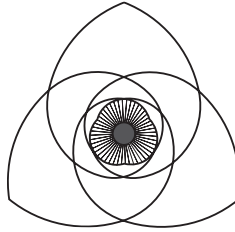


A TREATISE ON MIND



VOLUME 1

The ‘Self’ or ‘Non-self’ in Buddhism

Other Titles in the Series

The I Concept

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 Thödol (Part A)

Volume 5: An Esoteric Exposition of the Bardo Thödol (Part B)

The Way to Shambhala

Volume 6: Meditation and the Initiation Process

Volume 7: The Constitution of Shambhala

VOLUME ONE



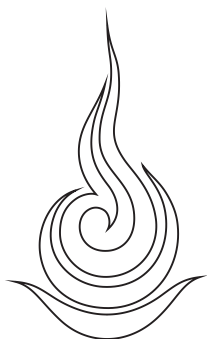
The 'Self' or 'Non-self'

in Buddhism

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 Thödol.*

(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 revision¹ 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.² 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' is 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 The book was inadequately edited hence contains many errors and grammatical mistakes that have now been corrected in this treatise.

2 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.³ 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 being⁴ (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.

3 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.

4 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 religio-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.⁵

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 embrative 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/>

5 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

The Rules of Interpretation of Sacred Scriptures

Introductory concepts

In introducing this treatise the mode of interpreting sacred scriptures should be discussed at the outset. One should not necessarily follow traditional interpretations simply because that is the way it is presented by the instructor steeped in orthodoxy. Orthodoxy insists that one ought to accept the established interpretation because that is what someone higher up in the ladder of the hierarchy of one's school, or the founder, tells us is to be believed. The lineage of such interpretation may extend back many hundreds or even a thousand or more years, therefore it is venerated as authoritative and generally unquestioned as the source of the highest revelation and truth. The denoted antiquity of an unbroken line of lineage spells total acceptance. The student is compliant and becomes indoctrinated into an entire belief system without properly developing a proper rationale of discernment.

Generally the indoctrination serves well because the general beliefs purported are valid, and because of the spiritual calibre of the student. Such calibre is at a level where the knowledge-discernment capability of the student is completely saturated to the maximum level by the presented doctrines. There however exist superlative beings, excellent philosophers, Bodhisattvas, that from former lives have developed the capacity for high revelatory discernment. They often question the orthodoxy through having discovered problems with the established logic. Such logic will have been found to veil the real, to only indirectly

lead to the development of enlightenment-attributes and in some cases to even mar its progress. This produces the eventuation of dissention and the appearance of different schools of developing valid cognition.

The veil of language often hangs like a cloud, obscuring true insight, marring the developing Clear Light of Mind¹. The fare that is adequate for beginners upon the path will not suffice to feed the cognitive needs of the superlative thinker. Many more levels of interpretation will be found by such a one than by the novice. Therefore texts are often written with these two levels of thinking in mind; words are chosen by the wise with care to incorporate both needs. Their treatises (*śāstra*), *sūtras*² and Tantras, generally consist of multidimensional thought structures, where many levels of meaning can be derived. This *Treatise on Mind* hopes to reveal much concerning such multidimensionality, of the way the many veils of meaning can be uncovered and deciphered.

In Buddhism the question of correct interpretation has been traditionally answered by 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, not those whose meaning needs definition. (4) Direct awareness is one's point of refuge, not discursive awareness.³

1 Mind is capitalised in this treatise when it refers to the abstracted enlightened Mind, compared to the concreted empirical unenlightened mind. Therefore the convention I shall use in this series is to capitalise the awakened Mind and keep the empirical mind in lower case.

2 *Sūtra*: 'thread', original discourses of the Buddha. Aphorism, a brief representative teaching. These teachings are generally categorised in a triune way, first the disciple discourses on the four Noble Truths. Next the Prajñāpāramita teachings that emphasise emptiness. Finally the Tathāgatarāga *sūtras* emphasising the Buddha-nature.

3 Shastri, *Abhidharmakośa*, 1202. Taken from P.J. Griffith, *On Being Buddha, The Classical Doctrine of Buddhahood*, (Sri Satguru Publications, Delhi, 1995), 52. See also La Vallée Poussin, *Madhyamakavṛttiḥ*, 43-44; Lévi, *Mahāyāna-Sūtrālaṅkāra*, 138-39. In his excellent essay on these Four Reliances Robert A.F. Thurman states that 'These four reliances are common in Universal Vehicle texts. The earliest instance of their mention and detailed analysis is in Asaṅga's *Bodhisattva Stages*, where they are given in Skt., BBh, (Dutt, *Bodhisattva-bhūmi*, 175-76). There are some variations from the final Tibetan tradition, in order and terminology, though the thrust is the same'. R.A.F. Thurman, *The Speech of Gold; Reason and Enlightenment in Tibetan Buddhism*. (Motilal Banarsidass, Delhi, 1989), 113-14, *fn*.

The *first* point means that when one analyses what is written concerning any teaching one must be able to ascertain its logical basis and evaluate its truth or worth for oneself. Seekers must consider the recesses of their own inner meditative reserves, and not rest upon faith in the fame of the author, or because some eminent person, guru, Rimpoche, or other, said that it is truthful. Such beings are rarely enlightened and thus are prone to errors in thinking. Also, even if the guru or authority was enlightened, the student needs to train his/her mind properly in logical and intuitive deduction, so as to overcome the impediments to lethargic thought. Only in this way can the limitations in consciousness be eliminated, the substance of the mind lacking in any area be strengthened, and the blocks to proper comprehension cleared. Thus true wisdom can be evoked. The *dharma* stands on its own merit and does not need authoritative validation to ascertain its viability. Students need to derive their own understandings from it. Eclectic discussion can help in the formulation of such validation. Discursive or straightforward reason can broaden the perspective of the student's thinking and lead to arenas not previously perceived. Ultimately, however, an enlightened one is needed to help properly awaken the inner tools and organs of perception⁴ that allow multidimensional visioning.

The *second* point means that one must take care to not reify any form of information given in the *sūtras* and *śāstras* they are studying. They must try to eke out the most esoteric interpretation as possible, and not just rely upon the quick, exoteric, and thus often most literal interpretation (as meant by 'the letter' above). Much deep thought must therefore be given as to the meaning. The most conventional form of interpretation is generally the least important, and most limited, veiled, reserved mainly for those with 'dull minds', who are content with the most superficial deductions.

In order to obtain the higher esoteric meaning one should use the interpretive method (the seven keys or modes of interpretation) explained at the end of the last chapter of my book *Karma and Rebirth of Consciousness*. They are: literally, numerically (including geometrically), astrologically, allegorically, symbolically, physiologically, and esoterically.

4 *Chakras*.

The *third* point refers to the fact that original sources by an acknowledged enlightened one should be relied upon. If such an author later takes the time to elaborate a difficult section, then that explanation should be utilised as a base to evaluate the rest of the text. This does not absolve meditation upon the topic at hand, or relaxing one's mental guard in trying to eke out the definitive meanings of other passages of the text. It means rather that the definitive interpretations can be used as a tool to fathom the meanings of related subjects, not just in that text, but in all of the related texts belonging to that particular school of thought. Though the definitive interpretation may have stood the test of time, nevertheless there may be aspects of it never revealed, hence significant meditation should be given in order to ascertain the most valuable esoteric implication.

In *The Speech of Gold* Thurman quotes from the *Akshayamati Scripture*:

Which scriptures are definitive in meaning? Which are interpretable? Those teaching superficial realities are interpretable in meaning. Those teaching ultimate realities are definitive in meaning. Those teaching various words and letters are interpretable. Those teaching the profound, the difficult to see, and the difficult to understand are definitive. Those introducing the path are interpretable. Those introducing the goal are definitive. Those scriptures that teach as if there were a lord in the lordless, using such expressions as "self," "living being," "life," "soul," "creature," "person," "human," "man," "agent," "experiencer," etc., are interpretable. And those scriptures that teach the doors of liberation, the emptiness of things, their signlessness, wishlessness, inactivity, non-production, non-occurrence, living-beinglessness, lifelessness, personlessness, and lordlessness, and so on, are definitive in meaning. You should rely on the latter, not the former.⁵

The statement 'You should rely on the latter, not the former' may be true, but one should endeavour to comprehend both. The form of interpretation one should take is entirely dependent upon the level of development of one's consciousness, of how awakened it is. If one is absorbed in the *sūnyatā* experience ('emptiness, voidness'), or is in

5 Thurman, *The Speech of Gold; Reason and Enlightenment in Tibetan Buddhism*, 123, quoting: Tsongkhapa, *Essence of Eloquence*, III n. 2.

the process of directly attaining such a state of awareness, then ‘the latter’ is preeminent and automatically incorporates the former. If one has not achieved *śūnyatā*, or who cannot in a particular life, thus has little ability to comprehend its meaning, (which includes virtually the sum of humanity) then the former is the one that is of importance. The person has still much to gain and master from basic experiences in the material domain before absolutes can begin to be striven for. Such people are incapable of truly comprehending what absolute mastery necessitates. They may strive to achieve such, but still have many obscuring *saṃskāras*⁶ blocking the way. The definitive interpretation therefore for them is a mystery, an objective to someday comprehend.

Next we have the middle level of interpreter, incorporating the bulk of Buddhist Scholars, who strive to rely upon the definitive interpretation, but must also comprehend the interpretive. This includes such things as understanding of the nature of consciousness, *karma*, *saṃskāras*, higher metaphysics, the dynamics of psychological processes, the rational of a ‘non-soul’; all with keeping open an eye or view to comprehend, then identify with that which is definitive.

Finally there are the enlightened ones. They know the truth through direct perception. They need not interpret, but if they choose to do so their consideration is definitive and may reveal concepts previously not known or revealed in the texts.

Thurman further states:

In fact, the absolute takes precedence over the relative, not intrinsically or ontologically, as it were, since the “two” realities are precisely presented as a conceptual dichotomy, but epistemologically, since the mind’s orientation toward the absolute is more beneficial and liberating than its orientation toward the relative, which after all is the creation of misknowledge. Thus, the statement “there is no Buddha” contains

6 *Saṃskāra* (compounding of ideas): From the Sanskrit roots, *saṃ* and *kri*, meaning the action (*kri*) that will improve, refine or make an impression in consciousness. *Saṃskāras* are thus the impressions from actions done in former incarnations and which are carried through to this one and thus become the basis for one’s present *karma*. It also refers to the effects of one’s present actions that will bear fruit in later lives. *Saṃskāras* are thus those actions that tend to bind one to the wheel of rebirth; to repetitious pain or pleasing dispositions, mental constructs, the inception of imagery, and all emotions. They can also be the tendencies to enlightenment.

the negation of the truth-status of a Buddha, and points to his ultimate status which is truthlessness, or realitylessness, or emptiness.⁷

I do not agree with the terms 'truthlessness', or 'realitylessness' here, as 'emptiness' can be conceived as truth or reality itself. It is not void of these. The inference is that because *śūnyatā* is 'empty' it does not intrinsically contain all truth and the real. It may be considered void of these things, but is the ground of the *dharmakāya*, the immaculate fount of pristine wisdom (*dharma*), which manifests as Truth (that which is definitive), and fecundates the Real wherever it manifests.⁸ The statement 'there is no Buddha' therefore really means that ultimately, when one is in the process of gaining enlightenment, one can only rely upon one's own meditative experiences. One *cannot* look to any external source for such revelation, not even that of the Buddha. Therefore there is 'no Buddha' because through direct revelation that which is directly experienced *is* the enlightenment. Direct perception needs no external teacher. Conversely, such experience (the *fourth* point) '*is the Buddha*'.⁹

The statement that 'the mind's orientation toward the absolute is more beneficial and liberating' is correct, and from this perspective, the assertion 'You should rely on the latter' has its validation. However, that which is 'interpretable in meaning' is necessary if one wishes to function practically in the realms of consciousness and thus in

7 Thurman, 124.

8 How such terms as 'truthlessness', or 'realitylessness' are interpreted however is important. Semantics always plays its role in the definition of things, therefore though my interpretation may differ from Thurman's, his may be valid from his perspective. Similarly with other concepts treated in this book, various interpretations may be valid from particular viewpoints, and often the way I define words may not tally with the accepted view. My intention is to reveal the esoteric veiled by the philosophy presented, which will be evident as this series unfolds. For this reason some new definitions and concepts need to be presented that the Buddhist mindset is not accustomed to, but which hopefully the reader will find revealing.

9 Actually in practice, once the process of inner contemplative obeisance has begun then impressions from the *guru* (the representative Buddha in one's life) will eventuate in accordance with those established in past lives. The inner and outer have become one. We can also say that the perceiving consciousness of the enlightened one does not perceive a separative 'self', therefore though there may be the appearance of a Buddha, but what appears is also intrinsic to all beings.

saṃsāra.¹⁰ Without such a comprehension none of us could exist in a human body. There certainly could not be any striving for the ‘definitive meaning’. The definitive interpretation leads one to experience that which exists ‘outside’ the empirical mind, and yet can also be inclusive of it. If most people relied exclusively on this form of interpretation without having properly developed their minds they risk being naïve optimists, or impractical idealists, immersed in conceptualisations they shallowly comprehend, hoping for attainments not possible in that life. An ‘absolute’ level of realisation is only obtainable by the greatest Bodhisattvas, and the vast majority of people have yet to be led to the Bodhisattva path. Many do not even conceive that such a path exists. They need education along these lines. Striving to comprehend such an ideal however is always useful, even if the attainment lies far in the future, if the mind is developed rather than mere belief. Here epistemological teachings set the path, ontology helps examine the nature of the definitive, which if phrased in terms of ‘absolutes’ such as *sūnyatā* is intrinsic, because it lies at the core of our essential being.

The path to enlightenment therefore realistically necessitates that aspirants should first strive at excellence with the ‘interpretable in meaning’ and seek the latter form of interpretation when they have the capacity to do so. One should never stop striving and once mastery of conventional thinking has been obtained, then from that platform leap to obtaining the ‘absolutely real’ form of revelation. This introduces epistemology of the so called ‘Idealists’, the Yogācāra-Cittamatra school. Thurman states that the Centrist Mādhyamika School looks at two Realities: ‘superficial (*saṃvṛti*) conventional (*vyāvahārika*) reality (*satya*)’, and ‘profound (*saṃvṛta*) ultimate (*pāramārthika*) reality (*satya*)’, whilst the Yogācārins have Three Natures in their place: 1. ‘Imaginatively constructed (*parikalpita*) nature (*lakṣaṇa*)’. 2. ‘Relative nature (*paratantra lakṣaṇa*)’. 3. ‘Perfect (*pariniṣpanna*) nature (*lakṣaṇa*)’.¹¹

10 *Saṃsāra*: cyclic existence, life-death cycle, the empirical realm. The ocean of causality, the perpetual turning of the wheel of births and deaths. Anything associated with the material worlds, to that which is ephemeral and ever-changing, and hence phenomenal, having no true substantiality of its own. It refers thus to the realms of illusion (corporeality) into which the personality incarnates and begins to identify with by means of the empirical mind.

11 Thurman, from the diagram, 118.

In his explanation Thurman refers to the 'Three Wheels of the Dharma'.¹² The first being the Hīnayāna mode of interpretation, the second being the general Mahāyāna mode, which however suffers from problems 'if taken too literally and interpreted nihilistically'¹³ because of interpretations concerning the nature of *sūnyatā*. This necessitates a third Wheel, which endeavours to eliminate this problem, called 'the *Elucidation of the Intention* itself, known as the "subtly discriminative" type of Universal Vehicle teaching'.¹⁴ What makes it 'subtly discriminative' is described by Thurman thus:

At stake primarily is the interpretation of the frequent statements of the Buddha in the Universal Vehicle Scriptures¹⁵ to the effect that all things are empty, often phrased as straight negations: that is, "there is no form, no feeling, no Buddha, no enlightenment, no non-enlightenment" and so forth. The Centrists¹⁶ supply the qualifier "ultimately" in all texts other than the *Transcendent Wisdom Hundred Thousand*, where the qualifier is in the text. But for the Idealists,¹⁷ Buddha considered this insufficient, and hence devised a scheme known as the "three natures" (*trilakṣaṇa*). Things have three natures, an imaginatively constructed (*parikalpita*) nature, a relative (*paratantra*) nature, and a perfect, or absolute (*pariniṣpanna*) nature. When all things are said to be "empty of intrinsic reality," this only applies to them in their imaginatively constructed nature; they continue to exist as relative things, and their ineffable relativity devoid of conceptual construction is their absolute nature. Thus, the insertion of the relative category between the conceptual (*parikalpita*) and the absolute (*pariniṣpanna*) insulates the practitioner against nihilism.¹⁸¹⁹

12 See also D. S. Lopez, Jr., *A Study of Svātantrika*, (Snow Lion Publications, New York, 1987), 224-26, where the ways that the different schools interpret these are discussed.

13 Thurman, 117.

14 Ibid., 117. This turning of the Wheel also promulgated teachings on the *tathāgatagarbha*, the Buddha-germ or womb, which will be analysed later.

15 The Mahāyāna.

16 The Mādhyamika.

17 The Yogācāra.

18 Thurman, 117.

19 *A Handbook of Tibetan Culture* states that 'According to the *Cittamatra* school all things can be analysed according to these three natures or categories, namely: 1) the imaginary (*parikalpita*), which includes the nominal (names and symbols) and the

Thurman then states:

There are two main criticisms of this Idealist hermeneutic. First, mere literal acceptability is an inadequate criterion of definitiveness, since there are varieties of interpretability—some involve symbolism, some involve intention, some involve context, some merely involve restoring abbreviated expressions, and so forth. Hence the criterion is too rigid and simplistic to cope with the intricacies of the teachings. Second, for all its claims to fine analytical discrimination, three-nature theory and all, this hermeneutical strategy is still itself scripturally justified—it is, after all, the scheme set forth in the *Elucidation of Intention Scripture*. No abstract rational rule or criterion to distinguish between scriptural claims is disclosed, and hence the obvious circularity of invoking a scripture's own claim of definitiveness as proof of its own definitiveness. The great Centrists, especially Chandrakirti and Tsong Khapa, level these criticisms at the Idealist hermeneutic before setting forth their own strategies.²⁰

The second criticism of the Yogācāra philosophy, relating to the disclosure of 'criterion to distinguish between scriptural claims' may or may not be true. However all Buddhist philosophy claims to be logical. Also the statement is irrelevant in view of what the Buddha has said in the *Kālāma Sūtra* about not believing anything because you have heard it, or because it is scripturally asserted (as is also the intent of the Four Reliances). Note that the lengthy quotes above have been provided to present a background of comprehension for the reader unfamiliar with these differing views, assisting thereby the understanding of the narrative that follows.

The relativity of things

When analysing the concept of 'relativity' and 'dependence', then such relativity refers to the quality of consciousness, i.e., how it identifies

delimited (mistaken view of self with respect to the individual and phenomena); 2) the dependent (*paratantra*), which includes impure dependence i.e., aggregates (*skandha*), elements (*dhatu*), sensory activity fields (*ayatana*), etc. and pure dependence, i.e., *buddha*-attributes; and 3) the absolute or thoroughly established phenomena (*pariniṣpanna*), which includes emptiness (*dharmadhātu*) and the irreversible states of cessation. Ed. G. Coleman, *A Handbook of Tibetan Culture*, (Rider, London, 1993), 397-398.

20 Thurman, 119.

with phenomena and to what degree. Initially consciousness is focussed towards the form, and *saṃskāras* are created through a combination of the aggregates, elements, and sensory activity. Because the person is primarily focussed via a self-concept, the 'I', he/she imaginatively mistakes phenomena to be real. This produces reifying of consciousness and fixation with *saṃsāra*. Differing degrees of attachment and knowledge-levels exist as to its nature, with consequent relative mastery of the related properties, creating different levels of interpretation of things, from that of primitive, animistic tribal societies, to the highly qualified scientific community, thence to Buddhist metaphysicians and yogic attainment. This in turn creates relative levels of ignorance.

At the later stages of evolution when actively treading the Bodhisattva path, the Bodhisattva's focus is towards the development of Buddha-attributes. Accordingly, the *saṃskāras* concerning the fleeting phenomenal world are eliminated and converted into enlightenment attributes, at a rate relative to the Bodhisattva stage that has been attained.

There are therefore two different types of orientation indicated:

- a. Downward to the realms of the form, and intensification of attachment to its allurements, to which there are relative degrees of ignorant forms of activity. This refers to the 'imaginatively constructed (*parikalpita*) nature'. All exists as part of the experience zone in the mind, consequently is 'imagined'.
- b. Upward to concepts of liberation from the form and the consequent lessening of the grip of *saṃsāra* and its illusions for such a person. The driving motivation (*vāsanā*) orients one towards right views and enlightening experiences. This produces the development of Buddha-attributes, which the Mādhyamika 'the *Tathagatagarbha* school take as absolute', whereas 'the Yogācāra take them as dependent', to quote Coleman *et al.* Such phenomena are integral to being enlightened, hence are 'absolute', but are capable of generating phenomena when interrelating with *saṃsāra*, thereby causing dependencies.

The way that people in these two broad categories interpret the 'real' is therefore different, as are the nature of the doctrines they would read and accept as being useful and true, e.g., scientific materialism versus the doctrine of the Void. The variety of religious presentations,

philosophies, and 'isms' found in the world all present relative truths, however they are part of the one process that leads eventually to the bliss of liberation, once those truths have been assimilated and transcended upon the upward way.

There is a process that leads from reliance upon the 'imagined' phenomena around one to the reality experienced by a Buddha. This includes the epistemological conceptualisations described above in order to discern the truth. We then have the path of yoga-meditation, the perusal of the Tantras in order to experience direct perception of the real. The process persists (over many lives) until Buddhahood is obtained. One thing is dependent upon another, everything is relative, a flow of mutable interrelation until the immutable is realised. Relativity therefore should be interpreted as this flux of interconnectedness. Even Buddha-attributes are relative to each other. They are literally the application of potent forces and energies from domains far subtler than those of normal human livingness. They govern the laws conditioning *saṃsāra*, hence a Buddha has mastered the sum of its phenomena. From the domains of Mind via a clarified mind do these attributes (*siddhis*, psychic powers) manifest to command whatever is to be.

Whether these Buddha-attributes are 'pure dependents' (*paratantra*) because of their relativity to each other is a moot point, depending upon whether one thinks in terms of absolutes, as being the Buddha nature (intrinsic emptiness), or in terms of such a One's interrelation with phenomena that we can cognise (extraneous emptiness), or in terms of *the process* producing the appearance of that which is cognisable (the intrinsic mastering the extraneous).

That all things are relative is the contention posited throughout this series. Without such relativity we could not think and categorise things. Things are defined as 'things' only when viewed relative to each other. *Śūnyatā* is only conceived as such relative to an 'other', i.e., *saṃsāra*. Without *saṃsāra* *śūnyatā* could not be explained or defined. *Śūnyatā* may be the goal, breaking this flow, hence considered an absolute, but it is not the true goal of one seeking Buddhahood. It is effectively a mirror of the *dharmakāya* into *saṃsāra*. *Śūnyatā* may 'exist', but there are no reference points to its existence until valid cognition is achieved. Later the fact that it is the middle between extremes, bridging

saṃsāra to the *dharmakāya* shall be explored. It facilitates the eventual integration of *saṃsāra* into/as the *dharmakāya*. The process necessitates the appearance of the human mind as a foundation for the demonstration of Mind. *Śūnyatā* can therefore be considered a vehicle of translation of such a mind into the *dharmakāyic* Mind. Considerable elaboration of what constitutes such a Mind is therefore imperative.

There is nothing rigid or simplistic in the concept of relativity, it allows all varieties of interpretation, and the definiteness of definitions as well as all subtleties of perception. It does not need scriptural justification, but scriptural authority can also be invoked as an interpretative tool if need be. (In reference to the *Madhyamaka*²¹ criticism of the 'Idealist hermeneutic' given above.) Only the concept of relativity allows us to define anything. Epistemological deductions are certainly useful, but direct pristine (yogic) insight is best. The Clear Light of Mind is the fount of all wisdom.

Things are automatically categorised in the mind (the process of *parikalpita*) in accordance to their relativity as part of the process of their definition, hence the 'varieties of interpretability'. This is but another way of stating the different ways things can be properly evaluated and defined, (i.e., how things stand relative to other things). This then determines how symbolism, intention, context, *etc.*, can be analysed. If a teaching or thing presented is symbolic, then the question that is automatically asked is 'In what way are we to derive meaning from it?'

The *bodhi*-tree, symbolising the Buddha's enlightenment, is one example. First it is conceptualised or imaginatively construed; then arises the concept of relativity, it's roots, trunk, branches, leaves, shade. They all pertain to aspects of enlightenment, from the foundations or roots (*saṃsāric* involvement), to the trunk, the main support or basis of the teachings or *dharma* from which branch out the main lines of reasoning, syllogisms, hermeneutics, pathways for knowledge. Each of these are relative to each other. Then come the myriad twigs and leaves, facets of knowledge forming the relatively differing sequences of the overall structure of *bodhi*.²² They provide a comforting 'shade' of

21 *Madhyamaka*, derived from *madhymapratipad*, refers to the Middle Way School. *Mādhyamika* means 'pertaining to the middle way', an adherent of the *Madhyamaka* School.

22 *Bodhi*, enlightenment, full awakening, perfected knowledge, transcendental insight.

revelation over the meditating one, preparatory to the liberating Light that must come from within. Next we have the absolute or Ultimate Truth; that the entire structure of the tree is a unity, but its form and shape is relative to others around it (e.g., other Buddha-fields).

Furthermore, only in this ultimate view can certain other intangibles be seen, such as the way that sunlight falls upon the tree, and the shade it creates, i.e., the way it tones down the absolute source of all (the sunshine, representing the *dharmakāya*), making the experience bearable or comfortable for most. Is this not a reason why the Bodhisattva Gautama chose the shade of a tree to sit under, and wherewith his enlightenment was produced?

Many examples of this nature could be cited showing that rather than being ‘too rigid and simplistic’, the three nature concept (in the way outlined here) is an essential ingredient in all definitions of things. The utilisation of relativity allows fluidity and is automatically utilised in any definition. When the Mādhyamikas have to use the qualifier ultimately ‘in all texts other than the *Transcendent Wisdom Hundred Thousand*, where the qualifier is in the text’ then they are in fact utilising a *de facto* version of the three nature theory.²³ When put into context we have:

23 See A. Wayman, *Untying the Knots in Buddhism, Selected Essays*, (Motilal Banarsidass, Delhi, 1997) 79-80, where we also have the words from the *Bodhisattva-piṭaka-sūtra*:

On the three truths (*satya*) of the bodhisattva (*saṃvṛti-paramārtha-*, and *lakṣaṇa*), conventional truth (*saṃvṛti-satya*) is as much as there is of mundane convention; and is expression with letters, speech, and discursive thought. When consciousness does not course, how much less the letters—that is absolute truth (*paramārtha-satya*). Truth of characteristics (*lakṣaṇa-satya*) is as follows: all characteristics are one characteristic, and one characteristic is no characteristic. On the bodhisattva’s skill in truth: the bodhisattva does not weary of expressing conventional truth; he does not fall into direct realization of absolute truth, but matures sentient beings; he reflects on the truth of characteristics as no characteristic.

In short, it appears that there was circulating in Nāgārjuna’s time this scriptural theory of a third truth—of characteristics as no characteristic, apparently underlying the other two truths, where ‘characteristics’ means ‘characters of differentiation.’...this may explain Nāgārjuna’s MMK, XXV, 19: “There is no differentiation (*viśeṣaṇa*) of Saṃsāra from Nirvāṇa; there is no differentiation of Nirvāṇa from Saṃsāra.” That is to say, Nāgārjuna rejected the ‘all characteristics’ of the Sarvāstivādin that serves to differentiate Nirvāṇa from

- a. The conventional interpretation, where there are things that appear to have an existence relative to other things.
- b. The 'absolutely valuable reality', conceptualised as *śūnyatā*.
- c. The term 'ultimately' uniting the two. This term means 'eventually, taking place in an unspecified later time', which necessitates a process of becoming, i.e., of manifesting one form of *relative* appearance in relation to another. These 'relative appearances' are the characteristics of *saṃsāra*, which become ultimately 'no characteristic' in terms of *śūnyatā*. The *process* of that which ultimately relates the two can also be considered that which is imagined because it is not yet manifesting. Thus this is but a version of the 'imaginatively constructed (*parikalpita*) nature' of the Yogācārins.

Therefore, when the two truths are explained later, so then the explication of the 'three natures' given above should be seen to be implicit in the presentation; namely that the term 'ultimately' is figurative for the progression of the relative appearances of things. It has implicit in it the 'relative (*paratantra*) nature' of the Yogācārins, as well as the 'imaginatively constructed (*parikalpita*) nature'. This eventually produces 'the ultimate', which is in itself relative to that which is 'not ultimate'. The truth of the matter is that ultimately the *dharmakāya* is all.

The saṃsāra-nirvāṇa interrelationship

From the perspective of the quote from Wayman,²⁴ where he states 'Nāgārjuna rejected the "all characteristics" of the Sarvāstivādin that serves to differentiate Nirvāṇa from Saṃsāra in the way the discriminating mind does', the view is from the perspective of Absolute

Saṃsāra in the way the discriminating mind does. With the 'eye of insight' there is one characteristic, or sameness; because with this 'eye' one sees *dharmas*, e.g., their dependent origination. But Nāgārjuna did not say that Nirvāṇa and Saṃsāra are the same. By insisting that Nirvāṇa and Saṃsāra have no characteristics of differentiation, he pointed to 'no characteristic', perhaps implicating the Mahāyāna Nirvāṇa, called 'Nirvāṇa of no-fixed abode' (*apratiṣṭhita-nirvāṇa*). After the time of Nāgārjuna, the Mādhyamika insisted there were just two truths, thus supporting my conclusion that the three-truth theory preceded Nāgārjuna.

See also page 87 of the text.

²⁴ Ibid., 80.

Truth. From this perspective Nāgārjuna's statement, 'there is no differentiation of *nirvāṇa*²⁵ from *saṃsāra*' is interpreted as 'because everything in *saṃsāra* is void, so there is no differentiation between *nirvāṇa* and *saṃsāra*'. (Which is actually stating that in reality there is no *saṃsāra*, only the Void is true. Here the word *nirvāṇa* is given before *saṃsāra* as a technical device to indicate its priority.) When viewing things in terms of the discriminating mind, then we are conceptualising Conventional Truth, wherein *nirvāṇa* and *saṃsāra* are linked by means of the process inherent in the term 'ultimately'. It is this process that the first part of Nāgārjuna's statement refers: 'There is no differentiation (*viśeṣaṇa*) of *saṃsāra* from *Nirvāṇa*'. The first part of the statement therefore refers to the process that is productive of *nirvāṇaśūnyatā* from out of *saṃsāra*, the second part refers to the mode whereby *saṃsāra* is perceived by one *in nirvāṇa*. (The technical device here is to place *saṃsāra* before *nirvāṇa*.)

Absolutely speaking there is 'no differentiation' in the process that relates the two modes of expression of *saṃsāra-śūnyatā* and *śūnyatā-saṃsāra*,²⁶ but conventionally there is; they are linked by a process: the term *relatively* by one brand of Buddhist hermeneutics, *ultimately* by another, and 'characteristics of differentiation' by the early Sarvāstivādins. The difference between these terms is that the words 'ultimately' and 'characteristics of differentiation' imply a time sequence, (*saṃsāra* including or relating to *śūnyatā* as *saṃsāra-śūnyatā*) whereas the term 'relatively' (*śūnyatā* including or relating to *saṃsāra* as *śūnyatā-saṃsāra*) does not. It however categorises or distinguishes between the appearances of things within that time sequence. The

25 *Nirvāṇa*, 'extinguished'. State beyond sorrow, therefore ultimate sphere of emptiness (*śūnyatā*). All defilements are extinguished, producing perfect calm, thus the state of residing in *śūnyatā*. From the Sanskrit roots *nir*, *nis*, meaning out, forth, away from, and *va*, meaning to blow, as the wind, to move, to be agitated. The 'final' attainment of the evolutionary process with respect to the form. It thus concerns complete liberation from all forms of taintedness or identification with the realms of illusion. It concerns the liberation of consciousness into a state of 'Be-ness', into spaciousness, that which is neither being nor non-being.

26 I have used the terms *saṃsāra-śūnyatā* and *śūnyatā-saṃsāra* (which shall be used throughout this series) here because *nirvāṇa* has the connotation of the final liberation of a Buddha, whereas *śūnyatā* relates to the state of emptiness that exists in lieu of *saṃsāra*. The term *śūnyatā* is hence more technically correct for general considerations.

appearance of relativities therefore produces the 'ultimate' over a time sequence.²⁷ One term ('ultimately') thus describes a process of becoming, the other ('relatively') characterises the particulars of that process. Both terms are needed to properly describe the *samsāra-sūnyatā* interrelationship, therefore one cannot really use one without reference to the other when explaining this relationship. This leads us to the inevitable conclusion that the two truth approach (of the conceptual and the absolute) has implicit in it a third truth of relativity and the process of becoming, which binds all into a unity. Relativity allows the dualities to be adequately described and resolved.

The quotation from Tsongkhapa's *Essence of the Good Explanations* given by Lopez in *A Study of Svātantrika* states:

Furthermore, when refuting [them],²⁸ one should affix the qualification "truly" [or "ultimately"] in relation to the thought of the opponent. Because, in general, [there are cases when the opponent's position] must be refuted in terms of both truths [ultimate and conventional], there are some cases in which it is not necessary to affix the qualification "truly." However, in most cases, the qualification "truly" must be affixed.²⁹

The term 'truly' means 'honestly, without pretence', and indicates the way things exist in truth. *Truth* here referring to that aspect of the *dharma* pertaining to *sūnyatā*. We can also add a second stream of truth: that aspect of the *dharma* pertaining to the *dharmakāya*, which presents to the mind significant metaphysics beyond that of the Void, or 'Be-ness'. In Tsongkhapa's day the form of truth pertaining to *sūnyatā* mostly sufficed for exegesis and meditation, but not for the coming epoch of revelation of the nature of the *dharma*. It portends deeper revelatory insights into the way of enlightenment and its outcome in relation to the vastness of the multidimensional attributes of cosmos. Such progress is the expression of a natural process of the developing history of Buddhism.

27 One can also say that the ultimate (*sūnyatā*) inherently exists and the entire process of the removal of characteristics (*samskāras*), as explained in volume 4 of this series, will simply reveal that which is the real all along. However, much more is implicated because wisdom is also generated.

28 Assertions from other schools.

29 Lopez, 370.

Tsongkhapa represented the end of an epoch. He came to precisely elucidate and aptly manifest a detailed critique of the sum of the Madhyamaka philosophy, and did this by placing into context all rival Buddhist schools. His efforts were therefore encyclopaedic, and in doing so he laid the foundation for further revelations to come. He produced the finalised books of all *dharma* that could be revealed preceding him. This allows succeeding new presentations of the *dharma*, once what he had to say was properly assimilated in the (Tibetan) Buddhist world. The present era is thereby introduced wherein further revelation can be provided of a deeper strata of *dharma*.

The use of relativity in analysis is needed to logically ascertain truth. It represents the part of the tree of *bodhi* where the main trunk splits off into its variegated branches. Therefore it needs no scriptural validation, but such can be presented as a means to greater revelation. Similarly with the word ‘ultimately’—ultimately one gets to the leaves (attributes of the enlightened Mind, *bodhi*) by means of the variegated branches of the tree (avenues of thought, conventional reality). In the leaves the all-embracing truth of sunlight can be directly experienced. In this analogy the main trunk represents the conveyance of the principle of enlightenment, wisdom, which has its roots in the fertile ground of *saṃsāra*, where the soil represents the ignorance to be overcome. The air through which sunlight manifests represents *śūnyatā*, liberation, (the Ultimate Truth). The all-sustaining sun then is the *dharmakāya*. This is the *saṃsāra-śūnyatā* approach, and is the main way of interpreting the *bodhi*-tree.

The *śūnyatā-saṃsāra* relationship can be viewed in an analogy where the soil (*śūnyatā*—being vast, dark, ‘unfathomable’) contains the nutrients, enlightenment-attributes, sustaining the entire tree via the roots. In between the soil and the sky stands the full panoply of the tree, teeming with its myriad forms of hidden life and activity, (revelatory experiences) which indicate the process of the relativeness of all that must ultimately manifest (the *dharmakāya*). The main trunk represents the support of the enlightened Mind (stemming from *śūnyatā*). The sunlight to which the branches and leaves of the tree aspire represents that aspect of that manifests as the cosmos. Seeds are caused to form which are then dispersed to distribute elements of the *dharmakāya* far and wide. Each new seed³⁰ has the capacity to germinate and sprout

30 The seeds symbolise the attributes of enlightenment that a Bodhisattva bequeaths

forth a new tree of revelatory capabilities and wisdom from out of the stable base that represents the soil/*śūnyatā*. In this analogy only the mind/Mind, *śūnyatā* and *dharmakāya* are players in the world. The mind is considered real, as though it contains aspects of *saṃsāra* its foundation is *śūnyatā*, and it is turned to the *dharmakāya*, of which it is an attribute. As it incorporates more of the attributes of *dharmakāya* so mind transmogrifies into Mind. The Mind integrates *saṃsāra*, *śūnyatā* and *dharmakāya*.

From the above perspective the earlier *saṃsāra-śūnyatā* approach has already been established, with the gains from *saṃsāric* activity in the process of being transformed and transmuted into *dharmakāya*. The abstract Mind contains *saṃsāra*, and the relativity is between the factors of transformation of the elements of mind/Mind (the leaves) into *dharmakāya*, supported by the stable ground of *śūnyatā* and its energies. This view therefore represents the practical meditative work in the Mind of a *yogin* or advanced Bodhisattva, when dealing with inner transformations

An alternate view is that the soil represents the darkness of *saṃsāra*, which contains the nutrients of all that is to be. The roots of the tree represent the activity of the mind, whereby the essential nutrients (*karma*-forming tendencies) are extracted from the soil. The main trunk of the tree then is *śūnyatā*, with the branches and leaves representing the *dharmakāya*. This view is symbolically more correct because there is a consistent linear relationship from *saṃsāra* to mind to *śūnyatā* to *dharmakāya* and cosmos.

Though the detail of the *saṃsāra-śūnyatā* and *śūnyatā-saṃsāra* relationship has been explained here, it should be noted that the way these terms are used throughout this series is that they signify the mechanism of the *tathāgatagarbha* (the Buddha-germ in us) in the way that it interrelates *saṃsāra* to *śūnyatā*. The tree then symbolises the *tathāgatagarbha*'s interrelationship with the *personal-I* (the incarnate human unit). The detail is not exact, but the leaves represent the raincloud of knowable things emanated via the *tathāgatagarbha*. The branches and trunk represent the main body of the mind of the

to others. A seed can also refer to the Buddha germ (*tathāgatagarbha*), but this statement hints at a vast ontology, somewhat explained in volume 3.

personal-I, and the roots in the soil represent the extraction of basic understanding via the sense-consciousness in the soil of *saṃsāra*.

The various depictions of the nature of the *bodhi* tree as presented also illustrate how the various views of the schools of Buddhism can arise when rationalising the same set of factors.

Direct awareness and interpretation

The fourth point of refuge earlier given is: ‘Direct awareness is one’s point of refuge, not discursive awareness’. Historically, various teachings may have taken the form of intellectual conundrums, but this has served to maximally develop thought and the empirical mind. The texts were however not written for mere intellectual pursuits, to feed mentalistic pride, or conceptual forms of smugness, but rather as aids assisting the quest for enlightenment. If fruitful this quest awakens the Clear Light of non-discursive thought, wherein insight is instantaneous revelatory experience. Buddhist texts are effectively aids in meditation. They assist the mind to rightly focus the needed ideas to gain clear insight of the nature of reality. If correctly utilised the texts can therefore stimulate a direct awareness, an aim of all teachings given by the enlightened. In fact if a sacred text is truly sacred then it is the product of the expression of the meditation-Mind of the enlightened being that wrote it. It is conceived in meditation, and presents the language of the nature of the awakened Mind. It can therefore only be properly interpreted by those that at least have the mind reposed in a meditative state or engaged in *samādhi*.³¹ If the Mind is not meditative, then deeper meaning of the scriptures will be missed or distorted by the reader’s ever too quick tendencies to emotively rationalise.

An enlightened One is like a Buddha (the prime example of a perfect teacher). Normally he will only partially explicate this or that fact about reality, because the emphasis is to lead the enquirer through a process of deductive and meditative logic wherewith truth (*satya*) can be deduced by that person. Words have their limitation, no matter how succinctly definitions are explained. There is always much more that

31 *Samādhi* can be defined as a concentration of the mind in a meditative equipoise upon the topic at hand.

could have been given, but could not be properly explicated through the extant language. Much can therefore only be hinted at, inferred, and also needs veiling for various reasons.

Over the millennia Buddhists have been overly concerned with modes of interpretation, producing many doctrinal disputes. Thus it may also be useful to the earnest student if the subject of interpretation is elaborated upon, allowing better comprehension of the meaning of the *sūtras*. P. J. Griffith states:

Rules of interpretation will usually be framed by creating a hierarchy within the set of doctrine-expressing sentences, and requiring that those lower down the hierarchical order be interpreted in terms of those higher up. For example, such a rule might say *all doctrine-expressing sentences of this community are to be interpreted so that they are consonant with a particular subset of them*. The rule of interpretation used by some Buddhist communities, that *Sūtras* whose meaning is definitive (*nītārtha*) are to be used as guides for the interpretation of those whose meaning requires interpretation (*neyārtha*), is of just this kind. *Sūtras* are, for Buddhists, collections of *buddhavacana*, Buddha's word, and as such are by definition collections of sentences expressive of doctrine for the community. But the assumption that all these sentences are of equal weight leads to problems, since there are many *prima facie* contradictions among them. Hence the specification of some subset of them as more authoritative: the *prima facie* meaning of these is to govern the interpretation given the rest.³²

He further states:

Buddhist scholastic literature, corpora are composed usually of a root- or core-text, sometimes in verse and sometimes in prose, surrounded by concentric layers of prose commentary, subcommentary, and subsubcommentary. The root-text is usually relatively short, and is essentially a mnemotechnical aid for the student, to be learned by heart as a first step in coming to grips with a particular corpus; the layers of commentary then proved exegesis and systematization, as well as extended discussion of controversial questions.³³

32 Griffith, *On Being Buddha, The Classical Doctrine of Buddhahood*, 20.

33 Griffith, 28-29.

The *sūtras* were first written down centuries after the time of the Buddha. They were coded for recitation and came from the meditation-Mind of a disciple of the Buddha, such as Ānanda, who remembered the original discourses. The later Mahāyāna scriptures are the direct result of meditation in action, depicting the way that the author's Mind visualises, interprets and expounds pertinent information. Depending upon the relative enlightenment of the authors concerned (or if enlightened at all), so the *śāstras* etc.,³⁴ have differing value. Some concepts and terms may have become corrupted over the centuries of recitation, and there is always the case of translation or copying errors of scribes, as the sacred scriptures were copied from generation to generation. It is important therefore that the reader not take the text upon face value, but rather as guides for analytical deduction or reasoning for truth. Nothing written down can be considered absolute, and the different ways of interpretation of most scriptures are legion.

Accordingly Griffith states:

It is claimed that whenever putative utterances of Buddha appear to some community not to be well said, not to conform to its own doctrinal system, its own tenets, they must be capable of an interpretation that makes them so conform.

Such a rule of interpretation necessitated the development of complex theories about Buddha's intentions in speaking nonliterally, and a battery of technical terms was developed to label these intentions.³⁵

Such 'complex theories' come about because the minds interpreting the *sūtras* and *śāstras* were not enlightened, or else the authors of the texts were not enlightened. That many hermeneutic schools exist also indicate that enlightenment can be of differing degrees, signifying various ignorance levels concerning the nature of fundamental reality. Differences can be considered to result from the many ways (views) the eye can observe the same object, affecting comprehension accordingly. Clearly, differing epistemologies can be rightly integrated in an awakened Mind and their content seen straightforwardly for what

34 *Sūtras* are the compiled rules, aphorisms and discourses of the Buddha, whereas *śāstras* are commentaries or treatises.

35 Ibid., 54.

they are. The forms of illogic can then be immediately discarded, and alternate views put in the proper category of legitimacy.

The nature of the serpent power

The source of inspiration of a sage's enlightened Mind is always presented in symbolic terms in a legend or myth concerning that person. This can be correctly interpreted by those comprehending the symbolism of the mysteries of being/non-being. The source always indicates the level of attainment of the originator of the scripture. Nāgārjuna, for instance, was said to have received his revelations from the realm of the *nāgas* (serpents). Serpents signify the way vital energy (*prāṇa*) in the body flows. Their realm represents the place of the store of such energies in the subtle body, which accomplished *yogins* can consciously access.

In considering the nature of the transformed *prāṇas* as a consequence of yogic practice serpents refer to the process of the development of *siddhis* (psychic powers) and consequent wisdom for those practicing the white *dharma*.

Samśkāras and *prāṇas* are virtually synonymous. They convey all consciousness-attributes developed by any individual. The associated energies manifest in a serpentine fashion. Each different *saṃskāra* has a beginning (the tail), accumulates qualities as it travels through time (a body) and an eventual end (head). The symbolism of where Nāgārjuna obtained his revelations thus informs us that he was a very accomplished *yogin*. It implies that his highly refined *prāṇas* were of such a high order that the energy conveyed by the serpents manifested as *siddhis* of accomplishment.

The quality of the *prāṇas* in the *nāḍī* system³⁶ of the body is all important. They determine the extent to which the *chakras*³⁷ (psychic centres) are awakened, the degree of rotation of their whorls of petals,

36 *Nāḍī*: literally river. (Also from *nada*, a species of hollow reed.) *Nāḍīs* are finely reticulated channels for the conveyance of *prāṇa* in the etheric vehicle. These channels stem from the three principal ones in the central spinal column (*iḍā*, *piṅgalā* and *sūśumṇā nāḍīs*). They roughly follow the path of the nerves and blood stream. There are said to be 72,000 *nāḍīs*, though this number is symbolic. Each *nāḍī* allows the passage of the five different types of *prāṇas*, and their combinations.

37 The proper transliteration of this Sanskrit term is *cakra*, however I have retained the commonly used *chakra*, signifying how it is pronounced.

and the intensity of the colours. (The *chakras* are receptacles for the assimilation and transformations of the attributes of consciousness. They are Eyes with which to perceive multidimensional space.) This pertains to the ability of the meditator to receive impressions from higher sources, such as from *dharmakāya*, Bodhisattvas, or *ḍākinīs* ('sky-goers', feminine protectors of the law).

How serpents evolve to be conveyers of wisdom so that they can enlighten *yogins*, and through them inspire an entire corpus of Buddhist philosophy is an intriguing subject for those wishing to develop the Eyes to see. The foundation of much of the Mahāyāna stream of revelation is based upon knowledge of many esoteric topics stemming from the awakening of *chakras*. Authors who did develop their Eyes arose to fill in some of the missing portions of the overall philosophy that for instance Nāgārjuna did not provide. Other scholars have relied upon purely empirical deductions, and so differing schools of interpretation developed. Various forms of concretions of mind reifying the esoteric logic were also produced. Tantric philosophy provides the answer for doctrines that come as a consequence of yogic practices, but the Tantras are not decipherable by the uninitiated, apart from the general meanings of the associated symbolism and underlying philosophy. Comprehending the esoteric background to sacred texts and of the internal processes constituting the making of an enlightened being should therefore be important for both practitioners and scholars if the reified knots of logic are to be untangled.

The symbolism of the serpent is inextricably interwoven with that of *the staff*, which is often one of the very few possessions retained by Hindu and Buddhist *yogins* and mendicants in their wanderings. They carry these not just to aid their physical bodies in their travels, but because the staff also symbolises their yogic prowess and austerities. It depicts the strait up the central spinal column through which the subjective energies associated with their yogic practices must flow. The spinal column is the central support of the *yogin's* entire meditative being, without which his attainments (*siddhis*) would not be possible.³⁸ *Prāṇas* flow up the spinal column via the three major psychic channels that it houses.

38 For the esoteric significance of the cane staff that Milarepa possessed, (who was perhaps Tibet's greatest accomplished *yogin*) see G.C.C. Chang, (Trans), *The Hundred Thousand Songs of Milarepa*, Vol 1, (Shambhala, London, 1977), Ch. 18.

At the base of the spinal column we find the energy of the Mother aspect, the primeval causative or formative energy that lies coiled in potential for liberating activity. This central reservoir of heat, or internal energy, that sustains the life of the dense material form, is called *kuṇḍalinī* ('serpent power').

Kuṇḍalinī is related to the fires deep within the heart of the earth and can be considered to have been, exist not, and yet is. It is an effect of the past (that has been), has no substantiality of its own ('exist not'), for in the last resort it is the Fiery subjective expression of the will, and is that which sustains the phenomenal, illusory universe (which is considered 'empty'). Yet it 'is' as long as this material world is sustained.

Its animating dynamo in a person is said to be the Base of Spine centre,³⁹ which in conjunction with the *chakra* at the sacral area psychically sustains life by means of fine channels (*nāḍīs*).

As well as the serpentine motion of this energy the symbol of the serpent is taken from a spiral path that two major *nāḍīs* take around the central column. One of these paths (the *idā nāḍī*) conveys the psychically receptive feminine creative forces and energies in Nature (an attribute of *kuṇḍalinī*) sustaining the evolution of sentience. The energies that it bears also pertain to the *prāṇas* from the input of the sense-consciousnesses as correlated by the intellect and thus empirical rationalisations, which often blind one to enlightened perceptions. Thus it governs the expression of the mind *per se*, and being *manasic* (of the mind) the Elements associated with it are Earth and Fire.⁴⁰ It also conveys the general vitality (*prāṇa*) absorbed from the air and obtained from food (utilising that term in its broadest possible sense).

The *piṅgalā nāḍī* conveys the 'son energy', the consciousness-engendering factor, the result of experience-gathering activities when integrated into streams of loving cognitive perceptions and intuitive revelations. It channels the *prāṇas* of human emotions, desire, and the affections developed through family and group interrelations. These qualities are later developed into the energy of love upon the path of liberation. It is Watery or Airy in nature, and is fluidly embracive

39 *Mūlādhāra chakra*.

40 The alchemical Elements: Earth, Water, Fire, Air and Aether shall be capitalised throughout this series. Explanations shall be provided as to their attributes when needed.

of unities, as associated with thinking via the Heart. It then conveys the *prāṇas* of an expansive Mind-stream that is vibrantly sensitive to impressions from manifold directions in multidimensional space. (A definition of the enlightened-Mind.)

The symbol of the *īḍā nāḍī* is the moon, because like the moon, it conveys reflected light, which is associated with the form nature, the energies of the personality, and that of the psychic world. The symbol of the *piṅgalā nāḍī* is the sun, the greater luminary, because it expresses the illuminating light of wisdom (*prajñā*). When the sun and moon are therefore spoken of in mystical, esoteric, alchemical, mythological, or religious texts, one can always assume that they refer to the energies associated with these *nāḍīs*. The *īḍā* and *piṅgalā* streams of energy are said to relate to ‘wisdom and method’ where the feminine is the wisdom aspect and the masculine is the compassionate aspect (or ‘method’), as stated in the introductory commentary on Tantric texts in Jamgön Kongtrul’s *Treasury of Knowledge*.

There are three main channels, the left, right and central channels, whose functions are of primary importance and whose positions within the body reflect the principles of method, wisdom and nonduality... The left channel, in Sanskrit *lalanā* (*rkyang ma*), originates from the power of the white aspect of the glow of pristine awareness. It creates the illusion of an apprehender. Lalana is also called “wisdom” (*shes rab*, *prajñā*) because it causes the lunar wind (*zla ba’i rlung*) to flow from the left nostril....The right channel, in Sanskrit *rasanā* (*ro ma*), originates from the power of the red aspect⁴¹ of the glow of pristine awareness. It creates the illusion of an objective world, the apprehended. Rasana is also called “method” (*thabs*, *upāya*) because it causes the solar wind (*nyi ma’i rlung*) to flow from the right nostril.⁴²

One should note that the details concerning the arousal and liberation of psychic energy have been *purposely made misleading* in all Tantric

41 It indicates the left channel as white the male aspect and the right channel as female and red. Note that though the terms *lalanā* and *rasanā* are commonly used in Tibetan Buddhist texts, I shall use the more commonly known terms *īḍā*, *piṅgalā* and *suṣūmṇā* (the central channel) throughout this series when referring to these *nāḍīs*.

42 Jamgön Kongtrul Lodrö Tayé, *The Treasury of Knowledge; Systems of Buddhist Tantra*, (Snow Lion, New York, 2005), 37.

texts because of the inherent dangers. The concept of red and white flows of *prāṇa* is for instance an example, as in reality there are five main *prāṇic* streams in each *nāḍī*, each possessing a different hue.⁴³

Compassion (love) is the active expression of wisdom if it is to be truly efficacious, hence explained in terms of the skilful means of a Bodhisattva. Compassion generally relates to relieving sources of emotional pain or suffering and wisdom to the right application of consciousness. Compassion arises spontaneously from the heart, whereas wisdom is derived from the mind when directed compassionately. From this Bodhisattvic perspective the assignment of compassion to the masculine gender is correct. Our concern here is literally an analysis of the dual Ray of Love-Wisdom. From another perspective the utilisation of correct analogy is assisted by the biological role of woman, which is to give birth to the child (the formed realm, *prakṛti*) and then to compassionately guide the child through its formative years (i.e., the demonstration of 'method'). The feminine nurtures the developing form, whilst the masculine principle should provide the right educative direction (i.e., 'wisdom') for the child's upbringing. This however, is the opposite to what is presented in orthodox Buddhism. When applying gender to any symbolic consideration one should always observe the different types of energy qualification. The more spacious and unfettering then 'masculine', the more receptive to and embrative of attributes of the form then 'feminine'. The nature of the 'view' however is the determinant factor, whether from above-down (e.g., with respect to the Bodhisattva attitude) or from below-up, as is the case with the feminine biological role.

Whatever the case may be for wisdom and compassion, the correct assignment for the *nāḍīs* is: the left (*idā*)—lunar, Earthy-Fiery, female, intelligence, activity; and the right (*piṅgalā*)—solar, Watery-Airy, male, consciousness, contemplation. Note that the Watery Element is sometimes assigned to the feminine because of its fluid changeability. The correct feminine assignment however is to the ubiquitous fusion of Water with Fire, producing the desire or emotional-mind (*kāma-manas*).

43 This allows the conveyance of the *prāṇas* of the five sense-consciousnesses and the development of the wisdoms of the five Dhyāni Buddhas through the *nāḍīs*. Many of the veils and blinds incorporated in Tantric texts shall be unravelled in this series, as will be evident by the time the mysteries of the *Bardo Thödol* are revealed in volume 5.

The central channel, the *suśumṇā nāḍī*, conveys the dynamically active ‘Father energy’ that impels the person onwards towards liberation. This is the energy that unites the highest aspect of being to the lowest, thus fully enlightening the person, providing the experience of *dharmaṭā* (actual reality, the Ultimate Truth of phenomenon).

Suśumṇā is brought to activity when ‘the Son’, consciousness (*prajñā*), is in full compassionate expression whilst the person is meditating. The mind has become serene and yet manifests a powerful intensity, allowing receptivity to the vast reaches of all-encompassing space. The mind is then a fully prepared and endowed womb, into which the ripened Fiery seed of all potential (*kuṇḍalinī*) is ready to spread its energy to flower in space. This seed is liberated by a potent sound (*mantra*) conveying the most intense type of energy that reaches down into the deepest layers of substance, to the base of manifest being. There it awakens the feminine Fire sustaining the life of every atom, integrating it with the Fires of the evolved consciousness. The triune united Fire, (*kuṇḍalinī*, *iḍā-piṅgalā* and *mantra*)⁴⁴ then rises up the central channel (*suśumṇā*), fully vivifying the various psychic centres in geometric order as it does so. Once the Head centre becomes totally vitalised with the fused energies then the person is liberated from the throttlehold of the form. Enlightenment has ensued.

The picture presented here is a bare outline. It is not yet possible to give an accurate detailed picture of the nature of the ‘raising of *kuṇḍalinī*’ because of the immensity, subtlety, and esotericism of the subject. The entire story of manifest being, of evolution, and meditative unfoldment is hidden in it. Many have tried to satiate their curiosity by perusing the various meditation and occult texts on the subject. It should be noted however that such information is always veiled, purposely misleading, contradictory, or else cursorily treated, because of the potential dangers awaiting the unwise in their premature attempts to awaken this force. In its most material aspect (for it is many layered) *kuṇḍalinī* will burn and destroy the form or wreak havoc upon the psychic constitution of the person who has not the knowledge or the moral and psychic purity to rightly direct it, and who has utilised the force of the personal will to

44 *Piṅgalā* and *iḍā* have at this stage been united as Love-Wisdom, producing the lucidity that is their ‘Son’.

'awaken' it. Its tendency will always be to reinforce or distort whatever subtle, uncontrolled desire, or base quality that exists. (For it manifests through the path of least resistance as it allegorically seeks to unite with the Father energies.) This is symbolised by the burning poison of the viper which produces psychic madness and spiritual death.

This introduces the secondary implication of the meaning of the serpent, as that of the *ability to poison*; which concerns engendering the little *prāṇic* serpents embodying qualities of desire, lust, spite, hatred, enmity, and vituperation. It thus also symbolises that which causes a person to be bound to the type of life associated with the sensual, illusion-forming material world. This domain is also implicit in the Watery (desire) world that Buddhist tradition states that *nāgas* (serpents) are said to rise from. Psychically, this means that their place of generation is associated with the Solar Plexus (naval) centre (*maṇipūra chakra*), which controls the expression of this Element. A serpent can thus refer to the ability to 'poison', (when the associated *prāṇas* are defiled or aberrant) or else to awaken wisdom.⁴⁵

There are five types of *prāṇas*, as explained in my book on *karma* associated with the stages of yogic development, called *apāna*, *samāna*, *udāna*, *prāṇa*, and *vyāna*.⁴⁶ They convey the qualities of the five Elements. When the third Element conveying the Fiery (mental) principle becomes the major *prāṇa* (*udāna*) flowing in the *nāḍī* system then the serpents are Fiery. When the fourth of the Elements (Air)

45 Three serpents lie within you:

The adder of death,

that with poisonous venom feeds the sensual person.

The serpent of wisdom, transmuted poison is ambrosia,

joyous nectar of Light, Love, and of Life.

The Dragon of Fiery Life, the serpent has shed its skin,

is free and flies.

Oh humanity, where are the chords that bind you?

It is your task to find them, and release the power behind them

if in all-encompassing space you shall reside. (Though consciousness cannot delineate it, yet it is a zone of residence that is the natural state of Mind.)

46 Bodo Balsys, *Karma and the Rebirth of Consciousness*. (Delhi: Munshiram Manoharlal, 2006), 56-7. See also Tabulation One, page 60. *Apāna* conveys Earthy *prāṇas*, *samāna* Watery ones, *udāna* the Fiery *prāṇas*, *prāṇa* the Airy quality, and is a generalised term for all five types of *prāṇa*. Finally we have *vyāna* conveying the Aetheric *prāṇas*.

becomes the major *prāṇa* flowing in the *nāḍīs* then the associated *nāgas* conveyed are Airy in nature, and sprout wings. If also Fiery they are viewed as *Fiery flying serpents*. This signifies the ability to travel in consciousness in all directions in time, space, and beyond. Such serpents can also convey the experience of the spaciousness of *sūnyatā*.

When the fifth of the *prāṇas* become dominant in the *nāḍīs*, then the Fiery flying serpents transmute themselves into *Dragons of Wisdom*. This *prāṇa* conveys the Aetheric Element associated with the stage called *vyāna*, vivifying the combined Head and Ājñā centres, which evokes the Dharmadhātu Wisdom of Vairocana in combination with the All-accomplishing Wisdom of Amoghasiddhi. Such is the nature of enlightenment.

The above represents an esoteric consideration of the *prāṇic* constitution of the three main types of enlightened beings (Fiery serpentine, Fiery flying serpentine, and Dragons of Wisdom) that are responsible for the source material of Buddhist literature and most of the commentaries and subcommentaries. The three types of enlightenment shall later be elaborated via the terms *ālayavijñāna*, *sūnyatā* and *dharmakāya* enlightenments.

The remaining two types of *prāṇas* are *apāna* and *samāna*. The level of expression represented by *apāna* (Earthy *prāṇas*) concerns sluggish small serpents, worms, and even maggots, which convey common conventional empirical thoughts pertaining to the material world and its phenomena, producing *saṃsāric* entanglement and attachments.

The level represented by *samāna* (Watery *prāṇas*) concerns vipers and small serpents. They are the psychic emanations of the full gamut of emotional, imperilled thinking of the active desire-mind, producing various distortions of truth, glamours, and illusions. The small serpents are also associated with the development of *siddhis*, psychic powers such as clairvoyance. They are expressions of the psychic realms of deception and *māyā*.⁴⁷ Many beginners on the spiritual path derive their basic impressions from these realms.

47 *Māyā*: illusion, deceit. The aggregates of forces controlling one's *chakras* by excluding the controlling impressions from the realms of enlightenment. Therefore the perceptions derived from the three planes of human livingness to the exclusion of any higher perceptions. It incorporates the sum of the energies working through the *nāḍīs*, causing the individual to identify unduly with *saṃsāra* and its allurements. It thereby embodies the impressions that veil the real.

The relationship between the *viper* and the *Fiery flying serpent* can be seen in that the 'viper' is a person whose *kuṇḍalinī* energy has been expressed to the degree that the centres (*chakras*) associated with the emotional desire nature (the 'Waters') have been stimulated. (Often causing many psychic aberrations and problems.) The *Fiery flying serpent* symbolises one who is liberated from attachment to the bodily nature.

The *chakras* and esoteric lore

In relation to *kuṇḍalinī* one must also include a discussion of the *chakras*, for they are intricately linked. In its simplest connotation the word *chakra* means wheel, the wheel of motion. *Chakras* are vortices of energy delineating consciousness, and depending upon the particular *chakras* activated they connote the different desirous, emotional, mental and psycho-spiritual qualities experienced by a person. From another angle of vision, they can be perceived as Eyes, allowing the entry of light from one dimension of perception into another. They are thus doorways to and from the realms of being/non-being (depending upon the Element each *chakra* controls) through which the *yogin* can leave and enter at will. All depends upon the degree of attainment evidenced.

Chakras manifest as swirling saucer-like whorls of energy, stemming from points in the spine, and are divided by means of spokes of energy into regions that are likened to the petals of lotus blossoms. The seven major endocrine glands are their physiological externalisations.

In effect, the *chakras* are eddies of energy that gradually increase in luminosity from a dull glow to a brilliant incandescence as the person is able to increasingly utilise the energies that are the result of spiritual development. This happens very slowly, as in the course of normal evolutionary development, or else it can be greatly hastened by means of meditative practices, following the Eightfold Path and other spiritual disciplines. There are seven major *chakras*,⁴⁸ though they can be grouped in terms of the development of the wisdoms of the five Dhyāni Buddhas, the perfection of the five Elements, and of the attributes of the five *prāṇas*, as presented in Buddhist Tantric texts. We therefore have the Head lotus (*sahasrāra padma*) integrated with the Ājñā centre (the

48 Or eight when the powerful dual Splenic centre is also counted.

third Eye) that together are capable of processing all five Elements, plus the most refined expression of Aether. They are situated on top of the head and the brow. Next is the Heart centre (*anāhata chakra*), situated in the chest cavity. It specialises in processing the Airy Element. The Throat centre (*viśuddha chakra*) specialises in the development and assimilation of the Fiery Element. The Watery Element is processed by the Solar Plexus centre (*maṇipūra chakra*), situated in the naval area. The overlapped Sacral and Base of Spine centres (*svādīṣṭhāna* and *mūlādhāra chakras*) process the Earth Element.⁴⁹

One of the main reasons for presenting such technical information is to explicate esoteric concepts veiled in the texts. A modernised mode of interpretation of Buddhist symbolism shall be introduced, presenting new terminology that will facilitate revelation of the truths coded into various texts by the enlightened. Indeed, many facts concerning the nature of the domains of enlightened beings shall also be revealed because there is a need for Buddhists to better comprehend whither they go as they aspire to become enlightened.

Not all enlightened beings are of equal realisation. The psychic constitution of some can be considered as *Fiery serpents*, others as *Fiery flying serpents*, and the very few that are the true *mahāsiddhas*, (enlightened saints possessing great occult power, such as Padmasambhava and Milarepa) can be described as *Dragons of Wisdom*. Depending upon where they stand in this ladder of ‘serpent power’, so the quality of their writings and achievements differ. Thus one must interpret their works accordingly. Some works are Fiery (mentalistic) in nature, others Airy (pertaining to *śūnyatā*), and others truly esoteric (Aetheric, *dharmakāyic*) and thus contain coded information accessible to many levels of interpreters, to assist in the development of the inner

49 Comprehension of the nature of the *chakras* is paramount, if the esoteric significance of later Buddhist ontology, especially its yogic and Tantric basis is to be revealed. Therefore this subject is only introduced here, and their attributes shall be examined as needed throughout this series. Much information that is considered ‘esoteric’ in the texts, but is considerably veiled, will be elucidated as the veils are removed. Many of the views practitioners presently possess concerning Tantras will necessarily alter in the light of the revelations provided from unveiling the garbled to reveal the esoteric. Volume 5 specifically presents significant detail concerning the constitution and functions of the *chakras*.

Eyes and Ears, hence *siddhis* and great wisdom. Thus the degree of enlightenment of the author is important. It also sets the level of what is possible to reveal, i.e., the sources of the revelation, whether from Bodhisattvas, *mahābodhisattvas*, *ḍākinīs*, or from the Jinas.⁵⁰

What the Bodhisattva has attained internally, i.e., the nature of the *prāṇas* developed, the quantity and quality of the empowering *nāgas*, or the Clear Light of his/her meditation-Mind, is what determines what can be received in vision. This is also conventionally understood, as shown in the statement by Griffith:

The "[concentration called] 'stream of doctrine'" is a state of ecstatic trance wherein bodhisattvas obtain doctrinal instruction direct from Buddha or from some functional analogue thereof such as Maitreya. Both the source and the method are taken to guarantee the efficacy and accuracy of the instruction obtained, and that it is mentioned here points to the strong emphasis placed by this corpus upon the authoritativeness and accuracy of its own words. The words of the verses are thus *buddhavacana* because they are formed, made, and communicated by Maitreya, one who functions like Buddha, to Aśaṅga, their human speaker, and because the latter's utterance of them reproduces Buddha's speech.⁵¹

In the case of Aśaṅga, receiving impressions direct from Maitreya in the texts concerning the famous *Five Works of Maitreya*, such as the *Mahāyānasūtrālaṃkāra*, and *Abhisamayālaṃkāra*, (which are the foundation to the Yogācāra School of philosophy) the symbolism of the source should be noted, as was with Nāgārjuna.

The process of the evolution of the corpus of the Buddhist religion can be viewed in terms of the awakening process of a human unit. The sequence of the unfoldment of the *chakras* are similar. *Chakras* are organised to awaken according to a natural sequence, in conjunction with a person's mental-emotional activities. The Buddhist religion is naturally set at the high end of human development relating to striving to comprehend the nature of consciousness, and to master *saṃskāras* with view of liberation.

50 A Jina is a victorious one. An epithet of the Buddha. More specifically it refers to the Dhyāni Buddhas.

51 Griffith, *On Being Buddha, The Classical Doctrine of Buddhahood*, 36.

Maitreya, the next Buddha to appear, is the embodiment of the compassion of the Buddhas. Compassion is active love. As such it represents a fusion of both love and wisdom. The teaching provided however was the Yogācāra doctrine, hence the emphasis being the wisdom of the Mind. The esoteric objective of this doctrine for the *buddhadharma* was the complete awakening of the Fiery impetus of the Throat centre. Maitreya's guiding presence was needed in the formation of this doctrine to ensure that no residual aspect exists in it that may pertain to the natural separative tendency of the mind. (The activity of the 'left eye', esoterically speaking.) The compassionate tenor of the doctrines was thereby ensured. The Fires from the Throat centre, plus the Airy impetus from the Heart centre were needed to awaken the twelve major petals of the Head centre.

Centuries earlier the Heart centre *per se*, the source of the realisation of *śūnyatā*, was awakened in the form of the Mahāyāna ontology in its Mādhyamika form. From this basis Nāgārjuna received his major revelations, as his focus was the doctrine of *śūnyatā*. The Heart in the Head centre was also energised.⁵²

Asaṅga's meditative concentration or purpose was towards awakening the complete Head lotus (the outermost tiers) for the *buddhadharma*. (Though the task fell more specifically to his brother Vasubandhu.) This was needed if later Tantric doctrines were to be disseminated and thrive. The major twelve-petalled lotus of the Head centre, plus all of the subsidiary petals of this lotus (including the inner Throat tier), could then awaken for the entire corpus of Buddhism.

The Yogācāra doctrine of 'mind only' was thus a derivation of the awakening Head lotus (and by extension the Throat in the Head) for the religion, whilst the doctrine of *śūnyatā* of the Madhyamaka School was derived from the Heart centre (thence the Heart in the Head). Because Asaṅga was the 'human speaker' of Maitreya ('the latter's utterance of them reproduces Buddha's speech') means that Asaṅga functioned

⁵² The constitution of the Head centre will be detailed in volumes 4 and 5 of this *Treatise on Mind*. The introductory information introduced here, plus by extension the hagiographies of all Buddhist sages and savants, can be correlated and adapted by Buddhist historians with what is provided in the later volumes to produce many interesting insights as to the esoteric history of the religion.

as a Throat centre, thus the doctrine of the Yogācāra is a Throat centre expression manifesting in such a way that the twelve main petals of the Head lotus could be compassionately awakened.

The Heart centre is located centrally between the Base of Spine and Head centres. It empowers the activity of the Bodhisattvas, engendering the powers of the eight *mahābodhisattvas* in accord to the movement of its *prāṇas* in the eight directions in space.⁵³ On the other hand, the five main tiers of the Head centre are embodied by the qualities of the five Dhyāni Buddhas. The doctrine of *sūnyatā* concerns the 'middle between all extremes', which is what the Heart represents. Its true foundation is the energy or potency of love (compassion). The Yogācāra doctrine of the *ālayavijñāna* on the other hand, is that of the mind/Mind, needed to awaken the Head centre which is specifically constituted to process and embody the Fiery Element. The Yogācāra therefore exemplifies the wisdom aspect of the dual Love-Wisdom Ray.

Like the *yin-yang*⁵⁴ motion one doctrine counterbalances the other, making the expression of the *buddhadharma* more complete. The Yogācāra represents the feminine (*iḍā*) and the Madhyamaka the masculine (*piṅgalā*) view. The interrelation helps prevent both doctrines from becoming extremes. With respect to the other extant religious presentations they are effectively both expressions of the *madhyamapratipad*, the middle way or path between extremes of eternalism and nihilism, and thereby complimentary to each other. The way of the Mind overcomes the extreme of eternalism by its fluidity, thereby not identifying with any fixed 'permanent' object in space. The way of the Heart overcomes nihilism by the compassion developed when everything is integrated in the Void that is undefinable by mind. The energy of compassion can be considered a defining *effect* of the experience of *sūnyatā*. Consequently it is the driving energy impelling the Bodhisattva to act. The import of this dual expression is veiled in the important term *bodhicitta*,⁵⁵ where the *bodhi* part represents the

53 Throughout this series the nature of these eight directions shall be detailed, rather than adding an additional two directions (making 'the ten directions of space') that incorporate the past and future directions to the eight main ones.

54 Yin-yang, the union of male and female (Tib. Yab-yum) principles in Nature.

55 *Bodhicitta*: the Heart's Mind, the Mind of enlightenment. The power or force

compassionate force, and the *citta* part the attributes of mind that are the foundation for the expression of wisdom. This integration is the basis to the Mahāyāna stream of Buddhism.

When we observe the two major preceding Theravādin schools, the Sautrāntika and the Sarvāstivādin-Vaibhāṣika, we find that they derived their essential doctrines from two major *chakras* below the diaphragm, the Solar Plexus centre (*maṇipūra chakra*) and the Sacral centre (*svādiṣṭhāna chakra*). The Buddha presented the foundational or Base of the Spine *chakra* teachings.

Kalupahana explains the differences between these two schools of thought:

The Sarvāstivāda concluded their analysis of *dharma*s with the recognition of ultimate discrete atomic elements which they were unable to put together even with a theory of four basic relations. The result was that they were compelled to admit a singularly metaphysical conception of “self-nature” (*svabhāva*) to account for the experienced continuity of such discrete phenomena. This self-nature could not be looked upon as something impermanent and unchanging, for that would be to defeat the very purpose for which it was formulated in the first place. Therefore they insisted that this self-nature (*svabhāva*, *dravya*) of *dharma*s remain during all three periods of time⁵⁶...One of the schools that reacted against this conception of “self-nature”, ... was the Sautrāntika school of Buddhism. As its name implies, this school was openly antagonistic to the “treatises” (*śāstra*) and insisted upon returning to the “discourses” (*sūtrānta*) as sources for the study of the Buddha-word⁵⁷....Even though the Sautrāntikas were openly critical of the substantialist conception of *dharma* advocated by the Sarvāstivādins, their reluctance to abandon the theory of moments (*kṣaṇa*) left them with the difficult task of explaining the experienced continuity in the individual person. The emergence of schools like “personalists” (*pudgala-vāda*) and “transmigrationists” (*samkrānti-vāda*), closely related to and sometimes identical with the

productive of awakened realisations, enlightenment that emanates from the Heart centre. The compassionate force of the liberating Mind. It is the mind of pure perfection, the authentic nature of Mind.

56 D. J. Kalupahana, Trans., *Mūlamadhyamakakārikā of Nāgārjuna. The Philosophy of the Middle Way*, (Motilal Banarsidass, Delhi, 1999), 22.

57 Ibid.

Sautrāntikas, is indicative of the solutions that this school had to offer in order to overcome the difficulties arising from the acceptance of a theory of moments.

The Sarvāstivāda and Sautrāntika schools thus presented a rather complicated set of theories, all contributing to philosophical confusion. The former perceived a "self-nature" (*svabhāva*) in the cause and emphasized the identity (*ekatva*) of cause and effect, while the latter, seeing no such "self-nature" but merely perceiving "other-nature" (*para-bhāva*), insisted upon the difference (*nānatva*) between cause and effect. The Sarvāstivāda conception of self-nature (*svabhāva*) was extended to all phenomena, including the human personality, while the Sautrāntikas, denying self-nature in phenomena, surreptitiously introduced a conception of self or person (*ātman, pudgala*) in a human personality.⁵⁸

Here we can see that with their conception of self-nature in all phenomena the Sarvāstivādins derived their understanding via the attributes derived from the awakened Sacral centre, as this *chakra* is concerned with the vitalisation of the sum of the bodily form. The Sautrāntika derived their theory of 'self in persons' via impressions derived from the awakened Solar Plexus centre, which is the centre of the self-will, from whence the 'I' concept derives. We can therefore account for the evolution of Buddhism, from the centres below the diaphragm: the Base of the Spine, Sacral and Solar plexus centres (the Buddha's teachings, plus that of the early schools), to those above the diaphragm being embodied by the Mahāyāna schools. Finally we have the centres in the Head, where general Tantrayāna associated with revelation of the nature of the *dharmakāya* relates to the awakening of the Ājñā centre of Buddhism. The epoch of Maitreya will awaken the complete significance of the Head lotus, revealing many esoteric insights not possible before. All necessarily contribute to the complete bodily form of Buddhism as far as its psychic constitution is concerned, just as the *chakras* are necessary for the functioning of the human body.⁵⁹

⁵⁸ Ibid., 22-23.

⁵⁹ This exposé is presented in terms of the *chakras* because such considerations are rarely thought of, but lies at the heart of all thinking of those that have progressed through yogic processes, as have all the Buddhist philosophers. It is after all a precedence set by the Buddha himself.

The psychic constitution (*nāḍī* system) is the true human unit, as the external corruptible form (the *māyāvīrūpa*) is a body of illusion that automatically reflects whatever energies manifest through the *nāḍīs*.

The course of evolution outlined above hints at the significant millennial planning by the Council of Bodhisattvas whereby they chose a sequenced incarnating process that best suits the compassionate education of humanity according to the collective wisdom (*sarvajñāna*) of their united meditations.⁶⁰

With the above in mind we can see that the only true way for one to properly interpret sacred scriptures and the writings of the major Buddhist metaphysicians is to develop the same form of meditative receptiveness as they did, either via the Heart centre, the Throat centre, or via the lower centres for the Theravādin schools. This does not mean that the Head centre was not awakened, but rather that the *prāṇas* that flowed through it to produce its awakening were principally from the lower centres, hence producing Earthy, Watery, Fiery or Airy forms of liberation.

The teachings concerning liberation by comprehending the nature of *dharmakāya* (hereafter called the Dharmakāya Way) necessitates the complete awakening of the Head and Ājñā centres, whereby Aetheric *prāṇas* become dominant. The Throat, Heart and Head lotuses are capable of producing higher transcendental wisdom. If the Fiery energy from the Throat centre dominates then the *ālayaviññāna* enlightenment is possible. If the Airy then the *sūnyatā* enlightenment occurs (for which the *prajñāpāramita* teachings lay the foundation) that produces direct spontaneous insight, without the conceptual process (*pratyakṣa*). All is possible according to a *yogin's* capacity and Bodhisattva level. This does not mean that the higher forms of awakening are not possible for the present Theravādin schools, as always (even in the early formative period of Buddhism) an exceptional *yogin* can appear therein, but the disposition of the teachings favour the *ālayaviññāna* enlightenment, exoterically viewed as the *arhat* accomplishment.

60 It should be obvious for those that have contemplated the actions of Bodhisattvas that they work collectively with a united meditation-Mind as how best to alleviate the ignorance and suffering in the world, according to humanity's available *karma* and predisposition to generate *kleśas* (dissident emotions) and *saṃskāras*. Depending upon the course of action of humanity, so the Bodhisattvas can fine-tune their incarnations to assist. Nothing is haphazard, or left to chance, and esoteric law is obeyed in all their undertakings.

Levels of interpretation

This statement by Griffith can be used to further illustrate the nature of right interpretation:

It is important, given the emphasis placed by many Buddhist theorists and more western interpreters, upon perception (*pratyakṣa*) and inferential reasoning (*anumāna*) as the only valid means of gaining knowledge (*pramāṇa*), to stress, as a corrective, the importance given here to authoritative persons as the guarantors of textually transmitted doctrinal knowledge.⁶¹

'Authoritative persons' are those who have proved themselves enlightened via awakening higher perceptions through Mahāyāna meditation techniques. The results of such revelations are recorded in their writings. If sentences 'express meaning' and a *sūtra* or *śāstra* is composed of a number of meaningful sentences, then it expresses the context of all of the meaningful sentences tied together to produce an overview or stream of revelation that is the sum of the content of each sentence. In this way all revelation proceeds. In the meditation-Mind, each sentence can be conceived as a visual import or image that can contain many strata or levels of understanding. The *sūtra* or *śāstra* is the completed meditation sequence.

Griffith further states:

It is an ancient and standard Buddhist claim that the attainment of true wisdom somehow transcends language, and that the sphere of discursive awareness in which doctrine-expressing sentences necessarily have their being, although essential, is significant primarily because the claims made in that sphere are instrumentally effective in producing nondiscursive awareness (*jñāna*).⁶²

*Jñāna*⁶³ thus must be developed by anyone wishing to properly interpret, without which comprehension of higher revelation is not

61 Griffith, 41.

62 Griffith, 55.

63 It would be better to use the word *prajñā* here, because though *jñāna* can be interpreted as pristine cognition (of a Buddha Mind) it is a flexible term and is sometimes translated as 'worldly knowledge'. *Prajñā* on the other hand is generally translated as analytical wisdom, discriminative awareness, or transcendental knowledge.

possible. The wise must explain the doctrines of the texts in the most skilful way so that those without understanding can receive valid insights and develop such ability themselves.

There are seven modes of interpretation (keys) presented at the end of my book *Karma and the Rebirth of Consciousness* that should be utilised if the esotericism of a sacred text is to be understood. They denote the way the enlightened veil the wealth of their teachings through symbolism, numerology, the law of correspondences, astrological verities, allegory, physiological analogy, and esoteric considerations (such as knowledge of the subtle body and its functions). The nature of the language, symbolism, and way of transmission by the enlightened of information presented to the unenlightened is necessarily conveyed in such a manner. A vast amount of information can thereby be compressed in a short well written and coded text. Such understanding is necessary to rightly interpret sacred scriptures.

A principle aim of this series is to reveal the context of many of these keys, therefore analysis of some texts shall be in far greater depth than would normally be the case. The many levels of meaning in the writings of the enlightened can therefore be revealed as well as the shortcomings of many conventional assumptions.

The student should consider the levels of interpretation and the factor of relativity in everything considered sacred. Without comprehension of how a form of truth stands relative to something else then the danger of concretion of information and undue emphasis on things relatively insignificant manifests. The more subtle, but far more embracive interpretation will then be missed. The factor of relativity will of necessity be utilised throughout this treatise.

Griffith states further:

This location of textual authority either in something akin to revelation (in the case of texts communicated by Maitreya to Asaṅga), or in the transmission of the insights of an authoritative human teacher through a line of reliable preservers and transmitters of those insights (through a *guruparamparā*) is not peculiarly Buddhist. It is, rather, pan-Indian, a feature of śāstric discourse generally. Its presence in the doctrinal digests is another indication of the extent to which Buddhist theorizing had, by the third or fourth century, entered the mainstream of Indian

virtuoso intellectual life⁶⁴.....Some of the terminology used to describe the authoritativeness of these texts—their teaching is *abhrānta*, without error; their composers have *uttamaprajñā*, supreme discernment, or are like a second Buddha—sounds, indeed, as though one should assimilate the kind of authority given these texts to that given the text of the Bible by some Christian fundamentalists.⁶⁵

The concept of *guruparamparā*, or of lineage traditions, is an important consideration in Buddhism and Hinduism, and rightfully so. It was essential in the past when books were comparatively scarce, and often the most sacred instructions or commentaries were not written down, but were 'ear whispered' from preceptor or guru to students, through a lineage or series of beings that have evolved to take the place (becoming the 'son') of the preceding guru. This was the way that the most sacred teachings were safeguarded in any particular school of thought. They remained sacred thereby, ensuring that the quality of teachings stayed at a very high level, so that the student would be assured of the best possible means to enlightenment if he/she found the right (enlightened) guru, to be initiated into an instruction lineage. The secrets of initiation into the mysteries of any particular lineage always took much time and earnest dedication, necessitating special skills to master. The student had to prove him or herself worthy. It was also necessary for some of the more dangerous Tantric and yogic practices to be safeguarded in this way.

However, apart from safeguarding against dangerous Tantric and yogic practices, the concept of *guruparamparā* is nowadays not as important as it used to be. This is because of the nature of modern mass-communications; the widespread availability of books containing an ever-increasing amount of formerly esoteric information in a translated comprehensible form. Also, the modern student has generally developed further and faster intellectually than his predecessors and thus can comprehend far quicker the nature of the information in manuals and texts. Shortcuts to learning have been developed, leading to many more people gaining individualistic forms of self-enlightenment or realisations. This does not obviate the need, ultimately, for an

64 Griffith, 40.

65 Ibid.

enlightened one to be found that can lead the *śrāvaka* ('hearer', or pious attendant of the doctrine) into the higher mysteries of the meditation-Mind. It does however mean that much of the preliminary learning can be wisely and relatively quickly learned from books, (such as the present one) thus quickening the process of right interpretation and hence comprehension as to the way to enlightenment.

Dogmatism of all types must be carefully eliminated in one's search for truth and ultimate meaning. One should always strive to be as broadminded as possible and thus avoid adhering to doctrines that purport that they are 'without error' or that 'their composers have *uttamaprajñā*, supreme discernment, or are like a second Buddha', simply because it is so claimed by the majority of the community of which one happens to be a part. The teachings must undergo the most rigorous testings that the student can apply before acceptance. He/she must remain open-minded and be capable of accepting other teachings, if such come that may prove better, or that might shed further light upon the difficult passages that has not yet been properly comprehended. The student must always be wary of quick interpretations and commonplace understandings, as much imperceptible to the unenlightened lies hidden in the scriptures. I have already stated that enlightenment is relative, and that there are many levels of interpretation. This means that the level or signposts of interpretation continue to be raised, depending upon the level of enlightenment one possesses.

A statement by D.S. Lopez, Jr. is helpful here:

Tibetan exegetes refined the process of determining whether a statement was of interpretable meaning through the delineation of four criteria:

1. The intended meaning (*dgongs pa*)
2. The foundation of the intention (*dgongs gzhi*)
3. The motive (*dgos pa*)
4. The contradiction if taken literally (*dnogs la gnod byed*)

Each of these requires discussion. The intended meaning (*dgongs pa*, *abhiprāya*) is what the Buddha says—that is, what he intends his audience to understand. This intended meaning is multiple and hence difficult to determine⁶⁶.....In any case, the intended meaning must

66 D.S. Lopez, Jr., 'On the Interpretation of the Mahayana Sutras', Ed., D. S. Lopez, Jr., *Buddhist Hermeneutics*, (Motilal Banarsidass, Delhi, 1993), 55.

differ from the Buddha's own knowledge of reality in order for the statement to be interpretable (*neyārtha*). This knowledge of reality is the foundation of the intention (*dgongs gzhi*), the truth or fact that the Buddha has in mind when he says what is not ultimately true. The motivation (*dgos pa, prayajana*) is the Buddha's purpose, based on his knowledge of the capacities and needs of his disciples, in teaching what is not actually the case. The last criterion, the contradiction, if taken literally (*dnig la gnod byed, mukhyārthabādhā*), refers to the contradiction by reasoning and by definitive scriptures if the statement were accepted without interpretation.⁶⁷

Regarding the statement: 'In any case, the intended meaning must differ from the Buddha's own knowledge of reality in order for the statement to be interpretable', the question to be asked is why should the 'Buddha's own knowledge of reality' *not* be interpretable? We could answer that his enlightened perception simply is, i.e., 'is definitive' and therefore there is no interpretation needed, or indeed is not possible with the discriminative mind. Here we are again involved with the argument *re* what is 'definite in meaning' and what is 'interpretable', explained earlier. Therefore when we say 'not interpretable' we must add the qualifier 'by whom?' This then makes the statement more correct, especially when we look to those that may be functioning at any of the levels of enlightenment earlier explained. Once something has been comprehended then it has been interpreted. This also includes what is in a Buddha's Mind. He automatically interprets on many levels of perception at once, otherwise he could not explain anything properly.

The intended meaning may indeed be 'multiple' and hence 'difficult to determine', whilst the quality of the effort required to overcome ignorance by students is an important consideration for spiritual teachers. The evocation of considerable effort by students is preferred to spoon-feeding them with information. The intention is for them to learn to overcome *saṃsāra* through mastery of their *saṃskāric* impediments. However, what is interpretable or not interpretable depends upon the target audience. A Buddha has the ability to alter his language to make everything interpretable as well as to give the experience of *sūnyatā* to those qualified to receive it if he so wishes.

67 Ibid., 55-56.

They then can correctly interpret that experience. Such an interpretation is not necessarily different from a Buddha's own interpretation. Indeed, it is not really possible for a Buddha and a high grade Bodhisattva to be in disagreement about 'things', there is just a vaster capacity of content or context in a Buddha's Mind.

All things in a Buddha's Mind can be perceived by a fully enlightened being whose *sāmadhi* (meditative concentration) is *śūnyatā*, which according to the above definition is 'definite in meaning', but which will be viewed as relative to 'something else' in the Buddha's Mind, because though *śūnyatā* is the state of residence of that Mind it is not exclusive of the 'other'. We can state the above because we incorporate in our understanding the consideration that what is contained and revealable in a Buddha's Mind may be vaster and more subtle than in a ('lesser') enlightened being's Mind, but this does not abnegate comprehension. That vastness is yet to be fully attained by the Bodhisattva, but nevertheless its nature and general paradigm is experienced, and interpreted. Such interpretation, however, must not be thought of in terms of empirical deduction, but rather, as a spontaneous non-conceptual revelatory identification with the *tathatā* that is the Buddha Mind, as per the focus of meditation.

The next point is the 'foundation of the intention', 'the truth or fact that the Buddha has in mind when he says what is not ultimately true'. For example, the erroneous version of the doctrine of *karma* as was then expounded, as explained in my book *Karma and the Rebirth of Consciousness*. It is the perspective or angle of vision that determines the truth or otherwise of something. Many presented formulations are true in the current context but may not be true when viewed from a different perspective; when greater more embracing knowledge has been accrued. However, everything a Buddha says is true, or more precisely, interpretable as part of a greater truth, once the code that his teaching is veiled by has been properly comprehended.⁶⁸ This indicates the way the *dharma* manifests. Errors are perceived because only part of a more wholesome truth has been revealed and this 'part' is not seen

68 Even the erroneous doctrine of transmigration of consciousness into animal forms dealt with in my former book is correct from one perspective.

in its proper context by the interpreter.⁶⁹ This produces the problems of the 'foundation of intention'. To be able to see what 'the foundation of intention' actually is in a Buddha's Mind necessitates someone who is similarly (though not necessarily as comprehensively) enlightened. Having developed a similar Mind one can peer into the intention. Another method, where ascertaining the Buddha's intention is possible is for the Buddha to convey such ideation to one who can receive telepathic impressions from him at the appropriate time. The presumption here is that the words attributed to a Buddha are correct, though this may not necessary be the case. Misrepresentation is always possible.

Lopez describes the third criteria as, 'The motivation is the Buddha's purpose, based on his knowledge of the capacities and needs of his disciples, in teaching what is not actually the case'. As above stated he does not teach what is actually not the case, but rather uses symbolism, allegory, etc., through which the true meaning can be derived and evaluated once such language is properly understood. Often the limitations of the interpreter's mind are at fault when he thinks that the teaching is false, because he has not taken a broad enough view, has not properly understood the meditative intent, or the coded mode the enlightened speak by.

Finally we are told 'the contradiction, if taken literally, refers to the contradiction by reasoning and by definitive scriptures if the statements were accepted without interpretation'. There will always be seeming contradictions if esoteric information is presented to those who have not evolved the capacity to understand. The wise one always takes possible misrepresentation of what he had said or written into account, and observes these effects over a long duration of time. Inevitably such 'contradictions of reason' must be rectified, and the wise one considers this part of the planned education. *Karma's* hand will deal mechanisms of comprehension in the normal course of events, whereby those that have formed wrong or contradictory opinions in past (lives) will learn to rectify them according to the enlightened view. It is just a matter of

69 One should also note that many things may have been purported to have been said by the Buddha by later authors that in fact were never his actual statements. Only enlightened beings can factually determine what was actually said through recourse to their meditation-Minds. Historical precedence and the logical metaphysics presented in the *sūtras* infer that they were actually the Buddha's words. We then impute that this is so.

time. Therefore ‘ultimately’ (to use the Mādhyamika form of logic) there is no contradiction, if the information proceeds from an enlightened being. If partially enlightened then error may exist producing logical contradictions. Such also need to be rectified over time.

The earnest student must always try to discover uttered or written contradictions by those that are not enlightened. Many are the claimants to enlightenment; rare are those who have attained. Such forms of illogic are major sources of *karma* for the teacher. The seeming ‘contradictions’ by an enlightened one are always based upon established truth, and present deeper insights awakening the ripened student’s intuitive faculties. They lead to enlightenment, contrary to the forms of illogic presented by the unworthy. One way of discerning the difference is that the enlightened one *never* feeds glamour, pride, or forms of shallow thinking in the student, which offer quick rewards for relatively little effort. Nor do the enlightened proscribe exercises that cause pain and suffering, except in cases where cleansing *karma* is necessary, or through the many renunciations one must make of all attachments to ephemeral things. Nor is it possible to buy teachings from the wise. They give freely to all worthy supplicants. Worthiness comes from past life attainments and preparedness in this life for the teachings.

Esoteric statements made by the enlightened may appear contradictory because interpretation is determined by the spiritual standing of the viewer. Those that interpret concretely will never understand more than the most basic level of the statements made by the enlightened. The methods chosen to interpret spiritual information accords to the level of awakening attained in past lives of achievement:

1. One may be an exemplary Bodhisattva, well founded in enlightened reasoning from many lives of philosophic and meditative investigation. Being Initiated⁷⁰ into the mysteries associated with the doctrine, immediately an insight or revelatory response is invoked.
2. A beginner upon the Bodhisattva path will have well-meaning, well thought-out responses derived from *sūtras* and related hermeneutic, but his/her deductions may miss the mark for the most esoteric presentations, which are generally contradictory to conventional

70 I will capitalise the words Initiate and Initiation in this series when it indicates the process of becoming enlightened, or one who is so.

thinking. Such a one generally has formed opinions as to the nature of enlightenment and its process, rather than the fluid, broadminded, revelatory approach of one farther travelled upon the road.

3. The intelligentsia, who see things in terms of the logic derived from this world and its phenomena. They possess much learning, but generally desire concrete proof for the subjective things that are immediately accessible to those of the first category.
4. Those driven by emotional-minds, who accept quick, often shallow-reasoned assumptions about this or that speculative philosophic argument, generally what best appeals to their emotions. Their thought life is glazed and self-opinionated. The problems concerning the 'foundation of the intention' arise when endeavouring to teach this vast and very broad category of humanity, because they do not listen properly. Their short-lived attention span and shallow thinking is catered for by simple, generally allegorical or metaphorical teachings. They are esoterically blind, and deep philosophic constructs fly past them.
5. Those engrossed in purely sensual and selfish activities. They care little for higher philosophical speculations, or the *dharma*. They are dull of hearing and what reasoning abilities they have developed is prostituted for selfish or sensual gain.

It should also be noted that the statement found in certain texts that the Buddha spoke nothing at all, or when Nāgārjuna said that he presented no doctrine at all, is only true from an absolutist sense. An example is the quote from the *Sūtra of the Adornment of Pristine Cognition's Appearance which Penetrates the Scope of All Buddhas*:

Nothing at all is seen by the buddhas, nor heard, nor intended, nor known, nor is the object of omniscience. Nothing has been said or expressed by the buddhas. The buddhas neither speak nor make expression. The buddhas will not resort to speech and they will not resort to expression. The buddhas do not become manifestly, perfectly enlightened. The buddhas have not caused anything to become manifestly, perfectly enlightened. The buddhas have not renounced conflicting emotions. The buddhas have not actually disclosed purity. Nothing at all is seen by the buddhas, nor heard, nor tasted, nor smelt,

nor known, nor cognised. If you ask why this is the case, Mañjuśrī, it is because all things are utterly pure from the beginning.⁷¹

The ‘beginning of what’, one may rightfully ask, because if ‘Nothing at all is seen by the buddhas, nor heard, nor tasted, nor smelt, nor known, nor cognised’ how can there be possibly a beginning? If there is a beginning, then there has to be a beginning of ‘something’, in which case the senses and cognition, etc, are activated. This means that then the Buddha can speak, will be heard, be made known, etc. The above quote is based upon consideration of absolute truth, whereas clearly one needs to incorporate conventional truth, if any soteriological consideration is to take effect for those whom a Buddha has incarnated.

Thurman states:

Nāgārjuna, in the climactic chapter of his *Wisdom*, in which he analyzes the concept of “Nirvana” and finally equates Nirvana and samsara, anticipates the objections of those who will consider him to have made some authoritarian statement about Nirvana by listing a version of the “Fourteen Unpronounced Verdicts” of the Buddha and concluding with the following extraordinary verse: “The quiescence of all perceptions and fabrications, that is the Highest Bliss! No doctrine at all was ever taught by any Buddha to anyone.”⁷²

Such a statement can only be asserted because of considerations of the Buddha residing in the Void. It is *untrue* when looked at in the context of the phrase ‘There is no differentiation (*viśeṣaṇa*) of Saṃsāra from Nirvāṇa, there is no differentiation of Nirvāṇa from Saṃsāra’.⁷³ Because in translating from *śūnyatā* to *saṃsāra* words are conveyed, meaning is relayed to consciousnesses, which then have the opportunity to act upon them in one way or another. If the Buddha literally spoke nothing at all then he would have chosen the *pratyekabuddha*⁷⁴ path after his *nirvāṇa* (which he seriously considered for a short while). But the

71 *Sarvabuddhaviśayātārājñānālokaṃkārasūtra*, (Dudjom Rinpoche, Jikdrel Yeshe Dorje. *The Nyingma School of Tibetan Buddhism, Its Fundamentals and History*, (Wisdom Publications, Boston, 1991), 298.

72 Thurman, 128.

73 Wayman, 80.

74 A contemplative, self-absorbed in his/her own enlightenment.

unassailable fact is that he did choose to speak (rather than remain silent) and therefore we have what is known as the *buddhadharma* today. There are times, however, when a Buddha teaches in silence, in meditative equipoise, for those that have the ability to receive instructions in this way. Then he can be considered to not 'speak nor make expression' etc.

It is wrong to fall into extremist absolutist positions of the above type because they posit only a small part of the overall view. (Thus interpretation in reference to 'speaking nothing at all' should consist of no more than a footnote or two in philosophical texts.) The subject of how the Buddha communicated with those caught up in *saṃsāra*, as well as to the deities, *ḍākinīs*, Bodhisattvas and all the other categories of beings, needs a better dictum than zealously saying that he spoke nothing.

Therefore we say that he spoke a lot, in many different ways: verbally, telepathically, (his thoughts could be perceived clairvoyantly), and through yogic direct perception as well, according to the nature of what was needed by the recipient. Certainly the foundation of what he spoke stemmed from the Void, but in reality it came from a vaster source, the *dharmakāya*, the nature of which the proponents of 'no speech' did not consider. The Void/*sūnyatā* is not the All, the *dharmakāya* is, and certainly therein there is speech, mantric Sound, but perceptible only to those whose basis is the Void. Such sounds no human ear can perceive, unless the *chakras* are ablaze with Light supernal. Literally the creation and destruction of whole galaxies of concepts can rest in each mantric sentence. Words and concepts are conveyed in silence, in the utmost stillness, where even the sound of a 'pin drop' from such a source, if emanated wrongly or aberrantly, could shatter a formed world.

Salutations to the great reforming ones!
The victory songs of all Jinās wings them on.
Om