



Ten Early Tantras of the Great Perfection: A Basket of Diamonds

Christopher Wilkinson

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The Great Perfection, also known as the Atiyoga or Dzogchen (rDzogs chen), is both a name for the realization of instantaneous enlightenment and a name for the literature that talks about this. Generally speaking, the Great Perfection is beyond both words and deeds, yet even though nothing may be said about it, there does exist a large body of literature that discusses it. This literature exists today within the canons of teachings that are preserved from the earliest period of Buddhism's beginnings in Tibet, around the Eighth Century of the Common Era. These collections are known as The Hundred Thousand Tantras of the Ancients (Nyingma Gyubum). The most famous of the early translators of Great Perfection literature were Vairochana, a Tibetan monk who went to India in search of the teachings on instantaneous enlightenment, and Vimalamitra, an Indian master who came to Tibet. The collected translations of Vairochana are retained in a collection called The Hundred Thousand Tantras of Vairochana (Vairo Gyubum). From out of the many hundreds of titles to be found in these great collections, I have selected ten works that I believe will be of great interest. The first five Tantras in this book are pointing out instructions, or upadesha, on the enlightened mind, or Bodhicitta. These five Tantras are a set, and include the Soaring of the Great Garuda, the Pounce of the Great Lion, the Motion of the Geese, the Song of the Cuckoo of the Awareness, and the Withdrawal of the Golden Turtle. These texts are presented in beautiful poetry, which I have done my best to bring through into English. Each contains unique insights into the practice and realization of the Great Perfection. This set is followed by two Tantras titled The Fish Lies in Wait. The first is a "drop" of the Bodhicitta, while the second is simply the Bodhicitta. These two works strike at the very core of Great Perfection thinking, and are considered secret. The practices of the Skull-Jump (Thod rgal) and the Solid Cut (Khregs gcod) are widely taught by many teachers these days. The Nyingma Gyubum and Vairo Gyubum contain only one text that has Thod rgal in its title: The Great Skull-Jump Tantra. They also contain only one text that has Khregs gcod in its title: The Seven Solid Cuts. These two texts will be of great interest to students who are interested in these practice traditions. The Single Grain of the Black Yangti contains a very concise and to-the-point description of the very core of the Great Perfection.

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