

# YOGA TANTRA: THEORY AND PRAXIS

In the light of the Hevajra Tantra  
*A Metaphysical Perspective*



**Dr. Tomy Augustine**





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*A Metaphysical Perspective*

**DR. TOMY AUGUSTINE**

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TO MY LOVING PARENTS,  
AND  
TO MY REVERED GURU  
PROF. ASHOK KUMAR CHATTERJEE



## FOREWORD

Anybody who ventures to write on Tantrism disturbs a hornet's nest. No other area in the entire range of the philosophical scene in India is more bewildering and controversial than the philosophy of Tantrism, whether Hindu or Buddhist. There are authors who give a very euphoric picture of Tantras, considering this way of life as a panacea of all our ills, while a few authors go to the other extreme, painting it in dismal colours by interpreting it as a license to licentiousness. Not that dispassionate study is altogether lacking, but these are mostly from a historical or an orientalist point of view, so that a strictly metaphysical analysis of the system is rather rare.

Dr. Tomy does well to take up a seminal text for an **in-depth** analysis, situating it squarely in the Mahāyāna-Vajrayāna tradition. He rightly treats Vajrayāna as a continuation of the central Mahāyāna concepts, giving the Mādhyamika-Yogācāra system as the background to which Tantric elements are grafted on. His essay is to be appreciated strictly as an analysis of the metaphysical foundation of a philosophico-religious system. He adheres closely to the text, without being diffident about bringing out its deeper philosophical implications, showing the Praxis springing from these foundations. Praxis is through and through informed by the theory, and this is very lucidly elicited by the author.

Buddhahood comprises two different elements – one noumenal and the other empirical, without any incompatibility between them. These are Prajñā (Wisdom)

and Karuṇā (Compassion). Buddha is thus bipolar in essence, one as the ultimate reality in itself, and the other being concerned with suffering mankind. This bipolarity is extended so as to cover everything that there is. Reality is bipolar, but there is a sort of self-estrangement on its part, so that one element is alienated from the other. This is the root cause of suffering. The spiritual demand is to bring them back to each other, the process of healing being executed in different stages by the Praxis. Yoga is the name given to this process of healing.

Tantrism has never been in the main stream of philosophical thinking in India and misinterpretations are rampant because of its esoteric character. Viewed objectively and analytically, without predilections, it sheds light on the darker recesses of human psyche. Man's existential predicament is really being pulled at contrary directions, so that he cannot be at peace with himself. Tantrism shows the way out, by seeking to integrate these contrary pulls and thus achieving a holistic personhood.

There are many other points of acute perceptiveness in Dr. Tomy's book. His treatment of the oblique employment of language in Tantric Mysticism, the significance of apparently meaningless utterances, the nature of religious symbolism – to mention only a few – is penetrating and stimulating. I am convinced that his work would be well received by scholars and laymen alike. Scholars would find in it plenty that will interest them, and the enquiring laymen would discover a novel way of life in which the burden of guilt oppressing him could be eased.

**Prof. Ashok Kumar Chatterjee**

Former Head

Department of Philosophy and Religion

Banaras Hindu University

Varanasi – 221 005 U.P



## PREFACE

*Vajrayāna* is a difficult and delicate theme to explore. The main difficulty arises from its secretive and esoteric nature and the mystery surrounding the tantric texts and tantric lore. The cautious attempts to interpret these texts have been made with great apology, reluctance, and compunction. On account of its overtly erotic elements it is disowned in scholarly circles as an illegitimate child of Mahāyāna's tryst with Tantrism. Hence most scholars refuse to stand squarely by tantric tradition, let alone consider it as a viable template for human life.

In recent years scholars of diverse cultural, religious and ethical provenance have pitched in to interpret and possibly rehabilitate tantrism in the galaxy of Indian religio-cultural tradition. Work on *Vajrayāna* has been limited mainly to editing and translating tantric texts. The area of analysis and systematisation of the doctrine and praxis contained in these texts remains largely a virgin territory. The orientalists, cultural anthropologists, philologists, sociologists, archaeologists, and historians have had their say on tantrism in general and *Vajrayāna* in particular yet, they have said almost nothing about, how *Vajrayāna* appeals to a student of Buddhist philosophy and how he 'makes sense' out of the tantric tradition.

The task, albeit an uphill one, and the path lonely, as *Vajrayāna* is a road less travelled by, has proved to be a most rewarding research experience. From the plethora of ideas and practices, a system of Vajrayānic theory and praxis seems to emerge. The eclectic and syncretic tendency of *Vajrayāna* is responsible for the catholicity of its ideas, practices, and goals, which are mundane as well as supra mundane. The influence of tantrism in general, and *Vajrayāna* in particular, has been so immense that it has

genetically modified the Indian way of life, if not the view of life. Art, architecture, sculpture, painting and literature have all been flavoured by tantrism. *Vajrayāna* has been able to enter the innermost chambers of the human psyche and satisfy certain vital aspirations and yearnings of man as no other system hitherto. So much so, even its amoral appearance attracts the ire only of the scholar, not of the commoner.

At the completion of this research project I am moved by profound gratitude and reverence for my revered *Guruji*, Prof. Ashok Kumar Chatterjee, without whose scholarly help and advice this thesis would not have come into existence. The numerous rounds of discussions that we have had helped me understand the intricacies and the nuances of *Mahāyāna* philosophy on the one hand and of tantric tradition on the other, which (intricacies and nuances) are the bases on which *Vajrayāna*, particularly the *Hevajra Tantra*, has been analysed. A doyen of *Mahāyāna* philosophy, versatile in Indian Philosophy as well as in Western thought, *Guruji* has been a source of incisive insights and inspiration. His paternal prodding, uncompromising commitment to quality and scholarly precision will I cherish for years to come.

I owe an immense debt of gratitude to my supervisor Dr. Munni K. Agrawal, Reader in the Department of Philosophy and Religion, Banaras Hindu University, Varanasi. She has accompanied me closely throughout the research period with able advice and maternal encouragement. In spite of her busy teaching schedules, she has gone through the manuscript patiently and offered suggestions and recommendations, pointing out areas for further elaboration and clarification.

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I am greatly indebted to Dr. Francis Alencherry S.D.B., the Provincial, Fr. John Berger, S.D.B., and the Salesian Province of Kolkata for permitting me to undertake my doctoral studies at BHU. I owe a debt of gratitude to the former professors of Philosophy at Salesian College, Sonada, Fr. Nicholas LoGroi, S.D.B., Fr. Joseph Verzotto, S.D.B., Dr. Scaria Thuruthiyil, S.D.B., and Dr. Joseph Alapurackal, S.D.B. I express my heartfelt thanks to my Uncle Dr. Anthony Mookenthottam, M.S.F.S., for all the help and inspiration to study Indian Philosophy.

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I am grateful to the Librarians and staff of the Central and Departmental Libraries, BHU; Vishwa Jytoi Gurukul Library, Christnagar; Jñāna Pravāh Library, Varanasi; Santarakshita Library, Central Institute of Higher Tibetan Studies, Saranath; The Namgyal Institute of Tibetology Library, Gangtok; Salesian College Library, Sonada and The Asiatic Society Library, Kolkata. They lent me several important volumes for consultation and provided me with other research facilities.

I express my love and affection for my parents, brothers, sisters, and relations for their constant encouragement and support. I remember with love Mr. Joseph Augustine, my eldest brother, Mrs. Geeta Chatterjee, Miss Shipra Chatterjee, Sr. Agnes Bhutia, I.B.V.M., Fr. Jude Sebastian, S.D.B., Fr. J. Pauria, S.D.B., Prof. Sisir Basu, Dr. C.D. Sebastian, Dr. George P.M., Dr. Emmanuel U.P., Dr. Varun Kumar Tripathi and Dr. Anil Kumar Sonker, Fr. Johnson V.T., and Mr. Shashank Srivastav who helped and encouraged me in different ways to complete this research project.

Dr. Tomy Augustine

Department of Philosophy  
Salesian College  
Sonada P.O., Darjeeling Dt.  
W. Bengal – 734 219  
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## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS OF REFERENCES

- AAA *AbhisamayĀlamkāraĀloka of Haribhadra, Baroda, G.O.S.*
- BCAP *Bodhicaryāvatāra of Śāntideva with the Commentary Pañjika of Prajñākaramati, ed., P.L. Vaidya, Darbhanga: The Mithila Institute, 1960.*
- BT *Bulletin of Tibetology*
- CPB *The Central Philosophy of Buddhism, T.R.V. Murti, New Delhi: Munshiram Manoharlal Pvt. Ltd., 1955. This edition, 1998.*
- CŚ *Catuhśatakaṃ along with the Candrakīrti Vṛtti, ed., & trans., Bhagchandra Jain Bhaskar, Nagpur: Alok Prakashan, 1971.*
- CŚV *Catuhśatakaṃ along with the Candrakīrti Vṛtti, ed., & trans., Bhagchandra Jain Bhaskar, Nagpur: Alok Prakashan, 1971.*
- Chi. *Chinese*
- DBHS *Daśabhūmikasūtra, ed., P.L. Vaidya, Darbhanga: The Mithila Institute, 1967.*
- EBT *Encyclopaedia of Buddhist Tantra, ed., Sadhu Santideva, New Delhi: Cosmo Publications, 2001,*

- HIL *History of Indian Literature*, Maurice Winternitz, Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1993, vols. I & II.
- HT(F) *The Concealed Essence of the Hevajra with the Commentary Yogaratnamālā*, Trans. & cds., G.W. Farrow, and I. Menon, Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass Publishers Private Limited, 1992.
- HT(S) *The Hevajra Tantra: A critical study*. Trans., D.L. Snellgrove, London: Oxford University Press, 1959. Reprint, 1980, part 1 & 2.
- HT(T) *Hevajratāntram with Mukṭāvalī Pañjikā of Mahāpaṇḍitācārya Ratnākaraśānti*, eds., Ram Shankar Tripathi, and Thakur Sain Negi, Saranath: Central Institute of Higher Tibetan Studies, 2001.
- IBE *An Introduction to Buddhist Esoterism*, Benoytosh Bhattacharyya, Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass Publishers Private Limited, 1980. Reprint, 1989.
- IHQ The Indian Historical Quarterly
- ITB *An Introduction to Tāntric Buddhism*, S.B. Dasgupta, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed., Calcutta: University of Calcutta, 1974.
- JAS The Journal of Asian Studies
- JORM The Journal of Oriental Research Madras
- JTAS The Journal of the Asiatic Society
- MA *Mādhyamika Avatāra of Candrakīrti*, Chapt. VI (incomplete) Reconstructed from the Tibetan version by Pt. N. Aiyāsāmi Śāstri, J.O.R., Madras, 1929 ff.



- MK *Mūlamadhyamakārika of Nāgārjuna: The Philosophy of the Middle Way*, David J. Kalupahana, Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass Publishers Private Limited, 1991. Reprint, 1999.
- MKV *Madhyamakaśāstra of Nāgārjuna with the Commentary: Prasannapadā by Candrakīrti*, ed., P.L. Vaidya, Darbhanga: The Mithila Institute, 1960.
- MSA *Mahāyāna-Sūtrālaṅkāra of Asaṅga*, ed., S. Bagchi, Darbhanga: The Mithila Institute, 1970
- MVSBT *Madhyānta-Vibhāga-Śāstra Containing the Kārikā-s of Maitreya Bhāṣya of Vasubandhu and Ṭikā by Sthiramati*, ed., Ramchandra Pandeya, Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1971.
- ORC *Obscure Religious cults*, Sashi Bhusan Dasgupta, Calcutta: Firma KLM Private Limited, 1976.
- Skt. Sanskrit
- Tib. Tibetan
- VMS *Vijñaptimātratāsiddhi of Vasubandhu*, ed., & trans., Mahesh Tiwary, Varanasi: Chowkhamba Vidyabhawan, 1967.
- YI *Yogācāra Idealism*, Ashok Kumar Chatterjee, Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass Publishers Pvt. Ltd., 1962. Reprint, 1999.

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## INTRODUCTION

*Mahāyāna* Buddhism flourished during the period between the second and the eighth century A.D., while between the seventh and the twelfth centuries, it was tantric Buddhism that dominated the scene. The creative activity of the latter period was almost exclusively devoted to tantras.<sup>1</sup> S.K. Ramchandra Rao points out that "Nalanda, Vikramśīla and Odantapura Universities were well-known centres of *Tantrik* studies".<sup>2</sup> According to tradition some of the greatest minds of Buddhist doctrine like Śāntarakṣita, Śāntideva, and even Nāgārjuna and Asaṅga were great scholars as well as tantric adepts.<sup>3</sup>

Tantric Buddhism took the world of Buddhist thought by storm. It baffles the student of Buddhist philosophy how a system known for its speculative sophistication could now degenerate, if it does as some allege, into mere esoteric and occult practices. This makes the scholar suspect that there is more to *Vajrayāna* than what meets the eye. But certain pertinent questions have to be answered

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1 D.L. Snellgrove, *The Hevajra Tantra: A Critical Study* (London: Oxford University Press, 1959; Reprint, 1980), Part I, p.4. From now on referred to as HT(S).

2. S.K. Ramchandra Rao, *Tibetan Tantrik Tradition* (...), Arnold-Heinemann, 1977), p.31. Jagaddala University in North Bengal was another centre for tantric studies. For details see pp. 30-36.

3 James B. Robinson, trans., *Buddha's Lions: The Lives of the Eighty-four Siddhas (catuṣaśīti-siddha-pravṛtti by Abhayadatta)* (Berkeley, Dharma Publishing, 1979), p.5. But modern scholars dispute these claims.

before he can arrive at definite conclusions. What is the essence of *Vajrayāna*? Is it merely a set of obscure practices performed for nefarious purposes? Is there a definite theory, which informs its prescribed praxis?

## 1. Yoga Tantrā

The name '*Yoga Tantra*' is generally applied to the third and higher grade of Buddhist tantras. But here the term '*Yoga Tantra*' is not employed to refer to this class of *tantra*, nor is it used to refer to the *Hevajra Tantra* itself, for, the latter does not belong to this grade of *Yoga Tantras* at all but to the *Anuttarayoga Tantras* and more precisely, to the *Yoginī Tantras*. At times, the term '*Yoga Tantra*' is also used to refer to the common elements of the *Yoga* and *Anuttarayoga Tantras*. *The Blue Annals* called the *Yoga* and *Anuttarayoga Tantras* as 'outer' *yoga tantra* and 'inner' *yoga tantra*.<sup>4</sup> However, I have used the term '*Yoga Tantra*' to refer to the *Vajrayānic* theory and praxis of *Anuttarayoga Tantra* leading to the mystic union (*yoga*), of polarities within the individual, which is the essence and goal of *Vajrayāna*.

Yogic practices existed long before the advent of Tantric Buddhism. The term '*yoga*' has several meanings, such as *samādhi*, union etc. Patañjali describes *yoga* as the cessation of mental modifications (*yogaś citta-vṛtti-nirodhaḥ*)<sup>5</sup>. The *Bhagavad Gitā* characterises it as 'equanimity in all circumstances' (*samatvaṁ yogā ucyate*)

4 George N. Roerich, *The Blue Annals* (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1949; Reprint 1996), p.351.

5 Christopher Chapple and Yogi Anand Viraj, *The Yoga Sūtras of Patañjali* (Delhi: Satguru Publications, 1990), *Samādhi Pāda*, 2.



or as 'skill in action' (*yogaḥ karmasu kauśalam*).<sup>6</sup> *Yoga* is the goal for the Buddhists as well, but understood in a quite different sense from that of their Hindu counterparts. For the Hīnayānists, as Stcherbatsky states, '*yoga*' is profound meditation in which the infinite number of separate evanescent entities (dharmas), the ultimate constituents of reality, gradually steer into quiescence leading to an absolute annihilation of all life.<sup>7</sup> It is concentrated thought (*samādhi*) or fixing the attention on a single point (*ekāgratā*) and persisting in that state (*punaḥ punaḥ cetasi niveśanam*).<sup>8</sup> *Daśabhūmikasūtra* advocates the practice of *yoga* in the first stage called *vimalā* for achieving the purification of all forms.<sup>9</sup> For the *Mādhyamika*, it would mean the cessation of views about reality, and for the *Yogācāra*, the cancellation of subject-object duality. The *Mādhyamika* and *Yogācāra* understanding of *yoga*, albeit near to the '*citta vṛtti nirodha*' of Patāñjali, is from a different metaphysical stock; the former is monistic and absolutistic, while the latter springs from the dualism of *puruṣa* and *prakṛti*.

In all, the Buddhist conception of *yoga* is far from those of the Brahminical theist and monist as well. For the theist it is union with God or at least being in his presence, while for the monist, *yoga* is merging into the impersonal absolute (*brahma veda brahmaiva bhavati*). For the Buddhists, *yoga* does not mean to be united with God or be

6 Swami Tapasyananda, Trans., *Śrīmad Bhagavad Gītā* (Mylapore, Sri Ramakrishna Math, ...) 2:48, 50.

7 Theodore Stcherbatsky, *The Conception of Buddhist Nirvāṇa*, 2nd edition (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1977), Part II, p.4.

8 Ibid., Part II, p.7.

9 "...sarvākārapariśodhanābhīnirhāra eva yogaḥ karaṇīyaḥ" P.L. Vaidya, ed., *Daśabhūmikasūtra* (Darbhanga: The Mithila Institute, 1967), 16. (emphasis added) From now on referred to as DBHS.

swallowed up by the Absolute. Evan-Wentz speaks of Buddhist *yoga* as essentially overcoming ignorance by being yoked to knowledge.<sup>10</sup> While it is some form of cessation for the Hīnayānist and the Mahāyānist, (of dharmas for the Hīnayānist, of views for the *Mādhyamika*, of subject-object duality for the *Yogācāra*), *yoga* for the Vajrayānist, is different. In *Vajrayāna*, *yoga* is the mystic union of the bi-polarity within the psyche of the *sādhaka*, and the consequent re-integration of the individual. In *Vajrayāna*, the state of mystic union (*yoga*) or *yuganaddha* is expressed through the symbol of 'sexual embrace', the most intimate of relationships.<sup>11</sup>

## 2. Theory and Praxis

The Vajryānic theory is the confluence of two distinct streams of thought, namely the *Mahāyāna* and the *Tantra*. By Mahāyānic thought we mean the general notions of *Mādhyamika* and *Yogācāra*, without going into further distinctions of the different branches of these schools. Tantric insights found in *Vajrayāna* spring from the general stock of ideas collectively called Tantrism to which both the Hindus and the Buddhists had recourse. The praxis also has elements from both Mahāyānic and tantric traditions. The practice of virtue, the study of *Mādhyamika* and *Yogācāra* notions are incumbent on the Vajrayānist as well. Tsong-kha-pa writes,

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10 W.Y. Evan-Wentz, ed., *Tibetan Yoga and Secret Doctrines*, 2nd edition (London: Oxford University Press, 1958; Paperback, 1967), p.39.

11 Herbert V. Guenther, *Tibetan Buddhism without Mystification* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1966), p.57.

Intelligence which apprehends the profound nature of all that is, is the same in *Mantrayāna* as it is in the two lower courses (*Hīnayāna* and *Pāramitayāna*), because without understanding existentiality it is impossible to cross the ocean of *saṃsāra* by exhausting our emotional reactions.<sup>12</sup>

The early Buddhism and the later *Mahāyāna* tradition become preparatory stages for the practice of *Vajrayāna*. Yogi C.N. Chen points that, "he who is not well accomplished in the *Hīnayāna* meditation of purification and in the *Mahāyāna* meditation of sublimation should not practice the *Vajrayāna* meditation either of Hevajra or of any other Heruka."<sup>13</sup>

The term 'praxis' sums up the entire realm of tantric practices adopted by the Vajrayānists. The term 'praxis' is more comprehensive than the term 'practice' as the former refers also to the principles that inform the various practices. 'Praxis' is closer to principles than to practices; it is applied principles as distinct and differentiated from static theories. This work does not enumerate or describe the various Vajrayānic practices but attempts to reveal the principles, which are applied therein. The happy marriage between the Mahāyānic and the tantric notions gave birth to this unique form of *tantra* called the *Vajrayāna*.

### 3. The Hevajra Tantra

*Hevajra Tantra* has been chosen as the constant reference in our effort to delineate the theory and praxis of

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12 as found in *Ibid.*, p.61.

13 Yogi C.M. Chen, "A Safe Guide of the Practitioner of Hevajra Tantra", in *Encyclopaedia of Buddhist Tantra*, (EBT) vol.4, ed., Sadhu Santideva (New Delhi: Cosmo Publications, 2001), p.997.

*Vajrayāna*. According to A.K. Warder, it is one of the most significant Vajrayānic texts, on account of the number of commentaries written on them, the most important of which are the *Yogaratnamālā* of Kṛṣṇācārya and the *Muktāvalī* of Ratnākaraśānti. I have made extensive use of these commentaries, thanks to the efforts of D.L. Snellgrove, G.W. Farrow and I. Menon, and Ram Shankar Tripathi and Thakur Sain Negi. The text and its commentaries help us to interpret the theory and praxis in the light of *Mahāyāna* philosophy as well as to explain the tantric insights informing them. *Hevajra Tantra* is a product of the mature years of *Vajrayāna* and is respected as an authoritative text on tantric theory and praxis, and is oft quoted by scholars.

#### 4. Nature and Scope

*Vajrayāna* has been analysed mostly by the Buddhologists, Orientalists, Indologists and Archaeologists. Great has been the contribution of tantric scholars like Mm. H.P. Shastri, Benoytosh Bhattacharyya, S.B. Dasgupta, P.C. Bagchi, Mm. Gopinath Kaviraj, Chintaharan Chakravarti, Agehananda Bharati, David Snellgrove, Arthur Avalon, Mircea Eliade, W.Y. Evans-Wentz, Giuseppe Tucci, Herbert V. Guenther, Lama Anagarika Govinda, F.D. Lessing, Alex Wayman and others. Their efforts have shed much light on such issues as the origin and development of *Vajrayāna*, the date and authorship of tantric texts, identity of tantric deities, masters and tantric sites (pīṭhas). Some of their works have given us details of tantric practices and their possible links with other traditions and religious observances. They have corroborated their findings with historical, textual and archaeological evidences. The laudable efforts of these

eminent scholars have furnished us with a great amount of useful data for deeper analysis and interpretation.

The present study does not focus on the historical and Indological specifics associated with texts, authors, places, and the like. We do not enter into the rewarding enterprise of comparing *Hevajra Tantra* with other tantric texts or attempt to relate *Vajrayāna* with Hindu tantras and other religious traditions. Issues of exegesis and hermeneutics, if any, that crop up in a textual analysis, are mentioned and bypassed. The present study is not a textual analysis but a thematic one. Our effort is only to accentuate the universal and fundamental themes of *Vajrayāna* and relate it with the basic notions of *Mahāyāna* and tantrism. This is a humble contribution to the construction of a Vajryānic theory and praxis in the light of the insights found in the *Hevajra Tantra*.

## 5. The Hypothesis

It is my contention that *Vajrayāna* is a continuation and development of the *Mahāyāna* tradition, and not a degeneration. Tantric Buddhism is not monolithic but contains diverse strands of thought and action, from the frivolous to the most sublime. In it there is a confluence of the Mahāyānic metaphysics and tantric insights, resulting in the theory of *Vajrayāna*. The unique conception of the Absolute as *vajra*, its bipolarity, and its nature as bliss constitute the salient features of Vajrayānic metaphysics. The praxis, drawn from a large number of sources, is the Vajrayānic metaphysics in action, the goal of which is to attain the union of polarities leading to psychic re-integration. Therefore *Vajrayāna* is metaphysics and not a mere cluster of unmeaning practices; it is theory as well as praxis.

## 6. The Significance of the Study

*Vajrayāna* is a system 'more sinned against than sinning'. It has been treated as a *pariah* in the world of Indian philosophy, for it finds no place in the classical compendia of Indian Philosophy like the *Sarva-darśana-saṁgraha* of Mādhavācārya or even in the modern ones of Hiriyanna, Dasgupta or Radhakrishnan. It is neither criticised nor condemned; but worse, ignored. This untouchability is probably due to the presence of certain questionable practices within its praxis. Though philosophers have shunned *tantra*, Orientalists, and Indologists, both oriental and occidental, have taken keen interest in tantrism in general and *Vajrayāna* in particular. Among these, some authors like S.B. Dasgupta are impartial and non-judgemental in their evaluation of tantrism while others like Benoytosh Bhattacharyya, who calls it a 'disease' to be eradicated,<sup>14</sup> are hostile. Even today, *Vajrayāna* is conceived merely as a bundle of occult and esoteric practices, which are not to be discussed. The present study attempts to clear some of these prejudices and aspersions that have cast a slur on an important and popular Indian tradition and reveal the structure of its theory and praxis.

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14 Benoytosh Bhattacharyya writes, "If at any time in the history of India the mind of the nation as a whole has been diseased, it was in the Tāntric age, or the period immediately preceding the Muhammadan conquest of India....Some should therefore take up the study comprising the diagnosis, aetiology, pathology and prognosis of the disease, so that more capable men may take up its treatment and eradication in the future." (emphasis added) See Benoytosh Bhattacharyya, *An Introduction to Buddhist Esoterism* (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass Publishers Private Limited, 1980; Reprint 1989), Preface. From now on referred to as IBE.



## 7. The Contribution to the Study of *Vajrayāna*

Much of the prejudice and misconception about *Vajrayāna* result from the faulty approach of judging the system in the light of a set of practices, which this study strives to rectify by advocating a reverse process; that is, by viewing the Vajrayānic practices in the light of its metaphysics. Hence in this work we present first the theory of *Vajrayāna* and then try to understand the praxis in the light of that. This helps one to understand the 'why' of what the Vajrayānists do. While it is right to judge the tree from its 'fruit,' it is wrong to judge it from its 'root'. Vajrayānic praxis may be rooted in certain unconventional practices, but *Vajrayāna* itself must not be condemned without reference to the 'fruits' it bears. Hence this study also takes care to highlight the 'fruits'- the relevance of *Vajrayāna* for modern man.

This book claims no novelty of ideas, as Mahāyānic and tantric insights are not unknown entities to the reader. Moreover, there are many works on *Vajrayāna*. This work is original only in its approach, and its attempt to bring *Vajrayāna* under a philosophic scan. Vajrayānic theory is analysed in the light of *Mahāyāna* philosophy and tantric insights, and its praxis is viewed in the light of its metaphysics.

*Hevajra Tantra* has been edited and translated by Snellgrove, Farrow and Menon, but it has not been analysed or studied in depth. Others who have edited the *Hevajra Tantra* have given it nothing more than an introduction to the text. Many authors use *Hevajra Tantra* as their constant reference, but do no more. Some highlight the practices followed in *Vajrayāna* and neglect the theory that informs them, while others mention the salient features of *Vajrayāna* and stop at that. There has hardly been any

attempt, to highlight the metaphysics of *Vajrayāna*, which emerges out of the confluence of Mahāyānic thought and tantric insights, and to view the practices in the light of that metaphysics. In the present study, a modest attempt has been made to bring forward the theory of *Vajrayāna* in the light of the insights presented in *Hevajra Tantra*. And it views the Vajrayānic praxis in the light of its metaphysics and highlights its relevance for modern man.

## 8. The Limitations and the Difficulties

An attempt to study *Vajrayāna* meets several limitations and difficulties. A host of controversial issues, which are significant, remain inconclusive due to the absence of adequate textual, historical, and archaeological evidences. A few important tantric texts have been edited and published, thanks to the effort of the Oriental Institute of Baroda, the Mithila Institute of Darbhanga and others. However, a Large number still remains confined to manuscripts in the possession of individuals, and probably a larger number still is lost or corrupted beyond recovery. The secrecy imposed on tantric practices would not allow us closer access. Tantric realisation is an inner experience, which requires prolonged practice under a competent *Guru* and cannot be fully captured through a purely academic enterprise as the present one.

The *Hevajra Tantra* itself has certain inherent difficulties, which throw further challenge to the scholar. The language is enigmatic and esoteric and is fraught with ambiguity, equivocation, contradictions, and paradoxes. The use of picturesque language, symbolic expressions, iconographic details require interpretation at every step. In this endeavour, the commentaries like the *Yogaratanmālā* of Kṛṣṇācārya, and the *Muktāvalī* of Ratnākaraśānti as well



as the explanations offered by Snellgrove, Farrow and Menon have been of immense help.

It is utterly presumptuous to imagine that the present study is an exhaustive and the final account of the theory and praxis of *Vajrayāna*. Vajrayānic insights and praxis continue to taunt the intellect of the scholar and elude his academic grasp. However, it is fervently hoped that the lead given in the present study will be pursued further by more competent scholars interested in tantric Buddhism.

## 9. The Methodology

This book bases itself primarily on the two editions and translations of the *Hevajra Tantra*, one by D.L. Snellgrove and the other by G.W. Farrow and I. Menon. Snellgrove's edition, in two parts, is entitled '*The Hevajra Tantra: A Critical Study*'. Part One furnishes us with an erudite introduction, the English translation of the text and a resume of the content; and Part Two contains the Sanskrit and Tibetan versions of the text as well as the Sanskrit version of the *Yogaratnamālā*. Farrow and Menon give us in one volume entitled, '*The Concealed Essence of the Hevajra Tantra*', the Sanskrit text of the *Hevajra Tantra*, its English translation, as well as the English translation of the commentary - *Yogaratnamālā* - side by side, making the text very scholar-friendly. The study has had recourse to another commentary on the *Hevajra Tantra*, namely the *Muktāvalī* of Ratnākaraśanti, besides other tantric works in their Sanskrit originals edited by Mm. H.P Shastri, Benoytosh Bhattacharyya, P.C. Bagchi, and others. The Tibetan and the Chinese sources are referred to through the works and translations by learned scholars like Evans-Wentz, Giuseppe Tucci, Herbert V. Guenther, Lama Anagarika Govinda, F.D. Lessing, Alex Wayman, Kazi

Dawa Samdup and others. Besides these, other general works on tantrism and specific ones on *Vajrayāna* have shed much light on some of the puzzling obscurities in which the text abounds.

This work is both analytic and synthetic in approach. The study of *Hevajra Tantra* reveals the presence of the basic *Mādhyamika* and *Yogācāra* concepts in the text, but in a disorderly and unsystematic manner, side by side with specifically tantric notions. These notions appear again and again, not only in concepts but also in other forms, such as symbols, images, iconographic details, and *sandhyābhāṣā*. The commentaries explain these notions in terms of the metaphysics of *Mādhyamika* and *Yogācāra*. The text of the *Hevajra Tantra*, and the explanations provided by the commentaries as well as verses from other tantric texts, give us sufficient ground to posit the existence of a metaphysical framework in *Vajrayāna*. An analysis of this metaphysical framework shows that all of its different strands are not entirely of *Mahāyāna* stock but some of it are of tantric origin, and that at times even the Mahāyānic notions have been modified and coloured by tantric insights.

*Hevajra Tantra* has been subjected to a thematic analysis along metaphysical lines. Verses and phrases, which reveal the metaphysical structure of the text, have been culled out and scrutinised in the light of *Mādhyamika* and *Yogācāra* traditions. Specifically tantric notions, which are incorporated in the text, are also analysed. The modifications and novelties grafted on to the Mahāyānic notions under tantric influence are brought to the fore. The relevant passages are grouped together and synthesised to constitute a coherent Vajrayānic metaphysical superstructure built on the Mahāyānic metaphysical

foundation, which undoubtedly is the inspiration for *Vajrayāna*. The *Hevajra Tantra*, along with *Yogaratanmālā*, and other important tantras, is frequently summoned to substantiate and corroborate the metaphysical claims.

The practices associated with *Hevajra sādhana* are not given as one systematic whole within the text. Theory and praxis lie interspersed in a somewhat confused manner. This is probably deliberate, since tantric *sādhana* is not to be learned from books, but from a competent *Guru*. However, for our purely academic purpose, these scattered references to the *Hevajra* practices have been grouped together to form a consistent praxis. Yet the exact nature of the praxis is not very clear in some cases. There is no attempt to justify or advocate them but only to show how they are related to and consistent with the theoretical framework of *Vajrayāna*.

The Vajrayānic theory and praxis is constructed with ample reference to classical Mahāyānic and tantric texts and commentaries. They are further substantiated with the views and opinions of scholars in *Mādhyamika* and *Yogācāra*, as well as in *Vajrayāna*. As the approach of the present study is new, and the effort to construct a theory and praxis unprecedented, all the assertions made here may not be shared by the scholars in the field. However, textual references and indications give us sufficient ground to arrive at the assertions we have made and the conclusions we have drawn in this work. Our presentation of the theme is expository, not argumentative, or confrontational. Controversies are pointed out but not entertained or entered into beyond a point, and we do not take sides. Our focus is on presenting, as far as possible, a closely-knit theory and praxis of *Vajrayāna* basing ourselves on the *Hevajra*.

*Tantra* and its principal commentaries the *Yogaratanmālā* and the *Muktāvalī*.

## 10. The Layout of Material

The material is organised into seven chapters. Every chapter begins with a few relevant introductory remarks and concludes with a brief summary of the issues dealt with. In the Introduction, the theme is analysed and the title is elaborated and justified. The nature and scope of the thesis is laid bare so as to enable the reader to have the right perspective as he enters into it. The contention of the author is explained briefly and the significance and novelty of the approach is indicated. The reader is made aware of the limitations and difficulties that the study has met with, and how, and to what extent they have been surmounted.

The first chapter presents a bird's-eye view of the world of Tantrism. It analyses the various nuances of the term '*tantra*', the origin of tantrism, and its salient features. A brief survey of the Hindu Tantras is included to complete the broader picture of the tantric tradition. The origin and development of *Vajrayāna* from *Mantrayāna* to *Kālacakrayāna* are treated at some length. The discussion then focuses on the classification of Buddhist tantras. In the sub-section on Vajrayānic literature, the different genre of Buddhist tantric literature as well as some of the important texts are referred to. One of the characteristics of tantric literature is the use of *sandhyābhāṣā* and other unique modes of communication. The controversies surrounding the term '*sandhyābhāṣā*' are only referred to but not elaborated on, as they bear little consequence to this study. The chapter ends with a brief reference to the great tantric masters, the Siddhācāryas, under whose supervision *Vajrayāna* took shape and flourished.

The second chapter introduces the *Hevajra Tantra*, the text in the light of which this work has been carried out. The title '*Hevajra Tantra*' is analysed into its constituent parts '*he*' and '*vajra*' signifying *karuṇā* and *prajñā* respectively. The date of composition and authorship are discussed, followed by a brief comment on the different versions of the text and the context in which it is believed to have been proclaimed by the Buddha. A brief analysis of the language and style of the text is added to aid the reader to appreciate the text better. Snellgrove gives a critical résumé of the content of the text, which is helpful in grouping together related verses. In this chapter, an attempt has been made to make a thematic analysis of the text so that the discussion on the theory and praxis of *Vajrayāna* becomes clear. The chapter concludes with a brief account of the commentarial literature on the *Hevajra Tantra* as well as a discussion on its significance and position among other major Buddhist tantras.

The third and the fourth chapters together delineate the theory of *Vajrayāna*, which is constituted of two distinct strands, namely Mahāyānic and tantric. The third chapter concentrates on the Mahāyānic metaphysical foundation, which is at the core of Vajrayānic theory. It discusses the nature of Existence, *Avidyā*, and the Absolute. There is a brief account of the understanding of *sūnyatā* and *vijñāna* as elaborated in *Mādhyamika* and *Yogācāra* respectively. The two views on Reality, namely *paramārtha* and *saṃvṛti* as found in the *Hevajra Tantra*, are highlighted. The Absolute is viewed as *vajra*, *sahaja*, and *mahāsukha*, which is a Vajrayānic modification of the conception of the Absolute inherited from its Mahāyānic predecessors. The text emphasises the immanence of the Absolute as the underlying principle of unity. The notion of *Tathāgata*, and the modification of the *trikāya* system in the hands of the



Vajrayānists are commented upon. Though the Hevajra Tantra does not employ the term *tathāgatagarbha*, the notion that every sentient being is a potential *tathāgata* is at the core of the text, and this is embodied in the person of the Vajragarbha to whom the Bhagavān preaches the *Hevajra Tantra*.

The fourth chapter explains the tantric base of the Vajrayānic metaphysics. The Absolute is conceived as bipolar and the Mahāyānic notions of *śūnyatā* and *karuṇā* form the two polarities. They are now called *prajñā* and *upāya* respectively. The two are considered female and male and are identified with the two nāḍīs, *lalanā* and *rasanā* as well as with vowels (*āli*) and consonants (*kāli*). The concept of union is fundamental to the tantric perception of Reality. The Absolute is viewed as the union (*yuganaddha*) of the polarities. *Vajrayāna* assigns a central place to the body and it is conceived as the microcosm. The chapter analyses the notions of Body, Speech, and Mind, which form the core of the pañcaskandhas, the five aggregates of phenomenal existence. The chapter concludes with a brief account of the 'homologous vision' of existence as delineated in the text.

The fifth and sixth chapters together furnish us with the praxis of *Vajrayāna*. The fifth chapter gives us the fundamental tools for praxis. The chapter explains the *maṇḍala* in general, and the *maṇḍala* of Hevajra and Nairātmyā in particular. The body itself is conceived as a *maṇḍala*. The meaning and significance of the *maṇḍala* is explained and its connection with Vajrayānic theory is established. The conception of deity is another important issue that is discussed. The significance of the *dhyāni* Buddhas, the *Ḍākinīs*, Hevajra, Nairātmyā and their 'retinue-goddesses' is explained. The chapter devotes some

space to the symbolic meaning and significance of the deity in the Vajrayānic praxis. The role of *Mantra* as an important tool in stabilising the mind and the need for a competent *Guru* in tantric praxis are explained.

The sixth chapter deals with the praxis proper, which consists essentially of the process of Generation and the process of Completion. The praxis of *Hevajra sādhana* calls for an intense preparation of the *yogī* and the *yoginī*. The strict philosophical training as enjoined by the *Hevajra Tantra* is followed by the application of the vows and the conferring of consecrations. The process of Generation consists of meditation on the *Hevajra maṇḍala*, which begins with certain preliminaries. The meditation on the *Hevajra maṇḍala* consists of the four stages of Sole Hero Yoga and the *ṣaḍaṅga-yoga*. This meditation (on the *Hevajra maṇḍala*) is followed by the visualisation of the *Nairātmyā maṇḍala*. The process of Completion is aimed at achieving union, which may be external, involving the female practitioner, or internal in which the union is between the two subtle *nāḍīs*, namely *lalanā* and *rasanā*. This union is achieved with different *mudrās* in which the different moments and the joys are noted by the practitioner.

The seventh chapter explains the relevance of Vajrayānic theory and praxis for our times. This concluding chapter contains a brief appraisal of the essential aspects of Vajrayānic theory: its understanding of the nature of existence, the nature of nescience, the conception of the Absolute as *vajra* and as bi-polar, the Absolute as union or *yoga* of polarities and as great bliss. The chapter shows how *Vajrayāna* has set Buddhism in a 'new key'. There is an emphasis on visualisation over conceptualisation and a shift from 'meaning' to 'meaninglessness'. The physical is

conceived as the spiritual and psychic fragmentation is replaced by re-integration. *Vajrayāna* has shed much light on the nature of human psyche and it holds much therapeutic relevance for man. The chapter also considers some of the popular questions, such as, whether *Vajrayāna* is a degeneration or development, whether it is practical and relevant for modern man, and whether it is Metaphysics, Religion or Psychology. *Vajrayāna* is presented as a tantric form of mysticism. We also discuss what potential it holds for personal re-integration and universal harmony. Finally, the chapter concludes with a note on how Vajrayānic theory and praxis promote a new vision of man, metaphysics, and religion.



# CHAPTER 1

## TANTRIC BUDDHISM

The phenomenon of tantric<sup>1</sup> Buddhism that dominated the scene of Indian Buddhism from the eighth to the thirteenth century was the result of a fusion of divergent thoughts and practices. Tantric Buddhism was forged from a variety of metaphysical currents, and religious practices, within a particular socio-political context. To understand its theory and praxis, it is essential to have a panoramic view of tantrism in general, and identify the labyrinth of influences that gave birth to it in particular.<sup>2</sup> This chapter is an attempt to unravel the genesis, nay the genetics of tantric Buddhism as well as trace its growth and development.

### 1. Tantra

The essence of *tantra* is revealed in its etymology. The term '*tantra*' comes either from the Sanskrit root '*tan*' (to spread) or from '*tantri*' (knowledge). Hence, '*tantra*' may

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1 The term 'tantric' has no basis in any Sanskrit adjectival form, but it is used widely to characterise the entire development of theory and praxis based on the class of texts called Tantras. And 'Tantrism' or 'Tantricism' is used as noun to signify the same. For the sake of uniformity I use 'Tantrism'.

2 For a brief introduction to Tantric Buddhism, the reader may have recourse to the following article by the author. Tomy Augustine, "Tantric Buddhism: An Introduction" *Jnanatirtha*, vol.IV, no.2 (July-December 2004) pp.179-199.

be understood as 'that which spreads knowledge'.<sup>3</sup> Kautilya (3<sup>rd</sup> century B.C.) used the word '*tantra*' to signify 'fundamental canons of a system of thought'.<sup>4</sup> Again, in referring to certain systems of Philosophy and Disciplines, such as *Nyāya*, *Sāṅkhya* and *Cikitsā*, expressions such as '*Nyāya-tantreṣu*', '*Sāṅkhya-tantreṣu*' and '*Cikitsā-tantreṣu*', were commonly used.<sup>5</sup> The *Ratnagotravibhāga*, a text belonging to the Buddhist *Tathāgatagarbha* literature, was popularly known as *Uttaratantra*. Therefore, the term '*tantra*', at least initially, meant any work, treatise, or handbook teaching some doctrine or practice, not necessarily a tantric one with the connotation it has now.

The term '*tantra*' could also be related to the Sanskrit verbal roots '*tan*' which means 'to stretch', or 'expound', and to '*tra*' which means 'to save'. Hence '*tantra*' is 'that which saves'. This soteriological nuance of the term '*tantra*' assumes importance in the face of the common misconception that the primary aim of *tantra* is to procure mundane benefits.

The Tibetan equivalent of the Sanskrit word '*tantra*', '*rgyud*', literally means a 'continuum' or an 'unbroken stream', flowing from ignorance to enlightenment. This is significant especially in relation to the tantric praxis. *Tantra* puts into practice the homeopathic dictum of 'curing the like by the like' (*similia similibus curantur*). That is, unlike the *Śūtra* path, the '*rgyud*' enables dissonant emotions such as *rāga* (passion), *dveṣa* (wrath), *moha* (delusion) etc., to be transmuted into blissful states of

3 '*tanyate, vistāryate jīḥnam anena iti tantram*', S.B. Dasgupta, *An Introduction to Tāntric Buddhism*, 3rd ed. (Calcutta: University of Calcutta, 1974) p.2. From now on referred to as ITB.

4 S. Abhayananda, *History of Mysticism: The Unchanging Testament* (Delhi: Sri Satguru Publications, 1996) p. 171.

5 S.B. Dasgupta, ITB, p.2.

realisation, without renunciation or rejection.<sup>6</sup> This resonates with the spirit of the *Mādhyamikakārikā* that *samsāra* and *nirvāṇa* are essentially one and the same continuum.<sup>7</sup> Thus the tantric practitioner can cultivate an uninterrupted continuum between his ordinary initial mind, the advanced mind on the Path, and the resultant fully enlightened mind of the Buddha.<sup>8</sup> While the Sanskrit root of the term 'tantra' points to its theoretical aspect, the Tibetan root highlights its praxis. *Tantra* must be understood in terms of both theory and praxis.

There have been several attempts to define *Tantra*. Benoytosh Bhattacharyya in his introduction to *Niṣpannayogāvalī* states, "Tantras are psychic sciences, which prescribe a variety of psychic exercises in order to experience certain supernormal phenomena."<sup>9</sup> This definition, while highlighting the psychic aspect of tantric praxis, seems to ignore the large number of physical practices enjoined by *Kriyā* and *Caryā* Tantras. Again, tantric praxis produces not only the experience of certain

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6 "...bhāvenaiva vimucyante vajragarbha mahākṛpa badhyante bhāvabandhena mucyante tatparijñaya..." (O Vajragarbha of great, it is by utilising the existent itself that men are liberated. Men are bound by the bondage of existence and are liberated by understanding the nature of existence.) G.W. Farrow & I. Menon, trans. & eds., *The Concealed Essence of the Hevajra with the Commentary Yogaratnamālā* (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass Publishers Private Limited, 1992) I:1:10-11. From now on referred to as HT(F).

7 "Na samsārasya nirvāṇāt kimcid asti viśeṣaṇam, na nirvāṇasya samsārāt kimcid asti viśeṣaṇam." MK.XXV,19. (*Samsāra* has nothing that distinguishes it from *Nirvāṇa*. *Nirvāṇa* has nothing that distinguishes it from *Samsāra*).

8 Graham Coleman, ed., *A Handbook of Tibetan Culture* (Calcutta: Rupa & Co., 1995; Second Impression, 1997) pp.391-392.

9 Benoytosh Bhattacharyya, ed., *Niṣpannayogāvalī of Mahāpañḍita Abhayākāragupta* (Baroda: Oriental Institute, 1972), p.14.

'supernormal phenomena' but also the attainment of siddhis and other temporal benefits, for which alone *tantra* was often pursued. Mahāmahopādhyāya Haraprasād Shastri, in his introduction to N.N. Vasu's *Modern Buddhism and its Followers in Orissa*, writes, "The word *Tantra* is very loosely used. Ordinary people understand by it any system other than the Vedas. But it really means the worship of Śakti, or female energy. The female energy is worshipped in conjunction with male energy. The union of male and female is the essence of *Tantra*."<sup>10</sup> This definition, albeit applicable to the Hindu tantras as well as the higher *Yoga* and *Anuttarayoga* tantras of the Buddhists, fails to include the lower *Kriyā* and *Caryā* Tantras. *Tantra* defies definition as it embraces within its fold elements from all quarters; it is theory and praxis; it is philosophy and religion. Hence a definition may in fact do violence to the very spirit of the system, and so it is best left undefined. However, it may be described as a special genre of religious literature, a unique philosophy and a sophisticated psychic praxis of an esoteric nature. We shall now proceed to explore the sources of the theory and praxis of *tantra*.

## 2. Rise of Tantrism

Tantrism, whether Hindu, Buddhist or Jaina, is not an absolute novelty within the Philosophico-religious traditions of India. It is rather a continuation, a modification and innovation grafted on their respective traditions. In this sense it marks a point of arrival and departure. The evolution of *tantra*, its theory and praxis, occurred over several centuries. It owes much to a wide variety of socio-cultural and religious influences. It is possible to posit a store of primitive tantric elements

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10 as quoted in Benoytosh Bhattacharyya, IBE, p.53.

scattered across several cultures, from which Hindu, Buddhist and Jaina Tantras borrowed freely over an indefinite period of time. P.G. Yogi points out that "...Tantrik tradition was not evolved by Hinduism or Buddhism out of its own select material, but has in fact grown out of the soil which both the Hindus and Buddhists use."<sup>11</sup> However, certain specific contribution to tantrism by the respective traditions is not ruled out.

## 2.1 Antiquity of Tantrism

Available historical data indicate that tantrism is of very ancient magical descent. The genealogy of certain tantric rites has been traced back to the Vedas, especially the *R̥g-veda* (10th century B.C.) and the *Atharva-veda*. On account of its close relation with the ritualistic tradition of the Vedas, *tantra* has been called *śrutiśākhāviśeṣah*.<sup>12</sup> Certain symbols engraved on coins belonging to the sixth and seventh century B.C., have been identified as tantric hieroglyphics. Upaniṣads like the *Tripuropaniṣad* contain descriptions of tantric hieroglyphics. Tantric deities were already worshipped in the fifth century is proved by the Gangdhar stone inscriptions (424 A.D.). Again, certain Āgamas may possibly belong to the same period.<sup>13</sup> The antiquity of tantrism is still difficult to determine though a number of tantric texts have been discovered. This is because these texts are of a much later development. Tantric practices were in circulation long before the texts

11 P.G. Yogi, "An Analysis of Tantrayāna (Vajrayāna)" in *Bulletin of Tibetology* (BT), No.3 (1998), p.30.

12 S.K. Moharana, *Tantric Buddhism* (New Delhi: Aryan Books International, 2001), p.3.

13 Andre Padoux, "Tantrism: Hindu Tantrism", in *The Encyclopaedia of Religion*, vol.14, ed., Mircea Eliade, (New York: Macmillan Publishing Company, 1987), p.275.

delineating them made their appearance. Most of the tantric texts belong to the period between the eighth and the fourteenth century A.D., which is considered to be the golden period of tantrism in terms of textual and artistic production.<sup>14</sup> Adequate historical data is not available as yet to arrive at a more certain date as the early stages of tantrism are much older than their first references in literature. Hence even if the tantras can be dated with some certainty the genesis of tantrism may still continue to elude the grasp of the historian.

Much scholarly wrangling has taken place on the question whether the Hindu tantras preceded the Buddhist tantras or vice versa. Mircea Eliade is of the opinion that Hindu tantrism is prior to its Buddhist counterpart. According to him, tantrism is essentially a Hindu phenomenon. However the oldest datable tantric documents are Buddhist. But Eliade counters, "Even if the oldest datable documents are Buddhist (they are Chinese, not Indian), Hindu tantrism in all likelihood and for several reasons, surely preceded Tantric Buddhism, even if both later interacted."<sup>15</sup> But Benoytosh Bhattacharyya is of the view that the Buddhist Tantras were the inspiration for the Hindu Tantras. He writes,

The developments on *Tantra* made by the Buddhists and the extraordinary plastic art they developed did not fail again to create an impression on the minds of the Hindus, and they readily incorporated many ideas, doctrines, and gods, originally conceived by the Buddhists in their religion and literature.... The bulk of the literature which goes by the name of the Hindu Tantras, arose almost immediately after the

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14 Ibid., p.276.

15 Ibid., p.275.



Buddhist ideas had established themselves, though after the Tantric Age, even up to the last century, Tāntric works were continued to be written by the Hindus.<sup>16</sup>

Benoytosh Bhattacharyya tries to establish the relative priority of the origin of certain deities common to both the systems in an effort to prove the priority of Buddhist Tantras. He concludes his lengthy argument stating, "it is possible to declare without fear of contradiction, that the Buddhists were the first to introduce the Tantras into their religion, and that the Hindus borrowed them from the Buddhists in later times, and that it is idle to say that later Buddhism was an outcome of Saivism."<sup>17</sup> Historical information available so far is scanty and confusing, rendering such an endeavour futile at the present stage. Further, the scope of this work neither warrants nor permits such an enterprise. The primary concern of the present section is only to identify the wellsprings of tantric theory and praxis.

## 2.2 Sources of Tantric Theory.

Tantric theory shares much in common with the classical Indian systems (Darśanas). Its linguistic or metalinguistic speculations are based on those of *Mīmāṃsā*. Its cosmology is modelled on the categories of *Sāṃkhya*. Tantric metaphysics, mostly of the non-dualistic, absolutistic type is Vedāntic<sup>18</sup> especially in case of Hindu Tantras, and Mahāyānic in case of Buddhist Tantras. S.B. Dasgupta writes,

...we find in the Hindu Tantras the ideas of *Vedānta*, *Yoga*, *Sāṃkhya*, *Nyāya-vaiśeṣika*, the

16 Benoytosh Bhattacharyya, *Sādhanamālā*, vol.II, (Baroda: Oriental Institute, 1928), p. xix.

17 Benoytosh Bhattacharyya, IBE, p.147.

18 Andre Padoux, "Tantrism: Hindu Tantrism", p.277.

Purāṇās and even of the medical sciences and the law-books – all scattered here and there; so also in the Buddhist Tantras we find fragments of metaphysical thought, which are all taken from the leading schools of *Mahāyāna* Buddhism as influenced by Vedāntic monism.<sup>19</sup>

Tantric theory is a jumble of ideas drawn from *Śūnyavāda*, *Yogācāra-vijñānavāda* and *Vedānta*, including even the leading tenets of early Buddhism. This rather unsystematic and confused presentation of tantric theory is probably because, the primary aim of tantrism is to build up a sure praxis to attain the goal in the shortest and easiest way possible, and not to construct a precise metaphysical system. While *Vedānta* and *Mahāyāna* represent the exoteric teaching, tantrism represents the esoteric one. The two are different yet they are not opposed to each other. The latter aims at the culmination of the spiritual journey, which begins with the comprehension of the monistic and absolutistic philosophy of the former. It is as though tantrism picks up from where the Upaniṣads and the *Mahāyāna* philosophy leaves off.<sup>20</sup> From the theoretical point of view, tantrism has not been inventive, but definitely innovative in interpreting existing notions in a new light. This is not to underplay the significance of certain typically tantric insights into the nature of reality, which we shall discuss at a later stage.

### 2.3 Sources of Tantric Praxis

The primary concern of tantrism was not to establish a metaphysical system, but “to indicate and explain the

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19 S. B. Dasgupta., ITB, p.4.

20 S. Abhayananda , *History of Mysticism: The Unchanging Testament*, pp.175-176.



practical method of realising the truth."<sup>21</sup> It is in the field of tantric *sādhana* that tantrism shows its ingenuity and creativity. Tantric *sādhana* drew inspiration from Vedic practices and is interspersed with elements of *Yoga*, besides numerous other cultural and religious ingredients.

The ascription of a Vedic origin to tantric praxis may be debated. However, the roots of certain tantric rites may be traced back to different parts of the Vedic literature, though tantrism as a system was not developed then. Some Tantras do acknowledge their Vedic parentage. The *Kulārṇava Tantra* states: "*Tasmāt vedātmakam śāstram vidhi kaulātmakam priye.*"<sup>22</sup>

Vedic authorities are cited in justification of *kaula* rites.<sup>23</sup> Most of the Vedic loans are from the *Atharva-veda* especially the *Saubhāgya-kaṇḍa* of the *Atharva-veda*. The *Kalikulārṇava Tantra* begins by stating, "Now Devī says in the *Atharvana Samhita*".<sup>24</sup> The *Yantra-Cintāmaṇi* of Damodara is considered the quintessence of the *Atharva-veda*. The tantric Upaniṣads like *Kaula*, *Rudra* etc., seem to maintain the Vedic lineage in the Tantras. The *Pañcurātra* system owes its descent to a less known vedic school called the *Ekayāna sakha* (see *Kalpataruparimala* under *Brahma Sūtra*, II:2:42). The origin of certain mantras, yantras, and cakras has been traced to the Vedas especially the *Atharva-veda*, and *Taittiriya: Āraṇyaka*<sup>25</sup> Sensualism, which is a hallmark of the Tantras, is also found in the Vedas. *Aitareya Āraṇyaka* (II:3.7.3) states that neither the seed of

21 S. B. Dasgupta, ITB, p.1.

22 Vidyāratna Tārānāthā, ed., *Kulārṇava Tantra* (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1984) II:85.

23 See *Ibid.*, II: 140-141

24 As quoted in Chintaharan Chakravarti, "Antiquity of Tantricism", in EBT vol.1, p.35.

25 *Ibid.*, p.36.

man nor the blood of woman should be despised as they are forms of *Āditya* and *Agni* respectively. The use of intoxicants for sacrificial purpose was known in Vedic times. Some claim that the hymns of *Ṛg-veda* point to the *Ṣat-karmas* of the Tantras.<sup>26</sup> Dharma Śāstras, Patañjali's *Yoga Sūtra* (iv.1), and Purāṇas (like *Padma*, *Devi*, *Kalika*, and *Linga*) and even early secular books like the *Arthasāstra* of Kauṭilya (xiv.3), refer to tantric practices.<sup>27</sup> Tantric elements are observable in Jaina canonical works in *Prākṛit* as well.<sup>28</sup>

Mircea Eliade, however, cautions us that there was no tantrism in Vedic and Brahmanic times, but merely elements that later evolved and became part of tantrism. Hence scattered references to the Vedic tradition in the tantric texts must not be taken to establish the Vedic origin of the Tantras. It is likely that such references were introduced later to win acceptance among orthodox circles.<sup>29</sup> The references to some of these practices could only mean, at best, that they were prevalent in some form in such ancient times. However, it does not show that they were either sanctioned or recommended by the Vedas.

The genetics of Tantra may lead us far beyond the confines of Vedic tradition and Āryan influences. Mircea Eliade believes that an ancient fund of autochthonous cults, whose existence is presumed, rather than proved,

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26 Ibid., p.37.

27 Ibid., pp.41-42.

28 In the *Sthananga Sūtra* (iv.4) Mahāvira refers to the *Saya-vādins* who were considered sensualists. Curative spells are found in the *Uttarādhyāyana Sūtra*. The *Sūtrakṛtanga* (II.2) refers to the practice of incantations and conjuring, the art to make one happy or miserable. Ibid., p.41.

29 Andre Padoux, "Tantrism: Hindu Tantrism", p.275.

transformed Vedic esoterism into tantrism.<sup>30</sup> These autochthonous practices comprise of the old traditions of unsystematised *yoga* and body cult, shamanic cultures of Central Asia, medicine, witchcraft, sorcery, occultism, magic - white and black, astrology, religious eroticism and folkloristic ritual.

Certain tantric practices may have been inspired by the primitive agrarian economy and the matriarchal social structures of prehistoric times. Mircea Eliade writes,

It is obvious, for example, that the symbolisms and cults of Mother Earth, of human and agricultural fertility, of the sacrality of woman, and the like, could not develop and constitute a complex religious system except through the discovery of agriculture; it is equally obvious that a preagricultural society, devoted to hunting, could not feel the sacrality of Mother Earth in the same way or with the same intensity."<sup>31</sup>

Fertility symbolism, eroticism and worship of the phallus are natural outcome of the pastoral concerns of a primitive people. Again, the emphasis on the female element in tantrism may be understood in the context of the matriarchal social structures of prehistoric societies.<sup>32</sup> The *Śākta* conception of *Śakti* as the active partner in the cosmic act of creation while *Śiva* remains purely passive probably had its origin in the primitive matriarchal cultures.<sup>33</sup>

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30 Ibid.

31 Mircea Eliade, *The Sacred and the Profane: The Nature of Religion* (translated from the French by Willard R. Trask) (New York: A Harvest/HBJ Book, 1959), p. 17.

32 Sanjukta Gupta, Dirk Jan Hoens, and Teun Goudriaan, *Hindu Tantrism*, (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1979), p.17

33 Ibid., p.55

While tantric praxis has its ancestry in the Vedic practices and in the autochthonous cults, tantric speculation has sprung from early Upaniṣadic sources such as the *Chāndogya*, the *Maitri* and others, the *Mīmāṃsā* and *Sāṅkhya* doctrines,<sup>34</sup> the absolutistic systems of *Vedānta*, *Mādhyanika* and *Yogācāra*. Thus a wide variety of influences and diverse cross-cultural currents seem to have fathered the emergence of tantrism. We have various essences, the orthodox speculation, the heterodox praxis, the Vedic ritualism and the yogico-mystic traditions of the Dravidians, other indigenous cults and autochthonous traditions brewing up in a prehistoric matriarchal social structure and agrarian economy, fanned by a spirit of revolt and challenge to the established socio-religious system, giving rise to what we now call Tantrism.

### 3. Salient Features of Tantrism

In this section we intend to discuss the chief characteristics of tantrism in general, without making any distinction between Hindu, Buddhist and Jaina tantras. S.B. Dasgupta holds that there is in fact no essential difference between the two major schools, the Hindu and the Buddhist schools of Tantrism; but other scholars like Lama Anagarika Govinda see it otherwise.

#### 3.1 The Spirit of Heterodoxy

One of the main features of tantrism is that it is a departure from tradition, especially the Vedic. The term 'tantrika' (follower of *Tantra*) was used as a mark of

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34 The tantric duality of *Siva-Sakti* betrays some affinity to the Sāṅkhyan principle of *Puruṣa* and *Prakṛti*. While there is no identity of *Puruṣa* and *Prakṛti* in *Sāṅkhya*, there is transcendental unity of *Śiva* and *Śakti* in *Śākta* and *Śaiva* philosophies. This could be a case of tantric innovation of the basic Sāṅkhyan thought. *Ibid.*, p.49.

distinction from 'vaidika' (follower of *Veda*).<sup>35</sup> Tantric tradition came to be deemed extraneous and even opposed to Vedic tradition, though the former seemed to have borrowed certain elements from the latter. Most of the Vedic loans were from the *Atharva-veda*, which always smacked of relative heterodoxy, seen from the fact that many Brahmins referred to the *Veda* as only 'trayi' (three-fold).<sup>36</sup> The term 'tantra' was used to denote scriptures, which expounded non-vedic doctrines and practices. The content of tantras differed from the content of the Vedas and its exegetical literature.<sup>37</sup> In the eighteenth chapter of *Rudrayāmala*, Vasiṣṭha the self-controlled the son of Brahmā, was advised to go to Cīna and learn the *sādhana* of the goddess. Thereupon, Vasiṣṭha expressed the confusion in his mind and addressed the Buddha,

Yet seeing the type of discipline (viz. the left-handed rituals involved), doubts assail my mind. Destroy them and my wicked mind bent on the Vedic ritual (only). O Lord, in thy abode there are rites which have been ostracised from the *Veda* (*vedabahiṣkṛtāḥ*) How is it that wine, meat, woman are drunk, eaten, and enjoyed by heaven-clad (i.e. nude, *digambara*) siddhas (adepts) who are excellent (*varāḥ*) and trained in the drinking of blood? They drink constantly and enjoy beautiful women (*muhurmuhuh prapibanti ramayanti varāṅganām*).... They are beyond the Vedas (*vedasyāgocarāḥ*).<sup>38</sup>

35 Andre Padoux, "Tantrism: An Overview" in *The Encyclopaedia of Religion*, vol.14., p.273.

36 Agehananda Bharati, *The Tantric Tradition*, (London: Rider & Co., 1965; This edition, 1992), p.82, see fn.30.

37 Sanjukta Gupta, Dirk Jan Hocns, and Teun Goudriaan, *Hindu Tantrism*, pp.5-6.

38 Agehananda Bharati, *The Tantric Tradition*, p.68

It is said that the Buddha then instructed him in Cīnācāra involving the use of wine, meat, women etc. and Vasiṣṭha obtained *siddhi*.

The break with the tradition was characteristic of tantrism. It was a departure not only from Brahmanism and classical Hinduism but also from Jainism and Buddhism and even from *Mahāyāna* philosophy to some extent.<sup>39</sup> The differences became more pronounced when we consider the *sādhanas*. The tantras advocated certain peculiar and heterodox guidelines, which were at times repulsive and obnoxious. Some of these were drawn from certain practices that we find in witchcraft, sorcery, shamanism, occultism, magic and the like. However, tantrism rises far above these heterodox practices in its nature and scope. The cult of the body, including sexo-yogic practices, along with esoteric geometric patterns (*yantra*), gestures (*mudrā*) and incantations (*mantra*) are nothing but instruments to attain spiritual transcendence.<sup>40</sup>

### 3.2 The Spirit of Revolt

According to some scholars, tantrism as a movement of the masses, is a reaction against the social ills and excesses of the established religions. It professed equality of all, encouraged free social interaction among all castes, and unrestricted access to ritual worship for all, in blatant opposition to the existing Brahmanic traditions. This heterodox spirit is seen especially among the Bauls of Bengal who were called, '*ulṭo pathiks*' (followers of the reverse order of things). They shared the spirit of social criticism upheld by the *Santa* poets of Northern and Upper

39 Andre Padoux, "Tantrism: An Overview" vol.14., p.273.

40 Ted Honderich, ed., *The Oxford Companion to Philosophy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995), p.864.



India, the mystics of *Marāṭhā*, and the *Sikh*, and the *Sūfī* poets. The *Hevajra Tantra* re-echoes the same spirit when it states, "The one who performs the *Heruka yoga* interacts with all the five castes. He conceives of the five castes unified as one caste because he does not distinguish between one or many castes."<sup>41</sup> The text adds, "Even those untouchable *Caṇḍālas* and other outcastes and those whose minds are intent on living for slaughter will attain accomplishment if they follow the *Hevajra* method of this there is no doubt."<sup>42</sup> The *yogi* is urged to violate all Vedic injunctions incumbent on the orthodox *sādhaka*. "The *yogi* should not think of anything as being prohibited and he should never think of anything as being inedible. There is not anything, good or bad, that he should not think or say."<sup>43</sup>

Tantrism revelled in the worship of unorthodox deities while principal deities of established religion were relegated to humbler positions. The treatment meted out to these gods smack of a spirit of revolt. They are presented as incapable of alleviating the miseries of the *sādhaka* who finally takes refuge in the tantric deities. Benoytosh Bhattacharyya points out that in the Buddhist Tantras we find a number of Hindu gods insulted, calumniated and humiliated. It is stated that the worshipper of *Mṛtyuvañcana Tārā* attains such power that even the ends of his hair cannot be destroyed by the Hindu gods, such as *Brahma*,

41 "herukayogasya puṁso vihāraḥ pañcavarṇeṣu/  
pañcavarṇasamāyuktam ekavarṇam tu kalpitam/  
anekenaikavarṇeṇo yasmād bhedo na lakṣyate!" (HT (F) I:6:4.

42 "caṇḍālceṇḍakārādyā māraṇārthacittakāḥ/  
te'pi hevajram āgamyā sidhyante nātra saṁśayaḥ" (HT (F)  
II:4:78.

43 "nākāryam vidyate kiñcin nābhakṣyam vidyate sadā/  
nācintyam vidyate hy atra nāvācyam yac chubhā ubham!" (HT (F)  
I: 7:24.

*Indra*, the Moon, the Sun, *Śiva*, the deities of the waters, *Yama* and *Manmatha*.<sup>44</sup>

### 3.3 Ritualism

Tantrism is essentially ritualistic, with rites and rituals of varying complexity occupying a fundamental position in all tantras, whether Hindu, Buddhist, or Jaina.<sup>45</sup> It echoes the strong trend that probably affected all religions, to substitute tangible and popular ritual for the earlier abstract meditations.<sup>46</sup> Tantrism did not focus on developing new lines of speculation though certain new metaphysical insights may be read into the theory and praxis of *tantra*. The metaphysical subtleties, which are not altogether wanting, belong to the respective traditions, Hindu, Buddhist, or Jaina to which they owe allegiance.<sup>47</sup> Tantrism is primarily a *sādhana*, a fund of practical *yoga* and mantric method. Heterodox and even repulsive practices, including sexo-yogic practices, are not only not ruled out, but positively recommended. Mircea Eliade points out that these repulsive and frightening practices prove that the adept is free from fear and disgust, and is able to employ the meanest of objects for the noblest of purposes.<sup>48</sup> Ritual is both external and more importantly internal, especially in the higher tantras. The practice of meditation (*dhyāna*), visualisation of the deities and internal worship of them are integral to the ritual.<sup>49</sup> Even in

44 see Bhattacharyya Benoytosh, IBE, pp. 116-119.

45 Andre Padoux, "Tantrism: An Overview", p. 274.

46 A.K. Warder, *Indian Buddhism*, 2nd ed. (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1980), p. 493.

47 Sanjukta Gupta, Dirk Jan Hoens, and Teun Goudriaan, *Hindu Tantrism*, p.47.

48 Andre Padoux, "Tantrism: Hindu Tantrism", p. 279.

49 Sanjukta Gupta, Dirk Jan Hoens, and Teun Goudriaan, *Hindu Tantrism*, p.8.



external worship the deity is invoked from within the adept's own heart and also dismissed therein. Again, worship involves the employment of both gross (*sthūla*) and subtle (*sūkṣma*) objects, such as intricate formulas (*mantra*), geometrical designs (*yantra*), physical gestures (*mudrā*) etc. These are tools by which the Ultimate Reality is realised and the experience articulated.

### 3.4 Centrality of the Body

One of the fundamental postulates of tantrism is that truth resides within the body of the adept. The human body is credited to be the easiest medium through which truth can be realised.<sup>50</sup> Tantrism adopts a mystic physiology in which the body, which is the microcosm, is identified with the universe, which is the macrocosm.<sup>51</sup> Tantrism is deeply anthropocentric in the sense that there is a macro-microcosmic equation. The 'cosmic being', which is as old as *R̥g-veda* (X,90) is adopted and magnified in tantrism. The gods, heavens, hells etc., are all present within the human body.<sup>52</sup> Body and bodily faculties are not dismissed but employed in the practice of *sādhana*. "The tantras do not teach to subdue the senses, but to increase their power and then to harness them in the service of the achievement of lasting ecstasy, the target of these methods thus being the same as that of the orthodox."<sup>53</sup> Along with the gross physical body a subtle yogic body is also recognised. This secondary somatic system consisting of *nāḍīs* and *cakras* located along an imagined spinal column is common to all

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50 S.B. Dasgupta, *ITB*, p.3.

51 Sanjukta Gupta, Dirk Jan Hoens, and Teun Goudriaan, *Hindu Tantrism*, p.8.

52 *Ibid.*, p.57.

53 Agehananda Bharati, *The Tantric Tradition*, p.290.

yogic disciplines and is at the core of tantric theory and praxis as well.<sup>54</sup>

### 3.5 The Ultimate Reality as Bi-polar

The notion of the bi-polar structure of the ultimate is the corner stone of tantric speculation. Viewed theologically, the ultimate non-dual reality possesses two aspects in its fundamental nature. The polarities may be characterised as negative and the positive or static (*nivṛtti*) and the dynamic (*pravṛtti*).<sup>55</sup> In its metaphysical aspect it may be characterised as '*prakāśa-vimarśa, prajñā-upāya, or śūnyatā-karuṇā*. In its theistic aspect it is *Śiva-Śakti, Heruka-Nairātmyā* or (*Vajradhara – Vajravārāhi*). In its physical aspect it is present as the pair of *Agni-soma*, and male-female reproductive principles. This truth is most effectively manifested in man and woman; and the creation of the universe is compared to a prolonged sexual union. The same principle is depicted in the 'half man-half woman' (*Ardhanārīśvara*) form of *Śiva*. The bi-polarity does not deny the inseparable unity of the two principles just as there is no dichotomy between fire and heat though the two are different.<sup>56</sup> The absolute is non-dual (*advaya*)<sup>57</sup> in nature though bi-polar.

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54 However, it should be noted that this yogic body is not supposed to have any objective existence in the sense the physical body has. The yogic body is "a heuristic device aiding meditation, not any objective structure; the physical and the yogic body belong to two different logical levels." *Ibid.*, p.291.

55 S.B. Dasgupta, *ITB*, p.4.

56 Sanjukta Gupta, Dirk Jan Hoens, and Teun Goudriaan, *Hindu Tantrism*, pp.54-56.

57 In the Buddhist context, the term '*advaya*' means knowledge that is free from the duality of the extremes of 'Is' and 'Is not'. Murti distinguishes '*advaya*' from '*advaita*' of Saṅkara. *Advaita* is knowledge of a differenceless entity – Brahman. *Advaya* is purely

### 3.6 Realisation as the union of polarities

As in other schools of thought, liberation from bondage is the chief goal of tantrism. Liberation is the perfect state of union between the two aspects of reality and the realisation of the non-dual nature of the self and the not-self.<sup>58</sup> Tantric *sādhana* is designed to bring about the re-integration of the adept's body, speech and mind with the cosmic entities, that is, a fusion of the microcosm and the macrocosm. In the Hindu tantras, it takes place when the internal *Śakti* (*Kuṇḍalinī*) with whom the *yogin* has completely identified himself reaches Her destination, the supreme *Śiva*, restoring the primeval union.<sup>59</sup> *Dhyāna*, *mantra*, *nyāsa*, *mudrā* and the judicious use of sexo-yogic practices are employed to achieve the union of polarities.

### 3.7 The Pursuit of Siddhis

Besides the common goal of spiritual emancipation, tantrism in general caters to procuring several mundane benefits for its followers. Some of these practical attainments include astrology, medicine and magic. Many

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an epistemological approach; the *advaita* is ontological. See T.R.V. Murti, *The Central Philosophy of Buddhism*, (New Delhi: Munshiram Manoharlal Pvt. Ltd., 1955; This edition, 1998) p.217. From now on referred to as CPB. See also Sanjukta Gupta, Dirk Jan Hoens, and Teun Goudriaan, *Hindu Tantrism*, p.52. David Kalupahana points out that the substantivist terminology of the Hindu tantras is conspicuously absent in the Buddhist tantras. See David J. Kalupahana, *A History of Buddhist Philosophy: Continuities and Discontinuities* (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass Publishers, 1994), p.224.

58 S.B. Dasgupta, ITB, p.4.

59 Sanjukta Gupta, Dirk Jan Hoens, and Teun Goudriaan, *Hindu Tantrism*, p.62.

tantric texts deal with super-normal abilities (siddhis)<sup>60</sup> and the Six rites (*ṣaṭkarmāṇi*). The six rites are: *Śānti*, *Vaśīkaraṇa*, *Stambhana*, *Vidveṣaṇa*, *Uccāṭana* and *Māraṇa*.<sup>61</sup> In Tantrism the border between the magical and the spiritual is a thin one. It is mostly on account of the former that tantrism became popular.

### 3.8 Predominance of Female Deities

Tantrism in general has a predominance of female manifestations. In the Vedas, on the contrary, we have a preponderance of male deities. Tantrism assigns a leading role to *Śakti* in her *jñāna* aspect, since without her grace or revelation no redemption through the body is possible.<sup>62</sup> The Śāktas assign the governance of the world to the three manifestations of Devī, namely, Tārā or Nilasarasvatī, Sundarī and Kālī. They hold that everything in the world is of 'female form'. She is the efficient cause of emanation as well as its spiritual base, and for the adept she is the Divine

60 The eight great siddhis recognised by the Hindus are: Atomization (*Aṇimā*), Levitation (*laghimā*), Magnification (*Mahimā*), Extension (*Prāpti*), Efficacy (*Prākāmya*), Sovereignty (*Īśvara*), Mastery over elements (*Vaśīva*) and Capacity to will actual facts (*Kāmaśāyīva*). At times 18, 24 and even 34 kinds of Siddhis are spoken of. See Benoytosh Bhattacharyya, *IBE*, p. 83.

61 *Śānti* is the power to remove disease and save persons from the terrible consequences of evil stars or the bad karmas of the previous birth. *Vaśīkaraṇa*, is the power to bewitch other men or women or even gods, and animals and get work done by them. *Stambhana* is the power by which the adept can stop all actions of others, and to stop the effect even when the cause is operating. *Vidveṣaṇa* is the power to separate two friends, relatives or lovers by creating animosity between them. *Uccāṭana* is the power to cause one's enemy to flee the country in disgrace. *Māraṇa* is the power to kill or permanently injure enemies. *Ibid.*, pp.89-90.

62 Sanjukta Gupta, Dirk Jan Hoens, and Teun Goudriaan, *Hindu Tantrism*, p.62.

Mother.<sup>63</sup> Devī appears under various names and forms, of benevolent as well as of terrifying natures. In the Hindu Tantras, the benevolent ones are Gaurī, Umā, and Pārvatī, and those of terrifying forms are Durgā and Kālī.<sup>64</sup> In the Buddhist Tantras, we find benign goddesses such as Locanā, Pāṇḍarā, Māmakī and Āryatārā, as well as those of terrifying nature such as Ekajaṭā, Nairātmyā, and Vajravārāhī. However, the role of the female deities in Buddhist tantric tradition is different from that of its Hindu counterpart.

### 3.9 Deities of Terrifying Nature

The presence of male and female deities of ferocious appearance is another feature of Tantrism. The tantrics hold that though these deities appear terrifying externally, they are extremely compassionate internally, and act constantly for the wellbeing of the practitioner. A passage with reference to the fierce form of Yamāri states: "After making my obeisance by my head to Lord Yamāri, who is of dignified appearance; internally compassionate, but externally terrific for the good of all beings, I write the procedure of his worship for the benefit of all".<sup>65</sup> Deities are said to assume these terrible forms to overawe and coerce people to perform these rites. Deities of terrible nature are invoked especially to discharge terrible functions. In addition to these, we have a whole host of godlings, spirits, demons, ghosts (*piśāca, vetala, preta,*

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63 Ibid., pp.54-55.

64 Andre Padoux, "Tantrism: Hindu Tantrism", p. 279.

65 "Śrīmantamantaḥ karuṣāmayānī tanī  
satvārtha hetoḥbahirugrarūpaḥ  
nātharī Yamārīḥ Praṇipatya mūḡhaṇā  
likhāmi tatsādhanamiṣṭhethoh." Sādhanamālā, p.550.

*bhūta*) and the like who are sought in certain tantric practices.<sup>66</sup>

### 3.10 Emphasis on *Guru* and *Dīkṣā*

Tantrism proves to be a dangerous path for those who are uninitiated and unaccompanied by a competent *Guru*. No *sādhaka* should attempt it by himself. The *Guru* is identified with the principal deity and the initiate is expected to abide by the *Guru*'s directions. Every tantric tradition insists on the necessity of initiation (*dīkṣā*)<sup>67</sup> from a competent spiritual guide. The Sanskrit root 'dīkṣ' means to 'dedicate or consecrate'. *Dīkṣā* is exclusively used to refer to 'spiritual initiation'. The sacred is also secret. Hence there is an elaborate array of formulas and symbols, which are made known only to the initiated in secret assemblies (*guhyaśamāja*). The Tantric code Language (*sandhyābhāṣā*) is a deliberate device to keep curious onlookers at bay.

These are the major features of tantrism in general. Space does not permit us to enter into a more detailed investigation of these at this juncture. However, these salient features will re-emerge in the course of our discussion and provide greater clarity. We now proceed to narrow down our discussion to the major schools of tantrism.

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66 Andre Padoux, "Tantrism: Hindu Tantrism", p. 280.

67 Tantric *dīkṣā* is different from the *upanayana*, which is given to all twice-born male Hindus. *Dīkṣā* is given to any suitable candidate irrespective of caste and sex. Agehananda Bharati states that *dīkṣā* is also different from *abhiṣeka*. In the former, a *mantra* is invariably imparted to the neophyte while in the latter it is not conferred. For a detailed discussion on *dīkṣā* see Agehananda Bharati, *The Tantric Tradition*, pp.185-197.



#### 4. Hindu Tantrism

Tantrism permeated Hinduism, Buddhism and Jainism in the course of centuries and gave rise to various schools of *tantra* within their own fold. The *Sammohana tantra* (ch.5) and *Śaktisaṅgama tantra* (1,2,85f) recognise *Śākta*, *Śaiva*, *Vaiṣṇava*, *Saura*, *Gāṇapatya*, and Buddhist schools of *tantra*. These six tantric darśanas remind one of the Six Darśanas of classical Indian Philosophy.<sup>68</sup> At the outset, we have to admit that the divisions of *tantra* are not clear-cut and the bewildering number of tantric schools and sub-schools make the task of ordering them a Herculean ordeal. The difference among the various tantric schools lies in the doctrines professed, the variety of deities worshipped, and practices employed by each school. The main divisions<sup>69</sup> of the Hindu tantras are the worshippers of *Śiva* (*Śaivas*), the worshippers of *Śakti* (*Śāktas*) and the worshippers of *Viṣṇu* (*Vaiṣṇavas*). It is difficult to distinguish clearly the *Śaiva*

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68 Sanjukta Gupta, Dirk Jan Hoens, and Teun Goudriaan, *Hindu Tantrism*, pp.40-41.

69 On the basis of conduct (*ācāras*) tantras have been divided into *Dakṣiṇa*, and *Vāma* to which is sometimes added a third called *Samaya*. *Dakṣiṇa* or the right-handed practice (*dakṣiṇācāra*) is the way of the spiritual attainment without the use of *pañca-makāras* (*madya*, *māmsa*, *mīna*, *mudra* and *maithuna*) and other extreme forms of rituals. They follow the Vedic tradition and accept the *vaṁśārama*. A great number of Vedic stanzas are applied in their tantric ritual context. The *Vedasāmhitas* are related to the four internal *cakras*, the highest being the *Atharva-veda*. The left-handed practice (*Vāmācāra* or *Kaula*) is the conduct of external worship employing the *pañca-makāras*. *Śāktas* and *Śaivas* may claim to be *Kaulas*. Abhinavagupta belongs to the *Kaula* tradition of Kashmir. In the *Śakti* tradition, *kaula* worship is related to the three manifestation of *Śakti*, namely *Śrī* or *Tripurā*, *Kālī* and *Tārā*. *Samayācāra* means 'the practice of internal worship' as advocated by Lakṣmīdhara and his followers. It is followed by the *Śrīvidyā* cult.



and the *Śākta* schools as *Śiva* and *Śakti* are ontologically inseparable. Schools of lesser importance are the worshippers of *Sūrya* (Sauras) and the worshippers of *Gaṇapati* or *Gaṇeśu* (Gāṇapatyas). As an exhaustive treatment of the Hindu tantras is not pertinent to this work only a brief survey is intended here.

#### 4.1 The Śaivas

The *Śaiva* tantras centred on *Śiva*, are often classified into *Dakṣiṇa*, *Vāma* and *Siddhānta* (or *Madhyama*). The *Dakṣiṇa* sect is further divided into the *Bhairava* and Kashmir Saivism. Kashmir Saivism is also known as the pure *Trika* system on account of its three key concepts – *Śiva-Śakti-Annu* or *Pati-Paśu-Pāśa*. It aims at moving from one's individuality to universality. It conceives individual souls and the material world as identical with *Śiva*. Doctrinal differences within Kashmir Saivism have given rise to different systems such as *Pratyabhiñja*, *Spanda*, *Krama* and *Kula*. Some of the most noted tantras of Kashmir Saivism are *Mālinīvijaya*, *Svacchanda*, *Netra*, *Vijñānabhairava*, *Parātrimśikā*, and *Kulārṇava*. Abhinavagupta seems to give the highest importance to *Mālinīvijaya*.<sup>70</sup> The *Vāma* division comprises of *Śiraścheda*, *Sammohana* and other tantras. The *Siddhānta* section claims for itself the Saivāgamas.

#### 4.2 The Śāktas

In Śāktism the Supreme Being is female, unlike in the other systems where the female deity is considered only as a consort of the male deity. She is the *ādiśakti*, the

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70 Kamalakar Mishra, *Significance of Tantric Tradition* (Varanasi: Ardhanārīśvara publications, 1981), p.91.

primordial energy, and the all-pervading female principle. According to *Śākta* purāṇas the great goddess created from her own body *Brahmā*, *Viṣṇu* and *Śiva* and then having divided her own self into three parts mated with them as a result of which life and the universe came forth.<sup>71</sup> The root of Śāktism may be traced back to the primitive cults of the Mother Goddess. There are several divisions of *Śākta* tantras such as *Śrīkula* and *Kālikula*,<sup>72</sup> *Kāḍīmata* and *Hāḍīmata*<sup>73</sup> etc. *Śākta* tantras claim a large section of tantric literature including the twenty-eight *Śaiva* Āgamas as well as the sixty-four *Bhairava* Āgamas. *Nityaṣoḍaśīkārṇava*, *Tantrarāja tantra*, *Rudrayāmala tantra*, *Śaktisangama tantra*, and *Mahānirvāṇa tantra* are some of the important tantras of the *Śākta* tradition. *Prapañcasāra* and *Saundaryalaharī*, the hymn to the Divine Mother attributed to Saṅkarācārya belong to this tradition.<sup>74</sup>

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71 N.N. Bhattacharyya, *History of the Tantric Religion*, (Delhi: Manohar Publishers & Distributors, 1982), pp.261-262.

72 According to *Śrīkula*, *Brahman* or *Śiva* is the material and efficient causes of the world. The atomic elements that compose the souls and the material world are produced by his *Śakti*. The *Kālikula* followers are exclusively monistic. They hold that *Śakti* is same as *Brahman* in its three aspects of *sat*, *cit* and *ānanda* and not its *māyā-vivarta* or transforming aspect. *Ibid.*, p.264.

73 *Kāḍīmata* pertains to the deity *Kāḍī* or to mantras beginning with the letter 'ka'. This school is also known as *Virādanuttara* or *Kālīmata*. *Hāḍīmata* refers to mantras beginning with 'ha'. 'Ha' is the symbol of *Śiva* after which this school is designated. Chakravarti Chintaharan, *Tantras: Studies on their Religions and Literature* (Calcutta: Punthi Pustok, 1972) pp.56-57.

74 For details see N.N. Bhattacharyya, *History of the Tantric Religion*, pp.66-71.

### 4.3 The Vaiṣṇavas

The major schools of *Vaiṣṇava* tantras are the *Pañcarātra* and the *Vaikhānasa*. *Pañcarātra*<sup>75</sup> is considered *sāttvika* by nature and is held superior to *Vaikhānasa*, which is *tāmasika* and hence inferior. The *Pañcarātras* are three fold, namely, *Divya* or those revealed directly by Lord *Narāyaṇa*, *Muni-bhāṣita* or those revealed by sages and *āpta-manuja-prokta* or those told by authoritative men.<sup>76</sup> Vaiṣṇavism flourished in Bengal especially at the time of Caitanya, the deified *Vaiṣṇava* mystic. The *Vaiṣṇavas* in Bengal developed a special kind of tantric *sādhana*, which came to be known as *Sahajiyā* (from *sahaja* = “natural, inborn”). They emphasised divine love coupled with eroticism. In their sexo-yogic practices they are indebted to the Buddhist *Sahajayāna*.<sup>77</sup> The *Vaiṣṇava* *Sahajiyas* of Bengal, an important *Vaiṣṇava* sect, is known for its peculiar erotic mysticism.<sup>78</sup> The Bauls of Bengal draw inspiration from them.

### 4.4 The Sauras

The *Sammohana Tantra* indicates that there are 180 *Saura* Tantras. The number may be fictitious but it shows that the *Sauras* were one of the prominent tantric sects.<sup>79</sup>

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75 It should be noted that the name *Pañcarātra* is found used in connection with sects other than the *Vaiṣṇava* as well. There are *Pañcarātra* works associated with the names of deities like *Śiva*, *Devī*, *Gaṇeśa*, *Brahman* and *Mahākāla*. Chintaharan Chakravarti, *Tantras*, p.57.

76 S.C. Banerjee, *A Brief History of Tantra Literature*, (Calcutta: Naya Prokash, 1998) p.535.

77 Sanjukta Gupta, Dirk Jan Hoens, and Teun Goudriaan, *Hindu Tantrism*, p.27.

78 Andre Padoux, “Tantrism: Hindu Tantrism”, p. 276.

79 N.N. Bhattacharyya, *History of the Tantric Religion*, p.37.

Though in several neighbouring nations the worship of the Sun was popular, Sūrya did not occupy a very prominent place in the liturgical worship of the Vedas, which is, for the most part, dominated by *Agni*. However, during the epic period Sūrya assumed a loftier position. The Sauras worship Sūrya exclusively and they acknowledge no other deity. *Prabha* (Brightness) is the consort of Sūrya but being unable to sustain the pressure of his intensity she assumed the form of *Chhaya* (shade) and was impregnated by him.<sup>80</sup> Sūrya cult was very popular in Bengal, which had a number of folk-ballads in praise of the Sun-God. *Sūryer Pañchāli* of Ramjivana Bhattacharaya Vidyabhūshaṇa is a work on the cult of the Sun in medieval Eastern Bengal.<sup>81</sup>

#### 4.5 The Gāṇapatyas

The supreme deity is *Gaṇeśa* or *Gaṇapati* (the god of the *gaṇa* or tribe). In the *Ṛg-veda* we find traces of this deity.<sup>82</sup> Of the six branches of Gaṇapatyas<sup>83</sup> the worshippers of the *Ucchiṣṭagaṇapati* were undeniably followers of tantrism. They visualised *Gaṇeśa* with four arms, three eyes, lasso (*pāśa*), goad (*ankuśa*), club (*gadā*) and in *abhaya mudrā*. He consumes liquor with his trunk and is seated on a *mahāpīṭha* while engaging in kissing and embracing his *Śakti* on his left lap. The *Ucchiṣṭagaṇapatyas*

80 Edward Moor F.R.S., *The Hindu Pantheon*, (Varanasi: Indological Book House, 1968), p.203.

81 Sarat Chandra Mitra, *The Cult of the Sun God in Medieval Eastern Bengal* (New Delhi: Northern Book Centre, 1986), p. 1.

82 "*gaṇānām tvā gaṇapmatirṅ havāmaherī*" (II.23:1; Vājasaney Samhita XXIII.19) as quoted in N.N Bhattacharyya, *History of the Tantric Religion*, p.269.

83 The six types of Gāṇapatyas are - *Mahāgaṇapati*, *Haridrāgaṇapati*, *Ucchiṣṭagaṇapati*, *Navanītagaṇapati*, *Svarṇagaṇapati*, and *Santānagaṇapati*.

did not differentiate between merit and demerit, encouraged sexual promiscuity, denigrated the caste system, particularly the *Smṛiti* injunctions restricting social interactions, and Vedic saṁskāras.<sup>84</sup>

## 4.6 Minor Hindu Tantric Sects

This section presents a brief survey of the Minor Hindu Tantric Sects: The Siddhas, the Nāthas, the Vaiṣṇava Sahajiyas and the Bauls. They do not strictly adhere to any one particular school of Hindu Tantrism discussed above; instead they incorporate elements from various schools including the Buddhist ones.

### 4.6.1 The Siddhas

It is a very ancient religious cult with a keen interest in Psycho-chemical processes of *yoga*, which is called *Kāya-sādhana*. The primary aim of it was to make the body perfect and immutable and thereby attain immortality. The Siddhas hold that death can be either put off *ad libitum* or overcome by dematerialising and spiritualising the body. The *Siddha* cult comes very close to the Indian school of *Rasāyana* (alchemy).<sup>85</sup> They incorporated elements of *Vajrayāna*, Saivism, magic, alchemy and *Hathayoga*. The Tamil Siddhas, the most prominent of whom is Tirumūlar (7<sup>th</sup> century A.D.), owed their allegiance to Saivism while the Eighty-four Siddhācāryas belonged to the Buddhist fold.<sup>86</sup>

84 N.N. Bhattacharyya, *History of the Tantric Religion*, p.271.

85 Shashibhusan Dasgupta, *Obscure Religious cults*, (Calcutta: Firma KLM Private Limited, 1976), p.192. From now on referred to as ORC.

86 Sanjukta Gupta, Dirk Jan Hoens, and Teun Goudriaan, *Hindu Tantrism*, p.23.

### 4.6.2 The Nāthas

The *Nātha* cult, also known as *Yogi-panthā* seems to be a particular phase of the *Siddha* cult of India. It came to be known as 'Nātha cult' on account of the fact that its masters adopted the title 'Nāth' (or *Nātha*) signifying a state of supreme existence. The origin of this cult is shrouded in mystery. According to some, it is an esoteric Buddhist cult, which later left its Buddhist moorings and became a Śaivaite cult. On the contrary, some others hold that it is essentially a Śaivaite cult, which absorbed esoteric Buddhist practices. In it we find a compendium of yogic Saivism and esoteric Buddhism.<sup>87</sup> According to Nāthism, the Ultimate Reality has two aspects represented by the sun and the moon – sun the symbol of death and moon, the symbol of immutability. The aim is to unite these two forces within the body through *kāya-sādhana* and experience the non-duality represented by *Śiva*.<sup>88</sup> Some of the great masters of the *Nātha* cult were Mīna-nāth or Matsyendra-nāth, Gorakh-nāth, Jālandharīpā, Kānupā, Gopi-candra and Mayanāmati; of these Gorakh-nāth was probably the most celebrated *Nātha guru*.<sup>89</sup>

### 4.6.3 The *Vaiṣṇava* Sahajiyas

The *Vaiṣṇava* Sahajiyas of Bengal evolved out of the Buddhist *Sahajiya* cult under the influence of the love religion of Bengal Vaiṣṇavism. The concept of 'sahaja' is

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87 Shashibhusan Dasgupta, ORC, p.192.

88 N.N. Bhattacharyya, *History of the Tantric Religion*, p.287.

89 Shashibhusan Dasgupta, ORC, p.382.



common to all the different medieval *Sahajiyā* schools.<sup>90</sup> The term '*sahaja*' literally means, 'that which is born or that which originates with the birth or with origination of any entity' (*saha jāyate iti sahajaḥ*).<sup>91</sup> *Sahaja* is the ultimate nature of all things, the quintessence of all dharmas, which is of the nature of *mahāsukha*. *Sahaja* in the form of *mahāsukha* is realised in and through a physiological process (*kāya-sādhana*). Hence the cult of the body is of paramount importance.<sup>92</sup>

The *Vaiṣṇava* *Sahajiyās* consider every man and woman to be the physical manifestations of Kṛṣṇa and Rādhā. The body itself is the *Vṛndāvana*, the site of Kṛṣṇa's sport, where *sahaja* in the nature of pure love flows between Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa. Once this realisation takes place, the love that exists between man and woman transcends the category of vulgar sensuality and transforms into love divine, which is the realisation of *sahaja*.<sup>93</sup> This *sahaja* is experienced when *Śakti* in her upward march through the nerve channels reaches the *sahasrāra cakra*, the *Gokula*, the abode of Kṛṣṇa. This union is brought about by two types of union between man and woman,

90 In a general sense, besides the Buddhist *Sahajiyās* and the Jaina mystics, the *Santa*, the *Sikh* and the *Sūfī* poets of upper, central and northern India as well as the *Bāuls* of Bengal belong to the *Sahajiyā* family.

91 Shashibhusan Dasgupta, ORC, pp.77-78.

92 An oft quoted couplet of Saraha states: "I have visited in my wanderings shrines and other places of pilgrimage. But I have not seen another shrine blissful like my own body." Charles, H. Capwell, "The Esoteric Belief of the Bauls of Bengal" in JAS, Vol. XXXIII, No.2., (February 1974), p.261.

93 Shashibhusan Dasgupta, ORC, p.134.



namely *svakāya* (conjugal union) and *parakāya* (union with the wife of another man).<sup>94</sup>

The *Vaiṣṇava* Sahajiyas incorporated the element of love to the sexo-yogic practice of the Buddhist Sahajiyas. The *Vaiṣṇava* Sahajiyas divinize the sex-emotion. Neither *Mahā-sukha* nor supreme love of the purest and most intense nature is attainable without the help of the chosen woman. She is the embodiment of *mahābhāva*, i.e., the supreme emotion of love personified as Rādhā. This exaltation of human love is the greatest contribution that the *Vaiṣṇava* Sahajiyas made to the *Sahajiya* tradition.

#### 4.6.4 The Bauls

The Bauls at first sight appear to be an order of rustic minstrels who enchanted rural Bengal with their haunting melodies but deeper thought reveals that they are a group of mystics with tantric affiliations. These rustic mystics owe their mysticism to the *Vaiṣṇava* Sahajiyas of Bengal and to the *Sūfī* mystics of Islam. The Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa principles of Vaiṣṇavism plays a crucial role in the Bauls' conception of all mankind as female representing Rādhā, in her relationship to the only universal male principle, Kṛṣṇa. The quest for self-realisation, which we notice in Upaniṣadic mysticism, is reiterated with a unique emphasis on love. The Divine personality, is called the 'Man of the Heart', and the 'Unknown Bird', is our *Sahaja* nature. The *Baul* is the lover whose melancholic search for his beloved is expressed in such verses as, '*kothāy pābo tāre āmār maner mānuṣ ye re*' ('Where shall I find him, the 'Man of

94 The standard *Vaiṣṇava* cults and *Sahajiya* Vaiṣṇavas accept the ideal of *parakāya* love as contrasted with the ideal of *svakāya* love in their doctrines. In the former, this idea remains mere theoretical speculation but in the latter it has practical bearings. *Ibid.*, p.113.

my Heart'?). For the *Sūfī* mystics the individual is the mad lover in pursuit of the ever-unattainable Beloved but for the *Baul* it is possible to capture 'the Man of the Heart'.<sup>95</sup> The love celebrated in the *Baul* songs<sup>96</sup> is mutual. The Infinite, on the one hand, manifests itself in the finite and relative nature of the world, and on the other, inspires man to dissolve gradually his separate existence and pass away into his original being in God.

According to Upendranath Bhattacharya, "sexual yoga is the *sine qua non* of the Bauls' religious path. A ritualised *coitus reservatus* performed on three successive days while the woman is menstruating is at the core of their belief"<sup>97</sup> This tantric *sādhana* is called 'the *sādhana* of the four moons'<sup>98</sup> The external sexual *sādhana* may be later replaced by the purely internalised *sādhana* where the mind takes the part of the female partner.

95 Dasgupta notes that it is this conception of the 'Man of the Heart' in the *Baul* songs that drew the attention of Rabindranath Tagore, whom he considers to be the greatest of the Bauls of Bengal. In the 'Man of the Heart' concept we find "a happy mixture of the conception of the *paramātman* of the Upaniṣads, the *sahaja* of the Sahajiyas and the *sūfī*-istic conception of the Beloved" Ibid., p.181.

96 Lālon Fakir is the most famous of the Bauls. A collection of his songs is entitled *Lālon-gītā*. See also the collection of Baul songs by Kṣitimohan Sen entitled *Bangavāṇī*.

97 Charles H. Capwell, "The Esoteric Belief of the Bauls of Bengal" p.256.

98 The tantric theory behind this *sādhana* is explained by Charles H. Capwell, "In the two products of the human generative organs, the Divine is manifested in its two forms as the pair-principle, the active and the passive. The active form appears during a woman's monthly periods to take part in the life of men and it is for this reason the ritual coitus occurs then. It is only in this form that the Man of the Heart can be regained and made to reunite with its passive form within the bodies of men and women." Ibid., p.259.

## 5. Tantric<sup>99</sup> Innovations in Buddhism

Buddhism never remained a fossilised ethical formula of liberation; on the contrary, it was a dynamic, self-evolving spiritual movement. It profoundly influenced the course of Philosophy and Religion in the world, while itself being shaped at the anvil of philosophical, religious, social and political currents of the time. This interaction brought about deeper and more profound insights into the teaching of the Buddha, as well as, further development of his doctrine. Buddhist historians Buston and Tārānātha identified three principal turning points (*dharmā cakṛa pravarttana* or Three Swings of the Wheel of Law) in the history of Buddhism. The first turning point was from the radical realism of the *Ābhidharmika* system (*Theravāda* and *Vaibhāṣika*) to the critical realism of the *Sautrāntika* school. The second transition was from this (critical) realistic phase to the radical Absolutism (*advaya-vāda*) of the *Mādhyamika*. The third phase was the transition from the *Mādhyamika* Absolutism to the Idealism of *Yogācāra* and later *Vijñānavāda*. The emergence of *Mādhyamika* is an important watershed in the development of Buddhism because it is with the *Mādhyamika* that *Mahāyāna* Buddhism developed its religious potential to the full.<sup>100</sup>

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99 From now on terms like 'tantra' and 'tantric' refer exclusively to the Buddhist tantras (*Vajrayāna*), unless specified otherwise.

100 In early Buddhism "...there was no element of worship, no religious fervour, no devotion to a transcendent being. No cosmic function was assigned to Buddha; he was just an exalted person and no more. His existence after *parinirvāṇa* was a matter of doubt; this was one of the inexpressibles." The Mahāyānists projected him not as a historical person but as the essence of all Being (*dharmakāya*), having a glorious divine form (*sambhogakāya*) as well as an illusory body (*nirmāṇakāya*), which he assumed at will for salvation of all beings and propagation of the *dharma*. T.R.V. Murti, CPB, p.6.

This transition into the region of religion laid the foundation for what we could call the fourth phase in the development of Buddhism – the tantric phase.<sup>101</sup>

### 5.1 Reasons for the Tantric phase

In the course of the development of Buddhism, direct realisation of Wisdom (*prajñā*) was overshadowed time and again by an over emphasis on the exposition of doctrine. The *Ābhidharmika* system, for example, focused its attention entirely on the analysis of the universe into *dharmas*, which are *saṃskṛta* and *asaṃskṛta*, and classified them into skandhas, āyatanas, and dhātus.<sup>102</sup> In this context *Mahāvāna* emerged to balance the scholasticism of *Ābhidharmika*. The Mahāvānistis discounted the claims of ratiocination and logic through its dialectic and replaced reason with intuition as the way to realise *śūnyatā*. But again, in the course of time, the Mahāvānistis fell into the same trap, stressing the dialectic of the *Mādhyamika* and the doctrines of *Yogācāra*. And their legacy, the Way of Perfection (*Pāramitāvāna*), presented itself to be a lengthy meandering towards the ultimate goal.<sup>103</sup> In this context,

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101 In Stcherbatsky's '*The Concept of Buddhist Nirvāṇa*', the tantric phase is considered the third phase of the development of Buddhist thought. David Kalupahana states that *Vajrayāna* is generally regarded as the final phase of Buddhism in India. See David J. Kalupahana, *A History of Buddhist Philosophy*, p.217.

102 Theodore Stcherbatsky, *The Central Conception of Buddhism and the Meaning of the word "Dharma"*, 3rd ed. (Calcutta: Susil Gupta (India) Ltd., 1961) p.3.

103 The *Daśabhūmikasūtra* presents the arduous journey that the 'bodhisattva-to-be' has to undertake. The first *bhūmi* itself calls for the ten mahāprañidhānas (DBHS, 10-11) and the ten *niṣṭhāpada* (DBHS, p.3); at the second *bhūmi* one must perfect the ten mental dispositions and the ten good courses of action; at the third *bhūmi* he must practice the four dhyānas (DBHS, 20); at the fourth

the tantric masters developed a unique praxis based on the cosmic, mantric and occult elements and called it *Mantrayāna* or *Vajrayāna*. Thus arose Vajrayāna to balance the scholasticism of *Mahāyāna* and emphasise that its doctrine be supplemented with rigorous praxis. *Vajrayāna* did not contest the doctrinal claims of *Mahāyāna* or its ultimate goal but, built on the theoretical framework of the former, a system of praxis that would ensure the quick realisation of the goal.

Another important factor that probably diverted Buddhism on to the tantric path was the philosophical stagnation of Buddhist speculation itself. The *ābhidharmika* had taken Buddhist speculations to the limits of Realism. *Mādhyamika* and *Yogācāra* systems took it to the heights of Absolutism. With the development of these systems speculative philosophy had reached its saturation point. The *Mādhyamika* intuition that the Ultimate Reality is *sūnya* appeared to be a sterile proposition to the later philosophers of the *Yogācāra-Vijñānavāda*. The latter preferred to refer to the Ultimate Reality as *vijñāna* or consciousness. The tantras went further to characterise the Ultimate Reality as great bliss or *mahāsukha*.

The transition from the *Arhat* ideal of the *Srāvaka* and the *Pratyekabuddha* to the ideal of the *Bodhisattva*, was a significant one. Philosophy had distanced and universalised the Buddha, rendering him so transcendental and nebulous that the ordinary believer could not love or relate to him with prayer and worship, and seek mundane blessings.<sup>104</sup> This religious urge of the common man was satisfied, only

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*bhīmi* he must attain perfection in the thirty-seven virtues (DBHS, 24) and so on.

104 Har Dayal, *The Bodhisattva Doctrine in Buddhist Sanskrit Literature* (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1931) p.34.



with the induction of the bodhisattvas. The bodhisattvas became objects of worship and adoration, essential to all religious practices. The Buddhists invented their bodhisattvas by personifying different virtues and attributes of Gautama Buddha, as in the case of Mañjuṣri (wisdom) Avalokiteśvara (*karuṇā* or compassion) Maitreya (*maitri* or friendliness) etc. This habit of inventing deities by personification reached its climax in the hands of the Vajrayānists, resulting in a proliferation of divinities within its fold. Abhayākara Gupta, the author of *Niṣpannayogāvalī*, deified almost everything that was sacred in Buddhism, such as the twelve bhūmis, the twelve pāramitās, the twelve principal dhāraṇīs, etc.<sup>105</sup> In short, it was with the introduction of the *bodhisattva* ideal, that *Mahāyāna* Buddhism emerged as a religion, paving way for the free induction of tantric elements into its practices.

Hindu religious revival prompted by the appearance of new cults after fifth century B.C., in the form of worship of devas and deified heroes, triggered off a similar and simultaneous movement within the Buddhist fold. As a result the religious impetus within Buddhism began to show itself, for the Buddhists could not resist the temptation to worship for long. The Buddha began to be worshipped in symbolic ways, e.g., the pair of foot, the throne, the flaming pillar, the *dharmacakra*, the *tri-ratna* symbol, the *bodhi* tree, the *stūpa* etc.<sup>106</sup>

The conversion of Aśoka (c.268-232 B.C.) to the Buddhist faith had much to do with the transformation

105 Benoytosh Bhattayacharyya, ed., *Niṣpannayogāvalī*, p.19.

106 Hajime Nakamura, *Indian Buddhism: A Survey with Bibliographical Notes* (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass Publishers, 1989), p.103.

Buddhism itself underwent.<sup>107</sup> In some sense he converted the faith which converted him. Aśoka was to Buddhism what Constantine (274-337 A.D.) and Charlemagne (742-814 A.D.) would be to Christianity, bestowing it with temporal power and wealth, and making it into a universal religion. His influence was not limited only to the organisation of the faith but also to the codification of its tenets. He did not favour the early Buddhist idea of annihilation after death or that of transmigration, but believed in a world beyond (*paraloka*), a transcendental world, which would be reached by the good.<sup>108</sup> Aśoka's preference for benevolent action to asceticism might have egged on the development of the later *bodhisattva* ideal. He may probably have realised the political potential of his new-found religion to unify people and heal the wounds of war and destruction, which his endless military campaigns had caused. The state-sponsored erection of stūpas and caityas, construction of monasteries and maintenance of monks, addition of pomp and paraphernalia to worship, transformation of the human Buddha into the transcendental Buddha etc., added further religious colouring to Buddhism. Once Buddhism established itself as a religion, tantrism lost no time in taking roots within its fold.

The missionary enterprise of the Buddhists, under the royal patronage of Aśoka and others, as well as the foreign invasions especially by the Greeks, Sakas, Parthians and

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107 Right from its inception, Buddhism enjoyed royal patronage under such benevolent kings as Prasenjit, Bimbisara, Ajātaśatru and later emperor Aśoka, Kaniṣka, Harsha Vardhana and the Pāla and Sena dynasties. Min Bahadur Shākya, "A study of Traditional Vajrayāna Buddhism of Nepal" (Essay on-line, accessed on 19 April 2004) available from [http://kaladarshan.arts.ohio-state.edu/exhib/-sama/%2A%20Essays/SP92.051 Hevaj.html](http://kaladarshan.arts.ohio-state.edu/exhib/-sama/%2A%20Essays/SP92.051%20Hevaj.html); Internet.

108 Hajime Nakamura, *Indian Buddhism*, p.94.



Kuṣānas, brought Buddhism in direct contact with varied religions, cults and practices. An effective way of winning neophytes to its fold was the liberal adoption of the latter's deities, cults and practices. Instead of changing the new converts and making them abandon their hitherto favourite observances, the Buddhists incorporated and sanctioned those very practices. Megasthenes (300 B.C.), the Greek ambassador to the court of Candragupta Maurya, referred to the worship of the Greek deities Heracles and Dionysos in India.<sup>109</sup> Padmasambhava in establishing the *Dharma* in Tibet adopted many of the deities of the *Bon* pantheon into the Buddhist fold and assigned to them various roles as guardians and protectors. This catholicity and the amorphic flexibility of Buddhism facilitated the incursion and inclusion of tantric deities and practices into the Buddhist fold.

Thus the inner dynamism of the Buddhist thought itself, the religious quest of the believer and the socio-political and religious atmosphere of the time, fathered the birth of Buddhist Tantrism, which is now known as *Vajrayāna*.

## 5.2 The Term *Vajrayāna*

*Vajrayāna* comes from the two words 'vajra' and 'yāna'. The term 'vajra' is at times translated as 'thunderbolt', which symbolises Indra's power in Hindu mythology. In the Buddhist tradition, "the *vajra* is regarded as the symbol of highest spiritual power, which is

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109 Later on under the patronage of the Kuṣānas the Buddhist pantheon was expanded to depict Greek gods like Hermes, Dionysos, Zeus and Heracles etc., as Vajrapāṇi (Buddha's angel companion), perhaps to show Buddhist superiority over them. In the course of time more Buddhas were invented, and their figures were magnified owing to opulent imagination. *Ibid.*, pp.157-158.

irresistible and invincible. 'Vajra'<sup>110</sup> is therefore compared to the diamond, which is capable of cutting asunder any other substance, but which itself cannot be cut by anything.<sup>111</sup> 'Diamond' signifies, preciousness, immutability, indivisibility, purity and clarity of the enlightened mind<sup>112</sup> ("abhedyam vajram ity uktam")<sup>113</sup> and hence in Buddhism 'vajra' is considered diamond.<sup>114</sup> Though the diamond is able to produce all colours, it is colourless according to its own nature. Hence it is a suitable symbol of that transcendental state of emptiness, *śūnyatā* – the absence of all conceptual determinations. The

110 The Tibetan equivalent for 'vajra' is 'rdo-rje', (pronounced 'dorjay'). 'rdo' means 'stone' and 'rje' means 'ruler', 'master', 'lord'. Therefore, 'rdo-rje' is the king of stones, the most precious, i.e., and the diamond. Lama Govinda Anagarika, *Foundations of Tibetan Mysticism* (London: Rider & Company, 1960: this edition, 1969), p.62.

111 Ibid., p.61.

112 *Vajracchedika*, one of the most profound Philosophical Scriptures of the *Mahāyāna*, ends with the words "This sacred exposition shall be known as *Vajracchedika-Prajñā-Pāramitā-sūtra*, because it is hard and sharp like a diamond, cutting off all arbitrary conceptions leading to the other shore of enlightenment." Ibid., p.62. (emphasis added).

113 HT(F) I:1:4. (emphasis added).

114 The controversy on the translation of the term 'vajra' is not settled. Max Muller renders the *Vajracchedikā sūtra* as 'Diamond Sūtra.' But Edward Conze translates 'vajra' as 'thunderbolt'. He writes. "The terms (*vajra*) is familiar from many Buddhist texts, including the large *Prajñāpāramitā Sūtras*. Everywhere it refers to the mythical 'thunderbolt' and denotes irresistible strength, both passively and actively. The title (*Vajracchedikā Prajñāpāramitā*) therefore means 'the perfection of wisdom which cuts like the thunderbolt' or, less probably, 'which could cut even a thunderbolt'. See Edward Conze, ed. & trans., *Vajracchedikā Prajñāpāramitā* (Roma: Is. M.E.O., 1957), p.8. We need not enter further into this debate. The essence of the term 'vajra' lies in its function of cutting asunder *avidyā* in all forms.

*Yogaratnamālā*, a commentary on the *Hevajra Tantra*, equates *śūnyatā* and *vajra*. "The void which is the firm essence, indestructible, indepletable, indivisible and not capable of being consumed is called *vajra*."<sup>115</sup>

'*Yāna*' literally means 'vehicle', which signifies the dynamic character of Buddhism. The idea of 'the way', of 'going', of 'movement' is a hallmark of Buddhism right from the start. We have expressions that exude this character, like, 'the eightfold path' (*aṣṭāṅgika-mārga*), 'the middle way' (*madhyamā pratipad*), 'the small vehicle' (*Hīṃyāna*), 'the big vehicle' (*Mahāyāna*), 'the crossing of the stream' (*pāragatim*), 'the entering into the stream of liberation' (*sotāpatti*) and 'the Buddha as one who has 'thus come' or 'thus gone' (*tathāgata*).<sup>116</sup> *Vajrayāna*, therefore, is aptly translated as 'the Diamond Vehicle'<sup>117</sup>

### 5.3 Founder of *Vajrayāna*

There is no consensus among scholars as to who was the founder of *Vajrayāna*, as well as to the time and place of its origin. Benoytosh Bhattacharyya believes that *Vajrayāna* had its origin in the fourth century with Asaṅga,<sup>118</sup> to whom he ascribes the *Guhyasamājatantra*.<sup>119</sup>

115 "dṛḍham sārāṃ asaṅgīṣyam acchedyābhedyalakṣaṇam//  
adāhi avināśi ca śūnyatā vajram uccyate//"  
*HT(S) Part 2, Yogaratnamālā*, pp.104-105.

116 Lama Govinda Anagarika, *Foundations of Tibetan Mysticism*, p.261.

117 At times 'vajra' is also translated as 'adamantine' and *Vajrayāna* as the 'Adamantine vehicle'.

118 Benoytosh Bhattacharyya, ed., *Niṣpannayogāvalī*, p.15.

119 Ashok Kumar Chatterjee points out that such an assertion is ill-founded and that "No real Tantra can be proved to have existed before the 7th century A.D...All we can say is that some of the elements of Tantrism are already found in earlier works." Ashok

Giuseppe Tucci also opines that *Vajrayāna* dates back to the time of Asaṅga (4<sup>th</sup> century A.D.).<sup>120</sup> Asaṅga himself is believed to have been initiated in this mystic cult by Maitreya in the *Tuṣita* heaven.<sup>121</sup> But Austine Waddell considers 500 A.D. as the beginning of tantric development in Indian Buddhism, which, according to him, began with the incorporation by Asaṅga of the pantheistic cult of *Yoga* (i.e. the ecstatic union of the individual with the Universal Spirit) of Patañjali.<sup>122</sup> In fact, one *Sādhana* (No.159) on the worship of the *Prajñāpāramitā*, is ascribed to Asaṅga. However, Winternitz rules out such a possibility. He states, "It is scarcely feasible, however, that Asaṅga himself should already have written Tantric works, though there seems to be a historical connection between the *Yogācāra* school and the rise of the *Vajrayāna*."<sup>123</sup>

Some scholars hold that Nāgārjuna, of *Mādhyamika* fame, is the founder of the esoteric school, and had received the Vajrayānic doctrines from the celestial Buddha, Vairocana through the divine *bodhisattva*, Vajrasattva of 'the iron tower' in South India.<sup>124</sup> Winternitz argues that "the Nāgārjuna who is mentioned as the author of *sādhana*s and numerous tantric works, is not the founder of the *Mādhyamika* system, but a teacher, who

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Kumar Chatterjee, *Yogācāra Idealism*, (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass Publishers Pvt. Ltd., 1962; Reprint 1999), p.35. From now on referred to as YI.

120 Ibid., p.35.

121 S.B. Dasgupta, ITB, p.53.

122 See Austine Waddell, *Buddhism and Lamaism of Tibet* (Darjeeling: Oxford Book & Stationery Co., 1985), pp. 13-17.

123 See Maurice Winternitz, *History of Indian Literature*, vol.II, (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1993), p.378. From now on referred to as HIL

124 S.B. Dasgupta, ITB, p.54.

probably lived about the middle of the seventh century."<sup>125</sup> T.R.V. Murti believes that "*Tantra* is certainly much earlier than *Asaṅga*, and the basic ideas and practices have been present in all ages."<sup>126</sup>

S.B. Dasgupta dissociates himself from any historical enquiry into the origin of *Vajrayāna*. He states, "it is wrong to try to discover a particular man who might have introduced Tantricism into Buddhism all at once at a particular point of time."<sup>127</sup> As historical data is scant, any conjecture on the matter is bound to remain a provisional assertion. It is clear that seeds of tantrism are very ancient and that they were sown in Buddhism, not by one man but by many, over an indefinite period of time as it was in the case of Hinduism and Jainism.

#### 5.4 Seat of *Vajrayāna*

There is also no unanimity among scholars on the place of origin of *Vajrayāna*. The *Hevajra Tantra* enumerates four *Pīṭhas*<sup>128</sup> which is probably the earliest record on the matter. They are, viz., Jalandharā (definitely near the present Jullundar, East Punjab), Oḍḍiyāna (or Uḍḍiyāna) or Urgyan in Tibetan, Pūṃgiri (the location is doubtful) and Kāmarūpa (Kamrup in Assam, a few miles from Guwahati, which is the only *Pīṭha* in action at present).<sup>129</sup> The *Sādhanamālā*, also mentions four *Pīṭhas* of the *Vajrayānists* namely, Kāmākhyā, Sirihatṭa, Pūṃgiri

125 Maurice Winternitz, HIL, vol.II, pp.378.

126 T.R.V. Murti, CPB, p.109.

127 S.B. Dasgupta, ITB, p.54.

128 "...*bhugavān dha/*

*pīṭhaṃ jālandharāṃ khyātam oḍḍiyānāṃ tathaiva ca/*

*pīṭhaṃ paurṇagiriś caiva kāmarūpan tathaiva ca/* " HT(F) 1:7:12.

129 Agehananda Bharavi, *The Tantric Tradition*, p.88.



and Uḍḍiyāna.<sup>130</sup> Kāmākhyā is identified as Kāmarūpa. Sīrihaṭṭa is the modern Sylhet. There is no consensus on the two names, Pūṃgiri and Oḍḍiyāna. Pūṃgiri is sometimes identified with modern Pune, which is unlikely. Uḍḍiyāna is identified with Udyāna in the Swat valley by Waddell, while S. Levi considers it as Kashgarh. Mm. Haraprasad Shastri identified it with Orissa.<sup>131</sup> Benoytosh Bhattacharyya believes that Uḍḍiyāna falls in Bengal (or even in the western part of Assam), and that it is there that Buddhist Tantrism first developed and was probably transmitted to the other *Pīṭhas*, and thence to the rest of India.<sup>132</sup> On the basis of available data so far we cannot pinpoint any particular *Pīṭha* as the birthplace of *Vajrayāna*. However, the four *Pīṭhas* mentioned above were great centres of tantric Buddhism.

### 5.5 Sources of *Vajrayāna*

The theoretical framework of a philosophical and theological nature of *Vajrayāna* depends heavily on unsystematised metaphysical fragments taken from the different schools of Buddhist thought particularly *Mahāyāna* Buddhism,<sup>133</sup> and also from cognate Hindu thought. We have fragments of *Mādhyamika*, *Vijñānavāda* and *Vedānta*, as well as tenets of early Buddhism along

130 *Sādhanamālā*, pp.453,455.

131 Benoytosh Bhattacharyya, IBE, pp.43-44.

132 *Ibid.*, p.46.

133 Many of the mantras used in the *sādhana* are nothing but the well-known doctrines of *Mahāyāna* Buddhism with the addition of an 'Om', or *Phaṭ* or *Svāha* etc. For example, we have mantras like, "Om Śīmyatā-Jñāna-vajra-svabhāvātmake 'harīḥ.'" "Om svabhāva-śuddhāḥ sarva-dharmāḥ svabhāva-śuddho 'harīḥ"; "Om sarva-tathāgatā-tmake 'harīḥ.'" "Om dharmu-dhātu-svabhāvā-tmake 'harīḥ'" etc. See S.B. Dasgupta, ITB, p.76, fn. 1.

with Brāhminic ideas, especially of *Sāṅkhya* and *Yoga*, confusedly jumbled together.<sup>134</sup> T.R.V. Murti holds that the *Mādhyamika* intuition of *Śūnyatā* is the metaphysical basis for *Vajrayāna*.<sup>135</sup>

The Vajrayānic praxis is the fusion of a large amount of mystical ideas and practices current in India from very ancient times. The yogic practices of *Haṭha yoga*, *Laya Yoga*, *Dhyāna yoga* and *Rāja yoga*, elements of Vedic ritualism and other autochthonous rites have been adopted, and at times modified, to form the Vajrayānic praxis. The Vajrayānists attempted to absorb and integrate their praxis with Buddhist speculation especially that of *Mahāyāna*. The close relation between *Mahāyāna* and *Vajrayāna* is seen also from fact that *The Blue Annals* calls the Buddhist tantras, 'Mahāyāna Tantras'.<sup>136</sup>

## 5.6 The Goal of *Vajrayāna*

*Vajrayāna* does not differ from other forms of Buddhism in its ultimate goal, namely the realisation of the Clear Void.<sup>137</sup> The purpose of *Vajrayāna* has been highlighted by several tantric texts. The *Sādhanamālā*, considers *Vajrayāna* to be the path of transcendental enlightenment. It states, "eṣ'ohanī anuttara-samyak-sambodhi-mārgaṁ āśrayāmi yad uta vajrayānam."<sup>138</sup> No enlightenment is possible unless one overcomes the snare of false subjectivity. *Vajrayāna* is the antidote against such

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134 Ibid., p.4.

135 T.R.V. Murti, CPB, p.109.

136 George N. Roerich, *The Blue Annals*, p.102.

137 John Blofeld, *The Way of Power: A practical guide to the tantric mysticism of Tibet* (London: George Allen & Unwin Ltd., 1970), p.31.

138 *Sādhanamālā* Vol.I, p.225.



misconceptions. "kalpanā-jāla-pūrṇasya samsārasya mahodadheḥ vajra yānam samāruhya ko vā pāram gamiṣyati"<sup>139</sup> Śrī-Guhyasamāja tantra, the oldest Buddhist tantra, delineates the goal of Vajrayāna as well as the path thereto:

"moho dveṣastathā rāgaḥ sadā vajre ratiḥ stithā /  
upāyastena buddhānāṃ vajrayānamiti smṛtaṃ ॥"<sup>140</sup>

(Vajrayāna is the constant immutable bliss of the Buddhas attained through the instrumentality of *moha* (desire), *dveṣa* (aversion) and *rāga* (attachment).

In short, the ultimate goal of all the rites and forms of worship endorsed by Vajrayāna is the generation of *bodhicitta*, and the final realisation of the voidness of the self and the identity of the self with all the objects of the world, which again is of the nature of essence-lessness.<sup>141</sup> The *Guhyasiddhi* of Padmavajra claims that Vajrayāna is indeed the unity of all the religions, an unparalleled religion of non-substantiality and purity, the doctrines of which are the most secret.<sup>142</sup>

139 Benoytosh Bhattacharyya, *Two Vajrayāna works*, (Baroda: Oriental Institute, 1929) p.68.

140 S. Bagchi, *Guhyasamāja tantra* (Darbhanga: The Mithila Institute, 1965), 18:51

141 "tathāgato yat-svabhāvas tat-svabhāvam idam jagat/  
tathāgato niḥ-svabhāvo niḥ-svabhāvam idam jagat" (*Kriyā-samgraha-nama-pañjika*, MS. P.21E) as quoted in S.B. Dasgupta, ITB, p.74 fn.2.

142 " atynataguptamudghāṭya vajrayānāmanuttaram/  
sarvadharmasamaikatvaṇi yat tvayā bhāṣitam prabho"  
*Guhyasiddhi*, 2:11  
aho guptātiguptasya vajrayānasya deśanā/  
niḥsvabhāvasya śuddhusya vidhyate yasya nopamā"  
*Guhyasiddhi*, 2:13. See Samdhong Rinpoche and Vrajvallabh Dwivedi, eds. *Guhyādi-Aṣṭasiddhi Saṅgraha* (Saranath: Rare

## 6. The Development of *Vajrayāna*

*Tattva-ratnāvalī* collected in the *Advayavajrasaṅgraha* divides *Mahāyāna* into two schools, namely, *Pāramitā-naya*<sup>143</sup> and *Mantra-naya* ("mahāyānārṇ ca dvividham, pāramitānayo mantranayaśceti").<sup>144</sup> The two have the same goal but follow different paths. The principles of the latter are said to be very deep, subtle, and inaccessible to ordinary men. *Vajrayāna* is deemed superior to *Pāramitāyāna* on account of the hope that the former is the quickest way to enlightenment. This *Mantra-naya* or *Mantra-yāna* appears to be the initial stage of Tantric Buddhism from which all the other offshoots such as *Vajra-yāna*, *Kālacakra-yāna*, and *Sahaja-yāna* arose subsequently.<sup>145</sup>

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Buddhist Text Project, Central Institute of Higher Tibetan Studies, 1987).

143 The *Pāramitā-naya* includes the *Sautrāntika*, *Mādhyamika*, and the *Yogācāra* schools. They emphasise the practice of the pāramitās as means to enlightenment. It is also called the *Sūtrayāna* on account of its conviction that the Sūtras lead one from ignorance to enlightenment. It entails a rational, intellectual and systematic approach to mind training, based on a stable foundation of ethical discipline and a fully developed single-pointedness developed through calm abiding. The goal is attainable only after an immeasurable period of time (calculated at three times ten to the power of fifty-seven years). There are three divisions within *Sūtrayāna* viz., the *Srāvakayāna* followed by the Srāvakas, *Pratyekabuddhayāna* followed by the Pratyekabuddhas and the *Bodhisattvayāna* followed by the Bodhisattvas. The first two lead to the result of arhathood while the last leads to the attainment of perfect buddhahood.

144 Mahamahopadhyaya Haraprasad Shastri, *Advayavajrasaṅgraha* (Baroda: Oriental Institute, 1927), p.14.

145 S.B. Dasgupta, ITB, pp.52-53.

## 6.1 Mantrayāna.

The Buddhists were Indians first and foremost, and so belief in mantras, which existed from the Vedic times, came naturally to them. Belief in the power of the solemn utterance of truth (Pāli- *sacca-vacana*) and the threefold repetition of the formula of refuge, which they believed would cure diseases and prevent calamities, are found in *Thervāda* Buddhism. In the Pāli texts we have a type of mantric mutterings, called *parittas*, which are protective spells against some particular evil. The worship of the Buddha, and devotion to the *stūpa*, which existed side by side with the practice of virtue and meditation, were accompanied by the chanting and recitals of a mantric character. The *Sarvāstivāda* school made a collection of these mantras entitled the *Mantra piṭaka*. Similarly the Mahāsaṅghikas possessed a collection called *Dhāraṇī* or *Vidyādhara piṭaka*.<sup>146</sup> Gestures and postures (*mudrā*) for gaining concentration in meditation were soon inducted. The belief in the *bodhi-maṇḍala*, (the circle around the famous *bodhi* tree beneath which the Buddha performed all his meditations and attained *bodhi*) led to the general belief in drawing circles and other diagrams in a place selected for performing religious duties. *Mantra* (including *dhāraṇī* and *bīja* mantras), *mudrā* and *maṇḍala* were resorted to, for creating the suitable mental conditions for devotion and meditation. As people of heterogeneous origin embraced Buddhism, these accessories attained the status of dogmas and articles of faith.

## 6.2 Vajrayāna

*Vajrayāna* is a further development of *Mantrayāna*. It is also used as a general term for the entire gamut of tantric

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146 Alicia Matsunaga, *The Buddhist Philosophy of Assimilation* (Tokyo: Sophia University, 1969), p.90.

Buddhism.<sup>147</sup> The concept of *vajra* is central to this system. The term '*vajra*' is translated as 'diamond', and sometimes as 'thunderbolt'. From the philosophical point of view, the term '*vajra*' signifies perfect void or *śūnyatā* (*prajñā*) (*vajram prajñā ca bhanyate*)<sup>148</sup>. The philosophical nuances of the term '*vajra*' will be taken up at a later stage. In the tantric Buddhist tradition it is the symbol of the highest spiritual power which is irresistible and invincible, and hence comparable to the diamond, which is cable of cutting asunder any substance but which itself cannot be cut by anything else.<sup>149</sup> In *Vajrayāna* everything is *vajra* (i.e. perfect void). The deity is of the nature of *vajra*; the worshiper is *vajra*; the materials of worship are *vajra*; the mantras are *vajra*; the process is *vajra*; in short, everything is *vajra*.<sup>150</sup> It is because all these lead one to the realisation of the void-nature of the self and the dharmas.

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147 The original name *Mantra-yāna* is also sometimes used to refer to the later Buddhist Tāntric Schools as a whole. For example in the *Hevajra-pañjikā* we read '*mantra-mahāyāne tv anuvakṣyate*', or again in *Advaya-vajra-samgraha* we find the expression, "*mantra-yānā-nusāreṇa tad idam vakṣyate'dhund*" See S.B. Dasgupta, ITB, p.63., fn.2. *Vajrayāna* is also called *Upāyayāna*, and *Guhyayāna*. Sridhar SJB Rana, "Vajrayāna and Hindu Tantricism", (Essay on-line, accessed on 19 April 2004) available from [http://kaladarshan.arts.ohio-state.edu/exhib/sama/%2AEssays/SP92.051 Hevaj.html](http://kaladarshan.arts.ohio-state.edu/exhib/sama/%2AEssays/SP92.051%20Hevaj.html); Internet.

148 "*bhagavān āha/ hekāreṇa mahākaruṇā vajraṁ prajñā ca bhanyate/ prajñopāyātmakarṁ tantraṁ tan me nigaditaṁ śṛṇu*" HT (F) I:1:7.

149 Lama Anagarika Govinda, *Foundations of Tibetan Mysticism*, p.61.

150 S.B. Dasgupta, ITB, pp.72-73.

### 6.3 Sahajayāna

*Sahajayāna* is supposed to have been founded by the noted Kashmiri *Yogin*, Luipa (c.750-800 A.D.). The Sahajayānist were popular in Bengal from the beginning of the 9<sup>th</sup> century A.D. This sect was dominated by wandering siddhas who challenged the Establishment.<sup>151</sup> The Sahajiyas were noted for their anthologies of poetry (*dohā* and *caryāpada*<sup>152</sup>) which versified the quest for enlightenment in vivid and varied imagery in keeping with the *Mādhyamika* philosophy and *Mantrayāna* systems. Such poetry is attributed to Saraha, Kambala, Kṛṣṇācārya, Tailapāda, Lūyipāda, Bhusuka, and others. In their attempt to appeal to the masses, they wrote in the vernacular Apabhraṁśa.<sup>153</sup> *Sahajayāna* survived the Muslim invasion and continued for a time in Magadh, Bengal and Orissa, probably on account of the fact that it was more a movement of the laity, than that of the monks. Moreover, the *Sahajiya* tenets clothed in popular lyrics remained imbedded in the minds of the populace. Though the content of these verses was essentially the same as that of the *Mantrayāna* tradition, it came to be known as a new vehicle.

*Sahajayāna* is called the 'natural vehicle' on account of its central concept of 'sahaja' (simple and natural). It is 'simple' since it involves nothing but the most 'natural' behaviour as means towards spiritual emancipation.<sup>154</sup> What is 'natural' is the easiest and so *Sahajayāna* is

151 Louis O. Gomez, "Buddhism : Buddhism in India" in *Encyclopaedia of Religion*, Vol.2, p.376.

152 The *Dohakoṣa* edited by Bagchi and the *Caryāgṛīkoṣa* edited by Bagchi and Śānti Bhikṣu were published by Santiniketan in 1938 and 1956 respectively.

153 A.K. Warder, *Indian Buddhism*, pp.492-493.

154 *Ibid.*, p.493.

considered the straight or the plain path.<sup>155</sup> It is *Sahajayāna* also because it aims to realise the ultimate innate nature (*sahaja*) of the self as well as of the dharmas.<sup>156</sup> The ultimate innate nature, which is realised through a physiological process including sexo-yogic practices, is experienced as *mahāsukha*.

The Sahajiyas differ from the Vajrayānists in certain respects. The former holds that Truth cannot be attained through the mere austere practices of discipline, rituals, and worship prescribed by *Vajrayāna*, or even by philosophic speculation. Lakṣmīṅkarā in her *Advayasiddhi* championed this view.<sup>157</sup> Truth, "is to be intuited within in the most unconventional way through the initiation in the *tattva* and the practice of *yoga*. This makes the position of the Sahajiyas distinct from that of the Vajrayānists in general."<sup>158</sup> The Vajrayānists had replaced the *dharmakāya* of the Mahāyānists with the *vajrakāya*. They also added a fourth *kāya* namely, the *mahāsukhakāya* to the three *kāyas* of the Mahāyānists. In *Sahajayāna*, the *Vajrasattva* or the

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155 Sarahapāda says in one of his songs, "O Yogins, do not leave off this straight and easy path and follow the crooked and curved path; *bodhi* lies near you, - do not go to Lankā (Ceylon) in search of it. Do not take the glass (*dāpaṇa*) to see the bracelets in your hands, - realise your own pure *citta* for yourself (and within yourself)." As quoted in Shashibhusan Dasgupta, ORC, p.52.

156 S.B. Dasgupta, ITB, p.69.

157 "Na kaṣṭha kalpanām kūrṃyannopavāsam na ca kriyānī/  
 snanānī saucānī na caivātragrāma dharmā vivarjanam//"  
 Ramprasad Mishra, *Advayasiddhi: The Tantric view of Lakṣmīṅkarā* (Delhi: Kant Publications, 1993; First published 1995), v.13.

"Śaila mṛṃmaya caityādīn na kuryān pustakeritīn/  
 Na maṇḍalānī svapneapi kāyavākcittakaṣṭhaṇḍā//"  
*Advayasiddhi*, v.18.

158 S.B. Dasgupta, ITB, p.69.



*vajrakāya* has been transformed into the *sahajakāya*.<sup>159</sup> The *Mahāyāna* concept of the production of *bodhicitta* (*bodhi-citto-tpāda*) is transformed in *Sahajayāna* into the production of a state of intense bliss (*mahāsukha*) through the sexo-yogic practice. The *Sahajiyā* esoteric practice consists in the production of *bodhicitta* in the *nirmāṇa-cakra* (or the *maṇipura-cakra*) through the union of the *prajñā* (female) and the *upāya* (male). Through processes of *haṭha yoga*, this *bodhicitta* is made to rise through the different cakras (*kāyas*) and reach the *uṣṇīṣa-kamala* or the *vajrakāya* (or *sahajakāya*).<sup>160</sup>

The Sahajiyas were noted for their spirit of heterodoxy and protest, and their aversion for scholarship, and their opposition to formalities of life and religion. A detailed account of the Sahajiyas can be found in Shashibhusan Dasgupta's, *Obscure Religious Cults*. *Sahajiyā* influence can be seen among the *Vaiṣṇava* Sahajiyas, the *Nāḍhā Nāḍhīs*, and the Bauls of Bengal.<sup>161</sup>

#### 6.4 Kālacakrayāna

*Kālacakrayāna* is perhaps the extreme phase of the *Vajrayāna* with the predominance of the terrible gods and

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159 Ibid., pp.80-81.

160 According to standard *Mahāyāna* thought, the *bodhicitta*, after production, moves upwards through the ten *Bodhicitta-bhūmis* and reaches the highest state called *Dharma-megha* and attain Buddhahood there. In *Sahajiyāna*, the *Kāyas* replace the *Bhūmis*. It should also be noted that *bodhicitta* in *Sahajayāna* is understood on two levels, viz., *Samvṛta* and *Vivṛta* or *Pāramārthika*. The *bodhicitta* experienced as gross sexual pleasure in the *Nirmāṇa cakra* is known as *Samvṛta* (*Samvṛti-satya*, the phenomenal) and in its motionless aspect in the *Uṣṇīṣa-kamala* is known as *Pāramārthika* (the ultimate reality of *Mahāyāna* Philosophy). See Shashibhusan Dasgupta, *ORC*, pp.93-94.

161 Benoytosh Bhattacharyya, *IBE*, p.76.

goddesses whom Austine Waddell labels 'demoniacal Buddhas'. He writes,

In the tenth century A.D., the Tantrik phase developed in Northern India, Kashmīr, and Nepal, into the monstrous and polydemonist doctrine, the *Kālacakra*, with its demoniacal Buddhas, which incorporated the mantrayāna practices, and called itself the *Vajra-yāna* or "the thunderbolt vehicle", and its followers were named *Vajrā-cārya* or "Followers of the Thunderbolt."<sup>162</sup>

There is also the view that the *Kālacakra* system developed outside India,<sup>163</sup> before it came to be known in the land of the Buddha, in the latter half of the tenth century (c.966 A.D.), during the reign of King Mahīpāla of Bengal. It was introduced into Tibet in 1026 A.D. and into Upper Burma in the 15<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>164</sup> Two great scholars of the system were Tsilupa and Somanātha. The *Kālacakratāntra* is the only available fundamental text of this system.<sup>165</sup> However, Warder mentions

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162 Austine Waddell, *Buddhism and Lamaism of Tibet*, p.15.

163 According to Alex Csoma De Koros, *Kālacakra* is derived from Shambhala. It was introduced into central India in the last half of the tenth century A.D. Later via Kashmir it found its way into Tibet where it flourished especially during the fourteenth, fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. See Alexander Csoma De Koros, "Note on the Origin of the Kāla-cakra and Ādi-Buddha systems" (Reprinted from *The Journal of the Asiatic Society* (JTAS), vol.I, 1833) in JTAS, vol.xxviii, no.2 (1986), p.108.

164 Biswanath Banerjee, ed., *Sri-Kālacakratāntra-Rāja*, (Calcutta: The Asiatic Society, 1993) p.x.

165 *Śrī Kālacakratāntra-Rāja* is also known as *Laghu-kālacakratāntra-rāja*. The important commentaries on it are *Kālacakrāvātāra*, the *Vimalaprabhā* and the *Sevokileśī tika*. There

Anupamarakṣita's *Ṣaḍaṅgayoga* and Vibhūticandra's *Antarmañjarī* as works on the *Kālacakra* system.<sup>166</sup> The *Kālacakra tantra* is said to have been spoken by the Buddha at Dhānyakāṭaka (Andhra).<sup>167</sup>

The concept of *Kāla* or *ādibuddha*, the primordial Buddha whence arises everything in the universe, is central to the system.<sup>168</sup> 'Kāla' is the unchanging *dharmadhātu*, while the 'Cakra' is the manifestations of time.<sup>169</sup> The *Kālacakrayānist* attempts to keep himself above the influence of the cycle of time which is in constant motion, bringing about decay, death and re-birth. Time reveals itself in the flow of vital winds within the body, which is the microcosm. The *Kālacakrayānist* tries to stop the flow of winds and raise himself up to the state of *mahāsukha* through *sexo-yogic* practices. Since *Kāla*<sup>170</sup> is the highest principle in this system they attach great importance to astronomical conceptions of *yoga*, *karaṇa*, *tithi* etc., and to the movements and positions of the sun, the planets and the constellations. They even interpret the various principles of Buddhism in terms of time and its different units. Thus the doctrine of *Pratītyasamutpāda* is conceived as the movement of the sun through the twelve zodiacal signs in twelve months. Further, *śūnyatā* is thought of as the sun of the dark fortnight and *karuṇā* as the moon of the bright fortnight.<sup>171</sup>

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are Tibetan commentaries and sub-commentaries by Tsong-kha-pa, Padma-dkar-po, Mkhas-grub-rje and others. See *Ibid.*, p.xii.

166 A.K. Warder, *Indian Buddhism*, p. 492.

167 *Ibid.*, p. 491.

168 Louis O. Gomez, "Buddhism : Buddhism in India", p.378.

169 *Ibid.* , p.378.

170 Since very ancient time *Kāla* (Time) has been regarded in India as the supreme force by different religious sects.

171 Biswanath Banerjee, ed., *Sri-Kālacakratānta-Rāja*, p.xv.

Waddell considers *Kālacakra* as, “unworthy of being considered a philosophy”, and as a, “coarse Tāntrik development of the ādi-Buddha theory combined with puerile mysticism of the Mahāyāna”;<sup>172</sup> nevertheless, it is a popular school of tantric Buddhism, initiation to which is given even today among the Tibetans.

## 7. Classification of Buddhist Tantras

The Mantrayānic Buddhists identify nine yānas.<sup>173</sup> They are: 1) *Srāvaka-yāna*, 2) *Pratyekbuddha-yāna*, 3) *Bodhisattva-yāna*, 4) *Kriyā-tantra-yāna*, 5) *Caryā-tantra-yāna*, 6) *Yoga-tantra-yāna*, 7) *Mahā-yoga-tantra-yāna*, 8) *Anuttara-yoga-tantra-yāna* and 9) *Ati-yoga-tantra-yāna*.<sup>174</sup>

The last three yānas are collectively known as *Anuttara tantra*. The more commonly accepted division of *Vajrayāna* is its division into four classes, viz., *Kriyā tantra*, *Caryā tantra*, *Yoga tantra* and *Anuttara tantra*.<sup>175</sup>

Waddell designates *Kriyā* and *Caryā* as lower tantras (Tib. *og-ma*), and *Yoga* and *Anuttara* tantras as higher tantras (Tib. *gon-ma*).<sup>176</sup> We shall now briefly comment on each of the four commonly accepted divisions of *Vajrayāna*.

172 Waddell Austine, *Buddhism and Lamaism of Tibet*, p.131.

173 Each *Yāna* is further divided into four parts or stages, namely, the View (*dṛṣṭi*) the Meditation (*dhyāna*), the Practice (*carya*) and the Fruit (*phala*).

174 Kazi Dawa-Samdup, ed., *Śrī-Cakraśūtravara-Tantra*, (First published: Calcutta: Thacker, Spink & Co., 1919; Reprinted: New Delhi: Aditya Prakashan, 1987) See introduction, pp.63-64.

175 S.B. Dasgupta, ITB, p.63, see fn.3

176 Austine Waddell, *Buddhism and Lamaism of Tibet*, p.164.

## 7.1 Kriyā Tantra

According to Mkhas-grub-rje (1385-1438 A.D.), the *Kriyā tantra* is meant for the sake of candidates who delight in outer action.<sup>177</sup> These outer actions (*bāhya-kriyā*) are such actions as bathing, cleaning etc.<sup>178</sup> These help the *sādhaka* to purify his body, speech and mind. In the *Kriyā tantra*, the deity (*yidam*) is viewed as external to the *sādhaka*. The practice of *Kriyā tantra* is believed to lead the practitioner to enlightenment in a span of sixteen lifetimes.<sup>179</sup> *Ācārya* Abhyākara teaches in the *Vajrāvali-nāma-maṇḍala-sādhana* that there are six kinds of initiations given to candidates of *Kriyā* and *Caryā* tantras. They are: the flower garland, the water, the diadem, the thunderbolt, the bell and the name. Of these, only the flower garland, the water and the diadem initiations are given in the *Kriyā tantra*.<sup>180</sup> *Kriyā tantra sādhana* involves three methods of procedure (*anuṣṭhāna*). They are: Meditation with Muttering (*japa*), Meditation without Muttering and Accomplishment of *Siddhi* after Appropriate Service (*seva*).<sup>181</sup> *Suśiddhikara* and *Dhyānottaraopaṭalākrama* are considered important *Kriyā* Tantras.<sup>182</sup>

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177 F.D. Lessing & Alex Wayman, Transs., *Introduction to the Buddhist Tantric Systems* (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass Publishers Pvt.Ltd., 1998), p. 219.

178 *Manjuśrīmūlakalpa* has great deal of *kriyā* elements; which are designed to honour the compassionate bodhisattvas and other beings such as the Avalokiteśvara and the series of Tārās.

179 T.D. Bhutia, *Beyond Eternity through Mysticism* (Darjeeling: Doma Dorji Lhaden, 1994), p.227.

180 For details on *Kriyā tantra* Initiations, see F.D. Lessing & Alex Wayman, Transs., *Introduction to the Buddhist Tantric Systems*, pp. 141-155

181 For details see *Ibid.*, pp.159-203.

182 A.K. Warder, *Indian Buddhism*, p.493.

## 7.2 Caryā Tantra

*Caryā tantra* is directed at candidates who delight in practising outer action and inner *yoga* in equal measure.<sup>183</sup> The term '*Caryā*' means 'conduct' and it refers to the action to be performed in the ritual, and more importantly to the whole conduct of the performer while preparing for the action and carrying it out.<sup>184</sup> *Caryā tantra* has four parts. The first part is the Initiation<sup>185</sup> which is given for the sake of making one a fit receptacle for the intense contemplation of the path. The second part is the Purification of vows (*sañvara*) and Pledges (*samaya*), which are in common with those of the *Kriyā tantra*. The third part is the Procedure of Preliminary Service (*pūrvaseva*)<sup>186</sup> Finally, the fourth part is the Manner of accomplishing siddhis after certain perfection is attained in the Service (*seva*).<sup>187</sup> Here the *sādhaka* visualises the deity as external and superior to himself. The practice of *Caryā* helps the *sādhaka* to familiarise himself with *dharma*. It is believed to enable him to achieve liberation in seven lifetimes.<sup>188</sup> The chief of *Caryā* tantras is *Mahāvairocana-abhisambodhi-tantra*. It is believed to have been preached by Vairocana, the Body of Complete Enjoyment

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183 F.D. Lessing & Alex Wayman, Transs., *Introduction to the Buddhist Tantric Systems*, p.219.

184 A.K. Warder, *Indian Buddhism*, p. 494.

185 In addition to the three *Kriyā tantra* initiations (*abhiṣeka*) mentioned earlier, the *Caryā tantra* initiations include those of the thunderbolt, bell and name.

186 This has two phases namely, *yoga* with images and *yoga* without images. The former is the *yoga* of the deity not governed by voidness. The latter is the *yoga* of the deity governed by voidness.

187 For details see F.D. Lessing & Alex Wayman, Transs., *Introduction to the Buddhist Tantric Systems*, pp.207-213

188 T.D. Bhutia, *Beyond Eternity through Mysticism*, p.227.



(*saṁbhoga-kāya*) in the Akaniṣṭha Ghanavyūha.<sup>189</sup> It contains consecration and postures for meditation, as well as the rituals of symbol and diagram, all of which are for the realisation of one's identity with the Buddha Vairocana.<sup>190</sup>

### 7.3 Yoga Tantra

The *Yoga Tantra* was revealed for the sake of subduing the candidates who delight in the *yoga* of inner *samādhi*.<sup>191</sup> Here, 'yoga' means, union with the *dharmadhātu* by means of intense contemplation of a god. Here ritual and 'conduct' are subordinate to meditation. The student embarks on a journey from the external to the internal.<sup>192</sup> The goal is profound concentration (*samādhi*) which is the gateway to personal liberation. *Samādhi* is attained by suppressing the wanderings of discursive thought and by fixing the mind one-pointedly on the object of meditation.<sup>193</sup> All the four classes of tantras use some form of deity-*yoga*. In the *Yoga tantra* the practitioner imagines himself to be the form-body (*rūpakāya*) of the Buddha.<sup>194</sup> In this way the vulgar body, speech and mind, together with their conduct, are transmuted in to the Buddha's Body, Speech, and Mind

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189 F.D. Lessing & Alex Wayman, Transs., *Introduction to the Buddhist Tantric Systems*, p.205.

190 A.K. Warder, *Indian Buddhism*, p.495.

191 F.D. Lessing & Alex Wayman, Transs., *Introduction to the Buddhist Tantric Systems*, p.219.

192 A.K. Warder, *Indian Buddhism*, p.495.

193 For details see F.D. Lessing & Alex Wayman, Transs., *Introduction to the Buddhist Tantric Systems*, p.215-249.

194 Jeffrey Hopkins, "Tantric Buddhism: Enhancement or Degeneration from the viewpoint of Tibetan perspective" (Essay on-line, accessed on 19 April 2004) available from <http://kaladarshan.arts.ohio-state.edu/exhib/sama/%2AEssays/SP92.051Hevaj.html>; Internet.

together with their marvellous Action.<sup>195</sup> In *Yoga tantra*, the *sādhaka* visualises himself as the deity and merges the *yidam* with himself. The practitioner is believed to attain liberation in three life-times.<sup>196</sup> *Vajraśekhara*, *Sarvatathāgata-tattvasamgraha* and *Sarvadurgatipariśodhana Tantra*<sup>197</sup> are fundamental *Yoga tantras*. *Yoga Tantra* was prevalent in Indonesia, Japan and South India, especially Kanchi and Nāgapaṭṭanam.<sup>198</sup>

#### 7.4 Anuttarayoga Tantra

The *Anuttarayoga tantra* is the incomparable *tantra* aimed at subduing the candidates who delight in inner-yoga.<sup>199</sup> There are four basic initiations conferred in *Anuttarayoga tantras*. These are namely, the Flask/Master initiation (*kalaśa/ācārya*), the Secret initiation (*guhya*), the Insight-knowledge initiation (*prajñā*) and the Fourth initiation (*caturtha* or *turīya-abhiśeka*).<sup>200</sup> The steps of the path traced out in *Anuttarayoga tantra* are divided into two, viz., Steps of Production (*utpatti-krama*) and Steps of Completion (*niṣpanna-krama* or *sampanna-krama*). The first is called the "path of maturation" in which "the forms

195 F.D. Lessing & Alex Wayman, Transs., *Introduction to the Buddhist Tantric Systems*, p.241.

196 T.D. Bhutia, *Beyond Eternity through Mysticism*, p.228.

197 The whole teaching of *Sarvadurgatipariśodhana Tantra* (Elimination of all Evil destinies) is geared towards procuring a better rebirth for the dead and a better life for those who are living. Tadeusz Skorupski, *The Sarvadurgatipariśodhana Tantra-Elimination of all Evil Destinies* (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1983), p.vii.

198 Lokesh Chandra, "Borobudur as a Monument of Esoteric Buddhism" in *JTAS* vol.xxvii, no.4 (1985), p.23.

199 F.D. Lessing & Alex Wayman, Transs., *Introduction to the Buddhist Tantric Systems*, p.219.

200 For details see *Ibid.*, pp.311-325.

of the male and female deities are visualised within their complete maṇḍalas. Their forms, maṇḍalas, symbols and seed-syllables are used to snare and purify the various arising manifestations of the personality. This step of purification is necessary to proceed to the next process of Completion."<sup>201</sup> The Steps of Completion is called the "path of liberation". In it "the union of the two purified forms, maṇḍalas and the seed-syllables of the deities of Wisdom and Means is performed."<sup>202</sup> The whole process is indicated by the word 'evaṁ'.

The process of Generation is indicated by the letter 'e' and the syllable 'vaṁ'. These two components of the word 'evaṁ' represent the purified male and female, solar and lunar deities and their maṇḍalas, the two principal concealed essences. The Process of Completion is indicated by the union of these two components and the formation of the word 'evaṁ'. That is, the union of these two components symbolizes the union of the two deities of Wisdom and Means.<sup>203</sup>

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201 HT (F), p. xx.

202 HT (F), p. xx. Farrow and Menon speak of three steps (kramas) viz., Generation (*utpatti-krama*) Completion (*utpanna-krama*), and Perfection (*niṣpanna-krama*), while Alex Wayman and David Snellgrove speak only of the first two kramas. They consider the *niṣpanna-krama* as another name for the step of Completion. But according to Farrow and Menon, at the stage of Completion the absolute nature is not fully manifest. Only in the process of Perfection through the Mahāmudrā Accomplishment the full realisation of the Absolute Voidness of all natures is realised. But the third step seems to be superfluous and is not recognised by other scholars. The present study also recognises only the first two steps, namely Generation and Completion.

203 HT (F), pp.xxii-xxiii. Farrow and Menon mention the phrase 'evaṁ maya' as indicating the three steps in their scheme. According to them the word 'maya' indicates the third step, namely 'the process of Perfection'.

*Anuttarayoga tantra* is subdivided into three, viz., *Mahāyoga*, *Anuyoga* and *Atiyoga*.<sup>204</sup> The *Mahāyoga tantra* is also known as the *Male tantra* or *Father tantra* to which the *Guhyasamāja tantra*, belongs. *Anuyoga* is also known as *Yoginī tantra* or *Mother tantra*. It includes the *Cakrasaṁvara*, *Vajrabhairava*, *Hevajra*, *Buddhakapāla*, *Mahāmāyā*, *Kṛṣṇayamāri*, *Caturyoginisaṁpuṭa*, *Mahāmudratilaka*, *Yoginisamcaryā*, *Dākārṇava* and the important *Abhidhānottara*.<sup>205</sup> The *Mahāyoga* and *Anuyoga* are called *Father tantras* and *Mother tantras* respectively because the former lays emphasis on the active realisation of the ideal of *karuṇā* (*upāya*) while the latter lays emphasis on the ideal of *prajñā* or transcendental wisdom.<sup>206</sup> Both *Mahāyoga* and *Anuyoga* are the preliminaries to the goal of *Atiyoga*. In *Mahāyoga*, the process of Generation is practised and the *sādhaka* attains clear vision and uninterrupted meditation. In *Anuyoga* the practices of energy control meditation leads to attainment of siddhis. In *Atiyoga* the mind is placed in a condition of spontaneous luminosity.<sup>207</sup> The *Atiyoga tantra* is the 'not-two' or non-dual *tantra* to which the *Kālacakra tantra*

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204 The *Sambarodaya*, the *Vajrapañjara*, the *Buddhakapāla* and other *Anuttarayogatantras*, make a basic division of the *Anuttarayoga tantra* into (*mahā*)*yoga tantra* and *Yoginī tantra*. The *Kālacakra* and others make a basic division of the *Anuttarayoga tantra* into *Upāya tantra* and *Prajñā tantra*. The *Vajrahṛdayālamkāra* and others speak of the *Dāka tantra* and *Dākiṇī tantra*. (*Mahā*) *yoga tantra*, *Upāya tantra* and *Dāka tantra* are synonymous. Similarly *Yoginī tantra*, *Prajñā tantra* and *Dākiṇī tantra* are synonymous. See F.D. Lessing & Alex Wayman, Transs., *Introduction to the Buddhist Tantric Systems*, p.251.

205 A.K. Warder, *Indian Buddhism*, p.496.

206 Biswanatha Banerjee ed., *Śrī-Kālacakratantra-Rāja*, p.iv.

207 T.D. Bhutia, *Beyond Eternity through Mysticism*, p.229.

belongs.<sup>208</sup> Classifications of *Anuttarayoga* tantras attested by different tantras vary; however, most accept the three fold division of *Anuttarayoga* mentioned above.

## 8. Vajrayānic Literature

The earliest Buddhist literature is in the form of the Buddhist *Tripiṭaka*, namely the *Vinaya Piṭaka*, the *Sutta Piṭaka* and the *Abhidhamma Piṭaka*. While the *Vinaya* and the *Sutta* are common to all schools, each school developed its own *Abhidhamma*. After the great schism in Buddhism at the Council of Vaisali (383 B.C), the Mahāsaṅgikas developed their own *Abhidharma* literature.<sup>209</sup> This served as a precedent for later inclusions to the *Tripiṭakas*. This tendency became very pronounced from the time of Nāgārjuna when certain apocryphal treatises, which were promptly attributed to Śākyamuni, began to appear in the fold of *Mahāyāna* literature; chief among these were the *Prajñāpāramitā* Sūtras. Kaniṣka's Council at Jalandhar about the first century A.D. adopted and legitimised this inflated version of the Buddhist canon, paving way to future incorporations in the form of tantric Sūtras, Dhāraṇīs and Tantras. This section is meant only to introduce us to the different genre of Vajrayānic literature in Sanskrit,

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208 "The classifications set by Bu-ston and Tson-kha-pa differ in details from the three subdivisions of the *anuttara-yoga*, propounded by Jayapaṇḍita Blo-bzan-hphrin-las (A.D. 1642-): 1. Neither Father nor Mother Tantras (Tson-kha-pa does not admit this subdivision) 2. Mother tantras 3. Father tantras." see classification of tantras in Kazi Dawa-Samdup, ed., *Śrī-Cakraśatīvara-Tantra*, ed., pp.7-8.

209 The *Mahāyāna Abhidharma* Sanskrit literature may be divided into two broad groups: 1. The works belonging to the *Mādhyamika* school of Nāgārjuna. 2. the works belonging to the *Yogācāra-Vijñānavāda* school of Asaṅga and Vasubandhu.

namely, *Sūtra*, *Dhāraṇī*, and *Tantra*, and is not meant to be an exhaustive catalogue of the same.

### 8.1 Sūtra

The Sūtras<sup>210</sup> are dialogues, which are the primary source for the Buddhist doctrine. The *Dharma*, recited by ānanda and endorsed by the first Council, came to be known as the *Sūtra Piṭaka*.<sup>211</sup> However, already in the first century B.C., the need was felt for a full-scale restatement of the *Dharma*. For this purpose they rewrote the sūtras, or wrote new sūtras, sufficiently similar in content as well as in style, as to appear authentic, at the same time opening up new avenues of thought. These new sūtras were thought of as spoken by the Buddha to a divine audience in different heavens, or to human audience, which failed to hand them down.<sup>212</sup> The author of such sūtras believed that he was inspired by a divine being revealing a *sūtra*, which was preserved by the gods or the dragons, until a competent teacher or student was found. In this way, they claimed legitimacy for these later developments in the Buddhist Literature. Here we shall be concerned only with some of the tantric sūtras of *Vajrayāna*.

Tantric sūtras are primarily magical formulas for worship or for protection from demons and diseases. They are not strong on philosophical doctrine though certain

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210 *Sūtra* is defined as "svalpākṣaram asarixdigdharī saravat viśvatomukham astobhamam anavadyarī ca sūtrāṇi sūtravido viduḥ"

211 The *Sūtra Piṭaka* was arranged into five āgamas (traditions) – *Dīrgha āgama*, *Madhyama āgama*, *Samyukta āgama*, *Ekottara āgama*, and *Kṣudraka āgama*. The Sthaviravādins call them Nikāyās (collections). See A.K. Warder, *Indian Buddhism*, p.202.

212 *Ibid.*, p.354.



philosophical concepts lie scattered in them. *Mahāmayūri Sūtra* is one of such magic sūtras. It is related to the *Āṭānāṭiyasutta*, a sacred book of Early Buddhism.<sup>213</sup> *Mātangi Sūtra* is an important predecessor of Vajrayānic magical formulas. *Mañiratna Sūtra* (available only in the Chinese version) is a spell to repel demons and diseases.<sup>214</sup> *Kāraṇḍa-vyūha* enumerates the great example of Avalokiteśvara renouncing *nirvāṇa* in favour of helping the suffering humanity.<sup>215</sup> It is partly in verse and partly in prose, and explains the Avalokiteśvara *mantra*, 'Om Mañi Padme Hūm'. In the *Mahā-vaipulya-Mahāyāna-sūtra (Mañjuśrīmūlakalpa)*<sup>216</sup> Śākyamuni gives Mañjusrī instruction on magic rites with mantras, mudrās, maṇḍalas etc. The culmination of the sūtras is found in the compilation of the *Mahāvairocana* and *Vajraśekhara Sūtras*.<sup>217</sup> In these two sūtras we find esoteric Buddhism in a systematised form. In the *Mahāvairocana Sūtra*, Mahāvairocana is called Mahāvīra and his *samādhi* is elaborated in it; various syllables are enumerated and esoteric meanings are ascribed to each of them. From the philosophical point of view, the central theme of the *sūtra*

213 Hajime Nakamura, *Indian Buddhism*, p.317.

214 *Ibid.*, p.318.

215 Benoytosh Bhattacharyya, *IBE*, p.29.

216 *Mañjuśrīmūlakalpa* was first edited by Mm.T. Gaṇapati Śāstri in Trivandrum Sanskrit Series, No.LXX, LXXVI and LXXXIV, i.e., in three parts published in 1920, 1922 and 1925 respectively. This *sūtra* contains material on astronomy, astrology, geography, geophysics, history of the Buddhist Church, and prominent kings, all put in a jumbled form. It contains innumerable mantras for the benefit of the *sādhaka*. The text has been edited and published by P.L. Vaidya, as the second part of *Mahāyāna Sūtra-Saṅgarha*. See Introduction, P.L. Vaidya ed., *Mahāyānasūtrasaṅgraha, Part II*; (Darbhanga: The Mithila Institute, 1964).

217 Hajime Nakamura, *Indian Buddhism*, p.319.

is the Bodhi-mind.<sup>218</sup> The *Vajrasekhara Sūtra*, which is believed to have been composed by Nāgabodhi in South India, contains the fivefold meditation to achieve the body of Mahāvairocana. It also describes the 'the thirty-seven *Devatā-utpatti*' as well as the Four methods of *Abhiṣeka*.<sup>219</sup> There are several versions, smaller and larger, of this *sūtra*, which are not dealt with here. The *Mahāvairocana* and *Vajrasekhara Sūtras* are considered tantras in the Tibetan tradition due to their distinctively tantric features.

## 8.2 Dhāraṇī

The *sūtras*, which were composed in about the fourth century A.D., manifested a new trend by their use of *Dhāraṇī* (an utterance usually mystical in nature).<sup>220</sup> The word '*dhāraṇī*' literally means, 'that by which something is sustained or upheld' (*dhāryate anayā iti*). They are mystic syllables, which sustain the religious life of man. *Dhāraṇīs* have their origin in the *Sūtras*. The ordinary followers of Buddhism could not follow the aphoristic statements of the *Dharma*. Hence it was necessary to shrink the *sūtras* into *dhāraṇīs* which the ordinary believer could easily commit to memory and recite them with faith.<sup>221</sup> Such fervent

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218 Ibid., pp. 322-323.

219 Ibid., p.324.

220 *Ratnaketu-dhāraṇī*, the first *sūtra* in a collection of *sūtras* entitled *Mahāsannipāta*, contains a *dhāraṇī*. It is for the most part unintelligible, consisting of repeated syllables (*guru, guru, muru, muru, hili, hili, ha'a, hala*, and so on) sprinkled with occasional words like 'great compassion' etc. A large number of texts of this period and later periods exhibit this new trend. A.K. Warder, *Indian Buddhism*, pp.485-486.

221 The *Aṣṭasāhasrika Prajñāpāramitā* was shortened to the form of *Śataśloka Prajñāpāramitā* of one hundred stanzas. Later it was still shortened to *Prajñāpāramitā Hṛdaya Sūtra*. This was further abridged to a *Prajñāpāramitā Dhāraṇī*, of a few unintelligible

recourse to the dhāraṇīs was believed to confer immense benefit on the practitioner.

One important characteristic of the *dhāraṇī* and the *mantra* is its meaninglessness. Vasubandhu says in his *Bodhisattva-bhūmi* that this absolute meaninglessness is the real significance of the mantras. A *sādhaka* who meditates constantly on the meaninglessness of the mantras will gradually be led to a state of mind where it will be very easy for him to meditate on the ultimate nature of the dharmas as absolutely meaningless. In this way, *dharmasūnyatā* is realised.<sup>222</sup> Thus Mantras help the *sādhaka* in realising the nature of the universe as absolute void. The four kinds of dhāraṇīs of the *bodhisattva*, which the *Bodhisattva-bhūmi* mentions, viz., *Dharma-dhāraṇī*, *Artha-dhāraṇī*, *Mantra dhāraṇī*, and the *Dhāraṇī*, for the attainment of forbearance of the *Bodhisattva* (*Bodhisattva kṣānti-lābhāya ca dhāraṇī*), have this aim in view.<sup>223</sup>

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words which ultimately gave rise to the *mantra* of *Prajñāpāramitā*. It was believed that the recital of even the *mantra* would bring the benefit of the complete *Prajñāpāramitā*. From the *Prajñāpāramitā mantra* evolved the *bīja-mantra* 'Prati'. See Benoytosh Bhattacharyya, IBE, pp.30-31. The *bīja-mantras* are mono-syllabic mantras symbolising some particular god or goddess. Thus 'a' represents Vairocana, 'ya' Akṣobhya, 'ra' Ratnasambhava, 'ba' Amitābha and 'la' Amoghasiddhi. "Hūṃ" is the *bīja-mantra* of Vajra-sattva. S.B. Dasgupta, ITB, p.57.

222 S.B. Dasgupta, ITB, p.59.

223 By the recitation of the *Dharma-dhāraṇī* the follower attains memory (*smṛti*), perfect knowledge (*Prajñā*) and spiritual strength (*bala*). By *Artha-dhāraṇī*, the correct significance (*artha*) of the Dharmas is revealed to the follower in a spontaneous way. The *Mantra-dhāraṇī* enables one to attain perfection. By the last type, the ultimate immutable nature of the Dharmas is revealed to the reciter. See Shashibhusan Dasgupta, ORC, p.21. See also Nalinaksha Dutt, ed. *Bodhisattvabhūmi* (Patna: K.P. Jayaswal Research Institute, 1966) p.185.

Dhāraṇīs may also be divided into four classes depending on the type of deity with whom they are affiliated.<sup>224</sup> From a religious point of view, dhāraṇīs were considered the relics of the *dharmakāya* of the *Tathāgata*<sup>225</sup> and were often enshrined within stūpas and icons. Dhāraṇīs were sought more for their mundane potential than for their philosophical propensities. They were believed to be powerful protection against disease, death, demons, and hell as well as ensure better re-birth.<sup>226</sup> This explains the immense popularity that dhāraṇīs enjoyed among the Vajrayānists.

### 8.3 Tantra

Tantras differ from the tantric sūtras in many ways. The tantric sūtras were considered *buddhavacana* and were

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224 The four kinds of Dhāraṇīs are, viz., *Vidyā* – utterances associated with female deities; *Mantra* – utterances associated with male deities; *Hṛdaya* – utterances of the wrathful deities; and *Upahṛdaya* – utterances of the male and female messengers and servants of deities. F.D. Lessing & Alex Wayman, transs., *Introduction to the Buddhist Tantric Systems*, pp.116-118.

225 Ibid., p.107.

226 The *Pañcarakṣa* (The Five Protective Spells) is a collection of five Dhāraṇīs, viz., *Mahā-pratisarā*, for protection against sin, disease and other evils; *Mahā-sāhasra-pramardini* – for protection against evil spirits; *Mahāmāyūrī* contains a number of magic sūtras; *Mahā-sitāvalī* for protection against hostile planets, wild animals and poisonous insects; *Mahārakṣa-mantrānusāriṇī* for protection against diseases. See Hajime Nakamura, *Indian Buddhism*, p.317. Again, the five dhāraṇīs of *Uṣṇīṣa-vijaya* are believed to protect the follower as well as remove karmic hindrances which bring about re-birth in an evil destiny. See F.D. Lessing & Alex Wayman, transs., *Introduction to the Buddhist Tantric Systems*, p.115. *Gaṇapati-dhāraṇī* is for gaining wealth, the performance of magical acts of controlling sentient beings and destroying demons. See Ibid., p.123. Dhāraṇīs, were at times more elaborate as to include the rite of building stūpas, manufacturing tile Buddhas, making offerings, r.iaṅḍalas etc.

not associated with human authors but the tantras were brought to light and handed down by human authors. Many of the profound *yoga* and *anuttarayoga* tantras were separately obtained by the different *siddhācāryas*,<sup>227</sup> and began to appear in composition about the middle of the seventh century A.D. They elaborate the philosophy and tantric theoretical assumptions contained in the tantric *sūtras* and lay down precise instructions on the praxis. From the number of commentaries written, it appears that the *Guhyasamāja Tantra*, the *Śrī-cakrasaṁvara tantra* and the *Hevajra Tantra* are the most important Buddhist Tantras.

The *Guhyasamāja Tantra*, a Father *Tantra* of the *Anuttarayoga* class, is one of the earliest Buddhist tantras<sup>228</sup> and exercised considerable influence on later

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227 Tāranāthā gives a list of important tantras and their compilers. Saraha obtained the *Buddhaakpāla-tantra*, Lūi-pā obtained the *Yoginīsaṁcārya*, Lva-va-pā and Saroruha obtained the *Hevajra*, Kṛṣṇācārya obtained the *Samputa-tilaka*, Lalitavajra obtained the three parts of *Kṛṣṇa-yamāri*, Gambhīravajra obtained the *Vajrāmṛta*, Kukuri-pā obtained the *Mahāmāyā*, Piṭo-pa obtained the *Kālacakra*. See, Debiprasad Chattopadhyaya, ed., Lama Champa & Alaka Chattopadhyaya, transs., *Tāranāthā's History of Buddhism in India* (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass Publishers, 1990) p.343.

228 Benoytosh Bhattacharyya believes that *Manjuśrīmūlakalpa* is earlier than the *Guhyasamāja* and was written probably in the second century A.D or even earlier. According to him the latter was composed by Asaṅga in the 3rd century. Asaṅga is believed to have composed also a *sādhana* of *Prajñāpāramitā* where he made a definite reference to the five *Dhyāni Buddhas* and their consorts. See Benoytosh Bhattacharyya, IBE, p.62. The *Guhyasamāja* is also known as *Tathāgataguhyaka* or *Aṣṭadaśapaṭala* signifying its eighteen chapters. See S. Bagchi, ed., *Guhyasamāja Tantra*, p.ii.



tantras and on Buddhist esoterism as a whole.<sup>229</sup> It is in this *tantra*, for the first time, that we have the conception of the five Dhyāni Buddhas as well as the five female deities. The central theme is the development of *bodhicitta* and the realisation of the ultimate emptiness of all entities. The text follows closely the doctrine of void as expounded by Nāgārjuna.<sup>230</sup> As regards the authorship and date of composition of the *Guhyasamāja tantra*, there are different opinions. Benoytosh Bhattacharyya holds that it was written by Asaṅga in third century A.D., but Alex Wayman is of the opinion that the text is of the fourth century A.D. probably authored by Indrabhūti the Great, who is not to be confused with the later King Indrabhūti.<sup>231</sup>

*Śrī-cakraśaṅvara-Tantra*, is a Mother *Tantra* belonging to the highly developed subdivision of *Anuttarayoga* tantras called *Anuyoga*. It is the first Buddhist *Tantra* to be published, and the first to be translated into any European language. It is believed to have been composed by "Yeshes-Senge, a priest of gNas-rNying" at the "Monastery of Shākya on the 25<sup>th</sup> of the 1<sup>st</sup> Summer month of the Earth-Tiger year"<sup>232</sup> The text details the Philosophy, ritual and rites of the *abhiṣeka*, *sādhana*, and the *maṇḍala* of Saṅvara with sixty-two deities, which is one of the richest and most complex maṇḍalas. This text

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229 The *Guhyasamāja* has been translated into Chinese, Tibetan and other languages of the different Buddhist countries which shows its wide subscription. It is also an oft-quoted *tantra*, an authority recognised by Indrabhūti in his *Jñānasiddhi* and Advayavajra in his *Advayavajrasamgraha* and commented on by several tantric masters. S. Bagchi ed., *Guhyasamāja Tantra*, p.ii.

230 *Ibid.*, p.vi.

231 Alex Wayman, *The Buddhist Tantras: Light on Indo-Tibetan Esotericism* (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass Publishers Pvt. Ltd., 1996), p.19.

232 Kazi Dawa-Samdub, ed., *Śrī-Cakraśaṅvara-Tantra*, p.155.



reveals the syncretic tendencies within *Vajrayāna* of incorporating Hindu deities and transforming them completely in their symbolism.<sup>233</sup> The central deity is the four-faced, twelve-armed Saṁbara (Saṁvara or Heruka) embraced by his *Prajñā*, Vajravārāhi.<sup>234</sup>

The *Hevajra Tantra*, which is one of the three most important Buddhist tantras, will be dealt with in detail in chapter two of this work. One of the less important tantras is the *Mañjuśrī-mūla-kalpa*, which describes itself as *Mahā-vaipulya-mahāyāna-sūtra*. It carries forth the spirit of *Mantrayāna*, as it is essentially a manual of magic in which the Śākyamuni instructs Mañjuśrī with magic rites, mantras, mudrās and maṇḍalas.<sup>235</sup> The text contains both *Kriyā* and *Caryā* elements. Warder places it in the early eighth century A.D.<sup>236</sup> It is vast in extent and could not have been the work of a single period. Some of its parts could even be earlier than eighth century. It includes a substantial history of Buddhism down to the beginning of the Pāla dynasty in the eighth century.<sup>237</sup>

In *Caṇḍa-mahāroṣana-tantra* there is a quaint mixture of Buddhist Philosophy and Vajrayānic practices. In chapter XVI there is the exposition of the *Pratītyasamutpāda* on the lines of *Mahāyāna* doctrine as well as the enumeration of the cult of Yoginīs such as Mohavajrī, Piśunavajrī, Rājavajrī etc. The female deities are presented in sexual union with their male counterparts. Sexual union is presented as essential for the attainment of the Six Perfections. In one passage Bhagavatī asks, 'O

233 Ibid., p.10.

234 Kazi Dawa-Samdup, ed., *Śrī-Cakraśaṁvara-Tantra*, p.10.

235 Maurice Winternitz, HIL, vol.II., pp.382-383.

236 A.K. Warder, *Indian Buddhism*, p.491.

237 Ibid., p.494.

Lord, can the dwelling of *Caṇḍa-mahāroṣana* be attained without a woman, or is that not possible?' The Lord said, 'That is not possible, O Goddess. Enlightenment is attained by means of bliss, and there is no bliss without a woman.'<sup>238</sup>

The *Mahākāla Tantra* and the *Saiṅvarodaya Tantra* have strong Saivaite flavour. The former caters to such mundane benefits as finding hidden treasures, gaining a kingdom, and obtaining a desired wife, and other magical rites.<sup>239</sup> *Mahākāla* is a deity of terrifying appearance, invoked in terrible rites, quite contrary to the notion of *karuṇā* so dear to the Vajrayānists.<sup>240</sup> The *Saiṅvarodaya tantra* is more Saivaite than Buddhist. It recommends the *Linga* cult and the worship of Saivaite gods.<sup>241</sup> In the *Kālacakra tantra* of Piṭo, we see liberal borrowings from Vaiṣṇavism and Saivism. The central deity of the *Kālacakra maṇḍala*, Lord Kālacakra, is surrounded by Hindu gods as guardians of the cardinal points.<sup>242</sup> The *Guhyasiddhi* of Padmavajra is remarkable for its use of Tantric code language (*sandhyābhāṣā*). Tson-kha-pa states that it establishes the *nidāna* of the *Guhyasamāja* and teaches the stages of the path. The *Pañcakrama*, also an extract from the *Guhyasamāja*, as the name itself suggests,

238 Maurice Winternitz, HIL, vol.II., p.383.

239 Ibid., p.385.

240 We have a verse in the *Sādhanamālā* "ācārye yaḥ sadā dveṣī kupito ratnatrayeapi yaḥ / anekasattvavidhvamsī Mahākālena khādyate" // *Sādhanamālā* p.586. (One who is persistently a hater of the preceptor and is adversely disposed towards the three jewels – Buddha, *Dharma*, *Saṅgha* – and immolated many animals, is eaten up alive by Mahākāla).

241 Maurice Winternitz, HIL, vol.II., p.385.

242 Biswanath Banerjee, ed., *Śrī-Kālacakra Tantra*, see Introduction, pp.x-xiv.

explains the five stages towards the final possession of the highest *yoga* (*yuganaddha*).<sup>243</sup> The *Jñānasiddhi* of Indrabhūti, the king of Uḍḍiyāna, is another work based on the *Guhyasamāja*.<sup>244</sup> It states that Buddhahood should be realised through conceiving all things as the self.<sup>245</sup>

Tantras were followed by a series of commentaries, as the texts required further exposition on account of their enigmatic expressions. There were commentaries on the *Guhyasamāja Tantra* by Nāgārjuna (the tantric), Candrakīrti and Ānandagarbha. The *Hevajra Tantra* was commented on by Saroruha, Kṛṣṇācaryā I, Bhadrāpāda, Dharmakīrti II, Vajragarbha and Tankadāsa. Kṛṣṇācaryā II, Bhadrāpāda and Jayabhadra wrote commentaries on the *Cakraśarīvara Tantra*.<sup>246</sup>

Another important section of Vajrayānic literature is the anthologies of poetry, which highlight the quest for enlightenment in many and manifold imagery. These were composed mostly in Apabhramśa (a vernacular probably spoken in Magadha as well as further west). They were collectively called *Dohā* and *Caryāpada* poems, and attributed to a galaxy of Siddhas like Saraha, Kambāla, Kṛṣṇācaryā, Tailapāda, Lūyipāda, Bhasuka and others.<sup>247</sup> In addition to these we have specific tantric texts as well as

243 Maurice Winternitz, HIL, vol.II., pp.381-382.

244 Alex Wayman, *Yoga of the Guhyasamājatantra: The Arcane Lore of Forty verses* (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1977; Reprint 1999) pp.90-91.

245 "bodhicittam idam vajram sarva-buddhatvam ātmanah/  
tasmāt sarvātma-yogena sarva-buddhatvam āpnute" *Jñānasiddhi*  
Ch.XV. See Samdhong Rinpoche and Vrajvallabh Dwivedi, eds.  
*Guhyāli-Aṣṭasiddhi Saṅgraha*, p.144.

246 For further details see A.K. Warder, *Indian Buddhism*, pp.491-492.

247 Ibid., p.493.

works of a general nature such as the *Niṣpannayogāvalī*<sup>248</sup> and the *Sādhanamālā*<sup>249</sup> which supplement our knowledge of the theory and praxis of *Vajrayāna*. Space does not permit us to be more elaborate on the Vajrayānic literature.

*The Blue Annals* composed by the well known scholar and translator Gos lo-tsa-ba-gZon-nu-dpal (1392-1481 A.D.) is the main source of information on all later historical compilations in the 'Land of Snows' as well as on the development of schools of Tibetan Buddhism. Due to lack of space we do not enter into the discussion on the development of *Vajrayāna* Literature in Tibet where alone Buddhist tantras were safeguarded and practised even up to the present day.

## 9. Tantric Language and Literary Style

*Tantra* has devised some unique forms of communication. It employs a tantric system of language called *sandhyābhāṣā* in its composition. There is some controversy about the correct form of the term and its

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248 *Niṣpannayogāvalī* of Abhayākara-gupta, is a remarkable work containing twenty-six Maṇḍalas in twenty-six chapters. All these maṇḍalas describe innumerable deities of the Buddhist pantheon. Its treatment of the images and deities is more varied and extensive than that of the *Sādhanamālā*. See Benoytosh Bhattacharyya, ed., *Niṣpannayogāvalī*, p.12.

249 The *Sādhanamālā*, (or *Sādhana-samuccaya*) also edited by Benoytosh Bhattacharyya, contains 312 *Sādhana*s. It is of great importance from the point of view of Buddhist iconography. Some of the *Sādhana*s are anonymous while the authors of some others are mentioned. They belong to the period between the seventh and the eleventh century A.D. "The work reveals much information on Tantric tradition, its philosophy and psychic exercises, and also of the Tantric authors, siddhas, mantras, maṇḍalas and various other matters of historical and cultural interest." See N.N. Bhattacharyya, *History of the Tantric Religion*, p.64.

translation<sup>250</sup>. Candrakīrti<sup>251</sup> in his *Pradīpodyotana*, a commentary on the *Guhyasamāja Tantra*, defines *sandhyābhāṣā* as, “*viśiṣṭaruci-sattvānāṁ dharmatattva-prakāśanam/ viruddhālāpayogena yat tat sandhyāy(sic!)abhāṣitam.*”<sup>252</sup> By the use of this technique

250 There are two opinions on the correct form of this word. Some scholars like Snellgrove, Lama Govinda, Pandit Haraprasad Shastri, Farrow and Menon hold that the term is ‘*sandhyābhāṣā*’, while others like Eliade, Agehananda Bharati, Shahidullah, V. Bhattacharya, and P.C. Bagchi consider that the more probable reading is ‘*sandhābhāṣā*’. The *Śatapiṭaka Tibetan-Sanskrit Dictionary* gives both ‘*sandhā*’ and ‘*sandhyā*’ as the Sanskrit originals for the Tibetan equivalent of *sandhyābhāṣā* (*Idem por dgons te bśad pa ni*). The term has been variously rendered into English. *Sandhyābhāṣā* has been translated as, ‘twilight language’, ‘enigmatic language’, ‘mystery’, ‘hidden sayings’ etc. Agehananda Bharati prefers Eliade’s translation of *Sandhābhāṣā* as, ‘*langage intentionnel*’ (intentional language). For details see Agehananda Bharati, *The Tantric Tradition*, pp.164-180; Vidhushekhara Bhattacharya, “*Sandhābhāṣā*” *The Indian Historical Quarterly* (IHQ), vol.IV, ed., N.N.Law (Delhi: Caxton Publications, 1926; Reprint 1985) pp.287-296. I use the term *sandhyābhāṣā*, since both ‘*Sandhā*’ and ‘*Sandhyā*’, are acknowledged by the Tibetan – Sanskrit Dictionary, and both the translators of the Hevajra Tantra (Snellgrove & Farrow and Menon) use the term *sandhyābhāṣā* and not *sandhābhāṣā*.

251 It is not certain whether this Candrakīrti is the Candrakīrti of (*Prāsaṅgika*) *Mādhyamika* fame.

252 There is some confusion with regard to the reading of the term ‘*sandhyāyabhāṣitam*’. Chintaharan Chakravarti while using the devanāgarī script writes it as *sandhyāyabhāṣitam* (p.3), while in transliteration records it as ‘*sandhāyabhāṣitam*’ (p.31). He writes, “The term ‘*sandhyāya bhāṣā*’ has been also read as *sandhā, sandhāya, sandhyābhāṣā*.” See Chintaharan Chakravarti, ed. *Guhyasamājantra-pradīpodyotanaṭīkā-ṣiṭkoṣṭhyā* (Patna: Kashi Prasad Jayswal Research Institute, 1984) ch.1, p.3 & p.31. The above passage is translated as, “whichever one reveals a truth of nature of sentient beings having superior zeal, and by the method of ambiguous discourse (*viruddhālāpa*) – that one is



the intended meaning is conveyed through coded formulas.<sup>253</sup> Hence terms and phrases belonging to this class are not to be understood in the literal sense.<sup>254</sup> The actual meaning is generally elucidated by the commentary. It is the language of communication between the *Guru* and the disciples as well as the circle of initiates.<sup>255</sup> In the *Hevajra Tantra* we have a list of terms and their corresponding tantric codes.<sup>256</sup> The *sādhaka* is duty-bound to communicate using the tantric code language lest grave dangers befall him.<sup>257</sup>

*Sandhyābhāṣā* is only the direct, vocal, method of communication but there are other modes of secret communication as well. *Chomā*, the Secret Sign Language, is widely used in the *Gaṇacakra* (the Circle of Initiates) and other gatherings. This consists of secret hand-sign language used in the Assembly of the Initiates to express realisation. As the emphasis is on direct personal experience of the Innate (*sahaja*), doctrinal expositions have no place in such assemblies. Words and concepts would only confuse the unripened disciples and hinder their concentration.<sup>258</sup> Hence natural language is replaced by an artificial sign language.

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expressed in the manner of samdhi." As found in "Tantric Songs and Twilight Language," in EBT, vol. 2, p.462.

253 According to Mircea Eliade, *Sandhyābhāṣā* has the dual purpose to camouflage the doctrine against the non-initiate as well as to project the *yogi* into the 'paradoxical situation' indispensable for his spiritual training. See Agehananda Bharati, *The Tantric Tradition*, pp.172-173.

254 HT(F) II:3:53-54.

255 HT(F), p.xxxviii.

256 HT(F) II:3:56-60.

257 HT(F) II:3:66-67.

258 HT (F), pp.xxxviii-xxxix.



Other non-verbal modes of communication are also used as in 'purification by Smile, by Gaze, by Embrace and by Sexual Union'.<sup>259</sup> Songs and Dance are also employed in the gatherings of the Initiates. Through dance the disciple attunes himself to the form of the deity to be emanated. Song is the recitation of the *mantra*.<sup>260</sup> By the employment of these modes of communication the theories, practices, and experiences of the processes are taught and directly experienced.

Tantric texts reveal a unique literary style. Probably, the first and most prominent characteristic of the literary style of the tantras is the paradoxical nature of the description of their doctrines. Second, the profuse use of symbolism especially in expressing the various positive categories of the doctrine. Third, the concluding statement that often expresses, either in brief or in detail, a feeling or experience of peace and happiness, more often than not, in the form of a magical formula.<sup>261</sup> David Kalupahana points out that the structure of tantric discourses follows the four distinct stages of the Buddha's method of language and communication, namely 'pointing out' (*sandasseti*), 'creating an agitation' (*samuttejeti*), 'appeasing the mind' (*sampahānseti*) and 'converting' (*samādapeti*).<sup>262</sup> We shall see in the next chapter that the discourses in the *Hevajra Tantra* too follow a similar structure. The unique language, literary style, and structure of discourse that these texts employ make them a distinct literary genre, the knowledge

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259 HT(F) 11:3:11. These actions express the affection between the deities of Wisdom and Means at the different consecrations. HT(F), *Yogaratnamālā*, pp.183-184.

260 For details see HT (F), pp.xxxviii – xLi.

261 David J. Kalupahana, *A History of Buddhist Philosophy*, pp.221-222.

262 *Ibid.*, p.225.

of which is essential to understand and interpret tantric texts.

### 10. Vajrayānic Masters: The Siddhācāryas

Vajrayānic theory and praxis were handed down through a lineage of tantric masters known as the Siddhas. Tradition speaks of the Eighty-four Siddhas who brought about the flowering of the tantric tradition from the eighth to the twelfth century.<sup>263</sup> They were persons, who, following the path laid down by *Vajrayāna*, attained direct realisation of the Buddha's teachings and guided innumerable disciples towards the same. The claims of *Mahāyāna* were not repudiated by the Siddhas. Some, in fact, combined scholarship in *Mahāyāna* with Vajrayānic pursuits. However, a large number preferred tantric praxis to the study of Buddhist texts. The Siddhas came from a wide variety of backgrounds. The *Siddha* lineage claims great *Mahāyāna* philosophers like Nāgārjuna and Asaṅga as well as Śāntarakṣita and Śāntideva. Though the most famous of the Siddhas were monks the majority were laymen and laywomen. Most of them were of lowly origin and worked in rather menial positions. In the spirit of *śūnyatā* that all phenomenal distinctions are essence-less, they ignored the restrictions of caste, the idea of purity and impurity and of proper and improper living. The *Siddha* is one who possesses Siddhis. Siddhis are of two types, mundane and transmundane. The latter is considered the highest *Siddhi*, which is enlightenment. It is more properly called the *Mahāmudrā* Accomplishment.

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263 For the biography of the eighty-four siddhas, See James B. Robinson, trans., *Buddha's Lions: The Lives of the Eighty-Four Siddhas*, *Caturaṣṭi-siddha-pravṛtti by Abhayadatta*.

## Conclusion

*Vajrayāna*, which is a system of esoteric theory and praxis, is the product of orthodox as well as heterodox elements. Vajrayānic doctrine is founded largely on Mahāyānic ideals, and to some extent also on Sāṅkhya, Yoga, and Vedāntic philosophy. But its praxis borrows liberally even from unorthodox practices, such as witchcraft, sorcery, shamanism, occultism, magic, and the like. The goal of tantrism, as seen from a large number of Sūtras, Dhāraṇīs and Tantras, is both mundane and transmundane. On the one hand, it caters to the lofty ideal of the non-dual (*advaya*) experience of the Ultimate Reality, and on the other, pursues such mundane benefits as siddhis. Thus *Vajrayāna* serves as an interface between Buddhist speculation and praxis.

## CHAPTER 2

# THE HEVAJRA TANTRA

The only reliable source of *Mahāyāna* Buddhist literature is the Tibetan Canon of which we have two editions: the *Narthing* edition and the *Derge* edition. The Tibetan Canon consists of two parts, the *Kanjur*<sup>1</sup> (Tib. *bKah-ḥgyur*) meaning 'Translation of the word' and the *Tenjur*<sup>2</sup> (Tib. *bsTan-ḥgyur*) meaning 'Translation of the Treatises'. Twenty-two volumes of the *Kanjur* are tantras and eighty-six volumes of *Tenjur* are commentaries on tantras. Among the vast volume of tantric literature, the *Hevajra Tantra* stands out as a specimen of Vajrayānic theory and praxis. It is probably the most prominent *yoginī-*

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- 1 The *Kanjur* consists of a total of hundred volumes: Thirteen volumes of monastic rules (*Vinaya*) and associated material; twenty-one volumes concerning the doctrine of the 'perfection of wisdom' (*Prajñāpāramitā*); forty-four volumes of *Mahāyāna* sūtras extolling the merits of the Buddhas and the bodhisattvas, and lastly twenty-two volumes of Tantras. HT(S), Part I, pp.3-4.
  - 2 The *Tenjur* comprises of works by individual Indian masters. Hence they are not treated as *buddhavacana*. They are classified into two large sections. The first section consists of 137 volumes of commentaries on the sūtras (*mDo-ḥgrel*). The second section consists of eighty-six volumes of commentaries on the tantras (*rGyud-ḥgrel*). The bulk of the works of the *mDo-ḥgrel* was produced between the second and the eighth centuries A.D., while the works belonging to the *rGyud-ḥgrel* were composed between the seventh and the twelfth centuries. This shows that the latter period of Buddhist literary production focused its attention exclusively on the tantras. *Ibid.*, pp.3-4.

*tantra* belonging to the *Anuttarayoga* class of Buddhist tantras. It was one of the principal tantric cycles introduced into Tibet during the post-persecution era, i.e., the later part of the tenth century A.D. In this chapter, we shall take a closer look at this unique tantric treatise.

## 1. The Title

The title 'Hevajra' (Tib. *dGyes-Pa-rDor-rJe*) is composed of two syllables 'he' signifying *karuṇā* (*upāya/compassion*) and 'vajra' signifying *prajñā* (*śūnya/wisdom*). In answer to Vajragarbha's query, "what is intended by the composite name Hevajra? What is proclaimed by the sound *he*, and what by *vajra*?"<sup>3</sup> *Bhagavān* answered that 'he' symbolised great compassion<sup>4</sup> (*mahākaruṇā*), and 'vajra'<sup>5</sup> symbolised

3 HT (F) I:1:6.

4 *Muktāvalī* states, "paramaraudrakāyavākkarma-sandarśanī tu mahākaruṇā." HT(T), *Muktāvalī*, p.9. See Ram Shankar Tripathi and Thakur Sain Negi, eds. *Hevajratantram with Muktāvalī Pañjikā of Mahāpaṇḍitācārya Ratnākaraśānti* (Saranath: Central Institute of Higher Tibetan Studies, 2001). From now on referred to as HT(T).

There is certain anomaly in interpreting 'he' as compassion. In the explanation of the composite name of 'Śrī Heruka', 'he' is interpreted as 'the primordial voidness of causality' (*hetvādiśūnyatā*).

"Śrīkāraṁ advayaṁ jñānaṁ hekāraṁ hetvādiśūnyatā/  
rukārāpagatavyūhaṁ kakāraṁ na kvacit sthitam!" HT (F) I:7:27.

It should be noted that such contradictory interpretations of the same term or symbol are rampant in the text.

5 The *Yogaratanmālā* commentary defines vajra as:

"dṛḍhaṁ sārath asauśirīyam acchedyābhedyalakṣaṇaṁ  
udāhi avināśi ca śūnyatā vajram ucyate"

(The Void which is the firm essence, indestructible, indepletable, indivisible and not capable of being consumed is called *vajra*). HT

Wisdom (*prajñā*). The term 'Hevajra' indicates the ultimate reality, which is the fusion of *śūnyatā* and *karuṇā*. *Muktāvalī* states that *mahākaruṇā*, with *sarvadharmāśūnyatā* as its content, is Hevajra.<sup>6</sup> The title also indicates the method that this *tantra* employs to attain its goal, which is one of Wisdom and Means (*prajñopāyātmakam*).<sup>7</sup> The method consists in uniting *prajñā* and *karuṇā*, and this union of voidness and compassion results in *bodhicitta*.<sup>8</sup> *Prajñā* (voidness) is of the nature of the female deity and *karuṇā* (compassion) is of the nature of the male deity. The goal of tantric realisation (*bodhicitta*) is iconographically depicted in the sexual union of the two deities. In the actual tantric praxis the *yogī* becomes the male deity (Hevajra) and the *yoginī* is the female deity (Nairātmyā) and the realisation is attained through their physical union. Thus the title itself indicates the basic view of the praxis found in the *Hevajra Tantra* and all other principal root tantras.

The term 'Hevajra' taken as a whole, is the name of the principal deity of the *Hevajra sādhanā*. The principal deity in the *Hevajra maṇḍala* is Heruka. There is no real distinction between Heruka and Hevajra. Heruka is worshipped singly or in union (Tib. *yabyum*; Chi. *yinyang*) with his *prajñā*. When he is in *yabyum* (union) he is

(S), Part 2, *Yogaratanmālā*, pp.104-105. See also, "na kadācid bhidyata iti abhedyatvād vajraḥ" HT(T), *Muktāvalī*, p.7.

6 "sarvadharmāśūnyatā lambanā mahākaruṇā hevajra ityārthaḥ" HT(T), *Muktāvalī*, p.9.

7 "bhagavān dha/ hekāreṇa mahākaruṇā vajraṁ prajñā ca bhūṣyate/ prajñopāyātmakāṁ tantrāṁ tan me nigaditāṁ śṛṇu// HT (F) I:1:7.

8 "śūnyatākaruṇābhinnāṁ bodhicittāṁ iti smṛtam" HT (F) I:10:40.



generally known as Hevajra.<sup>9</sup> By being in union with his *prajñā* (*Vajravārāhi/Nairātmyā*) he embodies in himself the method of this non-dual *tantra*.

As regards the term 'tantra' the *Yogaratanmālā* says, that it is a treatise consisting of three facets, namely the Source Facet (*hetu-tantra*), the Fruit Facet (*phala-tantra*) and the Means Facet (*upāya-tantra*).<sup>10</sup> The Source (*hetu*) consists of the beings who belong to the *Vajra* family. In the *Hevajra Tantra*, the members of the *Vajra* are the characters in the drama of the Buddha (*buddhanāṭaka*). Their dialogue is the vehicle through which the nature of and the means to the enlightened state of the Buddhas are revealed. The Fruit (*phala*) is the perfected Hevajra, that is, Vajradhara in the form of Hevajra.<sup>11</sup> The Means (*upāya*) are the methods of practice which are described in the *Hevajra Tantra*.<sup>12</sup> Thus the title of the text indicates the theory and praxis of *Vajrayāna*. The theory consists of the notions of *śūnyatā* and *karuṇā* and the production of *bodhicitta* (*bodhicittotpāda*). The praxis comprises of the visualisation of the deities of the *Hevajra maṇḍala* and the *sādhana* prescribed in the text for the generation of *bodhicitta* (enlightened consciousness). The principal deity, the method, as well as the treatise itself are known by the same name, Hevajra.

9 There are at least four forms of Hevajra – two-armed, four-armed, six-armed, and sixteen-armed. For a description of these forms, see Benoytosh Bhattacharyya, *The Indian Buddhist Iconography*, 2nd edition, (Calcutta: Firma K.L. Mukhopadhyay, 1958; Reprint 1968) pp.155, 157-158.

10 "*tantram iti prabandhaḥ/ tac ca tridhā hetu-tantraṁ, phala-tantraṁ, upāyatanaṁ ca.*" HT (S), Part 2, *Yogaratanmālā*, p.105.

11 "*pariṣpannā hevajramūrtiḥ phalam.*" HT (S), Part 2, *Yogaratanmālā*, p.105.

12 HT (F), p.xix.

## 2. Date and Authorship

Assigning precise dates to the tantras is a near impossible task, because tantras were in circulation through oral tradition long before they began to appear in writing. Snellgrove states:

It is never possible to date these works with any precision just because they usually have no date, but have developed gradually through several generations of followers within one particular group, for whom they first become authoritative, authoritative in the sense that the pupil learns them from the mouth of his master, and in this way they become the buddha-word...<sup>13</sup>

However, on the basis of historical evidences supplied by Tāranātha and Bu-sTon, traditions surrounding the Eighty-four Mahāsiddhas, as well as the textual evidences from commentaries written on the *Hevajra Tantra*, Snellgrove comes to the conclusion that the *Hevajra Tantra* in its present form was available towards the end of the eighth century.<sup>14</sup> Farrow and Menon too share almost the same opinion that it was composed between the eighth and the ninth century A.D., somewhere in the region of modern day Bengal, Orissa, or Bihar.<sup>15</sup>

As regards authorship, it is believed that Buddha in the form of Vajradhara is the real author of the *tantra* and the human authors only gave circulation to it. This is indicated by the phrase in the first verse of the *tantra* itself, “*evam mayā srutam*” (“thus have I heard”).<sup>16</sup> There is general consensus among scholars as to who brought this *tantra* to

13 HT (S), Part 1., p.5.

14 For details see HT (S), Part 1., pp.12-14.

15 HT(F), p.xLiii.

16 HT(F) I:1:1.

light. Snellgrove states that Saroruha<sup>17</sup> and Kampala (also called Lva-va-pa)<sup>18</sup> brought this *tantra* to light. His assertion is based on what Tāranātha himself has stated in his *History of Buddhism in India*, "After this, the two ācāryas Lva-va-pa and Saroruha brought the *Hevajra-tantra*."<sup>19</sup>

Authorship in this context should not be taken literally, as it is possible for a *tantra* to have existed through oral tradition prior to the author himself, to whom it is attributed in later years. It is probable therefore, states Snellgrove, that Saroruha only gave circulation to an already existing text, which was probably in dialect and this accounts for the defects in scansion and rough Sanskritization.<sup>20</sup> The profound esteem that Saroruha had for this *tantra* is seen from the fact that he wrote a commentary on it as well as several short works on the *Hevajra* cycle (*sādhana*, *vidhi*, and *stotra*) which are found in the *Narthatang* edition of the

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17 Saroruha is also called Padmavajra or Sakara. Benoytosh Bhattacharyya assigns A.D. 693 as the probable date of this great tantric master who also wrote the *Guhyasiddhi*, which is revered in Tibet. Tāranātha makes him a contemporary of Indrabhūti, Lalitavajra and Kukkuripa. For details see Benoytosh Bhattacharyya, IBE pp. 69-71. For biographical details of Saroruha see James B. Robinson, trans., *Buddha's Lions*, pp.227-230.

18 Kampala or Kambala-pa (Kambalapāda) is also called Lva-va-pa in Tibet. In Tibetan 'Lva-va' means blanket (*kambala*). He was thus called because he used to wear only one piece of blanket as his raiment. He is believed to have been from Oḍiviśa, a disciple of Vajraghaṇṭa and the preceptor to the *siddha*-king Indrabhūti. Debiprasad Chattopadhyaya, ed., *Tāranātha's History of Buddhism in India*, see fn. p.152; For biographical details of Kampala see James B. Robinson, trans., *Buddha's Lions*, pp.117-120.

19 Chattopadhyaya Debiprasad, ed., *Tāranātha's History of Buddhism in India*, p.246.

20 HT (S), Part 1., p.18.

*Tenjur*.<sup>21</sup> Snellgrove believes that Kampala also wrote a commentary on the *Hevajra Tantra* entitled *Hevajrapañjikā*, though it does not figure in the *Tenjur*.<sup>22</sup>

### 3. Text and Context

The *Hevajra Tantra* has Sanskrit, Tibetan, Chinese, Japanese and English versions, all of which have been published.<sup>23</sup> The Sanskrit original of this *tantra* consists of 750 ślokas in two parts. However, Vajragarbha, probably the first commentator on the text, states in his introduction that it is but a shorter version of the original work, which had thirty-two parts and 500,000 ślokas. The Chinese translation repeats a similar tradition, explaining that the work has two sections from an original of thirty-one. Buston in his list of the lost parts of the Canon refers to a version of this *tantra* in 100,000 ślokas.<sup>24</sup> In addition to these, Vajragarbha constantly, and Nāropa occasionally, quote from yet another version. In his introduction Vajragarbha refers to a *Mūla-tantra*<sup>25</sup> of 6,000 ślokas. In

21 HT (S), Part 1., p.12.

22 *Hevajrapañjika* by Śrī-Kamalanāth, complete in 23 folios, does not seem to have been translated into Tibetan. Snellgrove believes that it is possible to identify Kamala or Kamalanāth with Kampala who along with Saroruha brought to light the Hevajra Tantra. HT (S), Part 2., pp.vii-viii.

23 Hajime Nakamura, *Indian Buddhism*, p.334.

24 HT(S), Part 1., pp.15-16. Buston speaks of it as existing in the region of Cambhala, Uḍḍiyāna, etc. See E. Obermiller, trans., *The History of Buddhism in India and Tibet by Buston*, (Delhi: Sri Satguru Publications, 1986), pp.170-171.

25 In terms of the form of the text, tantras have been classified into the following:

- a) *Mūla-tantra* : it is the basic text containing the *nirdeśa* (explanation) of the *uddeśa*.
- b) *Laghu-tantra* or *Alpa-tantra*: it is the *uddeśa* (enumeration) of the subject matter.

explaining the figurative meaning of a passage he refers to this work. In introducing his discussion of chapter seven Vajragarbha says, "From this short version just as it is taught one learns the obvious meaning (neyārtha); the real meaning (nitārtha) is to be learned from the *Mūla-tantra*."<sup>26</sup> However, Snellgrove is of the opinion that this '*Mūla-tantra*' is later than the *tantra* itself and the early commentators, Saroruha, Kāṇha, Bhadrāpada and Dharmakīrti, as they make no mention of it. It must have been unknown to Tankadāsa and Ratnākaraśānti as well. Apart from Vajragarbha, Nāropa is the only other commentator to quote from it. Hence Snellgrove concludes that this '*Mūla-tantra*' must have been authored by Vajragarbha himself.<sup>27</sup>

The Tibetan version of the text must have appeared in the late tenth century A.D. It was translated into Chinese in 1004 A.D. This again was translated into Japanese by R. Kanbayashi. A critical study on this text along with its English translation was published, for the first time, by D.L. Snellgrove in two volumes in 1959.<sup>28</sup> Snellgrove has edited the text of this *tantra* on the basis of three extant manuscripts comparing it with the Tibetan version of the whole text. In the second volume of the book the Tibetan

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c) *ākhyāta-tantra*: it is the explanatory of another *tantra*.

d) *Uttara-tantra*: it is considered to be a commentary.

e) *Uttarottara-tantra*: it is placed after *uttara-tantra* and is commentarial in nature. See Hajime Nakamura, *Indian Buddhism*, p.332.

26 As quoted in HT(S). Part 1., p.17.

27 HT(S). Part 1., p.18.

28 Snellgrove's work is entitled, *The Hevajra Tantra: A critical Study*, Part 1, Introduction and Translation; Part 2, Sanskrit and Tibetan texts. Part 2 also contains *Yogaratanmāla*, a commentary on the *Hevajra tantra* by Kaṇha. Nakamura Hajime, *Indian Buddhism*, p.343, see fn.34.

version has been given side by side with the Sanskrit version to suit scholars well versed in both Sanskrit and Tibetan. He has included the text of the *Yogaratanmālā*, the principal commentary on the text, in its original Sanskrit version, to facilitate better understanding of the obscure doctrines and practices of this *tantra*.<sup>29</sup>

There has been yet another English edition, and translation of the *Hevajra Tantra* by G.W. Farrow and I. Menon entitled, *The Concealed Essence of the Hevajra Tantra with the Commentary Yogaratnamālā*, and published in 1992.<sup>30</sup> With these two publications we now have a reliable edition of the *Hevajra Tantra* and its

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29 Shashi Bhusan Dasgupta, (Book review) "The Hevajra Tantra: A Critical Study by D.L. Snellgrove", in JTAS, Vol. I. No.3, 1959., p.251.

30 The Farrow and Menon edition is based on Snellgrove's edition, and on four manuscripts of the *Hevajra Tantra* found in the National Archives in Kathmandu, Nepal. The text of the *Yogaratanmālā* that they have translated is also based largely on Snellgrove's edition of the same. However, they had two other manuscripts of the *Yogaratanmālā*, which helped them correct and improve on the edition of *Hevajra Tantra* and *Yogaratanmālā* and their translations. The root treatise has been ordered in such a way as to form units of related subject matter. These units have been transliterated in Roman script and are presented together with their English translation to facilitate easy comprehension. The translators have been influenced by the 'Buddhist Hybrid English' which has found wide acceptance in scholarly circles. Many technical terms found in the *Hevajra Tantra* can be found in earlier *Hīmayāna* and *Mahāyāna* works as well, but they have been translated, in keeping with the spirit of *Vajrayāna*, following Kṛṣṇācāryā's analysis of these terms. The text of the *Yogaratanmālā* has been improved on the basis of the Sanskrit originals of two passages which are only available in the Tibetan in the text of the *Yogaratanmālā* published by Snellgrove. Farrow and Menon have incorporated these two missing passages to the text of *Yogaratanmālā*. See HT(F), pp.xLiv-xLv.



principal commentary *Yogaratnamālā* in Sanskrit as well as their English translations. Bhagchandra Jain 'Bhaskar' has brought out another edition of the text entitled *Hevajratantra-Yogaratnamālā* along with a detailed introduction in Hindi.<sup>31</sup> Ram Shankar Tripathi and Thakur Sain Negi have edited *Hevajra Tantra* along with the Ratnākaraśānti's Commentary called *Muktāvalī*.<sup>32</sup> There are about fifty different Sanskrit manuscripts of *Hevajra Tantra* in various manuscript libraries of the world.<sup>33</sup>

The text of the *Hevajra Tantra* that is available now consists of twenty-three chapters divided into two parts; part one consists of eleven and part two of twelve chapters.<sup>34</sup> The treatise is composed of discourses that ensue between *Bhagavān* (Buddha as Vajradhara) and his disciple Vajragarbha. In the second part we have discourses between *Bhagavān* and his consort as well. These discourses convey the theory, practice, and experience of the *krama*, the processes of the Buddhist tantric method.

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31 See Bhagchandra Jain 'Bhaskar', ed., *Hevajratantra-Yogaratnamālā*, 2nd edition (Nagpur: Sanmati Research Institute of Indology, 2000).

32 See Ram Shankar Tripathi and Thakur Sain Negi, eds. *Hevajratantram with Muktāvalī Pañjikā of Mahāpaṇḍitācārya Ratnākaraśānti* (Saranath: Central Institute of Higher Tibetan Studies, 2001).

33 For details see *Ibid.*, pp.66-68.

34 Farrow and Menon entitle Part I, 'The Awakening of the Vajragarbha' and Part II, 'The Illusion'. The numbers assigned to the ślokas in each chapter do not always tally with Snellgrove's edition. Farrow and Menon give the translation of the *Yogaratnamālā* immediately after the relevant verses. They do not give the Sanskrit text of this commentary; but Snellgrove does (but not English translation) in Part 2 of his work. With the help of these two works of Snellgrove, and Farrow and Menon, a scholar can have a fairly good grasp of the *Hevajra Tantra* and its commentary, *Yogaratnamālā*.

The commentaries, *Yogaratnamālā* and *Muktāvalī* which accompany the text, explain the relevant terms and phrases of the text. An obvious problem that confronts the scholar, as S.B. Dasgupta points out, is to determine how much of the text is to be understood in its literal sense and how much in a figurative or metaphorical sense.<sup>35</sup>

Having introduced the text of the *Hevajra Tantra* and its commentaries, a word on the context of the root treatise is in order. Unlike the sūtras, the treatise does not mention the location where the Buddha is addressing Vajragarbha and the other yoginīs. He enters immediately into a dialogue with a *bodhisattva*, Vajragarbha, and later the Yoginīs too are found to join the discourse. They raise queries and the Buddha's answers often astound them. It is stated at the beginning that the Buddha is in a state of sexual union with his 'diamond women'.<sup>36</sup> It is in this state that he explains the various processes of the *tantra* and the nature of Enlightened Consciousness.

The *Hevajra Tantra* must be viewed in the larger context of the concepts and practices from various religions and social contexts that are found in *Vajrayāna*. Ascetic yoga tradition, rituals of tribal shamans, the fertility and passage rites, the rites of initiation into manhood, the rites of coronation of tribal chieftains, ancestor worship, the worship of temple deities and those of the family and the circuits of pilgrimage, set the stage for the practice of this *sādhana*. Monastic ideals of *Hīmayāna* and *Mahāyāna* also find their way into this *tantra*. Views and methods found in the *Guhyasamāja Tantra* and the *Sarvatathāgata-tattvasamgraha* have deeply influenced the formation of

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35 Shashi Bhusan Dasgupta, (Book review) "The Hevajra Tantra: A Critical Study by D.L. Snellgrove", p.251.

36 A.K. Warder, *Indian Buddhism*, p.498.

this treatise. Hevajra, the principal deity is similar to the Krodharāja of the *Mañjuśrīmūlakalpa* and other fierce divinities like Rudra, Bhairava and Śiva. Heruka is often used as a synonym for Śiva. The *Yogaratanmālā* and *Muktāvalī* reveal the influence of the traditions of *Abhidharma* as well as those of *Mahāyāna* schools, particularly *Mādhyamika* and *Yogācāra-vijñānavāda*. The text and its commentaries should be viewed in the literary context of Candrakīrti's *Mādhyamakāvātāra*, and the works of Nāgārjuna and Vasubandhu.<sup>37</sup>

#### 4. Language and Literary Style

The *Hevajra Tantra* is a fine example of tantric language and compositional style. The language is inferior Sanskrit with tinges of the vernacular as well. There is a couplet in the *Apabhramśa* dialect describing the characteristic of the Innate.<sup>38</sup> Other passage in the vernacular can be found elsewhere in the text.<sup>39</sup> The use of the vernacular as against the Sanskrit literary tradition of orthodox brahmins is in tune with the spirit of rebellion championed by the medieval poets of Northern India. Defects of language that plague all tantras are found in this *tantra* as well. Grammatical errors are numerous and the text shows utter disregard for scansion. Snellgrove found more than hundred lines of the text irregular from the point of view of scansion. With regard to grammar and syntax, especially in the case of endings, there seems to be great carelessness.<sup>40</sup> In his effort to get as close to the original as possible he has overlooked many of these irregularities. He

37 HT(F), pp.xLiii-xLiv.

38 See HT(F) II:5:67.

39 See HT(F) II:4:6-10; II:4:72-72.

40 For examples of errors of a literary nature see HT(S), Part 2, pp.x-xi.

writes: "We may then accept the irregularities of scansion, when it seems that they could not be otherwise, and the irregularities of grammar, in so far as they do not render impossible the required sense."<sup>41</sup> These literary defects give credence to Snellgrove's view that the *tantra* must have existed for long in the vernacular and the authors only committed to writing what was already a well-established oral tradition. Menon is also of the same opinion that, "the tantric *yoga* techniques described in the *Hevajra Tantra* have their origins in an orally transmitted tradition, which antedates the written tradition by at least a few centuries."<sup>42</sup>

The *Hevajra Tantra* opens like a *sūtra*. The literary style of both the *sūtras* and the *tantras* are similar. They exist in the form of dialogues delivered by the Buddha to congregations of disciples, bodhisattvas, or divinities in various heavens. The Buddha's answers to the questions raised by the congregation often astound his hearers and they drop down senseless. These pronouncements are often disorderly, stated authoritatively without any attempt to demonstrate their veracity. There are sudden interruptions and long digressions. The text exhibits a crude and disjointed style, and logical construction is conspicuous by its absence.<sup>43</sup> An analysis of the text reveals a structure similar to the structure of the method of discourse employed by the Buddha as discussed earlier.<sup>44</sup> The *Yogaratnamālā* is written in the *pañjika* style. This is a type

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41 HT(S), Part 2, p. x.

42 HT(F), p.xLiii.

43 HT(S), Part 1 pp.4-5.

44 See pp.69-70 above. See also David J. Kalupahana, *A History of Buddhist Philosophy*, p.225. For an example of the four-fold structure, see: i) pointing out (*sandasseti*) HT(F) II:4: 52ff. ii) creating an agitation (*samuttejeti*) HT(F) II:4:68. iii) appeasing the mind (*sampahāseti*) HT(F) II:4:69. iv) converting (*samādapeti*) HT(F): II:4:70-71.

of commentarial style where words or phrases from successive units of the root treatise are taken and commented on.<sup>45</sup>

Like other Buddhist tantras the *Hevajra Tantra* begins with the *nidānavākya*m, the fundamental statement – ‘*evaṃ māyā śrutam*’. This fundamental statement embodies within itself, in a cryptic manner, the *upāya* (the mode of practice), and the ultimate experience, which are elaborated in the successive chapters.<sup>46</sup> There is frequent employment of *sandhyābhāṣā*, which shields the true meaning of the text from the uninitiated and renders it an esoteric aura. From a practical point of view, it enables the writer to economise on the repetition of details regarding concepts and practices found within the treatise. Complex notions have been compressed into certain key names, words, or phrases.<sup>47</sup> The text employs a picturesque language, rich in symbolism and graphic in details. An understanding of the tantric symbols and their nuances is a must if one wants to understand the tantric vision behind the tantric ‘visibles’.

## 5. Thematic Analysis of the Text

Snellgorve has appended a résumé of contents to Part I of *The Hevajra Tantra: A critical study*; but it does not suffice to give us a clear and logical exposition of the theory and praxis associated with the *Hevajra sādhana*. Theoretical notions and practical guidelines lie scattered throughout the text. Hence we need to cull out and systematise them into the theory and praxis of the *tantra*. Here we have made an attempt to read into the text and establish a possible framework of theory and praxis. There

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45 HT(F), p.ix.

46 HT(F), p.viii.

47 HT(F), p.xxi.

is no attempt to accommodate every single line of the text into this framework, but only an attempt to show that there is a clear network of ideas, of a theoretical and practical nature, informing this *tantra*. The thematic analysis of the text has been brought under four principal headings: the *Mahāyāna* Foundations, the Theoretical Assumptions of Tantrism, the Tantric Means, and the Processes towards Buddhahood. These themes will have only a brief mention here, since they will be taken up in greater detail in the subsequent chapters.

## 5.1 The *Mahāyāna* Foundations

An analysis of the text reveals that the theoretical foundations of the text are Mahāyānic. As we shall presently discover, the core concepts of *Mādhyamika* and *Yogācāra* lie scattered throughout the text. These have been collectively referred to as the '*Mahāyāna* Foundations'.

### 5.1.1 The Absolute as *Tathatā*

The *Mādhyamika* intuition of *tathatā* is at the core of the philosophical foundations of this *tantra*. Snellgrove writes:

Now the basic philosophical position of the tantras is *Mādhyamika*. It asserts the fundamental unity of *nirvāṇa* and *saṃsāra*, of mystical and sensual experiences, and it regards all means as relative to the needs of the practiser...the process is checked by the conservative tendencies represented by the *Yogācāras*, and the whole movement remains essentially Buddhist after all, as subsequent developments show.<sup>48</sup> The Real (*tattva*) according

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48 HT(S). Part 1 p.20.



to *Mādhyamika* is one, uniform, undifferentiated nature. It is transcendent to thought as non-relative, non-determinate, quiescent, non-discursive, non-dual.<sup>49</sup> The Real is called variously as *tathatā*, *bhūtaakoṣi*, *dharmatā*, *dharmadhātu* and *śūnyatā*.<sup>50</sup> *Tathatā* is the ultimate unutterable experience in which the real and the intuition of it are non-different (*advaya*). It does not admit of differentiation and degrees.<sup>51</sup> *Tathatā* is not the result of accumulation of knowledge but the result of purification of the intellect, which arouses intuition (*prajñā*).<sup>52</sup>

The Vajrayānic equivalent of *tathatā* is *vajra*. The *Yogaratnamālā* quotes *Vajraśekhara*, in which *Bhagavān* equates *śūnyatā* with *vajra* when he says that, the void (*śūnyatā*), which is the firm essence, indestructible, indepletable, indivisible, and which could not be consumed is called *vajra*.<sup>53</sup>

The first verse in chapter five of the *Hevajra Tantra* reverberates the same *Mādhyamika* insight that the Real is devoid of constructive imagination (*sarvakalpanākṣayarūpaṇi*) and it is non-dual (*advaya*). *Hevajra Tantra* is

- 49 "Apara-pratyayaṇi śāntaṇi prapañcāir aprapañcitanī;  
Nirvikalpam anānārtham etat tattvasya lakṣaṇaṇi// " MK. XVIII,9.
- 50 "Śūnyatā, tathatā, bhūtaakoṣi, dharmadhātu ityādi paryāyaḥ." BCAP p.171. See P.L. Vaidya, ed., *Bodhicaryāvatāra of Śāntideva with the Commentary Pañjika of Prajñākaramati* (Darbhanga: The Mithila Institute, 1960).
- 51 T.R.V. Murti, CPB, pp.245-246.
- 52 Ibid., p.217.
- 53 "tathā coktaṇi Bhagavān vajraśekhara  
dṛṣṭaṇi sārāṇi asauśīṣyam accehdyābhedyalakṣaṇaṇi//  
adāhi avināśi ca śūnyatā vajram ucyate// " HT(S), Part 2,  
*Yogaratnamālā*, pp.104-105.

in perfect agreement with the *Yogācāra* view as well, that the absolute is a non-dual consciousness and that the subject-object duality does not pertain to it. *Hevajra Tantra* states that there is no duality in the Real (*grāhya-grāhakābhava*). "By their very nature, there is neither form nor the one who sees, neither sound nor listener, neither smell nor the one who smells, neither taste nor the one who tastes, neither touch nor the one who touches and there is neither mind nor thought."<sup>54</sup>

In terms of the Real or the True Principle (*tattva*), smell, sound, form, mind etc. do not exist.<sup>55</sup> Everything such as, the six senses, the Aggregate of the Five Components of Phenomenal Awareness, *mantra*, deity, is an aspect of the undifferentiated nature, or 'thusness' (*tathatā*).<sup>56</sup> It is due to ignorance that things, which are essentially non-existent, appear as though they actually exist outside one's consciousness. Due to ignorance again, all things appear to be in bondage, but in truth all things are 'released'.<sup>57</sup> These passages of the text echo the ultimate identity of *nirvāṇa* and *saṃsāra* as taught by the *Mādhyamika*.<sup>58</sup> The text upholds the unique Vajrayānic insight that the Real is Innate (*sahaja*) and is of the nature of Great Bliss (*mahāsukha*).<sup>59</sup>

### 5.1.2 The Absolute as *Tathāgata*

*Tathatā* and *Tathāgata* are not two separate entities. If the former is considered as *prajñā* or *śūnyatā*, the latter

54 HT(F) I:5:1.

55 HT (F) I:9:21; I:5:2-3; I:10:30.

56 HT(F) I:5:9-14.

57 HT(F) (II:4:36-38; II:4:70-71; II:4:75-77.

58 "na saṃsārasya nirvāṇāt kirttid asti viśeṣajñānī,

na nirvāṇasya saṃsārāt kirttid asti viśeṣajñānī." MK.XXV,19.

59 HT(F) I:10:31-32.

may be considered as characterised by the principles of both *śūnyatā* and *karuṇā* (compassion). *Tathatā* is the impersonal Absolute, while *Tathāgata* is the principle of mediation between the absolute and the phenomenal. All absolute systems require a mediator, and that need is fulfilled by *Īśvara* in *Vedānta* and the *Tathāgata* in *Mādhyamika* and *Yogācāra-vijñānavāda*. Only a being which enjoys a sort of dual status, having one foot in phenomena and the other in the Absolute, can possibly know the Truth and reveal it to others.<sup>60</sup> This serves as the *raison d'être* for the concept of *Tathāgata*, which is a metaphysical puzzle, but a theological necessity. The dual nature of the *Tathāgata*, as one with the Absolute yet actively pursuing the welfare of all beings, supplies the philosophical basis for the theological concept of the *trikāya* of the Buddha,<sup>61</sup> namely the *dharmakāya*, the *saṃbhogakāya* and the *nirmāṇakāya*.

The *Hevajra Tantra* reiterates the *Mādhyamika* intuition of the amphibious nature of the *Tathāgata*. It states, "The Auspicious One enters into the Thusness (*tathatā*) and similarly returns (*āgata*). By this kind of wise reasoning he is known as *Tathāgata*"<sup>62</sup> In the text, *Tathāgata* is called *Bhagavān*, *Vajradhara*, or the Auspicious One. *Bhagavān* refers to *Vajradhara* in the form of Hevajra. He is endowed with *bhaga*, that is, the six qualities of lordliness, abundance, grace, excellence, splendour and meaningful application of knowledge.<sup>63</sup> The text adopts the three *kāyas* as expounded by the *Mahāyāna* tradition and associates them with the various *cakras* of the

60 T.R.V. Murti, CPB, pp.276-277.

61 Ibid., p.284.

62 "tathatāyām gataḥ śrīṃdān āgataś ca tathaiva ca/  
anayā prajñayā yuktyā tathāgato 'bhīdhīyatel'" HT (F) I:5:8.

63 HT(F) p.4.

tantric subtle body.<sup>64</sup> In addition to the three kāyas envisaged by *Mahāyāna*, *Vajrayāna* has incorporated a fourth *kāya* called the *mahāsukhakāya* (the body of Bliss).<sup>65</sup> The fourth *kāya* is the fusion of the above three kāyas, which is the state of the *Tathāgata* (Hevajra) and it is realised through the complex *Hevajra sādhana*.

### 5.1.3 The Concept of Tathāgatagarbha

The Mahāyānic concept of *tathāgatagarbha* lies at the foundation of all tantric *sādhana*. All beings contain within themselves the seed of enlightenment and are potential Tathāgatas (*tathāgatagarbha*). The *Uttaratantra* quoting the *Tathāgatagarbha Sūtra* says, "All living beings are endowed with the Essence of the Buddha."<sup>66</sup> *Mādhyamikakārika* states that *nirvāṇa* is not something gained through abandonment or achievement<sup>67</sup> but is the eternal status of all sentient beings. The Mahāyānic conviction is that all beings are already Buddhas. The *Hevajra Tantra* reaffirms this conviction when it states, "There exists no one being who is unenlightened from the awakening to his own nature. By their very intrinsic nature, the beings in hell, ghosts, animals, gods, titans, men and even worms and so on in the dung, are eternally blissful, for they do not merely experience the pleasure of the gods and the titans."<sup>68</sup> But sentient beings do not experience the enlightened state due to the *jñeyāvaraṇas* and *kleśāvaraṇas*.

64 See HT (F) I:1:4; II:4:56-58; I:1:5; I:1:22-24.

65 HT(F) II:4:58.

66 As quoted in T.R.V. Murti, CPB, p.257.

67 "*Aprahīṇam asamprāptam anucchinam aśāśvatari,*  
*aniruddham anutpannam etan nirvāṇam ucyate.*" MK.XXV,3.

68 HT(F) II:4:75-76.

The goal of *Hevajra Tantra*, therefore, is not to 'produce' Enlightenment (*bodhi*) but to enable the *sādhaka* to realise that he is already enlightened and that he is essentially of the nature of bliss.

#### 5.1.4 The Concept of *Avidyā*

According to *Mahāyāna* tradition, *avidyā* prevents man from realising his enlightened nature. For the *Mādhyamika*, *avidyā* consists in constructive imagination (*kalpanā* or *vikalpa*). The root cause of *saṃsāra* is indulging in views (*dṛṣṭi*), and the holding of these views begets attachment and aversion<sup>69</sup> leading to suffering. For the Yogācārin *avidyā* is the objectification of consciousness (*viśaya dṛṣṭi*), the creation of subject-object duality (*grāhya-grāhaka dvaya*). "The Absolute consciousness is non-dual, but when infected by the illusory idea of the 'other', it is diversified into the subject and object. The function of *avidyā* is the creation of this fundamental duality."<sup>70</sup>

*Hevajra Tantra* uses terms like *ajñānaṃ*,<sup>71</sup> and *āgūntakamala* to refer to the obscurations that hide the enlightened nature of beings. It states: "Truly all beings are enlightened beings but they are veiled by the accumulation of defilements. By removing this veil of defilements, all beings are enlightened beings without doubt."<sup>72</sup> These defilements (*avidyā*) consist of two *āvaraṇas*, namely *jñeyāvaraṇa* and *klesāvaraṇa*. *Jñeyāvaraṇa* includes such

69 T.R.V. Murti, CPB, pp.270-271.

"*kāma jñānāmi te mūlān saṅkalpāt kila jāyase;*

*na tvān saṅkalpayiṣyāmi tato me na bhaviṣyasi*" MKV. p.149:197.

70 Ashok Kumar Chatterjee, YI, p.137.

71 "*ajñānaṃ svabhāvāparijñānaṃ*" HT(S), Part 2, *Yogaratnamālā*, p.130.

72 HT(F) II:4:70-71.

dr̥ṣṭis or vikalpas as thoughts of worthiness and unworthiness (*bhāgābhāgavicāra*), likes and dislikes (*iṣṭāniṣṭvikalpa*) etc.<sup>73</sup> The text states that men are deluded by not knowing the Real (*loko muhyati yetti na tattvaṁ*).<sup>74</sup> In the text *Bhagavān* seems to adopt the *Yogācāra* view that the defilements are due to the existence of subject object duality (*grāhyagrāhakabhāvāt*).<sup>75</sup> Wrong views generate afflictions (*kleśāvaraṇa*). Hence it is by the purification of these defilements that 'thusness' is realised.<sup>76</sup>

### 5.1.5 The Concept of *Bodhicitta*

The discipline that is undertaken to attain *bodhi* (Enlightenment) is called *bodhicittotpāda* (generation of *bodhicitta*). *Śūnyatā* and *karuṇā* are the principal features of *bodhicitta*.<sup>77</sup> *Śūnyatā* is *prajñā*, intellectual intuition, and is identical with the Absolute. *Karuṇā* is the active principle of compassion that gives concrete expression to *śūnyatā* in phenomena. Thus *bodhicitta* is a unique blend of intellect and will; it becomes the foundation of all altruism.<sup>78</sup> In the *Mahāyāna* tradition *bodhi* is realised through the practice of the Six Pāramitās and the Ten Bhūmis.

In *Vajrayāna*, *bodhicitta* is understood to have two aspects, viz., the absolute and the relative. In its absolute aspect, *bodhicitta* is the supreme mystical experience and as such may be called *mahāsukha*, which is *svasaṁvedya*

73 HT(F) I:6:19-21.

74 HT(F) I:9:20.

75 HT(F) I:9:5.

76 "sarveṣāṁ khalu vastūṁṁ viśuddhis tathatā smṛtā" HT(F) I:9:1.

77 "Śūnyatā karuṇābhinnāṁ bodhicittāṁ iti smṛtam" HT(F) I:10:40.

78 T.R.V. Murti, CPB, pp.264-265.



(self-experienced) and *sahaja* (innate). As relative it has an erotic connotation and is equated with the life-force (semei), the essence of *saṁsāra*. This again has two forms, namely the female coefficient (*rakta*) and the male coefficient (*śukra*).<sup>79</sup>

In the tantric conception of the subtle body, there are three important *nāḍīs*, namely *lalanā*, *rasanā* and *avadhūtī*.<sup>80</sup> At the base of the generative organ where *lalanā* and *rasanā* unite and *avadhūtī* ascends, *bodhicitta* exists in its relative form (*śukra*). At the crown of the head *bodhicitta* exists in its absolute condition as *mahāsukha*, known also as the Moon.<sup>81</sup> From the relative point of view, the generation of *bodhicitta* means the union of the sexual fluids of the male and the female<sup>82</sup>. The female is the *prajñā* or *śūṅyatā* and the male is the *upāya* or *karuṇā*. Thus it is through the sexual act of the *yogi* with the *yoginī* that *bodhicitta* in its relative aspect is generated. This limited experience strengthens the resolve of the practitioner and gives him a foretaste of the ultimate enlightened consciousness. Yogic practices enable the *sādhaka* to retain the relative *bodhicitta* at the *nirmāṇa cakra* and force it upward through the *avadhūtī* to unite with the *bodhicitta* residing at the *uṣṇīṣakamala* or *mahāsukha cakra*, the highest *cakra*. This union is again spoken of as the union of the lady with the lord, and is of the nature of Great Bliss.<sup>83</sup> This union may be achieved also through a process of inner union of the two *nāḍīs* in meditation according to the Guru's instructions.

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79 HT(S), Part 1 pp.25-26.

80 HT(F) I:1:14.

81 HT(S), Part 1 p.27.

82 HT(F) II:3:14, p.185

83 HT(F) II:4:38, p.216.

### 5.1.6 The Nature of *Nirvāṇa*

All schools of Buddhism consider *nirvāṇa* to be inexpressible. As pointed out earlier it is not something to be attained. The transformation is epistemic (subjective) and not ontological (objective). What actually undergoes transformation is the attitude of the seeker. *Nirvāṇa* is not a separate reality or a different state from that of *saṃsāra*. The Absolute is the only Real.<sup>84</sup> The Absolute is nothing but phenomena (*saṃsāra*) viewed without the distorting media of constructive imagination.<sup>85</sup> According to *Mādhyamika* the nature of *nirvāṇa* is indeterminate (*asaṃskṛta*). The *Yogācārin* considers the state of *nirvāṇa* to be the state of consciousness which is rid of subject-object duality and rests in itself.<sup>86</sup> This *nirvāṇa* is of the nature of supreme bliss (*mahāsukha*).<sup>87</sup>

*Hevajra Tantra* employs a number of terms to signify *nirvāṇa*, such as *siddhi*, *sahaja*, *mahāsukha*, *mahāmudrā* etc. For the Vajrayānist, the *mahāmudrā* accomplishment is *adbhedyalakṣaṇa* (without distinction) and *asiddha* (unachieved).<sup>88</sup> It is, as the *Yogācārin* views, a state where consciousness rests in itself and does not create, and it is the state of supreme delight.<sup>89</sup> *Hevajra Tantra* highlights the bliss aspect of *nirvāṇa* throughout.<sup>90</sup> *Yogaratanmālā*

84 T.R.V. Murti, CPB, pp.273-274.

85 "*sarvakalpanāḥ śāyārūpam eva nirvāṇam*" MKV, p.229.

86 "*cittasya citte sthānāt*" MSA, XVIII, 66.

87 Ashok Kumar Chatterjee, YI, p.161.

88 HT(F) I:10:18.

89 "*paramaratau na ca bhāvō na bhāvakaḥ*" etc. See HT(F) I:10:31-32.

90 "*sukhaṃ prajñā sukhopāyaḥ sukhaṃ kundurujaṃ taḥtā/*

states that the absolute (*vivṛtiḥ*) is of the nature of bliss (*mahāsukharūpaṁ*).<sup>91</sup>

## 5.2 Theoretical Assumptions of Tantrism

A thematic analysis of the *Hevajra Tantra* reveals the presence of certain specifically tantric insights as well, which gives credence to the view that the tantric theory is a fusion of Mahāyānic philosophical tradition and tantric assumptions.

### 5.2.1 The Bi-polar Nature of the Non-dual Reality

The tantric vision of the Absolute is that it is a *conjunctio oppositorum*. There is an in-built and inseparable bipolarity within the non-dual Absolute, which is expressed as positive-negative, active-passive, male-female etc. To signify this polarity the *Hevajra Tantra* employs such compound nouns as *sūmyatā-karuṇā*, *prajñā-upāya*, *yogi-yoginī*, *lalanā-rasanā*, *āli-kāli* etc.

The inner polarity of the non-dual Absolute is implied by the very name *Hevajra* who is *Vajradhara*. *Yogaratnamālā* asserts that *Vajradhara* is the Supreme Non-duality (*vajradharabhaṭṭārakaṁ paramadaivatam*)<sup>92</sup>. The text explains that the name *Hevajra* is composed of two syllables 'he' signifying *mahākaruṇā*, and 'vajra' meaning *prajñā*.<sup>93</sup> *Karuṇā* is also called *upāya* (*kṛpāpāya*) and the polarity is also expressed as *prajñopāya* (wisdom

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*sukhaṁ bhāvaḥ sukhābhāvo Vajrasattvaḥ sukhasmṛtaḥ//*" HT (F) II:2:32.

91 "mahāsukharūpaṁ vivṛtiḥ" HT(S), Part 2, *Yogaratnamālā*, p.125.

92 HT(S), Part 2, *Yogaratnamālā*, p.104. See also HT(F), *Yogaratnamālā*, p.6.

93 "...hekāreṣa mahākaruṇā vajraṁ prajñā ca bhaviyate..." HT(F) I:1:7.

and means). *Prajñā* and *upāya* are associated with the two *nāḍīs lalanā* and *rasanā*.<sup>94</sup> Again, *prajñā* and *upāya* are related to the vowel (*āli*) and consonant (*kāli*).<sup>95</sup> The text also employs other names like *Caṇḍāli* and *Vajrasattva*, which imply the bi-polar nature of the Absolute.

### 5.2.2 The Absolute as Union of Polarities

*Vajrayāna* presents the Absolute as the unity (*yuganaddha*) of polarities. This is portrayed iconographically in the union of Hevajra and Nairātmyā. Nairātmyā represents *śūnyatā* and Hevajra embodies *karuṇā*. The text declares that *bodhicitta* is the mingling of *śūnyatā* and *karuṇā*.<sup>96</sup> However there is no distinction in the Absolute. It is non-dual (*advaya*); It is devoid of all constructive imagination (*sarvasaṅkalpavarjita*); It is devoid of subject-object duality (*grāhya-grāhaka varjita*). The text clearly indicates that in the Absolute there is no distinction such as *prajñā-upāya* or *śūnyatā-karuṇā*. "By the complete awakening of the True Principle there is neither Wisdom nor Means."<sup>97</sup> It is characterised as Innate Joy (*sahajānandaṁ*) or Great Bliss (*mahāsukha*). It is inexpressible but directly experienced (*svasaṁvedyaṁ mahat sukham*)<sup>98</sup> within one's own body.

94 "lalanā prajñāsvabhāvena rasanopāyenasanīṣṭhitā.. " HT(F) I:1:15.

95 .."prajñālikālyupāyēti..." HT(F) I:8:10.

96 .."śūnyatākaruṇābhinnarū bodhicittarū iti smṛtam// " HT(F) I:10:40.

97 "...nātra prajñā na copāyaḥ samyaktattvāvabodhutaḥ// " HT(F) I:8:33.

98 HT(F) I:8:44.

### 5.2.3 The Body as the Sphere of Realisation

While the *Mahāyāna* tradition gives importance to the intellect and finally to Intuition in the realisation of the Absolute, *Vajrayāna* highlights the role of the body within which alone the Absolute is experienced as bliss (*dehābhāve kutaḥ saukhyaṁ*).<sup>99</sup> The text states that truth resides within the body (*dehasthaṁ ca mahājñānaṁ*).<sup>100</sup> The process toward the realisation of the absolute as bliss involves several bodily practices (*kāya sādhana*). Vajrayānic praxis involves both the gross body, and the subtle body constituted of cakras and nāḍīs.

### 5.2.4 Body as the Microcosm

In *Vajrayāna* the human body is considered as the microcosm. Every aspect of the universe is identified with the various parts of the gross or the subtle body. The elements that constitute the world are related to the four cakras. The five skandhas which form the universe, are reduced to three, namely the Body, Speech and Mind and these are related to the three nāḍīs *lalanā*, *rasanā* and *avadhūtī*. The pīṭhas are located within the body. The body is the *nikāya* (the assembly of the bhikṣūs), and the womb is the *vihāra* (monastery).<sup>101</sup> The three kāyas of the *Tathāgata* are located in the cakras of the subtle body.<sup>102</sup> Thus, the body is conceived as a microcosm, which houses every aspect of the cosmos, the macrocosm.

### 5.2.5 Homologous Vision of Existence

The term 'homologous' means 'having a pattern or correspondence' *Vajrayāna* views all aspects of existence as

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99 HT(F) II:2:35.

100 HT(F) I:1:12.

101 HT(F) II:4:64.

102 HT(F) II:4:54.

'co-responding' with everything else. The text betrays a preoccupation with finding a series of such 'co-responses'. We have three-fold, four-fold, five-fold and sometimes six-fold 'co-responses'. For example, we have a three-fold 'co-response' between various aspects as shown in the table below.<sup>103</sup> Distinctions and divisions found in *sañvṛti* can be overcome by viewing everything as 'co-responding'. The *yogī* is trained to see all things as related and finally to realise that all distinctions as well as relations are false.

### 5.3 The Tantric Means

Though *tantra* is built on the theoretical framework of *Mahāyāna*, and of certain tantric assumptions, in its praxis it differs from the Way of the Pāramitās (*Pāramitāyāna*) advocated by the Mahāyānists. The term 'Means' here signifies the instructions upon the methods of practice which lead the *sādhaka* to realisation.<sup>104</sup> The Means prescribed by the Mahāyānists comprise of the practice of the Six Pāramitās and the Ten Bhūmis. The Vajrayānists proposed a different set of Means for the generation of *bodhicitta*. The Means suggested by the *Hevajra Tantra* are, *Sañvara* (the Concealed Essence), *Abhiṣeka* (the Consecration), *Sandhyābhāṣā* (Tantric Code Language), *ānanda* (Joys), *Kṣaṇa* (Moments), *Caryā* (Applications of the Vow) and *Bhojana* (Feast).<sup>105</sup> The Means revealed in the *Hevajra Tantra* are collectively called the

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103	Doctrinal	Cosmic	Sexual	Vocal	Philosophical	Three worlds
	Wisdom	Moon	Padma	Āli	Imagined	Kāmadhātu
	Means	Sun	Vajra	Kāli	Contingent	Rūpadhātu
	Union	Fire	Śukra	Akṣara	Absolute	Arūpadhātu

104 "upāyaṁ samyaksañboddhisādhanaṁ" HT(S), Part 2, *Yogaratnamālā*, p.141.

105 HT(F) II:3:1.



'Fundamentals of All Tantras'. We shall now briefly comment on each of these Means.

### 5.3.1 Saṁvara

*Saṁvara* is called the 'Concealed Essence' as it is concealed in the body and because it is the choicest of essences. *Saṁvara* may be understood in its absolute and relative aspects. In its absolute sense, it is the Innate Enlightened Consciousness. In the relative sense, it is the various concealed essences (male and female sexual fluids) used in the tantric *yoga* method. The male and the female procreative essence of our progenitors responsible for our psycho-physical existence is at the basis of the concept of concealed essences. The Innate, as we have seen above, is the fusion of *śūnyatā* and *karuṇā*. The limited aspect of this Innate is represented by the procreative essence of the male and the female, the semen and the ovum. It is a firm Vajrayānic belief that the union of the procreative essences permits the co-mingling of the sacred (the absolute unlimited enlightened consciousness) and the profane (the procreative essences) and enables it to co-exist until the dissolution of the body.<sup>106</sup> The procreative essences are responsible for the body and the mind, which continually obscures and conceals the Enlightened Consciousness, the divine Innate. "The task of the *yogi* is to become aware of, and directly experience the Enlightened Consciousness. This task is achieved by utilising the breath, the energy of the limited Enlightened Consciousness, the libido and the reflections of our progenitors' procreative essences, the causal concealed essences, hidden in the body."<sup>107</sup>

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106 HT(F), pp.xxiv-xxv.

107 HT(F), p.xxv.

*Saṁvara* has the meaning of bond or union. It indicates a mystic union of all forms, of elements, and of the two (male and female) procreative coefficients. In other words, it is the union of the microcosm and the macrocosm.<sup>108</sup>

### 5.3.2 Abhiṣeka

*Abhiṣeka* literally means 'purification' by sprinkling.<sup>109</sup> In the earlier tantric period, the time of Mañjuśrīmūlakalpa and the *Sarvatathāgatatattvasaṅgraha*, it meant a rite of initiation by which the *sādhaka* was introduced into the mystic significance of the *maṇḍala*. The term may more accurately be translated as 'consecration'<sup>110</sup> Consecrations are four-fold: the Master (*ācārya*), the Secret (*guhya*) the Wisdom (*prajñā*) and the Fourth (*caturtham*). The type of consecration administered to a disciple depends on his worthiness or disposition (sensibility). *Yogaratanmālā* speaks of four types of practitioners who are of mild, medium, strong and the strongest sensibilities. These will be explained in detail in the subsequent chapters.

The Master Consecration is conferred on disciples of weak sensibility.<sup>111</sup> It is conferred in order to make the candidate worthy to listen, reflect, and meditate upon the Hevajra and other *Yoginī* tantras. The Master administers this Consecration by entering into sexual union with the Wisdom consort presented to him by the disciple.<sup>112</sup>

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108 HT(F) I:10:41; II:10:1. See HT(S), Part 1, p.138.

109 HT(F) II:3:12.

110 HT(S), Part 1, p.131.

111 HT(F) I:10:1-5; II:3:13; II:12:2; II:5:64.

112 HT(F) II:3:13.

The Secret Consecration is conferred on disciples of medium sensibility. It is administered by dropping the resultant sexual fluid, of the union of the Master and the Wisdom consort, into the mouth of the disciple. It is called secret because it cannot be explained to the *yogi* in terms of phenomenal concepts.<sup>113</sup>

The Wisdom Consecration is conferred on candidates of strong sensibility. At this consecration, the *Guru*, having worshipped the Wisdom consort, offers her to the disciple saying, "O great being, take this consort who will give you bliss."<sup>114</sup>

The Fourth Consecration is experienced with an external consort, in accordance with the *Guru*'s instructions. This consecration is given only to candidates of extremely strong sensibility. The *Guru* instructs the disciple saying, "O bearer of the *Vajra*, perform the Union".<sup>115</sup> The *yogī* then performs the Union with his *yoginī*. By this consecration the candidate attains the realisation of the True Principle.

### 5.3.3 Sandhyābhāṣā

In the composite word *sandhyābhāṣā* the term '*sandhi*' means 'the meaning agreed upon'. Hence the term refers to that mode of communication which has an agreed prime intent. Words belonging to this class are to be treated as code language and should not be understood in their literal sense.<sup>116</sup> *Sandhyābhāṣā* as Means is employed to

113 HT(F) II:3:14; II:12:3; II:5:65; I:10:6.

114 HT(F) II:3:15.

115 HT(F) II:3:16.

116 "*sandhir abhiprāyaḥ. abhiprāyupradhānaṁ bhāṣayitūṁ. nākṣarapradhānaṁ ity arthaḥ*" HT(S), Part 2, *Yogaratnamālā*.

communicate various elements of tantric praxis. It is considered the great conventional mode of communication among the yoginīs, which are not known to śrāvakas and others, and are not revealed in the other tantras of *Kriyā, Caryā, Yoga* and *Anuttarayoga*.<sup>117</sup> *Bhagavān* enumerates and explains the tantric code language that is commonly used.<sup>118</sup> The *yogī* is enjoined to use this wonderful language (*sandhyābhāṣaṁ mahādbhutam*) in communicating with the followers of the *Hevajra sādhana*, lest severe afflictions befall him.<sup>119</sup>

### 5.3.4 Ānanda

The *Hevajra Tantra* teaches that the four stages of consecration give knowledge of the four joys (*ānanda*). This knowledge of the four joys is known in the four consecrations by marking the four *kṣaṇas*, the four Moments. The four Joys are, the Ordinary joy (*ānanda*), the Refined joy (*paramānanda*) the joy of Cessation (*viramānanda*) and the Innate joy (*sahajānanda*).<sup>120</sup> From the Ordinary joy there is some bliss; from the Refined joy there is even more; from the joy of Cessation there is the passionless joy; the joy of the Innate is considered the culmination of all joys.<sup>121</sup> *Yogaratnamālā* explains that the first three joys are of the phenomenal realm,<sup>122</sup> and they do not bring about release.<sup>123</sup> As regards the relation between

p.145. See also "sandhinā abhiprāyeṇa ābhāṣaṁ sandhyābhāṣam" HT(T), *Muktāvalī*, p.154.

117 HT(F) II:3:53-54.

118 See HT(F) II:3:56-60.

119 HT(F) II:3:65-67.

120 HT(F), pp.xxxiv-xxxv.

121 HT(F) I:8:30-32.

122 HT(F) I:10:12-13.

123 HT(F) I:8:30, p.97

the first three joys and the Innate joy the *Yogaratnamālā* states,

The absolute Innate Bliss is the cause of the relative bliss, the relative Bliss being a limited aspect of the absolute Innate Bliss. Therefore confidence is attained by means of the relative bliss which is limited aspect, similar in nature to the primary cause, the absolute innate Bliss.<sup>124</sup>

The *Yogaratnamālā* teaches that the worldly joys are not to be spurned because they are the means, which enable the achievement of the goal, the Great Bliss.

### 5.3.5 *Kṣaṇa*

The *Kṣaṇas* are the various moments or stages in the process of realisation. The four Moments are: the Diverse (*vicitra*), the Ripening (*vipāka*) the Dissolving (*vimarda*) and the Signless (*vilakṣaṇa*).<sup>125</sup> The Diverse moment is so called because it consists of a variety, embracing, kissing and so on. The Ripening moment is the reverse of the Diverse moment. It is the enjoyment of the blissful knowledge. The Dissolving moment is said to be the reflective thought, 'I have experienced bliss'. The Signless is other than these three and is free from passion and the absence of passion; that is, it is devoid of the phenomenal existence and the Release.<sup>126</sup>

### 5.3.6 *Caryā*

The *Caryā* is the Application of the Vow according to the instructions of the *Guru* and the Buddhas. This is given so that the stages of the consecration can be realised and

124 HT(F) II:2:40, p.168.

125 HT(F), p.xxxv; I:1:26.

126 HT(F) II:3:6-8.

stabilised. Enlightenment is said to be quickly obtained by the Application of the Vow. For the disciple of mild sensibility the Differentiated Vow is prescribed. The candidate of medium sensibility is given the Undifferentiated Vow and to those of strong sensibility, the Extremely Undifferentiated Vow. The text does not mention any vow for those of the strongest sensibility. At their Fourth Consecration the application of the vow is realised through the *Mahāmudrā*.<sup>127</sup>

### 5.3.7 Bhojana

The feast (*bhojana*) associated with the gathering of the Circle of Initiates is described in chapter seven of the second part of the *Hevajra Tantra*. The feast is to be offered in a crematory or a mountain cave or deserted town or a lonely place. The seats are made of corpses or rags from the crematory or tiger-skins. The participants partake of the sacraments consisting of meat of cows, dogs, elephants, horses, and men. The disciple should give the *Guru* a skull-cup filled with liquor. It should be given with the left hand and received also with the left hand.<sup>128</sup> This feast is considered the Differentiated Application of the Vow, which is aimed at making the *sādhaka* shed his conventional mind-set such as, worthy-unworthy, edible-inedible, etc.

## 5.4 The Process Towards Buddhahood

It has been pointed out earlier that all beings are intrinsically enlightened but on account of defilements they appear to be in bondage. The tantric praxis is aimed at removing the apparent defilements, which arise from

127 HT(F), p.xxxviii. See also I:6:24; p.69.

128 HT(F) II:7:7-13.



nothing other than a false view of existence.<sup>129</sup> Hence the training consists in learning to conceive of existence in the light of its non-existence. In this way the *sādhaka* realises automatically the true Innate nature (*sahaja*). In order to attain this goal, *tantra* employs existence itself as the means (*upāya*).<sup>130</sup> The first step is to create mentally an idealised representation of existence (*utpattikrama*); the second, is to realise the dream-like nature of its apparent diversity and perceive its underlying unity (*sañpannakrama*).<sup>131</sup> The doctrinal instructions of the Adamantine One (*Vajradhara*) are based on these two *kramas* (processes), namely, the process of Generation (*utpattikrama*), and the process of Completion (*utpannakrama/sañpannakrama*).<sup>132</sup> These processes will be elucidated in greater detail in the sixth chapter.

#### 5.4.1 The Process of Generation

In the *Hevajra Tantra* the process of Generation consists in the manifestation of the form of the deities by the transformation of the Moon, the Symbol and the Seed-syllable, and so on, in a stabilised meditative state.<sup>133</sup> During the meditative process the numerous deities of the *maṇḍala* are visualised. The divinities of the *maṇḍala* are nothing but idealisation of existence produced by thought-creation (*bhāvana*).<sup>134</sup> It is called Generation because this

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129 "vinā kalpanayāstitvam rāgādīnam na vidyate;  
bhūtārthah kalpanā ceti ko grahīṣyati buddhimān." C. VIII,3.

130 HT(F) II:2:46-51.

131 HT(F) II:2:28.

132 HT(F) I:8:23.

133 HT (F) I:8:23, p.92.

134 HT(S), Part I, p.139.

process involves the generation of “figments by ideation or constructs by the cognition (*buddhi*)”.<sup>135</sup>

#### 5.4.2 The Process of Completion

In the process of Completion, the *yogin* considers himself as the centre of the process, and drawing the forms he has visualised into his own heart, realises the essential identity with the central, all-comprehending, divinity.<sup>136</sup> This involves the purification of all phenomenal things and the realisation of the voidness of all natures.<sup>137</sup> The process of Completion is the attainment of the intrinsic nature itself by the application of the True Principle.<sup>138</sup> The essential aspect of the process of Completion is the attainment of the state of unity through the unification of Wisdom and Means.<sup>139</sup>

### 6. Commentarial Literature

The *Hevajra Tantra* has several commentaries. Ram Shankar Tripathi in his edition of the *Hevajra Tantra* with *Muktāvalī* of Mahāpaṇḍitācārya Ratnākaraśanti, enumerates fourteen commentaries in all.<sup>140</sup> Nakamura claims that the earliest commentary on the *Hevajra* is the *Ṣaṣṭhasrikā Hevajratantratīkā* by Daśabhūmīśvara Vajragarbha.<sup>141</sup> Bu-ston speaks of a commentary on *Hevajra Tantra* by Vajragarbha entitled *Hevajra-*

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135 F.D. Lessing & Alex Wayman, *Introduction to the Buddhist Tantric Systems*, p.333.

136 HT(S). Part 1 p.140.

137 HT(F) I:9:20-21.

138 HT(F) I:8:23, p.92.

139 HT(F) I:8:24-25, p.93.

140 For details see HT(T), pp.62-63.

141 Hajime Nakamura, *Indian Buddhism*, p.334, fn.34.

*piṇḍārthu-ṭikā*.<sup>142</sup> It is not clear whether both the titles refer to the same commentary.

The most important commentary on the *Hevajra Tantra* is *Yogaratnamālā*, the commentary by Kṛṣṇa or Kāṇha.<sup>143</sup> It is also known as *Hevajra Pañjikā* on account of its compositional style called *pañjikā*. Kṛṣṇācārya's commentary reveals the influence of *Abhidharma* and the *Mahāyāna* traditions, as well as tantric precepts that are found in the *Guhyasamāja Tantra*, especially the direct experience of the Innate and the Great Bliss, which is attained in the *Mahāmudrā* Accomplishment. The *Yogaratnamālā* offers an authentic insight into the radical bio-genetic and psychological views of the *Yogī* tradition of *Vajrayāna*. It makes constant effort to relate the tantric theory and praxis with Mahāyānic speculation, and sheds light on the sophisticated and controversial tantric methods practised and perfected over the centuries. The commentary can be better understood in the light of Candrakīrti's *Mādhyamakāvātāra* and the treatises of Nāgārjuna and Vasubandhu.<sup>144</sup>

Bhadrapada is believed to have written another commentary on the *Hevajra Tantra* entitled, *Śrīhevajravākyāvivarāṇa*, which is found in the *Narhang* edition. Nāropa, the disciple of Tilopa, wrote *Vajrapādasārasaṅgrahapañjikā* and attempted to associate *Hevajra Tantra* with the Tibetan line of the *Ka-gyu-pas*. Tankadāsa, a monk of Nālandā, too is believed to have

142 E. Obermiller, trans., *The History of Buddhism in India and Tibet by Buston*, p.220.

143 Tāranātha states that Kāṇha, the commentator, is a contemporary of king Devapāla who reigned during the first half of the 9th century.

144 HT(F), pp. xLiii-xLiv.

written a commentary on this *tantra* entitled *Hevajratantrarājatīka-suviśuddha-saṅgītanāma*. Two other commentators of importance, who are not part of the list of Mahāsiddhas, are Dharmakīrti and Vajragarbha.<sup>145</sup> Saroruha is believed to have written a commentary entitled *Hevajratantrapañjikā Padminīnāma*. Ratnākaraśānti's *Muktāvalī* is another commentary on the *Hevajra Tantra*.<sup>146</sup> The *Hevajrapañjikā* by Śāntigupta (twelfth century) is actually a work of *Sahajayāna*, but in the first half of the work he explains verses of the *Hevajra Tantra*.<sup>147</sup>

There are over fifty associated and supplementary texts belonging to the *Hevajra Tantra* class, which explain the *maṇḍala*, *sādhana*, *vidhi*, *homa*, *pūja* and *abhiṣeka* of the *Hevajra Tantra*.<sup>148</sup> The existence of these texts is known from references to them in Tibetan works on *Vajrayāna*. The *Union Tantra* and the *Vajrapañjara Tantra* are two important associated works on the *Hevajra Tantra*. The *Union Tantra* is considered an explanatory tantra of *Hevajra Tantra*. It explains the processes of Generation and Completion. The *Vajrapañjara Tantra* is an exegetical work on the *Hevajra Tantra*.<sup>149</sup> The large number of commentaries and associated works demonstrates the high

145 HT(S), Part 1 pp.14-15. Dharmakīrti wrote *Hevajramahātantrasya pañjikānetra-vibhaṅganāma* and Vajragarbha wrote *Hevajrapañjikā*.

146 See Ram Shankar Tripathi and Thakur Sain Negi, eds. *Hevajratantram with Muktāvalī Pañjikā of Mahāpaṇḍitācārya Ratnākaraśānti*. Snellgrove refers to Ratnākaraśānti's *Muktāvalī* as 'Muktikāvalī'. See HT(S), Part 1, p.xiii.

147 Hajime Nakamura, *Indian Buddhism*, p.335.

148 See HT(T), pp.63-65.

149 Panchen Sonam Dragpa, *Overview of Buddhist Tantra* (English Translation by Martin J. Boord & Losang Norbu Tsonawa) (Dharamsala: Library of Tibetan Works and Archives, 1996), p.50.

esteem, which the *Hevajra Tantra* enjoyed among the Vajrayānists.

## 7. The *Hevajra Tantra* and other Major Tantras

The *Hevajra Tantra* does not exist in isolation in the gamut of Buddhist tantric literature. We can have a deeper understanding and appreciation of the text when it is viewed in the context of other major tantric texts. The *Hevajra Tantra* seems to be a point of arrival and departure in the development of tantric theory and praxis.

The two important tantric sūtras, *Mahāvairocana sūtra*, and *Vajraśekhara sūtra* or *Survatathāgatatattvasamgraha* emphasised consecration and postures for meditation. The *Hevajra Tantra* must have been influenced by the sophisticated praxis developed by these sūtras to wean the *sādhaka* away from external forms of ritual to inner realisation.<sup>150</sup>

The *Guhyasamāja Tantra* marks a step ahead in the development of tantric theory and praxis. It is in this *tantra* that we have for the first time, the conception of the five *Dhyāni* Buddhas and the five female deities.<sup>151</sup> It defines *bodhicitta* as the unity of voidness and compassion, as beginningless and endless, as quiescent and bereft of the notion of being and non-being.<sup>152</sup> The term 'diamond' (*vajra*) is used to refer to the ultimate non-dual reality. This non-dual reality is devoid of every kind of duality, of male and female, of wife and mother, of passion and detachment, of proper and improper food etc.<sup>153</sup> In the field of *sādhana*, *Guhyasamāja* introduced the specialised meditation

150 A. K. Warder, *Indian Buddhism*, p.495.

151 Hajime Nakamura, *Indian Buddhism*, p.333.

152 S. Bagchi, ed., *Guhyasamāja Tantra*, XVIII:37.

153 A. K. Warder, *Indian Buddhism*, p.495.

technique of visualisation.<sup>154</sup> The *Hevajra Tantra* probably owes to *Guhyasamāja* its conception of *vajra*, its understanding of the *Dhyāni* Buddhas and their Wisdom Consorts, its theory of *bodhicitta* and its praxis of visualisation. *The Blue Annals* opines that, "the *Hevajra Tantra* must have been expounded as an introduction to the (*Guhya*) *samāja*."<sup>155</sup>

The *Hevajra Tantra* has inherited from *Mañjuśrīmūlakalpa* a great deal of information on magic rites and rituals, mantras, mudrās, maṇḍalas, symbols, and instructions on painting.<sup>156</sup> The emphasis given in *Mañjuśrīmūlakalpa* on ritual over meditation has found an echo in the pages of the *Hevajra Tantra*.

The *Cakraśaiṅvara* and the other texts of the *śaiṅvara* group of Buddhist tantric literature introduced the symbol of sexual union to represent Bliss, the Ultimate Reality. The central deity is *Vajrasattva*, also called Heruka or *Śaiṅvara*. In this *sādhana*, meditation involves imagining oneself to be Heruka in union with his consort *Vajravārāhī*.<sup>157</sup> The *Śaiṅvarodaya Tantra* is noted for its elaborate treatment of cakras and nāḍīs in its thirty-first chapter. The *Samputodhbhava Tantra* sanctions sexo-yogic practices, and even incest as part of its *sādhana*.<sup>158</sup> The erotic symbolism and the sexo-yogic praxis introduced in these tantras are fully developed in the *Hevajra Tantra*.

In the *Hevajra Tantra* we have a compendium of the development of tantric theory and praxis that has gone before, and in this sense it is a point of arrival. The tantric

154 *Ibid.*, p.495.

155 George N. Roerich, *The Blue Annals*, p.358.

156 Hajime Nakamura, *Indian Buddhism*, p.333.

157 A. K. Warder, *Indian Buddhism*, p.496.

158 Hajime Nakamura, *Indian Buddhism*, p.333.



intuition of the Ultimate Reality as non-dual, as *tathatā*, as the *Tathāgata*, and every sentient being as *tathāgatagarbha*, find a place in the *Hevajra Tantra*. Furthermore, the unique tantric insight of the Supreme Reality as Bliss is highlighted by the text. In the area of *sādhana* it employs mystic syllables, mystic circles, divine forms as aid to concentration. Yogic practices involving breath control and control of seminal fluids are brought into vogue to secure stabilised meditative states. Eating and drinking of things abhorrent are used as means to overcome attraction and aversion, and to instil the virtue of indifference (*upekṣa*).<sup>159</sup> Sexo-yogic practices are recommended for the select candidates so that they gain confidence in the pursuit of Ultimate Reality as non-dual Bliss. Thus the *Hevajra Tantra* emerges as a treatise of tantric theory and praxis.

The *Hevajra Tantra* is also a point of departure in the sense that it sets the standard for later tantric speculation and praxis. The *Kālacakra Tantra*, probably one of the last additions to the Buddhist tantras, seems to build on the foundations laid by the *Hevajra Tantra*. The *sādhaka* is taught to visualise the whole universe in his own body. In addition, *Kālacakra* holds that time (*kāla*) is equally contained in the body in the form of the process of the breath (*prāṇa*). There is greater stress on the nervous system as basis for *yoga*, which was briefly outlined in the *Hevajra*, *Samīpuṭika* and other tantras. The *Hevajra Tantra*'s emphasis on the body as the means for experiencing bliss is further highlighted in the *Kālacakra Tantra*.<sup>160</sup>

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159 HT(S). Part I p.39.

160 A.K. Warder, *Indian Buddhism*, p.504.

One may not find a particular aspect of tantric theory or praxis, as an exclusive property of any particular *tantra*. However, a careful study of the various texts shows certain progression in its development as well as the varying emphases laid by different tantras. There is a definite movement from the largely external and gross practices of the earlier tantras, to internal and subtler *sādhana* of the later tantras. While earlier tantras gave greater levy to magical rites and to the acquisition of mundane benefits, later tantras stressed the supra-mundane. In the field of tantric speculation too there is greater sophistication and subtlety. The commentators of later tantras painstakingly incorporated and elaborated on tantric theory and praxis in the light of the wider *Mahāyāna* tradition. Compared to the earlier tantras, *Hevajra Tantra* appears to be the product of maturer years of tantric Buddhism.

## 8. Significance of the *Hevajra Tantra*

The significance of the *Hevajra Tantra* lies in the fact that it has synthesised the essence of Buddhist speculation with tantric theory and praxis. In fact, it recommends a progressive assimilation of Buddhist teachings culminating in *Hevajra sādhana*. The text states,

First give them (the disciples) the injunctions for conduct and then instruct upon the fundamental moral precepts. Then instruct upon the Vaibhāṣya doctrine and after that the Sūtrānta doctrine. Then instruct upon the Yogācāra doctrine followed by the Mādhyamika doctrine. After teaching all the practices of mantra, then commence with the instruction on the Hevajra practice.<sup>161</sup>

In this way it has synthesised the *śīla*, *samādhi* and *prajñā* of early Buddhism, and the essence of *Mahāyāna* speculation with Vajrayānic insights and praxis. Hence, the

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161 HT(F) II:8:10-11.

text occupies a significant place in Buddhist literature in general. As a specimen of Vajrayānic literature it is a unique testament to the theory and praxis of tantric Buddhism, and sheds much light on the tantric period of Indian religious history. The tantric insights found in its predecessors like the *Guhyasamāja*, Mañjuśrīmūlaklāpa and *Sarvātathāgatattvasamgraha* have been systematised and elaborated on in this text. Again, it has exercised great influence on succeeding Buddhist tantras and tantric literature in general. The *Hevajra Tantra* is the most quoted text in the Sanskrit commentaries on Vajrayānic texts. *The Advayavajrasamgraha*, *Sekoddeśatikā* and others borrow liberally from this text. Verses from the text are found also in the Tantric Buddhist songs in old Bengali as well as in Dohās written in *Apabhramśa*.<sup>162</sup>

The text claims technical proficiency in the matter of magical rites, in the science and technique of generation of yoginīs and manifestation of deities.<sup>163</sup> The greatness of the *Hevajra sādhana* is borne by the text itself. The text states,

There is no accomplishment attained by following all the Vedas, Siddhāntas and traditions of ritual. By following their purifications, there is rebirth in another cycle of existence. Without this knowledge (of *Hevajra Tantra*) there is no accomplishment possible in this or any other world. The effort of the one who does not know Hevajra is all in vain.<sup>164</sup>

The *Hevajra Tantra* is one of the most renowned of Buddhist tantras held in high esteem in Tibet by the *Kagyū-pas* and the *Sa-kya-pas*. For them it is a fundamental treatise, and the subject of much exegetical enterprise.

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162 Shashi Bhushan Dasgupta, (Book review) "The Hevajra Tantra: A Critical Study by D.L. Snellgrove", p.251.

163 HT(F) I:1:8-9.

164 HT(F) I:8:52-53.

Maitrpa (also known as Advayavajra) is known to have had a special predilection for this *tantra*. It was this rite into which the great Khublai Khan of the Mongols was initiated.<sup>165</sup> The yearning of Milarepa to join the congregation to which his Guru Marpa, the Translator, is supposed to be preaching the *Hevajra Tantra*, shows the great esteem it enjoyed among *ācāryas* and their disciples. In his song entitled, 'Thoughts of my Guru', he writes,

How happy I would be could I join the gathering,  
 At which you may be preaching the Hevajra Tantra  
 Though of simple mind, I wish to learn.  
 Though ignorant, I long to recite.<sup>166</sup>

## Conclusion

We find that the *Hevajra Tantra* occupies a singular position in the Vajrayānic literature as a unique treatise of tantric theory and praxis. Its peerless position is due to the fact that it has been able to synthesis the inspirations of early Buddhism, later Mahāyānic speculations, and tantric insights and praxis. The deities of the *Hevajra Maṇḍala*, as we shall see later, are nothing but the dharmas enumerated by the early Buddhist schools of *Theravāda* and *Sautrāntika*. The practice of virtues that these schools upheld, is presupposed in the *Hevajra Tantra*. The Mahāyānic speculations, as discussed above, serve as the bedrock of the philosophy of *Hevajra Tantra*. The text is also a compendium of tantric insights and praxis common to *Vajrayāna* in general. No wonder then, the *Hevajra Tantra* is considered to be a Vajrayānic masterpiece.

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165 HT(S), Part 1 p.10.

166 Garma C.C. Chang, trans., *The Hundred Thousand Songs of Milarepa*, (New York: University Books, 1962) vol.1., p.2.

## CHAPTER 3

# THE METAPHYSICAL FOUNDATIONS

Vajrayānic understanding of the Ultimate Reality is built on the metaphysical foundations of *Mahāyāna*. An analysis of empirical existence (*saṁvṛti*) is the key to understanding the nature of the Real (*paramārtha*). Ignorance (*avidyā*) of the nature of existence prevents the knowledge of the Real, and this brings about bondage. When ignorance is removed the Real is known. The *Hevajra Tantra* refers to the Real as 'vajra', and 'sahaja', and declares it to be of the nature of *mahāsukha*. The Real is immanent because everything is of the nature of bliss. The link between the Real (*tathatā*) which is transcendent, and the world (*saṁsāra*) which is immanent, is the *Tathāgata*. According to the Mahāyānists, the *Tathāgata* performs this function through His three kāyas; namely, the *dharmakāya*, *saṁbhogakāya* and *nirmāṇakāya*. To these the Vajrayānists added a fourth *kāya* called the *mahāsukhakāya*, the fusion and summit of all the kāyas. Every being is a potential-*Tathāgata* or *tathāgatagarbha*, and the *Hevajra sādhana* is devised to lead all to that realisation.

### 1. Nature of Empirical Existence

Early Buddhism<sup>1</sup> reduced all existent entities to dharmas, the ultimate elements of existence. Dharmas are

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1 The major schools of early Buddhism are *Theravāda*, *Sarvāstivāda* (or *Vaibhāṣika*), and *Sautrāntika*. T.R.V. Murti calls the first two schools collectively as *Ābhidharmika* system. The *Sautrantika* is

of two kinds, non-conditioned dharmas (*asaṃskṛta* dharmas) and conditioned dharmas (*saṃskṛta* dharmas). Empirical existence is constituted of *saṃskṛta* dharmas which are momentary but real. These *saṃskṛta* dharmas are classified variously as five skandhas, or twelve āyatanas or eighteen dhātus.<sup>2</sup> In the Pāli *Abhidhamma Piṭaka*, existence is classified into states of consciousness (*citta*), mental concomitants (*cetasika*) and corporeality (*rūpa*). To these a fourth reality is added, namely, *Nibbāna*.<sup>3</sup> The number of *asaṃskṛta* dharmas vary from school to school.<sup>4</sup>

*Mādhyamika* also considers empirical existence (*saṃvṛti*) as constituted of dharmas which are mutually dependent. This reciprocity of the dharmas is a mark of their unreality because whatever depends on another for existence has no nature of its own (*parasparāpekṣā siddhir*

also a realist like the first two schools; yet it does not accept the *Abhidharma* part of the Sanskrit canon but relies only on its *sūtra* part; hence the name *Sautrāntika*.

- 2 For more on dharmas see Theodore Stcherbatsky, *The Central Conception of Buddhism*, pp.1-9.
- 3 In the *Dhammasaṅgaṇī*, the first book of the Pāli *Abhidhamma Piṭaka*, "the first three realities (*citta*, *cetasika* and *rūpa*) are treated from the ethical standpoint and divided accordingly into a) ethically wholesome phenomena (*kusala-dhamma*), b) ethically unwholesome phenomena (*akusala dhamma*), c) ethically neutral phenomena (*avyākata-dhamma*)". Tomy Augustine, "The Abhidhamma Piṭaka: Its Significance and Essence", in *Jnanatirtha*, 2 (2002), p.216.
- 4 In the *Theravāda* only *Nirvāṇa* is considered as an *asaṃskṛta* dharma. The *Sautrāntika* does not accept this class at all. The *Sarvāstivādin* accepts three, namely *ākāśa*, *pratisaṅkhyā-nirodha* and *apratisaṅkhyā-nirodha*. The *Yogācāra* accepts three more, viz., *acalanirodha*, *sattjñā-vedayitṛ -nirodha* and *Tathatā*. See Ashok Kumar Chatterjee, *YI*, p.125.



na svābhāvīkī).<sup>5</sup> So, for the *Mādhyamika*, *saññīti* is only empirically real, but ultimately unreal. Candrakīrti, identifies three essential features of *saññīti*. First, it is that which covers up the real nature of things (*samantād āvaraṇaṁ hi saññītiḥ*). In this sense it is a synonym for *avidyā*. Second, it is mutually dependent (*anyonyāśraya* or *parāspara-sambhava*). Third, it is conventionally true (*loka-vyavahārah*).<sup>6</sup>

On the sphere of empirical discourse, *Yogācāra* too does not contest the realistic theory of dharmas of early Buddhism. "The *Yogācāra* is an idealist only transcendently; in empirical matters he has no quarrel with the realist."<sup>7</sup> For the *Yogācārin*, dharmas are phenomenally real, but from the transcendental point of view unreal, because they are but appearances created by consciousness itself. So consciousness alone is ultimately real.

The Vajrayānic conception of the nature of existence is a combination of the views of *Ābhidharmika*, *Yogācāra* and *Mādhyamika*. The *Hevajra Tantra* refers to the *Ābhidharmika* classification of existence into five skandhas, the twelve āyatanas composed of six sense organs and their six objects, and the eighteen dhātus comprising of six organs, the six objects and the six awarenesses of sense experience.<sup>8</sup> However, existence in

5 MKV. p.84. See also "yaḥ pratīyasamutpādaḥ sūnyatā saiva te matā" as quotes in BCAP, 198.

6 "samantādvaraṇaṁ saññītiḥ. ajñānaṁ hi samantātsarvapaddārthatatvācchādanātsamvṛtiriti- ucyate; parāspara-sañbhavanaṁ vā saññītir anyonyasamāśrayeṇetyarthaḥ; athavā saññītiḥ sañketo loka-vyavahāra ityarthaḥ. sa cābhidhānābhidheya-jñānājnēyādilakṣaṇaḥ." MKV. p. 215.

7 Ashok Kumar Chatterjee, YI, p.74.

8 "viśayavaiśayikābhyātm ca dvādaśāyatanaṁ bhavet/

*Hevajra Tantra* is generally understood as the aggregate of the Five Components of Phenomenal Existence (*pañcaskandha*).<sup>9</sup> Phenomenal objects are nothing but the five skandhas. In the *maṇḍala* of the *Hevajra* the five yoginīs (Vajrā, Gaurī, Vāriyoginī, Vajradākī, Nairātmyā) of the inner enclosure are of the nature of the five skandhas.<sup>10</sup> In addition to the five skandhas the text refers to the five bhūtas (*pañcbhūta*) as well.<sup>11</sup> The four yoginīs (Pukkasī, Śavarī, Caṇḍālī, and Dombī) of the outer enclosure of the *Hevajra maṇḍala* are of the nature of the four elements (earth, water, fire, air respectively).<sup>12</sup>

The *Yogācāra* holds that the dharmas ultimately have existence only in the mind. Hence they are *niḥsvabhāva*.<sup>13</sup> This doctrine, that it is the mind that creates external objects, finds its echo in the text when it says, “other than in the mind and nowhere else is the stability of the body seen”.<sup>14</sup> Indrabhūti in his *Jñānasiddhi* reiterates the same view.<sup>15</sup> The reason for placing the *dharmakāya* in the heart

*pañcaskandhāś ca rūpādyā vijñānāntā mahākṛpā/  
indriyaṁ viśayaṁ caiva indriyavinjñānam eva ca/  
dhātavo 'ṣṭādaśākhyaṭā yoginīmāṁ tu bodhayel'* HT(F) II:3:34-35.

9 “*sattvaṁ sattvam iti Vipra yaduta pañcaskandhāḥ*” HT(S), Part 2, *Yogaratnamālā*, p. 105.

10 HT(F) I:8:13; 9:9-10.

11 HT(F) I:5:10.

12 HT(F) I:9:17. The four goddesses (Locanā, Māmakī, Pāṇḍarā and Tāraṇī) are spoken of as of the nature of earth, water, fire and air respectively. See HT(S), Part 2, *Yogaratnamālā*, p. 104. The five dhyāni Buddhas (Vairocana, Akṣobhya, Amitābha, Amoghasiddhi and Ratnasambhava or Ratneśa or Piśunavajra) are of the nature of the five elements of earth, water, fire, air, ether respectively. See HT(F), *Yogaratnamālā*, pp.174-175.

13 “*trividhasya svabhāvasya trividhāṁ niḥsvabhāvatām;  
sarīdhāya sarvadharmāṇāṁ deśitā niḥsvabhāvatā*” *Triṁśikā*, 23.

14 “*cittaṁ vihāya kāyasya sthitir anyā na dṛśyate*” HT(F) II:4:84

15 “*cittenaiva tu tatsarvaṁ kriyate yat śubhāśubhaṁ*’

*cakra*, *Yogaratanmālā* states, is, that all existent things are only of the mind so the Body of Essential Nature (*dharmakāya*) is in the heart.<sup>16</sup> *Bhagavān* is stated to have said, "The whole three-fold realm, O sons of the Victorious, is nothing but of mind"<sup>17</sup> (*cittamātram idaṁ sarvam*). However, Kṛṣṇācārya explains that it is not the ultimate teaching; from the absolute point of view even the mind has no *locus standi*.<sup>18</sup> He quotes Nāgārjunapāda, "The teaching of the Sage which says, 'all this is of mind', was spoken to remove the fears of the simple-minded, but in truth it is not so."<sup>19</sup> So ultimately the mind too does not exist. This is also the ultimate view of *Yogācāra*.

Ashok Kumar Chatterjee points out that the Pure Will, according to *Yogācāra*, does not will anything; the *citta* is really *acitta*.<sup>20</sup> Ultimately, there is no *citta* but only non-dual consciousness (*vijñaptimātratā*). *Hevajra Tantra* also

*cittenaiva bhavennāśa ityuvāca jagadguruḥ// Jñānasiddhi*, 9:9. Benoytosh Bhattacharyya, *Two Vajrayāna Works*.

16 "cittamātrāḥ sarvadharmāḥ ato dharmakāyasya sthānaṁ cittasthānatvāt." HT(S), Part 2, *Yogaratanmālā*, p.148.

17 HT(F), *Yogaratnamālā*, p.50. See also, "tasmāt prkāśamānānī nilapītādi na vijñānabāhyo'rthaḥ/ kiṁ tarhi ? vijñānasaivāt-mabhūtaḥ/ HT(T), *Muktāvalī*, p.10. "tasmānnāsti vijñānabāhyo grāhyorthaḥ/ tadabhāvāttadapekṣakaṁ grāhakatvamapi vijñānasya nāstīti sarvārtha dvayaṁ nāsti grāhyaṁ grāhakaṁ ca/" HT(T), *Muktāvalī*, p.11. For a detailed discussion see HT(T), *Muktāvalī*, pp.10-12.

18 "tasmāt paramārthato nāsty etac cittaṁ" HT(S), Part 2, *Yogaratanmālā*, p.116.

19 HT (F), *Yogaratanmālā*, p.50.

20 "There is nothing to stand against consciousness, so that consciousness cannot serve even as the subject; citta becomes acitta." A.K. Chatterjee, "Idealism and Absolutism – A Buddhist Synthesis" in *Our Heritage* (Bulletin of the Department of Postgraduate Research, Sanskrit College, Calcutta) vol.xix, part I, July-Dec. 1971, p.50.

accepts that ultimately there is neither mind nor thought (*cittam nāpi caittikam*). *Yogaratanamālā* explains that by 'cittam' the totality of consciousness (*cittam pariniṣpannam vijñānam*) is meant and that 'caittikam' refers to both the contingent and the imagined (*caittikam paratantram kalpitam*).<sup>21</sup> In this way the *Yogaratanamālā* rejects the three-tier truth of *Yogācāra* as final.<sup>22</sup> Ultimately all distinctions vanish and non-dual consciousness (*bodhicitta*) alone exists.

*Hevajra Tantra* adopts the *Mādhyamika* insight, that the skandhas (empirical existence) are not ultimately real, as its final view. It states, "By their very nature, there is neither form nor the one who sees, neither sound nor listener, neither smell nor the one who smells, neither taste nor the one who tastes, neither touch nor the one who touches and there is neither mind nor thought."<sup>23</sup>

*Yogaratanamālā* explains the reason for this position. Forms etc., are non-existent because they manifest or arise (*bhavaty utpadyate. gater gatyantaram iti bhāvaḥ*).<sup>24</sup> Since existence is *pratīyasamutpanna*, the *Yogaratanamālā* concludes, forms etc., do not exist of their very nature. It declares, "They (forms etc.,) do not exist because of their very nature. In terms of the intrinsic nature, which is uncreated, transcendent, independent and self-contained,

21 See HT(S), Part 2, *Yogaratanamālā*, p.116.

22 "etat trayam paramārthato nāsty...tasmāt paramārthato nāsty etac cittam." HT(S), Part 2, *Yogaratanamālā*, p.116.

23 "Svarūpena  
nāsti rūpam na draṣṭā ca na śabdō nāpi śrotā ca/  
na gandho nāpi ghrātā ca na raso nāpi rāsakaḥ/  
na sparśo nāpi spraṣṭā ca na cittam nāpi caittikam!" HT(F) I:5:1.

24 HT(S), Part 2, *Yogaratanamālā*, p.105.

forms do not exist because they arise, that is, originate from dependent causation (*pratītyasamutpāda*).<sup>25</sup>

By this unique interpretation of the principle of *pratītyasamutpāda*, the *niḥsvabhāvatā* of all dharmas is established (*dharmasūnyatā*).<sup>26</sup> Both *Yogācāra* and *Mādhyamika* uphold the *niḥsvabhāvatā* of all dharmas, but for two different reasons; the former holds that the dharmas are non-existent (*sūnya*) because they are dependent on the mind for their existence, while the latter holds that they are non-existent because of their dependent origination.

*Hevajra Tantra* asserts that the *sūnyatā* of all dharmas is *prajñā* (*sarva dharmasūnyatā prajñā*),<sup>27</sup> and that alone is Enlightenment.<sup>28</sup> The realisation of the ultimate non-existence of the *pañcaskandhas* is liberation.<sup>29</sup> This is

25 HT(F), *Yogaratnamālā*, p.49. See also "...eva svarūpeṣa nāsti; yad asyākṛimāṇ param anirapekṣyaṇ nijaṛūpaṇi svabhāvas tenākāreṣu nāsti pratītyasamutpatteḥ; yaś ca pratītyasamutpādaḥ; sa eva bhāvānām anutpādaḥ..." HT(S), Part 2, *Yogaratnamālā*, p.116.

The *Yogaratnamālā* also cites a passage from *Nāgārjunapāda* in support of its assertion.

"tathā cokaṇi Nāgārjunapādaiḥ

akṛimāḥ svabhāvo hi nirapekṣaḥ paratra ca//

yadi niḥsvabhāvā bhāvāḥ svabhāvato na vidyante// (The intrinsic nature is uncreated and independent of everything, and if phenomenal things do not have such an intrinsic nature, they are, in essence, non-existent). HT(S), Part 2, *Yogaratnamālā*, p.116.

26 "svabhāvānutpattiṇi sarīlkhāya, mahāmate, sarvadharmāḥ sūnyatā iti mayā āśītaḥ" a passage quoted from *Lankāvatāra sūtra* in MKV, p.219.

27 HT(S), Part 2, *Yogaratnamālā*, p.117.

28 "svabhāvadarśanam eva sūnyatādarśanam tad eva bodhiḥ" (The perception of the intrinsic nature is the perception of voidness and that is enlightenment). HT(S), Part 2, *Yogaratnamālā*, p.150.

29 "pañcaskandhānutpādalakṣaṇatayā parijñayā mucyante." HT(S), Part 2, *Yogaratnamālā*, p.106.

because by thinking that phenomenal objects are real, men get attached to them (*vastvabhīniveśitā*).<sup>30</sup>

If the dharmas are essence-less (*sūnya*) how do forms etc., still appear? The *Yogaratnamālā* explains that the appearance of forms etc., is a fact of experience; but mere appearance does not prove the existence of that which appears. People do see images of hairs, a double moon; and eyes upon a peacock's tail or flies, which on closer examination do not actually exist. They owe their existence only to defective sight. Likewise, with the eyes of the mind affected by the cataract of ignorance, people see things, which are essentially non-existent as though they actually exist.<sup>31</sup>

Empirical existence, though ultimately unreal, has practical relevance because it is only by utilising the existent that *nirvāṇa* is attained (*bhāvenaiva vimucyante vajragarbha mahākṛpa*).<sup>32</sup> The text gives several analogies to show how phenomenal existence is purified by utilising phenomenal existence itself (*bhavaḥ śuddho bhavenaiva*).<sup>33</sup> The dependence on the phenomenal in the process of the Realisation of the Real is endorsed also by the *Mūlamadhyamakārikā* (*vyavahāram anāśrītya paramārtho na deśyate*).<sup>34</sup> Streng states, "To the degree that one uses *saññī* without the misconception of *svabhāva* it can be an aid in the cessation of suffering."<sup>35</sup> The actual process

30 "tasmin bhāve bandho graho vastvabhīniveśitā" Ibid.

31 HT(F), *Yogaratnamālā* p. 50.

32 HT(F) 1:1:10.

33 See HT(F) II:2:46-51.

34 MK. XXIV,10.

35 Frederick J. Streng, "The Significance of *Pratīyasamutpāda* for Understanding the Relationship between *Saññī* and *Paramārthasatya* in Nāgārjuna", in *The Problem of Two Truths in*



of how this is carried out in the *Hevajra sādhana* will be explained later.

As regards the relation between phenomena (*sañvṛti*) and noumenon (*paramārtha*), the *Mādhyamika* holds that the two are one and the same. *Sañvṛti* is nothing but the Absolute looked at through the categories of reason. For the *Yogācāra*, *sañvṛti* is only the objectification of consciousness. Both the schools accept that *sañvṛti* is what is conventionally true. The *Yogaratnamālā* states, "*Sañvṛti*, the limited relative aspect is so called because it is similar (to the fully opened absolute) but to a lesser degree because it is limited (*sañvṛta*)."<sup>36</sup> The commentary also says that *sañvṛti* is viewing the Absolute in relative or phenomenal terms (*sañvṛtyeti lokavyavahāreṇa*).<sup>37</sup> The text states that the various aspects of phenomenal existence (*sañvṛti*) are nothing but of the nature of primordial non-arising (*paramārtha*) and hence they are neither true nor false. They are like the reflection of the moon in water.<sup>38</sup> For the Vajrayānist phenomena is nothing but the Real defiled by the āvaraṇās (*jñeyāvaraṇa* and *kleśāvaraṇa*) and the Real is phenomenal existence purified of these āvaraṇās.<sup>39</sup>

*Buddhism and Vedānta*, ed. Mervyn Sprung (Boston: D. Reidel Publishing Company, 1973) p. 36. (emphasis added).

36 HT(F), *Yogaratnamālā*, p.94. "*ākāraleśena sañvṛtatvāt*" HT(S), Part 2, *Yogaratnamālā*, p.125. "*jantavo...tathāgatānāṃ kulās te syū rūpam āśṛitya sāñvṛtam*" HT(F) II:11:8. (All beings belong to the families of the Five Buddhas but the fact that beings are embodied they appear as relative and limited).

37 HT(S), Part 2, *Yogaratnamālā*, p.156.

38 "*svabhāvam ādyanutpannam na satyam na nṛṣṭi tathā/ udakacandropamam sarvaṃ yoginyo jānatecchayā//*" HT(F) II:3:36. See also II:3:32-35.

39 "*bhavasya śodhanam ...avikalpasiddhidāyakam*" HT(F) II:9:7 (the purification of phenomenal existence is the accomplishment of the non-conceptual state)

## 2. Nature of Nescience

Ignorance is a fundamental postulate in every system of Indian philosophy, and each system seeks to establish a passage from ignorance to truth. Ignorance is not an absolute absence of knowledge but a misapprehension of the Real; it is knowledge, which is erroneous.<sup>40</sup> This perception of the Real as something other than itself is called *avidyā* or *ajñāna*. *Avidyā* is understood variously in the Buddhist fold. According to early Buddhism *avidyā* is the ignorance of the Four Noble Truths; it is also the first link in the chain of dependent origination, the root of all empirical life. For the *Vaibhāṣika* and the *Sautrāntika* systems, *avidyā* consists in ascribing unity, permanence, and universality to dharmas, which are plural, momentary, and uniquely particular.<sup>41</sup> The Vedāntin's view is the reverse of the *Vaibhāṣika-Sautrāntika* position. For the *Advaita Vedāntin*, the Real is unchanging pure being (*Brahman*) and *avidyā* is the superimposition of differences (*bheda*) in the form of egoity etc., on *Brahman*.<sup>42</sup> Ignorance, for the *Vijñānavādin*, is the conception of an object as existing apart from, and independently of the non-dual consciousness. For the *Mādhyaṃika* system, the Real is indeterminate and so all attempts to characterise it as Being, Becoming, Consciousness etc., are *vikalpa* or *avidyā*. In other words, *avidyā* consists in the creation of views about the Absolute, which is essentially unconditioned (*dr̥ṣṭi-sūnya*). These different approaches to *avidyā* may be summarised in the words of T.R.V. Murti,

40 G.R. Malkani, R.Das and T.R.V. Murti, *Ajñāna*, (London: Luzac & Co., 1933), p.3.

41 T.R.V. Murti, CPB, p.239.

42 See T.M.P. Mahadevan, *The Philosophy of Advaita*, 4th edition, (New Delhi: Arnold-Heinemann, 1976), pp. 243-251.

For the *Ābhidharmika* system *satkāyadṛṣṭi* (Substance-view) is *Avidyā*; for the *Vijñānavāda*, *bāhya* or *viśaya-dṛṣṭi* (objectification) is *avidyā*; for the *Vedānta bhedadṛṣṭi* (differentiation) is *avidyā*. For the *Mādhyamika* viewing, *dṛṣṭi* as such, is *avidyā*; *dṛṣṭi* is *kalpanā*, and *kalpanā* is the ascription of features which are non-existent in reality.<sup>43</sup>

*Vajrayāna* uses terms such as *ajñāna*, *āguntaka*, *jñeyāvaraṇa*, *kleśāvaraṇa* and *Māras* as synonyms for *avidyā*. *Hevajra Tantra* declares that bondage is due to the ignorance of the Real, which is uncreated, transcendent, independent and self-contained (*akṛtrimāṇ param anirapekṣyaṁ nījarūpam svabhāvaḥ*).<sup>44</sup> Ignorance, as the *Śālistamba sūtra* says, is the non-apprehension of the Real and its misapprehension as something else.<sup>45</sup> Thus *avidyā* has the twin function of hiding (*āvaraṇa*) the Real, and projecting (*vikṣepa*) the unreal. It hides the essence-lessness (*niḥsvabhāvatā*) of empirical existence, and projects the relative (*saṁvṛti*) as the Real (*satyatābhimānaḥ*), and generates attachment to the objects of the world (*vastvabhīniveśaḥ*).

*Hevajra Tantra* uses terms like *doṣa* (defilement), *kleśa* (afflictions), *āvaraṇa* (veils), and *Māra*, to indicate the nature and function of *avidyā*. The differentiated external world arises in association with dullness and the other defilement (*jāḍyādibhiḥ doṣais samāyuktam iti*).<sup>46</sup> *Avidyā* as defilement (*doṣa*) assumes the forms of

43 T.R.V. Murti, CPB, p.240.

44 HT(S), part 2, *Yogaratnamālā*, p.116.

45 "tattve pratipattir mithyā pratipattir ajñānam avidyeti" *Śālistamba sūtra* as quoted in BCAP.171.

46 HT(S), part 2, *Yogaratnamālā*, p.119.

*jñeyāvaraṇa* (veils of knowledge) and *kleśāvaraṇa* (veils of affliction). *Jñeyāvaraṇa* consists in not knowing the intrinsic nature of things. Men are bound by not knowing the real nature of the True Principle.<sup>47</sup> It is the veil that obscures the nature of the phenomenal objects (*svabhāvāparijñānaṁ jñeyāvaraṇaṁ*).<sup>48</sup> The *kleśas* are the resultant passions and other emotions (*rāgādayaḥ kleśāvaraṇaṁ*).<sup>49</sup> The predominant passions are *rāga*, *dveṣa*, *moha*, *īrṣyā* and *paisūnya* of which, the first three are considered root evils. The *Māras* are four; namely, the *skandhamāra* who takes the form of Brahma, *kleśamāra* who takes the form of a Yakṣa, the *mṛtyumāra* who takes the form of Yama and *devaputramāra* who takes the form of Indra.<sup>50</sup> The *āvaraṇas* and the *kleśas* constitute bondage.<sup>51</sup> *Jñeyāvaraṇa*, *kleśāvaraṇa* and the four *Māras* hide the real nature of the Ultimate Reality and project It as something else, causing attachment, aversion etc. It is in this sense that *avidyā* is the root of all suffering.

*Avidyā* is responsible for the projection (*vikṣepa*) or creation of forms etc., by the mind. According to *Yogācāra*, the *vāsanās* embedded in the *Ālaya-vijñāna* is responsible for the creative process of the mind. Adopting the *Yogācāra* view, *Vajrayāna* holds that the external objects are all projections of the mind having only the status of

47 "loko muhyati vetti na tattvaṁ tattvavivarjitaḥ siddhiṁ na lapsyēt"  
HT(F) I:9:20

48 HT(S), part 2, *Yogaratnamālā*, p.130.

49 HT(S), Part 2, *Yogaratnamālā*, p.130.

50 HT(S), part 1, p.80., fn.2

51 "akliṣṭamajrānam avidyā...mātsarya-krodha-kausīdyādayaḥ, avidyākhyāḥ. kleśo mohaḥ ādi-śabdād dveṣa-rāgādayaḥ. ta eva bandhanāni taiḥ" HT(T), *Muktāvalī*, p.189

dream objects.<sup>52</sup> The text admits that the forms of deities, who are the elements of existence, arise in accordance with past tendencies (*vāsanās*).<sup>53</sup> It is ignorance that causes the essentially non-existent to appear as if it actually exists. The Noble Ones alone see beyond the defects of ignorance and realise the illusoriness of the phenomenal world. Ignorance, according to *Yogācāra*, consists in the subject-object duality of the intrinsically non-dual consciousness. Similarly, in the text *Bhagavān* declares that forms etc. become defiled on account of subject-object duality.<sup>54</sup> Further, the *Yogaratnamālā* points out that it is from this duality of subject-object, that *karma* gets created. *Karma* does not arise from the Innate one essence of the universe.<sup>55</sup> In the *Aṣṭadaśasāhasrikā Prajñāpāramitā* the Lord declared that duality is the cause of existence and the consequent karma-formations (*yāvad dvayaṃ tāvad bhāvaḥ, yāvad bhāvas tāvat saṃskāro*).<sup>56</sup> This duality

52 "sarvabhāvān manasāvalabhya cittamātram evedam asati bhāye viśayākaraṇaṃ bhrāntyā pratibhāsate/ tad yathā svapna iti/ tad api pratibhāsasvarūpaṃ cittam ekānekasvabhāvarahitaṃ/" HT(S), part 2, *Yogaratnamālā*, p.113.

53 "devatāyogarūpaṃ tu jātamātre vyavathitaḥ/ bhujamukhavarṇasthānāt kiṃ tu prākṛtavāsanāḥ/" HT(F) II:2:45 (The form of the Deity with which the *yogī* identifies exists only as something which is born, being a repository of the arms, faces and colours which moreover arise in accordance with unrefined past tendencies) (emphasis added)

54 "he bhagavān ke te 'viśuddhāḥ/ bhagavān āha/ rūpādayaḥ/ kasmāt/"

*grāhyagārāhakabhāvaḥ*// HT(F) I:9:5. (emphasis added).

55 HT(F), *Yogaratnamālā*, p.103.

"bodho grāhyagrāhakarūpeṇa pratipattiḥ tasmāt karmotpadyate na punar viśvasya sahajaikarasa bhāvāt." HT(S), part 2, *Yogaratnamālā*, p.128.

56 In the *Aṣṭadaśasāhasrikā Prajñāpāramitā* The Lord also states, "nāsti dvayasatijñāno dānataḥ nāsti śīlataḥ nāsti kṣāntir nāsti vīryataḥ

manifests also in the misconception that distinguishes oneself from others. The enlightened one alone does not distinguish himself from others.<sup>57</sup> For the *Mādhyamika*, *avidyā* is *saññīti*, and it is *dr̥ṣṭi* that causes the appearance of the world of dharmas (*saññīti*). When *dr̥ṣṭi* cease the world follows suit; so, in other words, *dr̥ṣṭi-sūnyatā* is *dharma-sūnyatā*.

We have seen that the Vajrayānic notion of nescience is drawn from the *Mādhyamika* and *Yogācāra* understanding of *avidyā*. The *Hevajra Tantra* subscribes to the *Mādhyamika* view that *avidyā* is the non-apprehension of the essence-lessness of empirical objects. However, it rejects the *Mādhyamika* view that every *dr̥ṣṭi* is also *avidyā*, because *Vajrayāna* itself is a *dr̥ṣṭi*. For the *Advaita Vedāntin*, *avidyā* is the illusory appearance of the Ultimate Reality (*Brahman*) as *jīva* and *jagat*. But for the *Yogācārin*, *avidyā* is the actual bifurcation of the Absolute (*vijñāna*) into a subject-object duality. Like the *Advaita Vedāntin*, the Vajrayānist admits that *avidyā* is illusory but rejects that the ultimate reality (*tattva*) undergoes any transformation, even an illusory one, but only that its real nature remains hidden under the defilements. The text accepts the *Yogācāra* view that all forms of duality are *avidyā*, but rejects the view that *avidyā* and the process of

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*nāsti dhyānaṁ nāsti prajñā, nāsti mārgo nāsti prāptir nāsty abhisamayo..* "(p.196). ("One who perceives duality, has no going, morality, patience, vigour, meditation or wisdom, no path, attainment or re-union..." (translation on p.386) Edward Conze, *The Gilgit Manuscript of the Aṣṭadaśasāhasrikā Prajñāpāramitā (chapters 55 to 70)* (Roma: Istituto Italiano per il Medio ed Estremo Oriente, 1962).

57 "svaparabhāvavikalpena bādhituṁ naiva śakyate" (H.T.(F) I:8:51.



defilement and purification are real.<sup>58</sup> The Vajrayānist agrees with the *Advaita Vedāntin* and the *Mādhyamika* instead, that *avidyā* is itself unreal and that all beings are actually liberated.<sup>59</sup> The text toes the *Mādhyamika kārika* line that if the passions are an integral part of one's nature how could they be abandoned, for, the Real can never be rejected.<sup>60</sup> Hence *Vajrayāna* holds that *avidyā* and its satellites, the *kleśas* and *Māras*, are not real as facts; they have only an epistemic status, yet they do exercise an influence on the individual.

### 3. Removal of Nescience

Removal of *avidyā* is an epistemological enterprise, as it has no ontological status save an epistemic one. The text speaks of 'purification of consciousness' (*viśuddham nimittamulānāmasthaṅgamāt*<sup>61</sup>) as the way to experience the intrinsic nature.<sup>62</sup> In another part of the text it speaks of

58 Ashok Kumar Chatterjee states, "*Avidyā* defiles the Real; this defilement itself is unreal in *Vedānta*, whereas, according to the *Yogācāra*, the Real is really entangled, though that can be helped." Ashok Kumar Chatterjee, YI, p.139. (emphasis added)

59 "*bhagavān āha/ sattivā buddhā eva kiṃ tu āgantukamalāvṛtāḥ/ tasvāpakarṣaṇāt sattivā buddhā eva na saṃśayaḥ!*" H.T.(F) II:4:70 (Bhagavān said: Truly all beings are enlightened beings but they are veiled by the accumulation of defilements. By removing this veil of defilements, all beings are enlightened beings without doubt.) (emphasis added)

60 This is because as the *Mādhyamikakārika* says, "*yadi bhīnāḥ svabhāvena kleśāḥ keccidd hi kasyacit, katharīn nāma prahāyeran kaḥ svabhāvaṃ prahāsyati*" MK XXIII,24 (If, indeed, certain defilements of someone have come to be on the basis of self-nature, how could they be relinquished? Whoever could relinquish self-nature?).

61 HT(T), *Muktāvalī*, p.122.

62 "...sahajam jagat sarvaṃ saha-jam svarūpam ucyate/

the 'purification of the objects of sense-experience' by means of Hevajra.<sup>63</sup> Bondage, as we have seen, is due to the attachment to phenomenal objects resulting from the false notion (*vikalpa*) and the belief that the objects of experience are real.<sup>64</sup> The objects of the world are nothing but forms etc., (i.e., the pañcaskandhas, the four elements and egoity or *ahaṁkāra*). The antidote to bondage is the removal of *vikalpas*, that is, the understanding of the non-arising nature of the pañcaskandhas etc. *The Bodhicaryāvatāra* states, "The defilements are weaklings to be subdued by wisdom's glare."<sup>65</sup> Like the Mahāyānists, the Vajrayānists also hold that phenomenal objects are non-existent from the ultimate point of view, and the key to liberation lies in knowing their non-existent nature. *Yogaratanmālā* quotes a passage from the *Lankāvatāra sūtra* which states, "The one who knows the non-existent nature of phenomenal things is unattached in all conditions. Such a person who is unattached in all conditions attains the stabilised meditative state of the unconditioned."<sup>66</sup>

*svarūpam eva nirvāṅīrṇi viśuddhākāracetasā//* HT(F) II:2:44.  
(emphasis added)

63 *"upāyaṁ prāpya hevajraṁ vajragarbha mahākṛpā/  
viśodhayanti viśayān lapsyante te hy anuttaram//* HT(F) II:4:80.  
(emphasis added)

64 *"vinā kalpanayāstitvaṁ rāgādmaṁ na vidyate;  
bhūtārthaḥ kalpanā ceti ko grahīṣyati buddhimān "* CŚ.VIII,3  
*"kāma jānāmi te mūlaṁ saṅkalpāt kila jāyase; na tvāṁ  
saṅkalpayiṣyāmi tato me na bhaviṣyasi".* Quoted in  
MKV.p.149;197.

65 Kate Crosby and Andrew Skilton, transs., *The Bodhicaryāvatāra (of Śāntideva)*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995) 4:46

66 *"tathā coktaṁ Bhagavā Lankāvatāre  
bhāvān abhāvān iti yaḥ prajānate  
sa sarvabhāveṣu na jātu sañjate  
yaḥ sarvabhāveṣu na jātu sañjate*

However, the Vajrayānist goes a step further to assert that it is by the utilisation of the existent itself that one comes to know its real nature and is liberated.<sup>67</sup> *Muktāvalī* explains what the *Hevajra Tantra* means by 'bhāvena', and enumerates the *laukika* and *lokottara* mārgas by which gradually the *sādhaka* gets rid of his false notions (*vikalpas*).<sup>68</sup> The *Yogī* is asked to make the differentiated (*sanvṛti*) appear as dream-like (*svapnavat*); utilising the differentiated he must transform it to the undifferentiated through the process of Generation.<sup>69</sup> The text states, just as

*so 'nimittam spṛṣate samādhim iti.*" HT(S) Part 2, *Yogaratnamālā*, p.106.

- 67 "...bhāvenaiva vimucyante Vajragarbha mahākṛpa  
badhyante bhāvabandhena mucyante tatparijñāyā  
bhāvaṁ bhāvyaṁ bhavet prājñā abhāvam ca parijñāyā....(HT(F)  
I:1:10-11)

(It is by utilising the existent itself that men are liberated, O Vajragarbha of great mercy. Men are bound by the bondage of existence and are liberated by understanding the nature of existence. O wise one, existence should be conceived through the understanding of non-existence). *Muktāvalī* explains that the nature of existence is *prajñāpāramitā* and it is by that all āvaraṇas and kleśas are destroyed. "*tasya bhāvasya parijñā paramārthajīṅānaṁ tatparijñā/ sā ca prajñāpāramitā, tayā mucyante/ tayaiva savāsanasarvāvaraṇaprahāṇāt saha bījena sarvasaṅkleśika-dharmaparikṣayāt/ evameṣāṁ nirvāṇamapratiṣṭitanirvāṇamucyate.*" HT(T), *Muktāvalī*, p.13.

- 68 "bhāvenaiveti laukikenaiṅ mārgeṇ/ tathā hi - catvāri smṛtyupasthānāni, catvāri samyakprahāṇāni, catvāra ṣṭdhipādāḥ, pañcendriyāṇi, pañca balāni, dvāvīṅśatidharmā laukiko mārgaḥ/ tena vinā na lokottaro mārgaḥ/ sa tu sapta bodhyaṅgāni aṣṭau ca mārgāṅgānī pañcadaśu dharmāḥ/ tena vinā nāsti bhāvakṣayaḥ/ tasmāt paramparayā bhavenaiva bhavakṣayo bhavati/ vikalpīca vikalpataḥ śuddho bhavati paramparayā/ tathā hi bhūtapratyavekṣaṇā'pi vikalpa eva/ saiva ca bhāvanābalādhānavyavadhānena nirvikalpaṁ jñānaṁ janayati/ tena ca vikalpāḥ kṣiyante//"  
HT(T), *Muktāvalī*, p.149.

- 69 "utpattikramayogena prapañcaṁ bhāvuyed vratī"

poison is used to dispel poison (*viṣeṣa sphoṭayed viṣuṁ*), existence itself is used to counter existence (*bhavaḥ śuddho bhavenaiva vikalpapratikalpanāt*).<sup>70</sup> How the existent is actually utilised to dispel itself will be elucidated in the sixth chapter.

*Hevajra Tantra* personifies the Wisdom, which destroys the skandhas etc., as Caṇḍālī, and the skandhas as the Five Buddhas, the earth and all other elements as (*Locanādi*).<sup>71</sup> The text states, "Caṇḍālī burns in the navel. She burns the Five Buddhas. She burns Locanā and others. Ahaṁ is burnt and the Moon flows down."<sup>72</sup> *Caṇḍālī* is a composite word derived from 'caṇḍā' meaning wisdom, and 'ālī' meaning compassion. The Five Buddhas, along with Locanā and others, form the entire sphere of phenomenal objects. *Ahaṁ* signifies the false sense of I and mine. Moon represents enlightened consciousness (*śāśī bodhicittaṁ*).<sup>73</sup> The text also presents *Bhagavān* as one who destroys (*bhañjanāt*) *kleśamāra* and others. The Four armed Hevajra symbolises the destruction of the four Māras, and in the sixteen armed form of the Hevajra, his four feet signify the defeat of the four Māras.<sup>74</sup> *Avidyā* and

*prapañcaṁ svapnavat kṛtvā prapañcāir niḥprapañcayet/*" HT(F) II:2:28.

70 See HT(F) II:2:46-51; II:4:72-73. See also "yena tu yena badhvate lokas tena tu tena tu bandhanatṁ muñcet/" HT(F) I:9:20.

71 "caṇḍā prajñā kleśopakleśaniṣkṛtane caṇḍāsvabhāvāt"  
 "...pañcatathāgatān pañcaskandhān..."  
 "...Locanādīm pṛthivyādīm..." HT(S) Part 2, *Yogaratnamālā*, p.110.

72 "caṇḍā i jvalitā nābhau/  
 dahati pañcatathāgatān/  
 dahati ca locanādīḥ/  
 dagdhe 'haṁ sravate śāśī/" HT(F) I:1:32.

73 HT(S) Part 2, *Yogaratnamālā*, p.110.

74 See HT(F) I:3:17 & I:9:15.

its satellites, the *kleśas*, are overcome through a complex process of philosophical enquiry, and the practice of *Hevajra sādhana*. The passions and emotions are envisaged as many aspects of the one mystic unity and are overcome by transforming and re-integrating them into the mystic absolute. This involves a complex process, which will be elucidated in the sixth chapter.

#### 4. Nature of the Ultimate Reality in *Mahāyāna*

The nature of existence, as we have seen is *niḥsvabhāva* because it depends on causes and conditions. The world of phenomena (*saṁvṛti*), which is only empirically real but ultimately unreal, appears only due to ignorance (*avidyā*). Now the question is, what is the nature of the Ultimate Reality as delineated in the *Hevajra Tantra*? It should be noted at the outset that the primary concern of the text is not to establish a full-fledged metaphysics of its own; nevertheless, it does furnish a metaphysical framework built on the general insights of *Mahāyāna*. This is not to overlook certain unique tantric innovations grafted on to what are essentially the Mahāyānic insights into the Absolute. We shall now briefly analyse the *Mādhyamika* and *Yogācāra* notions of the Ultimate Reality, which serve as the foundation of the concept of the Absolute in the *Hevajra Tantra*.

##### 4.1 *Mādhyamika* Understanding of *Śūnyatā*

In the *Mādhyamika* tradition, the Ultimate Reality is variously called, viz., *Tathatā*, *Bhūtaakoṣi*, *Dharmatā*, *Dharmadhātu* and *Śūnyatā*.<sup>75</sup> *Mādhyamika* and *Yogācāra*

75 "Śūnyatā, tathatā, bhūtaakoṣi, dharmadhātu ityādi paryāyah." BCAP p.171.

do not conceive *tathatā* exactly in the same manner: For the *Mādhyamika*, the Real is non-dual, i.e., free of all empirical predicates and relations. The four forms of predication (*bhāva*, *abhāva*, *ubhayam* or *na bhāvaḥ*, *naivābhāvaḥ*) either singly or in combination, are unsuitable to characterise the Real. In other words, the ultimate reality transcends all thought determinations; it is *dr̥ṣṭi-sūnya*. It is, as *Bhāvaviveka* puts it, “*atro vāco nivartante cittāsyāyam agocaraḥ nivartta(te ca) saṅkalpo jñānamaunam ca jāyate.*” (Words stop here; this is not a domain of thought. Conception turns back and the silence of Knowledge is born).<sup>76</sup> *Mādhyamikakārika* states that the Real (*tattva*) is non-relative, non-determinate, quiescent, non-discursive, and non-dual.<sup>77</sup> In the *Mādhyamika* understanding of the Absolute, two considerations stand out prominently. First, its utter indeterminateness (*anakṣaratā*), and second, its consequent non-accessibility to reason.<sup>78</sup> How then is this *anakṣara tattva* known? *Mādhyamika* states that even though the Absolute is devoid of attributes it can be indicated by an ascribed mark (*saṃrōpāt*),<sup>79</sup> namely *saṃvṛti*. There is no other means to realise the *anakṣara tattva* than *saṃvṛti*; it is utilised as a means (*upāya*) to realise the end (*upeya*).

76 As quoted in Shotaro Iida, “The nature of Saṃvṛti and the Relationship of Paramārtha to it in Svātantrika Mādhyamika”, in *The Problem of Two Truths in Buddhism and Vedānta* (Boston: D. Reidel Publishing Company, 1973) p.74.

77 “*apara-pratyayam śāntatā prapañcāir aprapañcitam; nirvikalpam anānārtam etat tattvasya lakṣaṇam*” (MK. XVIII.9).

78 T.R.V.. Murti, CPB, p.229.

79 “*anakṣarasya dharmasya śrutiḥ kā deśina ca kā; śrūyate deśyate cāpi saṃrōpāt anakṣaraḥ.*” Saying of Buddha quoted in MKV, p.115, BCAP, p.176.



*Mādhyamika* explains the relation between *sañvṛti* and *paramārtha* stating that the Absolute is the reality that lies beneath appearances. It is the *dharmāṅgām dharmatā*, their intrinsic nature (*prakṛtir dharmāṅgam*). This does not mean that there are two sets of real to reckon with. In the *Aṣṭadaśasāhasrikā Prajñāpāramitā*, the Lord declares, "Worldly convention is not one thing, and ultimate truth another, what is the suchness of worldly convention, that is the suchness of ultimate reality."<sup>80</sup> The Absolute is the real nature of phenomena (*vāstavikam rūpam*), and phenomena, the veiled form of the Absolute (*sañvṛtam rūpam*). In this sense, the two are non-different; the difference between the two is only epistemic, not ontological.<sup>81</sup> So much so, the *Mādhyamika* holds that ultimately there has never been bondage and there is no need for release either. Nāgārjuna holds that *nirvāṇa* is unachieved and non-ceasing.<sup>82</sup> *Mādhyamika* does not consider the Absolute to be a particular entity. By the removal of ascription (*adhyāropāpavādanyāya*) the true nature of the Absolute is known.<sup>83</sup> When there is nothing before us, when all ascriptions are shed (*kalpanakṣaya*), the Real is known. The Absolute is cognised in non-dual intuition; the Real is that intuition itself, and not an intuition of something else. The Real of the *Mādhyamika* (*sūnyatā*) is not a 'substance or 'something'. As Mervyn Sprung points out, "...*sūnyatā* is not a term to which something real corresponds; it does

80 "Bhagavān āha: (na) anyā Subhūte loka (sañvṛtir anyañ paramārthaḥ. Yena lokasañvṛtes tathatā saiva (paramā)." Edward Conze, *The Gilgit Manuscript of the Aṣṭadaśasāhasrikā Prajñāpāramitā*, p.166 (translation on p.361).

81 "na samsārasya nirvāṇāt kiñcid asti viśeṣaṅgam; na nirvāṇasya samsārāt kiñcid asti viśeṣaṅgam." MK, XXV,19.

82 "aprahīnam asamprāptam anucchinnam aśīśvatam; aniruddham anutpannam etan nirvāṇam ucyate" MK,XXV,3.

83 T.R.V., Murti, CPB, p.232.

not refer to anything of the nature of substance, to anything bhavic...<sup>84</sup> Hence it is expressed not in language but in silence.<sup>85</sup> The *Mādhyamika* is not a nihilist, though he resists all attempts to determine that which is essentially indeterminate. Therefore, the 'no-views-about-reality' of the *Mādhyamika* should not to be misconceived as 'no-reality-view'.

#### 4.2 *Yogācāra* Understanding of *Vijñānā*

*Yogācāra* agrees with the *Mādhyamika* that all dharmas, empirical predicates, and determinations, are ultimately false but it argues that the substratum of these is real and it is non-dual consciousness (*vijñaptimatratā*), the Absolute. For *Yogācāra*, determinations are the various relations, and the subject-object relation is the matrix of all such relations. The basic idealistic position as regards the subject-object relation is that the object is nothing apart from its consciousness, the subject (*sahopalambhaniyamād abhedo nīla-taddhiyoḥ*).<sup>86</sup> In other words, ultimately there is no subject-object duality.<sup>87</sup> Viewing that which is of its own form (i.e. the object) as something objective and extraneous to consciousness (i.e. the subject), is itself *avidyā*. *Yogācāra* holds the object does not exist apart from its consciousness but consciousness, the subject, can exist by itself without reference to any object, as it does in the

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84 Mervyn Sprung, "The Mādhyamika Doctrine of Two Realities as a Metaphysic", in *The Problem of Two Truths in Buddhism and Vedānta*, p. 51.

85 "paramārtho hy āryāpāram tūṣṇīmbhāva eva" MKV, p.19.

86 Ālambana Parikṣā, 6 as quoted in Ashok Kumar Chatterjee, YI, p.45.

87 "tatra dvayena grāhyagrāhakabhāvena nirūpayitum aśakyatvāt" MSA, p.182.

case of a dream or other illusions. Consciousness here is self-luminous, self-known (*svasamvittiḥ*) like the lamp.

However, Candrakīrti and Śāntideva point out that just as a finger cannot touch itself or tongue taste itself, consciousness cannot know itself without an object. Hence, if the object is unreal then the subject too must follow suit.<sup>88</sup> This criticism is unwarranted since *Yogācāra* itself acknowledges that in the final analysis consciousness is Pure Act. There is no trace of even the subject in it. *Yogācāra* also points out that the negation is the negation of the duality of subject and object (*dvaya-sūnyatā*) in something. However, the substratum of that duality does exist; it is the Absolute.<sup>89</sup> Consciousness gives rise to varied objects from its own potentiality (*svāśakti*).<sup>90</sup> *Abhūtaparikalpa* (*abhūtaśya parikalpo yasmin*), the substratum, is the transcendent, dynamic stream of consciousness, which creates from itself all phenomena, substance (*ātmā*), elements (*dharma*), the subject, object etc. There is nothing apart from it; it is the ground of all subject-object duality. It is non-different from the Absolute (*pariniṣpanna*), except that the former has subject-object

88 T.R.V. Murti, CPB, pp.99, 317-319.

89 "abhūtaparikalpo'sti, dvayam tatra nā vidyate;

sūnyatā vidyate tatra. tasyāmapī sa vidyate. MVSBT, p.9.

(The Universal Constructor of phenomena exists!(But he himself) does not contain any division in two parts (the apprehended and the apprehending). The Absolute however is contained in him, and in the Absolute again he is included.) Translation is from Th. Stecherbatsky, trans., *Madhyānta-Vibhanga Discourse on Discrimination between Middle and Extremes ascribed to Bodhisattva Maitreya and commented by Vasubandhu and Sthiramati* (Delhi: Oriental Books Reprint Corporation, 1936; First Indian edition, 1978) p.17.

90 "yathā tarangā mahato 'mburāśeḥ samīraṇaprerāṇay odbhavanti; tathālavākhyād apī sarvabhjād vijñānamātrāṇi bhavati svaśakteḥ" (MA, VI.46) as quoted in T.R.V. Murti, CPB, p.317.

duality superimposed on it, while the latter is totally free of all duality.<sup>91</sup> The Absolute is Pure Act; it is non-conceptual. There is no consciousness *of* the Absolute; consciousness itself is the Absolute.<sup>92</sup>

### 4.3 A Comparison of the *Mādhyamika* and *Yogācāra* Views

In the *Mahāyāna* tradition we find two views of the Absolute, the Absolute as understood by *Mādhyamika*, and the other as understood by *Yogācāra*. For the *Mādhyamika*, the Absolute is nothing but dialectical consciousness, the awareness of the conflict within reason leading to the rejection of reason itself. The *Mādhyamika* Absolute is not the 'thing-in-itself' of Kant. The realisation that all views about the Real are unreal is itself the Absolute. This realisation dawns not as a product of any analytic enterprise but of a dialectic one.<sup>93</sup> The Real is the utter silence of reason itself.<sup>94</sup> The *Mādhyamika* approach is purely negative, as it is not a constructive system at all; instead it advocates the de-construction of all views about the Real.

On the contrary, the *Yogācāra* "strives to supply a positive content to Buddhist thought and runs counter to the

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91 "na hyabhūtaparikalpaḥ kasyacid grāhako nāpi kenacit gṛhyate kim tarhi grāhyagrāhakatvaṁ svabhāvamātrameva;" MVSBT. 10.

92 Ashok Kumar Chatterjee points out that the *Yogācāra* Absolute is Pure Will, which is not 'waylaid by knowledge'. There is no consciousness of knowing the content of will, or knowing what is willed. Pure Will wills nothing. In that sense, *citta* is really *acitta*. See Ashok Kumar Chatterjee, YI, pp.134, 136.

"jñānam lokattaram ca tat" Trīṁśika p.29.

93 Ashok Kumar Chatterjee, YI, p. 197.

94 "paramārtho hy āryāṅgam tūṣṇīmbhāva eva." MKV, p.19.

apparently utter negativism of the *Mādhyamika*.”<sup>95</sup> *Yogācāra* is a constructive metaphysics; it negates only in order to affirm; while the object is negated, the subject is at least temporarily affirmed. For *Yogācāra*, the Absolute is consciousness minus its knowing function. That is, in the final analysis, consciousness is not a subject either, because there is *svasañvedana* only as long as consciousness continues to project an ‘other’.<sup>96</sup> The Absolute for the *Yogācārin* is non-dual consciousness; it is Pure Act, which neither knows nor wills an object. Now this is not very logical, as A.K. Chatterjee points out,

*Yogācāra* is not being very logical here in maintaining that while there can be no object independent of consciousness, consciousness itself however is not so dependent and can exist even without any object. One term of a relational context, when divorced from its correlative term, is not purified, becoming the absolute, it becomes nothing, simply nothing (*viśayam vinā jñānasya durniścayavāt*).<sup>97</sup>

Both the *Mādhyamika* and *Yogācāra* agree that illusion is not possible without a substratum. For the former the substratum is the critical consciousness itself, which when diversified by the views breeds illusion. For the latter, consciousness itself is the substratum of the projection of an ‘other’ While the *Mādhyamika* Absolute is purely epistemic, that of *Yogācāra* is ontic or more specifically psychic. There is no duality or plurality in the Absolute;

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95 A.K. Chatterjee, “Pratītyasamutpāda in Buddhist Philosophy,” *Our Heritage* (Bulletin of the Department of Postgraduate Research, Sanskrit College, Calcutta) vol.xix, part I, Jan-June 1971. p.15.

96 Ashok Kumar Chatterjee, YI, p. 199.

97 A.K. Chatterjee, “Idealism and Absolutism – A Buddhist Synthesis,” p.48.

*Mādhyamika* denies the plurality of views while *Yogācāra* renounces the subject-object duality. Both agree that the Absolute is transcendent to thought but at the same time it is the reality of phenomena, and is therefore immanent in it. Further, the Absolute is realised only in a non-discursive intuition. *Mādhyamika* and *Yogācāra* share much in common in its understanding of the Absolute; however it may be asserted that the Absolute of the *Mādhyamika* is more universal and indeterminate than that of the *Yogācāra*.<sup>98</sup>

### 5. Absolute and Phenomena in the *Hevajra Tantra*

According to Snellgrove, the philosophical position of the tantras is *Mādhyamika*.<sup>99</sup> However, according to Benoytosh Bhattacharyya, *Vajrayāna* leans more towards *Yogācāra* than to *Mādhyamika*. This is because, as he points out, for the *Mādhyamika* both the subject and the object are *śūnya* in essence; there is no reality either of the mind or of the external world. This is not palatable to the *Vajrayānists*, because to them a positive aspect in the form of *vijñāna* is absolutely necessary.<sup>100</sup> The border between *Mādhyamika* and *Yogācāra* is a very thin one; hence the present study does not undertake to make the hair-splitting distinction between these two stream of *Mahāyāna*. Hence, it may be said that *Vajrayāna* depends on the *Mahāyāna* system as a whole, since it draws elements from both *Mādhyamika* and *Yogācāra* to formulate its theory. But from the point of view of *sādhana*, it is anchored more on

98 Ashok Kumar Chatterjee, YI, pp.202-203

99 HT(S) Part 1, p.20.

100 Benoytosh Bhattacharyya, "Origin and Development of *Vajrayāna*" in IHQ (Narendra Nath Law, ed., vol. III (Delhi: Caxton Publications, 1927; Reprint 1985), p.734.



*Yogācāra-vijñānavāda* than on *Mādhyamika*. Benoytosh Bhattacharya writes, "If the *sādhana* is analyzed ample evidence will be found to prove that it belongs more to *Yogācāra* than to *Mādhyamika*."<sup>101</sup>

According to the *Mādhyamika*, the Real may be viewed from two points of view, namely *saññīti* and *paramārtha*. Reality looked through the categories of Reason is the world of phenomena (*saññīti satya*), while reality devoid of all thought-forms is the Absolute (*paramārtha satya*).<sup>102</sup> *Hevajra Tantra* is in favour of the *Mādhyamika* distinction of truth into *saññīti* and *paramārtha*, and does not favour the *Yogācāra* distinction of it into *parikalpita*, *paratantra* and *pariniṣpanna*. The text states that the enlightened consciousness has both absolute and relative forms (*vivṛtisamvṛtirūpakam*).<sup>103</sup> It gives Wisdom the appellation 'Sister' because she reveals the distinction between the relative and the absolute (*saññīti paramārthayor vibhāgakathanāt Bhaginī*).<sup>104</sup> However, in the final analysis, as the *Mādhyamika* holds, there is no distinction between *saññīti* and *nirvāṇa*,<sup>105</sup> and *Hevajra Tantra* too reiterates that ultimately *nirvāṇa* is nothing other than the phenomenal.<sup>106</sup>

The *Hevajra Tantra* states that *tathatā* is the purification of all things that exist,<sup>107</sup> and the *Yogaratnamālā* adds that the voidness of all natures is

101 Ibid.

102 "Dve satye samupāśrītya buddhānāṅ dharmā deśanā,  
loka-saññīti-satyāṅ ca satyāṅ ca paramārthataḥ." MK. XXIV, 8.

103 "bodhicittam tu vivṛtisamvṛtirūpakam" HT(F) II:4:38.

104 HT(S), part 2, *Yogaratnamālā*, p. 118.

105 "na samsārasya nirvāṇāt kiñcid asti viśeṣaṇam;  
na nirvāṇasya samsārāt kiñcid asti viśeṣaṇam." MK. XXV, 19.

106 "saññīti-rāḡṣṭe nānyan nirvāṇam iti kathyate" HT (F) II:4:36.

107 "sarveṣāṅ khalu vastūnāṅ viśuddhis tathatā smṛtā/" HT(F) 1:9:1

*tathatā*.<sup>108</sup> Keeping in line with the Mahāyānic position, the *Muktāvalī* states that from the ultimate point of view the Real is devoid of differentiation (i.e., it is advaya/śūnya)<sup>109</sup> For the *Mādhyamika*, the differentiation is one of views about the Real, while for *Yogācāra* it is differentiation into subject and object. *Muktāvalī* explains 'advaya' in terms of the *Yogācāra* stress on the negation of subject-object duality.<sup>110</sup> Kṛṣṇācārya, while commenting on the phrase 'yathā bhedo na jāyate',<sup>111</sup> explains that, "There should be no arising of the differentiations into the three components of sound, ear, and the awareness of sound (which constitute the auditory faculty)."<sup>112</sup> *Tattva* is undifferentiated (*niḥprapañca*). In *Hevajra Tantra* the Real is called *vajra*, which is characterised as non-dual knowledge.<sup>113</sup> The text defines this knowledge as, "free from notions of self and other, space-like, undefiled, void, the essence of existence and non-existence, and the supreme. This knowledge is blending of Wisdom and Means and a fusion of passion and absence of passion."<sup>114</sup> It is the intrinsic nature of all that is

108 "tathatā sarvadharme śūnyatā" HT(S), Part2, *Yogaratnamālā*, p.130.

109 "śūnyaṁ grāhyapratibhāsānāmasthaṅgamāḥ" HT(T), *Muktāvalī*, p.114.

110 "advayaṁ dvayasya grāhyagrāhakasya atyantamasarvāt" HT(T), *Muktāvalī*, p.160.

111 HT(F) 1:5:3

112 HT(F), *Yogaratnamālā*, p.52. "bhāvayabhāvabhāvabhāvāṅgamāḥ paramārtha(ta)s tritayaṁ nopalabhyate" HT(S), part 2. *Yogaratnamālā*, p.117.

"Yathā śabdādiṣu trayopalambho na syāt" HT(S), part 2. *Yogaratnamālā*, p.117.

113 "Vajram abhedyāṁ jñānaṁ" HT(S), part 2, *Yogaratnamālā*, p.117.

114 "...svaparavittivarjitam/ khasamaṁ virajaṁ śūnyaṁ bhāvābhāvātmakeṇ param/ prajñopāyavyatimīśraṁ rāgarāgavimīśraṁ/" HT(F) 1:10:7.

(*sarvabhāvasvābhāvo'sau*); it is the convergence of all natures (*sarvadharmāṅām ekaratsamīlanam*); and it exists as illusory forms as well (*māyārūpi ca saṁsthitaḥ*).<sup>115</sup> *Yogaratanmālā* states that this knowledge is *māyārūpi* because it creates manifold forms (*nānānirmāṇanirmiteva*) and makes way for the appearance of *saṁvṛti*.

As in *Mahāyāna*, in *Hevajra Tantra* the Real is considered undefinable. This is revealed by the paradoxical statements of *Bhagavān*. In one passage he states, "I am existence as well as not existence... (*bhāvo'haṁ naiva bhavo'haṁ*)."<sup>116</sup> Later, he also states that the Enlightened One is neither existence nor non-existence (*buddho na bhāvaḥ syād abhāvarūpo'pi naiva saḥ*).<sup>117</sup> The text also states that this knowledge is both non-dual, as well as of dual nature (*advayaṁ dvayarūpaṁ ca*).<sup>118</sup> The Absolute as great bliss is both void and non-void (*śūnyāśūnyam*).<sup>119</sup> *Yogaratanmālā* explains, that it is because the Enlightened One is undefinable, that he is characterised as neither existence nor non-existence.<sup>120</sup> The ultimate is beyond the ken of senses (*indriyāṅām agocaram*) and verbal communication (*vākpathātītagocaram*); but it is known through direct personal experience (*svasaṁvedyam*).<sup>121</sup>

115 See HT(F) I:10:10; HT(S), part 2, *Yogaratanmālā*, p.135.

116 HT(F) II:2:37. The commentator explains that *Bhagavān* in terms of *Nirmāṇakāya* and *Sam̐bhogakāya*, is existence and is of the nature of phenomenal things. But in terms of the *Dharmakāya* and the *Mahāsukhakāya* he is not existence.

117 HT(F) II:2:43.

118 HT(F) II:3:23.

119 "śūnyāśūnyam iti grāhyagrāhakahavirāhādadvayavijñaptimātram śūnyam, tato'pi śūnyacchūnyam" HT(T), *Muktāvalī*, p.215.

120 "apratiṣṭhitatvāt na bhāvo nāpy abhāva iti sthitaṁ" HT(S), part 2, *Yogaratanmālā*, p.140.

121 H.T.(F) I:8:49; HT(S), part 2, *Yogaratanmālā*, p.118.

*Hevajra Tantra* agrees with *Mādhyamika* in holding, that the *saññīti* is the means (*upāyabhūta*), and *paramārtha* is the end (*upeyabhūta*). "Basing ourselves on *vyavahāra* do we advance to the *paramārtha*."<sup>122</sup> Murti points out,

The *paramārtha* can be understood and realised only negatively, *only as we remove the saññīti*,... The Real is to be *uncovered, discovered*, and realised as the reality of appearances (*dharmāṣṛāṅ dharmatā*). In the order of our discovery, the removal of *saññīti* must precede our knowledge of the *paramārtha*.<sup>123</sup>

In *Mahāvāna*, *saññīti* indicates the Real negatively; that is, as distinct from itself while in *Vajrayāna*, *saññīti* is actually employed to discover the Real, as pointed out earlier. *Hevajra Tantra* states, "It is by those very things which bind mankind that their bondage is released."<sup>124</sup> The purification of phenomenal existence is achieved by phenomenal existence itself. In the same way, notions are used to counter notions.<sup>125</sup> Here the phrase

122 "vyavahāram anāśrītya paramārtho na deśyate" MK.XXIV,10.

123 T.R.V Murti, CPB, p.253

124 "yena tu yena badhyate lokas tena tu tena tu bandhanam muñcet"  
HT (F) I:9:20.

"yena yena hi badhyante jantavo raudrakarmaṣṭ  
sopāyena tu tenaiva mucyante bhavabandhanāt/  
rāgena badhyate loko rāgenaiva vimucyate!" HT(F) II:2:50-51.  
(Beings are released from the bondage of existence utilising as means those very things by which beings, because of their wicked deeds, are bound. Beings are bound by passion and are released by utilising passion.)

125 "yathā vātagṛhīṭasya māṣubhakṣyam pradīyate/  
vātena hanyate vātaṁ viparītauṣidhikalpanāt/  
bhavaṭ śuddho bhavenaiva vikalpapartikalpanāt!" HT(F) II:2:47  
(Just as the one who is afflicted by flatulence is given beans to eat,

'*vikalpapratikalpanāt*' seems to indicate the dialectical process of the *Mādhyamika*; in *Vajrayāna*, however, the process is not on the level of ratiocination but on the level of *sādhana*; the notions are countered by utilising the form of the deity (*devatākāraparikalpataḥ kṣīṇo bhavatīty*<sup>126</sup>). How this is carried out will be explained in the sixth chapter.

*Mādhyamika* teaches that without the acceptance of the *paramārtha* there can be no deliverance from *saṃsāra*.<sup>127</sup> B.K. Matilal states, "...emptiness is the means by which our deepest delusions are purged out of our system, whereupon the 'emptiness' doctrine resolves itself into the highest wisdom, the *prajñāpāramitā*."<sup>128</sup> Likewise, the *Hevajra Tantra* states, "Men are deluded by not knowing the True Principle, and those who are devoid of the True Principle cannot achieve the accomplishment."<sup>129</sup> *Yogaratanmālā* adds that without the Innate, which is characterised as being one of direct personal experience, there is no accomplishment in this or any other life.<sup>130</sup>

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for, afflictions caused by wind are destroyed by wind according to the rule of contradictory medicine, similarly phenomenal existence is purified by utilising phenomenal existence itself, utilising notions to counter notions.)

126 HT(S), *Yogaratanmālā*, p.140. The deity's form destroys false notions. See HT(F), *Yogaratanmālā*, p.172.

127 "*paramārtham anāgamyā nirvāṇam nādhigamyate*" MK XXIV,10.

128 Bimal Krishna Matilal, "A Critique of the *Mādhyamika* Position" in *The Problem of Two Truths in Buddhism and Vedānta*, p. 62.

129 "*loko muhyati vetti na tattvaṃ tattvavivarjitaḥ siddhiṃ na lapsye*" HT(F) 1:9:20. '*Siddhi*' is that state of *Vajradhara* which is not attainable by those who do not perceive the non-arising nature of phenomena.

130 "*tena svasṛvedya lakṣaṇena sahajena vinā ihaiva janmani janmāntare vā na siddhiḥ*" HT(S), part 2, *Yogaratanmālā*, p.130. See also HT(F) 1:8:53.



*Paramārtha* referred to as *prajñā* or *sahaja* is indispensable for deliverance. In keeping with other absolute systems, *Vajrayāna* too advocates that it is knowledge that removes *avidyā* and leads to the realisation of the Absolute.

*Mādhyamika* teaches that *bodhicitta* is a unique blend of *śūnyatā* and *karuṇā* (Intellect and Will).<sup>131</sup> Murti explains that *śūnyatā* is *prajñā*, intellectual intuition, and is identical with the Absolute; while *karuṇā* is the active principle of compassion, which gives concrete expression to *śūnyatā* in phenomena.<sup>132</sup> *Hevajra Tantra* teaches the same doctrine when it states, "The absence of distinction between Voidness and Compassion is known as the Enlightened Consciousness."<sup>133</sup> *Yogaratnamālā* too elucidates the fact that the unified essence of compassion and voidness is innate Radiance (*prabhāsvaraṇ*).<sup>134</sup> The enlightened consciousness is *advaya*, there is no duality of wisdom and the means (*prajñā* and *upāya*).<sup>135</sup>

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131 "*śūnyatā-karuṇāgarbhaṇ bodhicittam*" AAA.p.29 as quoted in T.R.V. Murti, CPB, p.264. See also "*śūnyatākaruṇābhinnāṇ yatra cittāṇ prabhāvyate sā hi buddhasya dharmasya sanghasyāpi hi deśanā*" (where an attitude in which *śūnyatā* and *karuṇā* are indivisible is developed, there is the message of the Buddha, the Dharma, and the Saṅgha). As quoted in Herbert V. Guenther & Chogyam Trungpa, *The Dawn of Tantra* (London: Shambhala, 1975), p.32.

132 T.R.V. Murti, CPB, p.264.

133 "*śūnyatākaruṇābhinnāṇ bodhicittāṇ iti smṛtam*" HT(F) I:10:40. Snellgrove translates this passage as, "The thought of enlightenment is the undivided unity of Compassion and Voidness" HT(S) Part 1, p.34.

134 "*tayor ekarasarūpaṇ prabhāsvaraṇ*" HT(S), part 2, *Yogaratnamālā*, p.144

135 "*advayaṇ prajñāpāyadvayābhāsarahitaṇ*" HT(S), part 2, *Yogaratnamālā*, p.143.



## 6. Vajrayānic Insights into the Nature of the Ultimate Reality

It is clear that *Hevajra Tantra* has incorporated several Mahāyānic notions into its theory of the Ultimate Reality. However the notion of the Absolute in *Hevajra Tantra* is not a mere repetition of Mahāyānic notions but a modification of the same under Vajrayānic influence. We shall now explore those unique insights into the Absolute, which resulted from such an interaction.

### 6.1 Ultimate Reality as *Vajra*

In the *Pāramitānaya*, *prajñā*, which is the voidness (*sūnyatā*) of all natures, is the supreme truth (*prajñāpāramitā*), and is personified as the goddess *Prajñāpāramitā*. In *Hevajra Tantra*, she is *Nairātmyā* (the absence of the notion of selfhood). Here the void (*sūnyatā* or *prajñā*) is called '*vajra*'<sup>136</sup> Again, in the analysis of the term '*Hevajra*', '*he*' is interpreted as *karuṇā* and '*vajra*' as *prajñā*.<sup>137</sup> '*Hevajra*' is the union of *prajñā* and *karuṇā* and it is the ultimate reality.

*Vajra* is also considered as *karuṇā*, as for example, when *Hevajra* is in union with *Nairātmyā*, then '*vajra*' symbolises *Hevajra* (*vajro Hevajrah*), the male aspect. *Hevajra sādhana* is also called the *Vajra-Kapāla Yoga*.<sup>138</sup>

136 "dṛḍhan saram asauśīṣyam accehyābhedyalakṣaṇaṁ adāhi avināśi ca sūnyatā vajram ucyate." HT(S), part 2, *Yogaratnamālā*, p.105.

137 "hekāreṇi mahākaruṇā vajraṁ prajñā ca bhūyate" HT(F) I:1:7. "vajram abhedyāṁ jñānaṁ" HT(S), part 2, *Yogaratnamālā*, p.117.

138 "The *Vajra-Kapāla Yoga* is the union of Compassion and Voidness. The union is the attainment of the Stabilised Meditative State of Compassion and Voidness". '*Kaṁ*' means bliss and '*pālayati*' means protects. *Kaṁpālayati* is that which protects bliss.

Here again, 'Hevajra' (*vajra*) is *karuṣā* and 'Nairātmyā' (*kapāla*) is *prajñā*. The term '*vajra*' stands at times for *prajñā* and at other times for *karuṣā*, sometimes for Nairātmyā and at other times for Hevajra, each of which is a coefficient of the Enlightened Consciousness (*śūnyatā karuṣābhinnam bodhicittam iti smṛtam*). Thus, '*vajra*' is a comprehensive term incorporating within itself the twin aspects of *prajñā* and *karuṣā*, and stands for the Ultimate Reality.

*Vajra*, in relation to *paramārtha* (*nirvāṇa*), is *prajñā*; and in relation to *saṁvṛti* (*saṁsāra*), is *karuṣā*. Both *nirvāṇa* and *saṁsāra* are *vajra*. That is why in *Vajrayāna* everything is *vajra*. *Bhagavān* himself is called *Vajrī*.<sup>139</sup> The Tathāgatas are called *Abhedyavajra* (the indivisible vajras),<sup>140</sup> which again shows that *vajra* stands for the Absolute. The *Guru* is called '*Vajradhāri*', the one who bears the non-dual knowledge.<sup>141</sup> Elsewhere, the *Guru* is identified with *Vajradhara* himself. Thus, *vajra* is used to indicate the ultimate Reality and all its manifestations.

*Vajra* is not synonymous with the *śūnyatā* of *Mādhyamika*, though they share much in common, and the terms *śūnyatā* and *prajñā* are frequently used in *Vajrayāna*. While in *Mahāyāna* the Ultimate Reality (*śūnyatā*) is primarily referred to as only *prajñā*, and *karuṣā* seems to be secondary and extraneous to it, in *Vajrayāna* both seem to have equal status; in fact the Real (*vajra*) is a fusion of the two. In *Vajrayāna*, the Ultimate Reality is the

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and that refers to Nairātmyā. HT(F) p.82. *kapāla* literally means skull. *Kapāla* sometimes refers to the lotus of Nairātmyā (II:5:5). Deities and yoginīs are depicted as holding in their hands both *vajra* and *kapāla* signifying the twin aspects of *prajñā* and *upāya*.

139 HT(F) I:10:34; II:12:1.

140 Ibid., II:3:18; p.187.

141 Ibid., II:3:20.

inseparability of *śūnyatā* and *karuṇā* (*śūnyatā karuṇābhinnam*). Again, while in *Mādhyamika* the Real (*tattva*) is an epistemic entity, in *Vajrayāna* the Real (*vajra*) bears ontological overtones. *Mādhyamikakārika* defines *tattva* as, that which is independently realised, peaceful, unobsessed by obsessions, without discriminations and a variety of meanings.<sup>142</sup> For *Vajrayāna*, the Ultimate Reality (*vajra*) is first and foremost the void which is the firm essence (*sāram*). *Bhagavān* defines *vajra* in *Vajraśekhara* as, “the Void which is firm essence, indestructible, indepletable, indivisible and not capable of being consumed is called *Vajra*”.<sup>143</sup> The attributes of *vajra*, as we can see, are ontological while those of *tattva* in *Mādhyamika kārika* are epistemological.

## 6.2 Ultimate Reality as *Sahaja*

‘*Sahaja*’, the Innate, means something that is born or arisen together or simultaneously (*sahajātyān yad utpannam sahajam tat prakīrtitam*). *Yogaratnamālā* states, “That undefiled nature which is produced from the simultaneous co-arising of the internal Wisdom and Means is the Innate which is known as the supreme.”<sup>144</sup> In *Vajrayāna* the Innate is equated with the very nature of

142 “*Apara-pratyayaṁ śāntaṁ prapañcāir aprapañcitaṁ, nirvikalpam anānārtham etat tattvasya lakṣaṇam.*” MK.XVIII, 9.

143 HT(F), *Yogaratnamālā*, p.7 (emphasis added). See also “...*dr̥gham saram asauśīṣyam acchedyābhedyalakṣaṇam udāhi avināsi ca śūnyatā vajram ucyate!*” HT(S), part 2, *Yogaratnamālā*, pp.104-105.

144 HT(F) I:10:39.

“*ādhyātmikaprajñopāyābhyān shajābhyān yad utpannam anāśvalakṣaṇam tatsahajam paramārthasābdenocyate.*” HT(S), part 2, *Yogaratnamālā*, p.135.

things (*sahajān svarūpam ucyate*).<sup>145</sup> The intrinsic nature is known as *sahajān* (*svabhāvaṁ sahaajān proktaṁ*). The intrinsic nature (*svabhāvaṁ*) is thusness (*tathatā*), the Absolute Void.<sup>146</sup> *Sahaja* is the concealed essence of all things (*sarvākāraikasaṁvaram*). It is calm (*nistarāṅgaḥ svarūpātma*), and it abides in all bodies (*sarva dehe vyavasthitaḥ*).<sup>147</sup> The Innate is characterised as Joy (*ānanda*) and is the culmination of the three phenomenal joys (*sahajānandaṁ śeṣataḥ*).<sup>148</sup> *Hevajra* is of the nature of Innate Joy (*sahajānandasvarūpataḥ*).<sup>149</sup> The *siddhi* attained through *Hevajra sādhana* is also of the nature of *sahaja* (*siddhiḥ sahaajānandarūpiṇi*).

*Sahaja* can only be self-experienced (*svasaṁvedya*).<sup>150</sup> When consciousness is purified, the intrinsic nature (*sahaja*) itself is experienced as release.<sup>151</sup> Our text states that the experience of *sahaja* is like cloud at first, then as illusion, later as sleep, and finally as no distinction between sleep and waking. These indicate the four stabilised meditative states in which *sahaja* is experienced in different degrees. The first stabilised meditative state, which is like a cloud (*meghavat*), is one in which the Innate is not clearly experienced but appears as a moon concealed by a cloud. In the second state it appears as illusion

145 HT(F) II:2:44.

146 "*sarvadharmāṅgān prakṛtis tathatā bhūtakotīḥ svabhāva iti paryāyāḥ tad eva sahajaśabdena prāg uktān*" (intrinsic nature is synonymous with the primordial state of all things, Thusness and the Absolute Void. This has been called the Innate) HT(S), part 2, *Yogaratnamālā*, p.135; HT(F) I:10:39.

147 HT(F) I:10:34.

148 HT(F) I:8:30.

149 HT(F) II:5:7. See also II:6:5

150 "*nānyena kathyate sahaajān na kasminn api labhyate/ ātmanā jñāyate puṇyād guruparvopasevayā//*" HT(F) I:8:34.

151 "*svarūpam eva nirvāṇaṁ viśuddhākāracetasā*" HT(F) II:2:44.

(*māyavat*), because the illusory nature of the world is truly realised. In the third state, it is like sleep (*svapnavat*), because there is no notion of distinguishing oneself from others. The final state is like having no distinction between the sleep and waking states (*svapijāgradabhedavat*) because the sleep and waking states are indivisibly united.<sup>152</sup> In *sahaja* there is no duality of Wisdom and Means (*atra prajñopāyor anu(pa)lambhāt*).<sup>153</sup> As self-experienced, it is beyond verbal articulation, like the dream of one who is dumb (*mūkasya svapnaṁ yathā*).<sup>154</sup>

### 6.3 Ultimate Reality as *Mahāsukha*

Probably the most remarkable innovation that *Vajrayāna* has made to the *Mahāyāna* lineage of thought is the conception of the Absolute as great Bliss (*acintya-mahāsukha*). Nowhere in *Mādhyamika* the Absolute is characterised as *sukha*. In *Yogācāra*, we find a brief reference to the nature of the Absolute as perfect bliss (*sukha*),<sup>155</sup> which is the perfect quiescence of consciousness devoid of subject-object duality.<sup>156</sup> For the Mahāyānist, *nirvāṇa* is supreme bliss in as much as it involves the extinction of the five skandhas, the basis of ego-centric personality and the cause of misery.<sup>157</sup> However, the

152 See HT(F), *Yogaratanmālā*, p.128.

153 HT(S), part 2, *Yogaratanmālā*, p.154.

154 HT (F) II:5:69.

155 "acitto 'nupalambho 'sau jñānaṁ loko-itarāṅca tat/  
 āśrayasya parāvṛttir dvidhā dauṣṭulya-hānitaḥ//  
 sa evānāsravo dhātur acintyaḥ kuśalo dhruvaḥ/  
 sukho vimukti-kāyo 'sau dharmākhyo 'yaṁ mahāmuneḥ//"  
*Triṅśka*, vv.29-30. (emphasis added)

156 "cittasya citte sthānāt" MSA, XVIII, 66.

157 "...te samābhiḥ paramasukhe sarvaniketavigame pratiṣṭhā-  
 payitavyā yad uta ...nirvāṇe" DBHS, 18.

conception of *mahāsukha* is not treated as elaborately as it is in *Vajrayāna*.

In early Buddhism the term '*nibbāna*' was understood generally in the negative sense of 'complete cessation of *saṃsāra*' or 'the blowing out of a Lamp'. However, attributing characteristics to *nibbāna* was not absent altogether either. Pāli literature attributed to it several qualities such as *param* (supreme), *śānta* (tranquil), *viśuddha* (pure) etc. *Therī-gāthā* stated that eternal bliss can be attained through the attainment of *nirvāṇa*.<sup>158</sup> *Milinda-pañho* speaks of it as supreme bliss or *paramasukha*.<sup>159</sup> *Dhammapada* declared, "*etaṃ jñutvā yathā-bhūtaṃ nibbānaṃ paramaṃ sukhaṃ*."<sup>160</sup> In early Buddhism the conception of *nibbāna* is not consistent. It is at times described negatively, (especially by the *Sautrantika*) and at other times spoken of positively. On the whole, however, a positive tendency seems to predominate over the negative one.<sup>161</sup>

In the *Mahāyāna* tradition, we shall consider the views of *Mādhyamika* and *Yogācāra* on the conception of *nirvāṇa*. For the *Mādhyamika*, *nirvāṇa* is the complete cessation of all mental constructions, and no categorical descriptions can be ascribed to it. Nāgārjuna would not

158 "*khemaṣṭhāne vimuttā te pattā te acalaṃ sukhaṃ*" *Therīgāthā*, 352. See Bhikku J. Kashyap, ed., *The Vimānavatthu-Petavatthu Theragāthā-Therīgāthā* (*Khuddhakanikāya* vol.ii) (..., Pāli Publication Board, 1959). (emphasis added).

159 "That principle of Nirvāṇa, O king, so peaceful, so blissful, so delicate, exists" T.W. Rhys Davids Trans., *The Questions of King Milinda*, Part II, (New York, Dover Publications, Inc., 1963), p.196. (emphasis added).

160 *Dhammapada*, 203. See S. Radhakrishnan, *The Dhammapad*, (London: Oxford University Press, 1966) p.126. (emphasis added).

161 S. B. Dasgupta, ITB, pp. 130-131.



speak of *nirvāṇa* as bliss, since it would be another construction; and hence equally culpable as any other. Similarly, Saraha-pāda warned in one of his Dohās that a positive conception of *nirvāṇa* is as wrong as a negative one, just as a chain whether made of iron or gold equally binds man.

*Yogācāra-vijñānavāda* conception of the Ultimate Reality is rather positive, and consequently, we have also a positive characterisation of *nirvāṇa*. *Nirvāṇa* is the realisation of the void-nature of both the cognising self as well as the external objects. Voidness (*sūnyatā*) is the annihilation of the *grāhya-grāhaka* duality. The pure consciousness devoid of this duality is the *dharmakāya*. There is no categorical assertion that the nature of the *dharmakāya* is bliss; but in the *Vijñaptimātratā-siddhi* the nature of pure consciousness is stated to be, the immutable element which is beyond the reach of all mentation; it is all good, permanent, **perfect bliss**, - it is liberation - the substance itself.<sup>162</sup> Though the concept of *nirvāṇa* as intense bliss is foreshadowed in early Buddhism and later in *Mahāyāna*, it gained prominence only in *Vajrayāna* and *Sahajayāna* whose followers went to the extent of identifying *nirvāṇa* with *mahāsukha*.

In *Vajrayāna*, the ultimate reality is of the nature of great bliss. *Hevajra Tantra* states, "Bliss is black, yellow, red, white, green, blue and all things moving and fixed. Bliss is the Wisdom, the Means, the erotic union, existence, and non-existence. Vajrasattva is known as Bliss."<sup>163</sup> In its

162 Trimśika, v. 30.

163 "sukhaṁ kṛṣṇaṁ sukhaṁ pītaṁ sukhaṁ raktaṁ sukhaṁ sitam/  
sukhaṁ śyāmaṁ sukhaṁ nīlaṁ sukhaṁ kṛtsnaṁ carācaraṁ//  
sukhaṁ prajñā sukhopāyaḥ sukhaṁ kundurujaṁ tathā/

examination of bliss the Hevajra Tantra speaks of four fold joys, viz., Ordinary Joy (*ānanda*), Refined Joy (*paramānanda*), Joy of Cessation (*viramānanda*) and Innate Joy (*sahajānanda*). The first three are of the phenomenal realm as they are characterised by the misconceptions of bondage and release.<sup>164</sup> The last, the Innate Joy, is identified as great bliss (*mahāsukha*). Though joy is four-fold, the Innate is considered to be one,<sup>165</sup> and in it there is neither passion (i.e., Refined Joy),<sup>166</sup> nor the passionless (Joy of Cessation),<sup>167</sup> nor the awareness of the middle state (Ordinary Joy).<sup>168</sup> *Muktāvalī* states that the Real is the non-dual voidness of all dharmas, the perception of which is the perception of *śūnyatā*, or enlightenment, and it is of the nature of Great Bliss.<sup>169</sup>

*sukhaṁ bhāvaḥ sukhābhāvo Vajrasattvaḥ sukhasmṛtaḥ//*" HT(F) II:2:31-32. "vyāpyāvypakarūpeṇa sukhena vyāpitaṁ jagat" HT(F) II:2:35 (The world is pervaded by bliss, the world and bliss being mutually dependent)

164 "yad etat trayam bhavanirvāṅśavahāvatvena bhrāntatvena saṁsārāvāhakaṁ" HT(S), part 2, *Yogaratanmālā*, p.127.

165 "niṣpannakrame sahaja evaiko bhāvya iti" Ibid.

166 "paramānandaṁ bhavaṁ proktaṁ" HT(F) I:8:32. (The Refined Joy is said to be the bound existence). "bhavaṁ saṁsāralakṣaṇaṁ, sahasākāṅkṣatvāt" (The Refined Joy refers to saṁsāra and it is the desire for the Innate). HT(S), part 2, *Yogaratanmālā*, p.127.

167 "viramānandaṁ rāganāśatvāt" ('Passionless' refers to the Joy of Cessation) HT(S), part 2, *Yogaratanmālā*, p.127.

168 "madhyameti prathamānanadamātraṁ sukhasāraṅgamātraṁ" (or *sukhasādhāraṅgamātra* – see fn.2) HT(S), part 2, *Yogaratanmālā*, p.127. "na rāgo na virāgaś ca madhyamaṁ nopalabhyate!" HT(F) I:8:33.

169 "svarūpuṁ ca sarvadharmānāṁ dvayaśūnyameva, tasya darśanaṁ śūnyatādarśanameva/ tadeva ca bodhiriti buddhā eva sarvasattvāḥ/ na vai śūnyatādarśanamātra bodhiḥ/ kiṁ tarhi yanmahāsukham..." HT(T), *Muktāvalī*, p.189.

Bliss is no-dual as nothing is emanated (*na kiñcid bhāvyaṃ asti*), and mind too does not exist in it (*cittaṃ tad api nāsti*).<sup>170</sup> In Great Bliss, differentiated notions are non-existent (*nānārthasyābhāvāt*).<sup>171</sup> *Yogaratnamālā* states that it is both void and non-void because of the nature of the one flavour of the union of Wisdom and Means, which are the non-dual nature of voidness and compassion; and it is indicated by the name Heruka.<sup>172</sup> *Hevajra Tantra* declares the non-dual and undifferentiated nature of bliss:

In the supreme delight there is neither the emanated nor the emanator. There is no form and neither is there object nor is there the perceiver. There is no flesh, no blood, no excrement, no urine, no sickness, no delusion, no purification, no passion, no wrath, no delusion, no envy, no malignity, no pride, no visible object, no emanated object, no emanator, no friend, and no enemy. The Innate is calm and undifferentiated.<sup>173</sup>

170 HT(S), part 2, *Yogaratnamālā*, p. 134.

171 See HT(F) p. 180; HT(S), part 2, *Yogaratnamālā*, p. 142.

172 "*śūnyāśūnyāṃ prajñopāyayor ekarasarūpatvāt/ etad eva jñānaṃ Herukaśabdavācyāṃ śūnyatākaruṇayor advayarūpatvāt*". HT(S), part 2, *Yogaratnamālā*, p. 155.

173 "*paramaratau no ca bhāvo na bhāvakaḥ/ na ca vīgraho na ca grāhyo na grāhakaḥ/ māṇsaṃ na śoṇitam viṣṭhā na mūtram/ na chardo na moho na śaucapavitram// rāgo na dveṣo na moho na irsyā/ na ca paiśūnyam na ca māno na dṛśyam/ bhāvo na bhāvako mitro na śatruḥ/ nistarāṅga sahaḥajākhyaṃ vicitrām//*" HT(F) I:10:31-32. (The translation is modified with the help of the translation given by Snellgrove).

Bliss is incommunicable (*vāgvikalpaviṣṣayātītatvād iti bhāvaḥ*).<sup>174</sup> Since bliss is beyond words (*vāggocarātītan*) it can only be intuitively experienced by the practitioner himself. Bliss is experienced in the body because the experience of bliss requires the presence of form and other qualities.<sup>175</sup> In the very first chapter of the text we are told that great knowledge (bliss), which is free of all illusory conceptions and all pervading, is located in the body. Although abiding in the body, it does not originate in the body.<sup>176</sup>

Bliss, the Ultimate Reality, may be viewed from two points of view, namely the absolute and the relative (*vivṛtisamvṛtibhedataḥ*). The absolute enlightened consciousness is of the nature of bliss, and the relative enlightened consciousness is of the nature of semen.<sup>177</sup> *Yogaratanmālā* states, "The absolute Innate Bliss is the cause of the relative bliss, the relative bliss being a limited aspect of the absolute Innate Bliss. Therefore confidence is attained by means of the relative bliss which is a limited aspect, similar in nature to the primary cause, the absolute Innate Bliss."<sup>178</sup>

The text clearly states that the relative bliss (erotic pleasure) is not the real bliss since the former arises from

174 "*nānyena kathyate saha jaṅṅ na kasminn api labhyate/ ātmanā jñāyate puṅyād guruparvopasevayā//* HT(F) I:8:34. (By no other can the Innate be explained and in no other person can it be attained. It is known intuitively as the result of merit gained from diligently following the guru's instructions and the observances).

175 "...*rūpādyabhāvena saukhyaṅ naivopalabhyate//*" HT(F) II:2:36.

176 "*dehasthān ca mahājñānaṅ sarvasatīkalpavarjitam/ vyāpakaḥ sarvavastūnān dehastho 'pi na dehajaḥ//*" HT(F) I:1:12.

177 "*vivṛtiṅ mahāsukhasvabhāvaṅ/ sativṛtiṅ kundasatīkāśūn*". HT(S), part 2, *Yogaratanmālā*, p.147., fn.(6).

178 HT(F), *Yogaratanmālā*, p.168.

the five great elements.<sup>179</sup> The function of the relative bliss is likened to that of a lamp, which only reveals and illumines other things (*andhakāre pradīpavat*). The worldly Innate Bliss is the very means, which makes the achievement of the goal (*sahajānanda*) possible.<sup>180</sup> The actual process by which both the relative bliss as well as the absolute bliss is generated will be taken up in the sixth chapter.

The Vajrayānists emphasised the element of Great Bliss in the Mahāyānic conception of the Absolute. *Mādhyamika* had declared that the nature of reality is void (*sūnya*); *Yogācāra* stressed that it is consciousness. The *Mantramahāyāna* tradition described it to be of the nature of Great Bliss.<sup>181</sup> *Mahāsukha* is the essential nature of all things. This is the secret instruction of the bodhisattvas regarding the nature of things.<sup>182</sup> *Mahāsukha* is the Absolute, the Ultimate Principle of all things, and there is no principle greater than that.<sup>183</sup> *Vajrasattva* who embodies

179 "...saukhyam ākāśadhātuś ca pañcabhiḥ pariveṣṭitaḥ /  
tasmāt saukhyam na tattvākhyam mahābhutam yataḥ sukham!"  
HT (F) I:10:38.

"sārinṣṭam kamalakulīṣam janitam na tattvākhyam  
pāramārthikam sajam" (The pleasure arising from the union of  
female and male sexual organs is not the real bliss, the supreme  
innate). HT(S), part 2, *Yogaratnamālā*, p.134.

180 "laukikasahasukham eva mahāsukhasya sādhyalakṣaṇasya  
sādhana bhūtam." HT(S), part 2, *Yogaratnamālā*, p.140.

181 "prajñājnābhiṣekapratītam mahāsukhalakṣaṇam sarvadharmā-  
sūnyateti kṛtvā sarvabuddha- dharmādharatvena  
mantramahāyāne tv anuvarṇyate." HT(S), part 2, *Yogaratnamālā*,  
p.138.

182 "bodhisattvānām dharmarahasya deśanā mahāsukham iti."  
HT(S), part 2, *Yogaratnamālā*, p.148.

183 "teṣām ..param nāsti svasattvedyam mahat sukham" HT(F)  
I:8:44.

the highest principle is known as Bliss.<sup>184</sup> *Yogācāra* asserted that non-dual consciousness is the Absolute, but *Vajrayāna* goes further to state that this consciousness is of the nature of *mahāsukha*.<sup>185</sup> Bliss is non-dual and undifferentiated (*nānārthasyābhāvāt*) and hence it is characterised as space.<sup>186</sup> *Mahāsukha* is realised through the process of Completion,<sup>187</sup> which will be elucidated in the sixth chapter.

#### 6.4 Ultimate Reality as Immanent

In the *Mādhyamika*, *tattva* is not shown as immanent or as constituting the very soul of the objects of the world. In fact the relation between the Absolute and phenomena is not made clear from the *saññīti* point of view. Murti considers this as a draw back in the *Mādhyamika* conception of the Absolute.<sup>188</sup> However, in the *Aṣṭasāhasrikā Prajñāpāramitā*, Subhūti declares, "From the very beginning, Subhūti the Elder, has been born after the image of the Tathāgata's Suchness. Because the Suchness of the *Tathāgata* and the Suchness of all dharmas are the same thing, and they are both the Suchness of

"*nanu bhūtakoṣṭh sarvadharmāṅgān tattvaṁ nātaḥ paraṁ tattvam astīyāha*" HT(S), part 2, *Yogaratnamālā*, p.128.

184 "*vajrasahitaḥ sattvo Vajrasattvaḥ so'pi sukhaṁ smṛtaḥ*", HT(S), part 2, *Yogaratnamālā*, p.139.

185 "*mahāsukharīpaṁ cittaṁ mahācittaṁ*" HT(S), part 2, *Yogaratnamālā*, p.141.

186 "*ākāśalakṣaṇaṁ niḥsvabhāvatvāt*" HT(S), part 2, *Yogaratnamālā*, p.141.

187 "*utpannakramayogo 'yaṁ tatsukhaṁ mahāsukhaṁ matam*" HT(F) II:2:33.

188 T.R.V Murti, CPB, p.237.



Subhūti the Elder.”<sup>189</sup> In *Yogācāra*, the Absolute is immanent in phenomena only in as much as the former is the reality, the substratum of the latter. However, the Ultimate Reality is not shown as pervading phenomena.

The immanence of the Ultimate Reality is highlighted in the *Hevajra Tantra*. The Innate is all-pervading (*sarvavyāpi*).<sup>190</sup> One's own consciousness itself is nothing but the Innate (*ātmanaḥ svacittasya sahajalakṣaṇasya svarūpaṁ*).<sup>191</sup> The *yogī* is reminded of the fact that in all things there is the Supreme Principle and that he should conceive them in the light of the Supreme Principle.<sup>192</sup> *Hevajra Tantra* states, “This knowledge is the very life-breath of all living things and is the imperishable supreme. It is all-pervading and abides in all living bodies. It is truly the Great life-breath and the world-pervader. Existence, non-existence and anything else whatsoever originate from it.”<sup>193</sup>

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189 Edward Conze, trans., *Aṣṭasāhasrikā Prajñāpāramitā* (Calcutta: The Asiatic Society, 1958; second Impression, 1970) chapter 16, p.113.

190 “*etad eva mahājñānaṁ sarvadehe vyavasthitam/ advayam dvayārūpaṁ ca bhāvābhāvātmaṁ prabhum// sthiracalaṁ vyāpya sarīrāṁśhet māyārūpi ca bhāti ca/*” HT(F) II:3:23-24. (This is in fact the Great Knowledge located in all bodies which is non-dual as well as of dual nature and is the Lord whose essence is both existence and non-existence. It dwells pervading both fixed and moving things and manifests as illusory forms.)

191 HT(S), part 2, *Yogaratnamālā*, p.128.

192 “*sarve paramam eva tattvaṁ tattvarūpeṣu bhāvyaṁ*” HT(S), part 2, *Yogaratnamālā*, p.128.

193 “*sa eva prāṇināṁ prāṇaḥ sa eva paramākṣaraḥ/ sarvavyāpī sa evāsau sarvadehevyavasthitaḥ/ sa evāsau mahāprāṇaḥ sa evāsau jagannayaḥ/ bhāvābhavau tadudbhūtau anyāni yāni tāni ca/*” HT(F) I:10:8-9.

The *Yogaratnamālā* states that all things are characterised by Thusness (*sarvadharmāṅṅ tathāgatasvabhāvatvāt*).<sup>194</sup> *Hevajra Tantra* also states that even the inanimate world is pervaded by Suchness (*tathatā*). It states, "Whatever exists, moving, or stationary, grass, shrubs, creepers etc., are all conceived of as the supreme principle which is one's own very nature."<sup>195</sup> *Bhagavān Vajradhara* declares that all things, fixed or moving, are in truth identical with himself. Everything that exists is of the same nature when viewed from the principle of the Flavour of Essential Similarity (*samarasa*).<sup>196</sup> By 'samarasa' is meant the sphere of essential identity of essence. *Vajradhara* himself is the source of the whole universe.<sup>197</sup> *Vajradhara* states that the world of objects (*prapañca*) is the differentiated aspect of the essentially undifferentiated Thusness.<sup>198</sup> "For the *yogī*, form and whatever other objects of experience that manifest, are all pure in nature, for the world is pervaded by the Enlightened Nature."<sup>199</sup> This intrinsic nature is

194 HT (F) *Yogaratnamālā*, p.55; HT(S), part 2, *Yogaratnamālā*, p.117.

195 "sthiraacalāśca ye bhāvās tṛṣṇagulmalatādayaḥ/  
bhāvante vai paraṅṅ tattvaṅṅ ātmabhāvāsvarūpakamḥ" HT(F)  
I:8:43.

196 "sthiramacalaṅṅ yāni tāni sarvāṅṅy etānāṅṅy evāḥarāṅṅ/  
samāni tulyaceṣṭāni samarasais tattvabhāvaniaḥ//"  
HT(F) I:8:37.

197 "madbhavaṅṅ hi jagat sarvaṅṅ madbhavaṅṅ bhuvanatrayam/  
madvyāpitam idaṅṅ sarvaṅṅ nānyamayaṅṅ dṛṣṭuṅṅ jagat//"  
HT(F) I:8:39.

198 "The differentiated (*prapañca*) is characterised by plurality. When devoid of the differentiated nature of one and many, they exist as aspect of the Thusness which is characterised as the non-arising nature of the differentiated." HT(F), *Yogaratnamālā*, p.55.

199 "rūpaviṣṅṅyādi ye 'py anye partibhāsante hi yoginaḥ/  
sarve te śūldhabhāvā hi yasmād buddhamayaṅṅ jagat//"  
HT(F) I:9:4.

known as the Innate (*sahaja*) which is the one concealed Essence of all things (*sañvara*).<sup>200</sup> It is said, "...within the infinite phenomenal universe all things are of the same nature!"<sup>201</sup> The *yogī* is exhorted to identify himself constantly with Hevajra who is the supreme identity present in all individuals.<sup>202</sup> The deities of the *maṇḍala* who are of the nature of *sūmyatā* are the various aspects of phenomenal existence. Hence all things are of one and the same nature. The Hevajra Tantra states that the Absolute is the intrinsic nature of all,<sup>203</sup> as well as the source of all knowledge recounted by other philosophical traditions.<sup>204</sup> The Ultimate Reality as Bliss pervades all things and the text states that there is no body without bliss, and so also there is no bliss without the body.<sup>205</sup>

It is this conviction that all things, animate and inanimate, are essentially identical in essence, that enables the *yogī* to overcome his prejudices and the tendency to discriminate and differentiate. When the knowledge of the undifferentiated nature arises within the *yogī*, it is no longer possible for him to be obstructed by the misconception that he is distinct from the rest.<sup>206</sup> *Hevajra Tantra* states,

200 "svabhāvaṃ sahajaṃ proktaṃ sarvākāraika sañvaram" HT(F) I:10:39.

201 HT(F), *Yogaratanmālā*, p.62.

202 "yathātmani tathā sattve tathātmani ahaṃ param/  
iti sañcintya yogātmā khānapānādim ārabhet!" HT(F) I:7:25.

203 "shajam jagat sarvam sahajam svarūpam ucyate" HT(F) II:2:44.

204 HT(F) I:10:10.

205 "dehābhāve kutaḥ saukhyaṃ saukhyaṃ vaktuṃ na śakyate!" HT(F) II:2:35. (In the absence of the body where is there bliss, for without the body it is not possible to speak about bliss).

"yathā sukhaṃ vinā na dehādi. Tadvad dehaṃ vināpi na tad iti" HT(S), part 2, *Yogaratanmālā*, p.139.

206 "svargamartyaiś ca pātālair ekamūrtir bhavet kṣaṇāt/  
svaparabhāgavikalpena bādhituṃ naiva śakyate!" HT(F) I:8:51.

He should not offer gifts with thoughts of worthiness and unworthiness. He must eat and drink whatever he obtains and he should not hold any notions regarding likes and dislikes. The practitioner should not have thoughts regarding what is edible and inedible; similarly, he should not differentiate between what can or cannot be drunk and what should or should not be done.<sup>207</sup>

The *yogī* overcomes the restrictions of caste and conceives the five castes unified as one.<sup>208</sup> One who is in union with the intrinsic nature of all things is free from all social and religious injunctions and inhibitions.<sup>209</sup> This conviction makes the *yogī* realise that all things are equal.<sup>210</sup> The compassion (*kṛpā*) of the *yogī* finds its spring in this conviction of the essential equality of all beings. *Kṛpā* is the experience of oneself as being of the same nature as all living beings.<sup>211</sup>

## 7. The Concept of *Tathāgata* in the *Hevajra Tantra*

As Buddhism changed course from the radical pluralism of the *Ābhidharmika* to the Absolutism of *Mahāvāna*, a mediator between the Absolute and the

207 HT(F) I:6:20-21.

208 "herukayogasya puṅṣo vihāraḥ puṅcavarṇeṣu/  
puṅcavarṇasamāyuktam ekavarṇam tu kalpitam/  
anekenaikavarṇena yasmād bhedo na lakṣyate// " HT(F) I:6:4.

209 HT(F) I:6:23-24.

"nākāryam vidyate kiṅcin nābhakṣyam vidyate sadā//  
nācintyam vidyate hy atra nāvācyam yac chubhāśubham// " HT(F)  
I:7:24.

210 "sarvāṅṅ etāni samānī draṣṭavyam tattvubhāvunaiḥ// " HT(F)  
I:8:35.

211 "sarvasattveṣv ātmasamatācittam kṛpā" HT(S), part 2.  
*Yogaratanmālā*, p.135.

phenomena became a metaphysical exigency. Being rooted in phenomena, man cannot realise the illusoriness of the world, since the world does not confess itself to be illusory. He has not the slightest inkling of the unconditioned and its nature, unless and until it is mediated to him.<sup>212</sup> The *Tathāgata*, is the one who reveals, and thus, He is that mediator. In all Absolutist systems the role of a mediator becomes necessary. In *Advaita Vedānta*, it is fulfilled by *Īśvara*, and in *Mādhyamika* and *Yogācāra* by the *Tathāgata*. The mediator is an amphibious being who is at once identical with the Absolute as well as immanent in phenomena.<sup>213</sup> Only such a being, who enjoys a sort of dual existence of having one foot in phenomena and the other in the Absolute can possibly know the Absolute and reveal it to others.

The *Hevajra Tantra* states that the *Tathāgata* is one who enters (*gataḥ*) into the Thusness (*tathatā*) and also returns (*āgataḥ*) to the world.<sup>214</sup> That is, he is one who has entered into innate radiance (*prabhāsvarapraviṣṭiḥ*), as well as the one who emerges from it for the sake of the world.<sup>215</sup> *Tathatā* is Truth in itself, while the *Tathāgata* is one who knows the Truth and reveals it.<sup>216</sup> As distinct from the Absolute, which is an impersonal principle (*tathatā*) the *Tathāgata* is a person. The former is devoid of all predicates (non-dual), while the latter is endowed with

212 Ashok Kumar Chatterjee, YI, p.170.

213 T.R.V. Murti, CPB, p.284.

214 "tathatāyān gataḥ śrīmān āgataś ca tathaiva ca/ anayā prajñayā yuktyā tathāgato 'bhidhīyate!'" (HT(F) I:5:8.

215 "prabhāsvarād dhy utthito jagadarthakaraḥ" HT(S), part 2, *Yogaratnamālā*, p.117.

216 "atīā tathatā yadvat pratyutpannāpy anāgatā: sarvadharmās tathā-dṛṣṭās tenoktaḥ sa tathāgataḥ" CŚV, p.30. "sarvākārāviparīta-dharma-daiśkatvena parārtha-sampadā tathāgataḥ" AAA, p.62. as quoted by T.R.V. Murti, CPB, p.277.

infinite qualities and powers.<sup>217</sup> *Mahāyānasūtrāṅkāra* says that the *bodhisattva* has two kinds of *sambhāras* (stock), viz., *puṇyasambhāra* and *jñānasambhāra*. By the former, he does good to the world and by the latter he is free from all *kleśas*.<sup>218</sup> The *Hevajra Tantra* conceives the *Tathāgata* (*śrīmān*) as *puṇyajñānasambhārasambhṛtaḥ* (i.e., one filled with divine knowledge and merits).<sup>219</sup> The *Tathāgata* is the God of religion, an object of worship and adoration. All powers and excellence associated with the notion of Godhead are ascribed to him. In *Hevajra Tantra*, the *Bhagavān* is *Vajradhara* in the form of *Hevajra*. *Bhagavān* is one who has 'bhaga' i.e., full of auspicious qualities.<sup>220</sup> In another sense, *Bhagavān* is so called because he destroys (*bhañjanāt*) the *kleśa* and the *Māras*.<sup>221</sup> "But His most important aspects are two, viz., *prajñā* and *karuṇā*. The first makes Him one with the Absolute while the latter keeps Him in phenomena."<sup>222</sup> In *Vajrayāna*, these two aspects come to be known as *prajñā* and *upāya* or Wisdom and Means.

217 Ashok Kumar Chatterjee, YI, p.169.

218 Ibid., p.172.

219 HT(S), part 2, *Yogaratanmālā*, p.117.

220 "aiśvaryaśūlayo guṇā vidyante yasya sa Bhagavān." HT(S), part 2, *Yogaratanmālā*, p.103.

"aiśvarasya samagrasya jñānasya yaśasaḥ śriyaḥ// rūpasārthaprayatnasya karuṇā bhagavān iti śrutam//"  
HT(S), part 2, *Yogaratanmālā*, p.103.

(The auspicious qualities -Bhaga- are six, viz., Lordliness, Abundance, Grace, Excellence, Splendour, and Meaningful Application of Knowledge). See also HT(F) I:5:15.

221 "kleśādimāraṇā bhañjanāt bhagavān iti" HT(F) I:5:15

222 Ashok Kumar Chatterjee, YI, p.173.



## 7.1 The Tantric Innovation of the *Trikāya*

The notion of the *kāyas* initiated by the Sarvāstivādins was developed further by the Mahāsaṅghikas and perfected by the Mahāyānist. <sup>223</sup> The notion of the *Tathāgatā* gave rise to the notion of the three bodies of the *Tathāgata* (*trikāya*). Murti writes, "The dual nature of Buddha, as one with the Absolute (*sūnya*) and at once actively pursuing the welfare of beings, supplies the philosophical basis for the theological conception of the *Trikāya* of Buddha." <sup>224</sup> They are, viz., the *Dharmakāya*, the *Sambhogakāya* and the *Nirmāṇakāya*. <sup>225</sup> *Vajrayāna* later added one more *kāya*, namely, the *Mahāsukhakāya* to the existing *trikāya* system.

### 7.1.1 Dharmakāya

As *dharmakāya*, the Buddha realises his identity with the Absolute (*dharmatā* or *sūnyatā*) and His unity (*samatā*) with all beings (*vasmād amūḍhasya vivṛtidharmakāyavat*). <sup>226</sup> It is totally free of all duality and is the very nature of reality. Hence it is also called *svabhāvakāya*. <sup>227</sup> However, *dharmakāya* is not the same as

223 P.G., Yogi, "The Doctrine of Kāya (Trikāya)," *Bulletin of Tibetology*, 1-3 (2000) p.14.

224 T.R.V. Murti, CPB, p.284.

225 "*trikāyamityādi sarvabuddhānām pratyekamananto nirmāṇakāyo nanto dharmakāyo nantaśca sambhogakāya-strikāyam*" HT(T), *Muktāvalī*, p.183. Obermiller speaks of four *kāyas*, namely the *svabhāva-kāya*, *Jiāna-dharma-kāya*, *Sambhoga-kāya* and *Nirmāṇa-kāya*. See E. Obermiller, *Prajāpāramitā in Tibetan Buddhism*, ed. Harcharan Singh Sobti (Delhi: Classics India Publications, 1988) pp.40-42.

226 HT(T), *Muktāvalī*, p.179.

227 But Obermiller points out a difference between the *Svabhāva-kāya* and *Jiāna-dharma-kāya*. The former is the unique immutable and motionless Body of Absolute existence while the latter is an active

*tathatā*, since the latter is a metaphysical principle while the former is a person endowed with innumerable merits and powers.<sup>228</sup> *Abhisamyālaṅkāra* of Maitreya enumerates twenty-one features of the dharmakāya.<sup>229</sup> From the *Yogācāra* point of view, it is Pure Will, and its essential character is *āśrayaparāvṛtti* (i.e., the withdrawing or retracting of the *ālaya*).<sup>230</sup> Ācārya Haribhadra states that *dharmakāya* is of the nature of knowledge that is *āśrayaparāvṛtya* and *niṣprapañcā*.<sup>231</sup> In *Hevajra Tantra*, the *dharmakāya* is called the Body of Essential Nature or *Vajrasattva*.<sup>232</sup> *Vajrasattva* is the void, which is indivisible etc., as well as the unity of the three centres of Body, Speech, and Mind.<sup>233</sup> Body, Speech, and Mind are nothing but the transformation of the five components of phenomenal awareness (*pañcaskandha*). According to

principle and is in relation with the world. See E. Obermiller, *Prajñāpāramitā in Tibetan Buddhism*, p. 41.

228 J.R.V. Murti. CPB, pp.284-285.

229 See TH. Stcherbatsky and E. Obermiller, *Abhisamayālaṅkāra Prajñāpāramitā-upadeśa-śāstra: The work of Bodhisattva Maitreya* (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass Publishers, 1992) VIII:2-6. For English translation see Edward Conze, trans., *Abhisamayālaṅkāra* (Roma: Is. M.E.O. 1954), pp.96-97.

230 Ashok Kumar Chatterjee, YI, p.174.

231 "sarve cāśrayaparāvṛtyāparāvṛtā bodhipakṣidayo niṣprapañcā-jñānātmakā/ dharmakāyo 'abhidhīyata iti kecit/" *Abhisamayālaṅkāravṛtti Sphuṭārthā of Acārya Haribhadra* (Saranath: Central Institute of Tibetan Higher Studies, 1977), p.83.

232 "anena prejñāpāramitāmadhyamakavicāreṇa Vajrasattva ity evam kathito dharmakāyo" HT(S), part 2, *Yogaratnamālā*, p.105 (By this kind of wise reasoning which is the Mādhyamika view of the Perfection of Wisdom, the Body of Essential Nature (dharmakāya) is called Vajrasattva). Translation from HT(F) *Yogaratnamālā*, p.7.

233 "... abhedyaṁ vajraṁ ity uktam sattvaṁ tribhavaśyaikatā/ anayā prajñayā yuktyā vajrasattva iti smṛtaḥ/ HT(F) I:1:4.

*Hevajra Tantra*, the *dharmakāya* is of the nature of Great Bliss<sup>234</sup> and it is formless.<sup>235</sup>

### 7.1.2 Saṃbhogakāya

The *Saṃbhogakāya* is the splendour of the godhead which is concretely manifested to himself (*svasaṃbhoga*) and to the heavenly beings (*parasaṃbhoga*). Here the Buddha appears as supreme God, abiding in the *Akaniṣṭha* heaven surrounded by bodhisattvas and other heavenly beings. He is endowed with thirty-two principal and eighty secondary marks of beauty and excellence.<sup>236</sup> All glorified accounts of the Buddha in the scriptures reveal this body. It is with this body that he enjoys creation.<sup>237</sup> *Hevajra Tantra* calls this body the Body of Enjoyment or *Mahāsattva*.<sup>238</sup> It is the body resplendent with all auspicious signs and satiated by the flavours of the great blissful union, which is of the nature of creation and destruction.<sup>239</sup> Unlike the *dharmakāya*, the Body of Enjoyment has a form,<sup>240</sup> and it

234 "dharmakāyasvabhāvamahāsukharūpatayā" HT(S), part 2, *Yogaratnamālā*, p.139. See also "anādinidhano hi dharmakāyaḥ sambodhiḥ sa eva sahaajānandaḥ" HT(T) *Muktāvalī*, p.118.

235 "dharmakāyo na vārūpī" HT(S), part 2, *Yogaratnamālā*, p.140.

236 E. Obermiller, *Prajñāpāramitā in Tibetan Buddhism*, p.41.

"dvātriṃśallakṣaṇī śāsta aśūivyañjanī prabhuḥ" HT(F) II:2:41 (The Lord and Master with the thirty-two auspicious characteristics and the eighty auspicious marks).

"dvātriṃśalakṣaṇāśūivyañjanātmā munerayaṇī saṃbhogiko mataḥ kāyo mahāyānopabhogataḥ" *Abhisumya-lankāravṛtti - Sphutārthā of Acārya Haribhadra*, p.85. v.12.

237 Ashok Kumar Chatterjee, YI, p.175.

238 "sa eva mahāsattvo buddhānāṃ saṃbhogakāyaḥ" HT(S), part 2, *Yogaratnamālā*, p.105.

239 HT(F), *Yogaratnamālā*, p.8.

240 "saṃbhogakāyena rūpī" HT(S), part 2, *Yogaratnamālā*, p.140.

belongs to the realm of saṃsāra (*saṃvṛti sambhogakāyavat*).<sup>241</sup>

### 7.1.3 Nirmāṇakāya

It is the apparitional body of Buddha, which saves beings from misery. In the present time it is Buddha as Śākyamuni.<sup>242</sup> Only to this body some form of historicity can be attributed. *Hevajra Tantra* calls this body the Body of Creation or *Samayasattva*, because it is the cause of the endless manifestations of Buddhas.<sup>243</sup> Hence *Bhagavān* in this *kāya* appears to be of the nature of phenomenal things.<sup>244</sup>

### 7.1.4 Mahāsukhakāya

*Mahāsukhakāya* is a Vajrayānic addition to the *trikāya* system of the *Mahāyāna* tradition. This *kāya* is the experience of the unity of three centres (Body, Speech, and Mind),<sup>245</sup> and is essentially of the nature of Bliss.<sup>246</sup> Great Bliss is the secret instructions of the Bodhisattvas regarding

241 HT(T), *Muktāvalī*, p.179.

242 T.R.V. Murti, CPB, p.286.

"karoti yena citrāṇi hitāni jagataḥ samānī  
ābhavātso 'anupacchinnaḥ kāyo nairmāṇiko mune"//  
*Abhisamayālaṅkāravṛtti - Sphutārthā of Acārya Haribhadra*, v.33.

243 "buddhānām anantaprabhedo nirmāṇakāyaḥ samayasattvaśā-  
bdenābhidhīyate" HT(S), part 2, *Yogaratnamālā*, p.105.

244 HT(F) *Yogaratnamālā*, p.166.

245 "tasaiva kāyatrayasya parijñānaṁ samatājñānaṁ svābhāvikaḥ  
kāyaḥ/ sa evānantaścaturtho buddhānām kāyo  
mahāsukhacakraṁ" HT(T), *Muktāvalī*, p.183.

246 These three centres represent the three preceding kāyas. Hence the *Mahāsukhakāya* is the culmination of all the other three kāyas. ("trayārjān parijñānasvabhāvaṁ mahāsukhacakraṁ" HT(S), part 2, *Yogaratnamālā*, p.107).

the nature of things. This is the fourth body, the Body of Great Bliss.<sup>247</sup>

## 8. The Concept of Tathāgatagarbha in the Hevajra Tantra

One of the fundamental principles of *Mahāyāna* Buddhism is, "the inherent potentiality of all animate beings to attain the supreme and perfect enlightenment of Buddhahood"<sup>248</sup> (*sarva sattvās tathāgatagarbhāḥ*). This is at the foundation of *Vajrayāna*, *Zen*, *Kegon*, *Tendai* and *Shingon* thought and praxis. The concept of *tathāgatagarbha*<sup>249</sup> (*tathāgata-embryo*) in an elementary form lies scattered in several texts, *sūtras* and *śāstras*, like the *Avataṅśakasūtra*, *Dhāraṇīśvararājasūtra*, *Ratnadārikasūtra*, *Vajracchedika*, and *Aṣṭasāhasrikā*. However it is in *Śrī-Mālā-Sūtra*<sup>250</sup> and *Ratnagotravibhāga*<sup>251</sup> that we find the doctrine fully developed and systematised.

247 "bodhisattvānāṁ dharmarahasya deśanā mahāsukham iti mahāsukhakāyaś caturthaḥ" HT(S), part 2, *Yogaratnamālā*, p.148.

248 Brian Edward Brown, *The Buddha Nature: A study of the Tathāgatagarbha and Ālayavijñāna* (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass Publishers, 1991) p.xiii.

249 The term 'tathāgatagarbha' has been variously rendered into English as 'matrix', 'embryo', 'womb', 'embryonic essence', 'kernel', 'heart', 'storehouse', 'germ', 'nature', 'essence'. The near perfect translation seems to be 'embryo of the *Tathāgata*'. For details see Brian Edward Brown, *The Buddha Nature*, pp.44-45.

250 *Śrī-Mālādevīsīrīhanāda-sūtra* has been translated by Alex Wayman and Hideoko Wayman under the title *The Lion's Roar of Queen Śrī-Mālā: A Buddhist Scripture on the Tathāgatagarbha Theory*.

251 The final form of the *Ratnagotravibhāga* dates from the early 5th century A.D., and its authorship is attributed to Saramati. It has been rendered in to English (from the original Sanskrit text) by Jikido Takasaki and (from the Tibetan version alone) by E.

In the *Avataṁsakasūtra*, the earliest of the scriptural sources, *tathāgatagarbha* is understood as the universal penetration of all sentient beings by the Wisdom of the Buddhas (*buddhajñāna*).<sup>252</sup> *Śrī-Mālā* emphasised the self-evolutive potentiality of the embryo to become itself the *dharmakāya*. The term 'garbha' does not indicate some elemental self, soul, or personality. It is not so much a primordial objective entity as it is an absolute subjectivity (i.e., that which is capable of experiencing suffering, and as that which eggs the being on towards *nirvāṇa*). In *Śrī-Mālā*, the *tathāgatagarbha* is not so much an ontic substance as it is an ontic subject.<sup>253</sup> *Tathāgatagarbha* is not only a dynamic potentiality (an embryo) but also a nutritive maternal principle (womb) leading all sentient beings to Buddhahood. Hence the term 'garbha' bears the dual aspects of embryo and womb.<sup>254</sup>

The *Ratnagotra* stressed the identity of the *tathāgatagarbha* and the *dharmakāya*. They are two modalities of *tathatā*, namely, *samalā tathatā* and *nirmalā tathatā*. *Samalā tathatā* is identified with the

Obermiller. *Ratnagotra* contains a systematic śāstral elaboration of the *tathāgatagarbha*, a synthesis of the doctrine found in scriptures prior and subsequent to *Śrī-Mālā*.

252 In *Ratnagortavibhāga* we find the following quotation from *Avataṁsakasūtra*. "Similarly, O son of the Buddha, the Wisdom of the Tathāgata, which is the immeasurable wisdom, the profitable wisdom for all living beings, thoroughly penetrates within the mentality (*citta-santāna*) of every living being. And every mental disposition of a living being has the same size as the Buddha's Wisdom. Only the ignorant, however, being bound by misconceptions does neither know nor cognise nor understand nor realise the wisdom of the Tathāgata (within himself)." Takasaki. *Ratnagotravibhāga* p.196, as quoted in Brian Edward Brown, *The Buddha Nature*, p.57.

253 Based on this insight of *Śrī-Mālā*, and *Lankāvatāra sūtra* later equated *tathāgatagarbha* with *ālayavijñāna*. *Ibid.*, pp.5-6.

254 *Ibid.*, p.14.



*tathāgatagarbha* and *nirmalā tathatā* with the *dharmakāya*.<sup>255</sup> The essential nature common to both the *tathāgatagarbha* and the *dharmakāya* is the Absolute Suchness (*tathatā*).

An analysis of several passages of the *Hevajra Tantra* and its commentary reveals that these basic *Mahāyāna* notions on the *tathāgatagarbha* are incorporated into their fabric. The text upholds the general *Mahāyāna* view that sentient beings are essentially enlightened. It states, "There exists not one being who is unenlightened from the awakening of his own nature. By their very intrinsic nature are beings in hell, ghosts, animals, gods, titans, men and even worms and so on in the dung, are eternally blissful, for they do not merely experience the pleasure of the gods and the titans."<sup>256</sup>

The *Ratnagotra* notion that the Thusness of the individual is the Thusness of the all-pervading one is reflected in the *Hevajra Tantra*.<sup>257</sup> This Thusness is the primordial blissful nature common to all classes of

255 "The Reality mingled with pollution (*samalā tathatā*) is a term for 'the Essence (*dhātu*), unreleased from the sheath of defilements' i.e., the Embryo of *Tathāgata*. 'The Reality apart from pollution (*nirmalā-tathatā*)' is a term for 'the same Essence, when it is characterised as the Perfect Manifestation of Basis (*āśraya parivṛtti*) in the Stage of Buddha, i.e., the Absolute Body of the *Tathāgata*" Takasaki, *Ratnagotravibhāga*, p.187 as referred to in Edward Brown Brian, *The Buddha Nature*, p.55.

256 "*abuddho nāsti sattvaikaḥ saṁbodhāt svasya svasya ca/ nārakapretatiryān ca devāsūramanuṣyakāḥ// amedhyakīṅakādyaṅ tu nityaṁ sukhinaḥ svabhāvataḥ/ na jānanti yataḥ saukhyaṁ devasāpy asurasya ca//* HT (F) II:4:75-76.

257 "*pṛthagjanatathatā sā sa (sarva)jñatathateti....buddha eva sarvasattvāḥ*" HT(S), part 2, *Yogaratnamālā*, p.150.  
 "sattvā buddhā eveti" iIT(S), part 2, *Yogaratnamālā*, p.150.

beings.<sup>258</sup> Though all beings are enlightened beings, the blissful nature is not experienced immediately, due to the veil of defilements. *Bhagavān* is said to have stated, "Truly all beings are enlightened beings but they are veiled by the accumulation of defilements. By removing this veil of defilements, all beings are enlightened beings without doubt."<sup>259</sup> The *Hevajra sādhana* is devised to enable sentient beings to remove the veil of defilements and realise their enlightened nature.

It must be noted that the doctrine generally admitted by the majority of the schools in India and Tibet is, that only the animate world (*sattvaloka*)<sup>260</sup> is *tathāgatagarbha* and would attain the Buddhahood. The inanimate world (*bhājanaloka*) would thus be excluded. However, the *T'ientas* (*Tendai*) school holds that the Buddha nature is the nature of all beings, animate and inanimate, and included the mineral kingdom as well as that of the plants.<sup>261</sup> But it is not clear how they explain the process of realising the Absolute in the case of inanimate beings. *Hevajra Tantra* does not consider the inanimate beings to be *tathāgatagarbha*. They are not potential Buddhas or Buddhas-in-the-making. However, the enlightened person (*yogī*) views the inanimate world as permeated by *tathatā*, just as it pervades the animate beings; while the latter is Buddha-in-the-making (*tathāgatagarbha*), the former is not.

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258 HT(F) *Yogaratnamālā*, p.230.

259 "bhagavān āha/

*sattvā buddhā eva kiñ tu āgantukamalāvṛtāḥ/*

*tasyāpukarṣapāt sattvā buddhā eva na sañśayaḥ//* HT(F) II:4:70.

260 The world of sentient beings (*sattvaloka*) consists of beings in the six planes of existence, viz., gods, titans, man, animals, ghosts, beings in hell.

261 Edward Brown Brian, *The Buddha Nature*, p.56. See (fn) 15.

## Conclusion

The Metaphysical journey of the Vajrayānist begins in Realism, passes through Idealism, and culminates in Absolutism. He admits the reality of the world generated by ignorance, as the starting point; its plurality and the psychological states that accompany it constitute the experience of bondage. In the second phase of his journey, he realises that the world of objects is nothing but of the mind. All plurality is reduced to the subject-object duality. The object is realised as nothing but a projection of the subject itself, impelled by the *vāsanās* in the store-consciousness (*ālaya-vijñāna*). The object thus dispensed with leaves the subject alone as a self-conscious entity. Finally, even the subject (*citta*) too vanishes giving way to Consciousness as Pure Will, which is the Absolute. The Vajrayānist does not endeavour to speculate or articulate the nature of the Absolute, but refers to it in terms of experience as *vajra*, *sahaja*, and *mahāsukha*.

Vajrayānic thought is founded on Mahāyānic speculation but with certain differences. *Vajrayāna* recognises the various *Ābhidharmika* classification of dharmas into skandhas, āyatnas and dhātus. But it goes on to deify them as various gods and goddesses, and relates them with the yogin's body, as we shall see in subsequent chapters. The six planes of existence are referred to, and bliss is perceived as pervading all things (*vyāpavyāpakarīpeṇa sukhena vyāpitaṁ jagat*)<sup>262</sup>. Ignorance, constituted of *jñeyāvaraṇa* and *kleśāvaraṇa*, is the misapprehension of the *niḥsvabhāvatā* of empirical existence. Subject-object duality is the basic ignorance; it is not so much the viewing of reality (*dṛṣṭi*) as such, as in *Mādhyamika*. It agrees with *Mādhyamika*, that ignorance is

not real but accidental (*āgantuka*) and that it is removed by knowledge. But in the process, unlike in *Mahāyāna*, *Vajrayāna* employs the very existent reality itself to dispel existence. As in *Mahāyāna*, the Ultimate Reality is referred to as *tattva*, which is *śūnya*, non-dual, undifferentiated, indeterminate and is *saṃvṛtīvivṛtirūpakam*. The *Mādhyamika śūnyatā* is not equivalent to the *vajra* of *Vajrayāna*. The former is an epistemic reality, while the latter is an ontic entity, a firm essence (*dṛḍham sāram*). *Vajra* is both *śūnyatā* and *karuṇā*, better, it is neither in the final analysis. *Vajrayāna* goes on to state that the Ultimate Reality (*vajra*) is innate (*sahaja*) and is of the nature of Great Bliss (*mahāsukha*). It accepts the notion of the *Tathāgata* as the bridge between the Absolute and the phenomenal, but in addition to the three *kāyās* found in *Mahāyāna*, it developed the notion of a fourth *kāya*, namely, the *mahāsukhakāya* (Body of Great Bliss). *Mahāyāna* perceives the Buddha nature of all beings and *Vajrayāna* too reiterates the same (*sarvadharmānāṃ tathāgatasvabhāvatvāt*)<sup>263</sup> We see that *Vajrayāna* has adopted the basic *Mahāyāna* notions and transformed them to forge a philosophical foundation for its own essentially practical concern. The Six Vajra Verses which form the content of the *DraxiShai Pal Rigbai Kujyug Tantra* (*The Fortune Bringing Cuckoo of Non-dual Awareness Tantra*) summarises the philosophical position of the Vajrayānist:

Although apparent phenomena

Manifest as diversity

Yet this diversity is non-dual,

And of all the multiplicity

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263 HT(F) *Yogaratnamālā*, p.55; HT(S), part 2, *Yogaratnamālā*, p.117.

Of individual things that exist  
None can be confined in a limited concept.  
Staying free from the trap of any attempt  
To say 'it's like this' or 'like that'

It becomes clear that all manifested forms are  
Aspects of the infinite formless,  
And, indivisible from it,  
Are self-perfected.

Seeing that everything is self-perfected  
from the very beginning,  
The disease of striving for any achievement is  
surrendered,  
And just remaining in the natural state as it is,  
The presence of non-dual contemplation  
Continuously spontaneously arises.<sup>264</sup>

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264 John Shane, ed., *The Crystal and the Way of Light: Sutra, Tantra and Dzogchen* (New York: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1986), p.xv.

## CHAPTER 4

# FUNDAMENTAL PRINCIPLES OF TANTRA

*Vajrayāna*, as we have seen, inherited much from its Mahāyānic ancestry. There was no direct transplanting of Mahāyānic categories on to the soil of *Vajrayāna*; nevertheless, Vajrayānic speculation came to be highly influenced by the *Mādhyamika-Yogācāra* mindset. Equally important and influential were certain specifically tantric theoretical assumptions that contributed to the crystallisation of the Vajrayānic theory. The focus of the present chapter is to identify and analyse these tantric principles as we find them in the *Hevajra Tantra*. Principal among these principles is the notion of the Absolute as bi-polar in nature. In the text, the Mahāyānic categories of *śūnyatā* and *karuṇā* are considered as constituting the two polarities within the Absolute, and these two polarities are viewed as female and male. Another important tantric insight is that the body is the microcosm, and hence, the abode of truth. It is within the body that truth is realised through direct personal experience (*svasaṁvedyam*). Finally, the realisation of the Absolute leads the enlightened person to have a 'homologous-vision' of the world.

### 1. The Bi-polar Nature of the Non-dual Reality

The tantric noumenon is a supreme non-duality, which is inexpressible and incommunicable in itself, except in



terms of a diametrical polarity.<sup>1</sup> Everything is "*conjunctio oppositorum*."<sup>2</sup> In everything there is a built-in polarity, which may be expressed in terms of positive-negative, potential-kinetic, thought-action, intelligence-emotion, male-female etc. This insight must have led to the intuition that the ultimate reality is bi-polar. Both the Hindu and the Buddhist Tantras hold that, "the ultimate non-dual reality posses two aspects in its fundamental nature – the negative (*nivṛtti*) and the positive (*pravṛtti*), the static and the dynamic, and these two aspects of the reality, are represented in Hinduism by *śiva* and *śakti* and in Buddhism by *prajñā* and *upāya* (or *śūnyatā* and *karuṇā*)."<sup>3</sup> *Prajñā* and *upāya* are the two aspects of the absolute reality, namely, the principle of passivity and the principle of activity respectively. The former is associated with the *dharmakāya*, while the latter is the whole world comprised of *saṃbhogakāya* and *nirmāṇakāya*. These two are the manifestations of *karuṇā*, since they are meant to lead all sentient beings to the ultimate goal. The relation between *prajñā* and *upāya* is likened to that of a lamp and its light - they are different yet inseparable.<sup>4</sup>

Dasgupta considers this bi-polar conception of the Ultimate Reality a theological principle. However, it appears to be a metaphysical necessity as well. In *Vajrayāna*, phenomena is not utterly naught but is a real emanation of the noumenon. The latter therefore must already contain within itself some principle of self-diversification. It must have within it the germ of everything phenomenal. Hence the noumenon, in tantric

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1 Agehananda Bharati, *The Tantric Tradition*, p.200.

2 Herbert V. Guenther, *Yuganaddha: The Tantric View of Life*, 2nd edition (Varanasi: Chowkhamba Publication, 1969), p.8.

3 S. B. Dasgupta, ITB, pp.3-4.

4 *Ibid.*, p.95.

parlance, must be both passive and active. This does not conform exactly with the Mahāyānic trend of thought where phenomena is not integral to *sūnyatā*, but something thrust on it from without.<sup>5</sup> The bi-polarity is the tantric attempt to bridge the gulf between the Absolute and the relative (*paramārtha* and *saṁvṛti*) - a unique way to accommodate the empirical. The quiescent as well as the creative (emanative) aspects of the nōmenon are polarised into the static and the dynamic. This bi-polar nature of the non-dual is foreshadowed in the *Mādhyamika* conception of *bodhicitta*<sup>6</sup> as the co-mingling of *sūnyatā* and *karuṇā*<sup>7</sup> though this polarity is not understood in the tantric sense.

The bi-polarity of the non-dual reality is expressed in such compound terms as, *sūnyatā-karuṇā*, *prajñā-upāya*, Lotus-Jewel, *ghaṇṭa-vajra*, Sun-Moon, *āli-kāli*, *lalanā-rusanā*, *dinaṁ-naktaṁ* etc.<sup>8</sup> There are other terms which are simple but compound in meaning, such as, *evaṁ*, *caṇḍāli*, *Hevajra*, and *Vajrasattva*. These also represent the ultimate non-dual reality, which is bi-polar.

5 These ideas emerged out of my discussions with Prof. Ashok Kumar Chatterjee.

6 The term 'bodhicitta' originally meant the mind (*citta*) bent on attaining enlightenment (*bodhi*). However, in later Mahāyāna tradition it implies the essence of consciousness which is a mingling of *sūnyatā* and *karuṇā*. See S. B. Dasgupta, ITB, p88.

7 "sūnyatākaruṇābhinnāṁ bodhicittam iti smṛtam" AAA. P.29., as quoted in T.R.V. Murti, CPB, p.264, fn.2.

8 "tena prajñopāya-sūnyatākaruṇā-candrasūryaṁ-ālikāli-praveśaṁ-śkāśa-dinarātri-va astamanodaya -uttarāyāṇudak- śiprāyāṁ (yana)-saṁbhoganirmāṭṭi-svapnaprabodha-paramārthasamvṛti-sūksṇasthūla- ekāvāṅkāra-karṅkāraṅkāra-bhāvābhāva-jñeyaj-ñānau(na)-grāhyagrāhaka(ka)-la(ra)sa-nālalānā-iṅgalāpingalā evamāvirīṣatyākārmadhimuncet" Samdhong Rinpoche and Vrajvallabh Dwivedi, eds. *Jīḥnodaya Tantram* (Saranāth: Rare Buddhist Text Project, Central Institute of Higher Studies, 1988), p.7.

### 1.1 Śūnyatā and Karuṇā as Prajñā and Upāya

*Śūnyatā* and *karuṇā* are called Wisdom and Means (*prajñā* and *upāya*) in the Buddhist Tantras. *Prajñā*<sup>9</sup> is the perfect knowledge of the voidness of all natures, and it is passive or static by nature. *Karuṇā* is compassion, the realisation of oneself as non-different from the other, and it is the active principle.<sup>10</sup> It serves as the means for the

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9 Gopinath Kaviraj equates the Vajrayānic notion of *prajñā* with the *Śakti* of the Hindu tantras. He writes "tāntrik upāsana vāstav me śakti ki hi upāsana hai. Bauddhom ki dr̥ṣṭi me prajñā hi Śakti ka svarūp hai (Tantric sādhana is indeed a sādhana of Śakti. According to the Buddhists *prajñā* is essentially *Śakti*) See Gopinath Kaviraj, *Tantrik Sādhana aur Siddhānt* (Patna: Bihar Rashtrabhāsha Parishad, 1979), p.269. But this seems to be an unwarranted generalisation. Lama Anagarika writes, "The concept of *Śakti*, of divine power, of the creative female aspect of the highest God (*Śiva*) or his emanations, does not play any role in Buddhism. While in the Hindu Tantras the concept of power (*śakti*) forms the focus of interest, the central idea of Tantric Buddhism is *prajñā*: knowledge, wisdom. To the Buddhist *śakti* is *māyā*, the very power that creates illusion, from which only *prajñā* can liberate us." Lama Anagarika Govinda, *Foundations of Tibetan Mysticism*, pp.96-97.

10 Agehananda Bharati points out that though the doctrine assigns static nature to *prajñā* and dynamic nature to *upāya*, the Tibetan iconographic presentation of the two in union (*yabyum*) presents a paradox. The *yabyum* is a position in which the goddess sits astride on the god's lap facing him. In this iconographic representation the 'yab' (god) sits in *padmāsana* or *vajrāsana* in which no movement is possible whereas the posture of the 'yum' (goddess) suggests intense motion. This way the iconography of *yabyum* seems to contradict the doctrine it represents. This apparent paradox is rectified to some extent by depicting the 'yab' in fierce (*ghora*) *bhāva* in keeping with the dynamic aspect while portraying 'yum' in benign attitude characteristic of the static nature. There are fierce goddesses (Nilasarasvatī, Aparājitā and the *Dākinīs*) but they are never shown in *yabyum*. See Agehananda Bharati, *The Tantric Tradition*, p.216.

realisation of the highest goal. While *prajñā* commands the metaphysical level, *karuṇā* relates with the physical or moral realm. Moral actions purified by *prajñā* do not leave *vāsanās* and *saṃskāras*, and these do not bring about rebirth.

The concepts of *prajñā* and *upāya* are found already in Aśvaghoṣa. "It is said in his *Awakening of Faith in Mahāyāna* (*Mahāyāna-śraddhotpāda-sūtra*) that Enlightenment *a priori* has two attributes, viz., (I) Pure Wisdom (*Prajñā*) and (II) Incomprehensible activity (*Upāya? Karuṇā*)."<sup>11</sup> In the *Aṣṭasāhasrikā Prajñāpāramitā*, Sariputra declares, "A Bodhisattva who wants to win full enlightenment should therefore develop the perfection of **wisdom** and become skilled in **means**."<sup>12</sup> Nāgārjuna also used the term *upāya* for *karuṇā* by which he meant the preaching of the truth among lay people to remove their veil of ignorance and realise the truth. Northern Buddhism in general holds that these two aspects of the ultimate reality correspond to *vajra-dhātu* (*tathatā*) and the *Garbha-dhātu* (*tathāgatagarbha*) respectively. The *Prājñika*, a subsect of the *Svābhāvika* school of Nepalese Buddhism equates *prajñā* with *Dharma*, *upāya* with the Buddha and the union of the two with *Sanḅha*.<sup>13</sup>

*Bhagavān* defines *Hevajra Tantra* as one that is of the nature of Wisdom and Means (*parjñōpāyātmaṃ tantram*).<sup>14</sup> *Guhyasamāja Tantra* equates *prajñā* with voidness (*niḥsvabhāvatā*) and *upāya* with the empirical

11 as found in S. B. Dasgupta, ITB, pp.91-92.

12 Edward Conze, trans., *Aṣṭasāhasrikā Prajñāpāramitā*, chapter 16, p.116. (emphasis added)

13 S. B. Dasgupta, ITB, p.98.

14 HT(F) I:1:7. See also HT(T), *Muktāvalī*, p.9.

reality; the union of the two with *yoga*.<sup>15</sup> In *Hevajra Tantra*, *prajñā* is understood in two ways, viz., Wisdom (*jñānaṁ*) and Wisdom consort (*mudrā*). The primary characteristic of this knowledge is its non-dual nature. It is, "free of notions of self and other, space-like, undefiled, void, the essence of existence and non-existence and (is) the supreme."<sup>16</sup> It is known through direct personal experience (*svasaṁvedyaṁ*). Unlike the *śūnyatā* or *prajñā* of *Mādhyamika*, knowledge (*jñānaṁ*) in *Vajrayāna* is a blending of Wisdom and Means (*prajñopāyavyatimiśraṁ*).<sup>17</sup> This knowledge is all-pervading (*sarvayāpi*) and abides in all living bodies (*sarvadehevyavasthitah*).<sup>18</sup>

The nature and function of Wisdom (*prajñā*) is indicated by the titles ascribed to it, such as, Mother, Sister, Washerwoman, Daughter, Dancer, and Outcaste Woman. It gives birth to the universe and hence it is called Mother.<sup>19</sup> It is *prajñā* that distinguishes the Absolute and the relative, and hence is called sister (*bhaginī tathā prajñā vibhāgaṁ darśayed yatha*).<sup>20</sup> Wisdom is called Washerwoman because she delights all beings with great bliss.<sup>21</sup> It is the fullness of enlightened qualities (*guṇasya duhanāt prajñā*) and hence it is addressed as daughter. Since the novice

15 "*prajñopāyasamāpattiryoga ityabhidhīyate yonisvabhāvataḥ prajñā upāyo bhāvalakṣaṇam*" *Guhyasamāja Tantra*, XVIII,32.

16 "...*jñānaṁ svaparavittivarjitam/ khasamaṁ virajaṁ śūnyaṁ bhāvābhāvātmakaṁ param...*" HT(F) I:10:7.

17 "*prajñopāyavyatimiśraṁ rāgarāgavimiśritam*" HT(F) I:10:7.

18 HT(F) I:10:8-9.

19 "*jananī bhūṣyate prajñā janayati yasmāḥ jagat*" HT(F) I:5:16.

20 HT(F) I:5:16.

21 "*sarvasattvānāṁ rañjanāt rajakī*" HT(F) I:5:17.

cannot stabilise this wisdom it is called dancer (*prajñā cañcalatvān*). *Prajñā* is called *Ḍombi* (outcaste woman) because it is outside the ken of sense experience (*indriyāṅām agocaratvena*).<sup>22</sup> In the text we find a bias in favour of *prajñā*; the notion of *upāya* is not elaborated as much as *prajñā* is.

In *Hevajra Tantra*, *prajñā* is understood also as the wisdom consort (*mudrā/mahāmudrā*).<sup>23</sup> As wisdom consort she is the personification of wisdom (*sā dhīti*). She is the noble lady (*saiva bhagavatī prajñā*). She is of the nature of the Five Aspects of Enlightened Awareness (*pañcājñānasvarūpiṇī*). She is Nairātmyā, the essence of nature and is none other than Hevajra himself.<sup>24</sup> Here again *prajñā* includes the notion of *upāya* as well. *Prajñopāyaviniścayasiddhi* of Anaṅgavajra states that the non-dual union of the two aspects like milk and water is called *prajñopāya*.<sup>25</sup>

Wisdom cannot be pursued in isolation. The yogi should take into account all the other sentient beings. Similarly Method when divorced from Wisdom has the effect of chaining the individual to saṃsāra.<sup>26</sup> *Hevajra Tantra* indicates this inseparability of *prajñā* and *upāya* by

22 HT(F) I:5:17-18.

23 See HT(F) II:3:10,13,15; 4:41,44,57.

24 "suviśuddhadharmadhātu sā saivāhaṃ maṅḍalādhipaḥ/  
saiva nairātmyayoginī svarūpaṃ dharmadhātukamI" HT(F)  
II:4:50. Here 'maṅḍalādhipaḥ' refers to Hevajra himself.

25 "ubhayormelanaṃ yacca sailakṣṇrayoriva  
advayākārayogena prajñopāyaḥ sa uccyate"  
*Prajñopāyaviniścayasiddhi*, 1:17. Benoytosh Bhattacharyya, *Two Vajrayāna Works*.

26 Bhajagovinda Ghosh, "Concept of Prajñā and Upāya" in *Bulletin of Tibetology*, No.3 (1992), p.43.



stating that *prajñā* pervades the world. Iconographically it is depicted by *prajñā* embracing *Hevajra* (*prajñālingitaḥ*), and by presenting both with the same attributes (*prajñā bhagavadrūpiṇi*).<sup>27</sup> In the Vajrayānic conception of the Ultimate Reality, the Real is not just *sūnya* or *prajñā* but *prajñopāya*, i.e., the fusion of *sūnyatā* and *karuṇā*.<sup>28</sup>

*Hevajra Tantra* does not elaborate on the nature of *upāya*, as Snellgrove points out, "in this union Wisdom, although unrealizable apart from Means, yet predominates."<sup>29</sup> There are only a few references to *upāya* in our text. It is symbolised sometimes as the corpse on which the yoginīs stand or as the hand-drum which is one of the five ornaments of the *yogī*.<sup>30</sup> The text equates *prajñā* with *dharmakāya*, while *upāya* is related to the *saṁbhogakāya* and *nirmāṇakāya*, which originate for the benefit of the world from the Source of Nature (*dharmadhātu*).<sup>31</sup> Hence *upāya* is essentially compassion (*upāyo mahākaruṇā*).<sup>32</sup> "Compassion (*karuṇā*) is born of the realisation of the universality and unity of all beings. As

27 See HT(F) I:3:17.

28 "grāhyagrāhakasantyaktarṇ sadasatpaṅkavarjitam  
lakṣyalakṣaṇanirmuktarṇ suddharṇ prakṣṭinirmalarṇ  
na dvayaṇ nādvayaṇ śāntarṇ śivarṇ sarvatra saṇsthitam  
pratyātmavedhyamacularṇ prajñopāyamanākularṇ" *Prajñopāya-*  
*viniścayasiddhi*, 1:19-20.

29 HT(S). Part 1, p.24.

30 See HT(F) I:8:20; 1:6:12.

31 "prakṣṣtarṇ jñānarṇ prajñā dharmakāyaḥ upāyo  
jagadarthakarapāya tanniṣyandabhūta saṇbhoganirmāṇakāya-  
dvayaṇ tayos tatsvabhāvataḥ tatsvabhāvo jātu ity ārthaḥ." HT(S),  
Part2, *Yogaratnamālā*, p.129.

32 "paramaraudrakāyavākkarma-sandarśanī tu mahākaruṇā" HT(T),  
*Muktāvali*, p.9.

one with the *Dharmadhātu* all beings are equal.”<sup>33</sup> In *Pramāṇavārtikavṛtti* Manoratha Nandi says, that *karuṇā* is the earnest desire to save all beings from *dukha* and the causes of *dukha*.<sup>34</sup> A Bodhisattva is said to exercise his compassion by revelation, by rekindling the desire for liberation in sentient beings and by becoming a *Guru* and granting initiation to his disciples. *Karuṇā* is inseparable from *śūnyatā* as the latter serves as the *raison d'être* for the former. “A person can be compassionate only if he overcomes his ‘species bias’ by which he considers the humans as different and superior to the rest. *Śūnyatā* enables one to realise that differences are only skin deep.”<sup>35</sup>

In the twin principles of *prajñā* and *upāya*, *Vajrayāna* summarises the entire process of *Pāramitāyāna*. The *bodhisattva mārga* towards *samyaksaṁbodhi* can be reduced to *jñānasāṁbhara* and *puṇyasāṁbhara*. The first is *prajñā*, which is attained through meditation, and the second is *upāya* achieved through the practice of virtues like *dāna* etc. Therefore *Vajrayāna* is right in conceiving the ultimate reality as *prajñopāyātma*.

## 1.2 *Prajñā* and *Upāya* as Female and Male

The bi-polarity of the ultimate reality, seen from the psychological and mythological angle, led to the conception of the two as man and woman, and in its cosmicized version as god and goddess. The characterisation of the bi-polar nature of the ultimate reality

33 Tomy Augustine, “In Search of a Buddhist Ecology” in *The Philosophical Quarterly*, vol.VIII, No.3-4, (July-October 2002), p.166. See also p.167.

34 “*dukkhā dukkhahetośca samudharaṇakāmanā karuṇā*” as quoted in Gopināth Kaviraj, *Tantric Sādhana aur Siddhānt*, p.252.

35 Tomy Augustine, “In Search of a Buddhist Ecology”, p.167.

as male and female is ubiquitous in various religions, as well as in mystical and magical traditions of the world. However, in *tantra* the ascription of gender to the bipolarity and the consequent sexual connotations are more pronounced than in other traditions. The Hindu tantric tradition assigned the dynamic principle to the female and the static to the male, while in the Buddhist tantric tradition the roles are reversed.<sup>36</sup>

The Indian and Tibetan masters of *Vajrayāna* ascribed all cognitive terms of spiritual consummation such as wisdom, realisation, beatitude etc., to the static and all conative terms like compassion, method, energy etc., to the dynamic.<sup>37</sup> Though grammatically both the terms, *prajñā* and *karuṇā* are feminine in gender, the Vajrayānist always considered the latter male. Of the four grades of *sūmyatā* that Nāgārjuna speaks of in his *Pañcakrama*, the first *sūmyatā* is *prajñā*, which is also called woman. The second (i.e. *atisūmyatā*) is called *upāya* and here too the sexual connotation is implied.<sup>38</sup> Similarly *Śrī-cakraśāntvara-Tantra* states, "Appearance, Method and Great

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36 But Luipā, Sarahapā, Indrabhūti, Lakṣmīṅkarā seem to have favoured the Hindu trend. "On the surface, then, the situation is this: the Hindus assigned the static aspect to the male principle, the dynamic aspect to the female principle. The tantric Buddhists in India (Luipā, Sarahapā, Indrabhūti, Lakṣmīṅkarā) were not quite at one between themselves about this assignment, but they tended to fall in line with the non-Buddhist trends round them, for it seems probable that the matrifocal atmosphere in which they flourished (Bengal in the East, Oḍḍiyāṇa in the west – the latter being linked with an Amazon-like tribe in the legend) was indirectly conducive to assigning the *dynamis* to woman." See Agehananda Bharati, *The Tantric Tradition*, p. 200.

37 The Tibetan tradition invariably assigned the dynamic aspect to the male and the static aspect to the female. Bharati suggests certain possible reasons for their choice. See *Ibid.*, pp.201-206; 220-224.

38 S. B. Dasgupta, *ITB*, p.105.

Compassion are the Male Deity, whilst the Void, *Prajñā*, Tranquillity and Great Bliss are, the Female Deity.”<sup>39</sup>

The *Hevajra Tantra* calls *prajñā* as female and *upāya* as male.<sup>40</sup> *Upāya* refers to the *yogī* and *prajñā* to the *mudrā* (female co-practitioner).<sup>41</sup> The synonyms for *prajñā* such as *mudrā*, *mahāmudrā*, *vajrakanyā*, *yuvati*, lotus (the female organ) *bhagavatī* etc., show that *prajñā* is feminine. In the *Hevajra Tantra*, *prajñā* is also called Mother, Sister, Washerwoman, Dancing girl, Daughter, *Ḍombi*.<sup>42</sup> *Prajñā* should be understood from the absolute and the relative points of view. From the former point of view it is transcendental wisdom, while from the latter it refers to the wisdom consort of the *yogī*.

### 1.3 *Prajñā* and *Upāya* as *Lalanā* and *Rasanā*

*Lalanā*, *rasanā* and *avadhūtī* are three important *nāḍīs* that are employed in tantric *sādhana*. *Hevajra Tantra* associates the dual nature of the Absolute with the first two *nāḍīs* by declaring that *lalanā* is of the nature of Wisdom (*prajñā*) and *rasanā* of Means (*upāya*).<sup>43</sup> The dual nature of the Ultimate Reality is referred to as *lalanā* and *rasanā*,

39 Kazi Dawa-Samdup, ed., *Śrī-cakraśāṅvara-Tantra: A Buddhist Tantra*, p.28.

40 “*yoṣit tāvad bhavet prajñā upāyaḥ puruṣaḥ smṛtaḥ*” HT(F) I:8:26.

41 “*kṛpōpāyo bhaved yogī mudrā hetuvīyogataḥ*” HT(F) I:10:40. Here ‘*hetuvīyogataḥ*’ means ‘freedom from causality’ i.e., the utter non-arising of all phenomenal things. This is supreme Wisdom (*prajñā*).

42 HT(F) I:5:16-18.

43 “*lalanā prajñāsvabhāvena rasanopāyenasamsthithā*” HT(F) I:1:15. See also

“*lalanā prajñāsvabhāvena rasanopāyenasamsthithā avadhūti madhyadeśe tu grāhyagrāhakavarjitā.*” *Jñānodaya Tantra*, 28, p.10.

and their union as *avadhūtī* in *Sādhanamālā* as well. It states, "*lalanā* is of the nature of *Prajñā*, and *Rasanā* remains as *Upāya*, and *Avadhūtī* remains in the middle as the abode of *Mahāsukha*."<sup>44</sup> *Lalanā* is believed to be on the left and *rasanā* is believed to be on the right, and *avadhūtī* in the middle.<sup>45</sup> Hence *lalanā* and *rasanā* are also called Left and Right or *vāma* and *dakṣiṇa* respectively. Again, *lalanā* is considered as the nature of Moon, and *rasanā*, of Sun.<sup>46</sup> *Lalanā* is the bearer of the seed, and *rasanā*, of the ovum.<sup>47</sup> Here there is an anomaly because *lalanā*, which is

44 *Sādhanamālā*, p.448. The following passages are also found in S. B. Dasgupta, ITB, p.107.

"*lalanā prajñā-svarūpeṇa rasano-pāya saṁsthitā/  
taylor madhye gatāṁ devī aṅkāraṁ viśva-rūpiṇī*" –*Heruka-*  
*tantra* M.S. p.74 (B) also

"*lalanā rasanā nāḍī prajñā-pāyaś ca melakaḥ*" *Ḍākārṇava* (Ed. MM. H.P. Shasti), p.158.

45 In the Hindu tantric tradition they are called *Idā*, *Pinḡalā* and *Suṣumnā* respectively.

46 "*vāmagā yā idā nāḍī śukla-candra-svarūpiṇī/  
śakti-rūpā hi sā devī sākṣāḥ amṛta-vigrahā/  
dakṣe tu pinḡalā nāma puruṣaḥ sūrya-vigrahaḥ/  
raudrātmikā mahādevī dāḍimi-keśara-prabhā*" *Sammohana-*  
*tantra* quoted in the *Ṣaṭcakra-nirūpaṇam* Ed., by A. Avalon as  
found in S. B. Dasgupte, ITB, p.107.

"*evam sarve ca niṣpannāḥ prajñopāyasvabhāvataḥ/  
prajñālikālyupāyeti candrārkasya prabhedanāt*". HT(F) I:8:10. *Yogaratanmālā* commentary explains that *āli* is the wind that originates in the left nostril and *kāli* in the right nostril (*ālī vāmanāsāpuṣaprabhavo vāyuḥ tadaparaḥ Kāliḥ*). HT(S), Part 2, *Yogaratanmālā*, p.109. This makes the association of *āli* and *kāli* with *lalanā* and *rasanā* clear.

47 "*akṣobhyāvahā lalanā rasanā raktavāhinī*" HT(F) I:1:16. See also "*akṣobhya-vahā lalanā rasanā rakta-pravāhiṇī/  
avadhūty amita-nāthasya ādhāra-bhāvinī sadā*" *Sādhanamālā*, p.448.

"*teṣāṁ madhye sthitā nāḍī lalanā śukra-vāhinī*

*prajñā* (female), is said to carry the seed while *rasanā*, which is *upāya* (male), bears the ovum. This should have been reversed in order to be consistent with the rest of the tantric analogy. However, the real aim is achieved - to show that the essential duality of the ultimate descends on the physical body as well.

#### 1.4 *Prajñā* and *Upāya* as Vowel and Consonant

In the realm of sound (speech), the metaphysical categories of *prajñā* and *upāya* are referred to as *āli* (vowel series), and *kāli*<sup>48</sup> (consonant series) respectively.<sup>49</sup> Just as the consummation of *prajñā* and *upāya* generates *bodhicitta* (*bindu*), the union of the vowel and the consonant produces the syllable (*akṣara*).<sup>50</sup> The seed syllable (*bīja*) may be a pure vowel when it indicates the unmanifested state, as for example, the vowel 'a' of *Nairātmyā*. Generally, the seed syllable of a manifested divinity consists of a consonant (or consonants), a vowel and a final 'm' (*anusvāra*). The *anusvāra* indicates the union (*bindu*), and is written as a dot over the syllable. Every complete seed syllable thus represents the essential

*dakṣiṇe rasanā khyātā nāḍī rakta-(pra)vāhinī//” Heruka Tantra, MS.p.14(B) as quoted in S. B. Dasgupta, ITB, p.107.*

48 *āli* and *kāli* are generally interpreted as Wisdom and Means respectively. However, we notice that in the interpretation of the name 'Caṇḍāli' 'caṇḍā' refers to Wisdom and *āli* refers to *Vajrasattva*. In another interpretation, 'Caṇḍā' is Wisdom and the left *nāḍī*, while *āli* is Means and the right *nāḍī*. (See HT(F) pp.21-22) Here again there is no consistency with the rest of the tantric scheme.

49 On the cosmic level *āli* is Moon and *kāli* is Sun or it is as night (*naktam*) and day (*dinam*).

*evam sarve ca niṣpannāḥ prajñopāyasvabhāvataḥ/ prajñālikālyupāyeti candrārkaśya prabhedanāt//” HT(F) I:8:10.*

50 HT(S). Part I, p.26.



idea of *upāya* (*vajra* or *kāli*), *prajñā* (lotus or *āli*) and the consummation (*bindu*).

Dasgupta justifies the ascription that *prajñā* is *āli* on the account of the fact that the letter 'a' is without beginning or origination; it is immutable and free from all vocal modulations as *prajñā* is. In every set of alphabets, 'a' is the first letter and is the source of all other letters. Hence it is an apt symbol to indicate the void nature of the dharmas, i.e., *śūnyatā/prajñā*. The *Ekallavīra-caṇḍa-mahāroṣiṇa-tantra* also employs 'a' to represent *prajñā* and 'va' to represent *upāya*. The Hindu texts too often use 'a' to represent Brahmā, the creator of the universe. In the *Bhagavad Gītā*, Lord Kṛṣṇa declares that among the letters He is 'a'. Hence the letter 'a' represents best *prajñā* or *śūnyatā*.<sup>51</sup>

Another set of vowel and consonant used generally to indicate *prajñā* and *upāya* are 'e' and 'vaṇ'. 'e' is *bhaga*,<sup>52</sup> (i.e., the lotus, the female sexual organ, or *prajñā*) and 'vaṇ' is *kuliśa* (i.e., the *vajra*, the male sexual organ, the *upāya*).<sup>53</sup> The compound syllable 'evaṇ' expresses the union of the bi-polar nature of the *Bhagavān*.<sup>54</sup> *Hevajra*

51 For details see S. B. Dasgupta, ITB, pp.108-109.

52 In the *Hevajra Tantra*, *prajñā* is called *bhaga*. It is symbolised by the letter 'e'. In the Bhrāmi script 'e' is written as a triangle (*trikoṇam bhagamityuktam*). See Gopinath Kaviraj, *Tantrik Sādhanā aur Siddhant*, p.270. In the Hindu Tantras the *Devī* is spoken of as the nature of 'kādi'. The meaning of this is that the triangle is the form of the *Devī*. The letter 'ka' written in Bengali, and generally in earlier Devanāgiri form, shows a triangle in the left. See Arthur Avalon, *Tantrarāja Tantra* (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1981) p.1.

53 "E-kāraṇī bhagam ity uktam VAM-kāraṇī kuliśaṇī smṛtaṇī" HT(F) I:1:7; See also HT(S), Part 2, *Yogaratnamālā*, p.103.

54 *Evaṇ* indicates the dual aspects of the *Bhagavān* expressed by pairs of tantric terms. "It is said: 'Bhagavān is of the nature of

*Tantra* states that “the divine letter ‘e’, adorned with the syllable ‘*vañ*’ placed within it, is the abode of all bliss and the receptacle of the jewels of the Buddhas.”<sup>55</sup> ‘*Evam*’ represents the Ultimate Reality. In the *Dohākoṣa* of Kāṇhupāda it is stated that one who has understood *e-vañ-kāra* has understood everything completely. In *Hevajra Tantra* ‘e’ and ‘*vañ*’ have been variously interpreted.<sup>56</sup> The seed-

Semen: that Bliss is the Beloved. It is also said: ‘Vajradhara is characterized by the qualities of Essential Nature (dharma) and Enjoyment (*sañbhoga*).’ And again: ‘As relative, white like jasmine; as absolute essentially blissful.’ By such statements, the essential tantric view regarding the nature of Voidness (*śūnyatā*) and Compassion (*karuṇā*), Wisdom (*prajñā*) and Means (*upāya*), the Body of Essential Nature (*dharmakāya*) and the Body of Enjoyment (*sañbhogakāya*), the Relative (*sañvṛti*) and the Absolute (*paramārtha*) and the Process of Generation (*utpattikrama*) and the Process of Completion (*utpannakrama*) are expressed.” HT(F) *Yogaratnamālā*, pp.4-5.

55 “*bhagavān āha/*  
*ekārākṣi yad divyañ madhye vañkārabhūṣitam/*  
*ālayaḥ sarvasaukhyānāñ buddharatnakaraṇḍakam//*” HT(F)  
II:3:4.

56 In *Hevajra Tantra* we see that ‘e’ is *prajñā* and is called mother while ‘*vañ*’ is *upāya* and is called father and their sexual union produces *bindu*, the immutable knowledge. Again, ‘e’ is understood as Moon and ‘*vañ*’ is understood as Sun. According to one interpretation of the *nidānavākyañ*, ‘*evañ mayā śrutañ*’, “E is known as the Earth element, the Seal of the Ritual (*karmamudrā*) and Locanā. Locanā is in a lotus of sixty-four petals in the Centre of Creation (*nirmāṇacakra*) located in the navel. Vañ is known as the Water element, the Seal of Essential Nature (*dharmamudrā*), and Māmakī is in a lotus of eight petals in the Centre of Essential Nature (*dharmacakra*) located in the heart.” HT(F), *Yogaratnamālā*, p.5. Though there are varying and at times contrary interpretations given to ‘*evañ*’, it epitomises the entire thought and praxis of *tantra*.

syllable 'hūṁ' also indicates the union of *prajñā* and *upāya* (*hūṁ...prajñopāyasvabhāvakam*).<sup>57</sup>

Our text uses few other words as well to indicate *prajñā* and *upāya* as well as their union, viz., 'Hevajra', 'Caṇḍālī' and 'Vajrasattva'. The term 'Hevajra' is a combination of 'he' and 'vajra'. The former symbolises Great compassion and the latter Wisdom.<sup>58</sup> The word 'Caṇḍālī' is composed of 'caṇḍā' (the fierce one) which refers to Wisdom (*prajñā*) and 'ālī' which refers to *Vajrasattva*. Usually, in iconographic representations, Wisdom is portrayed with a benign *bhāv* (appearance), but here Wisdom is fierce in the sense that it destroys the kleśas and the Māras. It is also said that 'caṇḍā' is Wisdom and the left *nāḍī*, 'ālī' is Means and the right *nāḍī*. The union of the two *nāḍīs* in accordance with the Guru's instructions is called *Caṇḍālī*, conceived as a blazing fire engulfing every manifestation of existence. There are various interpretations given to this composite word but all agree that it indicates the union of Voidness and Compassion.<sup>59</sup>

57 HT(F) I:3:5.

58 "HE-kāreṇa mahākaruṇā VAJRAM prajñā ca bhāṣyate" HT(S), Part 2, *Yogaratanamālā*, p.104 "Hevajra itīkṣāṁ nāmakena kāraṇena saṅgṛhītaṁ prajñopāyātmakam ityādi" HT(S), Part 2, *Yogaratanamālā*, p.105. See also HT(F) I:7:27. Here again our text is inconsistent with its interpretation of 'he'. While interpreting the composite word 'Śrīheruka', 'he' is interpreted as primordial voidness of causality (*hekāraṁ hetvādisūnyatā*) HT(F), *Yogaratanamālā*, p.82. Again, in the early part of the text 'vajra' implies Wisdom but while speaking of 'Vajra-kapāla Yoga', 'vajra' has been interpreted as *karuṇā* (Compassion or Means - 'vajro Hevajraḥ') and 'kapāla' as *Nairātmyā* (voidness - *prajñā* - Wisdom) HT(F), *Yogaratanamālā*, p.82.

59 For details see HT(F), *Yogaratanamālā*, pp.21-23.

The composite name '*Vajrasattva*' is formed of two words '*vajra*' and '*sattva*'.<sup>60</sup> "The Void which is the firm essence, indestructible, indepletable, indivisible and not capable of being consumed is called Vajra."<sup>61</sup> Here '*vajra*' stands for *prajñā*, '*Sattvaṁ*' refers to 'existent being'. "What the wise call existent being is the Aggregate of the Five Components of Phenomenal Awareness."<sup>62</sup> *Sattvaṁ*, the existent being is *upāya*. Again the text states that, "the union of *āli* and *kāli* is the seat of *Vajrasattva*."<sup>63</sup> Here the commentary explains that '*vajra*' refers to the symbol (*biṁba*) and '*sattva*' refers to the seed-syllable (*hīṅa*). The principal deity originates from the *sattvabiṁba*, that is, the union of *sattva* (seed-syllable) and *biṁba* (symbol).<sup>64</sup> The deity is the embodiment of the union of these two natures, *prajñā* and *upāya*. Thus the term '*Vajrasattva*' too indicates the dual nature of the non-dual reality.

## 2. The Tantric Absolute as the Union of the Bi-polarity

The tantric Absolute is the union of the polarities of *śūnyatā* and *karuṇā*; it is called *yuganaddha*, the ultimate goal of all tantric *sādhana*. Sarahapāda says in one of his Dohās, "He who discards *Karuṇā* and sticks to *Śūnyatā* alone never has access to the right path; he, again, who meditates only on *Karuṇā*, is not liberated even in thousands of births; he, on the other hand, who can mingle

60 "bhagavān dha/  
abhedyaṁ vajraṁ ity uktam sattvaṁ tribhavasyaikatā/  
anayā prajñāyā yuktyā vajrasattva iti smṛtaḥ//"  
HT(F) I:1:4.

61 HT(F) p.7.

62 "tathā coktaṁ Bhagavatā sattvaṁ sattvaṁ iti Vipra yaduta  
pañcaskandhāḥ"  
HT(S), Part 2, *Yogaratnamālā*, p.105.

63 "ālikālisamāyogo vajrasattvasya viṣṭaraḥ"  
HT(F) I:8:8. This refers to the union of the Lunar and the Solar Maṇḍalas.

64 HT(F), *Yogaratnamālā*, p.87.

*Śūnyatā* and *Karuṇā*, remains neither in *bhava* (existence) nor in *nirvāṇa* (extinction).<sup>65</sup>

*Yuganaddha* is the cessation of all forms of duality. The fifth chapter (*Yuganaddha-krama*) of the *Pañca-krama* explains clearly the notion of *yuganaddha*.<sup>66</sup> It states that the synthesis of the notions such as *saṁsāra* (creative process) and *nivṛtti* (absolute cessation), *saṁkleśa* (phenomenal) and *vyavadāna* (absolutely purified entities), and the perceiver (*grāhya*) and the perceived (*grāhaka*), is called *yuganaddha*.<sup>67</sup> *Hevajra Tantra* refers to it as *bodhicitta*, *prabhāsvara* etc. Our text states, "The absence of distinction between Wisdom and Means (*Śūnyatā* and *Karuṇā*) is the characteristic of the Innate Radiance (*prabhāsvara*), the supreme perfectly Enlightened Consciousness."<sup>68</sup> In the *Sādhanamālā*, the union (*yuganaddha*) of *śūnyatā* (female) and *karuṇā* (male) is called *bodhicitta*, which is *advaya* and is conceived as the neuter gender.<sup>69</sup>

65 as quoted in S. B. Dasgupta, ITB, pp. 89-90.

66 See *Pañcakrama* (of Nāgārjuna), (Xerox copy of a manuscript) in the possession of Santarakshita Library, Central Institute of Higher Tibetan Study, Saranath) pp-100-106. The relevant portions have been paraphrased by S.B. Das Gupta in ITB, pp-113-115.

67 "saṁsāro nirvṛtiśceti kalpanādvayavarjanāt/  
ekībhāvo bhaved yatra yuganaddhaṁ taducyate//  
saṁkleśaṁ vyavadānaṁ ca jñātvā tu paramārthataḥ/  
ekībhāvaṁ tu yo vetti sa vetti yuganaddhakam//  
grāhyaṁ ca grāhakaṁ caiva dvidhā buddhirna vidyate  
abhinnatā bhavet yatra tadāha yuganaddhakam//"  
*Pañcakrama*, p.100.

S. B. Dasgupta, ITB, p. 113.

68 H. T.(F), *Yogaratanamālā*, pp.136-137.

69 "ekasvābhāvikaḥ kāyaḥ śūnyatā-karuṇā-dvayaḥ/  
napuṁśakam iti khyāto yuganaddha iti kvacit"  
*Sādhanamālā*, Vol.II, pp.505.

In *yuganaddha*, the bi-polarity is synthesised; one aspect is not negated for the sake of the other. *Sam̐sāra* is not disowned for the sake of *nirvāṇa*; but the two are re-integrated as the two aspects of one and the same reality. Dasgupta states,

To enter into the final abode of 'thatness' in body, word and mind, and thence again to rise up and turn to the world of miseries – that is what is called *Yuganaddha*. To know the nature of *saṃvṛti* (the provisional truth) and the *paramārtha* (the ultimate truth) and then to unite them together – that is real *Yuganaddha*.<sup>70</sup>

What is negated is the notions of duality, distinction, and differentiation,<sup>71</sup> which arise from thought-constructs and theories about the real.

In our text, syllables such as 'evam̐', and 'hūm̐', and names like 'Hevajra', 'Vajrasattva' and 'Caṇḍālī', are expressions of the notion of *yuganaddha*. The same is symbolised by the flame arising from the lotus, or the moon-crescent, or by the flame arising from the *kalaśa* (jar). In Tibet, it is represented by the Aśoka branch inserted into the ambrosia vase. In Chinese and Nepalese Buddhism, it is indicated by the *yinyang* symbol.<sup>72</sup>

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70 S. B. Dasgupta, ITB, p.114.

71 HT(F) I:9:21; I:10:31-32; II:3:41-49.

72 In the Chinese symbol of *Yinyang*, 'Yin' the female principle is portrayed as dark in hue and represents the potential side of things. 'Yang' the male is portrayed in light hue and represents the active or the actuality. The two are combined in a circular diagram of interlocked halves, which evidently depict the state of sexual union. Each half displays one tiny spot of the opposing colour whereby indicating the non-dualistic interpenetration of the two principles. See Marco Pallis, "Consideration of Tantrik



This notion of union is expressed iconographically by the depiction of gods and goddesses in amorous embrace. In Tibetan and Nepalese Buddhism, the union of the bipolar reality is represented in the *yabyum* iconography.<sup>73</sup> In our text, *Bhagavān* Hevajra is presented in union with his *yoginī*. In the two-armed Hevajra, he is in the embrace of *Ḍombī*.<sup>74</sup> In the four-armed Hevajra, he is presented as embracing his Wisdom, *Vajravārāhī*.<sup>75</sup> In the six-armed Hevajra, he embraces *Vajraśṛṅkhālā*.<sup>76</sup> According to Lama Govinda Anagarika, the *yabyum* is a meditative imagery, a representation of the highest level of absorption or re-integration.

In the actual tantric *sādhana*, the *yuganaddha* is achieved at least initially through various consecrations including sexo-yogic practices. The union of the master with the *mudrā* (wisdom consort), and later the union of the *yogi* with her, are prescribed as means for the direct realisation of union (*yuganaddha*). This union may also be achieved purely through the internal union employing *prāṇayāma*. According to Lama Govinda Anagarika, though this symbol depicts sexual union, there is nothing "sexual" about the tantric *sādhana*. Today what is utilised

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Spirituality" in *The Journal of Oriental Research Madras* (JORM), No. xxxiv-xxxv (1964-65, 1965-66), p.43, fn.2.

73 Agehananda Bharati points out that this is typical of the Tibetan and Nepalese Buddhism. Though presentation of gods and goddesses in erotic postures is common in Hindu sculpture the *yabyum* model is not seen in Hindu sculpture or even in purely Indian Buddhist sculpture. See Agehananda Bharati, *The Tantric Tradition*, p.213.

74 "...ḍombīyāliṅgitakandharo mahārāgānurāgitaḥ//" HT(F) I:3:10.

75 "...śeṣadivibhujābhyāṅgī prajñāliṅgitaḥ vajravārāhī..." HT(F) I:3:17.

76 "...śeṣadivibhujābhyāṅgī vajraśṛṅkhālāsamāpannaḥ..." HT(F) I:3:18.

most is the Erotic Metaphor of Union<sup>77</sup> and not actual physical union between the *yogi* and the *yoginī*. But Bharati observes that sexual union was literally part of the *sādhana*. "Sexual contact does take place in certain meditations of the *rgyud* tradition, as it does in its Indian counterpart, the left-handed tantric exercise..."<sup>78</sup> It is reserved for the very advanced disciples.

### 3. The Centrality of the Body

In *tantra*, body refers not only to the gross, but also to the subtle or the psychic, as well as to the cosmic aspects of the physical body. Hence body is to be understood as a psycho-somatic as well as a cosmic entity. It is a fundamental tantric insight that body is the abode of all truth. The great knowledge that the body holds is that the nature of the Absolute is bliss and that it pervades all beings.<sup>79</sup> This bliss can be experienced only in the body, and only in reference to the body can the Absolute be spoken of as bliss.<sup>80</sup> This does not mean that bliss is ultimately dependent on the body, because the text clearly states that though it is *in* the body, it is not *of* the body (*dehastho 'pi na dehajaḥ*).<sup>81</sup> What is implied is that, in terms of the process of Generation, "...it is not possible to instruct about bliss anywhere else other than in the body."<sup>82</sup> Bliss in itself is independent of the body, but bliss as an object of experience cannot be had except in the body

77 See HT(F), pp.xxx-xxxiv.

78 Agehananda Bharati, *The Tantric Tradition*, p.215.

79 "*dehasthān ca mahājīḍnān sarvasaṅkalpavarjitam/ vyāpakaḥ sarvavastūnām dehastho 'pi na dehajaḥ*/" HT(F) I:1:12.

80 "*dehābhāve kutaḥ saukhyaṁ saukhyam vaktuṁ na śakyate/ vyāpyavyāpakarūpeṣu sukheṇa vyāpitaṁ jagat*/" HT(F) II:2:35.

81 HT(F) I:1:12

82 HT(F) p.165.

(*rūpādya bhāvena saukhyaṃ naivopalabhyate*).<sup>83</sup> This again accentuates the centrality of the body in *tantra*.

The bodily experience of pleasure is but a momentary glimpse of the same absolute bliss, which is the nature of all beings. In our ordinary life the most intense of such pleasure is experienced in sexual union. Hence the absolute bliss is likened to the experience of sexual union. The *Bhagavān* declares, "I dwell in *sukhāvātī*, the Citadel of Bliss, in the womb of the Vajra Lady which has the shape of the letter 'e' (a triangle pointing downwards) and is the receptacle of the jewels of the Buddha".<sup>84</sup> *Yogaratanmālā* associates 'e' and 'vaṃ' with body; it tells us that 'e' is *bhaga* (the female sexual organ), and 'vaṃ' is the *kuliśū* (the male sexual organ).<sup>85</sup>

Bliss, as we have seen earlier, is spoken of as absolute and relative; as absolute it is the enlightened consciousness, and as relative it is the semen. Our text states that these two aspects of bliss are generated in the lotus of the lady, which is *sukhāvātī*, by forming the 'evaṃ',<sup>86</sup> which once again highlights the significance of the body. The commentary states, "the Attainment of the State of Unity is achieved along with an external consort and is by means of uniting the Lotus and Vajra and by the simultaneous dropping of the seminal fluids (in orgasm)."<sup>87</sup>

83 HT(F) II:2:36.

84 "vihare haṃ sukhāvatyāṃ sadvajrayoṣito bhage/  
ekārāktirūpe tu buddharatanakaraṇḍake//" HT(F) II:2:38.

85 HT(F), *Yogaratanmālā*, p.4. "E-kāraṃ bhagaṃ ity uktāṃ VAM-  
kāraṃ kulīśūṃ smṛtāṃ" HT(S), Part 2, *Yogaratanmālā*, p.103.

86 "saṃvṛtāṃ kundasaṅkāśūṃ vivṛtāṃ sukhārūpīṇam/  
strīkakkolasukhāvatyām evaṃkarasvarūpake//" HT(F) II:4:34.

87 ĪT(F), *Yogaratanmālā*, p.95.

"bāhyamudrayā saha kamalakulīśayor yogena tulyakāḍapatanaṃ  
samāpattī" HT(F), p.xLv. This passage is not found in the

### 3.1 Tantric Physiology

The entire tantric *sādhana* is performed in and through the body. Hence an understanding of the Yogin's body is essential. Here we shall consider three important aspects of the Yogin's body, namely, the spinal cord, the plexus, and the *nāḍīs*, which constitute the anatomy of the yogin's subtle body.

#### 3.1.1 The Spinal Cord

The spinal cord is central to tantric physiology. It is called the *merudaṇḍī* and is identified with mount Sumeru. It stretches from the bottom of the back to the medulla oblongata. It is described as, "...the cave of the highest truth where all the world vanishes away."<sup>88</sup> It is along the spinal cord that the *cakras* are visualised and it is through it that the *nāḍīs* pass. Hence the steady vertical position of the spinal cord is insisted upon in all yogic meditative practices.

#### 3.1.2 The *Cakra*

There are four plexus (*cakras* or lotuses). The first is the Lumbar plexus (*maṇipura cakra*) located in the navel region. The second is the Cardiac plexus (*anāhata cakra*) located in the heart. The third is the Laryngeal and pharyngeal plexus (*viśuddha cakra*) at the junction of the spinal cord and the medulla oblongata (throat). The fourth

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*Yogaratanamālā* commentary given in the Sanskrit by Snellgrove on page 126 of Snellgrove's *The Hevajra Tantra, A Critical Study Part 2*. Farrow and Menon have included it from the manuscript of the *Hevajra Panījika* preserved in the National Archives, Kathmandu.

88 S. B. Dasgupta, ITB, p.147.

and the most important *cakra* is the Cerebral plexus (*uṣṇīṣa-kamala*) located at the crown of the head. The Hindu tantras identify seven plexus in their system.<sup>89</sup> In *Vajrayāna*, the four *cakras* are associated with the four *kāyas*.<sup>90</sup> Thus, the *maṇipura-cakra* is associated with the *nirmāṇakāya*; the *anāhata-cakra* with *dharmakāya*; the *viśuddha* with *sambhogakāya*; and the *uṣṇīṣa-kamala* with *sahajakāya*.<sup>91</sup> The text furnishes certain reasons why a particular *kāya* is associated with a particular *cakra*:

The Body of Creation is proclaimed to be there from where all living beings are born, the act of creation being constant and age-old. Since it

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89 The *Cakras* according to the Hindu Tantras are:

<b>Cakra</b>	<b>location</b>
1. <i>Mūlādihāru-cakra</i>	between the penis and the anus
2. <i>Svādhiṣṭhāna-cakra</i>	near the root of the penis
3. <i>Maṇipura-cakra</i>	navel
4. <i>Anāhata-cakra</i>	heart
5. <i>Viśuddha-cakra</i>	junction of the spinal cord & medulla oblongata

6. *Ajñā-cakra* between the eye-brows

7. *Sahasrāra-cakra* cerebral regions

See for details S. B. Dasgupta, ITB, p.147.fn.3.

90 Dasgupta speaks of the fourth *kāya* and calls it the *sahaja-kāya*. He states that the *sahaja-kāya* is also called *mahāsukhacakra* or *mahāsukha-kamala*. See S. B. Dasgupta, ITB, p.148.

Though four *kāyas* are often spoken of, our text speaks of three *kāyas*, and the knowledge of the three *kāyas* as the fourth **cakra**. The text states:

"*trikāyaṁ dehamadhye tu cakrarūpeṇa kathyate/  
trikāyasya pariññānaṁ cakramahāsukhaṁ matam//*" HT(F)  
II:4:54. (emphasis added)

91 S. B. Dasgupta, ITB, pp.147-148. See also

"*dharmasambhoganirmāṇāṁmahāsukhaṁ tathaiva ca/  
yonihṭkaphamasteṣu trayāḥ kāyā vyavasthitāḥ//*" HT(F) II:4:55.  
See also HT(T), *Muktāvalī*, p.22.

generates, that is, creates, it is known as (the Body of) Creation. 'Nature' refers to the nature of consciousness and the Body of Essential Nature is located in the heart. 'Enjoyment' is the enjoyment of the six flavours and the Body of Enjoyment is located in the throat. The Centre of Great Bliss is located in the head.<sup>92</sup>

The *nirmāṇacakra* is visualised as a lotus of sixty-four petals; the *dharmacakra* is a lotus of eight petals; the *saṁbhogacakra* is a lotus of sixteen petals and the *mahāsukhacakra* is a lotus of thirty-two petals.<sup>93</sup> At times certain anomalies are noticed in terms of the number, location and the number of petals of the lotus that represent the *cakra*.<sup>94</sup>

The four *kāyas* are associated with the four Beings. *Dharmakāya* is associated with *Vajrasattva*; *saṁbhogakāya* with *Mahāsattva*; *nirmāṇakāya* with *Samayasattva* and *mahāsukhakāya* with *Vajradhara*, the Supreme Non-duality, the secret of all the Buddhas, namely *Hevajra*.<sup>95</sup> Since these manifestations of the Absolute are the *kāyas* and the *kāyas* are located in the *cakras* it may be said that body is the abode of truth (*dehasthaṁ ca mahājñānam*). Moreover, in our text we find a general correspondence between the four *cakras* and the four

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92 HT(F) II:4:56-58.

93 HT(F) I:1:24.

94 For example the *Heruka tantra* described the *anāhata-cakra* as a lotus having eight petals while *Sekoddeśī* speaks of it as a lotus having thirty-two petals. While the *Heruka tantra* and *Sekoddeśī* speak of the *uṣṇīṣa-kamala* as a lotus of four petals, *Hevajra Tantra* states that it has thirty-two petals.

95 See HT(F) pp.6-8.



goddesses, the four tattvas, the four mudrās, the four elements, the four fruits, the four consecrations, the four Māras etc.<sup>96</sup> This is the Vajrayānic way of relating all aspects of theory and praxis with the body. This will be taken up at a later stage.

### 3.1.3 The *Nāḍī*

The *nāḍīs* form another component of the tantric physiology. The Buddhist tantras, the Hindu Tantras, and the Yogopaniṣads agree that there are seventy-two thousand *nāḍīs* apart from *upanāḍīs* which are innumerable. Of these, thirty-two are the important *nāḍīs*.<sup>97</sup> In the *Hevajra Tantra*, *Bhagavān* states that these thirty-two *nāḍīs* bear *bodhicitta* and flow into the Centre of Great Bliss (*mahāsukha-cakra*);<sup>98</sup> of these, three are the most important, namely, *lalanā*, *rasanā* and *avadhūtī*.<sup>99</sup> In the

96 For details see HT(F), *Yogaratnamālā*, pp.15-21. See also HT(T), *Muktāvalī*, pp.22-27.

97 The text furnishes the names of the thirty-two *nāḍīs*. See HT(F) I:1:17-19. For a detailed discussion on the *nāḍīs*, see HT(T), *Muktāvalī*, pp.16-21.

98 "*bhagavān āha/ dvātriṃśad bodhicittāvahā mahāsukhasthāne sravante/ tāsāṃ madhye tisro nāḍyaḥ pradhānāḥ/ lalanārasanā avadhūtī ceti//*" HT(F) I:1:14. *Sekoddeśa-ṭīkā* of Nāḍa-pāda speaks of five important nerves (instead of the three mentioned in our text), each presided over by the five Tathāgatas. See S. B. Dasgupta, ITB, pp.157-158.

99 "*bhagavān āha/ dvātriṃśad bodhicittāvahā mahāsukhasthāne sravante/ tāsāṃ madhye tisro nāḍyaḥ pradhānāḥ/ lalanārasanā avadhūtī ceti//*" HT(F) I:1:14.

Hindu tantras these three nāḍīs are called *iḍā*, *piṅgalā* and *suṣumnā*, respectively.<sup>100</sup>

*Lalanā* is believed to start from the neck and enter the navel region from the left side. *Rasanā* starts from the navel and enters the neck from the right. Within these two, and passing through the lotus in the heart is the *avadhūtī*.<sup>101</sup> *Avadhūtī* is so called because it is that which destroys all sins through its effulgent nature.<sup>102</sup> The *Muktāvalī* also states that *avadhūtī* is so called because it purges away false views (*vikalpas*).<sup>103</sup> In the Hindu tantras the *suṣumnā*, which passes through the spinal cord, according to some outside it, is believed to be composed of three nāḍīs, *citriṅī* (of the nature of *sattva*), *vajrā* (of the nature of *rajas*) and *suṣumnā* (of the nature of *tamas*). *Suṣumnā* is thought of as a sort of duct, encasing both *vajrā* and *citriṅī* within it,

100 *Suṣumnā* lies within the spinal cord while *iḍā* and *piṅgalā* are outside it and proceed from the left and right sides towards the nasal region, encircling the cakras. According to another view *iḍā* and *piṅgalā* start from the right and left testicles respectively and pass to the left and right of the *suṣumnā*. *Iḍā*, *piṅgalā* and *suṣumnā* are also called Yamunā, Sarasvatī and Ganga respectively. They meet at the root of the penis called *triveṇī*. The first two are the bearers of the two vital winds, *prāṇa* and *apāna*. See S. B. Dasgupta, ITB, pp.154-155.

101 "kaṇḍhāḍārābhya vamenā(a) pravṛtā 'dhomukhī nābhimanḍalagatā mūtravahā āliviṅpātā/ nābherārabhya savyena pravṛtorḍharī(ṛdh)mukhī kaṇḍhaparyantagatā raktavahā kāliviṅpā// madhyamā tu nāḍikā dvayādvaikarūpā 'dhomukhī bodhicittavāhā ...dharmakāya vākcittairūpā shajānandadāyikā etā tisro nāḍika..." *Jñānodaya Tantra*, pp.6-7.

102 "avahelayā anābhogena kleśā-di-pāpānī dhūmoti ity avadhūtī" as quoted in S. B. Dasgupta, ITB, p.158.fn.4.

103 "avadhūtīvīkālpatvād avadhūtī" HT(T), *Muktāvalī*, p.19.

running up to the *sahasrāra* where it has an opening called *brahmarandhra*.<sup>104</sup>

*Lalanā* and *rasanā* are associated with various pairs such as *sūnyatā-karuṣā*, *prajñā-upāya*, *āli-kāli*, Moon-Sun, Left-Right, *grāhya-grāhaka*, etc.<sup>105</sup> The thirty-two nerves are associated with the fifteen yoginīs in our text.<sup>106</sup> As regards the nature of these nāḍīs the text states that they are transformations of the three realms of existence, namely, Body, Speech, and Mind, which encompass all that exists. They are devoid of the duality of subject and object. However they are conceived of as possessing characteristics of phenomenal things.<sup>107</sup> The reason for

104 Ibid., p.154.

105 For details see Ibid., pp.154-155.

*“lalanā prajñāsvabhāvena rasanopāyenasāñsthitā/  
avadhūti madhyadeśe grāhyagrāhakavarjitā//  
akṣobhyāvahā lalanā rasanā raktavāhinī/  
prajñācandrāvahākhyātāvadhūti sā prakṛtitā//”* HT(F) I:1:15-16.

Here we notice a certain flaw in the correspondence. *Lalanā*, which is associated with the feminine, is shown to be the bearer of semen (Akṣobhya); and *rasanā*, which is associated with the masculine, is shown to be the bearer of *rakta* (ova). See also

*“lalanā prajñāsvabhāvena rasanopāyenasāñsthitā  
avadhūti madhyadeśe tu grāhyagrāhakavarjitā  
lalanā sambhogakāyo rasanā nirmāṇikānuḥ  
avadhūti dharmakāyaḥ syāditi kāyatrayo mataḥ”* *Jñānodaya  
Tantram*, pp.10-11.

*“lalanā prajñā-svabhāvena vāma-nāḍī prakṛtitā/  
rasanā co-p āya-rūpeṇa dakṣiṇe samavathitā//”* *Ekalla-vīra-  
caṇḍa-mahāroṣaṇa-tantra*, MS. (R.A.S.B., No. 9089) p.15(A) as  
quoted in S. B. Dasgupta, ITB, p.155.

106 See HT(F) II:4:26-28.

107 *“bhagavān āha/*

conceiving the nāḍīs in such a manner is given by *Yogaratnamālā*: “As a means to attain the Vajradhara state, in order to assist disciples, all these nāḍīs are conceived of as possessing characteristics of phenomenal things. Therefore, particular phenomenal qualities are conceived of in a particular centre as the nature of *Lalanā*, of *Rasanā* and of *Avadhūtī*.”<sup>108</sup>

By associating the nāḍīs with the essentials of Vajrayānic theory and praxis, the centrality of body is once again brought to focus. Everything is to be found within the body and the ultimate goal is to be realised in and through the body (*kāya sādhana*).

### 3.2 Body as the Microcosm

In the tantras, the body is viewed as a microcosm. It is a microcosm because it embodies the truth of the universe.<sup>109</sup> Moreover, the constituents of the universe are identified with parts of the yogin's body. As we have seen the spinal cord, which is called *merudaṇḍa*, is identified with mount Sumeru in the *Śrī-samputikā*. Our text enumerates the names of Pīṭhās and other meeting places (*melāpakasthānāḥ*),<sup>110</sup> which are actually to be found within the yogin's body. Snellgrove points out that,

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*tribhāvaparipatāḥ sarvā grāhyagrāhakavarjitāḥ/  
athavā sarvopāyena bhāvalakṣaṇakalpitāḥ//* HT(F) I:1:21.

108 HT(F), *Yogaratnamālā*, p.14.

109 It is said that Gambopa, the foremost disciple of Milarepa, experienced his body vast as the sky. From the top of his head down to the tip of his toes, his whole body, including all the limbs was full of sentient beings. See Garma C.C. Chang, trans., *The Hundred Thousand Songs of Milarepa*, vol.II., p. 479.

110 See HT(F) I:7:12-18.

They (the commentators - Dharmakīrti and Saroruha)<sup>111</sup> are not interested in these places in the world without. 'These places Jālandhara and so on, are not mentioned for the benefit of simple fools who wander about the country'.... **They are therefore interpreted as symbols for the places within the body**, that is to say, they are external equivalent of that which exists within.<sup>112</sup>

Vajragarbha too holds the view that these external places in the world without where deities dwell, exist internally in the body, in the form of veins.<sup>113</sup> The body is called the *nikāya* (the assembly of the Bhikṣus). The womb is called the *vihāra* (monastery).<sup>114</sup> The three kāyas namely, the *dharmakāya*, *saṃbhogakāya* and the *nirmāṇakāya*, are located within the body in the form of cakras.<sup>115</sup> *Bhagavān*

111 Snellgrove here refers to Dharmakīrti's *Netravibhāṅga* (id.xvii.336a-423a) and Saroruha's *Padminī* (id.xv.142a-194b).

112 HT(S). Part I, p.69. (emphasis added)

113 It should be noted that there is no consensus among the commentators on the list of these meeting places. They assume that there are 32 places on the analogy of 32 veins. However, our text mentions only 24 places. G. Tucci quoted a list of 24 places with 24 equivalent parts of the body. Here no attempt is made to clear the confusion with regard to the number and names of the places. We are interested only in showing that there has been a consistent effort to relate the external places with the body and its components. Saraha stated in one of his verses: "I have visited in my wandering *kṣetra* and *pīṭha* and *upapīṭha*, for I have not seen another place of pilgrimage blissful like my own body." See HT(S). Part I, pp.69-70.

114 "*nikāyaṁ kāyam ity uktam udaraṁ vihāraṁ ucyate*" HT(F) II:4:64.

115 "*trikāyaṁ dehamadhye tu cakrarūpeṣa kathyate*" HT(F) II:4:54. It is often stated that the Buddhist tantras added a fourth *kāya* to the existing *trikāya* system of the *Mahāyāna* tradition. It must be noted that our text does not speak of *Mahāsukha* as a *kāya* but uses the term *cakra* to designate it. It is in *Yogaratnamālā* that

stated that the nāḍīs are all transformations of the three realms of existence (Body, Speech and Mind), which encompass all that exist.<sup>116</sup> The deities such as Amitābha, Vairocana and Vajrasattva, are identified with Body, Speech and Mind respectively. Speech is expressed in the body through the tantric song and the Body finds expression in the tantric dance.<sup>117</sup> In the realm of phenomenal existence body is the substratum of Speech and Mind as well. So within the body the whole existence is experienced and expressed. The whole realm of existence is within the body in the form of the nāḍīs. The fifteen yoginīs who represents the totality of phenomenal existence are identified with the thirty-two nāḍīs.<sup>118</sup> There is no clear

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*Mahāsukha cakra* is called 'the fourth kāya'. Our text is consistent in speaking of the three kāyas (see HT(F) II:4:54-55). *Mahāsukha* is spoken of as the knowledge of the three kāyas. Even *Yogaratanmālā* states, "trayāṅgān pariṅḍānaṁ samatā jīḍānaṁ svābhāvikaḥ kāyaḥ. Sa mahāśukhacakram ity arthaḥ". Again it states, "kāyatrayaśya samvararūpeṇa mahāśukhacakrākāreṇa nirdiśyata ity arthaḥ". However, it also has statements like, "trayāṅgān pariṅḍānaṁ samatā jīḍānaṁ svābhāvikaḥ kāyaḥ. Sa mahāśukhacakram ity arthaḥ." (emphasis added). This may be because the fourth is totally indeterminate. But *Yogaratanmālā* has one expression, "mahāsukhakāyaś caturthaḥ", which speaks of *mahāsukha* as the fourth kāya. See HT(S), Part 2, *Yogaratanmālā*, p.148. S. B. Dasgupta and Snellgrove consider *cakra* and *kāya* as synonymous. But *Hevajra Tantra* seems to be reluctant to call *mahāsukha cakra* as a *kāya*. It always speaks of the first three (*sambhoga*, *dharma* and *nirmāṇa*) as kāyas, and the fourth (*mahāsukha*) as *cakra*.

116 "bhagavān āha/

*tribhāvapariṅḍatāḥ sarvā grāhyagrāhakavarjitāḥ/*  
athavā sarvopāyena bhāvalakṣaṇakalpitaḥ/" HT(F) I:1:21.

117 HT(F) II:4:12-13. See also HT(S), Part I, p.102., fn.3.

118 "kulapaṭale yā nāḍyaḥ kathitā dviṣoḍaśātmikāḥ/  
nāḍīdvayadvayaikaikā yoginyaḥ kramaśo mataḥ/" HT(F) II:4:26.  
See also II:4:27-28; HT(F), *Yogaratanmālā*, p.213.



cut rationale for assigning various cakras or nāḍīs to various aspects of existence; but one thing is clear, that there is the dogmatic assertion of the essential identity of the macrocosm and the microcosm. This relation can be understood only in actual mystic experience, which is the ultimate goal of *tantra*.

#### 4. Body, Speech and Mind

The 'existent being' is characterised by the Aggregate of the Five Components of Phenomenal Awareness or *pañcaskandha*. The commentary quotes *Bhagavān* as saying, "What the wise call the existent being is the Aggregate of the Five Components of the Phenomenal Awareness."<sup>119</sup> When the *pañcaskandhas* are transformed, they become the three Centres, which are the Body, Speech, and Mind.<sup>120</sup> These three Centres are called the three realms of existence, which constitute the entire dharmas (*trayobhavāḥ sarvadharmāḥ*). As we have seen above, the nāḍīs are spoken of as the transformation of these three realms of existence (*tribhāvaparīṣatāḥ*). Body, Speech, and Mind are associated also with the three cakras or kāyas, viz., *nirmāṇakāya*, *saṁbhogakāya*, and *dharmakāya* respectively. The commentary states, "The Body Centre is in the generative organ, the Speech Centre is in the throat and the Mind Centre is in the heart."<sup>121</sup> The unity of these three centres is spoken of as the fourth centre, namely, the *mahāsukhacakra* at the top of the head.<sup>122</sup> Body, Speech, and Mind are called *trayo vajrinaḥ* (the three vajrīs), and their unity is called *tribhavasyaikatā*

119 HT(F), *Yogaratanmālā*, p.7. See also "*sattvaṁ sattvaṁ iti Vipra yuduta pañcaskandhāḥ*" HT(S), Part 2, *Yogaratanmālā*, p.105.

120 HT(F), *Yogaratanmālā*, p.7.

121 HT(F), *Yogaratanmālā*, p.15.

122 See HT(F), *Yogaratanmālā*, p.15.

which is the state of non-duality. *Muktāvalī* states that this state of unity is attained when the seeds of all āsraavadharmas perish and consciousness attains pure bliss. At this state the *ālayavijñāna* attains the state of anāsraavadharmas, devoid of illusory projections, and having the nature of clear light and bliss.<sup>123</sup> The Body, Speech, and Mind are also called the 'secret three' (*triguhyam* or *triguhyasānīhāra*) and are spoken of as located in the centre of the *maṇḍala* in the form of the three goddesses, Bhūcarī (Body), Khecarī (Speech) and Nairātmyā (Mind). Their locations are below, above and middle respectively.<sup>124</sup> The Body, Speech, and Mind are the wombs of the *Vajra Ladies* (Locanā and others) where

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123 "kathanī tasyaikatā? sarvasāsravadharmabijakṣayāt pratiṣṭade-  
habhoganīrbhāsānām vijñānānām nirodhāt kevalavimalānand-  
anabhastalanibhe cittamalatyaktālayavijñānalakṣaṇe anāsra-  
vadhātulakṣaṇa-prāpte śaktulakṣaṇe sarvabuddhadharmabijādḥāre  
nirābhāseṇa prakāśarūpeṇa mahāsukhamaya (tri) bhavasya  
yāvadākāśameva sthānaṁ tribhāvasyaikatā." *Muktāvalī*, p.6.

124 "*bhagavān āha/  
triguhyam cakramadhye tu kāyavākcittabhedataḥ/  
adhorddhvamadhyamaṁ sthānaṁ cakramadhye vyuvasthitam//  
bhūcarī kāyamudrī syād adhomukhī kāyavajriṇī/  
khecarī rāgamudrī ca ūrdhvamukhī vāgvajriṇī/  
cittavajrī ca nairātmyā cittaṁ nairātmyarūpakam/  
cittaṁ madhyamakam sthānaṁ nairātmyā tena madhyajā//*"  
HT(F) II:4: 97-99. (Bhagavān said: The 'Secret Three' are at the  
centre of the Circle, differentiated as the Body, Speech and Mind.  
They are located below, above and in between respectively, being  
situated in the middle of the Circle. Bhūcarī, the Adamantine Body  
goddess, is below and is marked by the Seal of the Body. Khecarī,  
the Adamantine Speech goddess, is above and is marked by the  
Seal of Passion. The Adamantine Mind goddess is Nairātmyā, for  
the mind is the nature of Nairātmyā. Mind is in between, centrally  
placed, and so Nairātmyā arises at the very centre.)

the *Bhagavān* dwells.<sup>125</sup> The *Yogaratanmālā* states, "The Three Secret Centres are wombs of the adamantine goddesses because their bodies are in essence faultless and possess infinite pure natures. The Body, Speech and Mind of all the Buddhas are synonymous with the wombs of these adamantine goddesses is the intent."<sup>126</sup>

Further, the commentary adds that these three centres constitute the form of *Bhagavān* Vajradhara, which is nothing other than the Source of Nature (*dharmodaya*).<sup>127</sup> Vajradhara is the heart, i.e. the essence, of the Body, Speech, and Mind of all the Buddhas (*sarvatathāgatakāyavākcittahṛdayaṁ*), the embodiment of the supreme non-duality. The commentary adds that the most secret of the secret forms of Vajradhara is the *Hevajra*.<sup>128</sup> In our text *Bhagavān* declares that the indivisible unity of these three Centres is the Vajrasattva.<sup>129</sup> It is identical with the *dharmakāya* (*Vajrasattva ity evam kathito dharmakāyo*). The *sādhaka* is to correlate his body, speech and mind to those of the Buddhas. He correlates the body by means of gesture (*mudrā*), speech by means of incantation (*mantra*) and his mind by means of intense

125 "...bhagavān sarvatathāgatakāyavākcittavajrayoṣṭidbhageṣu vijahāra/" HT(F) I:1:1.

126 HT(F), *Yogaratanmālā*, p.4.

127 "...tat ( i.e., kāyavākcittam) punar Bhagavato Vajradharasya rūpaṁ dharmodayākhyam" HT(S), Part 2, *Yogaratanmālā*, p.103.

128 "Bhagavān āha/ kim viśiṣṭam tat sarvatathāgatakāyavākcittahṛdayaṁ sārām vajradharabhaṭṭārakaṁ paramaduivatam ata eva sarvatathāgatānām guhyaṁ Vajradharaḥ/ tasyātiguhyataram śrāvakādīnām aprakāśyatvād Hevajraṁ " HT(S), Part 2, *Yogaratanmālā*, p.104.

129 "bhagavān āha/ abhedyam vajram ity uktam sattvam tribhavyaikatā/ anayā prajñayā yktyā vajrasattva iti smṛtaḥ/" HT(F) I:1:4.

concentration (*samādhi*).<sup>130</sup> *Vajrayāna* perceives that existence is nothing but Body, Speech, and Mind and by making them adamant (vajra) existence itself is transmuted. This is the ultimate goal of tantric *sādhana*.

## 5. Homologous Vision

A 'homologous-vision' of reality is another fundamental aspect of tantric thought and praxis (*yathā bhāyam tathā dhyātmam iti*). By homology we mean 'co-respondence' or similarity in structure, but not necessarily in function, among the co-responding entities. Systematic analogies are found even in the Vedas and the Upaniṣads (e.g. *R̥g-veda*, *Chāndogya Upaniṣad*, *Bṛhadaranyaka Upaniṣad*, *Māṇḍūkya Upaniṣad* etc.). In the Vedas we have the three-fold symbolism of heaven, atmosphere and earth. In the *Māṇḍūkya Upaniṣad* we have the four-fold system of *jāgrat*, *svapna*, *suṣupti* and *tur̥ṅya*. In the *Taittirīya* we find the five-fold co-respondence between the microcosm and the macrocosm.

In the Buddhist tantras and especially in our text we have three-fold, four-fold, five-fold and six fold co-respondences.<sup>131</sup> It is noticed that though there are many numerical categories in early Buddhist thought there is no systematic homology as we have in the Buddhist tantras.<sup>132</sup> Alex Wayman speaks of 'analogical thinking', but analogy is about external similarities. In *tantra* we notice that the

130 Alex Wayman, *The Buddhist Tantras*, p.110.

131 In the *Guhyasamāja tantra* we find five-fold co-respondence based on the five dhyāni Buddhas. In the *Kālacakra* we have six-fold co-respondence due to the addition of the 'knowledge element' to the pañcabhūtas. Commentaries on the *Śrī-cakrasamvara tantra* propose a seven-fold co-respondence. See Alex Wayman, *Yoga of the Guhyasamājatānta*, p.63.

132 Alex Wayman, *The Buddhist Tantras*, pp.30-31.

various elements in the different co-responses do not reveal any such similarity. At times these co-responses are even forced. Hence 'homologies' may be a better term to depict these co-response among the various entities mentioned in the Hevajra Tantra.

Tantric vision is of constant co-response between the external and the internal. There is perfect conformity between the outer rite and the inner one and vice versa. Alex Wayman writes, "One must clear defiled thoughts from a space within the mind and erect the meditative image in this space. In the external maṇḍala-rite, first one drives away the evil spirits from the selected area; in this consecrated space one will draw the maṇḍala."<sup>133</sup>

The external *maṇḍala* is nothing but a representation of the internal *maṇḍala* within the body of the *sādhaka*, which in turn is the blueprint of the Ultimate Reality. This is because of the firm belief in the identity of the microcosm and the macrocosm. It is this identity between the two that serves as the *raison d'être* for all other co-responses. The *maṇḍala*-rites involving abhiṣekas, joys and moments, are all external manifestations of the inner process. For the same reason, whatever is performed symbolically is believed to occur actually as in the case of various rites, especially the fierce rites mentioned in chapter two of our text.<sup>134</sup>

The first kind of co-response we notice in the Hevajra Tantra is the three-fold co-response. There is a

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133 Alex Wayman, *Yoga of the Guhyasamājantra*, p.62.

134 These rites such as the cloud-rending ritual, the chalk ritual for the destruction of one's enemy, ritual for the destruction of the gods, causing sickness, ritual for subduing a young woman etc., involve symbolic rites. What is thus performed symbolically is believed to conform to the result desired.

correspondence between body, speech, and mind of the candidate with the Body, Speech, and Mind of the Buddha. We notice a three-fold pattern in our text incorporating 'the secret three', the three sattvas, the three goddesses, the three locations, the nāḍis etc.<sup>135</sup>

The four-fold co-responses are even more frequent in the Hevajra Tantra. We have a four-fold pattern of Elements, Goddesses, Cakras, and Centres. Similarly there is a pattern among the Four Noble Truths, the Four Principles, the Four Schools, the Four Moments, the Four Joys, the Four Disciples, the Four Vows, the Four Consecrations, the Four Purifications, the Four Brahmavihāras and the Four Māras.<sup>136</sup>

### 135 Three-fold Co-responses:

'Secret 3'	Sattvas	Yoginī	Location	Nāḍis	Biological
Body	<i>Vajrasattva</i>	<i>Bhūcarī</i>	below	<i>Lalanā</i>	Semen
Speech	<i>Mahāsattva</i>	<i>Khecarī</i>	above	<i>Rasanā</i>	Ova
Mind	<i>Samayasattva</i>	<i>Nairātmyā</i>	Middle	<i>Avadhūtī</i>	<i>Bīja</i>
Doctrinal	Cosmical	Sexual	Vocal	Philosophical	Three Worlds
Wisdom	Moon	<i>Padma</i>	<i>Āli</i>	Imagined	<i>Kāmadhātu</i>
Means	Sun	<i>Vajra</i>	<i>Kāli</i>	Contingent	<i>Rūpadhātu</i>
Union	Fire	<i>Śukra</i>	<i>Akṣara</i>	Absolute	<i>Arūpadhātu</i>

Cfr. HT(F) *Yogaratnamālā*, pp.4, 6, 12-13, 238. See also HT(S), Part I, p. 27.

### 136 Four-fold Co-responses:

Doctrinal	Sexual	Elements	Seals	Goddesses	Cakras
<i>E</i>	<i>Bhaga</i>	Earth	<i>Karmamudra</i>	<i>Locanā</i>	<i>Nirmāṇ cakra</i>
<i>Varh</i>	<i>Kuliśa</i>	Water	<i>Dharmamudra</i>	<i>Māmakī</i>	<i>Dharma cakra</i>
<i>Ma</i>	Activation	Fire	<i>Mahāmudra</i>	<i>Pāṇḍarā</i>	<i>Sañbhoga cakra</i>
<i>Ya</i>	Innate	Air	<i>Samayamudra</i>	<i>Tāriṇī</i>	<i>Mahāsukha cakra</i>

Cfr. HT(F). *Yogaratnamālā*, pp. 5, 222.



In the Hevajra Tantra we also find Five-fold co-responses. We have a five-fold pattern involving the five Buddha families, the five Seals of the Families, the Five *Dhyāni* Buddhas, the Five Defects, the Five Yoginīs, the Five Skandhas, the Five Elements and the Five Ornaments. We also have a five-fold co-response based on the five aspects of sexual Union.<sup>137</sup>

Noble Truths	Tattvas	Schools	Moments	Joys	Fruits
<i>Dukha</i>	<i>Āmatattva</i>	<i>Sthāvari</i>	Diverse	Ordinary	Corresponding
<i>Samudaya</i>	<i>Mantratattva</i>	<i>Sarvāstivāda</i>	Ripening	Refined	Matured
<i>Niroda</i>	<i>Devatattva</i>	<i>Samvidi</i>	Dissolving	Cessation	Personal striving
<i>Mārga</i>	<i>Jñānatattva</i>	<i>Mahāsaṅghi</i>	Signless	Innate	Pure

Cfr. HT(F), *Yogaratnamālā*, pp. 16-17, 182, 223, 225.

Disciples	Vows	Consecration	Purifications	Brahmavihāras	Māras
Weak	Differentiated	Master	Smile	Friendliness	<i>Skandhanāra</i>
Medium	Undifferentiated	Secret	Gaze	Compassion	<i>Kleśanāra</i>
Strong	Extremely Undifferentiated.	Wisdom	Embrace	Joyfulness	<i>Mṛtyunāra</i>
Strongest	No Vow	Fourth	Union	Detachment	<i>Devaputranāra</i>

Cfr. HT(F), *Yogaratnamālā*, pp. 69, 37, 116, 183.

### 137 Five-fold Co-responses:

Families	Seals	Dhyāni Buddhas	Defects	Yoginīs
Vajra	Ḍombī	Akṣobhya	Dveṣa	Nairātmyā
Tathāgata	Brāhmaṇī	Vairocana	Moha	Vajrā
Ratnā	Caṇḍālī	Ratneśa	Paiśūnya	Gaurī
Padmā	Nartī	Amitābha	Rāga	Vāriyoginī
Karma	Rajakī	Amoghasiddhi	Irśya	Vajradākinī

Lastly, we have a few six-fold co-responses mentioned in the Hevajra Tantra. We notice a co-response between the six families and the six senses. There is also a co-response between the six sensations and the six Yoginīs. There is also a co-response

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Skandhas	Elements	Ornaments
<i>Vijñāna</i>	Water	Circlet
<i>Rūpa</i>	Earth	Bracelet
<i>Vedana</i>	Space	Necklace
<i>Sanjñā</i>	Fire	Ear-rings
<i>Sarīskāra</i>	Air	Girdle.

Cfr. HT(F), *Yogaratnamālā*, pp.53-54, 65, 114, 117, 174-175.

### Five –fold Co-response Based on the Five Aspects of Sexual Union

Aspects	Experiences	Elements	Defects	Dhyāni Buddhas
Contact	Hardness	Earth	Delusion	Vairocana
Fluid	Fluidity	Water	Wrath	Akṣobhya
Pounding	Friction	Fire	Passion	Amitābha
Motion	Movement	Air	Envy	Amoghasiddhi
Pleasure	Impassioned State.	Space	Malignity	Ratneśa.

Cfr. HT(F), *Yogaratnamālā*, pp.174-175.

### Co-response Based on the Five Aspects of Enlightened Awareness

Aspect	Awareness
Moon	Mirror-like Awareness
Sun	Awareness of Equanimity
Seed-syllable & Symbols	Differentiated Awareness
Unity of these	Awareness of Performance
Form of the Deity	Awareness of the Pure Nature. Cfr. HT(F), <i>Yogaratnamālā</i> , pp. 43, 86.

between the six realms of existence, their predominant experiences and the lords of each of them.<sup>138</sup>

It seems to be a pre-occupation with the tantric masters to establish co-responses among the various aspects of the doctrine and praxis. Certain co-responses, no doubt, are forced and arbitrary. Neither the text nor the commentators furnish any reason for associating one element with another, and not with a third one. Probably the reasons are extra-rational or intuitive and a fact of meditative experience. We see an attempt at resolving some

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### 138 Six-fold Co-responses:

Families	Senses
Citta	Eye
Śāśvata	Ear
Ratneśa	Nose
Vāgīśa	Tongue
Amogha	Body
Sāttvika	Mind.

Cfr. HT(F),  
*Yogaratnamālā*, pp.54, 111.

Sensations	Goddesses
Form	Gauri (II)
Sound	Caurī
Smell	Vetāli
Flavour	Ghasmarī
Touch	Bhūcarī
Thought	Khecarī

Cfr. HT(F),  
*Yogaratnamālā*, pp.115-116.

Propensities	Lords
Wrath	Akṣobhya
Delusion	Vairocana
Malignity	Ratnasambhava
Passion	Amitābha
Envy	Amoghasiddhi
Bliss	Vajrasattva

Cfr. HT(F),  
*Yogaratnamālā*, pp.230, 239.

of the contradictions involved in these co-responses in the Hevajra Tantra where Vajragarbha raises his objections to the Seals assigned to the different families, and are answered by the *Bhagavān*.<sup>139</sup> This enterprise seems to demonstrate the tantric doctrine of the identity of the microcosm with the macrocosm, or the psycho-somatic with the cosmic. Contradictions become visible only when one approaches it with concepts and categories. Since everything is essentially essence-less (*śūnya*) everything co-responds to everything else, or better, there is no co-response at all.

## Conclusion

The tantric insight that the Ultimate Reality is bi-polar is fundamental to *Vajrayāna*. The Vajrayānist tries to relate the two aspects of the Absolute (*prajñā* and *upāya*) with the Mahāyānic principles of *śūnyatā* and *karuṇā*. The union of *prajñā* and *upāya* (*yuganaddha*) is called *bodhicitta*. In *Vajrayāna*, *śūnyatā*, *karuṇā* and *bodhicitta* assume sexual connotations in true tantric spirit. The first two are conceived as female and male, and their union is likened to sexual union. *Bodhicitta* is understood in two ways, viz., the absolute, and the relative. From the absolute point of view, it is non-dual consciousness, as in *Yogācāra*, and from the relative point of view it is the fusion of the female and male reproductive quintessences.

The same bi-polarity within the Absolute is internalised as the *nāḍīs*, *lalanā*, *rasanā*, and their union as *avadhūtī*. They form the essence of the subtle tantric physiology. So far *śūnyatā*, *karuṇā* and *bodhicitta* have been considered in terms of the Body, gross and subtle. Now, these same notions are considered in terms of Speech

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<sup>139</sup> See HT(F) II:4:81-90.

as *āli*, *kāli* and their union as *akṣara*, respectively. In terms of the Mind, they are visualised as the Female and Male Deities, Nairātmyā and Hevajra, and their union resulting in *mahāsukha*.

The centrality of the body is another mark of Vajrayānic insight. The body is the microcosm, the abode of all truth. It is within the body that the entire universe is located, discovered, and experienced. The insight that the Absolute is *mahāsukha* is fundamental to Vajrayānic thought and praxis, and as such it can be experienced only within the body. Once the Absolute is realised, all aspects of existence appears as one homologous vision. The enlightened one discovers that everything corresponds to everything else in an inexplicable manner. This vision is not the result of ratiocination but of an intuitive experience.

## CHAPTER 5

# FUNDAMENTAL TOOLS OF VAJRAYĀNA

After having analysed the theoretical foundations of *Vajrayāna*, we shall discuss its praxis in chapters five and six. In this chapter we attempt to elucidate some of the fundamental instruments of Vajrayānic praxis, which we would term, 'Fundamental Tools of *Vajrayāna*'. The more important ones among these tools are *Maṇḍala*, *Deity*, *Mantra*, and *Guru*. They are tools in the sense that they are instrumental to the process of re-integration of the *sādhaka*, as we shall discover in the forthcoming discussion. These tools may also be viewed as visual and sonic embodiments of the essential doctrines of *Vajrayāna*. They aid the *sādhaka* on his spiritual journey towards the realisation of the ultimate goal of re-integration.

### 1. The Maṇḍala

*Maṇḍala* is a harmonious and symmetrical network of archetypal forms placed in a circle around one central figure, generally a *dhyāni* Buddha. It represents the dynamic totality of the enlightened mind in all its various dimensions,<sup>1</sup> and is at the same time an aid in the

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1 Alex Kennedy, *Buddhist Vision: An Introduction to the Theory and Practice of Buddhism* (London: Rider & Co., 1985; Reprint 1994), p.181.



meditative process of re-integration. The word 'maṇḍala' means a circle, wheel, circumference, a totality, assembly, or literary corpus.<sup>2</sup> It may be analysed as 'maṇḍa', which means an 'inner content', held secure by an enclosing element 'la'.<sup>3</sup> Similarly, in his *Śrī - Buddhakapālatantrapāñjika-jñānavatī*, Saraha points out that 'maṇḍa' signifies 'essence' and 'la' means 'seizing' that. So *maṇḍala* means 'seizing the essence' or an 'enclosure of essence'.<sup>4</sup> *Yogaratanmālā* endorses this analysis (*maṇḍalaśabdaḥ sārāparyāyaḥ*).<sup>5</sup> The Sanskrit root verb 'mal' means 'to bear' or 'to hold', and *maṇḍala* is so called because it bears (*malanān maṇḍalam ucyate/ mala malla dhāraṇe*).<sup>6</sup> *Yogaratanmālā* also states, that 'maṇḍam' means 'essence', that is, Great Blissful Knowledge, and 'lāti' means 'to possess' it.<sup>7</sup>

The *Hevajra Tantra* employs terms like Circle (*cakraṁ*), Principal Abode, and Citadel of Great Liberation as synonyms for *maṇḍala*.<sup>8</sup> It defines *maṇḍala* as that which bears the essence, the Great Bliss of Enlightened

2 In *Anuvoga* and *Atyoga* we find the expression 'three *maṇḍala*' which refers to the buddha-body, buddha-speech and buddha-mind. *Maṇḍala* also indicates the central and peripheral or inner and outer deities of a tantric text. Graham Coleman, ed., *A Handbook of Tibetan Culture*, p. 342.

3 Alex Wayman, *Yoga of the Guhyasamāja Tantra*, p. 122.

4 F. D. Lessing and Alex Wayman, trans., *Introduction to the Buddhist Tantric Systems*, p. 270, fn.1.

5 HT(S) Part 2, *Yogaratanmālā*, p.144.

6 HT(S) Part 2, *Yogaratanmālā*, p.118.

7 HT(F), *Yogaratanmālā*, p.59. See also

"mahāsukhasya dhāraṇān maṇḍalam ucyate." HT(S) Part 2, *Yogaratanmālā*, p.118.

"...maṇḍalaṁ sārāṁ ity uktāṁ bodhicittaṁ mahat sukham ādānan tat karotiti maṇḍalaṁ malanāṁ matam"// HT(F) II:3:26.

8 HT(F), *Yogaratanmālā*, p.83.

Consciousness.<sup>9</sup> The text clearly declares that, “the *maṇḍala* is indeed the manifestation of the great bliss that is known in the *Mahāmudrā* consecration, for nowhere else than from this consecration does the *maṇḍala* originate.”<sup>10</sup> In our text, the term ‘*maṇḍala*’ also signifies the body of the deity as well as the body of the *yogī*.<sup>11</sup>

From the religious point of view, it is the colourfully drawn out, or constructed, site for worshipping the deity. It is essentially a spot or ground (circle or square in shape) marked out and ceremonially prepared in honour of a Buddha or a saint (for him to sit on), or for the performance of a sacred rite.<sup>12</sup> It is consecrated to render it safe from possible hostile influences on the performance of religious rites. It is into this site that the divinity is summoned during the *maṇḍala* rites. Hence a *maṇḍala* is the centre of sovereignty and power, which is indicated by the presentation of the *maṇḍala* as a fortified royal palace with walls and gates.<sup>13</sup>

Our text speaks of two kinds of *maṇḍalas*, the Foundation *Maṇḍala* (*ādhāramaṇḍala*) and the Supported Retinue *Maṇḍala* (*ādheyamaṇḍala*).<sup>14</sup> Another

9 “mahāsukhasya dhāraṇān maṇḍalam ucyate” HT(S) Part 2, *Yogaratnamālā*, p.118.

10 “mahāmudrābhīṣeṣu yathājñātaṁ mahat sukham/ tasyaiva tatprabhāvaḥ syān maṇḍalaṁ nānyasaṁbhavam/” HT(F) II:2:30.

11 HT(F), *Yogaratnamālā*, p.300.

12 Franklin Edgerton, *Buddhist Hybrid Sanskrit Grammar and Dictionary*, vol. II., (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1970), 415-416.

13 David Snellgrove, *Buddhist Himalaya* ((Oxford: Bruno Cassirer, 1957), p.287..fn.19.

14 HT(F), *Yogaratnamālā*, p.83. Alex Wayman speaks of *ādhāramaṇḍala* as the *maṇḍala* of residence (i.e., the palace and the seats for the gods) and the *ādheyamaṇḍala* as the *maṇḍala* of

classification of the *maṇḍala* is into the *maṇḍala* of the Diamond Realm (*vajradhātu-maṇḍala*) and the *maṇḍala* of the Nature Realm (*dharmadhātu-maṇḍala*). The former is related to the *dharma-kāya* and is considered inexpressible, while the latter is related to the *sambhoga-kāya* and is expressible.<sup>15</sup> The *Guhyasamāja Tantra* mentions three kinds of *maṇḍalas*, namely *bhaga-maṇḍala*, *bodhicitta-maṇḍala*, and *deha-maṇḍala*.<sup>16</sup> Ācārya Vajraghaṇṭa speaks of four types of *maṇḍalas*: those made of powdered colours, those painted on textiles, those formed by meditation, and the body.<sup>17</sup> The Mahāsiddhas are of the opinion that the *maṇḍala* of powdered colours is better than the painted ones, especially for the initiation rites. Meditation *maṇḍala* is for the disciple of keen sense organs and firm conviction. And the Body *maṇḍala* is used only by those who have first obtained initiation in an external *maṇḍala* of powdered colours or that painted on some textile.<sup>18</sup>

### 1.1 The Description of a *Maṇḍala*

The *maṇḍala* is an intricate work of geometric designs, symbols, figures, and objects, arrayed in a definite pattern. The external *maṇḍala* is made, either of powdered colours upon a purified surface consecrated with appropriate rites, or painted on cloth. The drawing of a *maṇḍala* is a laborious and meticulous task, because an error or

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residents (i.e., group of gods who take their places in that palace). See Alex Wayman, *Yoga of the Guhyasamāja Tantra*, p. 122.

15 Alex Wayman, *The Buddhist Tantras*, p. 92.

16 "bhagaṃ maṇḍalamākhyātaṃ bodhicittaṃ ca maṇḍalan/  
dehaṃ maṇḍalamityuktaṃ triṣu maṇḍalakaḷpanā//"  
*Guhyasamāja Tantra*, XVIII: 99.

17 F. D. Lessing and Alex Wayman, trans., *Introduction to the Buddhist Tantric Systems*, p. 271.

18 *Ibid.*, p. 273.

oversight or omission would render the whole exercise useless.<sup>19</sup>

Ratnākaraśānti's statements on how one should contemplate a *maṇḍala*, gives us an idea of the essential limbs of a *maṇḍala*.<sup>20</sup> Giuseppe Tucci gives us more details in his celebrated work, *The Theory and Practice of the Maṇḍala*. The *maṇḍala* is visualised in space, which is depicted as blue sky. It is encircled by a concentric circle or circles. The first circle is a circle of fire, which represents consciousness that burns away ignorance. Then there is a circle of *vajra*, which symbolises the Absolute Essence or cosmic consciousness.<sup>21</sup> This is followed, especially in the

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19 It is not because of the absence of a particular word or deed but because such an omission is a sign of inattention, lack of concentration and absorption. Attention and absorption are the essential psychological conditions, which produce in the *sādhanā* the process of redemption. Attention is to be paid to such details as the quality of the thread used, the number of strands that the thread is composed of, the colour and the measurement of this thread, the purificatory rites for each implement used in the rite etc. See Giuseppe Tucci, *The Theory and Practice of the Maṇḍala*, Alan Houghton Brodrick trans., (London: Rider & Company, 1961), p. 37.

20 "adhō vajramayīṅ bhūmīṅ tiryag vajraprākāram upari vajrapaṅjarāṅ madhye ghorasṃśānaṅ vibhāvya." Ratnākaraśānti's *Mahāmāyāsādhanā* (*Sādhanamālā*, No.239). (one should contemplate below a spot of earth made of diamond; across, a diamond enclosure; above, a tent; in the middle, a dreadful burning ground). "tanmadhye kūṭāgārāṅ ekapuṅṅ sarvaratnamayaṅ paśyet - caturaśraṅ caturdvāraṅ catustoraṅabhūṣitam/ hārādyair apsarobhūṣ ca bhāsvad vedīcatuṣṭayam//"  
(In the midst of that, one should visualise a palace with a single courtyard and made entirely of jewels with four corners, four gates, decorated with four arches having four altars, and radiant with nets and so on, and with nymphs). as quoted in Alex Wayman, *The Buddhist Tantras*, pp. 82-83.

21 Giuseppe Tucci, *The Theory and Practice of the Maṇḍala*, p. 39.

maṇḍalas dedicated to the wrathful deities, by a circle containing eight graveyards, which represents the eight aspects of the individual and individuating cognitions (vijñānas)<sup>22</sup> which have been destroyed. After the circle containing the graveyards, there is a circle of lotus leaves signifying spiritual rebirth.<sup>23</sup>

Beyond the concentric circles we have the *maṇḍala* proper. It consists of a palace (*vimāna*) within a square courtyard. The square enclosure is cut by transversal lines, which start from the centre and reach the four corners dividing the square into four triangles. In the centre of the square we have the figure of the principal deity of the *maṇḍala*. Similarly, in the centre of each of the four triangles there are certain emblems, or figures, of divinities.<sup>24</sup> It is a representation of the palace of the Akaniṣṭha-heaven<sup>25</sup> where the Buddha resides in his *saṁbhogakāya*. Within the palace, the principal deity, Vairocana, occupies the centre, and the other deities are placed in the four cardinal points. In the East there is Akṣobhya, in the South Ratnasambhava, in the West

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22 These eight aspects are the eight vijñānas spoken of by the Yogācārins constituted of the six viśaya-vijñānas, (i.e., the five external and one internal pravṛtti-vijñānas), the *kliṣṭa manas* and the *Ālaya-vijñāna*. These eight vijñānas bring about *saṁsāra*. The eight graveyards represent the destruction of these vijñānas.

23 Giuseppe Tucci, *The Theory and Practice of the Maṇḍala*, pp. 40-42.

24 *Ibid.*, pp. 39,42.

25 According to the *Mahāyāna* tradition the Akaniṣṭha heaven is at the top of the world at the limit of the 'pure abodes' of the 'Realm of form' where Gautama was initiated as a complete Buddha with the body called *saṁbhogakāya*. This *saṁbhogakāya* teaches the Bodhisattvas of the Tenth stage. *Maṇḍala* constitutes the re-establishment of this heavenly abode. See Alex Wayman, *The Buddhist Tantras*, p.91.

Amitābha, and in the North Amoghasiddhi.<sup>26</sup> Besides these deities there are numerous other figures of Buddhas, Bodhisattvas, Goddesses, and Guardian deities, depending on the type of *maṇḍala*. The *vimāna* is protected by a wall covering the four sides, in the middle of each side there is a T shaped gate. Each gate is guarded by a guardian deity (*dvārapālaka*). Above the gates there are *toraṇa*, a sort of triumphal arch, resting on two or more lateral pillars.<sup>27</sup> The area between the *vimāna* and the concentric circle contains things like fluttering banners, nets and half-nets, the eight posts and the eight flasks and the five offerings. Here we have only the barest description of what a *maṇḍala* is. The actual *maṇḍala* is more intricate than that described above, and contains many designs and figures replete with precise meanings; but space does not permit us to go into details.

## 1.2 Symbolic meaning of the *Maṇḍala*

The circle of fire represents the transformation of every particle of our being. The circle of diamond (*vajra*) represents the fierce determination and unshakeable commitment to realise the goal. The circle of lotus suggests the growth from the grosser to a finer level, that is, purification and spiritual rebirth.<sup>28</sup> *Sarvarahasyanāmantantrarāja* explains that the palace (*vimāna*) symbolises

26 For details see Alex Kennedy, *The Buddhist Vision*, pp.182-188.

27 Each *torāṇa* has eleven little roofs, one upon the other and each shorter than the previous one. On top of this arch is perched a disc with the twelve-spoked Wheel of the Law. To the right and left of it there are two gazelles suggesting the preaching of the first sermon of the Śakyamuni at the Deer Park at Sāranāth. The wheel contains also an umbrella, insignia of royalty and its sides are ornamental streamers in vases. Giuseppe Tucci, *The Theory and Practice of the Maṇḍala*, p. 43.

28 Alex Kennedy, *The Buddhist Vision*, p.182.



knowledge (*jñāna*) or consciousness. The four outer corners signify sameness of knowledge (*samatā-jñāna*). The four lines signify the mind of *maitri* etc. (i.e. friendliness, compassion, sympathetic joy and impartiality which are collectively called the four brahma-vihāras).<sup>29</sup> The two commentarial traditions, of Buddhajñānapāda and the tantric Nāgārjuna based on the *Guhyasamāja* cycle, explain that the four gates of the *maṇḍala* stand for the excellence by way of mindfulness (*smṛti*) and faculty (*indriya*).<sup>30</sup> The four arches are the four dhyānas.<sup>31</sup> The fluttering banners of eight different colours, the tinkling bells which are collectively called the nine-fold miscellany (*prakīrṇa*), stand for the nine-divisions of scripture. The net (*hāra*), half-net (*ardha-hāra*), mirror, and the flower-garland stand for the seven ancillaries of enlightenment (the seven bodhy-aṅgas or sambodhy-aṅgas).<sup>32</sup> The eight decorated posts, two at each gate, stand for the purity of the eight liberations. The eight flasks are the eight siddhis. The

29 For a discussion on the four brahma-vihāras see Har Dayal, *The Bodhisattva Doctrine in Buddhist Sanskrit Literature*, pp. 153-154; 172-193; 225-229.

30 The four stations of mindfulness are *kāya-smṛty-upasthāna*, *vedana-smṛty-upasthāna*, *citta-smṛty-upasthāna* and *dharmasmṛty-upasthāna*. For details see *Ibid.*, pp. 82-101. Mindfulness implies the four stations of mindfulness (*smṛty-upasthānas*) (see *Ibid.*, p. 82-101), the four right elimination-exertions (*samyak-prahāṅāni*) (see *Ibid.*, p.103), and the four bases of magical powers (*Ṛddhi-pādas*) (see *Ibid.*, p.106). The western gate represents the four stations of mindfulness and the four bases of magical powers; the southern gate the four right elimination-exertions; the Northern gate the one-pointed-*samādhi*, the five faculties (*indriya*) and the five powers (*bala*) involved therein (see *Ibid.*, p.141-149). Preliminary to all the rest is, faith (*śraddha*), which is the Eastern gate.

31 The four dhyānas, see *Ibid.*, pp. 229-236.

32 The seven Bodhy-aṅgas, see *Ibid.*, pp. 149-155.

birds on the various arches stand for the purity of passions. The five offerings, flowers, incense, lamp, perfume, and food, represent the *dharmadhātu*.<sup>33</sup> These interpretations show that the various parts of the *maṇḍala* symbolise the various aspects of the *Mahāyāna* tradition.

### 1.3 The *Maṇḍala* in the Hindu *Tantras*

In this discussion on *maṇḍala* in the Buddhist *tantra* a note on the *maṇḍala* in Hindu *tantra* is in order. The Hindu *tantras* employ a linear paradigm of the *maṇḍala* called the *Yantra*. The best example of the *yantra* is the *Śrī-cakra*, the wheel of *Śrī* or *Śakti*. It is constituted of four isosceles triangles with their apexes upward, and five others with their apexes downwards. The four upward facing triangles symbolise *Śiva* and the five downward facing triangles indicate the quintuple aspect of *Śakti*.<sup>34</sup> These triangles are of various sizes; and they intersect each another. In the middle of these triangles is a point (*bindu*), the mysterious matrix. These triangles are surrounded, first, by a circle on which are drawn eight petals which symbolise the mystical lotus of creation. Then, there is another circle of sixteen petals. After that a three fold circular girdle fitted into a square with four openings toward the four cardinal points. At the centre of the *yantra* there is a vase, filled with pure, perfumed water, containing various ingredients, into which the deity is believed to descend. A notable difference between the Hindu and the Buddhist *maṇḍalas* is that in the

33 Alex Wayman, *The Buddhist Tantras*, pp. 84-86.

34 The nine triangles express the process of divine expansion, the process of the One becoming Many. See Giuseppe Tucci, *The Theory and Practice of the Maṇḍala*, pp.137-138.

former geometric designs predominate and there is no image of any deity.<sup>35</sup>

#### 1.4 The *Maṇḍala* of Hevajra

The *maṇḍala* of Hevajra has all the common features of a Buddhist *maṇḍala*. It is presented as a square with four doors adorned with garlands, chains, and adamantine threads.<sup>36</sup> In chapter ten of the first part of the *Hevajra Tantra*, the *Bhagavān* describes the *maṇḍala* more elaborately.

Thus the Lord said: The *maṇḍala* comprises of a blazing square with four brilliant doors. It is adorned with garlands and chains, and has flowing plumes of many colours. It is resplendent with eight pillars, has *vajra* threads and is decorated with flowers of many kinds. Incense, lamps, and perfumes are there. In the *maṇḍala* there are eight jars which have branches in them and a piece of cloth is tied around each of their necks. The Victory Jar containing the five precious objects should be offered in the east. Assuming the nature of one's own chosen deity draw the *maṇḍala* with a beautiful, new thread that is well made and of right length.<sup>37</sup>

The eight ritual pots (jars or vases) have five lines drawn on each of them. These pots symbolise the eight retinue-goddesses. The size of the *maṇḍala* is indicated as three cubits and three-thumb width long. It is to be drawn

35 Giuseppe Tucci, *The Theory and Practice of the Maṇḍala*, pp. 46-47.

36 "cakraṁ pūrvaṁ yathā kathitaṁ hārārdhahāraśobhitam/  
catuskoṣaṁ caturdvāraṁ vajrasūtrair alaṅkṛtam/" HT(F) II:5:6.

37 HT(F) I:10:19-22.

with divine powder, or with powder of medium quality made from the five gems<sup>38</sup> (*pañcaratnamaya cūrṇa*), or else with the powder made from rice grains etc.<sup>39</sup>

The *maṇḍala* has a large number of symbols drawn in it. They represent the principal deity Hevajra, and his retinue of eight-goddesses<sup>40</sup> who occupy the eight directions.<sup>41</sup> In the middle of the *maṇḍala*, a lotus is drawn with eight petals and a pericap. A white skull with a crossed *vajra* is drawn on the pericap of the lotus; it represents Hevajra.<sup>42</sup> On the north-eastern petal we find a lion, (the symbol of Pukkasī); the south-eastern a monk (Śavarī); in the south-western a disc (Caṇḍālī) and in the north-western a *vajra* (Ḍombī). In the eastern petal there is a knife (Gaurī); in the southern a hand-drum (Caurī); in the western a tortoise (Veṭālī) and in the northern a snake (Ghasmarī). In certain cases these goddesses are represented by other symbols.<sup>43</sup> This shows that the deities

38 The five gems (*pañcaratnāni*) are coral, pearl, diamond, gold and silver. HT(F), *Yogaratanmālā*, p.130. In another part of the text the powder made of the five gems is considered as the powder of superior quality. Powder made of rice and so on is called powder of medium quality and the powder of lowest quality is made out of bricks or charcoal from the cremation ground. See HT(F) II:5:50-51.

39 HT(F) I:10:4.

40 See HT(F) II:5:8-9. See also II:5:30-33.

41 See HT(F) II:5:13-18.

42 In the sixteen-armed form of Hevajra he is presented with a necklace of human heads and with a crossed *vajra* on his head. See HT(F) II:5:8-9.

43 HT(F) II:5:52-55. In one of the textual descriptions of Heruka (*Abhidhānottara*) he has been characterised as embodying a host of *ḍākinīs* (*ḍākinīkuladhāriṇī*). Symbolically, each *ḍākinī* possesses a non-human head, either of an elephant, or a camel, or a cow, or a lion, or a dog, or a owl, or a pig or a hawk. Again in *Aparājita-prcchā* we find eight dik-kṣetrapālas that have faces,

are to be understood in their symbolic significance and not as idols.

The description of the *Hevajra maṇḍala* in the *Niṣpannayogāvalī* is more elaborate. In the first three forms of the Hevajra,<sup>44</sup> the inner circle of the *maṇḍala* is occupied by eight deities beginning with Vajraraudrī. In the second circle, Vaṁśā, Vīṇā, Mukundā and Murajā occupy the four corners. At the four gates there are Vajrāṅkuṣī, Vajrapāśī, Vajrasphoṭā and Vajraghaṇṭā. The description of the *maṇḍala* of the sixteen-armed Hevajra is similar to that given in our text except that *Niṣpannayogāvalī* mentions also the four deities at the four gates of the *maṇḍala*, viz., Hayāsyā, Śūkarasyā, Śvānāsyā and Simhāsyā.<sup>45</sup> A discussion on the significance of the deities will be taken up at a later stage.

### 1.5 The *Maṇḍala* of Nairātmyā

Nairātmyā, one of the goddesses emanating from Akṣobhya, is blue in colour, and partakes of his fierce nature.<sup>46</sup> The only benign forms among the goddesses of Akṣobhya family are Prajñāpāramitā and Vasudhārā. We have a description of the *maṇḍala* of Nairātmyā in the

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either of a human being, or a cat, or a lion, or a dog, or a bull, or an ass, or an elephant or a crow. K. Krishna Murthy, *Iconography of the Buddhist Deity Heruka* (Delhi: Sundeep Prakashan, 1988), p.48.

44 The first three forms of Hevajra are the Hevajra in his two-armed form (HT(F) I:3:15), in the four-armed form (HT(F) I:3:17) and in the six-armed form with three faces (HT(F) I:3:18). The fourth form is the sixteen-armed form with eight faces (HT(F) II:5:8-12).

45 Benoytosh Bhattacharyya, ed., *Niṣpannayogāvalī*, p.15.

46 For details on these goddesses see Benoytosh Bhattacharyya, *The Indian Buddhist Iconography*, pp. 189-205.

*Niṣpannayogāvalī*.<sup>47</sup> At the centre of the *maṇḍala* we have Nairātmyā. Surrounding her in the first circle are three other goddesses Vajrā, Gaurī and Vajradākinī. In our text we find that Vāriyoginī is added to the three mentioned above, and so there are four goddesses in the first circle that surrounds Nairātmyā.<sup>48</sup> In the second circle we have Gaurī(II), Caurī, Veṭālī and Ghasmāri in the four directions, and in the four corners we have, Pukkasī, Śabarī, Caṇḍālī and Ḍombī. These eight goddesses are the same as those of the *Hevajra maṇḍala* mentioned above. In addition to these, Khecarī is placed above and Bhūcarī is placed below.<sup>49</sup> There are other four deities in the four corners beginning with Varṁśā. *Niṣpannayogāvalī* mentions also the names of the deities occupying the four gates in the four cardinal points, as Hayāsyā, Śūkarāsyā, Śvānāsyā and Simhāsyā; but, they are not mentioned in our text. Here again we find close affinity with the *maṇḍala* of Hevajra. But our text speaks of the *maṇḍala* of Nairātmyā as composed of only fifteen yoginīs.

## 1.6 The Body as a *Maṇḍala*

So far we have spoken of the external *maṇḍala*, which is either of powdered colours or painted on cloth. Now we shall discuss the body itself as a *maṇḍala*. In meditation, particularly in tantric visualisation, the *yogin* conceives his body as the *maṇḍala* wherein the deities reside. This is called the internal *maṇḍala*. "My body is the Holy *maṇḍala* itself, wherein reside the Buddhas of all Times,"<sup>50</sup> declared

47 See Benoytosh Bhattacharyya, ed., *Niṣpannayogāvalī*, pp. 16-17.

48 See H T(F) I:8:12; I:9:9-13.

49 See also HT(F) I:8:13-14; I:9:9-13.

50 Garma C. C. Chang, trans., *The Hundred Thousand Songs of Milarepa*, vol. II, p. 507.



Milarepa in one of his songs. The *maṇḍala* as we have seen is a map of the universe. The body is analogous with the universe and contains within itself all the deities that is, the external *maṇḍala* is transferred to the internal *maṇḍala*, namely the body. The pivot of this internal *maṇḍala* is the *brahmarandhra*,<sup>51</sup> the opening of the *avadhūti* at the crown of the head. The principal deities, who are the pañcaskandhas, the ultimate constituents of the universe, find their abode in the cakras of the psychic body.

The *maṇḍala* as a tool for re-integration is brought out clearly through the union of the *yogin* and the *yoginī* in the external *maṇḍala* ritual. But when the body itself is visualised as the *maṇḍala*, the *yogin* and the *yoginī* are identified with the two *nāḍīs lalanā* and *rasanā*, and their union with *avadhūti*. The essential identity of the microcosm and macrocosm, which is now signified by the external *maṇḍala*, takes place within the body of the *yogin*. It is there that the union of Wisdom and Means is attained.<sup>52</sup>

The internal process towards this union involves certain breathing techniques by which the *yogin* controls and stills his breath and induces the psychic energies that flow in the two *nāḍīs* to unite at the base of the central *nāḍī*. This union corresponds to sexual union. The psychic energies in the two *nāḍīs* are conceived as *rakta* and *śūkra*. Their union generates *bodhicitta*, which is raised up in the central *nāḍī*; and as it passes through the four psychic centres (cakras), it pervades the whole body with bliss. The rise of the *bodhicitta* in the central *nāḍī* is considered as the blazing of Caṇḍālī who arises from the navel *cakra* to meet

51 Giuseppe Tucci, *The Theory and Practice of the Maṇḍala*, pp.108-109.

52 David Snellgrove, *Buddhist Himalaya*, p. 88.

her lord at the the crown *cakra*.<sup>53</sup> Thus the body of the *yogin* becomes the internal *maṇḍala* where the internal *yoga*, or union of the two aspects, takes place.

### 1.7 The Significance of the *Maṇḍala*

G. Tucci calls *maṇḍala*, a cosmogram.<sup>54</sup> It is employed to illustrate the structure of existence. Through an array of peaceful and wrathful deities, symbols and designs, it symbolises the universe, and equally the human body, which is nothing but the universe in miniature. It portrays the cosmic processes of the disintegration of the One<sup>55</sup> into the multiplicity of things represented by the images of deities, and the later re-integration of all multiplicity, the most basic of which is the subject-object duality. According to Tucci, *maṇḍala*, "...represents in a complex and symbolical fashion, this drama of disintegration and reintegration..."<sup>56</sup> It is a map of the cosmos, the essential plan of the universe in its process of emanation and reabsorption; and making use of this scheme the initiate attains the liberating psychological experience.

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53 Ibid., pp. 88-89.

54 *Maṇḍala* as a construction of the world or a magical reflection of the universe finds place in the exorcism liturgy of the Tibetan Bon Po religion. "The Bon Po Masters construct *mdos* or symbolical representations of the world. These *mdos* have four stands on each of which is a stick to, which is fixed transversely another piece of wood so as to form a cross. Around are disposed images of the Gods. The exorcist identifies himself with the essence of these Gods. with the soul that revivifies the cosmos, whereby he transforms himself, ideally, into the principle of all that exists, so as to be able .... to act as he pleases and to control the forces of the universe." See Giuseppe Tucci, *The Theory and Practice of the Maṇḍala*, p. 24.

55 Here, by the phrase, 'the disintegration of the One' we mean the manifestations of *sūnyatā* or *vijñāna*, which constitute *saṁvṛti*.

56 Giuseppe Tucci, *The Theory and Practice of the Maṇḍala*, p. 22.

Hence the *maṇḍala* as a symbol of the universe also has a soteriological significance.

The *maṇḍala* is an idealised representation of existence, and the identity of *nirvāṇa* and *saṃsāra*. This identity is represented through the stylised form of different divinities, which are the various aspects of the Absolute, as well as the different categories of phenomenal existence. Nairātmyā, and the Fifteen Yoginīs of the Nairātmyā *maṇḍala*, represent the five skandhas, the five elements, and the six cognitions,<sup>57</sup> at the same time they are manifestations of the Absolute (*śūnyatā*). Similarly, the deity Akṣobhya is an aspect of the Absolute as well as an aspect of the phenomenal existence, namely wrath, simultaneously. This insight is manifested in the *maṇḍala* where the five Buddhas, who embody the five transcendental wisdoms, are equated with the five evils that lie at the root of phenomenal existence.<sup>58</sup> Thus, we see that the *maṇḍala* is not only a paradigm of cosmic evolution and involution but also a plan to attain undiverted and unified consciousness. That is why Tucci calls it not just a cosmogram but a psychocosmogram.<sup>59</sup>

Each individual by his psychic temperament belongs to one of the families of the five *dhyāni* Buddhas. In the nature of each person there is the predominance of delusion, wrath, passion, envy or malignity. Each *dhyāni* Buddha is a purified form of these five basic personality traits or propensities. Accordingly, the individual is said to belong to that particular family of the *dhyāni* Buddha. The master having analysed the nature of the disciple assigns to him the *maṇḍala*, which has the particular *dhyāni* Buddha

57 HT(S), Part I, p. 127., Diagram IV.

58 HT(S), Part I, p. 29.

59 Giuseppe Tucci, *The Theory and Practice of the Maṇḍala*, p. 25.

at its centre. The one who follows the *Hevajra Tantra* belongs to the Vajra family with Akṣobhya, or one of his manifestations such as Hevajra, Heruka or Śaṁvara, at the centre of the *maṅḍala*. Wrath is the predominant character of those who belong to this family. It should be noted that our text being a *Yoginī-tantra* it is peopled entirely by feminine divinities. Even at the centre, at times we find, instead of Hevajra, his consort, Nairātmyā alone in her wrathful manifestation.<sup>60</sup>

The *maṅḍala* is not an arbitrary construction but a presentation of personal intuitions coloured by cosmological conceptions in an appropriate paradigm. Tucci states, "By an almost innate power the human spirit translates into visual terms the eternal contrast between the essential luminosity of its consciousness and the forces which obscure it."<sup>61</sup> Jung saw in it the play of some mysterious intrinsic necessity of the human spirit, which induces within the adept visions and apparitions, of which the *maṅḍala* is but a symbolic representation. The *maṅḍala* is born of those interior impulses, of archaic motifs or patterns of the 'unconscious mind', which also serve as the source of dreams, fantasies and psychoses, and even mythological motifs.<sup>62</sup> It becomes a psychic tool that

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60 HT(S). Part I, p. 30.

61 Giuseppe Tucci, *The Theory and Practice of the Maṅḍala*, p. 36.

62 C. G. Jung in his Psychological Commentary to *The Tibetan Book of the Great Liberation* by W. Y. Evans-Wentz speaks of the 'image-creating mind'. He holds that mind is the matrix of all patterns. He states, "These patterns are inherent in the unconscious 'mind': they are its structural elements, and they alone can explain why certain mythological motifs are more or less ubiquitous, even where migration as a means of transmission is exceedingly improbable." See W. Y. Evan-Wentz, ed., *The Tibetan Book of the Great Liberation* (London: Oxford University Press, 1954; paperback edition 1968), pp. xlv-xlv.

projects the forces governing existence into a form, which can be visualised by the *sādhaka*, and then to reverse the same energy in a process of re-integration.<sup>63</sup> It serves as an external instrument to provoke and procure such visions in quiet concentration and meditation. And it is by concentrating his mind upon these visions delineated in the *maṇḍala* that the *sādhaka* rediscovers the way to reach his secret reality.<sup>64</sup>

## 2. The Deity

While the earlier phases of Buddhism are more or less free of gods and goddesses, we have a proliferation of them during the Tantric phase. Hackmann attempted to classify, what he called 'the bewildering crowd of deities', under various groups.<sup>65</sup> A number of these deities, borrowed from the Bon faith of Tibet, grew out of the shamanistic beliefs of pre-Buddhist era and were accommodated as *dharmapālas* or *dvārapālas* (protectors of the religious

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63 John Blofeld, *The Way of Power*, p.109.

64 Giuseppe Tucci, *The Theory and Practice of the Maṇḍala*, p. 37.

65 Hackmann found that the Tibetan Pantheon is composed of the twenty-four Buddhas, predecessors of Gautama; the Bodhisattvas and their feminine counterparts, *Ḍākinis*, Tutelary deities who help in overcoming the noxious influence of demons, the *dvārapālas*, popular deities like Yama and his consort Lhamo (the tutelary deity of Lhasa), Jambhala, the god of wealth, host of supernatural beings and dangerous spirits drawn from Bon religion, class of saints including the first disciples of Gautama and The Sixteen Strong Holders of the Doctrine like Aśvaghōṣa, Nāgārjuna, Atīśa, Padmasambhava, Tsongkhapa and others. For details see H. Hackmann, *Buddhism as a Religion: Its Historical Development & its Present Condition* (Delhi: Neeraj Publishing House, 1910; Reprint 1981), pp.157-164.



Law or guardians of the Buddhist doctrine).<sup>66</sup> Buddhism liberally absorbed native gods, based on the perception, that every god is a manifestation of the Absolute. Similar is the *honji-suijaku* theory of Japanese Buddhism, by which, the original Japanese gods are considered to be manifestations (*suijaku*) of the true nature (*honji*) of the various Buddhas and bodhisattvas.<sup>67</sup>

Buddhism is often wrongly perceived as atheistic, but Schuon argues that it has nothing in common with atheism properly so called. He considers Buddhism to be 'non-theism' and not 'atheism'. He states, "extinction (*Nirvāṇa*) or 'the Void' is but 'God' subjectivised, as a state of realization; God is but the Void objectively regarded, as Principle."<sup>68</sup> But Dasgupta considers Mahāyāna to be theistic. He suspects Upaniṣadic and Vedāntic influences in setting *Mahāyāna* on the theistic course. According to him, the theistic tendency in *Mahāyāna*, seen in its *trikāya* doctrine, was fully developed by the Vajrayānists.<sup>69</sup> Lama Anagarika pointed out that, realising the danger of dwelling on a mere abstraction like *śūnyatā* or *vijñaptimātratā*, the Vajrayānists constructed symbolic figures to experience

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66 Rene de Nebesky Wojkowitz, *Oracles and Demons of Tibet: The Cult and Iconography of the Tibetan Protective Deities* (London: Geoffrey Cumberlege, Oxford University Press, 1956), p.vii, 3.

67 Alicia Matsunaga, *The Buddhist Philosophy of Assimilation*, p.86.

68 Frithjof Schuon, *In the Tracks of Buddhism*, Marco Pallis, trans., (London: George Allen & Unwin Ltd., 1968), p.19.

69 Dasgupta states, "The monistic conception of the Brahman is already there in the conception of the *Dharma-kāya* Buddha, and this conception finds its full expression in the conception of the Vajra-sattva, who is pure consciousness purged off all the impurities of subjectivity and objectivity; he is pervading the whole universe – the inner principle of all dharmas – the unity in diversity; he is a Being of infinite wisdom and merit, possessing universal compassion – he is the Lord Buddha." S. B. Dasgupta, ITB, p. 61.



and express the direct spiritual experience of *śūnyatā*.<sup>70</sup> But Vajrayānic theism is not without a rider, as David Alexandra Neel points out, "Among the numerous deities in the Lamaistic pantheon, there is not one that occupies the role of an eternal omnipotent Being, the Creator of the world."<sup>71</sup>

*Advayavajrasaṅgraha* states that the deity springs from the consciousness of *śūnyatā* (*śūnyatābodham*); from it the seed-syllable (*bīja*); from the *bīja* the icon; from the icon, its external representation.<sup>72</sup> Advayavajra holds that the deities are nothing but manifestations of *śūnya* and are by nature essence-less (*niḥsvabhāva*).<sup>73</sup> Our text too endorses the fact that the *mantra* and the deity exist as aspects of the undifferentiated nature (Thusness).<sup>74</sup> This supreme non-duality is Vajradhara (*paramadaivatam...*

70 Lama Anagarika Govinda, *Foundations of Tibetan Mysticism*, p. 91.

71 David Alexandra Neel, *Initiations and Initiates in Tibet* (London: Rider & Company, 1958) p.14.

72 "śūnyatābodhito bījaṃ bījādvimbaṃ prajāyate/  
bimbe ca nyāsavinyāsau" // *Advayavajrasaṅgraha*, p.50. (The first is the right perception of the *śūnyatā*, the second is its connection with the seed-syllable, the third is the conception of an icon and the fourth is the external representation of the deity). See also

"tasmāt punar api

prathamam śūnyatābodhiṃ dvitīyam bījasāṅgraham/

ṭṭīyam bīmaniṣpattiṃ caturtham nyāsam akṣaram// "(Then after that: firstly the Awakening to Voidness, secondly the Collecting of the Seed-syllable, thirdly the Manifestation of the Physical Form and fourthly the Placing of the Letter). HT(F) 1:3:2.

73 "sphūṛtiśca devatākārā niḥsvabhāvāḥ svabhāvataḥ/  
yathā yathā bhavet sphūṛtiḥ sā tathā śūnyātmikā"// *Advayavajrasaṅgraha*, p.51. (Deities are nothing but manifestations of *śūnya* and are by nature non-existent, and whenever there is manifestation it must be *śūnya* in essence).

74 "saṃsthitau mantradevau ca niḥprapañcasvabhāvataḥ" HT(F) 1:5:11.

*Vajradharah*).<sup>75</sup> While neither the Mādhyamikas nor the Vijñānavādins considered the Ultimate Reality (Thusness) as Being, the Vajrayānists went ahead to describe it as Adamantine Being (*Vajrasattva*), and sometimes as personal God, or the Lord Supreme. *Vajrasattva* reconciles in himself the voidness of all natures (*sarvadharmasūnyatā*), i.e. *vajra*, as well as the unity of the three centres (*sattva*), which are Body, Speech, and Mind.<sup>76</sup>

In essence the deity is of the nature of *śūnya* (*vajra*), but in manifestation it is of the nature of empirical existence. The deity is thus the form of the formless. *Yogaratnamālā* also states that existence is to be conceived as the deity's form. This form arises from the transformations of the Solar and Lunar maṇḍalas, the Seed-syllables and the Symbols.<sup>77</sup> The *Hevajra Tantra* explains that the Moon, the Sun, the seed-syllable and the symbol are nothing but the Five Aspects of Enlightened Awareness. The Moon is the Mirror-like Awareness; the Sun is the Awareness of Equanimity; the Differentiating Awareness is from the seed-syllables and the symbols of one's chosen deity; the unity of these is the Awareness of the Performance of Duty; the manifestation of the form of the Deity is the Awareness of Pure Nature.<sup>78</sup> Thus, the deity is the essence of the Enlightened Awareness (*abhisambodhiḥ*).

75 HT(F), *Yogaratnamālā*, p.6; HT(S), Part 2, *Yogaratnamālā*, p.104.

76 "...abhedyam vajram ity uktam sattvam tribhavyikatā..." HT(F) I:1:4.

77 HT(F), *Yogaratnamālā*, p.11.

78 "ādarśajñānvānś candraḥ samatāvān saptāśvikaḥ/  
bījaiś cihnaiḥ svadcvasya partyavekṣaṇam ucyate//  
sarvair ekam anuṣṭhānaṁ niṣpattiḥ śuddhidharmatā/..." HT(F)  
I:8:6-7: See also HT(F), *Yogaratnamālā*, p.43.

From the ultimate point of view, the deities are aspects of the undifferentiated nature (*niḥprapañcasvabhāva*), the Enlightened Awareness. However, from the differentiated point of view they are the five elements (*pañcabhūtas*) and the five components of phenomenal awareness (*pañcaskandhas*); as a result therefore, they are grouped under five families (*kulas*).<sup>79</sup> Since the *bhūtas* and the *skandhas* constitute the body, the deity is said to originate in the body (*dehe sarībhavati*), and hence is called *devatā*.<sup>80</sup>

## 2.1 The *Dhyāni* Buddhas

As pointed out earlier, the *Mahāyāna* notion of *dharmakāya* led to the *Vajrayāna* concept of Vajra-sattva, the Ādi-Buddha. This Lord Supreme was conceived of as possessing five kinds of knowledges. From these five knowledges proceed the five kinds of meditations (*dhyāna*); and the five deities who emerge from these meditations are called the five *dhyāni* Buddhas.<sup>81</sup> These

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79 “*kulānāṃ pañcabhūtanāṃ pañcaskandhasvarūpiṇām/ kulyate gaṇyate'nena kulāṃ ity abhidhīyate!*” HT(F) I:5:10. Sometimes Six families (Citta, Śāśvata, Ratneśa, Vagīśa, Amogha and Sāttvika) are also spoken of. These six families represent the six senses (eye, ear, nose, tongue, body (skin), and the mind. By merging Vajrasattva (*sāttvika*) they become five families representing the five *skandhas*. When further merged they become three families (Śāśvata, Akṣobhya and Vagīśa families) representing Body, Speech and Mind. HT(F), *Yogaratnamālā*, p.54.

80 “*dehe sarībhavatiṣṭi asmād devateti nigadyate*” HT(F) I:5:14.

81 S. B. Dasgupta, ITB, p. 84. S. B. Dasgupta alludes to certain Influence of *Sāṅkhya* philosophy in the conception of the *dhyāni* Buddhas and their association with the five *skandhas*. He also tries to seek some connection between the five kinds of knowledge of

five kinds of knowledges are known as the Five Aspects of Enlightened Awareness (*pañcākārābhisambodhiḥ*); with the corresponding *dhyāni* Buddhas they are the Mirror-like Awareness- Akṣobhya, the Awareness of Equanimity- Ratnasambhava, the Differentiating Awareness- Amitābha, the Awareness of the Performance of Duty- Amoghasiddhi and the Awareness of Pure Nature- Vairocana.<sup>82</sup>

The notion of the *dhyāni* Buddhas<sup>83</sup> (also called Pañcathāgatas) first emerged in the *Guhyasamāja Tantra*. They are five in number, (Vairocana, Akṣobhya, Ratnasambhava, Amitābha and Amoghasiddhi)<sup>84</sup> to which a sixth, Vajrasattva, is sometimes added. The first five are embodiments of the five skandhas and the sixth is the union of these five skandhas. Akṣobhya, the presiding deity of *vijñāna skandha* is accorded the highest place. The other four *dhyāni* Buddhas wear the miniature of Akṣobhya on their head and Akṣobhya in turn wears the miniature of Vajrasattva. This shows that the first four skandhas are modes of consciousness; and that *vijñāna* (empirical

the Vajra-sattva and the creative potency of the *abhūtaparikalpa* notion of the Vijñānavādins. See *Ibid.* p. 85.

82 HT(F), *Yogaratnamālā*, p.43; HT(F) I:8:6-7.

83 Lama Anagarika Govinda holds that the term *dhyāni* Buddha was coined by Western scholars in order to distinguish the spiritual or symbolic figures of Buddhas visualised in meditation (*dhyāna*) from the historical Buddha and his predecessors and successors on earth. In Tibet the historical Buddha is always referred to as Śākyamuni. Lama Anagarika Govinda, *Foundations of Tibetan Mysticism*, p. 83., fn.2.

84 Alex Wayman points out that in some Tantras, as in the *Hevajra Tantra*, these five are replaced by other names: Vairocana is called Brahmā, Akṣobhya is called Viṣṇu, Amoghasiddhi is called Śiva, Ratnasambhava is called Sarva, Amitābha is called Tattva and Vajrasattva is called Vibuddha (expanded). See Alex Wayman, *The Buddhist Tantras*, p.46-47. See also HT(F) I:5:12-14.

consciousness) is *not* the ultimate reality but Vajrasattva, who is pure consciousness free of subject-object duality, is. This Vajrasattva is known by many other names most important of which are Hevajra and Heruka.<sup>85</sup>

The *dhyāni* Buddhas are the purified forms of the five evils that beset phenomenal existence, namely Wrath, Passion, Envy, Malignity and Delusion. In mystic union with the deity the adept envisages these passions etc., as aspects of the one mystic unity. Thus the whole phenomenal existence is transformed into mystic absolute and every aspect is seen as various stages of departure from the centre, the unity of consciousness.<sup>86</sup>

The *dhyāni* Buddhas vary in the colour of their body, their mystic hand gestures (*mudrā*), their vehicles and their recognition symbols.<sup>87</sup> Each has a definite place in the *maṇḍala* or in the *stūpa*. Vairocana is at the centre, Akṣobhya in the east, Ratnasambhava in the south, Amitābha in the west and Amoghasiddhi in the north. At times Vairocana and Akṣobhya change places. The *dhyāni* Buddhas with their respective *prajñā* (wisdom-consort) are the progenitors of the different families of Buddhist gods and goddesses. The families are Dveṣa, Moha, Rāga,

85 S. B. Dasgupta, *An Introduction to Tāntric Buddhism*, pp. 86-88.

86 HT(S). Part I, p. 29.

87 Name	Colour	Mudrā	Vāhana	Symbol
Akṣobhya	Blue	<i>Bhūsparśa</i>	Elephant	Vajra
Vairocana	White	<i>Dharmacakra</i>	Dragon	Cakra
Amitābha	Red	<i>Samādhi</i>	Peacock	Lotus
Ratnasambhava	Yellow	<i>Varada</i>	Horse	Jewels
Amoghasiddhi	Green	<i>Abhaya</i>	Garuḍa	Viśvavajra.

See Benoytosh Bhattacharyya, IBE, p. 130.

Cintāmaṇi and Samaya. The members of each family wear the figure of their parental *dhyāni* Buddha on their heads.<sup>88</sup>

### 2.1.1 Akṣobhya

Akṣobhya, the Mirror-like Wisdom (*ādarśa-jñāna*) reflects the form of all things, the immutable foundation of all beings (i.e. *śūnyatā*). Akṣobhya's wisdom sees things exactly as they are, without distortion or interpretation, perfectly and objectively. Since he shows all beings in their true nature, he is the antidote for wrath, which is the predominant evil in the realm of hell. Hence he is called the Buddha of the hellish realm. To depict the immutable character of Akṣobhya he is presented in the *bhūmi-sparśa mudrā*<sup>89</sup> since earth (*bhūmi*) is the symbol of immutability, deep-rootedness and steadfastness. In his left hand he holds a *vajra*, symbol of irresistible conviction. He is seated on a blue lotus supported by two blue elephants, symbols of massive strength.<sup>90</sup> He is the blue Buddha, deep blue being the colour of infinite space, which symbolises the *dharmadhātu*, the all-embracing reality. The depiction of the deities shows that iconography is at the service of

88 Family	Dhyāni Buddha	Prajñā	Bodhisattva	Gods	Goddesses
Dveṣa	Akṣobhya	Locanā	Vajrapāni	Heruka, Hyagriva Yamāri	Ekajaṭā Nairātmā
Moha	Vairocana	Vajradhātviśvari	Samantabhadra		Māricī Vajravārāhī
Rāga	Amitābha	Pāṇḍarā	Padmapāṇi	Avalokiteśvara	Kurukulā
Cintāmaṇi	Ratnasambhava	Māmakī	Ratnapāṇi	Jambhala	Vasudhārā
Samaya	Amoghasiddhi	Tārā	Viśvapaṇi		Khadiravaṇi- Tārā Pariśavarī

For details see Benoytosh Bhattacharyya, IBE, pp. 131-146.

89 Lama Anagarika Govinda, *Foundations of Tibetan Mysticism*, pp. 108-109.

90 Alex Kennedy, *The Buddhist Vision*, pp. 183-184.



philosophy. What the iconographer wants to emphasise is the fact that if one contemplates deeply on any feature of the conditioned existence one would discover its transcendental moorings.

### 2.1.2 Ratnasambhava

Ratnasambhava, the jewel born, also called Ratneśa/Ratnapāṇi – the lord/holder of the jewel, the Wisdom of Equality (*samatā-jñāna*), highlights compassion for all that lives. Compassion springs from this intuition of equality, that is, everything is perceived as having the same fundamental nature, which is voidness. He is the antidote for pride, the weakness of the human realm, and so he is considered the Buddha of the human realm. The aspect of compassion is iconographically represented by his *dāna mudrā*, touching the ground with his palm turned upward. He holds the wish-fulfilling Gem – it is the Triple Gem of *Buddha*, *Dharma* and *Śaṅgha*, which alone can satisfy human beings. He is the golden yellow Buddha, seated on a lotus throne supported by yellow horses, sign of wealth and aristocracy.<sup>91</sup>

### 2.1.3 Amitābha

Amitābha, the Discriminating Wisdom (*pratyavekṣaṇa-jñāna*), symbolises direct apprehension, or inner vision, devoid of logical or conceptual ratiocination. He is portrayed in *dhyāna mudrā*.<sup>92</sup> He is the red Buddha, seated on a red lotus throne upheld by two peacocks, since the peacock is believed to derive its brilliant colours of its plumage from the poison of snakes on which it feeds; and

91 Alex Kennedy, *The Buddhist Vision*, pp. 184 -185.

92 Lama Anagarika Govinda, *Foundations of Tibetan Mysticism*, pp. 109-110.

thus the symbol of purification and transformation. The glowing red body of this Buddha signifies his nature, which is active compassion. His discriminating wisdom sees the individual needs of every creature. Compassion is the antidote for passionate craving, the evil that inflicts the realm of hungry ghosts (pretas).<sup>93</sup> Hence Amitābha is the Buddha of the realm of the hungry Ghosts.

#### 2.1.4 Amoghasiddhi

Amoghasiddhi, the Wisdom of the Performance of Duty (*kṛtyānuṣṭhāna-jñāna*), symbolises karma-free activity, which is devoid of attachment but guided by universal compassion. Wisdom is not only passive insight into the nature of things, but also knowledge of what is to be done for the welfare of all beings. Hence he is presented in *abhaya mudrā*, seated on a throne upheld by two strange creatures called Shang-Shangs.<sup>94</sup> He is the green Buddha, the Buddha of action. His action is directed for the welfare of others and so he is the antidote for envy, the evil that afflicts the realm of the Titans.<sup>95</sup>

#### 2.1.5 Vairocana

Vairocana, the Wisdom of Pure nature (*suviśuddhadharmadhātu-jñāna*), is the state of cosmic consciousness that transcends the ego-bound individual consciousness. This is expressed through his *dharmacakra mudrā*. He is the white Buddha. He represents the teaching function of the Buddha. He is seated on a white lotus borne

93 Alex Kennedy, *The Buddhist Vision*, pp. 185-186.

94 "These are composite animals, birds up to the neck, from which sprouts the upper body of a man who clashes two cymbals as he flies." Alex Kennedy, *The Buddhist Vision*, p.186.

95 *Ibid.*, p. 186.

by two white lions (or dragons). The Buddha's teaching is a lion's roar, because all the lesser teachings are silenced by it. He is the Buddha of transcendental wisdom and it is the antidote to the ignorance of the real nature of things. This illusion is the predominant evil that afflicts the realm of the gods; hence Vairocana is the Buddha of the world of the devas.<sup>96</sup>

Each *dhyāni* Buddha has a *prajñā* (Wisdom-consort) associated with him. The *prajñā* of Akṣobhya is Locanā. Ratnasambhava's *prajñā* is Māmaki (mineness). She looks upon all beings as her own children. Pāṇḍaravāsini (white-robed) is the *prajñā* of Amitābha. The *prajñā* of Amoghasiddhi is Tārā.<sup>97</sup> Vairocana has Vajradhātēśvarī as his *prajñā*. In symbolic form, the *dhyāni* Buddhas present the various dimensions of Enlightenment. Further, "The contemplation of their shapes and colours, their various emblems and figures, will help us to project more and more of the Transcendental qualities which are within us."<sup>98</sup> These Buddhas are provisional figures and one must go beyond them to the essence they signify.

## 2.2 The *Dākinī*

They are a class of beings, rather forces or symbols, related to the seed-syllable 'hūm'. Externally demonical in appearance, they stand for everything that cannot be fitted into our well-ordered world of thought. Hence, they appear

96 Ibid., pp. 187-188.

97 There are twenty-one different *Sarībhogakāya* manifestation of Tārā. Each form of Tārā embodies a particular aspect of compassion. Green Tārā represents the active, energetic aspect of compassion, and she is the national protectress of Tibet, while white Tārā embodies fertility, the motherly aspect of compassion. John Shane, ed., *The Crystal and the Way of Light*, p.4.

98 Alex Kennedy, *The Buddhist Vision*, p. 188.

to us threatening, dangerous, and terrifying. The seed-syllable 'hūm' represents everything that is unconventional, and non-conformistic, like the 'Id' of Freud, the forces lying dormant in the darkness of the subconscious. They represent the realm of experiences, which transcends thought as in ecstasy. They are represented with an aura of flames, and invoked with the seed-syllable 'hūm'. They embody those powerful impulses needed to transcend the realm of thought to the experience of the inexpressible. They are the consciously produced inner images in the course of meditation. Metaphysically speaking, a man's *Ḍākinī* is the urge within him for enlightenment and the means to attain it that is pictured for meditative purposes.<sup>99</sup> In classical Sanskrit, 'Ḍākinīs' were generally conceived as demonical beings hostile to humans and haunting cremation grounds and similar places. Yogīs considered such places suitable for religious ecstasy.

In Tibetan, *Ḍākinī* is called *Khadoma* (Tib. *mKhaḥ-ḥgro-ma*). 'mKhaḥ' means space or ether, which makes movement possible and makes forms appear without itself being movement or appearance. Its numerical symbol is zero; its metaphysical equivalent is *śūnyatā*. 'ḥgro' means 'to go' or 'to move' about. According to popular conception, *Khadoma* is a heavenly being of female appearance (as indicated by the Tibetan suffix 'ma') who partakes of the luminous nature of space in which she moves.<sup>100</sup> In this sense, *Ḍākinī* refers to someone born in the 'pure realm', a 'space voyager'; the term 'space' here is used metaphorically to imply 'emptiness', and the term 'voyager' meaning someone immersed in that

99 John Blofeld, *The Way of Power*, p.114.

100 Lama Anagarika Govinda, *Foundations of Tibetan Mysticism*, pp. 191-192.

experience.<sup>101</sup> She is gifted with higher knowledge and appears before the earnest seeker in human, divine or demonical forms, to lead him to higher knowledge and realisation. She is portrayed as naked, signifying the embodiment of the knowledge of unveiled reality. She combines in herself the primordial forces and the conscious awareness of the perfect knowledge.

### 2.3 Hevajra

Hevajra, who is the principal deity of *Hevajra Tantra*, is the essence of Vajradhara, the Supreme Non-duality.<sup>102</sup> He is, as it were, *śūnyatā* in visual form. In relation to the *dhyāni* Buddhas, Hevajra is a manifestation of Akṣobhya,<sup>103</sup> and belongs to the Vajra family. Hevajra is none other than Heruka who iconographically resembles Śiva.<sup>104</sup> When Heruka is in union (*yuganaddha*) with his *prajñā* he is known as Hevajra. There are four different forms of Hevajra, which are distinguishable by the number of his hands and, faces, and the names of the accompanying *prajñā*.

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101 Graham Coleman, ed., *A Handbook of Tibetan Culture*, p. 296.

102 HT(F), *Yogaratanmālā*, p.6.

103 Other important manifestations of Akṣobhya are Caṇḍaroṣaṇa, Heruka, Buddhakapāla, Sambara, Saptākṣara, Mahāmāyā, Haygriva, Raktayamāri, Kṛṣṇayamāri, Jambhala, Ucchuṣma-Jambhala, Vighnāntaka, Vajrahūnkāra, Bhūtaḍāmara, Vajrajvālānalārka, Trailokyavijaya, Paramāśva, Yogāmbara, and Kālacakra. For details see Benoytosh Bhattacharyya, *The Indian Buddhist Iconography*, pp. 154-188.

104 Krishna Murthy believes that the figure of Śiva embodying the eight Kṣetrapālas must have inspired a similar form of Heruka with the eight ḍākinis. K. Krishna Murthy, *Iconography of the Buddhist Deity Heruka*, p.49.

The two-armed form of the Hevajra, called *Trailokyākṣepa*, is in union with his *prajñā*, Nairātmyā. He is dark blue in colour, with hibiscus-red eyes and yellow hair coiled and knotted on the top of his head. He is adorned with the Five Symbolic Ornaments- the circlet, the ear-rings, the necklace, the bracelets and the girdle. His gaze is wrathful; he wears a tiger-skin and in appearance he is sixteen-years old. He holds a Vajra-skull in his left hand and a *khatvaṅga* rests in the crook of his left shoulder. He holds a black *vajra* in his right hand. He is the manifestation of the Seed-syllable 'hūṃ'.<sup>105</sup> An analysis of the symbols involved in the iconography of Hevajra reveals the Mahāyānic concepts hidden in them: the dark blue colour of the deity represents *dharmadhātu*; the hibiscus-red eyes compassion; the coiled hair the concept of ascending merit; the Five Symbolic Ornaments the five Buddhas;<sup>106</sup> the wrathful gaze the purification of wrath; the

105 HT(F) I:3:15. See also "Trailokyākṣepaḥ kṛṣṇo Ardhaparyāṅki...ekamukho dvibhujo vajrāṅkitaraktapūṃṣakapālabhṛdvāmakarākroḍita...Nairātmā...Vajraoddaṇḍasavyabhujāḥ" (Trailokyākṣepa (Heruka) is blue in colour and dances in the *Ardhaparyāṅka* attitude...He is one-faced and two-armed. With the left hand carrying the skull cup, full of blood and marked with a *Vajra*, he embraces his *Prajñā* Nairātmā...The right holding the *Vajra* raised." Benoytosh Bhattacharyya, ed. *Niṣpannayogāvalī*, p. 14. "herukasvabhāvahūṅkārākārakaṅi" HT(T), *Muktāvalī*, p.180.

106 The circlet is the symbol of Akṣobhya, the ear-rings represent Amitābha, the necklace Ratnasambhava, the bracelet Vairocana and the girdle Amoghasiddhi. In this way, Hevajra is shown to be the union of all the *dhyāni* Buddhas. See HT(S) I:6:11-12; I:8:17. These Five ornaments also mean the following: The circlet symbolises adoration of one's guru or the chosen deity. Ear-rings indicate one's deafness to evil words spoken against one's *guru* and Vajradhara. The Necklace signifies *mantra* recitation. The bracelets symbolise one's renunciation of harming living beings. The girdle stands for one's enjoyment of the consort. See HT(S) II:6:2-4.



*vajra* skull the severing of misconceptions regarding existence and non-existence; *Khatvaṅga*<sup>107</sup> voidness; the black *vajra* the adamant nature (*śūnyatā*)- and *vajra* when used along with *ghaṇṭa*, *vajra* stands for compassion (*karuṇā*).

The four-armed Hevajra is similar to the two-armed one, and is embracing Vajravārāhi.<sup>108</sup> The four-armed Hevajra symbolises the defeat of the four Māras. In his first left hand he holds a human skull filled with the blood of the gods and the titans, and in his first right hand he holds a *vajra*. With the remaining two hands he embraces his *prajñā*, Vajravārāhi. The human skull filled with blood of the gods and the titans<sup>109</sup> is the symbol of supreme beatitude.<sup>110</sup> The union with the goddess symbolises the union of *prajñā* and *upāya*, the two coefficients of liberation.

The six-armed Hevajra has three faces, carries additional symbols, and is in union with his *prajñā*.

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107 "A *khatvaṅga* is an implement used by ascetics; it is a sort of club on which are fixed a freshly severed head, another in a state of putrefaction and a skull." Giuseppe Tucci, *The Theory and Practice of the Maṅḍala*, p. 69, fn.1.

108 "*athavā caturbhujō dvibhujavat. Aparabhujābhyām savābha-Vajravārāhisumālītīgita ityeva viśeṣaḥ.*" (Or, he may be four-armed and appear similar to the two-armed form. With the other two arms he embraces his (*prajñā*) Vajravārāhi of his own creation. This is the only difference.) Benoytosh Bhattacharyya, ed. *Niṣpannayogāvalī*, p. 14.

See also HT(F) I:3:17.

109 Gods symbolise illusion and the titans symbolise envy. The blood of the gods and the titans indicate victory over the evils of illusion and envy just like the blood of the four Māras mentioned in HT(S) I:8:21.

110 Giuseppe Tucci, *The Theory and Practice of the Maṅḍala*, p. 69.

Vajraśṛṅghalā.<sup>111</sup> Of the three faces of Hevajra, the face on the left side is red, the face on the right is the luminous colour of the moon (white) and the middle face is blue black. He is naked. The six arms symbolise the Six Perfections. In his first left hand he holds a trident, in his first right hand a *vajra*; in his second left hand he holds a bell and in his second right hand a knife. With his other two hands he embraces Vajraśṛṅghalā. He is standing on a corpse, which represents the three realms. The three faces in this form of Hevajra refers to the following three *dhyāni* Buddhas: The face on the left, which is red in colour, represents Amitābha, is the *sambhogakāya* as well as Speech. The face on the right, which is luminous as the moon, represents Vairocana who is *nirmāṇakāya* as well as Body. The middle face, which is blue black in colour, is Akṣobhya who is *dharmakāya* as well as Mind. Thus, this form of Hevajra presents the unity of the three *kāyas* as well as the unity of Body Speech and Mind of all the Buddhas. The six arms symbolise the Six Pāramitās of the *Mahāyāna* tradition.<sup>112</sup> The deity holds various symbolic implements in each of his hands. The trident in the first left hand signifies victory over greed, wrath, and mental

111 "athavā śaṅbhujāḥ kṛṣṇāḥ kṛṣṇasitaraktatrimukhaḥ...vāmair-vajra-ghaṅṭānī dhanuḥ kapālaṇī ca dadhānaḥ savyair-vajram bāṇānī trīśūlaṇī ca vajravajraghaṅṭānīvitahastābhyānī svābhava-vajraśṛṅghalāmālīṅgitaḥ" (or he may be the six-armed and blue in colour. The principal, the right and left faces are blue, white and red in colour. In the three left hands he holds the bell marked with a *vajra*, the bow and the skull-cup. In the three right hands he carries the *vajra*, the arrow and the trident. He embraces with the two hands carrying the *vajra*, and the *ghaṅṭa*, the *prajñā* Vajraśṛṅghala of his own creation. Benoytosh Bhattacharyya, ed., *Niṣpannayogāvalī*, p. 14. See also HT(F) I:3:18.

112 The six Pāramitās are generosity (*dāna*), ethical discipline (*śīla*), patience (*kṣāntī*), perseverance (*vīrya*), meditative concentration (*dhyāna*) and insight (*prajñā*).

perturbation; the *vajra* in the first right hand compassion; the bell in the second left hand *prajñā*; the knife in the second right hand the severing of the six defects.

The fourth form is the sixteen-armed form of Hevajra who is in union with his Wisdom, Nairātmyā. In this form of Hevajra, he is presented with eight faces and four legs. With his four legs he is seen standing on the four Māras (portrayed as four Hindu gods)<sup>113</sup> but in the earlier forms he stands on a corpse.<sup>114</sup> He is terrifying in appearance,

113 Our text does not name the four Mārās as the four Hindu gods (see HT(F) II:5:8-12) but *Niṣpannayogāvalī* does. See the footnote below (no.114). The names of these Hindu gods are mentioned also in HT(S), Part I, p.80., fn.2. But our text mentions some of them as aspects of the undifferentiated. See HT (F) I:5:12-14.

114 "caturtho Hevajraḥ ṣoḍaśabhujō Akṣobhyamudrito Nairātmyāsamāpannaḥ/ kintvasya catvāro mārāḥ prāguktaśvavasthāne/ tatra skandhamāro rūpato Brahmā pīṭh, kleśamāro Viṣṇuḥ kṛṣṇo, mṛtyumāro Maheśvaraḥ śubhro, devaputramāro Śakraḥ gauraḥ/ teṣu Bhagavān dvābhyān ardhaparyauṅkavān aparabhyān ālīchastha iti catuṣcaraṇaḥ kṛṣṇo...aṣṭāsyauḥ/ mukhantu mūlān kṛṣṇān hasat savyān śuklam, vāman raktamīrdhvaṅ vikaṭadānīṣṭrān śeṣāni kṛṣṇāni/ dakṣiṇabhujēṣu vajrān khadgaṅ bāṇān cakrān caṣṭkān trīśūlam-aṅkuṣān ca; vāmeṣu ghaṇṭam, padmaṅ, dhanur-udyatakhaṇḍāṅgaṅ, kapalaṅ, ratnaṅ tarjanīpaśān ca'" (Hevajra of the fourth class is sixteen-armed and bears on his crown the figure of the *dhyāni* Buddha Akṣobhya. He embraces his Wisdom, Nairātmyā. Instead of the corpse under his feet as earlier, he has four māras under his four feet. The first is the *skandha māra* in the form of Brahmā of yellow colour, the second is *kleśa māra* in the form of Viṣṇu of blue colour, the third is *mṛtyu māra* in the form of Maheśvara of white colour, and the fourth is *devaputra māra* in the form of Śakra of white colour. On them the four-legged god stands with two legs arranged in *ardhaparyauṅka* and two others in *ālīchha*. He is blue in colour and has eight faces. The principal face is blue, the right has a smile and is white, the left is red, and the fourth is on the top of his head with distorted teeth. All other faces are blue in colour. In the right hands he carries, the vajra, the sword, the

adorned with a necklace made of human heads and dances wildly. He wears a crossed-vajra on his head and is black in complexion. From his mouth shoots forth the seed-syllable 'hūm'. His body is smeared with ash. He is in erotic union with Nairātmyā, and is full of tranquillity and bliss. The face in the front is deep black; that on the right white like jasmine; that one on the left terrifying red; that on the top distorted; and the other faces are of the colour of bees; and he has twenty-four eyes.<sup>115</sup> The sixteen arms signify the sixteen voids.<sup>116</sup> The eight faces are the eight vimokṣas<sup>117</sup> The deformed face signifies the denial of all theories. The four feet are the four methods of conversion (*saṅgruhavastucatuṣkena*). The wild dance is active compassion. The wrathful appearance signifies the subduing of the wicked. The garland of human heads symbolises the possession of the five wisdoms. The crossed-vajra (*viśvavajra*)<sup>118</sup> indicates the adamant nature of gnosis and the intangibility of the divine essence. The black body of the deity signifies the attitude of

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arrow, the discus, the wine-glass, the staff, the *triśūla*, and the goad. In the left hands he holds the bell, the lotus, the bow, the raised *khaṇḍa*, the skull-cup, the jewel, the raised index finger and the nose) Benoytosh Bhattacharyya, ed., *Niṣpannayogāvalī*, pp. 14-15.

115 HT(F) II:5:8-12.

116 For the sixteen voids, see HT(F), *Yogaratnamālā*, p.116. Some of the later *Prajñāpāramitā* texts, like the *Pañcavimśati-sāhasrikā*, speak of twenty modes of *śūnyatā*. In addition to the sixteen voids mentioned in the *Yogaratnamālā*, the *Pañcavimśati* mentions four more, namely *anupalambhaśūnyatā*, *bhāvaśūnyatā*, *svabhāvaśūnyatā* and *parabhāvaśūnyatā*. See T.R.V. Murti, CPB, pp.351-356.

117 See HT(F) II: 9: 10-13. The eight Vimokṣas (stages of deliverance) include the five samāpattis (attainments). See Har Dayal, *The Bodhisattva Doctrine*, pp. 229-231.

118 *viśvavajra* or double vajra has the form of a cross.

friendliness. The three eyes on each face show that his wisdom discovers everything in all three times and in the triple space.<sup>119</sup> The depiction of Hevajra in four different forms shows that in *Vajrayāna*, iconography is at the service of philosophy. Mahāyānic and tantric categories are clothed in varied symbols, which have an emotive edge over their conceptual counterparts.

## 2.4 Nairātmyā and her Troupe

The term 'Nairātmyā' means 'no-soul' and indicates *śūnyatā* or *nirvāṇa*. Gradually, *śūnyatā* was conceived as a goddess in whose embrace the *bodhisattva* remains in absolute bliss. *Śūnyatā* has often been compared to the sky, the colour of which is blue and hence Nairātmyā too has the colour blue.<sup>120</sup> Nairātmyā is described in two *sādhana*s in the *Sāadhanamālā*. Her form is similar to that of Vajravārāhī with the *kartri* and *kapāla*. The difference is on the position of the corpse on which each stands. When the corpse is presented as lying on its chest, the goddess is Vajravārāhī; when it lies on its back the goddess is Nairātmyā. Again, Vajravārāhī, being an emanation of Vairocana, bears an image of Vairocana on the crown, while Nairātmyā, being an emanation of Akṣobhya, bears the image of Akṣobhya instead.<sup>121</sup> *Sāadhanamālā* gives a description of Nairātmyā as blue in colour, terrible in

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119 See Giuseppe Tucci, *The Theory and Practice of the Maṇḍala*, p.p. 70-71.

120 Benoytosh Bhattacharyya, *The Indian Buddhist Iconography*, p. 204.

121 *Ibid.*, p. 203.

appearance, holding the *kartri* and *kapāla* while dancing the *ardhaparyāṅka* on a corpse that lies on its back.<sup>122</sup>

The conception of Nairātmyā shows how tantric Buddhism systematically deified *Mahāyāna* principles. In the *Mahāyāna* tradition the highest perfection is *prajñāpāramitā*, the supreme truth of void (*sūnyatā*), which in *Vajrayāna* is deified as the goddess Prajñāpāramitā. In the *Hevajra Tantra* she is called Nairātmyā, which means 'the absence of the notion of selfhood' (i.e. non-substantial). The supreme truth, under the male aspect, is *vajra*, expressed as, Akṣobhya, Vairocana or Hevajra.<sup>123</sup> The nature of Nairātmyā is described in the *Hevajra Tantra* thus:

Semen is itself Nairātmyā and bliss is the nature of Nairātmyā. The bliss of Nairātmyā is the *Mahāmudrā* located in the navel centre. She is of the nature of the first vowel, *a*, and the Enlightened Ones conceive her as Wisdom personified. In the

122 "Śivahṛccandrathārdhaparyāṅkanātyathitarī Nairātmānī kṛṣṇānī ekamukhānī ūrdhvapairṅgalakeśānī Akṣobhyamukuṣinīnī danṣṭrākārāllalajjihvānī, dakṣiṇena kartridhāriṇīnī, vāme kapālakhaṇvāṅgadhāriṇīnī, raktavartulatrinetṛānī pañcamūḍrāvibhūṣaṅgānī (dhyāyāt)" (The worshipper should conceive himself as Nairātmyā who stands in the *ardhaparyāṅka* in a dancing attitude on the moon over the chest of a corpse. She is blue in colour, has brown hair rising upwards, and bears the image of Akṣobhya on her crown. Her face looks terrible with bare fangs and protruding tongue, and she carries the *kartri* in the right hand and bears the *kapāla* and the *khavāṅga* on the left. Her three eyes are red and round, and she is endowed with the five auspicious symbols). See *Sādhanamālā*, p.451.

123 Hevajra, the male aspect of the void comprehends the whole truth as much as does the goddess Prajñāpāramitā. The essential identity is shown by the transmutation of the female form into the male form HT(S) II:2:24-27. See HT(S), Part I, p.24.



Process of Completion she is the noble lady, Wisdom. She is neither tall nor short and neither square nor round. She is beyond taste smell and flavours and is the cause of the innate joy. The *yogī* generates in her and enjoys her bliss. It is along with Her that the Accomplishment, which bestows the Bliss of *Mahāmudrā* is attained. Form, sound, smell, taste, touch and thought, characterised by the Essence of Nature, are all enjoyed only in this Wisdom. She is herself the Innate, the great blissful one, the divine *Yoginī*. She is the *Maṇḍala* Circle. She is of the very nature of the Five Aspects of Enlightened Awareness. She is the Mirror-like Awareness, The Awareness of Equanimity, the Differentiating Awareness of the six components of sensory experience, the Awareness of the Performance of Duty and the Awareness of Pure Nature. She is me, the lord of the *maṇḍala*. She is the *Yoginī* Without a Self (*nairātmyayoginī*), the very epitome of the Essence of Nature.<sup>124</sup>

This passage reveals the relative and absolute characters of Nairātmyā. As relative she is the wisdom-consort, the *yoginī* with whom the *yogī* should practise and experience all cognitions, which are characterised by the Essence of Nature (*dharmadhātu*). From the absolute point of view, she is indescribable, beyond shape, size, sensory experience; she is the embodiment of the Five Aspects of Enlightened Awareness. In other words, she is the culmination of the *dhyāni* Buddhas who are nothing but these five wisdoms. Hevajra declares in this passage that 'she is me, the Lord of the *Maṇḍala*' (*saivāhaṁ*

*maṇḍalādhipaḥ*), that is, as the epitome of the Essence of Nature (*dharmadhātu*) she is identical with Hevajra.

## 2.5 Other Deities of the *Maṇḍala*

In the Hevajra Tantra Hevajra appears with a troupe of eight goddesses, and Nairātmyā is seen surrounded by a troupe of fourteen. However, in some thankas the two circles have been merged and we have the full company of sixteen (as represented on the frontispiece of Snellgrove's *The Hevajra Tantra: A critical Study*, Part I). The two circles were also used separately in actual rituals.<sup>125</sup> The outer circle of goddesses belonging to the Nairātmyā circle belongs specifically to the circle of Hevajra. These Yoginīs are also called the Circle of Mothers. It may also be noted that within the troupe of Nairātmyā the inner five are goddesses proper while the outer eight are the names of low caste women or eight feminine relatives.<sup>126</sup>

The five Yoginīs of the inner enclosure of the *Nairātmyā maṇḍala* are of the nature of the purified pañcaskandhas.<sup>127</sup> Vajrā is *rūpa skandha*, Gaurī is *vedanā skandha*, Vāriyoginī is *saṃjñā skandha*, Vajradākinī is *saṃskāra skandha* and Nairātmyā is *vijñāna skandha*. They are assigned different directions in the *maṇḍala*. Vajrā is in the eastern direction (of the inner enclosure), Gaurī in the southern, Vāriyoginī in the western, Vajradākī in the northern and Nairātmyā at the centre.<sup>128</sup> The Yoginīs of the

125 The existence of the two separate circles could also be the reason for the duplication of Gaurī in both the circles. In the passage (HT(F) II:5:28.) the Yoginīs of the Hevajra Circle are given different seed-syllables. This again shows that originally there were two separate lists of Yoginīs.

126 HT(S), Part I, p. 31.

127 HT(F) I:8:11.

128 HT(F) I:8:12.

outer enclosure are Gaurī, Caurī, Vetālī, Ghasmarī, Pukkasī, Śavarī, Caṇḍālī and Ḍombī. The first four occupy the four doors of the square enclosure; beginning with the eastern direction are Gaurī, Caurī, Vetālī, Ghasmarī respectively. The last four occupy the four corners; beginning with south-eastern direction are Pukkasī, Śavarī, Caṇḍālī and Ḍombī respectively. Yoginīs Bhūcarī and Khecarī are located below and above respectively.<sup>129</sup> Along with Bhūcarī and Khecarī the first four embody the six cognitions; the last four the four elements.<sup>130</sup> Space is associated with Nairātmyā. These fifteen Yoginīs belong to the five families of *dhyāni* Buddhas.<sup>131</sup>

The goddesses are of the nature of Vajradhara. They arise from the seed-syllables of the Moon (Nairātmyā) and the Sun (Hevajra), Wisdom and Means, or *āli* and *kāli*. As we have seen above, Nairātmyā is Hevajra or Vajradhara himself. She is said to arise from the seed-syllable '*āh*'. Each of the fifteen yoginīs has her own seed-syllable.<sup>132</sup>

129 HT(F) I:8:13-14; see also II:5:13-18.

130 HT(S), Part I, p. 127.

131 The Five Families, the *dhyāni* Buddhas and their yoginīs are:

Families	Dhyāni Buddhas	Yoginīs
Wrath	Akṣobhya	Nairātmyā, Pukkasī, (Gaurī(II))
Delusion	Vairocana	Vajrā, Śavarī, Caurī, Bhūcarī
Malignity	Ratnasambhava	Gaurī, Caṇḍālī, Vetālī
Passion	Amitābha	Vārī, Ḍombī, Ghasmarī, Khecarī
Envy	Amoghasiddhi	Vajraḍākī. See HT(F), <i>Yogaratnamālā</i> , p.211.

132 "It is said that the seed-syllables of the Yoginīs are as follows: Nairātmyā's is *a*, Vajrā's *i*, Vāriyoginī's *ī*, Vajraḍākī's *u*, Pukkasī's *ū*, Śavarī's *ṛ*, Caṇḍālī's *Ṛ*, Ḍombī's *l*, the other Gaurī's *L*, Caurī's *e*, Vetālī's *ai*, Ghasmarī's *o*, Bhūcarī's *au* and Khecarī's *aṁ*." HT(F) II:4:22-25. See also HT(F) II:5:28: "From the blazing and terrifying black seed-syllables *hūm* and *aṁ* of the Lord and his erotic consort, issue the retinue-goddesses (of Hevajra) with their

The thirty-two nāḍīs mentioned in the first chapter of part I of the Hevajra Tantra are assigned to the Yoginīs, two to each Yoginī in the appropriate order. The three nāḍīs, *lalanā*, *rasanā* and *avadhūtī* are assigned to Nairātmyā. The last digit is arbitrarily rejected. As the Yoginīs are aspects of the Moon they are related to the fifteen digits of the Moon as well as to the fifteen vowels which are of the nature of *ālī*. Again the Yoginīs Bhūcarī, Khecarī and Nairātmyā are the 'Secret Three', namely Body, Speech and Mind respectively.<sup>133</sup>

All the Yoginīs in the *Nairātmyā maṇḍala* have similar features as Nairātmyā has. They are exceedingly fierce, black in colour, and are adorned with the Five Symbolic Ornaments. Each of them has a head, two hands, yellow hair, blood-red eyes and holds a knife and skull in her hands. A *khaṭvāṅga* rests on her left side. Each wears tiger skin around the waist, and stands on a corpse.<sup>134</sup> These symbols must be understood in the manner explained earlier. However, the Yoginīs in the *Hevajra maṇḍala* are seen as holding in their hands various other symbols and implements, which represent the key aspects of the Mahāyāna and Vajrayāna doctrines.

Gaurī holds a knife in her right hand and a fish in her left hand; Caurī holds a hand-drum in her right hand and a wild boar in her left hand; Vetālī holds a tortoise in her right hand and a skull in her left hand; Ghasmarī holds a snake in her right hand and a mendicant's begging-bowl in her left hand; Pukkasī holds a lion in her right hand and an axe in

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seed-syllables *ganī*, *canī*, *vanī*, *ghanī*, *panī*, *śanī*, *lanī* and *ḍanī*."

This again shows that originally there were two lists of Yoginīs.

133 HT(F) II:4:97-99.

134 HT(F) I:8:15-20.

her left hand; Śavarī holds a monk in her right hand and a *Khaṇḍavaṅga* in her left hand; Caṇḍālī holds a disc in her right hand and a plough in her left hand and Ḍombī holds a *Vajra* in her right hand and her left hand is held in the pointing gesture.<sup>135</sup>

These Yoginīs stand in a dance posture with one leg raised. They have two arms and three eyes each. The colours of these eight Yoginīs resemble the colours of the *dhyāni* Buddhas but there is no strict correspondence.<sup>136</sup> These retinue goddesses of Hevajra stand on Brahma, Indra, Upendra, Rudra, Vaivasvata, Vitanāyaka, Nairṛti and Vemacitrī respectively.<sup>137</sup> In the actual *maṇḍala* ritual,

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135 HT(F) II:5:30-33; 52-55. *Hevajrapīṇḍārthaṭīka* explains the doctrines signified by these symbols: The knife means the cutting of the kleśas; the drum the sound of the Absolute Void; Tortoise constant bliss; Snake wrath; Lion prompt and unhesitating action; Monk constancy in the condition of *arhat*; the Wheel (disc) the turning of the Wheel of Dharma; Vajra the overcoming of the kleśas; the fish pleasantness to the touch; the wild boar the destruction of delusion; the Skull the preservation of bliss; the Bowl taking knowledge; the Axe the cutting of the kleśas at the root; the fan bliss; the Plough the non-existence of the kleśas. By pointing the finger, the goddess indicates the spot which is immaculate. HT(S), Part I, p. 112., fn.1. Thus we see that the various symbols held by the goddesses represent the doctrine of the Void and Compassion, the removal of *jñeyāvaraṇa* and *kleśāvaraṇa*, and the resultant bliss.

136 See HT(F) II:5:35-36. There is no strict adherence to the colour of the family to which the Yoginīs belong. For example, Ghasmarī belongs to the family of Amitābha whose colour is red but she is presented here as green, which is the colour of the family of Amoghasiddhi.

137 HT(F) II:5:37. Benoytosh Bhattacharyya interprets such presentation of Buddhist deities standing on Hindu gods as a deliberate act of insult and humiliation of Hindu deities by the Buddhist tantras. But it may have some deeper iconographic significance.

these eight retinue goddesses are represented in the *maṇḍala* by the eight ritual posts which have five lines drawn on each of them<sup>138</sup> and by the eight consorts who are made to enter the *maṇḍala*.<sup>139</sup>

In the iconographic presentation of these fifteen Yoginīs we do see certain forced correspondences and even contradictions, yet one must admit that there is some pattern and purpose in the conception of these Yoginīs. They are essential to the theory and praxis of the Hevajra *Tantra*. The Yoginīs presented with symbols and implements indicate the bi-polarity of the ultimate reality (*sūmyatā* and *karuṇā*). Their identity with the *dhyāni* Buddhas show the essential identity of the polarities. Hevajra and Nairātmyā along with the Yoginīs represent the ultimate reality in its multiplicity as well as in its non-duality. Their circle becomes the map, which every *sādhaka* follows in the process of his own re-integration.

## 2.6 The Nature and Significance of the Deity

The nature and significance of the deity in religious practices of India is a complex one. Arindam Chakraborty points out that in all rites and rituals there arises the basic question, 'to whom' is it offered? According to him, the "vedic or tantric devatā fills this ethico-logical blank by answering this deepest dative, 'to whom' question (*kasmai*) asked by the moral man". As regards the nature of the vedic

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138 HT(F) II:5:50-51.

139 HT(F) II:5:58-59. These blissful consorts are twelve to sixteen years of age and are adorned with garlands and jewellery. They are known as Mother, Sister, Daughter, Niece, Maternal Uncle's Wife, Maternal Aunt, Mother-in-law, and Paternal Aunt. For details see HT(F), *Yogaratnamālā*, p.257. It should be noted that HT(F) I:10:5 speaks only of one divine consort to be introduced into the *maṇḍala*.



divinity he opines that it is a generalised, depersonalised, sensory power (*indriya-śakti* or *karaṇeśvari*) taken in the widest possible sense of the term, 'indriya' or instrument of cognition or conation.<sup>140</sup> In short, the deities are essentially instruments of cognition. This assertion, as we shall see later, is corroborated by the Hevajra Tantra.

The deity is a deliberate construction. From the analysis of the iconography of the deities, male and female, it is clear that they are not external, objective, divine persons, but symbolic figures, deliberately constructed with a definite purpose in view. They have been created to embody the fundamental *Mahāyāna* ideals. They are quasi-beings, presented, in an out-of-the-ordinary fashion, in terms of the number of heads, limbs, and other features. The purpose is to transport the mind of the worshipper from the ordinary realm of concepts and categories to a state of de-conceptualisation. In the deity we visualise Vajrayānic concepts in graphic forms. By projecting the concepts in the form of deities, one is able to distance oneself from those very concepts and become aware of the process of 'concept- construction'. We may call this a visual version of the dialectics of the *Mādhyamika*. Moreover, the odd forms of the deities make us break with the conventional patterns of thought and realise that reality is beyond our conceptual framework. Further, the *sādhaka* is made to visualise, project and withdraw the deities in the space of his consciousness, and thus he is made aware of the creative function of consciousness. He is led to the conviction that the empirical existence is likewise a projection of his own consciousness.

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140 Arindam Chakraborty, "Making 'Sense' of the Vedic/Tāntric Divinities" unpublished manuscript in the possession of Prof. Ashok Kumar Chatterjee.

From the metaphysical point of view, the deity is a prototype of the highest knowledge, the void.<sup>141</sup> Just as infinite space cannot be apprehended except by some individualising medium; so too, the void or the Buddha nature cannot even be faintly understood, unless and until refracted through different moulds. The figures of Buddhas and other beings, represent in symbolic form, the transcendental in its myriads of qualities.<sup>142</sup> The deities are the innumerable refractions of the Ultimate Reality. By identifying oneself with a deity one attains identity with the whole, the transcendental. Deities express the transcendental reality in its varied dimensions, such as wisdom, compassion, energy etc. However, all these different forms are but one essentially. This is seen from the fact that each deity contains all the others, and in turn is contained by them. Though the Ultimate Reality is clothed in empirical forms, the practitioner is made aware of the non-empirical nature of the deity by means of its grotesque appearance involving multiple limbs, heads, and other startling features.

Cosmologically, the deities are symbolic representations of phenomenal existence. They are embodiments of the Five Aggregates of Phenomenal Awareness (pañcaskandhas), the Five Elements (pañcabhūtas), the six indriyas, the twelve āyatnas, as well as the Five Evils affecting existence.<sup>143</sup> In the deity we see brute empiricity face to face. The deity is also the Five Aspects of Enlightened Awareness (*abhisambodhi*) needed to traverse through phenomenal existence. The deity is like

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141 *nirābhāsaṁ vijñaptimātram, tadeva herukam dvayagrāhyasya dvayapratibhāsasya ca tenaiva bhakṣaṣṭī* HT(T), *Muktāvalī*, p.215.

142 Alex Kennedy, *The Buddhist Vision*, p. 180.

143 See HT(F) II:3:32-35.

a lens; when looked from one angle we perceive the unity of all things (*śūnyatā* or *nirvāṇa*); and from another angle, it manifests the multiplicity and contradictions of phenomenal reality (*saṃsāra*). Though the tantric deities lack distinct personality, they are utilised to create the formless divine within the individual for the purpose of identification with it. However, they are not to be treated as mere symbols. Alicia Matsunaga writes,

...we would be mistaken if we merely regard the divinities as symbols having no other reality. If they were such they could not fulfil their function to assist in mental purification, for the intellect would merely grasp the meaning of the symbol and it would be impossible to move beyond the range of discriminative knowledge. By making the deity an object of faith, having a reality equivalent to all else that we perceive, it was possible to engage in a mystical union that did not entail the use of reasoning. The faith itself was an inducement for the laity to turn to the divinity and begin the process leading to purification."<sup>144</sup>

The deity is nothing but *śūnya* and as such it is real; but the deity in its manifestation is a created entity; and hence is provisional. It is the form of the Formless; the Formless is real, but form is relative.

The deity is a psychic reality. Jung opines that tantric gods form a 'psychic reality', though virtually non-existent, tantric gods are powerful- as powerful as thoughts in the mind of man. He states, "The gods of Tibetan Buddhism belong to the sphere of illusory separateness and mind-

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144 Alicia Matsunaga, *The Buddhist Philosophy of Assimilation*, p.93.

created projections, and yet they exist;...”<sup>145</sup> Evan-Wentz agrees that the deities are mind-created, and he goes on to state that, the mind itself is nothing but ‘That’ and its ideas are forms of the ‘That’.<sup>146</sup> It is a manifestation of the depths of human psyche; the unheeded aspirations, instincts, fears and phobias, which have been repressed, emerge, within the placid surface of the mind, in benign or terrifying forms and figures. In moments of spiritual concentration these appear from the depths of the unconscious, and as they are unacceptable modes to the conscious realm, they appear to be threatening and terrifying. This might explain the presence of a large number of terrifying deities in the Buddhist pantheon. Deity is a psychic tool to externalise and come face to face with the inner world of one’s own psyche. Alex Kennedy states, “The contemplation, in imagination of those figures allow us to project more and more of our own inner nature.”<sup>147</sup> The bright colours, rich jewelled attire, brilliant light, and other visual techniques are used to arrest our concentration and arouse our sense of awe. The *sādhaka* uses the deity as a psychic tool in his psychic exercises, aimed at developing psycho-spiritual

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145 W. Y. Evan-Wentz, ed., *The Tibetan Book of the Great Liberation*, p. xxxiv.

146 Evan-Wentz writes, “Although mind-created by the yogin, the visualized images of spiritual beings, upon which our texts direct him to concentrate, are not to be regarded by him with indifference. If he merely thinks to himself ‘I am creating with my mind’, no more than intellectual progress is made. The yogin must understand that his practices are not simply mental; he should regard them ‘with exalted regard, veneration, and devotion, looking upon the *Devatās* (i.e. the visualised Deities) as real, holy, and divine. They are none the less so because mind-produced, for the mind ultimately is That, and its ideas forms of That.” W.Y. Evan-Wentz, *Tibetan Yoga and Secret Doctrines*, p.44, (emphasis added).

147 Alex Kennedy, *The Buddhist Vision*, pp. 180-181.

powers. It is through the medium of the deity that the adept communes with the inexhaustible storehouse of power and empowers himself during the *sādhana*.<sup>148</sup>

The deity is significant as a metamorphosis of one's spiritual ecstasy. In deeper levels of meditation, truth appears in certain ecstatic forms. These ineffable forms are best expressed in iconography. For the *sādhaka* they become provisional supports in his meditative enterprise. In the deity we have the meeting of the speculative, the aesthetic and the affective aspects of our consciousness. The deity is both an expression and a means for experience of the undifferentiated consciousness. The religious purport of the deity is highlighted by the *Agnipurāṇa*, which states that the Godhead who has no form assumes different forms for the sake of the devotees, and that such manifestations of the unmanifest has only an instrumental value as it frees consciousness from the veil of *māyā*. *Muktāvalī* states that the sentient beings enslaved by unfavourable dharmas are freed by the emanation of the deity.<sup>149</sup> When the luminosity of the pure consciousness shines within us, the Gods, which are themselves images of consciousness, vanish.<sup>150</sup> So the

148 Benoytosh Bhattacharyya, *Indian Buddhist Iconography*, pp.23-24.

149 "yathā hyākāśamanādi tathiva sarvasttvānāmakuṣilavyākṛtā dharmā āvaraṇasatigrahūāḥ, teṣāṃ pratipukṣiḥ svādhidaivatabhāvanā" HT(T), *Muktāvalī*, p.135.

150 In certain Indian liturgies a mirror is employed which serves to remind the *sādhaka* that the images of Gods are but reflections to be burned by the power of knowledge and that they have no nature of their own. See Giuseppe Tucci, *The Theory and Practice of the Maṇḍala*, p. 65.

See the following advice of the Master to his disciple: "O son of noble family, if thou do not recognize that these images are of thy own thought, even if thou hast been learned in the holy scriptures and hast observed the precepts of the Law, for a whole cosmic age thou shalt not be consubstantiated with the Buddhas. But if one recognizes that these are images of one's own thought one will be



deities are the luminous fabric of the mind in benign or terrifying forms having religious and theological values.

In the context of *sādhana*, Tucci states, that the transfiguration from the plane of *saṁsāra* to that of *nirvāṇa* takes place in degrees, and the gods are symbolic representation of these degrees marking the transition from disintegration to re-integration. This process is two-fold. Through violent evocation of the mystical state the meditator forces the divine plane to descend on him (*āvāhana* or *samāveśā*) and transform him. In this case the deity symbolises the divine plane. The second process is one by which the meditator evokes the infinite possibilities of consciousness that are mysteriously present in himself. Here the gods are nothing but representations or projections of his own consciousness.<sup>151</sup> The deity is essentially a representation of the non-dual consciousness, the void, the Ultimate Reality, whether perceived on a distinct divine plane or visualised within the phenomenal plane of one's own consciousness.

In order to be effective instruments of re-integration the deities are presented in varying forms and natures. We have deities of beatific or of terrifying natures, alone or in coital union. The same deity may appear in different forms, colours, bearing implements, and ornaments, and with varying number of heads and limbs. Deities as 'provisional figurations', become focal points for the *sādhaka* to fix the turbulent forces of his psyche, and identify these psychic forces with the deities. In this manner he cognises them and eliminates them in a precise process of deliverance. Tucci states, "The different colours of the faces, the variable

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instantly consubstantiated with the Buddhas." As found in *Ibid.*, p. 66.

151 *Ibid.*, pp. 29-30.



number of hands, the implements grasped, are so many translations into visible signs of the truth which the mystic must relive in the spiritual drama which, surging up from the depths of his soul, regenerates him."<sup>152</sup>

By the touch of iconography these abstract truths and concepts come alive in visual forms, and similarly also, the psychic forces within man. Now the *sādhaka* who meditates on these forms and identifies himself with them is transformed. The deity has great significance in the theory and praxis of *Vajrayāna*. From the point of view of Metaphysics, Cosmology, Psychology, Theology, and *sādhana*, the deity is a unique creation.

### 3. The Mantra

The term '*mantra*' comes from the root '*man*'<sup>153</sup> which means 'to think' and '*tra*', the *कृत्*-suffix indicating instrumentality. Lama Anagarika calls it, 'a tool for thinking' or a 'thing which creates mental picture'.<sup>154</sup> Monier Williams lists the following meanings for the term '*mantra*': instrument of thought, speech, sacred text or speech, a prayer, a vedic hymn, incantation, spell, charm etc.<sup>155</sup> The interpretation of Ramakrishna Paramahansa brings out another nuance. He speaks of *mantra* as '*montor*', '*mon*' (mind) and '*tor*' (yours), i.e., (after the initiation) 'the mind (is) yours'.<sup>156</sup> For him *mantra* is a way of taking possession of one's mind. This is done by protecting the mind from sense objects and discursive

152 Ibid., p. 68.

153 In Greek '*menos*' and Latin '*mens*'.

154 Lama Anagarika Govinda, *Foundations of Tibetan Mysticism*, p.19.

155 Sir Monier-Williams, *Sanskrit-English Dictionary* (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1974), pp.785-786.

156 Aghananda Bharati, *The Tantric Tradition*, p. 105.

thought.<sup>157</sup> Eliade too points out that mantras as phonemes are support for concentration.<sup>158</sup> *Vidyā*, a form of *mantra*, counters *avidyā*, and protects the mind from the darkness of passion and other kleśas.<sup>159</sup> And *dhāraṇī*, another form of *mantra*, is one by which the adept fixes and retains the truth attained during deep absorption (*samādhi*).<sup>160</sup>

*Mantra* is not a word or mere sound. It is reality itself in sonic form, a transformation of reality into vibrations of human voice. 'Om', the seed-syllable, we are told, is the quintessence of the universe.<sup>161</sup> Mantras are eternal truths, which revealed themselves to sages in the form of sound-representations.<sup>162</sup> The divinity is said to have two aspects, the subtle and the coarse. The subtle aspect is the *mantra* and the coarse aspect is the image. The seed-syllable (*hīja-mantra*) is considered the essence (*svarūpa*) or seed of the deity. So much so, in many maṇḍalas there are no images of deities but only their seed-syllables or symbols. In tantric

157 "In explanation, 'man' is mind, and 'tra' is protecting, so it means protecting the performer's mind from signs and discursive thought. As to how it protects, the purpose of *mantra* is the recitation of the *mantra* through non-dual engagement of means and insight (*upāya-prajñā*). That method of cultivation generates the non-dual wisdom of voidness and compassion in the practitioner's stream of consciousness; and because of that method it is called *mantra*." As quoted in Alex Wayman, *The Buddhist Tantras*, pp.64-65.

158 Agehananda Bharati, *The Tantric Tradition*, p. 108.

159 Alex Wayman, *The Buddhist Tantras*, p. 65.

160 Lama Anagarika Govinda, *Foundations of Tibetan Mysticism*, p.32.

161 "...Omītyetadaḥśaramitaṁ sarvaṁ tasyopavyākhyānam bhūtaṁ bhavadbhaviṣyaditi sarvamoṅkāra eva/ yaccānyat trikālātitaṁ tadapyoṅkāra eva/!" Swāmi Gambhīrānanda, trans., *Māṅḍūkya Upaniṣad with the Kārikā of Gauḥapāda and the commentary of Śaṅkarācārya* (Calcutta: Advaita Ashrama, 1990). MU, 1.

162 Sashi Bhusan Dasgupta, *Aspects of Indian Religious Thought* (Calcutta: Firma KLM Private Limited, 1977) p.24.

*sādhana* the cosmic evolution and involution are reproduced according to an alphabetic scheme. These alphabets and their combinations reflect the complex cosmic processes.<sup>163</sup> The *bīja-mantra* (seed syllable) is the "microcosmic sound representation of the ultimate essence" of a deity.<sup>164</sup> Tucci points out that "these 'seeds', which apparently have no meaning, present in the symbol of sound the correlation between the various planes and reflect the play of cosmic forces."<sup>165</sup> The *bīja-mantra* which is a sound symbol is not without its support, the *prāṇa*. *Prāṇa* is the cosmic energy, the universal breath of many aspects, and of infinite vibrations. It represents the hidden life of deity and of things.<sup>166</sup> Thus the seed stands for breath, life and the ultimate essence of all things. The affinity between the deity and its seed-syllable is so intimate that it is enough to concentrate one's thought on the latter for the image to rise in the horizon of one's mind.<sup>167</sup> In the Hindu tradition, *mantra* is Brahman or the ultimate reality in the form of sound. Letters, words, and sentences are its different forms through which *śakti* appears in the individual. For the Vajrayānists *mantra* is endowed with great power and can even confer Buddhahood. A sound-

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163 Kashmir Saivism symbolises by means of vowels, the various phases of the cosmic process. For an explanation see Giuseppe Tucci, *The Theory and Practice of the Maṇḍala*, pp. 60-63.

164 Sashi Bhusan Dasgupta, *Aspects of Indian Religious Thought*, p.36.

165 Giuseppe Tucci, *The Theory and Practice of the Maṇḍala*, p. 61.

166 *Ibid.*, p. 61.

167 In our Text, Hevajra is called *hūmbhavaḥ*, i.e., born of the seed-syllable 'hūm'. HT(F) I:3:17. Again Nairātmyā is spoken of as of the nature of the first vowel 'a' (*ādisvarasvabhāvā sā*) HT(F) II:4:44. See also HT(F) I:3:3; 5-7.

symbol becomes *mantra* only when a *Guru* administers it to his disciple at an initiation ceremony.<sup>168</sup>

Each word is the sound-equivalent of an experience of reality. Experience of a higher order cannot be effectively expressed or re-enacted through concepts; but through sound-symbols it can be. These sound-symbols are not arbitrarily created outside such experiences but they are spontaneous expressions, springing forth from the deepest recesses of the human psyche during such an experience. They convey an experience of reality that cannot be translated into concepts. When a *mantra* is uttered, it calls forth its content into a state of immediate reality. Hence, *mantra* is not mere speech but power; it does not speak, but acts.<sup>169</sup> H. Zimmer too acknowledged *mantra* as an expression of the innermost essence, as non-dual knowledge, which is not argument or proposition, but power.<sup>170</sup> Thus *mantra* has two aspects- that of being the essence of reality as well as that of being the non-dual experience of that reality. In his explanation of the *Avalokiteśvara mantra*, '*Oṃ maṇi padme hūm: hrīḥ*', Lama Anagarika brings out clearly this dimension of *mantra* as both essence and experience of the Ultimate Reality.<sup>171</sup> *Mantra* is not only an expression of the non-

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168 N. N. Bhattacharyya, *A Glossary of Indian Religious Terms and Concepts* (Columbia: South Asia Publications, 1990), p.99.

169 Lama Anagarika Govinda, *Foundations of Tibetan Mysticism*, pp. 18-19.

170 Agehananda Bharati, *The Tantric Tradition*, p. 106.

171 He explains that in *Oṃ* we experience the *dharmakāya* and the mystery of the universal body. In the *Maṇi*, the *sambhogakāya* and the mystery of the mantric sound. In the *Padma* we experience the *nirmāṇakāya* and the mystery of the all-transforming mind. In the *Hūm* we experience the *vajrakāya* as synthesis of the transcendental body of the Three mysteries. In the *Hrīḥ* we dedicate the totality of our transformed personality (which has

dual experience of reality but also a means of identification and introjection of that very same reality. Such *mantra* as 'Om Śūnyatā-jñāna-vajra-svabhāvātmake 'ham', becomes a means for identification with *śūnyatā*, the Ultimate Reality.<sup>172</sup>

*Mantra* is not a plea or prayer to some deity in the heavens to act in some miraculous way. The power of the *mantra* is self-generated. *Mantra* disposes the *sādhaka* to a psychic disposition by which he evokes from within his own consciousness the deity as well as its power. Hence the inner attitude, as Lama Anagarika points out, is the main source of power. He points out three important components, which determine the efficacy of the mantric formulas, namely, form, feeling, and idea. The *mantra* should be melodious, rhythmic, and forceful in form. The feeling aspect is the devotional impulse expressed in faith, love, and veneration. The idea is constituted of the mental associations, knowledge, and experience (not abstraction), which arouse, intensify, and transform the latent psychic forces.<sup>173</sup> The actual *mantra* is not the physical sound; it is not uttered by the mouth nor heard by the ear; it is spiritual, uttered by the mind and heard by the heart. The *mantra* to

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become the *vajrakāya*) to the service of Amitābha. Lama Anagarika Govinda, *Foundations of Tibetan Mysticism*, p. 230.

172 Aghananda Bharati, *The Tantric Tradition*, p. 112.

173 Lama Anagarika Govinda, *Foundations of Tibetan Mysticism*, pp. 32-33.

It may be noted that in the sacrificial rituals of Brahmanism at the time of the Buddha, the use of mantric words had degenerated to a mere convention and to a convenient means for escaping one's own responsibility by relying upon the magic power of gods, demons and compelling magic formulae. But the Buddha placed man at the centre and believed in the possibility of self-liberation and not through divine intervention.

be effective must be learned from a competent *Guru* and requires constant practice.

Finally, it must be noted that a mere historical or philological interpretation of a *mantra* is a most superficial evaluation of it. The employment of *mantra* is not a case of degeneration or relapse into ancient brahminical practices. Again, it is not a piece of 'occult-linguistic' or some hocus-pocus gibberish, though it is often composed of a string of meaningless syllables. Vasubandhu in his *Bodhisattva Bhūmi* states that this absolute meaninglessness is in fact the real significance of the mantras.

A *Sādhaka* is to meditate on these Mantras as something absolutely meaningless and this constant meditation on the meaninglessness of the Mantras will gradually lead to a state of mind where it will be very easy for him to meditate on the ultimate nature of the dharmas as absolutely meaningless; this meaninglessness is the void nature of the dharmas and thus the meditation on the Mantras will gradually lead a *Sādhaka* to the realisation of the void nature of the dharmas.<sup>174</sup>

*Mantra* purges the mind of concepts and categories and heals it of its constructive tendencies; it becomes a psychic tool in the whole dialectical process. The meaning of the *mantra* is more than the sum of its parts. It is meaningful not from a discursive or descriptive point of view, but in an all persuasive holistic sense.<sup>175</sup> It is a

174 As found in S. B. Dasgupta, ITB, p. 59. See also, "tad yathā nāstyeṣāṁ mantrapadānāṁ kācīdarthaparimṣpattiḥ nirarthā evaite/ ayameva caiṣāmartho yaduta nirarthatā/ tasmācca paraṁ punaraparamarthaṁ na samanveṣate//"  
Nalinaksha Dutt, ed. *Bodhisattvabhūmi*, p.185.

175 Alex Wayman points out that the 'meaning' of the *mantra* is not inherent in its constituents but it is ascribed to it. For example the



symbol, a hieroglyph as it were of a direct inner vision of Ultimate Reality persuading the *sādhaka* to that Reality. And the emotive and psychic effect of the *mantra* leading the *sādhaka* to the depths of non-dual consciousness vouches for its efficacy.

#### 4. The *Guru*

The term *Guru* means 'one who dispels darkness'. The *Guru* brings to light gradually that which is hidden in the depths of the disciple's consciousness, and as a result, truth reveals itself to the disciple. This calls for a direct and cordial relationship between the *Guru* and his disciple. It is not a cold intellectual relationship, but an intimate, vital contact, or a 'spiritual courtship' as Agehananda Bharati calls it. When the two are thus spiritually attuned, the spirit of the neophyte is renewed. The mystics compare this interpersonal relationship between the *Guru* and his disciple to that of the cow and her calf.<sup>176</sup> The *Upaniṣād* is so called because the disciple has to sit near and below the *Guru* to obtain knowledge, which could be transmitted only in a one-to-one association of the two.

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*dhāraṇī* of *Vimalośhiṣī* "kṣaṇa kṣaṇa/ kṣaṇi kṣaṇi/ kṣaṇu kṣaṇu" is translated as "Guard, guard! Rescue, rescue! Nourish, nourish!" In some cases, the commentator may ascribe an unexpected meaning to a *mantra*. For example, the *mantra* "hana, hana" (in the work *Balmātika* of the Tenjur Canon) actually means 'Destroy, destroy' but they are translated as 'Prick, prick'. Here the commentator relates it to the vedic meaning of the verb 'han' 'to hurl a dart upon.' Alex Wayman, "The Significance of Mantras, Veda and Buddhist Tantric Practice" in *Buddhist Insight: Essays by Alex Wayman*, Geroge R. Elder, ed. (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1984) p.429.

176 Giuseppe Tucci, *The Theory and Practice of the Maṇḍala*, pp. 76-77.

According to the popular conception, a *Guru* is one who gives *dīkṣā*. He is not always a monk; sometimes he is a householder who has achieved the state of a spiritual master. The *Guru* may be a *yogin* or a celestial *bodhisattva* as in the case of Nāgārjuna, or a *Ḍākinī* as in the case of Virūpa. A *Ḍākinī* may be a human female adept (*yoginī*) as it was for Lūyipa.<sup>177</sup> A *Guru* is one, who has received *dīkṣā* from one or more Gurus, is one who is capable of conferring, and has actually conferred, initiation on another person or persons. He is endowed with all qualities, such as spiritual maturity, age, renown, learning etc.<sup>178</sup> He is idolised as the Buddha, Sugata, the *dharmakāya*; and it is he who bestows liberation.<sup>179</sup> *Advayasiddhi* states that, "The Preceptor is the supreme god and hence adorable with care."<sup>180</sup> The *Guru* is often regarded as even higher than the deity, because without the former, man cannot realise God or the Ultimate Reality.<sup>181</sup> Tibetan Buddhism is noted for its veneration of the *Guru*, so much so, that it added a 'refuge' in the *Guru* to the traditional 'three refuges' in the

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177 While all the great masters of *Mahāyāna* were men, women had a much more prominent role in *Vajrayāna*. See James B. Robinson (trans.), *Buddha's Lions*, pp.14-15.

178 Agehananda Bharati, *The Tantric Tradition*, pp. 186-188.

179 Benoytosh Bhattacharyya, IBE, p. 93. Lakṣmīnkarā in her *Advayasiddhi* compares the Preceptor with the incarnation of Vajrasattva or *Tathatā*.

"*sa eva tathatārūpī lokānugraḥ hetunā/*

*rūpamāśṛtya sarīrvṛtyā sarīrsthito yogapīṭhake//"* *Advayasiddhi*, 34.

"The Master of the *Maṇḍala* assuming the form of the two-armed Hevajra should enter the *maṇḍala* dancing the majestic postures of Vajrasattva...He majestically utters *hūṁ hūṁ* and the terrifying *hī hī*". See HT(F) I:10:28-29.

180 "*ācāryaḥ paramodevaḥ pūjanīyaḥ prayatnata*" *Advayasiddhi*, 33.

181 S. B. Dasgupta, ITB, p. 159.

*Buddha, Dharma, and Saṅgha.*<sup>182</sup> According to the *tantra* of Sungwa Nyinpo, in the task of guiding all sentient beings, the Guru exercises four kinds of compassion, namely the constant compassion, the spontaneous compassion, the compassion of granting benediction and prayers, and the compassion of guiding the disciples according to their needs.<sup>183</sup>

*Vajrayāna* asserts that nothing can be gained without the *Guru*.<sup>184</sup> The *Hevajra Tantra* states, "By no other can the Innate be explained and in no other person can it be attained. It is known intuitively as the result of merit gained from diligently following the guru's instruction and observances."<sup>185</sup> The tantric practices are secret and complex and there is every chance of aberrations at every step and hence, without the assistance of an able *Guru* the *sādhaka* may bring upon himself grave dangers. In the root text of the *Kālacakra Tantra* it is stated, "Even if you were to make offerings to all the Buddhas of the past, present and the future and practise charity to sentient beings for eons, you might still not be able to attain Enlightenment.

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182 Alex Wayman, *The Buddhist Tantras*, p. 72.

183 Garma C.C. Chang, *The Hundred Thousand Songs of Milarepa*, vol.II, p.466.

184 "ācāryāt parataram nāsti trailokyā sacarācarai/ yasya prasādāt prāpyante siddhyo 'nekadhāvudhaiḥ" (In the whole three worlds, there is no other than the preceptor who can enable through his merciful and meticulous guidance his learned disciple to attain multiple and multi-lateral perfection). See *Advayasiddhi*, 32.

185 "nānyena kathyate sahaḥajāt na kasminn api labhyate/ ātmanā jīḥyate puṇyād guruparvopasevayā//" HT(F) I:8:34.

But by making full proper Guru-devotion, the attainment of *Mahāmudrā* becomes easy."<sup>186</sup>

In the practice of *Vajrayāna* the primary responsibility of the *Guru* is to know the inner disposition of his disciple. These great masters had many tantras at their disposal and they imparted them in accordance with the propensities of their disciples. Hence the *Guru* must first closely observe the nature of his disciple and identify its predominant defect (delusion, wrath, passion, envy, or malignity). In this manner he determines the 'family' (*kula*) of his disciple. He then assigns to him the *maṇḍala* in which the Buddha of his family is at the centre.<sup>187</sup> The disciple should honour his *Guru* with worship and hymns, and should make offerings of food and drink. The disciple, seeking initiation prays thus: "O Lord, Great Tranquil Being who is intent only on the *Vajra* union, perfecter of the Seals and on who originates from the union of the indivisible Vajras! O great Being, as you do for yourself, O Lord, may you also do the same for me. I am sunk in the thick mud of phenomenal existence; save me who has no other resort."<sup>188</sup>

The offering, the disciple makes to the *Guru* consists of, "pleasing food and drink, wine and meat of fine quality, incense, sacrificial oblations, garlands, bells, banners and anointments"<sup>189</sup> The *Guru* then confers on the disciple the required *abhiṣeka* (or *dīkṣa* in Hindu tradition) during the

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186 As quoted in First Panchen Lama, *The Great Seal of Voidness* (Dharamsala: Library of Tibetan Works and Archives, 1975) p. 5.

187 HT(S), Part I, p. 30.

188 HT(F) II:3:18-19.

189 HT(F) II:3:20. See also II:7:12-13. The Vedic injunction is that the *Guru* has to be approached *samitpāṇi* (with firewood in the student's hand).

Initiation ceremony. In the *Hevajra* tradition, the *Guru* first performs the purification of the site<sup>190</sup> for the construction of the *maṇḍala* followed by the *Hūṅvajrī* rite,<sup>191</sup> then constructs the *maṇḍala* of the particular deity.<sup>192</sup> This is followed by the conferring of the four Consecrations: the Master consecration, Secret consecration, Wisdom consecration, and the Fourth consecration.<sup>193</sup> During the Initiation, the *Guru* instructs the disciple of the way in which the *mantra* should be recited and the number of times it should be muttered in order to attain the different kinds of perfections.

The *Guru* is an indispensable instrument in the process of re-integration of the *sādhaka*. The tantric aspirant is explicitly warned not to embark on this sure, yet dangerous, means of liberation without the guidance of a competent *Guru*. Through the observation of his disciple, through instructions, by conferring *abhiṣekas*, and by constant monitoring of his progress, the *Guru* accompanies him in the process of re-integration. For the disciple the *Guru* is all- the deity, the *mantra*, the very foundation and guarantee of the tantric *sādhana*.

## Conclusion

The fundamental tantric tools, namely, the *Maṇḍala*, the Deity, the *Mantra*, and the *Guru*, are essential for the tantric *sādhana*. *Maṇḍala* is the road map for the re-

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190 See HT(F) I:10:23-24.

191 See HT(F), *Yogaratnamālā*, p.119. It is a rite of protection. This will be taken up in detail later.

192 A description of this *maṇḍala* is given in HT (F) I:10:19-22; 26-27.

193 These four Consecrations will be dealt with in the later chapters. See HT (F) II:3:13-16.

integration of the *sādhaka* from his state of disintegration. The deities are important milestones in this spiritual journey. The *Mantra* provides the concentration and the constancy to pursue the goal, and the *Guru* acts as the constant companion and preceptor. These are the tools or instruments in the process of re-integration and emancipation, and hence provisional aids to discover oneself. Once the bi-polar nature of the Ultimate Reality is discovered within oneself and they are united emulating the matrix of the *maṇḍala*, the *sādhaka* realises his own innate nature as Bliss; then these tools may be, and actually are, dispensed with.



## CHAPTER 6

# THE PROCESS TOWARDS BUDDHAHOOD

The conception of Buddhahood is slightly different in the *Sūtra* system, and in the *Vajrayāna* system. The *Sūtra* system conceives Buddhahood as the non-dual realisation of the Ultimate Reality (*śūnya*). It is the intuition of the Real (*tattva*) as transcendent to thought, as non-relative, non-determinate, quiescent, non-discursive, non-dual.<sup>1</sup> But in *Vajrayāna* it is the experience of the void nature, the Innate, as Great Bliss (*sahajānandaṁ*). The nature of the Absolute in both systems has already been discussed at length in chapter three.

Here our focus will be on the process towards Buddhahood as prescribed in the *Hevajra Tantra*: As regards the process towards Buddhahood, the *Sūtra* system pursues the practice of the Six Pāramitās<sup>2</sup> and the passage through the Daśabhūmis,<sup>3</sup> while *Vajrayāna* follows the Stage of Generation (*utpattikrama*) and the Stage of Completion (*utpannakrama* or *sampannakrama*). The *yogī* and the *yoginī* undertake the practices of these two stages

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1 "apara-pratyayam śāntaṁ prapañcair aprapañcitam; nirvikalpaṁ anānāṛtham etat tattvasya lakṣaṇam. MK. XVIII,9.

2 The six pāramitās are: *dāna*, *śīla*, *kṣānti*, *vīrya*, *dhyāna* and *prajñā*.

3 The daśabhūmis are: *pramuditā*, *vimalā*, *prabhākari*, *Arciṣṇatī*, *Sudurjayā*, *Abhimukhī*, *Duraṅgamā*, *Acalā*, *Sādhumatī* and *Dharmameghā*.

in accordance with the instructions of the *Guru*. The success of the path depends primarily on the adequate preparation of the *yogī* and the *yoginī* and the exact fulfilment of the instructions imparted by the *Guru*.<sup>4</sup>

## 1. The Preparation of the *Yogī*

The *yogī* and the *yoginī* are the practitioners involved in the processes of Generation and Completion. Our text uses several terms to denote the *yogī*.<sup>5</sup> On the basis of their maturity, the disciples are classified into four classes: those of weak sensibilities, medium sensibilities, strong sensibilities and the strongest sensibilities;<sup>6</sup> and the *sādhana* prescribed for each varies accordingly.

*Hevajra Tantra* prescribes a strict course of philosophical training for the *yogī* before he commences

4 In *Vajrayāna* the process and the experiences at various stages of the process are always explained from the point of view of the *yogī* and not of the *yoginī*. The *yoginī* appears only as an aid, nevertheless an important one, in the whole process. Probably the *yoginī* is also expected to reflect on these experiences in similar manner as the *yogī* does.

5 The *yogī* is called *Yogavit* (the wise *yogī*) *‘Vratī* (vow-holder), *Prājñāḥ* (the wise one), *Siddhikāṅkṣikāḥ* (the one desiring accomplishment), *Tattvavatsalāḥ* (the one to whom the True Principle is dear), *Bhāvaka* (the practitioner), *Herukayogasya puṅḥso* (the one who performs the *Heruka* yoga), *Mantrī* (the practitioner), *Śiṣyaḥ* (the disciple), *Suyogavān* (excellent *yogī*), *Bhrātā* (brother), *Viśuḥ* (the wise one), *buddhaiḥ* (the wise), *Upāya* (the Means) etc

6 “*atra tantrē mṣṣumadhyādhimātrādhimātratarasattvabhēdena catasro mudrāḥ prāḡ uddiṣṭāḥ*” HT(S), Part 2, *Yogaratnamālā*, p.120. (It was previously mentioned that in this *tantra* there are four kinds of Seals (*mudrā*) for the four types of practitioners who are distinguished as being of weak, medium, strong and strongest sensibilities. HT(F), *Yogaratnamālā*, p.69.

the practice of *Hevajra sādhana*. Once again this reveals the relation and the continuity of the *Ābhidharma* and *Mahāyāna* principles in *Vajrayāna*. As regards the philosophical discipline that the *yogi* should undergo, *Bhagavān* stated that first he should be given the injunctions for conduct<sup>7</sup> and then instruction on the fundamental moral precepts.<sup>8</sup> Then he should be instructed in the *Vaibhāṣya* doctrine and after that the *Sūtrānta* doctrine. Then he should be instructed in the doctrines of *Yogācāra* followed by those of *Mādhyamika*. Then the disciple should be trained in *Mantra śāstra* and then the doctrines of *Hevajra* practice should be revealed to him.<sup>9</sup>

The moral discipline prepares the *yogī* for the rigorous philosophical training that follows. The Philosophical training proper begins with the realistic and pluralistic philosophy of the *Vaibhāṣika* (*Sarvāstivāda*), which enables him to view reality in terms of the seventy-five dharmas. The philosophy of the *Sautrāntika*<sup>10</sup> makes him critically analyse these dharmas. In this manner the seeds of Idealism are sown in the mind of the *yogī*. Then, like the

7 These refer to the conduct followed from sunrise onwards, on full-moon days and other important occasions. According to Snellgrove, it consists of the public confession of sins (*poṣadha*).

8 These consists of the eight precepts such as detachment from the evil ways of body, speech and mind as well as those precepts which ought to be followed as long as one lives. Snellgrove states that these refer to the ten rules of virtuous conduct.

9 "bhagavān āha/

*poṣadharāṃ dīyate prathamam tadānu śikṣāpadarāṃ diśet/*

*vaibhāṣyārāṃ tatra deśeta sūtrāntarāṃ vai punas tathā//*

*yogācārarāṃ tataḥ paścāt tadānu madhyamakarāṃ diśet/*

*sarvamantranayārāṃ jñātvā tadānu hevajram ārabhet/...*" HT(F)  
II.8.10-11.

10 The *Sautrāntika* as we know reduced the number of dharmas from seventy-five to forty-three.

*Yogācārin*, he learns to view the object (*dharmā*) as nothing but a projection of the subject (*vijñāna*).<sup>11</sup> Finally, with the *Mādhyamika*, he asserts that the object as well as the subject is devoid of essence (*śūnya*). He realises that the "Real is transcendent to thought; it is non-dual (*śūnya*), free from the duality of 'is' and 'not-is' "<sup>12</sup> Milarepa in *The Hundred Thousand Songs of Milarepa* states, "I am a *yogī* who is devoid of thoughts, knowing that there is no such thing as mind."<sup>13</sup> This vision of reality or this awareness of the ultimate non-substantiality of all phenomenal experiences, is termed in our text the True Principle (*tattva*). And the *yogī* who realises the True Principle is called *tattvavatsalaḥ*.

The above mentioned philosophical process of overcoming duality and attaining the True Principle is at times expressed, not in the concepts of *Mahāyāna*, but in tantric Code Language (*sandhyābhāṣā*). It is referred to as 'eating'.<sup>14</sup> The text states that, "the *yogī* must eat the flesh

11 Space does not permit us at this juncture to enter into a discussion on the development of *Yogācāra* Idealism from the theories of *Sarvāstivāda* and *Sautrāntika*. For a thorough investigation of this aspect one could profitably read Ashok Kumar Chatterjee, YI, pp. 24-44.

12 T.R.V. Murti, CPB, p.208.

13 Garma C.C. Chang, trans., *The Hundred Thousand Songs of Milarepa*, vol.1, p.13. (emphasis added). Commenting on this couplet, Chang states, "An accomplished *yogī* should have freed himself from all thoughts, or conceptualisations, be they simple or complex, good or evil, monistic or dualistic...then he is said to have acquired the wisdom of Equality or Non-discrimination." See, *Ibid.*, p.21, fn.8.

14 The *yogī* is to consume the fivefold sacrament of initial *NA*, initial *GA*, initial *HA*, final *ŚVA* and initial *ŚVA* (HT(S) I:xi:8-9). Snellgrove points out that '*NA*' represents the first letter of the name of man (*nara*), similarly '*GA*' represents cow (*go*), '*HA*' represents the elephant (*hastin*), '*ŚVA*' represents the last letter of

of one killed at the gallows pole as well as one killed by a weapon and one who is a seven times returned. The wise *yogī* performs the rite of Killing after intently arousing mercy."<sup>15</sup> Snellgrove points out that 'consuming the one killed at the gallows pole' (*dhvaja*) means that the *yogī* consumes or destroys any thought with an object for its activity. That is, he refutes the Realist's (*Vaibhāṣika* and *Sautrāntika*) position that the objects of experience (*dharmas*) are real. He realises that the object has no existence apart from the cognising subject, the mind. In this way, the *yogī* makes his mind rest on its foundation. To 'consume the one killed by weapon' (*śāstrahata*) means the *yogī* consumes the notion of self-existence. The *yogī* realises that just as the object is of the nature of void, the subject too is of the same nature. In this manner, he establishes the non-substantiality of the differentiated phenomena and the non-substantiality of all thoughts. Thus the *yogī* overcomes the subject-object duality (*grāhya-grāhaka dvaya*). Now by consuming 'the seven times returned' (*saptāvarta*) the *yogī* consumes his own person, that is, by making all thoughts non-existent he attains the stabilised meditative state of the void. At this stage there is neither the consciousness of an object, nor the consciousness of a subject (in relation to external objects) nor even the consciousness of self.

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the horse (*aśva*) and 'ŚVA' the first letter of the dog (*śvan*). Thus these letters represent the five kinds of flesh that the *yogī* should consume. See HT(S), Part I., p.86.fn.2. See also HT(S) II:x:5. These five ambrosias one should consume for the sake of perfection in *Hevajra*. All living beings are nothing but the Aggregates of the Five Components of Phenomenal Awareness (*pañcaskandha*). So by 'eating all living beings' is meant the realisation of the non-substantiality of all beings composed of the Aggregates of the Five Components of Phenomenal Awareness.

15 HT(F) I:7:21. See also I:11: 8-10; II:7:10.

In Tantric Code Language, the act of rendering phenomenal existence non-substantial (*śūnya*) is also called 'the rite of Killing' While speaking of the observance of the Vow (*samaya*), and the Observance of the Concealed Essence (*sanivara*) for the *yogī* in this highest stage, the *Bhagavān* stated:

(As the Observance of the Vow) you should kill living beings, speak lies, take what is not given and service others' wives. (As the Observance of the Concealed Essence) **one-pointedness of thought is the killing of living beings**, for the thought is the very life breath; the vow to save all beings is the speaking of lies; the sexual fluid of the woman is that which is not given and others' wives are the beautiful ones who are one's own.<sup>16</sup>

Since thought arises from the life breath, the very non-arising of thought is considered killing. The vow to save all living beings is the speaking of lies since the world of living beings is not real in terms of the absolute truth. The sexual fluid of the *Vajra* Lady is the non-dual knowledge. This non-dual knowledge is 'what is not given' because it is attained by means of a non-dual intuition. The 'beautiful ones who are one's own' refer to *Nairātmyā* and the other *yoginīs*. They are considered 'the wives of others' (*para*) because of their most (*parama*) excellent nature.<sup>17</sup>

The *yogī* is to be an embodiment not only of *prajñā* (*śūnyatā*) but also of Compassion (*karuṇā*). This emphasis on *karuṇā* is inherited from *Mahāyāna*. In the *Aṣṭasāhasrikā Prajñāpāramitā* the Lord teaches, "The *Bodhisattva* should adopt the same attitude towards all beings, his mind should be even towards all beings, he

16 HT(F) II:3:29-30. (emphasis added).

17 HT(F). *Yogaratnamālā*, pp.192-193.



should not handle others with an uneven mind, but with a mind which is friendly, well-disposed, helpful, free from aversion, avoiding harm and hurt, he should handle others as if they were his mother, father, son or daughter."<sup>18</sup> In *Vajrayāna*, the concept of *karuṇā* becomes more accentuated. The *Hevajra Tantra* states that 'the rite of Killing should be preceded by the generation of mercy', which means, the *yogī* starts with the practice of the *Brahma vihāra*, especially the exercise of *karuṇā*. The outstanding characteristic of the *yogī* is his Compassion. The *yogī* should first and foremost be compassionate (*kṛpāvān*).<sup>19</sup> Our text states that he always drinks compassion (*karuṇā pīyate nityam*) for the benefit of all beings.<sup>20</sup> In fact those who lack mercy cannot succeed (*kṛpāhīnā na siddhyanti*); hence the disciple is exhorted to arouse compassion within himself (*tasmāt kṛpām utpādayet*).<sup>21</sup> The tantric praxis involves a constant mingling of *sūnyata* and *karuṇā*. Therefore, rightly is this praxis called the *Vajra-Kapāla Yoga*, or the union of Compassion and Voidness.<sup>22</sup>

Once the void nature of phenomenal existence is realised and compassion is generated, the *yogī* is ready for instructions in *Mantra śāstra*. He now conceives the same phenomenal forms in terms of the Five Aspects of Enlightened Awareness.<sup>23</sup> He perceives all that exists,

18 Edward Conze, trans., *Aṣṭasāhasrikā Prajñāpāramitā*, chapter 16, pp.119-120.

19 HT(F) II:8:7.

20 HT(F) I:6:26.

21 HT(F) I:7:22.

22 Our text asserts that "all those living beings whose flesh the wise yogīs eat are all subdued by means of this Vajra-Kapāla Yoga". HT(F) I:7:28.

23 See HT(F) I:8:6-7, see also HT(F), *Yogaratnamālā*, pp.43, 218. He views the world of phenomena in terms of the Five Dhyāni

moving or stationary, grass, shrubs, creepers etc., as the Supreme Principle, which is one's own very nature.<sup>24</sup> This Supreme Principle is the Enlightened Nature, the Innate, which pervades the entire world of phenomena.<sup>25</sup> The Innate, which is the core of one's own being, is also the core of every other phenomenon. In this way the *yogī* realises his identity with everything else in the phenomenal world.

The *yogī* should constantly abide in the True Principle like the flow of the river's current, or like the rays of the light of a lamp.<sup>26</sup> For him the visible manifestation of the True Principle is the deity Hevajra. Therefore, being united with Hevajra is being united with the True Principle. The *yogī* is to be one with his chosen deity (*sveṣṭadevatāsaṁyogī*) constantly. *Bhagavān* states, "One who wishes to attain the Accomplishment should remain at one in union with Nairātmyā or Heruka and should not even for a moment rest in any other thought."<sup>27</sup> This constant and unfailing union with the deity is stressed by the text repeatedly.<sup>28</sup> By such constant union he realises that he himself is Hevajra who is the supreme underlying

Buddhas who are embodiments of the Five Aspects of Enlightened Awareness.

- 24 "sthiracalāśca ye bhāvās tṛṣṇagulmalatādayaḥ/  
bhāvante vai paraṁ tattvaṁ ātmabhāvasvarūpakamḥ" HT(F)  
I:8:43.
- 25 "rūpaviśayādi ye 'py anye partibhāsante hi yoginaḥ/  
sarve te śuddhabhāvā hi yasmād buddhamayaṁ jagatḥ" HT(F)  
I:9:4.  
See also HT(F) I:10:39, 41.
- 26 "nadīśrotāḥpravāhena dīpajyotiḥprabandhavat/  
satatāṁ tattvayogena sthātavyam ahorātrataḥ" HT(F) I:8:54.
- 27 "nairātmyāyogayuktātmā 'thavā herukayogataḥ/  
kṣaṇam apy anyacittaḥ san na tiṣṭhet siddhikāṅkṣakaḥ" HT(F)  
II:2:2.
- 28 See HT(F) II:2:5-9.

principle that is present in all individuals.<sup>29</sup> For such a *yogī*, everything that he does or does not becomes *sādhana*<sup>30</sup> because he is in constant union with the True Principle.

The *yogī*'s vision of phenomenal existence as non-substantial is depicted through the attire and ornaments he uses. His dress is designed to match that of the Hevajra, and he adopts the *vajrapada*<sup>31</sup> postures in order to signify that the *yogī* is himself Hevajra, the embodiment of the True Principle. The *yogī* is to wear the five divine ornaments<sup>32</sup> which symbolise the five *dhyāni* Buddhas who are but iconographic representations of the Five Aspects of the Enlightened Awareness. He is dressed in tiger skin<sup>33</sup> and his hair is to be coiled into a crown like a knot on the top of his head. He should adorn his hair with five skulls

- 29 "yatātmani tathā sattve tathātmani ahaṁ paraml..." HT(F) I:7:25.
- 30 The *Yogaratnamālā* points out that for the *yogī* who is thus united with the Deity (Hevajra), "eating is fire-sacrifice, yoga is serving Wisdom, and austerities are his physical activities. The sound of the hand-drum is the mantra and the holding of the *khaṇḍa* is the concentration (*dhyāna*). Similarly, the *Vajra* dance is the concentration and the *Vajra* songs the *mantra*. Thus, whatever he does is the Observance of the Vow (*samaya*) and whatever he does not is the Observance of the Concealed Essence (*saṁvara*)." HT(F), *Yogaratnamālā*, pp.68-69.
- 31 The *yogī* is to adopt the *vajrapada* postures of Hevajra such as the grounded feet, the raised feet, equipoised feet and half lying. See HT(F), *Yogaratnamālā*, p.64.
- 32 The five divine ornaments are the circlet, ear-rings, necklace, bracelets, girdle, which respectively represent Akṣobhya, Amitābha, Ratneśa, Vairocana and Amoghasiddhi. See HT(F) I:6:12.
- 33 *Śrī-Cakra-Śaṁvara-Tantra* mentions that Heruka wears a Tiger's skin loosened. It denotes that He casts off the outward object and the inner perceiving subject. It also means that he has fully developed His three principles namely His Body, Speech and Mind. See *Śrī-Cakra-Śaṁvara-Tantra*, p.98 (26),fn.9 and p.99(27),fn.1.

representing the Five Buddhas. The thread used for tying his hair has two strands, symbolising Wisdom and Means. In this way, every aspect of his attire indicates the philosophical process that he undergoes, and the realisation of the True Principle, Hevajra, who is the union of *śūnyatā* and *karuṇā*.

This realisation is further translated into the way the *yogī* orders his daily life, the food and drink he consumes as well as the classes of people he interacts with. On account of the realisation of the True Principle, the *yogī* conceives all distinctions as misconceptions, or as *śūnya*. The text states that once the knowledge of the True Principle arises within the *yogī*, "it is no longer possible for the him to be obstructed by the misconception that distinguishes himself from others."<sup>34</sup>

The *yogī*, who is one with the intrinsic nature of all things, is free of all ties of social conventions, caste restrictions, religious injunctions, and inhibitions.<sup>35</sup> He does not make such distinctions as worthy and unworthy, edible and inedible, liked and disliked.<sup>36</sup> *Bhagavān* points

34 "...svāparabhāgavikalpena bādītum naiva śakyate// HT(F) I:8:51.

35 "śikṣādikṣvinirmukto lajjākāryaṁ tathaiva ca/  
sarvabhāvasvabhāvena vicared yogī mahākṛpā//"  
HT(F) I:6:23.

36 See HT(F) I:6:19-21. See also

"nākāryaṁ vidyate kiñcin nābhakṣyaṁ vidyate sadā/  
nācintyaṁ vidyate hy atra nāvācyaṁ yac chubhāśubham//"  
HT(F) I:7:24. (The *yogī* should not think of anything as being prohibited and he should never think of anything as being inedible. There is not anything, good or bad, that he should not think or say). See also

"brahmajñāne samutpanne kṛtyākṛityaṁ na vidyate" (When Brahman-knowledge has arisen there is no longer distinction of what should be or should not be done). Arthur Avalon, *The Great Liberation (Mahānirvāna Tantra)*, (Madras: Ganesh and Company, 1985) VII, 94.

out that food and drink should be accepted as it comes without thought of what is acceptable or forbidden. One should not perform the rituals of bathing and cleansing or avoid vulgar behaviour. He neither recites mantras nor meditates; neither forsakes sleep nor restrains the senses.<sup>37</sup> He interacts with people of all castes as though they are the same as his own body and enjoys all kinds of women.<sup>38</sup> He does not love friends and hate enemies. He does not worship any idol made of wood, stone or clay, but remains united with his own chosen deity. He partakes of the conventionally most abhorrent food and drink.<sup>39</sup> For the one who has the awareness of the non-dual knowledge there exists nothing inedible.<sup>40</sup> Thus distinctions and differences are overcome not only at a conceptual level but also at the physical level. Milarepa says, "if the realisation (of *śūnyatā*) is stable, the organs and senses move freely but do not cling. One then forever merges with the *Trikāya*. This is the conviction of Enlightenment."<sup>41</sup>

Just as the life and activities of the *yogī* are unconventional so are the modes of communication that he

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37 "na kaṣṭa kalpanāṁ kuryannopavāsaṁ na ca kriyāṁ  
śnānaṁ śaucaṁ na caivātra grāma dharmā vivarjanaṁ"  
*Advayasiddhi*, 13.

38 See *Advayasiddhi*, 22.

39 *Yogī* is to drink Semen and especially wine. See HT(F) I:6:14; II:11:15. "He must eat the Five Nectars, drink liquor made from molasses, eat the poisonous Neem and drink the placental fluids. He must eat foods which are sour, sweet, bitter, hot, salty, astringent, rotten, fresh and bloody liquids along with semen... Obtaining menstrual blood he must place it in a skull-cup and mixing it with phlegm and mucous, the holder of the Vow must drink it." HT(F) II:3:46-48.

40 See HT (F) II:3:41-48; II:4:6-10; II:6:9-11; II:7:12-13; II:11:8. See also *Advayasiddhi*, 11, 14.

41 Garma C.C. Chang, trans., *The Hundred Thousand Songs of Milarepa*, vol.1, p.101. (emphasis added).

employs. The *yogī* should communicate using the Tantric Code Language (*sandhyābhāṣā*)<sup>42</sup> so that the praxis is kept secret from the uninitiated. Similarly, the mode of communication between the initiates is by the use of the Tantric Sign language (*chomā*).<sup>43</sup> Further, the use of these modes of communication becomes necessary because the realisation of the Absolute is beyond empirical concepts and categories.

## 2. The Preparation of the *Yoginī*

The role of the *yoginī*<sup>44</sup> is important in the *Hevajra* praxis because it is in and through her that the *yogī* experiences Bliss. Since an intimate relation between them is essential for *sādhana*, she must be one who loves the *yogī* (*sādhakapriyām*).<sup>45</sup> As regards obtaining the *yoginī* it is said that the *yogī* should receive her as a boon (*varalabdhā yato*). She may be a divine consort who originates from one of the five families or she may be any available sixteen year-old girl.<sup>46</sup> A *yogī* may also attract a *yoginī* by his own power from among the gods, titans, men, or even from the wood-spirits or celestial musicians.<sup>47</sup>

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42 See HT(F) II:3:65-67.

43 See HT(F) I:7:1-7.

44 The *yoginī* is referred to as the Wisdom Consort, *Prajñā* (wisdom), *Mudrā* (seal), *Mahāmudrā* (great seal), *Padminī* (lotus maiden), *Vajrakanyā* (the *vajra* girl), *Bhaginī* (sister) etc.

45 HT(F) II:4:40; II:6:11.

46 HT(F) I:10:5. The text states, "If a virgin of the *Vajra* Family is not available, then prepare to practise with the virgin belonging to the family of one's own chosen deity. If not practise with a virgin born of another family." HT(F) I:6:9.

47 HT(F) II:2:19-20. The rite of subduing a young woman is described in HT(F) I:2:26.



The tantric *sādhana* employs great passion, hence the physical qualities of the *yoginī* are emphasised. She is to be of twelve to sixteen years of age and must be adorned with garlands and jewellery.<sup>48</sup> The text describes the characteristics of the relative *mahāmudrā* (*yoginī*) as,

neither too tall nor too short; she is neither too black nor too white, and is the colour of a lotus petal; her breath is sweet smelling and her perspiration pleasant like the smell of musk. Her sexual organ has fragrance like that of the pink lotus. Her smell, that of the male and female sexual fluids... she also has the fragrance of the blue lotus and the scent of the sweet aloe wood. She is resolute and not fickle, pleasant of speech and delightful. She has lustrous hair, has three folds around her waist and by her shape and nature known as a Lotus Maiden (*padminī*).<sup>49</sup>

As regards the training to be imparted to the *yoginī* the text states briefly that she should be refined with the Enlightened Consciousness, that is, by the Triple Refuge and other initial practices. First, the ten virtuous observances- the ten rules of virtuous conduct- should be imparted. Then the instruction in the *Hevajra* doctrine must be given. She should be trained to identify the mind with the deity. Further she should be instructed in keeping the Observances of the vow and in the attainment of the one-pointedness of mind through the Innate *Yoga* (*sahaja yoga*).<sup>50</sup> She must be consecrated in the *Hevajra* practice (*svābhiṣīktām tu hevajre*).<sup>51</sup> She must be free from all

48 HT(F) II:5:58.

49 HT(F) II:8:2-5. See also HT(F) I:6:9; II:2:17; II:3:14; II:4:39-40; II:5:58-59; II:6:11.

50 HT(F) II:2:17-18

51 HT(F) II:4:40

misconceptions (*sarvasaṅkalpavarjitā*)<sup>52</sup> hence the strict philosophical training is incumbent on her as well. As regards the preparation of the *yoginī* the text does not elaborate. The *yoginī* is treated more as an aid for the *yogī* than a co-practitioner.

### 3. Application of the Vows

The *yogī* and the *yoginī* are now ready to commence the praxis, which begins with the *maṅḍala* practice. As the first step in this practice, the Pledge (*samaya*) and Vows (*saṅvara*) are taken as one enters the *maṅḍala*. The Tibetan equivalent of 'samaya' is 'dam-tshig' which means a pledge or guarantee. The Pledge consists in resolving to avoid the fourteen fundamental transgressions and the eight grave transgressions.<sup>53</sup>

The *yogī* takes the Vow of the Five Families, which is the tantric counterpart of the *bodhisattva* vow. Vows are of two types, namely, common (*sādhāraṇa*),<sup>54</sup> and uncommon

52 HT(F) II:2:19.

53 For details see F. D. Lessing & Alex Wayman, trans., *Introduction to the Buddhist Tantric Systems*, pp.328-329, fn.14 & 15.

54 The following Common Vow is mentioned in *Vajrapañjara-tantra*

1. I take my refuge in the Three Jewels;  
I confess every one of my sins;  
I rejoice in the merits of the living beings;  
I set my mind on the Enlightenment of the Buddha.
2. I take my refuge, up to Enlightenment,  
in the Buddha, his law, and the supreme host;  
For accomplishing my own and others' aim,  
I generate the Mind of Enlightenment.
3. After generating the Mind of Supreme Enlightenment,  
I shall be host to all the sentient beings;  
I shall practise zestfully the best practice of Enlightenment;  
May I become a Buddha for the sake of the world!

(*asādhāraṇa*)<sup>55</sup>. The former is common to all whether one follows the *Pāramitāyāna* or *Mantrayāna*. At initiation it is repeated thrice after the *Guru*. The latter is the vow of the Five Families and is special to each *sādhana*.

*Samaya* has several other nuances as well. Snellgrove calls it the 'conventional form', by which he means the *maṇḍala* and the different forms of divinities through which the practitioner experiences the very nature of the Absolute and phenomenal forms. It is also used to refer to the outward sign of an inner hidden power. *Samaya* is also the type of ritual food or 'sacrament', especially the *pañcamakāras*.<sup>56</sup>

*Saṁvara*, the Tibetan equivalent of which is '*sdom-pa*', also means 'bond' or 'union'. It signifies the mystic union of all forms and elements. It is the quintessence of all things (*sarvākāraikasāṁvaram*),<sup>57</sup> the Concealed Essences of all natures (*sarvadharmaikasāṁvaraḥ*)<sup>58</sup> *Saṁvara* is also the union of various concealed essences within the Yogin's body, which constitute the internal *maṇḍala*.<sup>59</sup> The

See F. D. Lessing & Alex Wayman, trans., *Introduction to the Buddhist Tantric Systems*, p.151.

55 The uncommon vow is peculiar to each *sādhana* as in the following case, which is an uncommon vow belonging to the *Kālacakra Tantra*. "Having conferred upon me the sublime initiation of the irreversible wheel, O Lord, pray explain the reality of the gods of the wheel, the wondrous action of the hierophant, the pledge of all the Buddhas, and the highest secret of the vow. So as to serve the aim of all sentient beings may I forever be a hierophant!" See Alex Wayman, *The Buddhist Tantras*, p.66.

56 HT(S). Part 1, p.138.

57 HT(F) I:10:39.

58 HT(F) II:10:1.

59 "*saṁvarabhedaśca kathyate/  
alikālicandrasūryaprajñopāyadharmasāribhoga-*

mystic union is of the microcosm and the macrocosm and the resultant supreme bliss is also called *sañvara* (Tib. *bdemchog*).<sup>60</sup>

The text claims that enlightenment is quickly attained by the application of the vow. The vow for each type of practitioner is different.<sup>61</sup> The *Yogaratanmālā* states that the disciple of mild sensibility is given the differentiated vow. The differentiated vow is explained in the seventh chapter of the second part of the Hevajra Tantra. By this vow the disciple is made aware of the plurality and diversity of the phenomenal world. He is to satiate the six senses, the eyes, ears, nose, tongue, skin, and mind. This is achieved by partaking of the 'sacramental food' (*samaya*), performing dance, song, music etc.<sup>62</sup>

The disciple of medium sensibility is administered the undifferentiated vow. Here the praxis consists in making the disciple realise the undifferentiated character of phenomenal existence. By taking this vow the *yogī* does not distinguish between castes.<sup>63</sup> He eats *bhaiṣajyam* (faeces) and drinks *vāri* (semen) which are ordinarily considered disgusting.<sup>64</sup> He overcomes the mental distinctions of worthy and unworthy, likes, and dislikes, edible and inedible etc.<sup>65</sup> The *yogī* becomes free of all social and

*nirmāṇamahāsukhakāyavākcittam!*" HT(F) I:1:22. (The various Concealed Essences (*sañvara*) are mentioned: *āli* and *kāli*, Moon and Sun, Wisdom and Means, the Centres of Essential Nature, Enjoyment, Creation and Great Bliss and the Body, Speech and Mind.)

60 HT(S), Part 1, p.138.

61 See HT(F), *Yogaratanmālā*, p.69.

62 See *Hevajra Tantra*, Part II, Chapter 7 entitled 'Book and Feast.' HT(F) II:7:10-11.

63 HT (F) I:6:4.

64 HT(F) I:6:14.

65 HT(F) I:6:19-21.

religious injunctions and inhibitions.<sup>66</sup> In this manner he realises that within the phenomenal universe all things are of the same nature.

The disciple of strong sensibility is given the extremely undifferentiated vow. This vow takes the disciple a step higher. He now realises that not only are things of the world undifferentiated, but they are of the nature of void. That is, all things are ultimately devoid of essence. By the earlier vow he realises that things of the world are of the same nature; by the extremely undifferentiated vow he realises that this nature is *sūnya* (void); and he attains the awareness of non-dual knowledge.<sup>67</sup>

For the disciple of strongest sensibility the text prescribes no vow. For such a disciple, in the fourth consecration, the application of the vow is realised through the *mahāmudrā*.<sup>68</sup> The non-dual knowledge attained in the earlier stages is now experienced as great bliss (*mahāsukha*). For the *yogī* the non-dual knowledge is now non-dual bliss.

In this way, the application of the vow leads the disciples of varying sensibilities to enlightenment. The different vows gradually wean the disciple away from the diversity and multiplicity of phenomenal existence to the sameness of nature, and then to the realisation of that nature as void, and lastly to the experience of void as bliss.

#### 4. Conferral of Consecrations

The tantric praxis, namely the Processes of Generation and Completion, is marked by four Consecrations

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66 HT(F) I:6:23-24.

67 See HT(F) II:3:41-49.

68 HT(F), *Yogaratnamālā*, p.69.

(*abhiṣeka*) administered by the *Guru*. *Abhiṣeka* literally means a purificatory sprinkling.<sup>69</sup> Broadly speaking they are initiation rites. The Tibetan equivalent is '*dbañ bskur*' which means 'conferral of power'<sup>70</sup> So by consecration one is empowered to receive the doctrines of the *tantra*. *Abhiṣeka* is not peculiar to *Vajrayāna*; it is found in early Buddhism in the form of the initiation to the vow of *pabbajjā* (Skt. *pravrajyā*), the vow of renunciation or the initiation to the *upasampadā* marking the entry of one as a full-fledged member of the *Saṅgha*. *Abhiṣeka* in some form or other is found in all schools of Buddhism as well as in other religious traditions and sects. It is deemed indispensable for tantric praxis.<sup>71</sup> In tantric Buddhism we have four Consecrations, namely the Master Consecration (*ācāryābhiṣeka*), the Secret Consecration (*guhyābhiṣeka*), the Wisdom Consecration (*prajñābhiṣeka*) and Fourth Consecration (*caturthābhiṣeka*).<sup>72</sup> The last three Consecrations are considered higher initiations.<sup>73</sup> They are given only after one has received the Master Consecration. Some texts prescribe preparatory rites, such as driving

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69 "*sekañ caturvidhañ khyātañ sattvānāñ siddhihetave/ sicyate snāpyate 'neneti sekas tenābhidhāyate!*" HT(F) II:3:12) (In order that beings may attain the Accomplishment consecration is proclaimed to be four-fold. Consecration is so called because one is sprinkled and cleansed).

70 Alex Wayman, *The Buddhist Tantras*, p.61.

71 "*nā 'bhiṣikto hi yo yogī yogitvam abhivāñchati/ hanyate muṣṣiṇā 'kāśatīñ pivet ca mṛga-tṛṣṇikām!*" (The *yogī* who tries to attain yogihood without initiation only fists the sky and drinks the water of mirage) quoted in the *Kriyā-saṅgraha Pañjika*, MS.p.5(A) as found in S. B. Dasgupta, ITB, p.160.

72 Besides these, our text (HT(F) speaks of a Consecration by Deity. Snellgrove calls it 'Self-consecration'. This is consecration by emanation. See HT(F) I:4:1.

73 F. D. Lessing & Alex Wayman, trans., *Introduction to the Buddhist Tantric Systems*, p. 329.



away the disturbing spirits of the ten quarters through mantras and other practices, prior to the consecration ceremonies. To ensure the safety of the practice, the ten Buddhas are placed at the ten quarters. The *yogī* seeking initiation should constantly think of himself as the adamantine being and the *yoginī* as *prajñā*.<sup>74</sup> The *yogī* and the *yoginī* are made to enter the *maṇḍala* and the consecrations are conferred on them.

#### 4.1 The Master Consecration

The Master consecration (*ācāryābhiṣeka*) is also called *kalaśābhiṣeka* or jar consecration. It consists of six subsidiary consecrations, in all of which a *kalaśa* (jar) is used. These six subsidiary consecrations are those of Water, Crown, *Vajra*, Bell, Name and Master.<sup>75</sup> These six are of the nature of the six Tathāgatas.<sup>76</sup> The text describes how this Initiation is given: The Master enters into sexual union with the *yoginī* presented to him by the *yogī*. "Embracing a sixteen year old wisdom consort with the hands and by uniting the bell and *vajra* is the master consecration."<sup>77</sup> The Master consecration is given in order

74 S. B. Dasgupta, ITB, p.161.

75 In his *The Buddhist Tantras*, Wayman lists them as Water, Diadem, *Vajra*, Bell, Mirror, and Name. See Alex Wayman, *The Buddhist Tantras*, p.68.

76 Water is of the nature of ideal knowledge (*Akṣobhya*); the Crown of equalising knowledge (*Ratnasambhava*); the *Vajra* of discriminative knowledge (*Amitābha*); the Bell of performance of duty (*Amoghasiddhi*); the Name of knowledge of the perfectly pure *dharmadhātu* (*Vairocana*); the Master of adamantine knowledge (*Vajradhara*). See F. D. Lessing & Alex Wayman, trans., *Introduction to the Buddhist Tantric Systems*, p.315.

77 "*pāṇibhyāṁ tu samālitgya prajñāṁ vai śoḍaśābdikāṁ/ ghaṇṭāvajrasamāyogād ācāryasecanaṁ matamī*" HT(F) II:3:13. See also HT(F) II:12:2.

that the *yogī* may progress and be far away from evil dharmas. This *abhiṣeka* makes the disciple worthy of the initiations, reflection and meditation, which follow. It is administered to the disciple of weak sensibility and instruction is given in meditation with the *karmamudrā*.<sup>78</sup> It is said that it washes away the impurities of the body and bestows upon the *yogī* the power of the *nirmāṇakāya*.

## 4.2 The Secret Consecration

In the Secret consecration (*guhyābhiṣeka*) the preceptor explains the secret process of the yogic union of *prajñā* and *upāya* by which the *bodhicitta* (semen) is produced. Instruction is given on how the downward tendency of the *bodhicitta* is to be checked and how it should be forced upward, through breath-control, to the *uṣṇīṣa-kamala*, and how the *mahāsukha* is attained.<sup>79</sup> In this consecration, while the songs and praises proper of this consecration are chanted, the Master with the thumb and ring finger of his left hand drops the juice of his sexual union with the *yoginī* into the mouth of the disciple.<sup>80</sup> It is called 'secret' because it cannot be explained to the *yogī* in terms of concepts and is hidden from the Śrāvakas, Pratyeka-buddhas, and all those below them. This

78 The various mudrās will be explained later in this chapter.

79 S. B. Dasgupta, ITB, 161.

80 "...jyeṣṭhānamikābhyañ ca śiṣyavaktre nipātayet/  
kāritavyaṅ ca tatraiva samarasarñ śiṣyagocarāñ//"  
HT(F) II:3:14. See also HT(F), *Yogaratnamālā*, p.185 and HT(F) II:12:3. Lessing and Alex Wayman describe the ceremony differently. According to them the red-and-white element of the "Father-Mother" union is taken from the lotus of the Mother with the ring fingers of the "Father-Mother" and placed on the tip of their tongue(s). When it reaches the throat it produces a special bliss. F. D. Lessing & Alex Wayman, trans., *Introduction to the Buddhist Tantric Systems*, p.319.

consecration is administered in order that the impurities of Speech are washed away and the *yogī* is empowered in the *sarīrbhogakāya*. This consecration is given to disciples of medium sensibility through instruction in meditation (*bhāvanā*) on the *samayamudrā*.

### 4.3 The Wisdom Consecration

At this consecration the master explains to the disciple the void nature (*sūnyatā*) of the self (*pudgala*) as well as that of all objects (*dharma*). He explains to him as to how this yogic process leads a seeker to this very realisation. Hence, this is called *prajñābhiṣeka*.<sup>81</sup> In this consecration the master, after having worshipped the wisdom consort, offers her to the disciple saying, "O great being, take this Consort who will give you bliss."<sup>82</sup> This consecration is given to disciples of strong sensibility through instruction on the *dharmamudrā*, the mental concentration (*samādhi*) in which all dharmas appear as illusion. This *abhiṣeka* washes away the impurities of the mind and bestows on the *yogī* the power in the *dharmakāya*.

### 4.4 The Fourth Consecration

The Fourth consecration is given immediately after the wisdom consecration. Dasgupta calls it *vajra-jñānābhiṣeka* as it leads the disciple of the strongest sensibility to the realisation of the ultimate adamant reality (*vajra*).<sup>83</sup> It is at this consecration that the nature of 'thusness' is realised. This process of *yoga* has no object of experience

81 S.B. Dasgupta, ITB, p.161.

82 "prajñāṁ pūjayed chāstā arcayitvā samarpayet/  
 śāstā brūyāt mahāsattva gṛhṇa mudrāṁ sukhāvahāml" HT(F)  
 II:3:15.

83 S. B. Dasgupta, ITB, p.161.

(*anālabanayogena*) and is characterised by the absence of discrimination. It is experienced with the external *mudrā* and by instructions of one's master.<sup>84</sup> The master instructs the disciple in the following words, "Take, O great Being, take this delightful goddess who is beautiful, the bestower of erotic delight and the bestower of the 'state' Taking her perform the service."<sup>85</sup> By this consecration the impurities of body, speech and mind are cleansed and the *yogī* is bestowed with power in the *mahāsukhākāya*. The realisation at this consecration is most subtle since it is beyond the realm of phenomena. It is space-like because it is devoid of projections and subject-object distinctions; it is undefiled since the afflictions (*kleśa*) are destroyed; it is the essence of *vajra*, which is the essence of all the Buddhas. As every seeker is a '*vajragarbha*', this realisation is not granted by any other being; here one is one's own procreator (*pitā te tvam asi svayam*) and has direct and immediate experience of it as *mahāsukha*.<sup>86</sup>

## 5. The Process of Generation

The *yogī* and the *yoginī*, having undergone the required philosophical training, performed the vows, and having received the required consecrations, are now ready to begin the process of Generation (*utpattikrama*). The insight that the *yogī* arrived at through the philosophical process that preceded it, is now re-enacted and realised within him

84 HT(S), Part 1, pp.132-133.

85 "*jñātvā śiṣyaṁ mahadbhūtam nirīṣyaṁ krodhavarjitam/ śāstā tam ājñāpayati kunduruṁ kuru vajradhīk//*" HT(F) II:3:16. See also II:12:4. By 'service' sexual union with the wisdom consort is intended.

86 "*idam jñānam mahāsūkṣmarṁ vajramaṇḍarṁ nabhopamam/ virajam mokṣadam śāntam pitā te tvam asi svayam//*" HT(F) II:12:5.

through the meditative process of Generation. The process of Generation is also called the process of Emanation. The *utpattikrama* is the manifestation (*utpāda*) of phenomenal existence in symbols, figures, and deities. The world of phenomenal existence, which was known earlier through the dharmas, is now manifested in the form of divinities. The stabilised meditative state in which there is the emanation of the form of the goddess by the transformation of the moon, the symbol, the seed-syllable and so on, is called the *utpattikrama*.<sup>87</sup> As pointed out earlier, the divinities are nothing but the idealisation of *saṃsāra*. Snellgrove states, "Emanation refers to the manifestation of the forms of divinities. The meditation in which this consists, is the Process of Emanation."<sup>88</sup> The existent is thus manifested because it is by utilising the existent that men are liberated. Hence, first among the techniques taught by *Hevajra tantra* is the method of generating the Heruka.<sup>89</sup>

Through the process of Emanation, the *yogī* becomes aware of the diversity of existence, and realising the dream-like (*svapnavat*) nature of this diversity he renders it to himself as undiversified, by means of this very diversity.<sup>90</sup>

87 " ..candracih nabhīādipariṣāmena devatākāraṇiṣpattir utpattiḥ sāv yasmin samādhau asti sa utpattikramaḥ/" HT(S) Part 2, *Yogaratanmālā*, p.125. In the case of male deities, the transformation of the Sun, the seed-syllable and symbol are referred to. See HT(F) I:3:5-7.

88 HT(S), Part 1, 75, fn.4.

89 "prathamāṃ tāvad bhaved ekaṃ herukotpattikāraṇam/  
bhāvenaiva vimucyante vajragarbha mahākṛpa/" HT(F) 1:1:10.  
See also

"yoginīmāṃ yathānyāyam utpattisthitikāraṇam/  
sāmarthyāṃ jñānavijñānaṃ devatānāṃ yathodayam/" HT(F)  
1:1:9. (It teaches the correct method of generating the yoginīs, their location, and their source. It is proficient in the science and technique of the correct method of manifesting the deities.)

90 "utpattikramayogena prapañcaṃ bhāvayed vratī"

The *maṇḍala*, being a psycho-cosmogram, clearly manifests to the practitioner the diversity of phenomenal existence in its internal (psychic) and external (cosmic) aspects. Our text teaches that existence should be conceived in terms of its non-existence. Even Heruka who is the epitome of existence should also be conceived in a similar manner.<sup>91</sup> Through the constant practice of the *maṇḍala* the world of objects appears as an illusion and so on.<sup>92</sup> In this way the emanation of the deities in the *maṇḍala* becomes a tool to overcome the *jñeyāvaraṇa* and arrive at the realisation that the world of phenomena is essence-less (*śūnya*).

The purpose of the process of emanation is the removal not only of *jñeyāvaraṇa* but also of *klesāvaraṇa*, which arise only on account of the false view of existence. The emanation of the deity's body eliminates the impure tendencies, and at the same time nourishes the tendencies of the purified aggregates of personality.<sup>93</sup> The form of the deity, which is a repository of arms, faces, and colours, arises in accordance with unrefined past tendencies.<sup>94</sup> That is, the deity is a manifestation of the practitioner himself. Each deity, as we have seen, is the embodiment of a particular personality trait. Delusion is Vairocana; wrath Akṣobhya; passion Amitābha; envy Amoghasiddhi and

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prapañcañ svapnaḥat kṛtvā prapañcair niḥprapañcayet// HT(F)  
II:2:28.

91 "badhyante bhāvabandhena mucyante tatparijñāyā/  
bhāvāñ bhāvyañ bhavet prājñā abhāvāñ ca parijñāyā/  
tadvacchrīherukañ bhāvyañ abhāvāñ ca parijñāyā// HT(F)  
I:1:11.

92 "yathā māyā yathā svapnañ yathā syād antarābhavam/  
tathaiḥ maṇḍalañ bhāti sataṭābhyaśayogataḥ// HT(F) II:2:29.

93 HT(F). *Yogaratnamālā*, p.171.

94 "devatāyogarūpañ tu jātāmātre vyavasthitaḥ/  
bhujamukhavarāsthānāt kiñ tu prākṛtavāsanā// HT(F) II:2:45.



malignity is Ratnasambhava.<sup>95</sup> The Deity, who is thus the idealisation of diversities and defilements itself, is used to remove all diversities and defilements, just as poison is used to dispel poison.<sup>96</sup> The intrinsic nature is experienced when consciousness is thus purified<sup>97</sup> through the process of Generation.

The purification of defilements (*jñeyāvaraṇa* and *kleśāvaraṇa*) is done by constantly identifying oneself with the form and nature of the appropriate deity that is emanated. It is the *Guru*, who after having discerned the principal personality trait of the disciple administers the appropriate wisdom deity as antidote. The assignment of the appropriate deity and the *maṇḍala* is done through the consecration rite. The forms of the male and female deities are visualised within their respective *maṇḍalas*; in this case, they are the *maṇḍala* of Hevajra and the *maṇḍala* of Nairātmyā. Through their forms, the *maṇḍalas*, the symbols and the seed-syllables, the various manifestations of the personality of the disciples that arise are purified. Through the application of the appropriate wisdom-deity-antidote the disciple realises the non-substantiality of his own dominant nature.<sup>98</sup> The apparent diversity of existence is reduced to the duality of the male and the female aspects within the *yogī*. In the *Hevajra Tantra*, the purified male and female, the two principal concealed essences, are expressed in tantric code language as 'e' and 'vani'. This purification is a necessary step towards the next stage, namely the process of Completion.

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95 See HT(F) II:2:53-57.

96 See HT(F) II:2:46-51.

97 "...sahajaṁ jagat sarvaṁ sahaṁ svarūpaṁ ucyate/  
svarūpam eva nirvāṇaṁ viśuddhākāracetasā//"  
HT(F) II:2:44.

98 HT(F), p. xix-xx.

The purpose of the process of Generation is purification, which is done through the emanation of the deities in the *maṇḍala* practice. The *Guru* assigns the appropriate *maṇḍala* to the disciple after having ascertained his predominant nature. This *maṇḍala* is the idealisation of the disciple's existence, his psyche, and his cosmos. It sets before him the diversity and defilements of his own existence. Now, by identifying himself with the principal deity of the *maṇḍala*, he realises the dream-like nature or the non-substantiality of his own existence. In this way, the *yogī* is purified of *jñeyāvaraṇa* and *kleśāvaraṇa*.

## 5.1 Meditation on the *Hevajra Maṇḍala*

We have seen above what takes place in the process of emanation. What follows is a brief account of how the *yogī* actually carries out the emanation of the *Hevajra maṇḍala*. This is a meditative process, involving the production of figments by ideation, through which, the stream of the *yogī*'s consciousness matures (*vipāka mārga*). In order to be a fit vessel for the process of Generation, first the Master consecration (*kalaśābhiṣeka*) mentioned above is conferred on the disciple. Prior to the meditation on the *maṇḍala* proper, certain preliminaries are to be performed.

### 5.1.1 The Preliminaries

The preliminary practices are for acquiring merit. They are five, namely, Taking refuge, Ripening of the mind, Making the offering, Chanting the hundred-syllable *mantra* and *Guru yoga*. The traditional refuges are the *Buddha*, the *Dharma* and the *Saṅgha*. In *Vajrayāna* the *Guru* is the *Buddha*, the deity (*vidam*) is the *Dharma*, and the *ḍākini* and the *dharmapāla* form the *Saṅgha*. The Ripening of the mind is achieved through the practice of the *brahmavihāras*

especially the last, namely of equanimity. The purpose is to get rid of the notion of 'I' (*ahaṃ*) which is the root of ignorance. The Offering (of *maṇḍala*) is to cut off the root of clinging. It is the offering of the entire universe in the form of *maṇḍala*. The hundred-syllable mantra represents in the form of sound, the 100 peaceful and wrathful deities. Gradually the hundred-syllable *mantra* dissolves into the seed-syllable '*hūṃ*'. Finally '*hūṃ*' dissolves into light, and merges into space. The purpose is to clear the mind of the *sādhaka*. The *Guru yoga* is a meditation on the *Guru*. Every detail of his figure, dress, seat etc., is meditated upon. The *sādhaka* chants the twelve-syllable mantra of *Guru Padmasambhava*, '*oṃ - ah-hum-vajra-guru-padma-siddhi huong*'. This frees the *sādhaka* from the twelve links of *pratītyasamutpāda*.<sup>99</sup>

The *Hevajra Tantra* mentions the above practices only in brief. It states that the *yogī* should settle in a pleasant place and adopt a comfortable posture. He then should pronounce three times the *rakṣa mantra*<sup>100</sup> in order to protect the site, himself, and the performance. Then he should worship the *Bhagavān*, represented by a picture or image or symbol, using one's *mantra*. He then should intone the prayer of dedication followed by the confession of sins. Then he should perform an act of gladness at merit gained and should perform the triple refuge.<sup>101</sup> He should make an offering of himself and pronounce the vow, "May I having become Heruka, make all beings without exception into Heruka too." Besides these, the *yogī* should

99 For detailed discussion on the preliminary practices see T.D. Bhutia, *Beyond Eternity through Mysticism*, p.196-215.

100 One of the common *rakṣa* mantras is : *Oṃ rakṣa rakṣa hūṃ hūṃ hūṃ phaṣvāhā*.

101 HT(F), *Yegaratanamālā*, p.37.

practise the four *brahma* vihāras.<sup>102</sup> These preliminary practices constitute what is known as the Foundation *Yoga*.

### 5.1.2 The Four Stages of the Sole Hero *Yoga*

The preliminaries are followed by the Four Stages of the Sole Hero *Yoga* (*ekavīṇayoga*). Each stage of this *yoga* is prefaced by the Foundation *Yoga* discussed above. The first stage is called the Mild stage or the primary *yoga*, which is the four-fold *vajra* (*vajracatuṣka*) consisting of four steps. The first step is the realisation of the void. It is the realisation of the essence-lessness of all things and the realisation that everything is just thought. The second is the visualisation of the seed-syllable. In the brilliance of the void, the *yogī* envisages a solar disk and the deity's seed-syllable on that. The third is the visualisation of the deities. From the seed-syllable the *yogī* visualises the emergence of the deity in *arthaparyauṅka* posture, mounted on a corpse. The fourth is the implanting of the seed-syllable. At this step the *yogī* imagines in his own heart the seed-syllable of the deity.<sup>103</sup>

At the second stage of the Sole Hero *Yoga*, the *yogī* visualises the solar *maṅḍala* arising from the fire seed-syllable 'raṁ'. Above the solar *maṅḍala* he emanates the

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102 The Four Brahma Vihāras form part of the ancient *yoga* and probably the earliest Buddhist practice, which have been incorporated into the practice of *Vajrayāna* too. They are Love, Compassion, Joy and Impassability. Love is the directing of thoughts so that all persons gain happiness. Compassion is the will to extricate all beings from suffering, even at the cost of one's own life. Joy consists in rejoicing at that which is beneficial for others. Impassability is the indifference to the harm done to self by others. HT(S), Part 1, p.56, fn.1. See also HT(F), *Yogaratnamālā*, pp.37-38.

103 HT(F) I:3:2. See also HT(F), *Yogaratnamālā*, p.38.

crossed-vajras as originating from the blue seed-syllable 'hūm'. Then on the horizontal plane he emanates the *vajra* balustrade and above it a *vajra* canopy. Below it he visualises a *vajra* floor and a blazing *vajra* nimbus enclosure. He then recites the *rakṣa mantra* to empower this emanation.<sup>104</sup> Within the *vajra* balustrade the *yogī* should visualise a corpse which is the Essence of Nature (*dharmadhātu*). He then visualises himself as standing on the corpse assuming the form of Heruka.<sup>105</sup> Then the *yogī* should visualise in his heart the seed-syllable 'raṁ' and the solar *maṇḍala* arising from it. From the solar *maṇḍala* he emanates the seed-syllable 'hūm'. 'Hūm' is of the nature of Wisdom and Means. Now the *yogī* should conceive of himself as the Wrathful One (Hevajra) who is the transformation of the seed-syllable 'hūm'.

The third stage of the Sole Hero *Yoga*, is performed after the completion of the first and second stages. Here the *yogī* envisages Hevajra in space emanating from his seed-syllable along with his retinue of eight goddesses holding various symbols. The *yogī* worships him internally with the mind.<sup>106</sup> From the brilliance of His body shoots forth rays, which pervade the whole expanse of the sky. The *yogī* collects these rays and brings them back into the same seed-syllable and brings the seed-syllable itself into his own heart; and thus he becomes the Wrathful One (Hevajra).<sup>107</sup> He conceives himself as the two-armed Hevajra.<sup>108</sup> At this stage, the *yogī* employs the lunar *maṇḍala* (*āli*) and the solar *maṇḍala* (*kāli*), the seed-syllable and the symbol of the deity which *Yogaratanmālā*

104 HT(F) I:3:3. See also HT(F), *Yogaratanmālā*, p.39.

105 HT(F) I:3:4.

106 HT(F) I:3:8-10.

107 HT(F) I:3:12.

108 For a description of the two-armed Hevajra see HT(F) I:3:13-15.

relates to the Five Aspects of Perfect Enlightened Awareness (*pañcākārābhisañbodhi*).<sup>109</sup> This meditative exercise is beneficial to the *yogī* because he should conceive the phenomenal objects in the light of these Five Aspects of Perfect Enlightened Awareness.<sup>110</sup>

The fourth stage of the Sole Hero *Yoga* involves the *maṇḍala* of the four Hevajras and Nairātmyā. The four Hevajras are the two-armed Hevajra symbolising the purification of the Five Buddhas represented by the Five Symbolic Ornaments. The Four-armed Hevajra symbolises the defeat of the four Māras. The Six-armed Hevajra symbolises the Six Perfections.<sup>111</sup> The Sixteen-armed Hevajra symbolise the Sixteen voids.<sup>112</sup> The *maṇḍala* of the Hevajra is to be visualised as discussed in the fifth chapter. Through the emanation of these, the *yogī*'s consciousness is matured and he becomes suitable for the process of Completion.

## 5.2 Meditation on the Nairātmyā Maṇḍala

The emanation of the *maṇḍala* of Nairātmyā and her retinue-goddesses is also part of the process of Generation. In this meditation two kinds of *maṇḍalas* are involved,

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109 Moon is the Mirror-like-Awareness. Sun is the Awareness of Equanimity. The Seed-syllable and the Symbol is the Differentiating Awareness. Bringing all these into unity is the Awareness of the Performance of Duty. And the perfected manifestation of the form of the deity is the Awareness of Pure Nature. See HT(F), *Yogaratnamālā*, p.43. See also HT(F) I:8:6-7; HT(F), *Yogaratnamālā*, pp. 86-87.

110 "...ākārān bhāvayet pañcavidhānaiḥ kathitair budhaḥ//"  
HT(F) I:8:7.

111 For description of the four Hevajras see HT(F) I:3:13-15, 17, 18; II:5:8-12.

112 See HT(F), *Yogaratnamālā*, p.116.



namely the Foundation *Maṇḍala* (*ādhāramaṇḍala*) and the Supported Retinue *Maṇḍala* (*ādheyamaṇḍala*).

First, we shall discuss the emanation of the Foundation *Maṇḍala*. Within the *vajra* balustrade and canopy, the *yogī* should visualise a *bhaga*, the triangle which symbolises the Source of Nature (*dharmodaya*). In the middle of this triangle he should emanate the four elements in the following manner:

(From the) seed-syllable *yanī*, emanate the Air *Maṇḍala*, which is an auspicious dark blue *ṣaṭkoṇa* (formed by overlapping two triangles) marked by a waving banner. Above that is the *raṇī* born Fire *Maṇḍala* which is a triangle marked by the fire seed-syllable *raṇī* in the three corners. Above that is the *vaṇī* born Water *Maṇḍala*, which is a white circle marked by a pot. Above that is the *laṇī* born Earth *Maṇḍala* which is a yellow square marked by vajras in the four corners. Emanate in this manner.<sup>113</sup>

Now we shall discuss the Supported Retinue *Maṇḍala*. This *maṇḍala* has two enclosures, one formed by the central pericap of the eight-petalled lotus within the triangle and the other by a triangle. At the centre of this *maṇḍala* the *yogī* should imagine a corpse with fifteen seats; above the corpse the lunar *maṇḍala* and above it the seed-syllable 'a'.<sup>114</sup> Above the moon he visualises the solar *maṇḍala* transformed from *kāli*. The moon and the sun are of the nature of Wisdom and Means, respectively. The fifteen Yoginīs of the Nairātmyā *maṇḍala* spring from the union of

113 HT(F), *Yogaratnamālā*, p.84. See also I:8:1-2.

114 HT(F) I:8:4; see also HT(F), *Yogaratnamālā*, p.85.

the moon and the sun, the union of *āli* and *kāli*.<sup>115</sup> He visualises the principal deity of the *maṇḍala*, Nairātmyā, arising from the seed-syllable (*āḥ*) and the symbol (*vajra*).<sup>116</sup> Now the *yogī* should visualise Nairātmyā and the retinue of Yoginīs in the various directions. The Yoginīs are similar to the principal deity in appearance and wear ornaments and symbols.<sup>117</sup> The text states that by emanating the *maṇḍala* of the Yoginīs in this fashion one attains accomplishment (*siddhi*).<sup>118</sup>

### 5.3 The Six-Phased *Yoga*

To further strengthen the mind of the *yogī* the Six-Phased *Yoga* (*ṣaḍaṅgayoga*)<sup>119</sup> is prescribed. The *Hevajra Tantra* states, "In the First phase of Six-phased *Yoga* the *yogī* should emanate black, in the Second red, in the Third yellow, in the Fourth green, in the Fifth blue and in the

115 HT(F) I:8:5,10

116 HT(F) I:8:8-9. "From this seed-syllable, by the transformation of the Moon, Sun, symbol and seed-syllable, Gaurī and the other retinue goddesses of the *maṇḍala* originate." Each of the retinue goddesses has her seed-syllable. HT(F), *Yogaratnamālā*, p.88.

117 See HT(F) I:8:15-20.

118 "...*etena bhāvayet cakraṁ laghusiddhim avāpnuyāt//*" HT(F) I:8:20.

119 We notice that the *ṣaḍaṅgayoga* mentioned in the *Introduction to Buddhist Tantric Systems* by F.D. Lessing and Alex Wayman, (see p.320) and that mentioned in the introduction to the edition of Ram Shankar Tripathi and Thakur Sain Negi's *Hevajratāntram with Mukṭāvalīpañjikā* (see p.24) are different. These authors speak of *ṣaḍaṅgayoga* as constituted of the six steps of *pratyaḥhāra*, *dhyāna*, *prāṇāyāma*, *dhāraṇā*, *anusmṛti* and *samādhi*. They consider it as a step in the Process of Completion. But the *Hevajra Tantra* states clearly that it belongs to the Process of Generation. Here the *ṣaḍaṅga yoga* consists in emanating the six colours representing the six Tathāgatas, as explained above. See HT(F) I:8:24; see also HT(F), *Yogaratnamālā*, pp.91-92.

Sixth white."<sup>120</sup> These six colours represent the six spheres of existence. Dharmakīrti in his *Netravibhanga* observes that they are the essence of the Six Tathāgatas and that by meditating on the six-fold range of colours of the *maṇḍala* one avoids clinging to the divinities as gross substantial forms.<sup>121</sup> This practice is an important step in weaning the *yogī* away from the gross to the subtle, from the physical to the metaphysical. While *Yogaratnamālā* is silent on the steps of the *ṣaḍaṅga-yoga*, *Muktāvalī* describes it in great detail. The preliminaries are the same as those constituting the Foundation *yoga* explained above. The process of emanation involves the visualisation of the various *maṇḍalas* and the goddesses Nairātmyā and others. The deities are viewed as the skandhas, dhātus, āyatnas, kleśas, upakleśas, pāramitās and bhūmīs. The whole process is marked by three *samādhis*, namely *ādiyoga samādhi*, *Maṇḍalarājāgrī samādhi* and *karmarājāgrī samādhi*.<sup>122</sup>

The meditations on the *maṇḍalas* of Hevajra and Nairātmyā, as we have seen, involve mind-boggling details. In all probability, these ever numerous steps and intricate patterns are only to keep the mind of the *yogī* firmly set on the process he is involved in. The core of this meditative process is the identification of the microcosm (*yogī*) with the macrocosm, (*śūnyatā*). Since voidness cannot be comprehended, the *yogī* is given certain tools in the form of the seed-syllable, the deities (Hevajra and Nairātmyā and their retinue), the corpse etc. By implanting the seed-syllable in the *yogī*'s own heart and identifying himself with Hevajra and Nairātmyā, he accomplishes the identification of himself with the void nature of all things.

120 HT(F) I:8:21-22.

121 HT(S), Part 1, p.75,fn.3.

122 For details see HT(T), *Muktāvalī*, pp.81-86.

## 6. The Process of Completion

The Process of Completion (*utpannakrama*) is the *yoga* in which the intrinsic nature is attained through the application of the True Principle.<sup>123</sup> While *utpattikrama* is the manifestation or projection of phenomenal existence, *utpannakrama* is the re-absorption (union) of the same into the yogī's own heart. During the process of Generation, the diversity of phenomenal existence is manifested in the form of the appropriate principal male and female deities. The female and the male deities symbolise Wisdom and Means, respectively. Their purified forms are indicated by the syllables 'e' and 'vāṃ'. The process of completion consists in the union of these two components and the formation of 'evaṃ'. This union is manifested in the union (Tib. *yabyum*) of the male and female deities. The state of union achieved in the process of completion is experienced as great bliss (*mahāsukha*). The stabilised meditative state called *śūṃyatāsamādhi* in which the union of Wisdom and Means takes place, may be achieved either Externally or Internally.<sup>124</sup>

### 6.1 The External Union

The attainment of the state of union in the process of Completion is achieved along with an external consort, and by the means of uniting the lotus and *vajra*,<sup>125</sup> and by the

123 " ..*utpannasvabhāvikaṃ eva rūpaṇi' tad eva tattvarūpenādhimucyate bhāvyaṭe yasmin yoge utpannakramaḥ*" HT(S), Part 2, p.125.

124 *athavā dvau kramau, eko bāhyayā vidyayā, dvitīyo'dhyātmyā*" HT(T), *Muktāvalī*, p.214.

125 The lotus and *vajra* stand for the female and male sexual organs respectively. The two are also called *kakkolaka* and *bolakaṇṭh* respectively (HT(F) II:3:60). Their union results in empirical bliss, which points to the absolute bliss. "...*vajrapadmasamdyogāt*

simultaneous dropping of the seminal fluids in orgasm.<sup>126</sup> In this way, the union of the female (Wisdom) and the male (Means) deities is enacted.<sup>127</sup> Wisdom is the woman and the Means is the man.<sup>128</sup> The sexual union of the *yogī* with the *yoginī* results in the production of semen, which is called the relative *bodhicitta*. According to some texts the *yogī* through yogic practices prevents the emission of this semen and forces it upward. However, the Hevajra Tantra does not speak of this. Instead it states, "This nectar should be taken with the tongue in order to fuel his vitality."<sup>129</sup>

*Hevajra Tantra* states that it is only through the practice of emanation (*bhāvana*) that the Innate is experienced intuitively by one's self. 'Emanation' (*bhāvana*) is to be understood here as the performance of union of Wisdom and Means, i.e., sexual union of the *yoginī* and the *yogī*, and the attainment of the state of unity (*bhāvaneti samāpattiḥ*)<sup>130</sup> But how can the Innate which is the body of Essential Nature of the Tathāgatas (*dharmakāya*) be experienced through the practice of 'emanation'? In answer to this question the *Yogaratnamālā* explains, "As there is no other way here, the Innate is intuitively known only by oneself from the ripening of the practice of emanation by the actualisation of the instructions on the phenomenal aspects of the Innate..."<sup>131</sup> As explained earlier, the sensual joy of erotic union serves

*hr̥ṣṭacittaḥ samāhitaḥ*" HT(F) II:5:49. See also HT(F) I:10:36; II:3:27; II:5:62;

126 HT(F), *Yogaratnamālā*, p.95.

127 For a description of the process of External Union see HT(F) II:4:39-42; II:5:60-62; II:11:11-15.

128 "*yoṣit tāvad bhavet prajñā upāyaḥ puruṣaḥ smṛtaḥ*" HT(F) I:8:26.

129 See HT(F) II:4:42.

130 HT(F) I:8:24.

131 HT(F), *Yogaratnamālā*, p.99.

only as a foretaste of the absolute bliss resulting from the union of the two polarities (Wisdom and Means).

## 6.2 The *Mudrās*, the Joys and the Moments

The process of attaining the state of union is marked by four consecrations, which employ four different *mudrās* in which four Joys are experienced at four different Moments.<sup>132</sup> The four Consecrations have been discussed above. The *mudrās*, *karmamudrā*, *samayamudrā*, *dharmamudrā*, and *mahāmudrā*,<sup>133</sup> are the different stages of the *sādhana*. The four Joys are, Ordinary Joy (*ānanda*), Refined Joy (*paramānanda*), Joy of Cessation (*viramānanda*) and Innate Joy (*sahajānanda*).<sup>134</sup> The Four

132 The First Joy is experienced in the Master Consecration, the Refined Joy in the Secret Consecration, the Joy of Cessation in the Wisdom Consecration and Innate Joy in the Fourth Consecration. See HT(F), *Yogaratnamālā*, pp.124-125. See also HT(F) I:1:29; HT(F) I:10:11. Our text establishes a relation among the Four classes of Tantras, the Four types of Purifications, the Four Consecrations, the Four Moments and the Four Joys. This may be expressed in the form of a table as:

Tantra	Purification	Consecration	Moment	Joy
<i>Kriyā</i>	Smile	Master	Diverse	First Joy
<i>Caryā</i>	Gaze	Secret	Ripening	Refined Joy
<i>Yoga</i>	Embrace	Wisdom	Dissolving	Joy of Cessation
<i>Anuttarayoga</i>	Sexual Union	Fourth	Signless	Innate Joy

Cfr. HT(F) II:3:6-11.

133 At times the *mudrās* are mentioned in a different order: *Karmamudrā*, *Dharma-mudrā*, *Mahā-mudrā* and *Samaya-mudrā*. See HT(F), *Yogaratnamālā*, p.5.

A text entitled *Catur-mudrā* refers to these *mudrās* as stages in the *sādhana* and describes the resulting realisations as the four *mudrās* or metaphorically as 'great women' of the *sādhaka*. See S.B. Dasgupta, ITB, p.174.

134 HT(F) I:1:30.



Moments are, Diverse (*vicitra*), Ripening (*vipāka*), Dissolving (*vimarda*) and Signless (*vilakṣaṇa*).<sup>135</sup>

The *karmamudrā* is the physical yogic process of the *sādhana*.<sup>136</sup> This includes the production of the *bodhicitta* (semen), the arresting of its downward flow and the forcing of its upward motion. This results in the experience of sensual pleasure (*ānanda*), which vaguely resembles the Innate Joy (*sahajānanda*). The Moment of this realisation is called *vicitra*, because this realisation of pleasure is attended with various kinds of emotions resulting from physical union.<sup>137</sup> This stage is significant because it is in and through this that the *sādhaka* is introduced to the later stages of the *sādhana*.

The *samayamudrā* refers to all the symbolic forms employed in the meditative process. They are the symbolic representations of the absolute being and its phenomenal forms, by means of which the *sādhaka* experiences the real nature of reality. In short, *samayamudrā* refers to the *maṇḍala* and the different forms of deities used in the meditative processes.<sup>138</sup> The realisation at this stage of the *sādhana* is called *paramānanda* (Refined Joy). It is more intense pleasure than mere *ānanda*, and is referred to as *bhava* or existence because of its relation to the world of birth and death. This stage is marked by the moment called *vipāka* because at this stage the ordinary bliss is matured to knowledge.

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135 HT(F) I:1:26.

136 *Karma-mudrā* also refers to the feminine partner in the *sādhana*. She is also called *prajñā* (Wisdom) or *mudrā* (Seal). HT(S), Part 1, p.136.

137 S. B. Dasgupta, ITB, p.177.

138 Dasgupta considers *Samaya-mudrā* as the *mudrā* par excellence and equates it with perfect Bliss and perfect Knowledge. Ibid., p.175.

The *dharmamudrā* is the realisation of the absolute itself (*dharmadhātu*), the ultimate element of the dharmas. This stage is non-phenomenal (*niṣprapañca*) and free from thought-construction (*nirvikalpa*). *Advayavajrasaṅgraha* states that this stage of the *sādhana* is realised when the *bodhicitta* is made to move upwards through the *avadhūtī*, and the knowledge of the ultimate element underlying all the elements of earth, water, fire, air, and ether, is obtained.<sup>139</sup> The Joy experienced at this stage is called *viramānanda* (Joy of Cessation). At this stage the *sādhaka* still retains his consciousness of ego-hood. Hence even this Joy is considered empirical. This Moment of realisation is called *vimarda*, since it is accompanied by the consciousness of the ego.

The *mahāmudrā* is the highest goal. The term is used also to refer to the feminine partner of the *yogī*. When the *bodhicitta* in its upward motion reaches the *brahmarandhra cakra* the *yogī* experiences transcendental knowledge. The stage of the *sādhana* is known as *Mahāmudrā* Accomplishment. It is characterised as essence-less and devoid of the veils of subjectivity (*jñeyāvaraṇa*) and passions (*kleśāvaraṇa*), transcending *bhava* (existence) and *nirvāṇa* (Release).<sup>140</sup> This is Innate Joy (*sahajānanda*) or Great Bliss (*mahāsukha*). *Sahajānanda* is different from the other three Joys in the sense, that, in it there is no consciousness of the self. Here the knower and the knowledge are lost in the oneness of perfect Bliss. The first three Joys, Ordinary Joy, Refined Joy, and the Joy of Cessation, are considered relative.<sup>141</sup> The Hevajra Tantra,

139 *Advayavajrasaṅgraha* (G.O.S) pp.33-34 as referred to in S. B. Dasgupta, ITB, p.174.

140 *Ibid.*, p.175.

141 The first three Joys are relative. The Ordinary Joy arises from the contact of the Lotus and the *Vajra*. The Refined Joy is the result of

“The first joy is of this world, similarly, the Refined Joy is of this world and the Joy of Cessation is also of this world. The Innate does not exit in these three.”<sup>142</sup> The innate is free of these three relative Joys (*sahajam ebhir vivarjitam or ānandatraya vivarjitaḥ*). The text also states that the Innate is contained in all, as well as free of all.<sup>143</sup> In the relative Joys there is some experience of bliss but the Innate Joy is the culmination.<sup>144</sup> The Innate is experienced at the end of the Joy of Cessation. However in some parts of the text it is said that the Innate is experienced at the end of the Refined Joy and at the beginning of the Joy of Cessation.<sup>145</sup> The absolute Innate cannot be explained by another person, even by the *Guru* or *Vajradhara* because language is incapable of expressing it. Therefore, it can only be directly experienced.<sup>146</sup> The Innate Joy is beyond both the bound existence (*bhavam*, i.e. the desire for the

the excessive desire (passion) for pleasure. The Joy of Cessation is a passionless state. See HT(F) I:8:31-32.

142 “*prathamānandaṁ jagadrūpaṁ paramānandaṁ jagat tathā/ virāmānandaṁ jagac caiva na vidyate sahajaṁ triṣu iti//*” HT(F) I:10:13; See also HT(F) I:10:15.

143 “*...athavā sarvātmakaḥ saivāthavā sarvair vivarjitaḥ//*” HT(F) I:10:16.

144 “*ānandena sukhaṁ kiñcit paramānandaṁ tato 'dhikam/ virāmena virāgaḥ syāt sahajānandaṁ śeṣataḥ//*” HT(F) I:8:30.

145 The text contains some conflicting passages with regard to when the Innate Joy is experienced. The Innate Joy is generally considered to be the Fourth (HT(F) I:8:30-31) but sometimes it has been indicated as the third as well (HT(F) I:10:16; HT(F) II:2:40). Snellgrove believes that it is due to the miss-match of various Hevajra traditions in circulation.

146 “*nānyena kathyate sahajaṁ na kasminn api labhyate/ ātmanā jñāyate puṅyād guruparvopasevayā//*” HT(F) I:8:34. See also “*svasaṁvedyam idaṁ jñānaṁ vākpathātītagocaram//*” HT(F) I:8:49.

Innate) and release (*nirvāṇa*).<sup>147</sup> There is neither Wisdom nor Means (*nātra prajñā na copāyaḥ*). Hence this stage of the *sādhana* is considered as Signless Moment (*vilakṣaṇa*).

The ability to distinguish the various Joys and the Moments is essential for the *sādhana* lest the practitioner mistake the gross sensual experience to be *sahajānanda*. The Hevajra Tantra asserts that perfect knowledge of bliss arises only from a perfect knowledge of the Moments. *Yogaratanmālā* states that it is only by knowing the nature of the Moments (*kṣaṇajñānāt*) that the understanding of the different Joys is possible.<sup>148</sup>

The Four Mudrās, the Four Joys, and the Four Moments are experienced at the four Cakras associated with the four kāyas. The Four Cakras are again associated with the three Bodies as well as Body, Speech and Mind, which are the essence of the Five Aggregates of Phenomenal Awareness. *Mahāsukha* is considered as the union of the three bodies as well as that of Body, Speech, and Mind. These relations may be shown in the form of a table.<sup>149</sup>

147 See HT(F) I:8:32.

148 "kṣaṇjñānāt svarūpaparijñānāt sukham ānandānāṁ bhedaparijñānāt syāt nānyan..." HT(S), Part 2, *Yogaratanmālā*, p.142. See also a verse from one of Tillo-pāda's Dohās:

"khaṅki ānanda-bheṇ jo jāṅki/

so iha jammahi joi bhaṅjijai // (No.28) "He who knows the distinction of the different moments and the different kinds of bliss becomes a real yogin in this very life." as quoted in S. B. Dasgupta, ITB, p.174.

149 Cakra	Kāya	Mudrā	Ānanda	Kṣaṇa
<i>Nirmāṅki cakra</i>	<i>Nirmāṅki kāya</i>	<i>Karma-mudrā</i>	<i>Ānanda</i>	<i>Vicitra</i>
<i>Dharma cakra</i>	<i>Dharma kāya</i>	<i>Dharma-mudrā</i>	<i>Paramānanda</i>	<i>Vipāka</i>
<i>Sambhoga cakra</i>	<i>Sambhoga kāya</i>	<i>Mahā-mudrā</i>	<i>viramānanda</i>	<i>Vimarda</i>
<i>Mahāsukha cakra</i>	<i>Svābhava kāya</i>	<i>Samaya-mudrā</i>	<i>Sahajānanda</i>	<i>Vilakṣaṇa</i>

### 6.3 Union as an Internal Process

The Attainment of the State of Unity may be carried out as an internal process of re-integration. In fact, the text states that the external union of the male and female sexual organs indicates the nature of the secret union. (*yathā bāhyarṇ tathādhyātmanṇ*)<sup>150</sup> The internal union is called the generation of the absolute *bodhicitta*.<sup>151</sup> It is based on the tantric concept of the subtle body as composed of *nāḍīs* and *cakras*. The two internal *nāḍīs*, *lalanā* and *rasanā*, constitute the sphere of *saṁsāra*. They are visualised as Wisdom and Means in this process. The subtle breath passes up and down these *nāḍīs*. The breath in the left *nāḍī* (*lalanā*) is called *rakta* and the one in the right *nāḍī* (*rasanā*) is called *śukra* which are the vital biological essences. The third *nāḍī*, *avadhūtī*, is imagined in the middle, constituting the union of Wisdom and Means. Four radiating circles (*cakras*) are imagined at the navel, the heart, the throat, and the head in the form of lotuses with varying number of petals. These signify the four stages of spiritual advancement in the form of four types of Joys. The First Joy is imagined at the navel and the Joy Innate at the head or vice versa.

The initial part of the process consists in harnessing thought to the breathing process so that the mind does not wander. In order to achieve stability of mind the *yogī*

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It should be noted that there are some discrepancies with the earlier order of *mudrās* and *ānandas*. The Hevajra Tantra, however, gives this arrangement. See HT(F), *Yogaratnamālā*, p.5. For further clarifications see HT(S) Part 1, p.38 & fn.1.

150 "*bolasaukhyarṇ mahāmudrā vajrāyatanam upāyakam/ anayā guhyasamāpattyā bāhyadvandvarṇ nidarśitam*" HT(F) II:4:53.

151 The process of generating the absolute *bodhicitta* is explained in HT(F) II:4:43-50.

visualises the vowel series (*āli*) as passing in and out through *lalanā*, and the consonant series (*kāli*) as passing in and out through *rasanā*. Concentrating in this way both breath and thought become stabilised. At the base of the genitals is the meeting point of the three *nāḍīs*, where the *bodhicitta* in its relative condition (*śukra*) resides. At the crown of the head (*brahmarandhra*) resides the *bodhicitta* in its absolute condition.

When the breath passes up and down through *lalanā* and *rasanā*, the psychic stream in each *nāḍī* is made to enter the base of the central channel. When they meet they arouse the *bodhicitta* which resides there. This arousing of *bodhicitta* is conceived of as fire (*caṇḍālī*) which is envisaged as the blazing seed-syllable 'a'. *Caṇḍālī* is also known as *Nairātmyā* or *Ḍombī*.<sup>152</sup> She is visualised as moving upward from the navel to the heart, and from there to the throat and to the head. The *bodhicitta* that resides in the head is symbolised by the seed-syllable 'haṁ', which on merging with *Caṇḍālī* melts and flows downward through the central vein, pervading the whole body through the various *cakras* as it goes. It reaches the lowest *cakra* and 'a' and 'haṁ' become 'ahaṁ' or I, the re-integrated self that is the Joy Innate.<sup>153</sup> Snellgrove considers 'ahaṁ' as the Joy Innate, but the Hevajra Tantra states that 'ahaṁ' is burnt as *Caṇḍālī* rises towards the centre of the Great Bliss.<sup>154</sup>

152 See HT(S), Part 1, p.36.

153 See HT(S), Part 1, p.37.

154 "caṇḍālī jvalitā nābhau/  
dahati pañcatathāgtān/  
dagdhe 'haṁ sravate śāśī'" HT(F) I:1:32.



*Yogaratnamālā* contains a number of interpretations of this passage. According to one, *Caṇḍālī* is composed of 'am' and 'hūm'. When these two seed-syllables unite at the navel *cakra*, the great bliss-filled fire of passion blazes. The fire burns the Five Buddhas, who are but the pañcaskandhas, Locanā, and others who are but the earth and other elements. It also burns *ahaṃ*, the ego, the notions of I and mine. Then, from the Centre of Great Bliss flows the moon, which is *bodhicitta*, the enlightened consciousness.<sup>155</sup> What is described herewith in a rather cryptic and symbolic manner is the meditative process through which an internal process of re-integration of the individual takes place.

## Conclusion

The Hevajra Tantra does not give us a step by step account of the entire Process to Buddhahood. This is probably because no tantric text is meant to be a manual or handbook for the non-initiated. The actual praxis has to be learned directly from a competent *Guru*. What the text offers is only the sketch of a very dangerous and intricate process, which should be undertaken only under the supervision of a competent *Guru*. The ultimate goal of the entire Process to Buddhahood is to enable the practitioner to realise within himself the pure nature of reality (i.e., Void), that *saṃsāra* and *nirvāṇa* are non-different, and that the Void is of the nature of bliss.

As discussed above, this Process to Buddhahood has two stages: the Stage of Generation and the Stage of Completion. In the stage of Generation, the plurality and

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155 See HT(F) p.22. For more interpretations of this passage see HT(F), *Yogaratnamālā*, pp.22-23.

diversity of the phenomenal world is made manifest through the *maṇḍala* practice and the process of visualisation. The plurality of the external world is reduced to the pañcaskandhas, and the bhūtas. Similarly, the internal or the psychic world is identified with the kleśas and the māras. Now, through the process of visualisation these are equated with the various deities of the *maṇḍala*. By realising the void nature of the deities, the void nature of the elements of the phenomenal world too is realised. The void nature of the phenomenal world, both internal and external, is *prajñā* (Wisdom). The experience of phenomena is therefore nothing but a projection of *prajñā* and it is called Means. The void manifests, and what is manifested too is void. In short, the phenomenal world is the Means, while its essential nature, Voidness, is Wisdom. The process of Generation ends when the entire gamut of phenomenal existence is reduced to this fundamental duality of Wisdom and Means.

In the process of Completion, these two principles, Wisdom and Means, are united. This process is both external and internal. In the external process, these two principles are identified with the *yogī* and the *yoginī*. Their sexual union is viewed as the union of Wisdom and Means; and the mingling of their sexual fluids of that union is known as the relative *bodhicitta*. Through yogic exercise this *bodhicitta* is prevented from flowing outward but retained, and thus, the practitioner has a prolonged experience of relative bliss. In the internal union, the subtle body consisting of nāḍīs and cakras is employed. Through yogic practices the *prāṇa* in *lalanā* and *rasanā* are made to unite and enter the *avadhūtī* and forced to ascend through the different cakras, and finally reach the *bodhicitta* at the crown *cakra*. The absolute *bodhicitta* residing there is then visualised as flowing down pervading the entire body with

bliss. At this stage, as there is no notion of 'I' and 'mine', there is no consciousness that one is experiencing bliss. Thus through these two-fold processes the *yogī* realises within himself the ultimate reality as non-dual bliss.

The question that confronts every student of philosophy is how the physical union of the *yogī* and the *yoginī* can be conceived of as the union of Wisdom and Means and the experience of sexual pleasure as absolute bliss. The philosophical training enables the *yogī* to visualise all things as void and realise *nirvāṇa* as non-different from *saṃsāra*. As a result, he experiences everything as pure and of the nature of bliss. The strict moral discipline makes him view the sexual union with the *yoginī* as a means and not as an end in itself. The yogic practice enables him to enact this union within his subtle body. Thus, we can only say that the rigorous philosophical, moral, psychic, and yogic preparations that precede this praxis may actually make the practitioner view this union as the factual union of Wisdom and Means.

## CHAPTER 7

# CONCLUSION

Tantric Buddhism is an important watershed in the development of *Mahāyāna* Buddhism that has had far reaching consequences on the later schools of *Mahāyāna* such as the *Tendai*, *Shingon* and *Zen*. Alicia Matsunaga notes,

Tantrism did serve an important purpose in the history of *Mahāyāna*, as it instilled a new emphasis upon intuitive and esoteric methods along with a development of the conceptions of divinity and ritual. In one manner or another, it touched almost every subsequent school of *Mahāyāna* Buddhism; serving as an inspiration in the development of Buddhist liturgy and the arts.<sup>1</sup>

Neither the Mahāyānic ideas nor the tantric notions are new in themselves but the happy marriage between the two has given birth to a novel way of 'doing metaphysics', namely *Vajrayāna*. *Vajrayāna* has contributed to the advancement of human thought in regard to the development of a new vision of God, world and man in general and to Buddhist thought and praxis in particular. Here an attempt is made to spell out more clearly the influence *Vajrayāna* has had till now and could have in the future in shaping the course of human thought and action.

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1 Alicia Matsunaga, *The Buddhist Philosophy of Assimilation*, p.95.

## 1. The Metaphysics of *Vajrayāna*

After making this passage to tantric Buddhism, we may boldly speak of a Metaphysics of *Vajrayāna*, which, as we have admitted earlier, is but a fusion of Mahāyānic and tantric elements. At first sight, Vajrayānic texts appear to be interspersed with Mahāyānic concepts, obscure cults, tantric mantras and maṇḍalas etc., described in cryptic language. Nevertheless, a student of philosophy can perceive the building blocks of metaphysics beneath the surface of these esoteric texts, and piece them together to reconstruct the metaphysical edifice of *Vajrayāna*. Though it may not have the metaphysical sophistication and conceptual precision characteristic of Buddhist speculation, certain metaphysical 'method' in its esoteric 'madness' cannot be ignored.

### 1.1 Nature of Existence

Existence in its realistic and pluralistic appearance is accepted as a first step in Vajrayānic investigation of reality. The *Ābhidharmika* delineation of dharmas into skandhas, āyatnas and dhātus is taken for granted here. *Vajrayāna* accepts the *Mādhyamika* view that, the dharmas are *śūnya* because they arise out of Dependent Origination. Though the dharmas have no nature of their own, they appear yet in empirical experience. According to Vajrayānists, who adopt the *Yogācāra* view in this regard, they appear because the dharmas (the object) are projected by the mind (the subject). They are nothing but the consciousness seen as an 'other' As long as the mind continues to act, the empirical reality is sustained; but ultimately the mind also ceases and consciousness alone exists as non-dual bliss. As A.K. Chatterjee points out, "with the negation of the object the subject function of

consciousness too lapses (*grāhyābhāve tadagrahāt*) and consciousness regains its intrinsic quiescence, unruffled by *pratītyasamutpāda*.<sup>2</sup>

The novelty in the Vajrayānic conception of the dharmas is that they perceive a homologous correspondence among them. They are not conceived as mere concepts any more, but visualised as deities inhabiting the *maṇḍala* of the principal deity, as well as residing within the body of the *sādhaka*, which is the internal *maṇḍala*. In this way, each of the dharmas is visualised and experienced within the *sādhaka* during the meditative process of visualisation. It is through the process of visualisation that the *niḥsvabhāvatā* of the dharmas is realised by the *sādhaka*.

## 1.2 Nature of *Avidyā*

The appearance of the empirical reality, which is nothing but the mental modification of consciousness, is impelled by *avidyā*. The twin forms of *avidyā*, namely, *jñeyāvaraṇa* and *kleśāvaraṇa*, influence the mind in giving expression to its creativity. *Jñeyāvaraṇa* prevents the knowledge of the real nature of the Ultimate Reality and projects multiplicity of views (*dṛṣṭis*) about the Real; *kleśāvaraṇa* is responsible for the emotional responses to the empirical reality, which afflict the human mind. *Jñeyāvaraṇa* and *kleśāvaraṇa* taken together create the illusory web of empirical reality complete with views and categories and the psychic responses to it.

The removal of the *āvaraṇas* is brought about by knowing the real nature of empirical existence in the

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2 A.K. Chatterjee, "Pratītyasamutpāda in Buddhist Philosophy," p.17.



Vajrayānic way. Once the nature of the world is known, the false views about it (*jñeyāvaraṇa*), and the accompanying inordinate mental afflictions (*kleśāvaraṇa*), which waylay the *sādhaka*, disappear.

### 1.3 Ultimate Reality as *Vajra*

The removal of *avidyā* is, the realisation of the Ultimate Reality as the adamantine essence (*vajra*). The concept of *vajra* is similar to that of *śūnyatā* of the *Mādhyamika*, and the *viññāna* of the *Yogācāra*, but not identical. *Vajra*, is the *śūnyatā* of dharmas (*dharmasūnyatā*), but not the *śūnyatā* of views (*dṛṣṭi-śūnyatā*), as spoken of in *Mādhyamika*. It is the absence of knower-knowledge duality (*grāhya-grāhakābhāva*) as in *Yogācāra*. But while the *śūnyatā* of *Mādhyamika* is an epistemic entity, *vajra* is an ontological one; it is a firm essence (*dṛḍham sāram*). It agrees with *Yogācāra* that the Ultimate Reality is non-dual consciousness but goes further to state that it is the Innate (*sahaja*) and is of the nature of Great Bliss (*mahāsukha*). The conception of *vajra* is more extensive than the understanding of *śūnyatā*, since *vajra* is used to signify both *śūnyatā* and *karuṇā*; and is conceived of as the fusion of the two.

### 1.4 Ultimate Reality as Bi-polar

*Vajrayāna* conceives the Absolute as bi-polar; *śūnyatā* and *karuṇā*, the two fundamental principles of *Mahāyāna*, form the two polarities. Polarity is not to be mistaken as duality; it is the inherent and inseparable condition of the Absolute. The Vajrayānists hold that the empirical reality reflects this essential bi-polarity of the Absolute, in the form of the female and the male. In the psycho-physical realm, every individual is endowed with this polarity, one

of which predominates and gives the person the distinct character as female or male.

### 1.5 *Yoga* : The Union of Polarities

The recognition and the eventual union (*yoga*) of the polarities within the body of the seeker, constitute the goal of *Vajrayāna*. The *yogī* is helped to identify himself as the male polarity and view the *yoginī* as the female polarity and through their physical union, following the Vajrayānic prescription and the Guru's instructions, attains psychic re-integration. The *yogī* may perform this process of re-integration and union, purely as an internal process using the visualisation techniques prescribed by the Vajrayānic texts, under the guidance of a competent *Guru*. In the process of internal union, he visualises the two *nāḍīs*, *lalanā* and *rasanā*, as the female and the male principles, and the central *nāḍī*, *avadhūtī*, as the union of the two.

### 1.6 Nature of the Absolute as Bliss

The state of re-integration is beyond the realm of concepts, and is indicated as great bliss (*mahāsukha*). The Absolute is not perceived as transcendent and sterile, as the *śūnyatā* of *Mādhyamika*, or only as the underlying non-dual consciousness of *Yogācāra*. For the Vajrayānist too, the Absolute is inexpressible in terms of empirical categories, yet not altogether beyond human experience. In terms of expression the Absolute is *śūnya*, but in terms of experience, it is Great Bliss. However, in this experience there is no subject-object duality.

### 1.7 *Vajrayāna*: Buddhism in a New Key

*Vajrayāna* is a Buddhist phenomenon with deep roots going back to the *Ābhidharmika* and the *Mahāyāna*

systems of Philosophy. As we have seen, the knowledge of *Vaibhāṣika* and *Sautrāntika* doctrines, as well as a clear understanding of the leading Mahāyānic insights, serve as a preface to the praxis of *Vajrayāna*. Guenther points out that, the *Lam-rim* literature is unanimous in asserting that the *Vajrayāna* path has to be travelled, and that the practice of the 'Common Path' must precede that of *Vajrayāna*.<sup>3</sup> Tantric Buddhism profits much from the constructive philosophy of the *Ābhidharmika*, the de-construction initiated by the *Mādhyamika*, and the Idealism of the *Yogācāra*. It absorbs the essentials of these systems and recasts Buddhist thought in a new key.

*Vajrayāna* recognises the meticulous classification of the elements of existence (dharmas)<sup>4</sup> into skandhas, āyatanas and dhātus by the *Ābhidharmikas*. Dharmas constitute the structural elements of existence, which cannot further be reduced. But *Vajrayāna* does not stop with speculation, but seeks, how this knowledge can be put to quicken liberation. In *Vajrayāna*, the dharmas are not so much objects of speculation, as they are of meditation. For this purpose they are visualised as deities inhabiting the *maṇḍala* and finally as residing within the body of the *sādhaka*. This is because the body is viewed as the microcosm. The skandhas, the Five Aggregates of Phenomenal Existence, are the five *dhyāni* Buddhas who are the embodiments of the Five Aspects of Enlightened Awareness as well as the five evils (doṣas) which afflict existence. Similarly, the twelve āyatanas have been deified as the goddesses of the Hevajra and Nairātmyā maṇḍalas.

3 Herbert V. Guenther, *Tibetan Buddhism without Mystification*, p.92. fn.3.

4 According to the Sarvāstivādins the dharmas are 75; the Sautrāntikas reduced them to 43. For the Yogācārin they are 100 in number.

While in *Ābhidharmika* systems the dharmas are real though momentary, in *Vajrayāna*, they are mere appearances of consciousness, as admitted also by *Yogācāra*. Just as the dharmas, so also the deities, are the creations of the mind. In *Vajrayāna*, through the deity-yoga, the non-reality of the dharmas is experienced. The most fundamental creation of the mind, according to *Yogācāra*, is the subject-object duality (*grāhya-grāhaka dvaya*). According to *Yogācāra*, when *nirvāṇa* is realised, the object is negated and the subject lapses and non-dual consciousness alone remains. Consciousness as Absolute is not subject to *pratītyasamutpāda*, but consciousness as subject (i.e., the creative mind) and its creations are.<sup>5</sup> *Vajrayāna* also admits that the subject-object duality is *avidyā* and that the Ultimate Reality is non-dual consciousness experienced as Great Bliss.

*Mādhyamika* establishes the void nature of all dharmas including the mind since they arise based on causes and conditions. Besides, every view (*dṛṣṭi*) about reality is also ultimately void. By declaring *dharma-śūnyatā*, *Mādhyamika* demolishes the foundations of perception, namely, the senses (*indriyas*), the objects of sensation (*viśayas*) and the consciousness of objects (*vijñānas*); the *dṛṣṭi-śūnyatā* dismisses all claims of reason to the knowledge of Ultimate Reality and ushers in intuition as the only means to realisation. *Vajrayāna* admits that the knowledge of the Ultimate Reality as something *svasaṁvedya* (directly experienced within one's body), lies beyond the ken of perception and ratiocination.

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5 A.K. Chatterjee, "Pratītyasamutpāda in Buddhist Philosophy," p.17.

In *Yogācāra*, multiplicity is reduced to the fundamental duality of subject-object. In *Vajrayāna*, all distinctions are reduced to a fundamental bi-polarity. It must be noted that there is no duality within the Ultimate Reality, though *Vajrayāna* concedes a basic bi-polarity experienced at the penultimate state, which is ultimately bridged by the coalescence of polarities. In *Yogācāra*, the object is negated and the subject lapses; but in *Vajrayāna* there is no negation or cancellation of any of the polarities but the union of the two. *Vajrayāna* regards the two fundamental *Mahāyāna* principles, *sūnyatā* and *karuṇā*, as constituting the bi-polarity, and in the true spirit of *tantra*, ascribes gender to them as female and male and their union as the non-dual reality.

*Vajrayāna* is fundamentally sexual in the sense that, in it we have a 'gender-specific experience of reality'. For the male 'the gender experience of empirical reality is feminine' while for the female it is masculine. This perception helps the practitioner to get in touch with his/her masculinity/femininity. The *Vajra* praxis helps the *yogī* to unite with the feminine within him and the *yoginī* to unite with the masculine within her, and thus experience completeness.<sup>6</sup>

The dominant speculative tendencies of Buddhist philosophy is put aside in favour of a predominantly experiential approach. The analytical skills of the mind employed by the *Ābhidharmika* in creating the matrix of dharmas are down played in *Vajrayāna*, in favour of imaginative thinking, which enables the *sādhaka* to visualise the dharmas in the form of deities within the

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6 "Honey on the Razor's Edge – The Tantric Psychology of Genders on Roman(sic)", in *Encyclopaedia of Buddhist Tantra*, vol.3, pp.604-606.



confines of a *maṅḍala*, both external and internal. Hitherto Buddhism depended on terms and concepts to express its findings, but *Vajrayāna* employs colours, sounds, symbols and figures to express its meditative realisations. To demonstrate that reality is beyond concepts and categories, paradoxes and the language of negation are generally employed; but in addition to these, *Vajrayāna* employs, *sandhyābhāṣā*, sign language, song and dance as well as iconography in its grotesque form. Our conventional frame of mind often casts its shadow upon the Ultimate Reality, and attempts to present the latter in reference to the conceptual framework of the 'is' and the 'not-is'. The iconography of the deities, especially of the wrathful ones with such weird features as, protruding teeth, multiple limbs, and non-human features, give a galvanic shock to our normal frame of mind. In *Vajrayāna*, iconography is at the service of metaphysics. It is deliberately made incongruous to our trite frame of mind in an attempt to reformat our mental make up.

In *Mādhyamika*, we become aware of the contradictions and inner fissures of our linguistic apparatus. Liberation, the realisation of the Ultimate, is prevented only by our own concept-barriers. A.K. Chatterjee points out that, "We can seek freedom from the intolerable contradictions only by shedding the tyrannical burden of words."<sup>7</sup> One way of 'shedding the burden of words' in tantric Buddhism is through the mantras as Vasubandhu points out. Further, the Vajrayānic employment of *sandhyābhāṣā* signifies that, a word could be chosen to represent a particular reality. In that sense, there is no strict adherence between a word, and the reality it conveys;

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7 A.K. Chatterjee, "The Mādhyamika and the Philosophy of Language", in *Our Heritage*, vol.xix, part I, Jan-June 1971, p.29.



because a word is but a symbol of an entity and reality stands free of the tyranny of language.

## 2.1 From Conceptualisation to Visualisation

Metaphysics has been concept-dependent. T.R.V. Murti states, "Language is not an accidental, dispensable garb which could be put on and put off. It grows with thought, or rather thought grows with it."<sup>8</sup> The shackles of language are so unavoidable that even to think of it we need the help of language, as Gadamer says, "All thinking about language is already once again drawn back into language. **We can only think in language**, and just this residing of our thinking in a language is the profound enigma that language presents to thought."<sup>9</sup> But can we think in pictures? Even if it is true that we cannot think except in language, the question is, whether metaphysics ends in thinking. Can there be any respite from thinking? Can analytical thinking be complemented by imaginative thinking? The *Mādhyamika* effort has been to demolish the myth that thinking and the resultant concepts are essential to knowledge of reality, the goal of all metaphysics. For the *Mādhyamika*, concepts are the greatest obstacles to knowledge. A.K. Chatterjee points out that for the *Mādhyamika*, "It is not merely language as employed in metaphysics that is at fault; it is rather language as such...*śūnyatā* is the total rejection of the pretensions of

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8 T.R.V. Murti, "The Philosophy of Language in the Indian Context" ed. Harold G. Coward, *Studies in Indian Thought* (Collected Papers of Prof. T.R.V. Murti) (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1983) p.358.

9 Hans-George Gadamer, "Man and Language" in *Philosophical Hermeneutics*, Tr. D.E Linge (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1977), pp.61-62. (emphasis added).

language to mirror reality. Language cannot describe; it can only distort or falsify."<sup>10</sup>

The gospel of *Mahāyāna* is the gospel of silence (*paramārtho hi āryāṇām tūṣṇim bhāva eva*). It may be argued that the 'product' of philosophical enquiry is the silence of reason (*tūṣṇim bhāva*) but not the 'process'; in the process of thinking, the only trust worthy medium is concepts. As Ashok Kumar Chatterjee points out, "Conceptual thinking has to be, not only thinking on concepts, but also thinking by means of concepts..."<sup>11</sup> The monopoly of analytical thinking in philosophy, employing concepts and categories, seems to have made metaphysics arid, sterile and tasteless, satisfying only the cognitive aspect of man, while leaving his conative, emotive and affective aspects starving. Can there be a way of approaching reality that involves and absorbs the other faculties of the mind as well? Ortiz Javier Ugaz recommends the use of symbols, which according to him, have also an 'affecting' side. Symbols are 'indefinite' and 'fluid' and can be understood only by participation, realisation (*anubhava*) and not by analysis. While the scope of reason is limited to the conscious sphere of man, symbols plumb beyond, delving into the unconscious as well.<sup>12</sup>

This explains the remarkable outpouring of visual arts, namely, architecture, sculpture, painting, the Tibetan

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10 A.K. Chatterjee, "The Mādhyamika and the Philosophy of Language", p.27.

11 A.K. Chatterjee, "Insight and Paradox in Buddhist Thought" in *Ānvīkṣikī*, vol.6, July - Oct., 1973, p.179.

12 Ortiz Javier Ugaz, "An Approach to Traditional Indian Linguistic-symbolic Conceptions and their relation with Metaphysics" in *Ānvīkṣikī*, vol.iii, no.2 (August 1990) pp.171-172.

thankas and carpets, not to mention Japanese artistry, which are characteristic of Buddhism. Probably the Buddhists advocated these as a *sādhana*, or as a means to arrest one's attention and silence the mind. In the aniconic and iconic art of the post 'Gandharian revolution' era we find a deliberate use of non-realistic features such as the *uṣṇīṣa* on the head, elongated ears and abnormally long arms. This technique is employed probably to shift the emphasis from the 'outer' to the 'inner' aspect of art, which is the absolute truth.<sup>13</sup>

*Vajrayāna* has traced a novel way of 'doing metaphysics'. Analytical thinking plays an important role especially in the philosophical preparation that precedes the praxis of *Vajrayāna*. But in *sādhana* proper, it employs imaginative thinking, or thinking in pictures, symbols, and figures. *Vajrayāna* combined two types of meditation, viz., the analytical meditation and the stabilising meditation. In the former, using clear, penetrative analytical thought, the *yogī* unravels the complexities of his attitudes and behaviour patterns. Though it involves mental activity, it is more controlled than the feverish mental activity of ordinary life. In the latter, he concentrates on an object like the breath, or a visualised image without interruption.<sup>14</sup> The natural capacity to think in pictures is used to deepen and sharpen one's awareness. The visualised image is not two-dimensional, cold, or lifeless; it is full of life, three-dimensional, made of radiant light. These two kinds of meditations are used together in visualisation techniques.

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13 Alex Wayman, "The Role of Art among the Buddhist Religieux", *Buddhist Insight: Essays by Alex Wayman*, George R. Elder, ed. (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1984) pp.288-296.

14 Kathleen McDonald, *How to Meditate: A Practical Guide*, ed. Robina Courtin, (Boston: Wisdom Publications, 1984; special edition, 1994) pp.19-21.

Analytical thought is used to construct the image and to recall it whenever it is lost in the process of meditation due to distractions; through the stabilising meditation clarity in visualisation is achieved.<sup>15</sup> Visual thinking has an edge over the purely analytical thinking, in the sense, that the former engrosses the whole person in the process. As a result the *sādhaka* has a more comprehensive apprehension of the ultimate reality.

Language is essential for expression but not for experience. There are experiences, which are beyond the grasp of words as Wittgenstein points out, "**There are, indeed, things that cannot be put into words. They make themselves manifest. They are what is mystical.**"<sup>16</sup> The Vajrayānic way of 'doing' metaphysics seems to emphasize experience over expression, imagination over analysis, and hence it is less dependent on concepts. Vajrayānic preoccupation is not with 'system-building' as in the case of most philosophies, nor is it 'system-breaking' as in *Mādhyamika*, but with making a system that enables the seeker to **experience** the Ultimate Reality (*svasañvedana*) rather than to **express** the experience of it. This effort calls for a shift of emphasis from conceptualisation to visualisation.

## 2.2 From 'Meaning' to 'Meaning-lessness'

A word has two aspects, namely, the sign, and its meaning. "A word is a sign which denotes something (*vācaka*), and its meaning (*artha*) is the thing denoted by it

15 Ibid., pp.111-113.

16 Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*, No.6. 522. as quoted in Shotaro Iida, "The Nature of Sañvṛti and the Relationship of Paramārtha to it in Svātantrikā Mādhyamika", p.74. (emphasis added).

(*vācya*)."<sup>17</sup> For the Idealist, a thing is nothing apart from the consciousness of it (*sahopalambhaniyama*). There is no 'thing' apart from and independent of the act of perception. Hence it is not the 'thing' that generates 'meaning' but rather, the mind (or 'meaning') that generates the 'thing'. A 'word,' which acts as a symbol, triggers off a host of mental modifications that are conceptual, imaginative, and emotive, making the mind lose its quiescence. The 'meaning' is the product of one's mind-set, formed of prejudices, and of the dualistic world-view. As a result, man categorises everything into good-bad, worthy-unworthy, proper-improper etc. In this way, a term sets off a chain of emotive reactions such as likes and dislikes, attraction and aversion etc. This conceptual and emotional baggage is the so-called 'meaning' of the term and it proves to be a burden on the mind, nay, it becomes an obstacle to the realisation of the Real. The mind gets clogged in the 'meaningfulness' of the term and settles down to conceptualisation and analysis, refusing to leave the confines of ratiocination for the higher plane of intuition. The remedy that the *Mādhyamika* suggested is, "the doctrine of universal *śūnyatā*, rejection of language as an adequate instrument for any veridical description of the real."<sup>18</sup> *Vajrayāna* is an experiential philosophy (*pratyakṣaśāstra*), and here 'meaning-lessness' is preferred to 'meaning'. The advantage of 'meaning-less' words is that they are free of the 'concept-burden'; that is, they contain and express reality without causing mental modifications. Such 'meaning-less' syllables, words,

17 S. Panneerselvam, *The Problem of Meaning with Reference to Wittgenstein and Śaṅkara: A Study in the Philosophy of Language* (Madras: Radhakrishnan Institute of Advanced Study in Philosophy, University of Madras, 1993) p.7.

18 A.K. Chatterjee, "The Mādhyamika and the Philosophy of Language", p.27.

phrases or symbols which *Vajrayāna* employs, do not *communicate* reality but only express it. They are primarily meant for the doer and not for the viewer.

The search for words, which contain reality but not 'meaning'<sup>19</sup> found a satisfactory answer in mantric formulations. The Mantras and the bija-mantras are words purged of 'meaning'<sup>20</sup> As Guenther points out, mantras have no assigned connotation, but are fraught with vital experience and can be used, "to signify anything without themselves being significant."<sup>21</sup> *Vajrayāna* ascribes 'meaning' to words which are actually contrary to their conventional meaning.<sup>22</sup> This is noticed especially in the use of tantric code language (*sandhyābhāṣā*). *Hevajra Tantra* lists over twenty such words.<sup>23</sup> *Yogaratanmālā* explains that the word 'sandhi' means 'the meaning agreed upon' (*sandhir ubhiprāyaḥ*). It is that mode of

19 *Māndukya Upaniṣad* says, "Om ityedaḥṣaram ulam sarvam.. " 'Om' is not conceptually analysed every time it is pronounced, but it is contemplated with concentration as the Ultimate Reality.

20 Shashi Bhusan Dasgupta writes, "...through this negation of all meanings to the *mantras*, a unique, transcendental, and immutable meaning is revealed to the heart of the *sādhaka*; this immutable nature is the real nature of all things." Shashi Bhusan Dasgupta, *Aspects of Indian Religious Thought*, p.30.

21 Herbert V Guenther, *Tibetan Buddhism without Mystification*, p.56.

22 For example the word '*asthyābharaṇaṁ*' means 'body'; '*karpūraṁ*' means 'semen'; '*sālijaṇi*' means 'human flesh' etc. For more examples, see HT(F) II:3:55-60.

23 See HT(F) II:3:55-60. It may also be noted that in the Candrakīrti's *Pradīpodyotana* commentary on *Guhyasamāja Tantra*, *sandhyābhāṣā* is one of the six ways of interpreting the contents of the *tantra*. *Caryā* songs of the Mahāsiddhas are mostly couched in this language. Munidatta's commentary on the *Caryā* songs contains good many examples of the use of code language and its interpretation. See HT(F), *Yogaratanmālā*, p.303.



communication, which has **an agreed prime intent**, and it is not to be understood in terms of the literal sense of the terms *(abhiprāyapradhānaṁ bhāṣaṇaṁ, nākṣarapradhānaṁ iti arthaḥ)*.<sup>24</sup> This is only to confirm our earlier assertion that the Vajrayānist does not consider 'meaning' as something inherent in words, but rather as created by the mind and **ascribed** to them.

The 'meaning-less' modes of expression are obvious especially in non-verbal ways of communication such as *chomā*, *mudrā* and dance postures, which are more conspicuous in *Vajrayāna* than in other systems. The *maṇḍala* also shows the deliberate avoidance of words in favour of images, symbols, designs, figures, and alphabets to indicate what in other systems are communicated through terms and concepts alone. The significance of the *maṇḍala* may be explained in terms of concepts and categories, as we have done; but when the *maṇḍala* is actually used, the signs and symbols evoke the reality they contain without reference to their conceptual ramifications.

The advantage of Vajrayānic modes of expression is that it calls forth reality, by-passing the mental modifications ('meaning') which otherwise accompany it. In this way, the practitioner has direct and unhindered access to the reality it signifies. In the ordinary transaction of life, we mistake the real for the mental modifications that the word causes within us. We do not get to know the real as it is. The real can be known only when the modifications (the so-called 'meaning') are silenced. Tantric words have no fixed meaning, often, a single letter or syllable indicates what generally requires a whole series of concepts to express. These 'meaning-less' words, images, and symbols are spontaneous expressions of the

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24 HT(S), Part 2, *Yogaratnamālā*, p.145.

experience of reality in meditation. These are the means of expression and not the means of communication. The former may be 'meaning-less' but not the latter definitely.

### 2.3 From the Physical to the Spiritual

The world is nothing but a phenomenon of consciousness, and so the material world is not an object of physics but an object of psychological analysis. Our corporeality, the psycho-physical complex, is the fossilised form of our past consciousness. This shows the close affinity between the physical and the spiritual. Yet, in several traditions the body has been conceived as diametrically opposed to the spirit and hence as something to be suppressed or discarded at the earliest.

*Vajrayāna* has rehabilitated the physical in the pursuit of the spiritual; rather, the physical has taken centre stage in its theory and praxis. Guenther opines that, "...the human body is the easiest form in which we can understand that which is most important to us.."<sup>25</sup> The body is the laboratory where the psycho-spiritual experiments of the Vajrayānists are tested, perfected and carried on. It is the means to achieve higher planes of consciousness. Sri Aurobindo in his book *The Synthesis of Yoga*, wrote, "The obstacle which the physical presents to the spiritual is not argument for the rejection of the physical; for in the unscen providence of things our greatest difficulties are our best opportunities. Rather the perfecting of the body also should be the last triumph."<sup>26</sup>

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25 Herbert V. Guenther, *Tibetan Mysticism without Mystification*, p.59.

26 Sri Aurobindo, *The Synthesis of Yoga* (Pondicherry: Sri Aurobindo Ashram, 1955) p.10.

The tantric insight that the body is a microcosm and the truth of the universe is to be found in the body has revolutionised the role of the body in the pursuit of the ultimate. T. D. Bhutia states, "If we identify our body with the universe by analysing all the tattvas within our body's biological system, we can discover the ultimate truth."<sup>27</sup> The various aspects of the doctrine and praxis are associated with the body in a homologous correspondence, as seen earlier. The four classes of tantras are related to the four different physical actions.<sup>28</sup> Every deity, be it wrathful or benign, is visualised as residing within the body. In the *Bhagavad Gītā*, Arjuna sees the entire universe in the *viśva-rūpa* of the Lord. The experience of bodily ease and pleasure are analogically related to the Ultimate Reality as Great Bliss.

Body is not to be shunned in the practice of *sādhana*, for, spiritual experience is closely linked to the awareness of the body. In Vajrayānic praxis, the body, gross and subtle, are extensively used; the former in āsanās, mudrās, and dances, and the latter in cakras and nāḍīs. The physical plane is not left behind in the spiritual flight, but elevated and transformed. *Vajrayāna* recognises the spiritual potential of the physical. The body is not merely physical, it is spiritual as well. The admission of the physical into the school of the spiritual has set at rest the imaginary strife between the body and the spirit. Here it is not a matter of giving each its due, ensuring a cease-fire between the body

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27 T.D. Bhutia, *Beyond Eternity through Mysticism*, p.234.

28 The four tantras viz., *Kriyā*, *Caryā*, *Yoga* and *Anuttarayoga* are at times likened to the four phases of courtship: exchange of glances, an appreciating and encouraging smile, a grasping of the hands, and the consummating sexual act, respectively. See Herbert V. Guenther, *Tibetan Mysticism without Mystification*, p.66.

and soul as it were, but harmoniously linking the two for the realisation of re-integration.

#### 2.4 From Fragmentation to Re-integration

Fragmentation and inner conflict are the order of human existence. In the cognitive sphere man experiences the conflict of views and counter-views; in the conative realm he is pulled by the multiplicity of choices and on the affective sphere he is afflicted by raging passions and desires. This internal fragmentation adversely affects his perception of and interaction with external reality. The apparent plurality of empirical existence with its numerous classes and categories of beings prevents him from seeing the unity underlying phenomena. As a result, man conceives himself as distinct from the rest, segregated by class and creed, which further heightens his experience of self-alienation.

At the root of this inner fragmentation is the illusion of the plurality of empirical existence. Hence through philosophical training he is made to realise that all forms of existence can be reduced to the skandhas, āyatanas and dhātus. The plurality of things is nothing but the manifestations of the one and the same consciousness. He further learns that these are ultimately essence-less because they are mutually dependent. In *Vajrayāna*, the skandhas, into which empirical reality has been reduced, is further simplified into Body, Speech, and Mind. Body, Speech, and Mind are visualised as the three cakras in the body of the *yogī* and are united and re-integrated through the Vajrayānic processes explained earlier. In this way the *sādhaka* experiences within himself the re-integration of his fragmented empirical existence.

*Vajrayāna* helps the seeker to see the whole of empirical existence fundamentally bi-polar, namely *śūnyatā*

and *karuṇā*, which, in typical tantric spirit, are visualised as female and male. Similarly, he is made to realise that his own body is the microcosm and experience the fundamental female–male bi-polarity within his psyche. The union of Hevajra and Nairātmyā presented in the *maṇḍala* becomes an exemplar of the re-integration that should be brought about within his own psyche. The method of re-integration taught by the *Hevajra Tantra* includes the techniques of visualisation (process of Generation) and the external or internal union of the polarities (process of Completion).

The conflict that rages within man, which causes the inner fragmentation of his personality, is fundamentally based on the split between intellect and emotion, femininity and masculinity, as well as between thought and action. The symbol of *yuganaddha* points to the unique harmony and inter-penetration of masculinity and femininity, or of intelligence and emotionality.<sup>29</sup> It is this *conjunctio oppositorum* of the basic polarity that heals the inner division and the consequent frustration that man experiences.

### 3. Vajrayānic Insights into the Human Psyche

The contribution of *Vajrayāna* in mapping the human psyche is probably unparalleled in the rest of the Buddhist tradition. The fundamental mental afflictions and neuroses have been identified as the five *doṣas*, namely, *rāga*, *dveṣa*, *moha*, *īrṣya* and *paśūnya*. As in *Mādhyamika*, *Vajrayāna* conceives them as the aftermath of false views (*vikalpa*). The Vajrayānist perceives them not as evils in themselves but as distorted energies, which can be transformed into powers and channelled to propel the human mind to

29 Herbert V. Guenther, *Yuganaddha: The Tantric View of Life*, p.8.

achieve, super psychic states. Each deity corresponds to a vital force within the depth of the individual, and by uniting with the various deities, the meditator makes contact with both the positive and the negative forces within, transmutes them, and utilises them to achieve higher states of consciousness.<sup>30</sup>

*Vajrayāna* also points out that, “within the human psyche there are tender feminine traits in the soul of the male and the hard masculine traits in the soul of the female.”<sup>31</sup> Vajrayānic praxis is devised in such a way as to enable us. “...to get in touch with our masculinity/femininity.”<sup>32</sup> The two genders are not considered obstacles to each other in spiritual praxis but complementary and necessary. When these two elements are harmoniously linked and integrated, one is liberated from the fatally dangerous one-sidedness.

Vajrayānic insight into the identity of the microcosm and the macrocosm, led to the visualisation of the entire cosmos within the human psyche. The world without is determined by the world within. The world is what we perceive it to be. So, the changes effected within bring about changes in the apparent reality without. Hence there is the insistence on a change in one’s mind-set and a shift in one’s paradigm.<sup>33</sup> Even a management *Guru* like Stephen R. Covey recognises the need for a paradigm shift. He writes: “We began to realise that if we wanted to change

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30 Linda Reid, “Jungian Archetypes and Tantric Deities: A Comparative Expose” in EBT, vol.2., p.533.

31 Herbert V. Guenther, *Yuganaddha: The Tantric View of Life*, p.6.

32 “Honey on the Razor’s Edge – The Tantric Psychology of Genders on Roman(sic)”, p.604.

33 Śāntideva in his *Bodhicaryāvatāra* states, “...since I cannot control external events, I will control my own mind.” *Bodhicaryāvatāra*, 5:14



the situation, we first had to change ourselves. And to change ourselves effectively, we first had to change our perceptions.”<sup>34</sup> Buddhists have always insisted on right mindfulness (*samyak darśana*). The Vajrayānist is deeply aware of the psycho-somatic nature of empirical existence, and their insights into the mental make up of man can be profitable for a more healthy living.

#### 4. Therapeutic Relevance of *Vajrayāna*

The goal of psychoanalysis, as Robert Wicks points out, “...is to improve an individual’s psychological health by revealing to the individual that individual’s basic psychic structure and constellations of inner conflict.”<sup>35</sup> In this sense, Vajrayānic praxis is a form of tantric psychoanalysis. The *maṇḍala* practice is an excellent way to delineate the geography of the human mind and map the labyrinths of forces that disturb the surface of the mind. The *kleśas* can afflict only at the subterranean level, but once they are hauled into the surface of consciousness they become tame and harmless.

Schuon points out that, “...the Buddhist *dharma* is not a passionate struggle against passions, it dissolves passion from within, through contemplation.”<sup>36</sup> This is true especially in the case of *Vajrayāna*. There are three familiar ways of working with emotions, viz., expression, repression, and dissipation. While ‘expression’ may further strengthen the wayward emotions; ‘repression’ causes depression, and ‘dissipation’, though least injurious, does

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34 Stephen R. Covey, *The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People* (London: Pocket Books, 1999), p.18.

35 Robert Wicks, “The Therapeutic Psychology of ‘The Tibetan Book of the Dead’”, in EBT, vol.3, pp.721.

36 Frithjof Schuon, *In the Tracks of Buddhism*, p.20.

not deal with the root problem. On the contrary, Vajrayānic method is to embrace the emotion. This is done by letting go the conceptual scaffolding, and wordlessly gazing into the physical sensation of the emotion. This staring at the face of emotions leads one to the realisation of their void nature. In a form of meditation known as 'exploding the horizon of conventional reality' (Tib. *Trek-chod*) the meditative practice of handling emotions is elucidated: The *sādhaka* locates the emotion within the body as localised or pervasive. Then he allows the sensation to expand and pervade him and he becomes the emotion itself. In this way he ceases to be an observer of emotions. He stares into the face of the arising emotion with such completeness that all sense of division between the experience and the experiencer dissolves. As a result he becomes aware of what he actually is. Through this constant 'staring' the distorted energy of the emotions liberates itself and enters into its own original status<sup>37</sup> of *mahāsukha*. The *Hevajra Tantra* states that *rāga*, *dveṣa*, *moha* etc., are but non-dual *mahāsukha* seen as 'differentiated'.<sup>38</sup>

*Tantra* uses symbols and figures for making the mind calm in the process of visualisation. They become props in auto-suggestion.<sup>39</sup> It has been suggested that the constant practice of *mantra* normalises blood pressure and reduces tension. Mantric sound waves are capable of penetrating

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37 Ngak'chang Rinpoche and Khandro Dechen, "Embracing Emotions as the Path Colours and Elements in Tantric Psychology," in EBT, vol.4, pp.1095-1096.

38 "*tasmād ekasvabhāvo 'sau mahāsukhaṁ sāsṅatparam/ pañcatāṁ yāti bhedenā rāgādipañcacetuṣā*// HT(F) II:2:59. (Thus, this Great Bliss is essentially one and the supreme, becomes five by differentiation into the five emotional states of passion and so on.)

39 Sadhu Santideva, *Therapeutic Tantra* (New Delhi: Cosmo Publications, 2001) p.28.

the subconscious mind, which is far more powerful than its conscious counterpart, and they have a favourable bearing on the body and the conscious mind of man.<sup>40</sup>

As pointed out earlier, *Vajrayāna* proves to be a therapeutic tool in harnessing and channelling psycho-spiritual energies. One important form of such energy is the sexual energy. The untapped and often repressed sexual energy appears in its distorted forms to haunt the psyche of man. The Vajrayānist perceives sexual union as a form of meditative discipline with profound psycho-spiritual effects. The erotic impulse for union is seen as the psychic thirst of the complementary polar opposites for union. Through sexual union the two partners harmonise themselves in multiple levels. Sexual intercourse releases tremendous energy inside the human psyche, which according to tantric masters, can be transmuted into superior forms of energy, called *ojas* and *tejas*.<sup>41</sup> Tantric sexual encounter is not to be identified with the ordinary sexual intercourse between man and woman. In the former, the couple is deeply conscious of their identity as the bipolar Absolute; they embody the dyadic wholeness of the Supreme. They are not ordinary man and woman in sexual embrace, but the foundational energies of the universe in union.<sup>42</sup> Their union takes place at a higher level of consciousness. According to *Hevajra Tantra*, they identify themselves with Hevajra and Nairātmyā, respectively. This stage of tantric praxis is reserved only to those who can attain this level of consciousness. *Vajrayāna* has raised sexuality to a higher plane, highlighting its therapeutic as

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40 Ibid., pp.158-159.

41 *Ojas* is the energy that confers extraordinary vigour, power, and virility. *Tejas* is the energy that produces the halo around the saint's head. See Ibid., pp.276-277.

42 For a detailed discussion, see Ibid., pp. 268-284.

well as spiritual significance. It has sacralized sexual intercourse and treated it as a copy of cosmic unity.<sup>43</sup>

Thus *Vajrayāna* has developed a unique way of handling emotions; and it could serve as a tool for modern psychotherapy. According to Linda Reid, "It could be said that the aim of Buddhist *Tantra* is to penetrate into, harness, and transform the dynamic forces of the universe, which are no different from the psychological forces and archetypal constellations of our own psyche."<sup>44</sup> The therapeutic uniqueness of the Vajrayānic praxis is that it enables passions to be turned into powers. Agehananda Bharati observes, "...if the intelligent in Modern India could view the Tantric tradition with that warm empathy which the builders of Khajuraho and Konarak must have felt, Tantrism in India may well be therapeutical for many cultural ills that beset her today."<sup>45</sup>

### 5. *Vajrayāna*: Degeneration or Development?

*Vajrayāna* in the past decades has drawn much attention by way of praise and blame, commendation and condemnation. Thanks to the scholarship at the global level, *Vajrayāna* has risen like the phoenix out of its ashes. Whether it will regain its past glory and wide subscription is yet to be seen. Nevertheless it has attracted the attention of philosophers as well as psychologists the world over. Is *Vajrayāna* a development or a degeneration of Buddhist thought? Can it rightly claim to be another phase of Buddhism? On the one side we have scholars, used to the

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43 Geoffrey Parrinder, *Sex in the World's Religions* (London: Sheldon Press, 1980), p.53.

44 Linda Reid, "Jungian Archetypes and Tantric Deities: A Comparative Expose," p.533.

45 as quoted in Douglas Nik, *Tantra Yoga* (New Delhi: Munshiram Manoharlal, 1971), p.14.

subtlety and sophistication of *Mādhyamika* and *Yogācāra* systems, disown *Vajrayāna* as some perverted form of magic and witchcraft, which hardly deserves a place within the Buddhist fold. But on the other side, there are those who consider its deep rooted links with the Buddhist tradition and view it as a growth and development within the province of *Mahāyāna* Buddhism. Let us look at these two attitudes to *Vajrayāna* a little closer.

If one looks and looks only at the myriad of deities, *sādhanas*, and practices involved in it, *Vajrayāna* stands out as a degenerated form of Buddhism. The practices incorporated in *Vajrayāna*, as we have seen, are drawn from all and sundry- *yoga*, magic, witchcraft, shamanism, and other autochthonous practices. Some of these practices are certainly superstitious and nebulous in character, which may be employed for nefarious purposes by some unscrupulous adepts. Again, tantric practices have often been resorted to for mere mundane benefits and the attainment of *siddhis*. We see here a clear departure from the speculative tendencies of the *Mahāyāna* Buddhists to the more practical and mundane concerns of the *Vajrayānist*.

The presence of a large number of esoteric and occult practices in the praxis of *Vajrayāna* is often considered unbecoming of a philosophy, not to mention of a *sādhana*. However, the *Vajrayānic* masters perceived the enormous psychic potential of these occult practices in bringing to the fore, the hidden and misguided energies of the unconscious. These practices are capable of tapping psychic energies, which may be channelled for useful or harmful purposes just as atomic or nuclear energy can be. Hence they made judicious use of them in their praxis. While *Mahāyāna* stressed on developing the analytic and speculative powers



of the mind. *Vajrayāna* explored another sphere of the same, namely the imaginative and the emotive. It pursued non-discursive thinking with interest in addition to the discursive one. The former they found more capable of silencing reason than the latter. While the Mahāyānist analysed the passions that vex the mind and arrived at their void nature, as in Śāntideva's *Bodhicaryāvatāra*,<sup>46</sup> the Vajrayānist perceived them as powers and sought to harness these basic drives of man to transport him from mere empirical consciousness to higher levels of consciousness.

In the realm of Metaphysics, *Vajrayāna* discovered certain dimensions of the Absolute which were hitherto unknown to the Mahāyānists. The perception of the Absolute as bi-polar is a unique tantric insight. While in *Mahāyāna*, *karuṇā* seems to be eclipsed by *śūnyatā*, in *Vajrayāna* it appears to enjoy equal status with *śūnyatā*, since, together they constitute the bi-polarity of the Absolute. The conception of *śūnyatā* and *karuṇā* as feminine and masculine dimensions of the practitioner, is of great interest to the psychoanalysts, as it sheds light on the psychic make up of man and woman. The high-flown speculative metaphysics of the Mahāyānist is brought down to earth by the Vajrayānist, to the practical concerns of human life. In this way, the Vajrayānist has balanced the speculative extremism of the Mahāyānist with their emphasis on praxis. Probably the greatest contribution *Vajrayāna* has made to *Mahāyāna* is its time tested and sophisticated *sādhana*. *Vajrayāna* may rightly be called

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46 Śāntideva in his *Bodhicaryāvatāra* undertakes a rational analysis of kleśas and attempts to demonstrate how ridiculous it is to remain under their sway. See for e.g., *Bodhicaryāvatāra* 6:73ff, 8:30-85.



'applied *Mahāyāna*' Viewed in this manner, *Vajrayāna* is indeed a further development of *Mahāyāna* Buddhism.

## 6. *Vajrayāna*: Is it Relevant?

While Vajrayānic insights may be tolerable or even acceptable to many, its praxis is judged irrelevant and impractical in today's world. The *sādhana*, involving the *pañca makāras* is condemned as repugnant and repulsive. Certain apparently wild and immoral injunctions prescribed by the tantras shock the onlooker as it appears to advocate sexual promiscuity and licentiousness. The common prejudice that the tantric is a depraved man with obnoxious habits, involving himself in nefarious practices, makes him appear more harmful than helpful to society. The way of life prescribed for the *yogī* in the tantric texts may be culturally and religiously alien to the modern world. Hence is *Vajrayāna* praxis relevant and practical?

Of all the Vajrayānic practices the rite of *maithuna* (*coitus reservatus*) is the most contentious one. According to some scholars like Lama Anagarika Govinda, it was only symbolic and not practised literally, but Agehananda Bharati and others hold that it was practised in the literal sense. In its symbolic interpretation it signifies the mystic absorption into the great *prajñāpāramitā*. A passage in Anaṅgavajra's *Prajñopāyaviniścayasiddhi* states that all women should be enjoyed by the *sādhaka* in order to attain the *mahāmudrā* accomplishment. Here 'all women' signify the 'elements of the world' which are represented in the *maṇḍala* as female deities.<sup>47</sup> It is difficult to gauge the

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47 A Tantric passage asks the *sādhaka* to have sexual intercourse with his mother, his sister, his daughter, and his sister's daughter etc. Here again, mother, daughter, sister etc. are applied to the *mahābhūtas*. Similar expressions are found in *Dhammapada* (verse

actual intent and import of the rite of *maithuna*, cut off as we are from the golden era of *Vajrayāna*. It calls for different levels of interpretation before a final verdict can be passed.

However, the wording in the *Hevajra Tantra* seems so precise as though to imply a literal interpretation.<sup>48</sup> Snellgrove, considering the practice to be literal, points out that it must be seen in the context of the bi-polar conception of reality, which is fundamental to tantrism and hence central to the whole conception of re-integration.<sup>49</sup> Sexuality is one of the basic drives of man, and *Vajrayāna* attempts to transmute and ennoble this natural condition. It must be noted that any and every practitioner is not permitted the *mahāmudrā* practice. It is granted by the *Guru* after judicious observation and due preparation of the disciple at the highest stage of *yoga*. Even after having said all that can be said about this practice, it may be admitted that it still remains an enigma in the gamut of *Vajrayāna* praxis.

The praxis of *Vajrayāna* cannot be cut and pasted on to the modern man in its ancient garb; his sense and sensibility needs to be taken into account. Some of the practices may be hopelessly outdated and offensive and may not cut ice with him. However, Vajrayānic praxis in its

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no.294) which states that after having killed father and mother and two *kṣatriya* kings, and having destroyed a kingdom with all its inhabitants, the *Brāhmaṇa* remains free from sin. Here 'father and mother' stands for egoism and craving. The 'two kings' are the two erroneous views of eternalism and annihilation. The 'kingdom and its inhabitants' are the twelve āyatanas. The '*Brāhmaṇa*' is the enlightened person. See R.P. Anuruddha, *An Introduction into Lamaism: The Mystical Buddhism of Tibet* (Hoshiarpur: Vishveshvaranand Vedic Research Institute, 1959) pp.119-120.

48 See HT(F) II:11.10-15.

49 HT(S). Part I, p.42, fn.1.

broadest outlines may be relevant for man even today. The mantric and yogic practices such as breath control, the meditation employing the visualisation techniques and the imaginative thinking with the aid of a *maṇḍala*, can prove beneficial to the psycho-spiritual growth of the modern man. He can also benefit from the Vajrayānic insight into human sexuality and learn to make his sexual experience a spiritual enterprise. Finally, the praxis is meant only as means for the realisation of the Vajrayānic vision and experience of reality and so the former is subservient to the latter. While the Vajrayānic insights into reality are relevant for modern man, he should perhaps strive to refine the ancient tantric praxis, keeping in mind the time and tenor of modern society.

### 7. *Vajrayāna*: Metaphysics, Religion or Psychology?

*Vajrayāna* defies definition as it incorporates elements from various fields. *Vajrayāna* is a metaphysics in the sense that it has a metaphysical framework based on the twin traditions of *Mahāyāna* and *Tantra*. We have seen how *Vajrayāna*, in addition to tantric insights, adopted the basic Mahāyānic concepts with certain modifications and innovations. The tantric texts abound in Mahāyānic concepts as well as in *Ābhidharmika* categories. The commentators of Vajrayānic texts explain the tantric praxis, which are often expressed in *sandhyābhāṣā*, in the light of *Mādhyamika* and *Yogācāra* philosophy. Though it is the tantric praxis that is at the forefront in *Vajrayāna*, a metaphysical framework beneath the surface cannot be denied. However, it must be noted that the goal of *Vajrayāna* is far from building a metaphysical system of its own.

*Vajrayāna* at first sight appears to be a religion like any other, because it has all the garb and regalia associated

with one. It has an awesome pantheon of wrathful and benign deities, heavenly beings, spirits, guardians, bodhisattvas, saints, gurus, and the like. The trappings of worship, such as purificatory rites, initiations, prayers, mantras, offerings, mudrās, songs, and dance, give it further religious hue and colour. However, to place it on a par with other religions may be misleading. The deities of *Vajrayāna* are different from those of other theistic systems. The *sādhaka* is not redeemed by the grace of some god outside him, but he achieves psycho-spiritual re-integration through his own efforts. The practitioner does not seek to be united with God, as in other religions, since all gods are within him and are part and parcel of his own psychic nature. Here the *sādhaka* himself is the deity; he is himself Hevajra (*hevajra svabhāvātmake 'ham*). *Vajrayāna* is 'religious' but not a religion in the strict sense of the term. It is 'religious' because it employs religious elements such as deities, worship, mantras etc., but not a religion in the strict theistic sense of the term.

*Vajrayāna* seems to be close to Psychology and Psychotherapy. The *maṇḍala* serves as a psychocosmogram, as Tucci opines. The deities are nothing but manifestations of psychic energy. The *maṇḍala*, *mantra*, and *mudrā* become means of attaining concentration and of harnessing the powers of the mind. It explores the potential of visualisation or imaginative thinking in identifying the powers that rule the realm of the inner self, and re-integrate them to achieve higher realms of consciousness. Vajrayānic praxis may be construed as a form of psychoanalysis and psychotherapy as indicated above.

It may be opined that *Vajrayāna* is a fusion of metaphysics, religion, and psychology. From the point of view of its conceptual framework, it is metaphysics; in its ethos, it is religion and in its techniques, it is psychology.

It is probably this comprehensive nature that is the secret of its immense appeal.

### 8. *Vajrayāna* as Mysticism

Mysticism comes from the Greek root 'μυωω' which means 'to close'; it denotes an experience which is 'closed to' or inaccessible to expression. Zaehner defines mysticism as, "...preternatural experiences in which sense perception and discursive thought are transcended in an immediate apperception of a unity or union which is apprehended as lying beyond and transcending the multiplicity of the world as we know it."<sup>50</sup> Mystic experience is spoken of as 'great blissfulness' and as 'an ecstatic state of quiescence' or 'clear light'.<sup>51</sup> Such experiences may be expressed only through analogy drawn from empirical experience. It is an intuitive experience without recourse to reason or sense data. It is a state stripped of doubts and duality, concept and categories, which St. John of the Cross called, the 'Night of undifferentiation', and Utpaladeva and Lallā referred to as, the mystical Night of Śiva (*Śivarātri*).<sup>52</sup>

Some mystical experience is overtly theistic with ostensible reference to God and it is dualistic, retaining the distinction between the mystic and God.<sup>53</sup> Here mysticism is thought of as a two-fold movement, involving self-giving

50 R.C. Zaehner, *Mysticism Sacred and Profane* (London: Oxford University Press, 1961) p.198.

51 Sidney Spencer, *Mysticism in World Religion* (London: George Allen & Unwin Ltd., 1966) p.95.

52 Paul E. Murphy, *Triadic Mysticism* (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass Publishers Private Limited, 1986; Reprint 1999) See pp. 96,99,147.

53 George I. Mavrodes, "Mysticism", in *The Oxford Companion to Philosophy*, ed. Ted Honderich, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995) p.599.

on the part of the Absolute, and the response to this self-giving by man. The Absolute is perceived as an object of love, which is capable of receiving and responding to this love.<sup>54</sup> Mysticism is often considered to be identical with religion, and if that is so, then *Vajrayāna* could not be a form of mysticism as it is not a religion in the strict sense of the term. Again, in *Vajrayāna* there is no duality between the *sādhaka* and the Absolute and so there is no room for devotion (*bhakti*), self-surrender (*prapatti*) and attendance (*kainkarya*).

William Stace points out that mysticism and religion should not be thought to be identical, as all mysticism need not inherently be religious.<sup>55</sup> There is also the mystical experience of a monistic nature emphasising the unity of all things and the lack of real distinction even between the mystic and the divine reality. This form of mysticism is likely to find acceptance among the great non-theistic religions.<sup>56</sup> Buddhism, as Schuon calls it, is not theism, not atheism, but 'non-theism' as it has a non-anthropomorphic, impersonal and static consideration of the infinite.<sup>57</sup> *Vajrayāna* through its weird iconography seems to indicate this non-anthropomorphic conception of the infinite. Buddhist mysticism, S.N. Dasgupta considers, is the realisation of *śūnyatā*.<sup>58</sup> According to Schuon, this 'void'

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54 J.X. Muthupackiam, S.J., *Mysticism and Metaphysics in Saiva Siddhānta* (New Delhi: Intercultural Publications, 1997) pp.5-6. The author does not seem to be using the word 'Absolute' in its strict philosophical sense, but to mean the personal supreme being.

55 George I. Mavrodes, "Mysticism", p.599.

56 Ibid., p.600.

57 Frithjof Schuon, *In the Tracks of Buddhism*, p.19.

58 S.N. Dasgupta, *Hindu Mysticism* (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass Publishers Private Limited, 1927; Reprint 1992) p.91.



(*śūnyatā*) is but 'God' subjectivised as a state of realisation; 'God' is but the 'void' objectively regarded.<sup>59</sup>

Vajrayānic mysticism is not an overtly religious one though it has much of the trappings of it. In Vajrayānic mystic experience there is no duality of consciousness of the self and the Absolute as all distinctions and duality are done away with. The *sādhaka* is Hevajra himself (*hevajra svabhāvātmake 'ham*). Hence there is no actual union with the Absolute. What we have is a polarity within the Absolute itself, which is perceived within the *sādhaka* himself, and the union of this polarity within him through the tantric *sādhana*. The mystic experience lies in the union of polarities, which results in a non-dual, and ineffable bliss. Vajrayānic mysticism, therefore, is of the non-dualistic and non-theistic type.

## 9. *Vajrayāna* for Personal Re-integration and Universal Harmony

A system of metaphysics is a way of looking at things<sup>60</sup> and this 'way of looking at things' determines man's understanding of reality and his relation to it. The 'way of looking at things' hitherto, has been predominantly rational, analytical and conceptual, where distinctions and differences hold sway over unity and identity. Another

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59 Frithjof Schuon, *In the Tracks of Buddhism*, p.19. Schuon considers such conception of the divine as a unique contribution of Buddhism. He states, "The great originality of Buddhism is to consider the Divine, not in relation to its cosmic manifestations as ontological cause and anthropomorphic personification, but rather in relation to its acosmic and anonymous character, as supra-existential 'state' which then will appear as voidness..." Frithjof Schuon, *In the Tracks of Buddhism*, p.20.

60 A.K. Chatterjee, "The Mādhyamika and the Philosophy of Language." p.30.

'way of looking at things', though less frequented, is the intuitive way with its emphasis on unity, wholeness and oneness. *Vajrayāna*, like *Mādhyamika*, *Yogācāra* and other Absolute systems, has recourse to the intuitive approach in the realisation of the ultimate reality.

The way of ratiocination may be at the root of the fragmented vision of reality. Man finds his own self fractured by inner conflicts, splits, and contradictions. He finds himself distinct and distinguished from everything outside him, and this cellular perception of himself leads to divisions and segregation in all other aspects of empirical life as well. He considers himself superior to everyone and everything else. Ideological differences, intolerance of other views and dogmatic sectarianism spring from a purely rational approach to things. Domination of one and the subjugation of everyone else in the social, political, cultural, and religious spheres, to name but a few, are the fallout of this approach. Such attitude proves disastrous to world peace and harmony.

The *Vajrayānic* approach, on the contrary, is predominantly intuitive, which perceives differences as illusory, and highlights the underlying unity of all things. The *Vajra* method starts by reducing all plurality to a fundamental bi-polarity, and finally re-integrating them in a mystic unity. The individual is made to realise that the warring elements within him in the form of views and mental afflictions are nothing but distorted forms of the two fundamental energies, the static and the dynamic, the male and the female. *Vajrayāna* then employs a sophisticated praxis to achieve the mystic unity of this bi-polarity, which results in the re-integration of the individual.

The re-integrated person finds himself in harmony with everything else within his empirical experience. He is not

confined by caste or class but interacts with people of all strata of society. He is not bound by social conventions and prejudices but is liberated from the vicious and intolerant confines of subjectivity. Freed of his parochial mind-set, he finds that life is a web of inter-dependence. He is made to view his body as the microcosm and perceive in it the whole of the universe. "When his vision of reality is transformed, man would act no more in a self-centred manner, but purged of his egoism and moved by compassion, he would devote himself to the welfare of all beings."<sup>61</sup>

*Vajrayāna* proves to be an effective antidote against phobias and fears that afflict human life. The *Vajra* praxis is designed to make the psyche of the *yogī* adamant, and in this way he is fortified against mental afflictions. He is made to stare at the face of every type of fear, which he does through the visualisation of the wrathful deities. The places that the *yogī* frequents such as cremation grounds and uninhabited places help him shed all fears. The tantric use, especially of the *makāras*, makes the *yogī*'s mind unmoved by notions such as likes and dislikes, clean and unclean, edible and inedible, worthy and unworthy, etc., which generate fear and anxiety in the minds of the uninitiated. The mental afflictions, now known as 'neurosis, paranoia, schizophrenia etc., torment man because his mind is not adamant. Some of the tantric practices are absorbed into the training of personnel who require mental toughness, grit, and endurance. The *Vajra* method is not one of developing self-control or a stoic sense. In it there is no occasion for 'control', since afflictions do not afflict him any more; the *Vajra* theory and praxis take the sting out of mental afflictions, by

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61 Tomy Augustine, "In Search of a Buddhist Ecology", p.168.

discovering their nature as void. Vajrayānic praxis makes one's psyche so strong and adamantine, that, he remains unnerved in adverse circumstances. Hence the tantric praxis could be further explored to discover its psychic effects and be adapted to attain better mental health.

### 10. *Vajrayāna*: A New Vision of Man, Metaphysics, and Religion

This sojourn into the hitherto unfamiliar territory of *Vajrayāna* for me has been one of discovery, hailing as I am from a tradition and upbringing that is totally different from the former. I have realised that the wealth of insights scripted in such enigmatic manner in the verses of the *Hevajra Tantra* and other tantric texts are the fruit of the rigorous investigations and meditative apperception of reality that our ancients pursued for centuries on end. We have seen several such admirable attempts and appreciable results in other metaphysical and religious traditions of the world, but *Vajrayāna* stands out as unique, distant and distinct from the rest. *Vajrayāna* cannot be brushed aside as some spurious and nefarious art developed by an inferior race. Rather, it may have the potential to furnish us with a new vision of Man, a deeper understanding of Metaphysics, and rich insights into Religion.

*Vajrayāna* has attempted to plumb the deepest recess of man, and map for posterity, the configurations of the human mind. To some extent, it anticipated by centuries some of the discoveries of modern depth psychology and the art of psychoanalysis. These insights, though clothed in symbolic and esoteric language, are, nevertheless valid and significant. The body-soul dichotomy and conflict, inherited from the Aristotelian tradition, is put to rest by viewing man as a whole, and as a microcosm. Man is not just the crown of creation, but creation itself; he is not a part of the world, but he is the world. There is no 'creature

consciousness' in him. This cosmicization of man has eclipsed the theistic image of God as the Supreme Being, the creator, the sustainer and the destroyer of the world. The classical distinction between God, World, and Man ultimately lapses. But this is no deification of the ego, for the ego melts away in the process of realisation into the non-dual consciousness, which is neither God, nor world or nor man, but all the three and much more.

This vision of things is not realised through conceptual investigation of reality; it is the fruit of an experiential philosophy. Philosophical enquiry is not a cognitive endeavour alone and does not stop with conceptual analysis, but proceeds to imaginative thinking and non-discursive analysis. Here, concepts do not remain abstract, cold and lifeless, but come alive in three-dimensional images and visions, bringing to the fore the imaginative and emotive dimensions of 'doing' metaphysics. The conceptual analysis undergone so far is now enacted through a process of meditative visualisations.

*Vajrayāna* has revealed the human face of the divine, as well as the divine face of the human, and bridged, as it were, the gulf between heaven and earth. God is not distinct or distant, but within man and non-different from him. Man is free to conceive Him in any manner he wants, because every concept is equally provisional. This shakes the religious traditions of the ordinary believer, so deeply rooted as he is, in one particular concept of God to the exclusion of all the rest. Is *Vajrayāna* doing to religion what *Mādhyamika* does to philosophy? In *Vajrayāna*, religion turns on itself and is turned inside out, and reveals the inner dynamics of religious enterprise. It does not deny the claims of revelation, but shows that revelation is as much human as it is divine. No revelation can be artificially inseminated into the consciousness of man, but must spring from within; that is, every revelation requires the in-built capacity to receive, understand, and accept it.



*Vajrayāna* has a unique understanding into the problem of evil. The eternal strife between Good and Evil, the subject of literary, philosophical and religious discussions since time immemorial, is put to rest. *Vajrayāna* looks in the face of evil and embraces it, knowing fully well, that evil is nothing but the other side of good. Good and evil are both energies available to man, which can be channelled to benefit him. Passions are powers gone haywire. Evil is not *that* 'evil'; it is not something to be condemned or condoned or even conquered,<sup>62</sup> but converted. In this way, the entire spectrum of psychic energy in the form of good and evil, is tapped and is made use of for the benefit of man.

*Vajrayāna* is threatening to one's cultural religious and philosophical upbringing, much as the deities of its pantheon are. Its wrathful nature is not an insinuation to discard one's religious tradition, but to look at it critically and see how far its gods are made in the image and likeness of man himself, and its revelation, pure human conventions. It may help the believer to adhere to his own tradition without compulsion and credulity. *Vajrayāna* threatens the conceptual complacency of the philosopher and prods him to venture into the realm of non-discursive, non-conceptual thinking. It makes man aware that the possibilities of liberation are within him, and chalks out a path that activates them and achieves the goal. In this sense, *Vajrayāna* serves as a help and not a hindrance. The terrain of *Vajrayāna* may be a difficult one to traverse, nevertheless, the journey proves to be a rewarding enterprise to the willing traveller.

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62 In *The Bodhicaryāvatāra*, Śāntideva considers the defilements as an enemy to be conquered. He writes, "I do not care if my guts ooze out! Let my head fall off! But never shall I bow down before the enemy, the defilements." *Bodhicaryāvatāra*, 4:44 (emphasis added).



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