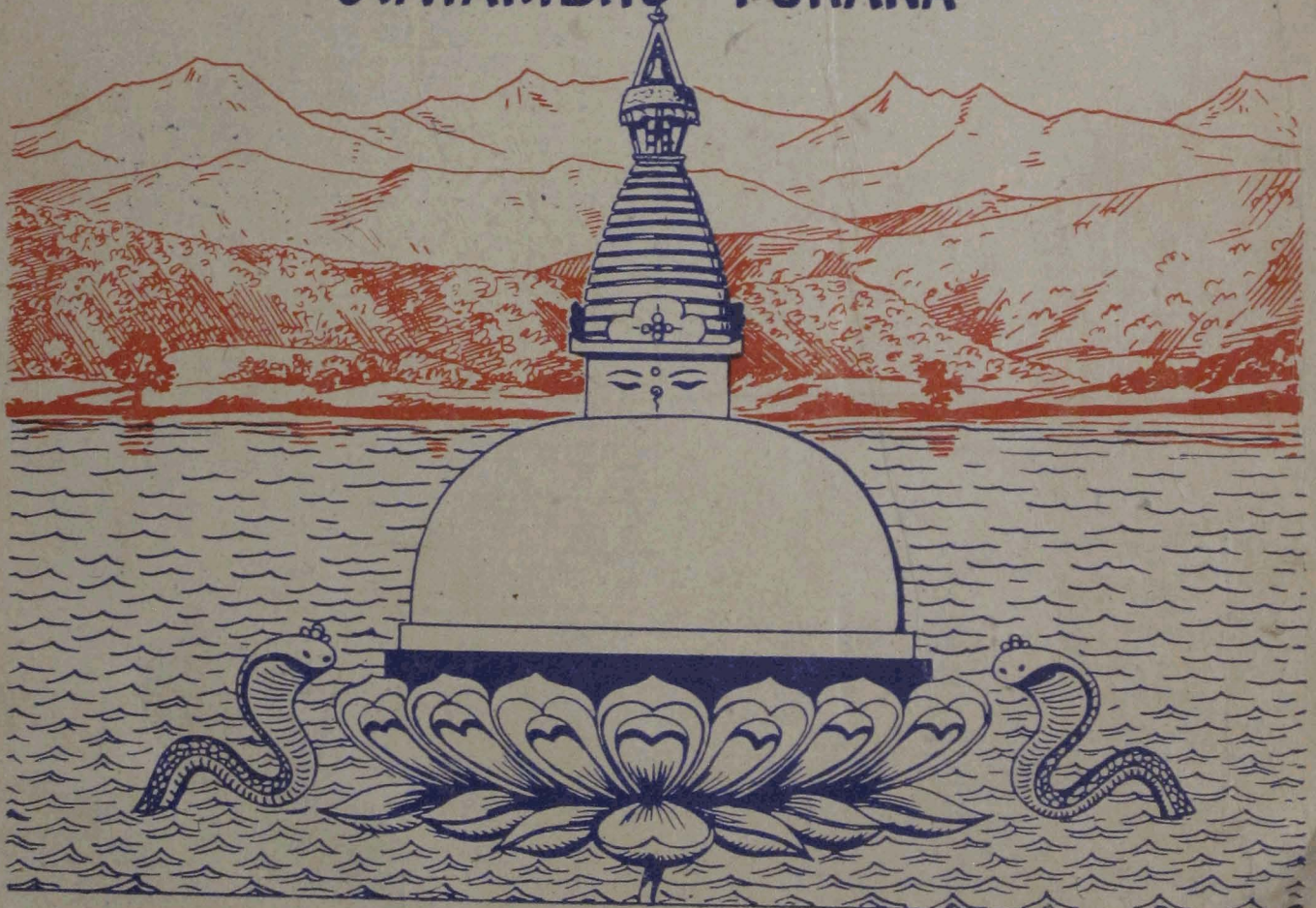


**MYTHOLOGICAL HISTORY
OF THE
NEPAL VALLEY
FROM
SVAYAMBHU PURANA**



Mythological History of The Nepal Valley
from
Svayambhu Purana

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And

Naga and Serpent Symbolism

by

Warren W. Smith

Avalok, Publishers.

Rs. 30/-

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1st Edition: 1000 Copies.

January 1978

Printed at: Nepal Press, Sukra Path, Kathmandu, Nepal.

Foreword

Svayambhu Dharmadhatu Chaitya of Nepal Valley is a holy place of all Buddhists of Nepal. The historical Buddha, Sakyamuni Gautama, was preceded by former Buddhas (*Adi Buddhas*)– Vipaswi, Sikhi, Viswabhu, Krakucchanda, Kanakamuni and Kasyapa. In the legend of Svayambhu it is disclosed that Vipaswi was the first *Tathagata* who visited to Nepal Valley and he rooted here a lotus which brought forth the Light of *Dharma* (*Jyotisvarupa*, Form of Light). This was in the time of *Satya Yuga*, the first stage in the evolution of mankind. At that time, Nepal Valley was a big lake, full of pure water, and residence of *Nagarajas*, divine creatures of water. Then in different times all *Adi Buddhas* came to visit the Light “enlightened” by Vipaswi. At the time of Viswabhu, Manjushri drained out all the water of the Valley. Then the Valley became suitable for settlement for all devotees of the Light. Eventually the Form of Light changed, by itself, to the form of the *Chaitya*. According to the Buddhist concept, *Chaitya* is a house of all Enlightened Beings, Buddhas, Bodhisattvas, and Tathagatas. Therefore, *Svayambhu Dharmadhatu Chaitya* is a holy place for all Buddhists.

Svayambha Purana is the text which tells all the stories of the “Light” of Nepal Valley. No doubt, in different times the text was copied and rewritten, adding many fascinating events in the history of the Valley. *Svayambhu Purana* is a textbook of the mythology, anthropology, religion, and natural physical energy of the land.

Mana Bajra Bajracharya

Contents

| | | | | |
|----|---|---|----------------------------|-----------|
| 1 | Svayambhu Purana | - | Introduction | 1 |
| 2 | First Chapter | - | Vipaswi Buddha | 5 |
| 3 | Second Chapter | - | Sikhhi Buddha | 7 |
| 4 | Third Chapter | - | Viswabhu Buddha | 9 |
| 5 | Fourth Chapter | - | Krakucchanda Buddha | 17 |
| 6 | Fifth Chapter | - | Kanakamunî Buddha | 21 |
| 7 | Sixth Chapter | - | Kasyapa Buddha | 23 |
| 8 | Seventh Chapter | - | Sakyamuni Buddha | 27 |
| 9 | Eighth Chapter | - | Santikar Acharya | 31 |
| 10 | Ninth Chapter | - | Pratapa-Malla | 34 |
| 11 | Kalpas, Yugas and Geologic Time | | | 36 |
| 12 | Svayambhu Purana as Creation Myth | | | 42 |
| 13 | The Buddhist Chaitya | | | 45 |
| 14 | Naga and Serpent Symbolism | | | 51 |
| 15 | Naga Iconography | | | 57 |
| 16 | Dhyani Buddha Amoghasiddhi | | | 61 |
| 17 | The Devi Kundalini | | | 65 |
| 18 | Naga Ritual in other Parts of Nepal | | | 67 |
| 19 | Relations to Chinese Geomancy | | | 69 |
| 20 | Telluric Currents | | | 73 |
| 21 | The Living Earth | | | 75 |
| 22 | Bibliography | | | 77 |
| 23 | (Map) The Former Great Lake - Nagavasahrada | | back inside cover. | |

Svayambhu Purana }

Introduction

Svayambhu Purana is a Nepal Buddhist Text of prehistoric legends of the Valley of Nepal and *Svayambhu Dharmadhatu Chaitya*,¹ holy place of all Buddhists. The tales were first told, according to the legends, by Sakyamuni Buddha who was born in Kapilvastu, an ancient kingdom of Nepal, in the 6th Century B.C.² The Lord Buddha, having achieved enlightenment under the Bodhi tree at Bodh Gaya, was travelling with his disciples, visiting the various holy spots, and lecturing on the Buddha *Dharma*. He came to Nepal Valley from Jetavana Mahavihara³ to visit the holy place of Svayambhu. Paying warm homage to the *Svayambhu Dharmadhatu*, he was residing on Manjushri Hill⁴, renowned as the holy place of *Manjushri Bodhisattva*, founder of Nepal valley for settlement.

As the Lord Buddha was lecturing on the holiness of *Svayambhu Dharmadhatu*, *Maitreya Bodhisattva*⁵ requested the Lord Buddha to tell all the prehistoric and legendary stories of *Svayambhu Dharmadhatu*, why it is a holy place for all Buddhas and

-
1. **Dharma** is Buddhist Law or Doctrine. **Dhatu** is the elemental form or ultimate element. Therefore the **Dharmadhatu** is the ultimate element of the **Dharma**. **Chaitya** is the Buddhist stupa.
 2. Sakyamuni Buddha is considered to have lived 563-483 B.C. Kapilavastu was in the area of the present Lumbini, in the southern Terai region of Nepal.
 3. Jetavana Mahavihara is supposed to be in the modern Lucknow (India) as there is now at that place a Vihar of that name.
 4. Manjushri Hill, also known as Sarasvati Hill, is the lower west peak of Svayambhu Hill.
 5. **Maitreya Bodhisattva** is the future Buddha or the Buddha yet to come, who appears here as a disciple of Sakyamuni Buddha. We will find in the text that the historical Buddha appears as a disciple of each of his predecessors.

Bodhisattvas, its significance, and why it is renowned to all Buddhist people. According to this request the Lord Buddha told in detail all the legendary stories of Nepal Valley and *Svayambhu Dharmadhatu* to Maitreya. These facts are mentioned in the first chapter of *Svayambhu Purana*. Also it is mentioned that the stories were retold by Upagupta Bhiksu to the King Asoka¹ in Kukutarama Mahavihara² as he had heard from his teacher Sanavasa Bhiksu. The stories were told after a long time once again by Jayashri Bhiksu to his disciple Jinashri Bhiksu in Bodhi Mandapa.³ This is the historical background of the text *Svayambhu Purana*. It is a holy book of the Buddhist people of Nepal Valley⁴. It is an interesting and popular account of the former Great Lake of Nepal and of the *Nagarajas*⁵ or Serpent Kings.

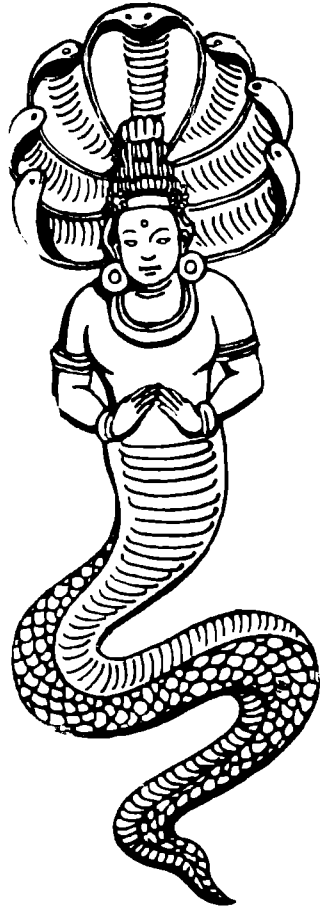
1 Asoka lived 274-237 B.C.

2 Kukutarama Mahavihara is supposed to have been in the present day Patna.

3 Bodhi Gaya.

4 The Brahmanical version of the creation of the Nepal Valley is obviously later and is less detailed in the account of the Valley as having been a lake. This lends credence to the Buddhist claim of an earlier occupation of the Valley.

5 Literally, **Nagaraja** means Serpent King but as we shall see, the Naga is not at all the zoological serpent, but is representative of a power or force of Nature associated with the Earth itself, with the element water and all phenomenon of water including rainfall, and with the fertility of all plant life and prosperity of human and animal life in Nepal and in the world as a whole.





First Chapter

Vipaswi Buddha

In the Golden Age or *Satya Yuga*, the present Valley of Nepal was a holy lake 7 *Kos* by 7 *Kos* (14 miles by 14 miles) surrounded by mountains and dense forest. The name of the lake was *Taodhanahrada* (Great Lake). There were many springs and streams flowing into the lake. The lake was very deep, having clear blue water. The lake was also known as *Kalihrada*¹ on account of its deep blue water and it was reputed to be as beautiful as *Mansarowar*. The water of the lake was renowned for its eight merits. It was pure, fragrant, cool, tasty, light, smooth, pleasant, and wholesome. Since ancient times it had been a holy place for all Buddhas and Bodhisattvas and for Nagarajas, the King of the lake being *Karkotaka Nagaraja*. For this reason the lake was also known as *Nagavasahrada* (Lake Kingdom of Nagas).

At this time there was in the place called *Bandhumati Nagara*² a *Tathagata*,³ *Vipaswi*, first in the lineage of Buddhas. His disciple, *Dharma Satya*, would, in another age, be reborn as *Sakyamuni Buddha*. *Vipaswi Tathagata*, having heard of the holy lake *Taodhanahrada*, came here with his disciples to do pilgrimage. After taking bath in the holy lake, *Vipaswi* realized that this was a very holy place. He took a round of the lake and from the mountain to the north-west,⁴ observing that there was every kind of flower in the lake except the lotus, he took a root of the lotus and saying a mantra over it, threw it into the middle of the lake. *Vipaswi Tathagata* then speaking to his disciples, made the following predictions: "In the

1 **Kall** in Nepali means both blue and black or a blue so dark that it appears almost black. The significance here is that the water of the lake was so deep that it appeared to be black.

2 Perhaps *Bungamati*, south of *Kathmandu*.

3 **Tathata** means literally, "as they come in the same way they go" meaning that the **Tathagata** is able to enter and leave human incarnation at will.

4 *Nagarjuna* mountain, the Valley Rim peak closest to *Svayambhu Hill*.

future this root will make a lotus flower with a thousand petals. On the top of the lotus will appear the light of *Svayambhu Dharmadhatu* self-created.¹ In this holy place where the lotus blossoms will appear a small hill.² In *Satya Yuga* the hill will be known as *Padmagiri*.³ In *Treta Yuga* it will be known as *Vajrakuta Parvata*.⁴ In *Dwapora Yuga* it will be known as *Gosring Parvata*.⁵ In *Kali Yuga* it will be known as *Gouccha Parvata*.⁶ This will be a famous place for all Buddhas and Bodhisattvas and a holy spot of Enlightenment." Having paid homage to the holy lake *Taodhanahrada*, *Vipaswi Tathagata* and his disciples returned to their native place.

1 **Svayambhu** literally means "self-created".

2 Svayambhu Hill stand less then 300 ft. above the floor of the Valley.

3 Lotus Hill.

4 Diamond Hill. The **Vajra** is symbolic of the **Dharmadhatu** and of the School of Buddhism practised in Nepal (**Vajrayana**).

5 Horn of the Cow. The two hills, Svayambhu and Manjushri, do in fact appear like the two horns of a cow.

6 Tail of the Cow. In recognition that the Manjushri Hill is slightly lower and forms something of a tail to the higher peak.

Second Chapter

Sikhi Buddha

After enjoying eighty thousand years life, *Vipaswi Tathagata* departed from this earth. Then in the lineage of Buddhas appeared *Sikhi Tathagata* to show the path of *Dharma* and to protect all sentient beings. He is said to have lived in the country know us Aruna.¹ As *Sikhi Tathagata* was lecturing in his Vihara about the past, present, and future, there was felt a great quaking of the earth. The disciples of *Sikhi Tathagata* in great distress asked to know the reason of this earthquake. Regarding their questions, he replied, "On the top of the Himalaya to the north there is a great lake called *Nagavasahrada*. It is a holy place for all Boddhas and Bodhisattvas. A long time ago *Vipaswi Tathagata* visited that place and he planted there a tuber root of lotus. Now that lotus flower with a thousand petals is blossoming. On the top of the lotus flower has appeared *Svayambhu Dharmadhatu* with dazzling light. The *Dharmadhatu* is one hand ln height.² All the Gods from the different directions have come to worship it. Even *Sesa Naga*³ who is the holder of this universe has come to worship *Svayambhu Dharmadhatu*. This is the reason of this earthquake.⁴ This is not a bad omen,

1 Perhaps the Arun Kosi region of East Nepal.

2 **Ek hat** (one hand) measured from elbow to fingertips is still the common standard measure in Nepal.

3 **Sesa** means literally "remainder". It is said that as Vishnu reclines between destructions of the universe, on the primordial waters, supported by **Sesa Naga**, that all creation is within his view. Only the waters remain outside his view. The primordial water, represented by **Sesa Naga**, is the only element existing even outside the realm of Vishnu, creator of the entire universe. **Sesa** is the remainder or what remains even independent of Vishnu himself. As such **Sesa Naga** is the ultimate source or support of the universe.

4 That is, when **Sesa Naga** moves, the whole earth must also move. The **Naga** is symbolic of all phenomenon relative to the Earth force; the force that causes an earthquake as well as the energy released by the quaking and cracking of the Earth's surface. It is interesting that the ancients recognized the relation of this force and the fertility and prosperity of the Earth's creatures. They were able to make distinction between beneficial and harmful earthquakes and other exercises of the Earth force.

really it is an auspicious occurrence as this earthquake will make for fertility and prosperity of all sentient beings.¹ *Sikhi Tathagata* continued, saying, “*Svayambhu Dharmadhatu* is the reality of self-creation. It is symbolized by the 5 *Dhyani Buddhas*;² *Aksobya* in the East, *Ratnasambhava* in the South, *Amitabha* in the West, *Amoghasiddhi* in the North, and *Vairochana* in the Center. It is the spiritual house of all Buddhas and Bodhisattvas. It is a great privilege of our time to have such a shrine in the *Nagavasahrada*.”

Then *Sikhi Tathagata* and his disciples came to do pilgrimage at the holy lake. They took round of the lake and sat in meditation on the peak to the south-west of the Valley called *Dhyanochcha*.³ *Sikhi Tathagata* announced to his disciples that he would be dissolved within the *Svayambhu Dharmadhatu* in order to have immediate Enlightenment. Thus he was incorporated into the *Dharmadhatu*⁴ and his disciples became devotees of that shrine.

1 In the same manner that lightning is a necessary spark or stimulus for growth of plant life, so also is the release of the Earth force necessary for the fertility of the Earth. It is the combination of these forces which produces fertility. That the Ancients of Nepal were aware of this phenomenon is evident in their practice of **Naga Sadhana**, or ritual for stimulation of the **Naga**, representative of the Earth force and the watery element. This ritual is performed in times of drought in an attempt to create rainfall. The ritual recognizes a type of **Naga** resident in the Earth and its waters as well as a type resident in the clouds and the force of lightning.

2 **Dhyani Buddhas** are the ideal Buddhas visualized in meditation. They are compared with the petals of the lotus, representative of the **Dharmadhatu**, as it unfolds, or with the different colours into which the rays of the sun are separated when passed through a prism. As such the **Dhyani Buddhas** are symbolic of the spatial unfolding or spiritual differentiation of the **Dharmadhatu**.

3 Now known as Chandagiri.

4 That is, he achieved Enlightenment and passed from the physical body by meditation on the **Svayambhu Dharmadhatu**.

Third } Chapter }

Viswabhu Buddha

Thus *Sikhi Tathagata* being dissolved within the *Svayambhu Dharmadhatu*, the time of the Second Buddha come to an end. After a long time in the lineage of Buddhas there appeared *Viswabhu Tathagata* to protect all sentient beings. His disciple, *Parvata Bodhisattva*, would in another age be reborn as Sakyamuni Buddha. As *Viswabhu Tathagata* was lecturing on the Buddha *Dharma* in his country known as Anupana, he was requested by his disciples to make pilgrimage to *Nagavasahrada* and *Svayambhu Dharmadhatu*. *Viswabhu Tathagata* was very pleased to hear this request and therefore he immediately set out with his disciples to journey to the Nepal Valley. They soon arrived here and they paid homage from the peak to the south-east of the Valley, known as Phullochcha.¹ On the top of this peak *Viswabhu Tathagata* engaged in meditation, and due to his strong devotion, there occurred a severe earthquake.² When requested by his disciples to explain the significance of the earthquake, he replied that it was not at all a bad omen; that he had received a premonition concerning future events in Nepal. *Viswabhu Tathagata* then predicted that a Bodhisattva would come to Nepal from MahaChin in the north; and that he would cause the waters to be drained from the lake, making the Nepal Valley suitable for human habitation.

1 Pulchowk, the highest of the Valley Rim peaks.

2 The significance here is that Viswabhu's meditation was so intense that it had penetrated the realm of the Gods, disturbing them, and thus causing all creation to quake. According to the text, the disciple who requested Viswabhu to explain the significance of the earthquake was called Gagana Ganja, which means literally "Sky-Vibration". The concept that a **Tathagata** may have the ability to move the heavens and the earth by the power of his meditation, is well within the bounds of **Vajrayana** Buddhist theory. There are, within **Vajrayana Sadhanas**, mantras and rituals for both causing the earth to quake and for causing it to cease quaking, as well as for producing other similar physical phenomenon.

At this same time, in *MahaChin*,¹ on the mountain called *Panchasirsa Parvata*² sat the *Bodhisattva Manjushri*,³ engaged in the meditation of *Lokasundarsanasamadhi*.⁴ In his meditation, he became aware of the existence of the Nepal Valley and the *Nagavasahrada* with the holy place *Svayambhu Dharmadhatu*, surrounded by dazzling light, and he was also made aware of the meditation and predictions of *Viswabhu Tathagata*.⁵ *Manjushri Bodhisattva* then immediately made preparations to depart from his place and proceed to the Nepal Valley. He took his two wives *Kesini*⁶ and *Upakesni*,⁷ his sword *Chandahasa*⁸ and his sacred book *Prajna*,⁹ and on his Lion mount, he came to Nepal. Upon arriving here, he observed the flame of *Svayambhu Dharmadhatu*, and was well pleased with the sight. His followers were amazed to see the light of the Self-Created, and they made various speculations on its nature. Some said that it was a lamp, others that it was lightning or the moon, or perhaps “*barwa*” (natural fire).¹⁰

1 (Maha) Great (Chin) China, though, more likely Tibet, as Nepalese refer to everything to the north as “Chin”.

2 Five-peaked mountain.

3 Though *Manjushri* is supposed to have come to Nepal from the north, the name itself is Sanskrit.

4 Contemplation to make visible the whole Universe.

5 *Viswabhu* had in fact, by the power of his meditation, summoned *Manjushri* to Nepal because of his own desire that the lake might be drained and the **Svayambhu Dharmadhatu** become more accessible to pilgrims as well as permanent residents.

6 Symbol of Wealth.

7 Symbol of Learning.

8 **Chanda Hasa** means literally “Dreadful Laugh” and is symbolic of the power of **Mantra**. *Manjushri* is regarded as one of the founders of **Vajrayana** and especially of the science of **Mantra**. *Manjushri*’s mantra, **Chanda Hasa**, symbolized by the sword he carries, has miraculous powers, as we shall see.

9 **Prajna** is literally “Insight” the central concept of Tantric Buddhism or **Vajrayana**. **Vajrayana** (Diamond Vehicle) Buddhism is distinguished from **Mahayana** (Great Vehicle) Buddhism, out of which it developed, by its inclusion of the principles of Tantra, including **mantra**, or sacred syllables, **mandala**, or sacred diagrams, **dharane**, or ritual incorporating **mantra** and **mandala**, and **mudra**, or symbolic hand gestures. The actual existant text of *Manjushri*, the **Manjushrimulakalpa**, is one of the earliest if not the earliest of the **Vajrayana** Buddhist texts. It dates from the third or perhaps even the first century A.D.

10 This is the only indication in the text that the “dazzling light” of the *Dharmadhatu* may be anything other than a metaphysical concept; and it may in fact represent the speculations of later compilers of the **Svayambhu Purana**. It is entirely possible, however, given the nature of the Valley, that such phenomenon may have been produced due, perhaps to the actions of “swamp-gas”, or methane, This gas is produced naturally due to the decomposition of vegetable matter, especially under swampy conditions, and can cause strange luminous effects. It has, in recent times, been mistaken as “Flying saucers”,

Manjushri stayed first on the mountain east of the Valley, called *Srinada Paravata*¹. Then he came to Phulchowk Mountain, leaving there one of his wives Kesini, whose name was changed to Varada,² From Phulchowk he came over to Chandagiri Peak and there he left his wife Upakesni, changing her name to Moksada.³ Then Manjushri proceeded to *Svayambhu Dharmadhatu* to pay homage.

Gazing upon the lake *Nagavasahrada* and the beautiful Valley, Manjushri felt that if the lake were drained of its waters, the *Svayambhu Dharmadhatu* would become more accessible to pilgrims and the Valley might be made for settlement. Accordingly he made a complete survey of the shore of the lake, finding that the lowest point of the surrounding mountains was to the south at the *Kacchapel Parvata*⁴ Here Manjushri cleft the hill with his sword *Chanda Hasa*, allowing the waters of the lake to drain away.⁵ The Kacchapel Parvata, being severely wounded, was naturally quite angry with Manjushri.⁶ Begging apology, Manjushri explained that his intentions were good; that he desired to benefit all creatures by making the Valley habitable. In order to make the Kacchapel Parvata happy, he promised to make a shrine of *Karunamaya*⁶ on the top of the hill so that everyone would come there to pay homage.

Manjushri then went round the lake to observe the flow of water. Wherever he found blockage he drained it out, until nearly all of the water had ebbed out. When he was doing

1 Dhillacho Peak.

2 "One who gives boon".

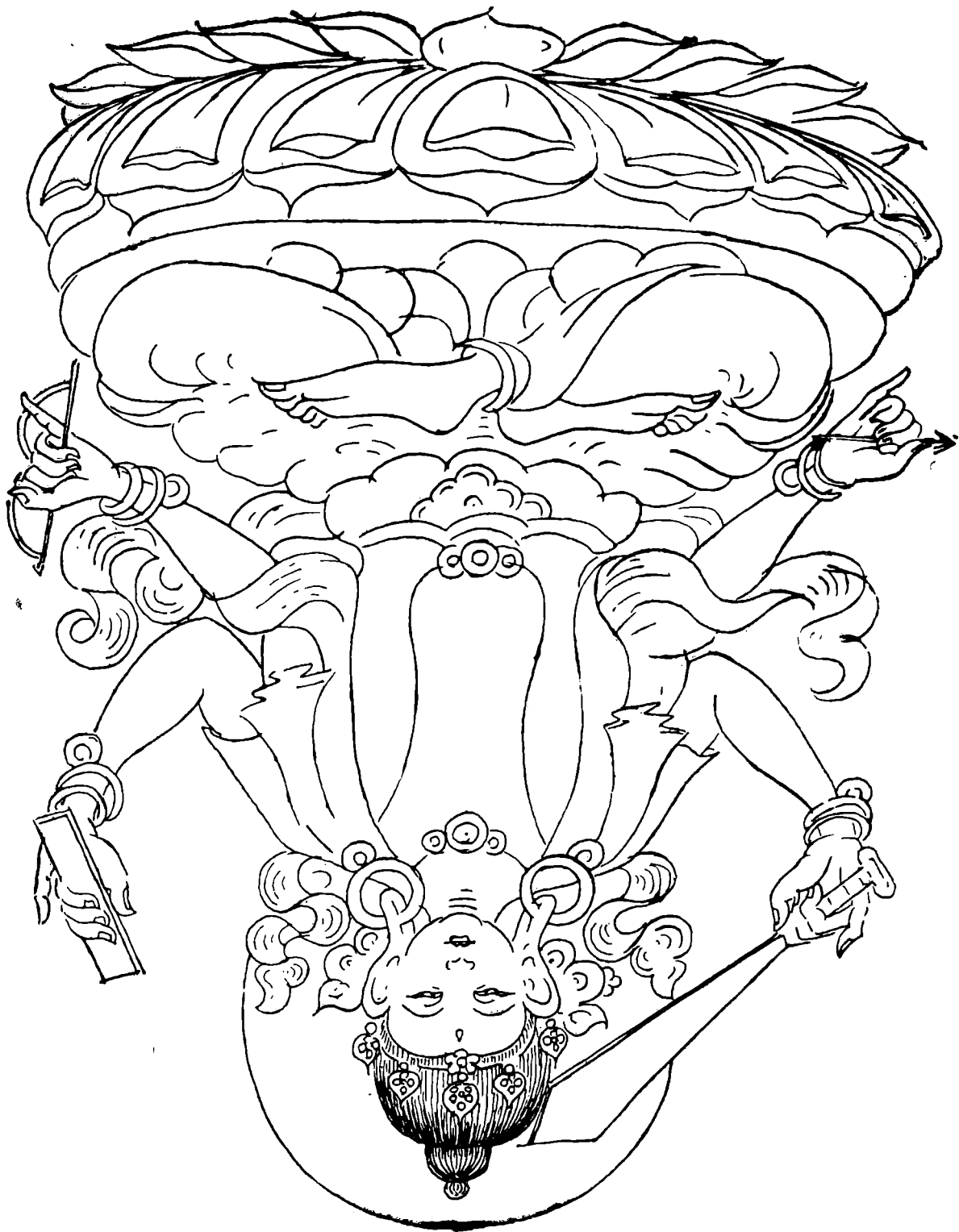
3 "One who gives Nirvana or Enlightenment".

4 "Turtle Mountain". The hill is small and rounded and may be imagined to resemble the shape of a turtle.

5 The place where the Kacchapel Parvata was severed is at the Chobar Gorge, about 2 1/2 miles from Kathmandu. The gorge was obviously created by earthquake, the walls being quite sheer on both sides. Manjushri's sword **Chanda Hasa** is symbolic of the power of mantra to cause earthquake or other physical effect. Manjushri caused the Valley to drain by the power of his mantra; producing an earthquake which severed the Valley Rim at its weakest point. Either the ancients recognized that the gorge had been made naturally by earthquake or, perhaps, **Manjushri Bodhisattva** as an actually historic character and adept of **Mantric** (Sound) Magic, was really able to produce such an effect. The ancients, especially the Tantrics, claimed these powers; we have had three instances of earthquake produced by magic means in **Svayambhu Purana**. Considering their knowledge of the powers of sound vibration it is hard to deny the possibility.

6 For a hill to speak is only to be expected in a land where rocks and trees are recognized as Gods; where the spirit is seen in every mountain and stream; and where all the forces of Nature are personified.

7 **Avalokitesvara**, the All-compassionate.



this, a *Daitya* (Demon) came out from the side of the mountain, and being fiercely angry, he tried to kill Manjushri but Manjushri was able to overcome him and kill him with his sword. The flesh and bones of the demon turned to stone and his blood and fat turned to clay which covered the whole Valley.¹

Manjushri then returned to the Chobar Gorge to observe the outflow of water. As he was there, the *Nagarajas*, Serpent Kings of the *Nagavasahrada*, seeing that their dwelling place was destroyed, began to approach the gorge in order to go outside.² First *Taksaka Nogaraja* with his large family came to go out. Manjushri stopped him saying, "Oh, *Nagaraja*, why are you going out? Please stay here for the good fortune and fertility of Nepal Valley." Hearing this, *Taksaka Nagaraja* became very angry saying, "How can I stay here in this Valley, the pure, clear water having been let out? You have destroyed my home, I cannot remain here, I will go to live in the Great Ocean." Manjushri did not request him again, so he went out. Then *Kulika Nagaraja* with his large family came toward the gorge. Manjushri stopped him and requested that he remain in the Valley. He promised to make a place for him and his family where they could live in peace. *Kulika* therefore decided to stay, thinking that as Manjushri would not stay here forever there might be an opportunity in the future to stop up the gorge and allow the waters to once again fill the Valley. *Kulika* then accepted Manjushri's offer and went to live at Monorath Tirtha in Tokha Dobhan near the head of the Vishnumati River.

Next *Karkotaka Nagaraja* with his large family approached the gorge in order to go outside. Showing great respect, Manjushri requested him not to go out saying, "Oh *Nagaraja*, King of *Nagarajas*, this Valley belongs to you and it is still your Kingdom. All the riches and jewels and property, all are yours. With a view to perform divine service to *Svayambhu Dharmadhutu*, I have dried up this lake and intend to make this Valley suitable for habitation.

1 This is a literal translation. One might almost suspect that the **Svayambhu Purana** has been written by an ancient Geologist. It is indeed the flesh and bone, the blood and fat of all the creatures and vegetation of the former lake that has made the more than 1000 ft. of lacustrine clay sediments of the Valley floor.

2 Though there were, no doubt, numerous aquatic animals of the serpent family resident in the lake, the **Nagarajas** are not serpents, but are symbolic representations of the electric or magnetic power of the element water. They are usually represented with serpent bodies, but with human heads and facial features. They are regarded as minor deities with definite functions, that is, to make fertility and prosperity and bring rainfall in season. In case of their neglect of duty, there is a specific ritual, or **Naga Sadhana** to stimulate them. If the **Nagarajas** were to abandon the Valley (If the Valley should entirely dry up) however, there could be no possibility for human prosperity here. It is for this reason that Manjushri is so anxious that the **Nagarajas** should remain.

It is your duty as *King Nagaraja* to provide for the fertility of the land, the prosperity of the people, and to bring the rains in season." Manjushri further promised to provide a large deep lake and a palace of jewels as a suitable residence for *Karkotaka Nagaraja*. Karkotaka therefore agreed to remain here and he went to live in his palace in the lake called *Taudaha*.¹

Then the Nepal Valley became a fertile plain. The hill of *Vajrakuta Parvata*² appeared by itself bearing the *Svayambhu Dharmadhatu*. Manjushri made a survey of the Valley to discover the important or holy spots. In particular he was interested to find the root of the lotus planted by *Vipaswi Tathagata*. He found the lotus root at *Guhyeswari*, the spiritual triangle (*yoni*), the *Khaganana*, the Mother of Buddhahood.³ Manjushri was very pleased to find the lotus rooted at this spot as the *Guhyeswari* is the most holy shrine; and this he regarded as an auspicious sign for the future of the Valley. As the lotus was slightly uprooted, he pressed the roots firmly into the ground at this spot and he made a tunnel or covering of the stem of the lotus from *Guhyeswari* to the flowers at *Svayambhu*.⁴ When Manjushri pressed the root of the lotus into the ground at *Guhyeswari*, there came out of the ground a large stream of water. Fearful that the flow might be sufficient to cause the flooding of the Valley, Manjushri made the meditation called *Jalastambhana*.⁵ Being now satisfied, Manjushri retired to the *Vajrakuta Parvata* where on the back side of it, he made his shrine and he sat in meditation on the *Svayambhu Dharmadhatu*.

1 **Taudaha** literally means "Large lake". The lake, located about 1/2 mile south-west of the Chobar Gorge, is now only about half a mile in circumference. It is also called **Dhanadaha**, or "money-giving lake, due to the belief that Karkotaka may bestow a boon of jewels from his palace on pilgrims who come to the lake with offerings. The locals genuinely believe that Karkotaka is still residing there in his palace. Wright reports in his History of Nepal that at the time of his residence here, an attempt was made to drain off the water of the lake in order to reach the palace of jewels. The attempt was defeated only by the great depth of the lake.

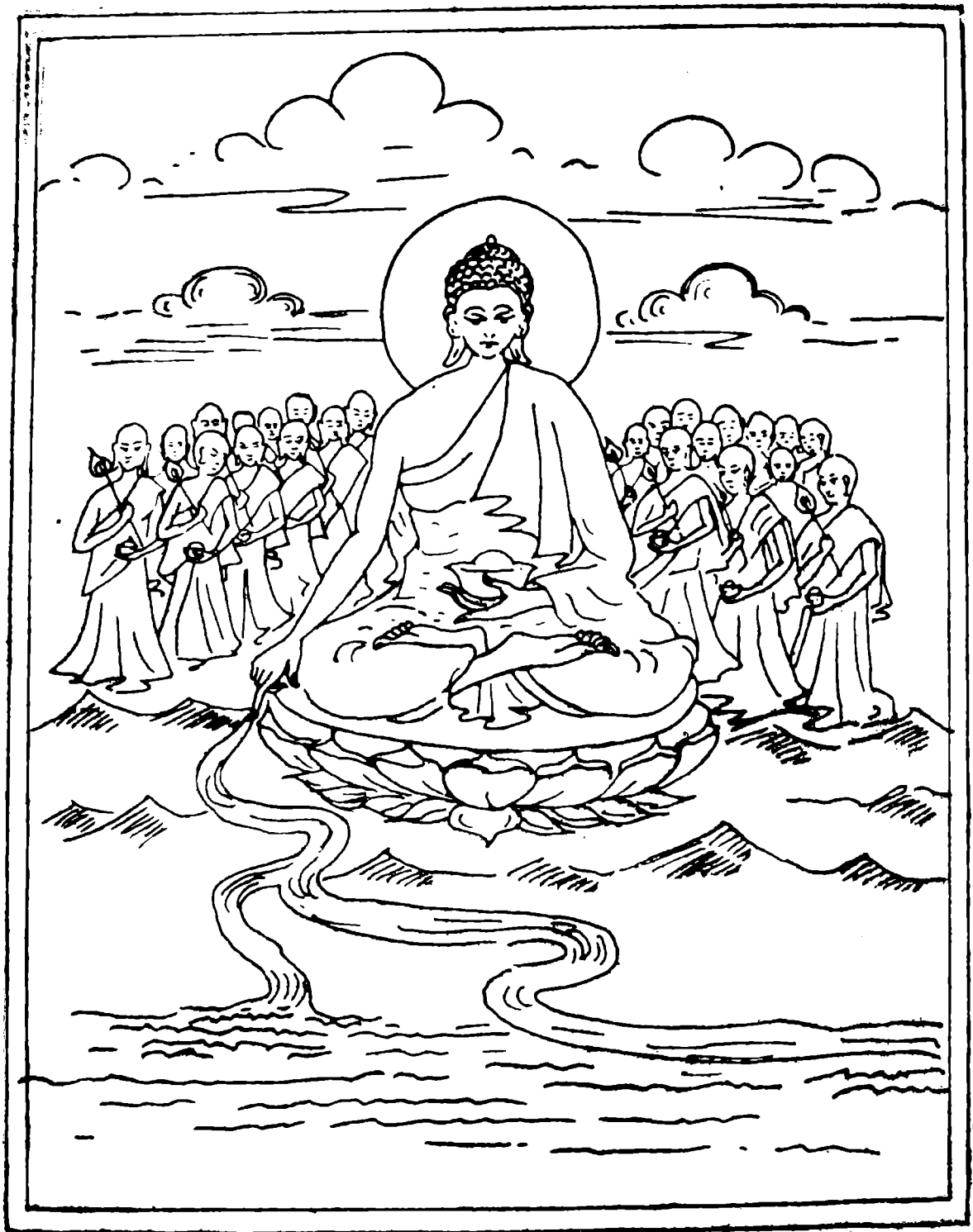
2 **Diamond Peak**. The **vajra** is the symbol of the highest spiritual power, irresistible and invincible; therefore compared to the diamond. The flame of the **Dharmadhatu** is itself referred to as the **vajradhatu** or diamond element.

3 **Guhyeswari** is the shrine of the **Sakti** or feminine Earth force and, as such, is the most ancient shrine of the Valley. She is known as the **Sakti Svayambhu** or **Adi Buddha**. **Guhye** is the female organ (*yoni*). **Khaganana** means "Face of the Void". As the Earth Mother, or Womb of the World, **Guhyeswari** is also Mother of Buddhahood.

4 The root of the lotus arising from the female *Guhyeswari*, flowers at the male *Svayambhu*. The "tunnel" is only a covering or protection of the lotus stem from *Guhyeswari* to *Svayambhu*, a distance of about 3 miles.

5 Literally "Stop water meditation". There is still a small but constant flow of water, considered to be holy or medicinal, from the shrine at *Guhyeswari*.





Fourth } Chapter } *Krakucchanda Buddha*

The time of *Viswabhu Tathagata* having ended, after a long time, *Krakucchanda Tathagata*, the fourth in the lineage of Buddhas, appeared in this earth to protect all the sentient beings. He lived in the country known as Ksemavati. This was the time of *Treta Yuga*. His disciple, Jyotisapala,¹ would in another age, be reborn as Sakyamuni Buddha. *Krakucchanda Tathagata*, travelling here and there, visiting all the holy places, came to the Nepal Valley to pay homage to the *Khaganana*, to the *Svayambhu Dharmodhatu*, and to the shrine of Manjushri. He stayed for some time on the Vajrakuta Parvata, and then he went to the mountain to the north of the Valley, the Sankha Parvata.² There he stayed and he began to lecture on the *Arasatya* (Noble Truth). Many people came to hear his lectures and they all requested to be made Buddhist monks. *Krakucchanda Tathagata*, being very happy, gave them initiation.

There being no source of water on the Sankha Parvata, *Krakucchanda* created a stream there by the power of his voice. Thus was created the first stream of the Nepal Valley, the Vagmati.³ This river is considered to be holy, its waters have the power to cure leprosy and to wash away sin. *Krakucchanda Tathagata* gave instructions to the spirit of the Vagmati that she may flow where she pleases, and that wherever another stream should join her, there should be a *Tirtha*, or holy place for bathing. Particularly, her source, middle and end

1 "Follower of Astrology".

2 "Conch Mountain" (Shivapuri), the north peak of the Valley Rim mountains. The fold in the mountain, when viewed from a distance, resembles the shell of the conch.

3 Vagmati means literally "stream created by Voice (**Vak**)" *Krakucchanda* has caused the stream to spring out from the side of the mountain by the power of **Mantra**.

should be great Tirthas. Krakurchanda then created the second large stream of the Valley, the Kesavati,¹ at the place where the hair of his disciples had fallen after initiation. At the joining of the Vagmati and Kesavati streams and wherever small streams joined these two, there were established the twelve Tirtha.

At this time, *Kulika Nagaraja*, having remained here in the Valley only in the hope of being able to someday refill the lake with water. seeing that *Manjushri Bodhisattva* was no longer here, thought that now might be the time to fulfill his wish. Therefore he called together all the other *Nagaraja* and convinced them to make continuous rainfall for many days in order to fill up the Valley again with water.² *Kulika* himself, with his followers, gathered themselves into a great black mountainous mass at the Chobar Gorge in order to keep the water from flowing out. As the waters began to collect in the Valley, the inhabitants were put in great distress, having to flee to the surrounding hills to escape the rising waters. *Korunamaya (Avalokitesvara)* in the Buddhist Heaven, *Sukhavati Bhuvan*, observed all these events with great compassion for his distressed subjects. He therefore sent *Samanta Bhadra*, the Changeless Light, to the aid of the Buddhist inhabitants of the Valley. *Samanta Bhadra* came immediately to *Kulika Nagaraja* and fixed his body with a stake that he might not be able to move and to make rainfall. *Kulika Nagaraja* seeing he was powerless to oppose *Samanta Bhadra*, made apology for his actions. He stopped all the *Nagarajas* making rain and he removed the blockage at Chobhar. *Samanta Bhadra*, with great compassion, realized the difficulties of *Kulika* and the other *Nagarajas* in that they were unable to regain their beautiful lake Kingdom. He spoke to *Kulika*, saying, "Oh, *Nagaraja*, What you are doing here is for your own bad Karma. *Manjushri Bodhisattva* made this Valley suitable for habitation so that all sentient beings might be able to worship the *Svajambhu Dharmadhatu*. You *Nagarajas* must do your duty to make the Valley fertile and bring the rains in season. You must live here in peace therefore I will make for you a palace in your own place where you may stay. So *Kulika Nagaraja* accepted the offer of *Samanta Bhadra* and went to live in peace at *Manorath Tirtha* in Tokha Dobban. In the same way *Samanta Bhadra* arranged for all the other *Nagaraja* to have each his own place to live in peace. Each was given one of the *Tirtha*, which are still renowned as holy places of pilgrimage. The locations of the *Tirtha* and the *Nagarajas* residing in each are as follows:

¹ Now known as the Vishnumati.

² There are found, in the lakebed sediments, thin (1-3ft. thick) deposits of peat and a few seams of coal, neither of which form at the bottom of lakes but which require swampy conditions for formation. This indicates that the former Nepal Lake was sometimes lake and sometimes swamp and perhaps even occasionally dry. Therefore the episode of *Kulika's* attempt to refill the lake has a basis in Geological fact.

Sodhani Tirtha is the place of *Taksaka Nagaraja*. It is located at the joining of the Amoghaphaladai and Vagmati rivers in Gokarna.

Santa Tirtha is the place of *Somasikhi Nagaraja*. It is located at the joining of Maradayani and Vagmati rivers in Guheswari.

Sankha Tirtha is the place of *Sankhapala Nagaraja*. It is located at the joining of Manirobinirian, Rudradhara and Vagmati rivers in Sankhamola Patana.

Raja Tirtha is the place of *Surupa Nagaraja*. It is located at the joining of Rajamanjari and Vagmati rivers in Bagmati.

Manorath Tirtha is the place of *Kulika Nagaraja*. It is located at the joining of Kesavati and Vimalavati rivers in Tokha.

Nirmala Tirtha is the place of *Parala Nagaraja*. It is located at the joining of Kesavati and Kusamavati rivers in Bhagavati.

Nidhana Tirtha is the place of *Nandopananda Nagaraja*. It is located at the joining of Kesavati and Suvarnavati rivers in Kanga.

Jnana Tirtha is the place of *Vasuki Nagaraja*. It is located at the joining of Kesavati and Papanasini rivers in Kalimati.

Chintamani Tirtha is the place of *Varuna Nagaraja*. It is located at the joining of Vagmati and Kesavati rivers in Tokha Dobhan.

Pramoda Tirtha is the place of *Padma Nagaraja*. It is located at the joining of Vagmati and Ratnavati rivers in Danaga.

Sulaksana Tirtha is the place of *Mahapadma Nagaraja*. It is located at the joining of Vagmati and Charumati rivers in Bhajangal.

Jaya Tirtha is the place of *Karkotaka Nagaraja*. It is located at the joining of Vagmati and Prabhavati rivers in Nekhu.

In this way, all the *Nagarajas* were made happy, except for *Taksaka Nagaraja*. Taksaka, who had gone out to the sea when Manjushri had drained the Valley, had been persuaded by Samanta Bhadra to return here, but still he remained angry. He caused much trouble around Sodhani Tirtha and he killed many animals and people. As a result of his bad karma, he was afflicted with leprosy. Therefore he repented his actions and he began to pay homage to *Karunamaya (Avalokitesvarn)*, in order to remove his bad karma. Soon he began to recover

and was one day basking in the sun after bathing in the holy waters of Sodhani Tirtha. At the same time, *Garuda*,¹ flying over the Valley, saw Taksaka lying there in the sun. *Garuda*, being very hungry and fond of eating *Nagas*, immediately swooped down to eat Taksaka. Taksaka, however, informed *Garuda* that he was not an ordinary *Naga*, but a *Nagaraja*, and therefore *Garuda* could not eat him. *Garuda*, however, being completely famished, said that he could not spare *Taksaka Nagaraja* or he would surely die, and he then jumped on Taksaka to eat him. They engaged in a tremendous battle but Taksaka proved to be a truly extraordinary *Nagaraja*. and he soon was about to defeat *Garuda* by dragging him into the water. *Garuda*, being about to die, summoned his protector *Vishnu*, who came there immediately to save his vehicle. *Vishnu* was about to cut off the head of Taksaka with his sword, *Chakra*, when Taksaka, realizing that he cannot defeat *Vishnu*, summoned his own protector, *Karunamaya*, who came there on his Lion vehicle. *Vishnu* was very surprised to see *Karunamaya* there in front of him and begging apology, he threw down his sword and began to pay homage. Likewise *Garuda* and Taksaka, ceasing their battle, joined in the worship of *Karunamaya*. Being completely pacified, *Garuda* offered himself as the vehicle of Taksaka and *Vishnu* offered himself as the vehicle of *Karunamaya*.²

1 **Garuda** is the man-bird vehicle of *Vishnu*, and symbolic representation of the sunbeam. As such, he is the natural enemy of the **Naga**. **Garuda's** attack on the **Naga** is symbolic of the sun's power to dry up water on the earth. **Garuda** and the **Naga** figure in many legendary battles in the mythology of Nepal descriptive of periods of drought (**Garuda** victorious) or flood (**Naga** victorious).

2 Composite image of *Karunamaya* (**Avalokitesvara**) on *Vishnu* on **Garuda** (with **Taksaka Naga** around his neck) on the Lion, is at Changu Narayan, the hill above Sodhani Tirtha. The story is supposed to represent, in the Buddhist version, the supremacy of the Buddhist **Avalokitesvara** over the Hindu *Vishnu*.

Fifth } Chapter } *Kanakamuni Buddha*

In this way, *Krakucchanada Tathagata* having passed out of this life, there appeared in the lineage of Buddhas, *Kanakamuni Tathagata* as the fifth Buddha to be born here in this earth for the protection of all sentient beings. He lived in the place called Swabhavati Nagar. His disciple *Sudharmaraja*¹ *Bodhisattva*, would in another age be reborn as Sakyamuni Buddha. At this time, in Vikrama Sil Mahavihara,² there lived a scholar named Dharma Sri Mitra. One day he was lecturing on the philosophy of Manjushri, the *Namasangiti*. One of his disciples made a question on the *Namasangiti* which Dharma Sri Mitra was unable to answer, so he made meditation on Manjushri in hope of receiving an answer to the question. During his meditation he was made aware of *Manjushri Bodhisattva* on Pancha Sirsa Parvata in MahaChin and he realized that he must travel to the place of Manjushri in order to answer the question. Accordingly, Dharma Sri Mitra set out on the journey to MahaChin. At the same time *Manjushri Bodhisattva* in his meditation *Lokasandarsana Samadhi* was made aware of the meditation of Dharama Sri Mitra and he determined to meet the scholar at the Nepal Valley.

Dharma Sri Mitra having reached the Nepal Valley, paid homage to *Svayambhu Dharmadhatu* and then intended to continue his journey to MahaChin. He was delayed by a strange sight, however. He saw a farmer ploughing his field having yoked to his plow a lion and a *Sardul* (griffin). Realizing that this was no ordinary farmer, Dharma Sri Mitra was

1 Sudharma means "Understanding of Reality".

2 Punjab.

made aware that this was *Manjushri Bodhisattva* who had come here to meet him. Manjushri then revealed to his question on the *Namasangiti*. The field where Manjushri was ploughing is known as *Sawa Bhumi*¹ and is the field first planted with rice every year. *Manjushri Bodhisattva* decided to stay in Nepal so he retired to meditate on the Vajrakuta Parvata. Also Dharma Sri Mitra remained in Nepal as disciple of Manjushri and after some time in devotion and meditation, he entered Samadhi.²

¹ **Sawa Bhumi** is in Thambahil (Thamel) and is now known as Bhagwan's Khet (God's Field).

² This chapter is the most vague of the **Svayambhu Furana**, as the fifth Buddha, **Kanakamuni Tathagata**, plays no part whatsoever. In other versions of the **Svayambhu Purana**, which vary considerably, **Kanakamuni Tathagata** is mentioned only as passing, or not at all. The meaning of the chapter perhaps lies in the introduction, by Manjushri, of farming to the Valley.

Sixth Chapter

Kasyapa Buddha

In this way, *Kanukamuni Tathagata* having passed out of this life, there appeared in the lineage of Buddhas, *Kasyapa Tathagata* as the sixth Buddha to be born here in this earth to protect all sentient beings. He lived in the place called Mrigadava.¹ His disciple, *Jyotiraja Bodhisattva*,² would in a later age be reborn as Sakyamuni Buddha. This was the beginning of *Dvapara Yuga*.

In this time *Manjushri Bodhisattva* was residing on the Vajrakuta Parvata in a human incarnation of the name Manjudeva, with his two wives, Moksada and Varada. Manjudeva, after staying here a long time, wished to go back to MahaChin to regain his divine body, leaving here his physical body. Therefore he, with his wives entered Samadhi and his disciples burned their physical bodies, erecting a *Chaitya* over their remains at the place where they had lived.³

At this time *Kasyapa Tathagata* came to the Nepal Valley on pilgrimage. He paid homage to the *Guhya swari*, to *Svayambhu Dharmadhotu* and to the *Manjushri Chaitya*. He stayed here only a short time, then he continued on his journey. After some time, he reached the Kingdom of Gouda,⁴ where the Raja of that country, Prachanda Deva, realizing the holiness of his visitor, made over his entire kingdom to him. *Kasyapa Tathagata* spoke to Prachanda Deva saying, "There are in this world four divisions, or *Dvipas*: *Purvadvipa*, *Jambudvipa*, *Uper-*

1 "Deer Park". Benares.

2 *Jyotiraja* means "Lord of Light".

3 Manjushri Chaitya is still existant, on the lower peak of Svayambhu Hill.

4 Bihar.

godavari, and *Utterkhanda*. Of these *Dvipas* there is one which is the best and this is *Jambudvipa*. It contains five *Kshertas*, or holy places *Kashi Kshetra*,¹ *Himalaya Kshetra*, *Nepal Kshetra*, and *Svayambhu Kshetra*. These last two are the purest, where the Self-Existant himself is revealed on a lotus of dazzling light. Take yourself to this place, pay homage to these holy *Kshetras*, and you will become a *Vajra Acharya*.² So *Kasyapa Tathagata* remained in the Kingdom of Gouda. and Raja Prachanda Deva proceeded on pilgrimage to Nepal.

Upon arrival in Nepal, Prachanda Deva bathed in the holy *Tirthas*, paid homage to *Guhesvari* and to *Svayambhu Dharmadhatu*, and then established himself on Manjushri Hill where he engaged in meditation on *Manjushri Bodhisattva* and *Svayambhu Dharmadhatu*. One day, while Prachanda Deva was taking round of Svayambhu Hill. he was engaged in thought of the future of this holy place. He realized that in *Dvapara Yuga* while people still have some *Dharma* mind, there is little difficulty to preserve the *Dharmadhatu*. But when *Kali Yuga* begins, people will be completely corrupted, and it might be very difficult to preserve the precious Light of the Self-Existant. Therefore, sitting in meditation in front of the *Manjushri Chaitya*, he requested to *Manjushri Bodhisattva* to give him instructions what to do in this regard. Accordingly *Manjushri Bodhisattva* appeared and ordered Prachanda Deva to construct a *Chaitya* of stone and brick, to cover the *Dharmadhatu*. Before doing this, however, he required that Prachanda Deva should receive the initiation of *Vajra Acharya*. Therefore Prachanda Deva received the initiation of *Vajra Acharya* and also of the *Namasangiti* or Philosophy of Manjushri as well as other *Mantras* and *Dharanis*, and he was given the name Santa Sri or Santikar Acharya.

Proceeding to erect a *Chaitya* for the *Svayambhu Dharmadhatu*, Santikar Acharya first dug a hole in the ground and placed the *Dharmadhatu* within it.³ The hole was then covered with a precious stone with a hole in the middle to allow the Light of the Self-Existant to

1 Benares.

2 **Acharya** means „Teacher”, therefore a **Vajra Acharya** is a Teacher of the **Vajra** Doctrine or **Vajrayana**. The title **Vajracharya** or **Bajracharya** is applied to the Nepal **Vajrayana** Buddhists.

3 Again the **Dharmadhatu** is referred to as if it were a physical object, when it is actually only a metaphysical concept. The **Dharmadhatu** is imagined to be an elementary vibration of point-like units of energy, containing the essence of the universe, and with the potential to burst forth into the dazzling flame of enlightenment. As a point (**bindu**) it is of the same metaphysical nature as a point in Geometry.

shine through. Then he built the hemispheric cupola, or *Garbha*,¹ of stone and brick. Above the *Garbha* was raised the square *Harmika*,² surmounted by a spire of thirteen levels,³ and covered by a golden umbrella.⁴ In the north-east side of the *Garbha* and on its top, he made holes penetrating directly to the *Dharmadhatu*, so that if offerings were made they would be received by the Light itself. On the east side of the *Chaitya* was placed the image of *Aksobhya* Buddha, mounted on an elephant, expressing the *mudra* (gesture) of earth-touching, and representative of the mirror-like wisdom. On the south side was placed the image of *Ratnasambhava* Buddha, mounted on a horse, expressing the *mudra* of giving, and representative of the wisdom of equality. On the west side was placed the image of *Amitabha* Buddha, mounted on a peacock, expressing the *mudra* of meditation, and representative of the discriminative wisdom. On the north side was placed the image of *Amoghasiddhi* Buddha, mounted on a garuda expressing the *mudra* of fearlessness, and representative of the all-accomplishing wisdom. The image of *Vairocana* Buddha, mounted on a lion, expressing the *mudra* of the wheel, and representative of the *Dharmadhatu* wisdom, ought to have been at the center but was placed on the right side of *Aksobhya*. *Vairocana's* proper position at the center is indicated by his eyes painted on each of the four sides of the *Harmika*.⁵ On each of the four sides of the *Chaitya* were placed flags upon which were written *Mantras* and *Dharanis*. Thus was the *Svayambhu* *Chaitya* completed.

In the same way, Santikar Acharya covered the Manjusri *Chaitya* and he made a temple for each of the five elements: *Vayupur* for wind with the image of *Vayu*, *Vasupur* for earth with image of *Vasundhara Devi*, *Agnipur* for fire with the image of *Agni*, *Nagapur* for water with the image of the *Naga*, and *Akasapur* for the sky.⁶ In the last of these shrines, Santikar Acharya retired for meditation on the *Namasangiti*, the *Mantras* and *Dharanis*. He

1 **Garbha** means literally "womb". The hemisphere is also called "anda" or egg. It is regarded as a center of creative forces of the earth which are gathered and nurtured there as in an egg. The forces rise through the spire or "Tree of Life" and projected into the universe.

2 **Harmika** is symbolic of the Sanctuary, base of the Tree of Life, and representative of the Noble Eightfold Path.

3 The spire is representative of the Tree of Life. The thirteen discs or layers correspond to the thirteen mystical powers of the Buddha.

4 The honorific umbrella is representative of the shade-giving Bodhi Tree which sheltered Sakyamuni Buddha.

5 The 5 **Dhyani Budhas** as ideal aspects of the unfoldment of the **Dharmadhatu**, are not represented in human incarnations.

6 **Akasa** is the ether, space, or void, and as such has no image.

engaged in the practice of *Yogacharya* and thus became *Trikaljnani*, or “knower of the past, present, and future”. He gathered many disciples about him and eventually the shrine was known a Santipur, in his honour. He acquired many *Siddhas*, or supernatural powers, including the *Pranayama* meditation for stopping the breath. Thus he determined to enter Samadhi and remain in the Santipur temple forever.¹

¹ There is a strong belief among the **Vajracharyas** of Nepal, that even now Santikar Acharya is inside Santipur temple in deep Samadhi.

Seventh Chapter

Sakyamuni Buddha

In this way *Kasyapa Tathagata* departed this life, the time of *Dvapara Yuga* having ended. Next to appear in the lineage of Buddhas, Sakyamuni Gautama Buddha, as the seventh Buddha, was born here in this earth to protect all sentient beings. He was born in the Kingdom of Kapilavastu. This was now the time of *Kali Yuga*. Sakyamuni Buddha, having achieved his Enlightenment at Bodh Gaya, was with his disciples making pilgrimage to all the holy places when, in the course of his journeys, he came to the Nepal Valley. Paying homage to the *Svayambhu Dharmadhatu*, he seated himself on the Svayambhu Hill between the Svayambhu Chaitya and the Manjushri Chaitya and there he lectured to his disciples on the Buddha *Dharma*. At the request of his disciple, *Maitreya Bodhisattva*, he also related the stories of his previous Buddhas and the legends of the Nepal Valley. These stories and legends would later be gathered and compiled by his disciples in the text, *Svayambhu Purana*.¹

At this same time, while resident in Nepal, the Lord Buddha was requested by the local inhabitants to give advice about the proper course of action to take to bring fertility and prosperity to the Valley. Especially all the *Nagarajas* requested the Buddha's instructions for making fertility and rainfall, for growth of all plants, trees, and animals, and for prosperity of all the inhabitants of Nepal Valley. Therefore, the Lord Buddha gathered together all his monks and disciples and, together with all the *Nagarajas*, went to the palace

¹ The *Svayambhu Purana* includes the stories related by Sakyamuni Buddha as well as accounts by later compilers which bring the text into the historical period and almost up to the present. When the text was first compiled and whether it actually represents the discourses of the historical Buddha, cannot be said.



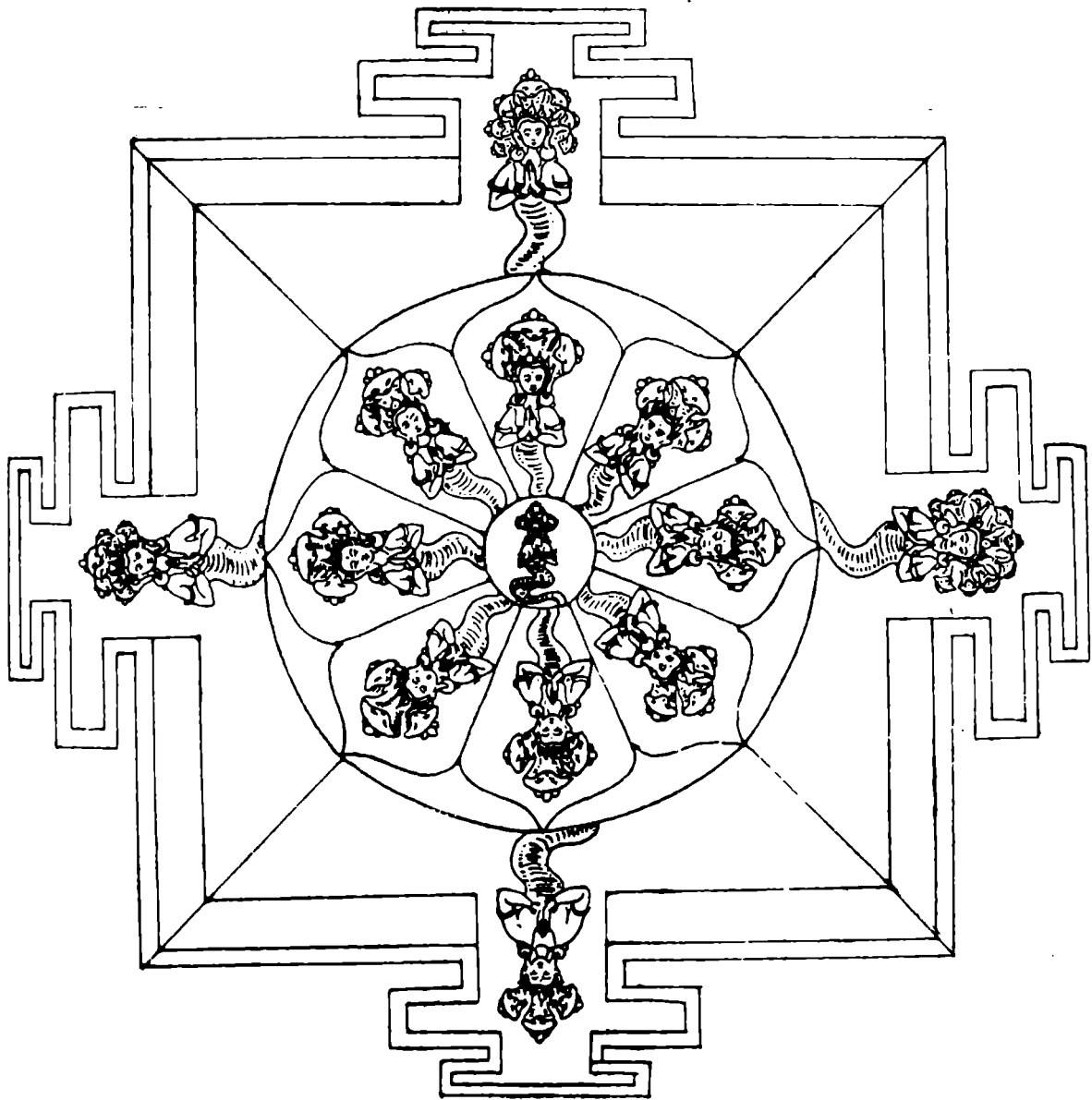
of *Nandopananda Nagaraja*.¹ There he lectured to them on *Maitri Vihara* (Right Conduct); he gave to them the *Sarvasukhada Dharani* for fertility, prosperity, and protection against calamities; and he gave another another *Dharani*, the *Mahamegha Nirnada Vijimbhi Suraketu*,² to the *Nagarajas* for the purpose of making rainfall. These *Dharanis*, with instructions for proper ritual performance and *Naga Mandala*, are together called *Mahamegha Mahayana Sutra*,³ and the performance of the ritual and recitation of the *Dharanis* is called *Naga Sadhana*.⁴ Having given these lectures and instructions, and being assured of the future prosperity of the Valley, Sakyamuui Buddha departed from Nepal.

1 The palace of **Nandopananda Nagaraja** is at the Nidhana Tirtha, on the banks of the Vishnumati river, near Bijeswari, only about half a mile from the Svayambhu Hill.

2 Literally "Sound for Awakening the Clouds, Flags of the Gods" This **Dharani** is an extensive **Naga Sadhana**, or ritual to stimulate the Nagas, which consists of many **Mantras** of a mnemonic nature, imitative of the sound of running water and falling rain. The **Dharani** is recited in times of drought for making rain.

3 **Mahamegha** means "Great Cloud", therefore the **Mahamegha Mahayana Sutra** is the "**Mahayana** (Buddhist) Sutra (Text) of the Great Cloud". This sutra is very late **Mahayana**, actually it is one of the earliest of the **Vajrayana** (**Vajrayana** having developed out of **Mahayana**) texts, dating to about the 3rd Century A.D. This account of the Buddha's lectures on **Mahamegha Mahayana Sutra** are taken from the introduction to that Sutra and is not found in the **Svayambhu Purana**. It is included here as illustrative of the natural history of the Valley.

4 **Sadhana** is a Tantric term meaning "ritual practices", usually including Tantric elements of **Mantra**, **Yantra** (**Mandala**) and **Dharani**. The **Naga Sadhana** is the "Tantric Ritual for the Stimulation of Nagas for Making Rain."



Eight¹ Chapter

Santikar Acharya

In the time of Raja Gunakamadeva,² the King and all his subjects were completely corrupted, being addicted to the various pleasures. He had left off performing service to the Triad,³ and was interested only in the company of beautiful women. Likewise, his ministers were interested only in vice and corruption. The heavenly deities were offended with them and therefore they sent a great drought and famine to oppress them. Gunakamadeva then, repenting somewhat, went to pay homage to *Svayambhu Dharmadhatu* and to the temple of Sautipur, knowing that Santikar Acharya had been a great Siddha with knowledge of *mantras* and *dharanis*, including the *Mahamegha Nirnada Vijrimbhi Suraketu Dharani* for making rainfall. Santikar Acharya was meanwhile still inside the Sautipur temple in deep Samadhi, having the power of *Pranayama* or ability to live without breathing. Becoming aware of the great distress of the people, Santikar Acharya came out of his meditation and granted audience to Raja Gunakamadeva. The Raja paid great homage to Santikar Acharya and requested that the Siddha help relieve the drought and famine. Santikar Acharya instructed that the Raja and all his subjects must change their evil ways, that they must do pilgrimage to all the holy places in the Valley, especially the Tirthas, and that they must begin to follow the way of the Dharma. Therefore the Raja and his subjects began to mend their ways and

1 From this point we have departed from the chapter sequence of the **Svayambhu Purana**, intending to present only two stories from the rest of the text. The remainder of the text deals with the historical period; the two stories we have chosen are a continuation of the development of **Naga Sadhana** and the role of Santikar Acharya.

2 942-1008 A.D.

3 **Buddha, Dharma, and Sangha.**

immediately upon doing this there was some relief in the bad atmosphere prevailing, but still there was no rain. So Santikar Acharya decided that he must perform the *Naga Sadhana*.

Therefore he summoned all the *Nagarajas* of the Valley in order to perform the proper ritual. All the *Nagarajas*, respecting his summons, came there immediately except *Karkotaka Nagaraja*, the former King *Nagaraja* of *Nagavasahrada*, now residing in his palace of jewels at Taodaha. Santikar Acharya in his meditation realized that the reason *Karkotaka* is not coming is that he is so ugly. So he sent *Raja Gunakamadeva* to flatter him into coming or, that failing, to bring him by force. Therefore the *Raja* went to the palace of *Karkotaka* and requested him to please come to participate in the *Naga Sadhana*. But still *Karkotaka* refused to come, thinking that he is too ugly to be seen. Three times the *Raja* requested but still he refused. Finally, using the power he had been given by Santikar Acharya, he grabbed *Karkotaka* by the neck and dragged him all the way to *Santipur* where Santikar Acharya put him in his proper seat.

Then paying due homage to all the assembled *Nagarajas*, Santikar Acharya spoke to them saying, "Oh *Nagarajas*. There is need of your aid to relieve the drought plaguing the *Nepal Valley*. In order to do the proper ritual there is need of the blood of the heart of each *Nagaraja* to be used to paint a *Naga Mandala*. Also you must participate in the performance of the *Naga Sadhana*." To this they all agreed, being fearful of Santikar Acharya who, in his role as the performer of the *Naga Sadhana*, has assumed the appearance of *Garuda*. So having given their blood for the painting of the *Mandala*, they assumed their places for the performance of the ritual. All the three-hooded *Nagas* were placed in the east, five-hooded *Nagas* in the south, seven-hooded *Nagas* in the west, and nine-hooded *Nagas* in the north. Then Santikar Acharya in his meditation imagining himself as *Garuda*, seated himself in his position on the blue cushion of the *Dharani* reader. Above his head was placed a canopy of blue cloth and blue flags were set up on all sides. In each of the four directions was placed a water jar full of pure water and decorated with blue flowers. Each of the water jars was set on an eight-petalled lotus drawn with cowdung. In front of the water jars were set up images of *Nagas* made of cowdung.

Having made all arrangements, Santikar Acharya then began the *Naga Sadhana*. First he read the mantra for protection of the *Dharani* reader, the *Raksavidhana*. Then he read the mantras of the eight chief *Nagarajas*, *Naganyasa*, then the mantra *Nagajapa* of each *Nagaraja* requesting to make rain, and the *Naga Tadhana* to stimulate each to do his duty. Then he read the *Argha Muntra*, for welcoming the water drops. After all these mantras

he made meditation on the Naga Mandala. Then he read the preliminary *Dharani Sarvasukhada*, including the summoning of all the *Nagas* in the Universe by name and all the cloud counterparts of *Nagas* by name.¹ All these ritual preparations having been made, Santikar Acharya then read the *Dharani Mahamegha Nirnada Vijrimbhi Suraketu*. And immediately upon the recitation of this *Dharani*, rain began to fall in the Nepal Valley.

Thus was the drought relieved. Raja Gunakamadeva, having achieved his purpose and being quite old, retired into meditation. Santikar Acharya also retired within Santipur temple to resume his meditation. The *Naga Mandala* was placed inside Nagapur and the original text of *Mahamegha Mahayana Sutra* was placed inside the Santipur temple. Both are believed to still exist.

¹ The list of **Nagas** includes more than 200 by name and description. **Nagas** are related to the heavens, the earth, geographic places, oceans, lakes, rivers, streams, pools and ponds; to types of rainfall, gentle, hard, light, heavy; to lightning and thunder; and to specific characteristics like colour, temperament, size, appearance, disposition, etc. Others are described as "flag of the Gods", "luminous", "Jewel-carrier", "wind-maker", "ocean of elixer", "treasure-keeper", "Hero", etc.. The list of clouds includes more than 60. Clouds are "Mothers of Nagas" in that the clouds produce water; the **Naga**, symbol of water, is born out of the cloud. Because of this relation, clouds can be summoned by the stimulation of **Nagas**. The list of clouds is similar to what a modern meteorologist might make on observation of a season of the incredible variety of atmospheric phenomenon normally occurring in the Nepal Valley.

Ninth Chapter

Pratapa-Malla

In the time of Pratapamalla¹ there was again severe drought in Nepal due to the corruption of the King and people. The Raja went to the Santipur² temple to retrieve the *Mahamegaha Mahayana Sutra* in order that he might be able to perform the *Naga Sadhana*. The subsequent events are recorded on a stele which the Raja had erected. The following is a partial translation of the inscription on the stele:

“Having no rain, I (Pratapamalla) called Sadhakas³ and told them to bring out the valuable book as soon as possible from Santipur.”

“This they did, but due to the defect of Kali Yuga and delusion they brought out the wrong book. Therefore, I decided to go myself to take out the right book.”

“Stepping on the *Phani* (Serpents), I went inside and I was surrounded by hundreds wrathful *Pisachas* (Ghosts). Then I sang the powerful praise loudly in my mind and all became peaceful”.⁴

1 Pratapamalla, the Poet-King of Kathmandu, reigned 1641-1674. He was known as one of the most lascivious of the kings of Kathmandu. He had supposedly taken a vow to cohabit with 100,000 women, and actually corrupted the chastity of 30,000.

2 The Santipur temple had been closed and sealed from the time of Raja Gunakamadeva until the time of Pratapamalla, and has not been opened since. The temple is the source of many popular legends. It is supposed to hold 27 rooms with books, religious objects, Siddhis in meditation, **Nagas, Bhuts** (Ghosts): and to be the entrance to tunnels leading to the bottom of the Svayambhu Chaitya or to other parts of the Valley. The temple is a large rectangular structure about 50 meter north and at a slightly lower level from the Svayambhu Chaitya.

3 **Sadhakas** are Tantrics or those versed in the practice of Tantric **Sadhana**.

4 The temple having been closed for many centuries there were, no doubt, many legends about what was inside, as there are now. The serpents and ghosts are perhaps only in the Raja's mind and the "powerful praise" is his protective mantra, which he was probably singing loudly as he entered.

“Inside the dreadful Santipur there are twenty-seven rooms. Here there are some Siddhas discussing; there is a colourful canopy decorated with jewels.”

“When I entered the ninth room I saw the book on a pedestal. Seeing the book, my mind became restless.”

“There came a bright light, I subdued it in the same way.¹ I took the painting painted with the blood of the Nagas and the wonderful book.”

“I came out with pleasure and with compassion for the people. Immediately rain came and the whole earth became full of water.”²

“To prove who went inside Santipur and brought out the wonderful book, I immediately made a record of these events.”³

“Paying homage to the Deity who destroys the sins of many, many lives, the Raja Pratapamalla, being very grateful, made this powerful praise”

“Seeing the dreadful drought, I, Kavindra Pratapamalla, in Newari Sambat 778 (1658 A.D.), Asadha Krishna Chaturti (4th day of dark Moon of Asadha–August) Brihaspath bar (Thursday) brought out the mandala painted with the blood of the Nagas from Santipur”

“At that all around the heavy rains came and all the people were happy. This rain relieved the drought and made for good times in Nepal. With compassion for the people and for their protection, I, Raja Pratapamalla, even taking such a risk, was also made happy.”

“Here is the end of the praise called *Vristichintamani*,⁴ composed by the Raja Pratapamalla.”

1 Again perhaps a figment of the Raja's imagination which he is able to overcome with a mantra.

2 This time it has not been necessary to even read the Sutra or perform the **Sadhana** in order to make rain. One can imagine the tension built up before the attempt is made to open and enter the temple, surrounded with the mystery of centuries. The Raja's fearful entry alone, into the “dreadful Santipur” has apparently generated enough cosmic electricity to bring the rains.

3 The stele may still be seen just inside the outer door of the Santipur temple.

4 **Vristi** means “rainfall”, **chintamani** means “wish-fulfilling jewel”. The **Chintamani** plays a large role in legend and folklore of Nepal and Tibet. It is sometimes compared to the “Philosopher's Stone”. It is the “Stone that makes Magic”, the stone or jewel itself being unnecessary, here it is the actions of the Raja that have made magic, that is, his actions have made rainfall. **Nagas** are represented with a single large jewel on the head, and some of them, like **Karkotaka Nagaraja**, are able to grant wishes.

Kalpas, Yugas, and Geologic Time

According to Indian philosophical belief, Universal Time is a continuous cycle of creation (*srusti*) and destruction (*pralaya*). Each cycle represents 100 years in the life of *Brahma*. *Brahma* is conceived as having been born from a Lotus (*Padma-Sambhava*, Lotus-Born) which issues from the navel of *Vishnu*. *Vishnu* is depicted reclining on the Serpent *Ananta*, the Endless who floats (*Narayana*) on the Primordial Waters (*Nara*). At the end of 100 years in the life of *Brahma* there occurs a Great Destruction (*Mahapralaya*) followed by 100 years of Chaos, after which another *Brahma* is born and the cycle begins anew.

One day in the life of *Brahma* is equivalent to 4,320 million Earth years, one *Kalpa*. Each *Kalpa* is further divided into 100 Great Ages or *Mahayugas* which consists of four Ages or *Yugas*. In the first *Yuga* of each *Mahayuga* moral order or virtue (*Dharma*) is an inherent characteristic of the Universe. As time proceeds, however, each *Yuga* suffers a decline or natural decay of *Dharma* by one quarter until in the *Kali* or present *Yuga* only one fourth of *Dharma* remains. The *Yugas* take their names from the four throws of the Indian dice game, *Krita*, *Treta*, *Dvayara* and *Kali*.

*Krita*¹ *Yuga*, the first of the Ages, is the perfect, or "four-quartered" *Yuga*, when *Dharama* is complete, conceived as stable on four legs, like the sacred cow. *Krita* is the perfect participle of the verb *kri*, to do; it means, "done, accomplished or perfect". *Krita* is the Four or winning throw in the dice game. In this *Yuga* man is born after only seven days pregnancy; he is not mammary, or milk-sucking; maturity is immediate; and intellect

¹ In the Nepali, *Satya*, or the *Yuga* of the Innate Truth.

and virtue are at the highest. There is no disease and men and women all observe the natural order of life or *Dharma*. The duration of this *Yuga* is 1,728,000 years.

Treta Yuga is named for the dice-cast of the Three, one fourth of *Dharma* has vanished; disease appears in the world; and moral duties are no longer spontaneous, but have to be learned. Man is born after eight months pregnancy and is now mammary. The duration of this *Yuga* is 1,296,000 years.

Dvayara Yuga is the age of balance between perfection and imperfection. The name is derived from *dva*, meaning "two". In this Age the sacred cow of moral order stands unstably on only two legs. Vice and materialism have entered and true saintliness, once the natural condition of mankind, can now be achieved only through devotion and religions or ascetic practice. The duration of this *Yuga* is 864,000 years.

Kali Yuga, the dark Age, *Dharma* stands on only one leg, all but one fourth of natural virtue have vanished. *Kali* is the losing throw of the dice game; the word means "black", also 'strife or quarrel'. The decline of moral order is described in the *Vishnu Purana*: "When society reaches a stage, where property confers rank, wealth becomes the only source of virtue, passion the sole bond of union between husband and wife, falsehood the source of success in life, sex the only means of enjoyment, and when outer trappings are confused with inner religion . . .", this is the present time, the *Kali Yuga*. This is the shortest of the *Yugas*, due to deficiency of *Dharma*, being only 432,000 years. The *Kali Yuga* is computed as having begun in 3102 B.C.

The Geologic Record

Are the time scales of Creation described by the Ancients completely figments of their fertile imaginations without any relation to reality, or is there some correlation between the ancient reckoning and the modern methods of determining Geologic Time? Indeed there is a correlation and a close one at that. The oldest rocks, dated by radioactive isotope decay methods, are 3,300 million years old, and the origin of the Earth and, it is assumed, of the Universe, is estimated to be "about 4½ billion" (4,500 million) years. Considering the known inaccuracy of radioactive dating over long time periods and the admitted

“approximate” estimate of the age of the Earth, which estimate are we to assume is more accurate, the “Modern Scientific” or the “Fantasy of the Ancients”? The correlation in any case is too close to imagine that the ancients have not employed “Scientific” tools in their Philosophical speculations. Indeed we can only marvel at their techniques which allow them to make perhaps more accurate estimates of Geologic Time than is possible with modern scientific methods.

Geologists believe that that the continents as we know them today were once one great continent Pangaea, “One Earth”. This “original” continent began to break up “only” about 200–300 million years ago. The force which can cause a continent to break up and begin subsequent “drifting” over the molten interior of the Earth is yet debated amongst geologists. It is perhaps due to convection currents set up by hot spots in the unequally cooled interior of the Earth; or it may be due to the rotation of the Earth or a combination of these two factors. The original continent Pangaea was split apart by hot spots beneath it, dividing into a northern continent, “Laurasia”, which included North America, Greenland, and Eurasia, and a southern continent “Gondwanaland”. This southern continent then broke up into Africa, South America, which drifted to the west, Antarctica, which drifted south, Australia, which drifted to the north-east, and India, which has drifted almost directly north. The “sub-continent” of India has drifted farthest of any of the continents, having travelled 9,000 kilometers to collide with the great mass of Eurasia, about 45–50 million years ago. Thus the Indian Sub-continent is a separate land-mass distinct from the Asian continent. Where the land-masses have collided they have over-ridden, underthrust, folded and fused to form the present Himalayan mountain range. Where two “plates” of the Earth’s surface collide, if one or both is not carrying a continent, that is, if the ocean floors collide, each may “sub-duct” or be forced down to be remelted in the interior. But where a plate is carrying a continental mass it is usually unable to sub-duct the entire mass and therefore the masses “pile-up” to form new continents and mountain chains. The Indian continent is thus attempting to consume itself in the “underbelly of Asia”, but being unable to sub-duct, has raised the Himalayan Range of mountains. Geologists believe that in general the Indian block has underthrust and the Asian block has over-ridden, thus making the Himalayas two continents thick. Where India ends and Asia begins is now impossible to tell, the continents having fused under tremendous pressure, melting and actually altering the crystalline structure of the rock (metamorphosis).

As the Indian continent approached the Eurasian continent the intervening body of water, the Tethys Sea (named for the wife of Oceanus of Greek myth) grew more and more

narrow until land was raised in its place. The Tibetan Plateau, or what we now know as the Tibetan Plateau, began to rise above the sea, slowly and shows evidence of having been for some millions of years a low swampy area, wet and fertile with vegetation, covered with numerous large lakes which have gradually dried up. The Plateau is composed of sedimentary rock, having been previously part of the Tethys Sea floors. As the mass of the Plateau began to offer more resistance to the advance of the Indian continent's northward movement, at the point of greatest heat and friction, the rocks are completely melted to form crystalline igneous rock which are shoved up to form the main chain of the Himalaya. This igneous upthrust still carries remains of the Tibetan sediment on top of it. All of the 8000 meter peaks of the Nepal Himalaya, except Makalu, owe their great height to as much as 1000 meters of the Tibetan sediment which they carry on their peaks.

As the main range of the Himalaya began to rise, the rivers flowing south from the Plateau, which formed the first watershed, were forced to cut their way through the mountains as they were raised. The rate the mountains were being thrust up being so rapid, in terms of Geologic Time, the rivers were often temporarily impounded forming lakes north of the main thrust. Evidence of such a lake is to be found in the Mustang region of Nepal. The rivers have cut through the mountains along north-south fault lines usually forming impressive gorges. The rise of the Himalayan range caused tremendous climatic change on the Plateau of Tibet because the southerly Monsoon was now blocked by the high mountain wall, the Plateau became arid, the swamps and lakes began to dry up and the glaciers receded up their valleys. The larger lakes of Tibet are now mostly saline (salt) and show evidence of having been much larger in the past. The glaciers likewise have been much longer and more extensive in the past.

After the greatest rise of the Tibetan Plateau and the Himalayan range had taken place, the area south of the main range was thrust up to form the 2000-3000 meter high Mahabharat Range, and the detritus of the mountain building farther south formed the Siwalik Range of 500-1000 meter hills. The rivers were again forced to cut through the Mahabharat Range as it rose. All of the main rivers of Nepal gather together into only three main rivers, the Kosi, Gandaki, and Karnali in order to force through this range of hills. The Ganges Sea had meanwhile been formed by the downfolding of the Indian continental crust under pressure of the continent's relentless advance to the north, and has been gradually filled with the detritus carried by the rivers from the mountains. These events have all taken place over the past 50 million years and are, no doubt, still taking

place today; though whether the uplifting of the mountains or their downfall due to erosion is more rapid, cannot be said. Indeed it is estimated that the mountains would have been eroded to a level plane in only 10 million years had not they been constantly rising at the same time.

After the mountains had been thrust up, there occurred a movement known as isostasy, which means the Earth seeking its own balance. The tremendous weight of the mountain mass causes the mountains to "settle" somewhat in relation to the surrounding areas, much as a rock settles in mud. The result of this movement in the Himalaya has been to cause the valleys south of the main chain to "back-tilt" towards the north, sometimes blocking the flow of rivers and impounding lakes. This has happened in the Vale of Kashmir and the Valley of Nepal as well as in numerous smaller valleys. The lakes form only to eventually break out after the lake outlet has cut through the barrier to the south, or as is often the case, the barrier has been ruptured by the agency of earthquake.

The Nepal Valley has fluvial lacustrine clay and sand horizontally bedded sediments of more than 300 meter depth.¹ This type of sediment is formed only by gradual deposition at the bottom of bodies of still water. Some fossils have also been found in the sediments. The local people use a black clay known as *kalimati* (black earth) as fertilizer on their fields. This clay could not be so fertile except for the presence of decayed organic matter, remnants of the vegetation and aquatic life of the former lake. The sediments also include bands of peat and coal which require swampy or dry conditions for formation, thus indicating that the lake was alternately swampy, dry, and lake again, as the mythological history would have us believe. The Valley is surrounded on all sides by a mountain rim ranging from 600 to 1200 meters above the Valley floor, broken only where the Bagmati river breaks out to the south. Were it possible to again block the gorge at Chobhar, the Valley would gradually fill up with water making a lake like the former lake. *Nagavasahrada* described in the *Svayambhu Purana*. From the Geological evidence the mythological stories of the ancient lake are entirely feasible; indeed we begin to wonder how long man may have occupied the Nepal Valley to be aware of the former lake, which probably dried up for the last time at least 25-30,000 years ago.

The original level of the lake must have been about the level of the present *Tar*, the high plateau-like sandy sediments on which were built the kingdoms of Kathmandu, Patan,

¹ Drill holes for water have been made to depths of 300 meter without striking rock; therefore the sediments are at least this deep or deeper.

and Bhaktapur. The Valley must have been nearly level until the rivers and streams eroded away the *Tar* to form the low alluvial plains known as *Dol*. The local farmers also make every attempt to increase the *Dol* at the expense of the *Tar*, as the former can be irrigated for rice cultivation whereas the latter cannot. The top of the *Tar* is almost perfectly level with the 4400 foot contour line; assuming that the maximum level of the former lake may have been 100 feet higher, it is then possible to trace the shoreline of the lake along the 4500 foot contour line. Reconstructing the lake in this manner gives a body of water about 10 miles by 12 miles, close to the '7 kos by 7 kos' of the *Svayambhu Purana*.

The gorge at Chobhar has obviously been ruptured by the agency of earthquake; faults are visible in the walls of the gorge. The Nepal Valley is a center of earthquake activity, major quakes having taken place in 1803, 1833, and 1934, causing extensive damage, especially in the major towns which are built on the unstable *Tar*. Thus the legend of Manjushri severing the gorge with his sword appears to be a mythological description of an actual geological event, and the *Svayambhu Purana* may be the earliest geological textbook. We can only speculate whether the authors of the legends were actually present at the events they describe.

Manjushri Bodhisattva from *Maha Chin* was, according to the *Svayambhu Purana*, the first to introduce agriculture into the Nepal Valley. The significance of this part of the legend is that the first settlers in the Valley were probably from the north rather than from south, from India. The language of the oldest inhabitants of the Valley, the Newars, is closely related to the Tibeto-Burman languages. The legend of *Manjushri* severing the gorge at Chobhar and draining the lake may also refer to the acts of the earliest inhabitants in draining the swampy remains of the lake. Other versions of the *Svayambhu Purana* have *Manjushri* also cutting the gorges at Gokarna and Pasupati to drain pools of water which would naturally have collected at those places.

Svayambhu Purana As Creation Myth

“When the divine life substance is about to put forth the Universe, the cosmic water grow a thousand-petaled lotus of pure gold, radiant as the sun. This is the door or gate, the opening or mouth, of the womb of the universe. It is the first product of the creative principle, gold in token of its incorruptable nature. It opens to give birth first to the demiurge-creator, Brahma. From its pericarp then issue the hosts of the created world. According to the Hindu conception the waters are female; they are the maternal, procreative aspect of the Absolute, and the cosmic lotus is their generative organ. The cosmic lotus is called ‘The highest form or aspect of Earth’, also ‘The Goddess Moisture’, ‘The Goddess Earth’. It is personified as the Mother Goddess through whom the Absolute moves into creation.”¹

“It is the nature of the Supreme Being to take delight in himself in the cosmic ocean. Presently, out of his cosmic body, he puts forth a single lotus, with a thousand petals of pure gold, stainless, radiant as the sun. And together with this lotus he puts forth the God-Creator of the Universe, Brahma, who is seated in the center of the golden lotus, which expands and is radiant with the glowing energy of creation.”²

“Svayambhu having been impelled to produce various beings from his own divine substance, he first manifested the waters (*Nara*) which developed within themselves a

1 Myths and Symbols in Indian Art and Civilization, Heinric Zimmer, p. 20.

2 Ibid, p. 51.

productive seed (*Bindu*). The seed became a germ bright as gold blazing like the luminary with a thousand beams, and in that egg he was born himself, in the form of Brahma, the great principle of all the beings.”¹

In the *Svayambhu Purana* the “mouth of the womb of the universe” is the *Guhyeswari*, the womb from which the lotus seed, planted by *Vipaswi* is germinated. The lotus unfolds, revealing *Svayambhu*, like a dazzling jewel, the *Vajra*, the *Dharmadhatu*. The *Svayambhu Dharmadhatu* further unfolds, “like a rainbow produced by the sun’s rays being spread or diffused by water droplets”, to reveal the *Dhyani Buddhas*, the “hosts of the created world”. The *stupa* or *chaitya* is finally erected over the *Svayambhu Dharmadhatu* as a protection for the manifestation of the “self-created” revealed within the lotus. The *Svayambhu Purana* is a complete creation myth, product of Hindu-Buddhist mythology.

The unfoldment of the *Dharmadhatu* from the original seed (*bindu*) into the *Dhyani Buddhas* and all the manifestations of the universe is visualized by the methods of Buddhist meditation. The meditator attempts to visualize in his own mind the original unformed, the great void, and from that point or shed within the void, to comprehend the nature of the created world. As we can understand the nature of a ray of sunlight by separating it into its component parts by passing it through a prism, so the nature of the ultimate reality, the *Dharmadhatu*, may be understood by observing its unfoldment into its component parts.

In *Vajrayana* Buddhism the lotus is symbolic of the female organ or principle and the *Vajra* is symbolic of the male organ or principle. Their union produce *Bodhicitta*, or Buddha-mind. The lotus is also symbol of the heart, therefore it is said that the jewel (*Vajra*) can only be found within one’s own heart. The creation myth of the *Svayambhu Purana* is then a description of Man’s search for Enlightenment or Buddha-mind through the technique of Buddhist meditation.

The “divine life substance” which produces the waters and the seed of creation is the *Akasa*, the space or void, the ether, the life force or energy of the universe. The seed germinated in the medium of the life force contains all material elements, modifications of the elementary *Akasa*, as well as the spiritual potentiality of mankind epitomised in the characteristics of the *Dhyani Buddhas*. Each of the *Dhyani Buddhas* is also related to an element; *Vairocana* in the center of the *chaitya* corresponds to the ether, the *Akasa*, *Aksobhya*

¹ Book of Manu, bk. i., 8. 9.

in the east, to the element Water, *Ratnasambhava* in the south to the element Earth, *Amitabha* in the west, to the element Fire, and *Amoghasiddhi* in the north to the element Air.

The cosmic waters, in the *Svayambhu Purana* the waters of the former Great Lake, the *Kalihrada* or *Nagavasahrada*, develop within themselves a seed, in *Svayambhu Purana* the seed of the lotus planted by *Vipaswi*. The seed germinates in the Goddess Earth, the *Guhyeswari*, and blossoms to reveal the *Svayambhu-Brahma*, the Self-created, the Self-existent, from whom proceeds all Existence. The legendary history of the creation of the Nepal Valley related in the *Svayambhu Purana* is also the history according to Buddhist cosmology of the creation of the Universe.

The Buddhist Chaitya

The Buddhist *Chaitya* structure reflects the development of the monumental architectural style from the simple tumulus or burial mound to a form incorporating a complex celestial and spiritual symbology; in the same manner the nature of the structure embodies the nature of the spirit of the men who constructed them. According to Lama Anagarika Govinda the *chaitya* architectural style is a natural monument of a "telluric-matriarchal" civilization who worshiped the creative forces of the earth.¹ And he considers it highly significant that the architectural form of this civilization served first the spiritual non-utilitarian needs of man rather than the material, utilitarian needs. "The monumental or shaped architecture is an expression of the human soul, just as any other work of sculpture, which cannot be understood from a utilitarian standpoint, nor defined by principles of architectural necessity. One would think that man tried to satisfy his material needs first, before bothering about spiritual things. But the history of humanity shows just the contrary."² Lama Govinda sees the *chaitya* or *stupa* architectural style as the combination of the ancient lunar matriarchal Earth cult and the later masculine solar cult represented by the spire and umbrella symbolic of the Tree of Life. The practice of the feminine Earth is revealed in the sitting of *chaityas* at ancient terrestrial sacred places, and represented architecturally in the lower hemispherical tumulus, the *anda* or egg which symbolizes the creative power of the Earth. He traces the development of the style from Ceylon where the *stupa* is a reliquary of the remains (*dhatu*) of the Buddha and was called *dagoba* from the combined term *dhatu-garbha*. The *stupa* shape emphasizes the *anda* or tumulus which is surmounted by a single umbrella. The form was further developed in the northern countries, Nepal and Tibet increasingly emphasizing the surmounting umbrellas to form the spire or solar symbol. The

1 Psycho-cosmic Symbolism of the Buddhist Stupa, Lama Anagarika Govinda, p. 74.

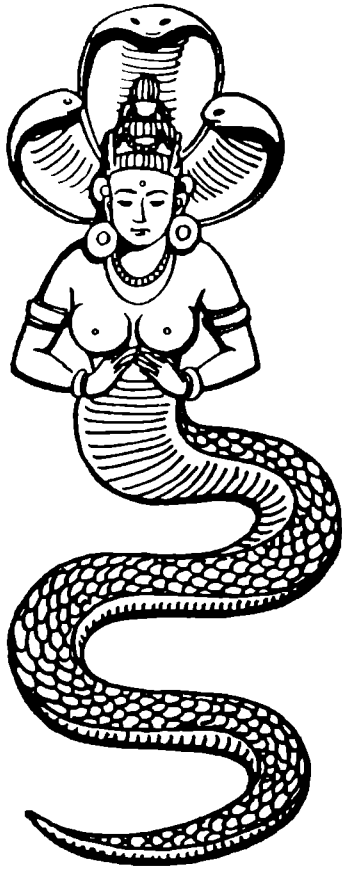
2 Ibid, p. 75.



round shape of the *anda* was constricted at the base, in Nepal to the point that the lower sides of the *anda* are almost vertical, and in Tibet to the point that the base of the *anda* is smaller than the upper part. The honorific umbrellas increased in number to a total of thirteen, symbolic of the stages of consciousness on the path to Enlightenment, to form the spire shape as in the Svayambhu stupa or the pyramidal shape as in the Boudhnath stupa of the Nepal Valley. The spire was then surmounted by a final large umbrella. Finally in the highest development of the architectural form in Nepal, Tibet, and Japan the spire is topped by a crescent lunar symbol which cradles a spherical solar symbol, all surmounted by a flaming drop representative of the ether (*akasa*) produced by the combination of sun and moon which is, again the "dazzling flame" of the *Dharmadhatu*.

The *Chaitya* as monumental architecture in its cosmological and spiritual significance is comparable in style and function to the Egyptian Pyramids and the Druidic stone circles at Stonehenge and Carnac. The Egyptian and Druidic monuments also incorporate the "sacred geometry" and celestial symbols and they likewise reflect contemporary periods of Man's spiritual development.





Naga And Serpent Symbolism

“As to the first point, that of violence, the technical term for ‘nonviolence’ is *ahimsa*, which means the avoidance of harm of all life. In this respect, Buddhism was one of the many movements reacting against the tyrannies that had arisen about 3000 B.C., and whose technical projects and military operations had led to widespread and often senseless violence and destruction of life. From its very beginning, the growth of civilization has been accompanied by recurrent waves of disillusion with power and material wealth. About 600 B.C. onwards, one such wave went through the whole of Asia, mobilizing the resources of spirit against the existing power system.

In India, the reaction arose in a region devoted to rice culture, as distinct from the areas further west that relied on animal husbandry and cultivation of wheat. For the last two thousand years, Buddhism has mainly flourished in rice-growing countries, with little success elsewhere. In addition (and this is much harder to explain), it has spread only into those countries that previously had a cult of serpents or dragons and has never made headway in those parts of the world that view the killing of dragons as a meritorious deed or blame serpents for mankind’s ills.”¹

“Between the Buddha and the *Naga* in India there is no such antagonism as we are used to in the savior versus serpent symbolism of the West. According to the Buddhist view, all the genii of nature rejoice, together with the highest gods, upon the appearance of the incarnate redeemer, and the serpent, as the principle personification of the waters of terrestrial

¹ Buddhism and Asian Society, Edward Conze.

life, is no exception. Eager to serve the universal teacher, they watch solicitously his progress toward final enlightenment, for he has come to redeem all beings alike, the creatures of the earth, of the heavens, and of the hells.”¹

“In the West, the hero-savior descending from heaven to inaugurate a new age on earth regarded as embodiment of a spiritual and moral principle superior to the blind, animal life-force of the serpent power. In India, on the other hand, the serpent and the savior are two basic manifestations of the one, all-containing divine substance.”²

In the former Great Lake of Nepal, the *Nagavasahrada*, there were, no doubt, all types of aquatic beings including those of the serpent or reptile genus. The lake in its various stages as bog and swamp must have been a prolific breeding ground for serpents. There is some evidence that the name Nepal, rather than being derived from the name of the sage, Ne Muni, is instead derived from the Sanskrit term for swamp or “damp place”. The lake, according to the *Svayambhu Purana* was ruled by the serpent-like *Nagas*; the name *Nagavarahrada* means literally *Naga-Kingdom-Lake*. The *Nagarajas* of the mythological history are not, however, the zoological serpent though represented in serpent form. The *Naga* is usually represented with human head and facial features and usually a human body becoming serpentine at the waist in the manner of the mermaid. The *Naga* may have a single head or, more often, the anthropomorphic figure is covered by a canopy of serpent hooded heads, usually three for a female *Naga*, or *Nagini*, and five or seven for a *Nagaraja*.

That the *Naga* is more than a mere serpent is evident from the fact of his possession of supernatural powers. In the *Svayambhu Purana*, *Manjushri Bodhisattva* is very careful to avoid arousing the anger of the resident *Nagarajas* and he attempts to persuade them to remain in the Nepal Valley at the same time he is taking over their exclusive domain for the introduction of human settlement. The supernatural power of the *Naga* is his control over all phenomenon related to the element Water. He can either cause the rains to fall, as in the case when *Kulika Nagaraja* attempts to refill the former lake, or he can cause the rains to cease, as apparently happened in the time of Raja Gunakamadeva and later in the time of Pratapa Malla. The *Naga* can cause the streams to flow or to dry up, he can bring the rains in season or out of season, he can provide the spark of life of the electrical storm in the spring or he can withhold it. The *Naga* retains the power over the fertility of the land and the consequent prosperity of the people. Man can take the land for cultivation

1 Myths and Symbols in Indian Art and Civilization, Heinrich Zimmer, p. 66.

2 Ibid, p. 89.

but he can neglect the spirit of the land and the representatives of that spirit only at his own peril. The original inhabitants of the Nepal Valley recognized the need to propitiate the original spiritual inhabitants; they first allowed the *Taudaha* as residence of *Karkotaka Nagaraja*, King of all the *Nagarajas* of the Valley, and later they established the twelve *Tirthas* as permanent residence of the twelve lesser *Nagarajas*. At a later time when the Valley had become more densely populated and the *Nagas* were perhaps neglected, no longer being allowed the proper respect or stimulation by ritual, they ceased their functions altogether causing great drought and famine. At this time the *Naga Sadhana* was established, the ritual for propitiation and stimulation of the *Nagarajas*, and they immediately brought the rains. This is the story of settlement and civilization all over the world. Man's prosperous cultivation of the land and the success of his civilizations is dependent on his paying proper homage to the archaic spirit of the living Earth. To quote from John Michell in "The Earth Spirit":

"Whereas formerly every part of the earth was inhabited and directly ruled by spirits, these are now placed in reservation that the world outside may be freed for the sacriligious proceeding of breaking the earth for agriculture, building and mining. Even so, these activities are carried out in the knowledge that they are objectional to the earth spirit and that they defy the gods. They must therefore be attended by ritual designed to attract the god's patronage."¹

The *Mahamegha Mahayana Sutra* dates from this time and incorporates all the element of *Naga Sadhana* as practised in Nepal. Besides *Karkata* and the twelve *Tirtha Nagarajas* there are given the names and attributes of more than two hundred *Nagarajas*. Their names reveal the nature of the *Naga* as conceived by the inhabitants of Nepal. A few are listed here:

| | |
|----------------------------------|--|
| <i>Sagara Nagaraja</i> | - <i>Naga</i> of ocean. |
| <i>Vidyumati Nagaraja</i> | - <i>Naga</i> of lightning flash. |
| <i>Avabhashnasikkhi Nagaraja</i> | - <i>Naga</i> with luminous head. |
| <i>Jambudhaja Nagaraja</i> | - <i>Naga</i> like flag made of cloud. |
| <i>Swastika Nagaraja</i> | - <i>Naga</i> of good welfare. |
| <i>Sasateja Nagaraja</i> | - <i>Naga</i> with hypnotizing light. |
| <i>Meghasambhava Nagaraja</i> | - <i>Naga</i> of Storm bearing cloud. |

¹ The Earth Spirit, John Michell, p. 7.

| | |
|------------------------------------|---|
| <i>Varsadhura Nagaraja</i> | - <i>Naga</i> bearing torrential rain. |
| <i>Mahakanaka Nagaraja</i> | - <i>Naga</i> who is the keeper of treasure room. |
| <i>Amrita Nagaraja</i> | - <i>Naga</i> of the <i>amrita</i> (ambrosia). |
| <i>Amoghadasana Nagaraja</i> | - <i>Naga</i> of good luck. |
| <i>Muhameghambudha Nagaraja</i> | - <i>Naga</i> who has the knowledge of storm bearing clouds. |
| <i>Indraprabha Nagaraja</i> | - <i>Naga</i> like a rainbow. |
| <i>Himvavun Nagaraja</i> | - <i>Naga</i> of Himalaya. |
| <i>Meghasaktida Nagaraja</i> | - <i>Naga</i> having power to make rain. |
| <i>Ambuda Nagaraja</i> | - <i>Naga</i> of <i>dharas</i> (water spouts). |
| <i>Vaisvarateja Nagaraja</i> | - <i>Naga</i> having lustre of fire inside earth. |
| <i>Vigatarosa Nagaraja</i> | - <i>Naga</i> of Gentle rain. |
| <i>Sughosa Nagaraja</i> | - <i>Naga</i> with pleasant sound (like a bubbling brook). |
| <i>Amrita Sagara Nagaraja</i> | - <i>Naga</i> of Ocean of elixer. |
| <i>Mahapravarsaka Nagaraja</i> | - <i>Naga</i> , Great rain-maker. |
| <i>Dundubiswara Nagaraja</i> | - <i>Naga</i> with the Sound of drum (thunder). |
| <i>Mahavidyutprabho Nagaraja</i> | - <i>Naga</i> of Great lightning flash. |
| <i>Chudamanidhara Nagaraja</i> | - <i>Naga</i> of the water spout of jewels. |
| <i>Somadarsana Nagaraja</i> | - <i>Naga</i> , light like moonlight. |
| <i>Muhameghavikurvana Nagaraja</i> | - <i>Naga</i> , who is creator of great clouds. |
| <i>Alkopata Nagaraja</i> | - <i>Naga</i> of the comet (comet is related to fertility). |
| <i>Ukalagarjita Nagaraja</i> | - <i>Naga</i> of Untimely rain. |
| <i>Akarsaka Nagaraja</i> | - <i>Naga</i> that Attracts (hypnotizes). |
| <i>Nimindhara Nagaraja</i> | - <i>Naga</i> that is turtle, carrier of the earth. |
| <i>Narayana Nagaraja</i> | - <i>Naga</i> , who is Floating on the waters (<i>Cesa Naga</i>). |

It is obvious that the *Naga* of the *Svayambhu Purana* and Hindu-Buddhist mythology is much more than the ordinary serpent. The *Naga* symbolizes the element Water and not only does it represent the physical element itself, but the spirit inhabiting the waters as well, manifested by the electrical, magnetic and psychic qualities of water in its role as fluid medium and source of all the earth's creatures. The quote from Zimmer in "Myth and Symbols in Indian Art and Civilization":

"*Nagas* are genii superior to man. They inhabit subaquatic paradises, dwelling at the bottom of rivers, lakes, and seas, in resplendant palaces studded with gems and pearls. They

are keepers of the life – energy that is stored in the earthy waters of springs, wells, and ponds.”¹

In Hindu mythology the Lord Vishnu creates and maintains the universe while reclined on the serpent *Ananta*, ‘The Endless’, who floats upon the primordial waters:

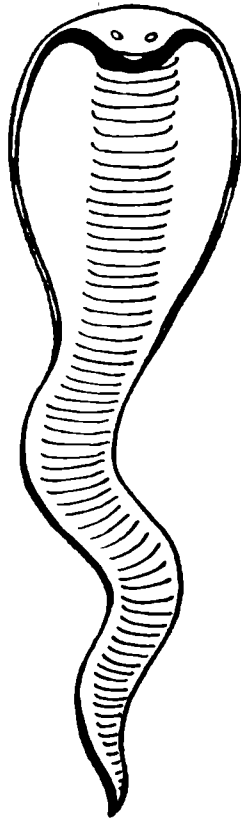
“Vishnu . . . and the cosmic ocean on which he is recumbent, are dual manifestations of a single essence; for the ocean, as well as the human form, is Vishnu. Furthermore, since in Hindu mythology the symbol for water is the serpent (*Naga*), Vishnu is represented, normally, as reposing on the coils of a prodigious snake, his favorite symbolic animal, the serpent *Ananta*, ‘Endless’. So that not only the gigantic anthropomorphic form (Vishnu) and the boundless elemental (Water), but the reptile too is Vishnu. It is on a serpent ocean of his own immortal substance that the Cosmic Man passes the universal night.”²

“The anthropomorphic figure, the serpent coils that form his bed, and the water on which this serpent floats, are true manifestations of the single divine, imperishable, cosmic substance, the energy underlying and inhabiting all the forms of life.”³

1 Myths and Symbols in Art and Civilization. Heinrich Zimmer, p. 62.

2 Ibid, p. 37.

3 Ibid, p. 61.



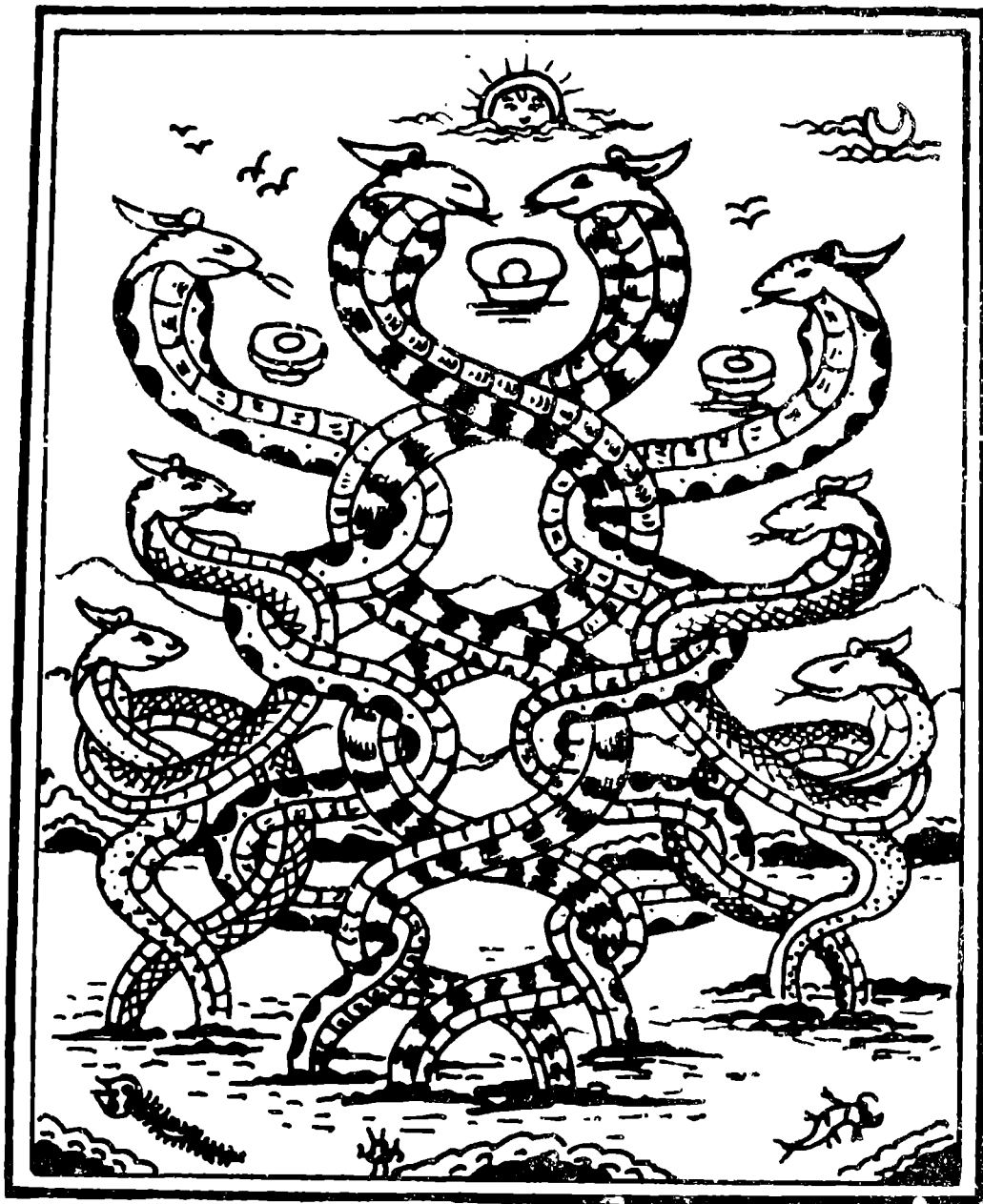
Naga Iconography

The *Naga* in his role as the symbol of the spirit of the element, Water, is represented in iconographic form as the thousand-headed *Ananta*, or as Sesa, The Remainder, who supports the earth. *Nagas* of lakes, streams, and pools are usually represented with three, five, or seven hooded serpent heads over a genii (yaksa) anthropomorphic form. *Nagas* of pools and lakes are often single-headed serpent forms with a large jewel (mani or cintamani) in the crown of the head. *Nagas* of this type can be seen at *Nag Pokhari* in Naxal, Kathmandu, and at the Bhaktapur Museum. The serpent form is also used as a decorative motif (*Nagbandha*) between the levels of temple structures, as at the Annapurna Temple in Asan, Kathmandu, around doorways, carved in wood, and around bathing pools, in stone, as at Patan.

The traditional Nepali doorway carving, the *Torana* has a *Naga* and *Nagini* in the clutches of Garuda, who symbolizes the sun or the rays of the sun. The carving represents the sky, *Torana* meaning literally sky and atmosphere due to the interaction of the sun and the terrestrial waters. The *Naga* and *Nagini* are also represented in stone carvings, cradled in the lap of a human figure. These shrines, such as the one near the Post Office in Kathmandu, are paid homage to so often that the features of the figures are rubbed completely smooth, having received so much sandal wood paste as offering.

In India, stone tablets (*Nagalkals*) with entwined serpent pairs carved on the face are set up at ponds believed to be inhabited by *Nagi*. The entwined serpents symbolize fertility and the stones are set up by women desiring children. The stone, after being carved, is left for some time in the water of the pond in order to imbibe the force of the watery element and of the *Nagas*.

In Nepal, prints and drawings of eight entwined serpents as well as drawings of Vishnu reclining on *Ananta*, are pasted on doorways outside houses at the time of *Naga Panchami*,



which occurs on the fifth day of the dark (waning) moon of Asad, usually mid-August. The drawing are supposedly proof against being struck by lightning. *Naga Panchami* is also the time when the *Mahamegha Mahayana Sutra* is taken out of Santipur and read, though in recent years this has not been done.

Besides being represented in iconographical form alone or in pairs, the serpent is often shown forming a canopy of seven hooded heads as part of metal and stone sculptures of Gautama Buddha and of the *Dhayni Buddha Amoghasiddhi*. This representation derives from the legend of *Muchalinda Nagaraja* who sheltered the Buddha during his meditation. At the time of his Enlightenment, the Buddha sat in meditation for seven days at the foot of the Boddhi tree, then for seven days at the Banyan tree, and then for seven days at the tree of the Serpent King, *Muchalinda*. While the Buddha was absorbed in his state of bliss, there arose a fierce storm, witnessing this the serpent issued from his hole in the roots of the tree and wrapped the coils of his body seven times around the body of the Buddha and with his seven hoods he sheltered the head of the Buddha from the raging storm.

The seven hooded *Naga* canopy is seen on every Buddhist *Chaitya* of the Nepal Valley from the largest at Baudhanath and Svayambhu, to the small stone *Chaityas* which are so numerous in all parts of the Valley. The seven hooded *Naga* canopy covers only *Amoghasiddhi*, the *Dhyani Buddha* on the north side of the *Chaitya*. At the Svayambhu *Chaitya* the shrine of the Water element, the *Nagjur*, is at the foot of *Amaghasiddhi*. The relation between the serpent form and the Buddha is highly significant and leads to an understanding of the deeper symbolic meaning of the *Naga*. According to Zimmer, the serpent halo as an artistic motif, developed out of the earlier pre-Buddhist artistic styles:

“When Jains and Buddhists began to employ craftsmen to fashion images of their saviors, the models for the new works of art had to be supplied by older Indian Prototypes, chief among which were the *Yaksa* and the *Naga*. These were regarded as protecting genii and bringers of prosperity. Their forms appear on every doorpost and on most local shrines.”¹

“When the artist craftsmen who for centuries had been supplying images for the Indian household and temple added to their catalogus the figures of the sectarian saviors Parsva and Buddha, they based their conceptions on the older forms and some-times retained the superhuman serpent attributes. These characteristic signs of the supernatural being

1 Philosophies of India, Heinrich Zimmer, p. 207.

seem to have supplied the model for the later Buddhist halo; and it is by no means improbable that the legend of Muchalinda came into existence simply as later explanation of the representation of the saviors with the covering, protective serpent hoods."¹

This interpretation of the origin of the Buddhist serpent 'halo' leads to the speculation that the spiritual aura or halo represented by the serpent or *Naga* is the same spiritual force which the 'enlightened' Buddha embodies. This spiritual force or energy produces the characteristic aura in artistic representations not only of the Buddha but of the saviors of other cultures, including Christ and the Christian saints. It is not too much to imagine that the Christian halo is an iconographic and artistic development of the *Naga* halo of Buddhist India as India was the source of many of the spiritual and philosophical concepts of the Occident. If Zimmer is correct in imagining that the legend of Muchalinda is a later explanation of the serpent halo motif, it is probable that the artists and craftsmen who developed the motif were aware of the spiritual significance of the serpent-*Naga* and used the form to represent the spiritual aura of the Buddha. We may even speculate that the aura of the 'enlightened' Buddha was visible to some sensitives and that the serpent-*Naga* was an ancient mystical and artistic symbol of the spirit or the life-force which is used to represent the manifestation, perhaps the first visible manifestation, of that spiritual force in Man.

¹ Ibid, p. 208.

Dhyani Buddha Amoghasiddhi

In the *Saddharma Puṇḍarikā Mahāyāna Sūtra* of the first Century the *Dhyani Buddha* on the north side of the *Svayambhu Chaitya* is named *Meghaswara Tathagata* or, Voice of the Clouds. In the *Suvarna Prabha Sūtra* of the third Century, this Buddha's name is changed to *Dundhubiswara Tathagata* or, Voice like Drum (Thunder). Only in the fifth Century in the *Guhyasamoja Sūtra* is his name given as *Amoghasiddhi*.

Amoghasiddhi is considered to have a special relation to the Monsoon. The development of his name indicates that he first represented the 'Voice' of the clouds, meaning thunder or rain, and later he is particularly referred to as the voice of thunder. Both these titles, *Meghaswara* and *Dundubiswara* are found in the *Mahamegha Sūtra* as the names of particular Cloud-Nagas. We can interpret that this *Dhyani Buddha*, the Buddha or the *Chaitya's* north side, has from ancient times had some relation to atmospheric phenomenon.

In his present iconographic form *Amoghasiddhi* is supported by a *Garuda* vehicle and covered with a canopy of *Naga* hoods. The *Garuda* symbolizes the action of the sun or the sun's rays, and the *Naga* represents terrestrial and atmospheric water; their combination and interaction produces rain or drought and their combination in artistic iconographical form symbolizes weather or climate. When the *Garuda* is shown clasping a pair of *Nagas*, as is seen in the traditional Nepali doorway carvings, this represents the sky (*Akasa, Torana*) as the source of the sun and the rains, and of a, hopefully, beneficial climate. In the typical *Torana*, the *Naga* and *Nagini* are shown either loosely or tightly grasped in the *Garuda's* claws or in his hands or sometimes in his beak; this represents the various reactions of heat and moisture, and consequent weather phenomenon, either wet or dry as the relative positions of *Naga* and *Garuda* vary. Where the *Naga* is in fact above and unrelated to the *Garuda*, as the canopy and vehicle of *Amoghasiddhi*, we may interpret symbolic weather or atmospheric



meaning, especially considering *Amoghasiddhi's* previous names, but here the *Naga* is unaffected by the power of the sun and thus the special relation of *Amoghasiddhi* and the Monsoon season.

Keeping in mind *Amoghasiddhi's* symbolic meaning on the plane of atmospheric (*Akasic*) phenomenon, we can examine his symbolic meaning on another level. In the *Vajrayana Buddhist* system, *Amoghasiddhi* is of the family of *Mahamudra*. *Mahamudra* means the unity of opposites, in *Vajrayana*, the union of *Prajna* and *Upaya*. And it is said that the knowledge or understanding of the unity of opposites of *Siddhi* or spiritual power. The unity of all principles is in the seed, or *Bindu* and the seed is produced from out of the void, the *Sunyata* or *Akasa*. This unity of opposites is symbolized by *Amoghasiddhi's Visvavajra*. The two ends of the *Vajra* meeting in a spiral center or *Bindu*, represents the unity of opposites, the *Siddhi*, and the double, or *Visvavajra* symbolizes the spiritual power operating in four dimensions; the dimensions of time and space are combined in the *Visvavajra* symbol.

Amoghasiddhi's green colour is a combination of the blue ether (*Akasa*) of *Vairocana*, the blue water of *Aksobhya*, and the yellow light of the inner sun (*Bodhi*) of *Ratnasambhava*. Thus, he represents a unity of opposites, sun and water plus another element, *Akasa*; and it is this third element which produces the *Siddhi* and transforms the characteristics of the other *Dhyani Buddhas* and effects their realization:

“*Amoghasiddhi* is the *Dhyani Buddha* of the fulfilment and realization of the *Bodhisattva* path. This unique position of *Amoghasiddhi* explains that strange statement in the *Badro Thodol*, in which it is said that on the sixth day only the radiances of the combined four Wisdoms appear, in spite of the presence of the complete *Mandalas* of the five *Dhyani Buddhas* and their retinue. ‘The green light of the All accomplishing Wisdom’, we are told, ‘will not shine upon you, since the faculties of spiritual perception are not yet perfectly developed’. This clearly shows that the realization of *Amoghasiddhi's* All Accomplishing Wisdom is the ultimate and highest step of the path to enlightenment within the realm of human embodiment.”¹

The *Siddhi* or spiritual force symbolized by *Amoghasiddhi* operates in the same medium, the *akasa*, as the atmospheric phenomenon symbolized by his vehicle and hooded canopy. In the same way that the combination of the *Siddhi*, the *Naga* and the *Garuda* represent the monsoon or life force on another level. Just as *Vishnu*, *Ananta*, and the water on which they float are “triple manifestations of a single divine, imperishable cosmic substance, the energy

1 Foundations of Tibetan Mysticism, Lama Anagarika Govinda, p. 262.

underlying and inhabiting all the forms of life", so the *Naga*, *Siddhi* and *Garuda* symbolize the same life energy. The *Siddhi* in its quality as the spirit without which the other *Dhyani Buddhas* are unrealized, is comparable to the spirit symbolized by the serpent *Sesa* in his role as support for *Vishnu*. *Sesa* is "The Remainder" in that, after *Vishnu* has created the universe, all is within his creation except *Sesa* who is beneath him, his support, the representative of the Original Source which is the source even of *Vishnu*. *Sesa* is the Remainder in that he remains even at the destruction of the universe, and the destruction of *Vishnu* as creator of the universe; he remains to give birth to a new *Vishnu* who then again creates the visible universe.

The choice of the serpent to represent the remainder of previous world ages is appropriate: *Sesa* may be said to represent the remains of the spirit of the great Age of Reptiles, which preceded our own age by millions of years. The Earth Spirit naturally gave birth first to life forms which embody the life energy in primitive shapes. The serpent lives within the Earth, issuing forth with a motion of the most primitive form naturally akin to the flow of the forces of nature as seen in the flow of water and the zigzag flash of lightning. The serpent embodies and symbolizes in art and religion the lightning flash or spark of life which is represented in the Hindu system by *Sesa*, The Remainder, and in the Buddhist system by the *Naga*, the *Siddhi* of *Amoghasiddhi*.

The Devi Kundalini

We have speculated that the serpent hood canopy may be an artistic motif representative of the aura or halo of a spiritual or 'enlightened' being, a Buddha or *Dhyani* Buddha. In the Tantric Yoga system, the life force or *Sukti* is thought to reside in the human body, in the *Muladhara*, or Root *Chakra*, and is like a serpent called the *Kundalini*, The Coiled. The *Kundalini* represents the latent life force which has potential either animal and sexual or of the highest spiritual nature, dependent or whether she flows through normal sexual channels or rises up through the *Chakras* to the thousand petaled lotus on the crown of the head. The Serpent *Kundalini* is imagined as lying coiled asleep in the Root *Chakra*, she embodies the primitive serpent sexual energy; the danger in awakening her is akin to the danger in disturbing a sleeping serpent. She lies asleep in almost all men but she may be awakened by the practice of *Kundalini Yoga* and made to rise in a spiraling path to the *Sahasrarapada Chakra* where she "of a sudden produces the bliss of Liberation".

Inside the *Muladhara Chakra* is the *Bindu*, the seed. Above the *Bindu* is the "beautifully luminous and soft, lightning-like triangle which is *Kamarupa*."¹ (*Kamarupa* is the Form of Love; compare with the *Khaganana*, Face of the Void, the *Guhyeswari*) In the triangle is *Svayambhuvan* in his *Linga* form (male, *Vajra* form; *Vajra* like *linga* is symbol of the male organ). Coiled three and one-half times around *Svayambhuvan* is the sleeping *Kundalini*, "charming like ten million lightning flashes in the dark blue clouds"² *Kundalini* in her passive coiled state in the *Muladhara* is the *Akasa*, the potential energy of the universe. In her active, kinetic form, as she is aroused and moves up the psychic spinal channel, she is the *Prana* or active life breath which moves in the medium of the *Akasa*. As the *Kundalini*

1 The Serpent Power, Sir John Woodroffe, V. 8, p. 340.

2 Ibid, p. 344.

rises through the psychic channel, opening each lotus-chakra in turn, she finally reaches the thousand petaled *Saharsarapadma Chakra* on the crown of the head. This lotus, when it is pierced by the *Kundalini*, is described as being "lustrous and whiter than the full Moon",¹ "shedding a constant and profuse stream of nectar-like essence".² "The *Devi*, having reached all the lotuses, shines there in the fullness of her lustre".³ The lustre of the *Devi Kundalini* at the moment of enlightenment produces a radiance or aura, perhaps visible to some sensitives. This is the aura or halo of the Buddha. As the *Sakti* of the Tantrics is symbolized by the serpent *Kundalini*, so the aura produced by *Kundalini's* rise through the body is represented artistically by the Buddhist Tantrics, the *Vajrayanas*, as the seven hooded *Naga* canopy of the Buddha and the *Dhyani Buddha Amoghasiddhi*.

We have attempted to interpret the meaning of the serpent symbol, combining the *Kundalini* Tantric Yoga philosophy with the *Vajrayana* Buddhist iconographic symbolism. This interpretation is offered as a speculation on the development of the serpent motif as a symbol of the spiritual life force through the conscious or even unconscious use by craftsmen and artists to represent the manifestation of the spirit in bodily form in the enlightened being, the Buddha. It must be pointed out that the Buddhist Yoga does not emphasize the power aspect, the *Sakti*, but concentrates on the knowledge aspect, the *prajna*. The *Sakti Kundalini* is not even mentioned in the Buddhist system; and the lower two *Chakras* are disregarded, perhaps because of the danger of causing the stimulation of the sexual impulses by concentration or meditation on the lower *Chakras*. Our interpretation, therefore, is an attempt to trace the development of iconographic symbolism, rather than the development of philosophical Yoga systems.

1 The Serpent Power, Sir John Woodroffe. V. 40, p. 419.

2 Ibid. V. 43, p. 433.

3 Ibid. V. 51, p. 460.

Naga Ritual In Other Parts Of Nepal

Belief in the *Nagas* and their supernatural powers is not confined to the Kathmandu Valley, but extends to all parts of Nepal. There are numerous *Naga Tirthas* in the midlands, mostly within the radius of the ancient kingdoms which were centered in the Valley; that is, from the Trisuli Gandaki river in the west to the Kosi river in the east. These *Tirthas* are located at the joining of the main streams and at high mountain lakes.

Everywhere in Nepal there are similar beliefs about the powers of serpents. Most Nepalis believe that it is bad luck to kill serpents, and sometimes they are protected around trees, ponds, and courtyards. *Nagas* are guardians of household and palace treasure rooms; if the *Naga* leaves the treasure room the family is sure to lose its wealth. These are sometimes actual serpents who live within the walls of the house. My Nepali informant relates how, as a child, he grabbed the serpent of his family's treasure room by the tail, and attempted to pull it from its hole. He was reprimanded by his family as they feared to lose their wealth if the serpent should be harmed or driven away.

There is a ritual for beginning the foundation of a house or temple, involving the *Naga* supposed to reside beneath the earth. The proposed site is divided into seven lines, making forty-nine squares, and the position of the head of the *Naga* is determined by astrological means. Then the first stake is driven into the place which is supposed to be between the body of the *Naga* and his arm; that is, in his armpit. According to my informant this is done to determine the position of the *Naga* and to pay him proper homage, rather than to pierce the head of the serpent to keep him from moving. The *Naga* must be allowed to continue his normal movements beneath the house or temple or there will be certain

trouble. Supposedly, temples begun in this way have not been destroyed by the numerous earthquakes but, temples and houses constructed without observance of this ritual have later fallen down.

In the Terai area of Nepal, where there are numerous serpents, there is a common belief in the supernatural powers of snakes. The Tharus who live in the Terai believe that a snake has the power to drain energy from other sources much like lightning can drain voltage from electrical lines. They believe that the snake, by the power of his own luminescence can drain off the light of a candle, or of a fire or even of an electric light bulb. Therefore, if a candle or light should suddenly dim, the Tharus look quickly around for the snake that may have crawled into the house.

The Sherpa people of the Solu - Khumbu area of east Nepal also practice a *Naga Sadhana* which was not derived from The Nepal Valley, but which derives from Kham, the eastern region of Tibet, whence the Sherpa migrated three to four centuries ago. The Sherpa *Naga* inhabits mainly springs and small streams. The Sherpa tell the tale that, when they came to Solu-Khumbu from Kham, their *Nagas* remained behind in their original places. After the Sherpas had become established in their new home, they sent to Kham for their *Nagas* to follow, having found or prepared suitable places for them. Their *Nagas* came to Solu-Khumbu and some, being satisfied with their new homes, remained; others however, being dissatisfied with their new places, refused to stay and they returned to Kham.

Sherpas believe that the *Nagas* are essential for rainfall and agriculture. In Junbesi, center of the Sherpa culture, there is a *Naga thaun* or *Naga* place, which is in a small grove of trees where an underground stream surfaces. In one recent instance a ritual was performed at the spot as the grove was not well kept and in fact, was fast becoming a local trash dump. Initiated by a local yogin and artist, the site was first thoroughly cleaned. Then the head of the local monastery led a procession to the site where *mantra* and *dharani* were chanted and ritual from the Tibetan tradition was performed.

A few westerners have encountered Sherpa *Nagas* by bathing in *Naga* pools, being unaware of the local legends. In at least two instances to my own knowledge Westerners have become ill, in one case breaking out in boils immediately after bathing in *Naga thauns*. The afflictions were relieved only after a ritual apology performed by the Lamas.

Relations To Chinese Geomancy

The Chinese practice Geomancy, divining by means of lines drawn or imagined seen flowing across the surface of the earth. Their term for the practice is *Feng-Shui*, Wind-Water. Interestingly, the Nepali term for climate is also Wind-Water (*hawa-pani*). The Chinese Dragon is represented as a winged serpent with fierce features (see illustration). It differs from the *Naga* in its wings and dragon head, unlike the simple serpent's head. The Dragon is a favorite motif in Chinese art and their landscape paintings always include the subtle "Dragon Paths". The Chinese believe that the contours of the earth's surface are determined by the outline of the backbone of the terrestrial Dragon. The Dragon in Chinese is *Lung*; *Lung* also means Wind, mountain, or anything that rises or is lofty. The bones of the Dragon form the mountains and hills and his arteries and veins form the rivers and streams of the living Earth. The Chinese attempt to determine the path of the Dragon Current (*Lung-mei*), in order to site tombs, temples, and all buildings, roads and canals.

The Chinese invented the magnetic compass in order to determine the flow of the Dragon Current. The Geomancers or Men of the Dragon (*Lung-kia*) call themselves the Professors of the Doctrine of *Ti-Li*, combining Geography with Geomancy. Their compass is a natural lodestone in circular shape, carved with astrological symbols and the Trigrams from the *I Ching*. According to the Chinese conception, the Dragon Currents follow the ridge lines of hill and mountain, the courses of rivers and streams; they are magnetic, that is, they follow the magnetic field of the earth; they change with the movements of sun, moon, and planets, and they respond to Man's direction to a certain extent. The Chinese attempted to modify the flow of current by making slight changes in contours of hills or with mounds



and standing stones in flat country. To quote from Michell in *The Earth Spirit*. "In some districts, particularly in wild, steep, rocky parts, the ways of the earth spirit are rapid and violent, and if the country is to be made habitable its energy must be tamed and directed into more evenly flowing channels. Where, as in flat, featureless country, it moves too sluggishly, with a tendency to stagnate, it can be stimulated by making lengths of straight avenues and watercourses and adding vertical features to the landscape." They erected stones in some places to drain off malignant currents in the same way that needles are used in their science of Acupuncture to drain off psychic tensions in the human body. They conceive of the Dragon Current as the psychic energy the *ch'i* of the living Earth

The flow of the Dragon Current in lofty mountainous regions is naturally much more vertical and atmospheric than in the low plains where the flow is slow and gentle, mainly following watercourses. Much of the area of China is steep and rocky and gives rise to their conception of the Dragon as winged and fierce. In the Nepal Valley, on the other hand, the terrain is flat except for being cut by watercourses, having formerly been a lake. This terrain leads to the Nepali conception of the *Naga*, who is mainly terrestrial, like the serpent and follows the courses of the Valley streams. The Dragon and the *Naga* differ in this respect, that the *Naga* represents more the terrestrial, potential, *akasic* force, comparable to the *Kundalini* at rest; whereas the Dragon represents the active, kinetic *pranic* force, comparable to the *Kundalini* when she is aroused.

The fact that the Dragon Current can be detected by the magnetic compass, and that it moves with the movement of the planets, gives a clue to its nature or at least to the medium within which it operates. The terrestrial magnetic field also changes with the movement of sun, moon, and planets and the direction of its flow can be determined by the magnetic compass. The earth's magnetic field is, like the Dragon Current, due to a combination of terrestrial and celestial influences. The force represented by the Dragon, and the *Naga*, operates within the medium of the magnetic field in much the same way that electricity is produced by and operates within a magnetic field. In the same manner the *prana* operates within the *akasa*. In this way also the *Naga* and Dragon differ; the *Naga* is similar to the *akasa* or the magnetic field and the Dragon is more similar to the *prana* or the electricity.

The forces of Nature, in the ancient Chinese tradition, are called the *Kwei Shin*, the Yin and Yang respectively. The *Kwei* signifies the latent inherent spirit of the earth, comparable to the *akasa*, the universal medium. It is related to the native spirits of cleft

and pool, and is found especially in grottos or caves. It is Yin, feminine, and the Mother of Creation. It is symbolized by the serpent. The Shin, or Yang spirit is related to the flow of the upper air and to the finer part of the spirit in Man. It is the Dragon. It is the cloud which is attracted by the *Naga*. Significantly, the Kwei are said to respond to ritual but the Shin are properly invoked only by music.

Telluric Currents

The Earth Spirit is the potential, *akasic*, magnetic source of the kinetic, *pranic*, electric energy which is the spark of life. Faults, clefts, caves, caverns and springs are natural sources of the Earth Spirit. This energy of the earth actually carries an electrical charge, a positive ionization due to natural radioactive decay of the minerals which compose the mass of the earth. This charge is detectable by the geomancer's compass or the dowser's rod. Where the earth's energy surfaces are found medicinal springs, sacred grottos and the sources of visions and prophecy. The oracles of Delphi (which means the female organ just as *Guhyeswari* does) would wrap themselves in snake skins, the serpent's skin being considered magnetic; under its influence they fell into trances, they became prophetic and delivered oracles. Megalithic dolmens were erected at sources of the earth current in an attempt to concentrate and store the energy, the natural flow being irregular, varying with the seasons, due to celestial influences.

When the telluric current surfaces or when it runs through the earth following geologic faults or underground water it is guided in its path by the magnetic field, it is influenced in intensity by celestial movements, and it follows the rock and ridge features of the earth to be concentrated in natural power spots where terrestrial energy combines with celestial. Where streams meet are *Naga Tirthas*, and where Dragon Currents meet are auspicious sites for tomb or temple. The Chinese, the Egyptians and the Druids apparently attempted to focus or concentrate the flow of this energy with standing stones, dolmens and menhirs in the theory that stone can accumulate and store the energy. The stone circles at Stonehenge and Carnac are in this way attempts to concentrate the energy found at natural power points, to which they were perhaps sensitive. The Great Pyramid of Egypt may be the largest and surely most massive structure built in an attempt to focus the telluric currents

in order to make combination with celestial influences, producing greatly concentrated energy at the top, which was composed of metal, perhaps even gold. Interestingly, the pyramid shape is the natural rock crystal shape, this type crystal being employed in modern times to focus light energy in the LASER. The ancient builders of India perhaps were attempting to accumulate earth energy in their stupa structures in the *Anda*, the egg, which was thought to be a storehouse of latent creative energy. The stupas were also built on sacred spots or power points where mankind intuitively knows that great power or spirit is present. By concentrating the *Kwei* of the earth in architectural structure erected on natural power points and by combining the terrestrial forces with the celestial influences, *Shin* or *Prana* can be produced much in the same way that the coiled *Akasa*, the *Kundalini*, is aroused and transformed to produce the *prana* and the consequent bliss of enlightenment in the human body.

The flow of the Telluric Current is detected by the Geomancer and Dowser. To a highly sensitive dowser the current is slightly unpleasant. In the same way experimenters Od (von Reichenbach), Orgone (Reich) and modern investigators of ionization have determined that the positive force or ions are sensed as stale and depressing whereas the negative ionization is fresh and stimulating. The earth releases positive ionization at caves and clefts, the force causes people to prophecy or go mad. People give off positive ions, a crowded room quickly becomes stuffy and even unbearable to the sensitive. Negative ion generators are now being used in aircraft to keep pilots alert, in classrooms to improve attention span and in hospitals to promote healing. On an atmospheric level, the positive charge released by the earth attracts the negative charge carried in the atmosphere. The atmosphere collects a negative charge due to friction in its contact with and movement over the earth's surface. This charge collects in electrical thunderstorm cells which are attracted to sources of the earth's positive energy. The charge discharges in the flash of lightning which acts like a massive spark to dissipate the stagnant positive ionization, fertilizing and stimulating all plant and animal life. Thus the belief that the *Naga* has the power to attract clouds and the relation of the *Naga* and Dragon with fertility and prosperity. And thus the absolute necessity to allow the freeflow of springs and all the forces of Nature.

The Living Earth

Man can only relate to the earth in a mutually productive manner when he recognizes the universal spirit, not only in himself and in all plant and animal life, but in the earth itself as a living, breathing body. For the earth is alive, it radiates an aura of life just as man does. It is the realization of the common spirit animating both man and earth that allows man to be sensitive to the flow of energy in a landscape, to avoid disrupting that natural flow or to even remove obstacles to a harmonious flow in the manner that the Chinese Acupuncturist regulates the flow of *ch'i* in the human body. Man is the doctor, the protector and keeper of the earth as he would protect and keep his own mother, for the Earth Spirit is his own mother, for the Earth spirit is his source and to that source he returns at death. We have forgotten that the origin of the world 'matter' is from 'mater' or mother. In another sense man can be imagined as an intelligent parasite on the body of the living Earth, totally dependent for his health and prosperity on the life force of the Earth. And like any intelligent parasite man must realize that he must not destroy his host, that he must maintain a symbiotic or mutually productive relationship.

Man cannot pollute the earth without causing disease in his own flesh, he cannot dirty the waters without fouling his own bloodstream. He can treat the earth as an inanimate, non-living body, separate from himself, only with the result of his own death. The ancients realized the intimate relation between the Earth Spirit and themselves. They sought oracles at cleft and spring, they sensed the flow of Spirit over and through the earth and its waters and they represented these forces in their art and religion as the Dragon and the *Naga*. They practised landscape architecture by directing and concentrating the flow of the telluric currents with mounds, menhirs, stone circles and the megalithic tumuli and pyramids. Man lost his sensitivity to the Earth Spirit when he became more settled, patriarchal and orientated in his religion to worship of the sun. The decline of the Earth cult is seen in the rise of the

practice of human sacrifice, when priests tried to stimulate the spirit formerly present in their stone accumulators by massive release of human spirit in sacrifice. They searched for the contact with Spirit which came so naturally before. But the flow of the terrestrial current is ever changing, just like the flow of energy in our bodies is constantly changing. Stones erected on Dragon paths were found to have lost their power, the Dragon having moved, refusing to be regulated by man. For why should the parasite be able to control the life of the host. Why should the child dominate the life of his parent.

Modern man treats the earth as his source of 'raw materials' and the deposit for his poisons and garbage. He destroys the Earth without regard for his own intimate dependency on the life and health of the Earth. He attempts to expand his commerce and industry infinitely without regard to the absolutely finite nature of the earth's resources and ability to absorb poisonous wastes. The ancients of Nepal who composed the *Svayambhu Purana* were very aware of the nature of their dependency on the Earth Spirit. They set aside places for the permanent residence of the *Naga* and recognized his relation to fertility and climate and consequently to their own prosperity. And Nepal has prospered to this day. Where man regards the earth as his own source and sustenance he does not destroy her, realizing that her destruction is also his own. Where man lives in intimate relation with the earth he can be aware of the life of the body of the earth as he is aware of his own life. Only where man believes, in his arrogance, that he is separate and unrelated, that the holy Spirit resides not in the earth and its creatures including himself, but in an exterior, removed monotheistic Deity, can he treat the earth as if it were already dead and treat his own body in the same manner.

Sensitivity to the spiritual life force is not confined to the so called 'primitive' Pantheists, but has been experienced by man at all times and cultures. In relatively modern times the life force has been identified as Anton Mesmer's 'Animal Magnetism', in von Reichenbach's 'Od', and in Wilhelm Reich's 'Orgone'. These men were reviled and ridiculed by the prevailing scientific establishments, but it is to them that we must turn for a description in modern scientific terms of the Spirit which animates us all. For when we have become aware of the Spirit in ourselves and in our Mother Earth as source and support of ourselves, then we are able to recognize the universal spirit in every rock and tree, and we begin to treat all creation as part of ourselves as we are part of all Creation.

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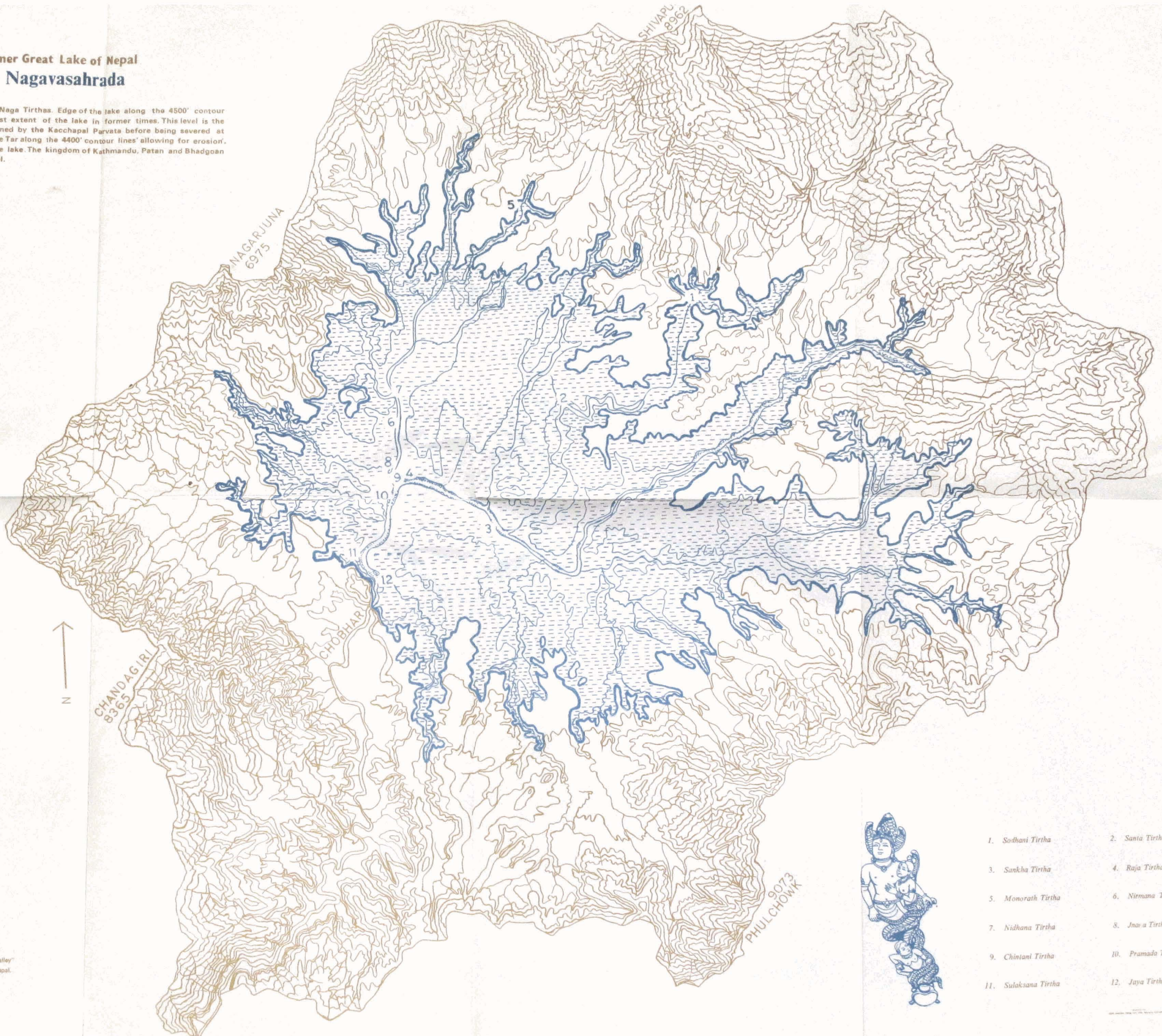
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The Former Great Lake of Nepal The Nagavasahrada

The Nagavasahrada and the twelve Naga Tirthas. Edge of the lake along the 4500' contour line represents the probable greatest extent of the lake in former times. This level is the highest that could have been contained by the Kacchhal Parvata before being severed at the Chobhar Gorge. The edge of the Tar along the 4400' contour lines allowing for erosion, represents the former bottoms of the lake. The kingdom of Kathmandu, Patan and Bhadgoan were all built on the Tar at this level.



Drawn By: Warren W. Smith
"Mythological History of Nepal Valley"
Avalot, Publishers, Kathmandu, Nepal.

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|----------------------|--------------------|
| 1. Sodhani Tirtha | 2. Santa Tirtha |
| 3. Sankha Tirtha | 4. Raja Tirtha |
| 5. Monorath Tirtha | 6. Niemana Tirtha |
| 7. Nidhana Tirtha | 8. Jnana Tirtha |
| 9. Chintani Tirtha | 10. Pramada Tirtha |
| 11. Sulaksana Tirtha | 12. Jaya Tirtha |

