

Chapter 11 **WRAPPED IN TATTERED RAGS: ON *BUDDHA NATURE***

What is that which always is, and has no becoming? And what is that which is always becoming, and never is? Plato, *Timaeus*

All sentient beings without exception have the Buddha nature. Buddha nature abides forever without change. Shakyamuni Buddha, *Nirvana Sutra*

All beings/entire being is the Buddha nature. Eihei Dogen, *Shobogenzo*

Modern science has helped us to see how extraordinarily beautiful and infinitely complex the natural world is. But our knowledge of ourselves as a natural part of that world has not kept up with our scientific advances. We struggle to understand how we fit in. We may try to reach something in our selves beyond our merely “human nature” but see how too often we fall short. One thinks of Icarus, who failed to heed the advice of his father Daedalus and flew too near the sun so that his wings melted, or Prometheus who stole sparks of fire from his father, Zeus’ sun chariot and was then chained to a rock where he had his liver pecked out continually by an eagle. This is the familiar story of human history – hubris followed by nemesis, pride by punishment or suffering.

The transcendental pretence

Take European history for example. In his book on modern continental philosophy, subtitled “The Rise and Fall of the Self”, the philosopher, Robert Solomon, writes of what he calls “the transcendental pretence”. No mere academic philosopher, Solomon describes the development of European philosophy in the last half of the eighteenth century, particularly in Germany, as “a thrilling cultural, intellectual, and psychological adventure story as rich and human as any epic by

Tolstoy, even if expressed in the clumsy language of German theology”.ⁱ The philosophers of the later Enlightenment thought, in their lack of modesty, that they could change the world, though it would be more accurate to say that they were trying to change our concept of what it is to be human.

The leading theme of this story was the rise and fall of an extraordinary concept of the self. This was no ordinary self but “the star performer” in modern European philosophy:

It is the transcendental self, or transcendental ego, whose nature and ambitions were unprecedentedly arrogant, presumptuously cosmic, and consequently mysterious. The transcendental self was *the* self – timeless, universal, and in each one of us around the globe and throughout history. Distinguished from our individual idiosyncracies, this was the self we shared. In modest and ordinary terms it was called “human nature”. In much less modest, extraordinary terminology, the transcendental self was nothing less than God, the Absolute Self, the World Soul. ⁱⁱ

Most philosophers cite Descartes as “the father of modern philosophy” and as the originator in the seventeenth century of the modern philosophical preoccupation with the thinking self as the seat of knowledge but it was not until Kant that this self assumed transcendental importance. As Kant famously wrote in his *Critique of Judgement*:

Two things fill the mind with ever new and increasing wonder and awe, the more often and the more seriously reflection concentrates upon them: the starry heaven above me and the moral law within.

Kant wanted to do for philosophy what Newton had done for physics. For him, what went on inside the human heart and mind had universal significance.

Kant also argued in his famous “second Copernican Revolution” that we do not see the world passively - as the empiricists believe - but fashion it through our own

powers of reason, a capacity that allows us knowledge of all minds the world over. The self was not just another entity in the world but, in an important sense, created the world. In addition the reflecting self did not just know itself but, in knowing itself, knew all selves. The ramifications of this view constituted the transcendental pretence.

Solomon's story began with Jean-Jacques Rousseau's "discovery" of the self, described how this eventually became Kant's transcendental self, which was then "romanced" by figures such as Fichte, Schelling and Schiller, before it was finally apotheosised as Spirit by Hegel in the early nineteenth century. One can also hear the transcendental pretence in the music of the age – in the opening bars of Beethoven's Fifth symphony for instance – or see it in the art – Caspar David Friedrich's *The Wanderer Above the Mists* of 1817.

Solomon's account was not written with an uncritical eye. The underlying assumption behind the transcendental pretence - that in all essential matters everyone, everywhere is the same - was coming of age as world-wide exploration and colonisation through innovations in transport, travel, and communications was achieving "the conquest of nature" with global efficiency. As Solomon warns:

The transcendental pretence is no innocent philosophical thesis but a political weapon of enormous power. Even as it signalled a radical egalitarianism, and suggested a long-awaited global sensitivity, it also justified unrestricted tolerance for paternalism and self-righteousness – "the white philosopher's burden". Philosophers who never left their home towns declared themselves expert on "human nature" and weighed the morals of civilisations and "savages" thousands of miles beyond their ken. ⁱⁱⁱ

Predictably, perhaps, the story changed in the nineteenth century with "the collapse of the absolute" and "the fall of the self". With the pessimists, such as Schopenhauer and Kierkegaard, the materialists, Feuerbach and Marx, the anti-transcendentalists - the logicians, empiricists, and relativists - and the nihilistic attack

on the self of Nietzsche the stage was set for “the self in and for itself” of the twentieth century, with all its solipsistic and anthropocentric implications. Nineteenth century European imperialism may well have been rationalised - consciously or unconsciously - by a sense of a transcendental European “human nature” but twentieth century capitalism now seems completely unaware of roots in any kind of transcendent reality.

The human self as a ‘lack’

In many ways human nature would seem to have had a bad twentieth century: two cataclysmic world wars separated by a great depression; the development of nuclear weapons of mass destruction continuing the war in a cold form; a sequence of totalitarian regimes and their genocidal terrors; over a hundred million people violently slaughtered throughout the century; and the wealth gap within and between countries wider than ever between the rich and the poor; the list goes on and on, the century ending with a human population inflating beyond anything the Earth can support - at present Western consumption levels - and an anthropogenic climate and ecological emergency well on the way.

Yet there is plenty of evidence to suggest that not only is modern human nature essentially no worse than in previous centuries and eras but is in many ways more humane than we allow. Traditional religions have spent so much time on the Sisyphean task of trying to redeem human nature. The truth is that, while we may be able to develop it in an ethical or evolutionary sense, perfecting it is impossible. We are deluded in our pretence that we could ever purge ourselves of our faults. To imagine that we could do so is both tragic and comic. Better to realise that our ignorance and fallibility is what we learn from. As one contemporary writer put it, our capacity to err, for instance, is not only inescapable it is necessary, for our imperfections are a path to transformation:

.... far from being a mark of indifference or intolerance, wrongness is a vital part of how we learn and change. Thanks to error, we can revise our understanding of ourselves and amend our ideas about the world. ^{iv}

The Buddhist philosopher and historian, David Loy, has written about what he terms the “lack” in our sense of self. √ From a Buddhist perspective “human nature” is incomplete. There has always been something unreal about the idea of a separate, individual self and the more we have tried to make ourselves real the more we have felt ungrounded. For instance in the West we have kept faith with the concept of human freedom - inherited from the ancient Greeks - but, based as it is on the illusion of the autonomous individual, it has never escaped from the shadow of its polar opposite – determinism. We also invented a God who designed and created us, but a God we felt estranged from and who continually demanded repentance. Our estrangement, rationalised as “sin”, led us to establish an institution – the Church – we could pay to save us from our sins, as if that would make us whole. Finally we separated the secular from the sacred and developed secular surrogates for sacred ends – desire for fame and power, love of romantic attachment, money and our desire for it – surrogates which have proved ultimately unsatisfying.

Today, so secular, so material, so scientific have we become that we are no longer conscious of our lack. It is as if we think human nature is sufficient in itself. Traditionally religion has been the main way we have tried to ground ourselves in some sense of absolute reality. From a Buddhist perspective our ungroundedness is not a religious but a spiritual problem and our attempts to resolve it in exclusively religious or this-worldly ways will always fail ultimately. The world is our natural habitat - where we belong - but we are not at home here. The more we try to ground ourselves solely either in this world or an ethereal one, the more we will encounter the shadow of our own incompleteness.

Original sinlessness

Buddhism is only too aware of our human nature and its instinctual drives – desire, aggression, delusion – but also teaches of a true, immutable, and eternal essence within us which we share with all things. The concept of an eternal, imperishable reality was a central pillar of the Vedic thought which predated Buddhism in India. In

Sanskrit the name for this universal reality is *Brahman*, an absolute consciousness, which also lives in us as *Atman* – the immortal Self. As in other religious traditions the “immortal self” is often viewed as quite distinct and separate from the mortal or human self. In the more sophisticated schools of Buddhism they are not viewed so much as opposites as forming a continuum, and analysis and contemplation are directed towards the relationship between them - what in us is mortal and what immortal?

In addressing this eternal problem there is understandably much confusion. In fact it is said that the highest form of contemplative investigation is the attempt to discover why immortal consciousness – *Atman* or *Buddha nature* – mistakes itself for a mortal body and mind – human nature. We in the secular West have turned our backs on contemplative traditions but while we ignore, or deny, an immortal, absolute Self we continually misread human nature – individually and collectively - as if it itself was absolute. As even Freud remarked, unconsciously we think we are immortal - hence, for instance, the “transcendental pretence” of the European Enlightenment.

The word Buddha means “awakened one” and Buddha essence is the capacity – the practice - to awaken to something changeless and timeless in ourselves. Mystics throughout the ages have spoken of this single immanent reality which is ultimately the source, the substance and the real nature of everything which exists. In other words the same life – or spirit – runs through us as causes the world and the universe to exist – a God Who is “the ground of all being”. Though, in a Buddhist view, this Buddha essence is ultimately beyond description Buddhist writings abound with testimonies to its reality. In *The Great Liberation* it is viewed as an “uncreated naturally originating inner radiance” and “pristine cognition”. It is said to be “unborn and deathless”, a notion similar to Zen’s “original face” - not the face we were born with, which will age and die, but the face we had before our parents were conceived, the face we have always had. This is the spirit in us which remains unrecognised. Because it is unrecognised, we go searching for it everywhere else except in ourselves.

Buddha essence is also thought of as a kind of original sinlessness, a primal

perfection. To focus on the negative side of human life, as we sometimes love to do, is to ignore the benign and benevolent nature we also possess. There is a huge fund of good will in the world today, whether it is to be seen in the instinctive adherence of the majority to law and order and ethical values, in the countless acts of human kindness, solidarity and compassion throughout the world - that our media for the most part ignores - or in the political and humane activities of innumerable official and non-governmental organisations that work within and across national and continental boundaries. This reflects an awakening awareness of something within us all in addition to what we historically understand as human nature – whether we call it God, *godhead*, Original Mind, Christ consciousness or *Buddha essence*. There is one particular revered Buddhist text which expounds the notion of Buddha nature.

The Sublime Continuum

In 1979 an English translation from the Tibetan was made of an important work on *Buddha nature*, originally written some fifteen hundred years ago in Sanskrit, entitled the *Mahayana Uttara Tantra Shastra*, (also known as the *Ratnagotra-vibhaga*). The author was Asanga, founder of the *Yogachara* school of Mahayana Buddhism and brother of the scholar, Vasubandhu. Asanga claimed that his text was inspired by Arya Maitreya, the Buddha in waiting. The 1979 translation by Katia Holmes was refined and republished in 1985 by her and her husband, Ken Holmes, as *The Changeless Nature*.^{vi} The text is also known as “The Treatise on the Supreme” or ‘“The Sublime Continuum” (the Dalai Lama refers to it as this in English). Ken and Katia Holmes republished a new translation of it in 1999, complete with a comprehensive commentary by the Tibetan Kagyu masters who had supervised their work throughout.^{vii} Other translations and commentaries have also been published in English in recent years.^{viii}

The *Mahayana Uttara Tantra* of Asanga likens *Buddha essence* to three things in particular and indicates the means by which it can be realised:

Like the purity of a jewel, space, or water,

It is always undefiled in essence.
It emerges through aspiration for dharma,
Highest prajna, meditation and compassion. ix

The metaphor of a gem, hidden from sight, is a popular one. For instance the *Lotus Sutra* – one of the most important sutras of Mahayana Buddhism - likens Buddha essence to a precious stone that is sewn into the lining of a person's coat. A person might know of its existence but not where it is. He goes looking everywhere for it, not realising that he is carrying it around with him. Asanga gives other common metaphors - honey amid a swarm of bees, a grain of rice within its husk, a treasure buried beneath the earth of one's own house, or a Buddha image wrapped in rags. Peter Harvey, in his introduction to Buddhism and in referring to the *Uttara Tantra*, described it in this way:

It is both like a Buddha-image wrapped in tattered rags, which suggests an unchanging perfection which has simply to be uncovered, and also like the shoots of a great tree piercing through the fruit from which it grows, suggesting that it is a potential in need of cultivation. Indeed it is to be seen as both “since beginningless time naturally present” and “perfected through proper cultivation”. It is already present, “the immaculate true nature to which nothing need be added and from which nothing need be taken. x

Buddha essence as “an unchanging perfection” is already within us. It is already there. The task is to uncover and realise it.

The nature of space

Secondly Buddha essence is likened to the sky or space. In classical Asian thought space – in its immaterial as well as material sense - is considered to be the most subtle element of the universe and the ground both of matter and mind. We in the West think of space as being empty, in the sense of vacuous. We don't see it because it is not apparent to our senses, so we don't look for it. We only see what is in space, we don't “see” space itself. We assume there is nothing there.

To begin to see space it is first necessary to change the way we think about the universe. For instance, the *Uttara Tantra* reverses the conventional view of reality. In our physical conception of life we commonly think matter to be the ground of everything, with the elements that comprise water, air and fire emerging from it. In this material view of the universe space, as an element, is invisible. Asanga turns this upside down and considers space to be the ground – “the groundless ground”. For him earth rests on water, water on air, air on space, space on nothing - no-thing. This is difficult for us to appreciate but for Asanga space, as the uncreated cause of everything, is self supporting. It is the primordial element prior to heaven and earth - prior to the big bang, prior to the first atom or any division of the elements, prior to life and mind. ^{xi}

Space, in other words, is transcendent. When it is spoken of as “nothing” – void, abyss, “emptiness” – it is not an empty nothing but a fullness. Space is not just transcendent, it is also immanent in all manifest life. ^{xii} We might wonder how something can be both transcendent and immanent – both outside and inside – at the same time. But in this view, space pervades everything. Space contains the universe but also lives within every element and particle of it. It is the whole which also pervades every part. Thus the Dalai Lama can write a book about science with the title, *The Universe in a Single Atom*. It is the same quality by which the sun lives within everything and the moon is mirrored in the tiniest dewdrop. As Thrangu Rinpoche explains in his commentary to the *Uttara Tantra*, the space that is *Buddha essence* may be “void” but it is a void that lives in everything: “There is not one object that is not permeated by it”. ^{xiii} In this way Buddhism views human nature as imbued with a universal Buddha nature. ^{xiv} We also know this as Spirit.

Changelessness

The other quality of space, according to Asanga, is its unalterability and, in this, it is similar to water. Just as muddied or polluted water can, if allowed to settle, recover its clear or pure state, so space is said to be ultimately unaffected by the objects in it. Because the nature of space is extremely subtle objects do not alter its nature. This

quality of changelessness is the essence of space. Universes may come and go/ appear and disappear but space always remains:

When the universe first begins, it manifests in space and when it disintegrates, it disintegrates into space. All this occurs in space but space itself doesn't change or decompose. ^{xv}

Just so, Buddha essence is the changeless, clear element within human nature. Bodies and minds come and go endlessly but Buddha essence is the uncreated, all pervasive, changeless quality within the particular, ever-changing, transient life we humans suffer and enjoy at any one time. It is a quality we do not need to develop. It is already in us. We only need to grow the "eyes" to see it. Buddhist teachers and other sages are engaged only in pointing it out.

Awakening

(Buddha nature) emerges through aspiration for dharma,
Highest prajna, meditation and compassion.

Asanga

"Dharma" is an important Sanskrit word with a number of meanings. It refers not only to the universal truth or law underlying our world but also the truth as each one of us is capable of understanding it. So the dharma for any one person will also indicate his or her path - or practice - towards the understanding of truth. And our understanding will vary according to our individual, social, national and cultural identity and circumstances – our various forms of "karma".

"Prajna" (see chapter 9) refers to an intuitive wisdom that cannot be conveyed by concepts or in intellectual terms. It is insight into emptiness, the emptiness of both the universe without and of the personal self within. Early Buddhism – such as Theravada - stressed the emptiness of the self while later Buddhism – the Mahayana – asserted the emptiness also of the "objective" world, though, as I have pointed out in chapter 9, this didn't imply its non-existence but made the distinction between a

phenomenal and an ultimate reality, the world as it appears and the world as it is.

“Meditation” is the means by which to understand the world “as it is”. Meditation is not just about sitting on a cushion in a lotus position. The contemplative practice of “sitting” - as it is often referred to in the Zen traditions – also applies to standing, walking or lying down, in fact to alert mindfulness in all one’s activities. Attention to posture and breathing - whatever one is doing - is essential to a calm mind. The modern practice of “mindfulness” stresses the initial importance of body awareness, as do the Buddhist traditions which provided inspiration for it. This is the first step towards appreciating “body-mind” as a unity, before going into an experience of oneself beyond both body and mind.

Descriptions of Buddha nature mean very little unless one is prepared to practice. Everyone is capable of experiencing Buddha nature but each will experience it in their own unique way – hence the importance of practice. A classic and often-quoted description of sitting meditation is the twelfth century Japanese founder of the Soto school of Zen, Eihei Dogen’s:

To study the Buddha way is to study the self. To study the self is to forget the self. To forget the self is to be actualised by the myriad things. When actualised by the myriad things, your body and mind as well as the bodies and minds of others drop away. ^{xvi}

Dogen was suggesting that in “dropping body and mind” and being “actualised by the myriad things” you realise the reality of your interdependence with everything else. Insofar as you conceive of yourself as a separate body and mind you split yourself off.

This may seem quite alarming to us. It does not mean getting rid of body and mind but making them more transparent and seeing what lies beyond them. This state of consciousness is also referred to by the Sanskrit word *samadhi*, a non-dualistic state in which not only does our consciousness of ourselves as the experiencing “subject” become one with the experienced “object” but we lose the

absolute sense of ourselves as an exclusively separate being.

The silent rock

A profound level of meditative quiescence may seem to be outside the experience of most of us and known only to the sages of the world. But it is worth reading what they say about it. Katsuki Sekida, a twentieth century Zen master, writes that when, in meditation, breathing slows or even seems to stop “we encounter the purest form of existence”. He describes it as an exceptional state of tranquillity:

Traditionally it is called Original Nature or Buddha Nature. It is the hushed silence of the snow-clad Himalayas. Or it can be likened to the eternal silence of the fathomless depths of the sea. ^{xvii}

He elaborates on the sea metaphor by referring to a “koan” - a paradoxical saying used in China and Japan to help a student go beyond merely logical or conceptual thought:

There is a koan that runs, *“Pick up the silent rock from the depths of the sea and, without getting your sleeves wet, bring it up to me”*

The silent rock is yourself. You are asked to pick yourself up from the depths of the sea. But first you will have to find yourself at the bottom of the sea, where eternal silence reigns, with no time, space or causation and no difference between yourself and others. ^{xviii}

This state of samadhi is different from a normal state of consciousness. It is where you can discover your true nature. The activity of consciousness, contrary to expectations, conceals and distorts your real nature. If you allow yourself to experience absolute samadhi, when you come back into ordinary consciousness you will find it to be “brilliantly illuminating”.

For Sekida this brilliant illumination is a form of “positive samadhi” which is made

sharper by the experience of absolute samadhi but which is available to us as an aesthetic appreciation of existence, as art:

The flexible, elegant limbs of an animal, the cells of the organisms we see under the microscope, the crystal structure of minerals, whose exquisite formation makes us stare in wonder: what made them as they are? To say that their beauty is simply the product of man's thought is ludicrous. The flower is beautiful and cannot be otherwise. Man appreciates it and cannot fail to do so This is because existence itself is beautiful and those who look at its forms are existentially moved by their beauty. ^{xix}

In art - a form of positive samadhi - the world "displays itself in full bloom". Sekida quotes the *Hekigan Roku* otherwise known as "The Blue Cliff Records", a classic Zen text:

Spring has come round.
A thousand flowers are in their lovely bloom.
For what? For whom? ^{xx}

He adds:

Among the deep mountains and steep ravines, flowers come out unknown to man and pass away unnoticed. Existence does not exist for others. It is of itself, for itself by itself.

In the lonely retreat,
Among the Alpine rocks,
Caressed by the whispering breezes,
The wild pink makes merry by herself.

The beauty of nature is the manifestation of existence itself. It is beautiful simply because it is beautiful. To say that colour is waves of light and nothing

more is pointless. Existence produces its own beauty of itself, and appreciates it by itself. ^{xxi}

Where does this leave us, we might wonder. It remains that it is ourselves we should be examining as well as the world around us, The question follows: Who are we? The crisis of extinction we find ourselves in prompts this enquiry more than ever. It seems that we are not who we think we are. This question is the basis on which another twentieth century sage grounds his practice.

The real Self

Sri Ramana Maharishi taught those who wished to know the truth about themselves simply to meditate continually on the question: Who am I? Ramana is one of India's most revered spiritual modern masters. In 1896 at only sixteen he left home to lead a life of solitude and meditation at the foot of a sacred mountain – Arunachala - in southern India. He remained silent for four years but gained supporters and devotees merely by the power of his presence. Eventually he began to speak and to teach those who came to see him. His fame spread and he was visited by people from all sections of society and from all parts of the world. He remained at Arunachala until his death fifty years later and could never be persuaded to go more than two miles from the base of the mountain.

Ramana taught self-enquiry above all else as the principal means to realisation. For him the Self, as distinct from the personal self, was akin to Buddha, or Original, nature. The Self is the only thing we can be certain of. “The essence of Sri Ramana's teachings” according to one student, “is conveyed in his frequent assertions that there is a single immanent reality, directly experienced by everyone, which is simultaneously the source, the substance and the real nature of everything that exists”. ^{xxii} In Ramana's own words on the nature of the Self:

That in which all these worlds seem to exist steadily, that of which all these worlds are a possession, that from which all these worlds rise, that for which all these exist, that by which all these worlds come into existence, and that

which is indeed all these – that alone is the existing reality. Let us cherish that reality - which is the Heart. ^{xxiii}

This is the universal, transcendent Self - the substance of everything that exists, including the personal self or ego. Since all of creation was known as Self, Ramana used different names when talking of it, each standing for a different aspect of the same indivisible reality.

For instance he often used the word *God, Brahman, or Siva* since these names conveyed for many people the sense of transcendent being, though Ramana's God was always more than personal. He also spoke of the Self as the *Heart*, not the physical or subtle heart but in the sense of the centre of a person. Sometimes he spoke of "true knowledge", not of objective things but of the Self. Sometimes he spoke simply of "silence".

Ramana taught that the Self is pure being, a subjective awareness of "I am" which is quite distinct from the feeling "I am this" or "I am that". As David Godman comments, "There are no subjects or objects in the Self, there is only an awareness of being". We can doubt all objective statements about the world and about ourselves but we cannot doubt that "I am" or "we are". (note re Descartes and "I think therefore I am".)

"I exist" is the only permanent self-evident experience of everyone. Nothing is so self evident as "I am". What people call self-evident - the experience they get from the senses - is far from self-evident. The Self alone is that. So, to do self enquiry and be that "I am" is the only thing to do. "I am" is reality. I am this or that is unreal. "I am" is truth, another name for Self. ^{xxiv}

Given that 'I am' is the only certain reality, it makes sense to centre contemplation on the question "Who am I?" For Ramana there was no objective answer, for the knower cannot be known, but the knower can be experienced as the one asking the question. The ultimate reality of "I am" is being rather than knowing.

NOTES

i Robert C. Solomon *Continental Philosophy since 1750. The Rise and Fall of the Self.* Oxford University Press, 1988. P 3

ii Ibid. p 4

iii Ibid. p 6

iv Kathryn Schulz, *Being Wrong. Adventures in the Margin of Error.* London: Portobello Books, 2010. P 5

v David R. Loy *A Buddhist History of the West. Studies in Lack,* Albany: State University of New York Press, 2002.

vi Arya Maitreya and Acarya Asanga, *The Changeless Nature (the mahayanuttaratanasastra),* subtitled *The Ultimate Mahayana Treatise on the Changeless Continuity of the True Nature.* Translated under the guidance of Khenchen the IXth Thrangu Rinpoche and Khenpo Tsultrim Gyamtso Rinpoche by Kenneth Holmes and Katia Holmes with the kind assistance of Dharmacarya Tenpa Negi.

Ken Holmes is the Director of Studies at Kagyu Samye Ling, the Tibetan monastery and community situated at Eskdalemuir in Dumfries. Samye Ling was the first and is the largest Centre of Tibetan Buddhism and Culture in Europe. As a community it was first established in 1967 by Chogyam Trungpa Rinpoche and Akong Tulku Rinpoche. Holmes has been involved with Samye Ling since the early 1970s and has benefited from the instruction of many of the principal Tibetan Buddhist teachers working in the West.

vii Ken and Katia Holmes, *Maitreya on Buddha Nature. A new translation of Asanga's Mahayana Uttara Tantra Sastra* with a comprehensive commentary based upon traditional Kagyu explanations according to its contemporary masters, Kenchen Thrangu Rinpoche and Khenpo Tsultrim Gyamtso Rinpoche by Ken Holmes. Forres: Altea Publishing, 1999. Thrangu Rinpoche and Gyamtso Rinpoche are two scholars and teachers highly revered by Buddhist students around the world.

viii See Kenchen Thrangu Rinpoche *The UttaraTantra. A Treatise on Buddha Essence. A commentary on the Uttarat Tantra Shastra of Maitreya.* Translated by Ken and Katia Holmes. Auckland: Zhyisil Chokyi Ghatsal Charitable Trust, 2003; Arya Maitreya *Buddha Nature. The Mahayana Uttarat Tantra Shastra,* written down by Arya Asanga, commentary by Jamgon Kongtrul Lodro Thaye 'The Unassailable Lion's Roar'. Explanations by Khenpo Tsultrim Rinpoche. Translated by Rosemarie Fuchs. New York, Snow Lions publications, 2000;

S.K. Hookham *The Buddha Within. The Tathagarbha Doctrine According to the Shentong Interpretation of the Ratnagotravibhaga.* Delhi: Sri Satguru Publications, 1992.

ix Holmes, 1999, p 103.

x Peter Harvey, *An Introduction to Buddhism. Teachings, history and practices.* Cambridge University Press: 1990. P 115.

xi See Holmes, 1999 or Thrangu Rinpoche, 2003 for the chapter on "*Buddha nature or Buddha essence*".

xii For a recent scientific view of “nothing” see a collection of essays with that title from the New Scientist, *Nothing. From absolute zero to cosmic oblivion – amazing insights into nothing*. London: Profile Books, 2013. It is clear from these articles that “nothing” is not nothing. The book concedes that “Nothing needs a rethink: all too easily, we ignore or dismiss the fascinating possibilities of emptiness and non-existence”.

xiii Thrangu Rinpoche, 2003 p 232

xiv “Space” here stands for nothing – or no-thing. Its importance as no-thing is illustrated in a verse in the Tao Te Ching:

We put thirty spokes together and call it a wheel;
But it is on the space where there is nothing that the
Usefulness of the wheel depends.
We turn clay to make a vessel;
But it is on the space where there is nothing that the
Usefulness of the vessel depends.
We pierce doors and windows to make a house;
And it is on these spaces where there is nothing that the
Usefulness of the house depends.
Therefore just as we take advantage of what is, we should
Recognize the usefulness of what is not.

Buddha essence is the space - the no-thing, the emptiness - in each of us. It is to human nature what space is to the manifest universe – the groundless ground.

xv Ibid. p 232

xvi Kazuaki Tanahashi *Moon in a Dewdrop. Writings of Zen Master Dogen* New York: North Point Press, 1995, 1985 p70.

xvii Katsuki Sekida *A Guide to Zen. Lessons from a Modern Master*. Edited by Marc Allen. Novato: New World Library 2013 P 58. This book consists of extracts from Sekida’s classic *Zen Training. Methods and Philosophy*. Boston and London, Shambhala 2005, 1985.

xviii Ibid. p 58

xix Ibid p 60. *Zen Training*, p 161

xx *Zen Training*, p 161

xxi Ibid. p 60-61, ZT 162

xxii David Godman (Ed) *Be As You Are. The Teachings of Sri Ramana Maharshi* London: Penguin Arkana, 1985 p 9. For the most comprehensive of Ramana's teachings see *Talks with Ramana Maharshi. On Realising Abiding Peace and Happiness.* Carlsbad, California: Inner Directions, The Spirit of Insight and Awakening, 2000-2010.

xxiii *Ibid.* p 7

xxiv *Ibid.* p 45