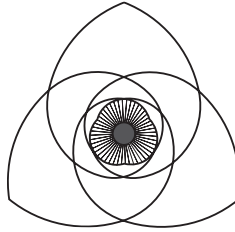


A TREATISE ON MIND



VOLUME 5

An Esoteric Exposition of the

Bardo Thödol

PART A

Other Titles in the Series

The I Concept

Volume 1: The 'Self' or 'Non-Self' in Buddhism

Volume 2: Considerations of Mind - A Buddhist Enquiry

Volume 3: The Buddha-Womb and the Way to Liberation

Cellular Consciousness

Volume 4: Maṇḍalas - Their Nature and Development

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The Way to Shambhala

Volume 6: Meditation and the Initiation Process

Volume 7: The Constitution of Shambhala

VOLUME FIVE



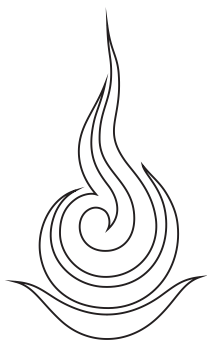
An Esoteric Exposition of the
Bardo Thödol

PART A

BODO BALSYS

UNIVERSAL DHARMA
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Āḥ!

Homage to the Lord of Shambhalla.
Inconceivable, inconceivable, beyond thought
Is the bejewelled crown of this most excelled Jina.
He whose Eye has taught many Buddhas.
And who will anoint the myriad,
that in the future lives will come.
As I bow to His Feet my Heart's afire.
Oh, this bliss, this love for my Lord
can barely be borne on my part.
It takes flight as the might of the Dove.
The flight of serene *nirvāṇic* embrace.
The flight of Light so bright.
The flight of Love so active tonight.
The flight of enlightenment for all to come to
their mind's Heart's attire.

Obeisance to the Gurus!
To the Buddhas of the three times.
To the Council of Bodhisattvas, *mahāsattvas*.
To them I pledge allegiance.

Om Hūm! Hūm! Hūm!

Dedication

Thanks to my students, past, present and future, and in particular to those that have helped in the production of this Treatise.

Om

Acknowledgments

Special thanks to Angie O’Sullivan, Kylie Smith,
and Ruth Fitzpatrick
for their tireless efforts in making this
series possible.

Om

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Preface

This treatise investigates Buddhist ideas concerning what mind is and how it relates to a concept of a ‘self’. It is principally a study of the complex interrelationship between mind and phenomena, from the gross to the subtle—the physical, psychic, supersensory and supernal. This entails an explanation of how mind incorporates all phenomena in its *modus operandi*, and how eventually that mind is liberated from it, thereby becoming awakened. Thus the treatise explores the manner in which the corporeally orientated, concretised, intellectual mind eventually becomes transformed into the Clear Light of the abstracted Mind; a super-mind, a Buddha-Mind.

A Treatise on Mind is arranged in seven volumes, divided into three subsections. These are as follows:

The I Concept

Volume 1. *The ‘Self’ or ‘Non-self’ in Buddhism.*

Volume 2. *Considerations of Mind—A Buddhist Enquiry.*

Volume 3. *The Buddha-Womb and the Way to Liberation.*

Cellular Consciousness

Volume 4. *Maṇḍalas - Their Nature and Development.*

Volume 5. *An Esoteric Exposition of the Bardo Thöдол.*

(This volume is published in two parts)

The Way to Shambhala

Volume 6. *Meditation and the Initiation Process.*

Volume 7. *The Constitution of Shambhala.*

The I Concept represents a necessary extensive revision of a large work formerly published in one volume. Together the three volumes investigate the question of what a ‘self’ is and is not. This involves an analysis of the nature of consciousness, and the consciousness-stream of a human unit developing as a continuum through time. It will illustrate exactly what directs such a stream and how its *karma* is arranged so that enlightenment is the eventual outcome.

The first volume analyses Prāsaṅgika lines of reasoning, such as the ‘Refutation of Partless Particles’, and ‘The Sevenfold Reasoning’ in order to derive a clear deduction as to whether a ‘self’ exists, and if so what its limitations are, and if not, then what the alternative may be. The analysis resolves the historically vexing question of how—if there is no ‘self’—can there be a continuity of mind that is coherently connected in an evolutionary manner through multiple rebirths.¹ In order to arrive at this explanation, many of the basic assumptions of Mahāyāna Buddhism, such as Dependent Origination and the two truths are critically analysed.

The second volume provides an in-depth analysis of what mind is, how it relates to the concept of the Void (*śūnyatā*) and the evolution of consciousness. The analysis utilises Yogācāra-Vijñānavādin philosophy in order to comprehend the major attributes of mind, the *saṃskāras* that condition it, and the laws by means of which it operates.

The enquiry into the nature of what an ‘I’ requires comprehension of the properties of the dual nature of mind, which consists of an empirical and abstract, enlightened part. As a means of doing this, the *ālayavijñāna* (the store of consciousness-attributes) is explored, alongside the entire philosophy of the ‘eight consciousnesses’ of this School.

Volume three focuses on the I-Consciousness and the subtle body, by first utilising a minor Tantra, *The Great Gates of Diamond Liberation*, to investigate the nature of the Heart centre and its functions, then the

¹ My earlier work *Karma and the Rebirth of Consciousness* (Munshiram Manoharlal, Delhi, 2006) lays the background for this basic question.

chakras below the diaphragm. This is necessary to lay the foundation for the topics that will be the subject of the later volumes of this treatise concerning the nature of meditation, the construction of *maṇḍalas*, and the yoga of the *Bardo Thödol*.

The focus then shifts to investigate where the idea of a self-sustaining I-concept or ‘Soul-form’ may be found in Buddhist philosophy, given the denial of substantial self-existence prioritised in the philosophy of Emptiness. Following this, the pertinent chapters of the *Ratnagotravibhāga Śāstra* are examined in detail so that a proper conclusion to the investigation can be obtained via the *buddhadharma*. This concerns an analysis of how the *ālayavijñāna* is organised, such that the rebirth process is possible for each human consciousness-stream, taking into account the *karma* that will eventually make each human unit a Buddha. In relation to this the ontological nature of the *tathāgatagarbha* (the Buddha-Womb) must be carefully analysed, as well as the organising principle of consciousness represented by the *chakras*. I thus establish that there is a form that appears upon the domain of the abstract Mind. I call this the Sambhogakāya Flower. The final two chapters of this volume principally define its characteristics.

The second subsection, *Cellular Consciousness* is divided into two parts. Volume four deals with the question of what exactly constitutes a ‘cell’ metaphysically. The cell is viewed as a unit of consciousness that interrelates with other cells to form *maṇḍalas* of expression. Each such cell can be considered a form of ‘self’ that has a limited, though valid, body of expression. It is born, sustains a form of activity, and consequently dies when it outlives its usefulness. This mode of analysis is extended to include the myriad forms manifest in the world of phenomena known as *saṃsāra* including the existence and functioning of *chakras*.

Volume five deals with the formative forces and evolutionary processes governing the prime cells (that is, *maṇḍalas* of expression), and the phenomenon that governs an entire world-sphere of evolutionary attainment. This is explored via an in-depth exposition of the *Bardo Thödol* and its 42 Peaceful and 58 Wrathful Deities. The text also incorporates a detailed exposition concerning the transformation of *saṃskāras* (consciousness-attributes developed through all past forms of activity) into enlightenment. The entire path of liberation enacted by a *yogin* via the principles of meditation, forms of concentration,

and related techniques (*tapas*, *dhāraṇīs*) is explained. In doing so, the soteriological purpose of the various wrathful and theriomorphic deities is revealed. This volume is published in two parts. Part A explores chapter 5 of the Bardo Thödol concerning the transformation of *saṃskāras* via meditating upon the Peaceful and Wrathful Deities. This necessitates sound knowledge of the force centres (*chakras*) and the way their powers (*siddhis*) awaken. Part B deals with the gain of such transformations and the consequence of conversion of the attributes of the empirical mind into the liberated abstract Mind.

The third subsection, *The Way to Shambhala*, is also in two parts. They present an eclectic revelation of esoteric information integrating the main Eastern and Western religions. Volume six is a treatise on meditation and the Initiation process.² The meditation practice is directed towards the needs of individuals living within the context of our modern societies.

Volume six also includes a discussion of the path of Initiation as the means of gaining liberation from *saṃsāra*. The teaching in Volume five concerning the conversion of *saṃskāras* is supplementary to this path. The path of Initiation is the way to Shambhala. As many will choose to consciously undergo the precepts needed to undertake Initiation in the future, this invokes the necessity of providing much more revelatory information concerning this kingdom than has been provided hitherto.

How Shambhala is organised is the subject of volume seven, which details the constitution of the Hierarchy of enlightened being³ (the Council of Bodhisattvas). It illustrates how the presiding Lords who govern planetary evolution manifest. This detailed philosophy rests on the foundation of the information provided in all of the previous volumes, and necessitates a proper comprehension of the nature of the five Dhyāni Buddhas. To do so the awakening of the meditation-Mind, which is the objective of *A Treatise on Mind*, is essential.

2 The word Initiation is capitalised throughout the series of books to add emphasis to the fact that it is the process that makes one divine, liberated. It is the expression of divinity manifesting upon the planetary and cosmic landscape.

3 The word 'being' here is not pluralised because though this Hierarchy is constituted of a multiplicity of beings, together they represent one 'Being', one integral awakened Entity.

How to engage with this text

In this investigation many new ways of viewing conventional Buddhist arguments and rhetoric shall be pursued to develop the pure logic of the reader's mind, and to awaken revelations from their abstract Mind. New insights into the far-reaching light of the *dharma* will be revealed, which will form a basis for the illustration of an esoteric view that supersedes the bounds of conventionally accepted views. Readers should therefore analyse all arguments for themselves to discern the validity of what is presented. Such enquiry allows one to ascertain for oneself, what is logical and truthful, thus overcoming the blind acceptance of a certain dogma or line of reasoning that is otherwise universally accepted as correct. Only that which is discovered within each inquiring mind should be accepted. The remainder should however not be automatically discarded, but rather kept aside for later analysis when more data is available—unless the logic is obviously flawed, in which case it should be abandoned. There is no claim to infallibility in the information and arguments presented in this treatise, however, they are designed to offer scope for further meditation and enquiry by the earnest reader. If errors are found through impeccable logic, then the dialectical process may proceed. We can then accept or reject the new thesis and move forward, such that the evolution of human thought progresses, until we all stand enlightened.

This treatise hopes to assist that dialectical evolution by analysing major aspects of the *buddhadharma* as it exists and is taught today, to try to examine where errors may lie, or where the present modes of interpretation fall short of the true intended meaning. The aim is also to elaborate aspects of the *dharma* that could only be hinted at or cursorily explained by the wise ones of the past, because the basis for proper elaboration had not then been established. This analysis of *buddhadharma* will try to rectify some of the past inadequacies in order to explore and extend the *dharma* into arenas rarely investigated.

There will always be obstinate and dogmatic ones that staunchly cling to established views. This produces a reactive malaise in current Buddhist ontological and metaphysical thought. However, amongst the many practitioners of the *dharma* there are also those who have

clarified their minds sufficiently to verify truth in whatever form it is presented, and will follow it at all costs to enlightenment. The Council of Bodhisattvas heartily seek such worthy ones. The signposts or guides upon the way to enlightenment have changed through the centuries, and contemporary practitioners of the *dharma* have yet to learn to clearly interpret the new directions. The guide books are now being written and many must come forth to understand and practice correctly.

If full comprehension of such guide books is achieved those *dharma* practitioners yearning to become Bodhisattvas would rapidly become spiritually enlightened. Here is a rhyme and reason *for* Buddhism. The actual present dearth of enlightened beings informs us that little that is read is properly understood. The esoteric view presented in this treatise hopes to rectify this problem, so as to create better thinkers along the Bodhisattva way.

The numbers of Buddhists are growing in the world, thus Buddhism needs a true restorative flowering to rival that of the renaissance of debate and innovative thinkers of the early post-Nāgārjunian era. In order to achieve this it must synthesise the present wealth of scientific knowledge, alongside the best of the Western world's philosophical output.

Currently the *buddhadharma* is presented as an external body of knowledge held by the Buddha, Rinpoches, monks and lay teachers. This encourages practitioners to hero worship these figures and to heed many unenlightened utterances from such teachers, based on a belief system that encourages people to *uncritically* listen to them and adopt their views. When enlightened teachers *do appear* and find consolidated reasons for firing spiritual bullets for the cause of the enlightenment of humanity, then all truth can and will be known. The present lack of inwardly perceived knowledge from the fount of the *dharmakāya* on the part of many teachers blocks the production of an arsenal of weapons for solving the problems of suffering in the world. Few see little beyond the scope of vision in what they have been indoctrinated to believe, allowing for only rudimentary truths to be understood. While for the great majority this suffices, it is woefully inadequate for those genuinely seeking Bodhisattvahood and enlightenment. The cost to humanity in not being given an enlightened answer as to the nature of awakening, is profound.

We must go to the awakening of the Head lotus to find the most established reasoning powers. Without the 1,000 petals of the *sahasrāra padma* ablaze then there is little substance for proper understanding, little ability to hold the mind steady in the dynamic field of revelation that the *dharmakāya* represents. How can the unenlightened properly understand Buddhist scriptures, when there is little (revelation) coming from the Head centres of such beings? Much still needs to be taught concerning the way of awakening this lotus, and to help fill the lack is a major purpose of *A Treatise on Mind*.

Those who intend to reach enlightenment must go beyond the narrow sectarian allegiances promoted by many strands of contemporary Buddhism. Buddhism itself unfolded in a dialectical context with other heterodox Indian (and Chinese etc) traditions, and prospered on account of those engagements. When one sees the unfolding of enlightened wisdom in such a fashion, the particular information from specific schools of thought may be synthesised into a greater whole. Each school has various qualities and types of argument to resolve weaknesses in the opposing stream of thought. This highlights that there are particular aspects in each that may be right or wrong, or neither wholly right or wrong. Through this process we can find better answers, or if need be, create a new lineage or religion which is expressive of a synthesis of the various schools of thought.

The Buddha did not categorically reject the orthodox Indian religious-philosophical ideas of his time, nor did he simply accept them—he reformed them. He preserved the elements that he found to be true, and rejected those ‘wrong views’ which lead to moral and spiritual impairment. If the existing system needs reformation it becomes part of a Bodhisattva’s meditation. The way a reforming Buddha incarnates is dependent on how he must fit into such a system. Thus he is essentially an outsider incarnating into it to demonstrate the new type of ideas he chooses to elaborate. If there is a lot of dogmatic resistance to the presented doctrine of truth, then a new religion is founded. If there is some acceptance then we see reformation. There is always room for improvement, to march forward closer to enlightenment’s goal, be it for an individual or for a wisdom-religion as a whole. There is a need for reform throughout the religious world today.

By way of a hermeneutical strategy fit for this task, we ought look no further than the Buddha himself. The Buddha proposed that all students of the *dharma* should make their investigations through the *Four Points of Refuge*. These are:

1. The doctrine is one's point of refuge, not a person.
2. The meaning is one's point of refuge, not the letter.
3. The sacred texts whose meaning is defined are one's point of refuge, to those whose meaning needs definition.
4. Direct awareness is one's point of refuge, not discursive awareness.⁴

These four points can be summarised or rephrased as: the doctrine (*dharma*), true or esoteric meaning, right definition, and direct awareness are one's point of refuge, not adherence to sectarian bias, semantics, the dialectics of non-fully enlightened commentaries, or to illogical assertions. What may be long held to be truthful, but is not, upon proper analytical dissection, needs rectifying. Also, in other cases, a doctrine or teaching may indeed be correct, but the current interpretation leaves much to be desired, and hence should be reinterpreted from the position of a more embracive or esoteric view.

Hopefully this presentation finds welcoming minds that will carefully analyse it in line with their own understandings of the issues, and as a consequence build up a better understanding of the nature of what constitutes the path to enlightenment. Their way of walking as Bodhisattvas should be enriched as a consequence.

For a guide to understanding the pronunciation of Sanskrit words, please visit our website

<http://universaldharma.com/resources-2/pronounce-sanskrit/>

Our online esoteric glossary also provides definitions for most of the terms used in this treatise.

<http://universaldharma.com/resources-2/esoteric-glossary/>

4 Griffith, P.J., *On Being Buddha, The Classical Doctrine of Buddhahood*, (Sri Satguru Publications, New Delhi, 1995), 52.

My eyes do weep as I stare into this troubled world,
For I dare not place my Heart in my brother's keep.
He would grapple that Heart with hands so rough
So as to destroy the fabric of its delicate stuff.
Oh to give, to give, my Heart does yearn,
But humanity must its embrace,
Humbling, pervasive scene yet to learn.
To destroy and tear with avarice they know,
But little care to sensitive rapture they show.
How to give its blood is my constant fare,
For that Love to bestow upon their Hearts I bemoan.
But they hide their Hearts behind mental-emotional walls.
No matter how one prods these walls won't fall,
So much belittling emotional self-concern prop their bastions.
Oh, how my eyes do weep as I stare.
I stare at their fearsome malls and halls.
That lock Love out from all their abodes
And do keep them trapped in realms of woe.

Om Maṇi Padme Hūm



Guru Rinpoche as the King of Sahor

Padmasambhava and the Bardo Thödol

Introductory statements

The teachings of the *Tibetan Book of the Dead (Bardo Thödol)* contain multiple levels of meaning and symbolism. It is traditionally used as a liturgy to be read out continuously for forty-nine days for the recently deceased as means to guide them through the travails of the after death (Bardo) state. However, the *Bardo Thödol* is also an important meditation treatise, because the processes associated with what happens when one dies is similar to dying to the physical body in meditation. This book will concentrate upon the section of the *Bardo Thödol* relating to the transformation of base *saṃskāras*¹ into their enlightenment-attributes. In doing so it will present much technical information concerning the nature of and the relationship between the deities and the processes involved in this transformation. The book thereby aims to guide the reader through the realms of illusion to eventual enlightenment.

The Tibetan term *Bardo Thödol* is translated as ‘*The Great Liberation by Hearing in the Intermediate States*’ by Gyurme Dorje,²

1 *Saṃskāras* are mental-emotional propensities of present and past actions carried through from life to life. The *saṃskāras* are expressed in the form of the five different types of *prāṇas* conveyed throughout the *nāḍī* system. They are thus collectivised in various groups of five consciousness-attributes. Literally, *saṃskāras* are one’s karmic accumulations which must be worked with and inevitably transformed in any one life and transmuted into the seeds of enlightenment.

2 Gyurme Dorje, Trans., *The Tibetan Book of the Dead: The Great Liberation by Hearing in the Intermediate States*, (Penguin Books, London, 2005), xxxvi.

and ‘*The Book of Spontaneous Liberation from the Intermediate State*’ by Lama Anagarika Govinda. Govinda states:

Those who have not yet attained the strength and maturity to see the unveiled reality are led by way of symbol and initiation ritual with the appropriate exercises to gradual understanding and personal experience. That is why the *Bardo Thödol*, the Tibetan book of spontaneous liberation (*thos-grol*, pronounced *thö dol*) from the intermediate state (*bar-do*)—that intermediate state between life and rebirth that we call death—is written in symbolic language.³

Govinda explains his use of the phrase ‘spontaneous liberation’ in the translation of the title:

Who are those that have ears to hear? Here we come to the decisive point in our judgement of the *Bardo Thödol*: the “hearing” that is meant is not mere reception through the outer ear, but spontaneous grasping through inner hearing, described in the *Surangama Sutra* as an intuitive hearing that transcends the ordinary senses. In this text, Mañjuśrī says to the Buddha:

We receive this doctrine of yours first through our hearing; but as soon as we are capable of fully grasping it, it becomes our own through a suprasensorial, intuitive hearing. This fact makes the awakening and perfection of such a supersensorial hearing of the greatest importance for every novice. The deeper the wish to gain *samādhi* is established in the mind of a pupil, the more surely can he gain it by means of this supersensorial organ of hearing.⁴

This is the spiritual background which makes intelligible the expression *Thödol* (*thos-grol*), which I have rendered as “spontaneous liberation,” and which literally means “hearing liberation.” It is a liberation through inner, intuitive hearing, through a spontaneous grasp of reality.

The understanding of the *Bardo Thödol* depends on one’s inner maturity and readiness. While it is, for those who are unprepared, a book sealed with the seven seals of silence, it begins to reveal itself

3 Lama Anagarika Govinda, *Buddhist Reflections*, (Motilal Banarsidass, Delhi, 2007), 130-131.

4 The footnote given: *The Surangama Sutra*, Charles Luk (Lu K’uan Yü), tr., (London: Rider & Co., 1966).

to those who have learned silence in the schools of meditation, in the practice of self-absorption. For the ordinary person there is no hearing when there is no sound. But for the spiritually awakened, the inner hearing is most lively in stillness, in the silence of all the other senses, and above all, of one's own thoughts.⁵

My explanation of the significance of selected chapters of the *Bardo Thödol* should be read in the spirit of the development of this 'inner, intuitive hearing', as some of the secrets of this 'book sealed with the seven seals of silence' are unravelled. There are various levels of interpretation of these 'seven seals' veiled by each cycle of seven days of the *Bardo Thödol*: the seven *chakras*,⁶ seven Rays, seven sheaths of expression to the human persona, the seven planes of perception and seven Initiation levels into the mysteries of being/non-being.

Govinda further states in the introductory foreword of Evans-Wentz's rendition of the *Bardo Thödol*:

It is a book which is sealed with the seven seals of silence,—not because its knowledge should be withheld from the uninitiated, but because its knowledge would be misunderstood, and, therefore, would tend to mislead and harm those who are unfitted to receive it. But the time has come to break the seals of silence; for the human race has come to the juncture where it must decide whether to be content with the subjugation of the material world, or to strive after the conquest of the spiritual world, by subjugating selfish desires and transcending self-imposed limitations.⁷

5 Lama Anagarika Govinda, *Buddhist Reflections*, 131-132.

6 The proper transliteration is *cakra*, but I use the term *chakra*, to denote how this important term is actually pronounced. The term *chakra* means a 'wheel, or disc', of any one of the major or minor energy vortices. The major ones stem from points in the spine. They are divided by means of spokes of energy into regions that have been likened to the petals of lotus blossoms in the etheric body of a person. These psychic centres allow the entry of light of differing qualities and potencies from one dimension of perception into another. Depending upon the energies (*prāṇas*) conveyed, so is seen the manifest quality or characteristic of that being. The major endocrine glands are their physical plane externalisations. The seven major centres are: the Base of Spine centre, the Sacral centre, the Solar Plexus centre, the Heart centre, the Throat centre, the Ājñā centre (the 'third eye') and the Head centre.

7 W.Y. Evans-Wentz, *The Tibetan Book of the Dead*, (Oxford University Press, 1960), liv.

In the process of unlocking these ‘seals of silence’ much formerly esoteric information can be provided concerning the theriomorphic deities, the functions of the Peaceful and Wrathful Deities, plus that dealing with liberation through knowing the Mind.⁸ To explain the context of the entire text would take a major treatise, thus only the key chapters shall be interpreted, allowing the information to be extrapolated into much of the *Bardo Thödol* by interested readers.⁹ The readers will thereby be led to a detailed comprehension of the nature of the practices concerning this higher yoga Tantra (*uttarayogatantra*). Consequently they should be able to utilise the information in their own meditation practices. Such comprehension will provide an important background for the teachings in volume 6 of this treatise, *Meditation and the Initiation Process*.

The *Bardo Thödol* was said to originally be penned by the great Tantric *yogin* Guru Rinpoche (Padmasambhava).¹⁰ He was invited by king Thrisong Detsun to come to Tibet because the great *dharma* teacher Śāntarakṣita could make little headway in converting the Tibetans to Buddhism in that early time. The main reason was the amassed adversity of the evil spirits and sorcerers in Tibet. Śāntarakṣita thus told the king ‘In order to subdue the savage spirits and demons of Tibet, there is a mantra adept called Padmasambhava, who is, at present, the most powerful in the world. I will send him an invitation, and Your Majesty should do the same’.¹¹ It is within the context of the subjugation of the ‘savage spirits and demons’ of Tibet (the embodied, externalised aberrant *saṃskāras* of the nation, plus the forces generated by the dark brotherhood), that the *Bardo Thödol* came to be written. The text was the expression of the specialised knowledge of Guru Rinpoche, of his own ‘spontaneous liberation’ through inner hearing.

8 The word mind is capitalised when it refers to the enlightened (abstract) Mind, and in lower case when referring to the unenlightened mundane mind.

9 They are chapter 4 of Gyurme Dorje’s translation, entitled ‘The Introduction to Awareness: Natural Liberation through Naked Perception’, and chapter 5 ‘The Spiritual Practice entitled Natural Liberation of Habitual Tendencies’. (Pages 35 and 59 of his book.)

10 It was given in the form of a Terma, a spiritual treasure, said to be hidden by his most important disciple, Yeshe Tsogyal, to be found by an inspired one (the fourteenth century treasure revealer, Karma Lingpa) at the time when people were ready for the teachings.

11 Dudjom Rinpoche, Jikdrel Yeshe Dorje, *The Nyingma School of Tibetan Buddhism*, (Wisdom, Boston, 1991), 513.

The respective images of the Wrathful Deities; the Ísvarī, Mātarah, and Piśācī, therefore fall within the context of what a *yogin* must accomplish internally if enlightenment is to proceed. Guru Rinpoche mastered this subject, as well as demonstrating external exorcisms of the demons in Tibet, so that Buddhism (the pure white *dharma*) could take hold there, and to supplant (convert) the Bön-pa religion of that time (circa 800 A.D.).

With respect to how much of the iconography of the indigenous religion of Tibet was incorporated into the *Bardo Thödol* teachings Govinda states:

Even though Padma-Sambhava did adopt into the Buddhist system some of the local Tibetan deities, to serve as guardians of the Faith, in doing so he did not give up one inch of Buddhist ground to the Bönpos, but acted in perfect conformity with the principles of orthodox Buddhism, wherein, in all Buddhist countries, the deities of the Earth and of space have always been honoured and propitiated, as being protectors of the *Dharma*.¹²

Govinda further states in this respect:

The Buddhist universe is alive through and through; it has no room for inert matter and mere mechanism. And what is more, the Buddhist is alert to all possibilities of existence and to all aspects of reality. If we have read of the fearful apparitions which surrounded the Buddha during the night preceding His Enlightenment, we need not search for Bön influences in relation to the animal-headed monsters that appear from the abyss of the subconscious mind at the hour of death, or in the visions of meditation. Wrathful deities, demons in animal form, and gods in demonical guise are as much at home in Indian as in Tibetan tradition.¹³

How the *Bardo Thödol* is ‘a key to the innermost recesses of the human mind, and a guide for initiates, and for those who are seeking the spiritual path of liberation’,¹⁴ can now be detailed. What shall be revealed

12 Evans-Wentz, *The Tibetan Book of the Dead*, lv.

13 Ibid., lvii.

14 Ibid., lix.

in this book will indeed prove to be a treasure trove of enlightening material for serious practitioners. They will discover the joys of what the visualisations in their meditations provide, as they successfully master their own *saṃskāras*. The associated deities of the *Bardo Thödol* will produce their vital revelatory experiences, if the meditations are carried through by means of the activity of the Heart's Mind, and not by means of the force of the personal will or imaginative desire. One must learn to *listen* to the Heart, and thereby *hear* the instructions from the guru within. Thus do all *śrāvakas* (pious disciples of the Buddha, 'hearers') begin to discern the real from the unreal, between what is the product of their imaginations and what appears in consciousness, freed from the image-making faculty of the mind. The various deities are not to be imagined to be real, they will simply appear at the appropriate time, and so act in their transformative and transmutative dance to signal that an appropriate stage has been achieved in the meditation. Then the development of the next stage is possible.

Sincerity in motive is the key. Earnest aspiration to transform base *saṃskāras* into enlightenment-attributes is the need. Steadfastness in applying the liberating aspects of the *buddhadharma* is the method. For others, the detail concerning the qualities associated with the various deities is a labour of mind, as the eye-doctrine develops its own belief system, its own accepted forms of images associated with the world of its accustomed ken.

There is an application of these Bardo teachings that would pave the way to the science of the future, if logically pursued with an awakened Mind. For the development of this future science the words of this treatise have also been written. Much can be understood concerning the natural world and its formation and evolution once the attributes and workings of the mind are properly comprehended. Many lines of enlightened investigation are therefore possible for future students of the *dharma* as these Bardo teachings come to be properly analysed and applied. Concerning the various Bardo states Govinda says:

At every moment something within us dies and something is reborn. The different *bardos*, therefore, represent different states of consciousness of our life: the state of waking consciousness, the normal consciousness of being born into our human world, known in Tibetan as the *skyes-nas bardo*; the state of dream-consciousness (*rmi-lam*

bar-do); the state of *dhyāna*, or trance-consciousness, in profound meditation (*bsam-gtan bar-do*); the state of the experiencing of death (*hchhi-kha bar-do*); the state of experiencing of Reality (*chhos-nyid bar-do*); the state of rebirth-consciousness (*srid-pa bar-do*).¹⁵

Of these states, the waking consciousness is well known to all that function via their sense-perceptors. It produces the sense-consciousnesses, as integrated by the sixth sense, the intellect. Many also experience the dream-consciousness, with its usual mix of distorted memories of what has been experienced when out of the body at night. Subliminal desire-thoughts and all drug-induced hallucinations can enter into consciousness in this Bardo, plus those that enter in from the enlightened planes of perception. The *Book of the Dead* is recited to firstly assist the deceased to recognise the bright lights of the deceased's sojourn that lead to the liberated domains. The experiencing of Reality is to be revealed via the primary or secondary¹⁶ Clear Lights in the Bardo of experiencing death (Chikhai Bardo, *hchhi-kha bar-do*) within the first week of being deceased.¹⁷ Either light, if recognised, brings the deceased to high attainment, akin to a *yogin's* liberation.

There are five types of Clear Light implied in the *Bardo Thödol*, as Lauf states:

In a Tibetan work about the clarification of all meanings of the bardo the dawning of the clear light from the centre of awareness is outlined in five stages:

In the first, one catches sight of it in its fivefold radiance like a visionary reflection; in the second it is like a moon; in the third like the sun; in the fourth it is like a dawning. These are the signs of the clear light, and then in the fifth stage it itself appears like the cloudless vault of heaven.¹⁸

15 Ibid., lx-lxi.

16 Evans-Wentz, *The Tibetan Book of the Dead*, 89-101.

17 Gyurme states that for the timing of the experience of the primary Clear Light, 'as most sūtras and tantras state that the period of unconsciousness [following the moment of death] may last for three and a half days, generally one should persevere for that length of time, in making this introduction to inner radiance'. Gyurme Dorje, *The Tibetan Book of the Dead*, 229.

18 Detlef Ingo Lauf, *Secret Doctrines of the Tibetan Books of the Dead*, (Shambhala,

In terms of the philosophy presented in this *Treatise on Mind* the first three of these five levels of the Clear Light relate symbolically to the three abstract mental subplanes. Here the sun and moon refer to relative levels of clarity of vision upon this domain of Mind. The fourth stage that is ‘like a dawning’ refers to the juncture between the abstract Mind and *śūnyatā*. The fifth stage, ‘like the cloudless vault of heaven’ can be equated with the *dharmakāya*. From this perspective the primary Clear Light refers to the integration of the fourth and fifth of these levels. The secondary Clear Light then refers to the three subplanes of the abstract Mind. The *śūnyatā-saṃsāra* nexus¹⁹ is where the primary and secondary Clear Lights meet.

The trance-like Bardo (*dhyāna*, *bsam-gtan bar-do*) relates to the experience obtained through the mental domain, where perceptions from the abstract Mind come to supersede those from the concrete mind. The term *dhyāna* means ‘concentration, a one pointed abiding in an unwavering state of mind’. It is a state of absorbed contemplation, of deep meditation and abstraction into the causal realms of the abstract Mind or higher, according to the abilities of the meditator.²⁰ The objective inevitably is to experience the lucid Clear-Mind state of enlightenment, of residence at the *śūnyatā-saṃsāra* nexus. In the mastery of *dhyāna* lies the key to the experiencing of Reality, the *Chönyid Bardo* (*chos-nyid bar-do*) and therefore controlling the entire rebirthing process. In this Bardo the forty-two Peaceful Deities are said to be experienced

Boston, 1989), 95. The source given is: *Bar-do'i spyi'i don thams-cad rnam-pa gsal-bar bsyed-pa dran-pa'i me-long*, Fol. 18a.

19 The place of interrelation between *saṃsāra* and *śūnyatā* wherein the *dharmakāya* finds its place of application in the meditation-Mind. This nexus can also be viewed as the *Śūnyatā Eye* at the heart of the Sambhogakāya Flower (*tathāgatagarba*), but it is also more than that, as it may be experienced directly when the Flower is no more. In fact the building of the bridge (*antaḥkaraṇa*) from mind to *dharmakāya* produces the death of the Sambhogakāya Flower, as once this bridge is built, that most subtle of forms (the flower) no longer serves a function. The interrelation between the *ālayavijñāna* and the *dharmakāya* via the *śūnyatā-saṃsāra* nexus is the great Seal (*mahā-mudrā*).

20 *Dhyāna* is one of the six *parāmitas* (great virtues) of perfection. There are said to be four types or levels of *dhyāna*. 1) Joy and pleasure obtained because of the relinquishing of desire and wrong thoughts. 2) Joy due to one-pointed concentration to produce clarity of thought. 3) Bliss due to relinquishing all forms of subtle emotions. 4) Obtainment of equanimity and pure lucid awareness, the Clear Mind.

for the next seven days, and the fifty-eight Wrathful Deities for the next seven days. Thus in these fourteen days the entire panoply of the *maṇḍala* of deities normally come and go. For a meditating *yogin* however the process is not that easy. These Deities are expressions of the trance Bardo, whereby the process of experiencing the death of any unruly *saṃskāra* becomes manifest. This activity is fostered by the meditator with the assistance of the energies of the Wrathful Deities. These *saṃskāras* are expressions of the theriomorphic entities, which need to be transformed into enlightenment-qualities. This takes considerable time, and often more than one lifetime is needed.

The cleansed *saṃskāras* are consequently birthed into a higher reality zone, where a new cycle of expression manifests the attributes of the Peaceful Deities as seen in the *Chönyid Bardo*. (The forces of one's own Heart centre—the guru within.) The rebirth Bardo then manifests, to bring one back into the waking consciousness. Upon awakening from this cycle the memory of what happened is enacted in a lucid dream-like state. The process happens again and again whilst transforming subtle *saṃskāras*, until eventually the livingness of the reality of the Clear Light of the Mind is obtained. The normal waking state is then illumined bright prescience, where the cycles of converting *saṃsāra* into *nirvāṇa* are completed.

If the deceased cannot accept the intensity of the bright lights of the liberated domains then the dull lights of *saṃsāra* appear. This process interrelates one with various states of perception, from the various hell states, to the effects of the mental emotions of people's thought life, as one dies to one experiential zone and enters another. This is symbolically undertaken in the twenty-first to the forty-ninth day in the rebirth Bardo (*srid-pa bar-do*). We see that effectively the sum of astral plane phenomena²¹ is incorporated here according to the directives of *karma*. The hope is then for the deceased to make the right choice in

21 The astral plane is explained on pages 137-146 in volume 4 of this treatise, and is the plane of perception where the deceased is normally found after the experience of the *chhos-nyid bar-do*. One can then speculate that the Yid-kyi lus mentioned by Lauf is but a Tibetan name for the astral body: 'The Yid-kyi lus is absolutely capable of experiencing the events of the bardo, as if it were equipped with all the corresponding senses for earthly life'. Lauf, *Secret Doctrines of the Tibetan Books of the Dead*, 96.

the rebirth Bardo which concerns the process of transition to any of the Six Realms. The forces of the *saṃskāras* generated in past lives lay the foundation for the direction of the individual's consciousness. This Bardo refers to the start of every new cycle of experience, rather than just being born out of a mother's womb. One can be born into any of the Six Realms or into the liberated domains. In its simplest connotation it concerns seeking out new experiences in an experiential zone to which one is newly born into.

This outline is a yogic interpretation of the process implied through the symbolic 49 days or stages that are effectively enacted when the *Bardo Thödol* is continually recited for the deceased. The deceased represents an embodied consciousness-stream that will wander to a better cyclic existence if the meaning of the words recited are appropriately understood and acted upon. The number 49 represents the 7 x 7 subdivisions of the sheaths of substance that one can experience and via which one incarnates,²² as synthesised by the seven *chakras*. The number also refers to the Rays and subrays delineating one's consciousness-states, thus the various permutations of the *saṃskāras* that must be transformed and inevitably converted into the Jina²³ wisdoms. (The five wisdoms must also eventually merge into a higher two that represents the function of the Ādi Buddha and his Consort.)

As one delves into the technicalities of the *Bardo Thödol* so then the significance of various numbers (2, 3, 4, 5, 7, 8, 10, 12) and some of their permutations, become quite meaningful. Much background information has been provided concerning these numbers in the former volumes of this *Treatise on Mind* and the earnest practitioner should refer to this foundational wealth to assist in understanding what the *Bardo Thödol* reveals.

22 Those sheaths are explained in volume 6 of this treatise, *Meditation and the Initiation Process*. They can be delineated as three *dharmakāya* levels; *ādi*, *anupādaka*, and *ātma*, then the mirror (*buddhi*, *śūnyatā*) which reflects *dharmakāya* into *saṃsāra*. *Saṃsāra* is represented by the mental plane, the astral zone of desire-emotions, and the dense physical plane.

23 *Jina* (Tib. *rgal ba*): 'Conquerer', an epithet of the Buddha, however it specifically refers to the five Dhyanī Buddhas.

Padmasambhava and the four cardinal directions

Investigating the significance of the Tantric life of Padmasambhava²⁴ would be a worthy study. However, this would be a lengthy disquisition in itself that would diverge us too far from the main theme of the *Bardo Thödol*. Revealing a small portion of the biographical detail surrounding him may however be of value to earnest students, who can then begin to research the deeper meaning of the import of his life for themselves. Consequently I shall focus upon the eight names of Guru Rinpoche, and the four cardinal directions veiled in the symbolism of his apparel as the King of Sahor.

I shall use my system of assigning positions of the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas, etc, to the directions of space, which sometimes may supplant the generally accepted assignments. In my system the direction *north* refers to that pertaining to the liberated realms, the *dharmakāya*. The direction *east* refers to the way inwards to the heart of liberated life (*sūnyatā*). The direction *south* refers to the dissemination of compassionate purpose to the little lives ensconced in *saṃsāra*. The direction *west* relates to the outward field of expression representing humanity, who must be brought to an enlightened stance by Bodhisattvic activity. These four directions represent the attitudes of an enlightened one tied to a fixed cross of resolute compassionate purpose.

When the intermediate positions of mutable enlightening activity are added it produces the eight armed cross of direction in space. These intermediate positions manifest as a mutable cross or swastika of energies that interrelate the various arms of the fixed cross in such a way that underlying compassionate purpose can be engendered as one moves from one form of activity to the next. The *northeast* arm of this mutable cross is characterised by the quality of *unity*. By 'unity' is meant that which unifies the forces of the enlightened one, and of the *maṇḍala* to which such a one belongs, so that they can be appropriately utilised to produce the most skilful and effective means to produce the objective.

²⁴ Guru Rinpoche, meaning the precious teacher, is the name given by the Tibetans to the founder of Lamaistic system in their country, Padmasambhava, the lotus born one.

The *southeast* direction directs that unified purpose into the field of *expression*. It is sown in the domains of *saṃsāra*, where hopefully the imparted ideas and energies produce fruit in enlightening response. The *southwest* direction produces the resultant gain in the form of *understanding* from those that worked with what was sown in the field of expression in the southeast. Right comprehension via the *northwest* then allows them to aspire upwards to liberation. Northwest signifies the response or gain of that comprehension as joy and *goodwill* demonstrated to all around as they become harbingers of the teachings of liberation. Such is the pattern of liberating activity found in all lists of four or eight, which abound in the *Bardo Thödol*, depending upon the level of interpretation one pursues.

The symbolic representations of all enlightened beings signify the status of their accomplishments and of the types of realisations they were Initiated into. Padmasambhava is no exception, and a wealth of information can be gleaned from the mythos surrounding him. After first describing some of Padmasambhava's more important attributes Lama Anagarika Govinda states:

The eight forms in which Padmasambhava is depicted are therefore not different incarnations, as popularly believed, but the representations of his eight main initiations, in each of which he assumed a new personality, symbolized by a new name (as gained in higher forms of initiation), and a form of appearance corresponding to that name. Because initiation is equivalent to entering a new life, it is a form of rebirth.

In his most important and characteristic form Guru Padmasambhava appears in the royal robes of the king of Zahor, but holding the insignia of spiritual realization.²⁵

The meaning of these insignias are important and deserve deeper analysis. They relate to the qualities of expression of the four cardinal directions, in which they indirectly symbolise attributes of the Dhyāni Buddhas. Govinda also states that:

Over the head of Padmasambhava often appears the red Dhyani-Buddha Amitabha, the Buddha of Infinite Light. He is the spiritual

²⁵ Govinda, Lama Anagarika, *Insights of a Himalayan Pilgrim*, (Dharma Publishing, California, 1991), 71-73.

source of Padmasambhava, who thus may be called an embodied ray of Amitābha on the earthly plane.²⁶

This infers that Guru Rinpoche, in the form of the king of Sahor, symbolises the attributes of the *nirmāṇakāya* of Amitābha. Of the three bodies (*trikāya*) of a Buddha the highest is the *dharmakāya*, the ultimate nature, body of Truth, the primordial, eternally self-existing essentiality of *bodhi* (enlightenment). Next is the *sambhogakāya*, the ‘bliss body’ of sublime vision of a Buddha or great Bodhisattva found upon the abstract domain of the Mind. It is the ecstatic transformation body of the form of the great ones depicted in Buddhist art. Finally we have the *nirmāṇakāya*, the transformation body, the emanation (form) body of a Buddha. It is the outer or phenomenal appearance, the tangible something that can be contacted on the realms of illusion, the incarnation body. With respect to Padmasambhava the three bodies of a Buddha are provided in the dedicatory prayer of part one of the main section of the *Bardo Thödol*:

I bow down to the spiritual teachers, [embodiment of] the Three Buddha-bodies:

To the Buddha-body of Reality, Infinite Light, Amitābha;

To the Buddha-body of Perfect Resource, the Peaceful and Wrathful Lotus Deities;

And to the Buddha-body of Emanation, Padmākara, protector of beings.²⁷

The ‘Lotus Deities’ relate to the emblem of Amitābha, which is the lotus. It signifies the powers of the *chakras*, embodied by the various deities that denote the attributes of these psychic centres. They can thus be peaceful or wrathful, depending upon the nature of the *saṃskāra* that they convey. The term Padmasambhava means ‘the lotus born one’, thus

²⁶ Ibid, 76.

²⁷ Gyurme Dorje, *The Tibetan Book of the Dead*, 225. Note that the term Padmākara is another name for Padmasambhava. Thurman’s rendering is: O Amitābha, boundless light of the Truth Body, O mild and fierce Beatific Body Lotus Deities, O Padma Sambhava, incarnate savior of beings—I bow to the Three Bodies in the Spiritual Mentors! (Robert A.F. Thurman, *The Tibetan Book of the Dead: Liberation through understanding in the Between*, Bantam Books, New York, 1994, 117.)

he can be considered one of these ‘Deities’. The other emblems for the *maṇḍala* of the Dhyāni Buddhas (Jinas) are the eight-spoked wheel of the *dharma* for Vairocana and his Dharmadhātu Wisdom, who occupies the central position of the *maṇḍala*. Akṣobhya occupying the eastern position, holds the *vajra*, with its five Rays embodying the immutable power of the *maṇḍala* of the Dhyāni Buddhas. Amitābha possesses the Discriminating Inner Vision and his direction in the *maṇḍala* is west. Ratnasambhava, of the southern direction manifests the Equalising Wisdom and holds the adamantine jewel, the diamond-mind or wish fulfilling gem, the intrinsic energy field of enlightenment, and which is the *nāḍī* system from which the *chakras* stem. Finally we have Amoghasiddhi and his All-Accomplishing Wisdom, whose emblem is the *viśvavajra*, which extends the power of the *vajra* in all directions and localities of space.²⁸

The western direction that Amitābha embodies in the *maṇḍala* of the Dhyāni Buddhas rules the realm of the mind/Mind, specifically everything associated with the *ālayavijñāna* (wherein resides the Sambhogakāya Flower²⁹). He therefore embodies the essence of whatever consciousness signifies, and the way of its transmutation into the *dharmakāya*. Residing in the Clear Light of Mind and by utilising its Fires, Padmasambhava’s miraculous supramundane *siddhis* (psychic powers³⁰) were evoked through the complete subjugation of the Watery disposition that qualify most humans. The *siddhis* are gained when all attributes and aspects of desire-mind (*kāma-manas*), its illusions, demons, attachments and phantasms can be subdued, conquered, and transmuted into enlightened principles.

Being an attribute of the *padma* family, the entire *Bardo Thödol*

28 These Wisdoms and emblems are taken from the *maṇḍala* on the Dhyāni Buddhas on page 121 of Govinda’s *Foundation of Tibetan Mysticism*.

29 The Sambhogakāya Flower was explained in detail in volume 3 of this treatise, *The Buddha-Womb and the Way to Liberation*. It is an alternate name for the *tathāgatagarbha*, the reincarnating principle, in the form of a *chakra* (a flower) existing upon the domain of the abstract Mind.

30 *Siddhi*: psychic powers (spiritual accomplishments) developed through yogic practices. They may be supramundane (attained by a Buddha) or ‘common’ (attained by an ordinary *yogin*). They can be of the left or right hand variety, and are of many types. We distinguish between the lower *siddhi*, derived from the *chakras* below the diaphragm, and the higher *siddhi*, the powers associated with the evocation of the qualities of the Heart centre, coupled with the *chakras* above the diaphragm.

is set to detail the powers attributed to the *chakras*. This subject is intimately linked to the *prāṇas*³¹ circulating through them. When viewed in terms of the *skandhas*³² incorporated by means of consciousness via sense-contact with the phenomenal universe we then have the appearance of *saṃskāras*. This is the basis to comprehending the theriomorphic, Wrathful and Peaceful Deities of the *Bardo Thödol*. They are the (mind-born) personifications of the *saṃskāras* incorporated by the *nāḍīs* as *prāṇas* course through them. They are modified or converted by means of conscious volitions via any of the *chakras*. The process of conversion from gross *saṃskāras* (constituting base desire-mind attributes) to the refinement pertaining to enlightened attributes then constitute the nature of the path signified by the various coloured lights depicted in the text of the *Bardo Thödol*. The quality of the *saṃskāra* involved determines the nature of the colour of the *prāṇa* observed.

Grosser *saṃskāras* are converted in the *chakras* below the diaphragm, where we have the activity of the theriomorphic deities. The conversion zones of transference (Initiation) from a lesser consciousness state to a more exalted level is enacted by the custodians of transference, the Wrathful Deities, who embody the forces pertaining to the major *chakras*. The Peaceful Deities represent the enlightened outcomes in the *chakras* above the diaphragm. This outline of the yogic process depicted in the *Bardo Thödol* shall be detailed later in this book.

31 *Prāṇa*: derived from the Sanskrit roots *pra*, meaning ‘forth’, and *na*, meaning ‘to breathe, move, live’. It is a ‘wind’, a current of psychosomatic energy, of which there are five types activating the subtle body. It is the ‘breath of life’, the energy drawn to the physical world from the etheric aspect of all phenomenal life, and is the sum total of the vital energy composing a body, be it human, planetary, or solar. The process of liberation from bondage to the dense form is directly concerned with the transmutation and right projection of the grossest forms of *prāṇa* in the body.

32 *Skandha*: the bundles or groups of attributes that together constitute the human personality and are responsible for the evolution of consciousness. Exoterically, there are five such groupings (attributes of consciousness): 1. Form, or body, the sense organs, sense objects and interrelationships (*rūpa*), 2. Perception or sensation, feelings and emotions (*vedanā*), 3. Aggregates of action, or the motives to thus act (*saṃskāra*), 4. The faculty of discrimination (*saṃjñā*), 5. Revelatory knowledge (*viññāna*).

For an explanation of the view of the *shandhas* utilised in this series see volume 1, chapter 2 where the esoteric account is provided. There they are relegated more purely to considerations of form (*rūpa*) and of the mental substance that incorporates the body of expression of the material world

With respect to Padmasambhava we must conceive a *maṇḍala* of the Dhyaṇi Buddhas that has Amitābha as the central figure. This *maṇḍala* is focussed upon the dissemination of the Fiery energy of Mind into manifestation. Vairocana and his Dharmadhātu Wisdom occupies the northern position. One then meditates with vertical alignment upwards to the 1,000 petalled lotus, to awaken the full potency of its petals. Only when the sum total of these petals are awakened can the reception and stabilisation of *dharmakāya* manifest. Akṣobhya and the Mirror-like Wisdom in the eastern direction signify the qualities related to the awakening of the Heart centre — where pacified and transformed *saṃskāras* from below the diaphragm are received into the Void Elements of the liberated Mind. It is therefore the place where generation of the Peaceful Deities occur.

Amoghasiddhi manifests the All-Accomplishing Wisdom in the southern direction. His ‘gesture of fearlessness’ helps to dispel the phantasms and to transform the most ferocious noxious and malevolent forces lurking in the depths of *saṃsāric* life.

Ratnasambhava works in the western direction to harmonise human emotional attributes in accord with the modifications of the enlightened Mind (the Equalising Wisdom) so that the patterns of liberation manifest. These patterns are the pathways that inspire people to walk the way of the Heart.

The *maṇḍala* with Amitābha at the centre, or with Padmasambhava substituting for Amitābha (being his *nirmāṇakāya*), represents the locality of the *saṃsāra-śūnyatā* nexus, the place of ‘explosion’ (if one may so term the process) of *dharmakāya* into *saṃsāra*, and ‘implosion’ of the attributes of *saṃsāra* into the Void. All happens as a consequence of being able to express the rarefied Fires of cosmos. Literally from this perspective Mind is all there is, wherein *saṃsāra* becomes the vehicle of expression for the manifestation of *dharmakāya*. To obtain this view the obscurations of mind must be converted to Mind by means of the transformation and transmutation process indicated in the *Bardo Thödol*. Here lies the potency of the realisation of rDzogs-chen, the Great Perfection,³³ and of the Yogācāra-Mādhyaṃika view of the Nyingma.

33 Or more specifically the Dharmakāya Way, explained in this *Treatise on Mind*.

The western direction

Having analysed the central figure of the *maṇḍala* associated with Padmasambhava as king of Sahor we can now look to the detail of its other major aspects. The *first* of the insignia of spiritual realisation to be considered is the *khaṭvāṅga*. The use of the *khaṭvāṅga* represents the expression of the *western* direction of outwards to serve humanity. It therefore summarises the attributes of the Bodhisattva path, of the means of transforming ‘greed, hatred and ignorance’ into enlightened attributes.

The *khatvanga*, a staff, surmounted by a double-vajra (*vishvavajra*), the symbol of universality and the “Wisdom that Accomplishes All Works”; a vessel containing the elixir of immortality (Skt. *amrita-kalasha*); and two human heads and a skull, symbolizing greed, hatred, and ignorance, which have been overcome by the knowledge of the Three Worlds and the Three Times, symbolized by a flaming trident (*trishula*). The staff itself represents the *sushumna* or the central current of psychic energy, which combines the solar and lunar forces (*pingala* and *ida*, respectively) in one mighty uprush of conscious realization. Thus, all these symbols constitute various aspects of insight into the nature of reality.³⁴

The staff is surmounted by seven symbolic representations. We first come across the trinity of:

- a. The *viśvavajra*, the symbol of universality and of immutable power over all elements and forces in the material domain. It governs the potency of the united wisdoms of the Dhyāni Buddhas, and of all the attributes of their full *maṇḍala* of expression. It represents the demonstration of the first Ray energy of the Will through yogic prowess projected to the four directions in space to awaken its potency.
- b. A *vessel* containing the elixir of immortality. This elixir is the ambrosia of *bodhicitta*, the energy of Love-Wisdom that confers immortality to all who can partake of this intoxicating enlightening and liberating liquor.

34 Govinda, *Insights of a Himalayan Pilgrim*, 73.

- c. A *flowing scarf* (not mentioned by Govinda) symbolising the free-flowing spaciousness of Mind, and which technically envelopes the vessel of immortality. In the nature of the energy flow from the *viśvavajra*, the third Ray of Mathematically Exact Activity is represented, producing the activity of the awakened Mind.

Above this trinity are three heads surmounted by a flaming trident.³⁵ The heads consist of a normal face, a distressed one, and a skull. The normal face symbolises happy ignorance, the state into which one is born. Thus it refers to the foundational quality or Earthy Element that one must learn to overcome. The distressed face refers to the consequence of attachment to phenomena, the expression of the quality denoted as ‘speech’, thus to the sum of the Watery Element that drives our passions, avarice and all emotional attributes. The skull refers to the death-like nature of the wheel of *saṃsāra*, thus to the fact of being in corruptible physical forms that eventually sicken and die. Hatred is exemplified here because it is that passion that most produces aggressive attitudes and the wars that cause so many deaths.³⁶

Ignorance, hatred, and greed are ‘the three poisons’ that stand at the centre in depictions of the *saṃsāric* Wheel of Life (and its Six Realms). They manifest in the form of a *red cock* (greed, passionate desire and attachment to things desired), a *green snake* (for all forms of aversion, irritation, separateness and hatred), and a *black hog* (symbolising the darkness of ignorance and of all forms of blindness). They are the consciousness-attributes to be mastered and transmuted by means of the power of the *khaṭvāṅga* upon which they rest. We thus have:

- a. The extreme of hatred that develops when the Fires of mind manifest separative qualities. This quality is symbolised by

35 A trident is represented in the case of a male holding the *khaṭvāṅga*, as it represents his female consort. If a *yoginī* holds it then it is surmounted by a *vajra*. The interrelation then symbolises the non-dual fusion of male and female—of compassion (method) and wisdom, emptiness and bliss.

36 I shall not here deal with other aspects of the symbolism of these heads, such as their colours (usually red, green and white) or of the symbolism of the *khaṭvāṅga* to Tantras such as the Chakrasamvara. Such symbolism is masterly explained in Robert Beer’s book *The Encyclopedia of Tibetan Symbols and Motifs*, (Shambhala, Boston, 1999). His work complements well my account.

the skull, as the mind is the ruler of the death-like *saṃskāras* developed by the individual. Eventually a ‘hatred’ or aversion for the conditions of *saṃsāra* develop, propelling the individual upon the yogic path to mastery over all the attributes of form. The *yogin* and *yoginī* therefore frequent the charnel grounds of their meditative lives to dance upon the corpses of the deceased *saṃskāras* that become the victims on the road to liberation.

- b. Greed, exemplifying the clinginess of the Watery desire principle, is the main energy that ties one to the sum of *saṃsāric* allurements, empowering the potency and longevity of the cycles of pain and suffering and is depicted as the distraught face. This face also symbolises the eventual realisation of the practitioner that all of the base *saṃskāras* that were developed in this and in previous lives must be transformed and transmuted into enlightenment principles. The distraught face also manifests as a realisation of the consequences of the *karma* that must be worked off upon the path.
- c. Lack of knowledge of the true nature of the form, of phenomena (the Earthy principle), epitomises the extent of one’s ignorance, and represents the normal head. It is the conditioning that most people find themselves in. Ignorance has a special place in the dialectic dissertations of Buddhists. It is the foundational basis to the twelve links of Dependent Origination (*pratītyasamutpāda*), thus of the entire wheel of birth and death.

The practitioner must therefore strive to overcome all forms of ignorance by learning the main attributes of the *dharma*, and then ardently practice the yogic precepts and meditation instructions so that enlightenment ensues.

Ignorance is relative to where one stands upon the ladder of attainment, and is never really mastered in its entirety. Even enlightened ones have forms of ignorance to master relative to the staggering immensity of the multidimensional cosmos they are newly born into, though they have mastered all forms of knowledge states concerning our earthy life.

The Fiery Element must be developed upon the path to liberation to fully master the vicissitudes of all the attachments to life so that the

wheel of *saṃsāra* can eventually be surmounted. It is the consequence of developing the mind to comprehend the nature of it all. Body, speech and mind are thereby viewed in terms of the transformations that eventually lead to enlightenment.

The *flaming trident* symbolises the function of the abstract Mind, the Clear Light, after the attributes of the three heads on the *khaṭvāṅga* have been transformed into the *saṃskāras* of enlightenment. The prongs of the trident then represent the Fiery expressions of the combined *idā*, *piṅgalā* and *suśumṇā nāḍīs*, and every associated ramification. Eventually they produce the three bodies of a Buddha, the *dharmakāya*, *sambhogakāya*, and *nirmāṇakāya*.

The symbolism of the *khaṭvāṅga* can also relate to the three major petals of the Sambhogakāya Flower existing upon the abstract levels of the mental plane. The *viśvavajra*, the flowing ribbon and cup of *amṛta* represent attributes of the three Knowledge petals of the Flower, where the attributes of mind that were developed are contained. They must eventually be transformed into the qualities of the Mind (the Wisdoms of the five Jinas) that inevitably transcend the ability of containment by this form. Much spiritual power must be used to transform the five sense-consciousnesses via knowledgeable pursuits, thus the need for the use of the *viśvavajra* at this level of development.

The three heads represent the development of the compassionate aspects (*bodhicitta*) of human livingness, thus the qualities of the attributes of consciousness that are stored in the Love-Wisdom triad of petals. Ultimately these petals are responsible for transmuting the basic qualities of the three heads into their enlightened aspects. This process manifests through selective rebirths of the sequence of personal-I's and the rightful overshadowing of each 'I' so that *saṃskāras* are eventually transmuted.

The *three prongs* of the trident represent the Sacrifice triad of petals because they indicate the high point of attainment of the *khaṭvāṅga*. The abstracted attributes of the *idā*, *piṅgalā* and *suśumṇā nāḍīs* are stored in these petals. When the *prāṇas* of this triad are added to the two other triads, then we have the nine qualities symbolising the functions of the nine major petals of the Sambhogakāya Flower. All aspects of the Flower must be abstracted into their most rarefied expression and projected towards the *dharmakāya* realisation.

The major tiers of the Head lotus (*sahasrāra padma*) similarly incorporate the *prāṇas* of the conscious volition of a personality via the activity of the Ājñā, Throat and Heart centres. (The *prāṇas* are processed in the Head lotus before being directed to the Sambhogakāya Flower.) The rectified and transformed *prāṇas* of the three poisons are directed to the Head lotus by these major *chakras*. *Ignorance* is transformed into revelatory knowledge with the assistance of the combined Head and Ājñā centres. (These two centres overlap and are esoterically viewed as a unity.) *Hatred* is transformed into acceptance and comprehension of underlying causes, or else to meditative realisation of how to affect beneficent change, with the assistance of the Throat centre. (This centre deals with all *manasic*³⁷ *prāṇas* in the body.) *Greed* is transformed with the assistance of the Heart centre focussed upon the centres below the diaphragm. The Heart centre works to convert all self-centred based emotions into egoless attributes of compassion. All selfish tendencies to amass things for oneself must be converted into selfless service to others. The process of the conversion of all mental-emotional *prāṇas* is the work of the dual Splenic centres via their interrelation with the Solar Plexus and some of the minor *chakras* below the diaphragm.

If we look to the overall symbolism of the *khatvāṅga* then we find seven major components, which relate to the seven Ray aspects governing all life. These seven aspects relate to a *western* orientation of outwards to the field of service, the major life orientation for the Bodhisattva.

1. The *viśvavajra* represents the first Ray of Will or Power, which expresses the combined power of the wisdoms of the five Dhyaṇi Buddhas. All *saṃsāric* allurements must be mastered and converted to wisdom-attributes by means of the will-of-love if these wisdoms are to be obtained.
2. The *vessel of amṛta* containing the ‘nectar of immortality’, which represents the function of the second Ray of Love-Wisdom, conveying enlightenment upon all who can sup this ambrosial energy.
3. The two *strands of the scarf* represent the qualities of the third Ray of Mathematically Exact Activity. They move this way and that (via the *idā* or *piṅgalā* streams) according to the way the winds of

37 *Manas*: (from the Sanskrit root *man*, ‘to think’) is literally the domain of the mind.

enlightenment (*buddhi*) flow, and to the perceived need in the material domain. Therefore this scarf is seen to manifest a dual function, which also symbolises the mode of the manifestation of mind/Mind.

There is also an implicit septenate in these three, with the four outer prongs of the *viśvavajra* representing the powers needed to process and overcome the afflictions of the personality quaternary and to transform them into enlightenment principles. This quaternary constitutes the dense form, the etheric substratum containing the *nāḍīs*, the emotional body, and the empirical mind. The vessel of *amṛta* symbolises the abstract Mind wherein enlightened consciousness resides, and which concurs immortality when all of its attributes are fully expressed. (Here it is an extension of the central prong of the *vajra*.) From this perspective the two strands of the scarf signify the *iḍā* and *piṅgalā nāḍīs* gathering *prāṇas* in the vicissitudes of *saṃsāra*.

4. The *trident* symbolises the qualities of the fourth Ray of Beautifying Harmony overcoming Conflict, which is a mirror reflecting the qualities of the triune abstracted universe into the three concreted realms, and *vice versa*. The long prong and handle of the trident integrates all of the component parts of the *khaṭvāṅga* into a unity, similar to the fourth Ray, which interrelates the three higher to the three lower Rays. The mechanism of the prongs either reflect divinity into the form, or project power from the form to conquer attributes of manifest space. The fourth Ray, or middle principle, works similarly with respect to receiving the gain from *saṃsāric* involvement, or to project into *saṃsāra* the attributes of divinity. The role of Ratnasambhava's Equalising Wisdom for this western direction is exemplified here.
5. The *manasic* overtones of the head relating to *hatred* is an expression of the fifth Ray of Scientific Reasoning. Hatred is an extreme version of the separative, dissecting nature of the analytical use of the mind, when coupled with strong emotion.
6. The head relating to *greed/desire* refers to the sixth Ray of Devotion, which is a refined form of desire, where the focus is for things divine or inspirational in nature.

7. The skull relates to the seventh Ray of Ceremonial Cyclic Activity which governs all of the cycles associated with the material world. This symbolises repeated incarnations of birth and death.

All of these attributes are conveyed to the personal-I (here interpreted at the level of the *nirmāṇakāya* of Padmasambhava) by means of the shaft of the staff, representing the *antaḥkaraṇa*, the consciousness-link between the 'I' and the Sambhogakāya Flower. They therefore represent the sum of the manifesting divinity that is mastered by the accomplished *yogin*. They are his prowess, the mechanism and qualities possessed to help humanity in the manner that this western position implicates.

The eastern direction

The *eastern* direction of inwards toward the Heart of Life is represented in the skull-bowl (*kapāla*):

The skull-bowl (*kapāla*), in which the vessel with the elixir of immortality is placed, rests in the left hand of the Guru, because the knowledge or conscious experience of death (as gained in the higher forms of initiation) leads to the realization of immortality, to the experience of the Greater Life. The elixir of immortality is the attribute of Amitayus, the Buddha of Infinite Life, the Sambhogakaya reflex of the Dhyani-Buddha Amitabha.³⁸

The skull bowl is held in the left hand, its position is below the Heart centre and symbolises the transmuted Watery qualities (of desire, lust, etc.) of the Solar Plexus centre (*maṇipūra chakra*) contained as an offering to the Heart of Life. The *amṛta* (elixir of immortality) is the fusion of all transmuted *prāṇas* of the Inner Round grouping of *chakras* synthesised by the Solar Plexus centre and integrated by *bodhicitta* from the Heart. It necessitates deep inner introspection to accomplish the translation of the *prāṇas* from the Solar Plexus centre so that they can be accommodated by the Heart centre. This is the basis for the expression of the *siddhis* developed by accomplished ones. The inward

38 Govinda, *Insights of a Himalayan Pilgrim*, 73.

meditation concerns dedicatory offerings of all awakened *siddhas*³⁹ to serve all sentient beings. Every form of transience (symbolised by the skull bowl) must be converted into the accomplishment of this elixir of immortality as an offering for all to drink its essence. This is the way of the Heart, the boundless expanse of the Waters of Love.

The southern direction

The symbolism of the *southern* direction (downward towards the little lives that constitute the body of manifestation), concerns controlling the entire field of *saṃsāra* wherein the lives reside. The mechanism of control is the *vajra* in the guru's right hand that is raised in 'the gesture of fearlessness and blessing'. Govinda describes the *vajra* as:

the sceptre of spiritual power, the means through which wisdom is put into action. It may also be displayed in a threatening attitude, the hand above the right knee, in the act of subduing evil forces. In a devotional Tibetan text Padmasambhava is described in the following words:

Being the end of confusion and the beginning of realization,
He wears the royal robes of the Three Vehicles (of liberation),
He holds the Vajra of Skillful Means in his right hand
And in his left the Skull-bowl of Wisdom with the Elixir
of Life.
He cuts off the heads of hatred, greed, and ignorance
And carries them like ornaments on his trident.⁴⁰

This gesture represents the projection of the spiritual power that will subjugate the demons and the forces of the dark brotherhood that control much of the material domain. It also represents the potency needed to subdue all of one's materialistic incentives, to overcome the allurements of attachment to the world of material plane living. The potency is a veiled form of the wisdoms of the Dhyāni Buddhas. Therefore it represents the Guru's ability to wield control over the externalised form of *karma*, whilst the bowl of *amṛta* represents the ability to control the *karma* of the internalised *saṃskāras*. Together they make him the

39 Accomplished *yogins* that have awakened *siddhis*, such as that of psychic heat.

40 Govinda, *Insights of a Himalayan Pilgrim*, 73-75. Govinda does not provide his source.

all-conquering Lord of Nature and the denizens inhabiting the *lokas*⁴¹ of all manifest life. He is a Buddha for the entire material domain, as all of its forces and potencies come under his control.

The northern direction

Finally, we have the symbolism of the *northern* direction of upward towards Life supernal as symbolised by the insignia on his hat.

His hat (known as the “lotus cap”) is adorned with the symbols of the crescent moon, the sun-disk, and a small flame-like protuberance, which signifies the union of lunar and solar forces (Tib. *thig-le*), the realization of the Dharmadhatu wisdom. The hat is surmounted by a vajra and an eagle’s feather. The latter indicates the Guru’s soaring mind, penetrating the highest realms of reality.⁴²

As this cap adorns the head, signifying the Head lotus (*sahasrāra padma*), it expresses the direction north to the highest realisations. The crescent moon refers to the energies of the *iḍā nāḍī*, which are lunar (astral) in nature when compared to those of the *piṅgalā nāḍī*, which are radiantly luminescent (solar) in constitution. By ‘lunar’ is meant that which shines by reflected light, and is a satellite to the greater luminary. Here the ‘satellite’ is the personality and the greater luminary is the Sambhogakāya Flower. The Fires of mind are kindled in the personal-I residing in *saṃsāra* via the development of the sense-consciousness. This awakens the *iḍā* flow, however the supernal liberating light of the Sambhogakāya Flower directs the overall *karma* and generates the flashes of illumination that produce enlightenment. The light from this Flower consequently shines upon the personality to direct its purpose. The solar forces are those whereby consciousness develops compassionate attributes to awaken the potency of the Heart centre and eventually the experience of *śūnyatā*.

The ‘small flame-like protuberance’ refers to the qualities of the *suśumṇā nāḍī*, which grows into a fierce incandescence when fully awakened. The Head lotus absorbs and processes all *prāṇas* associated

41 Planes of perception.

42 Govinda, *Insights of a Himalayan Pilgrim*, 75.

with these *nāḍīs*, and will eventually transform them into the highest enlightenment-attributes, synonymous with the Dharmadhātu Wisdom of Vairocana once an aspirant is rightly focussed and can utilise the higher wills. We know the *vajra* to symbolise the immutable power of the Dhyanī Buddhas. The eagle is able to soar high in the sky and with an extremely keen vision spot the minutest activity in the valley below, which symbolises the qualities of the All-seeing Eye, the Ājñā centre.

All told this cap is a composite of seven symbols that express the potencies of the seven *chakras* in the body, the *prāṇas* of which are absorbed into the 1,000 petalled lotus. For this reason they sit on Guru Rinpoche's head, where the Head centre is also situated.

1. The lotus cap—the Base of Spine centre, which supports all of the other *chakras*, the insignia of which are incorporated in this cap.
2. The cap is adorned with three, four or five small circles, and sometimes a *viśvavajra*. The three circles symbolise the three wish-fulfilling gems and their liberated qualities. They flow up the three major *nāḍīs* from the Sacral centre once the three poisons are converted. If four circles then they symbolise the four main Elements that constitute the *saṃskāras* that fulfil people's earthly wishes. Five circles, or the *viśvavajra*, represent the wisdoms of the Jinas, the transmuted correspondences of the sense-consciousness. The entire process of the retrieval of the associated *saṃskāras* and their eventual conversion find their repository in the various petals of the Head lotus.
3. The crescent moon symbolises the lunar forces in the body. They are the *prāṇas* generated below the diaphragm and synthesised by the Solar Plexus centre. These *prāṇas* are incorporated as the general *idā* stream.
4. The solar disc symbolises the solar forces in the body, which pertain to the Heart centre. These *prāṇas* represent the *pingalā* stream.
5. The flame-like protuberance, which Govinda says represents 'the union of solar and lunar forces', relates to the Throat centre, which regulates the Fiery Element, the forces of the mind, thus of the way that these *prāṇas* come to be incorporated into the Head lotus. Eventually the process associated with the liberation of *kuṇḍalinī* is also generated by the use of this centre.

6. The eagle's feather represents the All-seeing Eye, the Ājñā centre, which allows one to soar high in spiritual vision, to purvey the sum of the spiritual and *saṃsāric* landscape at need.
7. The *vajra*, with its prongs focussed northward, represents the immutable spiritual power of the fully awakened Head centre.

The complete body of Guru Rinpoche with all of its adornments also needs mention as it symbolises the central position of the *maṇḍala*, the *dharmakāya* from which all stems. The significance of the quote Govinda extracted from a devotional text: 'Being the end of confusion and the beginning of realization, He wears the royal robes of the Three Vehicles (of liberation)' may be illustrated. These three vehicles of liberation are the *nirmāṇakāya*, *sambhogakāya* and *dharmakāya* of a Buddha.

The eight appearances of Guru Rinpoche

The eight directions of space will be utilised to explain these appearances to derive a far greater meaning from them. It is useful to study these qualities because it provides a better understanding as to the nature of Tantric philosophy and the way that all aspects of a great One can be utilised to convey important esoteric truths. The eight appearances that are depicted around the central figure of Padmasambhava as the king of Sahor are:

1. Padma Jungnay (*Tib. Padma-'byung-gnas*, "the Lotus-born," Skt. Padmasambhava) in his Vajrasattvic form, dark-blue, embraced by his *Prajna*, the embodiment of his Wisdom (generally light-blue, sometimes white), because—according to his symbolical biography—Padmasambhava took on the aspect of *Vajradhara* when he was initiated into the doctrine of the Great Perfection (*Tib. rDzogs-chen*), in which the indestructible and transparent diamond-nature of our innermost being is realized.⁴³

The direction indicated here is *north* (upward to the domains of liberation), because here we have the doctrine of The Great Perfection

⁴³ Ibid., 77.

exemplified, bringing us to the highest realisations. Vajrasattva (white in colour) is the *sambhogakāya* of the Ādi (primordial) Buddha (known as Samantabhadra in the *Bardo Thödol*). He holds the *vajra* (signifying the wisdom of the five Jinas) in his right hand at his Heart centre (the seat of *sūnyatā*) and a bell (*ghanta*, signifying the natural emptiness of the Mind) with his left hand supported at his hip (signifying mastery of the lower centres by means of the clarifying sound). As such the *maṇḍala* of Peaceful and Wrathful Deities of the *Bardo Thödol* are said to be emanations of his Heart (the Peaceful Deities), and of his Mind (the Wrathful Deities). The name Vajrasattva can be translated as the vehicle of the unexcelled pristine Diamond-Mind (when the *vajra* is viewed as a diamond-sceptre).

2. Guru Shakya Sengge (Tib. *Shakya-seng-ge*, “The Lion of the Shakya Clan”). In this form Padmasambhava is identified with Shakyamuni, the historical Buddha, thus indicating Padmasambhava’s initiation into the teachings of the earliest schools of Buddhism, as represented by the Small Vehicle (Hinayana).⁴⁴

Shakya-Seng-ge refers to the direction *south* (downward to the material domains), because here the most basic expression of the *buddhadharma* is established, the Hīnayāna vehicle. This vehicle laid the foundation of the qualities to be developed and the later development of the Bodhisattva path espoused by the Mahāyānists. Also Gautama gave out the foundational teachings (the *mūlādhāra chakra* level) upon which all later Buddhist development was based. From this southern direction one learns to travel upwards to liberation by mastering *saṃsāra*.

3. Guru Padmasambhava as a *bhikṣu* or pandit of the Great Vehicle, indicating his initiation into the teachings of the Mahayana School and his entering upon the Bodhisattva Path.⁴⁵

A *bhikṣu* of the Mahāyāna refers to the direction *west* (outward to the field of service that represents humanity), because here the Bodhisattva path is exemplified. The ideal being to serve all sentient

⁴⁴ Govinda, *Insights of a Himalayan Pilgrim*, 77

⁴⁵ Ibid. 77-78.

beings and humanity in general, by bringing them to liberation, before the Bodhisattva takes the final step of *parinirvāṇa*.

4. Guru Lodan Chogsed (Tib. *Blo-ldan mchog-sred*), the “Guru Possessing Wisdom and the Highest Aspirations.” He appears here in kingly robes, his right hand raised with a *damaru*, from which the eternal sound (*shabda*) of the Dharma rhythmically emerges and pervades the universe. The left hand holds a skull-bowl brimming with the elixir of immortality.⁴⁶

Guru Lodan Chogsed embodies the direction *east* (inward to the heart of life), because the way to the liberating heart of all that is concerns the development of wisdom, realised through ‘the highest aspirations’. The eternal sound of the *dharma* perpetually emanates from the Heart centre. This sound can be considered to be the word of the liberation of consciousness—Om. Technically, the drum (*damaru*) beats out the rhythm 72 times per minute, similar to the pulsing of the blood in the veins.

5. Guru Padma Gyalpo (Tib. *Padma-rgyal-po*, “the Lotus King”), is very similar to the previous figure; he distinguishes himself mainly by holding the Mirror of Truth in his left hand. Sometimes he is also depicted with the mirror held up in his right hand, in which case the left hand holds the skull-bowl. In some thankas the emblems of these two kings are reversed, so that it seems these two figures are more or less interchangeable.⁴⁷

Padma Gyalpo refers to the direction *northeast* of unity of all forces directed towards one common field of expression. This lotus king holds ‘the mirror of truth’, which effectively reflects the combined wisdom of his fellow Bodhisattvas into the sacred and temporal space of the *maṇḍala* of which he is a part. It also refers to the mirror-like wisdom, staring into the face of the intrinsic emptiness⁴⁸ of one’s own being. This quality is projected from this direction into the activity of the entire wheel of this cross of direction in space.

⁴⁶ Ibid, 78.

⁴⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁸ For a detailed explanation see volume 4, chapter 3.

6. Guru Dorje Drolog (Tib. *rDo-rje-gro-lod*), “the Diamond Comforter,” manifests in a wrathful appearance (*krodha-bhairava*), red in colour, surrounded by flames (symbolizing knowledge in its “terrible” illusion-devouring aspect), riding on a tiger, holding a vajra in his outstretched right hand, and in his left hand a *phur-bu*, a magical dagger which destroys evil influences, exorcises demons, and drives away the powers of darkness. The prostrate human form underneath the tiger represents a conquered demon.⁴⁹

Dorje Drolog represents the direction *southeast*, of the expression into manifestation of the qualities possessed by the divinity contacted in the northeast direction. The ‘wrathful appearance (*krodha-bhairava*)’ that repels all phantasms and demons of the material world is necessary if the projection of the pure white *dharma* is not to be immediately consumed by the denizens of the encompassing *māyāvirūpa* and converted into the vilest *saṃskāras*. Psychic protection is a necessity in all true meditation work, as there are many *saṃskāras* of past life activities related to the dark arts that come to the surface when *yogins* awaken minor *siddhis*. The externalisations of the *siddhis* manifest in the form of demons and the like. They must all be transformed into enlightenment-attributes by the fierceness of this wrathful one. The work is accomplished by means of right ritual practices, invoking the power symbolised by the *phur-bu* (*phur ba*, the ritual dagger), that potently grounds the power of the wisdoms of the five Dhyāni Buddhas. The three blades and three faces of the *phur ba* represent the three planes and three times of human livingness; of body, speech, and mind, all of which must be transformed by means of yogic ritual and *dhāraṇīs*.⁵⁰ The blade is capable of liberating the serpent power (*kuṇḍalīnī*), thus it has entwined serpents running down it. The point projects the power of this liberating potency, as directed by the Knowingness of Secret Mantra, to whatever the object of the ritual is. Dorje Drolog rides upon the tiger, symbolising his fearlessness in dealing with any aspect of *saṃsāra*.

7. Guru Nyima Odzer (Tib. *Nyi-ma-od-zer*), “the Sun-ray Guru,” appears as an ascetic of the Heruka (unclad) type. His left (sometimes

49 Govinda, *Insights of a Himalayan Pilgrim*, 78

50 *Dhāraṇī*: a mechanism for fixing the mind to an idea, vision or experience gained in meditation.

his right) hand holds the sun by a ray, his right (sometime his left) hand holds a three-pointed staff (*khatvanga*). He wears a crown of skulls and a tiger-skin around his loins. His colour is yellow.⁵¹

Guru Nyima Odzer represents the direction *southwest* of understanding the expression formerly seeded in the southeast position. Thus he holds the sun disc, signifying the evocation of the wisdom associated with the *pingalā nādī* stream (*bodhicitta*). The ‘crown of skulls’ signifies the wisdom has been gained through perpetual rebirths into transient material forms, and through the mastery of *saṃskāras* that produce death-like *saṃsāric* attributes. The tiger skin indicates that he is the victorious conqueror over the entire desire principle that gained power over the course of many lives. The entire turning about in the seat of consciousness has occurred and the triumphant *yogin* has mastered *saṃsāra*. He can thus experience the Void (the empty hand), or else sound out the note of Emptiness to clarify all temporal space. (The use of the bell.)

8. Guru Senge Dradog (Tib. *Senge-ge-sgra-sgrogs*), “the Guru with the Roaring Voice of a Lion”, is a dark blue demoniacal figure, clad in a lion skin dangling from his shoulders and a tiger-skin as a loin-cloth. He is surrounded by flames; in his right hand he wields a vajra in a menacing way, and the left hand is either empty or holds a bell before his chest. He stands on the bodies of two conquered demons.⁵²

Guru Senge Dradog represents the *northwest* position of emanatory goodwill to all beings. ‘The Roaring Voice of a Lion’ symbolises victory over all *saṃsāric* vicissitudes as one treads the path of enlightenment, and is the unique sound of accomplishment emanated out into all space to hearken the residing brethren of his coming prowess. His menacing *vajra* is a warning to all dark foes that their days of manipulating base human desires are now numbered, as he has gained the power to make their spells and conjurations of demons ineffective. The sound of warning therefore emanates out into the space he is yet to travel, preceding his arrival. He is master of the entire material domain and hence is seen trampling demons of desire and separativeness.

51 Govinda, *Insights of a Himalayan Pilgrim*, 79.

52 Ibid.