



Tantric Buddhism, Degeneration or Enhancement: The Viewpoint of a Tibetan Tradition

Jeffrey Hopkins

Buddhist-Christian Studies, Vol. 10. (1990), pp. 87-96.

Stable URL:

<http://links.jstor.org/sici?sici=0882-0945%281990%2910%3C87%3ATBDOET%3E2.0.CO%3B2-Y>

Buddhist-Christian Studies is currently published by University of Hawai'i Press.

Your use of the JSTOR archive indicates your acceptance of JSTOR's Terms and Conditions of Use, available at <http://www.jstor.org/about/terms.html>. JSTOR's Terms and Conditions of Use provides, in part, that unless you have obtained prior permission, you may not download an entire issue of a journal or multiple copies of articles, and you may use content in the JSTOR archive only for your personal, non-commercial use.

Please contact the publisher regarding any further use of this work. Publisher contact information may be obtained at <http://www.jstor.org/journals/uhp.html>.

Each copy of any part of a JSTOR transmission must contain the same copyright notice that appears on the screen or printed page of such transmission.

JSTOR is an independent not-for-profit organization dedicated to and preserving a digital archive of scholarly journals. For more information regarding JSTOR, please contact support@jstor.org.

Tantric Buddhism, Degeneration or Enhancement: The Viewpoint of a Tibetan Tradition

Jeffrey Hopkins
University of Virginia

Tantric practices are often considered a “degenerate” development of Buddhism; there is a widespread notion that in Tantric ritual the deeply altruistic motivation and penetrative insight of Great Vehicle Buddhism were discarded in favor of expression of baser instincts. As these notions take no account of the presence of more prevalent, high traditions of tantra that are preserved in Tibetan and Japanese Buddhism, they create great stumbling blocks to meaningful dialogue between Tantric Buddhists and Christians. Therefore, in this article I present the basic principles of tantra as these are described in one of the high Tibetan traditions, the Ge-luk-ba¹ order. My emphasis will be on how the Tantric path is an enhanced embodiment of the teachings on compassion and wisdom basic to Great Vehicle Buddhism.

A CURRENT VIEW OF TANTRISM

I was unable to attend the last Buddhist-Christian Theological encounter, held at Purdue in 1986, as I was serving as a “study guide” for a Smithsonian tour of Tibet. Nevertheless, I contributed a paper on ultimate reality in Tibetan Buddhism and have heard an account of discussions that took place during the conference. Some of the participants at that conference apparently put forth the view that Tantric Buddhism is a degeneration from the high ideals of Great Vehicle Buddhism. (*Editor’s note.*—See *Buddhist-Christian Studies* 8 [1988]: 144. This remark was made by Prof. Gishin Tokiwa and incorrectly attributed to Prof. Miyaki.) Upon hearing this, I could not help but wonder what the participants at that Buddhist-Christian dialogue must think of those of us who are involved in Tantric Buddhism. Spiritual impoverishment! Moral depravity! Psychopathic deviants! If I may carry the joke a little further, perhaps our Christian colleagues—interested in probing the reasons behind the appeal of Eastern religions—are using us as a laboratory for exploring the degenerate reversion to a paradigm suited only to the morally corrupt!

Need I say that I began wondering what dialogue could possibly mean when

some participants, both Christian and Buddhist, have such a low view of the very traditions that some of us represent. Upon more reflection, however, I gradually came to consider the surfacing of their perspective as a positive development, a sign that we have come to know each other sufficiently well that deep-seated prejudgments are being expressed. Perhaps, later we will even arrive at such a point of mutual respect and openness that we will choose as a topic in one of our meetings "What Bothers Me about Your Religion." Later, we may even come to discuss "What Bothers Me about My Religion." Perhaps, we will then reach the level of dialogue that Wilfred Cantwell Smith calls "we all" talking with each other about "us."²

In any case, given the state of scholarship in Tantrism, it is no wonder that people would consider Tantrism to be a degeneration from high Buddhist practices of morality, compassion, and philosophic insight. Many books on the subject present a version of this opinion. For instance, even Mircea Eliade, who contributed so much to our understanding of so many fields of intellectual endeavor and had so much to do with creating an atmosphere of appreciation for the multifaceted appearance of world and local religions, describes Tantrism as suited for persons of lower sensibilities than Great Vehicle Buddhism. He says: "For Buddhists . . . the Vajrayana represents a new revelation of Buddha's doctrine, adapted to the much diminished capacities of modern man."³ In a similar vein, numerous scholars describe Tantrism as a frustrated attempt to turn away from monastic celibacy and prolonged practice of the path to immediate gratification in sexual ritual. In contrast, David Snellgrove, in the introduction to his splendid translation of the *Hevajra Tantra*, speaks of the Tantric commentarial tradition as embodying religion and scholarship of the first rank. He says:

No one can reasonably dispute the fact that the basic texts of the *tantras* have this murky and macabre appearance . . . one must still explain why these very same works should become endowed with such esteem. In the solution of this problem real interest should begin, for while the defects of some of the texts are so apparent, still more apparent is the glorious blossoming of human genius which they certainly nourished. Scholars, saints, and artists of first rank appear throughout the succeeding centuries and their works bear testimony to them to this day.⁴

In taking up this task of attempting to explain why Tantric works are held in such great esteem, we need to admit from the start that the very vocabulary of some Tantric literature understandably creates the impression that the high moral and social ideals of Great Vehicle Buddhism have been discarded for base pleasure-seeking. For instance, the term *bodhicitta*, which in the sūtra version of Great Vehicle Buddhism refers to the altruistic intention to become enlightened and to a Bodhisattva's direct cognition of emptiness, comes, in some passages of Highest Yoga Tantra, to mean semen. Also the term *karuṇā*, which in

the sūtra version of Great Vehicle Buddhism refers to “compassion,” is sometimes used in Highest Yoga Tantra to refer to “bliss,” particularly the bliss of orgasm without emission, as in some passages of the *Kālachakra Tantra*.

In a similar vein, my first encounter with Tantrism occurred in 1961 in the apartment of a friend in Boston, who had left college to pursue karate. A friend of his dropped by and, over mu tea, was discussing Tantrism with him, as I was sitting on the other side of the room seemingly absorbed in meditation. I suddenly asked, “What is Tantrism?” Without hesitation, he replied, “Screwing dead bodies.” Need I say that my interest in Tantrism was not sparked!

Eleven years later, in 1972, I began the study and practice of a tradition of Tantrism found in Tibet. My central concern, after nine years of practicing sūtra Great Vehicle Buddhism, was with the stuff of appearance in the face of the radical unfindability of objects under the type of analysis put forth by the Middle Way School (*mādhyamika*). I became fascinated experientially and conceptually with the Tantric tradition’s presentation of a union of compassion and wisdom in the manifestation of a divine, ideal, physical form. This practice is called deity yoga. Since Ḍzong-ka-ḅa⁵ (1357–1419), the founder of the Ge-luk-ḅa order which became a dominant force throughout almost all of Inner Asia in Mongolian and Tibetan areas, considers deity yoga to be the central, distinctive feature of Tantrism, let us discuss it briefly from the viewpoint of this high tradition in order to place this Tibetan interpretation in its own context before discussing the usage of sex in this spiritual path.

A TRADITIONAL VIEW OF TANTRISM

According to Ḍzong-ka-ḅa,⁶ in both the sūtra and tantra Great Vehicles, the basic motivation is an altruistic intention to become enlightened for the sake of all sentient beings; because of this, the motivational basis of the deeds of the path is the same in both sūtra and tantra. The other main factor of method—within the division of all practices into method and wisdom—has to do with the deeds induced by that motivation. In the sūtra Great Vehicle, these are the practices induced by the altruistic aspiration—the perfections of giving, ethics, and patience. However, these are also practiced in tantra, and tantra is said to have an even greater emphasis than sūtra on the deeds of the perfections in that a Tantric practitioner is committed to engage in them at least six times during each day.

Also, both the sūtra and the tantra versions of the Great Vehicle rely upon the same view of the emptiness of inherent existence as the fundamental practice of the factor of wisdom. Therefore, the profound distinction between the two vehicles cannot occur within the factor of wisdom, and, as we have seen, it also does not occur within method in terms of the basis of a Bodhisattva’s deeds or in terms of the practice of the perfections that is induced by that motivation. Rather, it occurs in the fact that in tantra there is meditation on one’s own body as similar in aspect to a Buddha’s Form Body whereas in the sūtra Great Vehicle

there is no such meditation. This is deity yoga, which all four tantra sets have but sūtra systems do not. Deity yoga means to imagine oneself as having now the Form Body of a Buddha; one meditates on oneself as an ideal, altruistically active being now. This distinctive feature of tantra is included within method since it is primarily concerned with creating a Buddha's Form Body, the main imprint of the practice of method.

In the sūtra Great Vehicle, there is meditation similar in aspect to a Buddha's Truth Body—a Buddha's wisdom consciousness. A Bodhisattva enters into meditative equipoise directly realizing emptiness, with nothing appearing to the mind except the final nature of phenomena, the emptiness of inherent existence; the wisdom consciousness is fused with that emptiness. Even though, unlike the Tantric counterpart, a sūtra bodhisattva does not specifically imagine that the state of meditative equipoise *is* a Buddha's Truth Body, meditation similar in aspect to a Buddha's Truth Body does occur in the sūtra system in the sense that the state of meditative equipoise on emptiness mimics a Buddha's exalted wisdom consciousness in its aspect of perceiving the ultimate.

However, the sūtra Perfection Vehicle does not involve meditation similar in aspect to a Buddha's *Form* Body. There is meditation on Buddhas as objects of offering, and so forth, but there is no meditation on oneself in the physical body of a Buddha.

In the sūtra system, the sole means for achieving a Buddha's Form Body is, on the basis of the altruistic intention to become enlightened, to engage in the first three perfections—giving, ethics, and patience—in “limitless” ways over a “limitless” period of time, specifically three periods of “countless” eons (“countless” being said to be a one with fifty-nine zeros). Though the Mantra Vehicle also involves practice of the perfections of giving, ethics, and patience, it is not in “limitless” ways over “limitless” periods of time. Despite emphasis on the perfections, practice in “limitless” ways over “limitless” time is unnecessary because one is engaging in the additional technique of meditation on oneself in a body similar in aspect to a Buddha's Form Body. In other words, in the Tantric systems, in order to become a Buddha more quickly, one meditates on oneself as similar in aspect to a Buddha in terms of both body and mind. This practice is significantly distinctive, and thus those systems that involve it constitute a separate vehicle, the tantra Great Vehicle.

In deity yoga one first meditates on emptiness and then uses the consciousness realizing emptiness—or at least an imitation of it—as the basis of emanation of a Buddha. The compassionately motivated wisdom consciousness itself appears as the physical form of a Buddha. This one consciousness thus has two parts—a factor of wisdom and a factor of method, or factors of (1) ascertainment of emptiness and (2) appearance as a divine being—and hence, through the practice of deity yoga, one *simultaneously* accumulates the collections of merit and wisdom, making their amassing much faster.

The systems that have this practice are called the *Vajra* Vehicle because the appearance of a deity is the display of a consciousness that is an *indivisible*

fusion of wisdom understanding emptiness and compassion seeking the welfare of others—an inseparable union symbolized by a vajra, a diamond, the foremost of stones, as it is “unbreakable.” Since the two elements of the Tantric fusion—compassionate method and penetrating wisdom—are the very core of the sūtra Great Vehicle, one can understand that sūtra and tantra, despite being different, are integrated systems. One can understand that compassion is not superceded by but essential to tantra and that the wisdom of the Perfection Vehicle is not forsaken for a deeper understanding of reality in the Tantra Vehicle.

To reiterate, the sūtra Great Vehicle and the tantra Great Vehicle do not differ in terms of the goal or the state being sought, since both seek the highest enlightenment of a Buddha in order to be of supremely effective service to others. However, there is a difference between the sūtra and tantra Great Vehicles in the means of progress, not in wisdom but in method. Within method, although they do not differ in the basis of motivation of the deeds (the altruistic intention to become enlightened) nor in having as deeds the perfections, tantra has the *additional* technique of deity yoga. A deity is a supramundane being who himself or herself is a manifestation of compassion and wisdom. In the special practice of deity yoga, one joins one’s own body, speech, mind, and activities with the exalted body, speech, mind, and activities of a supramundane being, manifesting on the path a similitude of the state of the final effect of practicing the path.

Deity yoga, the very heart and core of Tantrism, is a technique for enhancing the practice of compassion and wisdom. In this sense, therefore, Tantrism is not in the least a deviation from the high orientation of the sūtra Great Vehicle.

ORGASMIC BLISS AND SEX

But what about the usage of *karuṇā*, compassion, to mean “bliss,” specifically the bliss of orgasm without emission? Let us discuss how *karuṇā* comes etymologically to mean both compassion and bliss. *Karuṇā* generally is etymologized as “stopping bliss” (*bde ’gog*) by adding an anusvāra (*m*) to the first letter *k*, thereby making *kaṃ*, which means “bliss” (*bde ba*), and by taking *ruṇa* (not found in the Apte dictionary) to mean “stopping” (*’gog pa*). Compassion is a case of “stopping bliss” in the sense that finding others’ torment in a state of suffering to be unbearable stops or interferes with one’s own happiness. Similarly, in the Kālachakra system (a type of Highest Yoga Tantra) the great immutable bliss involves a stoppage of the bliss of emission and thus is also a case of *karuṇā*, “stopping bliss,” even though it is another type of bliss. Thus, both compassion and the supreme immutable bliss are, so to speak, cases of “stopping bliss,” *karuṇā*. Hence it can be seen that the fact that the term *karuṇā* is sometimes used in Highest Yoga Tantra additionally to refer to orgasmic bliss without emission does not rule out its other meaning as the wish that all beings be free from suffering and the causes of suffering.

For instance, the *Kālachakra Tantra* itself speaks eloquently about suffering in the Initiation Chapter (stanza 12), where it says:

In the womb there is the suffering of dwelling in the womb; at birth and while a child there is also suffering.

Youth and adulthood are filled with the great sufferings of losing one's mate, wealth, and fortune, as well as the great suffering of the afflictive emotions.

The old have the suffering of death and again the fright of the six transmigrations such as the Crying and so forth.

All these transmigrating beings, deluded by illusion, grasp suffering from suffering.

Moreover, the Tantric vows, taken during the initiation ceremony, call for practitioners to commit themselves to liberating all beings:

I will liberate those not liberated (from the obstructions to omniscience).

I will release those not released (from cyclic existence).

I will relieve those unrelieved (in bad transmigrations)

And set sentient beings in nirvana.

Also, that altruism is at the very heart of the initiation ritual is clear from the fact that the process begins with an adjustment of motivation toward altruism and ends with authorization to teach by way of the wise altruism that takes account of individual predispositions and interests.⁸ Thus, the special meaning of *karuṇā* as the bliss of orgasm without emission in Highest Yoga Tantra does not supplant the meaning of *karuṇā* as compassion.

The Mongolian scholar and yogi, Jang-gya-rol-bay-dor-jay,⁹ lama to the Ch'ien-lung Emperor during the Manchu domination of China in the eighteenth century, emphasizes that the practitioners for whom tantra was specifically taught are even more compassionate and of a higher type than the practitioners of the sūtra version of the Great Vehicle. In his *Clear Exposition of the Presentations of Tenets*, he says:

It is said in the precious tantras and in many commentaries that even those trainees of the Mantra Vehicle who have low faculties must have far greater compassion, sharper faculties, and a more superior lot than the trainees of sharpest faculties in the Perfection Vehicle. Therefore, those who think and propound that the Mantra Vehicle was taught for persons discouraged about achieving enlightenment over a long time and with great difficulty make clear that they have no penetration of the meaning of tantra. Furthermore, the statement that the Mantra Vehicle is quicker than the Perfection Vehicle is in relation to trainees who are suitable vessels, not in terms of just anyone. Therefore, it is not sufficient that the doctrine be the Mantra Vehicle; the person must be properly engaged in the Mantra Vehicle.¹⁰

Jang-gya emphasizes that the mere wish of a practitioner to practice tantra is not sufficient; the person must be *capable* of its practice. Far from being taught for those who are unable to proceed on the Perfection Vehicle, the four sets of tantras were expounded for persons of particularly great compassion.

In a similar vein, the Seventh Dalai Lama says that practitioners of Mantra are especially motivated by compassion, intent on the quickest means of attaining the highest enlightenment in order to be of service to others. He says:

Some see that if they rely on the Perfection Vehicle and so forth, they must amass the collections (of merit and wisdom) for three countless great eons, and thus it would take a long time and involve great difficulty. They cannot bear such hardship and seek to attain Buddhahood in a short time and by a path with little difficulty. These people who claim that they, therefore, are engaging in the short path of the Secret Mantra Vehicle are (actually) outside the realm of Mantra trainees. For to be a person of the Great Vehicle in general, one cannot seek peace for oneself alone but, from the viewpoint of holding others more dear than oneself, must be able, for the sake of the welfare of others, to bear whatever type of hardship or suffering might arise. Since Secret Māntrikas are those of extremely sharp faculties within followers of the Great Vehicle, persons who have turned their backs on others' welfare and want little difficulty for themselves are not even close to the quarter of Highest Secret Mantra. . . . One should engage in Highest Yoga Tantra, the secret short path, with the motivation of an altruistic intention to become enlightened, unable to bear that sentient beings will be troubled for a long time by cyclic existence in general and by strong sufferings in particular, thinking, "How nice it would be if I could achieve right now a means to free them!"¹¹

Even though the path of the Mantra Vehicle is quicker and easier, a practitioner cannot seek it out of fearing the difficulties of the longer sūtra path. Rather, the quicker path is sought due to being particularly moved by compassion; a Mantra practitioner wants to achieve enlightenment sooner in order more quickly to be of service to others.

In Highest Yoga Tantra, just as the unusual usage of *karuṇā* to mean the bliss of orgasm without emission does not cancel its also meaning compassion in other contexts, so the term "mind of enlightenment" also has an unusual meaning that does not rule out its having, in other passages of Highest Yoga Tantra, its usual connotations. The term "mind of enlightenment" has as its broadest referents the conventional mind of enlightenment, which is the altruistic intention to become enlightened, and the ultimate mind of enlightenment, which is a wisdom consciousness in the continuum of a Bodhisattva directly realizing emptiness. However, the term "mind of enlightenment" is also used to refer to semen or, more accurately, to the white and red essential fluids that both males and females have. This unusual usage of the term for fluids does not cancel out its more usual meanings, for, as has already been in-

icated, altruism and realization of emptiness are the very basis of the fundamental Tantric meditation of deity yoga. Rather, as with *karuṇā*, the term *bodhicitta* is used additionally *in specific circumstances*, to refer to the essential white and red fluids of male and female.

I shall not pursue here the very interesting topic of *why* terms for compassion and altruism are also used to refer to states and substances of sexual intercourse except to indicate four points:

- (1) Since the tradition, as detailed earlier, holds that only the most compassionate are capable of Highest Yoga Tantra, which involves using the bliss arising from union of male and female in the path, it clearly posits a connection between the capacity of compassion and the capacity to use sexual bliss in the path.
- (2) One of the two main techniques for generating compassion begins with identifying all beings as mothers and proceeds in a very tactile way to reflections on the kindnesses bestowed by a mother.
- (3) In Highest Yoga Tantra it is explained that during the intermediate state prior to rebirth as a male, the person is sexually attracted to the mother and that a person about to be reborn as a female is sexually attracted to the father.
- (4) A male's Tantric consort is called "Mother" (*yum*) and a female's consort is called "Father" (*yab*).

Aside from the obvious Freudian blares of trumpets and bugles, there is space here only to mention that the tradition appears to be seeking to utilize the deepest and strongest of affective states in the path.

This raises our final point: Why is sex brought into the path in Highest Yoga Tantra? Why is the bliss of orgasm used in a spiritual path? To understand this, it is necessary first to discuss briefly a presentation of levels of consciousness in Highest Yoga Tantra.

Considered by the Ge-luk-bas to be the final system, Highest Yoga Tantra divides consciousnesses into the very subtle and the gross.¹² According to the system of *Gubyasamaja Tantra*, a Highest Yoga Tantra that is parallel in importance to the *Kālachakra Tantra*, the very subtle level of consciousness is the mind of clear light, called the fundamental innate mind of clear light; the subtle are three levels of consciousness called the minds of vivid white, red (or orange), and black appearance; and the gross are the five sense consciousnesses and the mental consciousness when not manifesting one of the above subtler levels. When the grosser levels of consciousness cease, as in the process of dying, the more subtle become manifest. The first to manifest is the mind of vivid white appearance that is described as like a clear night sky filled with moonlight, not the moon shining in empty space but space filled with white light. All conceptuality has ceased, and nothing appears except this slightly dualistic vivid white appearance, which is one's consciousness itself.

When that mind ceases, a more subtle mind of vivid red or orange increase dawns; this is compared to a clear sky filled with sunlight, again not the sun shining in the sky but space filled with red or orange light. When this mind ceases, a still more subtle mind of vivid black near-attainment dawns; it is called “near-attainment” because one is close to manifesting the mind of clear light. The mind of black near-attainment is compared to a moonless, very black sky just after dusk when no stars shine; during the first part of this phase it is said that one remains conscious but then becomes unconscious in thick blackness. Then, with the three pollutants of the white, red, and black appearances cleared away, the mind of clear light dawns; it is the most subtle level of consciousness.

Because the more subtle levels of consciousness are considered to be more powerful and thus more effective in realizing the truth of the emptiness of inherent existence, the systems of Highest Yoga Tantra seek to manifest the mind of clear light by way of various techniques. One of these techniques is blissful orgasm because, according to the psychology of Highest Yoga Tantra, orgasm—like dying, going to sleep, and fainting—involves the ceasing of the grosser levels of consciousness and manifestation of the more subtle. The intent in using a blissful, orgasmic mind in the path is to manifest the most subtle mind—that of clear light—and use it to realize the emptiness of inherent existence. In this way, the power of the path-consciousness realizing emptiness is enhanced such that it is more effective in overcoming the obstructions to liberation and obstructions to omniscience.

A consciousness of orgasmic bliss is used because, when the sense of pleasure is powerful, one’s consciousness is totally involved with that pleasure and thus completely withdrawn; this is the reason why the subtler levels of consciousness manifest during the intense bliss of orgasm, even if they are not noticed, never mind utilized, in common copulation. Without desire, the involvement in the bliss consciousness would be minimal, and thus Highest Yoga Tantra makes use of the arts of love-making, and so forth, to enhance the process.

The usage of desire in the path is, therefore, explicitly for the sake of making the wisdom consciousness more powerful by way of using a subtler level of consciousness. The difficulty of using an orgasmic consciousness to realize anything indicates that it would take a person of great psychological development and capacity to be able to utilize such a subtle state in the path.

Since other, not so intense, levels of bliss are used in a similar way in the other tantra sets, actual practitioners of tantra in general and Highest Yoga Tantra in particular must be more highly developed than the practitioners of the sūtra version of the Great Vehicle. The view, evinced in the passage by Eliade cited at the beginning of this article—that “For Buddhists . . . the Vajrayana represents a new revelation of Buddha’s doctrine, adapted to the much diminished capacities of modern man”—does not take into account the exactly opposite view of D̄zong-ka-ba and his Ge-luk-ba followers, whose school was important throughout a vast region of Central Asia.¹³

In conclusion, it is within the context of hundreds of years of such commentary in India and Tibet that tantra offers a spiritual path to a high goal of altruistic service, even if implementation of certain of its techniques in practice is obviously beyond our present capacities.

NOTES

1. *dge lugs pa*.
 2. In *History of Religions: Essays in Methodology*, ed. Mircea Eliade and Joseph M. Kitigawa (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1959), see Wilfred Cantwell Smith's article "Comparative Religion: Whither—and Why?," pp. 31–66 and esp. p. 34.
 3. Mircea Eliade, *Patañjali and Yoga*, trans. C. L. Markhann (New York: Funk & Wagnalls, 1969), p. 179.
 4. D. L. Snellgrove, *The Hevajra Tantra: A Critical Study* (London: Oxford University Press, 1959), pt. 1, p. 9.
 5. *tsong kha pa blo bzang grags pa*.
 6. The presentation of the distinctiveness of tantra is drawn from Tsong-ka-pa, *Tantra in Tibet* (London: George Allen and Unwin, 1977), and the Dalai Lama's introduction to it, esp. pp. 57–63 and 100–108.
 7. For my sources and more discussion, see Tenzin Gyatso and Jeffrey Hopkins, *The Kālachakra Tantra: Rite of Initiation* (London: Wisdom Publications, 1985), introduction, n. 108, p. 488.
 8. In Gyatso and Hopkins, see the beginning of the ritual with the Dalai Lama's commentary, pp. 170–174. Also, for the end of the ritual, see my introduction, p. 124, middle, as well as the ritual and the Dalai Lama's commentary, pp. 333–338.
 9. *lcang skya rol pa'i rdo rje*, 1717–86.
 10. As cited in Gyatso and Hopkins, p. 33.
 11. *Ibid.*, pp. 31–32.
 12. The material on the levels of consciousness is drawn from Lati Rinbochay's and my translation of a text by Yang-jen-ga-way-lo-drö; see our *Death, Intermediate State, and Rebirth in Tibetan Buddhism* (London: Rider, 1979).
 13. Eliade's view, however, is somewhat similar to that put forward by a late Indian commentator on tantra, Tripiṭakamāla, who held that the top rank among the highest Tantric practitioners did not need to use sexual union in the spiritual path. He held that those just below the very top rank meditate on an imaginary consort, and he posits the usage of an actual consort only for the third level (albeit among the top level of practitioners). Hence he appears not to have held Ḍzong-ka-ba's view that an actual consort is needed in order to bring a withdrawal of the grosser levels of consciousness as in the process of dying.
- It seems that he viewed the practice only as a technique for those distracted by desire. Perhaps, his thought was that by trying to meditate on emptiness and so forth in the midst of ritualized sex, a practitioner could overcome the sense that sex is separate from the scope of emptiness. The psychological value of exposing oneself to one's own inner desires, fears, and so forth in the midst of a different, intentional background is unquestioned. However, it seems that Tripiṭakamāla was not cognizant of the doctrine of the levels of consciousness manifested in orgasmic bliss and thus did not even conceive of utilizing them in the path. Such an orientation casts a completely different light on the meaning of using desire in the path.
- For a discussion of Tripiṭakamāla's opinion and Ḍzong-ka-ba's refutation of it, see Tsong-ka-pa, (n. 6 above), pp. 145–150.