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## Introduction

*The hidden nature of the body, breath and mind, enmeshed in an assembly of secrets.*

*Chakrapani (19th Century, India, Lanka & ...)*



### The art of freedom

Despite escalating advances in science and technology, fundamental insight into human existence remains deeply constrained by methods of inquiry that exclude consciousness and the body as viable instruments of research. Tibetan yoga – or more precisely *niyoga*, ‘unity with the natural state of existence’ – overrules this bias and engages the intelligence intrinsic to human embodiment as a means to explore dimensions of experience inaccessible to prevailing modes of neuropsychological and anthropological research. This book introduces fundamental principles and practices of Tibet’s Vajrayāna, or Tantric form of Buddhism that have often been obscured within the tradition itself due to historical and sociopolitical constraints as well as Vajrayāna’s transformation in Himalayan culture from a yogic technology into a religion privileging ceremonial magic and scriptural study.

The yogic practices at the core of Vajrayāna Buddhism are further enshrouded by conventions of secrecy that have traditionally made them inaccessible to anyone not in a formal relationship with an accomplished master who not only holds the formerly restricted right to transmit them, but also embodies the evolved psychophysical capacities that the practices are designed to reveal. This book departs from tradition in expressing a growing consensus that the ideals of Himalayan Buddhism’s yogic traditions hold relevance even for those who have not been formally initiated into their practice and that the values they impart can enlarge and enliven collective perceptions of the possibilities and opportunities of human life.

Tibetan yoga’s core aim is to transform the human condition, freeing it from disempowering struggle and discontent and awakening self-transcending strength and compassionate action. Inherent to this world-view is an experience of consciousness that transcends individual preoccupation and expresses the unified, interconnected intelligence of life itself.

*Epigraph: A contemporary Bhutanese practitioner – the closely contextualized Tibetan book, increasingly the auxiliary Tibetan adapt. Niropo – documents, essential yoga practices called, “Tibetan, or “yogic movements”, which include several “yoga” that concern vital energy and awareness in the body’s central channel (sushumna) to realize, “inner heat” (Dharma as a teacher representing and illuminating all aspects of human experience.*





A detail of a wall painting in the private meditation chamber of the 14th Dalai Lama illustrates Tibetan yoga's ultimate goal of an alighting radiant, heat-crowned and omniscient presence, symbolised here by the personified Buddha Samantabhadra in a circle of rainbow light.

constantly throughout our lives. The yogic technologies based on these transitional states are directed towards the discovery of a solitary awareness both transcendent of, and immanent within, the emotional vicissitudes of everyday life. Concepts of Buddhist Yoga are explored in the chapter 'Luminosity'.

Tibetan yogic practices were sometimes enhanced with the use of pharmacologically active substances that point to the biochemical basis of both conscious and subconscious experience. Patanjali's *Yoga Sutra*, modelled on the eight-fold path to enlightenment outlined by Buddha Siddharmas, refers specifically to psychoactive plants as potential supports for inner, ecstatic experience. The section 'Poison solutions' provides an overview of the controversial use of plant and mineral substances that early Indian and Tibetan texts describe as potential aids to enlightenment.

The book's final chapter, 'Primal radiance', outlines the path of Dzogchen, or Great Perfection, the culmination of the preceding Six Yogas and the unmitigated experience of what is described as the naturally illuminated state of mind and body, also known as Mahāmudrā, or 'Great Coalescence'. Dzogchen includes rigorous mental and physical practices that culminate in 'non-dual'

#### Modern thermal imaging

Researchers report changes in body temperature resulting from specific forms of Tibetan yoga, as shown in this image of Margo Kingma performing Trulokar exercises at London's Wellcome Trust. Insights provided by modern science regarding the neurobiological correlates of yoga and meditation are leading to increased understanding of 'inner capacities' of the human mind and body. Wellcome Library, London.



visionary experiences - in environments of total darkness as well as with the support of sunrises and open sky - leading to the attainment, whether figuratively or literally, of a 'rainbow body' (gata). The *Afterword* concludes with an overview of the induction of Tibetan yoga in the West, its dialogue with science, and the ongoing dialectics of tradition and innovation that have advanced the practice of yoga from its earliest emergence as a means towards realising humankind's highest physical and metaphysical aspirations.

As a final note, *Tibetan Yoga* omits distracting bibliographic footnotes, although the *Notes and References* section at the end of the book lists extensive textual resources for pursuing additional study as well as practice. Those who are interested in a more academic presentation of yoga and physical cultivation within Vajrayana Buddhism may also refer to my published articles on the subject, as listed on the website [www.lambakar.com](http://www.lambakar.com). Lastly, Tibetan words are rendered phonetically in this book so as to make them accessible to a general audience.



## Modes of transmission

In order to assimilate Vajrayāna Buddhism's largely heterodox practices, Tibetans developed a *heuristic* model of outer, inner and secret transmissions that could be applied in varying contexts within an overarching philosophical view (of *śūnyatā* 'emptiness') (*śūnyatā*) in which all phenomena, whether physical or mental, are devoid of ultimate reality. On an outer level, the Buddhist Tantras themselves were explained as having been taught secretly by Sakyaṃsai Buddha during his own lifetime, most often to monachs who had requested means for attaining enlightenment without having to forgo worldly prerogatives and responsibilities. On an inner level, Vajrayāna teachings were understood as historically and culturally determined expressions of Buddha Sakyaṃsai's secret insights into the nature of human consciousness and the latent potential for spiritual awakening. Secretly, the Tantra Buddhist teachings were understood as creative expressions of the liberated mind itself, a seamless continuum beyond any sustainable division between spiritual and worldly phenomena, emptiness and matter, truth and illusion. As mahākāśhita Nāropā explained, "The innermost secret of the mind is that it neither exists nor doesn't exist, an indivisible union of emptiness and appearance."



*Figure 16* A *khata* from a Tibetan manuscript of the *Perjuror Prince Mission* depicts a letter of *śūnyatā* (emptiness) associated with the Completion Phase of the Heavens and Calmness Tantra.

*Figure 17* A drawing illustrating an early form of *śūnyatā* (emptiness) as the void of form's *Laṅkā* (empty refuge) extension in the Heavens Tantra and other early Tantra Buddhist texts that "the voidness is not an object and not."

*Figure 18* A page in Tibet margin but associated with the sky in a gesture associated with both Drogchen and Esoteric Mahāyāna. Her three-hand mudras (left and right and white *Tantra*) draw symbolically the internal mapping of "void" energy, associated with the feminine and "inner" energy associated with the masculine.



The outer, inner, secret heuristic was also applied to the Buddhist tradition as a whole, with the secret Vajrayāna teachings representing the highest insight into the nature of human experience while firmly based on Mahāyāna ideals of universal compassion and the foundational ethical precepts of the Buddha's earliest recorded teachings. Tibet's first order of Tantric Buddhism, the Nyingma, applied the same three-part model in their elucidation of the so-called *Three Tantras* of Mahā Yoga, Anu Yoga and Atī Yoga, characterized, respectively, as being esoteric, esoteric and "self-secret". At the highest levels of Atī Yoga (Dzogchen's) outer and inner practices are transcended through effortless abiding in the intrinsic radiance of one's Buddha Nature. The three phases of the Higher Yoga Tantras were further associated with psychological orientations of renunciation, transformation and integration while subtleties of understanding were primarily transmitted individually according to a disciple's disposition and capacity to receive them. In an 11th-century work entitled *Means for Attaining the Real*, mahākāśhita Nāropā clearly defined the approach to be taken in the culminating phase of Esoteric Mahāyāna and Dzogchen: "In the nucleus of perfect pristine realization, the goal is achieved without following any sequential path."



## Elemental wisdom

### The varieties of meditative experience

*If Enlightenment exists apart from meditation, how can meditation reveal it?  
If it is ineffable, how may it be discussed? ...  
The whole spirit is enshrouded by concepts,  
And no one recognises their essential nature.*  
Mahadeva Varma, 18th century



### The art of contemplation

**Oppose:** Contemplative practices in Tibetan Buddhism range from rigorous asceticism to ecstatic rapture and share a common aim of expanding the capacities of mind and body and cultivating empathy with all existence, as indicated in these details from a mural in the Labrang temple in Lhasa, Tibet.

**Join:** A head-locked yogi in the Labrang temple forms symbiotic bond gestures called *omahis* to still his state of awareness.

The Tibetan word for meditation is *gom*, and infers 'familiarization' or mindfulness of one's inherent Buddha Nature, a transpersonal state of empathy, insight and spontaneous altruism. Early Buddhist scriptures refer to meditation as a process of progressively awakening to deepening states of infinitude (*ananta*), culminating in exalted self-transcendent awareness infused with clarity and compassion. Such descriptions influenced the development of classical yoga, as evidenced in Patanjali's *Yoga Sutra*, which borrows from Buddhist doctrine to define yoga as an eight-fold path leading to the cessation of affective mental states and the attainment of existential freedom.

Tibetan Buddhism encompasses a vast range of contemplative techniques that traditionally began with meditation on the 'Four Immeasurables' (*sramanis*) of loving kindness, compassion, sympathetic joy and freedom from attachment and aversion. Embracing these sublime attitudes is the basis for all subsequent meditation practices in the Tibetan tradition – from the mindfulness-based disciplines of focused attention and unswerving awareness that have been adapted in contemporary clinical contexts to alleviate stress, anxiety and depression to the dynamic methods of Tantric yoga that stimulate, rather than relax, the central nervous system so as to arouse dormant capacities of the mind and body.

In Tibet's Vajrayana form of Buddhism, meditative practices progress from preparatory reflections on the nature of existence and the cultivation of unconditional compassion to creative reorientations of subjective experience (Kyrim or Creation Phase), to transformative engagement with the flows of energy through the body's subtle immaterial circulatory system (Drochom or Completion Phase). The resultant experiences of bliss, clarity and conception-free insight culminate in Drochom, the Great Perfection, also known as Anu Yoga, in which consciousness awakens to its spontaneously present Buddha Nature.





## Moving Inwards

Withdrawing sensory awareness from external objects (*pratyakāra*) is described in Patanjali's *Yoga Sūtra* as the foundational stage in meditative practices leading to deepening states of concentration (*dhāraṇā*), contemplation (*dhyaṇā*) and unitary absorption (*samādhi*). Sensory withdrawal is foundational to meditation practices across traditions, lessening distracting emotions, promoting mental tranquility and insight, and heightening awareness of internal sources of sensation, perception and awareness.

In Buddhist Tantra, such as the Kalacakra, or 'Wheel of Time' (*pañcika*) refers to the transformation of the five sense faculties of sight, hearing, smell, taste and touch into the mentally generated sensation of an enlightened deity that is simultaneously viewed as an immanent manifestation of universal emptiness. The Kalacakra's exposition of sensory internalization closely parallels the phase of physical isolation (*ājīvaśila*) in the Galyastaniga, the Tantra of the Secret Assembly, and is undertaken in total darkness until now conceptualized 'empty forms' arise in one's field of vision. These visions, which in Buddhist analysis are neither existent nor non-existent, provide the basis for the ensuing meditative stage of alpinia, or contemplation, through which consciousness is stabilized prior to being evergreened through dynamic breathing exercise (*prāṇāyāma*) that, in the context of the Kalacakra Tantra, circumscribe vital energy in the pelvic cavity below the navel. This deeply embodied approach to meditation continues with the subsequent phase of *ābhāsa*, in which subtle elemental substances (Bhūh, Bih, Sthi) are cultivated within psycho-spiritual

*Arise (2) Intention of the senses, as illustrated in this novel detail, unfolds through psychological operations. Located in the 'magical moment' of the 'blinking eye' (*dhyaṇā*) the Tantrics use gesture to combine with holding the breath beneath the nose. The eyes are closed with the two index fingers, the two are blacked with the thumb, the middle with the two middle fingers, the lips with the ring and little fingers, while the head is cocked three times to the right and three times to the left. Adornments, the body and limbs are vigorously shaken while exhaling breathily.*



nodes (*āra*) that parallel the spine. In the fifth phase of 'evolution' (*ananta*), these cultivated energies give rise to four successive states of meditative bliss within the core of the body, evoking early Buddhist accounts of four *jhāna*, or sequential stages of post-perceptive rapture. The Wheel of Time's six-fold *Viṣṭa* Yoga outlines an *ānāhāra*, or supreme absorption in the conjunct bliss and emptiness represented by the deity Kalacakra in the inner fireplay, spontaneity and unbounded consciousness inherent within all beings and attainable through progressive 'interiorization'.

Meditation postures vary depending on their specific intention, but whether focused inwards in a crouching pose to awaken the heart chakra or vertically aligned in the classic lotus position, their common objective is to bring mind and body into a natural state of ease, easing tensions and, as expressed in early Buddhist Sūtras, allowing awareness to merge naturally with Ineffable. In most postures, the spine is lengthened to expand the lungs, reduce wandering thoughts, and facilitate the free flow of somatic energy. The head typically rests effortlessly on top of the seven cervical vertebrae while the pelvis drops and attention is concentrated below the navel where, according to Tantric physiology, the body's three principal energetic channels join together. Buddhist texts describe the ideal meditation posture as one that balances the five elementary qualities of Earth, Water, Fire, Air and Space, as expressed within the human body, its sensory extensions, and the outer environment of minerals, water, sunlight and ethereal winds.

**Opposite: right & crouching posture** used in withdrawing the senses from external objects and entering an inner state of mental concentration focused at the heart centre, that allowing consciousness to be totally immovably and beyond all other immovability described in its detail words around. *Śaṅgīya* Prince Shant.

**Three: The classic cross-legged meditation posture** primary of the Buddhist Vinaya — the withdrawal of

Supreme Enlightenment — means allowing one's legs to form pressure and having one's feet open into one's thighs. The arms are raised with one hand held on top of the other four finger held towards the ear of with the palms up with and the thumbs gently touching in a gesture of openness (standing in some traditions, a deity in golden robes stand against the right hand is placed over the left. If attention is predominant, the left hand is placed over the right)

The spine is held erect, like a stack of golden coins. The shoulders are opened, like a eagle flying in wings in the sun. The hand balances effortlessly on top of the head, like a bird's head to rest. The feet rest on the ground in each yoke's length in line of the body. The neck is allowed to rest and the breath is allowed to rest and the legs, feet and torso rest comfortably with the top of the tongue lightly touching the roof of the mouth.

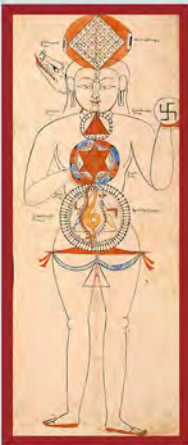


## Entering the flow

In Tibetan yoga, each of the Five Elements provides a meditative means for awakening to the mind's limitless nature and the larger flow of life. Turning inward, beyond the persona, and attuning to the inner archetype of Water, practitioners enter figuratively into the fluid depths of somatic consciousness, transcending habitual boundaries of perception and discovering an expanded, processual reality. In the Great Perfection *Tantra of the Illuminating Lamp*, adepts are instructed to crouch above a turbulent waterfall and, with 'the gaze of an elephant', to penetrate the essence of water. "When you listen uninterruptedly to the sound of water", the Tantra states, "the supreme unborn essence will fully emerge ... You will come to understand the flow of consciousness in future, present, and past."



*Opposite and right: The Yoga of the Five Elements consists of meditating successively on the primal sounds of Earth, Water, Fire, Wind and Space and allowing their resonances to permeate one's consciousness; by cultivating these inclusive forms of sensory awareness, practitioners receptive to the reverberations of the Five Elements as analogues of their psychophysical agencies, according to one's Buddha Nature in the state of falling water, the mind no longer grasps at either external or internal phenomena; and thoughts and emotions pass through consciousness unimpeded in a flow of pure and perfect presence.*



# Enlightened anatomy

## The yoga of channels, winds and essences

Mastering the path of channels and winds.  
The Buddha figures in the palm of my hand.  
—Mazu Chanizuo, 11th century

### Awakening the three bodies

While the Creation Phase practices of Vajrayana Buddhism actively engage imagination, intellect and emotion in liberating veiled perceptions of reality, subtle yoga practices of the Completion Phase (*niropama/dharma, Dzogchen*) extend the process through an envisioned metaphysical anatomy activated through mental focus, breath control and dynamic physical disciplines. As the female adept Siddharjiti proclaimed, ‘Don’t look for another source of refuge. The body itself is a sacred mandala. Don’t look elsewhere for the deity. The mind itself, unborn and unperishing, is the ultimate Buddha and teacher.’ The so-called Six Yogas of the Completion Phase entrain natural psycho-physiological processes towards realization of an illuminated condition of body, speech and mind. The resultant Coalescent Seal (Mahāmudrā) or Great Perfection (*mahāsiddhi*, *Tib. Dangchen*) represents an embodied realization of the Buddhist Yogicist doctrine of the ‘three bodies’ (*Trikāya-sāra*), consisting of the Nirmāṇakāya, or ‘emanation body’, the Saṃbhogakāya, or ‘beatific body’, and the Dharmakāya, or dimension of total reality. Although described as three inseparable ‘bodies’ (*dhāra*) of progressive subtlety, the terms ultimately transcend any anatomical reference while serving as ‘supports’ (*dhāraya*) for internal yogic experience. In one expressive metaphor, the Dharmakāya is likened to an infinite, waveless ocean, from which arise mist and rainbows, symbolizing the Saṃbhogakāya. Embodied clouds condense and fall as rain, symbolizing the naturally manifesting Nirmāṇakāya. The Completion Phase of Tantric Buddhism, on which the practices of the Six Yogas are based, specifically refers to ‘taking the three dhāras as the path’ (*ku one lam dāra*) as a process of transformation in which the bodymind is ultimately experienced as co-extensive with the universe at all stages of waking, dreaming, sleeping and dying. In his *Allyday Description of the Figure Body*, the Tibetan adept Gyāshen Yangtongpa refers to the conventionally experienced body, speech and mind as gateways for realizing the three bodies (*trikāya*) of absolute reality as one’s own inseparable, self-transcendent anatomy.

**Figure 1** An 18th-century meditation diagram based on the female deity Vajrasattva (Vajrayāna Buddhist), blends and fine-tunes conceptions of the yogi's body as a network of interconnected energy channels (called *culras*, along the body's central axis). The golden snake rising from the figure's palm symbolizes the awakening of kundalini, the 'serpent power' associated with self-transcendent awakening. The figure holds a swastika, a universal symbol of auspicious change. (Pritikin Collection)

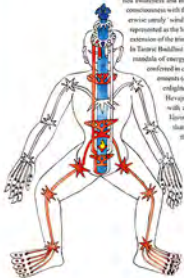
**Figure 2** A figure from a Tibetan medical chart reveals the yogi's anatomy, the treatment energy centers at the outline of the yogi's body.





## The anatomy of bliss

Tantric Buddhist accounts of the human body as ascending universal, subliminal processes pre-figure the observations of quantum physics that matter is ultimately energy. While Creation Phase practices actively engage imaginal Tantric deities to transfigure conventional perceptions of self and reality, Completion Phase practices magically imitate psycho-energetic processes in order to reveal transpersonal dimensions of mind and body. In yogic practice, the body's innermost structure is described as a network of 72,000 substantive and intangible pathways referred to in Sanskrit as *shukla*, or in Tibetan as *cu*. This pure physiological circulatory system encompasses the flow of blood and pre-lymphatic fluids as well as subtle energy "winds" known as *prana*, or in Tibetan *lung*, that, when consciously engaged, function as vehicles of amplified awareness and information. Tibetan tradition likens the integration of consciousness with these subtle energy currents to a rider mastering an otherwise unruly "wild horse", leading to the realization of transcendent joy, represented as the *Mahasukhakiya*, or "body of great bliss", an experiential extension of the triad of *Dharukikiya*, *Nambhagikiya* and *Nominakiya*.



In Tantric Buddhist tradition, meditation instruction on the body's central mandala of energy channels, winds and subtle processes is traditionally offered in conjunction with the sound of five successive empowerment syllables, culminating in the realization of the innate enlightenment of human embodiment. As described in the *Herveya Tantra*, the body is a "shimmering jewel" endowed with ambrosial essences. *Mahabodhi Varipal's* influential *Heart Essence* further designates the body as a Tantric test that, when fully comprehended, purifies impediments to the realization of Great Bliss (*mahabodhi*), a synonym for enlightened existence.

**The human body as a mandala of energy channels, winds and vital essences** (collected from *Chandamogor* into *tantras*) is depicted in the *Shingon Kagyu* diagram. A blue channel flanked by white and red channels – the central (Sushumna) and *prana* (Vajrasana) and *pingala* (Pingala) – and surrounded by energetic blue points called *chakras* (Chakras) is crossed by a blue vein extending beyond the top of the head and symbolizing the self-consciousness, indissoluble source of the "saga" body "windless". Drawing by Lama Dorje.

**Figure 4/1** The central channel (Sushumna), TB, the root of the yoga body, depicted in the Tibetan diagram, is also referred to as the *prana* or *prana* vein. *Tantra* texts describe the central channel as originating in the *prana* vein, or at the base of the spine and ascending the body's central axis to the crown of the head. The central channel may be energetically related to the embryonic structure, a broadly recognized structure that develops during human gestation and is later replaced by the umbilical vein. All forms of *Tantra*.



**Figure 4/2** The central channel (Sushumna), TB, the root of the yoga body, depicted in the Tibetan diagram, is also referred to as the *prana* or *prana* vein. *Tantra* texts describe the central channel as originating in the *prana* vein, or at the base of the spine and ascending the body's central axis to the crown of the head. The central channel may be energetically related to the embryonic structure, a broadly recognized structure that develops during human gestation and is later replaced by the umbilical vein. All forms of *Tantra*.



**Figure 4/3** The central channel (Sushumna), TB, the root of the yoga body, depicted in the Tibetan diagram, is also referred to as the *prana* or *prana* vein. *Tantra* texts describe the central channel as originating in the *prana* vein, or at the base of the spine and ascending the body's central axis to the crown of the head. The central channel may be energetically related to the embryonic structure, a broadly recognized structure that develops during human gestation and is later replaced by the umbilical vein. All forms of *Tantra*.

*Zigie Karma Usharal Khaycho* sits in the meditative posture of the jamaa on a natural angle, as transmitted within the Dzogchen lineage of Phagpa Zogpa, the "Profound Intimations of Vajrasattva." Placing the sides of the feet together and stretching the knees downwards with a straight back opens subtle energy channels at the base of the spine of channel and an almost additional psychosomatic centers at the mouth, heart, throat and head.

*Zigie* The body's lower mandala of energy planes, channels and subtle energies intensifies the positive vital, channel, passions, gates and desires that are visualized when generating a tangible external. As revealed in this Tibetan scroll: *gazing, divine lines represent the outer appearances of internal processes within the human body.* As described in the 19th century by Naropa Kunga Nigupsa, "The mind is refined and materialized through the discipline of the dependency which connections in the body, which is the gate of realization, and files for enlightening awareness." *Practical Buddhist Devotion (1988)*, 19th century manuscript on cloth, Rubin Museum of Art, New York, (2008, USA) (ISBN 9780714720077).

*Zigie* Channels are the basis for Buddhist practice and represent interconnections of psycho-physiological processes in the genitals, lower abdomen, heart, throat, postnatal cortex and the crown of the head. As shown in this drawing from the Shingon Kyoan tradition, valves are composed of a mass almost surrounded by differing numbers of branch channels that collectively form the lower mandala of the human body. Drawing by Lotus Dharma.





## Sacred dance

The Hevajra Tantra states that, 'When joy arises, the yogin should dance for liberation, assuming the virgin postures of the divine Itardka [Itarvira] with fullest attention ... emanating them with an impassioned mind within a state of unintercepted attention.' As the Hevajra Tantra further clarifies, the movements 'reveal the ultimate nature of the Buddhas, Yoginis, and Mother Goddesses.... The perfection of the assembly and oneself is by means of such song and dance.' Such statements suggest that the origins of Trulokar, as a means of embodying the qualities of Vajrayana-deities and associated psychophysical processes, may lie not only in early Hatha Yoga-related techniques, but also in traditions of Tantric dance, such as the yogic Itardara dance form transmitted within Kashmiri Śaiv-ism and *corollary*: a ritual dance tradition transmitted by Newar Vajrayoginis in Nepal and associated with the Cakrasamvara Tantra. Analogous choreographies of self-transformation are central to Tibetan ritual dances known as Cham, which prior to the 13th century were performed only within assemblies of consecrated initiates.

The 16th-century Tibetan scholar and adept Taranitha (1575–1634) described Trulokar as 'yogic instructions for dissolving the energy-mind into the central channel and relaxing knots in the channels, primarily using one's own body as the method', and he assigned them both medical and emancipatory effects. In his treatise entitled 'Eighteen Physical Trainings', Taranitha consolidated yogic exercises attributed to the 11th-century Kashmiri female mahasiddha Nigama and disseminated in Tibet by her disciple Khyagarog Naljar (c. 1050–1100). A separate transmission of an 'root' Trulokar with thirty-nine 'branches' is said to derive from Nigama's consort, Nirupa who, in turn, reportedly received them from his Bengali teacher Tilopa, although the dating of these practices is problematic due to the absence of original Sanskrit versions of Tilopa's and Nirupa's texts and the fact that they only became part of the Kagyu transmission more than a century later.

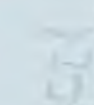
Active left and right A Tibetan yogin performs a series of postures that like the dynamic movements illustrated in a contemporary painting by Robert Powell, based on an original temple frieze in the Great Stupa at Sanchi in the United Kingdom kingdom of Madhya Pradesh. The assumed postures represent the forms of embodied experience and Tantric Buddhist yoga as an instrumental of deities depicted in famous mandala.



Left: A Newar Garga dancer embodies the qualities of a Tantric deity in a ritual of consecration and consecration, in which the human body is transformed by the forces of experience with that of the divine. The Newar tradition of Tantric Buddhism in Nepal's Kathmandu Valley preserves forms of Vajrayana that largely vanished in India after the 13th century.

Right: A yogin in a dynamic postural, depicted on a mural in a Nepalese temple, illustrates the central role of the body in transforming ordinary bodies of mind, as postured in Tantric Buddhist yoga.





## Numinous passion

### The alchemy of desire

*If thoughts of desire arise, conduct yourself like a joyful elephant.  
 Repose in emptiness. Victory over passions is yours. (Lotus Sutra)*

#### ❧ Dialectics of desire

The Buddha's early life as a privileged prince was devoted to the pursuit of pleasure, but he found it wanting in a sense of lasting fulfillment. The Buddha's later teachings were thus a critique of desire, which he came to view as the source of life's perennial dissatisfactions. According to Buddhist Senāsi composed centuries after his death, the Buddha advocated a life of abstinence from emotional, psychological and sensual entanglements. The Buddhist Tantras, however, which appeared from the 6th century with the 'Assembly of Secrets' (Cakrasamāja Tantra), reversed the logic of early Buddhist thought and promoted sexual union as a path leading to a state of numinous communion, in which dualistic passions could resolve in an all-encompassing unity of bliss and emptiness, compassion and wisdom. Early commentators on the Cakrasamāja Tantra went so far as to rewrite the Buddha's life story, presenting his encounter with Sujātā, his first female disciple, as an erotic union, and his offering bowl floating upstream afterwards, brimming with rice milk, as a coded metaphor for the union of bodhicitta, or reproductive essence, through his awakened anatomy. By altering established narratives of desire and consummation within a context of transgressive sexuality, the Buddhist Tantras offered skilled means for de-pathologizing desire as personal distress and reconfiguring it as a vehicle of enlightenment. As mahāvidhā Saraha sang: "Can that be called perfect knowledge if one is not released, while enjoying the pleasures of the senses? If it is already manifest, what is the use of meditation?" As Saraha further proclaimed, "That which I have heard by the word of my master why should I speak of it secretly? That blissful delight that arises in the union of *limo* and *vaya* [female and male sexual organs], who does not rejoice there? In this triple world, whose hopes does a fool so fall?"

*Obscene Indian poems generate the non-dual bliss that directly perceives the ultimate nature of mind and reality, as shown in this detail of a Tibetan scroll painting. As Yasho Tseyen declared in the 8th century: "Let male and female, female and male, let each perceive each other as it wearing. Merge emptiness with bliss and allow the vital passions to pervade your being... Realize the fruit of passion, the Great Bliss (santushti)..." and let desires and questions disappear!" (Gyöpa Dengyö Chöng, 19th century, personal collection, private art collector, Berlin, Museum of Art, New York (from the AN).*





**Tantric mobilization** (i.e., commonly shows inhibiting, unexpressed substances from human mind-caps. On an outer level, such depictions indicate Vajrayana Buddhism's co-evolution with Tantric Shaman, as also indicated by the

short-pointing robes common to both traditions. On an inner level, the yellow frontal sash symbolizes the mind's intrinsic emptiness. Next, these deities designate and combine Chakras (energy) level, the human skull-caps are

re-joined as becoming with diabolical water. Thus suggesting, the vision of emptiness made during substances within the brain that are activated through Tantric Buddhist practices.

A "metast goddess" is shown becoming, along a tempo by above - indicated by the black-laced crown - in the detail from a contemporary wall painting at Gangtang Monastery in Bhutan. Most expanding substances used in Tantric Buddhism reveal ancient Vedic rites in which practitioners of the first and Agra consumed a potent, psychoactive brew called soma, variously associated with ganoderma (G.D. ganoderma), fly agaric, Amanita (Amanita muscaria), the red and white-headed fly agaric mushrooms (Amanita muscaria), the sacred lotus (Nelumbo), and, more recently, with Psilocybe (Psilocybe cubensis). Based on clear depictions in an early 19th-century BC. Svalby panel discovered in 2001 in southern Mongolia.

## Entheopharmacology

The ritual use of Datura was not limited to the subjugation of external enemies, but was also applied to overcoming inhibiting mental states and gaining insight into the nature of reality. As expounded by Jamyang Khyentshe Wangchuk (1524-60) in the context of the Sakya "Path of Fruition" (lamdré), meditation on visionary phenomena produced by Datura establishes that, "All phenomena of apparent existence, Samsara and Nirvana, do not exist outside of one's mind." As a support for self-liberation in Dzogchen, the third Dzogchen Chen Rinpoche (1885-1926) expounded cryptically on a method of inducing a sustained isolation of Datura in order to activate the subtle body and attain "excellent accomplishment". Similarly, Padmasambhava is said to have plied Yabre Drogyal with a range of mind-altering substances in order to cultivate her ability to maintain clarity during expanded states of consciousness.

Vision inducing plants in Tibetan Buddhism are closely associated with the tradition of "revealed treasures" (treasures). A notable example occurs in a section of the "Innermost Heart Essence of Vimalakirti", a composition of Dzogchen path instructions codified in the 11th and 12th century, which describes introducing a dustlike of Datura into the eyes through the hollow quill of a vulture's feather in order to open the body's subtle energy channels and induce visions. An earlier poetic use of Datura is described in chapter twelve of the Mahākāla Tantra, which instructs practitioners to mix Datura and two other highly poisonous plants with honey and the bile of a black cat and to apply the resultant ointment to the eyes, after which "one spins around and around like a bee", a simile later applied to the usage of Datura.

A treasure text, in terms, entitled "Luminous Web", attributed to Padmasambhava and revealed by the 18th-century adept Tertön Kipdon Dorje Thokme, describes "five metast-brewing plants" ascribed with diverse physiological and psychic powers. As the text states, "Whoever consumes the 'excellent plant of miracles' will remain free of disease and attain miraculous powers. One's body will become youthful and capable of flying through the sky. Without abandoning the physical body, one can attain celestial realms... Whoever eats the 'plant of increasing bliss' experiences the inexhaustible union of bliss and emptiness... Whoever partakes of the 'plant of purification' dissolves all karmic obstructions and the angry, forces of habitual thought. They will avoid countless past lives. Whoever eats the 'plant that severs disturbing emotions' will never think of food or drink and meditative absorption will arise spontaneously

