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The Mind Mandala

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The very perception of our being is defined by the mind space within which we experience ourselves.

Mind space is the vast unbounded space element which contains all other elements, the formless form, the womb and the matrix where all forms arise from, dance and abide in and dissolve into, it is the Mandala of the mind.

We will see through this introduction that this statement is far from being a disembodied speculation, for in fact it is something we as an individual constantly live in, it is innate and not conceptually created.

How the mind Mandala appears and what is it?

Whenever we walk into any space, outer, inner, innermost or secret, there is a twofold process taking place:

1. Your mind is expanding to fill the space
2. Your mind is literally taking in the space

There are two simultaneous events happening as one:

1. Projection - the mind fills up the space
2. Absorption - the space is taken in

This happens to ensure the perception of your being within that space.

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It is only when these two events simultaneously happen as they weave a continuum of one into the other, projection or absorption to an even yet dynamic equilibrium that the dependent and simultaneous perception of our being takes form.

The elegance of the process is that it does not need our conscious attention; this is something our mind does automatically, yet in making this process conscious we learn to recreate ourselves in to a Buddha or Mahasattva and dissolve our deluded selves.

You are in the Mandala

Imagine that you walked into the room you are presently in: what your mind did is that suddenly it expanded to fill the space and then by filling the space it gave you the sense of where you are in relation to space.

- ❖ The same happens at birth:

When the constructed sense of “I” takes over the body-form by expanding in the inner and outer space through sense-object interaction, the inner Mandala experience of self and others is created and appears as ordinary deluded perception of self and others.

- ❖ The same happens during the innermost secret tantric practices:

The body and space is filled by mind spaciousness revealing the empty and infinite nature of inner space, not in fact separated with outer space for both inner and outer are conceptual labels. It is not pertaining to all pervasive and all-embracing mind nature.

In a very literal sense we are creating Mandalas in every moment -a space of time-of our lives.

Inner and outer, outer and inner

We perceive our self-existence because of the Mandala we constantly create; we just don't know we are inside them.

Quite literally we are led to believe by ordinary default perception that our mind, our self, exists framed within the body even to the point of experiencing the homunculus in our head delimited by the skull bones as the seer of life.

Yet this ordinary default perception represents in my view only 50% of complete reality of being, for in fact it is not really the mind that is inside the body in so much as the body is inside the mind.

This is a theory to be experienced and realized. The various practices Vajrayāna created and before Vajrayāna other forms of Buddhism, are fundamentally skillful means to realize this.

From theory to practice

So let us try and experiment together, you are now sitting in a room; as I told you the very moment you walked in, your brain has mapped this room, so your brain has created tridimensional representation of the room to give a sense of being in it.

1. Comfortably sit and just look around to have a sense of the space of this room
2. Now close your eyes and still try to have a sense of the space
3. For the experiment to work, repeat twice the above two sets for four to six times in a row
4. Keep your eyes closed and keep an expanded perception of your mind to fill up the boundaries of space
5. Now use your hands, your hands are the magicians' magical wand, hands are what we use to expand and direct our intent and articulate our intent.
6. Using your hands, I want you to push forward and touch the boundary of the wall that is in front of you, I am sure you can reach it, can't you? You can feel that you have touched the wall in front of you
7. Now take your hands from the wall, and I want you to stretch your arms on your side touching the walls. You can extend the hands to the boundary of space and then, open your eyes
8. Try to do the same with eyes open and reach in front of you, of course physically you are not reaching or touching the wall in front of you

But when you close your eyes you experience that you did, why? Because when you close your eyes you are living in the representation the mind has made of the space you exist in. In that moment, you are Hevajra or Cakrasamvara, Yamantaka, Hayagriva, Guyhasmaja or Vajrakilaya or any other deity-mind form.

Arising as Tantric Deity

1. You are the centre of the Mandala
2. The Mandala is mind itself
3. You are in the mind itself
4. Meaning that every person around you, I, anyone or anything around you is included, the chairs and tables or other people that are inside the Mandala are also inside the mind
5. They are not parted from it
6. The implication of this is profound because it means that the experience of separation, of otherness, is flawed

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Dreams

If this was a dream, right now if you are dreaming to be in this conference and you are seeing all the people here, you see them as I see you, out there, and then when you wake up from the dream and I ask you, if people you saw in your dream were out there? Clearly no, as this is because they appear in your dream.

So they appear within your own mind, which means they are your own mind.

This become very clear when you learn to experience reality as the mind Mandala -the space within which everything exists.

What is perceived by mind as other than mind is in fact mind. But again this is not a theory it has to be lived; I reached this conclusion without Vajrayāna, for all the matter without Buddhism, because these are inherent experiences of the mind appearing upon investigation and enquiry, reflection and concentration, beyond labelings.

Vajrayāna give us the tools to do that, but the point remains; the tool is just a skillful mean, it is pointing the way, but did you experience it? So this is ultimately the message, those practices in their ideal diversity should lead to concrete experiences. The rituals, dogmas, beliefs and visualizations are skillful means to deliver an experience, a grand show if you wish to create the magic, the emotion, the belief, but often they are given an importance and a reality far beyond their meaning, while sacrificing the result and experience which they point to.

Anuttara yoga tantra is now

This experience does not have to be removed from the reality; you have a chance to practice anuttara yoga tantra every day. Every day you walk into any room and if you were conscious, you would know what happens; your mind in that moment has filled up that space.

If it is not contracted in its little delusion, confusion and thoughts – I, this, that, he, she, you, me constantly neurotically contracted in to a little point creating solid sense of separation and otherness.

Unfolding the Mandala of Mahamudra

If you give chance to mind to fill the space of the reality it will unfold into the Mandala, Vajradhatu the diamond realm, and in this Mandala all beings are, just like you are here and I am here, we are inside this mind Mandala.

If we realize that the mind that expand and fills up the space and brought in it all of you, and therefore apparent separation is just apparent, this is Mahamudra. In it all delusion of aversion, clinging and difference are resolved.

Illusory body

The illusory body is the same body that allows you to fill the space of mind with mind when you close your eyes, it allows you to touch the walls, because you are touching the wall of your own mind, the mind that you extended to fill up the space, that is why you can touch. It is the same body you appear within dreams.

This conceptually created body is a body of action, the body that acts within the mind, is the illusory body.

This body - self-identity has the belief that is separated from mind, just like a wave believing to be separated from the sea, but this simple experiment proves you that your body is within the mind, and if you live your life just with its simple knowledge all the time.

This body, this mind experiencing them as separated and experience separation of others, and I gradually start to dissolve, the sense of separation start to dissolve and then clear light emerges.

Clear light

Clear light is bliss, is very physical, blissful experience that arises as the result of this realization. Again I came to these experiences without knowing anything, meaning that everyone can experience this.

The sense of bliss arises when:

1. You realize this body is within the mind
2. The very I who experience this body is also within mind
3. When this I is realized to be within the mind, it loses its self-perceived reality
4. Then this bliss arises and luminosity arises, which is what you experience every day when you go to sleep

When you are in a dream, you see the light? Sometime you see the sun, you see the objects just like you see this room, but most of the time when you are sleeping, and the world is dark, isn't it?

At night, there is no light, and yet you see the light in your dreams; you see the sun, object and colours but where does that light come from?

How can you see the light when there is no light, how can you see the sun in dream is because of the inherent luminosity of the mind, Prabhavasvara.

When the mind is realized to be the Mandala and the body and "I" is experienced to be within the mind and the illusion of separation is gone, that Prabhavasvara becomes self-evident, as the light that creates distinction and discernment of form and identity.

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When that emerges, the mind is known to be a mirror upon which thousand forms are reflected and all these forms are but display of luminosity that are never parted or separated from mind.

This is the unfabricated reality of our mind -Mahasanti- the great peace, which most of you know in the Tibetan translation Dzogchen.

I invite everyone to realize this, it is truly wonderful, natural, uncontrived, matter of fact, direct and available to you at the times.

Margaphala

The principle of mimesis is necessary in development at all levels, from children emulating parents to those tantric methods emulating some figure of authority such a great guru or a Buddha or a tantric deity.

Undoubtedly as humans we learn by emulation and mimesis, for which in tantra there is a term Margaphala -taking the result as the path.

This is all good and natural if it leads to emancipation and liberation of critical thinking and analysis, deconstruction and eventually transcendence of those outer models once they fulfilled the educative and inspirational role.

Upadesha

All the transmitted methods, actions, rituals, objects, visualization orders and such, in my view, should be treated in the view of the theory of mimesis or Margaphala.

They were originally someone else's experience, which we emulate. We emulate his or her mind, quality and traits to a certain extent because we have imbibed them with an hermeneutical meaning, something that can randomly be done with anything in daily life, from a phrase to a book to an action and object, substituting its meaning with another meaning. Therefore, transforming and transcending its function, this is the magical mind of children who can turn their parents and idols into super beings ascribed with all sort of powers, sticks and puppets into gods and goddesses, swords and stone into amulets and, a dress into a cape. This is what we are invited to do with our guru and their props.

We transform each of their looks, their words, their most banal actions and the bell and other implements they hold even their dresses into something other than it is, and imbibe it with a magical power, the power come from our investment in it, from the hermeneutical meaning with discover in it, and that help us to transfer our identity, we identify with it, and this help us transcend our limits, we reinvent and reimagine ourselves to be other than we are.

Like children do, we dress with capes and hold sticks but we truly see and feel ourselves fearless knights with magical swords.

It is all good, it works and it proves the method, but again it is not different from what we did as children, it's a magical process, and yet there is nothing secret in it in fact, it is natural and it is not created or revealed by some deity or kept by some lineage: it is the way our mind works.

And true to the meaning that innately we have Buddha nature, that nature and its mode of revealing itself is repeated and enacted since birth.

What changes is simply the level of awareness of what is happening and what is it we do free from primitive limiting belief, this is the clarity of view, terse clear logical rational, as lord Buddha clearly declared his Dharma to be.

Abhisheka

As we observe first our teachers as mesmerizing stage magicians and then go through the magical gestures and phrases and images ourselves we reenact them with greater identification of the hermeneutical meaning juxtaposed and with greater forgetfulness of what we and they are in their bare simplicity we are transported in to a realm of renewed view and experience.

This is the Abhisheka-empowerment- overtime we allow those transformed images, colours phrases and such leave a deliberate imprint on our mind continuum so gradually reshaping, recreating the form of our mind in emulation of this or that quality and trait.

As such the images and visualizations and, specific orders of events are guidelines rather than dogmas. Blue channel, red channel, red dot, green dot, left leg up or right leg up, left nostril breath right nostril breath could very well be any other color or pose chosen to represent this or that aspect of the mind.

When we give consensus to visualize paradise or pure land or Buddha form with that specific suggest form or colour we give consensus to the image of paradise first seen by someone else based on his or her memories, aspirations, needs, projections, unique character nature and karma.

By adjoining his or her stream of experience, we co-create and sustain it, to all extent making it more real.

But to all extent, it must be known with discernment that it is all just a magical display of illusion, a child magical castle, a dream that can easily change and be as real and as valid as any other.

Different people will find different expedients to be more effective. For some people, it is more effective to use physical means, or abstract means and for others those means are unnecessary.

This is because those are but skillful means, to facilitate the clarification of nature and function, substance and essence of your own mind and the sense of being arising in it.

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Let us remember that the Lord Buddha himself and many realized Zen master and the ancient orders of monk such as Ananda and Kasyapa the 16 arahats, did not do any extreme tantric practices.

There was no need of knowledge or consensus perceived need of tummo or candali or kundalini to be enlightened nor knowledge of channels, drops and essence, nor were there preliminary practices and 1,000,000 of mantras to be done to be liberated. There is not one single instance where Lord Buddha has ever recommended the practice of mantra in the historical sutras.

All traditions and belief systems concerning the perceived need of the so called preliminary practices as well as Tummo appeared very late in time in the wake of tantra nearly 1,000 years after Lord Buddha parinirvana.

In the light of this dissertation we clearly see what those methods are, skillful means of empowerment and transformation. We clearly see why those methods appeared, how they work, why they gained consensus, what is their educational and practical purpose, which is wide in scope and efficiency in terms of both relative and ultimate results, but by no means they should become a dogma without which buddha hood cannot be known.

Lord Buddha's revolution was just that, to free people from the rules of magical thinking, dogmas, rituals empowerment and mantras and offerings to gurus and deities without which people thought Moksha or liberation could not be known. This was the widespread belief and view during his lifetime in Vedic India.

He made us free through the terse non-religious and yet all inclusive logic of his view.

He proved that to be enlightened nothing else is needed but the direct and immediate noble eightfold path. So why are we falling back in the trap he dedicated his life to liberate mankind from?

Skillful means and empowerment, deities and rituals, channels winds and drops, magical implements and tantric sex, even guru devotion, or lineage fixation, mantra secrets and such, all these marvellous tools should be carefully looked and known for they are, no less, but also no more.

There is no Buddha but in the mind of Buddha

My experience arose without any prior knowledge of Buddhism and Vajrayāna, proving that, although we can rely on the established tradition, those are constructed artificial means aiming at preserving an experience and later a tradition, they are not the experience itself nor are strictly necessary by everyone.

We should use all upadesha to generate insight on their very nature, causation and function instead of giving them axiomatic and often dogmatic values; they were called upadesha for a reason.

Your mind, not my mind

Ultimately, we do not need to rely on anything but our immediate experience, creating or reenacting someone else experiences serves as tool to achieve a transformation through:

- Mimesis
- Guided projective identification and transfer
- Putting us in someone else place and mind
- Exchanging self and others
- Release grip of self grasping
- Separation of "I" and all that it implies

But once understand the scope, you must let go of, for beyond its educational scope it leads to dogmatism, obscure the view and defy purpose. It is an obstacle on the path to liberation and a conceptual attachment.

We should rely and see what is moment to moment for that is the content and form of our mind. Ultimately it is our mind; we aim at realizing mind in its five attributes:

1. Nature
2. Form
3. Quality
4. Essence
5. Function

Dharma is a living experience of what it is, the reenactment and memory of someone else experiences, no matter how lofty it is but a memory, construct.

In it, no liberation nor ultimate refuge can be found as Lord Buddha said treat all such things as:

Not I, not mine, not myself

No two Buddhas are the same

We must become who we are,

not someone else,

nor something else,

just who we are,

as we are.

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The suchness of Buddha's nature is one it has samarasa -the same taste- in all Buddhas, yet it manifests differently.

No two Buddhas are same.

Conclusions

In my view, the practice of liberation aims at recognizing and then seeing what always is as it is.

To conceptually generating or confabulating what is not into a reality, a dance of appearances, is a powerful tool if it is done with knowledge and clarity of:

1. The four foundation of mindfulness
2. Madhyamaka
3. Especially both sunyata and bodhicitta

Enabling one to know what one is doing and recognizing what appears makes the difference between a tool of immediate liberation and a conceptual fetter.

Without this clarity and discernment one is entering the realm of magic, power and illusions; a tantra territory that often overlaps with natural borders.

Yet, the distinction is clear, magic conceptually creates what is not making it appear as what it is.

This is an aspect of the application of tantra as the continuum of the twofold truth, relative appearance and actual being.

However, it by itself does not lead to liberation; when the same knowledge aims at liberation it becomes the illuminating vision that makes it appear.

