

**The Buddha In Your Body**  
**Is The Meditation Establishment Preventing Your**  
**Enlightenment?**

Barclay Powers

At first a yogi feels his mind is tumbling like a waterfall;  
In mid-course, like the Ganges, it flows on slow and  
gentle; in the end, it is a great vast ocean,  
Where the lights of Child and Mother merge into one.

Tilopa <sup>1</sup>

Although the Western meditation establishment is composed of many well-meaning individuals, few have achieved Buddhahood. Since these meditation teachers have not achieved the fruit of “uniting the mother and child lights,” the re-creation of conception, they often unintentionally prevent their students from achieving real liberation. Real liberation is the most valuable thing on earth, the lost secret of immortality. Let us not forget that the historical Buddha is believed to have said that he had discovered the “elixir of immortality.”

A major problem with meditation instruction in the West is that most teachers are not using the idea of recreating conception within the body, called the Spiritual or Golden Embryo in Chinese internal alchemy (*nei dan*) and the Reality Body or Truth Body (*Dharmakaya*) in Mahayana and Vajrayana Buddhism.

Liu Ming, a Chinese adept, says,

The valley spirit is the unique energy of primordial nothingness; this is what is called the spiritual embryo. <sup>2</sup>

He goes on to say that the Confucians called it the Great Ultimate or Ultimate Truth. Buddhists called it Complete Awareness or the Body of Reality or the Relic of Buddha. Taoists (Daoists) call it the Golden Elixir, the Spiritual Embryo or the Valley Spirit. Buddhism describes this as Tathagatagarbha, the Embryo of Buddhahood. It is also referred to as *shengtai*.

Syncretist movements combining Taoism, Buddhism, and Confucianism compare the Taoist *sheng-t'ai* to the Buddhist *tathagatagarbha* or the *Dharmakaya*.

The term *sheng-t'ai* furthermore occurs in the writings of Tsung-mi, a patriarch of the Hua-yen School of Chinese Buddhism. In a passage on the origin of Zen, Tsung-mi speaks of nourishing the spirit (*shen*) and

allowing the sacred embryo to grow. Ma-tzu Tao-i, one of the most famous Zen masters of the 8th century, also used the term. <sup>3</sup>



*Embryo of Enlightenment*

When Mencius, another ancient sage of China, says that, “To know one’s nature is to know heaven,” he is saying that there is a dimension of enlightenment that is possible to access if you succeed in returning the Embryo of Enlightenment to void or emptiness. This describes the completion stage of an inner alchemical incubation in which conception is recreated. The ultimate result is an inner subtle body union, the union of “mother and child lights.” This is the goal of Dzogchen, Mahamudra and Daoist inner alchemy.

The starting point of your body, the initial point of conception – your Buddha nature – contains all the information that's necessary to create an enlightened, golden, embryonic version of yourself. According to Chinese meditation theory, the energy between the time of your conception and the time of your birth is still enlightened and still connected to the Tao. Uniting pre-birth and post-birth consciousness or energy results in enlightenment. In Taoist practice, meditation, inner yoga, inner alchemy, qi gong, and tai chi (taiji) are based on harnessing the three treasures (*jing*, *qi* and *shen*). Buddhism describes this as *nadi*, *prana* and *bindu*. In Tibetan this is *tsa*, *lung* and *thigle*. Thigle and bindu are sometimes translated as *kundalini* or *chandali*. Buddhism calls the Embryo of Buddhahood your Original Face or Primordial Face.

The basic meditation process describes *jing* (reproductive energy) being refined into *qi* (vital life energy). The *qi* is then further refined into *shen* (original spirit) or the Spiritual Embryo, which is then returned to void and then back to Tao at the completion stage.

The goal of Chinese meditation is *shen ming*, inner illumination. This is achieved in both Buddhist and Taoist systems by fully opening the energy meridians of the body. In other words, the goal is to physiologically unite the microcosm of the human body and the macrocosm of the multiverse. Both Taoism and Buddhism have the idea of multiplying transformation or emanation bodies at the highest levels of self-cultivation. If conception is successfully recreated the subtle body (energy body) gains the ability to

duplicate universally outside of space and time. An enlightened, self-replicating subtle body is associated with the completion stage of meditation. Some Lamas describe Buddhahood metaphorically as an individual entering a television studio and appearing on all the screens in all dimensions simultaneously.



*The meditation achievement of self-replicating consciousness.*

There is nothing wrong with compassion, mindfulness and meditation as taught by the Buddhist establishment, except that you will never achieve Buddhahood in your lifetime by relying on these incomplete methods. Fewer negative emotions and greater happiness are wonderful meditation side effects, but the union of the three bodies (*Trikaya*) of a living Buddha is the

real goal. Modern practitioners have not yet been able to conceive the Embryo of Buddhahood because they have not opened the energy meridians completely.

Comparing the development of the embryo to the revelation of Buddhahood is typical of *Neidan* texts of the Ming period. For instance, the *Xingming guizhi* (*Principles of Balanced Cultivation of Inner Nature and Vital Force*) uses Body of the Law (*fashen*, *Dharmakaya*) as a synonym for *shengtai*. The birth of the embryo represents the appearance of the original spirit (*yuanshen*) or Buddhahood and is understood as enlightenment. The process leading to the birth of the embryo consists of the purification of inner nature and vital force (*xing and ming*). Thus the true inner nature and vital force come into being, which in turn is equated to the return to emptiness. The embryo also indicates the unity of body (*shen*), heart (*xin*), and intention (*yi*) in a state of quiescence without motion. <sup>4</sup>

### **The Spiritual Embryo**

In Chinese meditation the Spiritual Embryo is the core energy in a human being, when it's refined – the original energy of the body's conception. It is this energy, when led to the center of the brain (the pineal

gland, or *nihuan* point in the Chinese inner alchemy system) that results in inner illumination. Nihuan is the Chinese pronunciation of nirvana.

Taoists frequently refer to the sacred embryo as the golden flower, which opens when the adept has attained enlightenment. In a philosophical sense the enlightenment of the followers of the inner elixir consists in a return to nothingness. <sup>5</sup>

In Buddhism this is called the Reality Body or Dharmakaya Truth Body. The theory of embryonic enlightenment is the goal of both Buddhist and Taoist meditation practices. By refining and reversing the body's energy back to its starting point, recreating conception within the body, enlightenment or the return to void is achieved.

This concept of a self-generated, golden, unified being dissolving into emptiness at the time of enlightenment underlies Flower Garland or Hua Yen Buddhism and esoteric or tantric Buddhism. In Tibet this is called "seeing the primordial face of golden non-duality." What this means is that the initial point of conception within everyone's body is actually the tathagatagarbha or Embryo of Buddhahood. One patriarch of the Hua Yen school described a final meditation experience in which he embraced and swallowed a golden man and achieved liberation.



*Subtle body projection of consciousness.*

## Enlightenment and Immortals

In China the secret of enlightenment was called “the secret of immortality.” There are actually five different types of immortals – ghost immortals, human immortals, earthly immortals, celestial immortals and golden immortals, which represent different levels of self-cultivation. The golden immortals would be similar to Buddhas. What meditation practitioners were seeking was inner illumination. When Taoists speak of immortals they are not actually describing someone who lives in a physical body forever. An achieved one may be able to keep their body for 100 or



even 200 years but the most important point is that they have achieved true inner illumination through the inner alchemical firing process.

Many people in the West think of enlightenment in a psychological way, without the idea of a fundamental energy (qi, prana) activation. What's been left out is that real enlightenment is recreating conception within the body. Activating the original energy of the body and in particular, heating the starting point of the body (bindu), creates the Spiritual Embryo, the mother light, which dissolves into the child light at the completion stage.

The theory is that there is an incredible reservoir of stored energy in the lower torso that is heated by a variety of methods – which often include meditation, heat yoga, breath work and qi gong. This has to do with an actual physiological transmutation in which the energy meridians of the body are fully opened and the subtle bodies are unified.

When most Western people consider meditation they mean quiet sitting, following the breath and calming the mind. If you leave out the energy activation aspect you've left out the real mechanism of inner illumination. You're supposed to be taking the reproductive energy of the body and using it to supercharge the brain, which results in embryonic enlightenment, the union of "mother and child lights." By doing these types of body-centered energy practices the adepts are able to create both spiritual and physical change in their bodies.

What we're talking about here is literally rearranging the energetic structure of the mind and the body into a single whole, a primordial state of

perfection. This occurs when the two inner subtle bodies unite within the physical body, the union of “mother and child lights.”

Chinese and Indo-Tibetan lineages sometimes emphasize sexual yoga practices as one of the most secret methods of achieving inner illumination. A well-known saying from this tradition is that, “There can be no Mahamudra (enlightenment) without karmamudra (sexual yoga).” That’s what the famous Chinese inner alchemist, Chang Po Tuan, is describing when he says, “husband and wife in blissful embrace, this is a real experience, not just a metaphor.”

This method was always controversial because many Buddhist and Taoist monastic systems emphasized celibacy. In Tibet the practices of “the lower gate” were reserved for advanced initiates, who had completed the tummo heat yoga. In both Taoist and tantric Buddhist tradition this type of practice was taught with a lot of caution since it is easy for the practitioner to get caught up in mere sensuality and lose sight of the spiritual/energetic goals of the practice.



*Samantabhadra (the primordial Dharmakaya Buddha)*

*This image is a visual depiction of the “union of mother and child lights” at the completion stage of the Thogal practice of Dzogchen meditation.*

## **How Does Conventional Meditation Prevent Enlightenment?**

Conventional meditation can only result in extended tranquil states of mind and perhaps greater positive thoughts or happiness but without the energy channels of the body opening, the union of the three bodies of Buddhahood is not possible.

The *Uttara Tantra* tells the same story over and over. A human being is like a poor starving person living in a little hovel that doesn't know that

there's a golden treasure buried under his floor. Or it's like a pure gold statue that's wrapped in dirty cloths whose owner doesn't know that they just need to remove the dirty cloths for the brilliance of the statue to shine forth. Whether a black cloud or a white cloud obscures the sun, the nature of the sun is unchanged.

There is a line in the *Tamil* alchemical tradition that says, "enlightenment of the mind without enlightenment of the body is considered delusion."

The physiological firing process is the most dangerous part of the system, the most secret part, yet it's what determines whether the system works or not. Unless the meridians open completely and the two inner subtle bodies unite, deathless consciousness cannot be realized.

There is a famous story about Milarepa and his foremost disciple Gampopa. Gampopa could go into a meditation state of samadhi for three days without moving. Milarepa told him, "You need to combine that with my heat yoga and then you'll be my best student." Gampopa followed this advice and attained Buddhahood.

Liberation can't happen just from a state of deep meditation, inner heat is necessary. Without enough heat, which can be generated by a variety of methods – holding the breath, embryonic breathing, sexual yoga – there isn't going to be the complete energy activation that's necessary to result in "the union of the three bodies."



*Outer sexual union results in inner subtle body union.*

*Yab yum (father/mother) is the Tibetan pronunciation of yin yang.*

Most practitioners do not understand the subtle body energy theory. However, there are physical results from the practices we have been talking about. If someone can go out into the snow and spend all night there without freezing, as the Tibetan practitioners of *tummo* (inner heat practice) do, that's a physiological result. This is why Tibet's most famous yogi, Milarepa, was called "the Cotton Garbed One."

One example of a heat practice in the Taoist tradition is to put the attention of the mind into the lower abdomen or dan tian. By concentrating on this center, heat will be created, which can then be circulated throughout the body's energy meridians.

Tantric Buddhism theorizes that there are twenty-two knots or blockages in the energy meridians that must be cleared by energy circulation for realization to occur.

It is by grounding our practice in our body that we can effect the physiological changes that allow us to discover that the deepest level of our bodies is actually enlightenment itself. Embryonic enlightenment is the result of this physiological firing process and results in Buddhahood or a Return to Tao.

In Chinese meditation practice this is described as the union of pre-birth and post-birth energy or consciousness. In Indian medicine uniting solar and lunar energy meridians within the central channel of the body is said to result in realization.

As it says in the *I Ching (Yi Jing)*, "Understand the heart of the mind, see the original spirit and arrive at destiny." The original spirit is the Golden Embryo of Taoism or the Original Face of Buddhism. Deathless consciousness is the result.



Barclay Powers is an author and futurist filmmaker. He earned his Bachelor of Arts in East Asian Studies from Columbia University and has an extensive background as an independent scholar. He has studied Chinese, Tibetan and Indian meditation, yoga and martial arts traditions for more than 30 years. Powers is currently releasing multiple media projects worldwide in film and print, related to the evolution of consciousness based on his studies with numerous masters of ancient wisdom traditions. His most recent film, *The Lost Secret of Immortality*, based on his book, won best spiritual/religious/Christian film at the Great Lakes International Film Festival, 2012, the Silver Palm Award at the Mexico International Film Festival, 2012 and best spiritual documentary at the New York International Film Festival, 2011. See his website at [www.lostsecretofimmortality.com](http://www.lostsecretofimmortality.com) for information on the book, graphic novel and film.

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<sup>1</sup> Kornfield, Jack. *The Song of Mahamudra*, Shambhala, 1993.

<sup>2</sup> Cleary, Thomas, *Understanding Reality, A Taoist Alchemical Classic*, University of Hawaii Press, 1987.

<sup>3</sup> *The Shambhala Dictionary of Taoism*, Shambhala, 1989.

<sup>4</sup> Martina Darga, *Encyclopedia of Taoism*, Routledge, 2008.

<sup>5</sup> *The Encyclopedia of Ancient Philosophy and Religion*, Shambhala, 1994.