

Buddhist Tantric Medicine in the *Kālacakratantra*

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In this article I will discuss the characteristics of Indian Buddhist Tantric medical theory and practice and the soteriological significance of medical knowledge on the Buddhist Tantric path as they are presented in the *Kālacakratantra*, which is the most comprehensive Indian Buddhist Tantra belonging to the class of the Highest Yoga Tantras (*anuttara-yoga-tantra*). However, before I address the main topic of this article, I would like to provide the reader with a brief analysis of the concept of science in the *Kālacakratantra*.

The Concept of Science in the Kālacakratantra

A textual study of the *Kālacakratantra* reveals that when Brahmanic formal education in eleventh-century India was exclusively theological and disdainful of technical knowledge,¹ north-Indian Buddhist monastic education incorporated training in non-theological skills that required knowledge of medicine, alchemy, mathematics, artisanship, and even weaponry.² The sharp split between theological and scientific education, which impaired the Brahmanic educational system of that time, was absent in Buddhist monastic education due to the prevailing Buddhist Tantric view that theological knowledge and technical and scientific learning are not only compatible but also complementary.³ The *Kālacakratantra* with its diverse and well integrated topics best attests to that fact.

The topics of the *Kālacakratantra*'s first two chapters — called respectively "The Universe" and "The Individual" — directly pertain to the investigation of the universe as macrocosm and individual as its microcosm. The *Kālacakratantra*'s inquiry into the nature of the exter-

nal world and the individual as two facets of conventional reality — the external (*bāhya*) and internal (*adhyātma*) — utilizes the knowledge of the various branches of Buddhist science. Disciplines analogous to cosmology, astronomy, astrometry, chronometry, embryology, physiology, psychophysiology, anatomy, medical therapeutics, pharmacology, alchemy, botany, psychology, and philosophy are either directly or indirectly incorporated into the first two chapters of the *Kalacakratantra*. For Tantric Buddhist adepts, those diverse scientific disciplines provide a systematic analysis of the natural world, conventionally viewed as an object of purification, and humans' place and interactions in that world. Thorough understanding of the structures and functions of conventional reality is considered to be indispensable for the realization of ultimate reality (*paramārtha-satya*) which is Buddhahood. On the basis of the analysis of the *Kalacakratantra*, one may infer that there are two main reasons for that. First, conventional reality marks a starting point from which a Tantric adept ventures into Tantric practices; and secondly, a thorough knowledge of the ways in which conventional reality operates induces the insight into the nature of conventional reality, which is not fundamentally different from the nature of ultimate reality. The *Kalacakratantra's* identification of conventional reality with the ultimate is related to the ontological views of the Mādhyamikas, who equate the ultimate nature of dependent origination (*pratītya-samutpāda*) with emptiness (*śūnyatā*).

Since the time of Śākyamuni, Buddhists' investigation of the world has been based on their understanding of nature as a causal system governed by discernible causal laws. This same theoretical basis of investigation also permeates the discussions of the universe and the individual in the first two chapters the *Kalacakratantra*. Analysis of those chapters indicates that the primary goal of the Tantric Buddhist investigation of the natural world is to discover the causal factors operating within the universe as macrocosm and within the individual as microcosm. The secondary goal is to demonstrate the correspondence of the universe to the individual by identifying the properties of the external physical universe in the body of the individual.⁴ This goal reflects the *Kalacakratantra's* intent that its very presentation of the Buddhist scientific truths be non-dual, that is, without drawing an absolute distinction between the subject and object. The tertiary objective of the Buddhist Tantric scientific investigation is to ascertain the properties of the universe and the individual as the mere appearances invoked by the power of the individuals' *karmic* imprints. Finally, the ultimate aim is to see things as they are (*yathā-bhūta*) by means of acquiring direct knowledge of the nature of reality. Seeing things as they are means perceiving the illusory nature of conventional reality and realizing the non-duality of conventional and ultimate realities. The nature of this

non-duality is that conventional reality, although manifesting as the physical world, has the form of emptiness (*śūnyatā-rūpiṇī*) and emptiness has the form of conventional reality (*saṃvṛti-rūpiṇī*).⁵

The realization of the fundamental non-duality of the conventional and ultimate realities and the contemplative path to that realization are the chief topics of the other three chapters of the *Kalacakra*tantra, called respectively, "The Initiations," "Sādhana," and "Primordial Wisdom." A careful analysis of those three chapters indicates that the Buddhist Tantric contemplative path of actualizing Buddhahood is structured on two theoretical grounds. One is a theory that the universe is contained within the body of the individual as demonstrated by the diverse disciplines of Buddhist natural sciences; and the second theoretical ground is that the natural world as we experience it and explain it through scientific analysis is already *nirvāṇa* but needs to be recognized as such.

Thus, in the context of Buddhist Tantric soteriology, the proper understanding of the conventional world that is the object of purification, the genuine practice of the Buddhist Tantric path that is the means of purification, and the authentic actualization of Buddhahood that is the result of purification, are directly contingent upon adequate knowledge of the Buddhist natural and social sciences.

The concept of science in the *Kalacakra*tantra is indicated by the Sanskrit word *vidyā*, also meaning "knowledge." Already in some of the early Buddhist expositions on *vidyā*, the term signifies more than knowledge regarding the Four Noble Truths. In the *Nettipakaraṇa*,⁶ the definition of *vidyā* includes such concepts as investigation (*vicaya*), scrutiny or observation (*upaparikkha*), and correct views or theories (*sammasamditṭhi*). Thus, from early times, Indian Buddhists have recognized the relevance of rational and empirical methods in their studies of the natural world and human thought and relations. However, just as the Western concepts of religion and philosophy do not clearly apply to Buddhism as a whole, so the Western concept of science *does not directly correspond* to the phenomenon of Buddhist science. There are several critical reasons for that. Namely, Buddhist science is characterized by widely known and used contemplative and introspective methods⁷ of scientific investigation, its application of extra-sensory perception as one of the means of scientific verification, the difficulty of demonstrating the knowledge acquired by contemplative means, and by its goal of progress towards, not unprecedented knowledge, but knowledge previously acquired by Buddha Śākyamuni and other Buddhist contemplatives. Nevertheless, I feel that the term science is justified here for several reasons. First, in Buddhist science there are working hypotheses that are tested by means of experience and are capable, in principle, of being refuted experientially. Moreover, the conclusions

drawn from experience are formulated as rational theories that are internally consistent and make intelligible a wide range of phenomena.

A careful study of the *Kalacakratantra* reveals that the scope of science in Tantric Buddhism includes not only a wide range of natural sciences but cognitive sciences as well. Those diverse branches of Buddhist science present systematized knowledge of the nature and composition of the natural world and of humans' place and interactions in that world. Adequate knowledge of the Buddhist scientific disciplines and their practical application in an integrated form on the Tantric Buddhist path are viewed as highly relevant for one's spiritual maturation and liberation. For that reason, that knowledge and its practical application should be acquired and cultivated by the *Kalacakratantra's* adepts for the sake of liberation and also for the sake of temporary well-being. Thus, within the Kalacakra system, all of the aspects of the natural world become legitimate fields of Buddhists' scientific investigation, and knowledge of them becomes a significant component of the Buddhist dharma as the body of verifiable truths.⁸

The *Kalacakratantra* also demonstrates the ways in which the natural sciences become integrated with cognitive and social sciences on that Buddhist Tantric path. Disciplines that are presently classified as history, philosophy, fine arts, and psychology are presented in the *Kalacakratantra* alongside astronomy, cosmology, physics, medicine, biology, pharmaceuticals, and alchemy (or chemistry) and are jointly utilized in the varied modes of the *Kalacakratantra* practice. The integration of different sciences on this Buddhist Tantric path is facilitated by the earlier mentioned Tantric view of the non-duality of the individual and the individual's environment. That particular view implies that all psychophysiological process of the individual correspond to the physical and socio-historical processes occurring in the individual's environment. For example, the passage of days, seasons, and years corresponds to the passage of *prāṇas* in the human body; and the individual's spiritual battle with his or her own mental distortions has its external aspect in the religious war of Kalki with the King of Barbarians in the land of Mecca, and so forth.⁹ Thus, one may say that in Tantric Buddhism, the content of the Buddhist natural sciences becomes analogous to the content of contemporary cognitive sciences.

In all of the above-mentioned disciplines of Buddhist Tantric science, the verification of the Buddhist scientific truths appears to be based on the following four means: namely, sensory perceptions, mental perceptions, extrasensory perceptions, and inference. Since the earliest times, extrasensory perceptions have been regarded in the Buddhist tradition as valid means of scientific verification. In its last two chapters, the *Kalacakratantra* presents rational psychological and physiological conditions for bringing about extrasensory perceptions. The

verification of Buddhist scientific truths concerning the relative nature of the world, as expressed in natural causal laws, is based on all the aforementioned means of verification. Correspondingly, knowledge of relative scientific truths is viewed in this Tantric system as perceptual and conceptual and as a provisional knowledge of the world as it appears to the dualistic, biased mind. The verification of absolute scientific truth regarding the ultimate nature of the world, as expressed in emptiness (*śūnyatā*), is presented as a form of non-dualistic contemplative perception. Knowledge of absolute truth, however, is described as the non-conceptual (*avikalpita*), unmediated knowledge of all things in which the distinction between the perceiver and the perceived no longer appears.¹⁰

An important common feature of the aforementioned disciplines of Buddhist Tantric science is their individual syncretism that permeates their theories and modes of their practical application. The syncretistic nature of Buddhist Tantric science, as evidenced in the *Kālacakratāntra*, stems from the Buddhist Tantric view of the commonality of the Buddhists' and heterodox groups' (*tīrthika*) teachings concerning the conventionally existent phenomena. The *Kālacakratāntra* contends that there is no distinction between the Buddhists and heterodox groups with regard to the manner in which conventional reality appears. That view of the commonality of the Buddhists' and heterodox groups' approaches to conventional reality justified the Buddhist Tantric incorporation of specific ideas from other Indian religious and scientific systems¹¹ and resulted in the syncretism of Buddhist Tantric science. By amalgamating the ideas characteristic of non-Buddhist systems into its own theoretical framework, the *Kālacakratāntra* attempts to accomplish two objectives: namely, to facilitate its modeling of conventional reality and to convert heterodox groups. In this way, the Buddhist Tantric proselytizing efforts significantly contributed to the complex nature of most of the Buddhist Tantric scientific disciplines.

However, the syncretism of Buddhist Tantric medicine appears less related to those efforts. It stems chiefly from the Buddhist Tantric distinctive emphasis on the favorable effects of physical health on one's spiritual development.

The Characteristics of Buddhist Tantric Medicine in the Kālacakratāntra

On the grounds that the achievements of supernormal abilities and liberation are contingent upon proper bodily functioning, the preservation of one's health is given great importance in the *Kālacakratāntra*. Since its earliest stages, the Buddhist tradition has been concerned with medical knowledge and its practical application as supplementary sys-

tems of Buddhist learning and religious practice. The favorable effects of physical health on one's spiritual development are already indicated in the earliest Buddhist Pali literature. As recorded in the *Majjhimanikāya*,¹² Buddha Śākyamuni himself saw health as the individual's finest possession and pointed out the difficulty of reaching enlightenment with an impaired body. For that reason, understanding of the human body and knowledge of maintaining and restoring health have been given soteriological significance in all of Indian Buddhism. However, it is within the context of Tantric Buddhism that the preservation of one's health becomes of paramount importance. The *Kalacakra*tantra¹³ mentions an explicit reason for that, namely, that without health or a body, it is impossible to achieve mundane and supramundane *siddhis*. Consequently, in the *Kalacakra*tantra and in other Highest Yoga Tantras (*anuttara-yoga-tantra*) as well, Buddhist medicine has been regarded as a major facet of Buddhist Dharma.

The earliest records of Buddhist theoretical and practical approaches to medicine are already found in the Pali *Tipiṭaka*. Those records reveal that the early Buddhists' understanding of human anatomy and physiology was generally in accord with that of classical Āyurveda, whose basic contents were already formed and well-known throughout the Indian subcontinent. The early Buddhist *materia medica* was also similar to that of the Āyurveda. Nevertheless, in the early Buddhist records, the knowledge of illnesses and medicinal substances is frequently presented in a less systematic manner and on a more popular level than in the later Āyurvedic texts and later Buddhist medical treatises. Also, the Āyurvedic concept of vital energies (*prāṇa*) as a support of life is only mentioned in the Buddhist Pali Canon and is not yet developed and medically utilized as it is in the *Kalacakra*tantra.

By the time of Mahāyāna Buddhism in India, a rational system of classical Āyurvedic medicine was in general use among the Buddhists, and it strongly influenced the scientific framework of later Buddhist medicine.¹⁴ Several medical treatises, such as *Yogaśāstra*,¹⁵ *Jīvasūtra*, *Avabheṣajakalpa*, *Āryarājanāmavaṭikā*, and *Āryamūlakoṣa-mahauśadhavalī*,¹⁶ which the Buddhist tradition ascribes to Nāgārjuna, contain systematized knowledge concerning selected collections of medicinal formulas, discussions of physiological aspects of diseases, and medical treatments that are concordant with Āyurveda.

Moreover, the disciplines of alchemy and magic developed alongside the traditional and empirico-rational system of Buddhist medicine. According to a tradition no later than the seventh century C.E., those disciplines were already in practice by the time of Nāgārjuna. Nāgārjuna is mentioned by Hsüan-tsang as an accomplished alchemist; and the *Rasaratnākara* and the *Kakṣapuṭa*¹⁷ have been traditionally attributed

to Nāgārjuna as his writings on alchemy and magic respectively. The Mahāyāna Buddhist tradition considered Āyurvedic medicine, alchemy, and magic as separate but complementary branches of knowledge. It resorted to alchemical preparations, recitation of mantras, and drawing of *maṇḍalas* as supplementary methods of healing.

However, Buddhist Tantric medical treatises as well as the *Kālacakratāntra* integrate classical Āyurvedic medicine, alchemy, and magic even more strongly into a unique and comprehensive system of Buddhist Tantric medicine. The broad scope of the Tantric medical system, evidenced in the *Kālacakratāntra*, also encompasses knowledge of preparing incenses and perfumes used for worshipping buddhas and bodhisattvas during healing rites. The *Vimalaprabhā* commentary¹⁸ on the *Kālacakratāntra* indicates that the *Kālacakratāntra's* instructions on preparing incenses and perfumes are based on information contained in the specialized treatises on the preparation of perfumes and incenses (*gandha-śāstra*). Thus, the manuals on preparing perfumes and incenses form a significant supplementary branch of Buddhist Tantric medical literature.

As in the earlier Buddhist medical systems, so in Buddhist Tantric medicine one may find distinctions between magico-religious treatments and rational therapeutics based on induction from observation.

In Buddhist Tantric medicine, the determination of a medical treatment is frequently contingent upon determining the nature of a disease. Illnesses induced by malevolent spirits (*bhūta*), also known as non-human diseases, and snake-bites are commonly treated by means of religious healing rites and incantations.¹⁹ Incantations are also implemented as the protective, or preventive, methods of counteracting the evil intentions of non-human entities.²⁰ The *Kālacakratāntra*²¹ mentions diverse types of evil spirits and malicious siddhas who are to be appeased with the building of a specific *maṇḍala* outside the village, or under the tree, in a cemetery, in a temple, or at the confluence of rivers, with offerings of delicacies, incenses, perfumes, flowers, candles, praises, and invocations (mantra). The *yakṣas*, *grahas*, *rakṣasas*, *piśacas*, *śakinis*, evil *nāgas* who delight in human blood, *ḍākinis*, *rūpikas*, vampire-ghouls feeding in cemeteries (*kumbhāṇḍa*), protectors of fields (*kṣetrapāla*), *gaṇapatīs*, hungry ghosts (*preta*), goblins, the lords of *ḍākinis* who are accompanied by epilepsy, and siddhas are all considered to be powerful entities that may cause both illnesses and supreme well-being. Therefore, the worship of them is seen as indispensable for the patient's safe recovery. However, the *Kālacakratāntra*²² warns against the pacification of malevolent spirits when symptoms of irrevocable death appear;²³ and it gives two reasons for this caution. The first is that religious healing rites are ineffective in such a case; and the second reason is that

this situation may create temptation for the Tantric healer to perform the rites simply for the sake of his own material gain, while knowing that they will be of no benefit to the patient.

Tantric healing rites also entail the drawing of *yantras*, the initiation of a patient in the *maṇḍala*, and ablutions. For example, the *yantra* consisting of thirty-four numbers that are placed in their respective sections within the *yantra* is to be shown to a pregnant woman when her womb stiffens at the time of childbirth.²⁴ Those afflicted by *grahas* are to be bathed with five ambrosias (*amṛta*), namely, water, milk, sour milk, ghee, honey, molasses, and fragrant water, that are contained within the seven unbaked vessels.²⁵

At times, certain herbal medications, empowered by mantras, are administered to those possessed by malevolent spirits in order to alleviate the symptoms of afflictions. For instance, in the case of a pregnant woman's sharp uterine pains caused by malevolent entities, the pregnant woman is to be given pounded *kuṣṭha*, *uśīra*,²⁶ *kaseru* grass, *tagara*,²⁷ blue water-lily (*keśara*), and a filament of a lotus with cold water, after they have been consecrated by mantras and *vajras*.²⁸

Thus, the boundaries between magico-religious and empirico-rational treatments become far less noticeable in Buddhist Tantric medicine than in its precedents. For instance, in Tantric rites of healing the afflictions caused by non-human entities, the magico-religious and empirico-rational approaches clearly concur. The empirico-rational approach involves the diagnosis of a disease based upon the observation of its symptoms and the occasions for their occurrence; it establishes the causes of affliction, and determines the treatment according to those causes. For example, symptoms such as a convulsion of the body, sharp pains in the eyes, the face, arms, and legs becoming yellow, the color of urine being distinctively yellow, fever, vomiting, emaciation, and possible fainting are described as the symptoms characteristic of the children's disease caused by the possession of cruel spirits and treatable by a ritual oblation of the child in the *maṇḍala*.²⁹ In this way, the empirico-rational approach essentially underlies the magico-religious healing rites.

Furthermore, the treatments of other ailments provoked by the disequilibrium of the three humors – namely, wind (*vāta*), bile (*pitta*), and phlegm (*kapha*) – or by external actions, poor hygiene, inadequate diet, and other factors predominantly follow an empirico-rational approach. For example, the application of slightly warmed *akṣobhya* in the mouth is administered in the case of the infection of the mouth; the anointing of the neck with *karkoṭī*,³⁰ *lāṅgālī*,³¹ and *indrī*³² is applied in the case of the inflammation of the glands of the neck, and so forth.³³ Nevertheless, meditation, visualization of Tantric deities, and the reci-

tation of mantras, which are the common healing factors in magico-religious healing rituals, often accompany the administering of medications in empirico-rational therapeutics. For example, in the case of the malignant boils in the throat, one abiding in *samādhi* should annihilate strong pains in the following way: together with *prāṇāyāma* one visualizes in the heart-*cakra* Viśvamātā as having the appearance of the stainless moon, with the hands in the wish-granting posture holding a lotus, situated on the lotus-seat in the *vajra* posture, and having one face and two arms.³⁴

Tantric medicinal mantras that are mentioned in the *Kalacakra*tantra can be classified into three main categories: protective mantras, supplicatory mantras such as "*om phre* Viśvamātā, eliminate, eliminate *vajra*-like sharp and stinging pains, bring on my forbearance, bring on *svāhā*,"³⁵ and consecratory mantras such as "*om aḥ hūṃ* take away, take away pains in the womb of such and such persons *svāhā*."³⁶ In many instances, one mantra can perform more than one function. For example, in treatments of malignant diseases accompanied by fever and pain in the joints, the mantra "*om phre vajra*" simultaneously empowers medicinal herbal ingredients and protects the patient's bodily *cakras*.³⁷

Thus, a recitation of protective and supplicatory mantras that induce a physiological change by directly influencing the patient's *prāṇas* can be regarded as an empirico-rational treatment. The *Kalacakra*tantra's definition of *prāṇa* as the deity of mantra³⁸ and its view of the individual's *vajras*, or capacities, of body, speech, mind, and primordial wisdom as the source (*yonī*) of mantras³⁹ indicate a close and reciprocal influence between the mantras and the individual's mind and body. In light of this view, one may infer that in the context of Buddhist Tantric medicine, a recitation of mantra can be utilized as a medicinal treatment of both the mind⁴⁰ and the body.

As its rational methods of cure, Buddhist Tantric medicine utilizes the techniques of *haṭha-yoga*, particularly, the practices of *prāṇāyāma* and different *yogic* postures (*āsana*). For instance, in the *Kalacakra*tantra, the *vajra* posture (*vajrāsana*)⁴¹ is recommended for the elimination of backache, the head-stand posture (*śīrṣāsana*) for the cure of a disease induced by a disorder of phlegm, the vase technique (*kumbhaka*) of *prāṇāyāma* is recommended for the alleviation of abdominal ailments, leprosy, etc. In case of leprosy,⁴² the patient is advised to practice the vase technique of *prāṇāyāma* for a period of six months, during which the patient should not emit semen while having sexual intercourse. The *Kalacakra*tantra⁴³ also cautions that one should practice *prāṇāyāma* only until heat in the heart or pain in the head occurs. If one continues to practice *prāṇāyāma* after those symptoms

occur, *prāṇa* reaches congealment in the navel-*cakra*, or if unrestrained, it causes death by violently splitting the crown-*cakra* and leaving the body.

Sometimes, especially in the cases of the malignant diseases, *prāṇāyāma* is recommended as a therapy alternative to the application of medicaments. It is chiefly recommended to the experienced Buddhist Tantric *yogīs* who are capable of developing deep concentration (*samādhi*) and who do not always have access to appropriate medication. For instance, to *yogīs* suffering from the malignant disease of the throat⁴⁴ which is accompanied by fever, pains in the joints of the arms and legs, and headache, the following practice of *prāṇāyāma* is recommended: having entered a house that has no windows, a *yogī* should let his arms hang down towards the feet, that is, as far as the thighs, and should practice the vase (*kumbhaka*) technique of *prāṇāyāma* for as long as he does not fall on the ground and for as long as his fever does not drop down.⁴⁵

The most prevalent empirico-rational therapeutics of Buddhist Tantric medicine encountered in the *Kalacakratāntra*, are dietary therapy, hydrotherapy, treatments carried out by means of nasal inhalation and oral consumption of drugs, fumigation, and anointing. For example, anything bitter, when combined with three myrobalans (*kaṭuka*),⁴⁶ obliterates a disorder of phlegm, therefore goat's milk combined with the three myrobalans is recommended to those suffering from a phlegm-disorder. Sweet and astringent substances eliminate a disorder of bile, hence buffalo-cow's milk is administered to those suffering from such a disorder. Camel's milk is administered to those suffering from a disorder of wind, because camel's milk, when combined with rock salt (*saindhava*), becomes an alkaline fluid (*kṣarāmbu*) that removes a wind-disorder. A nasal inhalation of the *akṣobhya* plant or a nasal inhalation of water in the morning is prescribed as a cure for headache.⁴⁷ In the case of boils, pustules, etc., fumigation with ghee and sea-salt that are wrapped in a cloth and anointing with the sap of *arka*⁴⁸ are suggested as an effective therapy.⁴⁹ In the case of the infections of the ear and eye, the application of warm urine in the ear and of cold urine in the eye is recommended. In the case of sun-stroke, the oral ingestion of a decoction containing the equal portion of *dhatri*, coriander, and powder of tamarind leaves for three nights is recommended as an effective cure.

Those types of empirico-rational treatments best illustrate the classical Āyurvedic and early Buddhist medical heritage in Buddhist Tantric medicine. Its *materia medica* is also similar to that of Āyurveda and early Buddhist medicine. In addition to herbal and other remedial substances well-known from Āyurveda and earlier Buddhist medical treat-

tises, the *Kalacakratantra* mentions medicinal substances that are not specified in Āyurvedic texts nor in earlier Buddhist medical works. It is possible, however, that those medicinal substances are known in Āyurvedic and earlier Buddhist texts by different names, since the *Kalacakratantra* occasionally designates the medicinal herbs by their regional folk names, such as "lion's urine" (*siṃhamūtra*), "son's hair" (*putrakeśa*),⁵⁰ etc., instead of by their generally accepted names.

Indian Tantric Buddhists, concerned with the preservation of the body, expanded the already existent science of rejuvenation and longevity and structured it as an additional branch of Buddhist Tantric medicine. On the grounds that Buddhist monastic schools of the eleventh-century India attracted the scholars from other countries such as China, Persia and so forth, one may suspect that Tantric Buddhist methods of rejuvenation were influenced to some degree by the Taoists' methods of the prolongation of life. Tantric Buddhists composed numerous Tantric works dealing exclusively with the diverse methods of rejuvenation and prolongation of life, which involve the arts of extracting rejuvenating essences and the knowledge of performing rituals ensuring long life.⁵¹ In its exposition of Buddhist Tantric medicine, the *Kalacakratantra* indicates the following individual methods of rejuvenation: the meditation (*dhyāna*) that involves the bringing of *prāṇas* into the middle channel (*madhyamā*), the practices of *prāṇāyāma*, the ingestion of the five combined ambrosias (*amṛta*),⁵² the ingestion of life-giving essences extracted from herbs and foods, and the ingestion of elixirs produced by means of complex alchemical processes. For example, the vase technique (*kumbhaka*) of *prāṇāyāma* accompanied by the retaining of regenerative fluids in sexual union, which was mentioned earlier with regard to the elimination of leprosy, is also seen as having a rejuvenating efficacy. It is said that if practiced for two years, it eradicates old age and all of its symptoms. Also, the nasal inhalation of menstrual blood and the honey of black bees (*keśarajika*), accompanied with meditation, is suggested as a six-months therapy of rejuvenation.

The *Kalacakratantra* also discusses the intricate procedures of preparing tonics, elixirs, and gold, also called external elixirs (*bahyarasāyana*) and regarded by Buddhist Tantric tradition as nutrients inducing the attainment of a divine body (*divya-deha*) free of wrinkles and gray hair.

Thus, with respect to the Buddhist Tantric therapeutics, one may draw the following conclusions. Buddhist Tantric therapeutics establishes four aims, namely, to prevent and cure disease, to secure longevity, and to bring forth liberation. The first three goals are of a temporal nature. They are not mere ends in themselves, but ancillary to the actualization of the ultimate goal which is enlightenment. In order to ac-

tualize its goals, Buddhist Tantric therapeutics utilizes the syncretized knowledge and practices of Tantric *yoga*, *hatha-yoga*, *Āyurveda*, folk medicine, religious esoteric rites of healing and exorcism, the science of distillation, and alchemy in its distinctive Buddhist Tantric medical theory and practice. Thus, the immediate objective of the syncretism of the Buddhist Tantric medicine is to utilize all available medical knowledge and to provide all possible means of cure and disease-prevention in order to facilitate one's liberation. However, the syncretism of the Buddhist Tantric medicine should not be understood as a *reconciliation* of disparate views and practices but rather as their *synthesis*. The *Kalacakratantra* does not attempt to reinterpret diverse medical theories and practices, it pragmatically juxtaposes them.

The *Kalacakratantra's* medical therapeutics rest on several theoretical grounds that are characteristic of Buddhist Tantric medicine as a whole. The primary theoretical basis of *Kalacakratantra* medicine is Tantric Buddhist soteriology that focuses on the intimate relationship among the mind, body, and liberation. On that foundation rests the *Kalacakratantra's* principal medical theory of the predominant effects of *prāṇas* on one's mental, physical, and spiritual condition. To that theory the *Kalacakratantra* adds the theoretical framework of secular *Āyurvedic* medicine, which operates on the presumption that good health is maintained by the equilibrium of the three humors: wind, phlegm, and bile. The fourth element of this theoretical context is the principles of *hatha-yoga*, which are based on the view of a causal relationship among the bodily postures, breathing exercises and mental and physical health. Finally, the last theoretical ground of the Buddhist Tantric medical therapeutics is the premises of folk medicine and occult beliefs concerning bewitchment and spirit possession, according to which spirits can possess and thereby influence the individual's mental and physical states.

Moreover, the theoretical syncretism of *Kalacakratantra* medicine induces a wide variety of medical treatments. Among the aforementioned medical treatments, the Tantric *yogic* practices of manipulating the *prāṇas* and retaining regenerative fluids are believed to most directly effect the accomplishments of medical and soteriological ends. Thus, according to the *Kalacakratantra*, the *yogic* methods of actualizing supernormal powers (*siddhi*) are a part of the Buddhist Tantric medical theory and practice. The Tantric *yogic* practices of manipulating the flows of vital energies (*prāṇa*) and retaining regenerative fluids during sexual intercourse are given a dual purpose: spiritual and medicinal. When practiced by *yogis* endowed with good health, the Tantric *yogic* practices induce spiritual powers and liberation. To those facing premature death, that is, death prior to the age of one hundred, and to

those suffering from various diseases such as abdominal ailments,⁵³ asthma, cough, eye-diseases, poisoning, dysuria, and leprosy, they serve as preventive and curative therapeutics. For example, when the signs of untimely death occur, the following *yogic* practices are to be sequentially performed. The first is the obstruction of the vital energies (*prāṇa*) in the left and right channels (*nāḍī*); the immediately following phase entails the bringing of those energies into the central channel (*madhyamā*) and making them circulate there for a day; the third phase involves the filling of one's arms, legs, and fingers with vital energies (*prāṇa*); and the final phase involves the visualization of the buddhas' six female consorts with their hands in the protection-*mudrā* and standing within one's own six *cakras*. In the case of the abdominal and other aforementioned diseases, one is advised to contract the wind of *apāṇa* from below the navel and the wind of *prāṇa* from above. In this way, those two winds collide and cause a strong digestive fire to arise and spread throughout the entire body. It is said that after a month of practicing this *yoga*, one averts the maladies of liver, spleen, hemorrhoids, asthma, headache, cough, etc.⁵⁴

Lastly, the syncretism of the *Kalacakratantra's* medical theory reduced the boundaries between magico-religious and empirico-rational therapeutics. The concurrence of magico-religious and empirico-rational treatments in individual cases was invariably used for two purposes: simultaneously to alleviate the symptoms of the disease and to eliminate the cause of the disease.

These multiple aims and means of cure in *Kalacakratantra* medicine required the incorporation of different sciences as additional branches of medicine. For example, the science of preparing perfumes and incenses, the science of extracting elixirs from foods and herbs, the science of alchemy, etc., became supplementary fields of medical study. In this way, the syncretism of the Buddhist Tantric medical theory and practice broadened the scope of Indian Buddhist medicine as a whole, and it extended the Buddhist Tantric framework of theory and practice.

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Notes

- ¹ See Romila Thapar, *A History of India*, vol. I (London: Penguin Books, 1966), 253–54.
- ² The verses 128–147 of the first chapter of the *Kalacakratanta* give a detailed instruction on building the different types of weapons that should be used by the Kalki's army in the final battle with Barbarians in the land of Mecca.
- ³ This view of theological knowledge and scientific learning as complementary is dominant in the Vajrayāna, whereas in the Sūtrayāna they are simply compatible rather than complementary.
- ⁴ This is not characteristic of the *Kalacakratanta* only. Much earlier medical treatises of Āyurveda, such as the *Suśrutasaṃhitā* (first to second centuries C.E.) and the *Carakasamhitā* (c. fourth century C.E.), assert that the five elements which are present in the body, namely, earth, water, fire, wind, and space, form the entire universe.
- ⁵ See Jagannātha Upadhyaya's edition of the *Vimalaprabhā* commentary on the *Śrīlaghukalacakratantarāja*, Bibliotheca Indo-Tibetica Series, no. 11 (Saranath: Central Institute of Higher Tibetan Studies, 1989), 43.
- ⁶ The *Nettipakaraṇa* (London: Pali Text Society, 1962), [76].
- ⁷ If one asks, "How is introspection scientific in the context of Buddhism?" an answer would be that just as physical phenomena are to be scientifically studied as far as possible by means of direct observation, so also are first-person mental phenomena; and introspection is widely recognized in Buddhism as the sole means of observing one's own conscious states.
- ⁸ Already in the early Buddhist Pali literature, the Buddhist dhamma was referred to as the verifiable teaching (*ehi-passika*).
- ⁹ Jagannātha Upadhyaya, ed., *Śrīlaghukalacakratantarāja*, Bibliotheca Indo-Tibetica Series, no. 11 (Saranath: Central Institute of Higher Tibetan Studies, 1986), ch. 2, vs. 48–50, reads:

Within one's own body, Cakrī is one who has the *vajra*; the eminent lords of gods are the twelve restrained limbs; Kalkī is the right knowledge; the elephants, horses, chariots, and servants are the [four] Immeasurables; Rudra's name is Pratyeka [Buddhas]; Hanūman is Śrāvakas; a vicious king of Barbarians is the vice of living beings; and Kṛnamati, a bestower of suffering, is a non-virtue.

Aśvatthāma is spiritual ignorance; the entire host of demons is the four classes of Māras; its destruction in the battle is the annihilation of the fear of *samsāra*; the glorious victory is a path to liberation; the teaching of Dharma on Mt. Kailāśa is the removal of the fear of

saṃsāra. The earth is full of substances. Brahma and Sureśa, sons of the teacher of thirteen men, are in the rear and in the front [of the army, respectively].

Mañjuśrī, the glorious protector of people and the conqueror of the three worlds, is splendid blood and *bodhicitta*. The offsprings on the diverse earth, beginning with Brahma in the rear, etc., are many pure Buddhas. Thus, a battle with the king of Barbarians is indeed within the body of living beings. However, the battle with Barbarians, fought outside in the kingdom of Mecca, is not an illusory experience.

- ¹⁰ See Upadhyaya, *Śrīlaghukālacakratantrarāja*, ch. 2, v. 96 with the *Vimalaprabhā* commentary.
- ¹¹ The *Kālacakratantra* incorporates the ideas characteristic of the Sāṃkhya philosophical system, and at least in one occasion, it brings in ideas derived from the Jaina world-view.
- ¹² David W. Evans, trans., *The Discourses of Gotama Buddha: Middle Collection* (London: Janus Publishing Company, 1992), "With Magandīya," "Major Discourse on the Destruction of Craving."
- ¹³ Upadhyaya, *Śrīlaghukālacakratantrarāja*, ch. 2, v. 107, lines a-b read, "Firstly, a *mantrī* should preserve the entire body of the Jina for the sake of *siddhis*. In the absence of the body, neither a *siddhi* nor supreme bliss is attained in this life."
- ¹⁴ For more information see Kenneth G. Zysk, *Asceticism and Healing in Ancient India. Medicine in the Buddhist Monastery* (New York, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991) and *Encyclopaedia of Buddhism*, s.v. "Āyurveda," by Jean Filliozat.
- ¹⁵ According to the *Encyclopaedia of Buddhism*, s.v. "Āyurveda," by Jean Filliozat, p. 478, some Indian manuscripts ascribe the *Yogaśataka* to Vararuci instead to Nāgārjuna.
- ¹⁶ These five Buddhist medical treatises are included among the twenty-two Āyurvedic works that are incorporated in Tibetan *Tengyur*, where they are ascribed to Nāgārjuna. Apart from the *Yogaśataka*, the Sanskrit originals of the other four treatises are lost.
- ¹⁷ According to the *Encyclopaedia of Buddhism*, s.v. "Āyurveda," by Jean Filliozat, p. 478, an alternative attribution of the *Kakṣapuṭa*, or the *Kacchapuṭa*, is to Nityanāthasiddha.
- ¹⁸ See the *Vimalaprabhā* commentary on Upadhyaya, *Śrīlaghukālacakratantrarāja*, ch. 2, v. 141.
- ¹⁹ Cf. Śāntideva. *Śikṣāsamuccaya*, ed. P. L. Vaidya, Buddhist Sanskrit Texts, no. 11 (Darbhanga: The Mithila Institute of Post-graduate Studies and Research in Sanskrit Learning, 1961), 77–78, where Śāntideva advises bodhisattvas to counteract diseases with the recitation of man-

tras in addition to the usage of medications and water and in addition to the offerings of flowers to the image of the Buddha.

- ²⁰ Cf. Maurice Walshe, tr. *Thus Have I Heard: The Long Discourses of the Buddha: Dīgha Nikāya: "Aṭṭhaṅgīya Sutta: The Aṭṭhaṅga Protective Verses,"* (London: Wisdom Publications, 1987), 471–78; H. Oldenberg, ed., *Vinaya-piṭaka*, vol. 4, (London: Pali Text Society, 1879–83). Cf. Śāntideva. *Śikṣāsamuccaya*, ed. P. L. Vaidya. Buddhist Sanskrit Texts, no. 11. (Darbhanga: The Mithila Institute of Post-graduate Studies and Research in Sanskrit Learning, 1961), 77, where Śāntideva cites the mantras set forth in the *Trisamayarāja* as the mantras to be used for the protection of Bodhisattvas against Maras and other evil entities.

- ²¹ Upadhyaya, *Śrīlaghukālacakratantrarāja*, ch. 2, vs. 154–160.

- ²² Ibid., ch. 2, vs. 152–3.

- ²³ According to *ibid.*, ch. 2, v. 153, the symptoms of irrevocable death, which cannot be warded off by gods, men, or *nāgas*, are the following: the entire body becomes white, very subtle boils appear, the neck is bent together with the body, blood drips into the mouth, sexual organ or into the rectum.

- ²⁴ Ibid., ch. 2, v. 146 with the *Vimalaprabhā* commentary.

- ²⁵ Ibid., v. 159.

- ²⁶ The fragrant root of *Andropogon Muricatus*.

- ²⁷ *Valeriana jatamansi*.

- ²⁸ See Upadhyaya, *Śrīlaghukālacakratantrarāja*, ch. 2, v. 149 with the *Vimalaprabhā* commentary.

- ²⁹ Ibid., ch. 2, v. 152.

- ³⁰ Name of a plant with a bitter root.

- ³¹ *Methonia Superba*.

- ³² *Cucumis Colocynthis*, a wild bitter gourd.

- ³³ See Upadhyaya, *Śrīlaghukālacakratantrarāja*, ch. 2, vs. 124, 126–7.

- ³⁴ The *Vimalaprabhā* commentary on *ibid.*, ch. 2, v. 128.

- ³⁵ Ibid., v. 130: "om phre Viśvamāte vajra-kaṇṭakan naśaya naśaya mama śāntiṃ kuru kuru svāhā."

- ³⁶ Ibid., v. 149: "om aḥ huṃ amukāya garbhaśūlam hara hara svāhā."

- ³⁷ Ibid., v. 129.

- ³⁸ See the *Vimalaprabhā* commentary on the *Śrīlaghukālacakratantrarāja*, eds. Vajravallabha Dvivedī and S. S. Bahulakara. Bibliotheca Indo-Tibetica Series, no. 12 (Saranath, Varanasi: Central Institute of Higher Tibetan Studies, 1994), Ch. 4, v. 109.

- ³⁹ Ibid., v. 56.

- ⁴⁰ See *ibid.*, ch. 3, v. 1, where *mantra* is defined as primordial wisdom (*jñāna*) on the grounds that it protects the mind.

- ⁴¹ Ibid., ch. 2, v. 112 describes the *vajra* posture in the following way: "The *vajra* posture entails the left leg on the right thigh, and the right leg on the left thigh. Those two legs have the *vajra*-connection with the arms being on the top. The right foot is held by the left hand, and the left foot is held by the right hand."
- ⁴² The Sanskrit word *kuṣṭharoga*, or "leprosy," is a general term for the eighteen types of leprosy. Neither the *Kalacakra*tantra nor the *Vimalaprabhā* specifies whether the term *kuṣṭharoga* here refers to all of the eighteen types of leprosy or to a specific type of leprosy.
- ⁴³ Upādhyāya, *Śrīlāghukālacakra*tantrarāja, ch. 2, v. 122.
- ⁴⁴ Bu ston (p. 471) in his annotation, indicates the appearance of boils in the throat as a symptom of malignant disease of the throat.
- ⁴⁵ See Upādhyāya, *Śrīlāghukālacakra*tantrarāja, ch. 2, v. 128 with the *Vimalaprabhā* commentary.
- ⁴⁶ Three *kaṭukas* are three spices, namely, black and long peppers and dry ginger.
- ⁴⁷ See Upādhyāya, *Śrīlāghukālacakra*tantrarāja, ch. 2, v. 124.
- ⁴⁸ *Arka* is a tropical and sub-tropical milky plant that grows in the dry, plain areas. It is also known as *Calotropis gigantea*, linn., or the milky weed plant.
- ⁴⁹ See Upādhyāya, *Śrīlāghukālacakra*tantrarāja, ch. 2, v. 114.
- ⁵⁰ The *Vimalaprabhā* commentary on ibid., ch. 2, v. 135.
- ⁵¹ See the *Āyusparirakṣanāma*, which is preserved in Tibetan translation under the title *Tshe bsgrub pa'i gdams ngag ces bya ba* and is included in the Tantra commentary (*rgyud 'grel*) section of the *Tengyur* (Peking edition of the *Tibetan Tripiṭaka*, edited by D. T. Suzuki, vol. 69, no. 3236. Tokyo-Kyoto: Tibetan Tripiṭaka Research Foundation, 1955–1961); the *Āyuhśādhana*, which is extant only in Tibetan translation under the title *Tshe sgrub pa'i thabs* and occurs in the Tantra commentary section of the *Tengyur* (Peking edition of the *Tibetan Tripiṭaka*, edited by D. T. Suzuki, vol. 86, no. 4863. Tokyo-Kyoto: Tibetan Tripiṭaka Research Foundation, 1955–61); the *Āyurbuddhanusmṛti*, which is also extant only in its Tibetan translation under the title *'Phags pa sngas rgyas rjes su dran pa* and is included in the Tantra commentary section of the *Tengyur* (P. Cordier, ed. *Catalogue du Fonds Tibétain*, vol. 2, p. 371, no. 4); the *Āyurvardhanvidhi* which is attributed to Candragomin and is preserved only in Tibetan translation under the title *Tshe 'phel ba'i cho ga* in the Tantra commentary section of the *Tengyur* (*Tōhoku-Teikoku-Daigaku Hōbun-gakubu Tibet-Daizōkyō-So-Mokuroku* 1932, no. 3666).
- ⁵² According to Upādhyāya, *Śrīlāghukālacakra*tantrarāja, ch. 2, v. 125 and the *Vimalaprabhā* commentary, the five internal *amṛtas* (feces,

urine, semen, blood, marrow), when combined with the equal portions of the five external *amṛtas* (sulfur, nectar from black bees, talk, quicksilver, and three myrobalans), soaked for seven days, dried in the heat, and ingested with ghee and honey every day for up to six months, have a lifegiving power because they release energy, acid, oil, and salt.

⁵³ According to *ibid.*, ch. 2, v. 111 and the *Vimalaprabhā* commentary, the maladies of liver, spleen, and hemorrhoids are considered as abdominal ailments.

⁵⁴ See the *Vimalaprabhā* commentary on *ibid.*, ch. 2, v. 11.