


Introduction to Tantra

Class 1 (2019)

A 9-week
DISCOVERING BUDDHISM
course with registered FPMT
teacher, Miffi Maxmillion




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What if *you* yourself could become a Buddha in just three years?

- Enlightenment will take, on average, three countless eons on the Bodhisattva path
- What if it took only few lifetimes...
- One lifetime...
- A few years?
- How is this possible?


...the Tantra path



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Outcomes of the Course

- Unique characteristics of tantra
- Three gates to enter tantra (am I ready?)
- Responsibilities of the student
- How to recognise a qualified teacher
- Four classes of tantra
- Causes of the four buddha bodies
- Path of Action Tantra (Nyung-Ne)
- Path of Highest Yoga Tantra
- Visualisation, pujas and retreat
- The key to success – guru devotion



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Great Books on Tantra



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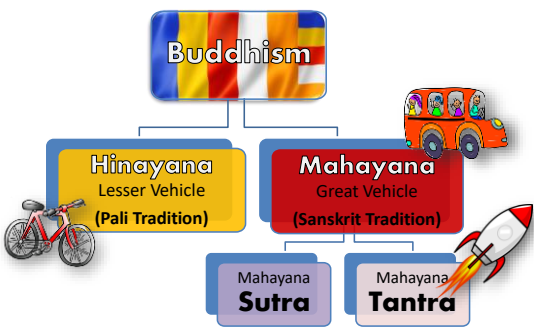
Outcomes of Today

- Greater and Lesser Vehicles
- Difference between sutra and tantra
- **Six names of tantra**



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Overview of Buddhist Vehicles



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Mahayana Paths

Sutra

Emptiness & bodhicitta
No danger
Afflictions and their seeds
Mahayana foe destroyer
Perfection/Causal Vehicle
Step by step process

Tantra

Emptiness & deity yoga
Utilises desire
Afflictions, seeds & *stains*
Four complete results
Mantra/Resultant Vehicle
Future result into present

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What is Tantra?

Continuity

- Indestructible mind
- Asleep to awake

Texts


- Practice manuals
- Provenance to Buddha

Meaning

- The process of the **basis** (oneself), **path** (practice) and **result** (buddhahood)

Practices

- Utilising desire (not naturally virtuous)
- Three Principal Aspects as a foundation



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Names of Tantra

1. Secret
2. Mantra
3. Resultant
4. Vajra
5. Methods
6. Cannon of the Vidyadharas

Secret MR. Vajra & his Method Canon

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The Lightning Vehicle



"...in one short lifetime of a being of the degenerate age, from the first initial practice of tantra until the attainment of buddhahood."


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SUMMARY



- Not separate paths. Methods vary, not the view
 - Lesser Vehicle main practice is **renunciation**
 - Mahayana Sutra practices with **bodhicitta**
 - Mahayana Tantra practices with **deity yoga**
- **Foundation** of the Three Principal Aspects of the Path
- Six names of tantra illustrate the unique qualities
- **Unique** object of abandonment in tantra is ordinary appearances (afflictions, their seeds *and their stains*)

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Reading:

- *Meaning of Mantra* (page 34)
- *Pabongkha's Advice* (page 37)
- Class 1 summary
- Mindmaps 1 & 2

Next Week:

- Why we need all three *Principal Aspects*
- Responsibilities of a student
- Recognising a qualified teacher

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Ladies and Gentlemen – Are We Ready?!




- How do we know if we are ready for tantra?
- How do we drive the vajra vehicle safely?
- How to recognise a qualified teacher?



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Foundation of Tantra

- Many forms of tantra (Hindu, Sikh, Jewish)
- Buddha taught tantra on a foundation of the *Three Principal Aspects of the Path*




- If you’re still unsure, be cautious!
- The stronger our 3PAs, the stronger our practice




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 <h4>Renunciation</h4> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• One’s own benefit• Strive for liberation• Renounce suffering and its causes• Strive for freedom, not contaminated happiness• Guards against distractions of bliss• <i>Without it we are bound tighter to samsara</i>	 <h4>Bodhicitta</h4> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Benefit of others• Yearn to free all from suffering and place them in bliss• Find the quickest way to help• No danger in love and compassion!• <i>Without it we do not become a buddha</i>	 <h4>Correct View</h4> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Cuts root of samsara• View of the non-inherent existing I• What makes it Buddhist• Recognise your innate potential• Works <i>because</i> of dependent arising• <i>Without it we hold everything as solid, inherent</i>
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Driving the Vajra Vehicle ...*Safely!*




 <h4>Renunciation</h4> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Not driving under the influence of afflictions• Not foolhardy, overestimate skill	 <h4>Bodhicitta</h4> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Responsibility to passengers• Find the correct destination, high road not low road	 <h4>Correct View</h4> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Road rules, interdependence• Maintenance, understand how it works
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Three Faults to Abandon

- Upside-down vessel
- Dirty vessel
- Cracked vessel



What to do?

- Enjoy your study, savour the journey
- Don’t try understand it all at once
- Practice in slogans (use your words)
- Apply the teachings to your own situation
- Socratic questioning and follow up

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To Become a Student of Tantra...

- Wish to be liberated (renunciation)
- Unable to bear the suffering of others without helping (bodhicitta)
- **Confidence in the vajra master**
- Desire to guard the vows
- Stable confidence in tantra
- **Trained in the three common preliminaries**
- Can meet the commitments
- Request the initiation



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Qualities of a Master (in Sutra)

Conduct

Wisdom

Looking after students

1. Ethical discipline

2. Meditative stabilisation

3. Training in wisdom

4. Well versed in scripture

5. Conceptually realised emptiness


6. Know more than the student

7. Skilled at teaching

8. Motivated by love

9. Content with one's work

10. Patient and tolerant



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Qualities of a Master (in Tantra)

At the very least...

1. Has exceeding qualities (more qualities than faults)

2. Attained empowerment

3. Abiding in vows and samayas

4. Learned in lineage rites


5. Completed the retreat

6. Permission from the deity (not opposed)




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Choosing a Guru



Judge your own crazy first!
Accept your responsibility as a student *first*. After that you check out the lama!




We put our life in their hands
In sutra the lama is *like the buddha*, in tantra the lama is seen as *the buddha*



Based on analysis, not charisma
If we make a mistake, the fault is in our negative karmic vision

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SUMMARY



The foundation makes tantra virtuous

• Renunciation means we are not distracted

• Bodhicitta means we remember everyone

• Correct view is what cuts the root of samsara

Master and disciple


• Continue to train in the *Three Principal Aspects*

• View the lama as no different from the buddha

• Investigate the lama well, *before* the initiation

• Joyfully keep vows and commitments

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Reading:

• *Samsaric Suffering* (pages 29-32)

• Class 2 summary

• Mindmaps 3, 4 & 5

Next Week:


• Three gates to enter tantra

• What the vows and commitments are

• An mysterious experiment....

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Getting Your License!




• You need permission to practice tantra

• Vows and commitments for each level


• **Must pass through three gates to enter tantra:**



1. Refuge



2. Bodhicitta



3. Empowerment

• A mysterious experiment...

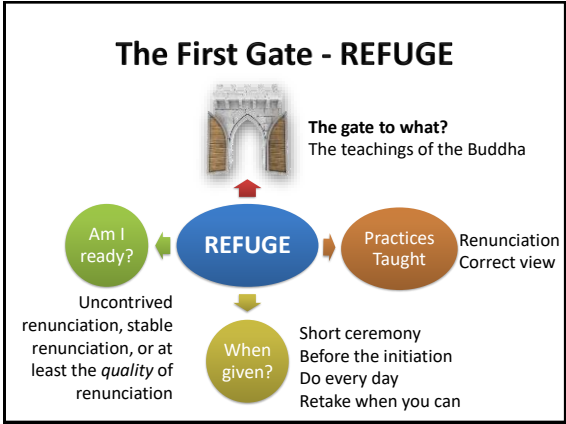
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Refuge Vows & Commitments

- In general:** rely on holy beings, practice Dharma, take as many vows as you can, offer food & drink to Three Jewels, 3 prostrations each day
- Lay vows:** avoid killing, stealing, lying, sexual misconduct, intoxicants
- How long for?** This lifetime
- Maintenance:** Know what's a downfall, how to confess and purify

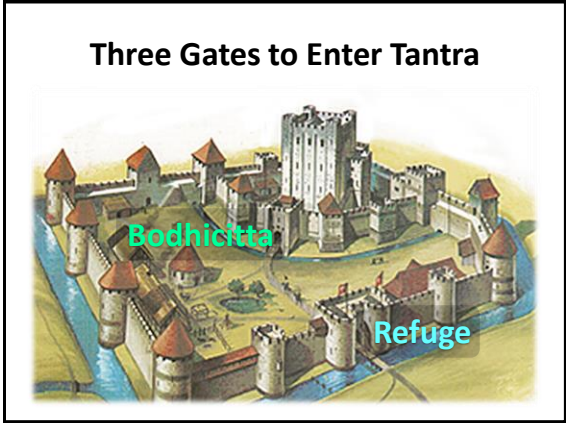
✗ Avoid:

- Having your main refuge other than Buddha
- Harming living beings
- Negative company

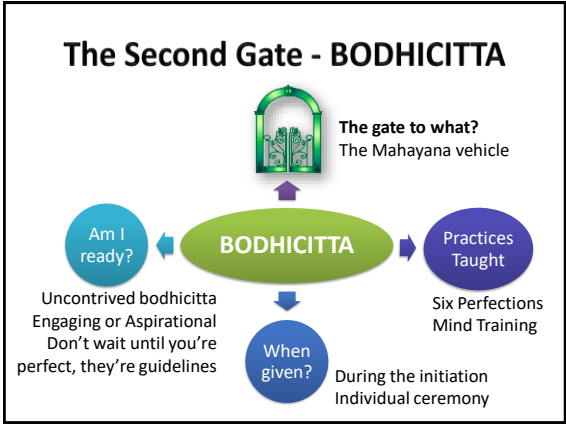
✓ Practice:

- Regard statues as the actual Buddha
- Regard every syllable as holy Dharma
- See the sangha as actual Sangha

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Types of Bodhisattva Vows

1. Aspirational bodhicitta **L**

- Never forsake the wish to attain buddhahood for the benefit of all
- Recite the Bodhisattva prayer 3x each day

2. Engaging bodhicitta **P**

- 18 root & 46 auxiliary
- Engaging in the conduct
- Based on 6 Perfections

• Attitude

- Don't wait until you think you can keep them
- Inverted pride "I couldn't possibly keep them!"
- An honour, not a burden

• Maintenance

- Hold until enlightenment
- Learn them so the conduct comes automatically
- Don't give up on people who harm you
- Know how to purify, retake when you can

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Three Gates to Enter Tantra

The image shows a stylized illustration of a castle with three main gates. The top gate is labeled 'Empowerment' in yellow. The middle gate is labeled 'Bodhicitta' in green. The bottom gate is labeled 'Refuge' in blue. The castle is surrounded by a river and has a small flag on top of the central tower.

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The Third Gate - EMPOWERMENT

The diagram shows a central purple oval labeled 'EMPOWERMENT'. Above it is a yellow archway icon with the text 'The gate to what? The practice of Mantra'. To the left is an orange circle with 'Am I ready?' and a list: 'Spontaneous attraction', 'Connection in a dream', 'Create merit first', 'Foundation of 3PA's', 'Lama's advice'. To the right is a green circle with 'Practices Taught' and a list: 'Deity yoga (practices containing desire)', 'Bodhisattva practices'. Below the central oval is a green circle with 'When given?' and the text 'After gates 1 & 2', 'Jenang or Wang'.

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Tantric Vows & Commitments

- **Refuge** vow and commitments
- **Bodhisattva vows** aspiring or engaging (18 root, 46 secondary)
- **Practice commitment** daily mantras, sadhana, approach retreat
- **Pledges** of the deity, including secrecy
- **Can use** bell and dorje

Additional for HYT:


- Tantric vows
- Samayas of the Five Families
- Daily 6-Session Guru Yoga
- Tsog twice a month (mother tantra)
- Retreat, fire-puja, self-entry
- Can use bell and dorje, damaru, inner offering



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What exactly is an initiation?

- First experience being the deity, provided by the vajra master
- Seed for actual experience




Leave aside misconceptions and replace with:

- A spirit of freedom (renunciation)
- A mind possessed by universal altruism (bodhicitta)
- We understand how the tantric reality corresponds *more* to our fundamental buddha nature than our current limited identity (wisdom)


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Two Types of Empowerment



Great Initiation (wang)

- 18 & 46 Bodhisattva vows
- Tantric vows (HYT)
- Usually held over two days
- Permission to practice that deity (and any in that class)



Subsequent Permission (jenang)

- Aspiring bodhicitta or the bodhicitta vow
- Not permitted to self-generate (if it's your first)

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If you fall asleep at an initiation, do you still receive it?


- Drunk on disturbing emotions, only wake up for more drinks, can't remember anything.... But I was there!




- Meet the host (deity), party with the guests (entourage), enjoy the venue (mandala), relish the feast (offerings), and take home a **party-pack of commitments?**

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SUMMARY





- One is not ‘born a suitable vessel’ for tantra, but needs to be made into one
- By holding vows we can accomplish all our aims
- We must enter the gates of Refuge and Bodhicitta before we can enter into Tantra
- *Jenang* and *wang* determine if we can self-generate or not
- It’s OK to take notes in an initiation!




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Smelling Assignment!

- **When?** Do it when you are hungry!
- **What?** Enjoy the smell, but halt the grasping that wants to eat
 - Change “yum...I want to eat that”
 - Into “mmm...how enjoyable”
- **Why?** So that later we can apply this skill to bigger things
 - The joy of a person’s company without having to posses them
 - The joy of appreciating things without having to buy them



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Reading:

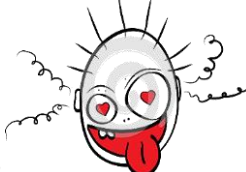
- Alexander Berzin “Bodhisattva Vows” (page 41)
- “Advice given during teachings by Geshe Tenzin Tenphel” (before summary sheets at the back)

Next Week:

- Four classes of tantra
- Differences between Lower Tantra and HYT
- Report back on your *smelling assignment*

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How much bliss can we handle before we go berserk?





- How do we use desire?
- What’s your *pleasure threshold*?
- Use every emotion on the path
- Four classes of tantra determined by capacity

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But first... the smelling homework!

- **Worldly** - feeling, craving, grasping
- **Hinayana** - restraining the mind
- **Perfection** - use it for others (based on restraint)
- **Mantra** - blissful play of appearances within emptiness (based on restraint and altruism)
 - Whether it’s the smell of cake or dog shit, you go “mmmmm, beautiful!”



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Desire as Fuel



- **Ordinary pleasure** narrows our attention, and increases our dissatisfaction
- **Tantric bliss** expands the mind to overcome limitations

“When the intense energy of bliss is focussed on emptiness, it gives rise to the wisdom that cuts the root of suffering.”

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Longing for Union


"Within us all is an unlimited source of male and female energy, just as within every atom is the potential for nuclear fission."



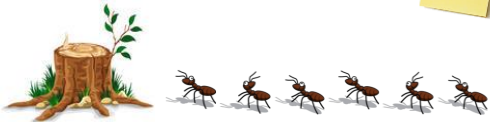

- Masculine:** bliss, skilful means, compassion,
- Feminine:** penetrative awareness, wisdom

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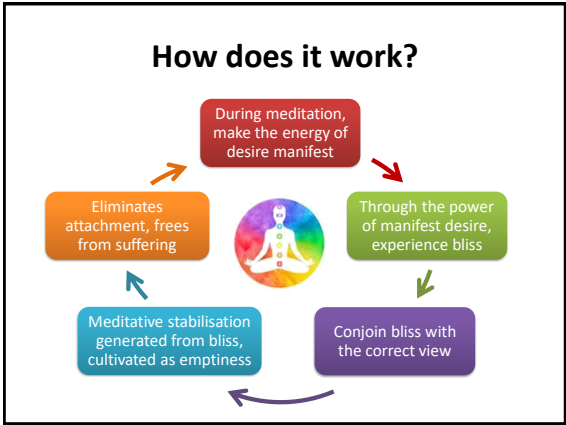
Like an Insect...



- An insect born from wood devours it from the inside, sustaining itself until the wood is gone
- We are born from attachment, but use this attachment to exhaust the attachment
- Tantra is not a method to increase one's attachment, but to eliminate it**




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Like a Vaccine...




- Vaccine uses disease to produce medicine
- What ensures it will not kill us? Processed with empty view and altruistic motive
- Tantra uses the bliss arising from desire to counter affliction
- Tantra does not eliminate the energy of affliction, but harnesses it**




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Practices Containing Desire



- Countries modernising too quickly



- A painter in the creative process



Capacity of the disciple to take bliss onto the path **without getting into trouble**

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Four Classes of Tantra

Name/Class	Capacity	Type of Bliss	Disciplined by
ACTION TANTRA <i>Kriya Tantra</i>	Lesser capacity	Joy of gazing	External activities (ritual cleanliness, avoid black foods, cleaning)
Performance Tantra <i>Charya Tantra</i>	Middling capacity	Joy of gazing and smiling back and forth	External activities and concentration equally
Yoga Tantra <i>Yoga Tantra</i>	Supreme capacity	Joy of gazing, smiling back and forth, and holding hands	Mainly concentration
HIGHEST YOGA TANTRA <i>Maha Anuttara Yoga</i>	Highest capacity	Joy of gazing, smiling back and forth, holding hands, and union	Not relying on the external at all (nothing higher than this)

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SUMMARY



- Four classes of tantra are determined by how much bliss we can handle before getting into trouble
- Ordinary and enlightened desire are directly opposed
 - Like an insect, devouring attachment from within
 - Like a vaccine, harnessing poison to destroy disease
- Unlimited source of male and female energy, just as every atom has the potential for nuclear fission
- Deity practice is a mirror of our enlightened potential

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Recommended Reading:

- The Four Tantras (page 32)
- The Four Levels of Attachment (page 33)


Next week:

- Four buddha bodies (kayas) and their causes
- Power of visualisation

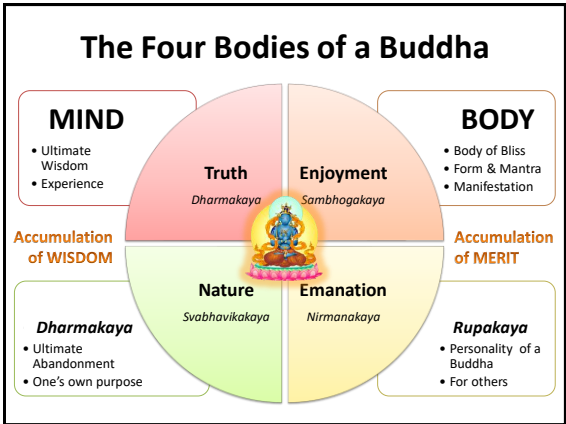
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No Substantial Cause, No Buddhahood!

- What is the substantial cause of buddhahood?
 - ...of a buddha's wisdom?
 - ...of a buddha's activity?
 - ...of a buddha's manifold forms?
- No mango seed, no mango tree (no matter how hard we pray!)





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What’s the Substantial Cause?

- Vehicles distinguished in terms of method, not view
- Later vehicles rely on the fulfilment of the characteristics of the earlier ones
- Substantial cause is similar to the result
- The two kayas are not separate, so we must achieve dharmakaya and rupakaya simultaneously
- *In the Perfection vehicle there is no substantial cause for the rupakaya, so one cannot attain Buddhahood through the Perfection vehicle alone!*



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Four Complete Results of a Buddha

Meditation	Result
MANDALA Meditate on the palace and hosts of deities	→ Abode 
FORM Appearance of one's own body as the deity	→ Body 
OFFERINGS Present offerings to the deity (front & self)	→ Enjoyments 
LIGHTS Emanate lights... ...to all sentient beings, purify and place in buddhahood ...to buddhas and bodhisattvas, as offerings Lights reabsorb... ...bringing the blessings of the buddhas	→ Deeds 

Inestimable mansion and environment

Body of the deity one visualised


Resources and wealth of a buddha

Spontaneously and effortlessly accomplish the activity of a buddha

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Why Use Visualisation?

- Takes the tendency of our mind to imagine things onto the path to enlightenment
- Our nervous system cannot tell the difference between fiction and reality
- Changes the neural pathways in our brain




Visualisation is a transformative method, not an optional extra!

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Like Believing Our Body Image...

- Our body *image* is mapped on to our body
- Ages us prematurely, or surprises us with superhuman strength
- Anorexics cannot reconcile an extreme body image with reality (body dysmorphia)
- Amputees experience phantom limb pain


All are phantoms, so why not adopt the body image of a buddha?



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Like Emanating Lights...


- On an ordinary level, electrical and magnetic fields decay and are finite, just like our actions
- On a quantum level, strange things happen, gravity changes, there is no barrier to light
- We all emanate light as a subtle manifestation of intention
- Every object in the universe has a harmonic resonance



First done in imagination, then later it manifests on an energetic level


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SUMMARY



- Four buddha bodies must be achieved simultaneously
- Substantial causes of the Rupakaya
 - Mandala (pure environment)
 - Form (body of light)
 - Offerings (enjoyments)
 - Emanating & absorbing light (activities)
- Visualisation is a transformative method that changes our experience and re-wires the brain

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Recommended Reading:

- *Tara the Liberator* by Lama Zopa (pages 13-17)
- If you can, read up to page 25

Next week:

- Path of Action tantra (e.g. Nyung-Ne)
- Structure of a sadhana

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Path of Action Tantra

Tantra is like working in a nuclear power plant – *precision work!*


Don't be a Homer Simpson – *be an Action Jackson!*

- Path of Action Tantra
- Structure of a sadhana




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Gathering the Two Accumulations



Perfection vehicle
Emptiness meditation (wisdom)
Supported by 6 perfections (merit) post session
Two accumulations gathered separately



Mantra vehicle
Deity practice (merit)
In union with meditation on emptiness (wisdom)
Gather two accumulations simultaneously – *quickly!*

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Like Looking at a White Snow Mountain Through Blue Glasses...

- **Two simultaneous aspects:**
the appearing clear deity, whilst ascertaining the emptiness of that deity





- From perspective of **appearance** it's a blue mountain
- From side of **ascertainment** it's a white mountain




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Path of Action Tantra

Yoga With Signs  Two Paths of Action Tantra  Yoga Without Signs

Concentration **with** recitation Four Limbs of application Concentration **without** recitation Three Suchnesses


Four Limbs of Application Self Basis Other Basis Mind Basis Sound Basis



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Yoga With Signs

- Purpose is **calm abiding**
- Method for **Rupakaya**
- Meditate on the **deity** (sustained by emptiness)
- Analytical then stabilising meditation (equally)
- Divine pride and clear appearance




Meditative stabilisation of non-conceptual bliss and clarity

- **Bliss** (mental and physical pliancy from calm abiding)
- **Clarity** (deity appearance)
- **Non-conceptual** (concentration meditation)

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Yoga Without Signs

- Purpose is **insight**
- Method for **Dharmakaya**
- Meditate on **emptiness**
- Analytical then stabilising meditation (equally)



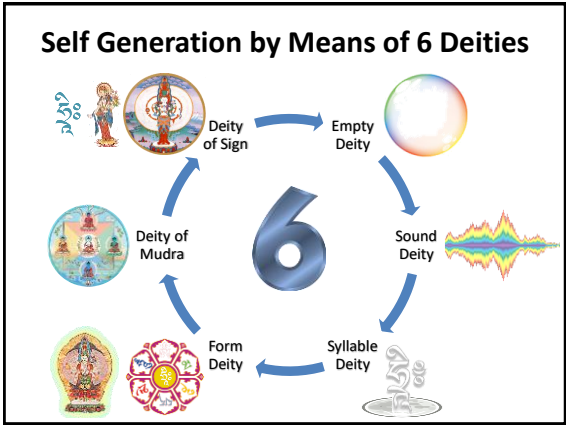
Non-dual yoga of profundity and clarity

- **Non-dual** (gather the two accumulations simultaneously)
- **Profound** (emptiness)
- **Clarity** (deity, mandala)


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Like the Meaning of Water...



(Species) Light Body	Biology (DNA) OM MANI PADME HUM	Genetics (H₂O) HRIH	Chemistry (sub-atomic world) Emptiness, dependent arising	Physics
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Happens both sequentially *and* simultaneously....

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Structure of a Sadhana

Preliminaries



- Refuge, bodhicitta, confession, offerings
- Lineage lamas, guru yoga, requests

Actual Practice

- Emptiness yoga
- Deity yoga
- Wind control
- Recitation

Concluding Prayers

- Torma, prayer of the path
- Dedications, long life prayers



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Like Joining a Choir...

- **Initiation** Hear the song in its entirety
- **Meditation** Familiar with the tune
- **Mantras/prayers** Learn the language
- **Daily practice** Practice difficult sections until it becomes fluid
- **Doing the puja** Choir more powerful than an individual
- **Once again with feeling** Embody it naturally
- **From cacophony to harmony!**
All appearances cause your wisdom to blaze!




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SUMMARY



- In tantra one gathers the two accumulations (merit and wisdom) simultaneously
- How? In the path of Action Tantra through the **yoga with signs** and **yoga without signs**
- The ‘six deities’ are both sequential steps and simultaneous existence
- Nyung-Ne has explicit details, that in other practices is there only *implicitly*

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Recommended Reading:


- *Skilful means of Tantra* (pages 34-36)
- *Blessings of dakas and dakinis* (pages 5-11)

Next week:

- Path of Highest Yoga Tantra (HYT)
- Chakras, channels, winds, drops....
- How *exactly* we can become enlightened in this one lifetime!

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Path of Highest Yoga Tantra




- How *exactly* do we transform ourselves into a buddha in just one lifetime?
- **Lower tantras** – learning about nuclear power in general
- **HYT** – getting the plans to the nuclear power station!
- It’s a psychic anatomy lesson!
- Taking death, bardo and rebirth onto the path

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Basis of Samsara & Nirvana

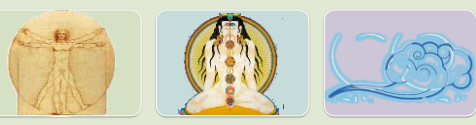


- **Body as the basis of samsara**
 - The body is viewed as a source of all problems
- **Body as the basis of nirvana**
 - The body is a perfect vehicle to carry us to enlightenment
- Whether we go up or down is our choice!
 - Passport of 3PA’s
 - Visa of initiation
 - HYT Guidebook



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Three Levels of Subtlety



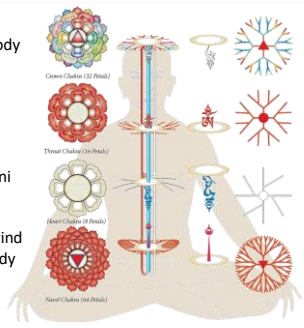
Coarse body
Circulatory system, blood vessels, nerves
Coarse consciousnesses (sight, sound...)

Subtle body
Channels, chakras, drops, and the winds upon which the mind rides

Very subtle body & mind
Fundamental mind and the subtle wind upon which it rides

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Psychic Anatomy Lesson



- **Channels**
 - 72,000 branches in the body
 - psychic nervous system
- **Chakras**
 - Energy wheels or knots
- **Winds**
 - Vital life force, chi, prana
 - Associated with the Dhyani buddhas and elements
- **Drops**
 - Coalescing of mind and wind
 - Permeate areas of the body
 - Indestructible drop at the heart is the subtle basis for our body

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Path of Highest Yoga Tantra



Generation Stage

Take the 3 kayas onto the path through meditations *similar* to the process of death, bardo and rebirth

Done in **imagination** (rehearsal)



Completion stage

Through meditation one **actually** gains control of the winds. Separate the subtle body and mind from the coarse. Attain the illusory body, arise into the form of the deity

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Death # Dharmakaya

Basis


- 8 stages of the death process

Path

- Meditate on death process dissolution, arrest ordinary appearances and conceptions, focus on emptiness
- Winds to enter, abide and dissolve into central channel

Result

- Clear light dawns
- Attain the dharmakaya



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Intermediate state # Sambhogakaya

Basis


- Leave old body behind, arise into the intermediate state
- Body of wind reflects the form of your future rebirth

Path

- Through the power of aspirational prayer, momentum of bodhicitta
- Arise from within emptiness into the seed syllable

Result

- Arise into the sambhogakaya



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Rebirth # Nirmanakaya

Basis


- Take rebirth under the power of karma and affliction

Path

- Drawing the subtle body and mind from the coarse body and mind.
- To accomplish the welfare of others one arises into the complete form of the deity

Result

- Achieve the rainbow body
- Emanate as the Nirmanakaya



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Completion Stage

In the completion stage we **actually** transform our ordinary body and mind into an enlightened being

- Single-pointed concentration
- Vajra recitation to halt coarse conceptions and winds
- Winds enter, abide and dissolve into the heart
- Clear light dawns
- Arise into the impure illusory body
- Then into the pure illusory body
- ...and so on until enlightenment dawns
- Attain the union of illusory body and clear light mind



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How is this done, *exactly*?!

We have everything in our present body/mind complex to become a buddha

Follow the Instructions!

- Sadhana practice, commentaries, guru's oral advice
- Must have appropriate initiation




Taking a Consort

- Must have reached completion stage
- A wisdom consort or an action consort




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SUMMARY



- HYT is a **highly specialised guidebook**, better than any treasure map in history!
- Our samsaric body can become the basis of nirvana
- Through meditation we can *actually* arise into the rainbow body of a buddha
- (Plan B) We can take our own death, intermediate state and rebirth onto the path, and arising as a buddha then...



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Recommended Reading:

- Re-read the HYT sections (pages 5-7)
- *Words of Advice from Geshe Tenphel* (after the mind maps)

Next week:

- Setting up a retreat
- Keys to success in tantra

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Ensuring Success in Your Practice

- **Meeting the Maestro!**
- Without guru devotion, realisations are impossible

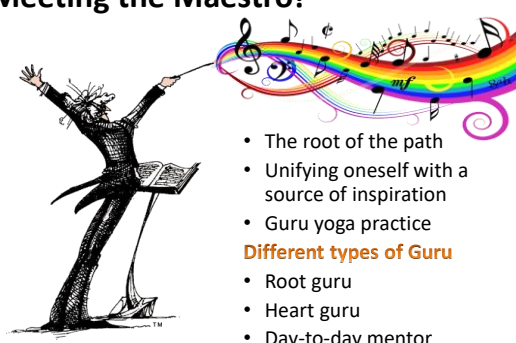


- **Retreat – the ultimate holiday (from neurosis)!**
- If we don't support our study with equal amounts of application, we will be in danger of burning out



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Meeting the Maestro!



- The root of the path
- Unifying oneself with a source of inspiration
- Guru yoga practice


Different types of Guru

- Root guru
- Heart guru
- Day-to-day mentor

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Why Do We Need a Guru?

- The guru is a living **example**, someone like us who has developed beyond what we presently think is possible



- We identify with unbroken **lineage** from the buddha, our cheer squad, our spiritual heritage


- They have more than just academic knowledge, they carry living **insights** and experience



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Who is the Guru, Really?

- The ultimate **coach** to help us conquer the delusions
- Relationship **matures** until we internalise the guru
- If we are out of touch with our inner guru, we cannot **integrate** Dharma wisdom
- Guru yoga is learning how to **listen** to the inner guru
- The **person** of the guru is not the guru!



- **Relative guru:** teacher who guides, challenges
- **Inner guru:** our wisdom
- **Ultimate guru:** the clear-light nature of mind

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Correctly Relying On The Guru

- Fulfil your responsibilities as a student first, *then* check the qualifications of the guru
- Put effort into developing your appreciation
- **In action:** Listen well and put their advice into practice
- **In thought:** Cultivate confidence and respect

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The Retreat is the Approach!

Drawing closer to the deity

- Putting intellectual study into concerted practice in order to achieve realisations


Types of retreat:

- Lam rim retreat
- Commitment (deity) retreat
- Nyong-dro (preliminaries)
- 3 years/3 months/3 days retreat
- Nyung-Ne weekends



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Setting Up a Retreat



I won't move until I'm finished

What would cause me to leave?

- Auspicious start day
- Begin in evening
- End on morning
- Shorter, quality sessions

- Undisturbed, quiet
- Clean the room
- Set boundaries

- Combine lamrim
- Heed instructions
- Create merit
- Spend the money

- Seat with ritual implements
- Altar, tantric offering bowls, tormas

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How Long is the Retreat?



Four Sessions

Before sunrise; until noon; until dusk; after sunset

Dawn session is most important

Break sessions into shorter ones

Numerical

Highest Yoga Tantra 100,000

Lower tantras 100,000 *per syllable*

Plus 10% wisdom rain mantra

Sign

Receive a sign from the deity in a vision or dream

Must do pre-dawn session for this one!

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Mantra Recitation

From coarse to subtle

- Reverberation of sound
- Mentally read syllables
- Simultaneous sound

A mantra commitment is verbal recitation

- Not too fast or too slow
- Not too loud or too soft
- Not talking and reciting, no wandering mind
- Not adding words or losing words

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Handy Hints in Retreat



Emptiness Mantra recitation

Commentaries

Paint tsa-tsas

Do your daily commitments

Prostrations

Bless food

Avoid black foods

Bigger lunch

Precepts

Keep your body healthy and clean

Mind relaxed

Abandon all conceptions of what is good or bad

All sights as the deity, sounds as the mantra, all thoughts and memories with divine pride

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SUMMARY



- The guru, is our very best friend, and **the key to success** in tantric practice
 - Aspirational prayers to find one
 - Outer guru leads to inner guru
- **Must balance study and integration**, otherwise we will burn out and lose the joy!
 - Are you becoming happier, or more miserable?
 - Could you live with the regret of putting it off?



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But am I Ready for Tantra?

- You don't need to understand it for it to work!
- **The rarity of tantra:**
 - The appearance of a Buddha is more rare than a star in the day time
 - Of the 1,000 buddhas of this fortunate aeon, only one will teach tantra
 - In all the 6 realms, of over 7 billion human beings, we are the ones with the window of opportunity
- **Balance your decision between "I'll never feel ready" and "I'll never get another opportunity"**



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Next week

- DVD and review

Assessment

- Interview, email, creative option (collage, story)
- *From Afflictions to Perfections* game

Where to from here?

- Complete any missed DB units
- Enjoy repeating the cycle!
- Integration activities (pujas, retreats, pilgrimage)

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