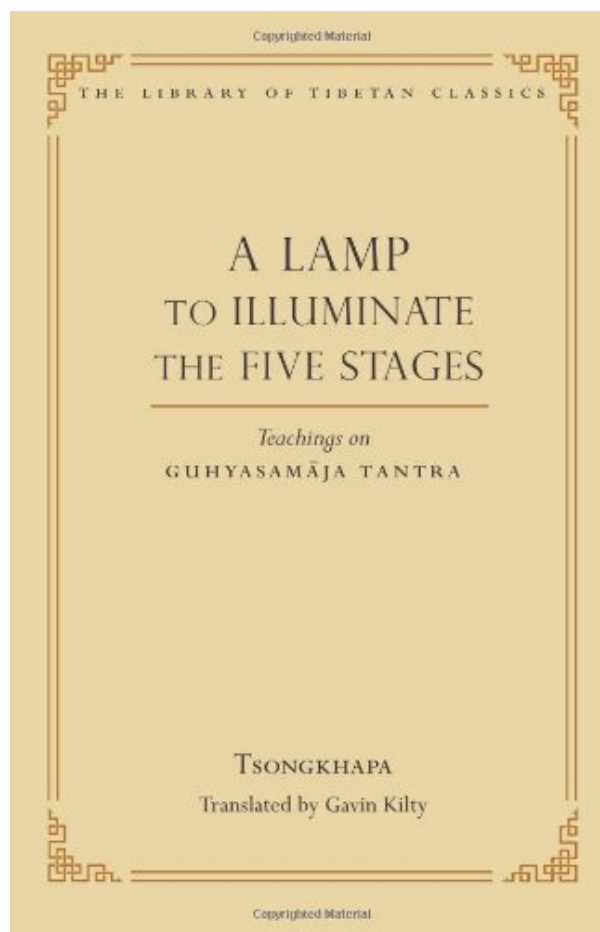
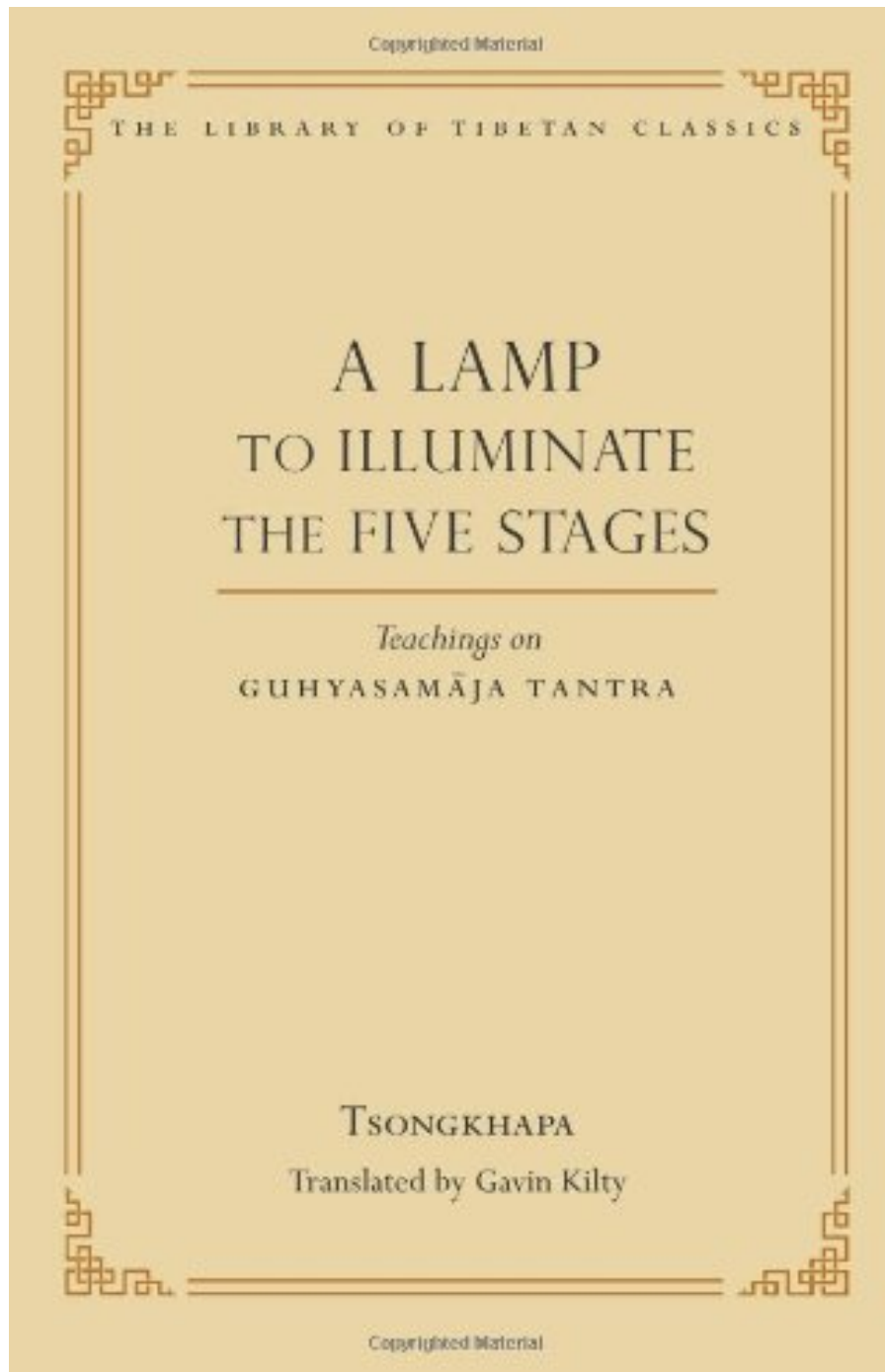


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## **Review**

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Introduction (partial)

#### TANTRA

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Method and wisdom are said to be the two wings of the bird that flies to enlightenment. Two wings are needed because the goal of buddhahood is essentially twofold: the resultant and enlightened state known as the dharmakaya, or "wisdom body," which refers to the unencumbered knowledge of the Buddha, or his enlightened mind, and the resultant embodiment of that enlightened mind, known as the rupakaya, or "form body." The wing of method accomplishes the rupakaya, and that of wisdom accomplishes the dharmakaya. The reality or final truth of all phenomena, which is obscured by our omnipresent unknowing state of mind, is sought out by the practices grouped under the category of wisdom. This reality is not something invented by the Buddha or added by later Buddhist commentators. In that sense, it is not a Buddhist truth; it is the actual way phenomena exist, and has existed, since time immemorial. Because of this, any Buddhist wisdom practice—sutra or tantra—aimed at discovering this truth is seeking out the same reality. There is no

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However, the practices of method in tantra are generally recognized to be superior to those of sutra. This is especially true in the highest class of tantra, known as highest yoga tantra (anuttarayoga tantra). There, method refers to two exclusive practices not found in nontantric Buddhist practice. First, method can refer to the type of mind that focuses on the ultimate truth, or emptiness. Normally, a mind dedicated to the perception of emptiness belongs to the wisdom side of practice as mentioned above. But in tantra this mind is combined with a great bliss that is produced by bringing the inner winds, or energies (vayu), into the central channel (dhuti) of the body. This manipulation of the bodily winds is achieved by a variety of methods, described in the present text. The bliss and the consciousness focused on emptiness are united as one. Such a bliss-consciousness is a very powerful and fast method to develop the wisdom that understands emptiness. The bliss-consciousness also is transformed through yogic practice into the form of the deity of the tantra. This is method, and the mind cognizing emptiness is wisdom. Because these two are essentially one entity, method and wisdom in tantra are said to be of one mind. This is not found outside of tantra. In sutra practices, wisdom is supported and supplemented by method practices such as compassion, and method is accompanied by the wisdom practices of understanding impermanence and the nature of phenomena, but they are never of one entity.

The other type of method found in tantra is the development of a form known as the illusory body. This body is created from the subtle inner winds and is in the aspect of the resultant buddha form that is the goal of the practice. This illusory body is the exclusive cause of the form body of a buddha, the rupakaya. Alongside this practice is the wisdom development of the mental state of clear light. This is in the nature of a very subtle level of mind and is the exclusive cause for the enlightened mind, or dharmakaya. These two practices are explained in great depth in the text and are not found in the sutra path. Tantra, therefore, is a fast method for gaining the two enlightened forms and is characterized by exclusive method practices.

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# **A LAMP TO ILLUMINATE THE FIVE STAGES: TEACHINGS ON GUHYASAMAJA TANTRA (LIBRARY OF TIBETAN CLASSICS) BY JE TSONGKHAPA PDF**

Tsongkhapa's *A Lamp to Illuminate the Five Stages* (1419) is a comprehensive presentation of the highest yoga class of Buddhist tantra, especially the key practices - the so-called five stages (pancakrama) - of the advanced phase of Guhyasamaja tantra. Beginning with a thorough examination of the Indian sources, Tsongkhapa draws particularly from the writings of Nagarjuna, Aryadeva, Candrakirti, and Naropa to develop a definitive understanding of the Vajrayana completion stage. Whereas in the generation stage, meditators visualize the Buddha in the form of the deity residing in a mandala palace, in the completion stage discussed in the present volume, meditators transcend ordinary consciousness and actualize the state of a buddha themselves. Among other things, Tsongkhapa's work covers the subtle human physiology of channels and winds along with the process of dying, the bardo, and rebirth. This definitive statement on Guhyasamaja tantra profoundly affected the course of Buddhist practice in Tibet.

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- 636 pages

## Review

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Wonderful resource for students of Tibetan Buddhism

By patrick lambelet

A Lamp to Illuminate the Five Stages is one of the most important works by the fourteenth-century Tibetan scholar and contemplative Tsongkhapa Losang Drakpa, founder of the Gelug tradition of Tibetan Buddhism. This translation by Gavin Kilty for the Library of Tibetan Classics is the second complete translation of this work into English, and in my opinion, it is an indispensable resource for those wishing to seriously study the system of Highest Yoga Tantra. The first translation, by Robert Thurman, was published in 2010 as Brilliant Illumination of the Lamp of the Five Stages. Kilty's excellent translation is lucid and readable, making this extremely challenging work accessible to Western scholars and practitioners. Although both translations have merits of their own, I highly recommend this edition for its clear and consistent terminology, whereas some may find Thurman's translation vocabulary difficult. As a tutor for an in-depth Tibetan Buddhist studies course, in which one of the principal subjects is Guhyasamaja, I can say that this translation will be extremely beneficial for students of Buddhist tantra.

The Lamp is an extensive and highly detailed commentary on the completion stage of the Guhyasamaja

Tantra, one of the most important tantras of the Highest Yoga Tantra system. Tsongkhapa held the Guhyasamaja in especially high regard and composed several commentaries on it, the Lamp being the most extensive, as well as his final work. It is said that by understanding the Guhyasamaja well, one can unlock the meaning of other Highest Yoga Tantra systems, such as Yamantaka and Chakrasamvara, more easily.

Kilty's introduction gives a clear and useful overview of the various systems within Mahayana Buddhism, explaining the differences between the sutra and mantra paths and then delving into the main features of Highest Yoga Tantra, the highest class of tantra. In tantra, the collections of method and wisdom are accumulated simultaneously, as opposed to sutra, where they are practiced as separate entities. Highest Yoga Tantra's distinguishing features include the practice of the clear light mind realizing emptiness and the cultivation of the illusory body, the goal being the final attainment of "union" of these two in the state of Buddhahood. Highest Yoga Tantra is divided into two main stages: the generation stage and the completion stage. In the generation stage, the practitioner merely imagines himself or herself as a deity within a mandala, while the completion stage involves practices to actually transform the body and mind on a fundamental level through yogas harnessing the body's subtle energies (winds), bringing about manifestation of the clear light mind and the illusory body. Tsongkhapa's Lamp is an explanation of the five stages of the completion stage, especially in the Arya tradition of Nagarjuna, one of the two main lineages of Guhyasamaja. Like much of Tsongkhapa's writing, the Lamp is dense and challenging, with copious citations from root tantras as well as Indian and Tibetan commentators, and detailed analyses of their views. Tsongkhapa carefully dissects these views, demystifying the often opaque tantric teachings and clarifying the meaning of even the most difficult points.

Part 1 is dedicated to the divisions of Highest Yoga Tantra, and begins by clarifying the division of Highest Yoga Tantras into father and mother tantras, based on their emphasis on either method (the illusory body) or wisdom (the clear light). Although both are cultivated in most Highest Yoga Tantras, different tantras place more emphasis on one or the other of these two facets of practice. Guhyasamaja is considered a method, or father, tantra. Following this is a discussion of the "root tantra," "later tantra," and "explanatory tantra" in relation to the Guhyasamaja. Tsongkhapa also refers to the division of the completion stage into five stages, and to the hermeneutical methods used to decipher the Guhyasamaja, also found in the explanatory tantras and the works of masters such as Nagarjuna. The Guhyasamaja "gathers all the secrets" of the tantras, and in this sense is comparable to the "basket" of sutras, in that it contains the essential points of all the tantras. Following this is a chapter on the commentarial traditions of Guhyasamaja, exploring the lineages of commentaries by Indian masters and their assertions on the Guhyasamaja path.

Part 2 of the book is dedicated to the actual path of Guhyasamaja. Here the basis of the path is training in the general stages of the path, as explained in the lam rim texts. Following this is a general presentation of the two stages--how to enter the mantra vehicle, how to maintain the vows and pledges, the order of the two stages, and so forth. In the following chapters, we find explanations of the inseparable bliss and emptiness of the completion stage, where Tsongkhapa clarifies that the emptiness taught here is the same as that of the Perfection of Wisdom sutras, i.e. the emptiness of inherent existence, while bliss is the special subjective mind of clear light unique to Highest Yoga Tantra. Following this is an explanation of the methods for meditation on the "vital points" of the body in order to generate great bliss, with detailed explanations of how a yogi causes the winds to enter into the central channel and ignite the inner heat, melting the subtle drops and generating great bliss, which is then used to meditate on emptiness.

Part 3 explains the divisions of the completion stage. Here, Tsongkhapa explains how to realize the correct meanings and way of practicing the Guhyasamaja Tantra, i.e. relying on explanatory tantras to understand the root tantra, and relying on the oral instructions to understand the explanatory tantras. Next he explains the divisions of the completion stage into five stages (vajra recitation, mental isolation, illusory body, clear light,

and union), as well as their definite order and number, examines how the "six yogas" of Guhyasamaja are included in the five stages, and how they compare to the six yogas of the Kalachakra system.

Parts 4, 5, and 6 are respectively concerned with the three "isolations": "body isolation," "speech isolation," and "mind isolation." On these three levels, the yogi trains sequentially in the means for actually dissolving the energy winds into the central channel, into the heart chakra, and into the indestructible drop at the center of the heart chakra. Part 7 presents stages for attain the "conventional truth illusory body," or the "impure" illusory body. Here, as a result of the three isolations, the yogi actually arises in the form of a deity's illusory body, which is made up of subtle wind and mind and is separated from the coarse body through meditation. Tsongkhapa then explains the methods for combining, or "mixing," the illusory-body practice with the states of sleeping, dreaming, death, and the intermediate state.

After attaining the illusory body, the yogi enters the level of "ultimate-truth clear light," which is explained in part 8. Here, the practitioner directly realizes emptiness, abandoning the afflictive obscurations, the root of cyclic existence (samsara). This section also explains how a practitioner of the sutra path must necessarily enter the path of Highest Yoga Tantra in order to attain the final state of buddhahood, and at what point of the path this must be done.

In part 9, Tsongkhapa explains the stage of union of the previous two stages: the illusory body and the clear light (also known as the "two truths" of Highest Yoga Tantra). Here, Tsongkhapa also explains the number of levels, or grounds, in the Guhyasamaja system. Part 10 is a presentation of the three types of "tantric activities" for enhancing the practice of the two stages--activities with elaboration, without elaboration, and completely without elaboration. These methods, by which one enhances the level of bliss that is used to realize emptiness in the path of Highest Yoga Tantra, are presented in the context of both the generation stage and the completion stage. Here, Tsongkhapa describes the rituals that accompany the activities, the special costumes, dances, and so forth. The text concludes with the explanation of the attainment of enlightenment upon having completed the training in the completion stage and its activities.

The Library of Tibetan Classics has done a commendable job in producing this wonderful translation of a work that is essential for serious students of Tibetan Buddhism and the Buddhist systems of tantra. As more Westerners are becoming interested in these teachings and receiving them directly from Tibetan teachers, translations such as this will be of immeasurable benefit. Readers should be aware that this is a detailed and scholastic philosophical commentary, not a "how-to" manual of tantra. If you're looking for something of a more introductory nature, you are likely to be disappointed, but if you want to learn about one of the most profound systems of Buddhist thought, this is an excellent resource.

9 of 10 people found the following review helpful.

A Solid, Helpful Translation

By grouper52

It is natural that this new rendition of Tsongkhapa's Lamp will be compared to the earlier one by Robert Thurman. Indeed, given the contrasts, and given the small number of readers who might run across or seek out either volume but not be aware of the other, I expect the comparison will be a common theme in reviews here. I will fall in line as well.

This new translation is very nice. It is quite user friendly, and the effort that went into making it clear and approachable is evident and much appreciated. The presentation of the Tibetan outline system here is nicely and thoughtfully tempered, presenting an organization scheme that is both helpful and less annoyingly blatant. The introduction is also very approachable and helpful.

The writing here, compared to Thurman's, is more sober, more straightforward, easier to negotiate and understand. This is the main distinction between the two translations. It seems this should be an unqualified plus, and yet I have mixed thoughts about it.

There are numerous paired translations of Hindu and Buddhist scriptures that I have read over the decades. In almost every case one rendition is clearly superior. Often one is not clear or not accurate in the main points. Often the approach in one is overly academic for a practitioner such as me. Most often, however, the problem in the lesser translation boils down to word choices that are too flowery or idiosyncratic. An example that comes readily to mind is the Visuddhimagga, in which the Pe Maung Tin translation is simply too ornate in its language compared to the dry but far superior one by Bhikkhu Nanamoli.

Certainly this translation of Tsongkhapa's Lamp is much less flowery and idiosyncratic in its use of language than that of Robert Thurman. Thurman's phrasing and word choices are almost wild at times. Thurman is very much present on the pages, rather than taking the more modest role of a mere translator. Perhaps Thurman's "ego" should not shine through, but Tsongkhapa himself, and numerous other Tibetan heavy hitters, didn't seem overly worried about such niceties.

Personally, I never mind Thurman's presence in his translation. Seldom does his language get in the way of understanding: the occasions where I had to pause a bit to struggle with the phrasing amounted to little more than the enjoyable solving of a riddle, and it made the reading far from dry or boring. His enthusiasm for the writings and his joy in bringing them to us is refreshingly evident. And these are, after all, Tantric teachings - the roots of which, culturally and scripturally, are far, far from the staid and refined gloss the later Indian and Tibetan monastics put on them. This is wild stuff, and I do not begrudge Thurman his wildly, blissfully enjoyable translation, a translation that I might add has been of enormous practical help to me.

Which translation would I recommend over the other?

People who grew up far from the coast will often have an indelible impression the first time they stand before the vastness of the ocean. Whether first seen as a wild storm roles in, or seen on a clear, sun-drenched day, the awe of that encounter will never leave.

For anyone fortunate enough to study either translation, and apply it to their practices, the awe of that encounter will never leave.

2 of 2 people found the following review helpful.

Crawl Before You Walk

By Kenneth M. Goodman

This book truly delivers the "highest of the highest" tantras, especially when it comes to evolving beyond allegories such as "mental-moonlight to pure sun," "bright cloudless sky" and "emptiness & bliss united," etc...all these are excellent meditative tools, but this "Guhyasamaja" tantra shows the way to transcend mere "pictures of empty sky" to really & truly see self-knowing clarity on its own, free from all winds of confusion...even clearer than the explanation "free from all winds of confusion!" One of many excellent tools it provides is how to actually use the mind-illuminating mantra, "om ah hum." Mantras like this should not be used frivolously, and won't work if simply "bought" for \$60 at some meditation-for-profit center. But the main reason I'm writing here is to strongly suggest that you not buy this book until you've first read another book in this excellent series: "Mahamudra and Related Instructions." I don't see how anyone could get direct value from "A Lamp To Illuminate The Five Stages" without first understanding how to apply the "Mahamudra way" of non-conceptual understanding. So, if you first buy, read & (reasonably) understand the Mahamudra book...then I would highly recommend purchasing "A Lamp." The decision to publish this

precious manuscript in English is very highly appreciated.

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# **A LAMP TO ILLUMINATE THE FIVE STAGES: TEACHINGS ON GUHYASAMAJA TANTRA (LIBRARY OF TIBETAN CLASSICS) BY JE TSONGKHAPA PDF**

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## **Review**

"Working from an extremely difficult Tibetan text, Gavin Kilty has succeeded in making his translation readable and comprehensible while at the same time most careful and accurate. I read Kilty's translation alongside the Tibetan and believe it to be the kind of exemplary achievement every translator should aspire to." (Yael Bentor, Hebrew University of Jerusalem)

"The Guhyasamaja Tantra and its circle of texts changed the face of tantric Buddhism. Kilty's translation is at once accurate and a pleasure to read. It represents a major contribution to our growing knowledge of this profound and beautiful tradition and will be valued by scholars and practitioners alike for many years to come." (Jacob P. Dalton, UC Berkeley, author of Tibetan Tantric Manuscripts from Dunhuang)

"Another masterful translation by Gavin Kilty! The teaching of Guhyasamaja Tantra is the fundamental purpose of the Gelukpa tantric colleges, and Tsongkhapa's Lamp is the foundational guide through this most profound system. Gavin Kilty has again presented us with a most accessible, accurate rendering of this central text in lucid translation." (Jeffrey Hopkins, Emeritus Professor of Tibetan Studies, University of Virginia)

"This important work, the great Tsongkhapa's final major masterpiece, brings to English readers the most authoritative account of the highest, most esoteric practice of Tibetan Buddhism. Gavin Kilty should be congratulated for having produced a highly readable translation of a very difficult and complex text." (Daniel Cozort, Dickinson College, author of Highest Yoga Tantra)

"Tsongkhapa's Lamp to Illuminate the Five Stages stands as one of the greatest literary contributions to the genre of highest yoga tantra ever written. In his translation of this extremely profound text, Gavin Kilty has successfully captured both its meaning and eloquence with such precision and grace that it will stand as the benchmark to which future translations of similar material must aspire." (David Gonzalez, translator of Source of Supreme Bliss)

"A work of singular importance. Gavin Kilty's masterful English translation is a gem that will deeply enrich the lives of many generations of readers." (Art Engle, Fellow at Tsadra Foundation)

#### About the Author

Tsongkhapa Losang Dragpa (1357-1419) is arguably the finest scholar-practitioner produced by the Buddhism of Tibet. Renowned for both his written works and his meditative accomplishments, he founded the Gelug school, which produced the lineage of the Dalai Lamas.

Gavin Kilty has been a full-time translator for the Institute of Tibetan Classics since 2001. Before that he lived in Dharamsala, India, for fourteen years, where he spent eight years training in the traditional Geluk monastic curriculum through the medium of class and debate at the Institute of Buddhist Dialectics. He also teaches Tibetan language courses in India, Nepal, and elsewhere, and is a translation reviewer for the organization 84000, Translating the Words of the Buddha.

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Introduction (partial)

#### TANTRA

Buddhist tantra of the kind found in Tibet and other Himalayan regions was mostly brought from the Indian subcontinent between the eighth and eleventh centuries in two great waves known as the early and late translations. These tantras were gathered by a few brave souls who made the perilous journey from Tibet to India to locate them. Sometimes they were translated in India with the help of experienced Indian pandits. Occasionally, Indian pandits traveled to Tibet to assist in translation. Also, one or two Indian Buddhist masters journeyed to Tibet, bringing with them tantras that were then rendered into Tibetan.

So what is a tantra, and how does it differ from that other genre of Buddhist teachings known as sutra? All Buddhist teachings are designed to lead the disciple from the unsatisfactory state of existence, known as samsara, in which we are prone to a host of unwanted experiences grouped under the term "suffering." The essential component of samsara, or the "cycle of existence," is that we are not in control of our destiny but languish under the sway of various mental afflictions that bring about this suffering. The teachings of the Buddha are designed to place us on the path that leads to the cessation of suffering (nirvana) or to the higher state of the enlightenment of buddhahood. The practices that lead to the cessation of suffering and especially to enlightenment can be grouped under the headings of method and wisdom. Method deals with goal-oriented, aspirational practices such as the development of love and compassion, patience, perseverance, and so on, while wisdom concentrates on penetrating the depths of reality.

Method and wisdom are said to be the two wings of the bird that flies to enlightenment. Two wings are needed because the goal of buddhahood is essentially twofold: the resultant and enlightened state known as the dharmakaya, or "wisdom body," which refers to the unencumbered knowledge of the Buddha, or his enlightened mind, and the resultant embodiment of that enlightened mind, known as the rupakaya, or "form body." The wing of method accomplishes the rupakaya, and that of wisdom accomplishes the dharmakaya. The reality or final truth of all phenomena, which is obscured by our omnipresent unknowing state of mind, is sought out by the practices grouped under the category of wisdom. This reality is not something invented by the Buddha or added by later Buddhist commentators. In that sense, it is not a Buddhist truth; it is the actual way phenomena exist, and has existed, since time immemorial. Because of this, any Buddhist wisdom practice—sutra or tantra—aimed at discovering this truth is seeking out the same reality. There is no difference between sutra and tantra in terms of the ultimate truth.

However, the practices of method in tantra are generally recognized to be superior to those of sutra. This is

especially true in the highest class of tantra, known as highest yoga tantra (anuttarayoga tantra). There, method refers to two exclusive practices not found in nontantric Buddhist practice. First, method can refer to the type of mind that focuses on the ultimate truth, or emptiness. Normally, a mind dedicated to the perception of emptiness belongs to the wisdom side of practice as mentioned above. But in tantra this mind is combined with a great bliss that is produced by bringing the inner winds, or energies (vayu), into the central channel (dhuti) of the body. This manipulation of the bodily winds is achieved by a variety of methods, described in the present text. The bliss and the consciousness focused on emptiness are united as one. Such a bliss-consciousness is a very powerful and fast method to develop the wisdom that understands emptiness. The bliss consciousness also is transformed through yogic practice into the form of the deity of the tantra. This is method, and the mind cognizing emptiness is wisdom. Because these two are essentially one entity, method and wisdom in tantra are said to be of one mind. This is not found outside of tantra. In sutra practices, wisdom is supported and supplemented by method practices such as compassion, and method is accompanied by the wisdom practices of understanding impermanence and the nature of phenomena, but they are never of one entity.

The other type of method found in tantra is the development of a form known as the illusory body. This body is created from the subtle inner winds and is in the aspect of the resultant buddha form that is the goal of the practice. This illusory body is the exclusive cause of the form body of a buddha, the rupakaya. Alongside this practice is the wisdom development of the mental state of clear light. This is in the nature of a very subtle level of mind and is the exclusive cause for the enlightened mind, or dharmakaya. These two practices are explained in great depth in the text and are not found in the sutra path. Tantra, therefore, is a fast method for gaining the two enlightened forms and is characterized by exclusive method practices.

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