

# PERSPECTIVES ON THE ANTAḤKARAṆA

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**ABSTRACT:** This paper is an investigation and overview of the main concepts of the antaḥkaraṇa, the means of its construction and its importance in service and meditative practise<sup>1</sup>. Western esoteric perspectives are introduced first, followed by Buddhist perspectives. In Vajrayana Buddhism the practice of taking death and birth on the path to enlightenment<sup>2</sup> is touched upon, since it is used in their meditations as a basis for higher spiritual attainments. It is seen to introduce a perspective of understanding about the antaḥkaraṇa that is not touched upon in the extant standard Western esoteric literature, and which adds richly to understanding and effective construction and use of the antaḥkaraṇa. A description of the stages of dissolution in death and meditation is introduced, followed by a very brief discussion of Buddhist meditative practices, with an emphasis upon *phowa* practice.

## INTRODUCTION

There is a painting one typically finds in murals at Buddhist monasteries, pictured right, that describes the stages of meditation in calm abiding, or *shamatha*.<sup>3</sup> The painting is a diagrammatic representation of those stages of meditation and has as its main feature a winding path along which an elephant plods, guided first by a monkey and later by a monk,<sup>4</sup> who after totally pacifying the elephant rides it on his way to attainment of higher realizations<sup>5</sup> and beyond. Each elephant represents a stage in one's progress in the achievement of shamatha, and is a representation of the mind of the monk at any particular stage. The monk represents the will that is brought to bear on the mind. What is of particular interest is the final stage—the place in the painting where the path ends and is replaced instead by a rainbow, emanated from the heart of the monk, over which the monk traverses back and forth in a victorious pose on the back of the elephant. That rainbow bridge is a bridge of light—of consciousness—which the monk, as meditator has himself constructed.



Students of the books of Alice Bailey will be well-familiar with that bridge of rainbow-colored light. It is the *antaḥkaraṇa*, the 'rainbow bridge'<sup>6</sup>, which enables one to proceed onwards to the great expansions of consciousness, or major initiations<sup>7</sup>. As it turns out, having it clearly developed is essential in any advanced meditative practice. Without it, no regular contact with the more subtle aspects of our nature is possible, nor is any accurate recollection of what is contacted in the more advanced stages of meditation or sleep. The realization of this antaḥkaraṇa, or rainbow bridge is

essential if one is to engage in any sort of higher spiritual practice, and the key in the attainment of that is a mind that is completely subdued by the will of the meditator, i.e. is single-pointed and pacified. Hence, the emphasis placed on the construction of the antaḥkaraṇa in the books of Alice Bailey. So, what is this antaḥkaraṇa if it is so important to our spiritual attainment?

### WHAT IS THE ANTAḤKARAṆA

*Antaḥkaraṇa* is a Sanskrit term composed of two root words:<sup>8</sup> *antaḥ* and *karaṇa*. ‘*Antaḥ*’ has been translated as ‘within’, or more to the point, ‘within the heart’. *Karaṇa* is a word meaning ‘causing’, ‘of the senses’, and most revealingly in terms of this exposition, ‘instrumental’. The compound word has been variously translated as ‘minds’, ‘mind/heart’ and ‘heart’. All translations are valid when applied to the current subject. In essence, the antaḥkaraṇa is a function of four factors: chitta, manas, Ego and buddhi, the ‘Ego’ being the basis of the ‘I’ consciousness, or sense of self. Chitta is the mind-stuff, or mental matter, regarded largely as the conceptual (concrete) mind. Manas is the process of mentation itself at all levels, largely regarded as *vritti* (obscurations or modifications) which in the final analysis are the obscurations to enlightenment.

The Ego is dual in nature: on the one hand it expresses through the causal body and is the incarnating soul—one of the causes of incarnation, aside from karma—when it is ‘downward-focused’, the subtle sense of self-hood,<sup>9</sup> of which the personality is the reflection. On the other hand, it is the point at which we gain entry and insight into the more spiritual aspects of ourselves, and as such it is the gateway to wisdom. The latter is the soul ‘upwardly focused’. Buddhi is ‘pure reason’, if we can understand that term, divorced from what we know as concepts, but it is also karmic volition—to be explained shortly—which is a volition that is also dual in nature, leading to ‘upward movement’ or aspiration to enlightenment on the one hand and the urge to liberation of all imprisoned live on the other hand. It is sometimes called the lowest aspect of ‘primordial mind’. It is that aspect of universal mind which makes the direct experience of wisdom possible. When we get to definitions of the antaḥkaraṇa, its construction and spheres of influence, although it is said to be a bridge of strictly mental construct, we may well find that in the final analysis it cannot be separated from buddhi, and it is the bridge that ultimately leads to that state of being.

It might be useful at this point to pause and consider terminology. In the Western esoteric traditions we are quite used to terms such as ‘soul’, ‘intuition’, ego or Ego, etc. However, since we are considering the more Buddhist perspectives later in this paper, Buddhism uses no such terms. There is no ‘soul’ in Buddhism *per se*, for instance. What we call the soul is simply to Buddhists a higher aggregate—a mental factor—and as such, it is ultimately an obstruction to omniscience, even though it leads one to seek that state. This applies as well to the Triad (atma/buddhi/manas). Ego and ego are both terms that to Buddhists have no meaning aside from the ‘I’ consciousness. They are ‘dependent arisings’, one coarse, one subtle. The matter is abstruse and is really beyond the scope of this paper, but it is mentioned here to give some perspective on what is being addressed.

While one might find these ideas uncomfortable, at odds with the Western esoteric traditions or just plain odd, it might be helpful to realize that the goal of the practitioner in Mahayana and Vajrayana Buddhism is full enlightenment—what we might call ‘monadic realization’ and beyond—and that once meditative equipoise can be had and the antaḥkaraṇa completed, the path to such a state is very swift indeed. In fact, the soul and the Triad are both transcended on the third through the fifth Buddhist paths<sup>10</sup>, respectively, and it is said this can be done within one or two lives depending upon one’s strength of application and karma. This indicates but one area in which Buddhism differs from the Western esoteric traditions.

Another term that is related to the subject matter at hand is ‘intuition’. Again, if one mentions the term to a Buddhist, it is usually greeted with a blank stare. The closest equivalent this author has found in Buddhism is ‘direct valid cognition’. Yet, the term ‘intuition’ is bandied about in the general populace as though it is easily had. In truth, very few people actually have what would rightfully be called an intuition. True intuition comes only with the first tenuous completion of the

antaḥkaraṇa, thus permitting the light of buddhi-manas to flood the brain consciousness. As such, it is *always* experienced in a field of bliss, and the knower is one with the known. It is rarely experienced at first, but once it has been, it is an impelling and compelling experience, leading one swiftly to the goal. What passes for intuition in the vast majority of cases is psychic impression, and mostly lower impressions at that. One of the aims of spiritual practice is to have true intuitions—part and parcel of the ‘science of vision’—and that is only had once the antaḥkaraṇa is completed, usually from the third Buddhist path onward, when one can more or less merge seamlessly with the light of buddhi via the highest aspect of mind in mental matter. With that, we return to the more Western presentation.

The antaḥkaraṇa is described as: “...the path of communication between soul and body, entirely disconnected with the former: existing with, belonging to, and dying with the body.”<sup>11</sup> The antaḥkaraṇa is entirely an aspect and a direct result of our aspirations toward enlightenment in the early stages. In Buddhism this would be called the stage of ‘aspiring bodhichitta’ (bodhichitta being the mind of enlightenment). It does not come from ‘higher up’, meaning from the soul. Rather, we build it entirely ourselves in the early stages through the force of our aspiration. In the later stages it is built directly via the focused mind of the meditator, as directed by one’s will. Of particular interest is the use of the term *karaṇa* with *karaṇa-śarīra*—the ‘body of causes’—or the ‘causal body’ of Theosophy. This is the body or emanation of the incarnating soul, the soul or that part of us that reincarnates from life to life and which forms the subtle basis of the personality. It is this causal body ‘over’ which the antaḥkaraṇa is built, eventually enabling a direct interplay between the monad and the personality.

Blavatsky defines this antaḥkaraṇa as *manas* connected with *buddhi*, and not simply as one’s higher mind, or Ego.<sup>12</sup> She goes further, though, and says, “...the Occultists explain it as the *path* or bridge between the Higher and the Lower Manas, the divine *Ego*, and the *personal* Soul of man.”<sup>13</sup> In this latter context we might gain further insight as we read on in the more Buddhist presentation of the subject to follow if we realize that ‘mind’ and its resulting mental factors in Buddhism encompasses the entirety of atma/buddhi/manas/emotion and not simply ‘manas’. Our point of reference of consciousness shifts as we progress along the path, in other words. As we may see, the antaḥkaraṇa opens a door which connects all facets of mind, being careful with how we define ‘mind’. The antaḥkaraṇa thus eventually enables one to directly access and thereby become useful to one’s spiritual source—the monad—and from thence to transcend the soul, human and divine, altogether—yet at the same time to be able to fully engage them in service. In order to synthesize and round out all the preceding points, then, it may be of use to read through a brief compilation of direct quotes in the books of Alice Bailey regarding the antaḥkaraṇa.<sup>14</sup> Comments are inserted in brackets in between to tie the sections together:

“The Science of the Antaḥkaraṇa is the science of the triple thread which exists from the very beginning of time and links individual man with his monadic source.<sup>15</sup> [T]here is, on the part of the soul-infused personality, a definite break *in consciousness* between the lower mind and the abstract mind. The [most abstract, or formless] mind (being the lowest aspect of the Spiritual Triad) can be regarded as a door admitting the consciousness of the soul-infused personality into a higher realm of contact and awareness.”<sup>16</sup>

[Here we have the crux of our problem when we seek to become more spiritually focused, as well as its solution. The opening quote would seem to suggest that the antaḥkaraṇa has been a part of our ‘equipment’ since the dawn of our human existence. But, in reading on we see that is not the case, not in fullness anyway. Only a small aspect of it has been in evidence, as seen in our sense of self-consciousness and our life-force. Even at a more advanced stage of human evolution—that of the soul-infused personality—the antaḥkaraṇa is not yet fully developed, as evidenced by the break in consciousness referenced. So then, this being the case, how does one gain real insight into the spiritual realms if there is not full cognizance of them, if waking consciousness

swoons every time those realms are approached, and then one returns to waking consciousness with no memory of what was experienced? There is our problem. This stage marks the first recognition of the need for and the initial stages of building the antaḥkaraṇa.

The triple thread mentioned is the combined life, consciousness and creative threads, anchored respectively in the heart, head and throat. The life thread especially links a person with their monadic source. The creative thread is a synthesis of that plus the consciousness thread.<sup>17</sup> These consciousness and creative threads are developed, strengthened and refined as we advance our meditative and service work. The fact that we have this break in consciousness referred to is evident to us every night when we sleep if, upon waking we have no memory of what we did on the inner planes during the hours of the night. It is the same in the deeper meditative states until we are able to link the brain consciousness with the Ego via the consciousness thread. At that point we have the possibility to remember much of what was done in the twenty-four hours of the day as well as in our meditative states. This continuity of consciousness is enabled via the antaḥkaraṇa. So, the solution to the problem of the break in our consciousness lies in our efforts to build this bridge, as outlined next. Continuing:]

The work of the building of the antaḥkaraṇa is primarily an activity of the personality, aided by the soul; this in time evokes a reaction from the Triad.<sup>18</sup> [The] *antaḥkaraṇa* is the lower manas, the path of communication between the personality and the higher manas, or human soul, or the link between the mental and the buddhic [faculties].<sup>19</sup> [It is] the channel of communication between the brain and the spiritual will, or the Monad, working through the medium of the Spiritual Triad... bridging...the gap which exists between the Monad and the personality.<sup>20</sup> The antaḥkaraṇa, therefore, is the thread of *consciousness*, of intelligence, and the responsive agent in all sentient reactions.<sup>21</sup> [T]his thread of consciousness is *evolved by the soul* and not by the monad.<sup>22</sup> [It] is the Path symbolically.<sup>23</sup> One of the points which it is essential that students should grasp is the deeply esoteric fact that this antaḥkaraṇa is built through the medium of a conscious effort *within consciousness itself*, and not just by attempting to be good, or to express goodwill, or to demonstrate the qualities of unselfishness and high aspiration.<sup>24</sup>

[There would seem to be contradictions in the statements here along with earlier statements made that the antaḥkaraṇa is self-evolved through the force of our own aspiration, but what is outlined actually seems to describe a twofold and graded process, one 'reaching up', the other 'pulling up'. In reality, the apparent latter stage can be seen as a continuation of the earlier stage. In the early stages we methodically, painstakingly go through the process of building this bridge with our visualizing capacity through practise, 'reaching upwards' until such time as the force of our aspiration attracts the attention of the soul, at which time we feel and are in a sense 'pulled up' by the soul, followed at a still later time by attracting the attention of the fullness of the Triad, and then the work goes ahead very quickly. So, in reality there are apparently ultimately two gaps in consciousness that need to be bridged—between the lower and the higher minds, and then between the personality and the monad itself via the full Triad. This stage is outlined next. Continuing:]

“[People] concerned with the building of the antaḥkaraṇa [thus have as] their task...that of linking the three points of mental focus—the mind [manas], the soul [as represented in the higher, or symbolic mind] and the lower mind [concrete mental faculties].<sup>25</sup> [T]he building of the antaḥkaraṇa ...is *consciously* undertaken only when the disciple is preparing for the second initiation [the 'Baptism'].<sup>26</sup> No major initiation can be taken until there is some measure of conscious use of the antaḥkaraṇa.<sup>27</sup> [It] is the conscious integrating force...the medium of light transference [and] concerns the continuity of man's perception.<sup>28</sup> [A] sense of universality is [therefore] required [when building the antaḥkaraṇa] and indicates, when present, a measure of

monadic inflow. This inflow comes naturally via the antaḥkaraṇa or across the "rainbow bridge."<sup>29</sup> One of the lines of thinking which it is most necessary to impress on advancing and advanced disciples is that of 'initiated thinking'. This means thought carried forward on purely abstract levels, and embodying, therefore, thought which is free from soul conditioning [higher mind] or from the crystallisations of the lower [concrete] mind. It is essentially triadal thinking and is only registered by the brain when the antaḥkaraṇa is somewhat constructed and there is some direct communication from the Spiritual Triad to the brain of the personality.<sup>30</sup> The building of the second half of the antaḥkaraṇa (that which bridges the gap in consciousness between the soul and the spiritual triad) is called the 'science of vision', because just as the first half of the bridge is built through the use of mental substance, so the second half is built through the use of light substance."<sup>31</sup>

[There is a rich field of investigation into the stages of initiation that is opened when one examines the correlations between the Buddhist grounds and paths in relation to the expansions of consciousness we call initiations. The third human initiation to us marks the Buddhist Path of Seeing, for instance, and this relates directly to the beginnings of the 'science of vision' in the last quote preceding. At this stage 'thought' as we have known it is supplanted increasingly and rapidly by direct cognition, or the direct ascertainment of truth, and this takes place in a field of what is called 'clear light', which is the light of the Triad.<sup>32</sup> What we have, then, in this 'science of vision', instead of being a process of thought which leads us to conclusions is instead a direct transference of light into the brain consciousness that overshadows our thoughts and clarifies our thought processes more or less instantaneously. The full fostering of this light transference and its use in service would be the 'science of vision' indicated in the quotes. Thought as we commonly know it then becomes an aftereffect in consciousness, in a way, instead of a means to an end. It becomes a tool of the monad for working effectively in the fields of matter, of which the personality is the access point.

The fields of development for an initiate are those of the Triad and beyond. The 'initiated thinking' referred to in one of the preceding quotes can have a dual meaning. On the one hand it can refer to 'thinking in the Triad' (Triadal consciousness) as one proceeds to master the higher meditative states and remove the subtler obscurations to omniscience in the clear light meditations (to be explained later). On the other hand it can refer to the thinking that is induced in mental substance when the higher impressions are received from buddhic levels and beyond. In effect, the mind must make sense of what is perceived in this latter case. The intuitions received in this 'triadal thinking' must be made useable in service, in other words. 'Universal thinking' here becomes necessary because once one is able to access these levels in meditation any sense of separateness quickly begins to fall away and all of one's notions of culture, religion, species, gender, time, space, etc., are challenged and are eventually seen as limitations to service and enlightenment, as well as tools to be used. Prior to that, this is cultivated through mental exercise, through embracing as many points of view as one can and through removing barriers to understanding. 'Universal' here refers to all thought that can be accessed, human and otherwise, unrestricted as to any sense of limitation<sup>33</sup>, limitation being the very thing that personality engenders. 'Universality' begins with 'impersonality'.

Here the term 'mind' can be somewhat problematic, depending upon one's point of view, for there is an apparent blind involved the terminology used in these quotes. "Thought carried forward on purely abstract levels" can have two meanings, especially if one considers Buddhist logic: In one sense such thinking can be seen to take place on the most abstract levels of the mental plane, but that would only be the smallest part of the story. The matter is clarified for us in the words, "It is essentially triadal thinking..." Such 'thinking'—for it is not human thought as we normally experience it—takes place in a field of bliss, of clear light, which is characteristic of the Triad and the monad, in a

type of mind that knows no separation between the Knower and the known, to use such terms. In other words, the ‘triadal thinking’ thus described is initially buddhi-manasic and then increasingly atmic-buddhic, and is possible to register in the brain consciousness only after the antaḥkaraṇa is somewhat completed, and this is indicated to us in the last line of the preceding quotes.]

[S]piritual desperation is what is needed to provide the required "point of tension" from whence the antaḥkaraṇa can be built. There is a basic distinction between desperation and pessimism. Desperation is related to the time element and to a correct and discriminative perception of the need.<sup>34</sup> *The tension of the lower evokes the attention of the higher.*<sup>35</sup> [T]he Science of Service...is the effort and the strenuous activity of the serving disciple which evokes the soul powers, makes meditation an essential requirement, and is the mode—ahead of all others—which invokes the Spiritual Triad, brings about the intensification of the spiritual life, *forces* the building of the antaḥkaraṇa, and leads in a graded series of renunciations to the Great Renunciation, which sets the disciple free for all eternity.<sup>36</sup> [The antaḥkaraṇa] is the final medium of abstraction or of the great withdrawal. It is with the antaḥkaraṇa that the initiate is concerned in the fourth initiation, called sometimes the Great Renunciation<sup>37</sup>—the renunciation or the withdrawal from form life, both personal and egoic.”<sup>38</sup>

This concludes the quotes. To summarize, then, the first stage of building the antaḥkaraṇa takes place in meditative equipoise on the mental plane, is initially laborious but eventually enables one to receive impressions directly from the soul. Once this is complete then it is only a short matter of time, relatively considered, before the second phase—that of full triadal interplay—is engaged. In Buddhism it is commonly held that this second phase can be completed in a single lifetime and one can thus attain full enlightenment, also in that time frame. The first line of this last set of quotes states exactly what is needed in order to complete the building the bridge—the sense of desperation. This sense of desperation arises from one’s service motivation. In one way, it is a test of one’s readiness and resolve. If the sense of desperation mentioned is not present, why would the soul or the Triad even pay attention to us? This is from a personal perspective. We do not make any effort to save a person who is swimming peacefully in a lake, for example, but we bend every effort to help when that person struggles to stay afloat and cries out for help. Once one has been pulled out of the water, so-to-speak, and one has achieved the desired connection and interplay, then another factor takes over in the life of one so imbued—one increasingly ‘becomes Triadal’. In other words, service becomes the overriding concern in one’s life, and this comes from inspiration, or light transference, from Triadal levels, keeping in mind that manas is only the smallest part of Triadal awareness. Service is no longer a mental exercise, or aspiration. It is a fact in one’s life—one’s life-blood, if you will—as evidenced by the light in which the mind is thereafter constantly bathed.

This last set of quotes brings us back to a term mentioned earlier in this paper with regard to buddhi—karmic volition. Up until the point when the active kundalini rises and brings about an end to the sense of separated self, service is an ideal—a noble ideal to be certain, but not a *known*, urgent reality. In a sense, the antaḥkaraṇa represents the clear central channel in the spine through which kundalini can rise unimpeded. When one, through mental development, mental equipoise and directed will, has reached the point in their development where the bridge is completed and it is possible to directly experience the divine via the kundalini, when one finally has a direct valid cognition of emptiness to use the Buddhist terms, then life is forever changed. From that state of being, which is manasic-buddhic at that point, one has the overpowering sense that, “Yes, I must bend every effort to liberate every being I can from their suffering and bring them to this very state!” One sees the time element involved, for with karma there is a window of opportunity for its resolution, after which it must wait for another day, and one sees clearly the immediate need. It is not enough that one dwells in such a state, because in that state one knows no separation from others. The suffering of others is known directly, as well as their sense of separation from that state of blissful peace.

One's desperation shifts from that of feeling bereft of spiritual connection and of feeling helpless to be of help in the stages of aspiration to that of the desperation of a bodhisattva. One becomes even more desperate—desperate to relieve the suffering of others, and it is this type of desperation for which the teachers and the Triad await. This begins with the people with whom one is most connected karmically. One's volition thus becomes the release the karmic threads that bind one to others and others between themselves, to remove the cords that bind one to 'this dreadful ocean of cyclic existence' which we call 'life' and to enable others to directly experience the bliss of the divine. The absolute peace of buddhi then becomes the very cause of the great struggle for liberation and breath for all beings within the mind of a bodhisattva. Until one is able to bring the suffering of others to an end and allow them to come to know that very peace directly, there is no rest or peace for the one who has thus attained. The path of the bodhisattva or a christ is therein fully engaged.

### THE ANTAḤKARAṆA: EAST AND WEST

Much of what has been outlined in the preceding points may seem new to the Western reader or as being part of some sort of a different dispensation regarding the Ageless Wisdom, but in fact, the science of the antaḥkaraṇa has been taught to initiated disciples for many centuries in the East. This has been especially true where Buddhist practise predominates, especially in Vajrayana Buddhism, a branch of Mahayana Buddhism, because service is seen there to be a prerequisite to being initiated into the practise of a *sadhana*, or meditative method.<sup>39</sup> For example, and to tie this in with the preceding quotes, in the prayer that typically precedes all Mahayana teachings and practices, the final line reads something similar to: "...may I attain Buddhahood *in order to benefit all sentient beings*." Thus, the practices and teachings are not for oneself. They are undertaken for the cause of the greater good. Service is thus the factor which impels one—or should—to take up meditative practices.

Before we begin to investigate the more Buddhist perspectives on the antaḥkaraṇa, though, it may be of benefit for us to pause for a few moments and consider why we would even need to take in these perspectives of the present subject matter. What follows is the author's opinion, but personal experience with all facets of what is discussed in this paper has led to the conclusions that follow. We might suppose that what has been given out thus far to the West in the writings of Helena Blavatsky, Alice Bailey and others is sufficient to our need, and these works have indeed been of great service. What has been presented through those works is universal in its scope, however the primary sources for those works have come from the Himalayan region—a region that has been predominantly Mahayana Buddhist in its traditions for over one thousand years, and which has had its roots in Hindu traditions for far longer than that. Djwal Khul himself, who was stated to be one of the main sources of the information in the books of Blavatsky and Bailey said that he was the abbot of a large Buddhist monastery<sup>40</sup> at the time, for instance. So, although we have the Western esoteric tradition now, what has been presented there gives us the background, but not so much the 'nuts and bolts' of how to proceed to directly perceive what is presented, except over a long period of time. What we have is generalized and not specific, especially to the individual student, and this relates to the occult meditations that involve the subtle energies of the human system. Such instructions are still secret in the large and orally transmitted.

As always, when one embarks upon occult practices that lead one to higher realizations, the presence of a spiritual teacher to guide one through the occult stages of the path is still a must and will remain so for some time, in all likelihood. However, if we examine what is before us at this point in world history, we have at present a most unique opportunity on a world scale. With the dispersal of the Tibetan diaspora world-wide due to the Chinese intervention in Tibet, the teachings that were once safeguarded in and more exclusive to their monasteries are now available in print and in person to anyone who would like to engage them. As well, initiations into practices, which in the end are very occult, and that were once secret and given only to monastics are now pretty much available to anyone who has the time and inclination to do them, provided the teacher approves it.



Virtually every major Western city now has a Buddhist center, often with Tibetan sangha living on the premises, and lamas travel frequently to those centers to teach and give the empowerments. The opportunity is unprecedented, for reasons that will be outlined presently.

There are two points that we may want to ponder in this regard: Firstly, why would these practices and teachings now be so widespread when they were previously kept secreted away for centuries, only coming to light outside the Himalayan region to any great extent almost 70 years ago—and after the end of the World War? And secondly, what is the opportunity presented by virtue of the first point? It is this author's considered opinion, and I am not alone in this view, that there has been a concerted plan underway on the inner planes for the West to avail itself of these teachings and practices. This is being done for the purpose of stimulating a more concerted spiritual effort in the West by virtue of the more occult forms of meditation, of somewhat offsetting the materialism of the West and of bridging East and West. But there is also the nature of an experiment in the blending of the Western scientific mind with Eastern methods, to the benefit of the world at large, and this in the busy melting pot that is Western culture.

In the East the method of pursuing spiritual practices is to remove oneself from the world to study and do them. But when Westerners commonly engage these practices, it has been much to the wonderment and sometimes consternation of the Eastern teachers that Westerners seem ill-disposed to retreat from the world to pursue this path, preferring instead to do them in their own way and time in the midst of their busy lives. And indeed, this is the stated way of progress for the Western disciple.<sup>41</sup> However, along with this Westerners are often largely unaware of what is being presented, so there is another aspect to this that bears our consideration, and this especially concerns the occult meditative practices that lead to the higher spiritual attainments, as seen in the following:

“The Himalayan School and Lodge is the one that principally concerns the Occident and the *only school without any exception* that should control the work and output of the *occult* students in the West.”<sup>42</sup>

The reason this would be so is because the meditative practices of the Himalayan region, Hindu and especially Buddhist, involve the movement of the subtle energies in the subtle channels of the body, utilizing internal heat, and as such they can prove to be quite dangerous if one is not under guidance by one who has seen the practice through to its conclusion. This movement of the subtle energies through the visualizing power of the mind via the will of the meditator is practical occultism and it is highly productive when properly engaged. Along with that, they act very quickly when properly practised and they are ideally suited to Westerners, since they contain copious visualizations on the whole, involve meditating in both the heart and the head, and are in the end quite scientific if one is familiar with Buddhist logic, thus suiting the Western intellect. The previous quote goes on to say that the Eastern teachers know adequately well how to protect their pupils, and this is largely due to the unbroken lineages of their transmission and the close proximity of the students to the teachers over the centuries. In short, these practices have been engaged for centuries to great effect, producing a large number of initiates. There is thus a large body of data and common shared experiences among *sangha* (the monastic community) upon which the teacher can draw in the event of any given eventuality with the student. These practices are thus safe, fast and produce exactly the results claimed when done under the watchful eye of a qualified teacher.

In speaking with people in the West about such practices there is sometimes a tendency to devalue them on the basis of culture, seeing the way they are practised in the East and presented as a sort of throwback and that Buddhism should somehow be ‘Westernized’. This is an unfortunate view and displays a certain ignorance of what is being presented, as these practices are universal, as well as the truths that underlie them. The only ‘Westernization’ that should take place is the adapting of one's life to accommodate the practice, not the other way around. To monkey around with an occult technique is really not the best idea. To do so can be a perilous path at worst, and be at the least non-productive. On the other side, the general teachings *should* be subjected to Western scientific thought, at the same time being open to trying an Eastern method, with an effort to make their spiritual import a part of Western culture when they are found to be true and effective.



However, we do lead Western lives, speaking as a Westerner, so what is to be done? It is quite simple, really. If one has taken on a sadhana and is involved in occult methods, one has to make time to do the practice on its own terms and then go about one's daily life, with the added benefits of the practice, making personal adjustments to accommodate them as the work proceeds. The general teachings, though, can be directly engaged with Western methods, and should be, with the added cultural richness that the interaction with the Eastern presenters can provide. It matters not whether one is monastic or lay. Respect is needed, as well as adaptation, and there is no reason to suppose that Tibetans or Indians should be expected to 'fit in'—even though they do quite successfully on the whole—to abandon their methods in favor of a more Western way. Their ways have proved themselves. Why should they change, and why would they want to?

These latter points bring in another dimension for the West, too, which will eventually find application: the West is not monastic in its orientation, nor is it ever likely to be. The days of religious monasticism in an increasingly secular world are quickly becoming a thing of the past. The Westerner is a householder, which brings in some interesting and potent possibilities. If the situation is found wherein a couple, for instance, share the same occult practice, and if the proper training can be found, then the practice can be greatly accelerated for both—meaning the possibility for enlightenment for both parties while still living. Women are said to have a particular gift for Vajrayana practices, for instance, which enables them to more quickly achieve the needed states that lead to enlightenment,<sup>43</sup> and in the West there are no monastic strictures on 'male/female interactions'. In the end, though, it makes no difference whether one is male or female, Eastern or Western. It is stated in Mahayana teachings that what is needed for enlightenment is a *human* body—a 'precious human rebirth'—and there are no qualifications to that statement on the basis of gender, race or culture, regardless of what one may have heard to the contrary.

Thus, there is a unique opportunity before us—for the West in having access to what was once the domain of the Eastern occultists, and for the East in having access to Western science, technology and culture. In the end, we are *all* being given the opportunity to accelerate the spiritual evolution of the world. Now, along with the Western esoteric presentations, we have the opportunity to engage directly in the practices that actually do lead one to the higher spiritual attainments, and in complete safety, if we so choose. A true spiritual teacher is able to teach anyone according to one's need. If such a teacher is found, it is to our great benefit if we can take what is given, first as hypothesis and later as proven fact through application, whether the teacher is of our race, gender or culture, or not, but at the same time 'testing what is given as one would gold'. In other words, we subject everything to the rigorous scrutiny of our own consciousness. A true teacher would not have it any other way. We meet such teachers through our karma and our need. It is not by accident that Tibetan Buddhism especially is now found dispersed throughout the West. It is a part of the world karma and addresses a world need, aside from the obvious hardship it has placed on many of the Tibetan people. It will also ultimately be found to have served greatly to benefit the Tibetan people, if we could see it. The preceding comments were made with the aim of opening a window of consideration and dialog, and not to promote a cause. It is the uniting of the facets that give a jewel its value, and not the individual face.

So, returning to the subject matter, if one reads between the lines a little in the preceding quotes about the antaḥkaraṇa and to summarize, there are certain key things that may appear to stand out regarding the conscious building of the antaḥkaraṇa:

- It requires the practitioner to be able to visualize, to imagine, and to act 'as if'<sup>44</sup>
- It requires the use of abstract thought, the use and correct interpretation of symbols
- It requires a sense of urgency—a point of tension that overcomes all personal concerns
- The sense of urgency—'desperation'—and the resulting effort invokes the help of the spiritual triad, and the mind becomes thenceforth imbued somewhat with buddhi, which is recognizable by the sense of bliss it confers, the light which one sees inwardly and the falling away of any sense of separateness. This comes in regularly only in the latter stages of the process.

- It requires that one's grasp of truth not be limited by temporal concerns, such as religion, culture, gender, etc.
- It is a meditative practice, one which:
  - a) is initially and increasingly inspired by service, and
  - b) takes the visualizations of the processes of death (abstraction) as a path to enlightenment and birth as a method of manifestation, esoterically considered.

This last point is implied, but not stated and goes back to the reason why Buddhist practices especially can be so effective in this regard, as discussed previously. 'Taking death onto the path' is a set of specific visualizations and instructions that are especially encountered in practices of Secret Mantra.<sup>45</sup> They involve the taking of the winds into the heart and then directing them through the subtle channels, thus clearing those channels and enabling the arising of internal heat, which leads to the greater meditative realizations. The break in consciousness referred to in the quotes is directly addressed in this process. The reason it is called taking death onto the path is because one encounters the 'clear light' at the time of death, and this clear light is the basis upon which full enlightenment is achieved. This clear light is also what is experienced on the other side of the 'break in consciousness' as well.

One also experiences a type of clear light at the time of deepest sleep, which can also be used as a basis for attainment and a practice for the time of passing. Thus, the death process is identical in particulars with the meditative methods that lead one to full enlightenment. This may seem odd at first or uncomfortable, but at death one is taken back to the source or launching point of one's life—the soul itself, which is the 'lowest point' of the Triad. If one could learn to recognize these stages, work consciously with them and do so in the waking state, then it becomes possible in life, and also at the time of passing, to enter fully into the consciousness of the Triad. One can thus attain continuity of consciousness, and eventually one's own monadic being and thus be of tremendously increased capacity to bring an end to world suffering. The possibilities for service are indeed endless. Such is vouchsafed for us in the tried and tested methods of the Himalayan schools, with their centuries of direct experience behind them. With that, we proceed with our considerations.

### **BUDDHISM AND THE ANTAḤKARAṆA**

There is an obscure formula that was presented in one of Alice Bailey's books which, when examined in the light of Buddhist practise, turns a key to understanding the building of the antaḥkaraṇa. It is contained in the following words:<sup>46</sup>

#### THE SUN . . . BLACK . . . ANTAḤKARAṆA

The key that unlocks this statement, in turn, is found in the recognition of the stages of dissolution in sleep, meditation and death, and can be seen the following now-familiar syllable:



We recognize this syllable as the Tibetan script for Om, or expanded, as AUM (the sound aspect of 'OM'). How is it that Om turns the key to unlock the obscure aforementioned formula? The answer to that is to be found in the component parts of the syllable and what they represent in a meditative context. Before we get to that, though, it may be of benefit and interest to investigate a few other factors in this regard first in order to give ourselves a little more foundation.

Om represents the body, speech and mind of a buddha<sup>47</sup>. It is used as a header in mantras and is used to invoke enlightened beings, or buddhas. In other words, it is more or less generic, connecting one with a divine source, whatever that might be, as represented in a mantra. Om is used here because it is familiar, but virtually any Sanskrit or Tibetan syllable that ends in 'm' can be used as a basis for dissolution, emanation and connection with a divine attribute, or deity even. In Buddhist sadhanas, syllables such as the one pictured are often systematically dissolved and re-emanated

during the course of a practice. Upon dissolution of the syllable one then meditates on emptiness<sup>48</sup> until the next stage of the sadhana is engaged. The syllable Om is actually composed in three parts: a, o and m, represented respectively by the letters pictured below, respectively (sounding as AUM):



The ‘a’ (pronounced ‘ah’) is the base letter, whereas the *naro* (middle symbol) and the *tigle* (circle) are qualifiers. The general process is to dissolve the body of the syllable first, moving gradually to the *naro* and then the *tigle*. The *tigle* atop these syllables is thus the point of exit and re-entry for the qualities represented by the body of the syllables. So, when pronouncing the Om, for instance, one can visualize the dissolution of one’s body (‘a’), speech (‘o’) and mind (‘m’) as a process, that dissolution leading ultimately to union with the divine attribute one is invoking. A study of these syllables is one of the bases of *mantrikashakti*, or the divine powers inherent in speech. When used in the context of a sadhana they have great power and safety in usage at the same time. The idea of dissolution, emanation and connection with the divine is inherent in the construction and utilization of the antaḥkaraṇa, yet we have a perfect opportunity to practise these processes daily—and it is a vast, unrealized potential. But first, it is important to know what one is dissolving and why one would have to in the first place.

We know somewhat of the importance of death as a liberating event in the cycle of life and a restitution of our consciousness to our more spiritual state of being, unhampered any longer by the cares of the world. What may not be so apparent is that we go through this same process every night when we pass off to sleep, passing through these very stages specifically when we enter into our deepest, dreamless sleep. Then we return to waking consciousness later, unable to recall what we did or experienced during those hours. In both instances—death and sleep—we eventually experience the mother clear light, however fleetingly and explained presently, yet because the antaḥkaraṇa is not completed we are unable to access that level of consciousness in the waking state or how we arrived there or returned therefrom. With this we might get an idea of why it would be important to learn to recognize the stages of dissolution in death and meditation. If we could do so and enter the process consciously then we would be able to engage the clear light for extended periods rather than as a fleeting moment, thus actively constructing this bridge in consciousness, greatly hasten our progress along the way and begin to bring through more readily the experiences and impression we receive in our deepest sleep and meditation.

Om is ubiquitous in sadhanas and mantras. In the Om we have the death process—or the ‘process of conscious abstraction’, if one prefers that term instead—represented for us symbolically. Why this would be so is as follows: The body of the Om, which is the ‘a’ base letter and the *naro* (the wing-shaped symbol atop the ‘a’), represent for us the dissolution of the elements in the process of dying—the earth, water, fire and wind elements. These can also be recognized in the process of going to sleep or in the deeper phases of meditation. The part of the Om in which we are particularly interested, though, is the *tigle*, or circle on the top—the ‘m’ sound in the Om. The *tigle* represents the withdrawal of the consciousness from the elements in death, sleep and meditation once they no longer serve as a support to consciousness (the coarse and subtle elements of the physical body). In other words, the elements are the bases of the sense-based consciousnesses. In the process of death, at that point the body would have been pronounced clinically ‘dead’. At this point in meditation one ceases breathing, although the life thread is still firmly anchored in the heart. Why these factors would be of importance to our current considerations has some rather interesting sidelines which are illustrative and pertinent to the process of building the antaḥkaraṇa, and those will be outlined in the next section.

Returning to the *tigle* and its dissolution, though, there are four distinct stages to its dissolution, and in fact, the entire *tigle* is not usually represented in Tibetan text. Usually only the circle, or even a dot, is shown, which represents the stage of ‘white appearance’, outlined below. This stage of ‘white appearance’ is often taken to be the stage of clear light, but this is a misapprehension. In effect, once this stage is passed in meditation or dying, conceptual mental activity ceases and one then enters into what appears to be a clear, peaceful state of being. Above and beyond the circle one

will often see a small wavy line drawn and connected to it, denoting a small flame. That flame represents the final stages of dissolution. At this point one is completely withdrawn from any sensory awareness. These four stages of the final withdrawal of consciousness are called, in order: white appearance, red increase, black near-attainment with recollection and black near-attainment without recollection. These latter two stages are explained in the next section. These final stages lead one into the experience of the mother clear light, which is manas with a touch of buddhi—the true ‘clear light’. The formula at the start of this section can thus be re-written as follows:

THE SUN (red increase) . . . BLACK (near-attainment) . . . ANTAḤKARAṆA (the bridge)

In the formula, regarding ‘the bridge’, we might ask, “the bridge from what to what?” It is the bridge between black near-attainment with recollection and the mother clear light. It is the bridge which takes one past the swooning of consciousness at the stage of near-attainment without recollection. With the completion of the antaḥkaraṇa there is no longer this swooning of the consciousness. Once this has been attained in fullness and one thus has full recollection back and forth between the near-attainment with recollection and the clear light, so-to-speak, one then has continuity of consciousness—full recognition and memory of all experiences in the twenty-four hours of the day, as well as one’s past lives. This stage must be done by the dynamic force of one’s will, or control over the mind, and this involves the yogic technique of the withdrawal of the winds into the central channel at the spine, explained in the next section. One is then well on the way to conquering death<sup>49</sup>, has all but completed the antaḥkaraṇa, has almost ended the necessity for reincarnation and can, after the Great Renunciation, incarnate and die at will. One is, therefore, well on the way to becoming an Adept or realized White Magician, or in Tibetan, a Rinpoche and higher.<sup>50</sup> This is, of course, if one’s motivation is entirely service-oriented toward the salvation of the imprisoned lives of the planet. With this in mind, how does one recognize the stages of dissolution and therefore success in one’s visualizations in the building of the antaḥkaraṇa?

#### DEATH AND THE ANTAḤKARAṆA

In Buddhist monasteries where Vajrayana practices predominate, death is a much-anticipated and celebrated event. In short, it represents the one opportunity a monastic person has to attain the higher initiations. A lay person can do so with a consort, given the requisite conditions, but such a process can be fraught and will not be dealt with here. If a monk, geshe or lama<sup>51</sup> is preparing to die, then when the time comes the signs related to the body are watched very closely. When a person dies, usually there are signs of death aside from the obvious loss of heartbeat and ceasing of breath, such as the exit of fluids from the lower orifices and blood from the nose, loss of heat from the body, etc. When, at the passing of one known to be spiritually advanced, these extra signs are not seen in addition to seeing other signs, then it is generally taken to mean that the person has entered ‘death meditation’. There are other measures taken to ascertain death meditation, not the least of which is direct clairvoyant ascertainment of the state of the one who is passing. If the person is particularly advanced then there will also be environmental signs, such as unusual weather, unusual behavior of animals, etc.

If one enters death meditation at the time of death, the body will remain fresh. It will look like the person is asleep instead of dead, in other words. If in a meditative pose it will remain erect and not slouch over. It can remain in such a state for weeks so long as the death meditation is engaged. This so-called death meditation is actually the process of initiation and can, if one is very accomplished in meditation, lead one directly to full enlightenment—the stage of chohan and higher.<sup>52</sup> All the Buddhist training comes into play for the person at that point: the training in taking death as a path, the conscious utilization of the process of dissolution, etc. In essence, the passing one is enabled to take one of the greater initiations with which we are familiar, usually from the fourth and upward.

However, it is not always the case that one who can enter death meditation shows any outward signs of having been particularly advanced while in life. There have been cases where it has been

found out after the fact that the person practised in secret and was not engaged in outward study, debate or teaching. So, one can never be quite sure of another's spiritual status until the time of death. It is quite possible for one to practise the deeper levels of meditation during the hours of sleep and never show any signs of having practised during the waking hours. In such a case one would have to be adept in dream yogas in the hours of sleep and would thus practise in an intimate fashion the very thing that would prepare them for the time of his or her death. In this way one could build the bridge in consciousness that would enable the greater expansions of consciousness at the time of death, and for hours at a stretch at that. It is thus important that one is able to recognize the stages of dissolution and be able to work with confidence in them in the preparation of the bridge in consciousness.

So, to recognize the stages of dissolution and their meaning we have the following:<sup>53</sup>

**“The Earth Element dissolving into the Water Element:** Things appear to the mind in the likeness of a mirage. The outer senses are quelled, the body has a feeling of heaviness, of sinking, and the mind lapses into the mirage-like state. The physical world has lost the ability to support consciousness. The sense then arises of being carried away on vast, flowing water. In the death process the eyes close at this point and the person begins their withdrawal from the life. Outer activity ceases.

**The Water Element dissolving into the Fire Element:** All watery essences evaporate, and the appearance of a wispy, blue smoke arises. The water element has lost its ability to support consciousness. In the death process the bladder voids its contents and watery exudations take place, if any. In meditation, the emotions are completely stilled at this point.

**The Fire Element dissolving into the Air Element:** At this point in the death process one loses the ability to discriminate. The body goes cold. In meditation, this marks the point of the stopping of the lower, conceptual mind. What appears at this point is something akin to fireflies or sparks darting in and out of the field of consciousness.

**The Air Element dissolving into the Winds:** At this point in the death process the breath ceases. It is the same in the meditation process. The winds<sup>54</sup> are withdrawn into the central channel at the area of the heart. The internal sign that this is taking place is akin to the vision of a sputtering candle or flame of a lamp. At this point in the actual process of death, the person to all accounts of modern medicine is clinically dead.

**The Stage of White Appearance (‘appearance’):** What appears to the consciousness at this point is something akin to a brilliant, white moon which pervades a clear, vacuous sky. This marks the dissolution of the coarser winds at the heart, the ‘winds’ being the vehicles of consciousness, akin to the horse of a rider, the ‘rider’ being one’s consciousness. [From this point onward in the death process the consciousness is abstracted into the outer petals of the causal lotus. This marks the beginning of the reassessment of the present life so commonly recounted in the death process in accounts of near-death experiences.]

**The Stage of Red Increase (‘very empty’ or ‘increase’):** This has the appearance of a red, orange-ish sun rising, pervading the clear sky. This marks the dissolution of the subtle winds at the heart. [In the death process this marks the assessment of the wisdom gained in life, and is connected with the inner petals of the causal lotus<sup>55</sup>.]

**The Stage of Black Near-Attainment (‘approximate attainment’ or ‘proximity’):** Black near-attainment has two stages. Firstly, the white and red drops meet at the heart chakra and enclose the most subtle wind. This marks the stage of entry of consciousness into the central bud of the causal lotus. There is at this point the appearance of a black, cloudless sky, like the darkest of nights. This is ‘**black near-attainment with recollection**’. One has memory of what is experienced at this point. Later in this stage, the consciousness falls into a swoon, prior to emerging into the clear light. This is the second stage, the stage of ‘**black near-attainment without recollection**’. One is unable to recall what is experienced after this stage.”

[It is at this point where the most essential bridge must be built in consciousness in order that the insights gained in meditation in the clear lights can be brought back into waking consciousness. This point is the imperative of building the antaḥkaraṇa. In astrology this latter stage of black near-attainment is marked for us in the zodiac archetypally by the sign Sagittarius—“piercing the heart with his arrows, and then upon the flight of the arrow...”<sup>56</sup>—one emerges into the clear light and ascends to the mountaintop, symbolically, in Capricorn. This ‘piercing the heart’ can be taken to mean ‘taking death onto the path’ in terms of our present context. This also marks the end of the winding path in the shamatha diagram, mentioned at the beginning of this article. In fact, the entire winding path represented in the diagram marks the stages of the zodiac from Aries through to Sagittarius, going in order through the signs.<sup>57</sup> Once one has at least completed a tenuous bridge of light, which will eventually radiate as the full ‘rainbow bridge’, then the path of seeing<sup>58</sup> in Buddhism is quickly engaged, because this rainbow bridge enables one to experience truth directly and not as a concept, and to bring those experiences back into the waking consciousness without distortion. One thus has a direct experience of emptiness—a true vision—in other words, to use the Buddhist terms.

At this point one can then progress onto the blending and attainment of the other clear lights, outlined next, which correspond to the levels of Triadal consciousness. The ‘mother clear light’ is one’s primordial mind, having been with us since the beginning of our path as human beings so many eons ago. It is pure *manas* so far as the human being is concerned. After that one progresses to the ‘example clear light’, which is *buddhi*, followed by ‘meaning clear light’, which is *atma*. These latter two lights are fully engaged only after one is ‘transfigured’, as it were. These ‘clear lights’ are what is engaged on the ‘Path of Vision’. Continuing from the preceding:]

“In addition to these seven, there are successive gradations of ‘Clear Light’:<sup>59</sup>

**The Mother Clear Light (‘the clear light’ or ‘utter emptiness’):** After the consciousness has swooned in the previous stage, the awareness awakens to the mother clear light. This is the primordial mind, the mind that is experienced at death. This is the ‘light at the end of the tunnel’ so often described in near-death accounts.<sup>60</sup> It is said that when this stage has been reached in the death process, that process is then complete. The heart beats its last. There is no possibility of return to the body at that point. In the meditative process, attainment of this state is the prerequisite for all advanced meditative practise—the prerequisite to the path. Meditation on emptiness at this point produces the nirmanakaya<sup>61</sup> of the meditator. Some people, upon reaching this state, think they have achieved the realization of emptiness, and thus a sort of end goal, but this marks only the beginning of the path of true meditation. From this point onward if the meditation process is fully engaged we have what is called ‘taking birth onto the path’ to the nirmanakaya. From its appearance, this is an empty, concept-free mind. From here, the mother clear light must be conjoined with:

**The Example (Child) Clear Light:** (also known as the ‘all-empty clear light,’ or the ‘child clear light of the path’): This is the clear light that realizes emptiness—the ultimate spiritual path. Then, there is **The Meaning Clear Light:** This has many names, according to one’s tradition. Once this has been achieved, then one can proceed to totally dissolve the five major winds at the heart. The end process of generating meaning clear light and full enlightenment are one and the same. The mind that realizes meaning clear light is the mind that directly cognizes emptiness—the mind of a buddha. Buddhahood has been achieved. This stage marks the realization of the dharmakaya.<sup>62</sup>

Of these four stages of emptiness, their recognition and usefulness—white appearance, red increase, black near attainment and mother clear light—especially at the time of death, it is said:

If during one's lifetime one did not cultivate this ability to place the mind in the view of emptiness, then there will be no way to do so now. Therefore it is

fundamental to the success of the bardo yogas that during one's lifetime one cultivates two qualities: the ability to place the mind in a stable understanding of emptiness; and the yogic means of inducing the four blisses.<sup>63</sup> One must apply this technology here for taking 'the child clear light' as 'the clear light of the path'.

...To gain the ability [to do this at the time of death] one must practice for it in this lifetime. During the waking state one brings the vital energies into the central channel and there causes them to abide and dissolve; one must gain familiarity in this way with the four emptinesses [which arise from the four blisses], and particularly 'utter emptiness' [i.e., the fourth emptiness, or mother clear light]. Also, during sleep one blends awareness with the clear light of sleep, no matter how deep one's sleep is. When one trains during the waking and sleeping states in this way, the strength of control over the subtle energies and mind that one achieves will provide one with the power to blend 'mother and child clear lights' at the time of death.<sup>64</sup>

[From this we might see the basis for one being able to take a major initiation (initiations beyond the Transfiguration) at the time of death. Continuing:]

"The associations of the three successive states of clear light with manas, buddhi and atma, respectively, will perhaps be apparent. There is much that has, of necessity, been left out of these descriptions. In the past, most of these points were addressed in commentaries on Secret Mantra (Vajrayana), which are given only to pledged disciples, although these points are now readily available in print.<sup>65</sup> In point of fact, in the books on esoteric psychology and esoteric astrology, the books by Alice Bailey, no information is given about the stages of this dissolution process, although hints are given. At that point in Western history when those books were written, the practices of Secret Mantra were just that—secret—and were orally transmitted. One such point which is hinted at in the Bailey material is that the building of the bridge to soul-consciousness is connected with the three latter of the seven preliminary stages—white appearance, red increase and black near-attainment—which lead to the realization of the mother clear light. This mother clear light is the light of the higher Self on its lowest level—manas<sup>66</sup>."

#### PHOWA AND THE ANTAḤKARAṆA

Although it may sound macabre or even dangerous to focus upon the death process as a path in meditation, every day we unconsciously practise this process of dissolution, but without withdrawing the life thread, and we do this during the hours of sleep. Death is but a longer interlude of the same process. If we could focus the consciousness when we go through these stages of withdrawal while still living, recognize them and work with them, then we would consciously be constructing the antaḥkaraṇa, especially in the near-attainment stages outlined above. We would then be able to use the clear light experienced at death as a basis for higher spiritual attainments at the time of death. We can also make progress along the way during the hours of sleep if we can stabilize the mind in this way, but during sleep we do not undergo the full process.<sup>67</sup> This blending of the clear lights is fully engaged in practices of Secret Mantra. But are there practices in the Buddhist traditions that are available to the West which train one in consciousness transference at the time of death that are not so complicated as those of Secret Mantra and, if so, what are they?

In fact, there is a Buddhist practice which trains one in this very technique of transferring one's consciousness to a buddha field—*phowa* (Tibetan: '*pho ba*)—which aids greatly in the stabilization and focus of the mind. This technique is also known as 'consciousness transference'.<sup>68</sup> The core of the practice will presently be outlined.<sup>69</sup> One of the things that makes this particular practice of interest here is that it does not require an empowerment into Secret Mantra, nor does it focus upon the process of dissolution in death and sleep, so it is more palatable to some people. It is also said to



be particularly suited to people who have no experience in the practices of Secret Mantra. However, it does train one in building an unobstructed channel with one's higher aspects.

At the same time of training one in building an unobstructed channel phowa aids in training one in the recognition of the stages of abstraction, if done properly, and of building this bridge over the gap in recollection between the black near-attainment with recollection and the clear light previously mentioned, although in the practice this is done without any focus upon that. It is strongly recommended that one be initiated into a long-life practice in concert with phowa, though, to be practised periodically while one is training in phowa, lest one becomes too practised at dying, if we see the meaning. There are three such long-life practices—White Tara, Ushnishavijaya and Amitayus—and since these are lower tantras, they are simple and require only a small commitment of time and effort, relatively considered. Phowa, along with the long-life practice, is very swift at clarifying, strengthening and combining the life thread and the consciousness thread, as well as giving us great ease in exiting and returning to the body in meditation, as well as removing the fear of death, and ultimately of conquering death itself. 'Conquering death' here means ceasing the karmic need for having to reincarnate.

The construction of the antaḥkaraṇa as one would find in Secret Mantra is not specifically outlined as such nor is the term ever mentioned. Instead, it comes about as a result of practise over time through the practise of dissolution and taking death onto the path. And this brings up an interesting point: In the monastic setting, especially in the earlier days of Buddhist monasticism, these practices were only given to people who already had established calm abiding in their mind-stream to some degree, or to whom the practice was recommended by a qualified teacher. Nowadays in the West many of the practices are available to virtually anyone, which is not really the best of situations. The great majority of advanced Buddhist meditative practices require an initiation and a commitment of time, behavior and persistent practice, and it is recommended if one wants to fully realize the benefits of those practices that one as well attend a commentary retreat on their particular practice. Otherwise, the visualizations will be confused or unclear and many particulars of the meditation would not receive their proper direction and/or focus as the novice practitioner proceeds with the practice. A commentary retreat will last anywhere from a few days to a few weeks, depending upon the complexity of the sadhana and the depth of presentation. Such practices are not for everyone, only the more committed of people, and they are best undertaken from a Rinpoche or Lama—one who has seen the practice through to its completion—one who has 'conquered death' or is a fully qualified dharma practitioner (living buddha), respectively.

Some of the lower tantras take only a few minutes a day to complete, whereas the higher tantras can take several hours. Phowa practice, for instance, can take as little as thirty minutes or last for much longer, depending upon one's motivation and commitment. But as with any of these practices, and indeed as with any discipline, it must be done regularly and steadily if one is to see any benefit from it, or more importantly, for it to be of benefit to anyone else. Naturally, the ones that take several hours are the ones that more intensively institute and complete the processes that lead to attainment, as they are full of visualizations. However, for busy Westerners such practices are best not engaged unless one has a driving inner commitment to do them and supportive relationships and/or circumstances that enable them. Such a combination of circumstances is rare in this day and time, which is why people commonly abandon the world and go into retreat to do them, or abandon the practice and go back to their ordinary lives. Usually one will either have the drive to do them but little or no support, or the support will be there, but the willingness to do them on the part of the novice practitioner will be absent.

The particulars of the phowa practice are too involved to outline here but the essence of it is as follows, although this is not to be taken as a basis of the practice: First of all, it is recommended that one first gain facility in the recognition of the stages of dissolution and is able to hold the mind steady in each of the successive stages. Of course, one can do the practice as an exercise, but for it to have effect the mind must be held steady. One visualizes on the crown of one's head (the lotus of the crown chakra) Buddha Amitabha<sup>70</sup> or one's root teacher in aspect of Amitabha, with a continuous channel thus being formed between one's heart and the heart of Amitabha (this would

be the central spinal channel). The teacher or visualized buddha represents all stages of the path and all realizations attained thereon—one's own buddha nature. The lower end of one's own channel is visualized as being plugged a hand's breadth below the navel by the heap of merit one has accumulated over one's countless lifetimes. This would resemble a pile of rice, for instance. One's eight sense doors<sup>71</sup> are simultaneously blocked, preventing egress of the consciousness through any of those other doors during the practice. The Brahma aperture is the only one that leads to a pure land<sup>72</sup>—to full enlightenment, in other words.

One invokes the aid of Amitabha or one's guru with strong intention ('desperation') to be taken to the pure land (if Amitabha, that would be Sukhavati). In other words, the intention is that one's consciousness be transferred to a buddha field, there to meditate 'in the light supernal', or in one's own buddha nature blended with that of the buddha or teacher. One's consciousness is visualized in the heart as a small ball of light, which can be formed in preliminary stages of the practice through the dissolution process, although it is not necessary to do so. From the heart of Amitabha, through the central channel, a cord of light descends on the end of which is a grasping claw, seen more in the vein of a helping hand, which descends to one's consciousness, gently grasps it and then pulls it upwards into the heart of Amitabha (or one's guru) instantaneously. Simultaneous with this, one's consciousness is also pushed upward through the central channel by the sheer force of one's accumulated merits from below. Thus we get the sense of one being simultaneously pulled upward and pushed upward through a chimney. At that point one would meditate on emptiness in Sukhavati, or in the trikaya of the buddha involved.

So long as the central channel remains intact life can return to the body, but in actual phowa practice at the time of death this would be severed at the Brahma aperture and sealed once one has been taken to one's appropriate pure land. This practice can be done for others, too—any sentient life with a physical body, really—but it must be done at the time of the other person's death and be done by one with strong mental focus. If done for animals, for instance, the aim would ultimately be to help bring them into the human kingdom. One may have heard of other less virtuous reasons for doing this for animals, but those practices are best left aside. For animals, this would be an unusual branch of service, and it might be expected that there would be special circumstances surrounding such practice as well as specific training, especially in being able to recognize the readiness of the animal for advancement or aid in this way and in one's own safety.

Signs of success in phowa vary, but aside from the light experienced in the meditation, there are other signs, such as that of a blister forming on the crown of one's head, or the hair atop one's head standing on end. If one does this for another then the signs will appear on the head of the other person as well as perhaps on one's own. Once such a thing has been observed one should then engage the long-life practice for oneself in order to ensure the anchoring of the life thread in the heart, if one intends live for a time. There are several things to note here with regard to the antaḥkaraṇa: Firstly, both the life and the consciousness threads are engaged (the anchoring in the heart and crown chakras) in the phowa practice. A continuous channel is formed between one's own spinal channel and the heart of the buddha nature visualized over one's head. This buddha nature is seen as being indestructibly sealed to one's crown. This channel has been previously purified through practise and marks a continuous and uninterrupted channel or means of conscious interplay between the practitioner and the teacher, the teacher or buddha standing as a symbol—but also as an intermediary—between oneself and the pure land, or buddha field. In the end, this is one's own buddha nature. The process can be repeated as often as is necessary.

Phowa is actually quite a beautiful and moving practice. Much has been left out of the description, but the core of the practice is there. It instills detachment, removes the fear of death and suffering, strengthens faith in one's teacher(s) and oneself. It develops an easy and effective channel of ingress and egress between oneself and one's ashram, or inner group, loosens the grip of the material upon the spiritual and yet enables the influence of the noumenal upon the phenomenal. These points are not stated in the practice itself, but they are more or less easily inferred. Its purpose can perhaps be summarized by the following verses from the closing of the practice, especially if done for others:

*Arya Avalokiteshvara, treasure of the victorious ones,  
I beseech thee myself as well as all sentient beings,  
Grant me freedom from the ocean of cyclic existence rapidly and  
Grant this not merely to myself but to all mother and father  
Sentient beings of the six categories of being.  
Bestow on me rapidly the vast and profound peerless minds of enlightenment and  
Purify rapidly all of the countless afflictions  
Which I have accumulated since beginningless time.  
Grant me as well as to all beings entry into Sukhavati and  
Grant me to see Buddha Amitabha as well as your own presence.  
Should this not occur may I be protected by a spiritual guide  
In life after life and never be separated from the teachings and  
Led rapidly to full enlightenment.*

### CONCLUDING REMARKS

There is much more that could be said about this most interesting, yet essential subject in the life of anyone who earnestly seeks the ‘higher way’, i.e., the path to the transcendental worlds. What has been outlined here is a brief insight into the basis of the antaḥkaraṇa and its construction, as well as the trans-Himalayan roots from which its foundations spring. If the antaḥkaraṇa is so essential to spiritual life and service, then it would benefit us to investigate all we can about the matter. But before we do, it might also be advisable for us to ask ourselves a few common-sense questions, such as: “Where will the practise of such a thing lead in my everyday life?” “How will it affect my relations?” “Am I able to do such practices and still meet my essential needs and the demands of the world around me?” “How much time am I willing to/can I commit to such things?” Probably more importantly, “How desperate am I?” If we do not feel a compelling inner urge to do something more than what we already do in the world in the way of our service, then it might be better to stay away from any sort of extra practice that would hasten our development along the lines outlined in this article.

These practices are abstracting. They take us away from worldly concerns, except for meeting the immediate spiritual needs of those around us. They render one impersonal, which is not to say that one becomes cold toward others. It simply means one loses attachments to others, and that can be disconcerting initially to us and to loved ones and people close to us. It can also seem on their part to be a huge inconvenience at times, a betrayal or that one has ceased to care, when exactly the opposite is true. One has a deep care for people, which is what motivates one to take on one of these practices in the first place. One’s cares simply change, moving from the deeply personal to the universal. The point is, once one chooses to accelerate the construction of the antaḥkaraṇa, life is never the same. What once seemed of importance drops away and one’s only concern from then onwards and increasingly is, “Have I done enough to alleviate the suffering of others and hasten their progress along the way?”

The true desperation, mentioned at the start of this article, one feels when choosing the quick path is not so much that, “I have so little time left” (for my own development), but rather, “Why am I so ineffective in what I do for others, and how can I hasten that effectiveness?” There is the crux of why one should seek a quicker path to union with the divine. It is the life-blood of the all bodhisattvas, so-to-speak. It is the reason the antaḥkaraṇa is being developed in the first place, for the Spirit knows no sense of separation, and anything that can bring greater light into the world is a grand service indeed. Such is the light that the channel of the antaḥkaraṇa provides.

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<sup>1</sup> ‘Practise’, used in this spelling is a verb—the act of pursuing a ‘practice’, or method.

<sup>2</sup> ‘Taking birth and death as a path’ is Buddhist terminology for specific intervals of meditation that use death and birth as vehicles for the attainment of full enlightenment or the emanation of a buddha field, respectively.

<sup>3</sup> This is the shamatha diagram. Image is in the public domain for educational purposes only.  
[http://www.rigpawiki.org/images/2/2b/Shamatha\\_Diagram\\_small.jpg](http://www.rigpawiki.org/images/2/2b/Shamatha_Diagram_small.jpg)

<sup>4</sup> Following are a few notes on the diagram: There are two types of mind inferred, as represented in the monkey and the elephant. The monk can be seen to represent the soul, initially, and later the monad itself. The monkey represents the distracting factor that is ever-present with the mental elemental as it goes about its business of latching onto every passing current of thought. The elephant represents the aspect of will with respect to mind, since willpower is reflected in the mind. In the early stages the mind is tamasic (asleep) and lethargic, represented by the black coloration, reflecting only the mad-monkey stage and having no volition of its own. It is led by the monkey at that stage. The monk observes at this point and then moves to begin engagement with the mind. The monk carries a noose and a goad, representing the directing power of his will. The monk only begins to engage the elephant directly in the third stage, when he is finally able to attach the noose to the elephant. As the stages of meditation progress, the elephant is awakened to the will of the monk and becomes a force that can be increasingly utilized by the soul, as represented in the last stages of the diagram. At these latter stages, the monkey is totally absent, and purpose (willpower) is the only guiding principle of the mind. There are a few stages wherein a rabbit appears on the back of the elephant, and this represents a transitional period, wherein a subtle lethargy can sabotage the efforts of the meditator. The rabbit is the representative of the subtle lethargy.

<sup>5</sup> ‘Higher realizations’ here meaning superhuman faculties—the so-called ‘higher siddhis’.

<sup>6</sup> So called because it is composed of multicolored light, depending upon the Ray makeup of the person or group, and also what is being transmitted or received through it.

<sup>7</sup> The ‘major initiations’ are the solar initiations. The first two human initiations, ‘birth’ and ‘baptism’ are preparatory to the major initiations.

<sup>8</sup> Translations of Sanskrit terms are taken from [www.sanskritdictionary.org](http://www.sanskritdictionary.org)

<sup>9</sup> In Buddhism *manas* is seen as a mental factor, an effect arising from the interaction between consciousness and matter, and as such carries a subtle sense of ‘I-ness, hence the term ‘Ego’. This would appear to be a contradiction of the idea that the soul knows no sense of separation, but this is only from a relative perspective. Once one delves deeply into such matters, even the Triad comes into question. All this is in the realm of Buddhist logic, but can only be touched upon here.

<sup>10</sup> The Buddhist paths are: 1) the Path of Accumulation, 2) the Path of Preparation, 3) the Path of Seeing, 4) the Path of Meditation and 5) the Path of No-More-Learning. These have a correspondence, respectively, with the five human initiations, ‘Birth’ through ‘Revelation’ as outlined in the books of Alice Bailey. The first two paths mark the period covered in the initiations of threshold. For a fuller explanation of the grounds and paths, see: Kirti Tsenshap Rinpoche, and Ian Coghlan, translated by Voula Zarpani, *Principles of Buddhist Tantra: A Commentary on Choje Ngawang Palden's Illumination of the Tantric Tradition: The Principles of the Grounds and Paths of the Four Great Secret Classes of Tantra*, (Boston: Wisdom Publications, 2011), as one example text.

<sup>11</sup> Helena Blavatsky, *Blavatsky Collected Writings*, Vol. V., p. 80, fn.

<sup>12</sup> Blavatsky, *The Secret Doctrine I*, pp. 69,70, fn.

<sup>13</sup> Blavatsky, *Theosophical Glossary*, heading under “Antahkarana”.

<sup>14</sup> In the books of Alice Bailey there are 450 references to antahkarana, thus what is represented here is the synthesis of those points. Letters and words in brackets [ ] indicate insertions by the author to connect the references and to enable the flow of text, or to differentiate terms. Italicized words are in the quotes already. Bolded italics are by the author for emphasis. Ellipses indicate unnecessary text from the quotes that was omitted.

<sup>15</sup> Alice A. Bailey, *Education in the New Age*, (New York: Lucis Publishing Co., 1954), pg. 146

<sup>16</sup> Alice A. Bailey, *Discipleship in the New Age II*, (New York: Lucis Publishing Co., 1955) p. 194

<sup>17</sup> Bailey, *Education in the New Age*, p. 146

<sup>18</sup> Bailey, *The Rays and the Initiations*, (New York: Lucis Publishing Co., 1960), p. 468

<sup>19</sup> Alice A. Bailey, *A Treatise on Cosmic Fire*, (New York: Lucis Publishing Co., 1951), p. 457

<sup>20</sup> Bailey, *Discipleship in the New Age II*, p. 46

<sup>21</sup> Bailey, *Education in the New Age*, p. 148

<sup>22</sup> Op cit.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid, p. 7

<sup>24</sup> Bailey, *The Rays and the Initiations*, p. 467

<sup>25</sup> Alice A. Bailey *Discipleship in the New Age I*, (New York: Lucis Publishing Co., 1944), p.38 The symbolic and abstract minds are merged when the antahkarana is completed.

<sup>26</sup> Bailey, *The Rays and the Initiations*, p. 483

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- <sup>27</sup> Bailey, *Discipleship in the New Age II*, p. 19
- <sup>28</sup> *Ibid*, p. 52
- <sup>29</sup> Bailey, *Discipleship in the New Age II*, p. 209
- <sup>30</sup> Bailey, *Discipleship in the New Age II*, pp. 347, 348
- <sup>31</sup> *Education in the New Age*, pp. 96, 97
- <sup>32</sup> The science of vision is fully engaged upon the 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> Buddhist Paths.
- <sup>33</sup> Bailey, *A Treatise on Cosmic Fire*, p. 48.
- <sup>34</sup> *Ibid*, p. 64
- <sup>35</sup> Bailey, *The Rays and the Initiations*, p. 494
- <sup>36</sup> Bailey, *Discipleship in the New Age II*, p. 59
- <sup>37</sup> Alice A. Bailey, *The Externalisation of the Hierarchy*, (New York: Lucis Publishing Co., 1957), p. 606. The ‘Great Renunciation’ is a Buddhist term describing the fourth initiation, or crucifixion.
- <sup>38</sup> *The Rays and the Initiations*, (New York: Lucis Publishing Co., 1960), p. 491
- <sup>39</sup> A sadhana is essentially a ‘road map’ for consciousness and meditative script rolled into one. They can be very short or long, but the purpose is to enable one to act ‘as if’ one is already enlightened, and in that way to move very quickly, relatively speaking, to full enlightenment. ‘Full enlightenment’ here means buddhahood.
- <sup>40</sup> As a point of interest, actually, the word used was ‘lamasery’, but the term itself is incorrect, implying a place of training for lamas, and is considered to be insulting in the eyes of some Buddhist scholars. Monasteries are places of teaching and training, and lamas have already achieved, i.e. are fully enlightened. They have reached the stage of ‘no-more-learning’. Monastery would be the correct term instead of lamasery.
- <sup>41</sup> Alice A. Bailey, *Glamour: A World Problem*, (New York: Lucis Publishing Co., 1950), p. 179. See also: Alice A. Bailey, *Letters on Occult Meditation*, , (New York: Lucis Publishing Co., 1950), p. 113: “The Western races must move forward into spiritual supremacy, *without obliterating the Eastern contribution*, and the functioning of the Law of Rebirth holds the clue to this and demonstrates this necessity.”
- <sup>42</sup> Bailey, *Letters on Occult Meditation*, p. 302. Bolded italics added for emphasis.
- <sup>43</sup> Keith Dowman, *Sky Dancer, the Secret Life and Songs of the Lady Yeshe Tsogyel*, (Ithaca: Snow Lion Publications, 1996) pp. 86, 262 “The gross bodies of men and women are equally suited [for practise], but if a woman has strong aspiration, her potential (for existential realization) is greater”. From Padmasambhava’s instructions to Yeshe Tsoyel.
- <sup>44</sup> Bailey, *Discipleship in the New Age II*, p. 556 “This *as if* behaviour is one of the most occult of practices. It in reality presupposes the imposition of the highest grasped aspiration upon the normal personality in the form of changed behavior”
- <sup>45</sup> Secret Mantra is otherwise known as highest yoga tantra, or *anuttarayogatantra*. These are Vajrayana practices, are quite involved, require empowerments and a larger commitment of time and daily practise, usually amounting to several hours a day. They are normally presented within a monastic mindset, but they can be effectively practised by lay people. The sexual aspect, which many people in the West usually associate with the word ‘tantra’, is not normally presented in such empowerments and commentaries. In a Buddhist setting Secret Mantra is commonly called ‘the supreme, quick path to enlightenment’, which makes it attractive to many people. But the matter should be fully investigated and discussed with people who have engaged such practices, lay and monastic, before taking one on, because Westerners commonly have no idea of the commitments involved or what it means to engage such a practice. They are a life-long commitment.
- <sup>46</sup> Bailey, *Discipleship in the New Age II*, p. 321
- <sup>47</sup> The ‘body, speech and mind’ of a buddha refers to a buddha’s emanations, or *trikaya*, in Sanskrit. These are the *nirmanakaya* (body), the *sambhogakaya* (speech) and *dharmakaya* (mind) of a buddha. As such, Om in this case connects one with the trikaya indicated in the body of a mantra. The mantra, *Om mani padme hum*, for instance, invokes Avalokiteshvara (Chenrezig) and connects one with his trikaya.
- <sup>48</sup> ‘Emptiness’ is the realization that all phenomena have no inherent existence of their own, including personalities, souls and Triads. In other words, everything is the result of a dependent arising (karmic outcome). Emptiness is not nihilism, though. It is the realization of the ultimate state of being. Its realization is a state beyond any description. The ultimate in emptiness for a human being is first experienced in nirvana, but even that state is seen to be inadequate at a later stage and is abandoned. There are thus varying grades of ‘emptiness’, with the greatest being realized at full enlightenment. The matter is very abstruse, but is the foundation and goal of all Buddhist logic.
- <sup>49</sup> ‘Conquering death’ in this context means ending the karmic necessity for incarnation, which is achieved at the fourth initiation.
- <sup>50</sup> Rinpoche has a specific meaning in Tibetan Buddhism. It is one who has undergone the Buddhist ‘Great Renunciation’, and has thus almost completed the full realization of the grounds and the paths. In effect, they have ‘attained nirvana’ and thereafter incarnate at will.
- <sup>51</sup> A lama (*bla ma* in Tibetan) is a fully endowed teacher of the dharma—a living buddha—one who has completed fully the grounds and the paths.

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<sup>52</sup> Opinions on this stage will differ, but at the stage of chohan one has surpassed even the need for nirvana and has entered more or less fully into the monadic state of being. So far as a human being is concerned, the monad represents full enlightenment.

<sup>53</sup> Excerpted from Malvin Artley, *The Full Moons: Topical Letters in Esoteric Astrology*, Appendix 8: The Levels of Dissolution in Death and Meditation, (Boston, EBookIt.com, 2014). For a complete presentation, see: Ven. Khensur Kangurwa Lobsang Thubten Rinpoche, *A Weekend on Death and Dying*, (available through Tibetan Buddhist Institute, Adelaide, South Australia). See also: Glen H. Mullin, *The Six Yogas Of Naropa: Tsongkhapa's Commentary Entitled A Book Of Three Inspirations: A Treatise On The Stages Of Training In The Profound Path Of Naro's Six Dharmas*, Kindle Locations 2462-2467, Kindle Edition (Ithaca: Snow Lion Publications, 1996).

<sup>54</sup> The winds should not be conflated with the elements. There are five winds (*prana* in Sanskrit, *rlung* in Tibetan): life-grasping, upward-moving, downward-cleansing, fire-accompanying and all-pervading. The winds are the vehicles of consciousness. The elements underlie form.

<sup>55</sup> The causal lotus is a chakra, or energy vortex, composed of more subtle matter of the mental plane at the level of the heart chakra. Its pattern and level of unfoldment are a clear indication of the spiritual evolution of a person. A full description is given in *A Treatise on Cosmic Fire*, starting on p. 1109. The causal lotus is the main energy vortex of the Ego, or soul in incarnation.

<sup>56</sup> Alice A. Bailey, *Esoteric Astrology*, (New York: Lucis Publishing Co., 1951) p. 61. Further clues are given in the comparison of Aries/Sagittarius/Aquarius on p. 174 of the same book. There are two points of meditative equilibrium indicated by the signs (ibid, pp. 189, 190)—Libra, marking what is called ‘thorough pacification’ in the stages of shamatha and Sagittarius, which marks the final stage of shamatha, or ‘placement in equipoise’ (samadhi). An equivalence between the archer on the white horse with Sagittarius to the monk on the back of the elephant in the shamatha diagram will perhaps not be lost on the reader.

<sup>57</sup> Hints of this are given throughout Bailey’s *Esoteric Astrology*. It is rather ‘convenient’ that the number of elephants on the winding path in the shamatha diagram equal the number of zodiacal signs (Aries through Sagittarius) that lead to the one-pointed focus necessary to enable one to attain the greater initiations, indicated by Capricorn through Pisces. The graded stages of spiritual progress as marked by the zodiacal signs start with Aries, being the sign of commencement of effort and end in Pisces—the so-called ‘wheel going counter-clockwise’. This is outlined in *Esoteric Astrology*, pp.60–61. No lasting spiritual progress is engaged until one’s mind is brought to heel. There is a proposed further, higher correspondence of these nine signs with the stages of *vipassana*, or meditation with insight. For the full proposed latter outline, see *The Full Moons: Topical Letters in Esoteric Astrology*, e-book edition, Table II, p. 364.

<sup>58</sup> The ‘path of seeing’ is the third of the five Buddhist paths (of the grounds and the paths, or *sa lam* in Tibetan), and marks the attainment of ‘transfiguration’, or the first direct, abiding experience of emptiness, which is brought about by the rising of ultimate bodhichitta (active kundalini). It marks a definitive point of attainment and also sets the stage for the higher aspects of meditative practise. One is from then onwards an ‘arya being’, or bodhisattva. This path begins the first Buddhist ground, which is also called ‘the Very Joyful’. The words, “Joy is a special wisdom” [*Supramundane I*, 1938, Agni Yoga Society, 231.] has a particular connection with this path, although here it is bliss, not joy, that is first fully experienced—what one might call ‘the first kiss of the monad’.

<sup>59</sup> There are many names for the various clear lights, but the main thing to be noted is that they are all beyond conceptualization., i.e. they are accessed at ‘Triadal’ levels and beyond. At this point in meditative practise one is actively utilizing and dissolving the subtle winds in the various chakras, and for this reason empowerment into a practice and the requisite commentaries are a must, one thus having access to a person who has mastered the processes therein.

<sup>60</sup> This is the opinion of the author, based upon reading numerous accounts of near-death experiences, the study of the Buddhist accounts of death and dying and of the correlations between these and the extant esoteric literature. The ‘tunnel’ frequently described in near-death sounds very much like the descriptions of black near-attainment. This is a subject that will remain controversial for some time into the future and the reader may want to investigate the matter further. For descriptions of the ‘tunnel’ experience, there is a good thumbnail collection with commentary at: <http://www.near-death.com/experiences/research16.html>

<sup>61</sup> Nirmanakaya: One of the three ‘bodies of a buddha’, the other two being the sambhogakaya and the dharmakaya. These in turn have correspondences to the personality, soul and spirit of a human being, respectively. Of the three, the dharmakaya (the ‘truth body’) is the most subtle and is not, strictly speaking, considered to be an emanation. Instead, the dharmakaya is the source, the actual buddha nature, the essential will and wisdom, which underlies the other two. The sambhogakaya is sometimes called the ‘bliss body’ of a buddha, although all three are commonly stated to be blissful emanations. The nirmanakaya is the ‘emanation body’.

<sup>62</sup> The mother clear light is the basis of all advanced spiritual attainment. It is, in the end, one’s first encounter with the Triad. In advanced practices it is blended with these successive stages of clear light to form the bases for the higher spiritual attainments. These clear lights are experienced and engaged beyond any conceptual basis. They are part and parcel of the Triad. In this vein, ‘attainments’, ‘realizations’, ‘siddhis’ and ‘Triadal consciousness’ are all synonymous

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terms. Although this is not in strict agreement with some Western presentations, it is seen as such in Buddhist presentations, as they are all experienced when these levels are reached and engaged.

<sup>63</sup> Glen Mullin, *The Six Yogas Of Naropa: Tsongkhapa's Commentary Entitled A Book Of Three Inspirations: A Treatise On The Stages Of Training In The Profound Path Of Naro's Six Dharmas* (Kindle Locations 1798-1805). Kindle Edition.) "It is important in each of these four chakra meditations that the mind is held on the mantric syllable at the center of each individual chakra, which is [located at] the center of the central channel, called avadhuti, as this makes it easier to collect the vital energies [at the specific chakra being meditated upon]. At each of the four sites a unique experience of bliss is aroused, and one must cultivate the ability to consciously recognize these in one's own experience." The four blisses are: "bliss", experienced at the crown; "supreme bliss", experienced at the throat; "special bliss", experienced at the heart; and "innate bliss", experienced at the navel. These are experienced during meditations on the inner heat yoga, or tummo.

<sup>64</sup> Ibid, (Kindle Locations 2462-2467)

<sup>65</sup> See, for instance: Sogyel Rinpoche, *The Tibetan Book of Living and Dying*, (New York: Harper Collins 1992)

<sup>66</sup> Bailey, *Discipleship in the New Age II*, p. 194. The mother clear light would be equated with 'manas' in atma/buddhi/manas, or the spiritual triad.

<sup>67</sup> See: *The Six Yogas of Naropa*, the two chapters on "Illusory Body Yoga" and "Bardo Yoga".

<sup>68</sup> There is a chapter devoted to this in *The Six Yogas of Naropa*, titled, "Consciousness Transference".

<sup>69</sup> For a full description, see: Kyabje Khensur Kangurwa Lobsang Thubten Rinpoche, *A Commentary on Entering into the Battlefield of the Victorious Ones: the Phowa of Amitabha* (Adelaide: Tibetan Buddhist Institute, 2009)

<sup>70</sup> Amitabha is the adi buddha of pure lands, immortality and infinite light.

<sup>71</sup> The eight sense doors lead to karmic rebirth. They are: between the eyebrows, the eyes, the ears, the nostrils, the mouth, the navel, the urinary tract and the anus. They are normally blocked in the practice by means of Sanskrit syllables appropriate to the aperture.

<sup>72</sup> Pure land here should not be conflated with Pure Land Buddhism, which features mainly in China and Japan. A 'pure land' (Sanskrit: *buddha-kṣetra*) is essentially the *nirmanakaya* (emanation body) plus the environment of a fully enlightened being, or buddha. There are thus many such pure lands. The pure land of Buddha Kalachakra, for instance, is Shambhala. More to the point, though, a pure land is emanated for purposes of service—the field in which the inner work of an ashram takes place. It is a place of teaching, of retinue, of attainment and duration.