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A LAMP
TO ILLUMINATE
THE FIVE STAGES

Teachings on
GUHYASAMĀJA TANTRA

TSONGKHAPA
Translated by Gavin Kilty

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A LAMP TO ILLUMINATE THE FIVE STAGES

The Library of Tibetan Classics is a special series being developed by the Institute of Tibetan Classics aimed at making key classical Tibetan texts part of the global literary and intellectual heritage. Eventually comprising thirty-two large volumes, the collection will contain over two hundred distinct texts by more than a hundred of the best-known authors. These texts have been selected in consultation with the preeminent lineage holders of all the schools and other senior Tibetan scholars to represent the Tibetan literary tradition as a whole. The works included in the series span more than a millennium and cover the vast expanse of classical Tibetan knowledge—from the core teachings of the specific schools to such diverse fields as ethics, philosophy, linguistics, medicine, astronomy and astrology, folklore, and historiography.

A Lamp to Illuminate the Five Stages

Tsongkhapa Losang Drakpa (1357–1419)

Tsongkhapa's *Lamp* presents one of the most comprehensive and detailed presentations of the highest yoga class of Vajrayana Buddhism, especially the key practices—the so-called five stages (*pañcakrama*)—of the advanced phase of Guhyasamāja tantra. Beginning with a thorough examination of all the relevant Indic literature, Tsongkhapa draws particularly from the writings of Nāgārjuna, Āryadeva, Candrakīrti, and Nāropa to develop a definitive understanding of the Vajrayana completion stage. Traditionally the work belongs to a class of “hidden texts” that are to be read only by those who have received initiations.

The teachings and practices in this volume follow on from those contained in the *sādhana* volume (volume 13). Whereas in the generation stage, meditators visualize the Buddha in the form of the Guhyasamāja 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. In the course of presenting these practices, Tsongkhapa's work outlines the subtle human physiology manipulated by the tantric adept, especially the network of channels and cakras, as well as the wind energies and vital drops that flow through them. Other topics, such as the Tibetan Buddhist understanding of the process of death and dying, the intermediate state of existence, and rebirth—central concepts of which find their origin in the *Guhyasamāja Tantra*—as well as theories of human psychology, such as the scope and dynamic of the emotions, dream states, and near-death experiences, are also addressed in detail.

This text was Tsongkhapa's last major work, which he completed in 1419, the year of his death. Its impact on the course of tantric practice in Tibet has been definitive for the Geluk school and profound for Tibetan Buddhism as a whole.

THE LIBRARY OF TIBETAN CLASSICS, VOLUME 15

Thupten Jinpa, General Editor

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WISDOM PUBLICATIONS ♦ BOSTON
in association with the Institute of Tibetan Classics

Wisdom Publications
199 Elm Street
Somerville, MA 02144 USA
www.wisdompubs.org

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Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Tson-kha-pa Blo-bzañ-grags-pa, 1357–1419, author.

[Rim lña rab tu gsal ba'i sgron me. English]

A lamp to illuminate the five stages : teachings on Guhyasamāja tantra / Tsongkhapa ; translated by Gavin Kilty.

pages cm — (The library of Tibetan classics)

Includes bibliographical references and index.

ISBN 0-86171-454-7 (trade cloth : alk. paper)

1. Tripiṭaka. Sūtrapiṭaka. Tantra. Guhyasamājatantra—Commentaries—Early works to 1800. I. Kilty, Gavin, translator. II. Title.

BQ2155.T7613 2012

294.3'823—dc23

2012028292

ISBN 9780861714544
eBook ISBN 9781614290353

17 16 15 14 13
5 4 3 2 1

Cover and interior design by Gopa&Tedz, Inc.
Set in Adobe Garamond Premier Pro 10.5/13.5.

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Printed in the United States of America.



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Message from the Dalai Lama

THE LAST TWO MILLENNIA witnessed a tremendous proliferation of cultural and literary development in Tibet, the “Land of Snows.” Moreover, due to the inestimable contributions made by Tibet’s early spiritual kings, numerous Tibetan translators, and many great Indian *panditas* over a period of so many centuries, the teachings of the Buddha and the scholastic tradition of ancient India’s Nālandā monastic university became firmly rooted in Tibet. As evidenced from the historical writings, this flowering of Buddhist tradition in the country brought about the fulfillment of the deep spiritual aspirations of countless sentient beings. In particular, it contributed to the inner peace and tranquility of the peoples of Tibet, Outer Mongolia—a country historically suffused with Tibetan Buddhism and its culture—the Tuva and Kalmuk regions in present-day Russia, the outer regions of mainland China, and the entire trans-Himalayan areas on the southern side, including Bhutan, Sikkim, Ladakh, Kinnaur, and Spiti. Today this tradition of Buddhism has the potential to make significant contributions to the welfare of the entire human family. I have no doubt that, when combined with the methods and insights of modern science, the Tibetan Buddhist cultural heritage and knowledge will help foster a more enlightened and compassionate human society, a humanity that is at peace with itself, with fellow sentient beings, and with the natural world at large.

It is for this reason I am delighted that the Institute of Tibetan Classics in Montreal, Canada, is compiling a thirty-two-volume series containing the works of many great Tibetan teachers, philosophers, scholars, and practitioners representing all major Tibetan schools and traditions. These important writings will be critically edited and annotated and will then be published in modern book format in a reference collection called *The Library of Tibetan Classics*, with their translations into other major languages to follow later. While expressing my heartfelt commendation for this noble project, I pray and hope that *The Library of Tibetan Classics* will not only make

these important Tibetan treatises accessible to scholars of Tibetan studies, but will create a new opportunity for younger Tibetans to study and take interest in their own rich and profound culture. Through translations into other languages, it is my sincere hope that millions of fellow citizens of the wider human family will also be able to share in the joy of engaging with Tibet's classical literary heritage, textual riches that have been such a great source of joy and inspiration to me personally for so long.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'Tenzin Gyatso', written in a fluid, cursive style.

The Dalai Lama
The Buddhist monk Tenzin Gyatso



Special Acknowledgments

THE INSTITUTE OF TIBETAN CLASSICS expresses its deep gratitude to Nita Ing and the Ing Family Foundation for generously funding this monumental translation project, bringing to the English-speaking world a much-revered and acclaimed work of the Tibetan Vajrayāna tradition. This is the first of many volumes from *The Library of Tibetan Classics* to appear whose translation has been sponsored by the Ing Foundation. As per the wishes of Nita Ing, the publication of this volume, Tsongkhapa's *Lamp Illuminating the Five Stages*, is dedicated to the good health and long life of Kyabjé Lama Zopa Rinpoché.

The Institute also thanks Gaden Shartse Dro-phen Ling, Singapore, for their generous donation that provided the initial funding for the project, and the Hershey Family Foundation for its generous support of the Institute of Tibetan Classics' projects of compiling, editing, translating, and disseminating key classical Tibetan texts through the creation of *The Library of Tibetan Classics*.



Publisher's Acknowledgments

THE PUBLISHER wishes to extend a heartfelt thanks to the following people who by subscribing to *The Library of Tibetan Classics* have become benefactors of this entire translation series: Serje Samlo Khentul Lhundub Choden and his Dharma friends, Tenzin Dorjee, Rick Meeker Hayman, Steven D. Hearst, Heidi Kaiter, Russell K. Miyashiro, Arnold Possick, the Randall-Gonzales Family Foundation, Jonathan and Diana Rose, the Tibetisches Zentrum e.V. Hamburg, Claudia Wellnitz, Robert White, Eva and Jeff Wild, Ellyse Adele Vitiello, and the donors who wish to remain anonymous.



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General Editor's Preface

A *LAMP TO ILLUMINATE THE FIVE STAGES* is a profound exploration of tantric Buddhism's vision of human nature and its potential for full awakening. Framed within the notion of five stages as developed in a seminal tantric work of the Indian mystic Nāgārjuna, *Lamp* is the last major work of Tsongkhapa, one of the greatest masters of Tibetan Buddhism. Reading this important text, we encounter his authoritative voice, coming face to face with his profound personal experience borne of years of learning and meditative practice. Every now and then, especially when Tsongkhapa describes complex physiological and psychological states that arise from specific meditative practices, we feel these could become a reality even for someone like ourselves, if only we devoted sufficient time to the path.

The Vajrayāna practices presented in *Lamp* belong to what is known as the Guhyasamāja cycle of tantra, and Tsongkhapa was a key proponent of this cycle of teachings. In fact, he explicitly refers to himself as “a yogi of glorious Guhyasamāja” and saw the clarification and propagation of this tradition in Tibet to be an important personal mission. The publication of this volume is a milestone in making key classical Tibetan texts available in contemporary languages. In particular, it provides a valuable resource for those who seek to engage deeply with the Tibetan Vajrayāna teachings, either as their personal spiritual practice or as a resource for exploring the deeper human potential. It is therefore a source of both joy and honor to be able to offer to the world, in a rigorous and lucid English translation, this precious treasure of the Tibetan tradition.

Two primary objectives have driven the creation and development of *The Library of Tibetan Classics*. The first is to help revitalize the appreciation and the study of the Tibetan classical heritage within Tibetan-speaking communities worldwide. The younger generation in particular struggle with the tension between traditional Tibetan culture and the realities of modern consumerism. To this end, efforts have been made to develop a comprehensive

yet manageable body of texts, one that features the works of Tibet's best-known authors and covers the gamut of classical Tibetan knowledge. The second aim of *The Library of Tibetan Classics* is to help make these texts part of global literary and intellectual heritage. In this regard, we have tried to make the English translation reader-friendly and, as much as possible, keep the body of the text free of unnecessary scholarly apparatus, which can intimidate general readers. For specialists who wish to compare the translation with the Tibetan original, page references of the critical edition of the Tibetan text are provided in brackets, and these Tibetan texts are available online.

The texts in this thirty-two-volume series span more than a millennium—from the development of the Tibetan script in the seventh century to the first part of the twentieth century, when Tibetan society and culture first encountered industrial modernity. The volumes are thematically organized and cover many of the categories of classical Tibetan knowledge—from the teachings specific to each Tibetan school to the classical works on philosophy, psychology, and phenomenology. The first category includes teachings of the Kadam, Nyingma, Sakya, Kagyü, Geluk, and Jonang schools, of miscellaneous Buddhist lineages, and of the Bön school. Texts in these volumes have been largely selected by senior lineage holders of the individual schools. Texts in the other categories have been selected primarily in recognition of the historical reality of the individual disciplines. For example, in the field of epistemology, works from the Sakya and Geluk schools have been selected, while the volume on buddha-nature features the writings of Butön Rinchen Drup and various Kagyü masters. Where fields are of more common interest, such as the three codes or the bodhisattva ideal, efforts have been made to represent the perspectives of the four major Tibetan Buddhist schools. *The Library of Tibetan Classics* can function as a comprehensive library of the Tibetan literary heritage for libraries, educational and cultural institutions, and interested individuals.

It has been a profound honor for me to be part of this important translation project. I wish first of all to express my deep personal gratitude to H. H. the Dalai Lama for always being such a profound source of inspiration and an exemplary embodiment of the best of the Tibetan tradition. I thank Gavin Kilty for his masterful translation of this important Tibetan work into English with such care, respect, and clarity. To the following individuals and organizations, I owe my sincere thanks: to David Kittelstrom at Wisdom for his incisive editing; to my fellow Tibetan editors in Sarnath, especially

Geshé Lobsang Choedar, for assisting me in the editing of the Tibetan critical edition, including sourcing all the citations; to the Central University for Tibetan Studies, Sarnath, for proving full access to its library to the Tibetan editors; and to my wife Sophie Boyer-Langri for taking on the numerous administrative chores that are part of a collaborative project such as this.

Finally, I would like to express my heartfelt thanks to Nita Ing and the Ing Family Foundation, who most generously provided the funding for this translation project. I also acknowledge the initial funding toward this project received from Ganden Shartse Dro-phen Ling, Singapore, which helped launched the project. Without this support, no amount of dedication on the part of the Institute or the depth of talent and skill on the part of the translator would have resulted in such successful conclusion of the project. I would also like to thank the Hershey Family Foundation for its longstanding support of the Institute of Tibetan Classics, without which the task of creating *The Library of Tibetan Classics* simply would not have gotten off the ground, and Pierre and Pamela Omidyar, who have enabled me through a special grant to continue overseeing the classics translation project as its general editor.

It is my sincere hope that the translations offered in this volume will benefit many people. Through the efforts of all those who have been involved in this noble venture, may all beings enjoy peace and happiness.

Thupten Jinpa
Montreal, 2013



Translator's Introduction

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. A few Indian Buddhist masters journeying to Tibet brought tantras with them 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*, 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. For practitioners on the bodhisattva path of the Mahayana, there is also no difference between *sutra* and *tantra* in terms of the motivation animating the practice; in both cases, the practitioner is compelled by a special mind called *bodhicitta*, the wish for complete enlightenment in order to be best able to liberate all beings from *samsara*.

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 *dharmakāya*, or “wisdom body,” which refers to the unencumbered knowledge of a buddha, the enlightened mind, and the resultant embodiment of that enlightened mind, known as the *rūpakāya*, or “form body.” The wing of method accomplishes the rūpakāya, and that of wisdom accomplishes the dharmakāya.

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 (*vāyu*), into the central channel (*dhūtī*) 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 rūpakāya. 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 dharmakāya. 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.

GENERATION STAGE

The practice of tantra follows an order of two stages: the generation stage and the completion stage. This work deals exclusively with the five stages of the completion stage. The generation stage, which must precede the completion stage, is characterized by the repeated visualization or imagination of yourself and your personal environment as enlightened forms. The purpose of these complex practices, known as *sādhana*s or *self-generation practices*, is to displace the ordinary view of yourself and personal environment and to replace it with a divine or enlightened view. This is only an imagined process and not an actual transformation; the generation stage is a preparatory ripening before the completion stage, during which these imagined enlightened forms are made real.

Generation-stage practices, therefore, consist of sequenced visualizations, usually beginning with a dissolution of the ordinary self and environment. From that state of emptiness arises a Sanskrit syllable, which by way of a few more transformations arises as an enlightened form such as a deity or a mandala. These transformative processes are repeated many times during the recitation and practice of the *sādhana*. In the form of the deity, many enlightened activities such as initiations and blessings take place, all performed to reinforce the imagined transformation of yourself from an ordinary being to a divine one. Repeated practice ripens you for the higher completion-stage practices, in which these imagined processes are made real through manipulation of the inner winds and psychic penetration of various vital points in the body known as *cakras*, or channel wheels.

COMPLETION STAGE

This text begins at the point where the yogi, or practitioner, has been ripened by prolonged practice of the generation stage, which itself has to be preceded by an empowerment or initiation (*abhiṣekha*) into the practice of that

particular tantric deity by a qualified master. The completion stage completes or perfects what was begun on the generation stage.

The completion stage itself is subdivided into stages. Commonly there are five, giving us the “five stages” (*pañcakrama*) in the title of this book, but the first one is itself divided into two, giving us six in all: body isolation, speech isolation, mind isolation, illusory body, clear light, and union. Another way of dividing the completion stage is in terms of the “six yogas.” These are described in the eighteenth and final chapter of the *Guhyasamāja Tantra*, which is also classified as a separate work called the *Guhyasamāja Later Tantra*. These six yogas are also the means by which the completion stage of the unique *Kālacakra Tantra* is taught.¹ Tsongkhapa spends a lot of time correlating the six yogas with the five stages.

The Five Stages

THE THREE ISOLATIONS

The three isolations of body, speech, and mind are so called because through their practices the yogi isolates body, speech, and mind from ordinary perception. This is different from the imagined transformation from the ordinary to the divine found in the generation stage because the completion stage is characterized by the yogic practice of bringing the winds into the central channel, or *dhūtī*. These inner winds are of vital significance in the realm of tantra. The winds exist within the human body and were first created at conception alongside the other components of the physical body. They are classified into five major, or root, winds and five secondary winds. Classification is according to function. These functions essentially concern the inner mobility of the human body and include such things as breathing, digesting food, and expelling waste. They also have their areas of the body in which they primarily operate. The main wind is called the *life-sustaining wind* (*prāṇa*), or just *life wind*, which as its name suggests is the most vital wind of the body. Imbalances in this wind can cause serious illness and even death.

As mentioned above, the winds are formed through a gradual process at conception and birth. Likewise, at death they follow the reverse process, dissolving gradually into the center of the heart cakra. In this process of creation and dissolution, or *withdrawing*, the winds carry with them various conceptual states of mind. These states of minds, which are called *intrinsic natures* (*prakṛti*), become increasingly coarse as they are created in the womb and increasingly subtle as they withdraw at death. Winds and the mind, or

consciousness, are together like a horse and its rider. The horse is equated with the winds and the rider with the mind, because like the horse, the winds carry the mind to where it is directed. Mind has no power to move without the accompanying horse of the winds. The natural arising and withdrawing of the winds is used in tantra to achieve its aims. In fact, many of the body's natural functions are harnessed to various tantric practices.

As the winds and conceptual states of mind withdraw during the death process, so the winds and consciousness become subtler. The subtle mind and subtle wind are ideal for the development of the respective causes of the dharmakāya and rūpakāya of a buddha. Therefore it makes sense to use them for this purpose by recreating such subtle states while still alive and employing them on the completion-stage path. Just as the winds withdraw into the central channel at death, so completion-stage practices, such as the three isolations, bring the winds from the two side channels into the central channel through the psychic penetration of the cakras, which loosens the channel knots there. Such a practice brings forth the subtle mind accompanied by the subtle wind, and this mind is then focused on the nature of reality, or emptiness, as described above.

Therefore, although body isolation involves similar practices to the generation stage in its visualization of various parts of the body as different deities, it is characterized by the bringing, or the ability to bring, the winds into the central channel. Nevertheless, as Tsongkhapa points out, there are good arguments for including body isolation at least partly within the generation stage.

Speech isolation is not an isolation of actual speech in the sense of separating the articulated sounds of the vocal cords from ordinary existence. It refers to practices called *vajra repetition* and *prāṇāyāma*. These make use of the inner winds and breath, which are often regarded as the root cause of speech. *Vajra repetition* refers to the exclusive form of mantra repetition on the completion stage, which is not vocalized chanting but an identification of the tones of the movement of the inner breath with the three fundamental syllables—*om*, *āḥ*, and *hūṃ*. *Prāṇāyāma* was a yogic practice well known in ancient India. It involved manipulation of the breathing process as a way of increasing lifespan and promoting good health. In Buddhist tantra the manipulation of the breath is an integral part of *prāṇāyāma* practice, but as this work shows, the goal and purpose are vastly different. Speech isolation follows body isolation because mantra recitation exclusive to the completion stage has to be recited by a practitioner who has gained the *body vajra* of body isolation.

The final isolation, isolation of mind, is practiced because in order to attain enlightenment, the practitioner must understand the nature of mind in tantric terms and use that mind to focus on ultimate reality by way of the exclusive tantric methods described above. This practice involves understanding the intrinsic natures and making use of the processes of withdrawing the winds, accomplished in vajra recitation, to develop the wisdoms associated with each stage of the withdrawal process.

This withdrawal process corresponds to the normal withdrawal process at death, during which various signs and appearances occur as the consciousness passes through the process of death. The same process is initiated in life by the experienced completion-stage practitioner who deliberately withdraws the inner winds to the heart center. If practitioners are unable to perform this during life, they will make use of the process as it naturally occurs at death.

The first signs to occur are those indicating that the four elements are withdrawing into each other. The elements withdraw in the order: earth, water, fire, and air. The signs accompanying these withdrawals are appearances resembling a mirage, smoke, lights in the sky, and a flame, respectively. The last sign, the flame, is the sign of the air element withdrawing into the consciousness. After this process the consciousness itself goes through a process of withdrawal whereby it becomes increasingly subtler. There are four stages to this withdrawal of consciousness, each resulting in a particular appearance. These four appearances resemble the whiteness of moonlight known as *appearance*, the reddishness of sunset known as *increase*, the darkness of night known as *close-to-attainment*, and the clarity of a cloudless sky at dawn, known as *clear light*. These four are also known as the *four empty states*—first empty state, the very empty state, the greatly empty state, and the all-empty state. The last of these is known as *death clear light* in the ordinary dying process and *illustrative clear light* when activated in meditation. This clear-light mind represents the subtlest level of consciousness and is the ideal mental state to use for focusing on emptiness, or ultimate truth.

THE UNION OF THE TWO TRUTHS

The last three stages involve the practice of uniting the *illusory body* with the *clear light* to form the final stage of *union*. This indivisible union is the second type of method-and-wisdom union described above. “Method and wisdom united” refers either to the union of bliss and emptiness, as was done earlier, or to this type of union in which the illusory body is method and the state

of clear light is wisdom. Method illusory body is also referred to as *conventional truth* and wisdom clear light as *ultimate truth*. In sutra teachings, the two truths are levels or modes of existence, but in tantra they are also the two causes for the two enlightened forms. *Conventional-truth illusory body* is the exclusive cause of the rūpakāya, and *ultimate-truth clear light* is the exclusive cause of the dharmakāya.

The creation of an illusory body is necessary because without it the yogi would have no exclusive or substantial cause of the rūpakāya, or form body. It is an exclusive cause because it is formed from the subtle wind within the body, and the form body too must be a product of the subtle wind. They are therefore in a direct causal chain. The illusory body is also a nonexclusive or cooperative cause of the dharmakāya, which is in the category of wisdom. The exclusive cause of the dharmakāya is the following stage of clear light. Therefore the illusory-body stage comes before the clear-light stage. This subtle wind from the illusory body is activated or induced through the processes of withdrawing the coarse winds in the isolation meditations. Although this illusory body is separate from the coarse body, and can even travel outside, it is not a separate identity.

In a normal death process, the consciousness withdraws through a series of stages, during which various appearances occur, as described above, until it reaches the death clear light. This is a very brief state, often not even noticed by the dying person. After it passes, the person, now officially dead, passes into the intermediate state, or *bardo*, in the form he or she will adopt in the next life, which is determined by the karma that has ripened at that time. This intermediate-state physical form is not one of flesh and blood or even matter but is constructed of the same subtle wind that creates the illusory body. The intermediate-state body is even said to be a *kind* of illusory body. It is these normal life and death processes that are manipulated in completion-stage practice. Therefore, during the death process, yogis will replace the intermediate state with a deliberately created illusory body in the form of the deity of the tantra they are practicing. Moreover, as mentioned, the advanced completion-stage practitioner does not have to wait for death but can recreate the same illusory body during meditation in life. The often-repeated statement that in tantra you can attain enlightenment in one life is based on the fact that if you achieve an illusory body in life, you will attain enlightenment in that life or at death.

The illusory body is generated to enhance the potency of the wisdom of clear light, which will eradicate the final hindrances to enlightenment

known as the *obscurations to omniscience* (*jñeyāvaraṇa*). This is done by withdrawing the illusory body into the clear light. As we saw, an actualization of clear light occurs naturally in the death process. Many instances of clear light are also manifested by yogic practices on the earlier stages, where they are used to focus on the reality of phenomena, or emptiness. However, here *clear light* refers to the direct realization by innate bliss of the very subtle reality. When the illusory body withdraws into this clear light, the illusory body itself disappears, but the remaining clear light is known as the *actual* clear light, as opposed to the *illustrative* clear light found on earlier stages. Only when the illusory body itself is purified by the clear light will the illusory body remain and not disappear. This is achieved by using the withdrawing and creating processes, which correspond to the processes of death and the intermediate state. The clear light is first achieved by the withdrawal, or dissolution, of the illusory body, and in the subsequent process of creation corresponding to the arising of the intermediate state, the illusory body is again produced, but this time in a purified form. This purified illusory body will not vanish when the actual clear light is actualized. This is the beginning of union, the last stage.

The stage of union represents the union of method and wisdom, conventional and ultimate truth, pure illusory body and actual clear light, and when perfected, the indivisible union of the rūpakāya and dharmakāya of the enlightened state. These two wings of practice run alongside each other throughout tantra—and in sutra practice too. Complementing and supporting each other, they reach their zenith when inseparably joined as bliss and emptiness or as illusory body and clear light. The development of these two is the very essence of all Buddhist practice, but in tantra they take on a special significance, becoming fast and powerful methods for attaining the state of a buddha.

The Guhyasamāja Tantra

The topic of this great work by Tsongkhapa is the completion stage of the *Guhyasamāja Tantra*. This tantra belongs to the highest yoga tantra class, which means it contains special methods for attaining the two enlightened forms described above that are not found in the three lower classes of tantra. For the three lower classes of action (*kriyā*), performance (*caryā*), and yoga tantras do not contain methods for bringing the winds into the central channel. The Sanskrit *guhyasamāja* means “a gathering of secrets.” According to

one tradition, this refers to a gathering or bringing together of the secrets of the body, speech, and mind of the enlightened state. According to another tradition it means a place where the meanings of all other tantras are gathered. "Secrets" does not mean something deliberately withheld but something so difficult to comprehend that its meaning is not apparent.

The *Guhyasamāja Tantra* holds a special place in the tantric tradition. It is referred to as the root of all other classes of tantra. Tsongkhapa says, "In the *Root Tantra*, in the section on the title, it states that every secret of the body, speech, and mind of every tathāgata is contained within this tantra." He devotes a whole section on its merits. There he recounts how just to read, study, or even come into contact with this tantra is of immense benefit, and that as long as the *Guhyasamāja Tantra* remains, the teachings of the Buddha remain also, because "it is the amulet carrying the Buddhadharmā."

The tantra itself still exists in the original Sanskrit and was translated into Tibetan during the second wave of translations in the tenth century, although it may also have been translated during the early translation period.² It consists of seventeen chapters with an eighteenth chapter, the *Later Tantra*, classified as a separate work. The chapters describe the various practices and rituals of the generation stage and stages. Each tantra will have its own main deity and own "residence," or *mandala*, which also usually contains a number of other deities. Depending on the tradition, the main deity of the Guhyasamāja generation stage is either Akṣobhyavajra or Mañjuvajra, and the number of deities is thirty-two or nineteen. According to tradition, most tantras were taught by the Buddha in his tantric form of Vajradhara or as the main deity of the mandala. It is also accepted traditionally that some were taught by the Buddha in his lifetime and others by way of various manifestations after he had passed away. The *Guhyasamāja Tantra* is one of those taught by the Buddha in his lifetime. The Buddha is present throughout the whole tantra, teaching and revealing the secrets to the large assembly.

EXPLANATORY TANTRAS, COMMENTARIES, AND TRADITIONS

As mentioned above, tantra is known as "secret practice" not due to some parsimonious attitude of not wanting to share it but because its subject matter is profound and difficult to access. Because of the way it makes use of various bodily processes, such as those involved in sexual practice, and of its attitudes toward matters generally regarded as "unclean," it is also open to misinterpretation and denigration by those who know very little about it. Moreover, and maybe because of this reason, much of the writing in the

tantras is enigmatic and subject to interpretation. Some of the phrases have varying levels of meaning. Because of this opacity, explanatory tantras often coexist with the tantras. These are also accepted as tantras taught by the Buddha. The eighteenth chapter of the *Guhyasamāja Tantra*, for instance, is viewed as an explanatory tantra of the first seventeen chapters. One tantra can have many explanatory tantras—the *Guhyasamāja Tantra* has up to five.

Still, even the explanations in these explanatory tantras need elucidating, and so there arose a corpus of commentaries by Indian masters. Because of its prominence, many commentaries on the *Guhyasamāja Tantra* appeared in India. This led to commentarial traditions being formed, united by the similarity in their presentations of the Guhyasamāja path. The two main traditions were known as the Ārya tradition and the Jñānapāda tradition, each named after the initiator of the tradition. “Ārya” refers to Nāgārjuna and “Jñānapāda” to Buddhaśrījñāna. Both masters’ seminal works on the *Guhyasamāja Tantra* spawned traditions of subcommentaries.

Nāgārjuna, of course, is well known in the Buddhist world as the influential author of several philosophical works on the ultimate nature of phenomena. According to tradition, he also composed works on Guhyasamāja and other tantric practices. Some deny that the sutra Nāgārjuna and the tantric Nāgārjuna are the same person because the dating of the two developments does not add up unless you accept that he had an abnormally long life. However, the sutra Nāgārjuna was a towering figure, and his philosophical heirs such as Āryadeva and Candrakīrti are also credited with works on the Guhyasamāja in keeping with the interpretation of their master. Nāgārjuna is said to have reached the stage of an *ārya*, or “exalted one” in his spiritual practice, meaning he had attained the level of a direct, nonconceptual cognition of ultimate truth. It is for this reason Nāgārjuna’s tradition is called the Ārya tradition. Nāgārjuna heard the Guhyasamāja from the yogi Saraha, but apparently the latter did not compose any specific works on this tantra and therefore is not credited as the tradition’s founder. Instead, Nāgārjuna’s *Five Stages* became the authority for the Ārya tradition of interpretation.

Buddhaśrījñāna received his teachings on the *Guhyasamāja Tantra* in a vision directly from Mañjuśrī, the personification of the wisdom of the Buddha. He then composed several influential works on the tantra. Tsongkhapa says that Buddhaśrījñāna in his main work, *Oral Teachings of Mañjuśrī*, concentrates on the *Later Tantra*, which explains the tantra using the six-branch yoga rather than the five stages. Of the two traditions, Tsongkhapa clearly favors the Ārya tradition, and this work focuses on that tradition.

The *Guhyasamāja Tantra*, along with the *Later Tantra*, most of the explanatory tantras, and much of the commentarial literature from these two traditions, was translated from Sanskrit into Tibetan during the later translation period, as described above. It is because of this great accomplishment of translation that Tsongkhapa and many other Tibetan masters were able to study and investigate the Indian teachings on the Guhyasamāja generation stage and fivefold completion stage.

Practice or teaching lineages of Guhyasamāja require an actual transmission of the texts and the oral tradition in the form of face-to-face teachings from an Indian master. According to Tsongkhapa seven Guhyasamāja teaching lineages appeared in Tibet by way of the great Tibetan translator Marpa (1012–97), who traveled more than once to India and Nepal to collect teachings. He received teachings and transmissions on both the Ārya and Jñānapāda traditions of Guhyasamāja from seven masters, although his main teacher in India was the Indian pandit Nāropa. Subsequently, the widespread Marpa Guhyasamāja tradition in Tibet relied on the works and teachings of Nāropa, especially his *Clear Compilation of the Five Stages*.

The eleventh-century translator Gö Khukpa Lhetsé traveled to India twelve times, where he studied the Ārya tradition of the Guhyasamāja literature from nine Indian teachers. He brought back to Tibet not only textual explanations of the classic texts but also the collections of core teachings that had developed around the classic texts. Tsongkhapa makes it clear that he holds the lineage of Gö in high regard. There was also an oral-tradition lineage of the five stages that was transmitted by the Indian master Jñānākara to the Tibetan master Naktso (1011–64). Tsongkhapa mentions that there were, apparently, other Guhyasamāja traditions in Tibet in the early days, started by one or two Tibetan translators but that they did not last. The *Blue Annals* states that the Buddhaśrījñāna Guhyasamāja tradition was introduced into Tibet by the great translator Lochen Rinchen Sangpo and subsequently by the pandits Smṛti and Śūnyaśrī.

According to the *Blue Annals* and the Sakya master Amé Shap's *History of the Guhyasamāja*,³ the Marpa tradition and the Gö tradition were transmitted eventually to the great scholar Butön Rinchen Drup (1290–1364). Also, the *Blue Annals* states that many masters of the Marpa Guhyasamāja tradition studied the Guhyasamāja of the Gö tradition. These include Tsurton Wangi Dorjé, an actual disciple of Marpa, and Tsurton's own disciple Khön Gopa Kirti. Tsongkhapa received the Marpa Guhyasamāja tradition from Khyungpo Lhepa Shönu Sönam, who had received it from Butön Rinpoché.

He received the Gö tradition from Khyungpo Lhepa as well as from Rendawa Shönu Lodrö, who was one of his main teachers.

Tsongkhapa's Guhyasamāja Legacy

Tsongkhapa then went on to become one of the most influential figures in the reform and subsequent development of the Guhyasamāja tradition in Tibet. He saw the Guhyasamāja tradition in Tibet as being in a state of decline, and he took on the responsibility of reforming it. He speaks of “the darkness of unknowing and misunderstanding surrounding the five stages,” and says, “The teachings in general, and specifically the Ārya tradition, have for a long time been severely weakened,” and concludes, “With a pure motivation for the severely weakened Guhyasamāja Ārya tradition to be restored and remain strong for a long time, I composed this work.” He felt empowered to take on this task because, as it says in the colophon, he received “special signs of permission to compose this work.” His confidence in approaching such a mammoth task derives too from his identity as a “Guhyasamāja yogi.” Driven by this reformist motivation, the tone and structure of the work is very much one of a close examination of the Indian and Tibetan Guhyasamāja literary traditions followed by conclusions based on reasoning and scripture. Therefore Tsongkhapa’s rejections and refutations of presentations of various aspects of the tantra put forward by a few Indian and Tibetan commentators, and sometimes of entire compositions, is done not to further his own views but in the spirit of restoring the tantra to an uncorrupted state. In this sense the work is far more than just a presentation of the fundamentals of the tantra.

The importance Tsongkhapa gave to the *Guhyasamāja Tantra* can be seen from the number of works he composed on this topic. Even after composing his groundbreaking work on the tenets of tantra in general, *Great Exposition of Secret Mantra*, he set out to write several works covering the path of Guhyasamāja. These ranged from annotations to commentaries on the initiation procedure, explanatory tantras, Indian compositions, and the generation and completion stages of the Guhyasamāja path. Although generally he leaned toward the Gö tradition, he brought out and developed parts of the Marpa tradition too. These include composing a short work entitled *Explicit Instructions for the Five Stages Complete on One Seat*, which is based on the Guhyasamāja teachings of Nāropa. In this present work also he expands on and evaluates aspects of the Marpa tradition, such as the instructions on the nine mixings.

Tsongkhapa's significance in the development of the Guhyasamāja teachings in Tibet cannot be overestimated. The *Blue Annals* states: "Generally, the master Tsongkhapa was of immense benefit to the doctrine, and specifically he was the one who spread the Guhyasamāja in this land."⁴

In the lineage list provided by Amé Shap, the Guhyasamāja lineages received by Butön made their way into the Sakya tradition. He states that of the two main Guhyasamāja lineages, the Sakya masters hold the Gö lineage as their main tradition. Marpa is regarded as the father of the many offshoots of the Kagyü school of Tibetan Buddhism, and clearly the Marpa Guhyasamāja tradition became its main Guhyasamāja practice lineage. Tsongkhapa also received the Marpa and Gö Guhyasamāja lineages, and as he clearly favored the Gö tradition, it would seem that the subsequent spread of the Guhyasamāja in the Geluk school of Tibetan Buddhism, of which Tsongkhapa was the founder, relies more on the Gö tradition. The main seat of Geluk Guhyasamāja practice is in the Upper and Lower Tantric Colleges, the centers of Geluk tantric instruction. There a tradition of teaching the Four Commentaries combined⁵ is followed.

The Guhyasamāja continues to be a main tantric practice of the Geluk school today. Despite the above declaration from the *Blue Annals*, it is not practiced today in the Nyingma school. In the Sakya school the practice of Guhyasamāja has declined. This is also true in the Kagyü tradition, although recently the head of the Karma Kagyü, the Karmapa, assigned different tantras to various monasteries in an attempt to revive them. The Guhyasamāja was among these tantras.

Structure of the Book

A Lamp to Illuminate the Five Stages, as its title suggests, is a work on the Guhyasamāja completion stage. Its aim is to arrive at a conclusive presentation of its five stages by way of a thorough examination of all the available Indic and Tibetan material on this tantra. At that time, there were evidently many differing and contradictory assertions on the practice and theory of the five stages among the traditions in Tibet and in the works of Indian masters. There was even doubt as to which Indian works were valid authorities on Guhyasamāja. In general terms, there was disagreement on what intrinsic characteristics delineated the class of highest yoga tantra into *father tantra* and *mother tantra*. It was this mass of seeming confusion that Tsongkhapa faced when he composed this work—his last, incidentally, before he died.

Tsongkhapa therefore begins this work with an examination of the criteria

for dividing highest yoga tantra into mother and father tantras. His approach here, and in all sections of this book, is to take prevailing assertions of the time, examine them using reasoning and the support of valid scripture, and come to a decisive position, which he then takes as his own position. In doing so, he avoids being dogmatic and is a reformer in the best sense of the word.

He then moves on to the Guhyasamāja father tantra and cites reasons and scripture for it being praised as the king of tantras. Part 1 of the book ends with a detailed and thorough investigation of Indic Guhyasamāja literature. This includes research into the tantra itself and its subsequent explanatory tantras followed by the commentarial traditions, with a special emphasis on the Ārya tradition and its main proponents. Tsongkhapa does not shy away from rejecting an Indian text as misleading or falsely attributed if it does not stand up to reasoning.

Part 2 begins with an account of how the Guhyasamāja traditions arrived in Tibet. This has been briefly described above. This is followed by Tsongkhapa asserting the importance of the student training well in the sutra path of bodhicitta and understanding emptiness before entering the path of the Vajra Vehicle. He then describes the necessity of following the prescribed sequence of initiation, maintaining pure tantric vows and pledges, and training well in the generation stage before embarking on the completion stage. It seems that there were misconceptions at that time questioning how necessary it was to prepare for completion-stage practice with prior generation-stage training, and Tsongkhapa devotes some space to addressing this point.

Part 3 deals with the essential components of completion-stage practice. This mainly concerns the union of bliss and emptiness, and the practice of focusing the mind and winds at particular vital points on the body in order to bring about this innate bliss. These are concepts that distinguish highest yoga tantra from sutra practice and lower classes of tantra and make essential reading for anyone who wants to understand this core component of this class of tantra.

In part 3 Tsongkhapa discusses the five stages in general terms, but he begins with an examination of the corpus of literature on Guhyasamāja known as *core instructions* (*man ngag, upadeśa*). This term is often applied to the oral teachings on sutra and tantra given by Indian and Tibetan masters that are then passed on, either orally or in writing, to become a lineage or transmission. In the tantric vehicle the purpose of these instructions is that they should open up the often inaccessible meanings of the tantras. In that sense they form an indispensable link in the chain leading from the root tantra to a good understanding planted in the mind of the disciple. Therefore

any core instruction on a tantra must have its source in the tantra itself. However, over time it can be seen that the link between the core instruction given by a lama and the tantra it supposedly explains could become stretched and even broken. It is this concern that Tsongkhapa addresses in this chapter. Clearly there were at that time some core instruction texts that had no basis in the great tantric works of India, and Tsongkhapa points this out.

Parts 4 through to 9 are the body of this work and deal with the five stages in order. Tsongkhapa also examines to see which of the six yogas correlates with each of the five stages. These chapters contain encyclopedic information on completion-stage practice and phenomena associated with it. For example, the chapter on speech isolation contains a lengthy presentation on the inner winds that includes descriptions, locations, functions, and associations. The mind-isolation chapter describes the four appearances and lists the eighty intrinsic natures. These phenomena are not restricted to Guhyasamāja but are found in much tantric literature. Part 8 establishes how all sutra paths must eventually join the tantric path if they are to lead to enlightenment, and part 9 deals with the final stage of union.

Part 10 breaks off from the order of the five stages and deals with the practice of *tantric activities*. This is a practice found on both generation and completion stages. It involves physical reenactment of the visualized practices found in the two stages and involves, for the most part, the staging of elaborate ritual activities involving other people as well as the main practitioner. Often these other participants mirror the number, position, and activities of the deities in the Guhyasamāja mandala. Hence masks and costumes play an important part. Not all tantric activities involve elaborate rituals. One type labeled *completely unelaborated* involves only the yogi. Since all such a yogi's activities are totally inward, outwardly he or she may appear to be someone whose only activities are sleeping and eating. Part 10 also deals with enlightenment from a tantric perspective.

Acknowledgments

First of all, I would like to express my deep gratitude to Geshé Thupten Jinpa, president of the Institute of Tibetan Classics, for giving me the opportunity to translate this remarkable composition. In the time that I have spent working on this translation, my life has been enormously enriched by its wealth of wisdom and knowledge. I feel privileged that I was asked to translate this great work and can only hope that my efforts have done it credit.

For resolving queries relating to the actual text, I turned to two friends

who were classmates of mine during my fruitful time as a student at the Institute of Buddhist Dialectics, Dharamsala, India. Gen Gyatso is now a teacher at the institute and known for his erudition and down-to-earth common sense. Ven. Tashi Döndrup now spends his life in retreat within the confines of the Dalai Lama's palace behind the institute. These good friends willingly gave of their time to help me resolve queries I had on the text. I also managed to see Ven. Jhado Rinpoché, former abbot of Namgyal Monastery in Dharamsala, to ask him some questions, but his busy schedule curtailed this to only two visits.

I really have to acknowledge the huge debt of gratitude I owe to David Kittelstrom, senior editor at Wisdom Publications. David, with assists from Lea Groth-Wilson, Laura Cunningham, and Andrew Francis, carried out his editorial duties with his usual efficiency and eye for detail. The look of the book on the printed page, and not a small amount of its readability, are the result of his conscientiousness. Moreover, because I have little or no academic training, much of the work outside of actual translation, such as annotation and this introduction, are woefully inadequate by modern academic standards. For the introduction especially, I had little idea of what information to include and at what readership level to pitch it, and David went out of his way to help me with these topics, for which I am humbly grateful.

I have to acknowledge my gratitude to Geshé Losang Chödar of the Central University of Tibetan Studies, Sarnath, India. Geshé-la was responsible for producing the critical edition of the Tibetan text. Consequently, it was his task to track down the origin of each and every citation in this work and render the name of the source text, its location, and the citation folio and page numbers as endnotes. This was task that required a lot of time and not an inconsiderable amount of patience. I am so grateful to him for taking this on.

Finally I want to thank David Reigle, a true Sanskrit scholar. Whenever I had a query concerning the finding and reconstructing of Sanskrit names, spelling, and so on, David always replied quickly and happily. Needless to say, his replies were thoughtful, detailed, and trustworthy.



Technical Note

THE TIBETAN TITLE of the volume translated here is *Rgyud kyi rgyal po dpal gsang ba 'dus pa'i man ngag rim pa lnga rab tu gsal ba'i sgron me*, which means *Lamp to Illuminate the Five Stages: Core Teachings on the Glorious Guhyasamāja, King of Tantras*. This edition of Tsongkhapa's work was prepared specifically for *The Library of Tibetan Classics* and its Tibetan equivalent, *Bod kyi gtsug lag gces btus*. Bracketed numbers embedded in the text refer to page numbers in the critical and annotated Tibetan edition published in New Delhi in modern book format by the Institute of Tibetan Classics (2012, ISBN 978-81-89165-15-1) as volume 15 of the *Bod kyi gtsug lag gces btus* series. In preparing our translation, the Institute of Tibetan Classics edition served as our primary source, with reference also to other editions.

The conventions for phonetic transcription of Tibetan words are those developed by the Institute of Tibetan Classics and Wisdom Publications. These reflect approximately the pronunciation of words by a modern Central Tibetan; Tibetan speakers from Ladakh, Kham, or Amdo, not to mention Mongolians, might pronounce the words quite differently. Transliterations of the phoneticized Tibetan terms and names used in the text can be found in the table on page 567. Sanskrit diacritics are used throughout except for Sanskrit terms that have been naturalized into English, such as *samsara*, *nirvana*, *sutra*, *stupa*, *Mahayana*, and *mandala*.

Except in some cases of titles frequently mentioned, works mentioned in the translation have typically had the author's name added by the translator for ease of reference by contemporary readers. It should be noted, therefore, that these names, although appearing without brackets, are not always present in the original Tibetan.

Pronunciation of Tibetan phonetics

ph and *th* are aspirated *p* and *t*, as in *pet* and *tip*.

ö is similar to the *eu* in the French *seul*.

ü is similar to the *ü* in the German *füllen*.

ai is similar to the *e* in *bet*.

é is similar to the *e* in *prey*.

Pronunciation of Sanskrit

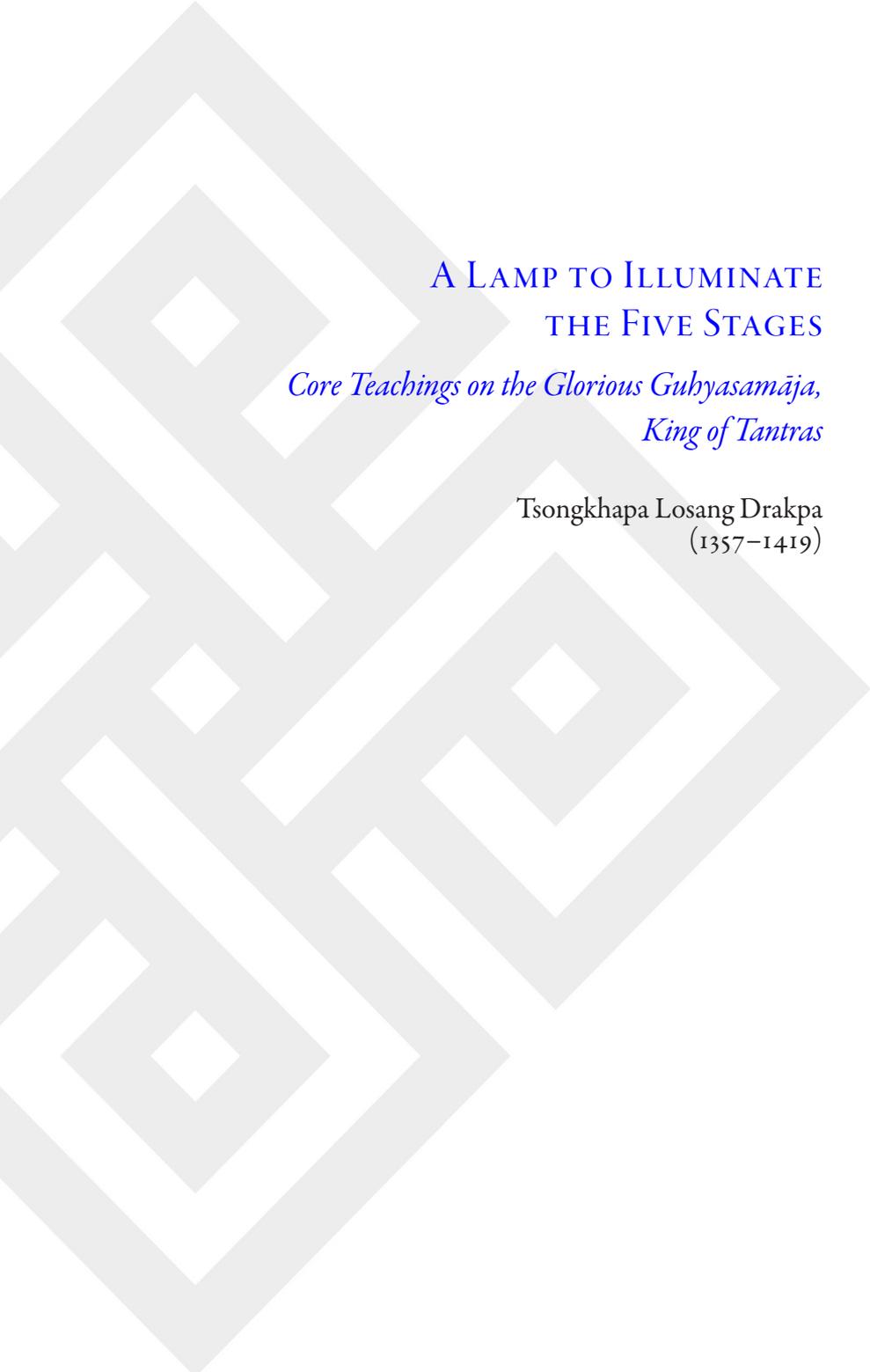
Palatal *ś* and retroflex *ṣ* are similar to the English unvoiced *sh*.

c is an unaspirated *ch* similar to the *ch* in *chill*.

The vowel *r̄* is similar to the American *r* in *pretty*.

ñ is somewhat similar to the nasalized *ny* in *canyon*.

ṅ is similar to the *ng* in *sing* or *anger*.



A LAMP TO ILLUMINATE
THE FIVE STAGES

*Core Teachings on the Glorious Guhyasamāja,
King of Tantras*

Tsongkhapa Losang Drakpa
(1357–1419)



1. Homage and Introduction

I prostrate with reverence to the lotus feet of Bhagavan Mañjuśrī, lord of all tathāgatas.

Sambhogakāya ablaze with the glory of the wondrous marks and features,
unceasingly enjoying the one-taste union of bliss and emptiness,
with nonapprehending compassion that leaves behind the extremity
of peace,

I prostrate to the great conqueror possessed of the seven features.

To the compiler Vajrapāni, who gathered together the secret teachings,
to Indrabhūti, Nāgaḍākinī, Viśukalpa, glorious Saraha, Vajra Nāgārjuna,
Āryadeva, Nāgabodhi, Śākyamitra, Mātaṅgī, Candrakīrti,
and to others of the guru lineage who attained the supreme stage
by the path of Guhyasamāja, the king of tantras,

I prostrate with great joy.

I prostrate constantly to the lotus feet of Guru Mañjuśrī,
who made clear the path of Guhyasamāja, which when understood
brings supreme and fearless confidence in all other scriptures.

Driven by a great force of merit built from prayers
to preserve the teachings of the Buddha and so on,
they traveled with great hardships to the noble land
and spread this practice in the land of snow mountains.

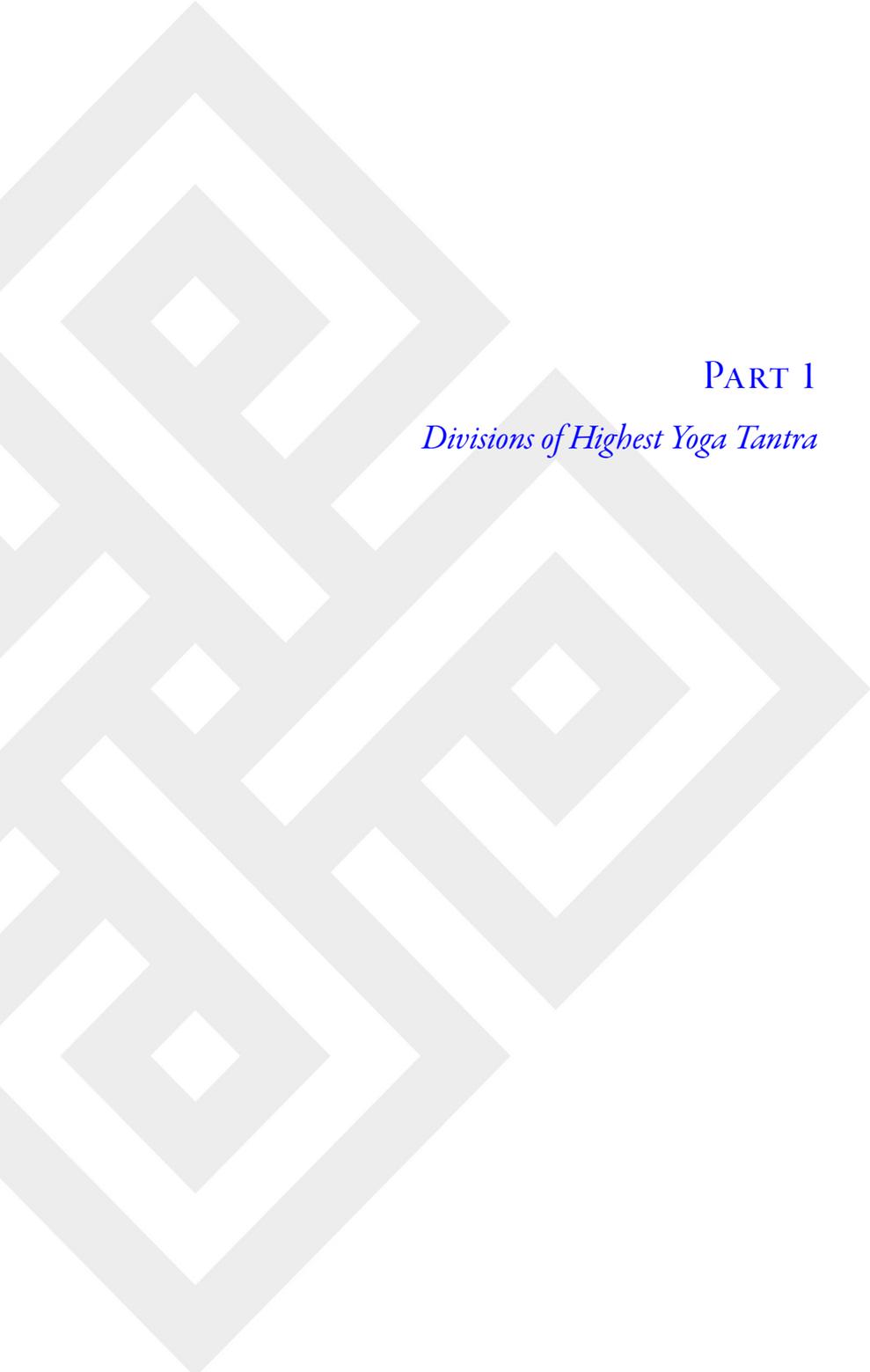
I bow to Rinchen Sangpo, the eyes of the world,
to Lhodrak Marpa, keeper of the treasury of secrets,
to Tanak Gö Lotsāwa, supreme translator, learned in untold scripture.

I will explain this wondrous path of Guhyasamāja,
not clearly understood, no matter how hard they try,
by those who are satisfied with minimal instruction,
who look upon sutra and tantra with blinkered eyes,
for whom scriptural tradition does not arise as instruction,
who seek refuge merely in scripture,
never understanding the subtle path of reasoning
as presented by the adornments of the world,⁶
the sole entrance into understanding the profound transmissions.

You who are interested in teachings that have arisen from
the bringing together of the *Root Tantra* and all explanatory tantras
on the path of scripture and reasoning,
through the instructions of the second great Vajradhara,
think how fortunate you are to enter this great secret path [2]
traveled by Indrabhūti, Sukhanātha, Saraha, Nāgārjuna, and so on,
by Nāgayoginī and millions of other ḍākas and ḍākinīs,
and with a radiantly joyful face lit by a smile,
free yourself from distraction of the three pot-like faults,
and listen.

Of all the wonderful teachings that Bhagavān Buddha, the sole beacon of light in the three worlds, supreme guide of gods and men, the source of all excellent teachings, revealed in keeping with disciple's capacities, the most exalted, the greatest, and the most important is on the glorious Guhyasamāja, a true jewel in this world. The stages of the path that leads to supreme enlightenment for the fortunate person who practices this particular teaching is the topic that will be explained. There are six main outlines:

1. Presentation of the two types of tantras
2. The greatness of Guhyasamāja
3. Commentarial traditions on the meaning of Guhyasamāja
4. Scriptural account of the Ārya tradition
5. How its instructions were transmitted in Tibet
6. The true meanings of these precious teachings



PART I

Divisions of Highest Yoga Tantra



2. The Two Types of Tantra

Presentation of the two types of tantras

1. Ways of naming highest yoga tantra
2. Division of tantra into two types in keeping with the meanings of the names
3. Specific explanation of method tantra

Ways of naming highest yoga tantra

There are many ways of categorizing highest yoga tantra into two. The *Samvarodaya Tantra* talks of *yoga* and *yoginī tantras*:

The number of yoga tantras
is ascertained at 60 million;
Likewise, the number of yoginī tantras
is said to be 160 million.⁷

The *Buddha Skull Tantra*, *Vajra Canopy Tantra*, and others use the same terminology. The term *yoga tantra* applies to both method and wisdom tantras, but using *yoga tantra* for method tantras is to use the general for the specific. For example, the term *child* is the basis for the divisions “boy” and “girl,” but to use *child* for a boy is to use a general for a specific. The term *ḍākini tantra* is also often used for yoginī tantras. Puṇḍarīka’s *Stainless Light Commentary* and others talk of method tantra and wisdom tantra. Nāgabodhi and Candrakīrti also refer to mother tantra as “wisdom sutra.” Tibetan lamas who have taken the name “yoginī tantra” and then created the terms *mother tantra* and *father tantra* are in keeping with the *Ornament of Vajra Essence Tantra* when it says:

The *Ornament of Vajra Essence Tantra*
is the grandmother of all ḍāka mother and ḍāka father tantras.⁸ [3]

Division of tantra into two types in keeping with the meanings of the names

1. Points of doubt
2. Individual assertions

Points of doubt

If highest yoga tantras are divided into method tantras and wisdom tantras, then are these two types of tantras those in which method and wisdom are nondual or not? If they are, this could not be correct because the meaning of the term *method and wisdom tantras* refers to tantras partial to either method or wisdom. Nondual tantras, on the other hand, are tantras that combine method and wisdom equally. If it is asserted that these two types of tantras are not tantras in which method and wisdom are nondual, that too would be wrong because the meaning of *yoga* in the term *highest yoga* as found in the *Later Guhyasamāja Tantra* is:

Method and wisdom in union
is what is meant by *yoga*.⁹

Thus it refers to method and wisdom equally combined without partiality to either. Therefore it has to be correct to say that highest tantras combining method and wisdom equally are nondual tantras. If this is the case, should it not be explained whether method and wisdom tantras on one hand and nondual tantras on the other are mutually exclusive or not?

Individual assertions

1. Others' assertions
2. Our own position

Others' assertions

Some Tibetan masters divide highest yoga tantras into three individual categories: method, wisdom, and nondual. They say that method and wisdom individually is what determines a tantra to be a method or wisdom tantra, whereas tantras that exhibit both are nondual tantras. They assert the *Hevajra*

Tantra to be a nondual tantra because it says, “A tantra with the nature of method and wisdom,”¹⁰ and they also say that the fact that the *Hevajra Tantra* states that it is a yoginī tantra is not contradictory because a nondual tantra must also be a wisdom tantra. If that is the case, they would have to say that a nondual tantra also has to be a method tantra. Therefore they must explain how this does not contradict their own position of dividing highest yoga tantra into three separate categories and maintaining that method and wisdom individually determine method and wisdom tantras, whereas nondual tantras are those that exhibit both together.

Some Tibetan masters say that the “three-classification” tradition asserted that a tantra beginning with the words “This I have heard” was method tantra and one that began “Made joyful by the supreme secret”¹¹ and so on was mother tantra, as asserted by Kṛṣṇācārya. Therefore, because the Hevajra root tantra contains the former, its explanatory tantra *Vajra Canopy* contains the latter, and its other explanatory tantra *Saṃputa Tantra* contains both, the *Hevajra Tantra* is a nondual tantra. In this way they are differentiating three kinds of tantras by the words they contain. [4] The Cakrasaṃvara root tantra,¹² however, contains the latter phrase, while its explanatory tantras such as *Later Exposition Tantra*, begin “This I have heard,” and the *Later Exposition Tantra* actually contains both phrases. This would mean that Cakrasaṃvara also becomes a nondual tantra, in which case we must critically ask, “Where is the mother tantra?”

They reply that their position is that a tantra may teach from both the vast method aspect, the profound wisdom aspect, and so on, but that mother and father tantras are determined from a position of one of them being dominant. This means that they think the two types of tantra and nondual tantras are mutually exclusive and shows that there is no analysis of what exactly is the difference between the method and wisdom that is nondual, and the method and wisdom of father or mother tantras.

Other Tibetan scholars maintain that dividing highest yoga tantras into method, wisdom, and nondual is a provisional position, but that definitively all highest yoga tantras are nondual. They also say that a tantra exhibiting both of the criteria that establishes method and wisdom tantras individually, or exhibiting something that is neither of those two criteria, is a nondual tantra. If that is so, positing three differing criteria for the establishment of the three types of tantra, while at the same time asserting the definitive position that both method and wisdom highest yoga tantras are nondual, and positing as an example of a nondual tantra one particular tantra that you have

strong liking for, is simply contradictory. If you do not accept mother and father tantras in your tradition, then this contradicts your own assertions as well as scripture. If you do accept them and say that these two types of tantra are not nondual, then that would contradict your assertion that these two tantras are nondual from a definitive position. If you accept them and say that they are nondual, then it would contradict positing three dissimilar criteria for the three types of tantra.

In all probability this thinking comes from believing nondual tantra to be superior to mother and father tantra, and to this end they forcefully establish the tantra they have the greatest liking for as nondual while positing all others as belonging to the two types of tantra.

Our own position

1. How to understand tantras of nondual method and wisdom
2. Understanding tantras of method and wisdom individually

How to understand tantras of nondual method and wisdom

1. Actual point
2. Resolving doubts

Actual point

In the terms *tantras of nondual method and wisdom* and *tantras of method and wisdom individually*, the phrase “method and wisdom” is the same. This has led to the error of believing the meaning of both terms to be the same also. Therefore, because of thinking there is only one “method and wisdom,” this has resulted in the conclusion that those tantras combining method and wisdom equally and those tantras that are partial to either method or wisdom must be mutually exclusive. [5] It is from this understanding that the division of highest yoga tantra into three distinct categories has arisen. Therefore these two phrases should be differentiated.

It has been taught that the term *yoga* in *highest yoga* and *highest yoginī* means method and wisdom combined equally, without partiality to either. *Method* refers to the innate bliss, and *wisdom* refers to the mind that cognizes the reality of no-self emptiness. This point is made often and is known as one of highest yoga’s great qualities. The nature of this method and wisdom of

bliss and emptiness is that they are united indivisibly, and on that basis all classes of highest yoga tantra are similar insofar as they all take this point as their highest theme. Therefore, in terms of how all highest yoga tantras are in their very nature, they exist as nondual tantras. Therefore the term *method and wisdom* as used in this way does not determine tantras partial to either method or wisdom. Nondual tantras in this sense are the basis for the division into father and mother tantras, but they are not to be held as a division in their own right. The *Stainless Light Commentary* says:

By their natures they are all yoga tantras possessing the nature of method and wisdom.¹³

Likewise the *Hevajra Tantra* states:

The syllable *he* is great compassion; *vajra* means wisdom.
A tantra with the nature of method and wisdom
I will explain, so listen.¹⁴

Therefore the *Hevajra Tantra* does not become a “wisdom” tantra because it does not say, “Listen to this wisdom tantra.” Also the *Guhyasamāja* says:

“Wisdom and method in union”
is stated to be the meaning of *yoga*;
samāja is taught to mean “coming together,”
referring to all the buddhas.¹⁵

Therefore this tantra does not become a “method” tantra. This is also taught in the *Primordial Buddha*:

By the body of method it is not yoga,
nor is it by wisdom alone;
method and wisdom in union
the Tathāgata has said to be *yoga*.¹⁶

Vajragarbha’s *Commentary* makes similar comments.

Saying that Guhyasamāja does not become a method tantra and that Hevajra does not become a wisdom tantra is a refutation of these two tantras being method and wisdom tantras in terms of understanding method and

wisdom as bliss and emptiness, but according to our own position, it is not an assertion that they are not a father tantra and mother tantra respectively. Mention is made of these two tantras because among mother and father tantras they are the most well known. This is also not an assertion that we do not accept method and wisdom tantras other than these two.

Resolving doubts

Compared to yoginī tantras such as Hevajra in which much is taught about bliss, not much is actually written in the Guhyasamāja corpus about bliss, whereas much is explained by way of the four types of emptiness. [6] However, do not, on account of this, hold the thought that great bliss is an exclusive feature of mother tantras and that father tantras do not take great bliss as the actual path. Mahāsiddha Kṛṣṇācārya said:

That spoken in yoga tantras
beginning “This I have heard”
is of no separate nature
to that of yoginī tantras,
like “fire is otherwise straw;”¹⁷
this the Mind Vajra has said.¹⁸

This means that the preface beginning “This I have heard,” found in method tantras, whose actual meaning is bliss and emptiness indivisibly combined, also mirrors the meaning found in yoginī tantras. Therefore the Conqueror has said that there is no difference in the nature of the union of bliss and emptiness of those two tantras. In particular, in determining the meaning of the Guhyasamāja preface beginning “This I have heard,” the *Guhyasiddhi* says:

Devoting himself to *tattva*,¹⁹
even without special practices,
the practitioner will have attainments.
Though he follows a hundred special practices,
if *tattva* is lacking, there is no attainment.²⁰

Also:

Also *tattva* is a feature of the tantras;
the glorious *Guhyasamāja* makes this clear.²¹

Also:

Creator of the tantra is the Mind Vajra;²²
the speaker and the spoken are the same.
Other than this there were none.
Therefore nothing other than great bliss was taught.
With the lines “This I have heard” and “was dwelling,”
the possessor of the Mind Vajra taught all buddhas.
Concerning the excellent words “was dwelling,”
just as Śrī Mahāsukhanatha has explained
in what manner they are excellent,
likewise, I too will speak a little on that.
Supremely and briefly taught on one occasion,
that spoken by the supreme one
was the true meaning of the tantras of the Buddha
and had the nature of great bliss.²³

Therefore he praises *tattva* in terms of what exists if it is present and what does not exist if it is not present, and more than once he explains that *tattva* refers to bliss and emptiness inseparably in union. This work was composed by Ācārya Mahāsukha, whose other name was Padmavajra. It is also quoted as a source several times in Āryadeva’s *Lamp of the Compendium of Practice* and is, therefore, in accord with the Ārya corpus. It points out again and again that bliss and emptiness united as the actual path is the significance of Guhyasamāja. Therefore, for those who follow the Ārya tradition, this is something to definitely understand.

Therefore, insofar as all highest yoga tantras take bliss and emptiness in indivisible union as the actuality of the path, there is no difference between any of them. With such an understanding, know that whichever of the two types of tantra we enter, it is indispensable to develop in the mind an indivisible bliss-and-emptiness method and wisdom. Moreover, do not have a superficial understanding of bliss and emptiness; it is essential that you discover the very subtle points of exclusive bliss and emptiness. [7]

Understanding tantras of method and wisdom individually

1. The position of *Stainless Light* and so on
2. The position of the *Vajra Canopy Tantra* and so on

The position of Stainless Light and so on

If we now understand the meaning of “method and wisdom” in tantras of nondual method and wisdom, then what is its meaning when used to describe tantras of method and wisdom individually? Let us first of all look at how it is settled in *Stainless Light*:

Whatever the tantra, in terms of worldly truth, the categories of method and wisdom come through the divisions into mirror-like wisdom, the purity of the aggregates and elements, and so on. The Tathāgata has said these exist because of the faculties of those with duller minds.²⁴

Therefore, from the purity of the aggregates come the male gods posited as method, and from the purity of the elements come the goddesses posited as wisdom. By this process individual tantras are established as being method or wisdom tantras. Such a method and wisdom, when compared to the previous ultimate method and wisdom, is conventional truth. Moreover, they exist because of the faculties of duller disciples. On how tantras are asserted as being method or wisdom by way of gods and goddesses, the same work says:

Conventionally, wherever the yoginīs move and the principal deity does not, that is a yoginī tantra. Wherever the method moves and the wisdom does not, that is a method tantra.²⁵

Therefore, in performing the activity of drawing in the wisdom beings into the samaya beings and so on, if the goddesses act and the male deities do not, this is a wisdom tantra. If the reverse occurs, it is said to be a method tantra. Vajragarbha’s *Commentary* explanation is similar. In that case then Kālacakra must be a method tantra, but does that not contradict *Stainless Light* when it says, “The ascertainment of the yoginī tantras is by the division of three years,” because in this section on the number of deities of yoginī tantras as determined by the number of central-channel days in three years,²⁶ Kālacakra is explained as being a yoginī tantra? Using the criteria of male and female deities to establish the two types of tantra is made on the basis of predominance, but it is not definitive. In method tantras, such as the Guhyasamāja according to the Ārya, there are activities of drawing in the wisdom beings, settling, and so on that are not performed by male deities. Also there are

authentic mother tantras in which drawing in, settling, and so on are not performed by female deities. Moreover, it is not contradictory for some tantras, whose presentations are shared by both types of tantra, to teach both ways of drawing in and so on. Therefore, just as the *Vajra Garland* is an explanatory tantra for both types of tantra yet by its nature it is taught to be a method tantra, the *Kālacakra* teaches features from both types of tantra and yet by its nature I think it is a yoginī tantra. [8]

Some say that this is the very reason these types of tantras are determined to be nondual tantras. They may wish to designate these tantras as nondual, but this ignores how nondual tantras are determined in keeping with the thinking of *Stainless Light*, which explains that nondual tantras are determined on the basis of ultimate method and wisdom, as explained previously, and that method and wisdom in terms of moving or unmoving is determined on the conventional basis of the mental capacity of those with dull faculties. This is teaching that the method and wisdom determining mother and father tantra by way of the male and female deities meditated upon is posited on the basis of the mental capacity of those with dull faculties. It is not teaching that this applies to all levels of method and wisdom determining mother and father tantras.

The following has been said:²⁷ *Stainless Light* teaches that in method tantras mother and father deities in union each have the same number of faces and hands representing the purity of the equinoxes, and that in wisdom tantras mother and father deities in union each have a different number of faces and hands, representing the purity of the times between the equinoxes. These are used as criteria for determining the two types of tantra. On the strength of that, where the main mother and father deity have a different number of hands and faces, and the entourage mother and father deities have equal numbers of hands and faces, we arrive at the establishment of nondual tantra. I do not see this as being a good explanation. This merely teaches the reason for there being an equal or unequal number of hands and faces in the two types of tantra. It is not a criterion for determining method and wisdom tantras because there are no defining aspects of method and wisdom, or male and female, in these passages at all.

Furthermore, determining a tantra to be nondual arises from a wish to establish it as superior to other tantras, and establishing tantras as nondual tantras using the above reason is nothing special. Even if it were the case that the main mother and father deity had a different number of hands and faces, and the entourage mother and father deities had equal numbers of hands and

faces, that alone is hardly a profound point. This way of thinking should be applied to other similar kinds of spurious proofs.

The position of the Vajra Canopy Tantra and so on

1. Refuting the positions posited by others
2. Establishing the best position

Refuting the positions posited by others

1. The position of others
2. Refutation

The position of others

The positions of some Tibetans are as follows. In chapter 4 of *Vajra Canopy Tantra* it says:

This is the sacred ḍākinī assembly
of all the buddhas,
and to establish the five ḍākas,
the ḍākinī tantra was taught.²⁸

Also:

For those keen on killing living beings,
those gone astray from the view,
and in order to gather in women,
a tantra easy to understand, not extensive,
of little text but vast in meaning, [9]
and featuring mantras that will bring
understanding to those of lesser minds,
the essence of all tantras, the ḍākinī tantra, was taught.²⁹

According to some Tibetans the first four lines indicate that when the Tathāgata showed himself in the form of a ḍākinī and was the central deity in female form, or because he was surrounded mainly by an entourage of women, the tantra taught was a mother tantra. Likewise, they assert that when the Tathāgata showed himself in the form of the lords of the five

buddha families and was surrounded mainly by an entourage of men, the tantra taught was a father tantra. This is because they think that the verse directly teaches the former and so indirectly teaches the latter.

Likewise, on the basis of the second citation they maintain that mother tantras were taught in order to tame those non-Buddhists who enjoy killing, hold wrong views, and are on wrong paths, and on the strength of that, father tantra was taught in order to tame those of our own doctrine who possess the right view and thereby desire to gain enlightenment. They assert that these are the two features that distinguish the two types of tantra.

In chapter 13 of *Vajra Canopy Tantra* it says:

In order to tame men
ḍāka tantras were taught;
in order to gather women,
ḍākinī tantra was taught.³⁰

Therefore some assert that two types of tantra were taught for these two needs, and it is this that determines the two types of tantra.

In *Illumination of the Secret Reality* it says:

Of the processes arising from generation and completion,
ḍāka is taught to be generation,
and completion is asserted as ḍākinī.³¹

Therefore others assert that father tantras teach the realities of the generation stage and mother tantras teach the realities of the completion stage.

Refutation

The meaning of the first citation is that the *Ḍākinī Vajra Canopy Tantra* was taught in order to establish the mandalas of the five classes of ḍākas who are surrounded by a host of ḍākinīs that make up the entourage of every buddha of the five families. This is made abundantly clear from the preceding text, and so it is not for identifying the nature of a mother tantra. On the five classes of ḍākas, the previous lines state:

The five mandalas are spoken of:
those of Vajrin, Nitya, Vajratejas,
Padmanṛtsvara, and Hayarāja.³²

These are the five lords of the buddha families themselves, and so even the principal deities of the mandala are not manifest in female form. Therefore the explanation of the first citation is incorrect.

The explanation of the second citation is also not right. Just before this citation Akṣobhya and the other tathāgatas ask the bodhisattvas why yoginīs and ḍākinīs were being gathered within this vajra canopy, and in answer Maitreya and the other bodhisattvas reply:

In the beginning Vajradhara
first made a prayer for enlightenment,
vowing, “I will free those born from eggs
and every other living being.” [10]
If that is so why should women be excluded?
For those keen on killing living beings . . .³³

And so on up to “the ḍākinī tantra was taught.” Therefore, in order to gather in women, this essence of ḍākinī tantra was taught, and because the question concerned a vajra canopy, that tantra was the *Vajra Canopy Tantra*. Just before this citation the text reads:

From the 500,000 Hevajra
has this essence been compiled.³⁴

Therefore it is called “essence of *all* tantras.” These lines are not criteria for a general determination of mother tantra. This can also be understood from the phrase, “of little text.”

But what is the meaning of the answer to the question on why women were being gathered inside the vajra canopy? Other scriptures teach that there is no actual attainment of buddhahood in the form of a woman. This question here, however, was on the basis of the teaching that in highest yoga tantra, someone who practices in that form can achieve the highest siddhi. The answer reminds us that the pledge made during the first generation of bodhicitta is to bring all living beings to enlightenment, and therefore, it would be improper to cast women aside. Beings can attain the highest siddhi by relying upon this path in that form, as can those of great wickedness, as illustrated by the line “For those keen on killing living beings,” and those who for the time being have wrong views. Therefore it was in order to gather these beings that the *Vajra Canopy* was taught. So how can it be said to teach the criteria for determining a tantra to be mother tantra?

Concerning the explanation that the two types of tantra were explained in order to tame men and to gather women, in this tantra mother tantras are also referred to as *yoga tantras*. Also, it is in consideration of the fact that the *Vajra Canopy* was taught to attract women that it says, “the *ḍākinī* tantra was taught.”

The Hevajra yoga tantra,
taught first by the Conqueror,
was later compiled into yoginī tantra
to attract those of female form.³⁵

Therefore, like the previous citation, this states that first the extensive five hundred thousand tantra was taught and later condensed to be taught as the yoginī tantra *Vajra Canopy* in order to attract women. In both the *Vajra Canopy* and the two-chapter *Hevajra Tantra*, Hevajra is said to be a mother tantra. Therefore calling it a yoga tantra here is done in terms of yoga tantra being the basis for the division into father yoga and mother yoga tantra. It is not that it is yoga tantra juxtaposed with yoginī tantra.

The way that *Vajra Canopy* was taught for the purposes of attracting women is explained above, and the third citation can also be explained that way. Alternatively, it can also be explained on the basis of both father tantra and mother tantra as follows: The principal form needed for jewel-like beings to attain the supreme siddhi by way of highest yoga tantra can be male or female. In the tantras and their commentaries, however, there are many descriptions of the practitioners mostly as men and the consorts (*mudrā*) as being the four types of women. [11] In these cases not only the man but the consort, too, is described as being a practitioner, because it said many times that just as method is liberated by the circumstance of wisdom, so the wisdom female is liberated by the circumstance of method. Such methods are explained in both types of tantra, but the definitions of a consort, their types, the ways to examine them, how to rely upon them, and how exalted wisdom is produced in reliance upon them are not as extensively explained in father tantras as they are in yoginī tantras. Therefore, in this way, the citation is saying that the two kinds of tantras were taught in order to tame those men and women. Moreover, this citation merely explains the need for the two types of tantra; it is not defining the criteria for determining father tantra and mother tantra. For example, the *Guhyasamāja* was taught primarily for the jewel-like disciple, but that is not what makes it a father tantra. If this were not the case, then the fact that *ḍākinī* tantras were taught to bring understanding to

those with lesser minds should be the criterion for determining them to be mother tantras.

The explanation of the citation from *Illumination of the Secret Reality* is also not correct. This work states:

... and coupling, these are the four aspects.
 Coming together is taught to be of two aspects—
 namely, processes of generation and completion.
 Yoga teaches generation,
 and completion is spoken of in yoginī.
 Two organs in meditative union
 is the meaning of “coming together.”³⁶

This passage is saying that of the four tantras of gazing, laughing, holding hands, and coupling, for the fourth of these, which refers to tantras that involve the coming together of the organs, yoga and yoginī tantras were taught. The first teaches a process arising from generation and the second a process arising from completion, but this is not a description of the generation and completion stages. Just before the above citation, *Illumination of the Secret Reality* says:

The path of glorious Guhyasamāja,
 whose nature is that of the two stages;
 the beautiful Guhyasamāja,
 prime source of all tantras.³⁷

This, therefore, contradicts any notion that yoga tantras such as Guhyasamāja do not primarily teach the points of the completion stage but mainly teach the points of the generation stage.

Some claim that Kṛṣṇācārya asserts that the tantra introduction “This I have heard” was for father tantra and the introduction “Made joyful by the supreme secret,” and so on, is for mother tantra. This is not his assertion. He is saying that the phrases “This I have heard” found in yoga tantras and the substituted phrase “Made joyful by the supreme secret” found in some mother tantras are no different in terms of the actual union of bliss and emptiness. He is not saying that these two phrases are criteria for determining the two types of tantra. The actual citation has already been quoted. [12]

Many other ways of determining the two types of tantras have been put forward by Tibetans and some Indians. For the most part, however, their

criteria contain no defining aspects of male and female, or method and wisdom, that could be used to determine method and wisdom tantras. Moreover, when they state “mainly teaching method and mainly teaching wisdom,” there is no explanation of what method and wisdom actually refer to and no explanation of the difference between mainly teaching and mainly not teaching. Also, their explanations of criteria for determining the two types of tantras merely look at what is conducive to each of the the two types of tantra. Therefore it is not difficult to understand how they are incorrect, and I will not write about them here.

Establishing the best position

So what is the way to determine father and mother tantras? Although you can posit that a differentiation could be commonly made based on the generation-stage collections of the two types of tantras, the differences have to be established primarily from the completion stages. On the basis of method and wisdom being bliss and emptiness, it has been explained previously the way to establish the two types of tantras as nondual tantras without necessarily determining them to be individually tantras of method or wisdom. Even in terms of method and wisdom being bliss and emptiness, a greater emphasis on one or the other is also not acceptable as criteria. This is because the greater emphasis on bliss found in the mother tantra Hevajra and others is not found in the Guhyasamāja, and so it would erroneously follow that the Hevajra was a father tantra and the Guhyasamāja was a mother tantra.

Therefore, concerning method and wisdom spoken of in terms of tantras being method or wisdom by way of the completion stage, *wisdom* is the ultimate exalted wisdom of great bliss, and *method* is the conventional illusory body. Establishing a tantra as a yoginī tantra by way of the first criteria, chapter 13 of the *Vajra Canopy* says:

“Bhagavān, how are they named yoginī tantras?”

The holder of the vajra spoke,

“The method of the perfection of wisdom
is spoken of as being the yoginī.

Because of which, by engaging in that reality
through the yoga of mahāmudrā,
they are called yoginī tantras.”³⁸

This passage succinctly determines mother tantra in general terms. Its meaning is as follows: They teach the way to “engage” in the ultimate “reality” of emptiness by way of the yoga of mahāmudrā. “Because of which” tantras such as the *Vajra Canopy* “are named yoginī tantras.” This reason that determines such tantras as mother tantras is expressed in the two lines beginning “The method of the . . .”

To explain that in more detail: The *kunda*³⁹-like bodhicitta descends from the crown to the jewel in the *descending* process, [13] and it is followed by the bodhicitta returning to the top of the head in the *stable ascent* process to produce the four joys. Stages of increasing insight arise from engaging in the ultimate reality of emptiness by way of the mahāmudrā of innate bliss inseparably united with emptiness. A tantra that primarily teaches the above, and does not primarily teach the method of creating the conventional illusory body from the five-light wind acting as the mount for the exalted wisdom of great bliss, is a yoginī tantra. This is because this innate perfection of wisdom, which is the method of accomplishing the dharmakāya, is a *yoga* involving the inseparable union of bliss and emptiness, and as creator of the dharmakāya, it is primarily the wisdom aspect on the side of emptiness. Therefore it is *mother*.

Establishing a tantra as being a father tantra by the second criteria, the *Dākā Ocean Tantra* says:

In the yogas, in the kings of tantras,
know the divisions of the various rituals.
With the clear light and the illusory,
I have taught the illusory to the world.⁴⁰

The meaning of this is as follows: The verse says, “have taught.” Taught where? In the “king of yoga tantras.” Taught what? The “illusory” body. To whom? To “the world,” meaning to his disciples. Taught by whom? “I,” the Teacher. How was it taught? By the methods of accomplishing the illusory body through the stages of the four empty states, consisting of “clear light” and the preceding three. By what will it be accomplished? By knowing well the “divisions,” or features, “of various rituals” taught in these tantras.

This can be explained in more detail. A tantra that primarily teaches the following processes is designated a father yoga tantra: The winds gradually withdraw into the heart, which is the location for the arising of the clear light. From this process the four empty states arise in forward order. After

this, in the emerging process, the four empty states appear in reverse order, from which the exalted wisdom of the empty states is created. From the five lights of the wind of the clear light, the conventional illusory body will be achieved. Such a tantra is a father yoga tantra because it teaches a *yoga* that inseparably combines the body produced from the winds with the exalted wisdom of the empty states, and it is *father* because it teaches the causes for accomplishing the form body, primarily the method aspect on the side of appearance.

Concerning the meaning of the citation above from *Illumination of the Secret Reality*, the “generation” of the illusory body, which is the “process arising from” the four empty states, and the process arising from the ever-increasing engaging in the reality that is “complete,”—that has existed, in other words, since time without beginning—are the two processes primarily taught by the two tantras. Therefore its message is similar to the other two citations.

The phrases “primarily teaching” and “primarily not teaching” indicate whether the respective tantra does or does not explain the above with particular emphasis on one or the other and do not indicate merely whether they are taught at all.

If these two differentiating characteristics can be observed in the main father and mother tantras as explained by authentic masters, then other method and wisdom tantras are branch tantras to be included in these two main types of tantras. Therefore even those tantras in which this process is not evident should be explained in terms of one of these two categories. Consequently, this method of distinguishing tantras applies to all mother and father tantras.