fade before our mind's eye as we drift off.

Stage 2: Light, dreamless sleep: Most people experience this as a light but dreamless sleep. We have now moved from the semi-conscious hypnagogic into the blackout stage of sleep, but we are yet to start dreaming.

Stage 3: Deep sleep: We now fall much further into sleep as our brain begins producing delta brain waves and we enter the deepest level of dreamless sleep. Stage 3 is restorative sleep. It's the state in which we release HGH (human growth hormone), repair our cells and recharge the batteries. If you manage to wake somebody from the deep, delta wave blackout of Stage 3, they normally feel groggy and disorientated.

Rapid eye movement (REM): This is the stage where our body becomes paralysed, our brain becomes highly active and we dream. Although some dream imagery can occasionally seep into all stages of sleep it's REM in which we dream most abundantly.

Most people have about four or five 90-minute sleep cycles per night, with REM dreaming being a feature of every one of these. That is about four or five dream periods a night, which become almost 1,800 dreams per year and well over 100,000 dreams in a lifetime. That's 100,000 opportunities to get lucid!

What are the benefits of Mindfulness of Dream and Sleep?

There are so many benefits to this practice but in a nutshell, once you become conscious *within* your unconscious mind you can (much like through hypnotherapy) make lasting changes to your body and mind while you sleep.

A few of my favourite benefits of the practice are:

- Psychological healing (phobias/trauma)
- Spiritual practice while you sleep
- Conscious sleeping
- Treatment of PTSD and nightmare integration

- Preparation for death and dying
- Lucid living and waking up to your full potential

Lucid Living

One of the key components of the Mindfulness of Dream and Sleep Approach is that of lucid living: interacting with daily life with a bit more mindfulness and lucidity.

For thousands of years Buddhism has proffered that although we believe that we are awake, our waking lives are spent sleepwalking through a dreamlike illusion that we mistake for absolute reality.

In waking life, however, most of us are still not aware that much of reality is a dreamlike illusion and so we feel separate from and threatened by everything that we perceive to be not us. This perceived threat leads to fear and we become afraid of ‘the other’ and barricade ourselves in against the shock of mistaken dualism.

In a lucid dream, however, we become aware that we are dreaming and ‘wake up’ to the illusion that what we once thought to be a solid, permanently existing reality is just a projection of our own mind. Once we have experienced this awakening, we begin to relax and enjoy the show a bit more in our waking life, because we are aware that it is not quite as solid and inflexible as we have been led to believe. Every time we lucid dream we are experiencing a new perception of reality, one in which we are the co-creator, and the more we experience this, the more we may also perceive waking reality in a similar way. Each time we do this we are creating a habit of recognition. It is this habit of seeing through illusion that forms the crux of lucid living.

Meditation is one of the original methods for lucid living and so forms a central part of our training in Mindfulness of Dream and Sleep.

It may seem a rather paradoxical method: we think that we will keep ourselves awake by constantly doing things, but one of the best ways to wake ourselves up is to do nothing – the intentional and very active nothing of mindfulness meditation. Meditation brings us into direct contact with our inner environment and through this we come to know ourselves better and so become better equipped to know when we are on autopilot and when we are truly awake. Meditation is also a form of mind training in which we make our mind stronger, more flexible and healthier. Just as it’s impossible to get fit without doing any exercise, so it’s impossible to wake up and live lucidly without exercising our mind. Mind training is like going to the mind gym; it’s about flexing the muscles of our mind to give ourselves the strength to become lucid. Researchers at Harvard, Yale, and MIT have found conclusive evidence that regular periods of meditation can alter the physical structure of our brain

in favour of clarity and lucid awareness. There is no greater tool on our path to lucid living than meditation.

But perhaps the most powerful way to lucid living is to regard waking life as a little bit more dreamlike. Intentionally looking out for life signs will help this shift of perception to take place. This is the foundation of a Tibetan Buddhist practice called Illusory Body yoga, which is used in conjunction with dream yoga to help the practitioner realize the dreamlike nature of reality. Be careful not to turn all this into some sort of ego trip, though. Everybody is part of the same dream, so you are no more the central protagonist than anybody else.

Conclusion

Mindfulness of Dream and Sleep both incorporates and goes far beyond the primary goal of simply lucid dreaming, with aims of more holistic and spiritual benefit. It includes a combination of transformative Western and Tibetan Buddhist dream-work techniques set within a framework of mindfulness meditation and awareness training. By combining Western and Eastern techniques, we can take the ancient power of the Tibetan Buddhist approach to dream work and make it accessible to Western practitioners without any homogenization of the two traditions. It is only once we are lucid, that the divergence between the lucid dreamer and the dream yogi occurs. The actual techniques used to reach lucidity can come from either tradition.

Mindfulness of Dream and Sleep practices aim to train our mind's awareness during all stages of dream, sleep and wakefulness. Rather than just focusing on lucid dreaming, we focus on strengthening lucidity in all areas of life, just as the original dream yoga teachings recommend.

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Kukai's Innovations and Efforts in Introducing Vajrayâna Buddhism in Japan

Barbara Morrison

Introduction

This paper was presented in Bhutan at the “International Conference on Tradition and Innovation in Vajrayâna Buddhism: A Mandala of 21st Century Perspectives” in July 2016. It is my fervent wish that this paper will provide an introduction to Buddhist Esoteric practice in Japan (namely Shingon Buddhism) as well as a point of departure for those interested in Vajrayâna practice as it has developed historically outside the borders of Central Asia. In my efforts to explore Shingon Buddhism this paper will begin to explain what I believe to be Kûkai's fundamental innovations regarding Vajrayâna Buddhism when he brought back esoteric teachings to Japan from China in the early 9th century at a time less than one hundred years after Padmasambhava's historic introduction of Vajrayâna Buddhism in Tibet and Bhutan. As the founder of Shingon Buddhism in Japan and an international figure who was proficient in both Chinese and Sanskrit, Kûkai established the Shingon center for Buddhist practice on Mt. Koya and his innovations have since been institutionalized in the vibrant practice of Shingon Buddhism as found on Mt. Kôya today.

With the understanding that a fundamental teaching of esoteric Buddhism lies in the realization that enlightenment can be achieved in this lifetime (in this very body), this paper will use the framework of the three mysteries (Jpn. *sanmitsu*); i.e. body (meditation practice), speech (preaching of the Dharmakâya) and mind (elemental consciousness) to think through the ways in which Kûkai's profound thinking on letters and language created a

particular interpretive lens that has since characterized the overall tradition of Vajrayāna Buddhism in Japanese culture. This paper will explore 1) Kūkai's notion of cosmic speech (*hosshin seppō*) as a means of sacralizing all phenomena, 2) Kūkai's conception of consciousness (mind) as a further addition to the five elements of earth, water, fire wind and space (*rokudai taidai*), and 3) Kūkai's synthesis of mantra and mandala as exemplified in the form of the Shingon practice of Aji-kan meditation. Central to all these innovations and to the overall practice of Shingon is the understanding that Shingon is, above all, an embodied practice. Because one's body is both the tool and the medium through which identification and unity (*yoga*) with the cosmos (mantra and mandala) occur, Shingon practices are extremely experiential in nature and rely on sensory input as provided by ritual practice to participate in an enlightened state.

Historical Background

Shingon Buddhism, also known as Mantrayāna Buddhism (and popularly referred to as Vajrayāna Buddhism) came to Japan from China in the 9th century C.E. primarily through the efforts of Kūkai (posthumously known as Kōbō Daishi: 774-835) who established Shingon (Jpn. 真言) Buddhism in 816 C.E. on Mt. Koya (currently Wakayama Prefecture) in Japan. Kūkai's colleague Saichō (posthumously known as Dengyō Daishi: 767-822) also brought back Vajrayāna teachings from China to Japan and founded Tendai (Jpn. 天台) Buddhism on Mt. Hiei (currently Shiga Prefecture) in Japan. Kūkai's teachings remain fundamentally esoteric in nature while Saichō's more eclectic approach (including his exoteric emphasis on the teachings of *The Lotus Sutra*) enabled exoteric developments of both Pure Land Buddhism (Hōnen: 1133-1212) as well as New Pure Land Buddhism (Shinran: 1173-1263), among others.

Kūkai and Saichō were very different personalities though they were closely matched in their passion and integrity for Buddhist teachings. Both Kūkai and Saichō risked their lives making the dangerous sea journey to China, a trip they took together (though aboard different ships) when they left Japanese shores (from what is present day Kyushu) for China in 804 C.E. While both Kūkai and Saichō were deeply compassionate men, it is my sense that Saichō was more concerned with the exoteric aspects of Buddhist practice and the ways in which Buddhism could enhance the lives of ordinary men and women. Kūkai - while also deeply concerned with the plight of his fellow human beings - was more scholarly in nature, and more driven toward an integrity of learning and teaching that often served to distance him (both physically and emotionally) from quotidian concerns outside a monastic setting. This indeed became a pattern for Kūkai, a pattern that Yoshito Hakeda describes in his well-regarded study of Kūkai as "alternating between seclusion and participation in the world, the same pattern that is visible in his later travels between Mt. Kōya and Kyoto" (23). It is perhaps for this reason that Mt. Koya has remained

consistently outside the warring alliances that characterize much of Japanese history. Mt. Koya (approximately a two-hour train ride from Osaka) is still preserved today as an International Heritage Site where one can stay the night (*shukubo*) in temples amidst a temple complex that has remained a vibrant center for esoteric practice for more than 1200 years. In contrast, the temples on Mt. Hiei were burned to the ground by Hideyoshi Nobunaga in the 16th century to quell the activities of the “warrior monks” who continuously participated in regional conflicts.

Kūkai: Texts and Teachers

Kūkai became a Buddhist novice at the age of 20 and entered the Buddhist order at the age of 24, though his first encounter with Esoteric teachings seems to have happened after Kūkai dropped out of college ~~at the age of 18~~ where he had been studying the Confucian Classics on track to become a government official since age of 18. In his early 20's, he became a wandering hermit and joined a group known as the Natural Wisdom School (*Jinnenchi-shū*) who devoted themselves to esoteric practices as they wandered and begged for food while immersed in profound relation with nature. It was during this time that Kūkai actualized his personal and profound ties with nature, ties that were no doubt a part of his early childhood years while growing up on the island of Shikoku. As a child Kūkai would have been fully acquainted with Shintō, a form of nature worship indigenous to Japan. During the time he spent with the Natural Wisdom School Kūkai experienced a profound revelation while meditating and reciting the mantra of Âkâsagarbha (Kokûzô). As Hakeda points out, it is important to note that Kūkai's quest for Esoteric Buddhist teachings was rooted in this experiential encounter with a profound revelation while immersed both physically and emotionally in nature. As Shingen Takagi and Thomas Eijô Dreitlein note, this profound experience:

Allowed Kūkai to escape from the world of superficially interpreting pages in books full of written letters to enter the great realm of empty space (*ākāsa*), where he learned to decipher the natural and inherent letters written on the pages of the book of the universe itself. (6)

After this initial revelation, Kūkai appears to have read the *Mahāvairocana Sutra* while in Japan and was unable to understand the text. This challenging textual encounter with esoteric doctrine was (according to Hakeda) the impetus for his trip to China where he intended to remain for 20 years immersed in esoteric study.

Instead, Kūkai remained in China for just two years during which time he was recognized and welcomed by Master Hui-kuo (746-805), the patriarch of Esoteric Buddhism and chosen disciple of Amoghavajra, or Pu-k'ung (705-74) who was one of the most respected and prolific translators of Esoteric texts in China. Vajrabodhi (d. 741), another prolific and respected teacher of Esoteric

Buddhism arrived in China in 720. Amoghavajra was Vajrabodhi's chosen disciple. Kūkai also studied Sanskrit and Siddham writing with the Indian monk Prajna (733 or 734 -?). Because of this remarkable convergence of events, teachers, and heart/minds, Kūkai became the Eighth Patriarch of Esoteric Buddhism during his two-year stay in China. On his return to Japan in 806 C.E. Kūkai brought with him the texts and mandalas for the Dainichi-kyō (*Mahāvairocana-sūtra*) lineage as well as the Kongochō-kyō (*Vajrasekhara-sūtrā*), two lineages that together form the basis of Shingon practice today. In addition to these lineages, and as noted in his "Memorial Presenting a List of Newly Imported Sutras and Other Items" (Hakeda 34) aka "Shōrai Mokuroku" and translated in Takagi and Dreitlein's text, Kūkai also brought back ritual implements, objects, knowledge of yogic practice with all deities as well as portraits of patriarchs (200-232).

Establishment of Mt. Kōya

In his own words, the area of Mt. Kōya was known to Kūkai before his departure to China as he had come upon the site while bent on ascetic practice while wandering through natural settings (Hakeda 47). It was in 816 that Kūkai officially requested permission to open a monastery on Mt. Kōya, then amid the forest wilderness only accessible to hunters. With a length of approx. 3.5 miles and width of 1.5 miles, the plateau on Mt. Kōya where temples and accommodations are to be found is said by some of those currently living on Mt. Kōya to be the result of a meteor impact. This otherworldly explanation is useful in accounting for the odd and mysterious phenomenon that occurs there. As Mt. Kōya is also surrounded by eight mountain peaks, one as high as 3,230 feet above sea level, this geographical feature lends itself to representations of an eight-petal lotus and is used particularly in images (Aji-kan) for Shingon meditation. Significantly, Mt. Kōya still preserves these early syncretic influences of Shintō (nature worship) and Buddhist (esoteric doctrine) that were such a compelling mix for Kūkai's spiritual development. To this day, representations of Buddhas, bodhisattvas and kami blend seamlessly in daily worship on Mt. Kōya. Myths regarding the founding of Mt. Kōya by Kūkai also attest to Kūkai's abiding respect for Shintō gods and goddesses (kami) as well as an appreciation for powerful manifestations of natural forces.

Kūkai's thought: Cosmic Speech

My first introduction to Kūkai and his thought was many years ago on reading Yoshito S. Hakeda's book *Kūkai: Major Works* during my Master's studies at Columbia University. Recently two books have been published that I have found to be extremely useful: one by Fabio Rambelli titled *A Buddhist Theory of Semiotics: Signs, Ontology and Salvation in Japanese Esoteric Buddhism* and the second (already mentioned) by Shingen Takagi and Thomas Eijō Dreitlein titled *Kūkai on the Philosophy of Language*. It is not by accident that both these

more recent works focus on Kūkai and his notions of sound, letter and meaning, for it is precisely in these areas that Kūkai made his far-reaching innovations to traditional esoteric modalities of Buddhist thought. While Esoteric Buddhism claims that their teachings come directly from the cosmic Buddha (Mahāvairocana) her/himself and not the historical buddha (Shakyamuni Gotama), Kūkai went as far as to claim that consciousness (mind) itself is a universal property inherent in the cosmos. In addition, this cosmic mind is continuously ‘speaking’ the extralinguistic preaching of the Dharmakāya.

According to Kūkai’s doctrine known as *hosshin seppō*, “the cosmic Buddha as *dharmakāya* is engaged in an endless and universal semiotic activity; each single thing in the universe is part of this ongoing self-referential and cosmic speech act called “preaching by the *dharmakāya*” (Rambelli 8). As such, and in this “pansemiotic vision” each linguistic unit (Sanskrit syllable) is a minimal mandala that enables direct communication with the absolute because these Sanskrit syllables (mantra/mandala) share enlightened awareness (Ibid). This cosmic speech is done for pure pleasure in an act of pleasurable self-awareness. Enlightenment under these conditions is not so much a mystical experience as it is cognitive state wherein one realizes an understanding of the language of absolute meaning. The practice of Shingon, as formulated by Kūkai, accounts for a modality of training through body, speech and mind that allows certain human beings who have become accomplished in Shingon practice to recognize their existence in an identification with the deity Dainichi (Mahāvairocana) who is at one with the Dharmakāya. Through this identification (yoga), Shingon practitioners realize the powers this absolute entity provides for both salvation and worldly benefits through the contemplation and articulation of mantra and mandala in ritual settings.


Kūkai’s Thought: Consciousness (Mind) as One of Six Elements

In his work *Sokushin jōbutsu Gi* (*Buddhanood Immediately and in This Body*) Kūkai makes an effort to include consciousness among the 6 elements when he writes:

The *bija*-mantras [of the six great elements are: *a vi ra hūm kham hūm*. The letter *a* means that fundamentally no dharmas arise [*ādyanutpāda*], and is the earth element. The letter *va* [contained in the letter *vi*] transcends speech (*vāc*), and is the water element. Purity without stain or blemish (*rajas*) is the letter *ra*, the fire element. The ungraspability of cause (*hetu*) is the gate of the letter *ha* [contained in the letter *hūm*], the wind element. Identity with empty space is the gate of the letter *kham* and the form of this letter is the element of space. “I awaken to” refers to the element of consciousness. (Takagi and Dreitlein 40)

The Buddhas themselves have “awakened” and it is within our power to share in this enlightened state as this enlightened state is in the natural order of

things. Below (see fig. 1) is a visualization I have created for Kûkai's text as quoted above.



a	earth	yellow	square
bi/vi/va	water	white	Circle
ra	fire	red	Triangle
un/ha	wind	black	Crescent: Semi-circle
ken/kha	space	all colors: blue/ green	Sphere: Jewel
hûm	consciousness		"I awaken"

Fig. 1: Six elements.

According to Kûkai, the cosmos (Dharmakayâ) is constituted by the six elements (earth, water, fire, wind, space and mind/consciousness) and these elements are in a state of unity (yoga). We too, as human beings, are constituted by these elements and as such are fully interpenetrated with cosmic forces including cosmic 'mind'. These forces constitute us and we are they. This is Kûkai's reality. Realizing this fundamental state of truth is what accounts for Shingon practice – an “awakening” to the “mind” of what is already a part of our being, and indeed, is a part of all beings, and of all worlds, at all times.

When visiting Mt. Kôya and as one walks the path to Kobo Daishi's tomb one can see hundreds, if not thousands, of stupas that encapsulate this teaching (see below Fig. 2).



Fig. 2: Sanskrit letters are visible on the stone face and indicate the corresponding element: from the bottom: square=earth/a, circle=water/bi/vi/ra, etc (see previous diagram). Consciousness itself is not represented as such but is actualized in the mind of both the Buddha and the beholder.

Given this state of affairs – that the cosmos is pansemiotic and is in a continuous process of articulating the ‘preaching’ of the Dharmakāya, it is reasonable to expect that Kūkai would be preoccupied with sound and with the nature of sound/vibration as well as how sounds articulate relations with particular deities and ultimately, with salvation. In accordance with the lineages Kūkai brought back from China, Kūkai conceives of each Buddhist deity as either a part of the Womb Mandala (re)presenting compassion and unfolding along the “y” axis of the conditioned, phenomenal world (as represented by the bell), or the Diamond Mandala (re)presenting wisdom and unfolding along the x axis of the unconditioned, noumenal world (as represented by the vajra). Each deity has a “bija” or a Sanskrit seed syllable that gives ‘voice’ to that deity’s state of enlightened existence. Below (see Fig. 3, 4 and 5) are three images of the Diamond Mandala, the first of the mandala itself, is followed by an image containing the names of the deities represented, and the third is an image showing the *bija* (Sanskrit seed syllable) for each deity.



Fig. 3, 4 and 5: Taken from Universe of Mandalas

Contemplating and articulating these seed syllables provides a 'gate' (*monji*) through which a human being can commune with a deity to experience that deity's enlightened awareness – a contemplation that calibrates our cellular energies with vibrational fields of enlightened modalities of existence. In what some have described as Kūkai's 'mantrification' or 'mandalization' of the cosmos, Kūkai calls attention to the inadequacies of ordinary language by claiming that signs (here specifically Sanskrit sounds and letters) are inscriptions of soteriological processes and that these signs must be symbolically assimilated, entered and absorbed via our own desires and our own energies to present us with true reality.

Kūkai's Thought: Aji-kan Meditation

Meditation on the letter *a* (pronounced 'ah') is a Shingon meditative practice that has been described at length elsewhere (see Yamasaki), but whose meaning is best appreciated in the context of Kūkai's overall profound experience and thought regarding the nature of the cosmos and the 'speech of suchness' (T&D 103). The Sanskrit letter *a* is the seed syllable for Dainichi Nyorai (Mahāvairocana Buddha) and therefore instantiates the fundamentally non-arising reality, neither male nor female, that provides us with an opportunity for inner mental continuity in an experience of the unity of our nature with the nature of existence and the nature of enlightened mind. Elsewhere Kūkai calls the letter "*a*" the "sound of origin" as well as the "meaning of non-arising" (T&D 136). On superficial level, English speakers will recognize the letter *a* as both the beginning of the English alphabet and as a means for elucidating the meaning of 'not' – as in 'atypical' or 'amorphous'. As such, we can perhaps begin understand to some degree why Kūkai calls *a* "the mother of all letters, the essence of all sounds, and the fountainhead of every aspect of reality" (130-131).

Furthermore, and according to Kūkai in *The Meanings of Sound, Letter and Reality*:

The root sound of the Sanskrit alphabet is the sound of the letter *a*. It is present in all sounds, from the moment of opening the mouth to speak. That is called *sound*. The sound of *a* calls the name of *a*, and reveals the name of the Dharmakāya. This is *sound* and *letter*. Dharmakāya has the meaning *a*. (92)

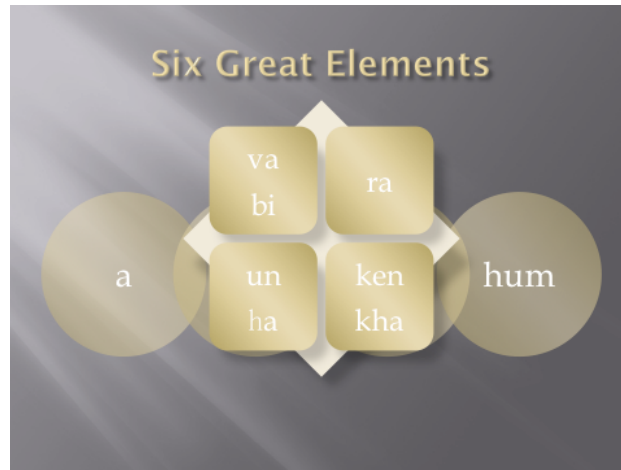


Fig. 6: Six great elements

From the above visualization that I have created, it is perhaps possible to envision one interpretation of what is contained in the absolute meaning of the (Sanskrit) letter *a*. The articulation of 'ah' begins with the mouth opening to

express the sound 'ah' – a sound that contains within it all the following five elements of the cosmos (earth/*a* water/*va*/*bi*, fire/*ra*, wind/*ha*/*un* and space/*kha*/*ken*). Finally, one closes one's mouth while iterating the last of the six elements to pronounce the sound of *hum*, meaning consciousness or mind. As *a* is the origin and nature of the cosmos, *a* (cosmos) is that which contains all the elements (earth, water, fire, wind space and mind) and is vibrationally imaged above as one sound that encompasses the articulated sounds of all six elements: *a-va-ra-ha-kha-hum*.

In Shingon practice, meditation using the Sanskrit letter *a* is widely practiced and uses some variation of the image as shown below (see Fig. 7):



Fig. 7: Sanskrit letter A

As you can see from the above (photo mine), the eight peaks surrounding Mt. Kôya are represented as the petals of a lotus. This meditation is closely proscribed and involves a visualization through which the letter *a* as presented above is contracted and assimilated into the heart/mind of the practitioner, then expanded into the cosmos and finally contracted once again, back into the image as found in the picture plane. For a more detailed explanation refer to Taiko Yamasaki in his text, *Shingon: Japanese Esoteric Buddhism*, pages 190-215.

Conclusion

The Sanskrit and Siddham writing systems are central to Kûkai's thought. In his thinking regarding the 'speech of suchness' Kûkai ultimately collapses the meaning of mantra and mandala into one sensory apprehension. While exoteric interpretation understands that sound, letter and reality are entities that can be understood separately, Kûkai bases his thinking in an esoteric

interpretation whereby sound, letter and reality are equated as one. This gestalt of awareness is no doubt grounded in Kūkai's own personal experience, an experience he systematized into a coherent epistemic system. Shingon practice seeks to ensure identification (yogic union) with ultimate reality through 1) meditative states (body), through 2) recitation of mantra (speech) and through 3) visualization of mantra in mandalic patterns (mind) so that one's own mental activity is identified with the mind of a deity, and one physically merges with the deity in an energetic state of enlightened awareness. In this way, one's body is a privileged site where breathing itself becomes a symbolic practice in sacred communion with universal sentience.

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Meditation in Modern Education: Outlining a Pilot Programme from Australia

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Introduction

From the beginning of Buddhist teachings, about two and a half millennia ago, meditation has been an integral component of the Buddhist soteriological path. In the numerous schools and traditions that evolved over the long history of Buddhism as it spread across Asia, the attention given to meditation seems to have varied; sometimes it was positioned very much at the centre and sometimes more at the background. However, it was approached always within the context of a larger Buddhist discourse. In the last century, because of the many historical parameters involved, namely colonisation and the more recent globalisation, a modern Buddhism has evolved in the West. This has positioned meditation at the forefront. Mindfulness has become one of the most prominent meditation methods. Since the 1970s, it has been increasingly secularised and applied in a range of new settings, largely with psychotherapeutic and “wellness” foci. In this transplantation process, mindfulness has been, probably for the first time in the history of Buddhism, abstracted from its Buddhist context; consequently, new issues have arisen in respect to its conceptualisation and practice.

In this article, the conceptualisation of Buddhist meditation and its ethical foundations are briefly presented and then the main concerns related to the recent secularisation of mindfulness are delineated. Aiming to address these concerns, in 2013 in Australia, the author designed a new programme of teaching meditation in high schools. This article outlines the broad theoretical

foundations of this programme, which is informed by Buddhist teachings, which draws from and is structurally based upon traditional Buddhist practices of mindfulness, concentration, wisdom, loving kindness, and compassion, with a strong emphasis on the cultivation of ethical values and behaviour. To evaluate the efficacy of this programme, a pilot research project was conducted in 2014 in an Australian high school. This article presents the main outcomes and delineates the major themes emerging. Lastly the article discusses how this pilot research indicated some directions for the integration of meditation programmes into educational systems in culturally appropriate ways. In this context, the article suggests that countries, such as Bhutan, may significantly contribute to introducing meditation into schools by drawing from Buddhism's vast repository of meditation methods and related teachings, founded on the rich Vajrayāna tradition.

Buddhist Meditation and Ethics

As discussed elsewhere,¹ meditation is deeply ingrained within Buddhist soteriological structures, as exemplified by the eightfold path, where meditation (comprised of right effort, right concentration and right mindfulness) is innately correlated with, and linked to, the other two components, i.e., wisdom (comprising right understanding and right thought) and morality or ethics (i.e., right speech, right action and right livelihood). The term rendered in English as “mindfulness” (Pāli *sati*, Sanskrit *smṛti*, and Tibetan *dran pa*) occurs in Buddhist texts in a range of meanings, from “memory, recollection” to “wakefulness, alertness.”² The term “mindfulness” most frequently refers to meditative attention, non-forgetfulness, wakefulness or presence; usually linked to clear understanding and ethical awareness; thus, according to the textual evidence in the Pāli canon, it functions as an ethical guardian.³ In Buddhist teachings, mindfulness is positioned within the broader context of the Buddhist soteriological goals: as one of the components of the Buddhist path, it is called “right mindfulness” (Pāli *sammā sati*, Sanskrit *samyak-smṛti*, Tibetan *yañ dag pa'i dran pa*), indicating that it is appropriate or “right” for development of wisdom and other factors on the path to liberation. For example, one of the most frequently referred to discourses—the text on the presence or foundation of mindfulness (Pāli *Satipaṭṭhānasutta*, Sanskrit *Smṛtyupasthānasūtra*), prescribes or describes that mindfulness is to be

¹ For a comprehensive discussion of Buddhist perspectives on mindfulness within different models of Buddhist teachings, with a special focus on the Theravāda, see Ditrich, 2016b.

² A broad overview of this term in different Buddhist textual traditions and contexts is given in Gyatso, 1992.

³ E.g., *Dhammasaṅgaṇi* (Müller, 2001, pp. 11, 16); *Visuddhimagga* (Rhys Davids, 1975, p. 464).

practised in conjunction with diligence;⁴ clear comprehension;⁵ and absence of desire and ill-will concerning the world.⁶ Right mindfulness is thus presented with several other mental qualities that are to be cultivated in meditative training, aiming to develop wisdom and result in liberation from suffering. Buddhist teachings intrinsically link right mindfulness to ethics, presuming that the absence of clinging, desire and ill-will preconditions ethical speech and actions. In ancient Buddhist languages, such as Pāli and Sanskrit, there are no equivalent terms for the categories ethics and morality, as understood in Western philosophy (Keown, 1992, pp. 2–3). Instead the concept of virtue (Pāli *sīla*, Sanskrit *śīla*)—wholesome, skilful speech and actions—is underpinned by the notion of wholesomeness or skilfulness (Pāli *kusala*, Sanskrit *kuśala*).⁷ This means that moral speech and actions are grounded in wholesome mental states or, in the language of the Theravāda *Abhidhamma*, accompanied by wholesome mental concomitants (*cetasika*), such as peace, kindness, compassion and wisdom.⁸ Wisdom (Pāli *paññā*, Sanskrit *prajñā*) is posited as one of the fundamental conditions for liberation from suffering; being represented as an understanding of impermanence, non-satisfactoriness and absence of any intrinsic permanent self or, in other words, as an insight into the empty nature of all phenomena.⁹ Thus, meditation, which encompasses right mindfulness, is firmly embedded in Buddhist discourse, fundamentally (and apparently inextricably) linked to ethical training and wisdom.

Secularisation and Popularisation of Mindfulness

Over centuries, with the spread of Buddhism across Asia, new approaches and methods of meditation evolved in various cultural contexts and historical periods. However, they seem to have remained within the larger framework of Buddhist soteriological teachings. The most radical changes in approaches to

⁴ Diligence or sustained effort (P *ātappa*, Skt *ātapa*) is explained as the energy needed to extinguish negative mental states or defilements (*kilesa*), such as greed or anger; cf. *Papañcasūdanī* (Woods, Kośambi, and Horner, 1976, 244).

⁵ Clear comprehension (P. *sampajañña*, S. *samprajñāna*. T. *shes bzhin*) is explained as an understanding of how to cultivate wholesome and skillful qualities and abandon harmful or unwholesome ones; cf. *Visuddhimagga* (Morris and Hardy, 1999, p. 13); *Dhammasaṅgaṇi* (Müller, 2001, p. 16).

⁶ In the *Satipaṭṭhānasutta* (*Majjhimanikāya*, Treckner and Chalmers, 2013, p. 56); *Dīghanikāya*, Rhys Davids, and Carpenter, 1995, p. 290) it is defined as: *ātāpī sampajāno satimā vineyya loke abhijjhādomanassaṃ*. Similarly in the *Arthaviniścayasūtra* (13): *ātāpī samprajānan smṛtimān vinīya loke abhidhyādaurmanasye* (Samtani, 1971).

⁷ Ditrich, forthcoming.

⁸ Bodhi, 1993, p. 79.

⁹ *Dhammasaṅgaṇi* (Müller, 2001, p. 11); *Majjhimanikāya* (Treckner and Chalmers, 2013, pp. 46–55); *Visuddhimagga* (Rhys Davids, 1975, pp. 436–437).

meditation, and mindfulness would appear to have occurred in the last decades when mindfulness became completely secularised and widely popularised across the Western world. These changes have their historical roots in the birth of “modern” Buddhism in the late-nineteenth-century (Lopez, 2002), which evolved as a response to the colonisation of Asia and the encounters between Buddhist traditions and European paradigms. Both Western and Asian Buddhists reinvented modern Buddhism aiming to present Buddhism as a world religion and a philosophical system compatible with European ideas of the time.¹⁰

In terms of Buddhist meditation, particular historical developments during the colonial period in Burma (Myanmar) greatly contributed to novel representations or adaptations of Buddhism. To popularise meditation among lay people, mindfulness was singled out as one of the most important Buddhist practices for them to be practised in everyday life.¹¹ Consequently, methods of instruction and approaches had to be simplified. For example, the time dedicated to formal meditation practice was significantly reduced. Thus repositioned and, to some extent reinterpreted, mindfulness meditation started to spread in Burma and other Asian countries and, since the 1970s onwards, across the world. In the West, mindfulness practice started to be increasingly viewed as training in attention with a largely therapeutic focus, thus gradually leading to its secularisation.

The introduction of the “Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction” programme (MBSR) in the late 1970s, developed by Kabat-Zinn, has had a great impact on advancing the secularisation of mindfulness. This eight-week programme, drawing to a large extent from the modern Burmese methods of meditation, developed and refined during the twentieth-century. It has been adapted and incorporated into various kinds of psychotherapy, addressing a range of psychological disorders.¹² It has also been implemented in many other contexts, such as schools, workplace, wellness industries, focusing mainly on stress reduction and enhanced wellbeing. In this process of the secularisation and expansion of mindfulness, it has been presented in new ways, typically defined as a practise of “paying attention on purpose, in the present moment,

¹⁰ Several modern scholars have explored the phenomenon of modern Buddhism, e.g., McMahan, 2008; Lopez, 2002; Sharf, 1995.

¹¹ Interpretations of mindfulness from a historical perspective are discussed in Ditrich, 2016a; for a comprehensive and exemplary study on the emergence of modern Buddhism in Burma, see Braun, 2013.

¹² For example, Mindfulness Based Cognitive Therapy (MBCT), which was developed as an intervention for prevention of depression relapse (Segal, Williams and Teasdale, 2002); Dialectical Behaviour Therapy (DBT) (Lineham, 1993), Acceptance and Commitment Therapy (ACT) (Hayes, Strosahl, and Wilson, 1999). For a review, see Germer et al., 2016.

and nonjudgmentally to the unfolding of experience moment to moment” (Kabat-Zinn, 2003, p. 145).

Although secular and Buddhist interpretations of mindfulness share one major aim, i.e., the alleviation of suffering, there are also several distinctions between the two approaches.¹³ Firstly, as briefly outlined above, in Buddhist contexts right mindfulness is practiced in conjunction with other components of meditative and ethical training and hence is not presented as “non-judgemental attention” but rather the cultivation of wholesome or skilful mental states and consequent ethical responses to lived experience. Buddhist meditation is underpinned by an ethical structure founded on the notion of wholesomeness; this axiomatic distinction sharply separates the traditional approach from secular interpretations of mindfulness, in which ethical considerations have been largely shifted to the background (McCown, 2013; Purser and Millilo, 2015; Monteiro, Musten and Compson, 2015). Secondly, secular interpretations largely view mindfulness as a method for the enhancement of wellbeing in worldly life, whereas Buddhist meditation (traditionally largely a monastic practice, as it seems) aims towards a deep existential transformation, achieved through insight into the empty nature of all phenomena and events, built on the foundational assumption that complete liberation from suffering is possible. Thirdly, the two conceptualisations of mindfulness differ in their understanding of a “self”: from the Buddhist perspective, an understanding of the intrinsic emptiness of any self is viewed as axiomatic for the path leading towards freedom from delusion and suffering, whereas to the Western perspective (and the psychotherapeutic in particular), the operationalisation of mindfulness primarily aims towards the development of a stable self or a healthy identity, with well-defined self-boundaries. These differences in the fundamental conceptualisation of mindfulness have concomitant implications for the processes involved in the meditation practice itself, its perceived goals and outcomes, as well as for the methodological approaches applied in modern research of mindfulness. Without understanding the different foundational paradigms of the two approaches, it is not possible to fully appreciate the disjuncture now becoming apparent in approaches to mindfulness.

With the rapid growth of applications of mindfulness in various environments, research into its efficacy has been expanding, most extensively in psychology and related fields.¹⁴ Numerous studies indicate that mindfulness promotes mental and physical health (Khoury et al., 2013) to be moderately effective (Vibe et al., 2012). Since research into mindfulness is still nascent, many methodological concerns require scholarly attention (Sedlmeier et al., 2012;

¹³ For discussion on distinctions between traditional Buddhist and modern secular representations of mindfulness, see Ditrich, forthcoming.

¹⁴ A brief overview of current research on mindfulness is given in Ditrich, forthcoming.

Thomas and Cohen, 2014). Currently, quantitative research methods prevail, e.g., measuring the efficacy of mindfulness through self-report questionnaires; such studies, mostly conducted in a theoretical (or at the very least under theorised) manner (Sedlmeier et al., 2012), focus more on the question of whether mindfulness works or not, rather than how it works. Qualitative approaches, although often recommended (Grossman and Van Dam, 2013, p. 235), are rare and the outcomes from it do not seem to be significantly different from those of quantitative research (e.g., Ames et al., 2014; Sibinga et al., 2014). More recently, scientific interest in meditation has been growing in neuroscience (e.g., Davidson et al., 2003) and new theoretical models have been proposed (Lutz et al., 2015). However, scarce attention has been paid to the question of how the proposed scientific theories may relate to and be informed by Buddhist traditions; the source traditions may well provide useful correctives or elucidations, simply because the Buddhist model provides a unique and well-structured holistic presentation of mindfulness, embedded within elaborated (Buddhist) theoretical models and the practice of meditation and ethics.

Introducing Meditation in Schools: A Twelve-week Programme for High Schools in Australia

Following the expansion of mindfulness programmes for adults in a variety of settings, mindfulness interventions have also been introduced to younger people with age appropriate modifications (e.g., MBSR-T programme for adolescents was developed on the model of MBSR). Such programmes are mostly taught outside schools or in school after-hours, usually conducted within a rather short period, between six to twelve weeks or, more rarely, incorporated into the daily school curriculum.¹⁵ Typically, the main goals of these programmes include stress reduction, increased attention, emotional balance, and improved academic achievements, as indicated by several research studies (Kuyken et al., 2013; Black, 2015; Schonert-Reichl and Roeser, 2016, pp. 3-4). However, these studies do not explore or focus on the deeper causes and conditions for stress and suffering in educational as well as broader societal settings. It may be questioned here whether Buddhist teachings, which are the source of the practice of mindfulness, can inform and contribute to current mindfulness programmes in education, especially with Buddhism's holistic approach to a penetrating investigation of human consciousness and its underlying conditions. This is intrinsically linked to cultivation of ethics, meditation and wisdom. To address this question, a new meditation training programme for schools was designed in Australia, in 2013, aiming to incorporate some of the fundamental premises of Buddhist teachings.

¹⁵ For example, MindUP (Maloney et al., 2016) and Inner Kids (Galla, Kaiser-Greenland, and Black, 2016).

The programme was structurally based on and followed a design—initially developed by the author as a postgraduate course about meditation—focusing equally on the theory and the practice of mindfulness, delivered to students at post-graduate level. This design was modified to be age-appropriate and adjusted for high school students by an experienced high school teacher (Catherine Ramos), who then developed weekly lessons and other teaching materials before she taught the programme in several high schools in Australia. Participation was entirely on a voluntary basis; the programme was delivered within school hours, over a period of twelve weeks. In 2014 the programme documentation was translated into Slovene, with some modifications, and delivered in two high schools in Slovenia. In addition, in 2014, two pilot research projects were conducted, in Australia and Slovenia respectively, aiming to evaluate the programme and determine any modifications required as well as to suggest future directions.¹⁶

The programme was designed for senior high school students (aged between 16 and 17), delivered in four high schools in New South Wales, Australia, between 2013 and 2015. It comprised of twelve one-hour weekly lessons; within each lesson half of the time was dedicated to theory and half to actual practice. In addition, students were regularly given handouts and pre-recorded guided daily meditations. They were also encouraged to practice meditation daily, and regularly contacted through Facebook as a means of follow-up and encouragement.

By design, the theoretical component (half of the lesson time) was regarded as a vital component of the entire programme: the presentations and discussions about meditation and related topics, such as ethics, identity, and relationships, explored from various perspectives (including Buddhist), were also selected to be particularly appropriate for the concerns of senior high school students. Several objectives instigated the formation of the theoretical part of the programme. Firstly, the main aim was to inform students about just what meditations (and mindfulness) are, how it is conceptualised and practised in its original Buddhist frameworks, and how it is understood and modified in the new modern secular contexts. In this way, students had access to a wider range of information about meditation and could reflect upon some of the facets of the two different discourses and views about life, namely the Buddhist and the modern Western.

Secondly, the programme introduced basic meditation terminology, largely drawing from Buddhist sources, informing them that meditative traditions such as those of Buddhism have a rich and precise conceptualisation (and

¹⁶ A study on the efficacy of this programme is currently under preparation for publication; here only the structure of the programme and some preliminary findings are outlined.

therefore vocabulary) for describing human consciousness and psychology and its many components, for which there are currently no equivalents in modern European languages, such as English.¹⁷ One of the underlying intentions of the theoretical component of the programme was to provide students with a conceptual context for reflection and contemplation. This would serve as a background for their individual informed investigation, through employing practical methods, of the processes of the mind and body, and the role of ethics, compassion, (non) self, and emptiness in relation to these processes. For example, the questions investigated included the possible links between human suffering and (un) ethical conduct, the relationship between humans and other species, especially in the light of the question of a separate “identity.” Thirdly, the aim of the programme was to familiarise students with various forms of meditation practice and skills, focusing on mindfulness, concentration, loving kindness and compassion, to introduce meditation as a potential life skill in a way that is relevant to a particular age-group and cultural context. At all times the students were encouraged to form their own opinions about the utility of the methods presented for their purposes. Thus, the programme was primarily intended to serve as an introduction to meditation skills and meditation itself within a broader theoretical context.

The practical component of the programme was of equal importance: it specifically aimed at introducing meditation skills, which the students could practice in their current environment or could return to later in life. As mentioned above, the practical component was about half of the time allocated for each one hour session. The programme focused each week on a particular area of mindfulness meditation, introducing a specific method and outlining the theory behind it to provide a conceptual framework for students to understand and engage with the meditation, i.e., the techniques were not presented uncritically, but embedded in a rational and coherent conceptual structure. The different areas of, and approaches to, mindfulness that were gradually introduced, followed roughly the structure of the well-known discourse on mindfulness, the Pāli *Satipaṭṭhānasutta* (Sanskrit *Smṛtyupasthānasūtra*). This discourse was selected as a foundation for the design of the programme because of its significant role, especially in modern Buddhism, being regarded as the root text for mindfulness. It is still reflected—to some degree at least—in various secularised models of mindfulness teaching. The *Satipaṭṭhānasutta* describes meditation practice in four main areas: mindfulness of the body, feelings, mind, and mental states.¹⁸

¹⁷ For example, the term *dharma* has no equivalent in English (Warder, 1971, p. 272); in Buddhist discourse it has a very wide semantic spectrum, which could be, at least to some extent, grasped through gradual familiarisation with the term in different nuances and contexts and, perhaps, gradually adopted into English vocabulary.

¹⁸ For a comprehensive study of the *Satipaṭṭhānasutta*, see Anālayo, 2010.

In this programme, mindfulness of the body was introduced first, focusing on the following areas: breathing (as a sitting meditation as well as in everyday life); four postures and movement (particularly walking meditation); and daily activities. Later in the programme, other areas of mindfulness were introduced, namely, the practice of mindfulness of bodily sensations, of the mind and of thoughts. Students were encouraged to reflect upon and contemplate the links between thoughts, speech and actions. Towards the end of the programme, mindfulness of mental states was discussed and practiced, focusing on observation of the senses and their objects, the five hindrances of Buddhist traditions (i.e. desire, aversion, dullness and torpor, restlessness and worry, confusion), the impermanence of all phenomena, and the perceptions of “self.” Different meditation techniques were gradually introduced and integrated into the programme over the weeks. In addition, loving-kindness meditation was introduced at an early stage and practiced throughout the course, aiming to enhance the presence of wholesome and correspondingly skilful mental states. Participants were encouraged not only to observe but also to investigate their experience of the mind and body, reflect upon these and not accept anything in the programme without testing it themselves, through their own lived experience.

To summarise, the practical component of the programme was based on what the author views as a version of traditional Buddhist approaches to meditation, with a strong emphasis on the exploration of ethical issues, compassion and kindness. A major goal was presenting meditation practice in a way relevant for the particular students’ ages and cultural milieu. The ongoing, informal student responses and feedback were generally positive. However, a small pilot research project was nevertheless designed, aiming at a better understanding of student experiences and an informed evaluation of the programme.

Pilot Research on the Efficacy of the Twelve-week Meditation Programme

For the research and evaluation of this twelve-week meditation programme, a qualitative method was chosen. As mentioned earlier, studies on the efficacy of mindfulness training for young people mainly employ quantitative methods (e.g. Kuyken *et al.*, 2013), whereas qualitative studies are rare, though often recommended by researchers since they may reveal the experiences of meditators during mindfulness training (Grossman, 2011; Schonert-Reichl and Roeser, 2016, pp. 12-14). A qualitative approach was chosen for this pilot research primarily to obtain comprehensive in-depth feedback on the structure, content and effectiveness of the programme based on the evaluation received, to modify and improve it accordingly. In addition, given the small number of participants, a qualitative approach was deemed the most feasible, meaningful and appropriate. The research was conducted in 2014 in a high school in Australia, chosen because of previous engagement and interest in the

programme.¹⁹ Here the outline of the research project and its preliminary outcomes are presented briefly.

The research was conducted using semi-structured interviews, which served as the starting point for discussion. In the interviews the following main questions were pursued: how was meditation experienced by the participants; which meditation methods they found most useful or acceptable, in what circumstances and why; how the programme affected their experience of anxiety and stress; how the programme (i.e., theory and practice of meditation) may have affected their understanding of the mind and body; how students perceived the links between meditation, ethics and identity; and how meditation influenced their conflict resolution skills. Eight students (male and female) were interviewed, each of them four times; three interviews were conducted during the programme and a follow up interview two months later. Most interviews took at least one hour. Following the standard procedures for qualitative research, the interviews were recorded; transcribed, coded and the main categories identified.

In terms of general findings, all the students interviewed perceived meditation as a goal-oriented practice, primarily aiming to control stressful situations, either at school or at home. They also reported that meditation helped them to concentrate and focus on their study better, develop better self-discipline and increased calmness. Although the programme was not primarily designed or consciously presented as a remedial tool for stress or, even less so for the enhancement of academic performance in school, the students perceived meditation primarily as a method for stress reduction and improved academic success. This may reflect the increasing perception in broader Australian society, through the media and other sources, that meditation is primarily a remedial tool (or relaxation method) rather than a method for systematic inquiry into the nature of the mind, which was one of the intended main design aims of this programme.

Among the meditation methods taught, the students most frequently chose mindfulness of breathing and loving kindness to use in their everyday life, especially to bring about improvements in their relationships with their peers, family and teachers, and to avoid or resolve conflicts. Mindfulness was primarily viewed as a method to be applied when unpleasant mental states were experienced: usually they would turn to mindfulness of breathing when they felt stressed (e.g., before exams), whereas loving kindness was a preferred approach to resolving interpersonal conflicts. Students found loving-kindness meditation as one of their preferred methods: they viewed it as a calming and

¹⁹ In addition, a similar qualitative research on the outcomes of the twelve-week meditation programme, translated into Slovene, was conducted in a selective high school in Slovenia, and its outcomes published by Globevnik, 2015.

pleasant practise before sleep and as an emergency self-help, practised “privately” for a few moment or longer, to ease painful thoughts after a sudden, traumatic or stressful situation. It was predominantly practised around conflicts in various relationships, and not in connection to schoolwork.

Students did not respond well to and would seldom independently practice meditation methods with the focus on the body, such as the body scan, mindfulness of the body postures or walking; they were mostly preoccupied with their thoughts and emotions and surprisingly, found it difficult to pay attention to the body. They showed a moderate interest in the practice of mindfulness of the mind and mental states, however, some of them reported increased awareness of unskilful thoughts or mental states, which they tried to alleviate through focusing on mindfulness of breathing or loving kindness meditation. Initially they found the practice of observing thoughts and mental states disturbing, but as they became more aware of their thought processes by the end of the course, they found an increased ability to see the impermanence of mental processes and reported being able to let go of negative states.

All the students interviewed expressed motivation to continue with meditation because they had already experienced some benefits. Importantly, they viewed meditation as a type of empowerment; having acquired a skill or competency they could apply by themselves, rather than seeking external help.

Concluding Remarks and Recommendations

The twelve-week meditation course aimed—rather ambitiously—at developing a comprehensive programme that would help students to explore, through meditation and reflection, their experiences, and enable them to learn about different, historically informed, approaches to and understandings of life. This included an attempted exploration of Western and Buddhist perspectives, especially on the question of whether humans have the potential to achieve a deeper transformation and to alleviate, or even be liberated from suffering. The small pilot study revealed that students had a few occasional insights into impermanence and fluidity of what they perceived as a “self” or identity, and made some connections between meditation, ethical responses and suffering. However, by and large, they chose to meditate mostly when they experienced unpleasant mental states, signalling that they perceived meditation primarily as a remedial tool rather than a method of exploration. The study shows that, in accordance with the initial intention of the programme, namely the pursuit of contemplative education, informed by Buddhist teachings and practices and with meditation as the central component, the programme was worthwhile and brought about some immediate benefits (e.g., perceived reduction in stress, improved interpersonal relationships). Nonetheless, for a deeper contemplative exploration, a much longer period, dedicated to both the theory and practice of meditation, would be recommended, preferably spanning over years, and being well incorporated into the curriculum.

Students responded very favourably to the design of the programme, especially to the integration of theory and practice. This study showed that the presentation of, and discussion on, different theoretical models of meditation, such as the Buddhist and Western, was especially suitable and recommendable for senior high schools. The introduction of, and familiarisation with, a range of meditation methods and approaches (though mindfulness was the central one) was viewed as helpful, allowing students to choose a method or two (such as loving kindness or mindfulness of breath) that would be appropriate or suitable for their particular circumstance at the time. The study recommends meditation to be taught in small groups, and if possible, individually tailored, as would have been done in the traditional Buddhist settings. The preliminary findings from the implementation and study of the programme indicate that such meditation programmes can be put before students as a potential life skill, on a voluntary basis and, importantly, presented and contextualised in a meaningful and coherent way, applying a rich spectrum of textual, visual and other materials that are age-appropriate and culturally relevant. All students were interested in continuing with meditation in school and indicated a need for schools to provide a special time and quiet space for meditation. The implementation of and research into this programme also showed the need for developing teacher training programmes in meditation and better defined standards for such teachers, as has been underlined by several recent studies on mindfulness in education (e.g., Lantieri et al., 2016; Jennings, 2016).

This meditation programme, designed for and adapted to the high school environment in multicultural Australia, was accepted by students with great interest and enthusiasm. In a Buddhist country, such as Bhutan, it would be probably much easier in many respects to introduce meditation in schools, by tapping into the rich treasury of Vajrayāna Buddhism. Therefore, a few suggestions for, and reflections on, the potential for development of such a comprehensive programme for schools, focusing on meditation and cultivation of values, will be outlined below.

The theoretical component of such a programme could draw from Buddhist Vajrayāna teachings, by making them relevant to the students of the twenty-first century. For example, the teaching of interdependent origination, with a focus on the role of desires and clinging and its links to environment and ethics, could be presented in many ways: for senior students through philosophical discussions, and for more junior students through examples from stories and visual representations, which are a large component of the Vajrayāna cultural context. In the exploration of ethics, the ideal of the *bodhisattva* model could serve as a starting point, by linking its representations in Buddhist philosophy with everyday practice, such as contemplation on compassion and non-violence towards all beings. In addition, the rich repository of stories about Guru Rimpoche Padmasambhava could serve as a culturally significant example for teaching ethics and values, especially the narratives about how he subdued the local deities that were perceived as

inimical spirits of the Tibetan landscape: he transformed or converted them rather than killing them (as would be the case in mythologies of many other cultures and religions). These stories could be used as a foundation for a reflection on options in responding to the challenges of modern life, pointing the way to personal transformation, which meditation aims at in the first place. Such transformation or conversion of negative forces or mental states is a particularly valuable and relevant model for the present world, where destruction seems to be one of the prevalent responses, manifested inwardly as self-destructing ways of life, or outwardly as destructive behaviour, expressed through greed (excessive consumption) and violence in relation to other beings and environments. In addition, the links between emptiness or non-duality and the idea of identity or individuality could be explored through the question of whether human beings can live as separate individual units or rather exist through “inter-being” (a word coined by Thich Nhat Hanh), and how compassion and friendliness can stem from, and be linked to, the Buddhist notion of non-duality.

In terms of meditation practice, Vajrayāna Buddhism is a particularly rich repository of numerous methods, including the cultivation of loving-kindness practices (including that referred to in Tibetan as *gtong len*), development of compassion, mindfulness, visualisations, meditation on *maṇḍalas*, sounds, *mantras*, and movements, to name a few. A taste of appropriate but selected meditation methods could be introduced in schools, suitably adapted in a way to make them relevant for students of particular age and explained against the background of Buddhist teachings; for senior high school students, the fundamentals of Buddhist philosophy could be introduced, whereas for junior students, the meaning and significance of meditation could be presented through stories, visual imagery, art, games and movement. Drawing from the experience in implementing a meditation programme in Australia, it can be recommended that students are explicitly informed about the aims and background of meditation practices, about the similarities as well as profound differences between the Western and Buddhist, (particularly Vajrayāna) approaches to life, and that they learn, in a meaningful way, how wisdom, compassion, ethics and meditation are interlinked and very much relevant for our present world and its many challenges to be faced by young generations.

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The Alchemical Body: Nutritional Perspectives on Tantric Buddhist Practices

Elizabeth Lee

Traditionally, the terms *Rasayana* in Indian yoga, *Duk Den* in Tibetan tantric practices, Outer Pill in Chinese Daoism, all refer to the path or an alchemy of extracting life-sustaining essence as a special food for the practitioner in the process of purifying, strengthening and transforming their physical and pranic (energetic) bodies towards a *vidam* body. These foods are often derived from pure metals, especially mercury and gold. We can trace metals such as silver, copper, lead etc., from the ancient alchemy records. We learnt from history that most human bodies are not strong enough to digest and absorb these heavy metal foods.

Today, we seldom see these ancient alchemy traditions being practiced. Instead these ancient wisdoms have been incorporated into Ayurveda, Chinese medicine and Daoist medicine. However, a lot of these wisdoms are practiced in our everyday life unnoticed. For example, drinking water from gold, silver and copper containers not only provide the feeling of luxury but also serves an alchemy function because these metals are highest in electrical conductivities among the substances, and our body welcomes negative electro ions.



This article shares eight key concepts and knowledge that I have been practising, all of which were learnt from my great Indian, Chinese and Japanese teachers in the fields of Ayurveda, Chinese medicine and Daoist medicine.

1. Definition of the word ‘food’

Food here is defined as any nourishing substance that is taken into the body to sustain life, to provide energy, and to promote growth.

2. Food categories and channels to obtain a good quality food

a. Food for Mind – The Mind-Body Food

We obtain food of our mind or consciousness from within ourselves. We can transform the quality of the Mind-Body Food through the means of renunciations, contemplations, surrender to higher purposes, meditations, compassion and philosophical (dharma) studies.

b. Food for Life Force – The Pranic-Body Food

We obtain from within ourselves–prana flows inside our body from the universe–air, sunshine, moonlight, and energy emitted from the other planets.

We can upgrade and increase the quality and amount of the Pranic-Body Food through various channels such as:

- Breathing practices to improve air intake quality and quantity. It improves the ability of inner prana circulations.

- Staying with positive and virtuous people to increase positive and higher frequency energies.
- Staying with great spiritual masters and practitioners to increase higher frequency and purer energies.
- Meditating to enhance and improves pranic flows.
- Creating favourable environments to obtain good and abundant fresh air by staying with a house with bigger windows, spending more time outdoor in nature and by wearing natural material clothes (skin is a large part of our physical body that intakes air and expels waste).
- Obtaining good sunshine since light is the most efficient energies for us to absorb. It is the cheapest and the most abundant good resources of light on the planet earth. The best time for absorbing sunshine is two hours right after the sunrise and two hours right before the sunset.

c. Food for Physical Body – The Physical Body Food

Our physical body needs to take nutrition from outside of the body. We can improve the quality of our food by means of being,

- aware of the body needs.
- aware of food input in the mouth.
- aware of food applied on our skins and hairs (as form of shampoo, moisture, oils and lotions).
- aware of food inhaled through nostrils (as forms of smoke).

3. The three basic principles of food

Principle 1

Mind, Pranic and Physical bodies are interdependent on one other. Junk food makes Physical body ill, and ill Physical body creates ill emotions, which weakens the Pranic body. Poorly-fed Mind body weakens the Pranic body and eventually manifests as illness in the Physical body.

Principle 2

All wholesome foods are good for the physical body. However, not all good foods are suitable for us. Therefore, we need to be aware of our own body situation and choose the suitable food.

Principle 3

Any intake taken repeatedly will become a medicine to our three bodies and bring significant impact to the bodies. Therefore, eating a greater variety of foods is the easiest way to avoid the physical bodies imbalances due to diet preference. The only food that human need to intake repeatedly and constantly to his/her physical body is Water.

4. Ten basic guidelines for taking in Physical Body Food are:

- a. Eat less - always eat 70-80% full to avoid overworking the digestive system.
- b. Eat cooked food
 - Through correct method of cooking we can enjoy and take advantage of some properties in a particular food item while minimizing or eliminating other properties which is not suitable for our unique body situation.
 - Cooked food is easier for digestion.
 - Cooked food will kill most of the bacteria that stay inside or on the surface of the plant or meat so we can avoid food poisoning.

A raw food diet can maximize the intake of energy and nutrition from food item in most cases. This is not always the case as it is better to eat tomato, for example, by cooking since it is only suitable for very strong body. The food ingredients obtained is also very clean.

- a. c. Eat lukewarm
 - Our body temperature is between 36-37 degree centigrade, and eating cold food creates additional workload for the digestive system which may cause indigestion or difficulties in absorption, which in long term will speed up aging of the digestive system.
 - Hot food will cause damages to the teeth and gum, and speed up aging of the teeth, our first frontier of the digestion process.

d. Eat fresh – For example, according to Ayurveda milk must be consumed within 24 hours after production. Today many people get gastric reactions to milk if consumed 24 hours after production. Unclean environment of production site and improper packaging, transportation and storage of the milk through the whole supply chain system can further worsen the quality of milk. Today there are many voices in the western societies against the intake of animal milk. In these countries, almost all animal milks are produced far away from the consumers.

e. Eat food when in season – for example, taking tropical fruits like mangoes or berries in winter time is not a healthy choice since mother nature designed these fruits to be consumed in hot, wet and humid regions. Consuming these fruits in dry and cold season will antagonise the body.

f. Eat at the right time - eat when 90-100% hungry. Do not snack all day long or eat when over-hungry. Both will harm the digestive system.

g. Eat with right combination of food and drinks – do not antagonise the body which in the long-term will lead to severe diseases related to skin, blood, infertility or immunity.

h. Eat according to individual body needs.

i. Eat clean.

j. Eat with gratitude.

5. Why Not Meat?

According to legend, the great Tibetan Vajrayana master Tilopa could take fish alive and vomit the fish alive.

Therefore, if we become enlightened we can take a diet based on non-duality. There are few Vajrayāna practices that suggest that the intake of meat is necessary. The majority of practitioners can benefit more from a vegetarian-based diet.

Animal based food provide faster energy

Plant based food provide purer energy

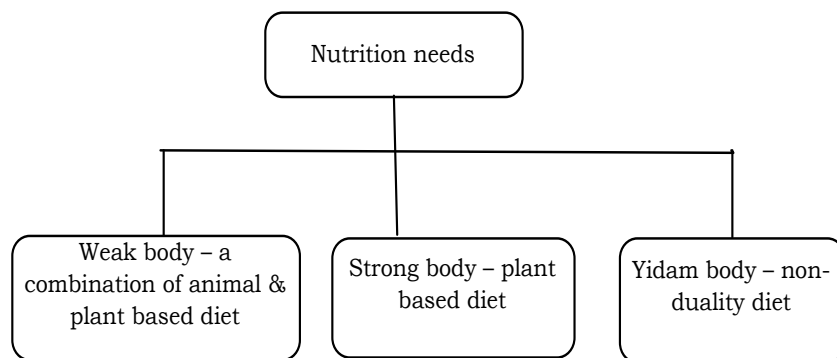
For example, shrimp feed on bacteria, faeces and dead bodies. Fish eat shrimp and human eats fish. Though both animal- and plant-based food may contain bad bacteria, meat consumers have higher chances of bacteria-poisoning.

Ancient alchemists proved that food provide purer energy which helps to open the chakras (energy centers in our pranic body) and lays the foundation to stronger inner recitation practices such as Kundalini or Tummo. Inner recitation practices generate great heat to burn off toxicities inside the body and speed up the transformation into a yidam body.



However, a pure plant-based consumer needs to have more knowledge of his/her food choice and eat more varieties to cover all the essential nutrition. A very weak body is at the risk of practising pure plant-based diet because the person requires an easy access to energy supply from the daily food intake. Such a body is not recommended to practise strong inner recitation practices.

It is therefore always most beneficial for the practitioner to practise consciousness and clear understanding of his/her own body conditions – both on food and their level of tantric practices.



6. The five problems

a. Food prepared without good energy:

- In Japan, it is very important that mother cooks and packs the food for the family members herself because mother possesses the most love for her husband and children.
- In eastern Bhutan, it is believed that there are “poison servers” who can poison others just by serving ordinary food.
- In general food prepared and served with loving kindness is good for digestion and absorption. Therefore, cook yourself or eat at home, which is always the best dining options.

b. Too much intake of chili or spicy food:

- Must be taken in moderation and not during every meal.
- Intake of proper quantity can help remove excess vata (winds) from body and stimulate our appetite.
- Overeating causes depletion of energy.
- Red chili stimulates/attacks stomach and lung systems.
- Green chili stimulates/attacks liver system.

c. Too much intake of six kinds of pungent vegetables - Garlic, Onion, Spring Onion, Shallot, Chives, Leeks:

- Smelly mouth skin faeces.
- Stimulates heart and brain too much and causes difficulties to concentrate at practices.
- When cooked they increase sexual desires.
- When raw they increase liver fire.

d. Processed food – white sugar, white salt, packaged and canned food:

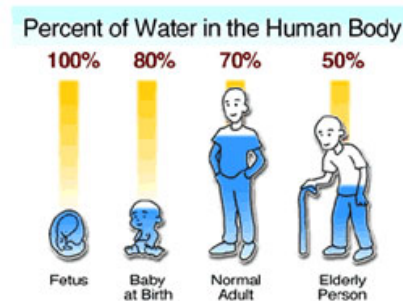
- Low or zero value in nutrition will only cause body to feel heavy and there are no benefits.

- The chemicals added and the mechanical process to produce these items already turned these items into chemicals and are no longer real food.
- White rice and white flour are real food but do not have much nutrition value due to over processing.

e. GMO (genetically modified organism) food

- There is no scientific proof telling us whether the GMO food is safe or not. However, mixing the animal DNA into vegetables implies that the energy absorbed from these foods are not so pure.

7. The single most important and basic food for Physical Body is: Water



Water is the most important food for our physical body. Therefore, we need to learn and practice a healthy water intake routine in our daily life. The best quality of water is “no-root water” which includes dew, rain and snow in a clean atmosphere and environment.

During a warm day, keep the room temperature water (23-30c) in a copper, silver or gold container over night or for the minimum of 10 minutes. Drink this water since it can help to intake more negative ions which helps to detox the free wandering positive ion radicals from the body.

Positive ions are usually carbon dioxide molecules that have been stripped off an electron. They have been demonstrated to have harmful effects to our physical body when exposed to them in excess. This is particularly the case with lungs, respiratory tract and immune system.

The best medicine for our physical body is good quality water taken efficiently.

8. Super Food

Super Food here is defined as, mild food which can be taken regularly (3-4 times a week), food that can bring special strong effect(s) to certain area(s) of the body, or can bring overall benefits to the health; and foods which are affordable and available.

Eight common Super Food:

1. Best grain – e.g., one harvest per year semi-polished round-grained red rice
2. Ginger
3. Medicine for all disease – pesticide-free tea leaves
4. King of full nutrition food – e.g., walnuts
5. Queen of full nutrition food – e.g., jujubes and other black and red dates
6. Brown gold – e.g., cinnamon
7. High concentration and full proteins food – e.g., eggs from non-GMO, free ranch, healthy fed hen and common quails
8. Oil/fat fit for all body types – free from non-GMO, healthy fed cows.

In conclusion, a proper view of tantric practitioners to use food to power up our bodies for practice is to be authentic to ourselves and be wise to constantly absorb necessary knowledge to take care of the body. We are the best and most qualified doctors for ourselves. And we know that death does not take our lies but our life.

Appendix 1 - Ten super food from Daoist and Chinese medicine systems



a. Mind Calming Treasure – Poria 茯苓



b. Top Longevity Treasure - Reishi mushrooms 靈芝



c. Essence of samsara – goggie 枸杞



d. Detox and antioxidant king in vegetables - Chinese cabbage



e. Detox queen – Job'd tears 薏仁 (Do not mistake I for pearl barley)



f. Key medicines to a weak body - Chinese Yarn 山藥



g. Food from thousand years old tree - Ginko seeds 白果



h. Hormone balance king - Huangjing 黄精



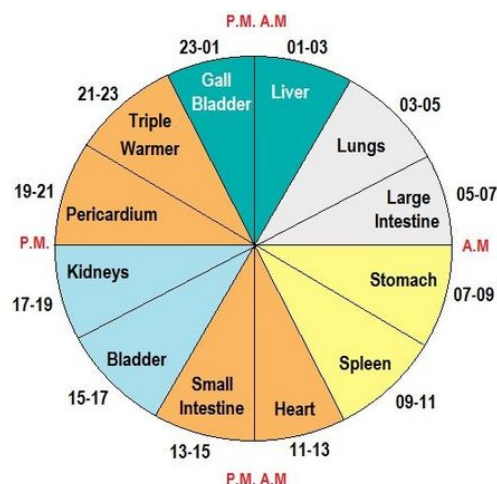
i. Hormone balance queen - Lily buds 百合花



j. Lotus family - seeds, core of seeds, root, leaves, flower

Appendix 2 - Chinese Human Body Meridian System

Daily energy flow in body according to time of passing organs



Note:

- Liver meridian most active 1-3 am, it is the best time to sleep so the liver system can detox blood more efficiently.
- Lung meridian most active during 3-5 am, it is the best time to practice breathing to absorb air.
- 5-7 am is the best time for defecation
- 7-11 am is the best time for digestion of heavier food

Appendix 3 - Food strengthen Body Chakras

According to the Tibetan Vajrayana, 5-Chakra System Monthly energy flows (lung) in the body according to dates of passing chakras.

		(Black month)		
Upward	Sacral	kidneys, bladders, sex organs, adrenal gland	Black, Purple	3 rd - 3 rd
Upward	Solar Plexus	spleen, stomachs, pancreas, livers, gallbladder, pancreas gland	Yellow, Green	4 th - 6 th
Upward	Heart	heart, small intestines, thymus gland	Red	7 th - 9 th

Upward	Throat	lungs, large intestines, thyroid gland	White	10 th – 12 th
Upward	3 rd eye	autonomic nervous system, pituitary gland		13 th – 15 th
		(White month)		
Downward	3 rd eye	autonomic nervous system, pituitary gland		16 th – 18 th
Downward	Throat	lungs, large intestines, thyroid gland	White	19 th – 21 th
Downward	Heart	heart, small intestines, thymus gland	Red	22 nd – 24 th
Downward	Solar Plexus	spleen, stomachs, pancreas, livers, gallbladder, pancreas gland	Yellow, Green	25 th – 27 th
Downward	Sacral	kidneys, bladders, sex organs, adrenal gland	Black, Purple	28 th – 31 th

The Five Dhyani Mudra in the Visual Arts of Vajrayāna Buddhism

Nilima Sikhrakar

Abstract

Mudras refer to sacred hand gestures as well as to female tantric deities that are paired with Buddhas and Bodhisattvas in Vajrayāna Buddhist art and ritual from the 10th century onward. This development has led to the five principal meditation deities of Vairocana, Aksobhya Ratnasambhava, Amitabha, and Amoghasiddhi being coupled with their corresponding mudras; Dharmachakra, Bhūmisparsa, Varada, Dhyana and Abhaya each representing qualities of enlightenment. This paper will explore the ways in which the rich existential symbolism of the Five Dhyani Mudras has influenced the modern and contemporary Asian art, in particular the works of Marcel Duchamp, Bill Viola, Gonkar Gyatso, Ang Tsering Sherpa, Arpana Caur, Zhang Huan and Nilima Sikhrakar. The paper will further address the inner symbolism of the Dhyani Mudras and their potential applications with visual art therapy.

Chapter 1: Introduction on Mudra

Mudra is a non-verbal communication, a mystic sign and a symbolic hand gesture seen along with the body posture. Origin of Mudras can be traced back to Hinduism, Buddhism, Christianity and Jainism. Mudra has been depicted in many iconographic arts and in sacred ritual practices, having its own significant and symbolic meaning.

"Etymologically, Mudra means that which bestows (ra) bliss (mud), that is, the realisation of one's own nature and, through the body, that of the (universal) self" (Sudhi, 1988, pp.57). "The roots in Sanskrit are "Mud" and "Dru". Mud means delight or pleasure, and Dru means to draw forth" (Dunn, 2013, pp. 2).

"Mudra is a method of citta-bhavana, or cultivating a specific state of mind" (Mcgonigal, 2008, pp.6). Researchers have concluded that the Mudras act directly on the brain and mind. Mudra helps us to synthesize the two sides of our brain by acting directly on the nervous system. Hence, Mudras are mystic signs made by the particular position of hand and fingers, which plays a vital role in esoteric Buddhism. Some of the Mudras can be shown in one hand such as Abhaya, Varada, Gyan, etc. while the others require both the hands such as Anjali, Dharmachakra, etc (Sudhi, 1988, p. 54, 55, 68).

The two hands represent the mandalas of the two worlds, the womb world and the diamond world. The two hands joined are also believed to represent the union of the world of Beings (left hand) and the world of the Buddha (right hand) (McArthur, 2004, pp.117).

References of Mudras in Tantric Buddhism can be found in Gherand Samhiti and Guhyasamaja Tantra (also known as a Secret Conclave). According to the Gherand Samhiti and the Vajrayāna Tantra, mudras are capable of bestowing great power and psychic abilities called "Siddhies". Hence, the monks practice mudras which symbolize forces or divine manifestation in their meditation. Mudras are considered to create forces and to invoke the deity. They are used routinely by the monks in their ritual practices of worship, incantation and concentration (Moharana, 2001, pp. 6, 7, & 9).

Mudra is also used as a sakti (cosmic woman - symbol), with whom the male symbol (guru) or Bodhisattva will unite during cakra puja (Lysebeth, 2001, p.275).

The mid-7th Century C.E. Mahavairocana-sutra, chapter IX makes note of over hundred and thirty separate mudras: thirty-one for the Great Buddhas, fifty-seven for the great deities, and forty-five for others. In Chapter XIV it is indicated that the nine esoteric mudras correspond to the five Buddhas of Wisdom (Dhyani) and to their four great acolytes (Frederic, 1995, pp.40).

According to Fredrick W. Bunce (2005), in "Mudras in Buddhist and Hindu Practices" states seven hundred and fifteen mudras including hasta (dance) mudras, Buddhist mudras and Hindu mudras. But, Fredrick has also mentioned that compilation of these mudras may be an error and invites any correction or addition. In addition, Fredrick has also mentioned that there are 40 mudras established during the reign of Rama III as being acceptable for the depiction of images of The Lord Buddha (p. Intro: xxix).

In meditation, Mudra is used for awakening of the chakra for spiritual benefits. In dance, it is used for the expression of particular emotions or situation. In Ayurveda and yoga, mudras have been used for therapeutic purposes. (Hirschi, 2000, p. 31). Hence, Mudra is used for the balancing of five elements inside of the body for physical and spiritual benefits. Five fingers have characteristic of five elements and each of these five elements serves a specific and important function within the body.

The five fingers of the hands representing five elements are as follows:

1. The Thumb symbolises the Fire
2. The Forefinger symbolises the Wind
3. The Middle Finger symbolises the Ether
4. The Ring Finger symbolises the Earth
5. The Little or small Finger symbolises the Water (Rao, p. 16, 19, 28 & 29)

Colors in Mudra

Colors influence our mind and our lives on every level. In color therapy, various shades of colors are specifically applied to regenerate the organs and glands, as well as to activate the processes of elimination, respiration, and circulation. Colors also influence our moods and every type of mental activity. Basically, there are no bad colors; in every aura has its own color in our energy body. While practicing mudra one should visualize a color or concentrate on the color of an object (Hirschi, 2000, p. 18, 19).

Classification of Mudras in Buddhist Art

The traditional classification in Buddhist art recognizes two categories of Mudras:

1. Formless – without accessories such as characteristic ritual implements or symbols
2. With Forms – with accessories

Formless Mudras are further divided into three classes:

1. Mudras of the Great Buddhas
2. Mudras used chiefly by minor deities and Bodhisattva
3. Mudra of the wrathful forces (Frederic, 1995, p. 39, 40)

Five Dhyani Mudra

The theory of five Dhyani Buddha was first time introduced in The Guhyasamaja Tantra (Moharana, 2001, p. 8).

It emerged along with the idea of Vajrasattva in Vajrayāna, the sub-sect of Mahayana Buddhism. Vajrayāna literally means “adamantine path or vehicle”, but technically means “Sunya Vehicle”, where sunya is used in a special sense to represent vajra. The Vajrasattva was regarded as the primal enlightened one, also known as the Adi – Buddha (Moharana, 2001, pp. 31).

The Guhyasamaja Tantra gives instruction for attaining salvation as well as taught to satisfy the popular needs by prescribing a number of mantra (Charm), mudra (mystic signs), mandala (circles of deities), and so forth, and by showing the way of attaining success in all normal human activities, including victory over rivals by miraculous means (Lokeswarananda, 1989, pp. 91, 94).

Adi – Buddha is in possessions of five kinds of knowledge which are like five attributes of the lord. From these five attributes proceed five kinds of dhyana (meditation) and there emanate five deities who are known as the five Dhyani- All the five Dhyani Buddhas are said to have originated from Vajrasattva himself” (Moharana, 2001, pp. 31).

Dr. Benoytosh Bhattacharyya (1958), in his book “The Indian Buddhist Iconography” mentioned that Alexander Csoma de Koros places the introduction of this conception of Adi Buddha in central Asia in the latter half of the 10th century. According to him, it originated at Nalanda University in the beginning of the 10th century (p. 43).

The Dhyani Buddhas, like the skandhas (aggregates) are considered eternal and they manifest themselves without passing through the intermediate stage of Bodhisattva or in other words, without depending upon others for their origin. These five skandhas, according to the Guhyasamaja-tantra, are presided over the Five Dhyani-Buddhas (Moharana, 2001, p. 31, 32). They are Vairocana (skt. Rupa) - Form, Akshobhaya (skt. Vijnana) - Ego-Consciousness, Ratnasambhava (skt. Vedana) - Feeling, Amitabha (skt. Samjna) - Perception and, Amogasiddhi (skt. Samskara) - Impression (Lokeswarananda, 1989, p. 92). According to Chinese Buddhist Encyclopedia (2015), the term “dhyani-buddha” was first recorded in English by the British Resident in Nepal, Brian Hodgson in the early 19th century, and is unattested in any surviving traditional primary sources.

Chapter 2: Visual Representations of Mudras in Vajrayāna Buddhism

This Chapter introduces the Five Dhyani Buddha and their significant uses of Mudra in Painting. Significance study of iconography and uses of visual images painted in Buddhist religion for worship, particularly emphasising on their colors, forms, elements and symbolic meaning. Mudra plays an important role in denoting each dhyani Buddha.

Abhaya mudra was the first mudra which was seen depicted in a gold coin developed under the reign of King Kanishk, Kushan Dynasty (C.AD 120-62), Fig. 1, dated around 1st century AD. Until then, Buddha was not represented in

human forms in the art. Only symbols to worship Buddha like – empty throne, a lotus, a footprint, etc, in the initial phase of when Hinayana Buddhism was dominant (Frederic, 1995, p. 22, 23).



Fig. 1: Kanishka – BODDO coin, Gold, Shah-ji-Dheri reliquary, Peshwar, Pakistan, London: British Museum (Sengupta, 2013, p. 63).

Basically, there are three types of paintings in Buddhist art where depiction of mudras can be seen:

Murals in Monasteries



Fig. 2: Dharmachakra Mudra, Ajanta Caves (Courtesy: Dr. Soumya Manjunath Chavan)

One of the earliest surviving paintings in Buddhist art are found in the caves of Ajanta, created in the fifth and sixth centuries in Gupta period (Pande, 2008, p. 121). Artists have depicted mudras in wall paintings and sculpture. For example, cave no. II, Fig. 2, Buddha is seen repeatedly in Dharmachakra Mudra. The purpose of art in Ajanta wall paintings was to sharpen the perception of a state of conscious mind achieved through meditation or ecstatic vision. The aesthetics of wall paintings are similar to the yogic disciplines practiced to attain higher consciousness. Artist who have created the art of the caves have put together the imitation of the visualization of their dreams.



Fig. 3: a. Prajnaparamita Sutra Manuscript, Cover, (Ohler, 2010).



Fig. 3: (b.) Prajnaparamita Sutra Manuscript, First page. (Ohler, 2010).

Illustrations for manuscript and their covers

Bhumisparsha Mudra in fig. 3 (a. & b.), seen represented by historical Buddha in the folios of Astasahasrika Prajnaparamita Sanskrit palm-leaf manuscript dated around early 12th century. Fig. 3 (a.), border of the manuscript cover contains the celestial Buddhas. Prajnaparamita in the central, right seated in Bhumisparsha mudra is historical Buddha and on left is Vignantaka. (Ohler, 2010).

Thang



Fig. 4: Thangka Painting, Courtesy: Anima Sikhrakar

Being icon painting, Thangka are bound by iconography, conventions and auspicious subjects matter and motifs (Sharma, 1994, p. 103). Both historical and transcendental Buddhas are generally represented as idealized, but essential human monks with supra-normal characteristics, such as a cranial bump, elongated earlobes and an auspicious urna (dot) in the middle of the forehead (Pal, 1990, p. 41). Fig 4, the postures (Asana) may vary according to the characteristic and nature of the deity. Generally, in lotus posture (Padmasana) are seen while depicting the feature of Five Dhyani Buddha (Frederic, 1995, p.55).

Five Dhyani Mudra: Bylakuppe Thangka Wall Painting Study

Kyabje Penor Rinpoche in 1963 established a monastery in Bylakuppe for Tibetan refugees. The monastery is located in Mysore district, Karnataka, India and is the spiritual place of worship. The walls and ceilings of the monasteries are richly painted with murals. Murals are painted in Thangka style, depicting celestial beings, Bodhisattvas, wrathful deities, Tara, Mythology of tantric Buddhism as subject and many more. Some Paintings depicts the lifestyle of the Buddha and his spiritual journey and others depicts the wrath of the Buddha fight among the gods and demons. And also, the depictions of the cultural background which are highly influenced by the Tantric Buddhism.

- ❖ Interview with Ajith, Thubten Lekshey Ling Nyingma Tibetan Buddhist Meditation Centre, a city centre of Golden Monastery, Bylakuppe, (all pictures taken at Bylakuppe)- Ajith, works with “Thubten Lekshey Ling

Nyingma Tibetan Buddhist Meditation Centre, Ulsoor road, Bangalore, India”, he speaks about thangka painting and Buddhism in brief. He says:

Aim of Buddhism is to remove veil of ignorance and negative emotions in spiritual path. Mudra practice is a branch of the tantric Buddhism. The main practice is to cultivate wisdom and compassion towards all beings. To achieve this, in tantric Buddhism, after the initiation from the enlightened master, one may evoke the primordial perfection through meditation involving visualization and mantra practice. To do so, one should have right knowledge and right practice. In this whole process, hand mudras help in communicating certain experience, and thus to stabilize certain state of mind that has been generated through meditation.

Ajith also gives an example stating that when Buddha is visualized in the Bhūmisparśa (earth-touching) Mudra, it conveys of being unshaken by circumstances and being able to view the world with perfect evenness rooted in clear wisdom. Similarly, when a Buddha is visualized with Varada mudra (gesture of giving), it invokes the experience of bringing benefit to all beings with loving kindness and equanimity. Such experiences stabilize and enrich the main practice of meditation. Therefore, Mudra practices in visual arts enhance the meditative experience.

Ajith says:

Thangka artist practice the path of the spiritual experience through the thangka art as an expression. Artist themselves were traditionally practitioners of the path. He quotes, “the crucial points of a thangka are not coming from the creativity of the artists instead the mudras, hand emblems, ornaments, posture, colours etc., are as prescribed in specific tantric practices - always revealed by enlightened Buddhas. And, each has certain meaning that the practitioner should be aware about. However, even with all these crucial points, the power to communicate certain experience, in other words, the life of thangka, comes with the creativity of the artist. When an artist who with experience on the practice of a particular deity does the painting that makes thangka special; then it really becomes a strong support for others to rely on this for visualizations.

Hence, the traditional thangka practitioner followed certain rules of Tantric Buddhism.

❖ Interview with Thangka Artist Konchok Dhondup, Bylakuppe (Fig.5)



Fig. 5: Artist Konchok Dhondup at his Studio, 2016.

Born in 1976 in Tibet, now lives and works in Tibetan Camp, Bylakuppe, Karnataka, India. Dhondup has been practicing thangka art for 35 years, out of which he has spent 25 years practicing in India. He has taught many national and international students. At present, he is one of the senior most thangka artists in Bylakuppe. In conversation about discipline in thangka painting, he quotes:

One should have a good heart and mind to become an artist to create the work. Even the teacher should have a good heart to teach the student and be useful for others without any bad intention. Then, the real work of art emerges and is appreciated.

In Fig. 6, painting done by two different artists, he explains that every art created by an individual artist has its own essence and meaning to it.



Fig. 6: Artist Konchok Dhondup Students work, 2016. Most of the wall paintings inside Fig. 7 & 8, "Padmasambhava Buddhist Vihara" have five dhyani mudras. This research focused on the brief study of the mudra and its meaning with the colors in visual arts. Below are the five Dhyani Buddhas Mudras depicted at Padmasambhava Buddhist Vihar, Golden Temple Monastery, Bylakuppe, Mysore District, Karnataka (arranged in order according to Newari Buddhist, Nepal):



Fig. 7: Padmasambhava Buddhist Vihara, Golden Temple, Bylakuppe, 2016.



Fig. 8: Paintings inside Padmasambhava Buddhist Vihara, 2016

Dharmachakra Mudra – Vairocana (Tibetan: “Namnang”)



Fig. 9: Dharmachakra Mudra

Dharmachakra Mudra represents upholding of the dharma beyond space and time, in Yogic language, the sanatan dharma; the eternal laws. In fig. 9, the right hand is held in a vitarkamudra like gesture, in front of the chest. The left hand clutches the hem of the robe between the thumb and the first three fingers, while the fourth, or little finger, points to the circle formed by the touching fingers of the right hand. The circle represents the Wheel of Dharma, or in metaphysical terms, the union of method and wisdom. The little finger of the left hand lies alongside the thumb of the right hand and the tips of the two digits are capped by the forefingers of the proper right hand. The three fingers come together at precisely the point where the conceptual centre is the seat of the heart-mind, the core essence that transforms and individual into a Buddha (Huntington, 2000, pp 4).

These fingers are themselves rich in symbolic significance: the three extended fingers of the right hand represent the three vehicles of the Buddha's teaching, namely:

- The middle finger represents the 'hearers' of the teachings
- The index finger represents the 'realizes' of the teachings
- The little finger represents the 'Mahayana' or 'Great Vehicle'

The three extended fingers of the left hand symbolize the Three Jewels of Buddhism, namely:

- The Buddha
- The Dharma
- The Sangha

Significantly, in this mudra, the hands are held in front of the heart, symbolizing that these teachings are straight from the Buddha's heart. This mudra symbolizes the historical moment of the Buddha, the first sermon after his enlightenment in the Deer Park at Sarnath, denoting setting motion of the wheel of the teaching of the Dharma (2000-2016, pp. 6).

Symbolic Chart:

English Name	Family	Consort	Delusion	Enlightenment Mind	Medical / Physical
Illuminating	Buddha	White Tara	Ignorance, Delusion	All-encompassing Dharmadatu wisdom	Energy Channels

Direction	Attachments	Seed syllable	Vehicle	Color	Symbol	Sense
Central	Form	Om	Dragon	White	Wheel	Sight

Chakra	Season	Elements	Mantra
Crown	n/a	Space	Om Vairocana Hum!

Bhumisparsa Mudra – Aksobhya (Tibetan: “Mikyopa”)



Fig. 1: Bhumisparsa Mudra

Bhumisparsa literally means earth witness or touching the earth. It is in this posture that Shakyamuni overcame the obstructions of Mara while meditating on Truth. It denotes that incident in the life of Buddha in which he called the Mother Earth as witness to his virtues due to which he remained unmoved even when the wicked Mara and his beautiful heavenly damsels, the daughters of Mara, tried to disturb his resolve when he was meditating under the bodhi tree. In this posture his right hand dangles in front of his right crossed leg and touches the lotus seat padmasana or the earth with palm open and facing inward (Wisdom Library, 2008, pp. 1).

As shown in Fig. 10:

This mudra, formed with all five fingers of the right hand extended to touch the ground, symbolizes the Buddha's enlightenment under the Bodhi tree, when he summoned the earth goddess, Sthavara, to bear and complemented by the left hand – which is held flat in the lap in the Dhyana mudra of meditation, symbolizes the union method and wisdom, samasara and nirvana, and also the realizations of the conventional and ultimate truths. Aksobhya, the mirror to our souls, is believed to transform the human failing of anger into a clear mirror-like wisdom (Wisdom Library, 2008, pp. 1).

Symbolic Chart:

English Name	Family	Consort	Delusion	Enlightenment Mind	Medical / Physical
Unshakable	Vajra	Locana	Anger - hatred	Mirror-like Wisdom	Blood flow

Direction	Attachments	Seed syllable	Vehicle	Color	Symbol	Sense
East	Consciousness	Hum	Elephant	Blue	Sceptic / Vajra	Sound

Chakra	Season	Elements	Mantra
Heart	Winter	Water	Om Akshobhya Hum !

Varada Mudra – Ratnasambhava (Tibetan: “Gyalwa Rinjung”)



Fig. 11: Varada Mudra

Varada mudra symbolizes Charity, compassion and boon- granting. It is the mudra of the accomplishment of the wish to devote oneself to human salvation. It is nearly always made with the left hand, and can be made with the arm hanging naturally at the side of the body, the palm of the open hand facing forward, and the fingers extended. The five extended fingers in this mudra symbolize the following five perfections (Tortora, 2000-2016, pp.5):

1. Generosity
2. Morality
3. Patience
4. Effort and
5. Meditative Concentration

Ratnasambhava means ‘Born from the Jewel’, ratna signifying jewel in Sanskrit – ‘The Gem of the Buddha’ (Kumar, 2003, para. 25). Ratnasambhava is believed to transform the negative human trait of pride into the wisdom of sameness (Kumar, 2003, para. 26). This wisdom brings out the common features of human experience and makes us see the common humanity underlying all men and women. Fig. 11 shows that this mudra is rarely used alone, but usually in combination with another made with the right hand, often the Abhaya Mudra. This combination of Abhaya and Varada mudra is called Segan Semui – in or Yogan Semui- in, in Japan (Tortora, 2000-2016, para.5). Ratnasambhava first appears, along with Amoghasiddhi, in the Sarvatathāgata Tattvasaṃgraha

Tantra in the late 7th or early 8th century (Jayarava, 2008, para.3). Symbolic Chart:

English Name	Family	Consort	Delusion	Enlightenment Mind	Medical / Physical
Jewel born	Ratna	Mamaki	Pride, Miserliness	Wisdom of equality	Flesh

Direction	Attachments	Seed syllable	Vehicle	Color	Symbol	Sense
South	Feeling	Tram	Lion	Gold / Yellow	Jewel	Smell

Chakra	Season	Elements	Mantra
Abdomen	Spring	Earth	Om Ratnasambhava Tram!

Dhyan Mudra – Amitabha (Tibetan: “opame”)

The Dhyan Mudra (fig.12) may be made with one or both hands.

When made with a single hand the left one is placed in the lap, while the right may be engaged elsewhere. The left hand making the Dhyana mudra in such cases symbolizes the female left-hand principle of wisdom. Ritual objects such as a text, or more commonly an alms bowl symbolizing renunciation, may be placed in the open palm of this left hand (Kumar, 2001, pp. 15).

With both hands are generally held at the level of the stomach or on the thighs. The right hand is placed above the left, with the palms facing upwards, and the fingers extended. In some cases, the thumbs of the two hands may touch at the tips, thus forming a mystic triangle. The esoteric sects obviously attribute to this triangle a multitude of meanings, the most important being the identification with the mystic fire that consumes all impurities. This triangle is also said to represent the Three Jewels of Buddhism, mentioned above, namely the Buddha himself, the Good Law and the Sangha (Tortora, 2000-2016, pp.12).

Symbolic Chart:

English Name	Family	Consort	Delusion	Enlightenment Mind	Medical /Physical
Infinite light	Padma	Pandara	Desire, Lust	Discriminating Wisdom	Body heat

Direction	Attachments	Seed syllable	Vehicle	Color	Symbol	Sense
West	Perception	Hrih	Peacock	Red	Lotus	Taste

Chakra	Season	Elements	Mantra
Throat	Summer	Fire	Om Amitabha Hrih!



Fig. 12: Dhyana Mudra

Abhaya Mudra – Amoghasiddhi (Tibetan: “Donyo drub pa ”)

The Abhya mudra is displayed by the fifth Dhyani Buddha, Amoghasiddhi, who is also the Lord of Karma in the Buddhist pantheon. Amoghasiddhi helps in overcoming the delusion of jealousy. By meditation on him, the delusion of jealousy is transformed into the wisdom of accomplishment. This transformation is hence the primary function of the Abhya Mudra (Hays, 2014, pp. 51).



Fig. 13: Abhaya Mudra

Abhaya in Sanskrit means fearlessness. In another word, it means gesture for promising protection. Thus, this mudra symbolizes protection, peace and the dispelling of fear. Fig. 13, the right hand raised to shoulder height, the arm crooked, the palm of the hand facing outward, and the fingers upright and joined. The left hand hangs down at the side of the body. In Thailand, and especially in Laos, this mudra is associated with the movement of the walking Buddha (also called 'the Buddha placing his footprint'). This mudra has been used in the prehistoric times as a sign of good intention (Tortora, 2000 - 2016, pp. 15).

According to the legend of the Buddhist tradition:

Devadatta, a cousin of the Buddha, through jealousy caused a schism to be caused among the disciples of Buddha. As Devadatta's pride increased, he attempted to murder the Buddha. One of his schemes involved losing a rampaging elephant into the Buddha's path. But as the elephant approached him, Buddha displayed the Abhya mudra, which immediately calmed the animal, therefore indicating the absence of fear (Tortora, 2000 - 2016, pp. 17).

Symbolic Chart:

English Name	Family	Consort	Delusion	Enlightenment Mind	Medical / Physical
Conqueror	Karma	Green Tara	Jealousy fear	All-accomplishing wisdom	Inner wind

Direction	Attachments	Seed syllable	Vehicle	Color	Symbol	Sense
North	Mental formation,	Ah	Garuda	Green	Double Vajra	Touch

	Concept					
--	---------	--	--	--	--	--

Chakra	Season	Elements	Mantra
Root	Autumn	Air/Wind	Om Amoghasiddhi An!

The actual color representation by artists of the five dhyani Buddhas and its mudras are not seen in the painting inside Padmasambhava Buddhist Vihara. Abhaya Mudra is replaced by yellow color, Bhumisparśa Mudra in yellow and Varada Mudra in blue.

Chapter 3: Influence of Five Dhyani Mudras on Contemporary Visual Art

Global influence and search for identity in the field of visual arts gave the opportunity for artist to conceptualize their work. The present paper focuses on the five dhyani mudras and its application and influence in the contemporary art. There are several artists who are expressing the essence of mudras in their art work. In west, Marchel Duchamp and Bill Viola is the finest example in contemporary art whose conceptual works have been profoundly influenced by Buddhism. In east, Arpan Caur, Zhang Huan, Gyönkar Gatso and Ang Tsering Sherpa are few names who have been practicing artworks.

Marcel Duchamp

The key figure in the modernist movement, Marcel Duchamp born in 1887 and died at 1968 is considered to be the germinal source of conceptual art, paving the way for the postmodern period. Asian influences have been identified by the critics in Duchamp's work. Duchamp once wrote to his brother-in-law, the artist Jean Crotti, "being esoteric is the only salvation," and in interview by Dorothy Norman in *"Art in America"* (July-August 1969), Duchamp quotes, "The true artist, true art, is always esoteric" (Bass, & Jacob, 2004, p. 123, 126).

In 1967, a poster for the Paris, Fig. 14, retrospective of his work showing a montage of his hand, palm facing us, a cigar with smoke rising above it between his first two fingers. The smoke is, in fact, not from Duchamp's cigar, but from another photograph, of the singer George Brassen's smoking pipe. A genius for wordplay, Duchamp grasped the potential of this Sanskrit name for Kuan Yin – Abhayamdada, the Giver of Fearlessness – to express his concern for human suffering in the world. In the original Sanskrit text, the one who confers the gift of fearlessness is Abhayamdada: abhayam means "fearless", and dada means "giver." An interpretation in terms of the Mahayana Buddhist concept of the bodhisattva, however, makes sense anyone can be a bodhisattva or a *savoi* all that is necessary is the determination to remain in the cycle of life until all beings are saved from suffering (Bass, & Jacob, 2004, p. 138).

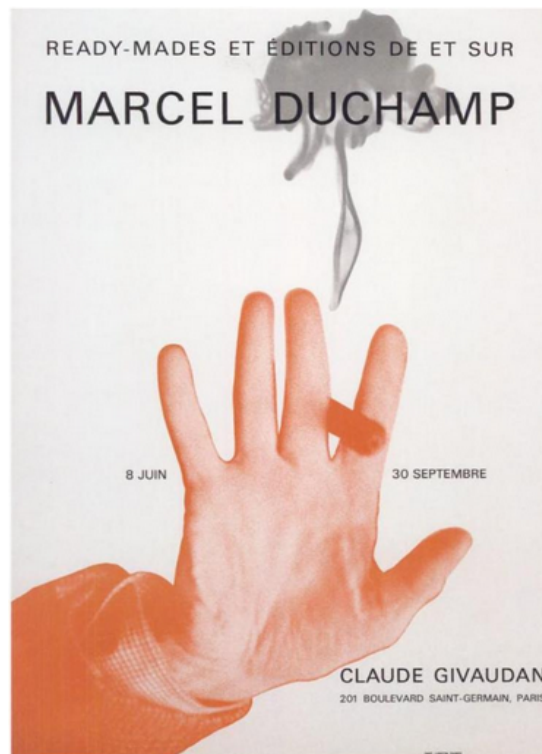


Fig. 14: Marcel Duchamp, "Ready-mades et Editions de et Sur," 1967 (Baas, & Jane, 2004, p.139)

Bill Viola

Born in 1951, lives and works in New York, USA. Fig. 15 represents the four sets of hands – a young boy's, two middle-aged people's and those of an elderly woman – run through a gamut of gestures; some are familiar and others rhetorical, some are associated with prayer or supplication, while others resemble Hindu and Buddhist mudras. The use of a range of ages implies a continuous tradition, the teaching of the young by the old, the sequence of gestures complementing but also departing from one another. Viola's use of extreme close-up draws attention to the elegance and sculptural qualities of this part of the human body. The hand gestures of the Bodhisattva Avalokiteshvara represent a visual vocabulary that is seen and understood by adherents of the Buddhist and Hindu faiths. Just as Christian saints serve as intermediaries between humans and God, a bodhisattva postpones Buddha hood in order to guide those seeking enlightenment, thus, embodying compassion and benevolence. Viola references diverse art historical traditions and the history of human societies and cultures. (Gestures and Details, 2005, Para. 1, 2).



Fig. 15: 'Four Hands' 2001, video polyptych on four LCD flat panels mounted on a shelf, artist's proof, collection of the artist, photograph: Kira Perov (The Passion: Gestures and Details, 2005).

Gonkar Gyatso

Born in 1961 in Lhasa, Tibet, lives and works in Beijing, New York, and London. He is the founder of the Sweet Tea House, a contemporary art gallery, London (gyatso). With an intense study on Buddhism Gonkar Gyatso has been highly influenced by Bhumisparsa Mudra. He has continuously depicted Bhumisparsa mudra in all his artwork using different medium to explore. He has experimented with the stickers to neon lights (Fig. 16) using the same dhyani posture. Early works of Gyatso including his Thangka painting has a traditional influence. Later phase of his work reflects more of the environment and his own personal experience in life. Gonkar's artworks on Bhumisparsa mudra is quite a fuse of subject and the concept between the history and the contemporary situation in today's scenario.



Fig. 16: Neon Buddha Plus, Gonkar Gyatso, 2010, Neon light, 120 X 120 cm. (gonkargyatso.com)

Zhang Huan

Zhang Huan, born in 1965, China, is internationally renowned as one of the most influential contemporary artists of today. He currently lives and works in Shanghai and New York. The most popular mudra of all, Abhaya mudra along with Varada mudra in fig. 17 (a & b) is one of the fascinating sculptures of Zhang Huan's work. The drapery is mould like a silk and the expression of the Buddha is maintained in this work. Huan works with mudras and parts of the body with experimenting installation on larger scale with highly influenced by Buddhism.

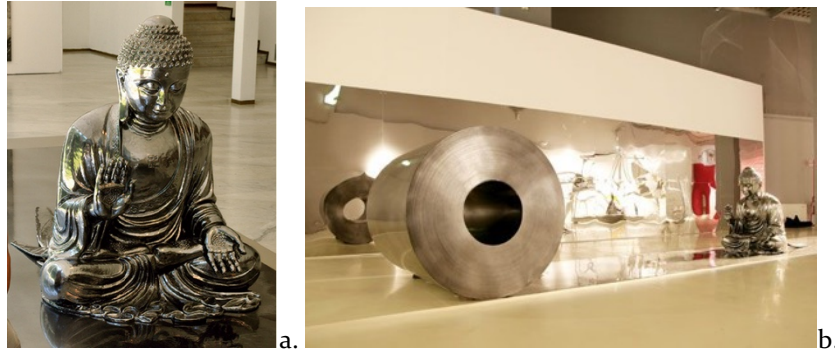


Fig. 17 (a & b): Buddha of Steel Life, (Steel and Copper), 2006, Milan, Italy, Fig a. Courtesy: Marco Secchi | Fig b. (zhanghuan.com)

Arpana Caur

Arpana Caur, a contemporary Indian artist was born in 1954, Delhi. She is a distinguished Indian painter and has been exhibited since 1974 across the globe (Sikhiwiki, 2010). Although Caur identifies herself as Sikh, she has made it her signature style to fuse elements from various world religions including Hinduism, Buddhism, Jainism, and many more. The artist's technique is a reflection of the Sikh religion's tolerance and belief in the spirit of one universal God. In fig. 18, the figure of Siddhartha Gautama Buddha, a spiritual teacher whose teachings inspired the Buddhist religion, can be identified by his long earlobes and signature lotus poses. The congestion traffic of vehicle is seen in the spiral surrounded around Buddha. Caur has painted buddha as blue in color and mudra denoting Dhyana (meditation).



Fig. 18: 'Buddha Mural', Picture taken outside the Venkatappa Art Gallery, Bangalore, India 2014.

Ang Tsherin Sherpa

Ang Tsherin Sherpa was born in 1968 in Kathmandu, Nepal, currently, lives and works in California.

In conversation with Tsherin via an email interview, he writes:

He is a trained in the traditional Tibetan Art and during that phase of traditional thangka painting, he painted mudras like the Dharmachakra, Varada, Abhaya, Vajra etc. All Buddhists believe in the Protector Spirits that safeguard Buddhism and Buddhist practitioners. The sacred belief in these spirits has always fascinated him since childhood. Therefore he have manipulatively transformed their features and mudras to create his own iconographic paintings. The concept behind the contemporary mudras of his paintings is to question the real representation of "The Spirit", the term itself could mean a deity, a ghost, a good attitude, a drink or even kerosene. The mudras of these spirits depict his social messages affected by his surrounding experiences which due complements with the urban psychology and is apparently accessible to all.



Fig. 19: Preservation Project # 1, created in 2010. (Van. 2011).

In fig. 19:

He often works with deities, and this time [in Preservation Project #1] with the limbs of deities. He made this painting as he was reflecting on Tibetan society. When he was growing up, he used to think that everything needed to be preserved in a specific way...we talk a lot of about preservation. But, don't know how we are preserving things without understanding the essence of our traditions. Now, we are in a globalized world where we have to interact with different people, different cultures, languages, all kinds of things, and some of the functions of these traditions, he feels, should have or would have transformed by now. If one were to understand the essence of a tradition and its role in society, then the method or ritualizing of the tradition is made less important and the essential vision is made more important, that is, tradition's overall contribution to society and humankind.

In fig. 20, Conqueror (Gangnam Style), acrylic, ink and white gold leaf on wood, 122 x 91.5 cm (48 x 36 in), depicts a figure performing the notorious dance move while wearing a mask of Vajrabhairava, a wrathful form of Mañjushrī. Sherpa said:

The Vajrabhairava may seem like an odd pairing with an international pop culture sensation but we live in a disposable culture where anything long-lived is unusual. In Tibetan manifestation, the dance mirrors a new global consciousness originating from the desperation felt by self-immolating Tibetans (rossirossi, 2013).



Fig. 20: Conqueror (Gangnam style) 2013, (rossirossi.com, 2013).



Fig. 21: "Kumari I" 2013 | Medium: Acrylic on Canvas.

Present researcher, has been practicing the concept of mudra in her artwork, through the medium of painting on canvas and installation. The artworks gradually developed and shaped on the concept along with the current research topic on mudra. It has not only helped to understand the practice of the mudra in the painting but also, on her scope to comprehend the ancient philosophy of the uses of mudra in the benefits of the human mind and body and also the image worshipping method by the tantric Buddhism.

Fig. 21, is the expression of the state of Kumari (unmarried Women hood) in the meditative state. Meditation is the only path to the liberation from self. Kumari is the living goddess in Nepal, highly respected and thought to have

been possess by the godly powers. Kumari is worshipped as manifestation of divine female energy. Therefore, this painting intends to show the state of the artist's being Kumari at the time of painting and using dhyana mudra signifies the transformation of negative energy into positivity. It is a metaphorical expression of inner self-realization. The Dhyana mudra is the mudra of meditation, of concentration on the Good law, and of the attainment of spiritual perfection. According to tradition, this mudra derives from the one assumed by the Buddha when meditating under the peepal tree before his Enlightenment. This gesture was also adopted since time immemorable, by yogis during their meditation and concentration exercises. It indicates the perfect balance of thought, rest of the senses, and tranquillity.

Fig. 22 and 23, "Label I & II" shows that we are being labelled or identified with the names, with the words, color, shape, height, weight and also the character of ethics in the eye of the people. We have been victimized every day worldwide with the label as business class and economy class. At the end, it is all about how you perceive life as, what you learn from it and how you want to be. The use of the metaphor representation of the umbrella being the protector, with the abhya mudra being fearless, bhumisparsa mudra stating of being aware, bulb as the symbol of hope and the glass bottle as the transformation of the character of the being fro, evil to good.



Fig. 22: "Label I" 2013 | Medium Acrylic on Canvas.



Fig. 23: "Label II."

Chapter 4: Conclusion

Art in Buddhism has been the path of sacred practice. In Tantric Buddhism, art goes beyond practice and becomes contemplation, worship and travel towards individual being. Buddhism as a culture has been recognized globally and this research is focused on Vajrayāna Buddhist “Mudra” in traditional thangka and contemporary art, analysis of practicing artists. Traditional artists follow what has been prescribed in Tantric Buddhist text. But, Contemporary artists retain the aesthetic value of Buddhism in art and metaphorically symbolize the meaning to the milieu. The cross-cultural practices in art, religion and philosophy of Buddhism can be traced back to the 5th to 7th century. From Gupta to Pala, from India, Nepal and Tibet, Asian countries played an important role to sustain the art of the Buddhism.

This paper focuses on the western and eastern artists who have been influenced by Buddhism. The artists have been relating Buddhism and iconographical symbols metaphorically in their artwork to relate to the situation, environment, and self-enquiry or to the political issues. As Aristotle says “Art is an Imitation”. Through imitation and practice one can grow and express what exactly one conveys. Gonkar has been practicing Bhumisparsa mudra in his work and he has continuously used only one mudra. But, he has experimented only with the different medium, posture and presentation. Zhang Huan is the artist who relates his cultural background in his artwork but also relates to workers or natural disaster expressed through the crush hands and dirt figures. Arpana Caur’s mural in Venkatapa Art Gallery is a message to the people. The small sketches of the vehicles around the Buddha, indicates the growing pollution and Buddha in his silent posture with the dhyana mudra indicates meditation for everyone. When compared to the west, Marcel

Duchamp creates a work which is contradictory to the Buddhist mudra and its meaning. But it is closely related to the Buddhist philosophy, and Duchamp's work with abhaya mudra, with the cigarette defines the world with restless beings.

According to the email conversation, Ang Tsherin Sherpa says that his work is a spiritual journey. Being a thangka traditional artist, Tsherin has applied these techniques in his work. Artists are influenced with the surroundings they grew up and the political and spiritual background and, this work of art will carry the essence of their experiences.

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The Building of Sangye Migyur Ling (Druk Mila Sekhar Guthog)

Peter Mann

In 2007, Venerable Lama Kelzang, who has lived in Hong Kong for 28 years, made a pilgrimage to the Milarepa Tower in Qinghai, and in a moment of inspiration, decided to build a similar tower and monastery in his home country, Bhutan. Following a positive response from the Royal Government, 9.8 acres of land were acquired at Rigzinling, about 10km from (and 900m above) the border town of Phuentsholing in south Bhutan. The new monastery is called 'Sangye Migyur Ling' (SML).

Most people know the story of the famous Tibetan saint who learned black magic in his early life to take revenge on enemies but later became a disciple of the great translator Marpa, who had brought many sacred texts back from India. Knowing that his new student had accumulated bad karma, Marpa treated him harshly and made him build a nine-storey tower (Sekhar Guthok) with his bare hands. When it was nearly finished, he told him to move it to another location. This happened a few times until Milarepa had removed his bad karma. Later, he went off to meditate in mountain caves and became enlightened in one lifetime. Milarepa is a shining example of the virtues of renunciation, diligent practice and devotion to his guru.

Venerable Lama Kelzang's plan is that the monastery and tower should become a holy site to attract pilgrims from Bhutan, where Kagyupa Buddhism is the official religion, and from Northeast India (e.g. Darjeeling, Kalimpong and Sikkim). Already, the Milarepa Tower and Shrine Hall have become prominent landmarks above the town of Phuentsholing and are clearly visible

from the Indian plain beyond. He hopes that in future, 500 monks will be in residence at SML, and that he can also build a Retreat Centre.



Sangye Migyur Ling Monastery takes shape on the south Bhutan skyline.

As the project budget was estimated at around US\$3.8m, charitable foundations were established in Hong Kong and Bhutan in 2010 and His Holiness the Je Khenpo wrote letters of support. A project committee was set up in Hong Kong to oversee and coordinate the project and to raise funds, which come from donations and fundraising activities such as charity dinners, concerts and sponsored walks.

On 17 November 2011, His Holiness the Je Khenpo presided over the ground-breaking ceremony and blessing of the site with many government representatives and thousands of spectators. That day there was a halo around the sun and when the cooks were asked how many they were cooking for, they replied 'We are cooking for all sentient beings!'

In his speech, His Holiness the Je Khenpo reminded us that "Even hearing the name of Milarepa prevents rebirth in the hell realms for seven lifetimes'. He also requested that the image of Milarepa should not be made in emaciated form like a hungry ghost but rather in a perfect form like all ancient statues. The Speaker of the National Assembly and the Minister of Labour and Human Resources also attended the ceremony.

From 2012 to 2014, extensive site formation took place, including the building of an access road and major drainage work. Then the foundation work started on the Milarepa Tower and Shrine Hall. As south Bhutan is considered an

earthquake prone zone, the foundations need to be exceptionally strong. By November 2015, the tower was finished and the Home Minister was invited to officiate at the ceremony to install the *sertok* or golden pinnacle at the top of the tower. The ceremony also commemorated the 60th birth anniversary of His Majesty the Fourth King.



Many treasures and precious relics were placed under the *sertok*. The construction of the Milarepa Tower and Shrine Hall now nears completion and most of the work involves decoration, plaster work and painting and making of statues.



Here a lama proceeds with highly specialized painting on the 9th level of the Tower.



Complicated carving work on the 9th level of the Tower.

Venerable Lama Kelzang's vision for the interior of the Tower is that the ground floor will contain a life-sized marble statue of Milarepa in a cave, surrounded by four protectors. There will also be 78 carvings of stories from Milarepa's *namthar*. The second floor will feature a statue of Shakyamuni Buddha together with his disciples, Ananda and Sariputra. There will also be paintings of the Sixteen Arhats. The third floor is devoted to the Buddha of the

East, Akshobhya, and paintings of the Five Buddha Families and Eight Goddesses.



The fourth floor will contain a mandala and 13 paintings of the main *yidam* of the Kagyu lineage, Cakrasamvara, while the fifth floor will feature the eight forms of Padmasambhava (Guru Rinpoche). The sixth floor will be devoted to the Kagyupa lineage with statues of Marpa, Milarepa, Gampopa and paintings of the four major and eight minor lineages. The seventh floor contains all the Drukpa Kagyu lineage, while the eighth floor has all the Karma Kagyu lineage. Finally, the ninth floor has statues of the Five Buddha Families.

On the top floor (inaccessible to visitors) are placed the Buddha Amitabha, Hayagriya and Kurukulle. These three, facing south, are powerful protectors of the Milarepa Tower and the country itself.



Buddha Amitabha, Hayagriya and Kurukulle, facing south, protect the tower and the country.

The Shrine Hall is situated to the south of the Milarepa Tower and following the advice of His Holiness the Je Khenpo, it will contain images of Amitabha (centre), Shakyamuni (left) and Maitreya (right). Underneath are monks' quarters, classrooms, visitor facilities and a practice hall. Plaster work and painting is underway and the marble floor will be laid later this year. There are already 20-50 novice lamas living at the site and a number of teachers who conduct daily lessons in English, Maths and dharma studies.

From 1-6 January 2016, the third annual Mahakala Puja was held at the tower, a ceremony dedicated to world peace, prosperity and the liberation of all sentient beings. The Ritual used was the long scripture rearranged by H.H. 15th Karmapa, Kachyab Dorje. The upcoming Mahakala Puja and Vajra Dances will be held from 21-19 December 2016.



Lama Kelzang presides over the Mahakala Puja in January 2016.



The Building of Sangye Migjur Ling in Bhutan



Novice monks saying grace before lunch.



Shrine Hall with view of Indian plain below



TK Ngan (project manager) in middle and Lama Yeshe (management) on right.

There are at present three main dharma projects nearing completion in Bhutan: The Big Buddha Statue in Thimphu, the Guru Rinpoche Statue at Takila, East Bhutan, and Sangye Migyur Ling in South Bhutan.

When all internal decoration and landscaping are finished, the Grand Opening of Sangye Migyur Ling is planned for 2019 (Year of the Earth Pig).

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His Excellency Dasho Tshering Tobgay is the Prime Minister of Bhutan and the leader of the People's Democratic Party (PDP). He was the Leader of the Opposition in the National Assembly from March 2008 to April 2013. Excellency attended secondary schooling at Dr. Graham's Homes School in Kalimpong, India, and received his bachelor of science in mechanical engineering from the University of Pittsburgh's Swanson School of Engineering in 1990. He completed his master's degree in public administration from the John F. Kennedy School of Government at Harvard University in 2004. His Excellency was a civil servant before joining politics, starting his career with the Technical and Vocational Education Section (TVES) of the Education Division in Bhutan in 1991. After working with the TVES from 1991 to 1999, His Excellency established and led the National Technical Training Authority (NTTA) from 1999 to 2003. His Excellency also served from 2003 to 2007 in the Ministry of Labour and Human Resources as the director of the Human Resources Department.

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David Verdesi is the founder of Human Potential, Research and Development (HPRD) and conducts seminars and training programs throughout the world in the fields of phenomenology and transpersonal anthropology. His professional research has focused on in-depth studies among highly achieved

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Charlie Morley received 'authorization to teach' within the Karma Kagyu school of Tibetan Buddhism from his teacher Lama Yeshe Rinpoche, the abbot of Samye Ling Monastery. For more than eight years, he has run retreats and workshops on lucid dreaming and dream yoga around the world and has written two books on the subject that have been translated into ten different languages. He is currently based at Kagyu Samye Dzong Buddhist Centre in London.

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Elizabeth (Liz) Lee is a Vajrayāna Buddhist practitioner, holistic health consultant, and Reiki master, based in Hong Kong. Her integrated approach to health, healing, and spiritual practice draws from her professional background in diverse forms of Eastern and Western mind-body medicine, as well as from Indian yoga and Chinese Daoism. She specializes in energy food based nutritional therapies and in root-cause resolution of entrenched psychiatric syndromes endemic in modern life.

NILIMA SIKHRAKAR

Nilima Sikhrakar is a visual artist born into a Newari Buddhist family in Kathmandu, Nepal. Her upbringing drew her to study thangka painting from the age of thirteen from the eminent Newar artist, Prem Maan Chitrakar. She completed her IFA at the Lalit Kala Campus in Kathmandu, Nepal in 2002; her BFA at the College of Fine Arts (C.K.P) in Bangalore, India in 2006; and her MVA at Jain University in Bangalore, India in 2014. She currently works as a visual art, highly influenced by Vajrayāna Buddhist culture.

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