

[from: *As Long as Space Endures: Essays on the Kālacakra Tantra in Honor of H. H. the Dalai Lama*, Ithaca, N.Y.: Snow Lion Publications, 2009]

Sanskrit Mantras in the Kālacakra Sādhana

by David Reigle

While the Tibetan lotsawas of old translated even Sanskrit names in their renowned translations of the Buddhist canonical texts, they left Sanskrit mantras untranslated. This is because the power of mantras is believed to derive from their sounds, sounds that could not be altered if this power was to remain intact. Thus we find that the mantras in the Kālacakra *sādhana*, like in all *sādhana*s, are in Sanskrit, not in Tibetan.

Yet it is just here that, because of how foreign these sounds are, errors are most likely to creep in. Indeed we find that, over the centuries, the pronunciation of these sounds has altered, and, due to unfamiliarity with the words, even the spellings have been subject to scribal errors. One of the clearest examples of altered pronunciation may be seen in the case of the famous Vajrasattva mantra, widely used on its own for purification, and found as an integral part of many *sādhana*s, including most of the fuller versions of the Kālacakra *sādhana*.

The 100-syllable Vajrasattva mantra as now pronounced may be seen in recent books on Tibetan Buddhism where it is given phonetically. From these, we see that the word Vajrasattva has become Benzar sato,¹ Benzar satto,² or Bedzra sato.³ These transformations of its pronunciation are largely due to it being pronounced as in modern Tibetan. We see the same thing in English, where Vajrasattva is pronounced as if it is an English word. But it is a Sanskrit word, and as such, the first syllable of Vajra should rhyme with “judge,” and the first syllable of sattva should rhyme with “hut.” If the early Tibetan translators gave such importance to preserving the Sanskrit sounds, we should make an attempt to pronounce them correctly.⁴

Then there is the question of meaning. The great majority of Sanskrit mantras have clear meanings that were meant to be

understood.⁵ Their meanings form an important part of the *sādhana*s in which they are used, making what is happening there more comprehensible. For example, at the beginning of the full-length Kālacakra *sādhana* is this mantra:⁶

om āḥ hūṃ hoḥ haṃ kṣaḥ prajñôpâyâtmaka-kāya-vāk-citta-
jñānādhipate mama kāya-vāk-citta-jñāna-vajraṃ vajrāmṛta-
svabhāvaṃ kuru kuru skandha-dhātva-āyatanādikaṃ
niḥsvabhāvaṃ svāhā

It was introduced with the phrase, “the mantra words purifying body, speech, mind, and primordial wisdom (*jñāna*) are: . . .”⁷ Leaving aside the untranslatable syllables, the straightforward grammatical meaning of this mantra is:

om āḥ hūṃ hoḥ haṃ kṣaḥ; O overlord of body, speech, mind, and primordial wisdom, consisting of wisdom and means! my vajra of body, speech, mind, and primordial wisdom, into the nature of vajra immortality, transform! transform! Aggregates, elements, sense-spheres, and the rest, are without inherent existence; svāhā!

This meaning would have been fully understood by the Indians who first used these mantras. But when translating the *sādhana*s in which they are found into Tibetan, the meaning had to be sacrificed for the sake of preserving the all-important sounds. When we know the meaning, the often seen mantra that comes shortly thereafter becomes much more comprehensible:⁸

om svabhāva-śuddhāḥ sarva-dharmāḥ svabhāva-śuddho 'ham

om; Naturally pure are all things; naturally pure am I.

It will therefore be of considerable usefulness to have English translations of the Sanskrit mantras included in the translations of the *sādhana*s. One can then do the prescribed meditations with greater understanding of what is occurring.

The Kālacakra *sādhana* that I am drawing from for the mantras discussed here is the full-length *Śrī Kālacakra Sādhana* by Sādhuputra, the only known Kālacakra *sādhana* to survive in the original Sanskrit.⁹ It consists of lengthy direct extracts from the *Vimala-prabhā*, “Immaculate Light,”¹⁰ the great commentary on the *Kālacakra Tantra* written by King Puṇḍarīka of Śambhala. These were compiled and arranged by Sādhuputra, with brief connecting paragraphs condensed from the *Vimala-prabhā*. So most of this Kālacakra *sādhana*, except the middle section that names all the deities of the Kālacakra *maṇḍala* in metrical verses, is actually by Puṇḍarīka, the author of the *Vimala-prabhā*, rather than by Sādhuputra. As such, it could hardly be more authoritative. Besides this, it has the advantage that it cannot be considered sectarian, since it was written in India, before the various orders of Tibetan Buddhism came into existence. It would therefore be the *sādhana* of choice as the most original form of the Kālacakra *sādhana*.

The Kālacakra *sādhana* has many elements in common with other Buddhist *sādhana*s, including a number of mantras. When we see elements in one *sādhana* after another, we know that these must be of basic importance. It will repay our time to try to understand these as fully as we can. Basic to all *sādhana*s of the highest yoga tantra class, such as Kālacakra, are the ideas of “clear appearance” and “divine pride.” Since these *sādhana*s consist of the visualization of oneself as a divine being, or *devatā*, in a divine residence, or *maṇḍala*, the “clear appearance” part is self-explanatory. One must make these visualizations appear to the mind as clearly as possible. The “divine pride” part means that you identify so fully with the divine being or deity you are visualizing that you feel a “sense of self” (*ahaṃkāra*) as that deity. So the idea of divine pride is literally “sense of self as the deity” (*devatāhaṃkāra*).¹¹ Like almost everything else in these *sādhana*s, including the visualizations from seed-syllables, this is done through the use of mantras. Thus, for example, early in the *Śrī Kālacakra Sādhana* we are instructed as follows: “Then [assert] the sense of self [as a divine form or deity, i.e., ‘divine pride,’ with this mantra]:”¹²

oṃ sarva-tathāgata-vajra-kāya-svabhāvātmaṃ 'ham

oṃ; I consist of the nature of the vajra body of all the Tathāgatas.

Again, we see that the meaning of these mantras is crucial to performing the *sādhana* with full consciousness of what is happening. Most of the mantras that are used to assert or affirm divine pride end with the phrase, *svabhāvātmaṃ 'ham*, “I (*aham*) consist of (*ātmaka*) the nature of (*svabhāva*)” Sometimes they only end with *aham*, “I.” Both of these kinds may be seen at the conclusion of the “circle of protection” (*raṅgā-cakra*) in the *Śrī Kālacakra Sādhana*. All but the shorter Kālacakra *sādhana*s begin by generating a “circle of protection” within which the visualizations will take place. The *Śrī Kālacakra Sādhana* has a very extensive circle of protection, making up nearly a third of the *sādhana*. At its conclusion, one commands the ten wrathful protectors to take their places in the ten directions. To do this, one must first generate the divine pride, the sense or conviction of self as the lord and commander of the wrathful protectors, with the following mantra. This is a particularly clear example:¹³

oṃ hūṃ krodhēndro 'haṃ krodhānām ājñā-dāyakaḥ svāhā

oṃ hūṃ; Lord of the wrathful protectors am I, giver of commands to the wrathful protectors, svāhā!

Once again we see the necessity of understanding the meaning of these mantras. Then, after commanding each of the ten wrathful protectors to their places with an individual mantra, one completes the circle of protection portion of the *sādhana* by asserting and affirming the divine pride or conviction of self as the entire circle of protection, with this mantra:¹⁴

sarva-tathāgata-raṅgā-cakra-svabhāvātmaṃ 'ham

I consist of the nature of the circle of protection of all the Tathāgatas.

Besides clear appearance and divine pride, there are three even more universal elements of Buddhist *sādhana*s. These are found at the beginning of virtually all *sādhana*s. First is refuge, then is generating *bodhicitta*, and last is dissolving everything into emptiness. At that point the visualizations of the particular *sādhana* actually begin. For the first of these a formula is often used. It is not a mantra, but can be recited like a mantra. It is:

buddhaṃ śaraṇaṃ gacchāmi
 dharmam śaraṇaṃ gacchāmi
 saṅghaṃ śaraṇaṃ gacchāmi

I go for refuge to the Buddha (the enlightened one).
 I go for refuge to the *dharma* (the Buddhist teachings).
 I go for refuge to the *saṅgha* (the Buddhist community).

Although “refuge” has become the accepted translation of the word *śaraṇa*, it here has more the sense of “guidance,”¹⁵ and has also been translated as “safe direction.”¹⁶ The refuge formula cited above is so well known that it is not usually spelled out in the *sādhana*s, which often just instruct the practitioner to go for refuge. They sometimes give alternative versions of the refuge formula, as is the case in the *Śrī Kālacakra Sādhana*.¹⁷

For generating *bodhicitta*, the thought or determination to lead all living beings to enlightenment, and thereby free them from suffering, the various *sādhana*s sometimes give different verses to recite.¹⁸ As with the refuge formula, the verses used for this are not mantras. Again, because it is so widely done, the *sādhana*s often just tell the practitioner to generate *bodhicitta*, without spelling out how to do this. The *Śrī Kālacakra Sādhana* just tells us to recall the three roots (of virtue, or wholesome roots), the first of which is generating *bodhicitta*.¹⁹ Interestingly, the third of these is abandoning the sense of I and mine. Here, the same word is used that is used in the idea of divine pride, *ahaṃkāra*, “sense of self,” or “sense of I.” So we first abandon the sense of I in regard to our personal selves, and then affirm it in regard to the divine forms we visualize ourselves as.

Then, to dissolve everything into emptiness in preparation for beginning the visualizations of the particular *sādhana*, these *sādhana*s frequently use the so-called emptiness mantra.²⁰

om śūnyatā-jñāna-vajra-svabhāvātmake 'ham

om; I consist of the nature of the primordial wisdom vajra of emptiness.

We immediately recognize the characteristic phrase used for asserting and affirming divine pride. The idea here is that, even though we may in fact have only a conceptual understanding of emptiness, while doing this meditation we are to act as if we have a full and direct realization of emptiness. We are to really believe that we see everything as empty. Then we can begin the particular visualizations of our *sādhana* in the proper manner. But what is the “primordial wisdom vajra”?

In these texts, the word “vajra,” literally, “diamond,” refers to the ultimate nature of something. This ultimate nature, like a diamond, is “indivisible” (*abheda*).²¹ Our body, our speech, and our mind each have an ultimate or vajra nature, which is that of a Buddha, and so does primordial wisdom.²² Primordial wisdom is *jñāna*, distinguished from wisdom, *prajñā*, which it includes.²³ It is the pure nondual knowledge where there is no distinction between the knower and the known, because all is empty. The primordial wisdom vajra is the overall vajra that includes the other three, the body vajra, speech vajra, and mind vajra. This vajra is therefore the ultimate or vajra nature of the universe; and this is why we identify with it in order to dissolve everything into emptiness. The vajra of primordial wisdom is described in the *Jñāna-siddhi* by Indra-bhūti in these beautiful verses:²⁴

46. It is not burnt by a conflagration, nor is it made wet by water.

It is not cut by a sharp weapon, even with much effort.

47. Like space, it is without support, [all-]pervasive, and devoid of distinguishing characteristics. This is the highest truth, the unsurpassed vajra [or ultimate] primordial wisdom.

In the *Śrī Kālacakra Sādhana* the emptiness mantra occurs as the first of a group of four such mantras on the four doors of liberation, namely, emptiness (*śūnyatā*), signlessness (*animitta*), wishlessness (*apraṇihita*), and non-activity (*anabhisamkāra*), as follows:²⁵

om śūnyatā-jñāna-vajra-svabhāvâtmaḥ 'haṃ ॥
 om animitta-jñāna-vajra-svabhāvâtmaḥ 'haṃ ॥
 om apraṇihita-jñāna-vajra-svabhāvâtmaḥ 'haṃ ॥
 om anabhisamkāra-jñāna-vajra-svabhāvâtmaḥ 'haṃ ॥

om; I consist of the nature of the primordial wisdom vajra of emptiness.
 om; I consist of the nature of the primordial wisdom vajra of signlessness.
 om; I consist of the nature of the primordial wisdom vajra of wishlessness.
 om; I consist of the nature of the primordial wisdom vajra of non-activity.

Preceding the emptiness mantra the *sādhana*s often cite a famous verse that also affirms emptiness. Again, like the refuge formula, this is not a mantra. Rather, it is a metrical verse. These are normally chanted by Indian pandits. It goes as follows:²⁶

abhāve bhāvanābhāvo bhāvanā nāiva bhāvanā
 iti bhāvo na bhāvaḥ syād bhāvanā nopalabhyate

When there is no existent thing, there is no meditation. Meditation, too, is not meditation. In this way an existent thing would not be an existent thing. Meditation is not [to be] found.

This verse sounds rather nonsensical. But once we know that it comes from the *Guhyasamāja Tantra*, where it occurs as verse 3 of chapter 2, we can check to see how it is explained in the *Pradīpodyotana* commentary thereon by Candrakīrti. Here he explains it in this way:²⁷

In the absence of all subjects, the moving and the unmoving, there is no meditation, because there is no object of meditation. “Meditation, too, is not meditation” means: The meditation [taken as] existing, too, is not meditation, because there is no meditation even without [an object of meditation]. In this way an existent thing having [both] existence and nonexistence could not be [since these are contradictory]. Therefore, neither the object of meditation, the meditator, nor meditation are [to be] found. This is the literal meaning.

Candrakīrti then goes on to explain this verse in three more ways, the first of which relates it to the three (not four) doors of liberation: emptiness, signlessness, and wishlessness. He does not discuss the fourth door of liberation, non-activity, because this one is found in Kālacakra but not in Guhyasamāja, and his commentary is on the latter.

When everything has been dissolved into emptiness, the visualizations of the *sādhana* proper can begin. These are done from seed-syllables, or *bīja*-mantras. The seed-syllable of the main Kālacakra deity is quite unusual, in that it is a “stacked” syllable rather than a single syllable. It is seven letters written in a stack, one on top of the other. These form a single conjunct consonant cluster, and with the inherent vowel and concluding *anusvāra*, make the seed-syllable, *hṛkṣṃlvryam*. Obviously, such a *bīja*-mantra cannot be pronounced. So in the translations of the *sādhana*s the letters it consists of are usually written out in a string, one after the other, adding to each an inherent vowel: *ha-kṣa-ma-la-va-ra-ya*. This allows it to be pronounced, leaving only the question of where in this to put the *anusvāra*.

The *anusvāra* in Sanskrit is a dot placed above the stacked syllable. It represents an open nasal, which is transliterated as *m*, even though it does not quite have an *m* sound. It is sometimes written in phoneticized Tibetan as *ng*, as in the seed-syllable *hung*, which is properly transliterated as *hūṃ*, and rhymes with room. But the *ng* sound is no closer to the actual pronunciation than the *m* sound. It should really be somewhere in between the two, a sound that is not found in English. We will here use the

transliteration *ṁ*. In the Tibetan texts, like in the Sanskrit texts, it is a dot placed above the stacked syllable. This syllable is often written in the *sādhana* translations, following the pronunciation of modern Tibetan teachers, as: *haṁ-kṣa-ma-la-va-ra-ya*, where the *ṁ* is put after the first syllable. However, this is not allowable in Sanskrit, where the *ṁ* must be placed after the last syllable, because it is the declensional ending; so: *ha-kṣa-ma-la-va-ra-yaṁ*. As I have observed and noted elsewhere, at least some Tibetans, who have become familiar with Sanskrit now that they are living in India, have adopted this correct pronunciation.²⁸

When the letters that make up this stacked *bīja*-mantra are used independently, as they are in the Kālacakra *sādhana*, they must individually have a declensional ending. So Kālacakra is generated from *haṁ* rather than *ha*, and the wind *maṇḍala* is generated from *yaṁ* rather than *ya*. The stacked seed-syllable of Kālacakra has not only an *anusvāra* overhead in the form of a *bindu*, or dot, but also a *visarga* in the form of a half-moon under this dot. While the *anusvāra* is transliterated as *ṁ*, the *visarga* is transliterated as *ḥ*. It is a hard breathing that echoes the vowel preceding it. Thus, *hoḥ* is pronounced something like *hoho*. It is normally written in Sanskrit much like an English colon, two vertical dots that follow the letter. But in the stacked Kālacakra seed-syllable it is supposed to be represented by the half-moon overhead, under the dot.²⁹ While six of the seven stacked letters take the *anusvāra* for their declensional ending when they are used independently, *haṁ*, *maṁ*, *laṁ*, *vaṁ*, *raṁ*, *yaṁ*, the other one takes the *visarga* for its declensional ending, *kṣaḥ*. These syllables, *haṁ*, etc., should rhyme with the English word “sum.” On top of all of these is a flame, representing a tenth soundless sound (*nāda*), thereby making the perfect ten of the Kālacakra mantra.

From emptiness emerge the *bīja*-mantras or seed-syllables, and from these are generated the *maṇḍala*, i.e., the residence, and the deities who inhabit it. After these are visualized, there follows a key step. The deities who you have visualized are, at this point, your thought constructions, imagined deities called “pledge beings” (*samaya-sattva*). You now call in the real deities,

called “primordial wisdom beings” (*jñāna-sattva*), to merge with and vitalize the imagined deities. You do this with the mantra, *jaḥ hūṃ vaṃ hoḥ*. With the sound *jaḥ* you “invite” (*āvāhana*), or “draw in” (*ākaraṇa*) the primordial wisdom beings. For this, an implement that you as Kālacakra hold in one of your 24 hands is employed, the *aṅkuśa*. An *aṅkuśa* is an elephant goad. The only thing comparable to this found in Western countries is a cattle prod. But an *aṅkuśa* not only has a point at the end, like a prod, it also has a hook near this pointed end. So the elephant can either be prodded forward with the pointed end, or pulled back with the hook. The use of this hooked goad when inviting the primordial wisdom beings makes the invitation, shall we say, more compelling.

Next the invited primordial wisdom beings or real deities are caused to enter (*praveśana*) the pledge beings or imagined deities with the sound *hūṃ*. For this, another of the implements held in your many hands is employed, the *vajra*. Then they are bound (*bandhana*) there with the sound *vaṃ*. For this, the rope you hold is employed. Lastly, with the sound *hoḥ* you cause them to be satisfied (*toṣaṇa*) in their new situation. For this, your bell with its pleasing sound is employed. This four-syllable mantra, *jaḥ hūṃ vaṃ hoḥ*, is used throughout Buddhist tantric practice, whenever the primordial wisdom beings are merged with the pledge beings, just as two of the above-cited mantras are used everywhere; namely, the purity mantra, *oṃ svabhāva-śuddhāḥ sarva-dharmāḥ svabhāva-śuddho 'ham*, and the emptiness mantra, *oṃ śūnyatā-jñāna-vajra-svabhāvâtmaḥ 'ham*.

The four syllables, *jaḥ hūṃ vaṃ hoḥ*, are all too often seen in *sādhana* translations as *jaḥ hūṃ baṃ hoḥ*, where *baṃ* is wrongly written for *vaṃ*. This mistake results from how this mantra is found in the Tibetan *sādhana*s as transliterated from Sanskrit: *dzaḥ hūṃ baṃ hoḥ*. While most translators know that the Tibetan letter *dz* transliterates the Sanskrit letter *j*, even though there is a Tibetan letter *j*, many do not know that the Tibetan letter *b* very often transliterates the Sanskrit letter *v*, despite the fact that there is a Tibetan letter *v* (or *w*). Thus they correctly write *jaḥ* for *dzaḥ*, but do not recognize that *baṃ* is in fact *vaṃ*.

This problem originated in the Indian province of Bengal, where so many of the Sanskrit tantra manuscripts that were translated into Tibetan came from. There, the Sanskrit letters *b* and *v* are not usually distinguished. The letter *v* is written for both, but is pronounced and transliterated as *b*. This may be seen in the name of the famous Bengali poet, Rabindranath Tagore, where the first part is the Sanskrit word, *ravi*, meaning “sun,” not *rabi*. So, when these mantras were transliterated into Tibetan a thousand years ago, the letter *v* was transliterated as *b*. This fact may quickly and easily be ascertained by checking the transliteration of book titles found in the Tibetan Buddhist canon, where we find “badzra” for “vajra,” etc. The problem of distinguishing *v* and *b*, whether as written or as pronounced, is well recognized by Bengali Sanskrit pandits such as Benoytosh Bhattacharyya (whose first name is actually Vinayatoṣa), editor of many Sanskrit Buddhist texts including the *Sāadhanamālā*. In this collection of *sādhanas* he distinguishes the Sanskrit letter *b* from *v* in writing (spelling, for example, *bīja* rather than the incorrect *vīja*), and always correctly writes *vaṃ* rather than *baṃ* for this *bīja*-mantra.

A fifth syllable is added to these four seed-syllables in the *Śrī Kālacakra Sādhana*.³⁰ To the *bīja*-mantras *jaḥ hūṃ vaṃ hoḥ* is added the syllable *hīḥ*. With this syllable the primordial wisdom beings and the pledge beings are made to fuse or become of the “same taste” (*sama-rasīkṛta*, *sama-rasībhūta*).³¹ Lovely words, but what are these primordial wisdom beings that you are supposed to make merge with the pledge beings? What does it mean that the primordial wisdom beings are real deities as opposed to the pledge beings or imagined deities? Certainly Buddhism, like all Indian religions, accepted the existence of real invisible beings known as *devas*, “shining ones,” often translated as gods. Is this what they are? It would seem not.

The deities (*devatā*, literally, “shining one -ness, or -hood”) called primordial wisdom beings (*jñāna-sattvas*) are described in the texts as the “purities” (*viśuddhi*)³² of specific elements of our world. For example, the five Tathāgatas, also called Dhyāni Buddhas, are said to be the purities of the five aggregates

(*skandha*) that make up a human being. Their consorts are the purities of the great elements, earth, water, fire, etc. The Kālacakra Śaktis are the purities of the vital airs (*prāṇa*); and so on. As seen above, the *jñāna-vajra*, or primordial wisdom vajra, is the ultimate or vajra nature of the universe, since it includes the other three vajras, symbolically called body, speech and mind. Similarly, the *jñāna-sattvas*, or primordial wisdom beings, are the ultimate purities of the various things that make up the universe.

Understanding what these are helps us to understand the deity called Vajra-sattva, the “diamond being,” i.e., the ultimate nature of a being. There are the imagined *samaya-sattvas*, or pledge beings, the “real” *jñāna-sattvas*, or primordial wisdom beings, and just plain *sattvas*, ordinary beings such as ourselves. Vajrasattva, as the vajra or ultimate nature of a being, is then, in a certain sense, the ultimate nature of our very selves. But this diamond-nature is that of a Buddha, so Vajrasattva is thought of as the collective purity of the Buddhas.³³ It is this that we are to call upon and identify ourselves with. This is done, as we have now come to expect, with a mantra, the 100-syllable Vajrasattva mantra, the great mantra of purification.

Over the centuries, used in a land where its language is foreign, errors have crept into this mantra, so that this great mantra of purification is itself now in need of purification. Of course, when recited with faith, this is not to say that it is not effective. But to have the effects that the Tibetan lotsawas of old tried to retain by carefully preserving its sounds, effects it had in old India where it was pronounced correctly and its meaning was accurately understood, its words must be restored to their purity. The correct spelling and meaning of this mantra are:³⁴

oṃ vajrasattva, samayaṃ anupālaya, vajrasattvatvenôpatiṣṭha,
 ḍḍho me bhava, sutoṣyo me bhava, supoṣyo me bhava, anurakto
 me bhava, sarva-siddhim me prayaccha, sarva-karmasu ca me
 cittaṃ śreyaḥ kuru hūṃ, ha ha ha ha hoḥ, bhagavan sarva-
 tathāgata-vajra, mā me muñca, vajrī-bhava mahā-samaya-sattva,
 āḥ

Om. Vajrasattva, keep [your] pledge. As Vajrasattva, stand near [me]. Be steadfast toward me. Be well pleased with me. Be well fulfilled on account of me. Be attached to me. Grant me all accomplishments; and in all actions make my thought beneficent, *hūṃ*. *Ha ha ha ha hoḥ*. O Blessed One, Diamond-nature of all the Tathāgatas, do not abandon me. Be of diamond-nature, O great pledge being, *āḥ*.

Vajrasattva is a synthesis of the five Tathāgatas, or Dhyāni Buddhas, being their collective ultimate nature. The syllables “ha ha ha ha hoḥ” in this mantra are their seed-syllables. Each of the five has a “family” (*kula*), and the Tathāgata at the head of a family is depicted in the crown of each deity in that family. Kālacakra is crowned with Vajrasattva in the first part of the Kālacakra *sādhana*, indicating that Kālacakra is here considered to be in Vajrasattva’s family; i.e., that Kālacakra is an emanation of Vajrasattva. This means that for this part you as Kālacakra are also identified with Vajrasattva. In the second part, Kālacakra is crowned with Akṣobhya, indicating that Kālacakra is regarded here as being in the family of the Tathāgata Akṣobhya.

The Kālacakra *sādhana* in its standard form, such as in the *Śrī Kālacakra Sādhana*, has four parts, not counting the circle of protection that precedes these. The second part repeats what was done in the first part, the main difference being the deity in Kālacakra’s crown. These two parts of the *sādhana* involve lengthy visualizations, while the last two parts are brief. So the visualizations that are done in the first part, in which Kālacakra is crowned with Vajrasattva, and repeated in the second part, form the primary portion of the Kālacakra *sādhana*.

The full Kālacakra *sādhana* includes a very large number of mantras. These all necessarily come from the great Kālacakra commentary *Vimala-prabhā*, “Immaculate Light.” These mantras are more or less corrupt in all existing *sādhanas*, due largely to copyists’ errors. The three known Sanskrit manuscripts of the *Śrī Kālacakra Sādhana* abound with clerical errors. The good news is that several older Sanskrit manuscripts of the *Vimala-prabhā* exist, including a highly accurate palm-leaf manuscript

in Old Bengali script.³⁵ This is a superb manuscript from near the time of the Tibetan translations. With these and the help of the early Tibetan translations, it is now possible to restore to full accuracy all the mantras of the Kālacakra *sādhana*. Since the corrected mantras can now be saved as electronic files, they no longer need to be hand copied. This is the step in which most of the errors were introduced, whether it was the copying of an earlier manuscript to a later one, the copying of a manuscript to a woodblock for carving, or the setting up of an edited text into type for printing. The *sādhana* in which to do this is the *Śrī Kālacakra Sādhana*, because it consists mostly of direct extracts from the *Vimala-prabhā*, already arranged as a *sādhana*. Once this is done, the mantras in all Kālacakra *sādhanas* anywhere in use can be corrected on the basis of those found in this *sādhana*.

NOTES

1. See: Willis, Janice Dean. *The Diamond Light of the Eastern Dawn: A Collection of Tibetan Buddhist Meditations*. New York: Simon and Schuster, 1972. "The Yoga Method of Dorje Sempa," pp. 83-86 (Dorje Sempa is Tibetan for Vajrasattva).

2. See: Khyentse, Dilgo, Rinpoche; translated and edited by The Padmakara Translation Group. *The Excellent Path to Enlightenment: Oral Teachings on the Root Text of Jamyang Khyentse Wangpo*. Ithaca, New York: Snow Lion Publications, 1996. "Appendix" (the Vajrasattva mantra), pp. 103-104.

3. See: Kalu Rinpoche. *The Gem Ornament of Manifold Oral Instructions, Which Benefits Each and Everyone Appropriately*. San Francisco: KDK Publications, 1986. "Ngöndro: Dorje Sempa Meditation," pp. 49-55 (Dorje Sempa is Tibetan for Vajrasattva).

4. For correct pronunciation of Sanskrit, the vowels are the most important. The short "a" is pronounced like English "u" in the word "but." The long "ā" is pronounced like "a" in "father." The short "i" is like in "kit." The long "ī" is pronounced "ee" as in "feet." The short "u" is like in "put," not like in "united." The long "ū" is pronounced "oo"

as in “boot.” The vowel “ṛ” is kind of like the “ri” in trip, but is trilled. The vowel “ṝ” is kind of like the “le” in “able.” The “e” is pronounced like English “ay” as in “day.” The “ai” is like the vowel in the word, “tie.” The “o” is like in “go.” The “au” is like the vowel in the word “cow.” For consonants, the main things are: The “c” is pronounced “ch.” The “th” and “ṭh” are pronounced “ta,” and aspirated. They are not like the English “th” sound. The “ś” and “ṣ” are pronounced “sh.”

5. That the meanings of the mantras used in the *sādhana*s were meant to be understood may be seen, for example, by the statement in the *Abhisamayamañjarī* of Śubhākara Gupta, ed. by Samdhong Rinpoche and Vrajvallabh Dwivedi, Sarnath, Varanasi: Central Institute of Higher Tibetan Studies, 1993, p. 5, “having recited ‘om śūnyatā-jñāna-vajra-svabhāvātmake ’ham’ with recollection of the meaning” (om śūnyatā-jñāna-vajra-svabhāvātmake ’ham ity arthānusmarāṇenôccārya).

6. *Kālacakrabhagavatsāadhanavidhiḥ*, p. 129. See note 9 below for full bibliographic data.

7. *kāya-vāk-citta-jñāna-viśodhakāni mantra-padāni bhavanti*.

8. *Kālacakrabhagavatsāadhanavidhiḥ*, p. 130. See note 9 below for full bibliographic data.

9. This was published as “Kālacakrabhagavatsāadhanavidhiḥ of Dharmākaraśānti,” in *Dhīḥ: Journal of Rare Buddhist Texts Research Project*, Sarnath, vol. 24, 1997, pp. 127-174. But as pointed out by Yong-hyun Lee, this is actually the *Śrī Kālacakra Sādhana* by Sādhuputra, found in the Tibetan Tengyur (Tohoku no. 1358; Peking no. 2075). According to the colophon in this Tibetan Tengyur translation, which is much earlier than the late Nepalese manuscripts where it is ascribed to Dharmākaraśānti, it was written *for* Dharmākaraśānti, not *by* him. See: *The Niṣpannayogāvalī by Abhayākara Gupta: A New Critical Edition of the Sanskrit Text (Revised Edition)*, by Yong-hyun Lee, Seoul: Baegun Press, 2004, p. xii, fn. 28. I have used this *sādhana* since the 1980s, when I obtained microfilms of Sanskrit manuscripts of it from libraries in Nepal and Japan.

10. Although the title *Vimala-prabhā* has now become more widely known in its translation as “Stainless Light,” I have preferred the no less accurate “Immaculate Light.” This I have adapted from Edward Fitzgerald’s “Immaculate Lustre,” found in his English translation of Helmut Hoffmann’s book, *The Religions of Tibet*, 1961, pp. 129, 162.

11. For the term *devatāhaṃkāra*, see, for example, *Sāadhanamālā*, ed. Benoytosh Bhattacharyya, vol. 1, Baroda: Central Library, 1925; Gaekwad's Oriental Series no. 26, p. 258.

12. *Kālacakrabhagavatsāadhanavidhiḥ*, p. 130: *tato 'haṃkāraṃ*.

13. *Kālacakrabhagavatsāadhanavidhiḥ*, p. 140.

14. *Kālacakrabhagavatsāadhanavidhiḥ*, p. 140.

15. *The Buddhist Catechism*, by Henry S. Olcott, 44th ed., 1915, fn. to para. 149, citing a letter from Wijesinha Mudaliyar, "This word has been hitherto very inappropriately and erroneously rendered *Refuge* by European Pāli scholars, and thoughtlessly so accepted by native Pāli scholars. Neither Pāli etymology nor Buddhistic philosophy justifies the translation. *Refuge*, in the sense of a *fleeing back* or a *place of shelter*, is quite foreign to true Buddhism, which insists on every man working out his own emancipation. The root *Sri* in Sanskrit (*Sara* in Pāli) means to move, to go: so that *Saranam* would denote a moving, or he or that which goes before or with another—a Guide or Helper. I construe the passage thus: *Gachchhāmi*, I go, *Buddham*, to Buddha, *Saranam*, as my Guide."

16. By Alexander Berzin, in *Taking the Kalachakra Initiation*, Ithaca: Snow Lion Publications, 1997, pp. 79 ff.

17. *Kālacakrabhagavatsāadhanavidhiḥ*, p. 160: *buddhaṃ dharmaṃ ca saṃghaṃ bhava-bhaya-haraṇaṃ bodhi-sīmnaḥ prayāmi*, "I go to the Buddha, the *dharma*, and the *saṅgha*, removing the fears of cyclic existence, until the summit of enlightenment." For a longer version, see: *Sāadhanamālā*, vol. 1, pp. 29, 154, 290-291.

18. The generating of *bodhicitta* is often done in association with the four immeasurables: loving kindness (*maitrī*), compassion (*karuṇā*), sympathetic joy (*mudita*), and equanimity (*upekṣā*). So the verse or verses recited for this may include these, as is the case in the *Kālacakra Six-Session Guru Yoga* by the Fourteenth Dalai Lama.

19. The three roots of virtue, or wholesome roots (*kuśala-mūla*), are listed in Nāgārjuna's *Dharma-saṃgraha*, 15, as: (1) the generation of *bodhicitta* (*bodhicittotpāda*); (2) the purification of [one's] intentions or motivations (*āśaya-viśuddhi*); and (3) the abandoning of the sense of I and mine (*ahaṃkāra-mamakāra-parityāga*).

20. This mantra has been called the "*śūnyatā-bodhako mantraḥ*," the mantra awakening one to emptiness; see: *Sāadhanamālā*, vol. 1, p. 315.

21. The word “vajra” is regularly defined as “indivisible” (*abhedyā*) in the Buddhist tantric literature. For example, Advaya-vajra cites this definition from the *Hevajra Tantra* (1.1.4) in his *Sekatānvaya-saṃgraha* or *Sekatātparyasaṃgraha*, with the words: *abhedyam vajram iti hevajre*. See: *Advayavajrasaṃgraha*, ed. Haraprasad Shastri, Baroda: Oriental Institute, 1927; Gaekwad’s Oriental Series no. 40, p. 37. This was re-edited in: “Advayavajrasaṃgraha—New Critical Edition and Japanese Translation,” ed. Mikkyo-Seiten Kenkyukai (Study Group for the Buddhist Tantric Texts), Part 2, *Annual of the Institute for Comprehensive Studies of Buddhism*, Taisho University, no. 11, March 1989, p. 231 (114).

22. These four vajras are described in the Kālacakra texts. See, for example, *Vimalaprabhāṭikā*, vol. 1, ed. Jagannatha Upadhyaya, Sarnath, Varanasi: Central Institute of Higher Tibetan Studies, 1986, p. 45. They are discussed by Vesna Wallace in *The Inner Kālacakratānta: A Buddhist Tantric View of the Individual*, New York: Oxford University Press, 2001, pp. 156-159.

23. Translators are always faced with the question of how to deal with closely related words such as *jñāna* and *prajñā*. The translation “wisdom” for *prajñā* has become widely accepted, as in the “perfection of wisdom” (*prajñā-pāramitā*), although a few translators use “insight” for it instead. But what, then, do we do with *jñāna*, which also means wisdom. Here there is no general consensus among translators. Some prefer “knowledge,” its basic meaning in common Sanskrit. But in Buddhism it is a technical term, as was recognized by the early Tibetan translators, and shown by their rendering of it as *ye śes*. In this word, *śes* translates the Sanskrit root *jñā*, “to know,” qualified by *ye*, meaning primordial or pristine, or exalted or sublime. Thus, it was understood to mean not just knowledge, but pristine or sublime knowledge; and modern translators often add these qualifying words. Many translators (including myself) prefer “wisdom” over “knowledge” for *jñāna*, even though “know” is linguistically cognate with “*jñā*.” In English, you can have knowledge of how to make gunpowder, or how to pick a lock, for example, but this would not be considered wisdom. Some translators have adopted the also linguistically cognate “gnosis” for *jñāna*. This word, however, is little used in English, being primarily a technical term of the now defunct Gnostic sects, and few people know what it means without looking it up in the dictionary. By contrast, *jñāna* is

widely used in Sanskrit, and even as a technical term in Buddhism it still retains its well-known meaning of knowledge. Other words that have been used to translate *jñāna* are “cognition” and “awareness,” with or without qualifying words such as pristine, and also “intuition.” All of these provide helpful insights into the meaning of *jñāna*, but in my opinion unduly restrict its meaning more to aspects of knowledge or wisdom rather than providing the central idea itself. Therefore, to distinguish *jñāna* from *prajñā*, as the Tibetan translators always did, and which has proven so helpful over the last thousand years, I have chosen “primordial wisdom” for *jñāna*. I note that Alan Wallace uses this in his translation of Gen Lamrimpa’s book, *Transcending Time: The Kālacakra Six-Session Guru Yoga*, Boston: Wisdom Publications, 1999.

24. The *Jñāna-siddhi* was published in *Two Vajrayāna Works*, ed. Benoytosh Bhattacharyya, Baroda: Oriental Institute, 1929; Gaekwad’s Oriental Series no. 44, where these two verses occur on p. 36:

dahyate nâgni-skandhena plāvyaṭe na jalena ca |
 bhidyate nahi śāstreṇa tīkṣṇenâpi prayatnataḥ || 46 ||
 apratiṣṭhaṃ yathâkâśaṃ vyâpi lakṣaṇa-varjitaṃ |
 idaṃ tat paramaṃ tattvaṃ vajra-jñānaṃ anuttaraṃ || 47 ||

Even though this Sanskrit edition has been available for more than 75 years, there still seems to be no English translation of it. The first of these verses is reminiscent of *Bhagavad-gītā* 2.23: “Weapons do not cut this; fire does not burn it. Water does not wet it; nor does wind dry it.”

25. *Kālacakrabhagavatsāadhanavidhiḥ*, p. 161.

26. This is found in the *Kālacakrabhagavatsāadhanavidhiḥ*, p. 161. It there comes from the *Vimala-prabhā* commentary, chapter 4, verse 5. See: *Vimalaprabhāṭīkā*, vol. 2, ed. Vrajavallabh Dwivedi, et al., Sarnath, Varanasi: Central Institute of Higher Tibetan Studies, 1994, p. 153. But it ultimately comes from the *Guhyasamāja Tantra*, chap. 2, verse 3. Its Tibetan translation in the *Vimala-prabhā*, Derge and Cone eds., with variants from the Narthang and Peking eds. in brackets, is:

dnogs po med la bsgom [sgom] pa med
 sgom pa sgom pa nyid ma yin
 de ltar dnogs po dnogs min pas [mi ’gyur]
 sgom pa dmigs su med pa’o

27. This is in: *Guhyasamājantraṇḍipodyotanāṭīkā-ṣaṭkoṭivākyā*, ed. Chintaharan Chakravartī, Patna: Kashi Prasad Jayaswal Research

Institute, 1984; Tibetan Sanskrit Works Series no. 25, p. 31. The text found in this edition differs somewhat from the Tibetan translation. My translation is of the Sanskrit, but I have had to correct it in three places with the help of the Tibetan. These are given in brackets below. The two longer bracketed phrases in my translation are based on the differing Tibetan text, which is also given below in full.

sthira-bala-[cala]-sarva-padārthhānām abhāve sati bhāvanāyā
abhāvaḥ bhāvābhāvāt | bhāvanā nāiva bhāvanēti | yāpi sato [satī]
bhāvanā sā na bhāvanā, vināpi bhāvanāyā [a]vidyamānatvāt iti | itthaṃ
bhāvābhāva-yukto yo bhāvaḥ sa na syāt | tasmād bhāvyo bhāvako
bhāvanā nōpalabhyate | akṣarārthaḥ |

brtan pa dang g.yo ba'i dngos po thams cad kyi ngo bo nyid ni
med pa yin na ni sgom pa med pa ste bsgom par bya ba med pa'i phyir
ro | bsgom par bya ba bsgom pa min | zhes bya ba ni | gang yod par
bsgom pa de yang bsgom pa ma yin te | bsgom par bya ba dang bral bas
yod pa ma yin pas so | de ltar zhes pa ni dngos po med pa dang dngos
po yod par 'dod pa dang ldan pa gang yin pa de ni dngos po med pa
nyid de phyogs gnyi ga dang 'gal lo | de bas na bsgom par bya ba dang
sgom pa po dang bsgom pa dmigs su med pa ste yi ge'i don to |

28. “On Kālacakra Sādhana and Social Responsibility,” the International Kalachakra Network website, at: http://kalachakranet.org/text_david_reigle_kalachakra_sadhana_social.html:

“The founder and former longtime Director of the Central Institute of Higher Tibetan Studies is Samdhong Rinpoche, currently Prime Minister of the Tibetan Government-in-Exile. Although I knew that Tibetans studying there had to learn Sanskrit pronunciation, it was still a pleasant surprise to me to hear Samdhong Rinpoche pronounce the Kalacakra heart mantra in the Sanskrit fashion. He did this during a break in our 1997 discussions on his ideas of how to have a nonviolent society. When he pronounced the nasal after the last syllable, as is required in Sanskrit, rather than after the first syllable, as is the current practice among Tibetan Lamas, I expressed my surprise. He replied that of course he followed the Sanskrit pronunciation. Why wouldn't he when the original is now available?”

29. *Vimalaprabhāṭikā*, vol. 1, p. 56: *visargo ardha-candrākāro*, “*visarga* is in the form of a half-moon.”

30. *Kālacakrabhagavatsādhanaavidhiḥ*, p. 165.

31. *Vimalaprabhāṭikā* 4.53, vol. 2, p. 181:

evaṃ pañca-prakāraṃ jaḥ-kāreṇākṛṣṭam, hūṃ-kāreṇa praviṣṭam, vaṃ-kāreṇa baddham, hoḥ-kāreṇa toṣitam, hiḥ-kāreṇa sama-rasīkṛtaṃ | vajrāṅkuṣeṇa vajreṇa vajra-pāśeṇa vajra-ghaṇṭayā vajra-daṇḍeṇēti | evaṃ jñāna-cakraṃ saṃpūjya pūrvavat samaya-cakraṃ samarasībhūtaṃ bhāvayed iti niyamaḥ |

See also: *Vimalaprabhāṭikā* 3.79, vol. 2, pp. 78-79.

32. *Kālacakra Sādhana and Social Responsibility*, by David Reigle, Santa Fe: Spirit of the Sun Publications, 1996, pp. 42-43: “The primary sources on this are, of course, the *Kālacakra Tantra* and the *Vimalaprabhā* commentary. The symbolism is generally introduced in the commentary by the words, ‘Now the purification of . . . is stated’ (*idānīm . . . viśuddhir ucyate*). Much of it is given in the latter part of the third section (*uddeśa*) of the fourth chapter (*paṭala*) of the *Vimalaprabhā*, ‘Generation of the Life and the Deities’ (*prāṇa-devatā-utpāda*), verses 95-109. Other references include chapter three, verses 52-55, 160-164, 167-168, etc.”

33. See: *The Tantric Path of Purification: The Yoga Method of Heruka Vajrasattva*, Lama Thubten Yeshe, Boston: Wisdom Publications, 1995, pp. 141-142 (2nd ed., 2004, with new title: *Becoming Vajrasattva: The Tantric Path of Purification*): “Who is Heruka Vajrasattva? We consider him to be a manifestation of the unity of fully developed male and female energy, the complete purity of the state of enlightenment. Out of their great compassion and limitless love, the buddhas and bodhisattvas have manifested their collected purity in the archetypal image of Vajrasattva so that we can identify ourselves with him. We have to understand that the qualities of Vajrasattva are already within us. But our realizations, method, and wisdom are limited. They have to be developed through identification with the limitless, pure energy of the archetype.”

34. This is from my unfinished article, “The Vajrasattva Mantra: Sanskrit Edition and English Translation,” for which I have utilized many Sanskrit and Tibetan sources. For example, I have noted eight occurrences of the Vajrasattva mantra in the *Sāadhanamālā*, and these occur seven times in the two old palm-leaf Sanskrit manuscripts that were reproduced in facsimile by Gudrun Bühnemann in the *Wiener Studien zur Tibetologie und Buddhismuskunde*, vol. 32, 1994. One of

the manuscripts came from Bu-ston's 'Za lu Monastery in Tibet. These same *Sāadhanamālā* occurrences of this mantra are found fourteen times in the Tibetan Tengyur, and in four Tengyur editions. So a fair number of sources have been checked to establish the correct form of this mantra. The most common error in modern books is taking the second occurrence of Vajrasattva as a vocative; that is, as addressing Vajrasattva twice. In fact, this word is Vajrasattvatvena, having the *-tva* suffix, and declined in the third or instrumental case. This declined suffix, literally "by being," means "as being"; thus, "as Vajrasattva." Even though mantras are not normally translated into Tibetan, a few translations were made, and these confirm this word, giving: *rdo rje sems dpa' nyid*, where the *nyid* translates the Sanskrit suffix *-tva*. There are many other errors in modern English translations of this mantra, which translations should be compared with the one given here.

35. This manuscript is found in the library of the Asiatic Society, Calcutta, where it is no. 10766. The usefulness of this manuscript may be seen by the following. Abhayākara-gupta in his *Niṣpannayogāvalī* gives the Kālacakra heart mantra or seed-syllable (*hṛd-bīja*). It is given as *hūṃ* in the 1949 edition by Benoytosh Bhattacharyya, published in the Gaekwad's Oriental Series, no. 109, from Baroda, p. 93. For more than half a century, this was the only edition. Then in the 2004 new critical edition by Yong-hyun Lee (see note 9 above) it is given as *hṛm* instead (p. 113). The editor adopted this reading on the basis of the printed edition of the *Vimalaprabhāṭikā* and only a single old palm-leaf manuscript, as against several other later manuscripts and even the two Tibetan translations of the *Niṣpannayogāvalī*. In a footnote on p. xv he notes that, "There is a possibility that the editor of the VP misread the reading of the most excellent manuscript *Ca*." This refers to the variant readings given in the *Vimalaprabhāṭikā*, vol. 2, p. 80, where the manuscript designated *Ca*, the Calcutta manuscript in Old Bengali script that we are discussing, is listed as reading *hūṃ* rather than *hṛm*. In fact, this most excellent manuscript reads *hṛm*, as I have verified from a microfilm of it in my possession. Thus, it confirms that the true Kālacakra heart mantra or seed-syllable (*hṛd-bīja*) is *hṛm*, despite the large number of later sources giving it as *hūṃ*.