

IMAGES OF WIND IN INDIAN BUDDHIST THOUGHT:
THEIR ORIGINS AND SIGNIFICANCE

Charles N. Small

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ABSTRACT

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This thesis is a study of "wind", "breath" and "air" in Indian Buddhist thought. These were seen as closely related principles active in cosmic, bodily and mental processes. "Wind" was a cause of birth and death, creation and destruction, purification and defilement. Its ambiguity reflected the ambivalence of Buddhist attitudes towards embodied existence: life was suffering, but it was also supremely valuable.

The influence of non-Buddhist ideas of wind on Buddhist thought is examined. These ideas include vāyu (wind, the wind-god); prāṇa (breath or life); the internal bodily "winds"; and the "wind" which was one of the "humours" in Ayurvedic medicine.

Buddhist ideas of wind, from the Nikāyas to the Tantras, are then considered. In the Pali Canon, wind is the first of the great elements that compose the material world. Breath is the object of contemplation in the practice of ānāpānasati. Later texts describe the function of bodily and cosmic winds, and the relationship of the Tathāgata to these winds.

Buddhists devoted particular attention to the analysis of mental functions. In attempting to define wind's relationship to con-

consciousness, they rejected earlier quasi-substantial ideas of wind as self-contradictory. However, these rejected ideas later reappeared as metaphors.

Three themes related to Tantric Buddhist ideas of wind are then examined: speech and mantra; prāṇāyāma (restraint of breath); and analogical thinking. The continuity of Tantric and earlier Buddhist ideas, and possible reasons for wind's prominence in Tantric thought, are considered.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

In this paper, I will examine "breath", "wind" and "air", and the images related to them, in the Indian Buddhist tradition. I will also consider how these images were used by early non-Buddhists in India. This consideration will help clarify the origins and special characteristics of Buddhist usages.

"Breath" (prāṇa) and "wind" (vāyu) were identified with each other, in Indian thought, from early times. From this identification, a consistent "pneumatic" view of cosmological, physiological and psychological processes developed. While it never formed an independent philosophical system, the influence of this pneumatology, particularly on later yogic practices, was considerable.

In this paper I will suggest that one reason for the persistence of these images was their ambiguity. Buddhists, in particular, attributed contradictory functions to both wind and breath.

Religious language is frequently ambiguous and paradoxical. For Buddhists, the ambiguity of "wind" was especially useful in descriptions of the relationship between Buddhahood and the phenomenal world.

In this paper, I will trace the history of the ideas of "wind" and "breath" from Vedic speculation, through Indian Buddhist thought to

the beginnings of the Buddhist Tantras. I will begin this survey by exploring, in Chapter 2, the antecedents of Buddhist usages, and the parallels to them, in the Vedas and Upanisads. In Chapter 3 I will examine the influence of early Indian medical theory on Buddhist ideas of "wind" and "breath".

I will then consider Buddhist writings, beginning in Chapter 4 with the Nikayas, and continuing in Chapters 5, 6 and 7 with the Sanskrit texts. In these three chapters, I have examined the three spheres - mentioned above - in which "wind" operates.

The first sphere (Chapter 5) is that of the human life cycle. Breath and air are here related to birth, death and the forces that sustain life. The second (Chapter 6) is the cosmic sphere, where wind is a primal and all-pervasive force involved in creation and destruction.

The third sphere (Chapter 7) is that of mind, thought and consciousness where wind is connected with the arising, continuity and cessation of mental acts and tendencies. In devoting particular attention to this sphere, Buddhists discredited earlier "pneumatic" ideas with their quasi-physical connotations. These did not disappear, but were reinterpreted as metaphors or sanctioned as provisional explanations.

In all three of these spheres, "wind" is associated with the emergence of entities and their destruction.

In Chapter 8, I will explore the ethical implications of this association. For Buddhists, worldly existence results from past actions, and is therefore ambiguous. Birth is creation; but it is also a calamity. Death is destruction; but for the Arhat, it is like the disappearance of a disease. Impure actions produce a "wind" which spreads their effects. But this wind is also an instrument of retribution, which eventually

sweeps away moral corruption.

In Chapters 9, 10, and 11, I will examine concepts which became important in later and Tantric thought. The first is speech (Chapter 9), which is connected with breath, with mantra and with Dharma (the speech of the Tathāgata). Chapter 10 is an examination of the practice of breath control (prāṇāyāma), as it was adapted by Buddhists. In Chapter 11, I suggest a relationship between the "winds" and the systems of analogical thinking characteristic of the Tantras.

Two tentative conclusions can be drawn from these Tantric materials. The first is that the ideas of "breath" and "wind" found in the early Tantras follow from, and are consistent with, previous Buddhist usage, in spite of evident borrowings from non-Buddhist traditions.

The second conclusion is that the ambiguity of "wind" helps to explain the prominence of this concept in Tantric writings. "Wind" and "breath" were well suited to incorporation into the Tantras' evocative, richly associative and ambiguous terminology. For the Buddhist Tantras, wisdom and its obscurations are not separate; neither are perfection and defilements. The potential for transformation exists because opposites coincide. In early Indian thought, "wind" had a wide range of divergent associations. In the body, for example, it was both the support of life and a cause of disease and death. "Wind", with its ambiguities and its many applications, could bring together apparent opposites.

However, "wind" seems to have been less important among non-Tantric Buddhists. In general, it was a secondary element in Buddhist thought. What, exactly, was its position? In early non-Buddhist texts, prana and vayu were fundamental principles of both the human organism and the cosmos. From the beginning, Buddhists were probably

aware of these ancient ideas. Like the followers of other schools. Buddhists developed new concepts peculiar to themselves, and adapted older notions. "Air" was one of the factors in the Buddhist theory of elements. In addition, early Buddhists developed a distinctive breathing meditation which influenced later practice.

Simultaneously, a systematization took place. In this process, old ideas - including "pneumatic" images - tended to disappear. However, they may have disappeared not because they were discredited, but because their existence and operation was taken for granted. Their operation was confined to a sphere which was not seen as relevant to the attainment of the ultimate goal, mokṣa or nirvāna. This irrelevance affected, for example, the Vedic gods. They were not entirely set aside, but they no longer served a central religious function.

Such concepts did not lose all importance. As echoes of early sacrificial religion are present at a much later date, so are remains of ancient "pneumatic" ideas.

What happens to such ancient ideas when they have ceased to be the subject matter of learned debate? They may lose their hold on educated thought or they may retain their original vitality for large segments of the population. Old ideas may later reappear with new names; or they may become generally accepted presuppositions in later thought, no longer questioned and hence, no longer explained. Religious ideas may re-emerge after having been preserved in popular traditions or by conservative strata of society.

Concepts which have been submerged can also reappear when philosophy becomes increasingly systematic and self-conscious.

Presuppositions which have remained unexamined are questioned. If they are judged to be anomalous, they may be rejected. If they are retained, it may be with the understanding that they are no more than helpful, though ultimately inadequate, makeshifts. Or they may be reinterpreted and revalued to be consistent with the new philosophical insights.

The above processes, it will be seen, took place with regard to the understanding of terms connected with the idea of "wind". Though it is not rigidly sequential, it will be possible at a number of points to judge what phase of this evolution we are dealing with - as when the wind appears in the Laṅkāvatāra Sūtra as an element in a well-known analogy; or when Vasubandhu applies dialectic to the traditional cosmic function of wind and produces a reductio ad absurdum. This is, of course; one aspect of a larger process: that in which ideas, in their evolution, are taken up as vehicles for religious expression, used, transformed, subsumed and in the end either discarded, or else polished and restored.

This paper, it must be noted, is not a comprehensive and systematic history of "pneumatic" concepts, nor is it a thorough comparison of Buddhist and Hindu ideas of "wind". I should also note that there are particular problems in adopting the approach I have followed. It is obviously risky to select, on the basis of thematic similarity, passages from texts written at different periods, for different purposes. In defense of this procedure, I suggest that the meaning of accidental references and peripheral images may remain more consistent over time than that of controversial conceptions which are constantly re-evaluated as doctrines evolve.

But this is only a partial defense. These terms were frequently of secondary importance to the authors of our texts. By studying the use of such terms, it is possible to perceive underlying assumptions. But it is also possible to find significance where none exists. Wind and breath are common symbols. They draw meanings to themselves easily, and their connotations in a given context are difficult to state precisely. But, in spite of their variety of associations, images of wind and breath express consistent meanings within the Buddhist tradition.

While these meanings may emerge from selected examples, the selection process must be carefully considered. The scholar's choices may be guided by his assumptions, thus distorting the eventual interpretation. The danger of distortion is most acute when he studies alien cultures. Few of us can claim to be so at home with ancient Indian culture - or any other ancient culture for that matter - that its assumptions and presuppositions have become second nature. There is a further danger, in that we must rely almost entirely on written texts for our information, thus excluding rituals and practices as well as inaccessible popular beliefs and traditions.

There are also problems in reconciling traditional Indian ideas of "wind" with Buddhist thought. Elements in the Buddhist tradition made these ideas difficult to accept. Among these elements were the doctrines of impermanence and no-self, the rejection of the authority of the Vedas, the denial of ultimacy to meditational and trance experiences in and of themselves, and the Buddha's admonitions to avoid indulging in vain speculation. I will note these and other obstacles, although I do not propose to examine them in detail.

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The central purpose of this paper is to draw out the ambiguity, or series of parallel ambiguities, embedded in the notions related to "wind". Only one aspect of this ambiguity may be evident in a particular context; or both may appear at once. The ambiguities may be clearly felt by those who express them, or remain unnoticed. But the images themselves, in a variety of forms, are retained because their double meanings correspond, for Buddhists, to ambiguities which are closely related to the nature of the central religious experience itself.

CHAPTER 2

PRĀNA AND VĀYU FROM THE RĠ-VEDA TO THE UPANISADS.

Ancient Indian beliefs and cultural presuppositions influenced both Buddhist and Upanisadic thought, although these two may not have been in direct contact. Pre-Buddhist Indian writings provide information about these early beliefs. The terms prāna and vāyu are prominent in these pre-Buddhist writings and in the later Upanisads. Buddhist ideas of "wind" show the influence of these early ideas.

The proper interpretation of the terms "prāna" and "vāyu" in early texts is still in dispute: at what point do breath and wind become identified with each other? How did the five (or three, or seven) "vital airs" become differentiated? Where is prāna to be understood as "breath", where is it a simple physiological function, and where does it take on a larger meaning - the spirit, vitality, or life-principle? Did "pneumatic" speculation originate in early breath-control practices or vice versa?

In spite of these uncertainties, the unity of a number of strands of meaning related to "wind" and "breath" can be discovered at an early stage, and an underlying though generally latent ambiguity can often be perceived.

In the Rg-Veda, "wind", like other natural forces is personified as a god. Vāta moves through the sky in his chariot, roaring, and scattering the dust of the earth.¹ Vāta is the king of the universe; at the same time he is the germ² of the world and "the first-born". Though he is invisible, he travels everywhere, never pausing to rest: "When he moves on his paths along the sky, he rests not even a single day." Constant motion and the appearance of the phenomenal world are already associated here.

In some ways, Vāta, or Vāyu is foremost among the gods. He is said to be "first of all".³ Wind is prathamajā ṛtāvā, the first-born taking part in the order (ṛta).⁴ This may be because Vāyu is the first among the gods to arrive at the sacrifice⁵ and the first to drink.⁶ He is invoked as the god who is "worthy as the first before all others to drink these our Somas . . ." ⁷ In a similar way, when "element theories" were later developed, as they were in Buddhist thought, wind was seen as the first among the material constituents of entities.

Vāyu is also addressed as ṛtaspati, the "lord of Right".⁸ He supports the cosmic order and sacred law.

Elsewhere, the wind is spoken of as the breath, or soul (ātman) of Varuṇa, who is himself the upholder of cosmic law.⁹ But, at the same time, this breath is said to have "roared through the mid-region, like an impetuous beast, which has won (its food) on the pasture land."¹⁰ Wind, then, is the embodiment of order, and yet is also to be feared as an untamed animal which can be violent, chaotic and erratic. The order of the world - the ṛta guarded by Varuṇa and Vāyu - is itself in movement. It is an order which resembles disorder. This ambiguity reappears in later times.

It is worth noting that Vāyu is found in association with Varuṇa and Mitra¹¹, on the one hand, and with Indra¹² on the other. The power of Indra is manifested in the violence of the storm. These two, in fact, wind and storm, are often paired.

In the early Upaniṣads, as in Rg Veda X. 168, Wind is "that divinity which never goes to rest." For that reason, Wind holds "the central position . . . among . . . [the] divinities."¹³ Wind, here, is

foremost because it is indispensable, as breath is indispensable to the life of the body. Sun, Moon and Fire "have their decline" but Wind never does. All other gods are dependent on Wind, as all life's functions depend on breath. Furthermore, Sun and Moon, when they set, and Fire (Agni) when it goes out, enter into Wind, and issue out of it again when they reappear.¹⁴

All is founded on wind, and wind itself is in constant motion. This combination of ideas suggests the doctrines of impermanence and continual flux taught by the Buddha.

But Vāyu does not escape the decline which is the fate of other Vedic gods. Vāyu is eclipsed by the Ineffable, the Immortal, the One Being - Brahman. He is seen as in essence identical with the One Lord, Īśvara¹⁵, or else as subservient to the unmanifest Brahman¹⁶, incapable of carrying off even a straw by his own power.¹⁷

But, by this time, the identification of microcosm with macrocosm, of wind with breath, had been made. The two are associated in the Cremation Hymn of the Rg Veda, which asks that the wind (vāta) receive the spirit (ātman) of the dead man.¹⁸ In the Hymn to Man, the Puruṣa-Sūkta, the identification is still clearer: Vāyu is said to have been born from the breath of the cosmic Man.¹⁹ In the Atharva-Veda, Prāṇa is said to be called Vāta, the wind.²⁰ The idea that prāṇa, the breath, passes at the moment of death into the wind, vāyu, is expressed in the Śatapatha-Brāhmaṇa.²¹ It also appears in the Aitareya-Brāhmaṇa in reference to the sacrificial animal.²² In the horse-sacrifice mentioned in the initial passage of the Bṛhadāraṇyaka -Upanisad, the wind is the breath of the cosmic horse.²³

Everywhere, one finds that the same forces which produce life in humans and animals are seen as active in the natural world. What is

inside man and what is outside him are not different; they share the same underlying nature. In many of the Upaniṣads, it is clear that breath, in the individual, is to be understood as a localization, on a human scale, of cosmic wind.²⁴

Once prāna is seen in this way as a unitary principle, it becomes possible to exalt its status above that of the old Vedic gods. This we find in the Hymn to Prāna of the Atharva-Veda. Prāna is Prajāpati, the lord of all, of "that which breathes and that which does not breathe." He clothes creatures "as a father his dear son"; he moves "as an embryo within the gods."²⁵

On the individual level, prāna becomes more than breath. It is closer to what we understand as the life-principle, the spirit or soul; or, in a more general sense, strength and vitality.

Filiozat observes that "the 'pneumatic' nature of the ātman, of the soul, is a major principle of Vedic philosophy."²⁶ Prāna, as the "breath of life" is found as early as the Rg-Veda.²⁷ The principle is one that is prominent in the Upaniṣads as well. "Just as . . . the spokes are fastened in the hub, so on this vital breath everything is fastened. Life (prāna) goes on with vital breath (prāna). Vital breath (prāna) gives life (prāna)."²⁸

This same passage goes on to explain that one's father, mother, brother, and teacher are all prāna. Prāna comes to designate what an individual considers vital - a beloved person or an indispensable object.²⁹ As wind, which never rests, is foremost among divinities, so breath is the central function of the body. Unlike eye, ear and mind, breath is indispensable to the organism; as long as life continues it can never cease, never "go to rest".³⁰

Prāna, in the cosmic sense, is identified, in the early Upaniṣads, as "everything here that has come to be, whatsoever there is".³¹

In this sense, prāna is phenomenal existence and also that in which phenomenal existence subsists.

Earlier, Vāyu was the upholder of rta. Rta was both cosmic order and moral law equivalent; in many ways, to dharma, the concept which later replaced it. In the Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad, prāna is said to be dharma.³² The association of "breath" with order is thus maintained. But dharma is that which is, and also that which truly, rightfully is. It is both reality and duty, or ideal order. But these two do not always correspond. What is and what should be are often in conflict. At this early stage, prāna, like vāyu, contained the potential for ambiguity.

Later Vedic and Upanisadic thought extolled prāna, not vāyu. For example, the Hymn to Prāna regards Prāna as an absolute and transcendent principle. This was part of a more general search for a single fundamental principle behind phenomena.³³

Buddhists denied the existence of any such unitary substratum. For them, there was no substantially existent self, and therefore, a permanent "pranic" soul was inadmissible. Since all things were compounded, none could be caused by any one isolated factor. The Upaniṣads also accord prāna a less exalted status. In these, the term ātman is commonly applied to the substratum of the self. In some passages, prāna and ātman are associated with each other. According to the Kauṣītaki Upaniṣad, prāna is one with the "intelligential self", or prajñātman. These two animate the body; they "dwell in this body; together the two depart."³⁴ In sleep, or at the point of death, the mind and the senses recede into prāna. On awakening, prāna disperses,

as sparks are scattered from a fire; and the breaths take up their stations in the body. From them emerge the vital sense-powers, and from the sense-powers, phenomenal existence.

In other passages, prāna has settled into an intermediate role. In the instruction of King Janaka, the identification of prāna with Brahman is accepted as only partially adequate.³⁵ In the Praśna Upaniṣad, prāna is said to be born from Ātman.³⁶ Prāna eventually comes to mean "life", rather than some mysterious power which produces and sustains life. Buddhaghosa understands it in this way.³⁷

Prāna is used in another important sense, beginning in the Vedic samhitās and the Upaniṣads. It refers to any one of the internal bodily "winds". Collectively, these winds were referred to as the "prānas". In classical times, five prānas were ordinarily included in the set: prāna, apāna, udāna, samāna and vyāna. Each was located in a particular area of the body, and served a particular physiological function.

The classical scheme developed slowly. In many earlier texts, the prānas were enumerated differently. It is impossible here to trace this development in detail. Since prāna was believed to be dispersed throughout the body, different names may have been applied to the prāna in different regions. This may have contributed to the evolution of the later scheme.

If prāna referred literally to the physiological breath, a division into two, at least, would seem natural: in-breath and out-breath, filling and emptying. In addition, prāna and apāna are often to be understood in the Upaniṣads as thoracic and abdominal breaths res-

pectively.³⁸ And Filiozat observes that apāna and udāna, in later Vedic times, stand for breath directed downwards and upwards. These two, together with prāna, or (as is more commonly found), prāna and apāna with vyāna, the "dispersed" or "diffused breath", make up a set of three;³⁹ or, taken all together, a group of four.⁴⁰ Samāna, the "middle breath", the "equalizing" or "concentrated breath", may have been introduced as a logical counterpart to dispersed breath. It appears in a list of four in the Atharva-Veda.⁴¹ All five - prāna, apāna, udāna, vyāna and samāna - are named together in the Vedic samhitās,⁴² as well as in the early Upaniṣads.⁴³ Elsewhere, seven⁴⁴ or ten⁴⁵ "breaths" are referred to, instead of five.

In part, the number and definition of prānas seems flexible enough to vary with the demands of particular systems of analogies. Certainly, their enumeration often occurs in the context of elaborate sacrificial and ritual symbolism. Possibly, the functions assigned to "prāna" expanded to accommodate the existence of other "winds" observed in the body - for example, the downwards-moving "winds" believed to be involved in sexual activity and birth.

There is another set of five prānas, in addition to that of the "breaths" or "winds" of the body. In the early Upaniṣads, sight, hearing, speech, mind and breath are referred to as prānas.⁴⁶ In this context, the term denotes the individual's vital functions.

The same word - prāna - was applied to two different sets of functions. In a similar way, it also acquired other associations. The set of five bodily "winds" was general enough to be identified with a wide range of phenomena. From early times the individual

prānas were correlated with particular cosmic phenomena, such as astronomical events.⁴⁷ Later, in the Buddhist Tantras, the five prānas were incorporated into an elaborate system of correlations.

Prāna and vāyu were identified with each other in ancient times. The set of five prānas also came to be identified with five vāyus. In other words, the bodily winds, the prānas could also be regarded as vāyus.⁴⁸

Buddhists did not acknowledge the existence of an underlying, unitary prāna; but they were probably more willing to accept a multiplicity of interacting prānas. There are references, in Pali writings, to a number of internal bodily "winds" (vāta), of which in-breath and out-breath are one variety.⁴⁹ The Majjhima-Nikāya contains a list of six "winds": upwards-going (uddhangamo); downward-going (adhogamo); contained in the abdomen (kucchittho); contained in the intestines (koṭṭhāsayo); inhaled breath (assāso); and breath which pervades the limbs (anganusari).⁵⁰ Evidently, these are closely parallel to the non-Buddhist "prānas".⁵¹

"Wind" was also an external element. The Pali writings contain lists of both external and internal winds. Both of these are referred to as "vāta". The Saṃyutta-Nikāya lists winds "from the east, . . . from the west, . . . from the north, . . . from the south, - winds dusty, winds dustless⁵², cool winds and hot winds, winds soft and boisterous."⁵³

Buddhist images of "wind" were influenced by non-Buddhist ideas, such as those found in early Indian writings. To what do vāyu and prāna refer in these writings? Vāyu, or Vāta, is a god, atmos-

pheric wind, and any one of the "prānas", the internal bodily winds. Prāna is the breath, life-principle, or spirit. It is one of the vital functions of the body, or the foremost amongst these. In the singular or plural, it is an internal wind, or "vital air" of the body. In some passages, Prāna refers to the lord and sustainer of all.

In these early writings, the meanings of prāna and vāyu occasionally appear ambiguous. But ambiguities are more evident in later Buddhist uses of these terms. Buddhists saw not only the benign and beneficial aspects of "wind", but also its destructive side. In a similar way, they brought into focus the darker side of all worldly existence. But since prāna, for Buddhists, was not a transcendent power, they had no reason to fear, exalt, or propitiate it.

For Buddhists, as for earlier thinkers, "wind" could refer to one of the internal winds (vātas). But other schemes of classification also influenced the Buddhist concept. For example, "vāyu" was one of the "humours" of the medical tradition. It was also one of the great elements, the mahābhūtas. I will examine these two schemes in Chapters 3 and 4, respectively.

NOTES

¹Rg-Veda X. 168, Vedic Hymns, Part I, trans. F. Max Muller, The Sacred Books of the East, vol. 32 (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1891), p. 449.

²Or embryo, "garbha".

³Rg-Veda VIII. 26. 25, Griffith 2:163.

⁴Rg-Veda X. 168, Muller, p. 449.

⁵"More rapidly than Vāyu seize the Soma juice", Rg-Veda X. 76. 5, Hymns of the Rigveda, trans. Ralph T. H. Griffith, 3rd ed., 2 vols. (Benares: E. J. Lazarus, 1920-26), 2:492.

⁶"Thou art he who drinketh first", Rg-Veda IV. 46. 1, Griffith 1:451.

⁷Rg-Veda I. 134. 6, Muller, p. 445

⁸Rg-Veda VIII. 26. 21, Griffith 2:163.

⁹Rg-Veda VII. 87. 2, Rgveda Mandala VII, trans. H. D. Velankar (Bombay: Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan, 1963); p. 191.

¹⁰Ibid.

¹¹Rg-Veda VII. 87. 2, Velankar, p. 191; Rg-Veda IX. 70. 8, Griffith 2:327; Rg-Veda IX. 109. 16, Griffith 2:377; Rg-Veda VII. 62. 3, Griffith 2:62.

¹²Rg-Veda I. 2, Griffith 1:2; Rg-Veda I. 135, Griffith 1:187; Rg-Veda VII. 91, Griffith 2:86; Rg-Veda VIII. 1, Griffith 2:106 n. 26; Rg-Veda IX. 27. 2, Griffith 2:288; Rg-Veda IX. 61. 8, Griffith 2:306; etc.

¹³Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad 1. 5. 22, The Thirteen Principal Upanishads, trans. Robert E. Hume, 2nd ed., rev. (London: Oxford University Press, 1931), p. 91.

¹⁴Śatapatha-Brāhmaṇa X. 3. 3. 8, The Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa, trans. Julius Eggeling, The Sacred Books of the East, vols: 12, 26, 41, 43 and 44, 5 vols. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1882-1900), 4:333.

¹⁵Śvetāśvatara Upaniṣad 4. 2; Hume, p. 403.

¹⁶Kātha Upaniṣad 6. 3, Hume, p. 358.

¹⁷Kenā Upaniṣad 3. 7-10, Hume, p. 338.

- 18 Rg-Veda X. 16. 3, Griffith 2:402.
- 19 Rg-Veda X. 90. 13, Griffith 2:519.
- 20 Atharva-Veda XI. 4. 15, Hymns of the Atharva-Veda, trans. Maurice Bloomfield, The Sacred Books of the East, vol. 42 (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1897), p. 219.
- 21 Satapatha-Brāhmana 4:333.
- 22 Aitareya-Brāhmana 2. 6, The Aitareya Brāhmanam of the Rig Veda, trans. Martin Haug, Sacred Books of the Hindus, extra vol. 4 (Allahabad: Suhindra Nath Vasu, 1922), p. 59.
- 23 Bṛhad. Up. 1. 1. 1, Hume, p. 73.
- 24 Bṛhad. Up. 3. 2. 13, Hume, p. 110; Bṛhad. Up. 5. 15, Hume, p. 157; Chāndogya Upaniṣad 4. 3. 1-4, Hume, p. 217; Aitareya Upaniṣad 1. 1. 4, 1. 2. 4, Hume, pp. 294-95; Īśa Upaniṣad 17, Hume, p. 365.
- 25 Atharva-Veda XI. 4, Bloomfield, p. 218.
- 26 J. Filliozat, The Classical Doctrine of Indian Medicine, trans. Dev Raj Chanana (Delhi: Munshiram Manoharlal, 1964), p. 184.
- 27 "Him whom we hate let vital breath abandon," Rg-Veda III. 53. 21, Griffith 1:375.
- 28 Ch. Up. 7. 15. 1-4, Hume, pp. 258-59.
- 29 "Tvam me prāṇah," "thou art to me as dear as life," Sir Monier Monier-Williams, A Sanskrit-English Dictionary, New ed., enl. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1899), s.v. "prāṇa".
- 30 Bṛhad. Up. 1. 3. 1-16, Hume, pp. 76-78; Bṛhad. Up. 1. 5. 21-22, Hume pp. 90-91; Ch. Up. 1. 5. 1-15, Hume, pp. 226-28.
- 31 Ch. Up. 3. 15. 4, Hume, p. 211.
- 32 "Him the gods made law (dharma); / He only today and tomorrow will be," Bṛhad. Up. 1. 5. 23, Hume, p. 91.
- 33 M. Hiriyanna, Outlines of Indian Philosophy (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1932), p. 41.
- 34 Kauṣītaki Upaniṣad 3. 3, Hume, pp. 322-23.
- 35 Bṛhad. Up. 4. 1. 3, Hume, p. 128.
- 36 Praśna Upaniṣad 3. 3, Hume, p. 383.

37Buddhaghosa, "The Illustrator of Ultimate Meaning (Paramattha-jotikā)", in The Minor Readings and the Illustrator, trans. Bhikkhu Nānamoli, Pali Text Society Translation Series, No. 32, (London: Luzac & Co., 1960), pp. 20-21.

38G. W. Brown, "Prāna and Apāna", Journal of the American Oriental Society 39: 104, quoted in Filliozat, p. 178. Prāna and apāna mentioned together: Taittirīya Upaniṣad 3. 10. 2, Hume, p. 292; Katha Upaniṣad 5. 3, Hume p. 356; Mundaka Upaniṣad 2. 1. 7, Hume, p. 371.

39Prāna, apāna and vyāna: Bṛhad. Up. 3. 1. 10, Hume, p. 109; Bṛhad. Up. 5. 14. 3, Hume, p. 155; Ch. Up. 1. 3. 3, Hume, p. 180; Taitt. Up. 1. 5, Hume, p. 278; Taitt. Up. 2. 2, Hume, p. 284; Maitri Upaniṣad 6. 5, Hume, p. 426; Atharva-Veda VI. 41, quoted in Filliozat, p. 181; Atharva-Veda XI. 5. 24-25, Bloomfield, p. 217.

40Atharva-Veda XI. 8, quoted in Filliozat, p. 181.

41Atharva-Veda X. 2, quoted in Filliozat, p. 181.

42Vājasaneyī, Kāthaka and Maitrāyaṇī, quoted in Filliozat, p. 182.

43Bṛhad. Up. 1. 5. 3, Hume, p. 87; Bṛhad. Up. 3. 9. 26, Hume, p. 125.

44Bṛhad. Up. 2. 2. 3, Hume, p. 96; Mundaka Up. 2. 1. 8, Hume, p. 371.

45Bṛhad. Up. 3. 9. 4, Hume, p. 120.

46Bṛhad. Up. 1. 5. 21, Hume, p. 91; Ch. Up. 5. 1, Hume, pp. 226-28.

47Atharva-Veda XV. 15-17, quoted in Filliozat, p. 177 n. 1.

48Monier-Williams, s.v. "vāyu"; V. S. Apte, The Practical Sanskrit-English Dictionary, ed. P. K. Gode & C. G. Karve, rev. & enl. ed., 3 vols. (Poona: Prasad Prakashan, 1957), s.v. "vāyu".

49T. W. Rhys Davids & William Stede, eds., The Pali Text Society's Pali-English Dictionary (London: Luzac & Co., 1921-25), s.v. "vāta".

50The Collection of the Middle Length Sayings (Majjhima-Nikāya), trans. I. B. Horner, Pali Text Society Translation Series, Nos. 29-31, 3 vols. (London: Luzac & Co., 1954-59), 1:235-36. cf. also Buddhaghosa, The Path of Purity (Visuddhi Magga), trans. Pe Maung Tin, Pali Text Society Translation Series, Nos. 11, 17 and 21, 3 vols. (London: Luzac & Co., 1923-31; reprint ed. complete in one volume, 1971), pp. 405, 419.

⁵¹To demonstrate the similarities, the "breaths" might be set side by side as follows:

uddhangamo	-	udāna
adhogamo	-	apāna
kucchittho	}	samāna
koṭṭhāsayo		
assāso	-	prāna
aṅganusari	-	vyāna

⁵²These are the two varieties of wind distinguished in the Visuddhimagga (PTS ed., p. 36).

⁵³The Book of the Kindred Sayings (Samyutta-Nikāya), Pali Text Society Translation Series, Nos. 7, 10, 13, 14 and 16; 5 vols. vols. 1 and 2 trans. Mrs. Rhys Davids; vols. 3, 4 and 5 trans. F. L. Woodward (London: Luzac & Co., 1922?-30), 4:146-47.

CHAPTER 3

WIND AND ĀYURVEDA

A variety of different conceptions are subsumed in the Buddhist ideas of "wind". This partially accounts for the ambiguities we will encounter. These conceptions include atmospheric wind; the "wind-god"; the life-principle; the "vital airs"; the principle of motion; breath and speech as "wind"; and the three essential bodily elements, the "tridhātu", of Ayurvedic thought. We will examine this last conception here.

"Wind" (vāyu or vāta), bile (pitta) and phlegm (kapha or sleshman)¹ are the three essential elements. "Wind" is the most significant of these for bodily health. We will outline the Ayurvedic theory of illness, and indicate how medical ideas of "wind" may have influenced Buddhist thought.

The classical Ayurvedic manuals ascribed to Suśruta and Caraka were, according to Filliozat, compiled at approximately the same period.² He traces the origins of the Suśruta-Samhitā to the first centuries before our era,³ and the origin of many of its concepts to the Vedic samhitās. The tradition undoubtedly evolved gradually, and was transmitted orally before being written down.

The Ayurveda preserved a number of magical elements. But the medical manuals also contain information acquired by empirical observation of disease and healing and a general theory to explain it. We will be concerned with these theories.

The Ayurvedic and the early Buddhist traditions were in contact with each other. Buddhists appear to have borrowed Ayurvedic concepts, and there are close parallels between their ideas.

Vedic and Upaniṣadic thinkers were inclined to ascribe the creation and evolution of the world and living organisms to a single essence, immanent or transcendent - a particular divinity, the cosmic egg, breath, time, the "All-Gods", and so on.⁴ Buddhists denied the existence of any such essence. In their view, living beings and objects in the phenomenal world were complex results of a continuous interplay of causes and conditions. In this respect, Ayurvedic thought resembled the Buddhist. Both were unwilling to introduce a "spiritual" essence into the process of material causation.

According to Filliozat, Ayurvedic thought "aims at supplying a purely physical explanation of the universe and of the organism, both conceived as having the same nature."⁵

The three chief humours⁶ of the body, wind, bile and phlegm, correspond to the external elements of wind, fire, and water. These humours give the body life and movement.

The Ayurvedic samhitās "explain the state of health and of disease by the interplay of constitutive elements of the organism, . . . the alimentary and general regimes and . . . the influences of time and seasons."⁷ As in Buddhist thought, both the universe and the organism were agglomerations, composed of the same elements. The gods, too, resided within, rather than above, the natural order.⁸

Moreover, for the Āyurveda, the three internal elements were correlated with the three external elements of the material world.⁹ Such correlations of internal and external elements are found in the element theories of the Buddhists and the meditations that correspond to them.¹⁰

Disease, for the Āyurveda, was caused by a disturbance in the

three vital elements of the body. Or at least, such a disturbance always accompanied disease. Clear references to the role of these elements in pathology occur in texts as early as the fourth century B. C.¹¹ It was believed that when the physical body was healthy, its internal elements circulated freely in equilibrium. When disease occurred, however, this equilibrium was upset, and the movement of the elements was excited or impeded.

The three physiologically active elements, (tridhātu), sustained life, but they were also the causes of disease. They were therefore simultaneously the three "troubles", or three "poisons" (tridoṣa) of the organism.¹² In other words, the very elements which produced disease and disharmony were indispensable for maintaining life.

This ambivalence was also shared by each individual element. Vāyu, or vāta could designate the element itself, or any pathological disturbance of it which might appear as illness.¹³ Wherever wind was disturbed in the body, it caused pain. According to the Pali Canon, angavāta is pain in the limbs, or rheumatism; kucchivāta is pain in the stomach; piṭṭhivāta, pain in the back.¹⁴

Wind is the foremost of the three "humours".¹⁵ "Pneumatology", as Filliozat observes, "dominates the physiology of the Āyurveda".¹⁶ A similar idea is found in the Bṛhadāraṇyaka-Upaniṣad: "from whatever limb breath departs, that, indeed, dries up, for it is verily the essence of the limbs."¹⁷

Wind is more pervasive than the other "humours" since it alone exists in the same form in both body and external world. Internal fire is bile, internal water is phlegm, but internal wind remains

wind.

For Buddhists, the origins of suffering were to be discovered in mental factors. An individual's actions and his state of existence were ultimately determined by mental tendencies. Of the three "humours", wind was the most closely associated with mental functioning. A mad individual, for instance, was believed to have been "overpowered by winds."¹⁹ The association of wind with mental functions may have helped establish its pre-eminence.

The function of wind, like that of the other "humours", was double. It sustained life and caused disease. We observed that Vāyu, in the Rg-Veda, was wild, impetuous and disruptive; and yet, at the same time, was the preserver of order. Similarly, from a medical perspective, wind brought both healing and disease.²⁰ In the Rg-Veda, the breath of Vāta is spoken of as healing balm and pleasant medicine.²¹ But wind also spreads illnesses. According to the Suśruta-Samhitā, when a vital point (marman) of the body is injured, "the wind which is spread, diffuses itself all around . . . The wind, spreading itself, propagates extremely serious ailments in the body."²²

The theory of "humours" appears to have been familiar to Buddhists. The Pali Canon contains references to diseases caused by wind,²³ as well as to disruptions produced in the body by the other two "humours". Disturbances in the wind, bile and phlegm are counted among the unforeseeable causes of death in the Anguttara-Nikāya.²⁴

Some passages suggest that episodes of illness caused by the disturbance of the elements are accidents that may befall any embodied being. The Buddha himself is said to have suffered from an

"affliction of wind in the stomach".²⁵ A list in the Nikāyas of the eight possible sources of the origination of sufferings, includes, as only one among them, the ripeness of karma. Four of the causes on this list involve the bodily humours and their union. The others represent factors considered significant in Ayurvedic theory: changes of season, improper care, stress of circumstance, and so on.²⁶ The "four hundred and four diseases" of the Bodhicaryāvatāra²⁷ are explained with reference to the humours - 101 are caused by each alone and 101 by the three combined.²⁸

The list in the Nikāyas implies that suffering resulting from the imbalance of elements was divorced from karmic causes. The Abhidharma-Kośa denies this: "[Le] déséquilibre ou . . . l'irritation des humeurs . . . résulte de l'acte."²⁹ In fact, this is more consistent with a comprehensive view of karmic causation. The same passage of the Kośa makes it clear that imbalance among the three elements could cause mental as well as physical suffering.³⁰

Buddhists obviously were familiar with contemporary medical ideas. They respected and often praised medical skill³¹, which they associated with knowledge of the constituents of the body. The physician understood how these elements combined, how their imbalance produced suffering, and how this suffering was to be removed.

In the Buddhist tradition, the greatest of physicians and diagnosticians was the Buddha. It has often been observed that the fourfold Buddhist truth reproduced a formulation borrowed from medical science: disease, diagnosis, cure and medicine.³² The term "dhātu" itself, familiar in the Buddhist analysis of existence and its elements, was probably borrowed from Āyurveda.³³

Both Buddhists and Ayurvedic practitioners believed that disease resulted from "three poisons". To the Ayurvedic physician, these were the "humours", while for the Buddhist, they were the three psychological poisons. These were tendencies towards passion and lust (rajas), hatred and anger (dveṣa), and delusion and stupidity (moha). These caused mental suffering both to oneself and to others.³⁴ The causes of disturbance, for the Buddhist, were neither exclusively physiological, nor entirely mental. The Ayurvedic and Buddhist ideas of the "poisons" merged, so that the cosmological and physiological were united with the ethical and psychological.

In both traditions, disease was not caused by an invasion of outside forces but was inseparable from normal functioning. The three "poisons" and the three constitutive elements of the organism were identical. However, the Ayurvedic "humours" were in themselves neutral. They were only poisons when they functioned abnormally. But the Buddhist poisons were by their very nature defilements, whether or not they were in equilibrium. Phenomenal existence was inseparable from suffering. The poisons, which were the constituent elements of the individual, were the motive forces for the cycle of rebirth.

In a sense, life itself was a disease.³⁵ But how was this disease to be cured? Was the cure to be found in the total extinction of the elements of suffering, or in the restoration of equilibrium among the elements, as a doctor would restore the balance of the body's "humours"? Both ideas entered the conception of "nirvāṇa".

The Buddhist was confronted with a problem the Ayurvedic physician was not required to face. The doctor attempted to relieve

pain; but for the Buddhist, suffering was far more pervasive than mere physical pain.³⁶ The doctor was interested in prolonging life; the Buddhist saw birth and death as part of the same chain of calamities, and strove to eliminate the potential causes of both death and birth. And so, the Buddhists' diagnosis was extended to include these causes of birth. Diagnosing and prescribing correctly demanded greater insight, since the Buddhist was concerned not merely with this body and this life, but with many bodies and lives.

In a text by Saṅgharakṣa, the monastic preceptor is compared to a physician. His diagnosis is based upon the predominance of one or the other of the "three poisons" in his pupil.³⁷ His medicine is dhyāna, or meditation. The particular type of meditation prescribed depends on the "poison" to be counteracted. Those dominated by passion and lust are directed to meditate upon impurity. Those in whom anger and hatred are strong practice meditative exercises intended to develop compassion; while the antidote for delusion is meditation on the origin of ignorance.³⁸ In the first of these, the meditation on the repulsive (aśubhābhāvanā), the unpleasant substances of which the body is composed are enumerated and contemplated.³⁹ But the development of kindness and compassion towards all living beings is also recommended, to guard against aversive tendencies.⁴⁰ The meditator is instructed to cultivate the fervent wish that all living beings be happy and free from suffering.

These meditations may be seen as "cures" for the diseases caused by the mental poisons, or merely as attempts to control their more destructive effects. We must remember that healing may be a

gradual process. There are partial remedies, which allow the individual to progress further on the Path. And the remedy, even if effective, must be prescribed for the correct complaint, and applied correctly. Improperly applied, the above meditations may lead to self-indulgent attitudes, or to pointless self-mortification. All this is in accord with what Ayurvedic theory would recommend: moderation, proper diagnosis of the ailment, and use of the appropriate therapeutic antidote or restorative.

However, there is a paradox in this approach. Life originates in the poisons and is inseparable from them. If life is a calamity and a disease, how can it be improved?

Nevertheless, early Buddhists undoubtedly placed great emphasis on maintaining a healthy body.⁴¹ Human life was valuable because it afforded an opportunity for hearing the Dharma and entering the Path. Through hearing and understanding the Dharma the ills of phenomenal existence were remedied. In fact, the Dharma possessed healing virtue, and the mere hearing of it brought physical benefits.⁴² Dharma was the panacea.

On the other hand, all embodied existence involved suffering. The goal, Nirvāna, could not be comprehended within the categories applicable to phenomenal existence. From the perspective of the highest truth, long life was not a blessing.

However, the goal of long life was easily understandable and inherently appealing. There were methods for attaining it: Āyurveda, for example, studied techniques for prolonging the āyus (span of life). The master of Āyurveda strove to achieve longevity through maintaining

equilibrium among the elements of the body. Moral factors were also involved. An individual could acquire merit by performing pure deeds. Through this merit he could gain the benefit of a long life,⁴³ or be reborn as a god and enjoy a long and blissful life in the heaven-worlds.

The gods, however, remain within samsāra. When their merit is exhausted, they are reborn in lower states of existence.⁴⁴ But, for Buddhists, long life and a better rebirth were acceptable as preliminary goals. For example, by acquiring merit, a woman might be reborn as a man in her next life, or a layman might have the opportunity to become a monk. A long and healthy life provided the opportunity to make progress on the Path.

The ambivalence towards worldly existence is related to the ambiguity of "wind." Wind and breath were associated with the continuity of life and also with death. Wind was both the dispenser of healing balm and the propagator of diseases. Similarly, life provided the opportunity for hearing the Dharma; but life was also a disease.

The two goals - long life and the transcendence of worldly attachments - are reconciled in the idea of the Bodhisattva. Like the higher gods of cosmology, the Bodhisattvas have extremely long life-spans. In the Mahāyāna-Mahāparinirvāna-Sūtra, Kaśyapa asks for instruction as follows: "How do we get long life, the adamant and invincible body? How do we get great strength? How . . . do we attain ultimately the other shore?"⁴⁵

Long life may be interpreted as a provisional goal on the path to Nirvāna, the "other shore". But Bodhisattvas also experience

long life. In their case, it is not a goal, provisional or otherwise. It is rather a consequence of their vow to postpone final Nirvāna for the sake of saving all beings.

The behaviour of Śākyamuni, however, was difficult to reconcile with the Bodhisattva's course of action. Śākyamuni Buddha did enter final Nirvāna. He had the power to extend his own life-span;⁴⁶ yet he did not.

Of course, the problem did not present itself in precisely these terms for either Theravāda or Mahāyāna Buddhists. For the former, the Bodhisattva ideal was lacking. For the latter, Śākyamuni was the manifestation of a trans-historical principle of Buddhahood.

Both traditions, however, needed to resolve similar questions. These questions concerned the relation of the Tathāgata to the phenomenal world, and the relation of the goal of the Path to life in this world. Different and apparently opposite answers to these questions were possible. Images of "wind", because of their ambiguity, were helpful in reconciling such apparent oppositions.

NOTES

¹Filliozat, p. 28.

²Ibid., p. 25.

³Ibid., p. 15.

⁴Hiriyanna, pp. 40-41.

⁵Filliozat, pp. 203-4.

⁶The concept of "humours", derived, as it is, from the Western tradition, is not strictly applicable. But the Indian system of three elements (dhātus) is strikingly similar to the theory of four bodily humours in early Western medicine. "The medical theories of Greece and India . . . are related to analogous speculations, . . . their organic constitution is similar and they are scientific in the same sense, inasmuch as they are efforts at a purely natural explanation of vital, normal and pathological phenomena," Filliozat, pp. 30-31.

⁷Ibid., p. 26.

⁸Ibid., p. 204.

⁹Ibid., p. 28.

¹⁰In a sūtra referred to by I-tsing, a fourth internal doṣa is added to the triad of wind, bile and phlegm. With this addition, a precise correlation is established between the doṣas and the four great elements: earth, water, fire and wind. Vasubandhu, L'Abhidharmakośa, trans. Louis de la Vallée Poussin, Mélanges chinois et bouddhiques, vol. 16, New ed., with an Introduction by Étienne Lamotte, 6 vols. (Brussels: Institut Belge des Hautes Etudes Chinoises, 1971) 2:136 n.1.

¹¹In a vārttika of Katyayana; Filliozat, p. 192.

¹²Filliozat, p. 28.

¹³Monier-Williams, s.v. "vāyu"; Apte, s.v. "vāyu". Vātaroga, "wind-disease", is colic, or disturbance of the intestines, Pali Text Society Dictionary, s.v. "vāta".

¹⁴Pali Text Society Dictionary, s.v. "vāta".

¹⁵Filliozat, pp. 199-201, 209.

¹⁶Ibid., p. 173.

¹⁷Bṛhad. Up. 1. 3. 19; Hume, p. 79.

¹⁸Filliozat, p. 28.

¹⁹"Stories of the Departed (Peta-Vatthu)", trans. H. S. Gehman, in The Minor Anthologies of the Pali Canon, Part IV: Vimānavatthu and Petavatthu, Sacred Books of the Buddhists, vol. 30, New ed. (London & Boston: Pali Text Society and Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1974), p. 39. Cf. also Apte (s.v. "vāyu"), "vayunighna" as "affected by wind, crazy, mad, frantic."

²⁰In a similar way, the Vedic Rudra both injures and heals.

²¹In a play on words, "vāta ā vātu bheṣajam," "may the wind fan the remedy," Filliozat, p. 71; Rg-Veda I. 89. 4, Griffith 1:114; Rg-Veda VII. 35. 4, Griffith 2:39; Rg-Veda X. 86. 1, Griffith 2:608.

²²Quoted in Filliozat, p. 164.

²³Pali Text Society Dictionary, s.v. "vāta".

²⁴"The monk . . . reflects thus: 'The chances of death for me are many. Snake, scorpion or centipede may bite me and bring death and hinder me. I may stumble and fall, the food I have eaten may make me ill, bile may convulse me, phlegm choke me, cutting winds within rack me and bring death and hinder me.' " The Book of the Gradual Sayings (Anguttara-Nikāya), with an Introduction by Mrs. Rhys Davids; Pali Text Society Translation Series, Nos. 22, 24-27; 5 vols.; Vols. 1, 2 and 5 trans. F. L. Woodward; Vols. 3 and 4 trans. E. M. Hare (London: Luzac & Co., 1932-36), 3:219; 3:81.

²⁵The Book of the Discipline (Vinaya-Piṭaka), trans. I. B. Horner; Sacred Books of the Buddhists, vols. 10-11, 13-14, 20 and 25; 6 vols. (London: Luzac & Co., 1949-66), 4:278; 4:286.

²⁶Samyutta-Nikāya 4:155; Anguttara-Nikāya 3:101.

²⁷Sāntideva, Entering the Path of Enlightenment (The Bodhicaryāvatāra), trans. with guide by Marion L. Maties (New York: Macmillan, 1970), II. 55, p. 152.

²⁸Abh. Kośa 1:218 n. 4.

²⁹Abh. Kośa 3:127.

³⁰Abh. Kośa 3:125-26.

³¹See, e.g., The Sūtra of Golden Light [Suvarṇaprabhāsottama-Sūtra], trans. R. E. Emmerick, Sacred Books of the Buddhists, vol. 27 (London: Luzac & Co., 1970), pp. 75-76.

³²Kern, Manual of Indian Buddhism, pp. 46-47; quoted in G. S. P. Misra, The Age of Vinaya (New Delhi: Munshiram Manoharlal, 1972), p. 63.

³³Th. Stcherbatsky, The Central Conception of Buddhism and the Meaning of the Word "Dharma", 4th ed. (Delhi: Indological Book House, 1970), p. 8 n.22.

There are many other parallels between the Buddhist and Ayurvedic traditions. For example:

(1) Both use "antidotes" in their "therapeutics" (Filliozat, p. 29).

(2) Both prescribe moderation - the "Middle Way" - in habits and behaviour (Filliozat, p. 29).

(3) Āyurveda is known as aṣṭāṅga ("eight-fold"). (Filliozat, p. 2.

(4) The physician is, according to ancient notions, magically immune to disease. He moves amidst impurity without being contaminated. In this respect he may be compared to the Bodhisattva, who remains uncorrupted amid worldly defilements.

(5) The Tathāgata has acquired mastery over his āyus and can extend or cut short his life-span at will. Implicitly, he is a master of Āyurveda, which is literally the "science of longevity." The notion of Buddha as the great physician needs no further elaboration here; see Raoul O. Birnbaum, The Healing Buddha (Boulder: Shambhala, 1979).

(6) The Suśruta-Saṃhitā has been associated with Nāgārjuna; while Caraka, who is said to have compiled the Caraka-Saṃhitā, appears in one source as a doctor at the court of the Buddhist king, Kaṇiṣka (Filliozat, pp. 12, 17).

(7) Filliozat notes that a classic medical discourse (on wind) ends with a formula similar to that which regularly concludes Buddhist sūtras (Filliozat, p. 203).

³⁴Anguttara-Nikāya 1:140-41.

³⁵Thus the end of life, for the Arhat, is compared to the disappearance of a disease, Abh. Kośa 1:122.

³⁶Duḥkha (suffering) includes mental and physical pain and distress. It also includes suffering produced by change. Pleasurable conditions are impermanent, and unhappiness results when they cease. But, in a more profound sense, suffering is inseparable from embodied existence. In the Samyutta-Nikāya (3:158), suffering is defined as the five skandhas. These five - form, sensation, perception, motivations and consciousness - are the "aggregates" of which the individual is composed. Walpola Rahula, What the Buddha Taught (New York: Grove, Evergreen Original, 1962), pp. 19-20.

³⁷In this diagnosis, the teacher is guided by direct insight into his pupil's heart, by the responses given to his questions, and by outward signs, including the pupil's habits, manner of speech and physical appearance. "Tso-ch'an San-mei Ching", in Edward Conze, ed., Buddhist Texts Through the Ages (New York: Harper & Row, Harper Torchbooks, 1964), p. 277.

³⁸Ibid.

³⁹Bodhicaryāvatāra VIII. 40-70, Matics, pp. 197-200; Anguttara-Nikāya 3:228; Anguttara-Nikāya 5:75; Samyutta-Nikāya 4:69; Samyutta-Nikāya 5:250.

⁴⁰See, e.g., Visuddhimagga, trans. Ñāṇamoli, 1:333-42. The Buddha himself is said to have cared for a sick monk. The Anguttara-Nikāya (3:110) contains a list of the qualities of one who attends the sick. On ānāpānasati and aśubhābhāvanā as antidotes, see, e.g., "Itivuttaka", in The Minor Anthologies of the Pali Canon, Part II: Udāna and Itivuttaka, trans. F. L. Woodward, Sacred Books of the Buddhists, vol. 8 (London: Oxford University Press, 1948), p. 174.

⁴¹"Health is the highest gain, nibbāna the highest bliss." Māgandiya-Sutta, Majjhima-Nikāya 2:188; cf. also Majjhima-Nikāya 2:282; Anguttara-Nikāya 3:54; Anguttara-Nikāya 3:183.

⁴²Anguttara-Nikāya 3:173; Anguttara-Nikāya 5:74.

⁴³Good deeds result in a long life and few illnesses; evil deeds in a short life and many illnesses, Majjhima-Nikāya 3:253.

⁴⁴The medical texts contain lists of physical signs which infallibly indicate approaching death (Filliozat, pp. 267-68). In a similar way, physical signs foretelling death appear on the bodies of the gods. A list of these occurs in the Kośa (Abh. Kośa 2:136).

⁴⁵The Mahāyāna-Mahāparinirvāna-Sūtra, trans. Kosho Yamamoto, Karin Buddhological Series, No. 5; 3 vols. (Ube City, Japan: Karinbunko, 1973-75) 1:61.

⁴⁶A similar ability is attributed to the Arhat, Abh. Kośa 1:121.

CHAPTER 4

WIND AND BREATH IN THE PALI CANON

Some of the attributes of "wind" in the Pali Canon have already been noted. The Pali texts mention the medical theory of "humours". They refer to diseases caused by "wind". And they contain lists of atmospheric and bodily winds. But these are all peripheral to their central concern.

"Wind" in the Pali Canon appears primarily as one of the four (or five) mahābhūtas, the "great elements". "Breath" figures in the practice or ānāpānasati (Sanskrit, ānāpānasmṛti), "mindfulness of in-breathing and out-breathing", or meditation on the breath.

In this chapter I will examine the role of wind in the theory of "great elements", and in the meditations associated with it. I will then consider ānāpānasati and its relation to non-Buddhist "meditation on the breath", and will demonstrate that both the function of "wind" and the attitudes adopted towards it are ambiguous. The two opposed images which are evoked by the term Nirvāna reflect this ambiguity.

Buddhists developed new ideas of "wind". In the Atharva-Veda, Prāna was the force that gave life; "the lord of all". Buddhists could not accept such a transcendent principle, as they rejected any unitary causative principle, either personal or cosmological. They held that both the phenomenal world and the entities within it arose from various causes and conditions. As compounds, such entities were without an essence and impermanent.

But if the phenomenal world is not ultimately reducible to a

single principle or essence, it could, for early Buddhist thought, be analyzed into sets of fundamental elements or functions. The material world, including the bodies of living beings, was classified as rūpa (form or appearance). The subdivisions of rūpa were the four "great elements" (mahābhūtas): earth, water, fire and air¹. They may also be considered as the principles of extension, cohesion, heat and motion, respectively.² The interaction of the elements illustrates the processes underlying the material world: union into compounds, separation, and perpetual change. By integrating this element theory with the physiology of humours, Buddhists arrived at a coherent, materialistic conception of reality.

Classically, there were three humours, and it seems that, at the earliest stage, there were, correspondingly, three "great elements". In the Chāndogya Upaniṣad, three elements, heat, water and food, are the source of all created things.³ Air is absent from this list; but with such enumerations, it is not unusual to find that another element is eventually added which subsumes the previous ones.

Air may have been added as the fourth element. A fifth element, space (ākāśa) soon appeared; and then a sixth, consciousness (viññāna).⁴ However, though they may have been seen as somehow more fundamental, these last two did not participate in material causation in the same way as the original four.⁵ According to one scheme, ākāśa was not one of the mahābhūtas. It was great (mahā), but not a "factor of becoming" (bhūta). The traditional function of ākāśa was simply non-obstruction.⁶ Air was first among the "factors of becoming", the elements which participate actively in the phenomenal world.

Wind was first among the "humours" and also among the great elements. If air was the fourth element to be added, it would have been more fundamental than earth, water, and fire. In fact, where the "great elements" are listed in their traditional order, air does appear fourth. This order can be found in both Buddhist and non-Buddhist writings.⁷

Wind alone was listed as both a "humour" and a "great element". As we have observed, its form remained the same, whether it was internal or external.

Wind also furnished a particularly appropriate metaphor for impermanence and change. All the elements provided such images: water flowed; fire consumed and transformed what it touched; and even mountains could be overthrown. But wind was most closely related to flux, since it was the principle of motion (īraṇa)⁸ itself.

Breath, which is internal wind, is the object of attention in ānāpānasati. There is no parallel practice of observing the other elements,⁹ although the elements, collectively, are the object of meditative exercises.

The ambivalent attitude towards the phenomenal world reappears in these meditations. They can be divided into two groups.¹⁰ In the first, the monk begins by contemplating the instability of all material things. Everywhere he sees nothing but the incessant combination of elements. Through this he cultivates aversion towards the phenomenal world. In contrast to these, a second group of meditations can be distinguished. In these, the action of the elements provides the model which the monk is to imitate in his own thoughts and behaviour.

The Mahāhatthipadopama Sutta can be included in the first of these categories. It discusses each element in turn, concluding with the element of motion:

And what, your reverences, is the element of motion? The element of motion may be internal, it may be external...Whatever is motion, wind, is internal, referable to an individual and derived therefrom, such as winds going upwards, wind going downwards, winds in the abdomen, winds in the belly, winds that shoot across the several limbs, in-breathing, out-breathing...¹¹ Whatever is an internal element of motion and whatever is an external element of motion, just these are the element of motion. By means of perfect intuitive wisdom it should be seen of this as it really is thus: This is not mine, this am I not, this is not myself. Having seen this thus as it really is by means of perfect intuitive wisdom, he disregards the element of motion, he cleanses the mind of the element of motion.

There comes a time, your reverences, when the element of motion that is external is agitated, and it carries away villages and it carries away little towns...and it carries away districts and regions. There comes a time, your reverences, when in the last month of the hot weather people are looking about for wind by means of a palm (leaf) fan...The impermanence of this ancient element of motion can be shown, your reverences, its liability to destruction can be shown, its liability to decay can be shown, its liability to change can be shown. So what of this short-lived body derived from craving? There is not anything here for saying, 'I' or 'mine' of 'I am.'¹²

Such meditations are related to asubhābhāvanā - the meditation on the repulsive - more closely than to ānāpānasati:

...this body...which has material shape, is made up of the four great elements, originating from mother and father, nourished on gruel and sour milk, of a nature to be constantly rubbed away, pounded away, broken up and scattered, should be regarded as impermanent, suffering, as a disease, an imposthume, a dart, a misfortune, an affliction; as other, as decay, empty, not-self...¹³

Or, still more explicitly:

A monk reflects on this body according to how it is placed or disposed in respect of the elements, thinking: "In this body there is the element of extension, the element of cohesion, the element of heat, the element of motion. Monks, even as a skilled cattle-butcher, or his apprentice, having slaughtered a cow, might sit displaying its carcass at a crossroads, even so, monks, does a monk reflect on this body...Thus...he fares along independently of and not grasping at anything in the world."¹⁴

In the second category of descriptions, the goal is still non-attachment, but the elements do not represent the instability and suffering the monk is to leave behind. Instead, they stand for the qualities he is to cultivate. As in the first type of meditations, the monk observes the elements. He considers the perpetual process of combination and re-combination in which they are involved, and finds that he himself is subject to similar processes. But, while he remains detached, he does not cultivate revulsion for the elements, or "cleanse his mind" of them. Rather, he discovers qualities which exemplify non-attachment in the elements themselves. These qualities represent the ideal state of mind with which the monk is to confront the phenomenal world. A passage attributed to Sariputta illustrates this approach.

Lord, just as on the earth they cast things, clean and foul, dung, urine, spittle, pus and blood, yet for all that the earth is not filled with horror, loathing or disgust; even so, lord, like the earth, I abide with heart large, abundant, measureless, feeling no hatred, nor ill-will. . .

Lord, just as in water they wash things, clean and foul, dung, urine, spittle, pus and blood, yet for all that the water is not filled with horror, loathing or disgust; even so, lord, like water, I abide with heart, large, abundant, measureless. . .

Lord, just as fire burns things, clean and foul, dung, urine, spittle, pus and blood, yet for all that the fire is not filled with horror, loathing or disgust; even so, lord, like fire, I abide with heart, large, abundant, measureless. . .

Lord, just as the wind blows on things, clean and foul, dung, urine, spittle, pus and blood, yet for all that the wind is not filled with horror, loathing or disgust; even so, lord, like the wind, I abide with heart, large, abundant, measureless, feeling no hatred, nor ill-will. . .¹⁵

In another passage, Rahula is urged to cultivate an identification with the four elements: earth, water, fire, and, in what follows, wind:

...from developing the (mind-) development that is like air, Rahula, agreeable and disagreeable sensory impressions that have arisen, taking hold of your thought, will not persist. As,

Rahula, the air does not repose anywhere, even so do you, Rahula, develop the (mind-) development that is like air.¹⁶

The mind of the meditator, like the elements which do not repose anywhere,¹⁷ should not settle into attachment to particular entities.

The Milinda-Pañha is more specific, listing the qualities of each element which the monk is to emulate. Five attributes of the wind are enumerated, including its capacity to overcome obstacles and its homelessness. As the wind constantly wanders through the sky, so the monk is to accustom himself to wandering among lofty things.¹⁸

The first variety of element-meditation teaches revulsion from the elements and from the phenomenal world. In this it resembles aśubhābhāvanā, the meditation on the repulsive. The second, which inculcates an identification with the qualities of the elements, can be compared to ānāpānasmṛti, mindfulness of breathing. Aśubhābhāvanā and ānāpānasmṛti are the two essential preliminaries to the Path in the Abhidharma of the Sarvāstivādins.¹⁹ Non-attachment is common to both. It is attained in aśubhābhāvanā through withdrawal, but in ānāpānasmṛti through mental identification with the elements.

Before examining ānāpānasati, a further aspect of these element-meditations must be noted. These meditations lead to mastery over the elements involved.²⁰ Mastery over the air element is displayed by great sages and Arhats who travel through the air sitting cross-legged. Quite literally, they do not repose anywhere.²¹ The prototype of these sages is the Muni of the Rg-Veda:

The Muni, made associate in the work of every God
Looking upon all varied forms flies through the region

of the air.
The steed of Vāta, Vāyu's friend, the Muni...²²

The Arhat is master of the elements. In meditation, he can prolong his life by drawing primary elements from the Rūpadhātu²³ into his body.²⁴

Nirodhasamāpatti - the trance of cessation - is the meditative state in which perception and feeling cease. In nirodhasamāpatti, the "great elements" of the body are in equilibrium.²⁵ He who has entered the trance of cessation cannot be murdered, wounded with a knife, burned or drowned.²⁶ Because the elements are in equilibrium, thought does not arise.²⁷ This implies that the arising and cessation of thought depend on the condition of the elements, including wind. The Vibhāṣā seems to confirm this. According to la Vallée Poussin, it distinguishes the recollection which brings about equality of thought from that which produces equilibrium among the mahābhūtas. The latter is said to interrupt thought; it cannot, therefore, be said to equalize it. This second recollection is evidently a more advanced stage, since it affects both thought and the mahābhūtas.

Similarly, in the Cūlavēdalla Sutta of the Majjhima-Nikāya, in-breathing and out-breathing precede thought. Breath - the element of wind - can exist independently of thought; but thought can only arise when breath is present:

There are three activities...: activities of body, activities of speech, activities of mind....

In-breathing and out-breathing...is activity of body; initial thought and discursive thought is activity of speech; perception feeling is activity of mind...

...when a monk is attaining the stopping of perception and feeling, activity of speech is stopped first, then activity of body, then activity of mind...

...when a monk is emerging from the attainment of the stopping

of perception and feeling, activity of mind arises first, then activity of body, then activity of speech.²⁸

Initial thought and discursive thought cease in the second stage of trance (jhāna). The "stopping" of in-breathing and out-breathing takes place in the fourth stage; perception and feeling cease only in nirodhasamāpatti, the ultimate stage of trance. But there is an ambiguity here: perception and feeling are activities of mind. Therefore, consciousness precedes breath, if thought does not. The relation of wind to consciousness was, as we will see, a difficult question. Their order of precedence varies in different texts.

In ānāpānasati, the monk was concerned exclusively with the element of wind. We observed that wind was foremost among the "great elements".²⁹ We also noted the qualities of the elements the monk was to emulate. The elements are not filled with loathing and disgust at the impurities of the phenomenal world. The function of ānāpānasati is similar: it allows the monk to confront the repulsive defilements of the world without recoiling.

Asubhābhāvanā, the meditation on the horrible, was practiced in the early Buddhist community although it was not uniquely Buddhist.³⁰ The Nikāyas record that the profound distaste for existence which this practice induced led many monks to suicide. When Ānanda brought this situation to the Buddha's attention, ānāpānasati was introduced as a corrective.³¹ Yogic breathing exercises evidently were known before the time of the Buddha, but these exercises differed from ānāpānasati. The Mahāvibhāṣā, according to Lin Li-Kouang, says that this practice was unknown to non-Buddhists,³² and the Abhidharma-Kośa

insists that it is exclusively Buddhist.³³

If ānāpānasati was not a Buddhist innovation, it was at least regarded as such by the later tradition. This suggests that it was an element which set Buddhist practice apart from that of non-Buddhists.

In later times, both aśubhābhāvanā and ānāpānasmr̥ti are preliminaries to the Path.³⁴ In the Abhidharma-Kośa, they follow the cultivation of thoughts directed towards Nirvāṇa and the development of the monastic virtues. However, they precede the smṛtyupasthānas (exercises in mindfulness) and the acquisition of the "beneficial roots" (kuśalamūla) which are conducive to insight. These are all preliminary exercises. The path itself begins with the succeeding stage, satyābhīsamaya, or comprehension of the Buddhist truths.³⁵

In the Kośa, ānāpānasmr̥ti is conducive to insight, but it precedes understanding of the Buddhist truths. In the Nikāyas, the outline of the path is less detailed, and the remembrance of the breath receives extravagant praise.³⁶ The Buddha himself performs ānāpānasati:

Monks, if the wanderers who hold other views should thus question you: "Friends, in what way of life does Gotama the recluse generally spend the rainy season?"...thus should ye make reply..."Friends, the Exalted One generally spends his time during the rainy season in the intent concentration on in-breathing and out-breathing."³⁷

Ānāpānasati is "the best of ways, the Tathāgata's way of life."³⁸ It leads to equanimity, mastery and release: "when exercised, when frequently practised, it is greatly fruitful, greatly advantageous."³⁹ In ānāpānasati, no discipline is imposed on the rhythm of the breath. The monk simply remains mindful of it. He

...sits down cross-legged, holding his back erect, arousing mindfulness in front of him. Mindful he breathes in, mindful he breathes out. Breathing in a long (breath) he comprehends,

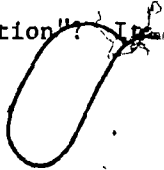
"I am breathing in a long (breath)"; or breathing out a long (breath) he comprehends, "I am breathing out a long (breath)"; or breathing in a short (breath) he comprehends, "I am breathing in a short (breath)"; or breathing out a short (breath) he comprehends, "I am breathing out a short (breath)". He trains himself thinking: "I shall breathe in experiencing the whole body"; he trains himself thinking: "I shall breathe out experiencing the whole body."⁴⁰

Restraint and forced control of the breath was alien to ānāpānasati. In this, ānāpānasati differed from the "non-breathing" meditation evidently practiced by ascetics of the time. This "non-breathing" meditation, which seems to have originated in very early times, was consistent with non-Buddhist ideas of breath. Prāṇa was believed to be a creative and life-giving force. Beneficial effects would follow if the ascetic filled his body with prāṇa and developed ways of retaining it.

Gautama practiced non-breathing meditation prior to his enlightenment. This meditation is said to have injured his body. In the Mahāsaccaka Sutta, its effects are described in great detail. Gautama suffered headaches and experienced intense heat. His body was cut and racked by fierce winds, and there was turbulence and disruption among its elements.⁴¹ An Ayurvedic practitioner would have concluded that the circulation of the elements in the body had been excited or blocked.

The Buddha's condemnation of non-breathing meditation was not forgotten. Restraint of the breath (prāṇāyāma) was widely practiced among non-Buddhists, but prāṇāyāma did not become a Buddhist practice until the time of the Tantras. And even then, it was interpreted differently.⁴²

Why did the Buddha reject "non-breathing meditation"?



was painful and unhealthy; and the turbulence it caused was not conducive to calm, cessation and non-attachment. The Buddha described the effects of this meditation on himself as follows: "Although unsluggish energy came to be stirred up in me, unmuddled mindfulness set up, yet my body was turbulent, not calmed, because I was harassed in striving by striving against that very pain."⁴³

Buddhists believed that right understanding and insight were necessary for the removal of suffering. Self-mortification only added more suffering to one's burden.⁴⁴ Non-Buddhist ascetics may have believed that the mastery of prāṇa would enable them to renew their vital force. For Buddhists, this would have been a pointless exercise, since life itself was profoundly unsatisfactory. Non-breathing meditation disrupted the physical equilibrium which was needed for a clear insight into the truth.

Moreover, the suppression of breath implied a refusal by the individual to acknowledge his participation in the interplay of elements. The continuous process of combination and change taking place in the individual was disclosed by the movement of breath. Breath was the characteristic of life, and life included birth and death. The attempt to cut oneself off physically from this process was an error. Only through right understanding could the individual extricate himself.

In contrast to the attempt to withdraw from existence, ānāpān-
asāti affirmed the identity of the individual with the natural process of continuous change. In-breath and out-breath, arising and cessation, life and death, creation and destruction, each gave rise to the

next in an unending causal sequence.

In the Abhidharma-Kośa, ānāpānasmṛti is described as "tattvam-anasikāra".⁴⁵ It is neither an effort to gain power, nor an exercise in imagination and visualization: it is seeing things as they are. For the Buddhist, this seeing was an immediate fact of experience.

In ānāpānasati, the monk watched the movement of his breath, which was the element of wind in his body and a fundamental constituent of the phenomenal world:

Ces souffles ne sont pas seulement vent (vāyu), mais ils sont les quatre grands éléments (mahābhūta), et encore rūpa dérivé de ces quatre; et la pensée avec les dharmas mentaux repose sur eux.⁴⁶

In ānāpānasmṛti, the internal and external winds were seen as merging and interpenetrating. La Vallée Poussin describes this process as follows:

Observer le rythme de la respiration, compter les mouvements de l'air inspiré et expiré, de un jusqu'à dix, sans compter trop haut ou trop bas et sans confusion; répéter ce calcul jusqu'à maîtrise parfaite; suivre l'air qui pénètre le corps jusqu'aux orteils et considérer les masses du corps comme des perles enfilées sur le courant d'air; suivre l'air expulsé à une distance d'une coudée, de deux coudées, jusqu'aux vents supérieurs du cosmos.⁴⁷

Through mindfulness of the breath, the monk develops a nature similar to that of the great elements. The wind, like the breath, is constantly in movement. It does not repose anywhere. Wind participates in the world, but is not contaminated by it. The monk identifies himself with the movement of the wind. But at the same time, he becomes calm and still: "When one cultivates and makes much of the concentration on in-breathing and out-breathing, there is no wavering or shaking of body, no wavering or shaking of mind."⁴⁸

Anāpānasati involves both movement and stillness. In reconciling these two, the practice brings together two apparently opposed functions of wind and air. From one perspective, wind drives away defilements and impurities:

...as wind sets all the trees that grow upon the earth in agitation, bends them down; just so...should the strenuous Bhikshu, earnest in effort, retiring into the midst of the woods, there, examining into the true nature of all things...beat down all evil dispositions.⁴⁹

Wind is active. But its action purifies, and is therefore conducive to stillness and non-attachment:

Meditate and conquer...A lamp with feeble rays is bent down by the wind like a creeper. In the same way do you...not clinging, shake off Māra.⁵⁰

The burning lamp is the flame of phenomenal existence, which is "bent down" by the wind. In this sense, wind is the healer and the dispenser of remedies. But, as we observed, wind may also be the "propagator of diseases", in which case its force should be resisted:

...Just as a solid mass of rock is not moved by the wind, so sights, tastes, sounds, smells, and all things to touch, mental objects, pleasant and unpleasant, do not cause a venerable one's mind, which is steadfast and unfettered, to tremble, and he sees its passing away.⁵¹

Wind represents the temptations of worldly life, which produce imbalance and disruption:

As the wind throws down a tree of little strength so indeed does Mara overthrow him who lives looking for pleasures, uncontrolled in his senses, immoderate in eating, indolent, and of low vitality.

As the wind does not throw down a rocky mountain, so Mara indeed does not overthrow him who lives unmindful of pleasures, well controlled in his senses, moderate in eating, full of faith, and of high vitality.⁵²

But this dichotomy is represented not only by such occasional and unconnected images: it relates to an ambiguity in one of the central doctrinal conceptions of the Nikāyas: Nibbāna, Nibbāna

can call to mind either extinction or steadiness, either the lamp flame which has altogether ceased, or the lamp flame which burns without wavering or flickering. In the first case, wind is a purifying force. It "bends down the lamp", the burning which is phenomenal existence, and finally extinguishes it.⁵³ In the second case, the wind carries and spreads defilements. It is when the wind ceases that the flame becomes steady.⁵⁴ Or, alternatively, this impure wind does not cease, but the mind becomes steady and is no longer moved by it. In the above passages, the monk is not swayed by the temptations of phenomenal experience, just as a rock is not moved by the wind.

Paradoxically, the purifying wind, in this analysis, leads to extinction. The impure wind is associated with steadiness and continued existence. The wind, in its activity, can be related to either purification or defilement. But this also holds true of its cessation. In Chapters 5, 6 and 7 we will examine how this ambiguity reveals itself in the physiological, cosmological and mental spheres.

NOTES

¹Samyutta-Nikāya 2:65; 2:113; 2:152; Samyutta-Nikāya 3:51; 3:55; 3:166; Samyutta-Nikāya 4:50; 4:127. The list could easily be extended. The Abhidharma-Kośa refers to these elements as dhatus, Abh. Kośa 1:21-22.

²"Certain of the qualities which reveal themselves to a mind, are regarded as more elementary or primary and hence basic, than others. These more elementary qualities are termed Mahābhūta, . . . 'great elementary qualities.' . . . 'Earth' is the symbolic expression for all that is solid and able to carry a load, 'water' for all that is fluid and cohesive, 'fire' for all that is warm or has temperature, and 'air' for all that is light and moving," Herbert V. Guenther, Philosophy and Psychology in the Abhidharma (Berkeley & London: Shambhala, 1976), p. 146.

³Ch. Up. 6. 2-6, Hume, pp. 24-43.

⁴Dhātuvibhaṅga Sutta, Majjhima-Nikāya 3:287; Samyutta-Nikāya 3:182.

⁵On this issue, see Abh. Kośa 1:66; 1:66 n. 1.

⁶Abh. Kośa 1:8.

⁷The five elements appear, in the traditional order, with air fourth, in the Taittirīya Upaniṣad (2. 1), Hume, p. 283.

⁸Stcherbatsky, p. 82.

⁹Or, at least, none of comparable importance. The "Fire-Sermon" (Vinaya-Piṭaka 4:45-46) comes to mind.

¹⁰I am, omitting from consideration here element-meditations centered on the kasinas, or devices for concentration. see, e.g. Dialogues of the Buddha (Dīgha-Nikāya), trans. T. W. Rhys Davids et al., Sacred Books of the Buddhists, vols. 2-4; 3 vols. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1899-1910?) 3:247.

¹¹The six breaths; see Chapter 2 above.

¹²Majjhima-Nikāya 1:235-36. See also Mahārāhulovāda Sutta, Majjhima-Nikāya 2:93; Anāthapiṇḍikovādasutta, Majjhima-Nikāya 3:311; Anguttāra-Nikāya 2:171; also, Aryasura, The Jātakamālā (Garland of Birth Stories), trans. J. S. Speyer (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1971), p. 318; and Śāntideva, Śikṣhā-Samuccaya: A Compendium of Buddhist Doctrine, trans. Cecil Bendall and W. H. D. Rouse (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1971), pp. 227-31.

¹³Dīghanakha Sutta, Majjhima-Nikāya 2:179.

¹⁴Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta, Majjhima-Nikāya 1:74.

¹⁵Anguttara-Nikāya 4:249-50.

¹⁶Mahārāhulovāda Sutta, Majjhima-Nikāya 2:94-95.

¹⁷This, too, is ambiguous: it might just as easily be said that they are never at rest.

¹⁸The Questions of King Milinda [Milinda-Pañha], trans. T. W. Rhys Davids, The Sacred Books of the East, vols. 35-36, 2 vols. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1890-94; reprint ed., New York: Dover, 1963), 2:312-13.

¹⁹Abh. Kośa 4:148; also Mahāvibhāṣā, quoted in Lin Li-Kouang, L'Aide-Mémoire de la Vraie Loi (Saddharma-Smṛtyupasthāna-Sūtra), with an Introduction by P. Demiéville (Paris: Adrien-Maisonneuve, 1949), p. 124.

²⁰Abh. Kośa 3:229 n. 3.

²¹See, e.g., Majjhima-Nikāya 1:43; 1:92. There are numerous instances of this in the Jātakas: The Jātaka, ed. E. B. Cowell, 6 vols. (London: Pali Text Society and Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1973):

²²Rg-Veda X. 136. 4-5; Griffith 2:582.

²³The "realm of form". It is the second of the three realms: the realm of desire, the realm of form, and the formless realm.

²⁴An opinion attributed to Ghosaka; Abh. Kośa 1:121.

²⁵Abh. Kośa 1:213, 1:213 n.2.

²⁶Ibid.

²⁷Ibid. We are reminded here of the equilibrium of elements which the Ayurvedic practitioner strove to achieve.

²⁸Majjhima-Nikāya 1:363-64; also in Samyutta-Nikāya 4:201-2.

²⁹Wind was also, perhaps, more accessible to perception than the other "great elements". The Kośa explains that "wind", as it is used in common speech, corresponds - at least in some instances - to "wind", the "great element", or the principle of motion. This cannot be said of the other three mahābhūtas. What we call "earth" is "colour and shape" (varṇasamsthānam), not the "great element" of earth. The same applies to what, in everyday speech we call "water" and "fire." But the same is not true of wind: "Dans l'usage commun, . . . le vent, c'est ou bien l'élément vent, ou bien de la couleur . . ."

et de la figure. En effect, on parle de 'vent noir', 'vent circulaire'; mais ce qu'on appelle 'vent', dans le monde, c'est aussi l'élément vent," Abh. Kośa 1:23-24. Wind, here, is īrana. This meant both motion and wind. Stcherbatsky (p. 11) explains that technical and common usages here coincided, as they did not for the other mahābhūtas. In any event, the use of īrana in this way could have led to the inference that the operation of air was more visible than that of the other elements.

³⁰See, e.g., Maitri Upaniṣad 1. 3, Hume; p. 413.

³¹Samyutta-Nikāya 5:284-85; Lin Li-Kouang, p. 124; Vinaya-Piṭaka 1:116-22. The superiority of ānāpānasmṛti to aśubhābhāvanā is indicated in a comment by Saṃghabhadra: "Celui qui est entré dans le Chemin après méditation d'aśubhā, peut tomber; celui qui y est entré après ānāpānasmṛti ne tombe pas," quoted in Abh. Kośa 4:269.

³²The Buddha, speaking of how non-Buddhists are to be converted to the faith, remarks that the very name ānāpānasmṛti is unknown to them. The sūtra cited here by the Vibhāṣā explains (in Lin Li-Kouang's translation): "l'ānāpānasmṛti n'appartenait qu'aux bouddhistes, et ne leur était pas commune avec les hérétiques, tandis que l'aśubhābhāvanā l'était", Lin Li-Kouang, p. 125.

³³Abh. Kośa 4:154.

³⁴Abh. Kośa (4:158). In the Mahāvibhāṣā, according to Lin Li-Kouang, they are considered as auxiliaries to the practice of the smṛtyupasthānas. As early as the Anguttara-Nikāya (1:38), ānāpānasati is listed as one among ten anusmṛti. The list of these also occurs in the Visuddhimagga (PTS ed., p. 227).

³⁵The Path is outlined in Chapter 6 of the Kośa, and summarized by la Vallée Poussin, Abh. Kośa 4:i-xi.

³⁶In the Visuddhimagga and the later Theravāda tradition, it retains its importance as an essential adjunct to meditation. But from the perspective of interpretation, little was added to earlier formulations.

³⁷Samyutta-Nikāya 5:326.

³⁸Samyutta-Nikāya 5:289.

³⁹Majjhima-Nikāya 2:97; Samyutta-Nikāya 5:112.

⁴⁰Majjhima-Nikāya 2:96. See also Majjhima-Nikāya 1:71; Majjhima-Nikāya 3:124; Samyutta-Nikāya 5:132; Samyutta-Nikāya 5:292; Mahāsatiṭṭhāna Sutta, Dīgha-Nikāya 2:327; Visuddhimagga, PTS ed., p. 305.

41 Majjhima-Nikāya 1:297-99. Cf. also The Mahāvastu, trans. J. J. Jones, Sacred Books of the Buddhists, vols. 16, 18 & 19, 3 vols. (London: Luzac & Co., 1949-56), 2:120-21.

42 It would be rash, however, to generalize about the Tantras, since both Hindu and Buddhist streams were rich in heterogeneous elements. The "stopping" of the vital wind is spoken of, among Buddhists, particularly by the authors of the Bengali dohas. See, e.g., S. B. Dasgupta, An Introduction to Tantric Buddhism, with a Foreword by Herbert V. Guenther (Berkeley: Shambhala, 1974), pp. 169-70.

43 Majjhima-Nikāya 1:297

44 Prāṇāyāma, as we will see, was connected with Brahmanic ideas of sacrifice and expiation.

45 Abh. Kośa 4:155.

46 Abh. Kośa 4:155-56.

47 Louis de la Vallée Poussin, La Morale Bouddhique, with a Preface by Emile Senart (Paris: Nouvelle Librairie Nationale, 1927), pp. 83-84. But cf. Abhidharma-Kośa: "D'après d'autres maîtres, [l'ascète] suit l'expiration jusqu'au 'cercle du vent' (vāyumaṅḍala) qui soutient l'univers et jusqu'aux vents Vairambhas. Cette opinion n'est pas admissible, car l'ānāpānasmṛti est tattvamanasikāra, vue des choses comme elles sont, " Abh. Kośa 4:155.

48 Samyutta-Nikāya 5:280.

49 Milinda-Pañha 2:313.

50 The Elders' Verses, trans. K. R. Norman, Pali Text Society Translation Series, Nos. 38 & 40, 2 vols., Vol. 1: Theragāthā, Vol. 2: Therīgāthā (London: Luzac & Co., 1969-71), Theragāthā 415-16, vol. 1, p. 44.

51 Theragāthā 643-44, Norman 1:64.

52 The Dhammapada, trans. S. Radhakrishnan (London: Oxford University Press, 1950), 1. 7-8, pp. 60-61.

53 Fire when it goes out enters into wind; it is also produced from it; Satapatha-Brahmana, 4:333.

54 Dīpankara Buddha, "he who lights a lamp", is honoured as the guardian deity of merchants and those who travel by sea because he is also the "calmer of the waves." Alex Wayman, "The Lamp and the Wind in Tibetan Buddhism", Philosophy East and West 5 (July 1955): 149-54. The image of the wind producing the waves of phenomenality is found in the Laṅkāvatāra Sūtra, as we will see.

CHAPTER 5

WIND, BREATH AND LIFE

Although Buddhists developed distinctive concepts, these did not evolve in a cultural vacuum. Buddhist thought embodied the generally accepted presuppositions and symbols of Indian culture.

Images of "wind", "breath" and "air" were among those adopted by Buddhists. These images, which figured in Upanisadic and pre-Buddhist speculation were used in the Nikāyas in ways which reflected both the Indian cultural background and particular Buddhist pre-occupations.

The Buddhists' attitudes towards the phenomenal world, of which wind was the primary element, were ambivalent. This ambivalence appeared in their use of images of "wind" which were similarly ambiguous. Again, Buddhists emphasized the need for insight. Consequently, their interpretation of breathing meditation related mindfulness of the breath to the attainment of insight.

Over the centuries, Buddhists developed comprehensive explanations of the phenomenal universe in terms drawn from their own and other traditions. In the next three chapters, I will examine physiological, cosmological and mental processes, observing how Buddhists used and modified earlier ideas of "wind".

To begin with, "wind" was related to the birth and death of the individual. It represented the movement which brought material elements together, and was therefore associated with life. But as it separated and dispersed the elements, it was also associated with

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death.

In pre-Buddhist thought, Vāyu was a god and Prāṇa, in the Atharva-Veda, exhibits divine characteristics. For Buddhists, vāyu was the principle of motion. It was the internal or external "wind", and it was also one of the body's humours. Though inorganic, it participated in organic life. Prāṇa denoted breath, life, or a living being. It was certainly not divine, and at times appears to be no more than an abstract principle.

Although Buddhists shared the general Indian notion that "wind" was associated with life and death, they could not countenance any interpretation of vāyu and prāṇa as an essence or fundamental substratum.

Prāṇa, in particular, was difficult to reconcile with Buddhist thought. While the concept of breath as a "vital force" was too basic to be set aside, this couldn't be a substantive and independent essence. That is, as breath is the invariable concomitant of human and animal life, it is the distinguishing characteristic of sentient beings. But this need not mean that it was a life-essence. Similarly, a Western biologist may speak of "life" but reject vitalism.

By extension, prāṇa referred to sentient beings themselves. It meant "a living being, a creature"; or, less frequently, "an animal".¹ Buddhaghosa explains pānabhūta as including all beings that breathe:

...breathing things (pāṇa)...includes creatures belonging to the five-constituents...being (existence)², which are bound up with in-breath and out-breath.³

However, since pāṇa itself meant "beings that breathe" Buddhaghosa expands his definition to include bhūta: "They are (bhavanti), thus they are beings (bhūta)...which...includes one-constituent and four-constituent beings."⁴ The "four-constituent beings" classified as

bhūta are those of the formless world, which possess all skandhas except rūpa (form). The "one-constituent beings" are non-percipient entities of the two lower worlds, the Kāmadhātu and the Rūpadhātu. These possess form, but lack the four mental skandhas. Plants, for example, would be classified as bhūta; insects as pāna. Insects breathe and perceive, but plants do not.

Buddhaghosa's definition occurs in his commentary on the Metta-Sutta, which describes the meditative extension of friendliness and compassion. Pāna appears in similar contexts elsewhere in the Nikāyas.⁵ It also occurs in prānātipāta, the ethical prohibition against taking life.⁶ For Buddhists, pāna rarely if ever referred to human beings alone. The beings defined as pāna were those in the various gatis, or "stations of rebirth": gods⁷, human beings, animals, hungry ghosts, and hell-beings. To the Buddhists, the word pāna evoked the image of the round of samsaric existence. Pāna, as we will see, transferred karmic effects between the various states of existence. It was the connecting link between the gatis. As the monk saw all beings as similar to himself, i.e. as pānas, this term provided the basis for an ethical universalism.

However, it was difficult to eradicate the older connotations of prāna, such as that of being a constitutive essence of beings.

In the Abhidharma-Kośa, Vasubandhu comments on prānātipāta, the prohibition against taking life.⁸ If the skandhas are momentary, he asks, what is it that is taken?

Two definitions of prāna are given in response to this. In the first, prāna seems virtually identical to physical breath. It is said to be a wind (vāyu), which is extinguished at death: Its existence

is dependent on the body and on thought, since it is not present in the two trances of cessation (nirodhasamāpattis).

But inhalation and exhalation did not exist in the first stages of embryonic growth. If prāna was simply physical breath, then killing an embryo would not be taking life (prānātipāta). Moreover, it was far from obvious that breath depended upon the body and thought. The order could easily be reversed, since without breath, there could be no embodied existence.

Those who argued in this way concluded that prāna was something more than mere physical breath. Vasubandhu therefore proposes a second definition, according to which prāna is identical to the life-faculty, the jīvitendriya.

Buddhaghosa also defines pāna with reference to the life-faculty, although he does not identify the two. Pāna is "a category-continuity involving the life-faculty, or . . . a creature described derivatively upon that."⁹ Buddhaghosa seems to be attempting to define rigorously a word which had passed into common language. He does not define pāna circularly by invoking "breath"; and he is careful to avoid the implication that pāna is a subtle essence.

Jīvitendriya was a more abstract term than prāna. It was less evocative of substantiality, and it was not associated with Vedic and Brahmanic ideas. Where Buddhist analytic thought required precise terminology, abstract words such as this were preferred to prāna. The Buddhist vocabulary included other terms similar to jīvitendriya. Jīvitam could be used to mean life, the duration of life, or livelihood. Āyus referred to the span of life.¹⁰ By extension, it meant health, vigour, life and the vital force.

These terms acquired substantive connotations of their own.¹¹ As Buddhist thought became more systematic, thinkers attempted to define the status of such terms more precisely. Was the jīvitendriya the same as or different from the body?¹² Who, if anyone, could be said to possess it?¹³ Were the jīvitam and āyus substantially existent in themselves,¹⁴ or were they merely conventional designations?

In spite of these difficulties, such terms were seen as preferable, for their purposes, to prāna. Yet this latter idea could not be set aside. It was reinterpreted, as we have seen. In addition, the concepts of prāna developed in this way merged with "pneumatic" ideas which were less distinctively Buddhist. These ideas were clearly enunciated in the medical manuals. In them, wind is one of the three quasi-substantial "humours". But it is also foremost among the constituents of the body. According to the Caraka-Saṃhitā, wind (vāyu)

...promotes movements of all types, it puts brakes on the mind and also guides it,¹⁵ this puts in action all the faculties, it is the conveyor of objects of all the faculties, the distributor of all the elements of the organism, which brings about the coherence of the body, it is the promoter of speech...the basis of the power of hearing and of touch, the source of joy and of liveliness, the kindler of fire, the drier of the elements of trouble,¹⁶ the expulser of impurities,...[and] the maker of embryos...¹⁷

But this same wind is also an "element of trouble":

When...it is excited in the body, it inflicts...all sorts of derangements to the detriment of the forces of colour, of well-being and longevity. It puts in tumult the mind, attacks all the faculties, throws down the embryos, provokes malformation, makes it go on for too long a time, engenders fright, chagrin, bewilderment, sadness, loquacity, and blocks the breaths.¹⁸

Wind, again, is both the "dispenser of remedies" and the "propagator of diseases": It maintains the body in health and is the "determining cause of the prolongation of life when it is not excited."¹⁹ But, for the Buddhist, as we have seen, it was doubtful whether long

life, or any life at all, was desirable.

The action of wind was a factor in the arising, continued existence, and destruction of beings. Wind precipitated birth; it sustained beings during life; and, when disrupted, it caused death. Wind was the "maker of embryos", and therefore a formative, creative force.²⁰ This idea is found in the Abhidharma-Kośa as well: rūpa and the four great elements are contained within, and derived from, breath.²¹

The rôle of wind in conception and in pre-natal life is recognized in the Atharva-Veda: "He puts to play apāna; he puts to play prāna, the Man, inside the matrix. When thou, prāna, thou pushest, then he is born again."²²

But wind is not only the maker of embryos; it also "throws them down". This "throwing down" can be understood as the "pushing" of the Atharva-Veda. Probably, when the winds of the body began to be catalogued, downward-moving winds were included, in addition to the breath of the upper part of the body. These descending winds were held to be responsible not only for excretion,²³ menstruation and flatulence, but also for the ejaculation of semen and the expulsion of the infant.

The Abhidharma-Kośa describes the rôle of the bodily winds in birth as follows: "Quand l'embryon est mûr, se lèvent dans la matrice des vents nés de la maturité de l'acte qui font tourner l'embryon et le disposent vers la porte de la naissance..."²⁴

Individuals are born into certain conditions as the result of their past actions. Actions stir up a "wind" which is the medium by which their later effects are produced. "Wind" carries the potential

effects of actions and eventually impels them to take on material form. It is this wind that pushes the embryo towards birth.

The Visuddhimagga, in its description of birth, refers to kammajavāta. Nyānamoli translates this as "kamma producing winds" or "forces". The passage in question is an account of the pain experienced by the fetus: "the pain arises in him . . . through his being turned upside-down by the kāmma producing winds [forces] and flung into that most fearful passage from the womb."²⁵

However, the most obvious translation of kammajavāta is not "winds that produce kamma", but "winds born of kamma." The latter translation is consistent both with earlier Indian beliefs and with la Vallée Poussin's translation of the parallel passage in the Kośa. It is also consistent, as we will see, with Buddhist cosmology. Phenomenal manifestation at both the individual and cosmic levels was precipitated by winds born of actions. In the Pali Text Society Dictionary²⁶ and in Pe Maung Tin's version of the Visuddhimagga,²⁷ kammajavāta is translated as "birth-pains". This is even less adequate, since the passage describes the pains of the child, not those of the mother.

In fact, both the Abhidharma-Kośa and the Visuddhimagga portray birth as painful and disgusting. The Kośa compares the embryo, about to be born, to "une grande masse d'impureté cachée."²⁸ The Visuddhimagga describes the womb as a narrow, dark, and loathsome place where the fetus is confined for ten months. Its pain intensifies at birth: "The child suffers . . . as though fallen into hell . . . and is dragged out through [the] . . . narrow mouth [of the womb], like a great elephant through a key-hole, or a denizen of the hells crushed into powder by mountains."²⁹

In the Caraka-Saṃhitā, wind is said to be responsible for "throwing down" embryos. As this is included in a list of wind's pathological effects, it may imply premature birth or miscarriage. But, for Buddhists, miscarriage need not have been implied, since birth itself was a calamity. The wind's function here was doubly ambiguous. First, life itself was a mixed blessing. Second, the wind which expelled the embryo was a pathological and disruptive force. But it was also the "expeller of impurities".³⁰ The embryo, according to the Kośa, is a mass of impurity.

A less prominent connection between wind and birth depends upon the association wind with ejaculation. The gods of the Kāma-dhātu reproduce through forms of intercourse which become progressively "purer" as their habitations are increasingly elevated. Among these, the Cāturmahārājakāyikas and the Trāyastriṃśas emit wind instead of semen: "Ils apaisent le feu du désir par l'émission de vent, attendu qu'ils ne portent pas de semence."³¹

Wind continues to act throughout life. Just as karmic causes and effects form an unbroken chain, so wind, the vehicle of karma, exhibits continuity. It causes birth and maintains the body's health during life. The constantly moving wind which sustains life discloses itself as breath. In the image of the Caraka-Saṃhitā, "the wind is the support of that which retains the chain."³² The chain is the series of interconnected elements which make up the body. The body is supported by the wind. In the commentary on this passage,³³ the wind is compared to the joints on which the body rests. A similar image appears in the Kośa. The parts of the body, from the head to the toes, are visualized, in meditation, as a chain of pearls. The breath is the

string on which they are threaded.³⁴

Death is associated with a severe disruption in the "humours" and the elements associated with them. Wind, as we have noted, was both the principal "humour" and the principal element. At death, according to the Abhidharma-Kośa, the body feels as if it is being pierced with sharp knives, and the elements of wind, fire and water are extremely agitated. The element of earth is omitted from this list, apparently because wind, fire and water correspond to the three humours. But, in the Kośa, the omission of earth is explained differently: "...parce que, le monde périssant par ces trois éléments, la mort aussi a lieu par ces trois éléments."³⁵

The life of the individual is analogous to the life of the cosmos. The cosmos and the body of the individual are composed of the same elements. The forces that give birth to the individual are the same as those that create the cosmos. And individual death parallels cosmic destruction. In the next chapter, I will consider wind's cosmological function.

NOTES

¹F. Edgerton, Buddhist Hybrid Sanskrit Dictionary, which cites the Saddharma-Puṇḍarīka Sūtra (27. 15); Lalita Vistara (394.19); and the Mahāvastu (1. 3. 3).

²In other words, those in which the five skandhas or constituents of being - form, sensation, perception, motivation and consciousness - are present.

³The Illustrator, p. 284. Cf. Visuddhimagga, PTS ed., p. 357.

⁴Ibid.

⁵Anguttara-Nikāya 2:82; Anguttara-Nikāya 2:183.

⁶See, e.g., Samyutta-Nikāya 1:269; Dīgha-Nikāya 3:43; Dīgha-Nikāya 3:125.

⁷Except those of the formless world. In this world inhalation and exhalation have ceased. Its inhabitants, therefore, are not pāpas.

⁸Abh. Kośa 3:153-54.

⁹The Illustrator, pp. 20-21.

¹⁰Āyus, however, was associated, not only with medicine, but also with Brahmanic thought. Among Vedic rituals was the āyustoma ceremony, performed to secure long life, V. S. Apte, s.v. āyus. Prāṇa, in the Taittirīya Upaniṣad (2. 3), is described as the life (āyus) of all beings. Sayana, in several passages, identifies Āyu of the Rg.-Veda with Vāyu, Griffith 1:214; 1:502; 2:404.

¹¹Jīvitam was grouped together with masculinity and femininity. These were called the "three faculties"; Samyutta-Nikāya 5:179.

¹²This is one of the "undetermined questions": see, e.g., Nivāpa-Sutta, Majjhima-Nikāya, 1:200; Abh. Kośa, 1:214-15; Points of Controversy (Kathā-Vatthu), trans. Shwe Zan Aung & Mrs. Rhys Davids, Pali Text Society Translation Series, No. 5 (London: Luzac & Co., 1915), p. 226.

¹³Abh. Kośa, 3:154

¹⁴Denied by the Sautrāntika, Abh. Kośa, 1:215. The difficulties which surround the use of these terms are obvious: the life-principle comes to an end at death, but how can it end without being substantially existent? It comes to be accepted that jīvitam, uṣman and viññāna depart simultaneously at death; the difficulty is resolved in a manner familiar to Buddhists, by establishing the mutual interdependence of a number of elements. Abh. Kośa 1:215; Abh. Kośa, 4:154; Majjhima-Nikāya 1:335-36.

¹⁵Abh. Kośa 4:155-56: thought and mental dharmās rest on the breath.

¹⁶i.e., the tridoṣa.

¹⁷Filliozat, pp. 199-200.

¹⁸Quoted in Filliozat, p. 200. Cf. the Buddha's description of the effects of non-breathing meditation, Majjhima-Nikāya 1:297-99.

¹⁹Quoted in Filliozat, p. 200. Similarly: "As long as the wind subsists which decomposes nourishment, man lives." Bhela-Samhitā, quoted in Filliozat, p. 205.

²⁰In the Prasna Upaniṣad (1. 4), prāṇa and rayi (matter) are the mother and father of all things, Hume, p. 378.

²¹Abh. Kośa 4:156.

²²Quoted in Filliozat, p. 179. In Bloomfield's translation: "Man breathes out and breathes in when within the womb. When thou, O Prāṇa, quickenest him, then is he born again." (Bloomfield, p. 219). Not only wind, but all six dhātus (viñāna, ākāśa, vāyu, etc.) can be considered, individually, as "soutien, raison d'être de la naissance." Abh. Kośa 1:50.

²³Abh. Kośa 1:112; Visuddhi Magga, PTS ed., p. 405.

²⁴Abh. Kośa 2:58-59.

²⁵Buddhaghosa, The Path of Purification (Visuddhi Magga), trans. Bhikkhu Nyanamoli, 2 vols. (Berkeley: Shambhala, 1976) 2:570.

²⁶s.v. vāta.

²⁷Visuddhi Magga, PTS ed., p. 594.

²⁸Abh. Kośa 2:59.

²⁹Visuddhi Magga, PTS ed., pp. 593-94.

³⁰i.e., through excretion. Caraka-Samhitā, quoted in Filliozat, p. 200.

³¹Abh. Kośa 2:164. In the medical tradition, sterility is listed among those illnesses caused by wind.

³²Quoted in Filliozat, p. 199.

³³Ibid.

³⁴Abh. Kośa, 4:155 n. 4

³⁵Abh. Kośa, 2:136.

CHAPTER 6

WIND AND COSMOLOGY

Wind, in Buddhist cosmology, was a central element in the recurrent creation and destruction of the world. It was also the support of the material world, which was believed to rest on a circle of wind. But the world appeared as the result of the impure acts of beings, and all experience within it was bound to be unsatisfactory. Wind was therefore associated with samsāra.

Embodied existence involved pain and conflict. But these could be removed by following the path revealed by the Tathāgatas who have appeared within this corrupt phenomenal world.

In this chapter we will examine the cosmic functions of wind, and its connections with the Tathāgata.

Wind was believed to pervade and hold together objects and living bodies. The monk, in meditation, visualized the parts of his body as connected by breath.¹ He saw each of these parts of his body, from his head to his toes, suspended on the breath as pearls are threaded on a string.

The Kaśmir Vaibhāṣikas believed that objects were composed of indivisible atoms which could not touch one another. If they did, it would follow that they were complex and hence divisible. But unless the atoms were held together in some way, objects would fall apart. Hence the atoms must have been held together by some agent. This was identified as the concentrative wind, similar to that present at the formation of the world:

Certain élément vent a pour fonction la dispersion, par exemple, le vent de la période de destruction du monde; certain élément vent a pour fonction la concentration, par exemple le vent de la période de création.²

Just as wind cleanses and defiles, it sustains and disrupts. As early as the Rg-Veda, Vāyu was both the upholder of order and a roaring, impetuous beast.³ For the Vaiḥhāṣikas, the wind participated in all creation and destruction, down to that of the most trivial everyday objects. The medical texts make it clear that wind's action was pervasive. Among its normal cosmic functions were:

...the support of the earth, the flaming up of the fire, the regulation of the continuous course of the sun, of the moon, and of the totality of the stars and the planets, the formation of clouds, the emission of waters, the putting into movement of the course of water, the production of flowers and fruits, ...the division of the seasons /and/ of the elements, the elaboration of grain, /and/ the growth of cereals...⁴

The cosmic wind, like the bodily wind, became a destructive force when it was excited or blocked. It spread calamities and misfortunes everywhere, and was responsible for:

...the levelling...of the summits of...mountains, the uprooting of trees, the overflowing of the oceans, the rising of...lakes, the pushing back of the courses of water, the trembling of the earth, the swelling of the clouds, the production of...mist, of thunder...and lightning, the destruction of six seasons,...calamities for beings, the complete destruction of existences, the production of clouds, of the sun, of fire and of the wind which bring to an end the four yugas of the world.^{5*}

The wind "possesses an extreme force, has an extreme violence... it acts very promptly and brooks no delay when it is forcefully excited".⁶ Wind was the ultimate motive force behind the normal or perturbed functions of the other great elements, fire, water, and earth: "The wind is said to be the principal element among the five elements. These four⁷ are always linked with the wind; the wind is everywhere, always."⁸

The ancient idea that sun and moon rested on wind,⁹ or that

wind regulated the motion of the heavenly bodies,¹⁰ is also found in the Abhidharma-Kośa:

Sur quoi reposent le soleil et la lune?--Sur le vent. Par la force collective des actes des êtres sont produits des vents qui créent dans le ciel, la lune, le soleil, et les étoiles. Tous ces astres tournent autout du Meru comme entraînés par un tourbillon d'eau.¹¹

A common Indian tradition is reshaped here to show Buddhist emphases. The wind rests on the acts of beings. In true Buddhist fashion, it arises from various causes and conditions. The ideas about birth found in the Atharva-Veda were recast in a similar way.

Both traditions are found in the encyclopedic Abhidharma-Kośa, which explicitly records many contemporary Buddhist ideas that were implicit in other texts. The Kośa contains a detailed account of the creation of the world. Wind plays a central role:

...la semence (bīja) du nouvel univers est le vent, un vent doué d'efficacités spéciales qui ont leur principe dans les actes des êtres.¹²

In other words, the acts of beings are not destroyed; although the Kāmadhātu of the previous cycle of creation no longer exists, the beings of that cycle remain. The new universe unfolds from the past actions of these beings.¹³ There is no truly new creation, nor is there any central or primordial Being from which creation proceeds. Like individual birth, cosmic creation is the effect of past actions. Individuals are the result of their karmic tendencies. Similarly, the physical world is the collective result of the fruition of actions.¹⁴

The wind originates from actions, and it carries the karmic potentialities of these actions in a dispersed state. It also concentrates them so that their potential becomes manifest.

The continuity of the individual's personality is maintained

in this process. When a cycle of creation draws to an end, the beings of the Kāmadhātu are reborn in higher states. Their world - the bhājanaloka (receptacle-world) - is destroyed only when it has been emptied of beings. As a new cycle begins, the bhājanaloka is created first. Beings then die in the Rūpadhātu and are reborn in the newly created Kāmadhātu:

Au moment où, en raison de l'acte collectif des êtres, apparaissent les premiers signes du futur monde réceptacle; au moment où se lèvent... dans l'espace... des vents très légers... alors... la période, ... durant laquelle le monde va se créer... commence.

Les vents vont grandissant et, finalement, constituent le cercle du vent; ensuite naît tout le réceptacle...

Le réceptacle est donc crée, et le monde se trouve créé d'autant.

Alors un être, mourant dans l'Ābhāsvara, naît dans le château de Brahmā... qui est vide; d'autres êtres, mourant les uns après les autres dans l'Ābhāsvara, naissent dans le ciel des Brahmapurohitas, des Brahmakāyikas,... dans l'Uttarakuru,... le Jambudvīpa; chez les pretas et les animaux [et] dans les enfers.¹⁵

This list includes all the states within the Kāmadhātu in which beings may be reborn. Wind is the first element in the creation of the Kāmadhātu. It is also, as we have seen, the connecting link between all beings in its various states of rebirth. Individual beings are supported by breath: the receptacle-world as a whole rests on a circle of wind.

This circle of wind supports the world, which is itself circular. In the center of the world is Mount Meru, the abode of the lower gods. The oceans are arrayed in concentric rings around Meru, separated by walls of mountains. The four continents and eight subcontinents of the human world are at the four quarters in the outermost ocean. Above the world are heavens and below it are hells. All of this rests on a circle of gold supported by a circle of water, which rests on the wind-circle.¹⁶ When the world is created anew, the wind appears first, followed by each

of the higher circles.¹⁷ In this way, the entire Kāmadhātu, with its various heavens and hells, comes into existence.

But beings can also be reborn in higher and more blissful states than those of the Kāmadhātu. These are the heavens of the "world of form" and the "formless world". They are arrayed in a hierarchical structure, in which the ascending subdivisions correspond to the stages of jhāna, or meditation.¹⁸ Beings are born in these heavens at the end of a world-cycle, when the Kāmadhātu is destroyed. They can also reach them through meritorious actions or progress on the Buddhist Path. Mastery of a particular stage of meditation gives access to the corresponding heaven.¹⁹

Beyond these states--which are accessible to non-Buddhists as well--the disciple arrives at the trance of cessation of perception and feeling (nirodhasamāpatti), in which he "touches nirvāna with his body."

In each successive heaven, the inhabitants are purer in conduct and bodily form.²⁰ But each stage of meditation and each heaven-world is also characterized by its own particular "vice" or "imperfection" (apakṣāla), which is only overcome by ascending to a still higher plane. Wind, in this scheme, corresponds to inhalation and exhalation, which is the "vice" of the third heaven of the Rūpadhātu and the third stage of meditation.²¹ All beings breathe except those who have transcended these stages.

While the gods inhabiting the heavens possess immensely long life-spans, their status is in some ways inferior to that of humans. The Mahābrahmā gods, for example, cannot enter the Buddhist Path, because each believes himself to be the self-born creator of the universe.²²

Despite their longer lives, all gods are still within the cycle of rebirth. The bliss of heaven is impermanent:

There comes a time, monks, when this world rolls up. As the world rolls up, beings are generally reborn as Radiant Ones,²³ There they are made as of mind, feeding on joy, self-radiant, faring through the sky, in splendour abiding, for a long, long time they stand fast...Yet for the Radiant Devas there is change and reverse. So seeing the learned Ariyan disciple feels revulsion; on feeling revulsion his interest in the topmost fades, not to speak of the low.²⁴

Just as the gods die, the heaven-worlds themselves eventually perish. The destructions are of various kinds and of various extents. They recur at regular intervals in a prescribed sequence. Each destruction is followed by a new creation, which is also eventually destroyed.

According to both the Abhidharma-Kośa and the Visuddhimagga, the cosmos may be destroyed by fire, by water, or by wind. The destruction by fire consumes the Kāmadhātu and the first heaven of the Rūpadhātu. The destruction by water reaches higher, to destroy the second heaven. In the destruction by wind, the third heaven perishes, together with all that lies beneath it.²⁵ This is the most inclusive, but also the rarest destruction. It occurs after the world has been destroyed fifty-six times by fire and seven times by water.

The three elements by which the world is destroyed are the three fundamental constituents (dhātus) of beings, according to the medical tradition. These three bodily elements which are agitated at death correspond physiologically to the "humours" and psychologically to the Buddhist "poisons". Buddhaghosa correlates the cosmic destructions to the poisons:

When lust is superabundant [the world] ...perishes

by fire. When hate is superabundant it perishes by water. Some say that it perishes by fire when hate superabounds, by water when lust superabounds. When delusion is superabundant, it perishes by wind.²⁶

In the Abhidharma-Kośa, the cosmic destructions also correspond to particular defilements. The Kośa's scheme explains the differing extent of the destructions. As the "vices" of beings entail karmic consequences, the element destroying their world corresponds to the vice to which they are addicted. Beings in the third heaven-world have not freed themselves from inhalation and exhalation. Their world, therefore, is destroyed by wind.²⁷

Wind is the first of the great elements to appear when the world is created, and the most devastating of the elements when the world is destroyed.²⁸ Wind is also the last physical element of which beings purify themselves in their ascent through the stages of the heaven-worlds. In-breath and out-breath cease only in the fourth and highest heaven of the world of form.

These heavens correspond to stages of meditation. It follows that suspension of the breath took place during meditation. But suspension of the breath, as the Buddha's experience demonstrated, could have undesirable consequences.

There is an ambivalence here, which is reflected in Buddhist attitudes to the heaven-worlds. In the Anguttara-Nikāya, the monk is urged to feel revulsion for even the highest of these.²⁹ But the heavens acquire importance if they are regarded - as they are in the Kośa - as corresponding to stages on the Buddhist Path.

In the Kośa the characteristics of the heavens are described in detail. In the Anguttara-Nikāya's account of the destruction of the world, few such cosmological details are found. The sequence of fire,

water and wind is not mentioned. There is no reference to a new creation and to interim rebirth in higher worlds. Instead, there is a repeated refrain: "Thus impermanent, thus unstable, thus insecure are all compounded things. Be ye dissatisfied with them, be ye repelled by them, be ye utterly free from them."³⁰

These two approaches do not indicate a shift from earlier rejection to later acceptance of the phenomenal world. In fact, both earlier and later Buddhists exhibited ambivalent attitudes towards the phenomenal world. These are reflected in the ambiguous nature of the wind, which is the primary force in both creation and destruction. The wind supports the earth. But this wind is also the ground of samsāra. It carries karmic potentialities and "pushes" beings towards rebirth in one or another of the gatis, the states of existence. Wind is therefore the motive force of samsāra: "The wheel of samsāra revolves like a wind-wheel."³¹ On the other hand, the wind which destroys the world purifies it, by sweeping away the defilements of the Kāmadhātu and the lower heavens.

But the picture of the Buddhist cosmos must also include the goal of the Path. All Indian Buddhists agreed that the highest goal would be obtained through the effort made in this world. The Path leading beyond suffering was to be found in this world.

The Tathāgata pointed out this path. Though in this world, he also transcended it. Images which relate the Tathāgata to wind reflect his complex relationship to the phenomenal world. Wind itself was ambivalent: it carried karmic potentialities and also purified.

A common feature in images which relate the Tathāgata to wind is that the action of the two does not conflict. The Tathāgata affects

the wind, but he does not suspend or suppress its movement. The conflicts created by wind are resolved through the speech and actions of the Tathāgata.

I will examine images in which the Tathāgata is compared to wind and images in which he masters the winds and reconciles the oppositions inherent in them. I will conclude with an image from the Nikāyas which illustrates particularly well the relationship between these two.

The Buddha, in the Mahāvastu, is compared to the wind, which cannot be caught in a trap or enmeshed in a net.³² The wind moves freely everywhere. It is the support of the entire world. But at the same time it is nowhere to be found, and there is nothing that can contain it. In the Milinda-Pañha, the monk is advised to develop a nature like that of the wind.³³

The mind of the Tathāgata resembles the wind in that it abides nowhere. Just as the wind is continuously in motion, the Tathāgata is not attached to particular objects. This ideal of non-attachment was related to the homelessness of the early monk. The monk, like the wind, should have no permanent residence.³⁴

Mastery of the wind is acquired through developing a wind-like nature. Passages which compare the Tathāgata to wind are closely related to those in which he demonstrates mastery. The two are brought together in the image of flight. Some early Arhats were said to be able to travel through the air.³⁵ Śākyamuni, too, was reported to have risen into the air on more than one occasion.³⁶ Flight implies mastery of the element of wind. It also involves resemblance to it. He who possesses this ability penetrates everywhere, like the wind, and is ungraspable.

There is also a paradoxical element in the image of flight. In

flying, one is without any apparent support. One rests on air. But air upholds all things: the world and everything in it. Therefore, it is the most secure support.

In the Aṣṭasāhasrikā Prajñāpāramitā, the Bodhisattva is compared to a bird in flight. Air, in this passage, represents emptiness (śūnyatā):

It is just like a bird who on its wings courses in the air. It neither falls onto the ground, nor does it stand anywhere on any support. It dwells in space, just in the air, without being either supported or settled therein. Just so a Bodhisattva dwells in the dwelling of emptiness, achieves complete conquest over emptiness...But he does not fall into emptiness...with his Buddha-dharmas remaining incomplete.³⁷

In this passage, mastery of the wind is related to insight. The Bodhisattva sees that phenomena are empty--i.e., insubstantial and without independent existence. As a result of this insight, he becomes free of any attachment to phenomena. But he does not "fall into emptiness". That is, he does not turn away from the world, but remains within it.

A similar reconciliation was achieved in ānāpānasmṛti. Through this practice, the monk affirmed that his apparent self was identical with the processes taking place in the material world. He cultivates non-attachment; but he also learned to overcome his revulsion for the world and his desire to withdraw from it.

The monk who performed ānāpānasmṛti saw his inhaled and exhaled breath as merging with the cosmic winds.³⁸ In the Vimalakīrtinirdeśa, the Bodhisattva acts similarly, but with more spectacular results:

Par sa force miraculeuse, le Bodhisattva aspire par la bouche...les tempêtes...des grands cercles de vents... de tous les univers des dix régions, et cependant corps...n'en subit nul dommage...,et les herbes...et les bois de ces champs de Buddha, tout en rencontrant ces vents, ne se couchent point.³⁹

In the person of the great Bodhisattva, and through his actions,

the conflicts of the winds are resolved. From the perspective of a more complete insight, their conflicts are shown to be only apparent. The winds blow, but the Bodhisattva is not harmed by them, and even the grass does not bend. In the Bhadramāyākāvyākaraṇa, the Tathāgata explains his mastery of wind:

Maudgalyāyana, the following wind-circles are existing in the world: the Scattering Wind and the Cutting asunder Wind, which cut asunder the Universe containing three thousand thousands of worlds and destroy it: the Dispersing and Scattering Wind which moves in the middle of the world; the All-Settling Wind which reaches the top of the world; the Destroying Wind which can scatter even Sumeru, the king of mountains, not to mention the common hills; the Blazing Wind, the flame of which, burning during an aeon, spouts out to the world of Brahmā; the Overcoming Wind, which smothers this fire which burns during an aeon, the Satisfying Wind, which can cover all this Universe containing three thousand thousands of worlds with one cloud; the Water-sprinkling Wind, which pours out rain during a burning aeon; the Very Dry Wind, which dries up all that has been damaged by water...

As for myself, Maudgalyāyana, I should be able to keep to all the four kinds of behaviour within all those wind-circles. The Tathāgata can, at will, put all the wind-circles in one mustard-seed, and this seed will not burst. And he can, moreover, show within a mustard-seed all the effects of those wind-circles, and the winds will neither clash nor conflict with one another.⁴⁰

What did this image mean, for Buddhists? The Tathāgata was not dismayed by these winds, and did not recoil from them. He remained within the wind-circles, observing right conduct. It was not necessary for him to alter the nature of the winds or suppress their movement. He mastered them through insight into their nature. Seen as part of the continual flux of appearance and dissolution, these winds ceased to be threatening. In this way, the Tathāgata was not destroyed, even by the forces that destroyed the cosmos.

The Tathāgata's actions appear to be miraculous interventions in the manifested order, achieved by means of supernatural powers. But

there is another aspect to the Tathāgata's mastery of the elements. He produces miraculous effects because his actions are extraordinarily pure.

Buddhists believed that the actions of beings continuously affected everything in the world. This was true of both Tathāgatas and ordinary beings. Pure actions produced beneficial results; and impure actions, harmful results. For example, when immoral practices became prevalent, the earth, and the plants growing in it, would be damaged.⁴¹

The entire material world, in fact, was the collective product of the actions of beings.⁴² But the actions which produced this world were impure. In contrast, the Tathāgata's actions were pure. They were also more effective than those of ordinary beings, since they derived from clear insight. For these two reasons, the actions of the Tathāgata could alter the ordinary course of events.

This intervention affects the wind that is the vehicle of karmic tendencies. This wind supported the earth, and it was an old Buddhist idea that the earth shook when the layer of wind was disturbed. In the Ayurvedic texts, too, wind caused earthquakes.⁴³ In the Anguttara-Nikāya, the Buddha enumerates eight causes of earthquakes:

Since, Ānanda, this great earth rests on water and the water rests on wind and the wind subsists in space; what time the great winds blow, they cause the water to quake, and the quaking of the water causes the earth to quake. This, Ānanda, is the first cause, the first reason, of a great earthquake becoming manifest.

Again, Ānanda, a recluse or godly man, possessed of psychic powers and mind-mastery, or a deva of great magic power and might, causes the earth to shake, to tremble and to quake when the thought of the earth as limited, or the thought of the waters as limitless, is made become by such an one. This is the second cause...

Again, Ānanda, when a being awakening quits the Tuṣiṭa assembly and enters, mindful and self-possessed, his mother's womb; then this earth shakes, trembles and quakes. This is the third cause...

When a being awakening, mindful and self-possessed, leaves his mother's womb; then this earth shakes, trembles and quakes. This is the fourth cause...

When a tathāgata completely awakens to the unsurpassed and highest awakening; then this earth shakes, trembles and quakes. This is the fifth cause...

When a tathāgata sets rolling the unsurpassed wheel of Dhamma; then this earth shakes, trembles and quakes. This is the sixth cause...

When a tathāgata, mindful and self-possessed, casts aside the sum of this life; then this earth shakes, trembles and quakes. This is the seventh cause...

And when, Ananda, a tathāgata becomes completely cool in the cool element to which naught attaches; then this earth shakes, trembles and quakes. This, Ananda, is the eighth cause, the eighth reason, of a great earthquake becoming manifest.⁴⁴

The first cause on this list accounted for the natural shaking of the earth.⁴⁵ The other causes were extraordinary. One was the mastery acquired through supernatural powers. The remaining six were associated with the manifestation of a Tathāgata in the world, and his performance of the Tathāgata's actions.

In these cases, the shaking of the earth was an intervention in the normal order of worldly events. This intervention took place without any effort at control or mastery. It was implied in the nature of the Tathāgata's being. The wind was the support of the existing order and the carrier of impure karmic potentialities. The pure actions of the Tathāgata--his birth, his awakening, his turning the wheel of Dharma, and so on--shook the foundations of this order.

When the earth trembled, everything on it was shaken. Was there stability anywhere in the material world? Only the Tathāgata, whose actions moved all things, remained unshaken. The Buddha, before his enlightenment, took his seat beneath the Bodhi-tree and vowed to remain there unmoved until he attained perfect insight. He fulfilled this vow, and remained immoveable in spite of the attacks of Māra. Stability was

attained, for the Buddhist, in stationing oneself in this position. The seat beneath the Bodhi-tree was where the believer came into contact with the Tathāgata and the truths he taught.

All actions had their effect on the causal order. But actions of extraordinary purity were powerful enough to divert the material order from its course and re-orient it. In the Milinda-Pañha, the earth shakes, the waters of the oceans rage, and beings tremble, at the generosity of King Vessantara:

...King Vessantara gave away whatsoever is in the world considered most difficult to bestow, and by reason of the nature of his generosity the great winds beneath the earth were unable to refrain from being agitated throughout, and on the great winds being thrown into confusion the waters were shaken, and on the waters being disturbed the broad earth trembled, and so then the winds and the waters and the earth became all three, as it were, of one accord by the immense and powerful influence that resulted from that mighty giving.⁴⁶

Such was the power of the perfectly good action of even one individual, on the forces which supported and maintained the world. The wind which was stirred up by this action was both destructive and purifying, in that it swept away defilements.

Buddhists believed that all existing things were compounded, and would inevitably be destroyed. At first sight, nothing could be more solid and immovable than the great earth. Yet the earth was not a reliable support, since ultimately it rested on nothing but air, which circulated in unobstructed space. Those who relied on the unstable for support were liable to be overthrown. True stability and security were found, for the Buddhist, in the Tathāgata and his teaching.

This security was not mere physical safety, since attaining it implied a profound psychological reorientation. The Mahāyāna-

Mahāparinirvāna-Sūtra distinguishes between two kinds of shaking of the great earth. The "great shaking" is that which occurs at the crucial moments in the life of the Tathāgata:

The one that shakes but little is a shaking and the one that shakes greatly is a great shaking...The shaking in which the earth only shakes is a shaking...and the one in which the beings' minds get shaken is a great shaking.⁴⁷

Mental change is deeper and more pervasive than mere physical change. Here, as everywhere in Buddhist thought, it was ultimately the mind that was the decisive factor. (Good and bad actions and motivations were rooted in mental acts and tendencies. Buddhists never envisioned physiological or cosmological theories apart from the psychic factors with which these were correlated.

In Chapter 7, we will examine the relation of wind to thought and mental functions, and in Chapter 8 we will return to the question of ethical actions and their cosmic correlates.

NOTES

¹Abh. Kośa, 4:155, Cf. Bṛhad. Up. 3. 7. 1-2: "Do you know that thread by which this world and the other world and all things are tied together?..."

"...Wind, verily, O Gautama, is that thread. By wind..., as by a thread, this world and the other world and all things are tied together. Therefore, ...they say of a deceased person, 'His limbs become unstrung,' for by wind, O Gautama, as by a thread, they are strung together." Hume, pp. 114-15.

²Abh. Kośa, 1:89-90.

³Rg-Veda VIII. 26. 21; Rg-Veda VII. 87. 2.

⁴Caraka-Saṃhitā, quoted in Filliozat, p. 200.

⁵Caraka-Saṃhitā, quoted in Filliozat, pp. 200-201.

⁶Ibid., p. 201.

⁷Even ākāśa is evidently included here, and made dependent upon wind.

⁸Bhela-Saṃhitā, quoted in Filliozat, p. 206. In the Suśruta-Saṃhitā, the wind is praised extravagantly: "The Being existing by himself, that Blessed One is, it is said, the wind. Since it depends only on itself, existed perpetually, and also because it goes everywhere, it is for all objects the universal soul to whom the entire world renders homage. It is he who is the efficient cause of...beings in their conservation, their birth and their destruction...Its power is inconceivable..." Quoted in Filliozat, p. 209.

⁹Satāpatha-Bṛāhmaṇa, 4:333. Cf. also Kauṣītaki Up. 2. 12, Hume, p. 316.

¹⁰Filliozat, p. 63.

¹¹Abh. Kośa, 2:156.

¹²Abh. Kośa, 2:210.

¹³The Mahīśasakas believe that the "seeds" of the new universe are carried by the wind from the Kāmadhātu of another universe, ibid.

¹⁴F. B. J. Kuiper has noted the frequent parallels, in Indian creation myths, between conception and embryology, on the one hand, and cosmology, on the other, "Cosmology and Conception: A Query", History of Religions 10 (1970): 94-138.

¹⁵Abh. Kośa, 2:185-86.

¹⁶The wind itself is sometimes said to rest on space.. This "space" can be described in more or less reified terms; but, in any event, it is not a "factor of becoming".

¹⁷Abh. Kośa 2:138-44. See also Le Compendium de la Super-doctrine (Philosophie) (Abhidharmasamuccaya d'Asaṅga), trans. Walpola Rahula, Publications de l'École Française d'Extrême-Orient, vol. 78 (Paris: École Française d'Extrême-Orient, 1971), p. 60.

¹⁸On Buddhist cosmology, see L. de la Vallée Poussin, "Cosmogony and Cosmology (Buddhist)", Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics, ed: James Hastings, 13 vols. (New York: Scribner's, 1912; Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1912), vol. 4, pp. 129-38; J. R. Haldar, Early Buddhist Mythology, with a Foreword by D. C. Sircar (New Delhi: Manohar, 1977).

¹⁹Eliade points out the similarity between this ascent through the stages of meditation and the mystical flight and ascent to heaven of the shaman, Mircea Eliade, Yoga: Immortality and Freedom, trans. W. R. Trask, Bollingen Series LVI, 2nd ed., rev. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, Princeton Bollingen Paperback, 1970), p. 327.

²⁰Except for beings of the formless world. There are bodiless.

²¹Abh. Kośa. 2:215

²²Abh. Kośa, 3:105 n. 2.

²³Abhassara-Vattanikā, a class of gods.

²⁴Anguttara-Nikāya 5:41.

²⁵Visuddhimagga, PTS ed., pp. 486-88; Abh. Kośa 2:184; 2:184 n.4.

²⁶Visuddhimagga, PTS ed., p. 488.

²⁷Abh. Kośa 2:215.

²⁸Cf. Chāndogya Upaniṣad, 4.3.1-2: "The Wind (Vāyu), verily, is a snatcher-unto-itself. Verily, when a fire blows out, it just goes to the Wind...When water dries, goes up, it just goes to the Wind." For the Wind, truly, snatches all here to itself." Hume, p. 217.

²⁹Anguttara-Nikāya 4:41.

³⁰Anguttara-Nikāya 4:64-67.

³¹"Saṃsāracakri bhramate 'nilacakra.tulye..'" Prañāpāramitārat-nagunasamśyagāthā, ed. E. Obermiller, Indo-Iranian Reprints, no. 5 (The Hague: Mouton & Co., 1960), p. 38.

³²Mahāvastu 3:108; 3:121.

³³ Milinda-Pañha 2:312-13.

³⁴ Ibid.

³⁵ Edward J. Thomas, The Life of Buddha as Legend and History, 3rd ed., rev. (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1949), pp. 98, 113-14.

³⁶ Ibid.

³⁷ The Perfection of Wisdom in Eight Thousand Lines & Its Verse Summary (Aṣṭasāhasrikā Prajñāpāramitā), trans. Edward Conze (Bolinas: Four Seasons Foundation, 1973), p. 224.

³⁸ La Vallée Poussin, La Morale Bouddhique, pp. 83-84.

³⁹ L'Enseignement de Vimalakīrti (Vimalakīrtinirdeśa), trans. Étienne Lamotte, Université de Louvain, Institut Orientaliste, Bibliothèque du Muséon, vol. 51 (Louvain: Publications Universitaires, 1962), p. 255.

⁴⁰ Bhadramāyākāraṅkāraṇa, trans. Konstanty Régamey, Publications of the Oriental Commission, No. 3 (Warsaw: Society of Sciences and Letters, 1938), pp. 63-65.

⁴¹ Abh. Kośa 3:187. This concept was consistent with earlier thought and was probably not an innovation.

⁴² Abh. Kośa 2:210.

⁴³ Caraka-Saṃhitā, quoted in Filliozat, pp. 200-201.

⁴⁴ Anguttara-Nikāya 4:209-10.

⁴⁵ This appears as one cause of earthquakes in the Saddharma-Smṛtyupasthāna-Sūtra, along with the anger of the Nāga-spirits, Lin Li-Kouang, p. 28.

⁴⁶ Milinda-Pañha 1:176-77.

⁴⁷ Mahāyāna-Mahāparinirvāna-Sūtra 1:45.

CHAPTER 7

WIND AND CONSCIOUSNESS

Buddhists never entirely abandoned the earlier quasi-substantial concept of wind. But the Mahāyāna insistence that all manifested phenomena were dependent on discrimination required that all such concepts be reinterpreted. In this chapter, we will see how Mahāyāna thinkers understood "wind" and will examine its relation to consciousness.

Mental functions and tendencies were always central elements in Buddhist analysis of phenomenal experience. The key concepts of ignorance, desire, attachment, and wisdom are all mental in nature. In short, the causes of suffering were mental, and they could be eliminated by insight.

But it was difficult to determine how wind was related to mental functions. This was a problem for both Buddhists and non-Buddhists. In the early Upaniṣads, breath was the primary vital function. It was more essential than mind. Life could continue without mind (manas); but when breath ceased, life ended.¹ A corpse would never again possess consciousness or any of the vital functions. The overriding importance of breath was therefore obvious.

Later, in the Kauṣītaki Upaniṣad, prāṇa and prajñā (intelligence) were identified.² And in the Prāśna Upaniṣad, the earlier relationship was reversed. Citta (thought) determined prāṇa (life): "Whatever is one's thinking..., therewith he enters into life."³ As long as he was ignorant of his true nature, an individual would be reborn. His mental tendencies and past actions determined his status in his next life. As thinkers accepted the doctrine of rebirth, they modified earlier ideas of the primacy of breath. Breath ceased at death; but this was not the end of embodied existence. Consciousness, not breath, determined the

individual's destiny.

The doctrine of rebirth was a presupposition of Buddhist thought. Buddhists were encouraged to perform meritorious actions and develop beneficial mental tendencies. But earlier ideas of breath's importance persisted. In the Cūlavedalla Sutta, it was affirmed that breath arose before thought - or at least, before certain kinds of thought - and continued when thought had ceased.⁴ In the Abhidharma-Kośa, thought and individual mental factors (dharmas) are referred to as resting on breath.⁵ Mindfulness of the breath, in the Kośa, is said to cut off the initial mental awareness which gives rise to discursive thought.⁶

Embodied beings depended on breath for their existence. And breath, or wind, caused them to exist: the wind born of past actions drove beings to rebirth.

In spite of this, Buddhists increasingly saw mental factors as of fundamental importance. Mental tendencies bound an individual to samsāra; the appearance of the phenomenal world itself depended on mental discrimination.

Note that Buddhists did not simply reduce the physical to the mental. Consciousness is mental. Wind is more or less physical. Although Buddhists emphasized mental factors, these were understood to be closely related to physical ones. For example, the twelve-fold chain of causation described the processes by which the phenomenal world came into being. The links in this chain were both mental and physical.⁷ Between these two there was an intimate connection. Anacker, speaking of the Abhidharma-Kośa, observes that " 'mental' phenomena such as citta, and 'material' elements such as wind, are genetically related in such a manner as to make a dichotomy untenable."⁸

However, mental factors, not physical forces, were the primary

determinants of the individual's destiny. Because they were so closely related, mental factors could directly affect the material world. One's mental state could change one's physical state. For example, the Arhat could, by the power of his dhyāna, (meditation) draw the four great elements into his body.⁹ Pure manasamcetanā (attention) and viññāna (consciousness) could cause the great elements to expand and increase.¹⁰

The world rested on wind, and wind arose from actions. But these actions proceeded from mental tendencies, and it was these that were significant. The Abhidharma-Kośa describes the genesis of action as follows:

La mémoire (smṛti) fait surgir un souhait ou désir d'action (chanda=kartukāmatā); du souhait procède l'imagination (vitarka); de l'imagination procède l'effort (prayatna), lequel donne naissance à un souffle (vāyu) qui déclanche l'action corporelle.¹¹

Wind was simply the last link in the chain of factors that caused physical action. Since Buddhists were primarily concerned with the ultimate, rather than the proximate, causes of samsāra, wind became less an object of interest.

Viññāna (consciousness) was added as the sixth of the "great elements", following earth, water, fire, wind and space.¹² The element that occurred last in the traditional order of enumeration was the most fundamental and pervasive of the elements. Accordingly, consciousness - not wind or space - was held to be the primary factor responsible for the appearance of phenomena. Mental factors also replaced wind as the bearers of karmic potentialities.¹³

Earlier Buddhist philosophic systems had analyzed the world into a multitude of discrete factors. Later Buddhist thinkers rejected many of these supposedly irreducible factors by pointing out that they existed only as the result of mental discrimination. From this perspective,

these thinkers criticized concepts that seemed superfluous, irrelevant or ambiguous.

"Wind" was such an idea. It was primarily a material element although it eluded precise definition. Moreover, in non-Buddhist and ancient Indian thought, "wind" was associated with the idea of a transcendent life-giving principle and with the practice of suppressing the breath, both of which Buddhists rejected.

As the Vijñānavāda developed from the Sarvāstivāda and Sautrāntika, the interpretation of "wind" was radically modified. Wind was traditionally the principle of motion.¹⁴ In the Karmasiddhiprakāraṇa, Vasubandhu demonstrates that the principle of motion as it is ordinarily understood is self-contradictory:

When a thing is stable (avasthita), it has no movement. And if it has no movement, it is constantly stable. On the other hand, if it is not stable, it also has no movement.¹⁵

An unstable object cannot have movement because it only exists momentarily:

Tous les conditionnés sont momentanés...Le conditionné ...périt à la place où il est né; il ne peut de cette place aller à une autre.¹⁶

This argument, according to Anacker, leads Vasubandhu to reinterpret the traditional idea of motion: "For him, calling the element wind the mobile principle can mean only that it is responsible for making a new dharma arise in another locus, immediately subsequently to a previous dharma which is related to the new dharma by being its homogenous cause."¹⁷ In the causal process that appears as movement, there is "nothing which could be called a (true) movement which has the characteristic of a progression (of the same thing to another locus)."¹⁸

Wind is admitted to be an effective causative force. But wind, as an image, does not convey an accurate idea of how this force operates. "Wind" could no longer be helpful in any philosophic inquiry into the causal process. This is Vasubandhu's position in the Karmasiddhiprakaraṇa. "Motion" occurs, he says, because of the element wind. But he continues:

If it is admitted that it is the same thing from which motion is held to arise, that causes something to arise in another locus (immediately subsequent to a previous thing at the first locus), what use is there for an investigation (viçaya) into a (principle of) motion which cannot be revealed by any possible object-of-consciousness?¹⁹

Other thinkers criticized the traditional theory of the "great elements". Among them was Nagarjuna, the founder of the Mādhyaṃika school. In the Ratnāvalī, he demonstrates that these elements are unreal:

If we conceive the material elements as being separate; the consequence would be that fire can burn without any fuel: if, on the other hand, they are combined together, it is impossible to speak of their characteristics: the same decision must also be applied to the other elements.

In this way . . . the material elements are in either case (viz. either separately taken or combined) unreal.²⁰

In the Mūlamadhyamakārikās, using a different analysis, Nagarjuna concludes that

. . . Space (ākāśa) is neither an existing thing nor a non-existing thing, neither something to which a defining characteristic applies, nor a defining characteristic.

Also, the other five irreducible elements can be considered in the same way as space.²¹

No separate things exist substantially. The existence of any one thing depends on the existence of other things. All things, therefore, are empty of independent existence. In their own nature, they are not different from emptiness.

In earlier thought, "wind" had been associated with the emergence

and dissolution of the phenomenal world and the entities within it. When the elements of existence were found to be insubstantial, and dependent ultimately on mental discrimination, "wind" became irrelevant.

Buddhist thinkers had other reasons for avoiding the concept of "wind". For example, it carried archaic connotations, since it was associated with Vedic and Brahmanic ritual and speculative thought.

In spite of these difficulties, the image of "wind" did not disappear. New applications were found for it in later Buddhist thought. These later usages reflected the concerns of post-Mādhyamika thinkers. The Mādhyamika dialectic had undermined earlier Buddhist views of the world. But it also opened the way for a revaluation of the world. This world and Nirvāna were not fundamentally different. They appeared to be distinct from each other as the result of false mental discrimination. Samsāra and Nirvāna were coterminous. Later philosophers developed the implications of this insight.

In this respect, Vijñānavāda and Tathāgatagarbha thought shared a common orientation with the early Buddhist Tantras. Thinkers of all these schools believed that it was misleading to place too much emphasis on the emptiness of things. This misplaced emphasis resulted in needless disputation. It might also lead individuals to deny the validity and significance of the Buddhist Path. These later thinkers did not set aside the dialectics of emptiness, but they attempted to reconcile previous developments with a revaluation of the realm of manifestation.

This orientation was expressed in the concept of the three "turnings of the wheel of Dharma". The first "turning of the wheel" was explained as representing the Hinayāna doctrines. These were directed at disciples of lesser attainment, and, for their benefit,

attributed reality to the elements of existence. The second "turning" represented the doctrine of emptiness (śūnyatā) - the unreality of phenomena. This was taught for followers of the Mahāyāna. But both these teachings gave rise to debate. With the third "turning of the wheel", however, doctrinal conflicts were to be resolved.²² Buddhist thinkers who adopted this position saw themselves as the representatives of this third movement. They believed that the comprehensive synthesis they propounded would make disputation unnecessary. This synthesis would be both profound and accessible: it would be rich in both prajñā (wisdom) and upāya (skilful means), and would thus reconcile the teachings of the first and second "turnings".

The revaluation of the material world was associated with the reappearance of ideas - including cosmological images - which had previously been rejected. Many of these thinkers saw the phenomenal world and the transcendent as interpenetrating. They used earlier physiological and cosmological ideas to represent this interpenetration.

This is evident in writings that show the influence of Tathāgatagarbha thought. A central concept of these texts is that of a "seed" (bīja), "embryo" (garbha), "ground" or "basis" (dhātu; hetu, gotra) of Buddhahood within the phenomenal world. According to Yoshito Hakeda, the concept of the Tathāgatagarbha "grew up out of attempts to explain how man, while residing in the temporal order, at the same time may possess the potential ability to instate or reinstate himself in the infinite order; that is, . . . to attain enlightenment."²³

According to the Ratnagotravibhāga, a fundamental Tathāgatagarbha text, the minds of all beings do not differ in their basic nature:

That which is the indiscriminative Innate Mind.

(cittaprakṛti) of the ordinary people, of the Saints and of the Buddhas has a common feature in these three states, irrespective of their being defective, virtuous or the ultimate point of pure virtue . . . /The cittaprakṛti/ is all pervading, all-embracing, equal, of no difference and is present always.²⁴

Although their basic nature is identical, the minds of ordinary people appear to differ from those of Buddhas because the basic nature of the mind is obscured for them by the presence of defilements. Early Buddhist cosmological ideas are used to explain these defilements. For example, the cittaprakṛti is compared to space (ākāśa):²⁵

Being of no cause or condition,
Or complex (of producing factors),
It has neither origination nor destruction,
Nor even stability (between two points).
The innate nature of the mind is brilliant
And, like space, has no transformation at all.²⁶

Although space does not participate in creation, the material elements are manifested within it. The traditional cosmological scheme is found in the Ratnagotravibhāga:

The earth is supported by water,
Water by air, and air by space;
Space has, however, no support
Neither in air, nor in water, nor in the earth.²⁷

In the Kośa, these elements give rise to one another, in ascending order,²⁸ until the entire material world is manifested. In the Ratnagotravibhāga, the material elements are correlated with factors that obscure the cittaprakṛti:

All the component elements of Phenomenal Life
Are known as akin to the earth,
And the Active Force and Defilements of living beings
Are known as akin to water.
The Irrational Thought is known
As having resemblance to air:
Being of no root and of no support
The Innate Mind is like space.²⁹

The "Irrational Thought" which corresponds to "air" or "wind" in

this scheme is ayoniśomanasikāra. Obermiller translates this as "the naive appreciation of existence"³⁰ and la Vallée Poussin as "judgement inexact."³¹ For some earlier Buddhist thinkers, ayoniśomanasikāra seems to have been a fundamental causative principle, or even the cause of avidyā (ignorance). A relationship of mutual causation between avidyā and ayoniśomanasikāra was also proposed.³² Avidyā was the first member of the twelvefold chain of causation and hence the fundamental cause of suffering. But Buddhists could not regard avidyā as the ground of phenomenal existence. Hence, they had to demonstrate its dependence on other factors, such as ayoniśomanasikāra.³³

In the Ratnagotravibhāga, ayoniśomanasikāra corresponds to the basic misconception or misapprehension of reality, without which there would be no appearance of samsāra. Like wind, it is the first element in creation:

Abiding in the Innate Mind,
There occurs the irrational action of mind.
By the Irrational Action of mind,
The Active Force and Defilements are produced.
All the component elements of Phenomenal Life,
Originated from the water-like Active Force and Defilements,
Show their appearance and disappearance (repeatedly),
Just as (the world repeats its) evolution and devolution.³⁴

The elements of the phenomenal world arise from mind, and conceal the brilliance of the basic nature of mind. All these elements appear and disappear. They are unstable, impure and subject to destruction in accord with the Buddhist conception that all phenomenal existence is unsatisfactory:

In this cosmology, wind is ambivalent, as it is elsewhere.

Ayoniśomanasikāra, which corresponds to wind, is first among the factors that obscure the cittaprakṛti. But, at the same time, the cittaprakṛti

is its foundation and support:

- All the component elements (of Phenomenal Life)
- Have their foundation in the Active Force and Defilements,
- And the Active Force and Defilements exist always
- On the basis of the Irrational Thought.
- The Irrational Thought is founded
- In the (innate) mind which is pure. 35

In the Kośa, the wind of creation arose from the past actions of beings. But in the Ratnagotravibhāga, it is not clear what causes ayoniśomanasikāra to arise, or even if it has a temporal origin.

The world-creations described in the Kośa are material creations. They are distinct events, links in an unbroken causal chain. The Ratnagotravibhāga, on the other hand, describes the psychological forces underlying the appearance of the world. Ignorance and the defilements give rise to phenomenal experience. These forces exist as long as there are beings whose minds are obscured.

The Kośa's "wind of creation" is the vehicle of karmic causation. It originates from causes that precede it in time. But ayoniśomanasikāra, which corresponds to wind, originates in the unoriginated. In earlier Buddhist thought, wind connected things which were causally related, but separate in space and time. In the Ratnagotravibhāga, ayoniśomanasikāra is a mediating factor between the phenomenal world and the transcendent. It is founded on the brilliant and unoriginated basic nature of mind;³⁶ but it is the source of all the defilements of living beings.

Wind is still seen as ambivalent: creative and destructive, purifying and defiling. But an important development has taken place. In this literature, the factors that determine phenomenal experience are clearly mental ones. The old cosmological scheme is retained; but a parallel process of psychological causation is established alongside

it. From one perspective, these two schemes are identical, since both produce the elements of phenomenal existence. But cosmological and psychological causation are also distinct processes: the first is a metaphor for the second. Wind's role as a metaphor for particular mental factors is more important than its cosmological role.

A second significant change has taken place. In the Ratnagotravibhāga, the elements which compose the world are more than factors in an endless and meaningless process of material causation. They - or at least the psychological factors they represent - are grounded in the transcendent.

This close relationship between purity and corruption generates a number of questions. What could cause defilements to arise in the originally pure? If it is originally brilliant, how can defilements obscure it? And how can it mix with defilements, and yet still be pure?

The Ratnagotravibhāga recognizes these paradoxes and accepts them:

"The Reality mingled with pollution" is always, at the same time, pure and defiled; this point is inconceivable . . .

"The Reality apart from pollution", though it is originally not defiled by pollution, yet it is purified afterwards; this point is inconceivable.³⁷

All the elements of phenomenal experience are both pure and defiled. Wind represents the force which produces these elements. Like them, it is founded on the originally pure, though it is itself impure.

The imagery of wind is further developed in the Laṅkāvatāra-Sūtra and the Mahāyānaśraddhotpada-Sāstra, both of which show the influence of Tathāgatagarbha thought.

Wind creates disturbances. The Laṅkāvatāra-Sūtra, uses the image of water disturbed by wind, to describe the arising of phenomenal experience. The water is the Ālayavijñāna or consciousness as the source and ground of phenomenal experience (i.e. "the ocean of mind"), as well

as the Ālayavijñāna as differentiated consciousness, directed towards particular objects (the ocean's waves). The two aspects of consciousness are not substantially different from each other: only their forms differ. In a similar way, the ocean and its waves are both water. Their apparent difference results from the action of wind.

This "wind" gives rise to what we perceive as the world. The "wind of objectivity" represents the effect of ignorance, attachment and accumulated mental tendencies:

The sense-field is apprehended like a mirror reflecting objects, like the ocean swept over by a wind . . . The waves of the mind-ocean are stirred uninterruptedly by the wind of objectivity: cause, deed, and appearance condition one another inseparably; . . . and because the self-nature of form, etc., is not comprehended, . . . the system of the five consciousnesses comes to function.³⁸

A similar image occurs in the Abhidharma-Kośa: phenomenal manifestation arises when the circle of water is stirred up by the wind on which it rests. But in the Kośa, this is part of a literal cosmology, with mythic overtones. The Laṅkāvatāra-Sūtra, however, uses the image to illustrate its analysis of experience:

. . . the Ālaya is compared to the ocean . . . (only) for the sake of the discriminating intellect of the ignorant; the likeness of the waves in motion is (only) brought out by way of illustration.³⁹

The effect of mental tendencies is compared to the effect produced by the wind. But there is no further relationship between the two, and the question of whether mental tendencies produce wind or vice-versa does not arise. The image of wind serves to direct the mind towards another process in which no actual wind participates. In this, the Laṅkāvatāra's interpretation resembles that of the Ratnagotravibhāga, but in that text there is no explicit assertion that "wind" is only a

metaphor.

There are other differences between the images in the two texts: in the Lāṅkāvatāra-Sūtra only two elements occur: wind and water. Moreover, in the Ratnagotravibhāga, the "wind", the defilements, and the elements of phenomenal experience were all distinguished from one another and from the cittaprakṛti. In the Lāṅkāvatāra-Sūtra, on the other hand, phenomenal experience and the "ocean of mind" are not fundamentally different.

The Awakening of Faith contains a similar image. Water is said to be the "essence of Mind" and wind is ignorance. In China and Japan, this became a familiar image:

What we speak of as "cessation" is the cessation of the marks of (the deluded) mind only and not the cessation of its essence. It is like the case of the wind which following the surface of the water, leaves the marks of its movement . . . Since the water does not cease to be, the marks of the wind may continue. Because only the wind ceases, the marks of its movement cease accordingly. This is not the cessation of water. So it is with ignorance; on the ground of the essence of Mind there is movement. If the essence of Mind were to cease, then people would be nullified and they would have no support. But since the essence does not cease to be, the mind may continue. Because only stupidity ceases to be, the marks of the (stupidity of the) mind cease accordingly. It is not that the wisdom (i.e. the essence) of Mind ceases.⁴⁰

In the Ratnagotravibhāga, wind was ambivalent. It was similar to ayoniśomaṇasikāra, but it was also founded on the basic nature of mind.

In The Awakening of Faith, however, wind is exclusively a defiling force. Wind is ignorance; when it ceases, the defilements disappear.

In these later texts, the image of "wind" is used to express the interpenetration of the phenomenal world and the transcendent. But these texts also affirm the doctrine of emptiness. This affirmation prohibits any return to the earlier naive acceptance of reality. The Lāṅkāvatāra-

Sūtra states that the "wind" it describes is not to be taken literally. "Wind" was not a real and substantial element, interacting with other real and substantial elements.

Throughout this historical movement, striking parallels occur between the connotations of "wind" in different contexts. One of the themes that is found consistently is that of purification and defilement.⁴¹ It is to this important element that we now turn.

NOTES

¹Bṛhad.Up. 1.3.1-16, Hume, pp. 76-78; Bṛhad.Up. 1.5.21-22, Hume, pp. 90-91; Ch.Up. 1.5.1-15, Hume, pp. 226-28.

²Kauṣītaki. Upaniṣad 3.4, Hume, p. 324.

³Praśna Upaniṣad 3.10, Hume, p. 384.

⁴Majjhima-Nikāya 1:363-64; Cf. also Samyutta-Nikāya 4:201-2.

⁵Abh.Kośa 4:156.

⁶Abh.Kośa 4:149.

⁷This still holds true for those who maintained that the factors in this chain were, from an ultimate perspective, empty and without independent existence.

⁸S. Anacker, "Vasubandhu, Three Aspects: A Study of a Buddhist Philosopher" (Ph.D. dissertation, U. of Wisconsin, 1970), p. 205 n. 17.

⁹Abh.Kośa 1:121.

¹⁰Abh.Kośa 2:127.

¹¹Abh.Kośa 5:294.

¹²This list occurs as early as the Nikāyas. See Majjhima-Nikāya 3:187; Samyutta-Nikāya 3:182.

¹³Citta (thought) functioned as the bearer of karmic "seeds" (bīja). See Vijñaptimātratāsiddhi: La Siddhi de Hiuan-Tsang, trans. Louis de la Vallée Poussin, Documents et travaux pour l'étude du bouddhisme, première série, vols. 1 and 5; 2 vols. (Paris: Paul Geuthner, 1928-29) 1: 182-89.

¹⁴The commentaries on the Abhidhammattha-Sangaha define vāyo as "that which, as the condition of motion to another place, brings about the impact of one Essential with another"; or as "that which vibrates or oscillates; that which, as a condition of motion in space, moves the series of elements to a different place, or carries its co-existent qualities from place to place." Compendium of Philosophy (Abhidhammattha-Sangaha), trans. Shwe Zan Aung, Rev. and ed. Mrs. Rhys Davids, Pali Text Society Translation Series, No. 2 (London: Luzac & Co., 1910), p. 270.

¹⁵Quoted in Anacker, p. 109.

¹⁶Abh.Kośa 3:4-5.

¹⁷Anacker, p. 204. Cf. Abh.Kośa 1:22: "Par motion, on entend ce qui fait que la série d'états qui constituent une chose va se reproduisant dans des lieux différents; de même qu'on parle de la motion d'une flamme." Cf. also Karmasiddhiprakaraṇa, in Anacker, p. 111.

18. Karmasiddhiprakaraṇa, in Anacker, p. 109.
19. Karmasiddhiprakaraṇa, in Anacker, p. 111.
20. "The Ratnāvālī of Nāgārjuna", trans. Giuseppe Tucci, Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society (1936): 429.
21. Nāgārjuna, "Mūlamadhyamakakārikās: Fundamentals of the Middle Way", trans. Frederick J. Streng, in Emptiness: A Study in Religious Meaning, by Frederick J. Streng (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1967), 5.7-8, p. 189.
22. Samdhinirmocana Sūtra (L'Explication des Mystères), trans. Étienne Lamotte, Recueil de travaux publiés par les membres des Conférences d'Histoire et de Philologie, Université de Louvain, 2e série, 34e fascicule (Louvain & Paris: Bibliothèque de l'Université & Adrien Maisonneuve, 1935), pp. 206-7.
23. In his Introduction to Aśvaghosha (attr.), The Awakening of Faith [Mahāyāna-Sraddhotpada], trans. Yoshito S. Hakeda (New York: Columbia University Press, 1967), p. 13.
24. Ratnagotravibhāga, trans. Jikido Takasaki, in A Study on the Ratnagotravibhāga (Uttaratantra), Série Orientale Roma, No. 33 (Rome: Istituto Italiano per il Medio ed Estremo Oriente, 1966), pp. 233-34.
25. Space (ākāśa), is a frequent analogy for the inconceivable nature of dharmas, or the qualities of Tathāgatas and Bodhisattvas. See, e.g., Nāgārjuna, Le Traité de la Grande Vertu de Sagesse (Mahāprajñāpāramitāsāstra), trans. Étienne Lamotte, Bibliothèque du Muséon, vol. 18, 2 parts (Louvain: Institut Orientaliste, Université de Louvain, 1949), 1:364-68.
26. Ratnagotravibhāga, pp. 236-37. For this passage, compare Ārya Maitreya (attr.), The Sublime Science of the Great Vehicle to Salvation [Mahāyāna-Uttaratantra], with a commentary by Āryasāṅga (attr.), trans. E. Obermiller, in Acta Orientalia IX (1931) (reprint ed., Shanghai: n.p., 1940), pp. 187-88. Cf. also David Seyfort Rugg, La Théorie du Tathāgata-garbha et du Gotra, Publications de l'École Française d'Extrême-Orient, vol. 70 (Paris: École Française d'Extrême-Orient, 1969), pp. 419-20.
27. Ratnagotravibhāga, pp. 236-37.
28. Except for ākāśa, which is much less prominent in the Kośa's scheme.
29. Ratnagotravibhāga, pp. 236-37.
30. Uttaratantra, p. 187.
31. Abh. Kośa 1:162.
32. Abh. Kośa 2:71.

³³ It was later accepted that the twelve factors in the causative chain arose, not sequentially, but simultaneously. The demonstration of avidyā's dependence then became unnecessary.

³⁴ Ratnagotravibhāga, p. 237.

³⁵ Ibid., p. 236.

³⁶ "La luminosité naturelle de la Pensée constitue en quelque sorte un trait d'union entre le plan du tathāgatagarbha, qui n'est pas délivré des klesas, et le plan du tathāgata parfaitement éveillé", Ruegg, pp. 423-24.

³⁷ Ratnagotravibhāga, p. 188.

³⁸ The Laṅkāvatāra Sūtra, trans. Daisetz Teitaro Suzuki (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1932), p. 40.

³⁹ Laṅkāvatāra Sūtra, p. 43.

⁴⁰ The Awakening of Faith, pp. 55-56.

⁴¹ In his Introduction to the Ratnagotravibhāga, Takasaki observes that, in Tathāgatagarbha thought, realizing the Dharmakāya involves "the purification of mind from the defilements". He notes that the terminology used reflects this concern with purification, Ratnagotravibhāga, p. 28.

CHAPTER 8

WIND, KARMA AND PURIFICATION

We have noted the connection of "wind" with pure and impure actions. Wind purifies; but it also defiles. This is true of the cosmological, physiological and mental spheres. We will now trace this theme from early Indian writings to the early Tantras.

The purifying aspect of wind was accepted by virtually all Indian thinkers. The defiling aspect, however, was more emphasized by Buddhists than by non-Buddhists. This emphasis seems to have been associated with the Buddhist doctrine of the unsatisfactoriness of existence. This orientation was maintained by later Buddhist thinkers, who reaffirmed the identification of the elements of the body with the "poisons". They continued the notion that wind carried impurities and caused embodied existence.

The differences between Buddhist and non-Buddhist images of wind reflect contrasting valuations of the phenomenal world. For example, a non-Buddhist medical compendium, the Caraka-Saṃhitā, associates the three "humours" of the body with the three worldly puru-ṣārthas: dharma (morality), artha (gain) and kāma (pleasure), all worthy pursuits:

"The wind, the bile and phlegm, in normal state, make man, ...his faculties intact...and in good health...live a long life, just as morals, interests and pleasures, rightly practised, make man attain the utmost happiness in this world.¹

For the Buddhist, on the other hand, the "humours" were equated with passion, hatred and delusion, the driving forces in the cycle of rebirth. The Buddhists' identification of the constituents of the body with these "poisons" reflects a deep suspicion of, and dissatisfaction with, phenomenal existence.

Buddhist thought, which emphasized renunciation, developed in a monastic setting. In contrast, Hindu dharmasāstras (law-books), such as the Manu-Smṛiti, which contained the lay ethic, were directed chiefly towards householders.

In pre-and-non-Buddhist thought, wind and breath were primarily purifying forces. In the Bhagavad-Gītā, wind is foremost among purifiers.² Sayana, in his commentary on the Rg-Veda, lists wind, fire and sun as the three purifying forces.³ Furthermore, the Prāna that is praised in the Atharva Veda's "Hymn to Prana" is essentially a beneficent power.

The Hindu dharmasāstras commonly recommend control or suppression of the breath (prānāyāma) as a means of self-purification: "As the impurities of metallic ores, melted in the blast (of a furnace), are consumed, even so the taints of the organs are destroyed through the suppression of the breath."⁴

The purifying effect of prānāyāma was associated with the expiation of sins. An individual who performed impure deeds was contaminated by them. Prānāyāma removed the defilements produced by such actions. The Vāsiṣṭha Dharma Śāstra describes the effect of prānāyāma on its practitioner: "If, untired, he performs three suppressions of his breath according to the rule, the sins which he committed during a day and a night are instantly destroyed."⁵

Classical Yoga included a variety of breathing exercises. The practitioner inhaled or exhaled through a particular nostril, or retained the breath for a specified length of time.⁶ The "suppressions" of the dharmasāstras were apparently retentions of this kind. In later Yoga, suppression of the breath involved progressive reduction of

the rate of inhalation and exhalation, and extension of the interval between them.

However, the use of prāṇāyāma in Brahmanic ritual purifications preceded its inclusion in the classical aṣṭāṅga-yoga.⁷ The efficacy of the practice extended to a variety of infractions:

"The Gautama-Dharma-Śāstra states that if animals other than dogs, snakes, frogs and cats pass between the teacher and the pupil when the latter has sat down before the former for study, he (pupil) should practise three prāṇāyāmas and should partake of some clarified butter."⁸

Similarly, "he who has been bitten by a dog, a jackal, or a donkey, by a tame carnivorous animal, by a man, a horse, a camel, or a (village-) pig, becomes pure by suppressing his breath."⁹

The practice also provided expiation for the more serious offence of taking life: "In order to expiate (the death) of those creatures which he unintentionally injures by day or by night, an ascetic shall bathe and perform six suppressions of the breath."¹⁰

Elsewhere it is asserted that "sixteen suppressions of breath, accompanied by (the recitation of) the Vyāhrtis and the syllable Om, repeated daily, purify after a month even the slayer of a learned Brāhmaṇa."¹¹

As we will see, prāṇāyāma had affinities with Brahmanic sacrificial ritual. In some passages, breath itself is referred to as an oblation.¹² Suppressing the breath may have been a way of offering it in sacrifice.

Buddhist breath-meditation (ānāpānasmṛti) involved no suppression or control: it was not a sacrifice of breath. For Buddhists, as for non-Buddhists, prāṇa was associated with the prohibition against taking life. But Buddhists did not encourage suppression of the breath

for any reason.

Ānāpānasmṛti, like prāṇāyāma, led to purification. In the Kośa, mindfulness of the breath culminates in purification.¹³ But, among Buddhists, breath-meditation was useful above all in removing the mental obstacles to clear insight.¹⁴ It was a preliminary to entering the Path, rather than a means of warding off the undesirable consequences of impure actions.

For early Buddhists, the purifying effect of wind was often a poetic image for the more significant purification achieved through understanding the Buddhist truths and following the Buddhist Path:*

"As a frontier city is guarded inside and out, so you should guard yourselves

Calm, quiet, speaking in moderation, not conceited, . . .
[the bhikkhu] shakes off evil characteristics as the wind shakes off the leaves of a tree.

Calm, quiet, speaking in moderation, not conceited, he plucked off evil characteristics as the wind plucks off leaves from a tree."¹⁵

The monk is purified by following the Buddhist way of life. The wind disperses mental obscurations and passions. In a similar way, the speech and actions of the Tathāgata are compared to a purifying wind:

"Whatever ties are here, ways to delusion, taking the side of ignorance, . . . they do not exist when they reach the Tathāgata . . .

For if no man were ever to disperse defilements, as the wind disperses a mass of clouds, the whole world, enveloped, would be darkness indeed."¹⁶

This wind extinguishes the flame of craving and attachment. As, in dispelling defilements, it assuages the suffering of living beings, it represents compassion: "As the great and mighty wind . . . so . . . has the Blessed One blown over the ten thousand world systems with the wind of his love, so cool, so sweet, so calm, so delicate."¹⁷

A similar comparison occurs later, in the Rātnagotravibhāga:
 the defilements of living beings "are like a multitude of clouds; /And,
 bringing about the dispelling of these, /Compassion is like a strong
 wind."¹⁸

On the other hand, wind can be chaotic and destructive. In
 the Samyutta-Nikāya, lust is compared to a hurricane:

"In the upper air there blow winds that are hurricanes. If a
 bird goes thither, the hurricanes toss him about; feet, wings, head,
 body are scattered in all directions. Even so here also a brother
 ...whose heart is possessed by gains, favours, and flattery, when
 he...enters village or township for alms,...he there sees women-
 folk lightly clad...Seeing them thus, lust assails his thoughts.
 He...rejects the training and turns toward low things. And
 one takes his robe, another his bowl, another his sitting-mat,
 another his needle-case, just as the bird hurled in pieces by
 the hurricane."¹⁹

Wind fans the passions. In the Majjhima-Nikāya, the man
 engrossed in worldly pleasures is compared to a man carrying a blazing
 bundle of grass against the wind: unless he throws it away immedi-
 ately, he is sure to be burned.²⁰

Impure mental tendencies cause agitation. The monk is swayed
 as if by a wind:

"The arrow of desire tied together with uncertainty and doubt,
 fastened by the power of pride, stiff as a mind full of anger,
 Originating from the bow of craving...
 ...is sharpened by wrong intentions and memories; pierced by
 that I tremble like a leaf shaken by the wind."²¹

In these passages, wind's effects are painful and disagreeable.
 Such passages contrast with those found in non-Buddhist writings. For
 example, the word payana, among non-Buddhists, meant "air", "wind"
 or "the god of wind". As an adjective, it meant "clean" or "pure".
 It was also used for the householder's sacred fire.²² In Buddhist
 usage, pavana, in the sense of "wind", seems to have been rare.²³ But
 it does occur - with radically different connotations - in the

Visuddhimagga. It denotes "most offensive winds, intensified by the smell of various impurities." ²⁴ These are the winds of the uterine cavity which buffet the embryo.

The winds are impure because they carry the effects of past actions. The individual is driven by these winds both before and after birth. This image is found in the Theragāthā: "Intentions dependent upon desires are the winds which carry along the man of wrong views."²⁵

The persistence of this idea is shown by its recurrence, much later, in the Tibetan Book of the Dead. The being of the intermediate state is advised that, at the time when he is beginning to seek rebirth, "the fierce wind of karma, terrific and hard to endure, will drive thee (onwards), from behind, in dreadful gusts."²⁶

As in earlier references, there is a close and complex relationship between thought and "wind". On the one hand, thought is determined by karma: "Thine intellect . . . will be like a feather tossed about by the wind, riding on the horse of breath." On the other hand, the existence of the wind of karma is itself dependent on thought: "Fear it not. That is thine own illusion."²⁷

For Buddhists, physical and moral causation are inseparably linked. The wind which "pushes" beings towards birth is itself produced by the maturing of actions.²⁸ The "great elements" composing the embryo result from actions in preceding lives²⁹, as does rūpa (form)³⁰, and the perceptive and cognitive faculties.³¹

Human actions affect all things. For example, immoral practices cause the fertility of the soil to diminish:

"En raison de la pratique intense du meurtre, les choses extérieures - les plantes, le sol, etc. - sont de petite vitalité

....; en raison de vol, elles sont accablées par des pluies de pierres, de poussière ou d'acide...; en raison de l'amour illicite, elles sont couvertes de poussière ou d'acide...; en raison de mensonge, elles sont de mauvaise odeur..."³²

As the actions which produced all things and beings resulted from ignorance, everything is compounded of impurities. Wind carries these impurities; but it is also a purifying force.

An image which occurs in the Saddharma-Smṛtyupasthāna-Sūtra demonstrates this close association of purification with defilement. There are illuminating differences between the various forms this image assumes in the text. If, as Lin Li-Kouang suggests³³, the sūtra was compiled from fragments written at different dates, these differences may indicate a process of development.

The second chapter may be among the oldest sections of the text.³⁴ It lists eight winds in the human body, which are similar to those enumerated in the Nikāyas. The text adds that "de tels vents, il y a 80 espèces, qui se meuvent comme des vers."³⁵ The movement of the winds is compared to the movement of worms, but there is no implication that worms actually exist in the body.

The third chapter, however, indicates that both worms and winds are to be found in the body. In this chapter,

... on lit que le corps des êtres . . . contient 80 espèces de vers, qui rongent les diverses parties du corps et qui, au moment de la mort, sont anéantis respectivement par 80 espèces de vent (vāta).³⁶

If the version in the second chapter is older, the "worms" and the "winds" may originally have been identical. In the third chapter, they are still closely associated. The image of "worms" brings to mind bodily corruption and impurity. The "winds" are a purifying force, since they destroy the worms. But these two opposed forces

share common characteristics.

In the seventh chapter of the text,

les 80 espèces de vers sont énumérées au complet et longuement commentées une à une, en huit groupes, suivant les différentes parties du corps. Puis les 80 espèces de vents sont à leur tour exposées séparément.³⁷

There is a significant difference between this account and the previous one. In the third chapter, the worms were said to gnaw or devour the bodies of those "destinés aux grands enfers, Avīci et autres." In the seventh chapter, however, devouring by worms is not a punishment reserved for evildoers. The worms and the winds are said to be found within every human body.³⁸

In a later text, the Śikṣā-Samuccaya, thousands of worms are said to exist in the body. They are included among the repulsive elements contemplated in aśubhābhāvanā: "The Bodhisattva must regard the body . . . as a dwelling-place for eighty thousand broods of worms."³⁹

Worms are a reminder of the ultimate fate of the physical body. This recollection inspires abhorrence for phenomenal existence. It may be that contemplation of the "winds" counteracted the excessive aversion this might create, as ānāpānasmṛti counteracted the distaste for existence aroused by aśubhābhāvanā.

This passage of the Śikṣā-Samuccaya mentions no "winds" corresponding to the worms. But in the early Tantras, as we will see, the "winds" reappear, in association with eighty impure tendencies.

The bodily winds moved like worms. But there is another way in which "worms" and "winds" might have become associated. Prāṇa, in the sense of "a living being" often occurred in the context of the prohibition against killing. Prāṇaka (Pali pānaka), which referred

to animals in general,⁴⁰ is found in similar contexts. More specifically, pānaka denotes the tiny creatures living in water. Water that contains these is sappānaka. Since these creatures must not be injured, monks are forbidden to use such water.⁴¹

A prānaka is a small creature, such as an insect or a worm. The word is used in this way in the Mahāvastu: "The ground is covered with many creatures, small, large and medium-sized. When the Buddha walks over these creatures . . . his tread will be the cause of suffering."⁴²

In other contexts, prānakas are creatures that, like worms, devour human flesh. In the Mahāvastu, the bodies of beings in hell are devoured by these prānakas, which are described as black creatures with jaws of iron. Yet the sufferers do not die, because they are upheld by their past karma.⁴³

This image is parallel to that found in the seventh chapter of the Saddharma-Smṛtyupasthāna-Sūtra. In both images, the bodies of living beings are eaten away continuously. In the Mahāvastu, the sufferers are the inhabitants of hell; in the sūtra, they are human beings in this world. The function of the prānakas, in the Mahāvastu, is parallel to that of the worms, in the sūtra.

In the Saddharma-Smṛtyupasthāna-Sūtra, "worms" and "winds" are correlated. This correlation may reflect the semantic affinity between prānas (bodily winds) and prānakas (tiny creatures that devour the body).

Purifying and defiling forces were associated in complex ways. In Pali writings, for example, the water that monks are permitted to use is appānaka: it contains no living creatures.⁴⁴ It is consistent

with Buddhist attitudes to phenomenal experience that the presence of life should be associated with impurity, and its absence with purity. In another context, however, appānaka is used with negative connotations. It refers to the practice of non-breathing meditation, which was condemned by the Buddha.⁴⁵

Such reversals indicate that corrupting and purifying forces may be identical. This identity is proclaimed in the Tantric tradition: "That by which the world is bound, by that same its bonds are released."⁴⁶

For Tantric Buddhists, as for earlier Buddhists, wind brought about the existence of the phenomenal world. But this wind arose from a source which transcended all phenomena. Because of its ambivalence, wind provided an appropriate image for the Tantrics' identification of purity and defilement.

In the Tantras, individual existence is said to arise from the three poisons, which are subdivided into eighty prakṛtis ("natures"), or vikalpas. Guenther translates the "poisons" as the three "reaction potentialities". He refers to the eighty prakṛtis as the "self-contained reaction patterns."⁴⁷ The disciple must perceive the working of these patterns within himself. By dissolving or transmuting them, liberation is attained. This is the goal of the complex manipulation of winds in Tantric practice. Through these winds one is both bound and released.⁴⁸

The eighty prakṛtis may have originated in the eighty "worms" and "winds"; or both traditions may represent borrowings from a third source. In any case, the image of the prakṛtis, like that of the "worms" and "winds", is ambivalent. They obscure the Clear Light of

the Dharmadhātu, and are the root of all phenomenal experience. But at the same time, the prakṛtis represent prajñā (wisdom), upāya (means) and their union.⁴⁹

According to the later commentarial tradition, the practitioner must meditate upon the prakṛtis and understand their operation before attempting to manipulate the internal winds.⁵⁰ The set of eighty prakṛtis is divided into three groups, corresponding to the poisons: lust, hatred and delusion. Forty - including desire, attachment, joy and bliss - are classified as male and associated with lust. Thirty-three prakṛtis - among them aversion, fear, worry and sorrow - are female. They are associated with the second poison. Seven tendencies, including indifference, forgetfulness and weariness are both male and female, and are classified with delusion.⁵¹

In the Pañcakrama, wind causes the eighty prakṛtis to arise and to cease. It carries potentialities which give rise to the phenomenal world:

When "knowledge" (jñāna . . .) becomes associated with subtle-formed wind, then issuing forth from the paths of sense organs it grasps . . . the sense objects.

At whatever time the wind, having become a vehicle (for viñāna) is yoked by the "light", at that time all those prakṛtis are completely dissipated.

At whatever (vein, nāḍī) the wind stops, at that one it sustains some prakṛti (among the 80 prakṛtis). As long as (the wind) stirs up, the "light" is not steady.⁵²

The wind supports the prakṛtis. When it is active, the world is experienced through the senses. When the wind calms, the phenomenal world subsides.

A familiar image recurs in this passage: the wind causes the light of a lamp to fluctuate. The term Nirvāna, in its early Buddhist usage, could be associated with the extinction of a flame, or with

its steady burning. In the Pañcakrama, the latter - an unwavering light - is the objective to be attained. The lamp burns steadily when the wind ceases. In this respect, the image of the Pañcakrama resembles that found in the Ratnagotravibhāga. In that text, light was associated with the cittapraṁkṛti, which was described as brilliant. This brilliance is visible only when the wind of ayoniśo-manasikāra subsides.

I have noted the frequent passages in which wind and consciousness are closely associated. In the Guhyasamāja-Nidāna-Kārika, wind is described as the "vehicle" of consciousness. This implies that wind is necessary for the activity of consciousness to become manifest. It also implies that wind is guided by consciousness:

The wind seizing, takes hold of that entity-light in each case, and viññāna joined with wind continually operates in the world of living beings.

This wind, the great element, is the mount of the three viññānas. By means of it, the prakṛtis always proceed accordingly.⁵³

Wind is the immediate cause of the prakṛtis, but consciousness is their "root" or source.⁵⁴ Similarly, in the Manimālā, the prakṛtis are generated by wind, but consciousness is the necessary support.⁵⁵

Whatever the precise relation between these two, it is clear that the propagation of the prakṛtis is to be terminated. According to the Pradīpoddyotana, "the Vajrayāna purifies lust, hatred and delusion."⁵⁶ Hence it also purifies the eighty prakṛtis that proceed from these three.

The prakṛtis are the tendencies which attach beings to the cycle of rebirth:

Having done good and evil deeds [beings] . . . wander in the five destinies; having committed the sins of immediate retribution, they roast in the hells; having done the good deeds of giving and the like, they thrive in heaven . . . Again and again this happens during their uncountable lives . . . The beings are tormented by way of the (eighty) prakṛti lights.⁵⁷

This last sentence is a vivid reminder of the eighty worms gnawing at the human body. It would take us too far afield to examine the method by which the prakṛtis are eliminated. This is summarized, however, in the Guhyaśamāja-Nidāna-Kārika: "Knowing the differences of the prakṛtis and the Lights, one should engage in the caryā (praxis), (namely), abandoning the body of works (karmakāya)."⁵⁸

Through this one attains the "diamond body" (vajradeha).⁵⁹ Wayman refers to a commentary in which vajra is explained with reference to the prakṛtis: "So as to explain the word 'vajra', it is said 'The vajra and also the vikalpas', because it destroys the sets of natures (prakṛti) amounting to one-hundred-sixty."⁶⁰

The prakṛtis are sustained by wind, which is therefore the motive force of samsāra. Wind performs all actions in the material world.⁶¹ But there is a second aspect to wind. In the Ratnagotra-vibhāga, wind was the source of all defilements, and yet was grounded in the cittapṛakṛti. A similar idea is expressed in the Maṇimālā. When its nature is understood, wind is found to originate in a source transcending all phenomenal experience:

Now the topic is the five kinds and the ten kinds of wind . . . While they are taught as the multitude of deeds . . . , if one ponders their intrinsic nature, they are the wind which arises from the Clear Light of the Dharmadhātu Circle.⁶²

The development I have outlined shows that through the whole

history of Buddhist thought, wind and breath express a consistent set of ideas. They are related to karmic tendencies, to purification, and to the arising and cessation of phenomenal existence. In this respect there is no sharp break between the Nikāyas and the Mahāyāna, or between the Mahāyāna and the Tantras. Images of wind were undoubtedly drawn from the Indian cultural background; but they were adapted by Buddhists and used in ways appropriate to their own tradition.

In this chapter we have seen examples of this adaptation. Images of wind expressed the unsatisfactoriness of phenomenal experience, and also the interpenetration of the phenomenal world and the transcendent. Although the second was increasingly prominent in later thought, both were central Buddhist concerns. There is another set of images related to wind that were also given a distinctive Buddhist interpretation. I will examine these images in the next chapter.

NOTES

- ¹Caraka-Saṃhitā, quoted in Filliozat, pp. 202-3.
- ²The Bhagavad Gītā, translated and interpreted by Franklin Edgerton (New York: Harper & Row, Harper Torchbooks, 1964), 10. 31, p. 53.
- ³Griffith 1:341 n. 8. While it is of relatively recent date, this commentary preserves much earlier traditions.
- ⁴The Laws of Manu [Manu-Smṛti], trans. G. Buhler, The Sacred Books of the East, vol. 25 (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1886), VI. 71, p. 211.
- ⁵Vāsiṣṭha Dharma Śāstra XXV. 7; The Sacred Laws of the Aryas, trans. G. Buhler, Sacred Books of the East, vol. 14 (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1882), p. 126.
- ⁶Pandurang Vaman Kane, History of Dharmasāstra, Government Oriental Series, Class B, No. 6, 5 vols. (Poona: Bhandarkar Oriental Research Institute, 1930-62), vol. 5, part 2, pp. 1437-40.
- ⁷Ibid., p. 1436.
- ⁸Ibid.
- ⁹Manu-Smṛti XI. 200, p. 471.
- ¹⁰Manu-Smṛti VI. 69, p. 210.
- ¹¹Vāsiṣṭha Dharma Śāstra, p. 127. Also in Baudhāyana Dharma Śāstra (IV. 1. 29), ibid., pp. 316-17; Manu-Smṛti XI. 249, pp. 479-80.
- ¹²See, e.g., Kauṣītaki Upaniṣad 2.5, Hume, p. 310.
- ¹³Abh. Kośa 4:154-56.
- ¹⁴Ibid.
- ¹⁵Theragāthā 1005-7, Norman 1:93. Cf. also Theragāthā 2, Norman 1:1; Anguṭṭara-Nikāya 2:211.
- ¹⁶Theragāthā 1267-68, Norman 1:115.
- ¹⁷Milinda-Pañha 1:148.
- ¹⁸Ratnagotravibhāga, p. 354.
- ¹⁹Samyutta-Nikāya 2:157.
- ²⁰Majjhima-Nikāya 2:29. The close relationship of consciousness and karmic potentialities, and of wind and flame, appears in the

later Theravāda tradition. Cf. A Manual of Abhidhamma (Abhidhammattha-Sangaha), trans. Nārada Mahā Thera (Kandy: Buddhist Publication Society, 1975). Nārada (p. 282) observes that "motion and heat in the material realm correspond respectively to consciousness and kamma in the mental." Wind and flame are used in the Śikṣa-Samuccaya (p. 240) to explain how action (karma) can take place without a doer: "as by the friction of the wind the blazing of a tree blazes up; and neither maruts [the wind-gods] nor tree thinks, 'I produce the fire', nevertheless there is the fire, so are the doers of action."

²¹Theragāthā 752-54, Norman 1:73.

²²Monier-Williams, s.v. pavana.

²³It occurs neither in Edgerton's Dictionary, nor in that of the Pali Text Society.

²⁴Visuddhimagga, PTS ed., p. 593.

²⁵Theragāthā 760, Norman 1:74.

²⁶The Tibetan Book of the Dead, comp. and ed. W. Y. Evans-Wentz, trans. Lama Kazi Dawa-Samdup (New York: Oxford University Press, Galaxy Books, 1960), p. 161. The wind of karma, here, is also the wind which pushes beings towards birth. Cf. Praśna Upaniṣad (3. 7): "Now, rising upward through one of these (channels), the up-breath (udāna) leads in consequence of good (work) (puṇya) to the good world; in consequence of evil (pāpa), to the evil world; in consequence of both, to the world of men." Hume, p. 384.

²⁷Tibetan Book of the Dead, p. 161.

²⁸Abh. Kośa 2:58.

²⁹Abh. Kośa 2:51-52.

³⁰It is so described by Saṅghabhadra, Abh. Kośa 1:25 n. 2.

³¹Abh. Kośa 1:273-74.

³²Abh. Kośa 3:187.

³³Lin Li-Kouang, p. 115.

³⁴"Les chapitres I-VI ne doivent pas être antérieurs à 150 ap. J.-C.; . . . la première partie du chapitre VII doit être du troisième siècle au plus tôt," Lin Li-Kouang, p. 115.

³⁵Quoted by Lin Li-Kouang, p. 110.

³⁶Lin Li-Kouang, p. 109.

³⁷Ibid. "La liste . . . se retrouve . . . dans . . . le

Garbha-sūtra [qui] a été traduit en chinois en 303 ou 281 A.D.; le Yogācāra-bhūmi (trad. 284 A.D.) [qui] est attribuée à Saṅgharakṣa . . . ; [et] le Nanda-garbhāvakraṅta-nirdeśa [qui] appartient au Vinaya-kṣudraka-vastu des Mūla-sarvāstivādīn (trad. 710 A.D.)", *ibid.*, p. 114.

³⁸Lin Li-Kouang, p. 109.

³⁹Śikṣā-Samuccaya, p. 218.

⁴⁰F. Edgerton, Dictionary, s.v. prānaka; Pali Text Society Dictionary, s.v. pānaka. See, e.g., Samyutta-Nikāya 4:130-31.

⁴¹See, e.g., Majjhima-Nikāya 1:17; Vinaya-Piṭaka 2:261; Vinaya-Piṭaka 3:3-4; Samyutta-Nikāya 1:212. Edgerton's Dictionary cites (s.v. prānaka) Karmavibhāṅga (160. 1); Mañjuśrīmūlakalpa and the Vinaya of the Mūlasarvāstivādīn, for this usage.

⁴²Mahāvastu 1:224; cf. also Mahāvastu 2:131; 2:133.

⁴³Mahāvastu 1:7.

⁴⁴If pānaka were worms, this rule was as salutary for the monks as it was for the creatures whose lives they spared.

⁴⁵Majjhima-Nikāya 1:297-98.

⁴⁶The Hevajra Tantra, trans. D. L. Snellgrove, London Oriental Series, vol. 6, 2 parts (London: Oxford University Press, 1959) 1:80.

⁴⁷The Life and Teaching of Naropa, translated, with a Philosophical Commentary, by Herbert V. Guenther (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1963), p. 58.

⁴⁸It is difficult to discuss this topic briefly without oversimplifying. The materials this discussion makes use of are primarily from the Guhyasamāja tradition, and are not necessarily applicable to all Tantric schools. In this tradition, wind is fundamental to both theory and practice. Speaking of the Guhyasamāja system, Wayman observes that "unless one believes . . . there are these mystic winds . . . he can see little point to having these two successive stages of yoga; and, in fact, there is little profit to his pursuing the system at any level of application." Alex Wayman, Yoga of the Guhyasamājatantra (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1977), p. 143.

⁴⁹Yoga of the Guhyasamāja, pp. 184-88.

⁵⁰The meditation on the praktis occurs at the outset of the first stage of Tantric practice. According to Wayman, this stage (Generation) places greater emphasis on theoretical understanding than the succeeding stage (Completion).

⁵¹Pañcakrama, quoted in Yoga of the Guhyasamāja, pp. 185-88.

⁵²Ibid.

⁵³Guhyasamāja-Nidāna-Kārikā, quoted in Yoga of the Guhyasamāja, pp. 5-6.

⁵⁴"viñāna . . . has the characteristics of the three lights. This is entirely the root of the prakṛtis . . . of the sentient-being realm," ibid.

⁵⁵Quoted in Yoga of the Guhyasamāja, p. 197.

⁵⁶Ibid., p. 191.

⁵⁷Pañcakrama, quoted in Yoga of the Guhyasamāja, pp. 227-28.

⁵⁸Yoga of the Guhyasamāja, p. 15.

⁵⁹Ibid.

⁶⁰Eighty for day and eighty for night (ibid., p. 185). Quoted from Alaṅkālaśa's commentary on the Vajramālā (ibid., p. 285).

⁶¹"What is called 'wind' performs all deeds", Pañcakrama 1. 3, quoted in Yoga of the Guhyasamāja, p. 198

⁶²Quoted in Yoga of the Guhyasamāja, p. 197.

CHAPTER 9

WIND, BREATH AND SPEECH

In this and the following two chapters, I will consider the imagery of wind in the Buddhist Tantras, particularly in those of the Guhyasamāja tradition. I will begin by examining the relationship between breath and speech in both Buddhist and non-Buddhist traditions.

To the natural connection between breath and speech, the Rg-Veda adds a connection between wind and speech. In the Hymn to Vāk, Speech (Vāk) is personified as a god who is said to "breathe a strong breath like the wind and the tempest."¹

The image suggests an analogy between speech and the howling of the wind. This sound is mentioned in several passages of the Rg-Veda.²

A further indication of the connection of wind and breath with sound is found in the Vājasaneyī-Saṃhitā. In this text, wind and breath are said to be born from the ears.³

Breath, either at this time or later, was connected with two central concerns of Brahmanic religion: sacred utterance and sacrifice. In the Bṛhadāraṇyaka-Upaniṣad, the three Vedas are speech, and breath is their lord:

. . . it breath is . . . Bṛhaspati. The Bṛhatī is speech. He is her lord (pati), and is therefore Bṛhaspati.
And it is also Brahmanaspati. Prayer (brahman), verily, is speech. He is her lord, and is therefore Brahmanaspati.
And it is also the Sāma-Veda. The Chant (sāman), verily, is speech. . .
And it is also the Udgītha . . . Song (gītha), verily, is speech.⁴

In this passage, the three Vedas are shown to be subject to breath. The Bṛhatī, a meter used in the Rg-Veda, represents the Rg-Veda itself. Prayer (brahman) is the Yajur-Veda.⁵

The three Vedas are sacred utterance, the essence of which is

mantra. In the Jaiminīya Upaniṣad Brāhmaṇa, breath is described as the essence (rasa) of the mantra "om".⁶ In mantra, breath and speech are unified:

This is the quintessence of the essences, . . . namely the Udgītha . . .

The Ric is speech. The Sāman is breath (prāna). The Udgītha is this syllable 'Om'.

Verily this is a pair - namely speech and breath, and also the Ric and the Sāman.

This pair is joined together in this syllable 'Om'.⁷

Speech and breath are conjoined in mantra. A similar idea of the relationship between breath and speech appears in Tantric Buddhist texts. But a second and contrasting idea of their relation can also be found in early non-Buddhist writings. In this view, speech was associated with prāṇāyāma and sacrifice.

It has been suggested that prāṇāyāma (restraint of the breath), originated in Vedic recitation.⁸ It seems that exercises involving suspension or suppression of the breath were prescribed for those who chanted the Vedas. The Jaiminīya Brāhmaṇa teaches that one should not breathe while chanting the Gāyatrīstotra.⁹ Similarly, in the Chāndogya-Upaniṣad, Vedic recitation is to be performed without in-breathing or out-breathing:

The Ric is speech. Therefore one utters the Ric without in-breathing, without out-breathing. The Sāman is the Ric. Therefore one sings the Sāman without in-breathing, without out-breathing. The Udgītha is the Sāman. Therefore one chants the Udgītha without in-breathing, without out-breathing.¹⁰

The same passage explains that breath is suspended because breath and speech are mutually exclusive:

The junction of the in-breath (prāna) and the out-breath (apāna) is the diffused breath. Speech is the diffused breath. Therefore one utters speech without in-breathing, without out-breathing.¹¹

In speech, breath was suspended. In breath, speech was suppressed.

Both, therefore, were sacrifices;

As long, verily, as a person is speaking, he is not able to breathe. Then he is sacrificing breath (prāna) in speech.

As long, verily, as a person is breathing, he is not able to speak. Then he is sacrificing speech (vāc) in breath.

These two are unending, immortal oblations; whether waking or sleeping, one is sacrificing continuously, uninterruptedly.¹²

Life itself was a continuous sacrifice, an offering of ritual oblations.¹³ Through sacrifice, creation was sustained and renewed.

Similarly, speech was a creative power. In the Rg-Veda, Vāk (speech) describes himself as holding together all existing things:

. . . I have penetrated Earth and Heaven. On the world's summit I bring forth the father: my home is in the waters, in the ocean.

Thence I extend o'er all existing creatures, and touch even yonder heaven with my forehead.

. . . I hold together all existence.

Beyond this wide earth and beyond the heavens I have become so mighty in my grandeur.¹⁴

Speech was a creative force. It also purified. We observed that prānāyāma, the suppression of breath, was performed to expiate sins. In speech, breath was suppressed. It followed that speech would be an effective accompaniment to prānāyāma. In fact, prānāyāma was often combined with the repetition of a mantra. Breath-control performed in this way was known as "sagarbha" or "sabīja". It was more highly recommended than prānāyāma alone ("agarbha" or "abīja" prānāyāma).¹⁵

Buddhist ideas of the relationship between breath and speech differed from those of non-Buddhists. As we have seen, the Buddha condemned meditative exercises which involved the suppression of breath. Buddhists considered Vedic sacrifices to be useful only within a circumscribed sphere, but not helpful in attaining the ultimate goal, Nirvāna. Nor could this goal be obtained through ritual purification. Prānāyāma

as a means of expiation for wrongdoing was therefore excluded.

For the non-Buddhist, the Vedas were the source of authoritative wisdom. They were also "speech". Non-Buddhist ideas of the purifying and creative powers of speech were related to this confidence in the Vedas. Buddhists regarded Dharma, the utterances ascribed to Buddha, as the source of authoritative wisdom. Did the utterance of Dharma serve a similar function among Buddhists, as did the utterance of the Vedas for non-Buddhists? And was the Buddhist understanding of Dharma related to the ancient magical belief in the power of the word?

A detailed exploration of this difficult problem would be out of place here.¹⁶ As Dharma originated from the Buddha, he was the pre-eminent source of excellent speech.¹⁷ But early Buddhists criticized those who attributed magical efficacy to words. The Buddha is said to have condemned the use of mantras and charms.¹⁸ At the same time, magical elements were not entirely eliminated.

For example: the spoken word, from earliest times, was held to embody a healing force. Bhesaja meant a spell, charm or mantra and also a drug or remedy. This curative effect was shared by breath and wind. Breath was a purifying force, and wind, in the Rg-Veda, was the dispenser of healing balm.

Dharma was enunciated by the Buddha, who is the great physician and healer. Dharma is the Buddha's excellent speech. Like all excellent speech, it shares the virtues of mantra, and is imbued with healing power.

If this understanding only became explicit at a later date, it was clearly present much earlier. In the Girimānanda Sutta, for example, the Buddha is told of a monk who has been stricken with a serious illness. He recommends that the Ten Ideas be recited to him: "There are grounds

for supposing that when he hears them, that sickness will be allayed there and then."¹⁹

This relief cannot be entirely separated from magical efficacy. Traditionally, hearing the Buddhist truths is no more than the first stage in understanding. Hearing must be followed by careful consideration of these truths and by meditation upon them. Nevertheless, there are passages in the Nikāyas that seem to indicate that suffering may be relieved through simply hearing the Dharma: "Just as a clever physician might in a trice take away the sickness of one sick and ailing, grievously ill, even so . . . whenever one hears his honour Gotama's Dhamma . . . grief, lamentation, suffering, sorrow and despair vanish away."²⁰ The popular belief in the benefits to be obtained by reciting sūtras, or by hearing them recited,²¹ is undoubtedly related such early ideas.

It is significant that Dharma or speech is closely related to wind. Just as the world rested on a circle of wind, Dharma, in its general sense of duty, morality, or the natural order of things, was the basis and support of the manifested world.

When the circle of wind beneath the earth was upset, earthquakes resulted. Similarly, when the Buddha proclaimed the Dharma, the great earth shook.²² The Buddha's speech, uttered "with resounding voice . . . shakes the world of the gods and causes the firm-based earth to quake in six different ways."²³

In the Indian tradition, speech, like wind, was implicated in purification and defilement, and in creation and destruction. Elaborate systems of mantras developed in non-Buddhist traditions. These systems were concerned with the evolution of the individual and the cosmos, and their transformation through sound and speech.²⁴ Buddhists, although they

rejected the Vedas and the sacrificial tradition, were acquainted with the concepts of the efficacy of words and of the manifestation of the phenomenal world by the power of wind.

In addition, developments within Buddhist thought itself made it possible to view words and speech as creative forces. The Mādhyamika position that the phenomenal world was only conventionally existent was generally adopted by later Buddhist thinkers. To them, the apparent reality of the world was based upon verbal designation and discrimination:

Thus much must be understood: to wit, the covering and the essence, the kernel and the husk. And that by the Blessed One has been fully seen, fully spoken, made clear, as being void. . .

. . . Void is form by its nature (and so on to "consciousness") . . . All this is just convention, just names, just compact, just covering, just agreement. Thus wise men should not believe in it.²⁵

Discrete entities exist as the result of mental discrimination. The mind, confused by its own accumulated tendencies and obscured by passion, distinguishes an external world and labels its perceptions. But these are "just names": there are no corresponding entities that exist apart from the mental tendencies of the perceiver.

If the mind did not discriminate and assign names, the phenomenal world, as we know it, would not exist. In this sense, naming creates the world. Ordinarily, this creative activity is caused by ignorance. Ignorance leads to seeing the world as it is generally perceived. However, the opposite of ignorance, insight, can be the basis of conscious naming, as a means of transmuting perceived reality. Words then become an aid on the Buddhist Path.

In the Buddhist Tantras, speech represents both the existing and the ideal order. The existing order is called into being and supported

by speech. But it is also through speech that this order is subverted and transmuted. This applies in particular to mantra. Mantra is explained in the Guhyasamāja-Tantra as follows:

Whatsoever mind arises in dependence on sense organs and sense objects, that mind is the "man", the "tra" in the meaning of its salvation.²⁶

"Mantra" refers to the mind in its deluded state; but it also denotes the process by which its obscurations are removed. This double significance parallels that of "wind". Wind represents both the support of the existing order and also the force that overturns that order and allows a higher truth to supervene.

In the Guhyasamāja-Tantra, the definition of mantra includes both meanings. It asserts that the two are not different.²⁶ The mind that experiences the phenomenal world is not separate from the mind that does not. The existing order was believed to be already the ideal or transformed order.

It is necessary to understand the existing order to see the forces responsible for the arising and cessation of the phenomenal world. Speech, like wind, was a motive force in the creation and dissolution of the manifested world. The Tantric practitioner attempted to understand and use this force.

The gods, for example, could be called into being through speech or mantra. Particular gods could be manifested through meditation on specific seed-syllables.²⁷

The world was said to arise through the action of particular winds, which were correlated with mantra syllables. The Vajramālā,²⁸ in Wayman's words, "holds that the phenomenal world is due to the winds prāna and apāna identified with two mantra syllables A and HAM . . .

which form the 'knot of the heart'.²⁹ "Aham" is "I" - the first person singular subjective pronoun. The apparent existence of the individual arises from the sense of selfhood. The "knot of the heart" represents the suffering experienced by the embodied being. In the words of the Vajramālā:

A is explained as the prāṇa wind
Likewise, apāna is said to be HAM
When those two unite, there is samsāra.³⁰

The idea of creation by wind and mantra is here united with orthodox Buddhist ideas. The passage is consistent with the doctrines that the apparent self is composite, that belief in a self causes suffering, and that the phenomenal world is produced by the interaction of causes.

The Tantric practitioner must learn to dissolve the "knot of the heart". To do so, he must understand the forces that produce the body, and visualize his body as their product. The illusory self emerges through wind and speech. A and HAM, like the various winds, are assigned precise locations in the practitioner's visualized body. In the visualization process, the illusory nature of the self is experienced, and the disturbances created by this false concept are calmed.

Through visualizations, the practitioner learns to manipulate illusory forms. In this way, the forces that produce the sense of selfhood are brought within his grasp. A similar effect results from exercises in which the gods of a maṇḍala are visualized. The following passage, from the Śrīcakrasambhāra-Tantra, illustrates this process:

One should meditate on the pure and sacred outer Maṇḍala of the Nirmānakāya as the first step on the Path. Thus all who reside in such Maṇḍala must be brought clearly before the mind. This mental movement, together with the lower and upper Vāyu /apāna and prāṇa/ in motion, cause the Ham sound at the crown of the head to hum, and the A-shaped vital principle to pass through the Sūkshma-nādi where both the Vāyus meet in the heart and unite in one.³¹

Mantra and wind were associated with each other. For non-Buddhists, as we have seen, mantra often accompanied prāṇāyāma. The same was true for Tantric Buddhists, although they seem to have interpreted prāṇāyāma differently.

Prāṇāyāma was among the practices associated with the stage of completion in the Guhyasamāja tradition. In the Stage of Generation, the practitioner mastered the production and dissolution of illusory forms. In the Stage of Completion, he applied this ability to the process of inner transformation.

The transformative process is outlined in the Pañcakrama ("The Five Stages"). Wayman points out that the "stages" of this work seem to have been drawn from the Vajramālā.³² They were eventually correlated with the six-membered yoga³³ referred to in the final chapter of the Guhyasamāja-Tantra. According to the Pradīpoddyotana,³⁴ the third of the six members, prāṇāyāma, was associated with the first "stage", known as vajrajapa.

Vajrajapa, as the word indicates, includes the two aspects of mantra referred to in the Guhyasamāja-Tantra. Vajra (diamond, or diamond-like) is applied to the attributes of the Tathāgatas. The practitioner identifies the characteristics of his own being with these attributes. The qualities associated with vajra include clarity, brilliance, flawlessness, penetration, immoveability, imperishability and creative force. Japa denotes the repetition of mantra-syllables.³⁵ Vajrajapa includes both the practice and its goal.

The Vajramālā explains the association of this practice with "wind": "The one who by . . . diamond muttering [vajrajapa] understands the characteristic of the wind(s), destroys the vikalpa-winds and attains visualization of the citta."³⁶

The "winds", in this passage, are the inner "vital airs" associated with specific bodily locations and functions. The vikalpas are the prakrtis, the set of "natures" or reaction-patterns. These are destroyed when the winds that generate them in the nādis, or subtle channels, of the body subside.

The prakrtis, and the three poisons they represent, are the motive forces of samsāra. But they are also, when rightly seen, inseparable from the qualities of the Tathāgatas:

Delusion, hatred, and lust are always the repose
lying in the vajra,
Whereby the means of the Buddhas is called
Vajrayāna ("Diamond Vehicle").³⁷

The ignorant consider the poisons to be entities separate from the pure qualities of the Tathāgatas. Since they desire to avoid the first and acquire the second, they are not free from attachment and aversion. The Tantric disciple understands that, fundamentally, no such separation is possible. Enlightenment involves seeing the unity of apparent opposites.

Through Tantric practice, he learns to perceive this unity. This allows him to transform the poisons into the qualities of the Tathāgatas. In this process of transmutation, defilements become adornments.

The Tantric practitioner tries to attain the vajradeha, the "diamond body". Body, or physical form, is only one of the aspects of this transformation, in which the individual's body, speech, and mind are identified with the body, speech, and mind of the Buddhas.

Through the prescribed mantra-practice, the individual identifies his speech with that of the Buddhas, and perfects the vagvajra, the "diamond of speech".³⁸

Tantric Buddhist ideas of speech and breath differed from those

found in non-Buddhist writings. In some of the non-Buddhist passages noted earlier, breath and speech were mutually exclusive. Speech involved a sacrifice of breath.

For the Tantric Buddhist, breath and speech are complementary. Breath is the cause, speech is the result. "The cause is prāṇa, the effect is mantra; and their reality is the 'reality of mantra'".³⁹ The "reality of mantra" (mantratattvam) is identified with the vagvajra, the speech of the Tathāgatas. Breath is a necessary element in achieving the transformation of speech.

The difference between Buddhists and non-Buddhist Tantrics is reflected in their practices. Both recited mantras in conjunction with breathing meditation. But each combined the two differently.

Non-Buddhists practiced restraint of the breath (prāṇāyāma). Mantra, which involved the sacrifice of breath, promoted its suppression.

For the Tantric Buddhist, mantra and breath existed simultaneously. The earlier Buddhist emphasis on mindfulness,⁴⁰ rather than restraint, was continued. The mantra recitation of the Stage of Generation in the Guhyasamāja tradition is known as "recitation of the winds". It is performed according to the natural cycle of the elements.⁴¹ Each element is contemplated in turn, along with its corresponding goddess and mantra-syllable. The "winds" are the in-breath and out-breath, which do not cease, but are harmonized with the rhythm of the recitation. The in-breath and out-breath "have the nature of the five knowledges and the five Tathāgatas".⁴²

For Tantric Buddhists, mantra-practice derives its efficacy and justification from its source, the Buddhas and Tathāgatas. The Guhyasamāja-Tantra defines mantra practice as follows:

Whatever pledge and vow said to be free from worldly conduct has protection by all the vajras, that is explained as the mantra practice.⁴³

In this passage, according to Wayman, the vajras are probably the five Tathāgatas. If so, then the qualities of the Tathāgatas are not only the goal towards which mantra practice is directed, but also its basis and support.

It is also clear from this passage that the practice involves much more than the recitation of prescribed syllables. Mantra-practice means commitment to the Buddhist way of life. The individual must become "free from worldly conduct." In this way, he experiences the purification which results from following the Path.

Mantra, in this sense, is the "wind that sweeps away defilements." But it has the power to remove corruptions only because it is the essence of Dharma, the pure speech of the Buddhas. This concept is represented symbolically. As the source of samsāra is associated with the mantra, syllables A and HAM, the origin of the Buddhist truths is associated with E and VAM. These two syllables unite to form "evam" ("thus"), the first word of a Buddhist sutra.⁴⁴ Evam is the essence of Dharma. "E" (ए) is regarded as the mother and "vam" (व) as the father. Together, they are the progenitors of the scriptures.⁴⁵

Mantra and Dharma are both purifying forces. The speech and actions of the Tathagata affect the wind on which the world rests. Similarly, the utterance of pure speech, in the form of mantra, affects the "winds" which support the body. These winds, in Tantric physiology, flow along "nerves" or "channels". The two central "channels", alongside the spinal column, are associated with wisdom and means, and also with the syllables "E" and "VAM".

The "winds" carry impure tendencies, but these tendencies are not different from the attributes of the Tathāgatas. Mantra, through its association with Dharma, makes this identity apparent.

Tantric Buddhists borrowed and adapted traditional ideas of mantra. Their interpretations of these ideas were consistent with their own concepts of "breath" and "wind", and with the traditional Buddhist emphasis on the Tathāgatas and their Teachings.

NOTES

- ¹ Rg-Veda X. 125.8, Griffith 2:572.
- ² See, e.g., Rg-Veda I.113.18, Griffith 1:151; Rg-Veda IV.22.4, Griffith 1:423; Rg-Veda VIII.91.5, Griffith 2:254; Rg-Veda X.168.1, Griffith 2:601.
- ³ Quoted in Filliozat, p. 64 n. 1. Wayman suggests that Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad 3.9.4 (Hume, p. 120), which identifies the prāṇas with the Rudras, may indicate that the prāṇas were believed to make a noise (to "cry out", rud) when leaving the body at death. Yoga of the Guhyasamāja, p. 70.
- ⁴ Bṛhad. Up. 1.3.20-23, Hume, p. 79.
- ⁵ Hume (p. 79) explains the passage in this way.
- ⁶ Jaiminīya Upaniṣad Brāhmaṇa I.1, quoted in A. Padoux, Recherches sur la Symbolique et l'Énergie de la parole dans certains textes tantriques, Publications de l'Institut de Civilisation Indienne, Série in-octavo, fasc. 21 (Paris: E. de Boccard, 1963), p. 28.
- ⁷ Ch. Up. 1.1.3-6, Hume, pp. 177-78.
- ⁸ Hauer, Der Yoga, p. 26; quoted in Padoux, p. 36 n. 1.
- ⁹ Jai. Up. Br. III.3.1; quoted in Eliade, p. 108.
- ¹⁰ Ch. Up. 1.3.4., Hume, p. 180.
- ¹¹ Ch. Up. 1.3.3, Hume, p. 180.
- ¹² Kauṣītaki Upaniṣad 2.5, Hume, p. 310.
- ¹³ Cf. Bṛhad. Up. 1.5.3-13, Hume, p. 88: speech, mind and breath are the ātman; they are the three Vedas, the three worlds, etc. Cf. also Muṇḍaka Upaniṣad 2.1.8 (Hume, p. 371) where the seven prāṇas are referred to as seven ritual oblations.
- ¹⁴ Rg-Veda X.125.6-8, Griffith 2:572.
- ¹⁵ Kane, vol. 5, part 2, pp. 1442-43. Cf. also Manu-Smṛti (VI.70, p. 211): "Three suppressions of the breath. . . accompanied with (the recitation of the) vyāhṛtis and of the syllable Om, one must know to be the highest (form of) austerity for every Brāhmaṇa."
- ¹⁶ Some early Buddhist doctrinal debates are relevant to this issue. One concerned the transcendental (apauruṣeya) quality of the Buddha's speech. Early Abhidharmists seem to have been influenced by Mīmāṃsā theories: see P. S. Jaini, "The Vaibhāṣika Theory of Words and Meanings", Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London 22 (1959): 95-107. Among the early Buddhists there were also those who

maintained that the Path (mārga) could be produced by verbal utterance - that is, by pronouncing the word dukkha. They may have been influenced by ideas which related speech to purification. See J. J. Nattier and C. S. Prebish, "Mahāsāṃghika Origins", History of Religions 16 (Feb. 1977): 255-57.

¹⁷"In this world . . . there is no source of good speech but you . . .", "The Varnārhavarna Stotra of Mātrceṣa", trans. D. R. S. Bailey, Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London 13 (1950): 969.

¹⁸See, e.g., Brahmajāla Sutta, Dīgha-Nikāya 1:1-26.

¹⁹Anguttara-Nikāya 5:74.

²⁰Anguttara-Nikāya 3:173.

²¹See, e.g., Scripture of the Lotus Blossom of the Fine Dharma [Saddharmapuṇḍarīka], trans. from the Chinese of Kumārajīva by Leon Hurvitz (New York: Columbia University Press, 1976), pp. 332-37.

²²Anguttara-Nikāya 4:209-10.

²³Varnārhavarna Stotra, pp. 949-51. Another, more remote parallel: the Buddha "disperses defilements as the wind disperses a mass of clouds", Theragāthā 1267-68. Norman 1:115. In the Rg-Veda, speech is compared to the wind driving clouds, Rg-Veda I.116.1, Griffith 1:154.

²⁴See, e.g., Kane, vol. 5, part 2, pp. 1100-1101.

²⁵Śikṣa-Samuccaya, pp. 236-37. In Beyer's translation:

"This much is to be known: the conventional & the absolute: and the Blessed One has well seen & well known & well experienced it, and it is emptiness . . .

. . . For form & feeling & idea & motive & perception are all empty.

All this is nothing but usage, nothing but names, nothing but agreed signs, nothing but convention, nothing but designation, and wise men do not believe in it."

Stephen Beyer, ed. and trans., The Buddhist Experience: Sources and Interpretations (Encino, Cal.: Dickenson, 1974), p. 211.

²⁶Quoted in Yoga of the Guhyasamāja, p. 58. It should be noted that the translation of this passage is based on a version of the original which incorporates two theoretical corrections made in it by A. Wayman and R. V. Joshi, 1969.

²⁷Yoga of the Guhyasamāja, p. 76.

²⁸An "explanatory Tantra" of the Guhyasamāja cycle, tentatively dated by Wayman as belonging to the fifth century of our era, Yoga of the Guhyasamāja, p. 98.

²⁹Ibid., p. 71.

³⁰Ibid.

³¹Sir John Woodroffe [Arthur Avalon], gen. ed., Tantrik Texts, vol. 7: Śhrīchakrasambhārā Tantra, trans. Kazi Dawa-Samdup (London: Luzac & Co., 1919; Calcutta: Thacker, Spink & Co., 1919), pp. 41-42.

³²Yoga of the Guhyasamāja, p. 171.

³³This list is similar to that found in the Maitri Upaniṣad (6.18), Hume, p. 435.

³⁴A commentary on the Guhyasamāja-Tantra by the Tantric Candra-kīrti; written, according to Wayman, in the ninth century, ibid., p. 96.

³⁵Vajrajapa is incantation "of the three syllables (Om, Aḥ, Hum) of the three families (respectively Vairocana's Body, Amitābha's Speech and Akṣobhya's Mind) to cause the (five) basic and (five) secondary winds to enter, stay, and rise (for 'leaving')." Wayman, citing a commentary by Tsong-kha-pa, Yoga of the Guhyasamāja, p. 218.

³⁶Quoted in Yoga of the Guhyasamāja, p. 171.

³⁷Guhyasamāja-Tantra, quoted in Yoga of the Guhyasamāja, p. 59.

³⁸The "clear reality of mantra" (mantratattva) is "the accomplishment of the speech diamond", Pañcakrama 1.66, quoted in Yoga of the Guhyasamāja, p. 74.

³⁹Śrī Lakṣmī, commenting on the above noted passage from the Pañcakrama, and quoted, ibid.

⁴⁰Majjhīma-Nikāya 2:96; Majjhīma-Nikāya 1:71; Majjhīma-Nikāya 3:124; Dīgha-Nikāya 2:327.

⁴¹Yoga of the Guhyasamāja, pp. 218-19.

⁴²Ibid., p. 218.

⁴³Quoted in Yoga of the Guhyasamāja, p. 58.

⁴⁴The first words are evam mayā śrutam, "thus I have heard".

⁴⁵S. B. Dasgupta, Obscure Religious Cults, 2nd ed., rev. (Calcutta: Firma K. L. Mukhopadhyay, 1962), p. 92. Cf. Tsong-kha-pa, in Yoga of the Guhyasamāja, p. 76. See also P. C. Bagchi, Studies in the Tantras, Part I (Calcutta: University of Calcutta, 1939), pp. 64-66.

⁴⁶Many other pairs are associated with these two "channels", especially in the Hindu Tantras: male and female, subject and object, sun and moon, puruṣa and prakṛti, the Ganges and the Yamuna, vowels and consonants, etc.

CHAPTER 10

WIND AND PRĀṆĀYĀMA

Buddhists and non-Buddhists interpreted the practice of breathing meditation differently. Such psychophysical disciplines were almost universal in Indian culture. Two types usually can be distinguished.

The first, that of classical Yoga, emphasizes asceticism, withdrawal and gradual purification. The goal of the religious quest is attained by each individual, alone, and there is an essential opposition between the demands of religious and worldly life.

The second approach seems to have originated as a reaction to the extremes of the first. This ideal is to be in the world, but not of it. Since the transcendent participates in the phenomenal, withdrawal is not necessary. Worldly existence provides the basis for transformation. This approach may be accompanied by a revival of devotionalism. There may also be a feeling that selfish striving is unworthy and that the mere observation of right conduct and rituals of purification will not result in liberation.

Both of these approaches can be found within the Buddhist tradition. The Nikāyas show affinities with both, but the second came to dominate Mahāyāna and Tantric Buddhist thought. However, Buddhist breathing meditation, in both periods, was not based upon those tendencies I have called yogic.

The ascetic practice of breath restraint (prāṇāyāma) was consistent with the yogic orientation, but had little place in the Buddhist tradition. As we have seen, it was associated with Brahmanic ritual purification, the utterance of the Vedas, and, possibly, with the early ascetic practice of non-breathing meditation. The early speculation on breath and wind

contributed to the growing influence of prāṇāyāma.

Prāna (breath or life) was a powerful force which could be induced to remain in the body. The Praśna Upaniṣad contains a plea to Prāna, for protection:

This whole world is in the control of Life
/ Prāna / -
 E'en what is established in the third heaven!
 As a mother to her son, do thou protect (us).¹

In the Bṛhadāranyaka Upaniṣad, the same sense of the awe-inspiring power of breath, and the same desire for protection, are connected to breathing meditation. The text describes Breath as the central vital function, as is Wind among gods. It then concludes:

Therefore one should practice but one activity. He should breathe in and breathe out, wishing, "May not the evil one, Death, get me . . ." Thereby he wins complete union with that divinity [i.e. Breath] and residence in the same world.²

Such a goal would have been unacceptable to early Buddhists, for whom the situation of a god inspired revulsion. To them, true insight involved the awareness that there was no technique which could prevent death intervening at any moment. Death necessarily followed birth.

Early non-Buddhists connected prāṇāyāma with expiation and with divine protection. The suppression of breath was, at least in part, a sacrificial offering. Through offering one's breath, one might gain long life. In the Praśna Upaniṣad, sacrifice and the control of breath are combined. The in-breath and out-breath are the offerings:

The equalizing breath (samāna) is so called because it "equalizes" (samaṃ nayati) the two oblations: the in-breathing and the out-breathing . . . The mind, verily, indeed, is the sacrificer. The fruit of the sacrifice is the up-breath (udāna). It leads the sacrificer to Brahma day by day.³

Similarly, in the Bhagavad-Gītā, the in-breath and the out-breath

are continuous oblations. Breath-control expiates sins:

In the nether life-breath [apāna] the upper life-breath [prāna] offer up
Others, likewise the nether in the upper life-breath,
Checking the course of the upper and nether life-breaths,
Intent upon restraint of breath . . .

. . . All these know what sacrifice is,
And their sins are destroyed by sacrifice.⁴

The sacrifice of breath involves control. The breaths are consciously drawn, restrained, and offered: "As the huntsman draws in fish with his net and sacrifices them in the fire of his stomach, thus, assuredly, indeed, does one draw in these breaths with Om and sacrifice them in the fire that is free from ill."⁵ This "internal fire" is "the highest place of Viṣṇu".⁶

The movement of prāna is to be stilled in order that the life-force may be retained. But under certain conditions, prāna becomes quiescent spontaneously. This occurs during deep sleep, which is described in some passages of the Upaniṣads as a blissful state.⁷ In deep sleep, the vital functions are unified:

Asleep, he sees no dream whatsoever.
Then he becomes unitary in this Prāna.
Then speech together with all names goes to it;
the eye together with all forms goes to it;
the ear together with all sounds goes to it;
the mind (manas) together with all thoughts goes to it.
When he awakens - as from a blazing fire sparks would disperse in all directions, even so from this self (ātman) the vital breaths (prāna) disperse to their respective stations; from the vital breaths, the sense-powers (deva); from the sense-powers, the worlds.⁸

But prāna can also be forced into a quiescent state through ascetic self-mastery. If everything in the three worlds is under the control of prāna, he who wishes to attain liberation from the three worlds must acquire mastery over prāna. He must cease to be swayed by it, and must subdue it

to his will:

Verily, when a knower has restrained his mind from the external, and the breathing spirit (prāna) has put to rest objects of sense, therefore let him continue void of conceptions. Since the living individual (jīva) who is named "breathing spirit", has arisen here from what is not breathing spirit, therefore, verily, let the breathing spirit restrain his breathing spirit in what is called the fourth condition (turya).⁹

In the Praśna Upaniṣad, the in-breath and out-breath become "equalized". But in prānāyāma, as it is interpreted in classical Yoga, the movement of the breath ceases. In the short passage of the Yoga-Sūtra devoted to prānāyāma, it is defined as "the stoppage of the inhaling and exhaling movements (of breath)".¹⁰

Elaborate techniques for the retention and restraint of prāna were eventually developed. Through them, the yogi could overcome death:

So long as the air (breath) moves, bindu [semen, or creative potential] moves; (and) it becomes stationary (when the air) ceases to move. The Yogi should, therefore, control the air and obtain immovability. As long as prāna remains in the body, life (jīva) does not depart.¹¹

This passage occurs in a text from the later Hatha Yoga tradition. In this tradition, particular attention was devoted to physiological methods of retaining prāna. Many of these techniques were demanding and strenuous. Hatha itself means "violent". These later ascetic practices involved forcible restraint of breath. In this, they resembled the "non-breathing meditation" practiced in the time of the Buddha. The Buddha describes this meditation as resulting in turbulence and violent agitation of the elements of the body.

Prāna became an important element in non-Buddhist yoga, but its earlier connection with sacrifice was not lost. The relation between breath and sacrifice was formalized in the prānāgnihotra ceremony, which was traditionally performed before meals. A portion of the food and drink

to be consumed was offered to the prānas, the five "vital breaths." The offerings were symbolically transformed into amṛta and soma, the food and drink of immortality. Food was, in any case, the source of long life. Through food the vital functions of the body were renewed. In the prānā-grihotra ceremony, the sacrificial food was eaten and, in this way, was laid as an oblation on the inner gastric fire. The ritual was accompanied by prayers for immortality, for deliverance from the effect of one's evil deeds, and for the purification of the five elements of the body.¹²

The preservation and retention of prāna was an important element in non-Buddhist ascetic practice and ritual. But the idea of breath-control did not become as influential among Buddhists. There were a number of reasons for this.

First, Buddhists rejected Vedic ritual. Release was not to be obtained through action alone, and certainly not through ritual observances and purifications. Right understanding and the elimination of desire and attachment were required. Balancing one's personal karmic accounts was a proximate goal, while obtaining freedom from the cycle of rebirth became the highest goal.

However, this goal was not unique to Buddhists. From the time of the Upaniṣads, many non-Buddhists also assigned a higher value to mokṣa (liberation) than to worldly benefits and heavenly bliss. And many asserted that mokṣa was to be attained not through ritual actions, but through knowledge. These beliefs alone cannot account for the differing attitudes to breathing meditation. Other ideas, more distinctively Buddhist, must be considered.

For Buddhists, prāna was not a transcendent power to be feared and propitiated. Nor was it a life-giving essence within the individual.

Therefore, there was no need to preserve prāna through breath-control. Prāna was simply the distinguishing characteristic of living beings.

Moreover, "wind" was a defiling, as well as a purifying force. Life was a disease; and prolonging it through the control of prāna was of dubious value.

Buddhists did, however, develop a unique practice of meditation on the breath - ānāpānasmṛti. In this practice, no restraint or control was exercised. Ānāpānasmṛti was a way of acquiring insight through close attention. The monk, through remaining mindful of his breath, merged, as it were, with the processes taking place within and around him, and ceased to resist them. As a result, he began to see these processes clearly.

Ānāpānasmṛti, according to tradition, was introduced to counteract violent and destructive tendencies.¹³ The Buddhist teaching of non-injury was associated with not taking prāna, and similarly, ānāpānasmṛti, the attention to the breath, was related to non-violence. In monks who practiced it, the impulse to do violence to oneself was removed. Moreover, unlike non-breathing (appānaka) meditation, the practice itself did no violence to the body.

Eliade points out a paradoxical element in prāṇāyāma. In this practice, "life coexists with holding the breath". This restraint is "in flagrant contradiction to life".¹⁴ By suspending his breath, the yogi undergoes a kind of symbolic death. His objective is to attain, through this discipline, a purified and autonomous state of existence. In practicing prāṇāyāma, he withdraws from life and its movement, and imitates the immobility of death.

In ānāpānasmṛti, too, life coexists with death. But it is breathing, not the cessation of breath, that indicates death's proximity.

All living beings are subject to death by virtue of the fact that they breathe. The goal of the practitioner is not to withdraw from this life process, but to become more deeply aware of his participation in it. Life is a disease and breath is its symptom. But the disease is not cured by suppressing breath. Instead, one yields to its natural rhythm and does nothing to restrain it. Prāṇāyāma, as described by Eliade, is a dramatic attempt to experience and conquer death. Ānāpānasmr̥ti, in contrast, is non-violent and non-disruptive.

The word prāṇāyāma was used in the Tantric Buddhist tradition. Prāṇāyāma was one of the six elements in the yoga system of the Guhyasamāja-Tantra. But the word often seems to denote something closer to ānāpānasmr̥ti.

Prāṇāyāma was related to vajrajapa, the oral repetition of mantras associated with the Tathāgatas. Neither this repetition nor prāṇāyāma involved the suppression of breath.

According to Wayman, prāṇāyāma

does not ordinarily signify in the Buddhist Tantra, "restraint of breath" but rather prāṇa, in-breathing, and āyāma, out-breathing; or prāṇa, the passage of winds through the orifices, and āyāma, the out-going mental component that "rides on the wind."¹⁵

The first of these interpretations calls to mind the attentiveness to the natural movement of the breath which was the essential element in ānāpānasmr̥ti. Wayman's second definition of prāṇāyāma is also consistent with earlier Buddhist thought, in that wind and consciousness are closely associated, and mental factors are assigned a determinative rôle in all processes, including physical ones.

The Guhyasamāja-Nidāna-Kārika refers to "beings in the three worlds taking recourse to prāṇāyāma."¹⁶ Prāṇa was the

common characteristic of beings in the various states of existence. According to Wayman, the commentaries indicate that prāṇāyāma here means inhaling and exhaling. If that is the case, all beings - men, gods, asuras, animals, hell-beings and hungry ghosts - might be described as "taking recourse to prāṇāyāma."

Buddhists had other reasons for not advocating the suppression of breath. The fundamental nature of wind was pure. Wind was perceived as a defiling force by those who were deluded by ignorance and passion. This emphasis on wind's fundamental purity is evident among later and Tantric Buddhists. For example, in the Ratnagotravibhāga, wind is said to be grounded in the cittaprakṛti, the basic nature of mind. In the Pañcakrama, it is described as arising from the Clear Light of the Dharmadhātu circle. In the Samdhivyaṅkaraṇa, the basic nature of wind is identified with bodhicitta, the "thought of enlightenment":

The bodhicitta...being wind and dwelling in space... becomes the life wind of all sentient beings... The bodhicitta called "Twelvefold Dependent Origination" is the three natures¹⁷ and called "wind", governs all the sense organs.¹⁸

Bodhicitta, the potential for enlightenment, is present in all beings. This thought of enlightenment is the seed from which the tree grows bearing Buddhahood as its ultimate fruit. Bodhicitta is the elemental form in which the transformative power of the Tathāgatas appears in this world.

Tantric Buddhists associated bodhicitta with bindu, or creative potential.¹⁹ Bindu is represented as a dot, or point. Symbolically, it is the spaceless point from which the phenomenal world proceeds. As bodhicitta, it is the center from which the inherent perfection of living

beings is manifested. For the Tantric Buddhist, these two are identical. The distinction between the characteristics of impure beings and the qualities of the Tathāgatas is illusory.

In prāṇāyāma, the meditator experiences prāṇa in both of its aspects: as the basis of his individual existence and as the potential for enlightenment. He experiences in-breathing and out-breathing, which support life. But he also apprehends the basis of prāṇa in bindu. The goal of the practice of prāṇāyāma, is to "place...the Prāṇa in its bindu form" in the "lotus of one's heart".²⁰ As in-breathing and out-breathing, prāṇāyāma is the symptom of the disease of worldly existence. But it is also the cure, since it is grounded in the bodhicitta manifested bindu.

The Stage of Generation of the Śrīcakrasambhāra-Tantra includes a meditation according to the natural cycle of the elements. In the final phase of this exercise, meditation on the in-breath and out-breath is continuous with concentration on the bindu. The bindu is represented here as a blue point:

Imagine a four-petalled lotus in the navel, the petals of which, going leftward from the East, are earth and air; on the North water and air; on the West fire and air and on the South air and air; represented by the yellow La, white Va, red Ra, and green Ya respectively. In the centre think of a blue-point as standing for the ether. Having visualised these clearly, next imagine that when you are breathing outward a ray of light as thick as a medium-sized thread issues outwards from La through the left nostril going to a distance of sixteen finger breadths, and again when re-entering sinking into the La thus making a pair of breaths. Then with constant meditation the imagined ray of Light assumes a misty appearance. When this happens sink the La into the Va. Then imagine that a white ray issues from the Va, and proceed as aforementioned until one sees the image or reflection. When this happens sink the Va into the Ra and meditate as abovementioned changing the colour of the ray from white to red which issues and

re-enters Ra until the ray is seen as a firefly. When this happens sink the Ra into the Ya. Then follow the same process with a green ray of light until one sees a burning altar lamp. When this is seen sink the Ya into the blue point in the centre. Then drop meditation on the rays, their issue and re-entrance, and concentrate the mind on the blue-point itself and meditate upon these two-fold airs until the sign of a cloudless sky is seen. This is the wisdom of the path of vision.²¹

The function of wind in this meditation is similar to its function elsewhere. It is the first of the "elements of becoming". Each element is conjoined with wind; and after these elements are reabsorbed, wind, in the form of breath, remains. The "two-fold airs" persist through the entire process of absorption. At the conclusion of the exercise, the meditator attends exclusively to breath and bindu.

Tantric visualizations often begin with a dot. This is the "seed" from which the elements of the visualization develop. A mantra-syllable emerges from the dot; this, in turn, evokes the corresponding god. When the process is reversed, visualized elements are reabsorbed into the bindu. These visualized elements need not be gods: in the above passage, the great elements are absorbed into the bindu.

The bindu, as we observed earlier, is the source of prāna, the "wind" which supports beings. It is also the source of mantra.²² Mantra was associated with Dharma; while its origin, the bindu, was related to bodhicitta. In this way, terms that were not specifically Buddhist acquired Buddhist correlates. All worldly experience, in fact, was interpreted with reference to the Tāhāgatas, the Dharma, and the Buddhist Path.

The bindu which is the source of the phenomenal world is identified

with bodhicitta, the potential for enlightenment. This potential is implicit in phenomenal manifestation. This is confirmed by the traditional interpretation of the word "EVAM". Dharma, as we observed, was said to originate in the syllables "E" and "VAM" (एव, "thus"). "E" represented wisdom and the female principle, "VA" was the male principle and skilful means.

In written form, the final nasalized "M" is represented by the anusvāra, or superscripted dot. This dot is the bindu, which represents the union of the two principles²³ and their origin. It is therefore the ultimate source of the Buddhist truths, at least as they are revealed in this world.

Prāṇa and mantra proceed from this bindu. In prāṇāyāma and mantra-recitation, they are returned to their source, just as visualizations are returned to the bindu from which they proceed. This return is not a cessation, since it is directed to the potential for enlightenment, which is an active force. In fact, the process is only apparently a return. It might be described as the realization of an already existing unity between bindu, prāṇa and mantra. Through this process, the practitioner identifies himself with the Tathāgatas and awakens their qualities in himself.

NOTES

- ¹Praśna Upaniṣad 2.13, Hume, p. 382.
- ²Bṛhad. Up. 1.5.22-23, Hume, p. 91.
- ³Praśna Up. 4.4, Hume, p. 386.
- ⁴Bhagavad-Gītā. 4.29-30, Edgerton, p. 26.
- ⁵Maitri Upaniṣad. 6.26, Hume, p. 439.²
- ⁶Ibid.
- ⁷Praśna Up. 4.6, Hume, p. 386; Māṇḍūkya Upaniṣad 5, Hume, p. 392.
- ⁸Kauṣ Up. 4.19-20, Hume, pp. 333-34.
- ⁹Maitri Up. 6.19, Hume, p. 436.
- ¹⁰Paṭāñjali. Yoga-Sūtra II. 49, trans. Rama Prasada; in S. Radhakrishnan & C.A. Moore, eds., A Sourcebook in Indian Philosophy; (Princeton: Princeton University Press, Princeton Paperback, 1957), p. 469.
- ¹¹Gorakṣa-Saṃhitā 90-91, trans. Briggs; quoted in Eliade, p. 249. On the suppression of breath, cf. also Tārākhaṇḍa, quoted in Eliade, p. 248. Yogic exercises for attaining immobility of the breath were also practiced by some Buddhists. This is particularly true of the Bengali Tantric poets: see, e.g. Kāpha, quoted in Eliade, p. 268; Atindra Mojunder, The Caryāpadas, 2nd ed., rev. (Calcutta: Naya Prakash, 1973), p. 46.
- ¹²La Mahā Nārāyaṇa Upaniṣad, trans. Jean Varenne, Publications de l'Institut de Civilisation Indienne, fascicule 11 (Paris: E. de Boccard, 1960); cf. Ch.Up. 5.19-23, Hume, pp. 238-39.
- ¹³Saṃyutta-Nikāya. 5:284-85; Vinaya-Piṭaka 1:116-22.
- ¹⁴Eliade, p.98.
- ¹⁵Yoga of the Guhyasamāja, p. 71. cf. Tsong-kha-pa: "Prānāyāma means breathing in (prāna) and breathing out (āyama)", quoted in Yoga of the Guhyasamāja, p. 217.
- ¹⁶Ibid., p. 8.
- ¹⁷The trisyabhāva: parikalpita, paratantra, and pariniṣpanna. These three together provide a comprehensive description of experience.
- ¹⁸Quoted in Yoga of the Guhyasamāja, pp. 197-98.
- ¹⁹Yoga of the Guhyasamāja, p. 77.

²⁰Pradīpodyotana, quoted in Yoga of the Guhyasamāja, p. 47.

²¹Shrīchakrasambhāra-Tantra, pp. 56-57. cf. Yoga of the Guhyasamāja, p. 219.

²²"This is concentration on letters (Mantras). Thinking that all these letters are really the point (Bindu) and meditating as aforementioned is called concentration on the Point", Ibid., p. 57.

²³Devendrapariprcchā, quoted in Yoga of the Guhyasamāja, p. 182.

CHAPTER 11

THE "WINDS" AND ANALOGICAL THINKING IN THE BUDDHIST TANTRAS

We have been discussing "breath" in the singular. But the classical Indian tradition recognized the existence of a set of "breaths" or "vital functions" (prānas): prāna, apāna, saṁāna, udāna, and vyāna. Sometimes five subsidiary prānas were added.¹

The Nikāyas also contain a list of bodily "winds", whose individual functions are not clear. But eventually, the five classical "winds" were adopted by the Buddhist tradition. In Tantric Buddhist writings, the five "winds" were correlated with the Buddhas, the skandhas and with other such sets. In general, the bodily winds were mentioned only peripherally in earlier Buddhist texts. Tantric Buddhists made much more extensive use of this idea. In this chapter, we will see that their interpretation of wind was consistent with traditional Indian thought and also reflected particular Buddhist emphases.

The idea of wind gained prominence in Tantric writings for at least two reasons: first, it was well adapted to the systems of analogical thinking characteristic of the Tantras; and second, it was ambiguous and evocative. Tantric Buddhists used language in ways which made these qualities valuable.

The position of wind in Tantric thought is consistent with its function elsewhere. It is related to purification, since its basis is the "thought of enlightenment". It is also related to defilement, since it is the foundation of worldly activity. Wind "performs all deeds"² and is the "life force of sentient beings."³

Wind is related to individual birth and death. In birth, wind is

the first element created by the action of impure or deluded consciousness. All else arises from it.

When initially the form of viñāna takes recourse to the four elements through the propagation of prakṛti (s) that time it passes away from its own abode.

From viñāna the wind arises; from that the fire; from the latter the waters arise, and from these the earth. From these (four), in turn the personality aggregates (skandha) arise; from these the sense bases as well. From the latter, the holder of the prakṛtis of consciousness, in a sequence of 160, dissolves here in the same way as it was born, from the prakṛtis.⁴

At death, the elements dissolve into each other, in the reverse order of their emergence.⁵ The dissolution of the elements in meditation parallels this process, each step being accompanied by specific signs.⁶ Wind is the last of the elements to be dissolved in this way.

Earlier Buddhists attempted, as we have seen, to define the relationship between wind and consciousness. The problem was difficult, since either could be seen as dependent on the other. In general, however, Buddhists assigned priority to mental factors. An attempt to explain the interaction of wind and consciousness in the birth process appears in the Vajramāla.⁷ It is interesting that Tantric Buddhists were confronted with the same problem as were earlier Buddhists.

Whatever their precise relationship, it was clear that wind acted in conjunction with consciousness. In general, Buddhists were reluctant to ascribe causation to any single factor. Consequently, they considered neither wind nor consciousness as independent causal principles. Phenomena emerged through the interaction of the two.

For the same reason, Buddhists probably found it easier to accept a set of five interacting prānas than a single unitary prāna. They

correlated the five classical "winds" with the five skandhas. Both of these were sets of factors that explained the appearance of selfhood. What seemed to be an individual was really an agglomeration of cause and conditions which could be analyzed into these sets of factors:

The skandhas were used in this way from early times, but it is only in the Tantras that the "winds" are correlated with them. It seems that earlier Buddhists rarely referred to the five prāṇas. In contrast to the skandhas, which were a distinctively Buddhist development, the "prāṇas" were associated with Vedic ritual. In addition, the winds were physiological principles: the skandhas more accurately reflected the Buddhists' concern with psychological factors.

The Tantric tradition developed an elaborate system of five-fold analogies and correspondances.⁸ In spite of earlier resistance, the five "winds" seem to have been incorporated into this system at an early stage.

Such systems of analogies were widespread in early Indian thought. Some were based on dualities;⁹ others on the numbers three, four, five or six. There was a tendency for these lists to add one member¹⁰ which subsumed the others, or at least had a significantly different status.

Five-fold symbolism may have developed from earlier sets of three and four. The Māṇḍūkya-Upaniṣad refers to three states and to the "fourth" which surpasses them.¹¹ In the Brahmopaniṣad, the four states are correlated with four locations in the body: the navel, heart, neck and head.¹² A fifth element was eventually added to conventional lists of four. The four elements were earth, water, fire and wind: the fifth was space. The fifth direction, in addition to the four quarters, was the center. The list of five breaths seems to have grown by a similar process of accretion.

The Brhadāranyaka Upaniṣad already declares that "this whole world, whatever there is, is fivefold."¹³ In the Chāndogya Upaniṣad, the five "openings of the heart", in five directions, are correlated with the "doorkeepers of the heavenly world", the prāṇas, and the vital functions.¹⁴ A similar scheme appears in the Taittirīya Upaniṣad.¹⁵

Five-fold symbolism is later found in the Yoga-Upaniṣads. In these, the system of correspondances is characteristically Tantric. For each of the five "great elements" there is a corresponding dhāraṇā, or mantra-syllable, a god, and a particular meditation. The practitioner acquires mastery over the elements by performing the appropriate meditations.¹⁶

The systems elaborated in the Tantric Buddhist tradition are similar to this. However, the five Buddha-families, and the five types of wisdom corresponding to them, replace the non-Buddhist deities. The primary goal is no longer mastery of the elements, but acquisition of the qualities of the Tathāgatas, or the Jinas (conquerors).

The Yoga-Upaniṣads seem to date from the early centuries of our era,¹⁷ i.e. from before the composition of the Guhyasamāja-Tantra.¹⁸ In the Guhyasamāja, the five "families" and their five lords, the Vidyā-dharas, are mentioned.¹⁹ The Vajramāla correlates these with colors, with the five elements, and with winds in the body and "rays" emerging from the nostrils.²⁰ The Pañcakrama, quoting this passage, adds the five classical "winds" to the system of correspondances.²¹

But the system of analogies also shows the influence of traditional Buddhist thought. For Tantric Buddhists, as for earlier Buddhists, impure psychic tendencies cause embodied existence. These are carried by the "winds" of karma which impel beings towards birth. The individual is

simply the maturation of these karmic tendencies. The impurities which cause birth are assigned a place in the system of microcosmic and macrocosmic analogies. Lust, hatred, delusion, pride, and jealousy form a set which is correlated with the Tathāgatas, the elements, the skandhas, the five colours, and so on.

In both Buddhist and non-Buddhist Tantras, there is a concern with the underlying and generally unperceived unity of opposites - prescribed behaviour and prohibited behaviour, purity and corruption, bondage and liberation. For example, the five impure substances - urine, blood, semen, human flesh and excrement - are correlated with five varieties of amṛta, the nectar of immortality.²²

For Buddhists, in particular, all distinctions between the pure and the impure are dependent on mental activity. From one perspective, the objective of the Tantric Buddhist is to transform the "five poisons" of the mind into the Five Wisdoms.²³ But he is also aware that wisdom and delusion are separate only from the limited perspective of the discriminating mind. This emphasis is consistent with earlier Buddhist thought.

Because purity and defilement coincide, the practitioner already, in some sense, possesses the pure qualities of the Tathāgatas. Prāṇa, the force which supports his body, is grounded in bodhicitta. The five Tathāgatas are correlated with his own impure skandhas. The five-pronged vajra represents the five limbs of his body²⁴; the Tathāgatas are as near to him as the five fingers of his hand.²⁵

The coincidence of the phenomenal and the transcendent world was vividly represented through analogical thinking. The Tantras gloried in finding correspondances which allowed disparate elements to be homologized,

and discrete systems of classification to be merged.

In the Tantric tradition, ambiguous terminology was not avoided: it was cultivated. "Wind" became an important term because of its ambiguity. Wind, historically, was associated with pairs of opposites: birth and death, health and disease, purity and corruption, movement and cessation, existence and extinction.

For this same reason - its ambiguity - "wind" was less prominent in the earlier Buddhist tradition. Abhidharma thinkers, for example, analyzed and classified phenomena. Enumerations of the Abhidharma type isolate elements from one another. Ambiguities, which blur the distinctions between elements, must be eliminated or resolved wherever possible.

The image of "wind" carries a train of associations stretching from the Rg-Veda to the Yoga-Upanisads. It was only with the development of forms of analogical thinking in which ambiguity was to be cultivated that those associations became an asset rather than a hindrance. Buddhists adopted the image of wind, but, as I have attempted to show, they also reinterpreted it in the light of their own concerns.

NOTES

¹The five subsidiary prānas and their physiological functions are listed in O.P. Jaggi, Yogic and Tantric Medicine, History of Science and Technology in India, vol. 5, (Delhi: Atma Ram & Sons, 1973), p. 61.

Tsong-kha-pa (quoted in Yoga of the Guhyasamāja, p. 198) explains that the five basic winds perform all deeds and the five secondary winds perceive all things.

²Pañcakrama. 1.3, quoted in Yoga of the Guhyasamāja, p. 198.

³Or perhaps the basis of their life, or simply life, vitality: "prānabhūtas ca sattvānām vāyvākhyah", Ibid. There is no sharp break between this and earlier Buddhist definitions.

⁴Mahāmudrātilaka, quoted by Tsong-kha-pa; in Yoga of the Guhyasamāja, pp. 206-7.

⁵Tibetan Book of the Dead. p. 93, p. 93 n.3.

⁶The Life and Teaching of Naropa. p. 65. Tsong-kha-pa correlates the dissolution of the elements and the process of death and rebirth with the "five stages" (pañcakrama). Wind acts together with consciousness to determine rebirth: "At the time of death the winds sequentially dissolve up to prāna (i.e. in the order, vyāna, udāna, samāna, apāna, prāna) and one dies. Then, from the Clear Light of Death the 'wind of action' arises, and the pair consisting of the latter together with viññāna, takes birth somewhere in the three worlds. From that 'wind of action' the (80) vikalpas of 'desire', etc. arise, and therefrom one amasses good and evil, and the wheel of death and rebirth is so-to-say turned." Quoted in Yoga of the Guhyasamāja, pp. 221-22.

⁷Quoted in Yoga of the Guhyasamāja, pp. 202-3.

⁸See, e.g., Alex Wayman, The Buddhist Tantras, (New York: Samuel Weiser, 1973), p. 34; Dasgupta, Tantric Buddhism, p. 87.

⁹For Buddhists, the Vedas were not the supreme authority. In rejecting the Vedas, Buddhists also set aside the cosmogonic myths contained in them, including those of the "cosmic egg" and the "divine parents". As late as Tantric times, and despite the prevalence of male-female dualities in the Hindu Tantras, Buddhists were still inclined to analyze phenomena using groups of three, four, five, or more, rather than dualities.

¹⁰On this question, see David M. Knipe, "One Fire, Three Fires, Five Fires: Vedic Symbols in Transition", History of Religions 12 (Aug. 1972): 28-41; cf. also Yoga of the Guhyasamāja, p. 63.

¹¹Hume, pp. 391-93.

¹²Quoted in Eliade, p. 128. cf. The Buddhist Tantras, pp. 184-89, for examples of four-fold symbolism.

- ¹³Bṛhad. Up. 1.4.17, Hume, p. 86.
- ¹⁴Ch. Up. 3.13, Hume, p. 208.
- ¹⁵Taitt. Up. 1.7, Hume, p. 279.
- ¹⁶Yogatattva Upaniṣad, quoted in Eliade, p. 130.
- ¹⁷Eliade, pp. 124-29.
- ¹⁸Wayman tentatively assigns it to the fourth century, Yoga of the Guhyasamāja, p. 99.
- ¹⁹12.24-33, quoted in Yoga of the Guhyasamāja, p. 30.
- ²⁰Quoted in Yoga of the Guhyasamāja, p. 72.
- ²¹Ibid.
- ²²Guhyasamāja-Tantra 6.21-24, quoted in Yoga of the Guhyasamāja, pp. 27-28; cf. The Buddhist Tantras, p. 34.
- ²³Lama Anagarika Govinda, Foundations of Tibetan Mysticism, (New York: Dutton, 1960), p. 208.
- ²⁴The Buddhist Tantras, p. 210.
- ²⁵Hastapūjavidhi, quoted in Eliade, p. 211.

CHAPTER 12

CONCLUSION

I have examined images of "wind", "breath" and "air" in Buddhist writings from the Nikāyas to the early Tantras. The continual reappearance of these images in new forms testifies to their enduring power.

"Wind" and "breath" had been identified with each other in pre-Buddhist writings. Vāyu represented the atmospheric wind which was constantly in movement. The god of wind, Vāyu, was both the upholder of cosmic order and an unruly, disruptive force.

Within the individual, this wind appeared as breath (prāna) and as the internal "winds". Prāna, as breath, was the support of life. The word was applied to the vital functions of the body, and eventually became a synonym for "life". It could also refer to the spirit or life-principle.

In the Ayurvedic medical tradition, wind was one of the three elements or "humours" circulating within the body and determining its state of health. The three "humours", of which wind was the most important, were the chief constituents of the body and also its "poisons".

The Buddhists, who considered all phenomenal existence unsatisfactory, adopted this scheme. But they interpreted the "poisons" psychologically in accord with their belief that suffering originated in mental tendencies.

Early Buddhists referred to bodily "winds" which resembled those of non-Buddhist tradition. And they may have known of speculative tendencies in which Prāna was held to be a powerful, life-sustaining force. Buddhists shared the presuppositions of Indian culture and borrowed from

non-Buddhist traditions. But they borrowed only what they believed could be reconciled with their own heritage, and they adapted non-Buddhist ideas in the light of their own doctrines and practices.

In the medical tradition, as in the later Buddhist tradition, "wind" was ambivalent. While this sense of wind's ambivalence was not restricted to Buddhists, non-Buddhists were likely to see wind as a purifying force. Buddhists were more aware of its disruptive and defiling characteristics.

In the Pali Canon, wind was the first of the "great elements" of which all things in the physical world were composed. Since all things were compounded, they were subject to destruction and lacked any real individuality. The monk was urged to cultivate aversion for all compounded things. But at the same time, he was to develop a nature which was like that of the great elements. The elements did not repose anywhere, or become attached to any objects in the phenomenal world. They made no distinctions and felt no horror or revulsion at the conditions in which they found themselves. The elements were at home everywhere.

The monk cultivated this resemblance to the elements through meditations on each of them, and also through ānāpānasati (ānāpānasamṛti), mindfulness of the breath. In attending to the movement of breath the monk observed the first of the great elements, and became aware of the causal process in which all things participated. He recognized that this process continued not only outside his body, but also within it. He saw the error of premature and ill-considered attempts to cut himself off from the world. Mindfulness of the breath was said to have been introduced to counterbalance the effects of meditation on the repulsive.

In early times, these two practices were essential preliminaries to the Path.

Mindfulness of the breath was a way of acquiring insight. No artificial control or restraint of the breath was required. For non-Buddhists, on the other hand, breathing meditation was apparently seen as a means of purification or a technique for gaining power. It was practiced by ascetics who suppressed their breathing. The Buddha condemned this practice because it injured the body and raised obstacles to the acquisition of insight.

In the practice of mindfulness of the breath, motion and stillness were reconciled. These two polarities were present in the image of wind and also in the image of nirvāna. Wind was the force which sustained the phenomenal world. In this respect, it gave life, but also spread impurities and corruption. Wind also destroyed the world at the end of a great cycle of creation. From this perspective, wind brought chaos and disorder, but was also a healing force sweeping away impurities.

"Wind" functioned at the cosmological, physiological and psychological levels. It carried karmic potentialities which eventually manifested themselves in the material world. It "pushed" the individual towards birth, and, at the beginning of a world-cycle, it was the primal force in creation. The world, like the individual, was born of past actions.

The analogy extended further: wind, or breath, sustained the body during life, as it supported the circle of the earth. When violently disrupted, it led to the death of the individual. On a larger scale, its disturbance resulted in cosmic destruction. Moreover, since wind was the vehicle of karma, moral and psychological factors were inseparable from physical causation.

For Buddhists, the appearance of the Tathāgatas amidst the impurity

of the world was an essential element in cosmology. Buddhists attempted to understand how the Tathāgata was related to the phenomenal world, and how his body, speech and mind were related to the physical and psychological characteristics of ordinary beings.

The Arhat, the Bodhisattva and the Buddha were compared to the wind. The great sage moved freely everywhere and was entirely without attachment. Though unsupported by anything, he was able to move all things. This also applied to the Tathāgata: he was master of the elements, and in him the apparently conflicting aspects of wind were reconciled.

The pure speech and actions of the Tathāgata influenced the entire world through their effect on the wind which supported it. This wind - the product of impure actions - was disturbed and reoriented. The result was an earthquake, in which defilements were swept away and the minds of living beings were shaken.

Buddhists adapted ancient Indian ideas of wind's cosmic and physiological functions. They also applied these ideas to the psychological sphere, and attempted to determine the relation of wind to consciousness. Buddhists devoted particular attention to the analysis of mental functions. As their analyses became increasingly sophisticated, Buddhists tended to dismiss "wind" as an imprecise and self-contradictory notion.

But "wind" did not disappear from Buddhist writings. Images of "wind" proved to be useful in clarifying the relationship between the phenomenal world and the Buddhas. Such illustrations were used to explain how the minds of Buddhas differed from those of ordinary beings, and in what respect the potential for Buddhahood could be said to exist within individuals. These images of "wind" are found in the Ratnagotravibhāga,

the Lankāvatāra-Sūtra and the Mahāyāna-Śraddhotpāda. They reproduced, with modifications, the traditional cosmology. But at this stage, material elements were metaphors for psychological processes. "Wind" was not a real and substantial cosmological element.

"Wind" was important in the Buddhist Tantras; but in these, the line between literal and metaphorical usage was imprecise. The richness, ambiguity and evocative power of the image of wind made it valuable. Analytical precision was of secondary importance. Images of "wind" were well adapted to the symbolic Tantric Buddhist language.

Buddhist ideas and practices did not develop apart from surrounding culture. At the same time, Buddhists were never indiscriminate in their borrowing. Earlier developments in Buddhist thought prepared the way for Tantric interpretations of wind.

Mantra-repetition was common to Buddhist and non-Buddhist Tantrics. But the two had different interpretations of how breath and speech were related in mantra-practice. Moreover, for Buddhists, mantra was inseparable from Dharma, the speech of the Tathāgatas.

Similarly, Tantric Buddhists adopted the practice of prāṇāyāma, but reinterpreted it. Prāṇāyāma, as it is described in Tantric Buddhist texts, resembles ānāpānasmṛti. Explanations of the practice show the influence of earlier Buddhist ideas of wind.

Tantric Buddhist interpretations of "wind" also show the persistence of certain fundamental Buddhist attitudes despite apparently drastic outward changes. Among these were a sense of the unsatisfactoriness of embodied existence; and a belief that all beings exist within a pervasive causal process.

Buddhists consistently emphasized the importance of mental factors. Suffering and rebirth were the results of mental tendencies, while enlightenment was associated with wisdom and insight.

From the Buddhist perspective, no real benefit could come of actions which proceeded from ignorance. Techniques of meditation which involved suppression of the breath were blind attempts to ignore or deny an actually existing situation. Non-breathing meditation was an attempt by the individual to interfere with the pervasive causal process in which he was implicated. But unless such an intervention was founded on genuine insight, it could only lead to further disturbance. Understanding was a necessary foundation for practice.

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