

CHAPTER 7 SHAKTI-MAYA-BUDDHA

7.1 INTRODUCTION

In rare instances during the history of Mankind the mystery of *What Is* has been seen. Unsurpassed depths of insight were reached by some of the mystics of the Upanishads, like for example **Yajnavalkya**, the author of the Brihad-Aranyaka Upanishad who realized that the deepest truth cannot become conscious knowledge. His statement *Neti, Neti* expressed the insight that no concept could ever adequately describe the truth of *What Is*. This was *Maya*, the creating and disguising power of the universe and everything in it.

As we have seen in earlier chapters, the underlying actuality and truth of *What Is* cannot be conquered even through the certain rational methods of science. Quantum theory actually confirms the insights of the Upanishads in the sense that **meaningful and rational science is only possible because of an underlying matrix of non-certain intelligence, freedom, and Oneness; and that domain is not subject to science.**

With the beginning of early civilizations in Sumer, the mysteries of the essence of the human being, of meaning, of truth, and of morality, became questions for intelligent human speculation to be answered in mythological terms. The result of this thinking is contained in the rich mythological traditions of the East and the West. Unfortunately, the intelligent meaning of these stories tends to get lost through time and repetition, or rather through the imperceptible change of realities. The psychological, philosophical, and spiritual meaning of mythological tales dies over time, only the form remains, which is interpreted according to the prevalent reality. Timeless meaning must be reawakened through new language which corresponds to the current realities but is able to refer to the underlying spiritual source.

Throughout this book I have used references and illustrations taken from the Asian Indian treasure chest of mythologies, which can be seen to be very close to ancient Greek and Germanic mythologies. It seems that the Indian and particularly Tibetan ideas are fresher and more immediate than the Western mythologies which have come to us in their translations and interpretations through Christian and Islamic filters. Particularly in Tibet ideas were preserved which go back to Dravidian-Indo-Aryan times of more than four thousand years ago. They entered Tibet about fourteen hundred years ago, where they were allowed to unfold practically untouched by Islamic and Christian influences until the beginning of the twentieth century.

The dialectic and complementary nature of reality and actuality, as well as the struggle between female and male energies in their various forms and manifestations are themes which permeate Indian and Tibetan art, philosophy, and religion. Their deeper comprehension is the ultimate goal of what can be called an enlightened clarity of human thinking, sensing, and acting.

Modern physics tries to lift the veil of the mystery behind these energies, only to recognize, as we have seen in the preceding chapter, that there are veils upon veils upon veils.

The first syllable '*phy*' in the word physics (which is a Greek word) refers to an action and a growing, just like the first syllable of Shakti, namely '*shak*.' Shakti is the Goddess of action. The original Greek word '*physis*' for nature implied a living essence of and in all things, a wholeness and holiness. According to Schadewaldt, this sense of holiness of *What Is*, including all things and appearances, was felt by the Greek people still in the time of Aristotle³⁷⁷, with whose teaching the concept of rational science started. It appears that the same sense of Oneness prevailed in India and Asia much longer. In the West we have developed a reality which is characterized, since René Descartes, Francis Bacon, and Isaac Newton, by the two opposing notions of '*res cogitans*' and '*res extensa*,' thinking matter and extended matter, respectively. Those two areas were not anymore seen as one and the same movement. A useful pragmatic differentiation deteriorated into an absolute and fragmentary separation. **An absolute dualism replaced an older sense of Oneness.** The same struggle between dualism and monism has been going on in spiritual thinking much longer and much more intensely. In previous chapters I have tried to shed light on this struggle by using philosophy and science as the predominant tools of investigation. In the current chapter my approach puts emphasis on the mythological ideas of India and Tibet.

7.1.1 TRIADIC THINKING AND TRIMURTI

It seems that in mythologies of ancient civilizations we find again and again the most direct representations of the mind projected into the transcendent world of Gods and Goddesses. The **triads of Gods and Goddesses** as well as their powers, their births, deaths, and reincarnations are like holomorphic images of thinking with its peculiar powers of freedom and creation, which I call suspending powers.

In one of the famous orthodox Indian sculptures, named Trimurti, three Gods, Brahma, Vishnu, and Shiva, are fused together into one: One body with six arms and three heads. The heads represent the three basic energies of the universe and of the human mind. **Brahma** is the subtle energy of creation, **Vishnu** the intermediate energy of generation, and **Shiva** the wild, mechanical energy of preserving and destroying. Vishnu, according to some accounts, lives in a trans-real, yet reality embracing solitude, sustains and continues it, and on occasion descends into its turmoil. The wives or female personae of these Gods are **Sarasvati or Savitri, Lakshmi, and Sati or Parvati.** These are uncertain ciphers and beacons for the meditative mind, interchangeable form and idea, just one level removed from the ideas of oneness, nothingness, and betweenness. Consistent with the inexhaustible depth of cipher the importance of the three male divine manifestations changes during the long Hindu tradition. I emphasize here characteristics which illustrate and support the basic **triad of human thinking** as developed earlier³⁷⁸. I interpret the three aspects of the God as the three mechanical, generative, and creative movements of **SAT**. Each movement has its dialectic or complementary counterpart, represented by the female manifestation of the Gods, i.e. their spouses or lovers.

³⁷⁷) See Schadewaldt, WS 202-203.

³⁷⁸) See section 1.4.5.2 on page 73.

Similar representations of Gods and Goddesses with three complementary functions can also be found in the ancient Greek pantheon: **The German philosopher F.W. Schelling talks about the three aspects of Dionysus and the corresponding three female Goddesses in his Philosophy Of Revelation**³⁷⁹.

The Trimurti triad is a rather recent representation of the Hindu pantheon. The Goddess that is hidden in this picture is Shakti-Maya, the neolithic Goddess who has been around since the beginning of human consciousness of record.

Heinrich Zimmer writes of her:³⁸⁰

"This dream power - this cosmic stupor, the ever lasting divine drunkenness of the dream of universal organism - suffusing all and everything, brings about the unfoldment of the cosmos, as well as its perpetuation and, at last, its end. This, in fact, is the power that is effective in the Trinity - Brahma, Vishnu, and Shiva; for all opposition, as well as identity, stems from Maya.

*Great Maya is wisdom and increase, stability and readiness to assist, compassion and serenity. Queen of the World, she is alive in every nuance of feeling and perception; feelings and perceptions are her gestures. **And her nature can be sensed only by one who has comprehended that she is the unity of opposites.** This queen produces the round of mortal delusion; nevertheless the same power throws open the way to release. She is wisdom and ignorance in one - self-illumination in intrinsic luminosity. And all women are her self manifestations, but especially the two great goddesses, Lakshmi, consort of Vishnu and the patroness of fortune, and Savitri, goddess of the glowing words of the wisdom of the divine revelation and tradition - the latter is Brahma's spouse."*

In this ancient story it is told *how the first woman Dawn emerged out of the meditating unconsciousness of the creator god Brahma.*

She is the incarnation of all female beauty, indeed of anything beautiful. She is Maya. Brahma, Vishnu, and Shiva are three of her functions, male representatives with their female counterparts, Savitri, Lakshmi, and Parvati, respectively. Vishnu is blue-black, his female persona Lakshmi is white; on the other hand Shiva is white and Parvati is black. They are of course all one in the incomprehensible underlying Nothingness-Oneness, which in the moment of becoming object is Maya. The following story tells how she creates herself out of herself through Brahma, who also does not know her mystery, or his own.³⁸¹

"Brahma, sinking still deeper into the limpid darkness of his own interior, struck a new depth: suddenly the most beautiful dark woman sprang from his vision, and stood naked before everyone's gaze.

³⁷⁹) Schelling, SPOW, volume 1, page 464.

³⁸⁰) See "The King And The Corpse," ZKC, page 265.

³⁸¹) See also section 1.4.4.5 on page 70 and section 5.2.5.1 on page 366. From "The Involuntary Creation," ZKC, page 243. Translation by H. Zimmer of the Kalika Purana.

She was Dawn, and she was radiant with vivid youth. Nothing like her had yet appeared among the gods; nor would her equal ever be seen, either among men, or in the depths of the waters in the jeweled palaces of the serpent queens and kings. The billows of her blue-black hair were glistening like the feathers of a peacock, and her clearly curving, dark brows formed a bow fit for

Figure 71
Parvati, 2, 15-16th century, ZAIA II plate 419



the God of Love. Her eyes, like dark lotus chalyxes, had the alert, questioning glance of a frightened gazelle; and her face, round as the moon, was like a purple lotus blossom. Her swelling breasts with their two dark points were enough to infatuate a saint. Trim as the shaft of a lance stood her body, and her smooth legs were like the stretched-out trunks of elephants. She was glowing with little delicate pearls of perspiration. And when she found herself in the midst of her startled audience, she stared about at them, in uncertainty, then broke into a softly rippling laugh."

The contemplation of this strange, puzzling, beauty causes **another similarly involuntary emanation of Brahma's mind**. This time it was the **beautiful young man known later as Kama, the irresistible God of love**. On his request his mate was created, the irresistibly

beautiful Rati, delight, the Goddess of desire and lust. **Kama is given powers by the great God over all creatures, including the Gods Vishnu, Brahma, and Shiva themselves. To the point that even Brahma, Dawn's involuntary father, burns with carnal desire for his daughter and is scolded for this transgression by Shiva. Kama and Rati are of course the symbols of the major attributes of Maya. As Dawn, she thus starts the whole process of creation in the**

universe. She is Maya, the supreme irresistible force, Shakti, of the One, Brahma-Vishnu-Shiva.

In Indian subconsciousness she is omnipresent, and revealed in myths, temples, sculptures, and paintings as the ultimate power of the universe. She is the energy that is before there was time, space, or matter. And she is the energy that gives life to the other Gods, and also to the human mind. The same energy which allows the human mind to comprehend the universe, understand the world and reality, and have insight into truth are the divine energies of Vishnu, Shiva, and Brahma, all energized ciphers of Maya.

7.1.1.1 BRAHMA

Brahma³⁸² as the creative aspect of the divine substance, he is fully entitled to the Lotus throne; for as the first-born of the timeless waters, he is a masculine counterpart of Padma, the Lotus flower, represented by Shakti-Maya. The Goddess Dawn, Maya, Parvati springs out of his deepest creating meditation. But according to the tradition of Brahman philosophy and mythology he is also the highest being itself in its pure, spiritual, and transcendent nature; an anthropomorphic symbol of Brahman, the essence of the universe, the cosmic, anonymous Self. The idea of Atman is very similar to that of Brahman. In the West we would call both ideas the soul, the absolute imperishable essence of *What Is*. In the human being these forces become **Atman-Shakti**, the moving energy of a human being.

In India the idea of the human soul is not personalized or individualized. Brahman dwells within all beings as the supranatural kernel of their nature. Brahma, therefore, is equal to Vishnu and Shiva; he personifies and connotes, beyond his role as Creator, pure being itself, supreme reality, transcending change, time, and every limiting qualification. At some point in the mythological past he is the spouse of Sarasvati, the important river Goddess of learning, arts and wisdom, even creator of all reality.

Thus, the in-separability of Shiva and Shakti-Maya and **their actual oneness** is affirmed once again. For a more abstract interpretation one can say that the deities Brahma, Vishnu, Shiva, and Shakti-Maya are historical personifications (or deifications) of the idea of Oneness-Nothingness-Betweenness, unfoldments, called reincarnations, at various stages. Brahman and atman are corresponding philosophical, metaphysical notions. In Mahayana Buddhism the Nothingness concept is highly developed as an abstract idea of Sunyata and Sunya-sunya. In Tibet it is supported by manifestations of Buddhas and their female counterparts in erotic union.

Figure 72 Shivalinga, Trimurti Cave, Mahabalipuram



³⁸²) Heinrich Zimmer, ZAIA, page 168.

The linga-yoni and Shiva-Shakti symbolism is older and deeper implanted in the Indian soul than Brahma or Vishnu and the metaphysical concepts of Brahman and Atman. This comes clearly to light in the picture Trimurti Caves dedicated to the three Gods. In this Trimurti cave of Mahabalipuram in South India, Shiva's linga is clearly the dominating power.

The picture shows the Trimurti cave in Mahabalipuram in South India. In this cave the three Gods are shown separately. However, the central sculpture is Shiva carved from the rock of the rear wall of the cave. In the center of this cave is the linga, the holy male symbol of creation, whose female dialectic opposite is the yoni, represented by Maya-Shakti. **The linga in the yoni represents the deepest mystery and force of the universe, the opposites in one.**

"The simple form (of the linga) represents the divine life force of the universe, its all-comprising, all generating essence. The glossiness of its surface is due in part to the offerings of water, milk, and oil, that have been poured on it."³⁸³

"The symbolism ranges from Atman and Brahman, to Shiva-Shakti, linga-yoni, Yab-Yum. In the Brhadan-anyaka Upanishad (800 B.C.E.), for example, we read: "Just as a man, when in the embrace of a beloved wife, knows nothing within or without so does this being, when embraced by the Supreme Self, know nothing within or without."

Here we have clearly an early precursor of the later ideas of the union of Shiva-Shakti and Yab-Yum. In this union Nothingness is One with Oneness.

Brahman, the absolute nothingness-oneness, and Maya are both actual and real. Brahma and Maya coexist. (In Greece the opposing forces Dionysus-Aphrodite and Apollo became irreconcilable enemies.) Maya is the continuous self-manifestation and self-disguise of Brahman, its self-revelation, and its multi-colored, concealing veil. **She is the active erotic energy which drives Man into reality and governs him and her in that reality.**

All things on all levels are permeated and sustained by **Brahman. One might call it the intelligence of nothingness-oneness, out of which everything emerges.** The same Brahman, the same soul, is shared by all things and beings, hence their dignity. There is no thing which could be disregarded as just dead matter, or just an animal without feeling and soul. The sum total of all is worshiped as the Highest Goddess, Mother and Life-Energy of Gods and Creatures, under the formula, Maya-Shakti-Devi.

What is fascinating in these ideas, beyond any religious context, is their **power to order our thinking.** As long as we treat such ideas as non-certain ordering principles, they can be extremely beneficial for human thinking and human sanity. This human sanity is probably the intelligent source behind any such ideas. The human mind asks questions which cannot be answered with certainty, ever. The questions of the human soul, of human meaning, of the purpose of the universe need answers in terms of metaphors and ciphers which are embedded in the knowledge of a rational reality and science but always go beyond them.

³⁸³) Zimmer, ZAIA volume I, page 23, volume II, plate 289.

7.1.1.2 SHIVA³⁸⁴

Vishnu and Shiva appear in modern Hinduism as gods of equal stature, the destroying and maintaining masks or attitudes of the Supreme. Vishnu in his myths becomes Shiva and assumes the appearance of Shiva, when he brings to pass the periodic dissolution of all things. Just as Vishnu is also a destroyer, so is Shiva also a creator and maintainer; his nature at once transcends and includes all the polarities of the living world.

The main symbolism associated with **Shiva** is the **linga** or penis; just like the **yon**i represents the female creativity represented by **Shakti, Padma, Lakshmi, Shri, Parvati, Uma**, so represents the linga the male aspect of creativity in Shiva. **Shiva and Shakti are one in their dialectic dualism, the most fundamental dualism of male and female, which is the basis for Maya and all reality, actual or illusory. In the origin of the attraction between linga and yoni, their ultimate oneness, lies the mysterious complementarity of Yab-Yum and Yin-Yang, the Oneness of Sameness and Difference as shown explicitly in the figures of Samantabhadra and Samantabhadri. Together they are the driving energy of the universe and of human thinking, sensing, and acting. Such complementary opposites attract and repel, they are one and yet different, they create action, they enfold and unfold each other in an eternal dance.**

In the Hindu myth of the origin of the linga, Shiva is the lord of the linga, the force supreme of the universe.

Shiva is the triad of Shiva, Vishnu, and Brahma, destroyer, maintainer, and creator, as depicted in the Trimurti statues discussed earlier. Shiva is called the Great Lord (**Maheshvara**) when he is regarded as a personification of the fullness of the **Absolute**.

But Shiva is always also Shakti, and vice versa.

7.1.1.3 USHNISHA VIJAYA

In Tibet this **truth of the Three Divine Energies in One, and One in Three, all maintained by the Goddess' energy of Nothingness-Oneness-Betweenness** is further developed and incorporated in the ideas of Buddhism. In the bronze figure of *Ushnisha-Vijaya* (or white Tara), for example, we are looking at a female body with three heads and eight arms. She is carrying all the symbols of wisdom and compassion, necessary for any beings to become who they are. *Ushnisha* is the **crown protrusion on her head, symbolizing the cosmic openness of the consciousness of an enlightened being; vijaya** means victorious. The energies of enlightenment are ultimately victorious over the energies of confusion, ignorance, and deception. That victory is never in question as the three forces **Brahma, Vishnu, Shiva-Shakti** represent *What Is*.

³⁸⁴) Heinrich Zimmer, ZMS, page 125.

Figure 73
Ushnisha Vijaya, White Tara, Bronze, 9"



She holds a **Vajra cross** in her first right hand before her chest, symbolizing the **power of the Absolute and its unknowable character**. Her other right hands make the gestures of revelation and display the subtle interplay of all manifestations of reality and truth, represented (in India) by the Goddess of Maya. This is the energy of Betweenness, the dialectic link between reality and truth, or nothingness and oneness.

She gives or grants all aspects of her inner nature, i.e. she represents and gives who we are, the **true Buddha nature of what is, Brahman and Atman**, in Hindu terminology. That wisdom and actuality is granted to us by the very fact that we are self-conscious human beings. This **triadic energy** represented in Ushnisha is for human consciousness the mystery which helps us to be thankful that we are not 'lesser' material substance without the possibility of self reflection.

She grants us the freedom to think and act as a holomorphic substructure of herself. She allows us to be the tool through which the intelligent universe, and all that is, can arrive at a comprehension of itself in this particular human, free way. She lets us be an active and free part of the cosmic play, in which life and death, honor and duty, happiness, joy, and bliss are the dynamic energies which are one with us, which guide and challenge us. We are part of her thinking and being, free and yet one with her, separate and one. She helps us on our way to comprehend this freedom and oneness, so that she herself can become conscious of herself through us. Thus, she helps us to create our own twilight of the Gods³⁸⁵ and Demons. She helps us to throw light on our concepts of Gods and Demons. This light is our enlightenment, the intelligence of Nothingness.

We can assist this form of Maya in her quest to comprehend herself, through our comprehension of ourselves, and join in her dance, or we can resist, and become the petrified corpse Shava. **Whether we call our conditioning knowledge or ignorance, if we don't dance the uncertain dance of Maya's mystery, we are losing our freedom and our dignity.** Or rather we never become free in the first place.

³⁸⁵) "Götterdämmerung and Götzendämmerung" in German.

The second left hand carries the vase of immortality, indicating not only immortality but the timelessness or eternity of *What Is*, and of who we are, once we have lived up to the challenge of our existence in and as reality.

7.2 THE DIALECTIC ENERGIES IN ASIAN ART

The ideas and thoughts contained in these figures try to communicate what the great philosophers have recognized to be impossible to understand in terms of conventional logic alone. The thought-ideas of Gods and Goddesses and their representation as sense-ideas try to speak directly to human intelligence, between sensing and thinking. The passage of ideas through the forms of reality is necessary for communication, but the forms are never what they appear to be. Their meaning points beyond them and their forms. In any of these attempts to learn, to clear away the contaminants of conditioning and confusion, to help us set ourselves free, we see the unresolvable dialectic struggle between a fixed understanding and a living but non-certain truth.

7.2.1 REALITY AND TRUTH; SHAKTI AND SHIVA

This relationship between Reality and Truth, its tension and mysterious energy, is very ingeniously portrayed in stories, symbols, paintings, and sculptures throughout Asia. Some of the most fascinating ones are the Chinnamasta (Divine Mother, Shakti) paintings in India and Tibet, the Yab-Yum sculptures and Shri-Yantra symbols of Tibet, and the Shiva-Nataraja sculptures of South India. Some of these I have already introduced at earlier occasions. Here is an overview of these symbols in the context of the ideas of **Oneness-Nothingness-Betweenness**, and the various modes of mechanical, generative, and creative sensing, acting and thinking.

7.2.1.1 CHINNAMASTA

In the painting of Chinnamasta, the *Divine Mother*, we see a central female red colored figure as Maya-Shakti (the great magician Maya) holding her own head in her left hand.³⁸⁶

At either side of her there are two blue dark colored women, her daughters or other personae, looking up adoringly at the central mother figure. All three women are naked except for necklaces of human skulls and some jewelry as waste bands, bracelets, and pearls around the neck, in addition to snakes. From the gushing wound of the severed head of Maya Shakti three streams of blood gush forth onto the tongues and into the mouths of the two dark women at her sides, as well as into the mouth of the severed head, who joyfully relish this water of immortality.

All heads and souls are thus nourished by this life giving red energy. The two dark sisters or daughters of the central Shakti carry a bowl (in Tibetan versions a skull bowl) filled with blood and brain pieces in their left hand. In their right hand they carry a pair of scissors symbolizing the cutting off of the ego from the self. All three women stand on a white colored couple, again manifestations of the same Maya Shakti. Maya Shakti lies on top of Shiva in sexual union.

³⁸⁶) Cf. supra, section 3.5.1.1 on page 209 connection with the Greek Moira and the Fates, Goddesses of fate.

Figure 74
Chinnamasta, 2, from PRT Plate 22, Gouache on Paper 30 x 20 cm, Cankra 18th Century



She is giving life to Shiva, who gives life to Shakti. They enjoy together the dance of Maya, who is life, sex, illusion, destruction and creation. Actually the head of this Shiva wears the same crown as the severed head of Shakti. They are one and the same, meaning that any human being who lives in a harmonious life between wisdom and compassion has realized the same nature or soul of the mystery of *What Is*. For this to become true all aspects of Chinnamasta must be realized.

In this version of the union between Shiva and Shakti, the Shiva is not a corpse (or Shava) like in many other illustrations which allude to the necessary life giving forces of Shakti.³⁸⁷ Here, both lovers enjoy the bliss of their union with each other and with the forces of the whole universe. The lovers Shiva-Shakti rest on top of a Shakti triangle, inside of a circle, contained in a Lotus blossom. Underneath this blossom one can see the green murky waters of the earth. In the background the sky and the ether of the universe are visible.

This whole scene is a worship of the creative energy and an appeal to it, to *What Is*, from the spiritual realm of ideality to the material realm of reality. Maya-Shakti permeates everything with the juices of her life, her blood and her spirit. She is Atman and Brahman, the

energy of the Absolute; she is Vishnu, Brahma, and Shiva. She is the mother of all Buddhas, Tara, and Ushnisha Vijaya. In abstract philosophical terms this means that *What Is*, is Energy-Intelligence-Movement, ideas which are slightly more concrete than Oneness-Nothingness-Betweenness.

I look at this painting as an illustration of the movement of thinking in its process of unfolding and enfolding consciousness. Unknowable thinking negates itself (cuts its own head off) and re-creates itself as two separate forces of generative and mechanical thinking, who together

³⁸⁷) Compare the story of “*Vishnu on Garuda*” in 3.2.5.2 on page 189; see also “*Ideas and Changes*” in section 3.5.1 on page 208.

create the self. Both movements are sustained by the dialectically opposed forces of Shiva and Shakti, who again need to be one, in order to maintain a harmonious universe and self. The life giving energy or blood comes from the body of the whole which has sacrificed its wholeness to create and nourish its parts. The many skulls hanging from the necks of the three women indicate the difficulty of the task. To put the ego in its place, and to comprehend the individual self as a display of Maya, is like cutting one's own head off. So, this whole image of Chinnamasta, though looking gruesome at first sight, represents the blissful state of human consciousness, having insight into its own true nature, and being able to separate the illusion of Maya from truth.

A similarly blissful representation of this insight is given by the image of the sexual union between **Shiva and Shakti**. In the picture of Chinnamasta the loving divine couple represents the foundation of reality lying blissfully inside of the yoni of the universe, the Shakti triangle inside the Lotus flower. In Tibet this very image became the central idea of the many Yab-Yum representation. There, the scissors are replaced by the vajra-chopper, the skinning knife.

7.2.1.2 SHIVA-SHAKTI AND YAB-YUM

In the Yab-Yum figure we see the Buddha Vajrasattva³⁸⁸ (Truth) sits in the Lotus position with his Shakti, the Buddha Vajrapani (Reality) on his lap.

He represents the highest meditative creative energy of the universe but also of the human mind, an energy which if it finds a receptive reality will transform and recreate it.

She represents the *con-ception* of truth and action in reality, of the universe and of the human consciousness.

Truth (he) acts inside Reality (her), and Reality (she) acts around and outside of Truth (him). They are one in love or compassionate wisdom, which creates true perception and true action in the whole of the two which are one. The essence of this union is the freedom of either one and their oneness. Nothingness and Oneness in loving embrace. There is a harmonious energy and tension between the two, encompassing love and lust, passion, freedom, and bondage. The false comes in through the artificial separation of the two, which are dialectically one.

It is also the symbolism of creation, in which one spermatozoon enters an egg; both negate their individual existence and become some entirely new creation, which in turn can create. Thinking can do this in a constant process of growth and creation, and thinking can become action, in which some new reality can be born. The self can suspend itself to the benefit of a new creation which is freer and wiser. In this negation there is complete freedom and **trust in uncertainty**. In the case of human procreation this uncertainty is of course totally covered up by the illusion that one's offspring will be like oneself or even better. Furthermore, it is **truth that acts in reality and on reality, reality does not act on truth**. Truth has an effect on reality only if reality is ready for change, i.e. conception and transformation. Like a spermatozoon creates new life only if there is an egg ready for fertilization.

When the creators of Yab-Yum symbols used the symbol of sexual intercourse, they saw that the role of human sexuality (beauty, bliss, happiness, desire, pain, heartache etc.) is as complex,

³⁸⁸) Please refer to the figures of Vajrasattva, alone, **Figure 53** on page 338, and together with his consort, **Figure 58** on page 358 and **Figure 81** on page 500.

deep, and volcanic as the question of truth and reality. This was a thousand years before Sigmund Freud! The volcanic power of the forbidden and suppressed emotions connected with eros and mythos must have been known to anyone capable of observing the human psyche. The practice of inward looking without judging or prejudice is at the center of Tantra meditation. Nietzsche said in *“The Twilight Of The Idols”* (1888) that *art requires intoxication and the best and oldest form of intoxication is that of sexual excitement*. This is the same Dionysian or Shivaist life affirmation which we find in Tantra. It is the dance with Maya.

The reptile brain of man and woman was there when reality and truth were born as concepts with the consciousness of Man. Emotions of love are deeper and older than the rather immature products of the young human brain. Truth and reality, just as love and sexuality, are dialectic and dynamic, and emerge from beyond rational thought. Both will for all times give cause to all human emotions and actions from the extreme good to the extreme evil. We can only trust that their dialectical oneness will ultimately guide and direct human action, because we are of that same stuff. Matter is mind is mother is creator is intelligence. Shiva is Shakti is Vishnu is Brahma, all is Maya. Time, space, consciousness, the self are her recent spinings.

Truth and Reality as well as their correlation arise from three distinct movements of the active mind. This distinction of three different movements of thinking, which can be observed through and in thinking itself, is not primarily based on the product or content of that thinking but on the qualitative differences of its movement: **The movement of thinking is the relationship between the thinker (subject) and the thought (object). It is also the uncertain internal dynamics of thinking, in which subject and object are yet to be created.**

This whole movement of thinking is in a holomorphic relationship to That Which Is, and therefore also with all that it can get in touch with either in a subject-object relationship or in mystical oneness. Thinking is a microcosmos of the macrocosmos of *What Is*. One might also say that thinking is the creative space which is between thoughts and before them, just as physical space - including creative physical space - is what is between objects and what is before their existence. We see space, time, matter, and thinking merge into one creative power, which in poetic terms is Shakti-Maya.

What is before thoughts and before physical objects can be adequately labeled an unknowable nothingness, which is evidently without any 'otherness' and which is therefore also a oneness, thus a nothingness-oneness. A similar distinction of three modes of consciousness is that of the waking state, the dream state, and the deep sleep state. In Indian philosophy these three states are represented by the letters A-U-M which together form the sacred mantra OM. A fourth movement of thinking is contained in this syllable which is the silence, or unknowable nothingness-oneness behind and beyond any manifestation. It is the thought-less-ness corresponding to the speech-less-ness. Our mouth drops open when we are confronted with the sight of beautiful Maya-Shakti-Shiva; our mind empties itself of all conscious thought when confronted with the idea of Nothingness-Oneness-Betweenness.

Only **after** thoughts and time, objects and space, have been created out of that intelligent nothingness-oneness is there a consciousness with its thought-objects. Or, these processes may occur simultaneously: Thoughts, time, space, matter, consciousness, and things in space. It is this consciousness which then feels compelled to explore its essence, or the essence of things, which are its projections and reflections on its own space time structure. Consciousness comes up with notions oscillating between nothingness and oneness. It then seems that we must say that the essence of all

things and thoughts, the essence of all thinkables, is neither nothing (the mind before awakening to consciousness) nor one (the mind after awakening to consciousness, the self), but an emanation of itself on itself. Our consciousness and its objects may therefore adequately be called a betweenness. As there is no absolute separation, the content of consciousness must be between the oneness and nothingness of the self. This can only be a non-exclusive betweenness. The relationship is a correlation. Falseness is introduced when thought forgets its origin and creates the illusion of separation. Still, to explore difference and separation as qualities of thinking seems then to be an unavoidable first step in the classification of thought.

The goal is for the mind to truly comprehend its own nature and the products of the mind as such betweenness. This comprehension requires more than reason. Our consciousness vacillates between the certainty of fixed thought and the non-certainty of self-reflection. To remain on one or the other side of the middle path fosters illusion and deception.

7.2.2 REVIEW OF THE THREE MODES OF THINKING³⁸⁹

Depending on its dominant mode of operation, an observing consciousness may see thinker and thought related in different ways, with different degrees of self-deception, entanglement in the web of Maya:

- **As being totally separate, (I am in complete control of my thoughts);**
- **as being totally one, (I am one with the beloved);**
- **or as being dialectically separate and one, or dialectically neither totally separate nor totally one.**

The modes of separation correspond to degrees of certainty. **The more a thinking consciousness is separate from the content of its thinking the more this consciousness can be certain of that content, and can imagine to be in complete control of its thinking.** The more consciousness is one with the content of its thinking the less is its demand for certainty. Certainty (security or fear) has no meaning for a holistic consciousness. A holistic "consciousness" sees itself without another. It is all-one, enfolded in itself. Yet, where there is consciousness there is Maya. The self and ego are merely more rigid forms of consciousness. Rationally, the self can see that it is the sum total of all of its thinking.

It starts to see that without thinking there is no self, there is no reality. *What Is*, when there is no thinking, is evidently no reality and no thing, both of which are products of thought. However, this state of nothingness excludes reality, and is therefore also limited and not holistic. The mind can move from one state to the other to some degree. It is the flexibility which maintains the health and creativity of the mind, the middle path of dialectic freedom, between *Tat Tvam Asi*³⁹⁰ (this is you)

³⁸⁹) Cf. infra section 1.4 "A CLASSIFICATION OF THINKING" on page 49.

³⁹⁰) Chandogya Upanishad.

and *Neti, Neti*³⁹¹ (neither this, nor that). The state of mind when thinking appears to occur without the self is not absolutely separate from the thinking self. Otherwise, there would be no access, no memory, no reference possible to it. We cannot abandon the modes of operation of rational thinking, if we want to communicate.

We can classify the movements of separation between thinker and thought according to their effect on thinking and arrive at three qualitative differences (Refer to page 73):

(1) **Mechanical thinking** is a thinking in terms of fixed rules. It preserves traditional and habitual thinking and can be mechanically described as a movement of thought based on cause and effect, which may be imagined or real. This thinking can be correct and certain within a limited area. On its own this movement is in Hindu terminology called maya, also avidya (ignorance but also active contribution to the mechanical web of conditioning). This is not wrong thinking per se but logical thinking which closes itself off to the transforming powers of change as contained in the non-certain modes of thinking. It is also in its purest form comparable to the state of waking consciousness, the letter 'A' in the sacred syllable **AUM** (Mandukya Upanishad).

(2) **Generative thinking** extends and modifies rules of thinking and thought-forms. It is a sub-conscious, sub-certain movement between preservative and creative thinking and displays properties similar to those which can be found in the quantum physical (quantum organic) description of phenomena. In Hindu terminology this mode of thinking is called dhyana, inner seeing, contemplative or meditative thinking-seeing-sensing. It is the letter 'U' in the syllable **AUM**. Without that this thinking actively participates in consciousness, the mind remains in the state of illusion of deceptive maya and avidya.

(3) **Creative thinking** cannot be described adequately, but we can allude to it indirectly through dialectic metaphors. On this level, the uncertain creation of radically new rules and thought-forms begins. Creative thinking is part of what I call insight and intelligence. This thinking or non-thinking is Nirvana, highest wisdom, nothingness and oneness in union. It is the letter 'M,' but also the silent space and the whole syllable **AUM** or **OM**. This means that this thinking does not exclude the other two states, but embraces them as movements. This thinking is not a thinking which could be arrived at by the two other movements, or even be described by them in adequate terms. For them it appears as an empty nothingness or void. The consciousness that advances from mechanical to creative thinking is that all inclusive thinking already.

7.2.3 CREATIVE THINKING AND SHIVA-SHAKTI-BUDDHA

Thinking which unfolds from mechanical to creative is creative, the path and the goal are one. In Tibetan Buddhism this positive world view is best expressed in the provocative religious metaphoric symbol of the naked Buddha in Lotus position with his equally naked female consort sitting on his lap, embracing him passionately in evident sexual bliss and union, called Yab-Yum, father-mother in Tibetan. One of these figures shows the Buddha (or Bodhisattva) Samantabhadra ("He who is all pervadingly good") and his female dialectic counterpart, Samantabhadri. If she

³⁹¹) Brihad-aranyaka Upanishad.

carries a vajra-chopper (the skinning knife symbolizing the cutting off of the ego), they are called Vajrasattva (absolute wisdom and compassion) and Vajradhari. He/she is regarded as the embodiment of the insight into the oneness of sameness and difference.

The central Buddha figure is the nothingness of creative thinking or nirvana consciousness. This figure is embraced by the female figure representing the action of generative and mechanical thinking, the Maya of the world, which presents herself to the waking consciousness as separate. Nothingness is in loving embrace with oneness. The insight into this truth is the highest attainable wisdom. The creation of difference and separation is seen as necessary conditions for a reality, without losing sight of the fact that reality is part of ideality or truth, which is essentially the unknowable mystery, the Maya out of whose lap infinitely many realities emerge.

7.2.3.1 CONTRAST WITH CHRISTIAN MYTHOLOGY

In Christian mythology the paradise was lost when the "evil" snake seduced Eve to seduce poor old Adam to eat from the tree of knowledge. Ever since, women were blamed for the pleasure they gave men. The more pleasure they gave the more they were vilified. The more beautiful, seductive, and intelligent they were, the closer they were to the devil. What a twisted and corrupt logic! The symbol of Yab-Yum, on the other hand, is a guide to the tree of knowledge and self-comprehension, not away from it. The reward is the union with paradise which we have never left.

One should recognize here that both the serpent and the tree are much older positive 'pagan' symbols for the creative female powers of nature. The combination of those powers with the powers of the intellect was indeed the beginning of modern consciousness. The paradise of ignorance was lost with this powerful marriage, which should not at all be seen as a single act of deceitful seduction, but as the creative mutual seduction of one vital energy by another. The paradise of wisdom, on the other hand, was opened from the moment of this sacred marriage. The female creative power of nature seduced the abstract powers of thinking into her embrace. What was lost in this union was the world of unquestionable submission to magic powers, the world of blissful ignorance, but above all the sense of being an integral part of the Nature Goddess. Ever since, the cognitive mind has made desperate attempts to understand what is going on. What was forced into submission through this relentless drive to understand what cannot be understood, was the creative power of the Mother Goddess. From this mythical moment onwards Man had to understand, to know, had to question everything divine or human. He had to speculate, to reason, and to believe and fear where he could not know. This is the intrinsic function of a consciousness awakened to its powers of creating worlds. He had to create a web of meaning to replace paradise lost and to create the expectation for regaining access to it. Little does consciousness suspect that its loss and its redemption is its own product. Little does it know that most of Man's realities created in this fashion were and are cobwebs of its own illusions and lies, masterfully held together by strings of causality. It is actively and ignorantly trying to cover up its own underlying nothingness, which some people see.

Thus, in essence, Christian thinking interpreted the mythical moment of awakening of consciousness as the end of paradise and as a condemnation; mystic thinking generally sees the potential for a new paradise, in which wisdom and active participation in the universal play of realities and truth could be united. (There is also in all religions the apocalyptic mystic thinking and vision. I consider that an aberration and don't go deeper into it.) Christianity rejected the world with

the hope for heaven and the fear of hell, whereas a mystic view tried to transcend the world, heaven, and hell, to make room for a life in actuality and without dogmatism.

In modern times Kant and Hegel explained again that all reality is conditioned, through and through. It seems that Schopenhauer was the first philosopher in the West who understood that the **"Kantian concept of a-priori forms of sensibility and categories of logic are practically identical with the Hindu-Buddhist philosophy of Maya,"** of which we heard in the West reliably only a few hundred years ago.³⁹²

The essence of Buddhist thinking is in my terminology to overcome the illusory certainty and security of a mechanical world view. This world view is avidya (ignorance) or Maya. The Hindu term Maya has the clear connotation to the active principle of creating a mechanical world through restrictive mechanical thinking, which is actually void and empty in addition to being utterly destructive for all living beings. Avidya and Maya is not the lack of knowledge or deceptive illusion alone, but the separation by consciousness of a oneness into a fragmented world of separate things, thoughts, individualities, which have the appearance of being absolutely independent from human thinking. It is the goal of true thinking to see the danger and destruction arising from mechanical thinking. The mechanical self and ego must be overcome, i.e. understood and transcended. Nirvana is creative thinking and the comprehension of emptiness of the self, it is the opening of the mind to its own unconditioned creativity.

In this comprehension the empty self, a negative concept, is transcended to a oneness-nothingness, sunyata, a positive concept. The empty self is controlled by fear and the desire to fill its emptiness with the eternal diversion of the day: power, money, pleasure. But there is no self or individual which could ever reach nirvana, because the concepts of self, nirvana, goal are themselves part of Maya. There is no goal to reach, no river to cross; samsara is nirvana. This is why it is impossible to talk about creative thinking or enlightenment, or any spiritual matter, without entering a world of thinking which is characterized as dhyana : meditative, dreamlike, mystical. Not surprisingly, all these notions are subject to derision and confusion for rational thinking. Not surprising also that so-called religions have been created around these notions which entrap poor believers in ever deeper dependence, ignorance, and deceptive illusion, the horrific aspect of Maya, Kali.

The Buddha's basic recommendation was: "Stop ignorance, stupidity, and insanity."

There are three major areas to this recommendation;

1) Simple ignorance which can be remedied by a good educational system, i.e. good schools; accurate knowledge about things and history.

2) Self and ego controlled ignorance which comes about in great part through the conditioning in a particular socio-economic and cultural environment. In a free modern society much of this ignorance can be dispelled through accurate information together with psychological and possibly medical treatment.

3) The profound ignorance of a thinking process which cannot reflect on itself. This is where meditation, dhyana, and creative self reflection must come in. This is the thinking which does not address content, but the mode of thinking itself. In some ways this could be described as a thinking

³⁹²) Joseph Campbell, "*Creative Mythology*" CCM, page 338.

about no-thing in which there is neither thinker nor object of thought. It is what Aristotle called "noésis noéseos " the thinking of the Gods.

All reality is Maya in Vajrayana Buddhism, and therefore the legends do not insist on the human character and earthly births of the Buddhas. The biographies, interspersed with popular miraculous features, represent illusory displays of the transcendental divine essence in the field of the intellect and the senses. "The Buddha life has become an unsubstantial reflex on the mirror-plane of phenomenality"³⁹³. **"The Unfolding of the Playful Illusory Manifestation of the Buddha on the Earthly Plane."** (Lalita vistara sutra)

The aim of Vajrayana Buddhism is pedagogical³⁹⁴, not penal as in occidental religions. The aim is not the satisfaction of a supernatural father, but an awakening of natural man and woman, and all other sentient beings, to truth. This is possible in any one's life. One can have insight into the workings of the mind, and that insight clears up the obstructions to clear perception, thinking, and acting. The content of Vajrayana Buddhism, from bronze figures, to yantras and mandalas, from mantras to chants and exercises consists of pedagogical devices with the purpose of showing the illusory nature of the self, or rather its Maya nature. This should lead ultimately to the ending of ignorance through the self-comprehension and self-suspension of the self or the ego, caught in the web of comfort, fear, security, and hope, caught between the desire of indulgence in reality and its rejection, caught in religious systems and philosophical schemes. The ego is the self caught in deceptive and self-deceptive illusion. Confused thinking leads to and maintains the ego. Insight into this confusion counteracts the inertia of self-deception and allows for freedom and intelligence to play predominant roles.

7.2.3.2 FURTHER EXPLORATION OF THE YAB-YUM SYMBOLISM

"We see Samantabhadra in the attitude known in Tibetan as Yab-Yum, in union with his shakti, who represents the energy of his essence. The word shak means "to have force to do," "to be able." Thus an adequate translation of 'shakti' is 'energy.' This is the representation of maha-sukha, highest bliss.

He has his hands folded in his lap holding a bowl. She has her arms wrapped around his head, the left hand carrying the skullcup, the right hand wielding the vajra-chopper. Both are completely naked, without any ornaments, indicating their complete freedom from reality, the cipher language for their Oneness with Nothingness which is also Oneness. The Buddha figure is indeed Mahasukha, who, often encircled by a ring of flames, like Shiva-Nataraja, embraces a lovely and beloved female being, who sits on his lap, enclosing him lovingly with her arms and legs. This posture is the common one and was derived from the earlier archetype of Shiva and the Goddess, who usually lies atop of Shiva in their sexual union.

Allegorical interpretation: The male and female principles in eternal embrace represent, as in Shivaite iconography, the coincidence or union of opposites. The divine couple are both the goal

³⁹³) Heinrich Zimmer, "The Art Of Indian Asia," ZAIA volume 1, page 173.

³⁹⁴) Joseph Campbell, "Oriental Mythology," COM, page 310.

and the way: fulfillment and the means or process of attaining it; enlightenment and the doctrine or way to enlightenment - including all the stages of imperfection, approach, improvement, near-perfection, and the ultimate attitude of the Wisdom of the Far Bank, which is, finally, a timeless,

Figure 75

Samantabhadra and Samantabhadri, 1996



and bliss (a notion of dynamism, process, time, differences, individual beings, or states that really are), the candidate is still caught in a subtle form of ignorance, a kind of entanglement in the meshes of his own intellectual striving. This whole dualistic sphere of thought, discourse, and experience must be transcended if the realm of utter reality is to be reached: the Far Bank of transcendental truth.

static repose beyond the flow of time, beyond events, beyond all the qualified, differentiated, and limited moments and realizations of the realm of life. For in the secret insight of the Enlightened One the two apparently antagonistic principles of time and eternity are one, just as husband and wife, God and his Spouse, constitute one figure and are one sole being. The dual appearance is but a phenomenal mere appearance.

Nirvana and Samsara, then are fundamentally not different from each other, but represent contrary phenomenal aspects of the one, selfsame, transcendent reality, which is beyond both. Therefore, as long as enlightenment (nirvana) is posited as something apart and different from the sphere of ordinary life (samsara), true enlightenment has not been attained: though perhaps, conceived of, in an intellectual way, it has not yet been realized existentially. For if the notion exists that there is something to be reached, or anything to be forsaken, that there is a real process going on, leading from ignorance and suffering to sublime indifference, aloofness,

Metaphysics and dialectics, the preliminary means for teaching the inexpressible, point to the truth but do not contain it. They are mere road marks, and if thought to be real they become the most exquisite and dangerous snares of ignorance. The accomplished philosopher of metaphysician, therefore, who clings to his own processes of exposition, is a perfect example of the most sublime failure on the way to the palace of wisdom.

There is no such **thing** as enlightenment or nirvana. That is one of the reasons why the historical Buddha refused, again and again, to describe or define it. And that is the attitude of not being caught by the antagonistic notions of ignorance (samsara) and enlightenment (nirvana), or by any other pair-of-opposites in the realm of thought, is characteristic of and fundamental to all esoteric circles of advanced candidates for Bodhi (wisdom). What then are Vajrasattva and his Shakti? He is the Way and she is Nirvana; or conversely, he is Eternity and She is Time; each is both, and both are each; and the two are one, and both are Nothing, this is Prajna-Paramita, highest enlightened wisdom.

Apart from the Yab-Yum symbolism, in Tibetan Buddhism the synthesis of the two ideas is also contained in the beautiful and sensuous Goddess figure of Tara herself, the mother of the Buddhas. Her symbols are the Lotus flowers behind her shoulders and below the right foot. She is of course also seated on a Lotus throne. In Hindu contexts she is the Mahashakti, or Maha-Kali (the Great Dark One), the mother of the universe. She is perfect consciousness and bliss, wisdom and compassion, experiencing both pain and pleasure. Here she is Tara, the nature of the ultimate.

Here she sits at ease with the right leg swung out wide and its foot resting on a Lotus pedestal. She draws unabashed attention to the female center of creation. The left leg is folded under in the contemplative position. Her left hand holds the stem of a lotus flower which floats over her left shoulder. Another lotus, fully opened, floats over her right shoulder. She is dressed in a gauzy skirt, which clings tightly to her legs. A blouse leaves her breasts uncovered. Over them she wears a garland together with beautiful necklaces and bracelets. Tara is depicted as a ravishingly beautiful woman at the age of sixteen as described in the Vajra Buddhist text "**Tara Tantra**," going back to the eighth century C.E.

Figure 76
Green Tara, Sitting



All Buddhas in Tibetan bronze statues are seated on the Lotus throne, the Lotus being Maya-Shakti and Tara, and even the support of the Shiva-Nataraja statue rest on such a throne. She is the common ground of all reality and truth.³⁹⁵

The Goddess Lotus is Maya, Tara, and Avalokiteshvara, the male and female Buddhas in one. She is the dialectic struggle, which is intrinsic to all life, the ambiguity yet joyful and blissful participation in all life; she is the validation of the Buddha's first Noble Truth, "**All Life Is Sorrowful.**"

In the transcendent realization, the struggle is identical with nirvana, since samsara and nirvana, time and eternity, the Buddha and his shakti, are ultimately one. Hence the lovely goddess Lotus, who is the essence of this mystery, being herself that living process which is known on the one hand as strife and on the other as eternal bliss or the bliss of eternal being.

Without her there would be no revelation, since she is the field in which the revelation appears; and without the Buddha there would be nothing to reveal, since he is what appears. The two are the ultimate terms of that dialectic which is the gate to wisdom, and equally the return gate through which the wise regard the world. And in essence the two are one.

The Buddha figure in Yab-Yum is compassion, she is wisdom. But, he is she, and she is he. He is sitting in the immovable lotus position, she sits on his lap. She has aroused him and embraces him. And she is in charge!

This provocative symbol shows in all its power how different Tibetan Buddhism is from Judeo-Christian beliefs. Can a devout Christian imagine the virgin Mary sitting on Jesus Christ's lap, both lovers doing what all lovers of the world do in this situation? Not even the combined image of Maria Magdalena, the whore, with Maria, mother of Christ, comes close to the complexity and power of Maya-Shakti. Actually, in all these Buddhist Yab-Yum symbols it is the **Vajravarahi**³⁹⁶, the Shakti, the Maya who is the active lover. But Shiva is in deep meditation. There is never an individual consciousness present to begin with. He is like a corpse without the fresh blood and passion of his Shakti. In spite of his erection his nothingness is not perturbed, but rather, it is complemented to a full oneness in the blissful embrace. When lovers have sex, they lose all consciousness in the moment of orgasm. The French call this moment appropriately "*la douce mort*," or "*sweet death*." The ecstatic bliss annihilates the separation between the lovers. Evidently, Tantra Buddhists (at least some of them) were very much aware of the rejection and suppression of sexuality and its pleasures. Carnal pleasures were anathema to any spiritual organization. What better symbol then to use the physical union, the great orgasmic moment, the attraction of the sexes, to represent the union of the God with his Shakti. After all, the world, with all its sex and pleasure, and torture, and horrific atrocity is the creation of the Great God and his Shakti, or vice versa, or is it?.

The supremacy of Maya Shakti to which even the Gods have to bow is well described in the earlier story of Vishnu on Garuda. One can see that all hierarchy stops with oneness-nothingness. Whatever a normal consciousness finds repulsive in one reality, another consciousness might find

³⁹⁵) Heinrich Zimmer, "*The Art Of Indian Asia*," ZAIA, page 230.

³⁹⁶) See the picture on page 367.

attractive. This is not moral relativism. But any choice of the conscious mind is a play of the Maya. This should be cause for humility and joy, not for despair and suppression. Without Maya there is only immobility and death, emptiness instead of nothingness, rigidity instead of oneness. The mind is nothingness and oneness at the moment of bliss in sexual embrace, pleasure, pain, the world are being transcended. This incestuous, sacrilegious symbol says exactly this. The real world of Maya is not the world of school masters and monks who are overly concerned with decorum and worried about correct and proper

language. Maya-Shakti is a warrior, lover, and creator. Shiva (the earlier Hindu deity in love with his Shakti, who in Tantra Buddhism becomes the Buddha with a much richer philosophy) and Shakti do love each other in every sense of the word, no four letter word being excluded. It is in ecstasy that the brain can let go of its self-images and the fixed images of the world. The most extreme opposites must become one, our grandstanding ethical images must soften. What better image to use than the shocking love making of our holiest deities, who in most religions would come down with thundering punishment, fire and brimstone, to destroy and punish the evil

thinkers and fornicators, and throw them into deepest everlasting hellfire.

But if all reality is essentially "**The Unfolding of the Playful Illusory Manifestation of the Buddha on the Earthly Plane.**" (Lalita vistara sutra), the concepts of sin, ethics, morality and so on, in their religious and sociological definitions become questionable and suspect. The concept of the self who would fry in hell for eternity is merely another point in this tapestry of illusion.

If there is no heaven, no hell, no sin, no god, no devil, no saint, then what? Will all hell break loose on earth? Not necessarily, but then again, it has already broken loose. "Hell is the normal existence in illusion," would be the Bodhisattva's answer.

The Yab-Yum statues of Tibet are teaching devices which can help the mind through shock and meditation to loosen the rigid reality, to unite body and soul, nature and spirit, matter and mind,

Figure 77

Samantabhadra and Samantabhadri, Faces



sensuality and spirituality. The unification of the opposites gives the proper reference for human action. **But they cannot be unified in reality.**

The female's face shows the ecstasy of pleasure, pain, and horror to which the participating motions of lovers of the world, of all conscious beings, lead to with necessity. Sex is the most widespread and common of activities of all sexual life-forms.

It is synonymous with participation in the world, with the creation of thoughts and things, from the first stone axe to the latest computer. Any such activity must lead to pain and pleasure, pleasure and pain, and sorrow, ultimately death. This is the wisdom of the energizing, life giving and life taking, unpredictable, creative and destructive Maya, the Shakti (Sanskrit: creative energy and force) energy of the whole universe.

The participation in life needs the wisdom and the blessing of Maya, the mother goddess. But this wisdom alone is not sufficient. It leads to blood and human sacrifice, unmitigated horror of existence, which drinks the blood of its children and skins them alive, without mercy or justice, without meaning or remorse. Not even the wisdom of the Maya, nor her appeasement with sacrifices and prayers is sufficient. The participants in life must not only comprehend the Maya of the outside existence, no, they must also comprehend the Maya of this comprehension, which is wisdom. **The Self must realize its own illusory insubstantiality.**

Shiva or Buddha is the certain, immovable, secure, vajra like, state of total insight in the nothingness of being. The attributes to this state are beyond conscious comprehension, ultimate not-knowing and total insight. This state alone is also still under the spell of the separated Maya. She, Lakshmi and Shri (prosperity, fortune, beauty, virtue) Shakti, Padma (Lotus), Aphrodite, Isis represents the beautiful, sexy, graceful aspects of nature and the human psyche but also all its opposites. She is the seducer, the best allegory, metaphor, and cipher of the erotic seductive powers women have over men. Of all the maya: powers, illusions, and temptations the greatest one is woman. She drinks their blood and skins them alive, and men are bewitched by her. She copulates with them, deceives them, cheats them, maims and kills them. She, Maya, is the essence of human illusion, lust for power, pleasure, fame. The maya of having prices to gain, things to accomplish, pleasures to experience, goals to reach, is the greatest illusion there is. And the realization of this illusion by the Self is the maya of Maya, the almost perfect illusion. To realize the illusion may be another illusion.

Evidently, male and female are psychological and mythological terms referring to attitudes present in every man and every woman. The physical forms are allegories.

It is only in the ecstatic union of this absolute unshakable Maya security of Shiva, with the never resting, always moving, always acting Maya, that the maya state of both is transcended to the plane of compassion and wisdom, a moving play of no-thingness, when both are one, both are nothing, and all there is. This is the eternal moment of compassion and wisdom, which is the only true movement. The ecstasy of this union is the oneness-nothingness from which forms, apparent substance, can be created. Existence and transcendence unite. The union transcends existence which, if alone, is Maya and absurdity, and transcendence which, if alone, is Maya and religious fantasy. Together, Maya-Shiva finds comprehension in herself, and is free to participate with wisdom and compassion in her own play.

When consciousness and space and time and the world 'return,' compassion and wisdom of the loving embrace between Shiva and Maya have transformed the world, the world as the

experience of the conscious mind. Now there is the seed of compassionate wisdom planted in consciousness.

Maya produces the world; she is the mother of our swiftly transitory lives. Though these lives of ours are caught in the cycle of births and rebirths where everything fails at the end, filled with suffering and guilt, shortcomings, ridiculous infatuations, nevertheless they are the manifestations of divine energy. Whatever we may perceive or experience, and no matter how we may perceive it, everything, including ourselves, our world, the unknowable actual world and the world as we perceive it, in so called objective or subjective fashion, is a revelation of divine energy. Hence the divine sanctity of Maya, whatever she may be, or mean, or not mean to our consciousness. The absolute, disguised as and by Maya is around us in everything. It includes ourselves, our consciousness, our subconscious, and unconscious mind which are closest to the mystery.

In Tantra, the Hindu and Buddhist version, Maya can be seen as simply the dynamic aspect of the Absolute. Hence, all and everything is a revelation, a manifestation of the one and sole divine essence. This amounts to such a wholesale, indiscriminate sanctification of all and everything on the earthly plane, that there is no need any more for yoga, for sublimation through asceticism. Life with all its features and experiences, the universe in its decline and strife, though screening the divine Self in us, is holy and divine. Just **beneath the veil of Maya, the magic mirage of the universe, dwells the Absolute.** And the energy of Maya is precisely the energy of that Absolute, under its dynamic aspect.

Religion, therefore, which etymologically means that which obliges or binds together, is in its most fundamental sense the recognition that the world is an Order, of which each man, being, and thing, is a part and to which each man stands in a definite, established relation; together with action based on, and consistent with, such recognition, and in harmony with the whole cosmic activity. In Tantra God is worshiped as the Great Mother because, in this aspect, God is active, and produces, nourishes and maintains all. Shiva is the God. Shiva is the unchanging Consciousness, and Shakti is its changing power appearing as mind and matter. **Shiva-Shakti is therefore Consciousness of What Is and Its Power.**

7.2.4 SHIVA-NATARAJA AND YAB-YUM

The same positive idea, the unity between contemplation and action, between truth and reality, is represented in the dance of Shiva. Shiva's facial expression shows the serene aloofness of the mind immersed in nothingness. His copious hairdo, on the other hand defies asceticism. **So does the whole body of Shiva dancing ecstatically the female dance of the world, celebrating creation, action, joy, and exhilaration, all reality.** He stomps down on the dwarfish figure, representing the repressive forces contained in both asceticism as well as in overindulgence, stomps on the doctrine of expulsion from paradise. That little figure, the confused self, the ego, symbol for mankind, tries to do things right by throttling the forces of nature represented by the cobra, to no avail of course. This diminutive figure is in terrified awe of Shiva and his dance on the razor's edge between exhilarating life affirming action, and the unfazed meditation of the mind which is one with the whole creation. He is expelled from paradise, and tries to subdue the dragon, dutifully obeying the rules of the castrated priests, having it all gotten wrong.

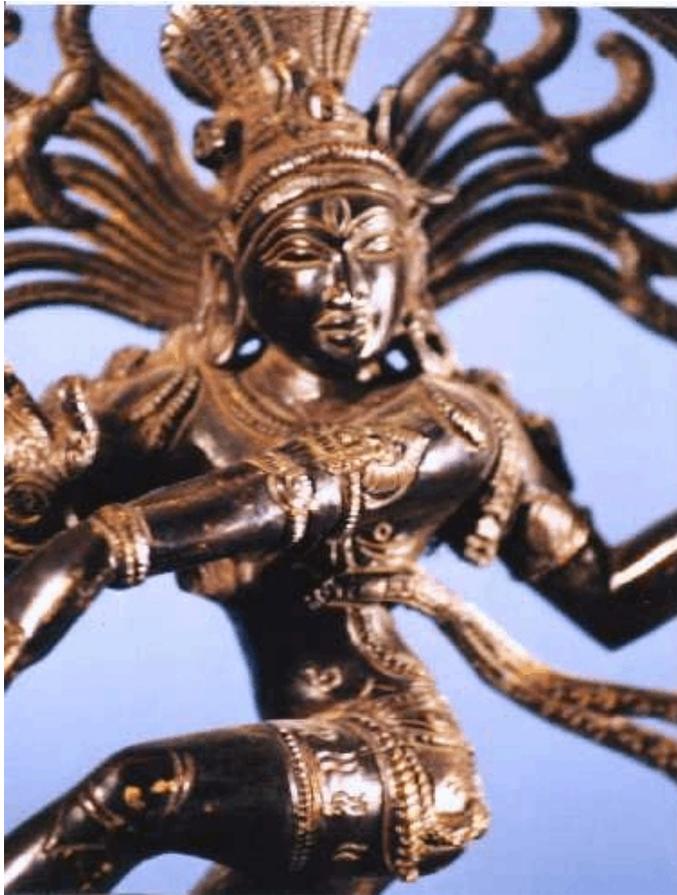
There is a clear parallel between the Tibetan bronze figures of Yab-Yum together with the figures of the wrathful deities dancing on the corpses of ignorance and ego, and the figures of Nataraja.

Shiva symbolism delves deep into the mystery of two-in-one in close parallels to the explicit bronze figures of Yab-Yum in Tibetan Buddhism.

Shiva-Nataraja represents in one dynamic bronze figure the essence of Hinduism and Tibetan Buddhism in their most advanced and profound forms. The oneness-duality mystery, the oneness-nothingness, of Shiva and Shakti, Shiva-Shakti, OM. And Shiva represents all the forces separated in the three figures of Vishnu, Brahma, and Shiva, as discussed earlier.

The mystery of life and death, human suffering and joy, ignorance and release, have found

Figure 78
Shiva-Nataraja, 2, Bronze 14"



an ingeniously inspired and masterly executed artistic representation in this bronze figure. The dynamism, mystery, and transcending power of this masterpiece are breathtaking and have hardly an equal anywhere or at any time in the world of magic, art, or philosophy. The three dimensional figure tells a dynamic endless story. It is the story of all human life as the dance of and with Maya-Shakti-Shiva. This artwork draws the spectator into its meditative dreaming but explosive truth and makes him or her an active participant. It represents the insight of the mystic and offers to become one with the enchanting dream of Maya.

It is a masterpiece at a par with the meditation Buddhas and sculptures of Tibet and Tantra Yoga. In some sense this should come as no surprise, Shiva being the lord of yogis and also being one with his Shakti, the beautiful and sensuous Goddess, which later in Buddhism becomes Tara and the loving consort of the Buddha.

Shiva dances the dance of Maya, the dance of the universe and the dance of illusion. He is Shiva, the unshakable truth, but he dances the dance of Shakti, action,

because the greatest illusion and dance of Maya-Shakti is woman. The whole dance is ecstasy, trance, and magic. Like the universe, or human perception thereof, it is unknowably dynamic, mysterious, impenetrable, yet luring, enticing, promising like the sensual Shakti or the equally sensual Shiva. Whoever enters the ring of fire must join in the dance, at the risk of being burnt to ashes. Nataraja, Shiva as the master of dance, performs the cosmic dance of **Maya-Shakti** on top

of the little insignificant dwarf, who represents Man in his ignorance, forgetfulness, and heedlessness. This corpse is our lot if we try to understand the world by staying outside of the unpredictable, uncertain, unknowable ring of dance. At another instant he dances on top of the Bull, see page **Figure 54** on page 346.

Mere intellectual understanding, scientific or religious, which claims to be perfect knowledge, is a non-participating deadly illusion, the lowest form of Maya, on which Shiva dances. The dwarf looks up to Shiva in utter bewilderment, trying with his right hand to fend off a cobra the symbol of the creative waters which are ultimately the life creating juices of **Maya-Shakti**.

This little ignorant being attempts in vain to please the God or Goddess by squeezing and suppressing his desires, his fears of the serpent, his longing for sexual bliss and fulfillment, his horror of the earth and water forces, the chthonic energies, death. This poor Man is in utter awe of the incomprehensible other, represented by the crazed dancer above, who abolishes all norms of morality and decency. **This is Nietzsche's "Übermensch," man-woman-god-goddess, who has seen the conditioning of reality, and who dances with Maya as Maya as Shiva.**

And yet, this little bewildered, stressed out human being, in the deepest recesses of his mind, hopes and fears that this **DANCER** is who he himself might be.

The little dwarf, flat and ridiculous lying on his stomach, does not at all understand this in his fruitless battle against the forces of life and death, which are one.

So, Shiva dancing the wild ecstatic cosmic dance, fully embracing and being the sensuality of Maya Shakti, affirms life and the full participation in it. The whole dance is similar to the ideas expressed in Tantra Shaktism and Tantra Buddhism.

And he/she dances on top of the ignorance of human beings, who want to live against the forces of Maya, desperately trying to ignore her, rationalize her away, or ban her into eternal hell fire.

The conquest of the demon, the self-conquest, of ignorance lies in the attainment of true comprehension of reality. Therein is the release from the bondages of the world. By participating in the dance, under the guidance of Shiva-Shakti or any of his/her numerous disguises, we break the magic of the maya, we become one with the dancer-creator, one with the maya, suspending the world, while living in it.

Actually, we never break Maya's magic. We can see it sometimes, comprehend and touch it occasionally. But that is the beauty of life, our awakening, and happiness. It is to see Maya, from the beauty of a butterfly to the beauty of the stars above us, from the idea and fact of love, to the compassionate acts towards creatures of the universe. Love is the active embrace of Maya and the dance with her, be in the form of Shiva or Chinnamasta. And we must not overlook the misery in the world, the ignorance, stupidity and horror. **It is our task, given to us by Maya, not to sit back and lament "maya, maya, illusion, illusion."** There is illusion that calls for its destruction through insight, and there is illusion that calls for admiration. To know the difference and act accordingly is dancing with Maya. Maya gives us intelligence, freedom, creativity and insight, not to be passive observers of the world spectacle, but to be her active dancers and doers. Freedom and intelligence

are the highest aspects of truth, of Maya herself, given to us because: We are her, and we don't know. This is Maya's dance, and Shiva's dance:

Heinrich Zimmer describes Shiva's dance: *"In his hairdo to the right the God carries a flower of the datura plant, a hallucinogenic plant used to induce ecstasy. At the front the descent of the river Ganges to earth is depicted as the diminutive figure of the Goddess Ganga, and a skull. The skull is the common crown jewel of many divinities. The image of Ganga is a reminder that Shiva is the greatest and powerful of all ascetics and yogis, who agreed to catch the mountainous floods of the river Ganges on his head so that they would not flood and destroy the earth. His towering powerful hair received the falling water cascades and slowed them down, as to lessen their destructive power in the labyrinth of his beautiful hair. Thus, the floods could meander down the Himalayas and peacefully enter the vast and dry planes of India, bringing life back to them. To the left a crescent moon is implanted in his hair representing the element of water and the primordial sound that creates the universe, and also representing the female principle. The crescent moon is the symbol of the innocent babe Shishu.*

One is reminded here of the four transformations Man has to go through as expressed in Nietzsche's Zarathustra, another ecstatic dancer, namely the camel, the lion, the dragon, and the child. According to Nietzsche's fable the camel is the beast of burden carrying all the duties and morals of the ages on its back. The camel must transform into the lion in order to slay the dragon

Figure 79
Shiva Nataraja



of society's conditioning. But only the child is capable of creating the world anew. Shiva's dance is an invitation to become this creative child, the Maya of the universe, and to join in the dance between birth and death.

Shiva's face is emotionless and turned inward, representing the male aspect of Shiva-Shakti, as passive unaffected nothingness-oneness, eternity and conqueror of time and death, Yamantaka. It is the face of the meditating Shiva, knowing himself in oneness, bodily and spiritually, with his own universal creative energy, his Shakti, the feminine active principle, the material cause of the universe and world as Maya. It is the quiet meditating face of the Buddha, as seen later in other marvelous bronze figures of Tibet and Nepal, displaying the Shakti or Vajradhari (carrier of the vajra-chopper, the symbolic skinning knife to remove the ego from consciousness) sitting on the lap of the Buddha in sexual union.

The rest of Shiva's body is the female energy of time and action swinging with the cobra in a frantic dance of enchantment. Also, Shiva's main attribute, his linga, is not visible, possibly another indication that his dancing body represents the female dynamism of the creating and destroying universe. The whole dancer is Shiva and Shiva-linga inside of the ring of fire. Shiva's face, the face of compassion and wisdom, is united with the world of Maya, they are one. Nirvana is Samsara, there is no river to cross, no enlightenment to reach. Fire and water and air, all consciousness is one No-thingness-Oneness; but seen from a consciousness caught in the Maya of reality, this oneness is illusion, is empty nonsense. And it is this attitude which is the illusory Maya, the Maya as deception, and enemy, Satan, the devil, in Judeo-Christian mythology. The spiritual world is one but inaccessible to mechanical thought, therefore no-thing. As all sentient beings are part of that oneness they all have their value through it, even if they deny and fight it.

*The upper right hand carries a little drum, shaped like an hour glass, for the beating of the rhythm. Sound was the first of the five elements (ether, air, fire, water, earth) to develop from the nothingness of the universe as the most subtle form of cosmic matter. In the beginning was the word, or sound, **OM**. Ether is the primary and most subtle pervasive manifestation of the divine substance. Out of it unfold in the evolution of the universe, all the other elements. Together, therefore, Sound and Ether, allegorically, signify the first moment of creation, the productive energy of the Absolute, which again is indicated by the crescent moon in Shiva's hair. This small symbol can here be interpreted as the rising of the first sound, the first manifestation of space in the old Indian mythological understanding. It represents the state of power, the heartbeat of the Absolute.*

The upper left hand, with a half-moon posture of the thumb and forefinger bears on its palm a tongue of flame. The cobra dances in the same plane, thus we have the three elements: ether, fire, water. Ether as the primal driving creating force of the absolute oneness-nothingness. Water associated with Shakti-yoni as the female creating power and fire as the male creating power are the driving forces underlying all reality of sentient beings.

An outer ring of flames and an inner ring of light surround the dancing Shiva. This is said to signify the vital processes of the universe and its creatures, nature's dance as moved by the

dancing god within. Simultaneously it is said to signify the energy of Wisdom, the transcendental light of truth, dancing forth from the personification of the All."³⁹⁷

This reminds again of Shiva who in the story of "*Shiva In The Forest Of Divine Trees*" appeared in a flaming ring of fire radiating like a thousand suns. This story itself introduces the pre-Aryan idea of the **omnipotence of Shiva and Shakti, the linga and the yoni**, and establishes their power above that of the newer Aryan gods.

In this story Shiva is challenged by the lot of fake forest dwelling ascetics, who are jealous that their wives and daughters could be seduced by this beautiful stranger. They have taken vows of celibacy and think that they have removed themselves successfully from the low pleasures of reality. This unknown stranger shows them that their determination and discipline is not all that hot after all, and they hate him for it. They want his head, or at least his penis. Outraged by this cheap asceticism the master yogi himself rips off his penis and throws it to the ground. The penis grows and in a fiery ring penetrates into the earth and grows beyond all imagination.

Vishnu and Brahma, meanwhile are excitedly occupied disputing among themselves who is the greatest god. They are caught in the web of Maya and don't know it, otherwise they would not entertain such silly quarrels. Thus, Maya has them easily in her power. Suddenly this gigantic flaming thing appeared in front of them and kept growing and growing. Neither Vishnu nor Brahma had any idea what was going on. Stupefied they change into the forms of their animal personae and chase after the appearance into opposite directions, but they cannot find the beginning or the end of this thing. They become afraid and start to utter the sacred syllable OM, and implore Shiva to help them in their dread, induced by the powers of Maya. It is then that Shiva appears to them in this huge thing which is the **linga, which is only containable by Maya, the yoni of the universe**. Thus, Vishnu and Brahma recognize that the creative and destructive ultimate power of *What Is*, is the One Shiva-Maya, linga-yoni. Om Mani Padme Hum.

The jealous yogis in the woods recognize also their terrible mistake and try to make amends with Shiva. Thus, Shiva shows that neither the rejection of the world through asceticism, nor the divine wisdom of the high gods Vishnu and Brahma, can save a being from the web of Maya, who is Shakti, who is Shiva.

Maya is the yoni of the world. Her essence is the essence of all, she is the mistress of all: the power of the Great God, accomplished without beginning. She is All-Space and All-Time, radiating she fills All. In her is the Great One, who beyond the world resides in highest place: Shiva, the One, but also the God who is half woman. He created the universe, which has its

³⁹⁷) From Heinrich Zimmer, ZMS, pages 151-157; and ZAIA, page 122.

origin in Him, obeying His Maya. The Maya God or Goddess, concealed in all things, without separation: He is the Goddess, and nothing is separate from Him or Her. He who sees this, is immortal. The ring of fire is the yoni enfolding and unfolding the whole space, within which Maya-Shakti rules, it is reality, actuality, and truth.

In some bronze figures the shape of the fiery ring is more like that of an almond, rather than

Figure 80

Chintamani Avalokiteshvara, Thangka



round, revealing even more the intentional connotation with the opened yoni of the eternal Shakti. The heat and moisture of Shakti envelops the ecstatically dancing Shiva. It also represents the mystic syllable OM, or A-U-M, the letter A standing for waking consciousness or mechanical thinking-sensing-acting, the letter U standing for generative consciousness or dreaming state, the letter M standing for creative consciousness, the non-conscious activities of the Mind, which is one with the universal mind. The silence that follows the sound is the Nothingness aspect of the sound OM. Together, the Nothingness of the silence and the Oneness of OM are All.

The famous Tibetan mantra:

OM MANI PADME HUM spells out and affirms the oneness of Shiva-linga (Mani) with his Shakti-yoni (Padme) in the same erotic cosmic dance represented here. The ring of fire is Shakti, the cosmic yoni, embracing Shiva in passionate love. In this oneness, the illusory duality is transcended, wisdom and compassion are one. This same idea is present in the single figure

of **Avalokiteshvara**, in any of the innumerable representations. His is the mantra **OM MANI**

PADME HUM, and he/she appears as the enchanting dancer encountered earlier³⁹⁸, or as the beautiful transcending figure shown here.

Let us return to the image of the dancing Shiva: *“The symbol for the primordial ether in one hand and the flame in the other represent the dialectic harmony between the creation and destruction aspects of the universe. At the close of the current age, the Kali Yuga, according to Hindu belief, fire will annihilate the body of creation, to be itself then quenched by the ocean of the void, represented by the serpent.”*

Figure 81
Shiva-Shakti in Yab-Yum as Vajrasattva and Consort
(1996)



The "fear-not" gesture (abhaya mudra), bestowing protection and peace, is displayed by the second right hand. The remaining left arm and hand is lifted across the chest, pointing downward to the uplifted left foot. The left leg is lifted high in a playful elegant dancing position, the foot hanging in a relaxed yet controlled downward bent, crossing over the slightly bent right leg which stomps on the demon, representing Man in his pitiful ignorance. The left hand is thus pointing to Shiva's foot inviting worship of the God for the attainment of the higher consciousness of the Shiva-Shakti oneness. The posture of this left downward pointing hand imitates the outstretched trunk or hand of the elephant, reminding us of Shiva's son with Parvati (Shakti). This son Ganesha is the God of Wisdom and Remover of Obstacles, who grants success on the secular as well as the spiritual plane.

Shiva as the cosmic dancer is the embodiment and manifestation of eternal energy in its five activities: Creation, Maintenance, Destruction, Concealment (Maya), and Favor (bestowal of peace through a

³⁹⁸) See also figures on pages xxii, 2, 157, and frontispiece.

revelatory manifestation). The first three and the last two are in groups of dialectic opposites; the God displays them all. And he displays them not only simultaneously, but also in sequence. They are symbolized in the positions of his hands and his feet - the upper three hands being respectively, "creation," "maintenance" and "destruction"; the foot planted on the demon, Man in his ignorance and hope, is "concealment," and the uplifted foot, "favor"; the "elephant hand" pointing to the uplifted foot indicates the linkage of the three to the two, and promises peace to the soul that experiences the relationship. The two arms representing the dance of creation and destruction, ether and fire, together with the dancing cobra, are in the plane of the fire circle, the opening of the cosmic yoni.

The hand turned upward and asking not to fear, as well as the hand pointing to the foot which has been lifted from the poor ignorant person, ourselves, allude to the hope of liberation from ignorance. "Step out of the ring of knowledge-ignorance into the ring of dance."

The two protruding hands and foot are distinctly relaxed, untouched by the fire but reaching outward into the world of human beings, inviting us to dance into the gateway to freedom. Shiva-Shakti sings and drums and dances the dance of life:

"Join the dance, fear not, see the oneness of creation and destruction, and the burden of ignorance is lifted from your back. See that this horrific, ecstatic, erotic, lascivious, and sacrilegious dance is in actuality one with the divine. See your ignorance, the web of Maya, and be free."

The foot, stomping on the near corpse of ignorance, will be lifted if homage and attention is paid to the dynamic truth of the universe in its play of Maya. This same image of the Buddha stomping on a prostrate man and woman can be found in the wrathful Yab-Yum figures as well. It is not the God's foot that keeps us in prostrate ignorance and immobility, fighting the wrong fight against Maya. It is our own action of fighting that fight, which maintains Maya as illusion rather than Shiva-Shakti as liberating dance. The sublime wisdom of the transcendent Shiva and the exuberant terrible and pleasurable play of the Shakti are the same. The whole represents Shiva in his embrace with Shakti, more, Shiva, identical with Shiva-linga is in the ring of fire, the yoni, which is Shakti. And Shiva is Shakti. We are one with Shiva-Shakti but we don't know it, we don't even generally sense it. But the goal of human life is to be this. It is our own dance to which we are invited.

The indestructible Self and the mortal being, both metaphors and ciphers of who we are - which we don't know - are in essence the same. The incessant, triumphant motion of the swaying limbs of Shiva induced by the rhythm of the drum and the dance of the Naga-Shakti is in significant contrast to the balance of the head and the immobility of the serene face."

Shiva is Kala, "The Black One," "Time"; but he is also Maha Kala (Great Time) and eternity, Yamantaka (killer of death), active transcender of Time. Time, eternity, and the realm in between, of which we as human beings can partake in silence. This is he Shiva, she Shakti, the male and female Buddha in Tibetan representations.

“Shiva, as Nataraja, king of dancers, his gestures, wild and full of grace, suggest the cosmic drama; his flying arms and the swaying of his torso together with the swaying of his female companion represented by the cobra, represent the continuous creation and destruction of the universe. Death and birth, annihilation and revolution. The initial explosion of Nothingness as the future universe, the creation of suns and nebulae, and their implosion into nothingness, history and its ruins, the genius and evilness of the human mind, are all contained in this dance of Shiva, the dance of Maya.

In the medieval bronze figurines of Southern India this cosmic dance is miraculously rendered. The cyclic rhythm, flowing on and on in the unstayable, irreversible round of the Mahayugas, or Great Eons, is marked by the beating and stamping of the Great God's heels on the ignorance and stupidity of illusory thought, the illusion of Maya. But the face remains, meanwhile, in sovereign calm.”

“In this bronze figure of Shiva-Nataraja the peaceful and the wrathful yab-yum figures of Tibet are condensed into one dancing ecstasy.

Shiva's fiery hair, blazing from his head to the surrounding ring of Shakti-yoni, like hissing cobras, hot and cold simultaneously, defies the ascetic attitudes of yogic denial, and celebrates the female fire and sensuous beauty. Uncut, flowing in long manes, it is the secret of male and female power, which Shiva-Shakti displays and relishes with unapologizing abandon. The hair guards the entrance to the bliss of Shakti and invites to it with its flowing beauty and fragrance. This is in total defiance of the customs of the priests and the deniers of life, sex, earth, water, and nature with their "dirty and messy" habits of creating and destroying.

The world renouncers everywhere cut their hair and shave their heads defying the generative impulses of the beautiful and seductive Maya-Shakti. They don't dare to look at the naked beauty of a woman or a man, not to mention the ecstatic union of the two, they don't dare to enter this Yoni ring of water and fire, which has been denigrated to pornography and deadly sin, particularly in Christian and Islamic religion. How refreshing to see this fear of the flesh transcended in the erotic-spiritual bronzes and sculptures of India and Tibet. Shiva, just like the Buddhas in the yab-yum embrace, shows an introverted calm. He understands Maya, all this pain and suffering and struggling. He uses all his magic, from dance to sex and threats of death, to break the panic and stupor of the ignorant gods and humans.

Whatever Shiva does is teaching: the passionate lover of his Shakti and Parvati, the erotic and ecstatic dancer, the destroyer, the master of illusion. It must be remembered that Shiva is not only the ascetic yogi, the ecstatic dancer, but also the austere deity of learning, the very embodiment of knowledge.

This head, this face, this mask, abide in transcending all-oneness, as a spectator unconcerned, seeing the whole together with the duality. Its smile, bent inward with a pair of eyes and the third eye open towards the inside and towards the outside, filled with the bliss of all-oneness, enhances and suspends, with a scarcely hidden irony, the meaningful gestures of the feet and hands. A tension exists between the marvel of the dance and the serene tranquility of this all transcending facial expression. The tension is not resolved but revealed, the tension of Eternity and Time, the paradox - the silent Oneness-Nothingness - of the Absolute and its Reality. The immortal self and the perishable psyche, Brahman-Atman and Maya; virtue and the illusion of virtue, sin and the illusion of sin, are transcended in dance and meditation. For neither one is the entirety; the two, invisible and visible, are the Betweenness. Man, on whose back Shiva performs his dance, with all

the fibers of his native personality clings to the duality, in anxiety and delight; this is his religion, hope and forgetfulness, his ignorance, and arrogance. Nevertheless, actually and finally, there is no duality; but thinking cannot penetrate through the silky garments of the beautiful Maya."

Thinking can at best acknowledge her dance and participate in it. Ignorance, passion, egotism, the active play of Maya disintegrate in this dance which is the experience of the highest essence, crystal clear, transparent and illusive to thought or deed. What emerges is the comprehension of the universal illusion-actuality of a world of individual existences. This "*What Is*" for all its fluidity and incomprehensibility to conscious thought is eternal or eternity. This dance is

"The Unfolding of the Playful Illusory Manifestation of the Buddha on the Earthly Plane."

7.2.4.1 SHRI-YANTRA AND YAB-YUM

The Shri-Yantra³⁹⁹ is the completely abstract representation of the basically identical fundamental ideas of Tibetan Buddhism and Tantra philosophy, which we just described. The Shri-Yantra corresponds to the Yab-Yum figures of Tibet and also to the symbolism of Shiva-Nataraja (in the interpretation given here). It consists essentially of nine superimposed triangles converging on a central point (bindu). The five triangles whose apex points down represent Shakti, while the four with their apexes pointing up represent Shiva. The central point is bindu, the absolute, nothingness-oneness, which may or may not be shown. Out of this unknowable Ground, Shiva-Shakti, grows the first power of the universe and the universe itself.

It is the downward pointing triangle, the yoni, Maya-Shakti, the Mother Goddess, who finds her parallels in all cultures of the world as Isis, Aphrodite, Parvati, and so on. With this downward pointing Shakti triangle comes into existence immediately the upward pointing triangle, representing Shiva. This upward pointing triangle is the male, the linga, and⁴⁰⁰ is called the fire "vahni." Thus, the vahni triangles denote the male essence of the god, and the shakti triangles the female essence of the consort. Together they form the two primordial dialectic and dynamic opposites, which from here on should never be separated. Consciousness emerges from the unio mystica of the two forces which are one. Consciousness becomes I and not-I, I and the other, I and the rest of the universe, yoni and linga, which create the next levels of triangles and so forth, in an ever expanding and contracting form of forms, always dialectic and dynamic, always unfolding and enfolding.⁴⁰¹ The Yantra of figure 82, nava-yoni, represents the creation of the universe through the union of the male

³⁹⁹) See the earlier section 7.2.4.1 on page 503 ff.

⁴⁰⁰) Heinrich Zimmer, ZMS, page 140 ff.

⁴⁰¹) For a more detailed explanation see Sir John Woodroffe, Avalon: "*Shakti and Shakta*," SS, page 274.

and female principles. Each of the nine (nava) triangles is the yoni of the universe.⁴⁰² This **Nava-Yoni Chakra** floats on the cosmic waters, which I would liken to the unobservable quantum-field ether, enfolding and unfolding all universes and all forms with their potential actualities and realities.

From some point of view the Yantra images serve in the yoga of Buddhism and Hinduism a strangely similar purpose to the advanced mathematical formulas of theoretical physics. The yantras are symbols representing the interaction of the human mind, psyche, and soul with itself and the world; the formulas of physics describe the world in its interaction with objective thought. Both representations are completely empty and meaningless to the untrained mind. But in the case of the

Figure 82
Shakti-Shiva Triangle. Nava-Yoni



yantras one should only consider to associate the three basic modes of thinking mentioned earlier with the corner points of the Shakti triangle, for example, and one has a powerful non-linear model of thinking at hand. If one furthermore associates the three basic human activities with the corner points of the Vahni triangle, namely thinking, sensing, and acting, one has created a structure of the human mind-body totality. Such structures are non-linear; they can account for mechanical, generative, and creative activities, any mixtures thereof, and possibilities for infinite

variations - with the infinite Shri-Yantra - of differentiated oneness. An interesting aspect of this representation is that we have a fundamental structure which may be repeated to infinity, not unlike the structure of the material universe with its fundamental pattern of quarks as described in physics, energies of un-certain structures, sunyata (nothingness) and sunya-sunya, a no-thingness which is not nothingness. The holomorphic structure of human consciousness finds its adequate representation here. **Human consciousness expresses divine consciousness in a fundamental oneness, which dissolves into unknowable nothingness, like the triangles of the Shri-Yantra dissolve in and emerge from an unknowable point before consciousness, before anything was or is.**

An infinitely expanded Shri-Yantra could encompass the whole universe of mind and matter, in a symbolism which avoids the pitfalls of dualistic and hierarchical models. The interpretation of the Shakti-Triangle as Nothingness and of the Vahni triangle as Oneness allows us to even meditate on the mystical aspects of *What Is*.

⁴⁰²) See Khanna, Madhu, "Yantra," YAN page 28.

The loving embrace of Shiva with his Shakti is the Nothingness which is not Nothingness (Sunya-sunya) and the Oneness which is two in one, and thus a betweenness, which is the self-suspending path of the Buddha.

The physicist who meditates on the complex equations of quantum field theory and on the algebras which for him generate the universe, enters into the same realm of the Tibetan adept who meditates on creation through the Shri-Yantra. Their minds become unobservably one with the abstract Nothingness-Oneness of *What Is*. From that creative space, Shambala in Buddhist terms, which is nowhere, and not in any time, new ideas emerge.

7.2.5 ENERGY AND MATTER, SHIVA AND PARVATI

In the orthodox system of Indian philosophy, called Sankhya, *What Is* was thought of as made up of two constituents, Purusha and Prakriti.⁴⁰³ This pre-Aryan dualistic realistic system of thought was ultimately incorporated into Brahmanism together with Yoga. Prakriti corresponds somewhat to the Western idea of matter whereas purusha corresponds to the internal life-energy and spiritual intelligence. It was this dualism which was, as was the scholarly custom of the time, pushed to extreme classifications and categorizations. It was and still is in conflict with the non-dualistic Vedanta philosophy, as expressed also in the Upanishads. The relationship and ultimate oneness of Brahman and Atman permeates all of modern Hinduism, and as I have tried to show, also Mahayana Buddhism. Eastern and Western thinkers and religious people commit most often the same mistake: They forget that about the ultimate ideas one should only think in terms of ciphers. This insight is present, in my view, in the visual expressions of Indian and Buddhist art. The very fact that these ideas are being expressed for the senses excludes more easily their incorporation into a certain body of knowable concepts. The meaning of art is a non-certain intuition, it is appealing to the senses and full of meaning, i.e. it contains uncertain appeal to uncertain thinking and sensing.

Science can also lend us a hand in trying to find this meaning for us. Everyone knows (or should know) the famous Einstein formula:

$$E = M \cdot c^2$$

Figure 83 Shri-Yantra



⁴⁰³) See Heinrich Zimmer; ZP, page 325 ff.

This equation says to a physicist that any matter contains a certain amount of energy, which can be calculated according to this formula. It also says that anything which we consider matter can in one way or another be turned into energy and vice versa. If our psychological hangups are real, they must have a material representation in our bodies in terms of molecules or their arrangements. This is the gross matter which Shiva tried to burn into energy, much like any human yogi would do. However, at the level of Shiva's 'existence' he is essence, not part of reality. He, like Parvati, is all aspects of that essence. His form is pure illusion, and therefore, his gross matter is pure illusion also. It is only Shiva's illusion, that keeps him trying to burn up what is not even there. Now, Parvati, as Maya is not only the essence of all form, actuality, and reality. She is also the essence of illusion. Thus, one can read the equation also for one's spiritual benefit as:

NOTHINGNESS
IS
ONENESS
IS
ENERGY IS MATTER
or
MAYA (KAMA) IS SHIVA
or
THE INTELLIGENT POTENTIAL POWER TO BECOME
IS
THE MOTHER, THE CREATRIX OF ALL
THAT CAN BE
MANIFEST IN TIME, SPACE, MATTER, AND THOUGHT.

As I showed in the previous chapter Nothingness itself can be looked at as the infinite energy contained in every cubic inch of so-called empty space. Space is not empty; space-time-matter-thought are unfolding movements of the underlying eternal Nothingness. Nothingness, matter and energy, defy **ultimate** definition and explanation. The ideas of prakriti and purusha may be likened to them. I intentionally use the more abstract ideas Nothingness for purusha and Oneness for prakriti. Both are ciphers and not knowable concepts of measurable certainty. The Betweenness of the ciphers is their Oneness and Nothingness. This is what all the bronze statues of Yab-Yum and Shiva-Shakti or the symbolism of Shri-Yantra and Yin-Yang lastly express. The wisdom of the West is hidden in its scientific achievement which is not well comprehended; the beautiful nothingness of the equations of quantum field theory which unfolds models of the universe has not yet been properly explored. The same holds for the **particle wave duality**, and the creation of the universe out of an eternal infinite energy of an intelligent Nothingness-Oneness.

Hegel's statement that *intelligence* is **mysticism** for the *intellect* still holds. The majority of scientists scoff at philosophers, who by and large lost themselves in negative philosophy, trying to emulate the successes of science.

The wisdom of India is hidden in the beauty of its sculptures and mythologies, and buried in the immensity of its often inconsistent and contradictory (at least for most Western observers) philosophical literature. But greatest treasures of the human mind are there.

The dialectic tension between ideality and reality, spirit and matter, intelligence and mechanicalness is contained in yet another report about the stormy relationship between Shiva and his Shakti:

When all the Gods were once again close to be defeated by the demons, they needed the help of the great Shiva, who of course, as usual, did not take it lightly that someone tried to disturb him in his meditations. In addition, having just lost his beloved wife Sati, he was absolutely in no mood to look at a woman again. Only Shakti, the creative energy of the universe might have any hope to approach him successfully. So she appears before him under her persona of Parvati.

The king of the Himalayas, Parvata, finally brings his daughter, the beautiful dark skinned Parvati, with the pet name Kali, to Shiva to stir him up out of his yogic austerities. Shiva is quite annoyed about this disturbance; after all, what has he, the master yogi immersed in meditation to do with a sexy woman like Parvati?

It is not only her beauty that ultimately convinces him, but her intelligence and irreverent speech. She challenges him by ridiculing his austerities.

"What do you think you are doing with your yoga practices, anyhow; gaining energy by burning up matter?" she asks.

"If you are the highest form of matter, the created God himself, for what purpose are you practicing yoga? To get rid of any blemishes? This does not make sense."

Well, he claims that he is indeed this pure matter or prakriti, which he burns up to gain more energy.

"No," she says, challenging him now as the Goddess herself, "This is silly; I am matter (prakriti) and you are energy (purusha), I am what becomes real and what drives reality, whereas you are spirit and energy, the absolute. You are already what you want to gain through these austerities. You are the absolute. Therefore, practices and austerities don't make any sense. You might as well stop and come along with me and marry me."⁴⁰⁴

So, in a sense, Parvati expressed the insight on the spiritual plane that matter is energy, and that no practice, no method can lead the absolute spirit to some no-thing which it already is. This is the insight into Maya. Duality is the fundamental illusion. **What Is, is Oneness-Nothingness-Betweenness.** I read this account as the metaphorical rejection of division between reality and ideality, between nirvana and samsara. It is also a criticism of all the methods and practices, which supposedly lead to nirvana. It is the same criticism of all the religious organizations with their lucrative superstitious ceremonies and practices, which is contained in the philosophy of Nagarjuna:

There is no path from samsara to nirvana, because both are nothing and both are one.

⁴⁰⁴) More on the love affair between Shiva and Parvati on pages 371 and 398.

Albert Einstein proved the realizable aspect of that insight at the beginning of the twentieth century. **Just as there is ultimately no separation between (measurable) energy and matter, energy and substance, so is there ultimately no separation between existence and transcendence.**

One has to go even further: The apparent difference between No-thingness and Thingness arises through the intelligent unfolding movement of Nothingness. Thus, Thingness is part of No-thingness unfolded, or **Nothingness has Thingness enfolded in itself**, and vice versa. All things are correlated with the underlying Nothingness.

The possibilities of differences are thus enfolded in Nothingness as well and are important for the discerning processes of sensing, acting, and thinking. Nothingness, oneness, differences as and through the movements of *SAT*, are enfolded in *What Is* and are unfolded to a thing-like reality for consciousness. Neither separation nor 'mechanical oneness' are ultimately part of reality, but are approximations or metaphors. The joining 'point' between an electron emitting a photon, does not exist in reality, nor does the connecting signal in the Einstein-Podolsky-Rosen-Bohm-Aharonov experiment. **We are in both cases entering the domain of non-certainty, non-locality, creative space, Nothingness.**

During the encounter between Shiva and Parvati, the mountain daughter could have added that her worship was older (because she is of course Maya-Shakti herself) and truly timeless, and that the two are one anyhow.

She is Shiva, and he is Shakti.

Both are oneness and nothingness, linga and yoni. He, transcendence, in her, immanence, create and are actuality and reality. It is merely their appearance, as and in time and space, which creates the confusion. But then, she didn't and doesn't have to reveal all of her maya, and she has a sense of humor.

Anyhow, the story ends well, and in typical fashion the two become the greatest lovers in the universe. Their loving and laughing, pleasure and fun, was witnessed by the faithful Bull Nandi, who eventually told the stories of what he saw and heard during the night, in which the sweat drops of the two lovers jumped into the skies to form the innumerable stars above. The story of their love making became the Kamasutra, the teaching of sexual pleasures.

7.2.5.1 MAYA AND SHAKTI: THE TANTRIC VIEW

The last paragraph should be reserved to quote the great English researcher Avalon (Sir John Woodroffe), who has done the ground breaking work on the philosophy of Tantra. He has inspired among others the great Indologist Heinrich Zimmer, who was able to unlock some of the secrets in Indian mythology for me. The following excerpts are from the book by Avalon: "*Shakti and Shakta*". To simplify reading I have included some **explanations in parentheses and boldface**, referring to notions which I have used in this book; *words in italics* are explanations of Sanskrit words added by the current author. I want to remind the reader again that this text represents a model, and is metaphor and cipher:

"Religion"⁴⁰⁵, therefore, which etymologically means that which obliges or binds together, is in its most fundamental sense the recognition that the world is an Order, of which each man, being, and thing, is a part and to which each man stands in a definite, established relation; together with action based on, and consistent with, such recognition, and in harmony with the whole cosmic activity.

⁴⁰⁶The Shakta is so called because he is a worshiper (he embraces the power of uncertainty) of Shakti (**power**), that is God in Mother-form as the Supreme Power which creates, sustains, and withdraws the universe...

God is worshiped as the Great Mother because, in this aspect, God is active, and produces, nourishes and maintains all.

Shiva is the God. Shiva is the unchanging Consciousness, and Shakti is its changing power appearing as mind and matter. Shiva-Shakti is therefore Consciousness and Its Power.

In creation an effect is produced without effect in the Producer. In creation the power (**Shakti**) "goes forth" in a series of emanations or transformations, which are called the 36 Tattvas (**fundamental principles**). These mark the various stages through which Shiva, the Supreme Consciousness, as Shakti, presents Itself as object to itself as subject, the latter at first experiencing the former as part of the Self, and then through the operations of Maya Shakti as different from the Self. This is the final stage in which every Self (**Purusha**) is mutually exclusive of every other. Maya, which achieves this, is one of the Powers of the Mother or Devi. The Will-to-become-many is the creative impulse which not only creates but reproduces an eternal order. The Lord remembers the diversities latent in His own Maya Shakti due to the previous Karmas of Jivas (**conscious manifestations, incarnations**) and allows them to unfold themselves by His volition. It is that Power by which infinite formless Consciousness veils Itself to Itself and negates and limits Itself in order that it may experience Itself as Form.

This Maya Shakti assumes the form of Prakriti (**matter**) Tattva, which is composed of three Gunas (**fundamental qualities**) or factors, called Sattva Rajas, Tamas (**creative, generative, and mechanical SAT**). The function of Prakriti is to veil, limit, or finitize formless Consciousness, so as to produce form, for without such limitation there cannot be the appearance of form. These Gunas work by mutual suppression. The function of Tamas (**mechanical SAT, maya**) is to veil Consciousness (**intelligent thinking**), of Sattva (**creative SAT**) to reveal it, and of Rajas (**generative SAT**) the active

⁴⁰⁵) Sir John Woodroffe, Avalon, "*Shiva And Shakti*"; SS, page 2.

⁴⁰⁶) Sir John Woodroffe, Avalon, "*Shiva And Shakti*"; SS, page 6.

principle to make either Tamas suppress Sattva or Sattva suppress Tamas. These Gunas are present in all particular existence, as in the general cause or Prakriti Shakti. Evolution means the increased operation of Sattva Guna (**unfolding of intelligence**). The aim of Sadhana (**Shakti worship**) is therefore the cultivation of the Sattva Guna."

In Tantra Buddhism, *What Is* is the Buddha-mind. It is holy, creative, intelligent, Nothingness, boundless energy and wisdom. The human mind is an intelligent representation and a holomorphism of the movements of this spirit, Brahman and Atman, or energy (purusha). The human brain is merely a temporary representation of this energy, with the potential to be receptive to intelligence.

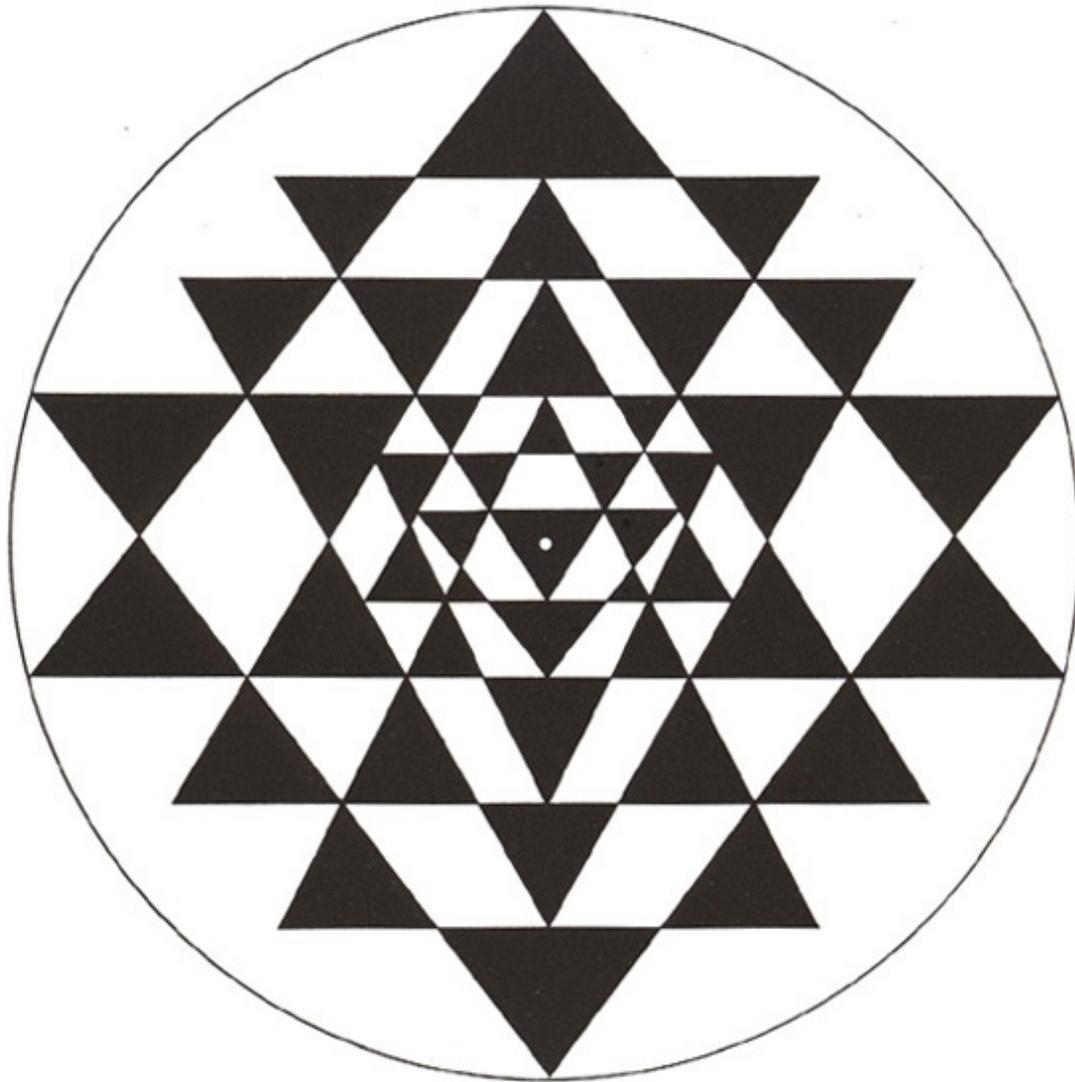
In this representation the live human brain is a holomorphism of matter and can create human consciousness, but the manifestations and notions of this living brain and consciousness are bound by the dimensions available to its understanding. Here, the narrow notions of mechanical thinking with its possibility for relative certainty have their place, notions of morality, tradition, life, death and so on. This is the reality of Maya.

But the mind as spirit (Geist) can go deeper than this because *it is one with the Nothingness-Oneness of What Is*. Prakriti and purusha, matter and energy, Atman and Brahman, are one. To see this is the ending of the limiting notions of life and death and human suffering. It is the ending of conventional reality and the transformation of mechanical thinking, the beginning of intelligence, freedom, and compassion. Maya is one with Buddha and Shiva-Shakti, Nothingness and Oneness are One and Nothing. No matter how much mechanical thinking tries to get from here to there, it cannot do it, because it itself is the obstacle and the illusory path. The path is as un-knowable as the unknowable God.

**IT IS THE MYSTERY
OF MAYA,
WHO INVITES TO HER
DANCE.**

Figure 84

Shri-Yantra, the Unfolding and Enfolding of What Is



**TO DANCE WITH MAYA
IS OUR FREEDOM
OF HER
AND OUR ONENESS
WITH HER.**

**Figure 85
Tara, Wisdom of the Buddhas, Action of Reality.**

