

## SECTION I

### CHAPTER I

#### Introduction

Some knowledge of the life of the ŚĀKYAMUNI *Buddha* and the historical development of Buddhism on the part of the reader is presumed in all that follows, but it may be helpful to re-state here a few elementary facts which every Tibetan takes for granted.

"We believe that during the present Kalpa (aeon) the incarnations of a thousand supreme Buddhas will take place in this world. Like ourselves, these Buddhas were living beings before they attained perfection. These Buddhas have the power to project reincarnations of their mind, body, and speech into millions of forms within a moment of time. And they do this for the benefit of all living beings of worlds like ours. Each of these supreme incarnations will preach his own doctrine, and will work eternally for the salvation of all living beings."<sup>1</sup>

We regard the ŚĀKYAMUNI *Buddha* as one of the thousand *Buddhas*. He was born in a royal family in India over two thousand five hundred years ago and lived his early life as a prince. Contact with old age, disease and death made him decide to renounce his princely life and become an ascetic at the age of twenty-nine.

"After he attained Enlightenment, the Perfection of Buddhahood, at Buddha Gaya, he preached three different sermons, each at a different place in the part of India known as Bihar. The first, at Varanasi (Benares), was on the Four Noble Truths ... It was mainly addressed to the Sravakas (hearers) who were people gifted spiritually but of limited outlook. The second sermon, at Giridhākuta, was on Sunyata (Voidness), the non-existence of an ultimate self-nature ... This was addressed to Mahayanists, or followers of the Great Way, who were men of very high intellect. The third sermon, at Vesali, was intended primarily for Mahayanists of a lesser calibre. Thus, he not only preached on Sutras for Mahayanists and Hinayanists (followers of the Greater and Lesser Ways, the two main schools of Buddhism), but also preached many Tantras for Mahayanists."<sup>2</sup>

Within Buddhism are to be found a great number of systems of teaching and tenets but all of them can be grouped under the two major traditions of

*Theg-chen (Mahāyāna)* or the Great Vehicle, and *Theg-dman (Hīnayāna)* or the Lesser Vehicle. In order to avoid having to enumerate these different systems here and to facilitate their identification separate diagrams are given of the various branches and sub-branches.<sup>3</sup> In subsequent chapters an attempt has been made to give a general and brief outline of the *Mahāyāna* and *Hīnayāna* traditions. This is not the place for a detailed explanation of the tenets of the Buddhist faith, and only such explanation is given as is necessary to an understanding of the works of art under consideration. For a fuller account of the tenets of Buddhism the reader is referred to the books of reference cited in the footnote.<sup>4</sup>

By the careful study of these works of reference it will become evident that the *Buddha* when he delivered his teaching took into account the spiritual inclination and intelligence of those he addressed, and taught them in an appropriate manner. In the same way, the truly learned men of old, both Indian and Tibetan, who over the years taught the words of the *Buddha* and made commentaries on them also bore in mind the location in time and place and the mental aptitude of the people they taught, and varied and adapted their mode of instruction accordingly. Naturally, as a result of this there came into existence a large number of Buddhist systems of teaching and each of them had to be given a name. However, these systems of teaching are all inter-connected and form a sort of spiritual ladder which the devotee joins on a rung suited to his own spiritual state.

By the study of the books referred to above it will also be seen that certain words of the *Buddha*, spoken at different times, which at first appear to be contradictory, are really not so in fact. In the same way it will be seen that the teaching methods employed by the learned teachers and expounders of the *Buddha's* words, although appearing to differ on points, all fall within the framework of what the *Buddha* taught and do not represent alien doctrines. In the building of a house there are hundreds of different tools used. Although each of the tools

<sup>1</sup> Dalai Lama, *An Introduction to Buddhism*, 1965, page 4.

<sup>2</sup> Dalai Lama, *An Introduction to Buddhism*, 1965, page 5.

<sup>3</sup> See diagrams I and II.

<sup>4</sup> The major works of reference are: Sources nos. 22—25, 38, 78, 96, 97, 100, 115, 117, 126, 127, 159, 169, 178, 186—189, 209, 212, 227, 250, 296, 320 and 322.

differs in its form and function they all serve the same purpose — that of building a house. So it is with the different systems of teaching — their end is the same although their means differ.

Buddhism was first introduced in a small way to Tibet during the reign of king IHA THO-THO-RI GÑAN-BTSAN in 233 A.D.<sup>5</sup> Under the patronage of the religious kings, the three most well-known being SROŃ-BTSAN SGAM-PO (seventh century A.D.), king KHRI-SROŃ LDE'U-BTSAN (eighth century A.D.) and king KHRI RAL-PA-CAN (ninth century A.D.), Buddhism steadily spread despite a set-back under the repressive king GLAŃ-DAR-MA in the ninth century A.D. Many distinguished Indian and Tibetan scholars took part in the spreading of Buddhism in Tibet and in the translating of texts from Sanskrit into Tibetan.

In time various schools of Buddhism grew up in Tibet such as the *rÑin-ma*, *bKa'-brgyud*, *Sa-skya* and *dGe-lugs* sects, but all these schools adhere to the same teaching of *Theg-dman* (*Hinayāna*) — the Lesser Vehicle, and *Theg-chen* (*Mahāyāna*) — the Great Vehicle, including *rGyud-kyi theg-pa* (*Tantrayāna*) — the Tantric Vehicle — and all conform to the '*dul-ba* (*vinaya*) rules of discipline. Tibetan Buddhists do not separate these teachings, but pay equal respect to them all.

The collected teaching of the ŚĀKYAMUNI Buddha, translated from Sanskrit into Tibetan, are contained in the *bKa'-'gyur* scriptures. The vast collection runs into over one hundred volumes which can be grouped into three divisions. These three divisions are jointly called *sde-snod-gsum* (*tripiṭaka*) meaning literally, the 'three containers or receptacles'.

The three 'containers' are: *mdo-sde'i sde-snod* (*sūtrapiṭaka*) — the collection of discourses; '*dul-ba'i sde-snod* (*vinayapiṭaka*) — the collection of disciplines; and *mñon-pa'i sde-snod* (*abhidharma piṭaka*) — the collection of spiritual philosophy. Generally when one speaks of the *sde-snod-gsum* the *tantras* (*rgyud*) are included in and belong to the first division. There is however another mode of classification which excludes the *tantras* from the three collections and gives them separately. The *tantras* themselves are sub-divided into four sections.<sup>6</sup>

The Tibetan translation of commentaries by Indian scholars upon the ŚĀKYAMUNI Buddha's teachings are contained in the *bsTan-'gyur* which consists of over two hundred volumes.

## CHAPTER 2

### *Some General Points about Buddhism*

Because Tibetan art is largely religious in content we should first try to convey the meaning of the word *chos* (*dharma*). The word conveys ten different meanings.<sup>1</sup>

1. It can be applied to all 'knowable things'/ phenomena (*ses-bya*). This interpretation comes from the meaning 'to hold' which is one of the many meanings of the Sanskrit word *dharma*. In this sense the word refers to all conditioned states, those which can be seen by the human eye and which may possibly exist, which are said 'to hold' their own essential identity, in the same way that all phenomena 'hold' the characteristic of impermanence.

2. The second of the meanings implies a *lam* or 'path', for example 'the pure view' which is the 'path' of *ston-'ñid* (*śūnyatā*) — the view of emptiness — and all spiritual knowledge gained, through various levels of meditation, along the 'path' leading to the view of emptiness.

3. Thirdly it may mean *mya-nan-las 'das-pa*, meaning literally 'gone beyond suffering', which is the obtaining of *nirvāṇa* — liberation from *saṃsāra*. This meaning is another interpretation of the first meaning given above, 'to hold', though the sense here is 'to hold back' or to be saved from the sufferings of *saṃsāra*.

4. Fourthly *chos* means any 'object of the mind' — and includes all phenomena recognised by our six senses.

5. Fifthly *chos* may mean *bsod-nams* 'merit' or the 'good fortune', acquired by meritorious actions in previous existences, which enable one to practise the Buddha's teaching. For example, in order that the mind may concentrate on religion it is necessary that the body should be free from material worries

<sup>5</sup> Refer Tsepon W. D. Shakabpa, Tibet, A Political History, Yale University Press, 1967, page 24.

<sup>6</sup> See chapter 7 on *Tantrayāna*.

<sup>1</sup> References sources nos. 114 page 7 and 155 page 244.5.8.

and wants. Or again, to be born in a devout environment, or to be free from physical and mental infirmities are advantages which are conducive to religious progress, and these are said to be 'good fortune'.

6. Sixthly *chos* may mean 'life'. Respect for the lives of other creatures or the saving of the lives of other creatures are factors which will prolong one's life, possibly even one's present life.

7. Seventhly *chos* may mean the 'virtuous teaching' — 'words' (*gsun-rab*) — of the *Buddha* which clearly and unmistakably outlined the right and wrong course of action.

8. Eighthly *chos* means that which is to come to pass — the inevitable future, as for instance that to be born means to die. The inevitable nature of the human body is to be subject to ageing; every minute the new-born child lives also shortens its life and brings old age and death closer.

9. Ninthly *chos* may mean a prescribed course of conduct. For example a monk, by the very nature of his profession, is expected to observe certain rules of conduct.

10. Tenthly *chos* may mean the intrinsic behaviour-pattern of any object or group of objects. For instance the traditional customs and usages of any community — be it of country or caste — may be defined as its *chos*.

Of the ten meanings given above the most commonly understood meaning of *chos* is the 'virtuous teaching' of the *Buddha* (no. 7 above). This is because the 'virtuous teaching' of the *Buddha* can get rid of all the stains and defilements of *samsāra*. The basic tenets of the *Buddha's* teaching are embodied in the Four Noble Truths or '*phags-pa'i bden-pa-bzhi* (*catvāri āryasatyāni*) and those persons who practise the *Buddha's* teaching increase in virtue. The wide use of the word *chos* in this sense caused this meaning to be the one most commonly understood.

The basic tenets of the ŚĀKYAMUNI *Buddha's* teaching given in his first sermon at Varāṇasī are the Four Noble Truths — '*phags-pa'i bden-pa-bzhi*

(*catvāri āryasatyāni*). These are: True Sufferings, True Causes, True Cessations and True Paths.

True Sufferings — the first of the Four Noble Truths — means '*khor-ba* (*samsāra*) or cyclic existence. This is the vicious circle which consists of a succession of continuous existences in the many realms of birth. *Samsāra* is divided into three spheres — the realm of the five senses, the realm of form, and the realm of the formless. According to the forms of births found within *samsāra* *samsāra* can be divided into 'six kinds of beings' (*'gro-ba rigs-drug*). These are: *lha* (*deva*) — gods, *lha-ma-yin* (*asura*) — demi-gods, *mi* — human beings, *dud-'gro* — animals, *yi-dvags* (*preta*) — hungry ghosts, and those beings in *dmayal-ba* (hells). The first three divisions are known as *bde-'gro*, meaning beings in happy states; and the other three as *ñan-'gro*, meaning beings in suffering states (see Plate 6).

The second of the Four Noble Truths — True Causes — means *las* (*karma*) or actions, and *ñan-moñs* or afflictions. There are physical, verbal and mental actions, and they may be meritorious, non-meritorious or invariable.<sup>1</sup> We speak of 'accumulating actions'. We may experience the results of these 'accumulated actions' in this life, or the next or in any other of our future existences. There are *ritsa-ñon-drug*, six main afflictions: desire, anger, pride, ignorance, doubt (about Truths), and wrong-views. These are further divided into twenty subdivisions — *ñe-ñon ñi-bu*. The root of all afflictions is the mistaken view that all phenomena exist — whereas in truth all phenomena are empty of self-nature. Self-attachment stems from this wrong view.

True Cessations — the third of the Four Noble Truths — means the complete extinguishing of True Sufferings and True Causes. And the True Paths — the fourth of the Four Noble Truths — are the means by which these cessations are achieved.

When the True Causes of actions and afflictions are removed at the root one is released from the bondage of *samsāra*. This release is *thar-pa* (*mokṣa/nirvāṇa*) or liberation.

To recapitulate, in order to effect liberation from *samsāra* one has first to recognise what causes one

<sup>1</sup> "Karma has been defined as 'concordant action and reaction'. According to the higher schools of Buddhism, Karma has two aspects, known in Tibetan as Sempai Le and Sampa Le. Sempai Le is the latent stage of Karma in which physical action is yet to take shape; the stage where the impulse to act is subconscious. Sampa Le is the manifest stage in which physical and oral actions occur. With regard to its results, there are three kinds of Karma.

Meritorious Karma causes beings to take rebirth in the realms of gods, demi-gods, and men. Demeritorious Karma causes rebirth in the lower regions of animals, Pretas and hells. Finally, Achala Karma, Invariable Karma, causes beings to take rebirth in the upper worlds, Rupa and Arupa Dhātu, the worlds of the Form and the Formless."... Dalai Lama, An Introduction to Buddhism, 1966, page 11.

to be enmeshed in *samsāra*. All that we are in our present existence, all that we experience in the way of misery and joy is the effect of causes which lie in our past actions. Thus the starting point on the road to liberation is to have a thorough understanding of the vicious nature of *samsāra* and the nature of our actions and afflictions. Out of this conviction is then born *nes-'byuñ* — 'renunciation' — the resolution to turn one's back on worldly existence and to break out of *samsāra*. In order to achieve the final goal the basic codes of right conduct must be 'adhered to' (*blañ*) and accepted as the basis of one's moral behaviour; and correspondingly wrong conduct must be 'relinquished' (*span*). The mind continuity must purify itself and raise itself by degrees and eventually succeed in cutting off at the very roots the causes leading to rebirth. We can do this by choosing a suitable path from the many shown by the *Buddha*. Once one has attained liberation one is no longer subject to the cycle of rebirths, unless one voluntarily chooses to be reborn as in the case of some *bodhisattva*.

All the *śduḡ-bañal* (*duḡkha*)<sup>3</sup> — sufferings of this transmigratory existence — have as their sole cause the undisciplined mind. In order to get rid of one's misery one has first to discipline the mind. This can be done by first recognising one's wrong mental attitude and then replacing it with another. A religious mental attitude is the only one which offers a lasting solution. Non-mental agents such as medicines or drugs and other external agents cannot remove permanently the misery accompanying a wrong mental attitude. One should strive to get rid oneself of those causes which give rise to suffering and to perpetuate those causes which give rise to merit.

The basis of cultivating the right mental attitude is to observe the Ten Virtuous Rules relating to the body, speech and mind.<sup>4</sup>

These Ten Virtuous Rules are observed when one refrains from: taking life of any sort; stealing; adultery and perverted sexual practices; lying; slanderous speech; harsh and abusive language; frivolous talk; covetousness; the desire to harm others; and wrong views, such as holding anti *dharma* or false views concerning the *Buddha's* teaching.

In order to have a full understanding of when

these ten precepts are infringed one has to know exactly what the following constitute: the 'object' (of the action); the 'intention' (to distinguish between wrong committed wilfully while in a state of awareness, and wrong committed accidentally or in a state of ignorance); the 'effort' exerted towards executing the final goal; and the 'accomplishment' of the deed.

One should refrain from actions which contravene these ten precepts, and instead carry out actions which will bring merit. To control and discipline one's mind — that is the foundation stone on which the *Buddha's* teaching rests.

The actions of a person who, having come to discern the difference between merit and evil, proceeds to lead a virtuous life with the purpose of furthering his spiritual progress, all constitute *chos* (*dharma*); but if one's good deeds are motivated by the desire for gain in this present life, then these actions are not religious and do not constitute *chos*. All those beings who profess to be religious must be judged for the sincerity of their motivation by this criterion.

Compassion (*śñiñ-rje*) whereby one does not harm others but turns to follow a path of peace is the basis of the *Buddha's* teaching. When the *Buddha* taught what course of action one should take (i.e. what one should adhere to and what one should give up) he stated clearly that all our actions, whether good or bad, cause their corresponding effects. He did not merely tell us to observe such and such a rule without giving a reason. Instead he outlined the causes and their effects and left us a free choice of action.

The effects of one's actions — whether virtuous or otherwise — must be borne by the person concerned. No one, not even the *buddhas* or *bodhisattvas*, can help to wash away or remove with a gesture of the hands the ill effects of past actions. Nor can the *buddhas* or *bodhisattvas* transfer their accumulated spiritual attainments to another being. There is no short cut either to escape one's past demerits or to acquire fruits for which one has not worked. The only help available is the *Buddha's* teaching which shows a multitude of paths suitable for every mental level. By means of these, if one chooses a path most suited to one and pursues it with dedi-

<sup>3</sup> "Duhkha may be physical (pain) or mental (anguish), it refers to the facts of 'birth, old age, disease and death', to the common enough 'grief, lamentation, pain, anguish and despair', to being 'conjoined with what one does not like' and being 'separated from what one likes, to not getting what one wants'. The very components of our personality

are, because we grasp at them (as 'I', as 'mine'), bound up with dukkha." ...

Dalai Lama, *The Opening of the Wisdom-Eye*, Bangkok, 1968, p. 107.

<sup>4</sup> Reference sources nos. 121, 123, 298 page 88vb and 301.

cation putting all its principles into practice, one can reach a high spiritual level. The highest spiritual level in the *Hinayāna* tradition is the achievement of *thar-pa* (*mokṣa/nirvāna*) or liberation from *samsāra*; and in the *Mahāyāna* tradition it is the achievement of Buddhahood (*Saṅs-rgyas-kyi go-phan*) — the state of total enlightenment.

### CHAPTER 3

#### *The Three Jewels or Refuges*<sup>1</sup>

There is no means of access to the *Buddha's* teaching other than through seeking refuge in the Three Jewels — *dkon-mchog-gsum* (*triratna*) — the Three Rarest (and) Best.<sup>2</sup> These are the *saṅs-rgyas dkon-mchog* (*buddharatna*) — the *Buddha* Jewel; the *chos dkon-mchog* (*dharma ratna*) — the *Dharma* Jewel; and the *dge-'dun dkon-mchog* (*samgharatna*) — the *Samgha* Jewel.

The three names are already familiar enough to many people but that is not sufficient; their true meaning and full significance should be understood. Many texts<sup>3</sup> belonging to both the *Mahāyāna* and *Hinayāna* traditions give details of the Three Refuges, the manner in which one seeks refuge in them, the benefits which one receives as a result of having taken refuge in them and the precepts to be observed. To go into an explanation of the Three Refuges at this point may seem uncalled for, but as already mentioned in the Preface, one of the main tasks of this book is to provide a background for the explanation and interpretation of Tibetan art. It is therefore necessary to touch on those subjects which play a direct or indirect rôle in this task. The essential meaning of the Three Refuges will be treated here briefly.

As has been pointed out in the previous chapter the ultimate aim of those who practise the *dharma* is to gain either liberation from *samsāra* or the state of omniscience (total enlightenment). The one who shows the way and teaches us what refuge to take is a *buddha*, who is like a physician administering the right medicine. This is the *Buddha* Refuge. The

path shown is the *dharma* — the actual refuge — and it is likened to the medicine. This is the *Dharma* Refuge. The *Samgha* Refuge is like the nurse, a friend who helps one to achieve the actual refuge.

What then in more detail is a '*buddha* refuge', a '*dharma* refuge' and a '*samgha* refuge'?

A '*buddha* refuge' is a being who, for the sake of himself, has completely got rid of the 'two obscurations' (*sgrib-gñis*);<sup>4</sup> and who, for the sake of others, has gained complete wisdom. A '*buddha* refuge' possesses two '*buddha* bodies' — *chos-sku* (*dharma-kāya*) — the 'truth body';<sup>5</sup> and *gzugs-sku* (*rūpa-kāya*) — the 'form-body'. The 'truth body' is the mind of a *buddha* which is the 'accumulation of wisdom' (*ye-bes-kyi tshogs*) gained along his paths of progression leading to Buddhahood. *gzugs-sku* — the 'form-body' is the physical body of the *buddha* which is the 'accumulation of merit' (*bcod-nams-kyi tshogs*), gained by carrying out merit-earning deeds such as making prostrations, offerings, giving alms to the poor and so on.

The '*dharma* refuge' is the teaching of the *Buddha* and all spiritual knowledge from the stage of '*phags-pa* (*ārya*)'<sup>6</sup> onwards.

The '*samgha* refuge' is the community of monks — a minimum number of four fully-ordained Buddhist monks; or any one individual who has reached the rank of '*phags-pa* (*ārya*).

In order to seek refuge one must have fear and belief. If one is not afraid one will not think of seeking refuge. If one is aware and fears the sufferings to be found within *samsāra* and also the unsatisfactoriness of remaining static in a state of bliss after having achieved liberation from *samsāra*, one will automatically come to think of refuge. However it is not sufficient just to think of a refuge, one must seek the refuge and pursue it. In the same way, when one is hungry it is of no use thinking of food: one must look for it and satisfy the hunger by consuming the food. When one thinks of the Three Refuges in the light of the comparison made to a physician, medicine and nurse one will be convinced that they are the only ones worthy of giving

<sup>1</sup> General sources nos. 1, 10—12 page 92 (Lhasa edition) 53, 95 page 24.1.7., 103, 106, 110, 151, 158, 173, 182, 190, 192, 199—201, 204, 210, 231 and 251.

<sup>2</sup> The Three Rarest (and) Best are synonymous with the Three Refuges — *skyabs-gsum*.

<sup>3</sup> Refer sources nos. 94 page 19r3, 124, 179, 200 and 300.

<sup>4</sup> *sgrib-gñis* — 'two obscurations' include all samsaric misery and affliction which give rise to the darkness of

ignorance, and obscuration of omniscience, that is — direct cognition of all objects of knowledge.

<sup>5</sup> *Dharma-kāya*: The Spiritual Body in which all Truth, relative and absolute, is understood. Refer Dalai Lama, *The Opening of the Wisdom-Eye*, Bangkok, 1968, page 90f. 'having a body that is, or is characterized by the Doctrine ...' Franklin Edgerton, *Buddhist Hybrid Sanskrit Grammar and Dictionary*, Delhi, 1970 page 277.

<sup>6</sup> '*Phags-pa* (*ārya*) or an 'exalted being'. See chapter 5.

refuge. When should one start to seek refuge? The answer to this is — immediately! The reason for this urgency is made clear in the following paragraphs.

In order to practise the *dharma* (which is the refuge) it is necessary first of all to be born as a human being, to have a qualified spiritual teacher to guide one, to have the opportunity to hear the *Buddha's* teaching and to want to pursue the *dharma*. When these conditions are all present, preparations are complete for the practice of the *dharma*. The opportunity to practise the *dharma* is one which is difficult to come by again, and one must recognise that the present is the rare opportunity which one must utilise to practise the actual refuge — the *dharma*.

Then again if one does not start to practise the *dharma* this very moment it might be too late. It is certain that one will die, it is uncertain when one will die. Therefore, no one can guarantee the order in which 'tomorrow' and 'the next life' will follow, for the next life might well come before the start of the next day. When one is dying none of such things as relatives, friends, wealth, power, influence or rank are of any use to one. It is only the *dharma* which can be of benefit to one at the time of one's lonely death. After death life does not go out like a light, without continuation, but will continue, taking birth in another form. The spheres in which one will be born will depend on the strength of the merit and demerit of one's past actions. If one takes birth in one of the 'suffering states' one will not be able to endure the immeasurable sufferings in those states. One should seek now a refuge to save one from those states, because when one is actually suffering in those states one will not be capable of even the thought of seeking refuge. Therefore it is imperative that one make use of the present opportunity.

It is important that followers of the *Buddha's* teaching, like the followers of other religions, should have strong faith in their religious beliefs. But the faith should not be of the kind which regards as religious obstinate and blind adherence to the religious codes, or the enduring of physical hardships. What is important is to have the right frame of mind wherewith to examine and understand the religious codes which one is to follow. To examine one's beliefs and codes of conduct is both essential and to be encouraged, and they should be of such

substance that they stand up to examination. The faith born out of total conviction after such examination is the strongest and the best.

Images of the *Buddha*, *bodhisattva*, *bla-ma* (spiritual teachers), deities and so on, holy texts and writings, the 'Twelve Divisions of the Sayings of the *Buddha*'<sup>7</sup> are not themselves the real Three Refuges and should not be mistaken for them. They are only symbolic representations and serve to remind us of the Three Refuges. But since they play such a vital part in directing the devotee's thoughts towards the precious Three Refuges a great amount of merit can be earned by those who regard these symbols with deep devotion and veneration — merit equivalent to what one would gain were they the real Three Refuges.<sup>8</sup>

It is for this reason that the religious kings of Tibet (like king SROŃ-BTSAN SGAM-PO and many others from the days of old right up to recent times) had numerous images and temples made such as have since become famous. For the same reason, Tibetans retain in their daily lives the traditional practice of having a place of worship — be it a private chapel, an altar or a simple shrine — the size and elaborateness of which varies according to what room-space and expense the individual can afford. These places of worship are attended to continuously with devotional offerings, including the lighting of butter-lamps.

Tibetans also retain the practice of carrying gold or silver reliquaries, in the shape of miniature shrines, on the person when out on a journey. Inside these reliquaries are placed miniature statues and other relics (See Plates 1 & 2). They serve both as a reminder of what they stand for, and as a means of obtaining grace and protection from harm.

#### CHAPTER 4

##### *Additional Kinds of Refuge*

bla-ma yi-dam byañ-chub sems-pa  
rañ sañs-rgyas ñan-thos dpa'-bo mkha'.gro  
chos-skyoñ/sruñ-ma

In Buddhism the following are also regarded as refuge-givers: *bla-ma* (*guru*) — spiritual teachers; *yi-dam* — meditational deities; and those of the following who have reached the rank of '*phags-pa*

<sup>7</sup> For a complete list of the Twelve Divisions see Sarat Chandra Das, Tibetan-English Dictionary, Kyoto, Japan,

1969, page 1307.

<sup>8</sup> Source no. 11.

(*ārya*):<sup>1</sup> *byan-chub sems-pa* (*bodhisattva*)<sup>2</sup> — a *buddha*-to-be; *ran sañs-rgyas* (*pratyekabuddha*)<sup>3</sup> — a *buddha*-by-oneself; *ñan-thos* (*śrāvaka*)<sup>4</sup> — a disciple; *dpa'-bo mkha'-gro*<sup>5</sup> — beings possessing tantric powers; and *chos-skyon/srun-ma* (*dharma-pāla*) — protectors of the *dharma*.

The reader might well wonder how so many refuges are possible when the fixed number of three has been given in the previous chapter. There is no contradiction here however, for all refuges fall into three types or categories, so that if all objects of refuge were classified they would be seen to fall within the Three Refuges already outlined. The refuges just mentioned are sub-divisions of the three major refuges and may be classified as follows. *Bla-ma* and *yi-dam* belong to the *Buddha* Refuge, and the remaining five to the *Samgha* Refuge. The spiritual knowledge possessed by all these seven additional kinds of refuge belongs to the *Dharma* Refuge.

*Bla-ma* are included within the *Buddha* Refuge because not all beings are fortunate enough to be born into this world at a time when a *buddha*-manifestation with the superhuman physical marks has taken human form. The ŚĀKYAMUNI *Buddha* himself has proclaimed again and again that he will take the form of *bla-ma* — on the same plane and sharing the same fortune as ordinary men — in order to benefit others. And it is because the most beneficial action of a *buddha* is his speech — the teaching of the *dharma* — that a *buddha* manifests himself directly or indirectly in *bla-ma* who are his blessed agents. *Bla-ma* give religious teaching and show us the virtuous way by instructing us what course of action to follow and what course of action to avoid.<sup>6</sup> From the point of view of the person instructed his *bla-ma* is not only no different from a *buddha* but whatever measure of spiritual knowledge he has acquired he owes it exclusively to his *bla-ma*, and so his debt of gratitude to his *bla-ma*, who is accessible to him, is greater even than that which he owes to the *Buddha*. For this reason *bla-ma* are included in the *Buddha* Refuge. Thus it is that when a devotee recites the formulas for seeking refuge in the Three Refuges he opens with the line seeking refuge in the *bla-ma*, thereby especially singling out the *bla-ma* refuge, which is in actual fact a part of the *Buddha* Refuge.

Bla-ma

A *bla-ma* is a person who is versed and practised in the *sūtras* and *tantras*. His spiritual practices may be carried out openly for all to see, or they may be practised in secrecy. A person who upholds and spreads the *Buddha's* teaching, if only by an explanation of just one syllable of the *Buddha's* word, is a *bla-ma* — but with the important proviso that there must first be established a mutual acceptance of the teacher-pupil relationship, which means that the interested pupil must ask the teacher for instruction and the teacher must agree to the request.

Tibetans in general when they hear this word *bla-ma* think primarily of *sprul-sku*, or incarnate human beings. This is incorrect. Among non-Tibetans the word *bla-ma* is commonly, and incorrectly, used to denote all Tibetan monks (*grwa-pa*). It should however be clearly noted that not all *bla-ma* are monks, and by no means all monks are *bla-ma*. This misuse of the word probably originates from the fact that the teachers and writers of religious works with whom non-Tibetans originally came into contact were mostly either *sprul-sku* or monk-*bla-ma*. In the strict sense of the word a *bla-ma* need be neither a *sprul-sku* nor a monk. Many famous Tibetan teachers have been laymen, among whom MAR-PA (1012—1099), MI-LA RAS-PA (1040—1123) and 'BROM-STON-PA (1004 to 1064) are perhaps the best known. All three were *bla-ma* but none of them were monks nor incarnate beings.

Although a majority of *bla-ma* are men, it should be noted that female *bla-ma* also exist. Some examples of the better-known female *bla-ma*, of both Indian and Tibetan origin, grouped under the collective name RNAL-'BYOR-MA BCO-LŪA — the Fifteen *Yoginī*<sup>7</sup> — include the following: NI-GU-MA, SU-KHA SIDDHI, MA-GCIG GRUB-PA'I RGYAL-MO, MKHA'-'GRO YE-ŚES MTSHO-RGYAL, YUM BDAG-MED-MA, MA-GCIG LAB-SGRON (ca. 1099—1201) and MA-GCIG ZA-MA (1062—1148).

Another well-known Tibetan female *bla-ma* is to be found in the line of re-incarnations of the BSAM-SDIŅ RDO-RJE PHAG-MO of BSAM-SDIŅ monastery. This line of re-incarnations is traced to ŚEL-DEKAR RDO-RJE MTSHO-MO, wife of a famous Tibetan scholar, BO-DOŅ PHYOGS-LAS RNAM-BGYAL

<sup>1</sup> *Phags-pa* (*ārya*) or 'exalted being' means one who has reached the third of the five stages of progression. See chapter 5.

<sup>2</sup> *Bodhisattva* is a being possessing the *bodhi*-mind. See chapter 6.

<sup>3</sup> *Pratyekabuddha* — see chapter 5.

<sup>4</sup> *Śrāvaka* — see chapter 5.

<sup>5</sup> *dPa'-bo mkha'-gro* — see chapter 7.

<sup>6</sup> Source no. 180.

<sup>7</sup> Source no. 324 'A' page 3 v 1.

(1375—1451). Another illustrious female *bla-ma* was *mKHA'-SPYOD BDE-LDAN DBAÑ MO* who was probably a contemporary of the tenth Dalai Lama, *TSHUL-KHRIMS ROYA-MTSHO* (1816—1837). She is said to have been born as a male child in *lCañ-groñ* in the province of *Koñ-po* in Tibet. At the age of twenty-five she had a dream in which she received the blessing of *MA-GCIG LAB-SGRON* and was transformed into a woman. The sixty-ninth and seventy-second *dGa'-ldan khri-pa*<sup>1</sup> — *Khri-chen BYAÑ-CHUB CHOS-'PHEL* and *Khri-chen 'JAM-DPAL TSHUL-KHRIMS* — were amongst her principal spiritual teachers. More recently there was the nun *bla-ma*, *ŠUG-GSEB RJE-BTSUN*, who lived to the age of a hundred and thirty, dying in 1950<sup>2</sup>.

It is not possible to categorise certain *bla-ma* as belonging exclusively to the *sūtras*, or to the *tantras*, or to only one of the two Vehicles, *Hinayāna* and *Mahāyāna*.

Of the seven sub-divisions of the Three Refuges *bla-ma* has been defined above. *Rañ sañs-rgyas* and *ñan-thos* will be defined in chapter five; *byañ-chub sems-pa* in chapter six; and *yi-dam*, *dpa'-bo mkha'-'gro* and *chos-skyoñ/sruñ-ma* in chapter seven.

## CHAPTER 5

### *Theg-dman*<sup>1</sup> (*Hinayāna*)

The ultimate aspiration of the path of *Theg-dman* (*Hinayāna*) or the Lesser Vehicle is more limited than that of the path of *Theg-chen* (*Mahāyāna*) or the Great Vehicle. *Theg-dman* is the path by which an individual seeks liberation from *samsāra* for himself alone.

The followers of *Hinayāna* are generally considered to be narrower in their outlook, because they are more limited in their intellectual capacity. Because of these differences in intellectual capacity the *ŚĀKYAMUNI Buddha* — like a mother instructing her children — outlined, in the smallest detail for the benefit of both lay people and monks, methods by which bad conduct of body, speech or mind might be controlled. These rules of discipline are contained in the '*dul-ba*'s *sde-snod* (*vinaya piṭaka*) or the collection of disciplines. In these

rules the eight categories of discipline and their vows, together with the manner of observing the vows, how a broken or neglected vow can be atoned for, and the point at which a vow may be considered to be completely broken are set out. The collection of disciplines lays down which rules are to be observed, what conduct is permitted, and what prohibited. From a study of these scriptures it is clear that even during the *ŚĀKYAMUNI Buddha*'s lifetime these rules of discipline were frequently altered, revised or added to. These adaptations were necessitated by changes of place, time and circumstances. It is clear, then, that if the *Buddha* were alive today he would most certainly have made alterations and introduced new rules as a result of taking into consideration the inclination of his followers, and the changes of place, time and prevailing conditions. There is a Tibetan saying that "the '*dul-ba* rules are dependent on time and place".

Of the eight categories of discipline mentioned above, the first three apply to the lay people and the other five to the monks. The very fact that vows for the lay people were laid down should dispel the mistaken idea among many non-Tibetans that the presence in Tibet, up to 1959,<sup>3</sup> of such a vast number of monks means that it was necessary to become a monk in order to practise Buddhism. It is in fact not even necessary to take a lay vow in order to do so, and it is possible for any person regardless of caste or creed to practise Buddhism without taking a single vow. Similarly those who break or neglect a vow of discipline are in no way ostracised or excluded from practising the *dharma*. This is an example of the kind of freedom found in Buddhism.

However it is laudable for a person to take up and abide by a vow. This is because there is a certain amount of discipline involved in the process of observing a vow, and for this reason there is a stronger check exercised on the person's conduct of body, speech and mind. Because the eight vows are progressively harder, the higher the vow chosen to be observed the greater the benefit.

Within *Hinayāna* are to be found: *Ñan-thos-kyi theg-pa* (*Śrāvakayāna*) or the Vehicle of the Dis-

<sup>1</sup> *dGa'-ldan khri-pa* — "Enthroned One of *dGa'*ldan monastery" — head of the *dGe-lugs* sect.

<sup>2</sup> Refer Rinchen Dolma Taring — Daughter of Tibet, London, 1970.

<sup>3</sup> General sources nos. 12, 151, 199, 200, 201, 231, 296, 299 and 300.

<sup>3</sup> It should be noted that throughout this book all references to Tibetan culture within Tibet refer to the period up to March 10th 1959 — the date of the Lhasa uprising against Chinese occupation, and the flight of the Dalai Lama.



principles, and *Raṅ saṅs-rgyas-kyi theg-pa* (*Pratyeka-buddhayāna*) or the Vehicle of the Silent *Buddhas*.<sup>3</sup>

The word *ṅan-thos* (*śrāvaka*) is derived from two roots — *ṅan* meaning 'to hear', and *thos* meaning 'to make heard' (or 'to proclaim').<sup>4</sup> The Vehicle of the Disciples embraces all those devotees who have 'heard' the teaching of the *Buddha* from the *Buddha* himself or from other teachers of the *dharma*, and who, as a result of receiving this teaching, have reached their ultimate goal, that of *ṅan-thos-kyi byaṅ-chub*<sup>5</sup> (*śrāvakabodhi*) or the Enlightenment of the Vehicle of the Disciples, and then gone on to proclaim or 'make heard' their knowledge to others, whether these others are followers of *Hinayāna* or *Mahāyāna*.

The meaning of the word *raṅ saṅs-rgyas*<sup>6</sup> (*pratyeka-buddha*) is literally a 'buddha-by-oneself' — and it covers all those followers of *Hinayāna* who attain the rank of *dgra-bcom-pa* (*arhat*) — 'one who has subdued his inner foes'<sup>7</sup> — by their own efforts. What this means, in effect, is that in their final samsaric existence they do not require, or do not have to rely on, the teaching of another to gain the state of *dgra-bcom-pa*. They are able to achieve this state on the strength of their own past reservoir of merit, particularly on the strength of their own prayers and petitions.

Within *raṅ saṅs-rgyas* there are two types<sup>8</sup> — the 'solitary' and the 'sociable':

1. *bse-ru lta-bu*'i *raṅ saṅs-rgyas* (meaning 'the buddha-by-oneself like the single-horned rhinoceros') who pursues his path of training in solitude;

2. *tshogs-spyod raṅ saṅs-rgyas* (meaning 'the buddha-by-oneself who is sociable'). Within this group are two further divisions.<sup>9</sup> Firstly there are those who have reached the third (*bzod-pa*) of the four sub-divisions of the Stage of Preparation;<sup>10</sup>

and secondly all those between the last phase of the Stage of Preparation and just before the final Stage of No More Learning.

Because the main subject concentrated upon during meditation by the followers of the Vehicle of the Disciples differs from that concentrated upon by the followers of the Vehicle of the Silent *Buddhas* so does the *thar-pa* (*mokṣa/nirvāṇa*) — liberation from *samsāra* — which they gain at the end differ. So although at the end adherents of the two Vehicles are both said to have attained *dgra-bcom-pa* (*arhat*) there is a qualitative difference in the state of *dgra-bcom-pa*, because their views of 'emptiness' also differ.

Apart from this distinction, both these Vehicles have the Five Stages of spiritual progression, known by the following names: (See diagram III)

1. *tshogs-lam* (*sambhāramārga*) — the Stage of Accumulation
2. *sbyor-lam* (*prayogamārga*) — the Stage of Preparation
3. *mīhōn-lam* (*dāśkanamārga*) — the Stage of Seeing
4. *ogom-lam* (*bhāvandmārga*) — the Stage of Meditation
5. *mī-slob-lam* (*asaikṣamārga*) — the Stage of No More Learning

### 1. The Stage of Accumulation (of merit and wisdom)

The first stage is entered from the moment when a genuine resolve is born within one to follow a path, be it the *ṅan-thos* or *raṅ saṅs-rgyas* path, to attain liberation from *samsāra*. This resolve is based on a complete understanding of the three types of *sdug-bṅal* (*duḥkha*)<sup>11</sup> — sufferings — found within *samsāra* and the realization that these three *sdug-bṅal* inflict suffering on us ceaselessly. This is the

<sup>3</sup> Sources nos. 299 and 300.

<sup>4</sup> Sources nos. 46, 199 page 78 and 211.

<sup>5</sup> *Byaṅ-chub* (*bodhi*) literally means one who is 'purified' and 'perfected'. This is the quality attained by a *buddha*.

<sup>6</sup> Source no. 53.

<sup>7</sup> The 'inner foes' referred to are the afflictions (see page 3). The *dgra-bcom-pa* or *arhat* rank is the highest stage in *Hinayāna*.

<sup>8</sup> Sources nos. 45, 53, 76, 199 page 82 v.6, 209, 211, 299 and 300.

<sup>9</sup> The names given to these two sub-divisions are: *tshogs-spyod raṅ saṅs-rgyas che-ba* (meaning literally, the *raṅ saṅs-rgyas* who is sociable in a big way) and *tshogs-spyod raṅ saṅs-rgyas chun-ba* (meaning literally, the *raṅ saṅs-rgyas* who is sociable in a small way). In the sense given here the root 'tshogs' means 'crowd' or group of people, and the roots 'che-ba' and 'chun-ba' mean 'big' and 'small'. There is an important additional meaning of these roots which it is not possible to translate by a single word or phrase in

English. 'Tshogs' can also mean 'accumulation of merit and wisdom' and 'che-ba' and 'chun-ba' then refer to the amount of effort exerted, so that *tshogs-spyod raṅ saṅs-rgyas che-ba* = he who acquires merit and wisdom with more effort (because in the earlier stages); and *tshogs-spyod raṅ saṅs-rgyas chun-ba* = he who acquires merit and wisdom with less effort (because in the latter stages). The point of the distinction here is that 'more effort' is required for the accumulation of merit and wisdom when the devotee is in the early stages of following the *dharma*; as the devotee makes spiritual progress 'less effort' is required. A comparison here may help. When a householder wishes to make for himself a neat garden out of the untamed jungle, much effort is required to get the garden under control and free from weeds. But once the garden is under control, comparatively less effort is required to keep it free from weeds and in order.

<sup>10</sup> See chapter 5, page 10.

stage when one starts to 'accumulate' merit and wisdom in great quantities. This stage has three sub-divisions, small (*chun-nu*), medium ('*brin*'), and large (*chen-po*) through which one must progress before the second stage begins.

2. The Stage of Preparation  
(leading to the cognition of the view  
of 'emptiness')

The second stage is entered when one gains 'an extraordinary wisdom which arises from meditation' (*sgom-byun-gi ses-rab khyad-par-can*). This is the 'union of abiding calm'<sup>12</sup> and penetrating insight'<sup>13</sup> (*xi-lhag zun-'brel-gyi tin-'ne-'dzin*) by which one is enabled to perceive 'emptiness' as the real nature of things. This stage is arrived at as a result of directing the mind and concentrating upon the Four Noble Truths and their sixteen sub-divisions.<sup>14</sup> This concentration is carried out both by the *ñan-thos* and the *ran sañs-rgyas*, each according to his own conception of 'emptiness'. The Stage of Preparation has four sub-divisions which are known by the names of *drod* (heat), *rse-mo* (summit), *bzod-pa* (patient endurance), and *chos-mchog* (sublime *dharma*).

3. The Stage of Seeing  
(the 'emptiness')

The third stage is entered when one experiences directly for the first time the actual reality of the 'emptiness' or *ston-'ñid* (*śūnyatā*) as a result of having contemplated further the sixteen aspects of the Four Noble Truths. (As explained before, the experience of this 'emptiness' differs according to the type of meditation followed by a *ñan-thos* or a *ran sañs-rgyas*).

In the moment of experiencing the reality of 'emptiness' one becomes equipped with the antidotes which will get rid of the one hundred and twelve afflictions belonging to the 'three worlds' (the world of the senses, the world of form, and the world of the formless) at their very root. This Stage of Seeing has sixteen sub-divisions which are known as *ses-bzod bcu-drug*.<sup>15</sup> A person who has reached this Stage of Seeing is known as '*phags-pa* (*ārya*)' — or an 'exalted being'.

4. The Stage of Meditation  
(meditational development)

After the first experience of the 'emptiness' this realization is meditated upon again and again by the *ñan-thos* and *ran sañs-rgyas* devotee — each according to his own type of meditation — until he reaches a level of meditation which enables him to start removing those of the afflictions which must be removed during this stage.<sup>16</sup> This level of meditation is the first of the nine levels of meditation of which three are small (*chun-nu*), three medium ('*brin*'), and three large (*chen-po*). These can be more readily understood if set out as follows:<sup>17</sup>

Nine Levels of Meditation ( <i>sgom-lam skor-dgu</i> )			Nine Kinds of Afflictions to be removed ( <i>sgom-spañ skor-dgu</i> ) (at the corresponding level of meditation)		
small	— small	→ 1 ←	large	-- large	
small	— medium	→ 2 ←	large	— medium	
small	— large	→ 3 ←	large	— small	
medium	— small	→ 4 ←	medium	— large	
medium	— medium	→ 5 ←	medium	— medium	
medium	— large	→ 6 ←	medium	— small	
large	— small	→ 7 ←	small	— large	
large	— medium	→ 8 ←	small	— medium	
large	— large	→ 9 ←	small	— small	

<sup>11</sup> These three *sdug-bśal* (*duḥkha*) are: (a) *sdug-bśal-gyi sdug-bśal* (*duḥkha-duḥkhatā*) — the state of misery or suffering which arises from physical or mental causes; (b) '*gyur-ba'i sdug-bśal* (*viparīṇāmaduḥkhatā*) — the state of misery or suffering which arises from the impermanent nature of things; (c) *khyab-pa 'du-byed-kyi sdug-bśal* (*saṃskāraduḥkhatā*) the state of misery or suffering which arises from our dependence in being inescapably bound to the cycle of rebirths.

<sup>12</sup> Tib. *ñi-gnas*, Skt. *śamatha*.  
<sup>13</sup> Tib. *lhag-miñon*, Skt. *vipaśyanā*.  
<sup>14</sup> Refer Dalai Lamas, *The Opening of the Wisdom-Eye*, Bangkok, 1968, page 123.  
<sup>15</sup> Up till the realization of 'emptiness' meditation has been of a relatively shallow nature, frequently interrupted by a return to mundane affairs. Indeed no distinction during

these early stages is recognised between meditation and normal life. With the realization of 'emptiness' the devotee reaches the rank of '*phags-pa* (*ārya*)' and from the beginning of this stage and onwards, meditation develops into a state of deep contemplation (called *mñam-gñag* in Tibetan; *śamāhita* in Sanskrit) akin to trance.

<sup>16</sup> An analogy here may help: after weeks of effort a person learning to ride a bicycle at last makes a break-through — he finds the skill has suddenly come and he exclaims excitedly "I can do it!" But this realization is only the beginning. He can ride, it is true, but to become a really skilled cyclist requires repeated practice and training. So with the realization of 'emptiness'.  
<sup>17</sup> The 'large' afflictions (large-large) are eliminated at the very first level of meditation (small-small). But the greatest effort (large-large) is needed to eliminate the last, lingering

The ninth and final level of meditation is called *rdo-rje lta-bu'i tsh-ñe-'dzin* (*vajropamasamādhi*) — or 'the meditation like the adamant diamond' — this state of deep calm is compared for its strength, stability and brilliance to the adamant, or hardest diamond.

### 5. The Stage of No More Learning

When the 'meditation like the adamant diamond' has removed those last remaining afflictions which are to be removed at the corresponding level one arrives at the final stage of No More Learning. Both *ñan-thos* and *rañ sañs-rgyas* attain the state of *dgra bcom-pa* (*arhat*) (*ñan-thos dgra-bcom-pa* and *rañ-rgyal dgra-bcom-pa* respectively). This is the highest state in the *Hinayāna* tradition.

## CHAPTER 6

### *Theg-chen*<sup>1</sup> (*Mahāyāna*)

The ultimate aspiration of the path of *Theg-chen* (*Mahāyāna*) or the Great Vehicle is not the seeking of tranquility and happiness for oneself alone. Rather the chief motivation of a follower of *Mahāyāna* is the magnanimous desire to secure a permanent release from *samsāra* for all sentient beings and to set on the path to total enlightenment those beings who, while liberated from re-birth, are yet suspended in a state of static bliss. The seeking of Buddhahood for oneself is only the first part of a dual aspiration.

When every act of worship and prayer, every charitable deed, all receiving and practising of religious instruction, and all meditating on them are carried out with the intention outlined above, then that is practising *Mahāyāna*. If this intention is not present, none of our acts — no matter how good or

meritorious — can be said to belong to the *Mahāyāna* practice: this is what the *Buddha* has specified.

Whereas the *Hinayāna* tradition is based solely on the *sūtra* teachings of the ŚĀKYAMUNI *Buddha* *Mahāyāna* is based on both the *sūtra* and *tantra* teachings given by the *Buddha*. However, the final aim of a Mahāyānist, whether he be a follower of *Sūtrayāna*<sup>2</sup> — the Vehicle of the *Sūtra* — or a follower of *Tantrayāna* — the Vehicle of the *Tantra* —, is the attainment of total enlightenment. There is no qualitative difference between a *buddha* who has attained enlightenment by way of the *sūtra* and a *buddha* who has attained enlightenment by way of the *tantra*. Nor does one Buddhahood rank above the other. The difference between them lies in the means by which the end is achieved. It is only the aspiration of the *Hinayāna* practice, that of seeking happiness for oneself alone, which the follower of *Mahāyāna* rejects. In all other respects *Mahāyāna* (whether *Sūtrayāna* or *Tantrayāna*) has the same basic principles as outlined in the *Hinayāna* texts. For example renunciation (*ñes-'byun*) and the reasoning behind this renunciation is common to both *Mahāyāna* and *Hinayāna*. Similarly such subjects for meditation as the 'twelve interdependent qualities which together combine to produce all phenomena',<sup>3</sup> 'the six qualities which go to make one learned',<sup>4</sup> 'the sixteen aspects of the Four Noble Truths',<sup>5</sup> 'the thirty seven virtuous qualities of a *bodhisattva*'<sup>6</sup> and so on, and the vows for the laity and the monkhood given in the '*dul-ba* rules of discipline by the adherence to which one is prevented from ill conduct in body, speech and mind — all these subjects and vows are given in the *Hinayāna* texts, and also form an essential part of the *Mahāyāna* practice.

Two reasons can be given which briefly explain the essential sameness of *Mahāyāna* and *Hinayāna* principles.

Firstly, the ultimate goal aspired to by a Mahāyānist is the state of Buddhahood which is 'all-pure' and 'all-knowing'. On the way which

remnant of afflictions (small-small) — at the ninth level. Again, an analogy will help: a very dirty garment yields up most of its dirt at the first, easy rinse; with each successive rinse the amount of dirt to be got rid of decreases, but increasing effort is required as only the obstinate stains are left. To eliminate and wash out the most stubborn stain (small-small) of worldly illusion requires extreme and repeated application (large-large).

<sup>1</sup> General sources nos. 12, 151, 199, 200, 201, 231, 296, 299 and 300.

<sup>2</sup> *Sūtrayāna* (*m.Do'i theg-pa*) is also known by the names *Pha-rol-tu phyin-pa'i theg-pa* (*Pāramitāyāna*) or the Vehicle of the Wisdom Gone Beyond (abbreviated form, *Phar-phyin theg-pa*) and *rGyu'i theg-pa* (*Hētiyāna*) or the Cause Vehicle.

<sup>3</sup> *ñen-'brel yan-lag bou-ñhis* (See Plate 6 and chap. 8, footnote 2.)

<sup>4</sup> *mñhas-bya'i ñhos-po-drug*.

<sup>5</sup> *ñden-bñi mi-riags-sogs bcu-drug*.

<sup>6</sup> *byan-phyogs-so-bñun* (See *Mahāvyyutpatti* Index no: 953—1004 [except 971—975]).

leads to the achievement of this state all faults have to be removed and all knowledge acquired. The area to be covered is of such an all-embracing nature that those faults discarded by a Hinayānist must of necessity also be discarded by a Mahāyānist. Similarly the knowledge acquired by a Hinayānist must be acquired by a Mahāyānist.

Secondly, a Mahāyānist wishes to save all sentient beings. The way in which he will have to achieve this is, in the main, by teaching the *dharma* in order to liberate beings caught in *samsāra*, and to remove the blissful satisfaction of those who have been liberated from *samsāra* so that they will wish to make further spiritual progress towards achieving total enlightenment. To be in a position to teach others he must first of all gain the knowledge and experience himself. It is therefore a necessity for a Mahāyānist to know all the various ways of the Hinayānist.

To the end of achieving enlightenment there existed in Tibet three main schools of Buddhist studies: *bsad-grva* (teaching school), *risod-grva* (debating school) and *sgrub-grva* (putting-into-practice school). In these three schools scriptures belonging to both *Mahāyāna* and *Hinayāna* were compulsory subjects to be studied. The subjects were *tsad-ma* (*pramāṇa*), *ses-rab-kyi pha-rol-tu phyin-pa* (*prajñā-pāramitā*), *dbu-ma* (*mādhyamika*), *mñon-pa-mdzod* (*abhidharmakośa*), and *'dul-ba* (*vinaya*). Of these the first three belong to the *Mahāyāna* scriptures, though they also contain interpretations given from the *Hinayāna* point of view. The last two belong to the *Hinayāna* scriptures. The *Mahāyāna* and *Hinayāna* texts which were studied in these schools were translations of the original Indian works. There were also textual commentaries written by Tibetans on these subjects.

Of the three main schools mentioned *bsad-grva* (teaching school) is the school where a spiritual teacher instructs his pupils by explaining the words and meanings of the scriptures, taken from the *bka'-gyur* and *bdan-'gyur* and other texts and commentaries. Through the explanations given by the teacher the pupils come to get a good understanding of the scriptural contents.

*rTso-d-grva* (debating school) is the school which extends beyond simply learning the meanings of the words of the scriptures. Here the pupils on their own initiative engage in repeated exchanges of questions and answers with one another so that in the process they gain clarity in even the smallest of their problems. This results in a complete under-

standing of the scriptures in all their depth and detail.

*sGrub-grva* (putting-into-practice school) is a hermitage type of school consisting of a number of persons who have joined together to concentrate and meditate in quiet on the knowledge which they have acquired from their spiritual teachers, or it may be a place to which one retires to carry out intensive contemplation and meditation on a particular selected subject.

The *Mahāyāna* path, like the *Hinayāna* path, is divided into five stages. The order of progression of these five stages, their names and the sub-divisions found within them, are almost identical to those already outlined in the chapter on *Hinayāna*. It will therefore not be necessary to write about them in length. However, there are a few essential points of difference and these together with a general outline of the five stages are given briefly below.<sup>7</sup>

The first stage (of Accumulation) of the *Mahāyāna* path is entered with the birth of the *bodhi*-mind or *byañ-chub-kyi sems* (*bodhicitta*). This is a combination of two feelings — the feeling of *byams-pa* or 'loving regard' (the wish that all sentient beings should find a state of permanent happiness); and *shñ-rje* or 'compassionate regard' (the wish that all sentient beings should find a permanent separation from suffering). When a person, for the purpose of bringing benefit to others in the form of universal enlightenment and liberation, resolves to take upon himself the task of accomplishing this by first seeking to achieve the rank of a *buddha* — there and then is born in him the *bodhi*-mind. This selfless genuine and uncontrived aspiration (as uncontrived as a mother's natural love and concern for the welfare of her children), with its dual aspiration of Buddhahood for oneself and Buddhahood for all sentient beings, constitutes the *bodhi*-mind. A being possessing the *bodhi*-mind is known as a *byañ-chub sems-pa* (*bodhisattva*).

The *bodhi*-mind may be possessed by celebrated persons such as GSER-GLIÑ-PA or JO-BO-BE DPAL-LDAN A-TI-ŚA (ATIŚA DĪPAṆKARA ŚRĪLĪĀNA) but it may equally be possessed by any unknown person no matter how humble, wandering about in quiet anonymity. Thus in Tibetan religious art when one tries to determine whether a figure representation is a *bodhisattva* or not one cannot take such distinguishing marks as those manifested by

<sup>7</sup> Source no. 45.

the famous *ÑE-BA'I SRAS-CHEN-BRGYAD*<sup>8</sup> (the Eight *bodhisattvas* who are always depicted as having lavish silk garments and wearing crowns of jewels and so on) as being the only criteria.

The *bodhi*-mind is the essential core of the *Mahāyāna* tradition. To enumerate all the qualities which accompany the birth of the *bodhi*-mind and to name the many various classifications of the *bodhi*-mind is not possible here.<sup>9</sup>

The second stage (of Preparation) is that which leads to the path of the '*phags-pa* (*ārya*). This stage is entered when one has succeeded in getting an initial, conceptual realization of the 'emptiness' which has been the focus of one's concentration in the meditations. This 'emptiness' is the ultimate non-existence or 'no-self nature' inherent in all existence. This initial, conceptual realization arises out of the wisdom born of the two states of meditation — 'abiding calm' or *xi-gnas* (*śamatha*), and 'penetrating insight' or *lhag-mthoñ* (*vipaśyanā*).

After this second stage the *bodhisattva* continues, as before, to meditate on the nature of emptiness. In the course of his meditation he comes finally to a direct, face-to-face realization of the real and ultimate 'emptiness'. This is the moment when he enters the third stage — the Stage of Seeing (the 'emptiness'). Such a *bodhisattva* achieves the rank of '*phags-pa* (*ārya*). In addition, as taught in the *Mahāyāna* tradition, such a being gains simultaneously the first of the ten levels — *rab-tu dga'-ba* (the Joyous).<sup>10</sup>

After the *bodhisattva* has reached the last of the ten levels (referred to above) and has succeeded in carrying out the ninth and final meditation he enters a state of deep contemplations which is continuous and uninterrupted. During this fourth stage the last of the stains and defilements are

discarded and the wisdom obtained from the highest level of meditation sets one free. With this total liberation the devotee enters the fifth and last stage. A being entering this stage possesses the two bodies of a *buddha* — *chos-sku* (*dharma-kāya*) and *grugs-sku* (*rūpakāya*) — (the 'truth body' and the 'form-body') and is a fully enlightened *buddha*.

## CHAPTER 7

### rGyud-kyi theg-pa<sup>1</sup> (Tantrayāna)

*rGyud-kyi theg-pa* (Tantrayāna) — the Vehicle of the *Tantra* or the Tantric Vehicle — is an integral part of the *Mahāyāna* tradition of Buddhism. It is also known as: *sÑags-kyi theg-pa* / *gSañ-sñags-kyi theg-pa* (*Mantrayāna*)<sup>2</sup> or the *Mantra* Vehicle; *rDo-rje theg-pa* (*Vajrayāna*) or the Diamond or Thunderbolt Vehicle; and '*Bras-bu'i theg-pa* (*Phalayāna*) or the Effect Vehicle.

The starting point for a person aspiring to study and practise *Tantrayāna* is the same set of basic principles as expounded in *Hinayāna* and *Mahāyāna* — namely, 'renunciation' and the *byan-chub-kyi sems* (*bodhicitta*) attitude of mind. That is to say that the person desirous of following *Tantrayāna*, having initially recognised the unsatisfactory nature of all worldly existence, should have turned his back on it and developed a spirit of total renunciation. In addition he must also have that compassionate state of mind (*bodhicitta*) which is no longer solely interested in its own selfish desires, but instead desires Buddhahood for the purpose of releasing all other sentient beings from *samsāra*.

<sup>8</sup> For a full list of these eight *bodhisattvas* see chapter 14, note no. 20.

<sup>9</sup> The sources where these can be found are: nos. 12, 46, 76, 94, 95, 151, 199 page 84, 200–202, 204, 231, 296 and 300.

<sup>10</sup> Sources nos. 48, 191 and 303. These ten levels are: "the joyous, the pure, the light-maker, the radiant, the invincible, the turning towards, the far-ranging, the unshakable, the beneficial, the cloud of Dharma" ... refer Dalai Lama, *The Opening of the Wisdom-Eye*, Bangkok, 1968, page 85. For the progression of these ten levels and the Five Main Stages of Progression within *Theg-chen* (*Mahāyāna*) see diagram IV.

<sup>1</sup> General sources nos. 36, 39, 40, 86, 107a page 200, 157, 159, 250 and 296.

It should be noted here that while it is the correct Tibetan translation for *Tantrayāna*, *rGyud-kyi theg-pa* is a title never in practice used by Tibetans, who refer to it by the

alternative titles given here.

<sup>2</sup> *gSañ-sñags-kyi theg-pa*, means, literally, 'the secret-mantra-vehicle'. *gSañ-sñags*, and its abbreviated form *sñags*, is the one most commonly used by Tibetans when speaking of the *tantras*. The meaning of the word *gSañ-sñags* is as follows. *gSañ*, means 'secret' and refers to keeping 'secret' the practice of this unique system of teachings from those who have not been initiated into any one of the *mañḍala*; and from those who, although initiated, have neglected the practice and the observance of precepts, vows, and rules of conduct. *sÑags*, translates the Sanskrit word *mantra* (*mana-tra*). *Mana* means 'mind' and *tra* 'protection or rescue'. The complete word in Sanskrit would imply that the mind of one who follows this path is 'rescued' or 'protected' from his mental stains and defilements ... source no. 107a, Tibetan Tripitaka, vol. 3, page 200, line 4. Additional source nos. 36 and 39.

Thus the aspirant should have cultivated, in part if not in full, these basic preliminaries as outlined in the systems of both *Hinayāna* and *Mahāyāna* and become fully conversant with his subject. Only with such preparation is he a fitting candidate for the *tantra* practice. Then such a person, having already highly developed faculties of mind, should seek a fully qualified tantric master who will initiate him into one of the *dkyil-'khor* (*maṇḍala*) of the four classes of *tantra* (given below). After this the aspirant abides by the precepts, vows and rules of conduct which, at the ceremony of initiation, he has pledged to observe faithfully. The aspirant is then ready to receive instruction in meditation.

The meditations on *sūnyatā*, *bodhicitta* and the practice of the Six Perfections (*phar-phyin-drug*)<sup>5</sup> are the same in both *Sūtrayāna* and *Tantrayāna*. However, in the tantric practice these are accomplished by the special method of meditation known as *lha'i rnal-'byor* (*devayoga*) — identification of the individual's self with that of the chosen meditational deity in which, during meditation, the initiate concentrates on the physical characteristics of his chosen meditational deity, that is the principal deity of the *maṇḍala* into which he has been initiated. Each *maṇḍala* has its own central meditational deity or *yi-dam*. In his meditation, the tantric initiate identifies himself totally with the *yi-dam* of his *maṇḍala*. It is this method, designed to accelerate the aspirant's attainment of the full enlightenment of Buddhahood, which is known as *Tantrayāna*.

The actual attainment of the complete enlightenment of Buddhahood implies the realization within oneself of both the spiritual and physical characteristics of a *buddha* — namely, the 'truth body' (*dharmakāya*) and the 'form-body' (*rūpakāya*).

The essential practice leading to the *dharmakāya* is meditation on 'emptiness' or *ston-'ñid* (*sūnyatā*). This means the elimination of all belief in the independence and self-existence of phenomena.

From the very moment that the aspirant's mind starts to meditate ceaselessly on *sūnyatā* he is laying the foundation for the attainment of *dharmakāya* in the future.

As for the attainment of *rūpakāya*, this depends upon developing concentrated mindfulness, right from the very beginning of tantric meditation, on a

*buddha's* form as represented in the meditational deity.

The body of the particular deity meditated on, from the very moment that meditation starts, becomes the body — the 'form-body' — that the aspirant himself will achieve in the future — when the efforts and exercises of his meditation come to fruition.

In the main it is in the practice of attaining the 'form-body' of the two *buddha* bodies that the difference between *Sūtrayāna* and *Tantrayāna* is to be found. It is because all the tantric practices have as their basis this unique and special method of identification-meditation that this vehicle of the *tantra* is more profound and swifter. It is up to the person wishing to practise *tantra* to choose any one of the many meditational deities enumerated in the four classes of *tantra*. The choice as to exactly which deity will be the object of meditation is determined solely by the person's own preference and inclination, that is his own karmic tendencies.

The body and mind, defiled by the forces of delusion and *karma* accumulated over many aeons of time, must be disciplined and purged of all stains. To attain this perfectly cleansed body of a *buddha* the tantric aspirant must begin to meditate on his own physical make-up and visualize it as the body of a *buddha*. The vast and profound mechanism of the meditations by which he effects this transformation — a subject so vast that it defies meaningful abbreviation — involves the proper activation and utilization of the complex psychic nerve system of the body. Since the energies latent in this complex system are so powerful, such tantric meditations are designed to be followed only by dedicated and qualified students under the aegis of a fully qualified *bla-ma*.

The following remarks will be sufficient to give some idea of what is involved in tantric practice itself.

A unique feature of tantric practice consists in visualizing the Four Total Purities (*yon-su dag-pa bzhi*) — characteristics of the meditational deity — from the very beginning of the meditation practice. The Four Total Purities are:

1. The Total Purity of Environment (*gnas yon-su dag-pa*). This consists of the visualization of the supra-sensory abode (*maṇḍala*) of the meditational deity.

2. The Total Purity of the Body (*lus yon-su dag-pa*). This consists of the identification of the

<sup>5</sup> *Phar-phyin-drug* — the Six Perfections or Supreme Virtues are: *ed-yan-pa* (charity), *tsul-khrims* (morality), *bzod-pa* (patience), *brtan-'grus* (assiduity), *bsam-gtan* (meditation) and *ses-rab* (wisdom).

body of the meditator with the pure body of his meditational deity.

3. The Total Purity of Acceptance and Usage (*loṅs-spyod yōis-su dag-pa*). This consists of visualizing oneself with the ability to accept and use the objects and praises offered to one devotionally.

4. The Total Purity of Deeds (*māzad-pa yōis-su dag-pa*). This consists of visualizing oneself producing manifestations of the meditational deity and also dissolving these manifestations. Such manifestations of oneself are produced in order to secure the well-being of all sentient beings, to guide them in the attaining of the supreme state of Buddhahood.

In order to habituate his mind to dwelling upon the chosen tantric deity, an initiated aspirant has an image of the deity placed before him. This serves as the object of his meditation. He then proceeds to make a mindful examination of all the characteristics of the image. After he has made sufficient progress in this, the object of meditation is withdrawn so that there is no longer any direct physical link between himself and the meditational deity. Hereafter, his meditation is purely a matter of visualization. By constructing a clear and comprehensive picture of the deity in his mind, the aspirant develops a sure and steady analytical and concentrated meditation. In time, the visualized image of the particular deity, in all its details, becomes perfectly clear to the meditator. This accomplishment is accompanied by a full realization of the 'emptiness' nature of the object itself: that it is not a self-created entity, but is dependent on things outside itself for its existence. When these two realizations of the convincing life-like clarity of the deity, and of the awareness of its 'emptiness' nature appear simultaneously to the mind of the meditator, then he has developed the power of discriminating awareness. Everything that he sees appears in the form of the deity; and everything he hears is the deity's *mantra*. Whatever he experiences will be as the words, deeds and thoughts of the deity. He is no longer deluded into thinking that phenomena have independent self-existence; rather, he understands the 'emptiness' nature of everything and is therefore in a position to work skilfully<sup>4</sup> for the liberation of all those sentient beings still caught in the delusions of *samsāra*. In this way, his mind-continuum becomes progres-

sively purified. His active delusions and their instinctive propensities will be cut off at their very source and the meditator will finally attain the supreme status of Buddhahood.

In the tantric system, there are many different wrathful and peaceful deities. Whichever deity one chooses, be it in its fierce or peaceful aspect, it is chosen for the sole purpose of aiding the meditator to liberate all sentient beings from the misery of *samsāra* and to attain the supreme enlightenment of Buddhahood.

The four classes of *tantra*<sup>5</sup> are: (i) *bya-rgyud* (*kriyā tantra*); (ii) *spyod-rgyud* (*charyā tantra*); (iii) *rnal-'byor-rgyud* (*yoga tantra*); and (iv) *rnal-'byor bla-med-rgyud* (*anuttara yoga tantra*).

These tantric teachings were given by the ŚĀKYAMUNI Buddha to meet the requirements of aspirants of varying degrees of mental and intellectual attainment. Of the four classes of *tantra* the last is the most profound.

The *bya-rgyud* (*kriyā tantra*) was taught to those of the Buddha's disciples who laid more emphasis on the cultivation of external activities such as bodily cleanliness than on the activities of the inner world of the mind.

Followers of the Buddha who laid equal emphasis on the cultivation of both the inner and the outer activities belonged to the *spyod-rgyud* (*charyā tantra*).

To those of his followers who considered the cultivation of inner activities as more important than external activities, the Buddha taught *rnal-'byor-rgyud* (*yoga tantra*).

The tantric teachings of the fourth, or 'supreme' class, were given to those followers who cherished the cultivation of inner activities above everything else. Because there is no inner activity higher than this, it is called *rnal-'byor bla-med-rgyud* (*anuttara yoga tantra*), meaning the 'tantra of supreme inner activity'.

The stages of progression within these four tantric classes are similar to the five stages as outlined in the chapters on *Theg-dman* and *Theg-chen*. However, each of these stages has its own individual degrees of progression. An attempt has been made to familiarize the reader, to some extent, with these main stages and degrees of progression by means of four separate diagrams.<sup>6</sup> Names of sub-

<sup>4</sup> 'skilfully' is used in the context of this book to mean 'in a manner calculated to produce liberation from *samsāra*.'

<sup>5</sup> Sources nos. 38, 39, 40, 85, 157, 159, 250 and 296.

<sup>6</sup> See diagrams V, VI, VII and VIII.

divisions within the four tantric classes are also given.<sup>7</sup>

At this point, some questions about tantric practice may arise. Why is the system of *tantra* necessary when there are other paths designed to lead to the same goal? Why are the teachings of *tantra* always transmitted and practised in secrecy? Many explanations have been advanced to answer these questions: what follows is a selection of them.

The answer to the first question can be found if we take the widely quoted and generally known four distinguishing features which differentiate the *Tantrayāna* from the other non-tantric paths. These are:

1. the distinguishing feature of being clearly defined (*ma-rmois-pa'i khyad-par*)
2. the distinguishing feature of having many methods (*thabs man-ba'i khyad-par*)
3. the distinguishing feature of being not-difficult (*dka'-ba med-pa'i khyad-par*)
4. the distinguishing feature of demanding sharper intellectual powers (*dbañ-po rno-ba'i khyad-par*)

Firstly in both the *Sūtrayāna* and *Tantrayāna* teachings the ŚĀKYAMUNI Buddha has proclaimed that it is essential to practice the Six Perfections *phar-phyin-drug* (*saṭ pāramitī*) required of a *bodhisattva* in order to achieve Buddhahood. In his *Sūtrayāna* teaching the Buddha taught only the external actions by which the Six Perfections might be achieved, so the practice is difficult and the accomplishment of Buddhahood takes many aeons of time. In other words the path to enlightenment outlined by the non-tantric systems of *Mahāyāna* is very long; and it takes many lifetimes for the desired goal of Buddhahood to be reached. But in *Tantrayāna* the Buddha also taught the internal, meditational actions by which the followers of *tantra* automatically and simultaneously fulfil the practices of the Six Perfections. By this path the desired goal may be, and has been reached within one lifetime. Thus for a person who wishes to see all sentient beings liberated from their sufferings as soon as possible and who desires the attainment of Buddhahood to further such altruistic ends, the relative brevity of the tantric system is of great benefit. The tantric way, though not easy, is distinguished by its clarity and sharpness.

Secondly in the tantric teachings given by the ŚĀKYAMUNI Buddha, he has taught a great variety of different techniques, all of which fall within the four classes of the *tantra*, to suit every individual and it is for this reason that the tantric way is said to be distinguished by the fact of having many methods.

Thirdly in the tantric practice it is easier to get rid of the afflictions. This is because one makes use of the afflictions which one has to help get rid of the remaining afflictions, and thereby one succeeds in eradicating afflictions from the very roots without much difficulty, just as the insects born out of a tree devour and destroy the tree itself. The Buddha has taught many different practices according to the amount or the seriousness of the afflictions which the followers possess. This explains the distinction of not being difficult.

Fourthly, considered from every aspect, the methods to be practised within *Tantrayāna* are much wider and more demanding than those within *Sūtrayāna* — hence those who follow the tantric path to attain Buddhahood more swiftly are required to be of sharper intellectual powers.

The reason why tantric teachings are kept secret from the uninitiated and from those with no genuine belief in them is that they involve greater faith and greater effort than most people are capable of: without these two, results may be disastrous for the uninitiated. Prolonged meditation on a chosen deity, strenuous repetition of tantric incantations, concentrated meditations on the concepts of 'emptiness' and non-duality, and the symbolic performance of various *mudrās* are required of the initiate.

The initiate who practises the tantric method correctly, conforming to all the prescribed regulations, will however achieve unparalleled benefits and will be able to attain Buddhahood more speedily than followers of the other paths.

On the other hand if the tantric practice is not carried out properly both the teacher and the initiate accumulate demerit. A comparison is made concerning those treading the tantric path to a snake put in a bamboo pole: there are only two ways open — the one leading upwards to Buddhahood, or the one leading downwards to birth in the lowest form of existence, as a hell-being.

At this point, while dealing with the reasons for the secret nature of tantric practices, the author would like to stress that *tantra* is not a spiritual set of exercises to be treated commercially; it is not a commodity for sale in the market; it is not for

<sup>7</sup> Readers interested in more detailed information are advised to consult the various texts available on the subject. Refer sources nos. 39, 40, 85 and 250.



exploitation or for use as a means to gain worldly fame; nor is it to be used for personal advancement or as a means to earning one's bread.

Tantric teachings are not for casual reproduction as one might narrate a story: they are intended only for the ears of those genuinely qualified to receive them. No matter how curious the student, if he lacks faith he is an 'unfit vessel'.

The writer when having to give explanations regarding the *tantras* is always confronted with the difficult problem of deciding just how much one may safely and legitimately impart. Exactly where the line of secrecy should be drawn is difficult to decide and depends on the spiritual state of the enquirer.

If the writer does not give some idea of the profounder aspects of *Tantrayāna*, the reader will not be able to achieve any understanding of the essence of this important branch of the Buddha's teaching. Moreover, the writer feels that it is wrong that a number of recent interpretations of the *tantra* by various people whose knowledge is only superficial should go unchallenged. Some of these recent interpretations have been lengthy and the writer does not doubt the good intentions of their authors. Nevertheless, as a result of inadequate experience or understanding on the authors' parts many errors and misunderstandings are in danger of being accepted by Western students. Again, if the writer adopts a neutral stand the understanding of those genuinely interested in the practice or study of the *tantras* would suffer. These are arguments for speaking out that one cannot overlook.

On the other hand, to talk openly on a subject which enjoins great secrecy is to violate one's sacred vows and to make available material for the charlatan to exploit. Besides, *Tantrayāna* cannot be regarded in the same light as, say, history, i.e. as a subject to study but not to practice. With *Tantrayāna*, practice must go hand in hand with study and no further progress can be made in studying the subject unless one has also reached the required standard of practice.

On balance, the writer does not feel justified in going into any further detail on the subject.

### Yi-dam

Each of the four classes of *tantra* has its own system of psycho-cosmic diagrams or *dkyil-'khor*

(*maṅḍala*), consisting of one central deity and several other attendant deities. It is this principal deity of a *maṅḍala* that is known as a *yi-dam*. A person practising *tantra* adopts a particular *yi-dam* as the object of his meditation. The attendant subsidiary deities surrounding the principal one are different only so far as form and manifestation are concerned. In essence and nature, they are one and the same as the central deity.

While on the subject of *tantra*, the topic of *maṅḍala* itself invites some discussion. A *maṅḍala* is a diagrammatical representation of the mystical abode, or supra-sensory mansion, of a *yi-dam* deity. In other words, the real connotation implied in a *maṅḍala* is that the variegated forms of supra-sensory mansion are simply a projection of the *yi-dam* deity and all the qualities associated with the *yi-dam*'s being. The *maṅḍala* is just a symbol to help the meditator in the visualization of the supra-sensory abode of the *yi-dam* who is the object of his meditation.

Detailed explanations regarding the measurement, form and shape, colour and so on, of a *maṅḍala* are given in the special texts (*thig-rtsa*) of the respective *yi-dam* deities. Again, in each case, the meanings of the words have been condensed and put into shorter texts (*mñon-rtogs*) in order to facilitate their recitation and committing to memory. These and the original texts are also elucidated in various commentaries.

*Maṅḍalas* are of three types:<sup>8</sup> those drawn and painted on cloth (*ras-bris-kyi dkyil-'khor*) (See Plate 3); those made of coloured sands (*rdul-tshong-nyi dkyil-'khor*) (See Plate 4); and those made of material structures (*blos-baṅs-kyi dkyil-'khor*) (See Plate 5) — such as wood or clay.

The making of a *maṅḍala* is determined by factors of time and space. For instance, when there is inadequate space, instead of drawing the figures of the deities in full they are represented simply by symbols (tantric objects), or the single *mantra* syllables of a particular deity.<sup>9</sup>

There are countless numbers of *yi-dam*, but they can be broadly classified into three main types: peaceful (*ñi-ba*), wrathful (*khro-bo*) and semi-peaceful/wrathful (*ñi-ma-khro*).

A few examples of the better known peaceful *yi-dam* are: 'JAM-DPAL-DEYANŠ (MAÑJUŚRĪGHOṢA), S'PYAN-RAS-GZIGŠ (ĀVALOKITEŚVARA), S'GBOL-MA (TĀRĀ), TSHE-DPAG-MED (AMITĀYUS) and so on.

<sup>8</sup> The *maṅḍala* referred to here are of the visible type. There are also categories of invisible *maṅḍala* — such as those constructed in the mind of a person during meditation.

<sup>9</sup> † = S'PYAN-RAS-GZIGŠ.

‡ = 'JAM-DPAL-DEYANŠ.

GŚIN-EJE-GŚED (YAMĀNTAKA), PHUR-PA (KĪLA), EṬA-MGRIN (HAYAGRĪVA) and PHYAG-NA RDO-EJE (VAJRAPĀṆI) are examples of wrathful *yi-dam*. Among the semi-peaceful/wrathful *yi-dam* are GSAṆ-BA 'DUS-PA (GUHYASAMĀJA), BDE-MCHOG (ŚAMVARA), DGYES-RDOR (HEVAJRA), DUS-'KHOR (KĀLACAKRA) and RDO-EJE PHAG-MO (VAJRAVĀ-RĀHI).

These *yi-dam* are portrayed in various forms: some have the normal features of one face, two arms and two legs, while others are multi-faced, multi-armed and multi-legged.

The different physical aspects and properties which go to make up a *yi-dam*'s form symbolise the many diverse qualities of wisdom and omniscience of the *buddha*-mind. It is for this reason that all *yi-dam* are regarded as belonging to the category of the *Buddha* Refuge.

Why is it that so many *yi-dam* of wrathful appearance have been given in the *tantras*? Would not the peaceful variety have been sufficient? The answer lies in the fact that the essence of the Buddhist teachings lies in 'disciplining' or 'training' the mind of oneself as well as of others. The helpless sentient being, whose mind is in a state of affliction, resulting from delusion, is driven on helplessly into committing and amassing unskillful deeds. It is the state of affliction that is to blame for this and therefore this evil of delusion must be destroyed at its very roots. In order that the mind may grasp more readily the evil nature of this state of affliction it is presented in concrete visual form.

Most beings are habituated to the idea of categorising other beings as their foes, friends, or mere acquaintances, and therefore they understand easily the feelings of hatred, love, or indifference which arise in relationship to each of them. So in the context of the *tantra* the state of affliction is regarded as one's enemy.

For instance this state of affliction may be symbolised by the trampled prostrate figure under the feet of a deity. The viewer must understand that it is affliction that is being trampled underfoot, not a human being. In similar manner deities are portrayed wearing gruesome ornaments and bearing objects such as a severed head, a skull, shin-bone, human heart, intestines, blood and so on. The various offerings and surrounding decorations will also all be connected with wrathful activities. However these ornaments and decorations are not to be regarded as real in the sense that they have actually been taken from some human being who was killed specifically for this purpose. They merely

represent the supposed tangible existence of the personified enemy — affliction; and the use of gruesome details of flesh, blood and so forth are only symbolic of the gruesome nature of the 'enemy'.

The attitude of a person practising tantric meditation should be one of regarding with compassion those afflicted with delusion; and one of wrath against this affliction. The ŚĀKYAMUNI *Buddha* expounded these tantric teachings using the wrathful forms to act as a means to arouse the devotee's aversion to affliction — an aversion of such ferocity and violence as to act as a strong, speedy and totally effective means of destroying this evil. The terrifying appearance of a *yi-dam* therefore displays the wrath felt by the *yi-dam* towards affliction.

The tantric ceremonies are also performed with this same attitude of mind, namely of compassion towards those suffering from affliction; and wrath against the state of affliction itself. Such methods are amply described in the numerous commentaries on the *tantra*, and the rites and observances of tantric performances. By examining them, one will learn a great deal.

#### dPa'-bo mkha'-'gro

*dPa'-bo mkha'-'gro* are beings who belong to both the world of form (human beings) and the world of the formless (deities, spirits). They possess tantric powers. The term *dpa'-bo mkha'-'gro* commonly implies those *dpa'-bo mkha'-'gro* of the 'twenty-four states of existence' (*yl űer-bűi'i dpa'-bo mkha'-'gro*) who are depicted as the attendant deities of the *yi-dam* BDE-MCHOG (ŚAMVARA).

*dPa'-bo* implies the male (meaning literally 'hero'), and *mkha'-'gro* implies the female (literal meaning 'one who goes in the sky').

In fact both words exist in male and female forms, as follows: *dpa'-bo* (male), *dpa'-mo* (female), *mkha'-'gro* (male), and *mkha'-'gro-ma* (female).

*dPa'-bo mkha'-'gro* are of two kinds: '*jig-rten-pa'i dpa'-bo mkha'-'gro* or *las-kyi dpa'-bo mkha'-'gro* — mundane, or 'karmic' *dpa'-bo mkha'-'gro*; and '*jig-rten-las 'das-pa'i dpa'-bo mkha'-'gro* or *ye-űes-pa'i dpa'-bo mkha'-'gro* — transcendental or divine *dpa'-bo mkha'-'gro*.

Mundane or 'karmic' *dpa'-bo mkha'-'gro* are further sub-divided into two kinds: those who have adopted the tantric path and those who have not. The former have reached either the tantric Stage of Accumulation or the tantric Stage of Prepara-

tion. The latter are those who possess tantric powers by virtue of which they can, to some extent, benefit or harm other beings and can also perform limited miraculous feats such as flying through the air. Some of these are to be found in the class of *yi-dvags* such as *sa-za mkha'-'gro-ma* and *phra-men-ma* or *geon-'dre-ma*. Mundane *dpa'-bo mkha'-'gro* however can under no circumstances be taken as one's refuge or guide: they can only be called upon as a friend to help the individual in his spiritual practice.

Transcendental or divine *dpa'-bo mkha'-'gro* are exalted beings who have attained the Stage of Seeing of the tantric path, or passed beyond it, and all possess the rank of '*phags-pa* (*ārya*). The *dpa'-bo mkha'-'gro* mentioned in chapter four are of this category and belong to the *Samgha* Refuge. Because they have attained the rank of '*phags-pa* they are entitled to be taken as one's refuge or guide or spiritual protector.

#### Chos-skyoñ / Sruñ-ma

*Chos-skyoñ* or *sruñ-ma* (*dharma-pāla*) are upholders or protectors of the *dharma*. Like *lha* (*deva*) and '*dre* — spirits — they belong to the world of formless beings. They are able to benefit or harm other beings and to perform miraculous feats. They were appointed by the ŚĀKYAMUNI *Buddha* and other holy personages and have taken vows to champion the cause of the *dharma*, to uphold and protect it, and also to protect patrons of the *dharma* and guard them from internal and external misfortunes. Some of the best known *chos-skyoñ/sruñ-ma* are the Four Guardian Kings.

*Chos-skyoñ/sruñ-ma*, like *dpa'-bo mkha'-'gro*, are of two kinds: '*jig-ten-pa'i sruñ-ma*<sup>10</sup> — mundane, or 'karmic' *sruñ-ma*; and '*jig-ten-las 'das-pa'i sruñ-ma* or *ye-śes-pa'i sruñ-ma* — transcendental or divine *sruñ-ma*.

Mundane *sruñ-ma* are deities subject to the operation of *karma*. Their real nature may belong to the transcendental realm but they manifest

themselves as mundane *sruñ-ma* in order to further their good offices. Mundane *sruñ-ma*, like mundane *dpa'-bo mkha'-'gro*, may be subdivided into two kinds: those who have adopted the tantric path and those who have not.

In their previous births the mundane *sruñ-ma* have been practising the tantric teachings at random, without fully grasping or fulfilling the 'three essentials of the path' (*lam-gyi gts'o-bo rnam-gsum*) — of renunciation, *bodhi*-mind and the perfection of the right view (*śūnyatā*). This together with such immediate causes as the intensity of good or bad desires at the time of their death, created conditions whereby they were re-born as deities (*lha*), rulers of a realm, demons (*blaan*), man-like demons (*gnod-sbyin*), evil spirits ('*byuñ-po*) or powerful *yi-dvags* — all endowed with great tantric powers for the performance of good or evil deeds. Because of these powers they have been appointed, under vows, by the *Buddha* and various *bla-ma* to serve the cause of the *dharma*. This kind of *sruñ-ma* cannot be taken as one's refuge or guide, but can be used as 'servants' for furthering one's religious practices.

Transcendental *sruñ-ma* are exalted beings who have reached, or are already beyond, the Stage of Seeing and possess the rank of '*phags-pa* (*ārya*). They are motivated by an intense, self-created desire to champion the cause of the *dharma*. This intense desire has caused them to assume the form of *sruñ-ma*. It is these transcendental *sruñ-ma*, who like the transcendental *dpa'-bo mkha'-'gro*, are included in the *Samgha* Refuge, and are thereby entitled to be taken as one's refuge or guide or spiritual protector.

*Chos-skyoñ/sruñ-ma* assume various manifestations — peaceful, wrathful or semi-peaceful/wrathful. Among the peaceful *sruñ-ma* the most well-known are TSHÉ-RIN MCHED-LŪA and GYU-SGRON-MA. Among the wrathful are MGON-FO, DAM-CAN CHOS-EGYAL, DPAL-LDAN LHA-MO and RGYAL-PO SKU-LŪA; and well-known semi-peaceful/wrathful *sruñ-ma* include MA-GCIG DPAL-LHA, RŪNAM-THOS-SRAS, TSHAŅS-PA and YAR-LHA ŠAM-PO.

<sup>10</sup> '*Jig-ten-pa'i sruñ-ma*: When one gives a more detailed classification there are also some *sruñ-ma* of this category known as *las-kyi sruñ-ma*. It may, however, be worth-

while noting here that unlike the *las-kyi dpa'-bo mkha'-'gro* which were identical with '*jig-ten-pa'i dpa'-bo mkha'-'gro*, not all '*jig-ten-pa'i sruñ-ma* can be called *las-kyi sruñ-ma*.

## SECTION II

## CHAPTER 8

*Early Representations of the Buddha*

Some writers hold the view that no image representations were made of the *Buddha* during his lifetime and that the first representations were made some centuries after his death. However, many Indian works translated into Tibetan state that portraits of the *Buddha* were made even during his lifetime. This difference of opinion can only perhaps be settled when a full comparison is made between the Tibetan translations on the subject of iconography and such original Indian works as are still extant. Here the Tibetan viewpoint is given, based partly upon the old translations from Indian scripts whose contents are attributed to the spoken word of the *Buddha*, and partly on other learned treatises and commentaries of both Indian and Tibetan origin.<sup>1</sup>

Paintings of the *Buddha* Made During  
His Lifetime

The painted form of the *Buddha* seems to have preceded the statue-form. This painted form is said to have first been used during the reigns of king *oZUGS-CAN SĪN-FO* (Bimbisāra) of *rGyal-po'i-khab*, and *U-ṬA YA-NA* of *sGra-srog*. Although the two kings

lived far away from each other and had never seen each other they became firm friends, and it became their custom to exchange presents. Once *U-ṬA YA-NA* sent his friend a priceless coat of mail. King *oZUGS-CAN SĪN-FO* asked his ministers to summon experts to estimate the value of this present so that he might return the compliment with a present of similar worth. They came to the conclusion that no present of equivalent value existed such as the king might fittingly send in exchange to his friend. This knowledge filled the king with sadness.

Then a minister from Magadha, *Bram-ze dBYAB-TSHUL*, spoke to the king saying:

"There is no need to be so despondent! In this world the most precious of gems is a *sans-rgyas* (*buddha*). Have a picture painted of the *ŚĀKYAMUNI Buddha* on a cloth and send that as a present."

The king requested the *Buddha* for permission to do this and the *Buddha* agreed, and added:

"Have also painted below my picture the 'twelve interdependent qualities which together combine to produce all phenomena'<sup>2</sup> and below that some words of religious advice (See Plate 6)."

Artists were accordingly assigned to do a painting of the *Buddha*. But when they looked on the *Buddha* they were filled with such blissful contentment that they were unable to reproduce his magnificence. The magnanimous *Buddha* thereupon went and sat by the side of a pool, and the painters were able to paint his picture from his reflection in the

<sup>1</sup> Sources nos. 8, 37, 63, 71, 98, 99, 121, 203 page 42.5.7., 287-290 and 298

<sup>2</sup> These twelve interdependent qualities, *rien-'brel yan-lag*

*bcu-gñis*, form a cycle, each quality producing its successor. Sources nos. 124a page 237.4.7, 124b vol. 128, 35.4.5 and 129 page 36r3. Thus:

Twelve Interdependent Qualities		and	Pictorial Representations
1) <i>Ma-rig-pa</i>	Ignorance produces	—	A blind person
2) <i>'Du-byed</i>	Sense-Impressions, which produce	—	A potter moulding a pot
3) <i>rNam-tsa</i>	Consciousness, which produces	—	A monkey looking out of a window
4) <i>Miā-gzugs</i>	Name and Form, which produces	—	A man rowing a boat
5) <i>sKye-mched</i>	The Six Sense Organs, which produces	—	A prosperous-looking house
6) <i>Reg-pa</i>	Contact, which produces	—	A man and woman embracing
7) <i>Tshor-ba</i>	Feeling, which produces	—	An arrow piercing the eye
8) <i>Bred-pa</i>	Desire, which produces	—	A man drinking
9) <i>Len-pa</i>	Sensual Enthralment, which produces	—	A monkey picking fruit
10) <i>Brid-pa</i>	Procreative Urge, which produces	—	A pregnant woman
11) <i>sKye-ba</i>	Birth, which produces	—	The birth of a child
12) <i>rGa-fi</i>	Old Age and Death	—	A corpse being carried to cremation

water.<sup>3</sup> Thus the picture came to be known by the name of CHU-LON-MA, meaning 'taken-from-the-water'. Below the figure of the *Buddha*, the symbolic representations of the twelve qualities were painted, together with words of injunction calling upon the beholder to lead a virtuous life. The painting was put in a golden cylindrical container which in turn was put inside a silver one, and these two were placed inside a container made of copper. This container was wrapped up in rich and costly material and was then loaded on to an elephant. A messenger was assigned to accompany it. The messenger was given detailed instructions regarding the present in his charge and he, with a party of retainers, was sent off to king U-ṬA YA-NA.

When the messenger was two and a half *dpag-tshad* (*yojana*)<sup>4</sup> away from his destination king U-ṬA YA-NA and a party of retainers came to receive the royal gift in all reverence. This was in accordance with the wish of king GZUGS-CAN SÑIN-PO, made known to king U-ṬA YA-NA in a message preceding the arrival of the party bearing the king's gift. Then, when they had all come to an open space, the painting was unrolled. In this remote borderland no one had even heard the name of the *Buddha*. However, there were some traders nearby from the central provinces who knew of the *Buddha* and when they saw the picture they cried out:

"Obeisance to the *Buddha*!"

When king U-ṬA YA-NA heard the name '*Buddha*' pronounced a tremor ran through him and he asked to be told all about the figure in the painting, and to have the symbols below it and the written message explained to him. The king's questions were answered by the messenger and the traders. The king was thereupon filled with great joy and gladness and had the painting conducted to the palace where he made extensive worship and prayers. As evening fell he dwelt upon the meaning of the twelve interdependent symbols. It was then that the king realized the nature of the transmigratory existence and the path which has to be followed to attain release from it. At the same time he attained the Stage of Seeing (*mihon-lam*). Then he sang a song in praise of the *Buddha*:<sup>5</sup>

"Praise be to the *Buddha* who is far away from  
here!  
He has bestowed on me the Wisdom Eye and has  
removed my ignorance!  
He possesses such power to heal!  
Obeisance to the most perfect of physicians!"

For this gift king U-ṬA YA-NA sent a letter to king GZUGS-CAN SÑIN-PO expressing his heartfelt thanks, and he also made known his desire to meet a disciple of this *Buddha*. King GZUGS-CAN SÑIN-PO communicated this request to the ŚĀKYAMUNI *Buddha* who immediately despatched 'Phags-pa KĀ-TYĀ YA-NA (*Ārya KĀTYĀYANA*) with an entourage of five hundred to the court of king U-ṬA YA-NA. And thus the *Buddha*'s teaching spread to the borderland of sGra-sgrog where the king had five hundred temples built.

Another account<sup>6</sup> of the origin of the painted representation of the *Buddha* is traced to the time when the *Buddha* taught in Ser-akya (*Kapila*).

At that time there lived there a man called MN-CHEN of the ŚĀKYA clan whose wife had a maid-servant called RO-HI-TA. One day, just when the *Buddha* was teaching, the maid-servant was told to go and fetch a necklace. Her mind was filled with grief at having to leave the *Buddha*'s presence even for a short while and she thought sadly:

"Alas! I shall miss the religious instruction being given. Such is the misfortune of being a maid-servant."

It so happened that on her way to fetch the necklace she was attacked by a cow and killed. She was re-born in Siŋga-la as the daughter of the king of that land. When traders from mÑan-yod (*Śrāvastī*) went to Siŋga-la and there spoke about the *Buddha* the princess MU-TIG 'KHRI-SIN/MU-TIG-CAN,<sup>7</sup> by virtue of her previous good deeds and her past faith in the *Buddha*, experienced a re-awakening of that faith. She sent a message to the *Buddha* asking him for a representation of himself. The *Buddha* let the rays from his body shine on a cloth and artists outlined his form;<sup>8</sup> and this bodily representation, which came to be known as 'OD-ZER-MA, meaning 'taken-from-the rays', was sent to the princess with a letter. Thus it is from about this

<sup>3</sup> Sources nos. 8, 37, 63 page 50r1, 99, 101 page 44.5, 121 page 180.2.7, 287 and 298.

<sup>4</sup> A measure of distance (one *dpag-tshad* = 7 km, 680 m).

<sup>5</sup> Source no. 121 page 180.2.7.

<sup>6</sup> Sources nos. 98, 99, 101, 287 and 298.

<sup>7</sup> Sources nos. 98, 99, 101, 289 and 298.

<sup>8</sup> Source no. 123 page 336v1-340r1 (Lhasa edition GA).

period — within his own lifetime — that the practice of representing the *Buddha* pictorially on cloth came into widespread use.

### Statues of the *Buddha* Made During His Lifetime

The first statue representation of the *Buddha* is traced<sup>9</sup> to the time when a householder by the name of DAD-SBYIN invited the assembly of monks to a midday meal. Because the *Buddha* himself was not present it was felt that the gathering lacked splendour and so another householder by the name of MGON-MED ZAS-SBYIN sought and received the *Buddha's* permission to make a statue of him. The same householder had many statues made out of precious materials, in keeping with the specifications laid down by the *Buddha*.

Another account<sup>10</sup> explains that on a certain occasion the *Buddha* went to a heavenly sphere to give religious instruction to his mother (who had been re-born there) and to the other divine beings residing there. In the *Buddha's* absence from earth the king of gSal-ldan<sup>11</sup> wishing to be reminded of the *Buddha*, wanted to erect a sandal-wood statue of him and asked the *Buddha's* disciple MO'U 'GAL-GYI BU (MAUDGALYĀYANA) for help. MO'U 'GAL-GYI BU exerted the wondrous magical powers which he possessed and transported the craftsmen, who were to work on the statue, to the heaven where the *Buddha* was giving instruction. There they observed the exact shape and form of the *Buddha* and returned to gSal-ldan where they erected a full-length statue in the *Buddha's* likeness. In front of the *gtug-tor* (*uṣṇīṣa*) — the flame-shaped tuft or growth on the head of the *Buddha* — they placed a dazzling sun-stone. It is said that when the *Buddha* returned from the heaven of divine beings the sandal-wood statue took six steps forward to greet him. In fulfilment of a prophecy made by the *Buddha* on that occasion the statue was subsequently taken to China. There it came to be known by the name of TSAN-DAN-GYI JO-BO.<sup>12</sup> (This form of the standing *Buddha* was later portrayed in embroidery work in the famous *Zi'u-thar*<sup>13</sup> style.)

Yet another account<sup>14</sup> traces the origin of the statue-form to the time when the *Buddha* was about to pass away from this world. In order to set his teaching on a more permanent basis and to subdue the other non-Buddhist teachings he asked that a statue be made of him. After he pronounced this command three rays of light shone forth from his mouth. These rays touched the three gods TSHAṆS-PA (BRAHMA), KHYAB-'JUG (VIṢṆU), and BRGYA-BYIN (KAUŚIKA) and they were drawn to the spot where the *Buddha* was. These three undertook to make representations of the 'three bodies' of the *Buddha*: the 'spiritual or truth body' — *chos-sku* (*dharmakāya*), the 'enjoyment body' — *lons-sku* (*sambhogakāya*), and the 'created body or the body of magic transformation' — *sprul-sku* (*nirmāṇakāya*).

TSHAṆS-PA had a magnificent *mchod-rten* erected to represent the 'truth body' and this served as an object of worship for the *mka'*-*'gro-ma* (*dākinī*) in O-di ya-na (= O-rgyan).

KHYAB-'JUG took many jewels of the *klu* (*nāga*) and made a statue called RNAM-SNAṆ GAṆS-OAN-MTSHO to represent the 'enjoyment body' of the *Buddha* and this was placed in the ocean to serve as an object of worship for the *klu* (*nāga*).

BRGYA-BYIN took five kinds of earthly and celestial jewels, and glass jewels of five hundred and one varieties and had statues cast in the *Buddha's* image by BI-ŚVA KAR-MA. In all BI-ŚVA KAR-MA made three statues of the *Buddha*, representing the *Buddha* at different ages. Following descriptions given by the *Buddha's* nursemaids, the first and second statues represented the *Buddha* as he was at the ages of eight and twelve; and the third one portrayed him at the mature age of twenty-five. Each of these three statues represented the 'body of magic transformation'. The *Buddha* let the rays of his body shine on these statues and blessed and consecrated them. The largest of these statues BRGYA-BYIN took to lHa-yul (a heavenly sphere). The other two smaller ones were taken in turn to lHa-yul, O-di ya-na, Klu-yul (a sphere inhabited by *klu*), and rDo-rje-gdan.<sup>15</sup> It is said that during the reign of king DEVAPĀLA the statue of the twelve year old *Buddha* was taken to China and the statue of the eight year old *Buddha* to Nepal.

<sup>9</sup> Sources nos. 99, 101, 287 and 298.

<sup>10</sup> Sources nos. 8, 101, 287, 290 and 298.

<sup>11</sup> King U-TA YA-NA of sGra-agrog according to sources nos. 63 and 290.

<sup>12</sup> See Sarat Chandra Das, Tibetan-English Dictionary, Kyoto 1969, page 996.

<sup>13</sup> Other spellings of this word are: *Si's-thar* and *Si-thar*.

<sup>14</sup> Sources nos. 99 Part 1 page 58, 279 and 287.

<sup>15</sup> Bodh Gaya in modern Bihar.

The Statues of the *Buddha* Portrayed  
As at the Ages of Eight and Twelve

In the seventh century A.D. the thirty-third Tibetan king, king *SEŌN-BTSAN SGAM-PO*, took as one of his consorts the Nepalese princess *KHRI-BTSUN*, daughter of king 'OD-ZER GO-CHA (*AMṢU-VARMA*), better known to Tibetans as *BAL-BZA'* — meaning 'the Nepalese Consort'. The princess when she came to Tibet brought with her the statue of the *ŚĀKYAMUNI Buddha* portrayed as he was when he was eight years old. This statue was kept in the temple Ra-sa 'phrul-snañ in Lhasa which *BAL-BZA'* had specially built. This temple later became popularly known by the name of Jo-khañ. The image came to bear the name *JO-BO MI-BSKYOD RDO-BJE*.

King *SEŌN-BTSAN SGAM-PO* also took as one of his consorts the Chinese princess *WUN-ŚŪN KŌN-JO* (*WEN-CH'ENG KUNG-CHU*), better known to the Tibetans as *RGYA-BZA'* ('the Chinese Consort'), daughter of the emperor *THAÑ TEA'I THUN* (*TAI TSUNG*). She brought with her as part of her dowry the image of the *ŚĀKYAMUNI Buddha*, portrayed as he was at twelve years of age. This statue was enshrined in the *Rva-mo-che* temple in Lhasa which *RGYA-BZA'* had specially built.

During the reign of king *MAÑ-SROÑ MAÑ-BTSAN*, the grandson of *SEŌN-BTSAN SGAM-PO*, there was fear of a Chinese attack on Lhasa and because of this the statue which had been brought to Tibet by the Chinese consort of *SEŌN-BTSAN SGAM-PO* was taken for safe-keeping from *Rva-mo-che* to Jo-khañ where it was hidden, and walled up. A picture of '*JAM-DPAL-DBYANŚ* (*MAÑJUŚRĪGHOṢA*) was painted over the entrance to the hidden spot to mark it. Later when the danger was over this image was taken out of its hiding place and housed as the central statue in Jo-khañ while the statue of *JO-BO MI-BSKYOD RDO-BJE* which had formerly occupied the central position in Jo-khañ, was transferred to *Rva-mo-che*. Thus an exchange in the position of these statues took place<sup>14</sup> which remained unchanged up to the recent Chinese occupation of Tibet. The names by which the statue of the *ŚĀKYAMUNI Buddha* in Jo-khañ (i.e. the one brought by the Chinese consort) came to be known are several: *JO-BO ŚĀKYAMUNI*, *JO-BO YID-BZIN NOR-BU* and *JO-BO RIN-PO-CHE*.

These two images of the *Buddha* in Jo-khañ and *Rva-mo-che* were the two most venerated of all images in Tibet.<sup>17</sup>

Other Statues of the *Buddha* Made  
Shortly After His Death

About eighty years after the *Buddha's* death when '*Phags-pa NĒR-SBAS* was the chief upholder of the *Buddha's* teaching there lived three Brahmin brothers in Magadha.<sup>15</sup> The eldest of the three, *RGYAL-BA*, had a temple built in *Vārānaśi* with a statue of the *Buddha* inside made of precious stones. He also composed verses in praise of the *Buddha*. After his conversion he took the name *MTHO-BTSUN GRUB-BJE*.<sup>16</sup>

The second brother, *LEGS-ROYAL*, had a temple built in *Ka-len ta-ka* a spot in '*Od-ma'i-tahal* (a grove in *rGyal-po'i-khab*) and for it a statue was made of earth brought from 'the eight holy pilgrimage places'.

The youngest of the brothers, named *BDE-BYED BDAG-PO* (= *RGYAL-BA*) had a *mchod-rten* built in *rDo-rje-gdan* which housed a small temple within. The *mchod-rten* was built next to the 'bodhi' tree under which the *Buddha* gained his total enlightenment. Inside its temple was a statue of the *Buddha* as he was at the age of thirty-five, made out of the finest sandalwood and pulverised jewels. The sandalwood used was that which grew on the banks of the river *Gaṅga* at a bathing spot frequented by the *Buddha*. The eyes were made of precious stone. The statue came to be known as the *MAHĀ BODHI*. In time numerous patrons had many statues made to fill this temple in *rDo-rje-gdan*, of which the most celebrated were 'the Eight' (statues) which included the famous one known as '*JAM-DPAL RŪA-SORA* (*MAÑJUŚRĪ DUNDUBHISVARA*).

The religious king *AŚOKA* (*MYA-NAN-MED*) in the course of his reign had various beautiful adornments made to the *mchod-rten* in *rDo-rje-gdan* among which the most famous are the beautiful railings of the innermost of the three ambulatories. King *AŚOKA* also built *mchod-rten* in 'the eight holy pilgrimage places'. Later Indian workmanship, although incomparable in its way, could not match the magnificence of these early works.

<sup>14</sup> Source no. 20 page 28—34, 56 page 75.

<sup>15</sup> The appellation *Jo-bo* came into being after *TROÑ-KHA-PA* had both these statues crowned.

<sup>16</sup> Sources nos. 37, 63, 99, 101 page 101.22, 102, 287 and 298.

<sup>17</sup> However, source no. 101 page 101.25, contradicts the assumption that *RGYAL-BA* is the same person as *MTHO-BTSUN GRUB-BJE*.

### The Rise of the Various Schools of Buddhist Art

Among the best of these later works were the statues made by the sculptor BĪMBISĀRA who lived in Magadha during the reign of king ŚANŚ-EGYAS-PHYOGS. This craftsman took as the model for his statues the 'OD-ZER-MA ('taken-from-the-rays')<sup>20</sup> representation of the *Buddha*, and from his work originates the Central school of Buddhist art in India.

During the reign of king NĀN-TSHUL there lived in Ma-ru the artist PHĒN-'DZIN (SRAGDHARĀ). It is he who originated the Old Western school of Buddhist art in India.

During the reigns of the kings DEVAPĀLA and DPAL-LDAN CHOS-SKYON there lived two master craftsmen, father and son, in Wa-ren-dra. They were DHI-MAN-DA<sup>21</sup> and his son BIT-PA-LO. Later the son went to Bhañ-ga-la and resided there. From the father and son originated the Eastern school of Buddhist art in India. The statues made by the Eastern school came to be known by the name of *Śar-gyi-lha* (gods of the East); and they also took the 'OD-ZER-MA ('taken-from-the-rays') as their model.<sup>22</sup> The father and son were also responsible for establishing the Eastern style in painting although later the son inclined more towards the Central style.

The Central, Old Western, and Eastern schools were the three main schools of art in India at that time.

The earlier Nepalese works are similar in style to the Old Western school but later they appear to be influenced by the Eastern school. Much later still the art form in Nepal followed no set school but became a complete mixture.<sup>23</sup>

Kha-che (Kashmir) at first followed both the Central and Old Western schools, but later the Kha-che artist HASURĀJA started a new style of art which came to be known by the name of *Kha-che-ma*.<sup>24</sup>

In Pukkam and south India the art of statue-making found wide expression. The schools of art followed there are said to be of a three completely different kinds.<sup>25</sup> The founders of these schools of art were RGYAL-BA, GZAN-LAS RGYAL-BA, and RNAM-PAR RGYAL-BA, and together they are known as the Southern school (*lho-ma*). Little is known

about them in Tibet however since their influence does not appear to have reached that far.

### CHAPTER 9

#### *The Function of Religious Statues and Paintings*

According to Tibetans all branches of learning fall into five major divisions. These are: arts and crafts (*bzo rig-pa*); medicine (*gso-ba rig-pa*); Sanskrit grammar (*sgra rig-pa*); logic (*tshad-ma rig-pa*); and philosophy (*nan-don rig-pa*). In addition there are five minor divisions of learning which are included within the major divisions.<sup>1</sup> These are: astrology (*skar-rtsis*); composition (*sdeb-sbyor*); prosody (*shan-nag*); the study of words (*mtshon-brjed*);<sup>2</sup> and drama, dance and music (*zlos-gar*). So in total there are ten branches of learning.

In the branch of arts and crafts (*bzo rig-pa*) three distinctions are made depending on whether the creative process involves the functioning of the body, speech, or mind.<sup>3</sup> Within the first category fall the making of icons such as those representing a *buddha* or a *bodhisattva* (*byan-chub sems-dpa'*); the making of other sacred objects such as *mchod-rtan* (*caitya/stūpa*); the writing of works of a religious nature; and the making of all kinds of articles for daily use. In the second category are included the reading and expounding of the religious texts, and all other sounds such as song, melody, and tonal rhythmic incantation. The third category embraces the mind's pursuit of all learning and knowledge, without limitation, religious or other wise.

Of the works which are said to originate from the physical body the highest kinds are considered to be the making of religious images whether in statue or painting form. These works fall into three divisions depending on which of the 'three *buddha* bodies' they represent. *Chos-sku* (*dharmakāya*) — the 'spiritual or truth-body' — is represented in works such as *dkyil-'khor* (*mandala*), *'khor-lo* (*cakra*), *mchod-rtan* (*caitya/stūpa*), and *satsatsha* — miniature clay images. *Loñs-sku* (*sambhogakāya*) — the 'enjoyment body' — is represented in those images of divine beings who have hair knots, silk garments and ornaments, including head ornaments. *sPrul-sku*

<sup>20</sup> Sources nos. 98 and 298.

<sup>21</sup> DHI-MAN-DA according to source no. 287 and DHI-MA-NA according to source nos. 37 and 101 page 213.25.

<sup>22</sup> Sources nos. 98 page 18r7, and 298.

<sup>23</sup> Sources nos. 37 and 287.

<sup>24</sup> Sources nos. 37 and 287.

<sup>25</sup> Sources nos. 101 and 287.

<sup>1</sup> Sources nos. 99 Part 3 page 855, 244, 287, 288.

<sup>2</sup> See Sarat Chandra Das, *Tibetan-English Dictionary*, Kyoto, Japan, 1969, page 363.

<sup>3</sup> Sources nos. 15, 16, 98 page 18r7, 226, 244, 297 and 298 page 204 v 7.



(*nirmāṇakāya*) — the 'created body' or the 'body of magic transformation' — is represented in images of unadorned divine figures such as the ŚĀKRAMUNI *Buddha* wearing the plain monk's robes. These religious images are considered the highest kinds of works because of the use they serve to worshippers, who by looking upon the figures represented and reflecting upon their gracious qualities may thereby be led to meritorious achievement. As a result of such virtuous thoughts as these, religious zeal is born in the devotee. These religious objects are symbolic representations to which reverence and worship is paid, whereby the worshipper gains merit. It is therefore only fitting, and indeed of the greatest importance, that these objects of worship should be made accurately in accordance with the dimensions and measurements laid down.<sup>4</sup> If these measurements are not complied with then the merit earned by the maker of the object may be outweighed by the demerits he accumulates for his faulty workmanship. Moreover an ill-proportioned or badly-executed work has the effect of inviting irreverent thoughts and remarks from beholders, and thus demerit will be earned by these people also. A badly-executed work inspires no faith or devotional zeal in the worshipper, and as a result no blessing is acquired, for the blessing is commensurate with the devotion of the worshipper. It is only when a deep understanding of the *Buddha's* teaching is gained that one appreciates more clearly the real meaning of these symbolic representations. Then one's regard for them is increased; then one comes to distinguish clearly the uses served by a work of religious content, as distinct from a mere plaything or, for instance, a carving representing a monkey such as one might find decorating a table.

All religious works of art are collectively referred to as '*sku-gsun thugs-rtan*'. The Tibetan word '*rtan*' means literally 'support' but in its religious connotation it has no exact equivalent in English. '*rTan*' in the religious sense means an aid to memory, an aide memoire or reminder of the real thing which the object stands for (hence a 'support'). For example all religious statues portraying a *buddha*, deity or holy being belong to '*sku-rtan*' (physical reminders); all religious written works belong to '*gsun-rtan*' (verbal reminders); and all objects directly related to religious practice, such as *mchod-rtan*, *mandala* and attributes, belong to '*thugs-rtan*' (spiritual reminders).

There exists the practice of having certain religious images for specific purposes. For example, a person who wishes to commission a work for use in his own religious practice can make his own choice from the whole range of deities. Of course particular roles are fulfilled by certain deities. Thus a devotee may turn to a particular deity when making a request for a long life in order to be able to practise religion. Or an image of the sGROL-DKAB (SITATĀRĀ), or the White TĀRĀ, may be commissioned by a person who seeks to remove impediments which hinder his practice of religion. There are also statues or portraits which are executed after a person has died: 'OD-DPAO-MED (AMTĀRĀ), or the *Buddha* of Unmeasured Splendour/Boundless Light, is one of the deities commonly portrayed on such occasions. The name given to these works, executed after a person's death, is *skyes-riags*. The roles that these deities play for certain specific occasions and purposes are outlined in the *mdo* (*sūtra*) and *rgyud* (*tantra*) scriptures. However, it should be borne in mind that there is no hard and fast rule which restricts the portrayal of a certain deity for just one single, specific purpose. Certain deities who are not referred to in the scriptures for a particular case may be used equally appropriately and a deity quoted for one role may be employed for other purpose as well. The result is that the patron has a very wide choice at his disposal; and of course the original purpose in mind also varies greatly. For this reason it is sometimes difficult to say with any certainty what the original role of a particular work was intended to be.

In paintings, apart from the details directly connected with the figures portrayed, there is also the background scenery adorning it to be considered. This includes the landscape, animate and inanimate objects, and heavenly objects such as the sun, moon and stars, all of which contribute to make the painting pleasing to behold. However some of these details are not mere adornments but have underlying significance, being symbolic representations of the spiritual achievements of the *bla-ma* (*guru*) or *lha* (*deva*) portrayed. These symbolic illustrations of abstract qualities, whether they be symbolised by trees or flowers or anything else, should be viewed in their entirety and explanations should not be looked for in every line and stroke as that is not in keeping with the artist's intention. There exists no written work which enumerates the significance of such details. The understanding and ability to interpret the great variety of symbolic representations will come only after one has made

<sup>4</sup> Sources nos. 6, 8, 37, 108, 109, 112, 128, 161, 180, 183, 198, 206, 207, 244—248 and 310.

a thorough study of the religion. Those people therefore who readily give a host of plausible interpretations and explanations of what they feel their listeners want to hear are often only laying down self-concocted generalities which mis-represent the true religion and culture. The writer himself lacks the temerity to attempt such facile interpretations.

If one compares the work of two artists on an identical subject the dimensions and measurements should tally. In other respects however there is a free choice in the extent to which adornments such as symbolic ornaments, clothes and other surrounding details are used by the artist. Such differences as one may find in two works on the same subject are purely personal embellishments by the artist and have no religious significance.

Some representations have for their subject more than one personage and these may be portrayed either in one composite work or in a set of works. The rules pertaining to such works vary, but for convenience they are divided into three categories. In the first category are included such works as '*khruis-rabs*,<sup>5</sup> *brgyud-rim* (See Plate 7)<sup>6</sup> and *tshogs ts'i* (See Plate 8)<sup>7</sup> which portray a host of figures for whom there exists a definite prescribed order, laid down in the sacred texts, which determines the number and arrangement of the figures. In the second category are deities fulfilling a similar role — say, for long life — which may be grouped together. But the majority of these group portrayals, whether portrayed in a set or in a composite group, belong to the third category which is determined solely by the choice of the person commissioning them. It will be obvious then that one cannot say with any certainty why a certain group of figures should be grouped together when no absolutely hard and fast rules exist.

In recent years there appears to have been a growing interest in the West in meditation; at least

the word 'meditation' has come into increasingly widespread use. Because of this the role that images play in the practice of meditation has also come to be investigated. But simply to take an image and to say immediately precisely what connection it has to meditation is extremely difficult. If meditation is to be sincerely practised it is customary, and essential, first of all to train the mind. In order to do this, small stones, bits of sticks or an image may be employed on which one concentrates and focuses the mind. Where possible an image such as that of the *Buddha* should be employed. The devotee then concentrates clearly on every detail of the form, retaining the picture of the object in his mind. In this way a dual purpose is served. In the first place, by such concentration the devotee trains the mind and prepares it for the practice of meditation proper; and in the second place, the mere act of having looked upon a holy image is itself a means whereby merit may be earned.<sup>8</sup> As pointed out above, images are made for a variety of purposes and not solely for use in meditation.

It is only after one has succeeded in training the mind that one can seriously start to meditate in order to advance along the path leading to enlightenment. By the time this stage has been reached it is pointless to concentrate on the physical image in front of one. Instead, the concentration has to be on the projected image seen in the mind, for the realm of *ts'iñ-ñe-'dzin* (*samādhi*) is not accessible through the physical organs of perception. The main endeavour on the way to enlightenment is the practice of *dpyad-sgom* (examination, investigation) into *ston-pa-tid* (*kūnyatā*), and '*joḡ-sgom* (reflection upon the knowledge so gained). The meditation upon a real or imagined image forms only a part of the meditation. If one wants to have a full and accurate understanding of the practice of meditation in Buddhism, this can only

<sup>5</sup> '*Khruis-rabs*: refers to works where the subject matter traces the historical line of succession of incarnate beings, e.g. the line of descent of the Dalai Lamas or Pan-chen Rinpoches (known also as Panchen Lama to non-Tibetans) or other incarnations.

<sup>6</sup> '*brGyud-rim*: refers to works where the subject matter traces the line of spiritual teachers through whom a teaching has been transmitted. These teachers need not follow one another but a number may exist at the same time, as contemporaries. The line of continuity here is not one of incarnations but simply of handing on a particular doctrine.

<sup>7</sup> '*Tshogs-tsi*: refers to works whose subject matter is similar to *rgyud-rim* except that *tshogs-tsi* embraces a host of additional refuge-givers. (See chapter 4 on the Additional Kinds of Refuges.)

It might be appropriate at this juncture to point out that this word in the past has often been misinterpreted by some writers, who have translated it as 'assembly tree'. The *ts'i* in *tshogs-tsi* is spelt with a *z* and not with a *l*, which is the spelling for a tree. The literal meaning of *tshogs-tsi* is 'merit sphere or object'. The figures represented bestow merit and wisdom upon those who make prayers and offerings to them.

<sup>8</sup> Sources nos. 12 and 145.

be achieved by making a study of the *sūtras*, *tantras*, and other learned commentaries, and by taking instruction personally from an experienced spiritual teacher. The question of such meditation is far too complex to be dealt with here.

## CHAPTER 10

### *The Professional Artist and His Preparation*

Before commencing on a particularly important work, be it a statue or painting, certain religious rites may be performed.<sup>1</sup> The ceremony consists of reading from the scriptures, making offerings and distributing alms to the poor. A *bla-ma* bestows blessings on the place where the work is to be carried out, and on the materials and tools to be used for the work. The artist or craftsman carrying out the work is also blessed by the *bla-ma*. This is done after the *bla-ma* has entered a state of meditation in which he invokes a divine being — usually the deity 'JAM-DPAL-DEYANŚ (MAÑJUŚRĪGHOṢA) god of Wisdom — to enter into the human maker of the image.

If the subject of the work is a *yi-dam* — a meditational deity, or a *srub-ma* — a guardian deity, it is especially necessary that the maker of the image be an initiate of the tantric class to which that deity belongs. If he is not already an initiate then he receives the consecration necessary to initiate him into the appropriate *maṇḍala* of the particular deity which he is about to portray. Once an artist has received initiation into one of the four tantric classes<sup>2</sup> he does not require further initiation before embarking on a work of any *yi-dam* and *srub-ma* belonging to that class. If however the subject of a new work is a deity belonging to a class different from the one into which he has already been initiated the artist must receive an initiation into the appropriate class.

In addition to this a rite known as *rjes-gnañ* is performed by a *bla-ma* before the making of representations of *yi-dam* and *srub-ma*. During this ceremony of *rjes-gnañ*, meaning 'permission given', the artist receives the *bla-ma*'s blessings which enable him to recite and meditate on the *mantras* of the *yi-dam* or *srub-ma* on which he is about to start work.

In the case of certain *yi-dam* and *srub-ma* the artist has also to spend a period of time in meditational retreat.

A harmonious relationship between the artist and the person commissioning the work is also considered conducive to the success of the work. Also there should not be any feelings of discord between the artist and the patron's *bla-ma* and the subject of the work about to be undertaken.

The place of work should be in quiet surroundings and except for those persons directly connected with and helpful to the artist's work, such as the patron, *bla-mas*, and physicians, curious visitors should be barred.

The direction in which the artist faces whilst carrying out his work is another consideration. This depends on the subject of his work. East is the favoured direction faced when making portrayals of 'peaceful' deities and persons; south for those deities appealed to for 'increasing' merit, long life, prosperity etc.; west for some tantric deities; and north for the 'fierce' or 'wrathful' deities. If for reasons of lighting the favoured position is not advisable then the artist sits for a short while facing in the auspicious direction before taking up a more convenient position.

Depending on the subject of his work certain personal restrictions may be placed on the artist during the period of his work, such as abstinence from meat, alcohol, onion, and garlic; and strict personal cleanliness may be enforced. These restrictions always apply during the making of representations of any of the deities belonging to the first tantric class — *bya-rgyud* (*kriyā tantra*). Details of these restrictions are prescribed in the text concerning the particular deity.

There also exists the practice of adding small amounts of certain ingredients to the material to be used in making the portrayal, for example earth and water collected from sacred pilgrimage spots; relics of holy *bla-ma*; powdered bits of gold, silver, turquoise, coral and pearl; sweet-smelling medicinal herbs, powdered saffron flowers and so on.

For certain deities special ingredients are recommended in the texts and, if available, these special ingredients should also be added. If the statues are made of clay these ingredients are either mixed with the clay or added to the paint. In the case of metal statues the ingredients are made into

<sup>1</sup> Sources nos. 15, 16, 161, 180, 206, 207 and 245.

<sup>2</sup> Refer chapter 7, page 15.

a liquid which is then usually painted on the inside of the statue. In paintings these ingredients are either applied direct on to the surface to be painted or added to the paints; or they may be mixed with the ink or vermilion used for the writings at the back of a *than-ga*.

Worn garments of *bla-mas* may also be used for painting on though this is rare. More often the cloth to be painted on is kept for a short period in close proximity to a holy person before being prepared for painting on.

The maker of an image does not necessarily have to be a monk: there are both lay and cleric artists. A traditional concept of a person engaged in making some religious work and the qualities ideally required of him are outlined in a certain text.<sup>3</sup> In this it is said that the ideal artist should be free of faults and shortcomings such as an inadequate knowledge of his work; should be free of conceit or arrogance; should not be un-cooperative or difficult to live with; should be free from the desire to be flattered or shown respect by others; should be free of rudeness; free of acquisitiveness; should not be demanding in his fees or in the quality of food and drink provided for him; should be free of dishonesty (i.e. not given to stealing from his work materials); should not be slothful or given to making excuses readily; should not be fond of wine and women. The positive good qualities which he should possess are: modesty; devotion to his religion; middle-age; soundness in all his senses; diligence and conscientiousness in his work; good temper; a freedom from back-biting and a kindly disposition.

Here it might be appropriate to say a few words about the profession of the religious artist.

The profession of the artist was most often dictated by his being born into a family of painters (*tha-bris-pa*) or image-makers (*tha-bzo*), though there were, of course, also those who turned to this profession as a result of their own interest and talent. Many years of apprenticeship were spent working and learning under a master. In painting the final test was said to come when an apprentice had perfected his skill in drawing the eyes and mastered the art required in the delicate application of outlines and drawings in gold paint.

In the Tibet of old the makers of images were always kept busy with works commissioned from them. The artists worked either in their own homes

or else got board, and sometimes lodging, and a fee for doing the work at a monastery or in a private household.

When new temples or shrines were added to monasteries, statues and *than-ga* would be required for them. Donations from rich patrons requesting that certain statues or *than-ga* be made and housed in a monastery were another source of work for the artists. There were many occasions which might result in the commissioning of a new work whether by the lay or monk population. For example statues or *than-ga* might be commissioned as part of the prayers and ceremonies for the recovery of someone ill or for a newly deceased person (See Plate 42).<sup>4</sup> Other occasions were to ward off ill influences at certain ages, say at the ages of thirteen, twenty-five, thirty-seven, forty-nine etc. The most general reason for the making of new works was to create objects of worship in order to accumulate merit. The commissioning of a work was an act of worship in itself and between the completed work and the patron there existed a very close personal link. Sometimes after a person's death religious works of art belonging to him might be offered to a *bla-ma* or to a monastery. This might be the wish of the deceased or the request of a close relative. Or such a presentation might take place during the lifetime of the person. People in Tibet never treated these religious works as mere antique pieces. The quality and significance of a work was more important than its antiquity. It was quite often the practice to 're-do' or 'touch-up' old statues so that they might be kept in good condition. There existed no shops where one could buy *than-ga* and religious statues and even today it is considered morally reprehensible and disrespectful to the deity involved to make money out of the buying or selling of religious works of art.

The few Tibetan artists who left Tibet in 1959 and who are now living in India have to contend with very different circumstances. Although some of them continue to carry out works of religious art for patrons, naturally enough a Tibetan population of refugees cannot be compared as a source of patronage with the original population of their own country, who lived at a different tempo, and with other values than those which prevail outside Tibet. Some of these artists are now compelled to seek a livelihood by painting *than-ga* and making statues in order to sell to tourists.

<sup>3</sup> Source no. 70.

<sup>4</sup> The name given to these latter works is *skyes-rtags*. Refer also chapter 9.

## CHAPTER 11

*Dimensions and Symbolic Adornments  
of Statues and Paintings*<sup>1</sup>

There are eight sets of *thig-khan*,<sup>2</sup> which are the measurements and dimensions for all images, whether portrayed standing or seated, whether peaceful or wrathful. These measurements cover the whole figure.

1. In this category are those figures shown seated in an erect position such as the portrayals of the ŚĀKYAMUNI Buddha wearing monk's robes;<sup>3</sup> and EGYAL-BA RIGS-LŪA (the Five Jina) wearing jewelled ornaments.

The set of dimensions for this category is given in the tantric text *Dus-'khor-gyi rgyud* (Kālacakra-tantra).

2. In this category are those *zi-ma-khro* or semi-peaceful/wrathful deities such as the *yi-dam* BDE-MCHOG (ŚAMVĀRA), DGYES-EDOR (HEVAJRA), and DUS-KHOR (KĀLĀKRA) who wear bone ornaments.

The set of dimensions for this category is given in the tantric text *bDe-mchog sdom-'byun-gi rgyud*.

3. In this category are the figures of those *yi-dam* with a thousand hands and multiple heads such as some statues of sPYAN-RAS-GZIGS (ĀVALOKITEŚVARA) and gDUGS-DEKAB. (SITĀTAPATRĀ).

The set of dimensions for this category is given in the tantric text *dPal gdan-bži'i rgyud* (Śrī-caturpiṭhatantra).

4. This category includes various other *yi-dam*, shown either seated or standing, such as BDO-BJE PHAG-MO (VAJRAVĀRĀHĪ) and sGROL-MA (TĀRĀ).

The set of dimensions for this category is also given in the *dPal gdan-bži'i rgyud* tantric texts.

5. This category includes in general the wrathful *yi-dam* and *srub-ma* deities. They are the ones who are heavily built and have thick arms and legs, and are short in stature with large bellies. They are powerful-looking. PHYAG-NA BDO-BJE (VAJRĀPĀṆĪ) with one head, two hands and two legs is an example in this category. Other examples with more than one head, two arms and two legs are BTA-MGRIN (HAYAGRĪVA) and PHUB-PA (KĪLA). An example with multiple heads, arms and legs, is 'JIGS-BYED; while dPAL-LDAN LHA-MO is shown riding. All these *yi-dam* or *srub-ma* wear not only the bone ornaments but also ornaments of snakes, intestines, garlands of severed heads etc. These

ornaments are called '*chol-ba'i-rgyan*, meaning literally 'inappropriate ornaments'.

The set of dimensions for this category is given in the tantric text *gSin-rje-gsed dmar-nag-gi rgyud*.

All these five sets of dimensions were given by the ŚĀKYAMUNI Buddha himself in his tantric teaching.

6. In this category are stunted figures such as M-GON-PO-GUR and *khū* (*nāga*) figures which have the lower half of the body in serpent form.

7. In this category are *ñan-thos* (Śrāvaka), *rañ sañs-rgyas* (Pratyekabuddha) and ordinary mortals.

The sets of dimensions in these two categories were derived from the statues and paintings which were first taken from India to Tibet.

8. This category deals exclusively with the various postures, and gives dimensions where appropriate. The postures are as follows:

*rDo-rje'i skyil-kruñ*: this is the cross-legged posture in which the soles of the feet are turned upwards.

*Padma'i skyil-kruñ*: this is the lotus posture in which the right foot is tucked under the body while the left foot rests on the right calf. It is slightly looser than the *rdo-rje'i skyil-kruñ*, but the knees are kept flat on the ground.

*Sems-pa'i skyil-kruñ*: in this posture the left foot is tucked under while the right foot rests on the left thigh.

*dPa'-bo'i 'dug-stans*: in this posture the left leg is in the crossed position but the right knee is drawn upright and close to the body.

*dPa'-mo'i 'dug-stans*: this posture is similar to the last but the ball of the right foot is placed on the left thigh.

*bZan-po'i 'dug-stans*: in this posture the body is seated in the western fashion with the two legs slightly apart.

*gYas-rol*: in this posture the left leg is crossed while the right leg is flexed loosely in such a way that the inside calf touches the left foot.

*gYon-rol*: this posture is the reverse position of the last.

*bDe-gsegs-can*: in this posture the two legs are sharply bent in such a way that the soles of the feet touch one another completely while both knees are kept on the ground.

*rTin-zlum*: this is a posture in which the knees are flexed akimbo with the heels touching and toes pointing in opposite directions.

<sup>1</sup> Sources nos 81, 98 page 29 v 1, 108, 109 128, 161, 180 page 187, 198, 206, 207, 232, 312 and 315.

<sup>2</sup> Sources nos. 81 and 244.

<sup>3</sup> Source no. 52.

*mNam-pa'i rkañ-stabs*: this posture is a standing posture with the heels and feet together, as if 'at attention'.

*rGyal-po rol-pa'i-stabs*: this is a seated posture in which both legs are loosely drawn up in a pose of relaxation.

The set of dimensions used in this eighth category is derived from the measurements used by the Nepalese artists such as the celebrated artist RATNA RAKṢITA.

The Tibetan artist SMAN-THAN-PA and those following his school of art have another system of eight sets of dimensions; while the *sGar-bris*<sup>4</sup> and BU-STON have a system with eleven sets of dimensions. The contents in all cases are the same as above although in the latter case they are presented in more divisions (See Plate 11).

Portrayals in statuary and painting of beings above the rank of '*phags-pa (ārya)* are distinguished by the presence of some, or all, of the following symbols: the *dbu'i 'od-kor* — the circle of light round the head (halo or nimbus); the *sku'i 'od-zer* — the rays of light emanating from the body; the *ñi-zla padma'i gdan* — the seat covers of the sun, the moon and lotus flowers; and the *khri rgyab-yol* — the throne and backrest.

*dBu'i 'od-kor*: the halo or nimbus is a neat circle round the head taking as its centre the point at the top of the forehead, in between the eyes, and represents radiating rays. The diameter of the halo is two cubits (*khru*) — i.e. twice the length of the forearm from the elbow to the closed fist of the personage represented. The colour of the halo is usually green or light red (See Plate 12).

However, there are two classes of beings above the rank of '*phags-pa (ārya)* who are never portrayed with the halo — the very wrathful *yi-dam* or meditational deities (all of whom are above the rank of '*phags-pa*'); and the very wrathful *ye-śes-pa'i sruñ-ma*<sup>5</sup> 'jig-rten-las 'das-pa'i sruñ-ma.<sup>5</sup>

*sKu'i 'od-zer*: The rays of light round the body are enclosed within an oval circumference, the top part of which touches, or very nearly touches, the top of the halo. The lower part of the oval merges into the lotus seat. The background colour of this body halo is dark blue. On it are drawn fine curved lines in either gold or yellow paint which represent

the rays of light emanating from the body (See Plate 12).

At the edges of the head halo and the body halo there are sometimes elaborate curling patterns called *nor-'dzin pa-tra* interspersed with the jewel *nor-bu*. Sometimes the *nor-'dzin pa-tra* design is on its own; sometimes on its outside there is either a single or a double band of rainbows; sometimes there is a single or a double band of rainbows on the inside; and sometimes there is both an inside and an outside band of rainbows. Then again there are cases when the *nor-'dzin pa-tra* pattern is absent altogether and there may be just a rainbow border. In some cases there is only an orange border. At its simplest level there may be no border at all round the halo or the rays of light round the body. In all cases, whatever the decoration or absence of decoration, the original size laid down for the haloes must be adhered to. Thus, if any of the above elaborations are present they must come within the size originally laid down and must not be added on to it (See Plate 12).

In the case of the semi-wrathful aspects of *yi-dam* and *ye-śes-pa'i sruñ-ma* 'jig-rten-las 'das-pa'i sruñ-ma the rays of light round the body do not have a border of *nor-'dzin pa-tra* but in its stead there is a ring of fierce flames (See Plate 13) or gusts of wind (See Plate 14), or sometimes both flames and wind together (See Plate 15). Details concerning each of the deities are given in the texts and must be complied with.

Images may generally be found seated on the triple seat covers of the sun, the moon and lotus flowers (*ñi-zla padma'i gdan*) or on the cushion ('*bol-gdan*).

The triple seat covers have an uppermost layer of gold (representing the sun); a middle layer of white (representing the moon); and a bottom layer of lotus flowers, which can be in all colours.

The cushion often has on top of it a red coverlet with a silk border called *stan-dmar* (See Plate 9); and sometimes over this the monk's rug or carpet called *gdin-ba* (See Plate 10) in red or maroon. However, unlike the triple seat covers of the sun, moon and lotus flowers, and the cushion, the two top covers (*stan-dmar* and *gdin-ba*) can be used by even those who have not reached the '*phags-pa (ārya)* stage.

<sup>4</sup> *sGar-bris*: a school of Tibetan Painting. See Chapter 14, page 37.

<sup>5</sup> The group of guardian deities known collectively as *ye-śes-pa'i sruñ-ma* 'jig-rten-las 'das-pa'i sruñ-ma are the

highest-ranking *sruñ-ma* or guardian deities and are all above the rank of '*phags-pa* and so technically entitled to the halo. (Refer chapter 7.)

As a rule the peaceful aspects of deities have only the moon seat cover. If the sun seat cover is also present it is below that of the moon. Similarly, the wrathful aspects of deities usually have only the sun seat cover. If the moon seat cover is also present it is below that of the sun. These variations are given in detail in the special texts belonging to a particular deity.

The seat cover of lotus flowers comes below the seat covers of the sun and moon.

As a rule in portrayals of *bla-ma* and those *srul-ma* who are above the rank of 'phags-pa the sun, moon and lotus seat covers are not to be found. There are however exceptions to this rule — for example in portrayals of SLOB-DPON CHEN-PO PADMA-SAMBHAVA, JO-BO-RJE DPAL-LDAN ATISA and TSON-KHA-PA all of whom have the three seat covers.

Most portrayals of *bla-ma* show them seated on either one or two cushions ('*bol-gdan*) together with the red rug (*stan-dmar*) and the monk's rug (*gdin-ba*).<sup>6</sup> A portrayal of one's own special *bla-ma* to whom one wants to pay extra respect has a seat of three cushions ('*bol-gdan*) and on top of this the usual *stan-dmar* and *gdin-ba*. Because these portrayals do not have the lotus seat they do not also have the rays of light surrounding the body, since the two always go together. Instead there is a backrest similar in shape to the oval circumference enclosing the rays of light. In rare cases the backrest may be square in shape. The colour of the backrest is dark blue, and on it are outline drawings in gold of flowers, cloud formations, waterscapes, rock shapes etc. which give the backrest the appearance of brocade silk. Draped over this backrest is a long flowing silk scarf (*kha-btags*) which has its ends hanging over the sides of the backrest (See Plate 16).

If the portrayal is on a more elaborate scale than there is, in addition, a throne below the triple seat covers or cushion, complete with backrest of varying elaboration.

The most elaborate thrones may have up to twenty-one or twenty-two stages.<sup>7</sup> A description of a throne which is fairly elaborate and often seen is as follows. The height of the lowest stage, called *stags-bu* meaning 'base support' or 'stand', dictates the height of the throne. Above this *stags-bu* is a flight of three steps called *them-shas*. The height of each step is a third of the *stags-bu*. Next comes the main part of the throne support known as *gdon-*

*chen* which measures in height twice the *stags-bu*. On top of this is another stage, *srul-ma*, which is wider than the *gdon-chen* and in height equals a third of the *stags-bu*. Above this is the *pad-chun* which is of the same height as the *srul-ma* but slightly wider. On top of this is the part called *ba-gam* which is two-thirds the height of the *stags-bu*.

The faces of all these stages of the throne are decorated with lotus flowers, *pa-tra* designs and *nor-bu*. In front of the throne is represented a narrow silk drape, called *khri-khebs*, which covers the central portion of the throne. The lions which generally support the throne appear at the edges of the *gdon-chen*. If, instead of the lions, elephants or peacocks support the throne they are found in the same place (See Plate 12).

The ornate backrest of the throne, where present, has six varieties of ornaments. Outside of the halo and the rays of light surrounding the body is a decorative surround, in the centre of which is a (i) *bya-khyun* (*garuda*) — a mythological eagle-like bird — holding outstretched in its hands a serpent, which it is also clasping with its beak. On either side of the *bya-khyun* come in pairs (ii) *klu gdens-kacan* (*naga*) — water-spirits (with a human-like upper half and a serpent-like lower half) with multiple hoods behind the head; (iii) *chu-srin* (*makara*) — a crocodile-like sea monster with criss-cross ornamental patterns on its body; (iv) *mdzes-po'i bu-chun* — fine-looking youths, wearing leaves of trees as garments; (v) *ri-dvags ka-ral-can* — large unicorn-like animals having a mane of flesh and only one horn; and (vi) *glan-po-che rgyan-lan* — an elephant adorned with ornaments and holding a vase in its trunk (See Plate 12).

The spaces in between these six ornaments are heavily decorated with *nor-bu*. Other decorations which fill the surround are rainbows, cloud formations, flowers etc. A throne with the six varieties of ornaments is known as *khri drug-gyogs* meaning a 'throne of six supports', or *khri rgyan-drug* meaning 'throne with six varieties of ornaments'. The exact size of these ornaments and the spaces in between them, depending on the size of the central figure, are clearly laid down in the religious texts.<sup>8</sup>

The triple seat covers, the type of throne itself, and the ornaments of the backrest symbolise the spiritual qualities possessed by the figure seated on

<sup>6</sup> Source no. 52.

<sup>7</sup> Sources nos. 78 and 81.

<sup>8</sup> Source no 81.

the throne.<sup>9</sup> Accordingly the three main essences of the Buddhist path which are: the *byan-chub-kyi sems* (*bodhicitta*), *ston-'ñid* (*śūnyatā*), and *nes-'byun* — renunciation of worldly things — are symbolised by the moon seat cover, the sun seat cover and the lotus seat respectively.

The lions supporting the throne symbolise *mi-'jigs-pa bz'i* (*catvāri vaiśāradyāni*) — the Four Fearlessnesses.<sup>10</sup>

The six varieties of ornaments on the backrest represent *phar-phyin-drug* (*ṣaṭ pāramitā*) — the Six Perfections (of one who has 'gone to the farther shore').

In image portrayals, be it in painting or statue work, the Thirty-five *Buddhas* of Confession used during a special ceremony when prayers of repentance are offered for general sins committed, have thrones supported with white elephants, instead of lions. The elephant symbolises 'strength' and it is hoped that we may likewise be endowed with strength to rid ourselves of defilements. The colour white symbolises purity.

Representations of *Tshe-dpag-med* (*Amitāyus*) made to ensure a long life have peacock supports. The peacock symbolises long life because it is not destroyed by poison.

The *'bol-gdam*, the cushion, which is a type of seat commonly used by Tibetans, also has a significance. It serves to remind us that the figure on the throne, whether he be alive or dead, is a homely figure always present amongst all sentient beings with the magnanimous desire to help them all.

## CHAPTER 12

### *Sacred Contents and the Ceremony of Consecration*<sup>1</sup>

When a work of religious art has been completed a ceremony of consecration called *rab-gnas* is performed in which religious articles or writings are

permanently associated with the new work of art in order to make it a focus of spiritual blessings.

In the case of a statue the inside is not left empty but is filled with holy articles — *gzuns-gzug*. *gzuns-gzug* is normally composed of some of the following articles: *chos-sku'i rin-bsrel* (sacred writings); *sku-bal-gyi rin-bsrel* (physical relics of holy men); *yun's-'bru lta-bu'i rin-bsrel*<sup>2</sup> (meaning "relics which are like grains of mustard seeds"). The sacred writings are mostly *mantras* taken from the holy texts and there are many passages which are specifically prescribed as being appropriate for lodging in different parts of a statue. Sacred writings for lodging in the head are known as *dbu-gzuns*, for lodging in the neck as *mgrin-gzuns*, for lodging in the breast as *thugs-gzuns*, and for lodging in the lotus base as *pad-gzuns*. The physical relics of departed holy men may consist of such things as their nails, teeth, hair and so on, or some personal item which belonged to the holy man such as a piece of clothing or some other article that has been in close contact with the holy person during his life. Bone relics or the embalmed bodies of holy men are also sometimes used. Holy images, scriptures and *mchod-rien* are also commonly placed inside large statues. Which of these particular fillings is used depends entirely on what is appropriate and available. Certain medicinal plants or other articles considered to possess purifying effects — such as the dried and powdered form of the saffron flower or pieces of the juniper tree (which is traditionally used as a form of incense) — may also be used.

However these contents cannot just be placed inside the statue in a haphazard fashion. A special ceremony — *gzuns-'bul-gyi cho-ga* — in accordance with the religious rites and rituals laid down in the holy texts, must be performed and it is during this consecration ceremony that the *gzuns-gzug* should be lodged in the appropriate place. In the case of larger statues a stick, preferably of sandalwood and of about the same size as the statue, is usually inserted in the centre of the statue at the same time, along with the sacred contents. The stick is called *srog-'ñin* (literally "life-stick").

<sup>9</sup> Sources nos. 81 and 151.

<sup>10</sup> The Four Fearlessnesses are: "confidence of being perfectly enlightened as to all dharmas; of knowledge that all impurities are destroyed for him; of having described precisely and correctly the obstructive conditions (to religious life); of the correctness of his way of salvation for realization of all (religious) success" — Franklin Edgerton,

Buddhist Hybrid Sanskrit Grammar and Dictionary, Delhi, 1970, page 512.

<sup>1</sup> General sources nos. 65, 66 page 83, 67, 160, 161, 235, 236, 239—242, 258, 259, 263, 265, 269—286, 311.

<sup>2</sup> These hard particles, off-white in colour, are to be found in the burnt ashes of certain holy men and also on statues. The name by which they are more commonly known is *'phel-gdun* or *rin-bsrel*.



For those statues which have a base, such as the lotus cushion seat, there is a cover, called *śabs-bkag* or *śabs-sdom*, which is made to fit the bottom of the statue exactly. In the case of clay statues this bottom cover is usually made of wood, though it can also be made of gold, silver, bronze or brass. After the cover has been firmly secured to the base of the statue two "crossed" *rdo-rje* or *vajra* (*rdo-rje rgya-gram*) are usually engraved on the outside surface. Secure sealing ensures that no outside agent, such as insects, rodents and the like, can get at or damage the contents and also serves to keep the inside water-tight. Statues without a lotus cushion seat have openings in the back. The covers and sealing process are similar to those already described.

Unless there is a genuine necessity to repair the statues — as a result of some natural catastrophe for instance, or accidental serious damage — these sacred contents should not be tampered with. When such a replacement of the old sacred contents with new ones does become necessary it too is performed in strict conformity to the rites and rituals laid down for this purpose.

Where masks and sacred paintings, such as *thañ-ga*, are concerned — objects which have no 'insides' to hold religious articles — sacred writings are inscribed on the inner surface or reverse side of the work of art. The three syllables *om-āḥ-hūṃ* generally appear, together with syllabic combinations for the names of various deities, and special invocations or prayers making a special request or simply offering praise. The practice of taking the hand-print (or finger-prints where there is not enough space) and personal seals of holy teachers is also widely observed.

When all is completed and prepared the consecration ceremony (*rab-gnas*) is performed. During *rab-gnas* the grace and wisdom of the particular deity represented is invoked to the end that it will be infused into the work of art and the prayers being uttered in such a way that this grace, now transferred to the work of art, will continue to exert its benign influence. The consecration ceremony is not reserved exclusively for performance on the completion of a new work but can be repeated thereafter as often as desired.

This ceremony of consecration may be on a simple or elaborate scale. It is carried out in accordance

with the rites laid down and is a combination of meditation, incantation, and the recitation of prescribed mantras, together with the appropriate gestures and movements and the use of the correct ritual objects.

The details outlined above for filling statues with sacred contents and the consecration ceremony that accompanies it are not the choice of the persons performing the ceremony but are in accordance with the *Buddha's* injunctions as contained in the Buddhist texts and commentaries of holy Indian sages.<sup>3</sup>

Up to the present day the line of this ritualistic tradition remains alive and unbroken.

## CHAPTER 13

### *Religious Worship and Offerings — mchod-pa*<sup>1</sup>

The word *mchod-pa* can mean either the worship and reverence paid to a sacred object, or the actual items used to please the sacred object.

Items deemed suitable for offering may include any beautiful thing; sounds pleasant to hear; things pleasant to smell or taste; clothes which are light and soft to wear; and valuable ornaments. For certain religious ceremonies the *Buddha* has specified certain articles which are an essential part of the ritual. Apart from these, any other wholesome articles can also be used as offerings depending on their availability according to the season and the country where the offering is made. Thus the types of offerings which were made in India tallied with a particular district and its customs. The Tibetan's traditional love of elaborate ceremonies was responsible for the making of offerings on a grand scale. One sees this love of the elaborate even in Tibetan painting where the objects used as offerings — such as *nor-bu* (jewel/gem), flowers, fruits and so on — are included as marks of reverence and worship. For the same reason the brocade mountings surrounding the *thañ-ga*, as well as the clothes for statues, are made of the finest material. Similarly the scripture books are wrapped neatly in pieces of cotton, silk or brocade cloth. Worship and reverence may also be paid by having the gilded parts of statues renewed or touched up.

<sup>3</sup> Some of the best known of these texts are: sources nos. 105, 125, 163, 174, 229, 252-257, 260-262, 264, 266, 268, 308 and 309.

<sup>1</sup> General sources nos. 10, 63 page 175v5, 63a page 263.1.7, 63b page 276.2.1, 170, 177 page 156.5.1, 198 page 142.4.2, 199-202, 204, 231, 305 and 310.

*mChod-rten* standing out-of-doors are also constantly maintained in good condition for the same reason.

The traditional Tibetan offering is the *gtor-ma* (meaning literally 'that which is strewn or scattered'). *gtor-ma* come in a variety of shapes and different colours (white, red and yellow)<sup>2</sup> and may be offered in large or small quantities (See Plates 17 and 18). *gtor-ma* are made from the ground barley powder which is the staple food of Tibetans. If the *gtor-ma* dough were offered just as it is they would be an unattractive sight and so the practice of presenting them in pleasing shapes and decorating them with coloured motifs and butter grew up. There are even books on the subject of preparing these offerings which define and illustrate various set shapes appropriate for different occasions. Actual classes demonstrating the preparing of these elaborate *gtor-ma* used to be conducted. Additional merit could be earned by the offerer through the making of the dough more pleasing both in shape and colour.

In the early times holy and learned Indians used bread as the main part of their offering. The reason for this is that bread constituted one of their staple foods. Even to this day the word bread ('roti') is used in the general sense of 'food' even in areas where rice is now the staple diet.

These offerings are accompanied by the recitation of prayers which are chanted in various tones and depths and accompanied by the beating of drums, clashing of cymbals and the blowing of long trumpets (*duñ-chen*), conch shells and an oboe-like wind instrument called *rgya-glin*.

Incense sticks, flowers and the burning of lamps are offered just as is the usual practice in most religious worship. The offering of clean water was a widely practised form of worship and reverence in Tibet.<sup>3</sup> JO-BO-RJE DPAL-LDAN ATÍŚA praised the water of Tibet as possessing eight good qualities and remarked that the offering of this alone would be sufficient. He said:

"Cool and good to taste;  
Refreshing and smooth;  
Clear and sweet of smell;  
Harming neither the throat nor the stomach when drunk —  
Such are the eight qualities of the water of Tibet".

So when an offering of water is made merit is earned for each of the eight good qualities enumer-

ated. The easy availability of water also ensures that the person making the offering will not acquire demerit through begrudging the cost of his offering.

Offerings of water may be presented in containers (*mchod-tin*) made of gold, silver, brass, bronze or glass — or indeed any material. A poor person may even use his drinking cup after cleaning it. There is no fixed shape for the container — whatever is pleasing is best — but the container should if possible be larger than one's own cup.<sup>4</sup> There is no fixed number of water-offerings that have to be made, but multiples of five, seven, ten and a hundred are most commonly used.

### Mañdal

The word *mañdal* is derived from the Sanskrit word *mañḍala* and can be applied to a variety of different objects: here we speak of the *mañdal* offering.<sup>5</sup> This is a symbolic offering of the spheres of the universe and is a widely practised form of offering. The significance of this offering rests on the belief held by Buddhists that the spheres of the universe are the product of *las* (*karma*) — actions of all sentient beings. Each person by his own *karma* has contributed to the total sphere of the universe and is involved in the whole, and so when a *mañdal* offering is made he offers the entire universe, through his own share in it. This offering, like all offerings, is made to accumulate merit. As the amount of merit acquired depends on the articles offered, it may be expected that the offering of the spheres of the universe will result in the accumulation of merit on a vast and extensive scale. There are containers of various shapes in which this *mañdal* offering is made. The most generally used type consists of a round plate with high side (See Plate 19), on top of which are placed three or four hollow concentric rings (*lcags-ri*) of decreasing diameter, held in position by the grain-offering that is placed within. On the top is placed an ornate decoration (*tog*) which usually has the wheel of the *dharma* in the centre. A *mañdal* container may be made of gold, silver, copper, brass, wood, stone, slate or even clay depending on a person's wealth and taste.

Briefly the manner in which this offering is made is as follows. The base container is held in the

<sup>2</sup> Sources nos. 40a page 247,5,7, 184a page 79.3.1 and 188a page 167.2.2.

<sup>3</sup> Source no. 305.

<sup>4</sup> Sources nos. 53 and 151.

<sup>5</sup> Sources no. 151.

<sup>6</sup> Sources nos. 12, 63, 151, 199, 204, 215—225 and 231.

hand — with the base plate facing upwards, and the first ring is placed upon it. The space inside this ring is carefully piled high with handfuls of barley, wheat or rice grain, often mixed with medicinal seeds and precious stones such as turquoise, coral, pearl, pieces of gold, silver or other metals. The next ring is then placed on top of the grain and the process repeated until all the rings have been used. The *top* is then placed on top. The offering may be made of only one kind of grain, or precious stone or metal just mentioned. Lacking other materials bits of stone or sand can also be used.

Throughout this process the special prayer connected with this offering is chanted. In all, thirty-seven handfuls of grain are generally heaped onto the container to complete the offering. (Thirty-seven is the largest number; there are other counts of twenty-five, twenty-three and seven.) The different layers symbolise the component parts of the universe, as well as offerings such as the Seven Jewels of a Universal Monarch (*rgyal-srid sna-bdun*) and so on. Each heap placed on the container represents a vital part of the offering and serves to act as a reminder of the actual thing offered. Concentrating fully on each part of the offering, the person makes a total offering in miniature, of the universe. It is as if one were viewing a hill through the eye of a needle or seeing the complete reflection of a face in a small hand mirror. In this way the person making the *maṅḍal* offering regards it as embracing the entire universe.

Offering are also divided into different categories such as the following.<sup>7</sup> The offering may be of an article which has an owner (*bdag-pos bzur-ba'i mchod-pa*) — e.g. a flower growing in a private garden; or of an article which does not have an owner (*bdag-pos ma-bzur-ba'i mchod-pa*) — e.g. a flower growing wild. It may be a tangible object that is offered in reality (*dños-su blams-pa'i mchod-pa*); or one that is abstract and imagined in one's mind (*gid-kyis sprul-pa'i mchod-pa*). It may be of an 'external' nature (*phyi-yi mchod-pa*) — one designed to please the five senses; or, in tantric practice, it may be an 'internal' offering (*nan-gi mchod-pa*) — such as tea or an alcoholic drink which has been blessed by the offerer during the process of meditation when he identifies himself with a certain deity. (In this case the blessing is considered

to come from that deity.) The offering may be a 'secret' one (*gsar-ba'i mchod-pa*), such as the offering of a female consort. The devotee can also offer the *ston-pa-ñid* (*tūnyatā*) — (*de kho-na ñid-kyi mchod-pa*) — view of emptiness — after he has acquired it. 'Karmic' offerings are those made by a person who has not as yet reached the '*phags-pa* stage (*bla-na yod-pa'i mchod-pa* or '*jig-ñen-pa'i mchod-pa*); while 'transcendental' offerings are those made by someone who has achieved the rank of '*phags-pa* (*bla-na med-pa'i mchod-pa* or '*jig-ñen-las* '*das-pa'i mchod-pa* or *chos-kyi mchod-pa*).

Other categories or sub-divisions of offerings into groups of sixteen<sup>8</sup> or ten<sup>9</sup> also exist. These divisions vary according to whether one takes as one's basis for classification the subject of the offering, the object of the offering or the kind of offering itself.

Although not all these forms of worship were originally practised in Buddhist India they cannot be dismissed as non-Buddhist forms of worship. It may well be that some of these forms of worship were prevalent in religious practices in Tibet before Buddhism came to that land and were absorbed into the new religion. However, there is no ground for denying the validity of these traditional forms of worship in the practice of Buddhism. Some writers of books on Tibet, without studying in depth the religious practices of Tibetans, have observed these ceremonies which are strange and colourful to their foreign eyes, and on the superficial impression they have gained have claimed that the Buddhism practised by Tibetans is something different from the Buddhism of India, and have even given it a separate name of its own — Lamaism. It is unfortunate that the use of this coinage has already become widespread, but it is not my intention at this juncture to express arguments for or against the use of this term. Examples of the influence of a country's indigenous traditions and customs on an imported religion can be seen in most religions of the world. Moreover most outward religious practices are the outcome of developments which have taken place well after the 'teacher' of a religion has passed away. The different modes of worship have no effect on the actual religion practised.

<sup>7</sup> Sources nos. 12, 63, 151 and 231.

<sup>8</sup> Source no. 106 page 188v1.

<sup>9</sup> Sources nos. 12 page 97r1, 173 page 212.2.7 and 202 page 187.4.6.