

TASTING THE ESSENCE OF TANTRA

The practice of Tibetan Buddhist meditation,
brought into contemporary Western life



A Full Cycle of Seminars with Rob Preece

- Expanded Brochure -

[Expanded Version 0.5 – October 2014

INTRODUCTION

Tantra, or *Vajrayana*, is one of the most extraordinary aspects of Buddhism that emerged in India and became shaped and developed in its transmission through Nepal and into Tibet. Today this tradition is accessible to Westerners as Tibetan masters come to the West to teach.

Tibetan tantric practice is honoured for its completeness and transformative power. Though many people are attracted to tantric meditation practice, they are not always able to make a deep connection to experience. The complexity of practice that has been developed in Tibet is not easy for us, as Westerners, to relate to; it does not always suit the Western mind. Many people try to engage with these practices but struggle with this complexity and become disappointed when they do not seem to be attaining the results they may have wished for.

To gain a genuine experience of this path we need to find ways to enable the particular psychological nature of our Western mind to be touched by this profound Eastern tradition. *Tantra* is a creative process, and just as it evolved when it became Tibetan experience, so too it must evolve as it meets the Western mind in order to become our genuine experience.

WHAT IS 'TASTING THE ESSENCE OF TANTRA' ?

Tasting the Essence of Tantra is designed as a four-year (eight-module) experiential meditation training program based on Tibetan Buddhist wisdom, meditation and yoga. Each module will build upon the experience of the previous one to enable the gradual awakening and embodiment of a taste of our innate nature, expressed in tantric meditation practice. The seminars will cover traditional practices, integrated and enriched with insights and experiences from Western psychology and psychotherapy.

Although it is possible to attend only specific modules, some requirements and preparations may apply.

PROGRAM OBJECTIVES:

- Guide participants through a process of meditation training that begins to awaken a taste of *tantra*, not just intellectual knowledge
- Bring together tantric practice and psychological understanding as per *Lama Yeshe's* aspiration
- Open students gradually to the experience of how *tantra* works. Each retreat will build upon the experience of the retreat before to enable the gradual awakening of a taste of our innate nature expressed in tantric practice

- Facilitate working with one's own psychological and emotional experience, taking care to enable practice to be tailored to individual process
- Deepen connection to practice as well as clear some of the difficulties that can arise when embarking on more advanced practices
- Help to develop a sound relationship to the body and emotions by integrating the practices of *Kum Nye*, a Tibetan form of yoga, and movement.
- Catalyse healing, development and liberation

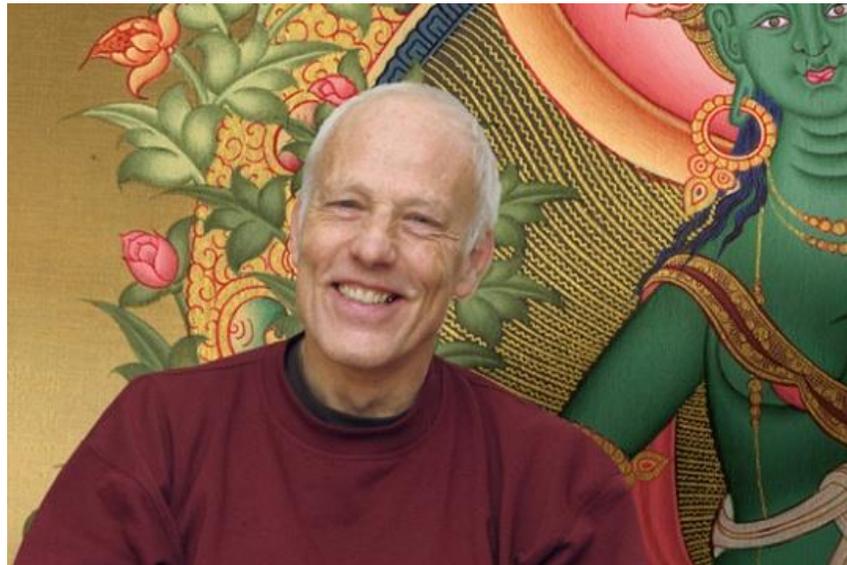
During the course there will be a gradual introduction to the primary spiritual archetypes or deity practices of 'action *tantra*' or *kriya tantra* and to some of the foundations for the practice of higher *tantra*. As the course progresses participants will be supported to establish an ongoing meditation practice and to learn the processes of making offerings, creating sacred space, purification and healing. Those who are able to participate in the entire program will find this is a good basis for further practice such as the *ngöndro* or preliminary practices, as well as the practices of higher *tantra*.



ROB PREECE

Rob Preece has studied and practised Tibetan Buddhism for more than four decades under the guidance of great teachers and spent five years in retreat in the Himalayas. Returning to the West he trained as a psychotherapist and has practised for the past 25 years. During this time he has led many workshops and retreats and written four ground-breaking books on the meaningful chemistry between Jungian psychology and Tibetan (tantric) Buddhism: *The Psychology of Buddhist Tantra*, *The Courage to Feel*, *The Wisdom of Imperfection* and *Preparing for Tantra*.

Rob's style of teaching is oriented towards opening a dialogue around the material that is being explored. This is to maintain a spirit of exploration and creativity in the way *tantra* is integrated into Western experience, rather than holding to rigid prescriptions of practice. Given this orientation, it is helpful to bear in mind that elements of the course may change as it unfolds. In this way we may take into account what emerges as things progress, and what is relevant to participants' experience.



THE MODULES

MODULE 1: BECOMING A STABLE VESSEL

In this module we will begin to work with the awareness of sensation, feeling and emotion within the body. This creates a sound basis of practice and a resource to help stabilize our relationship to our emotional life and the body. In this context we will explore the cultivation of a sense of definite emergence (renunciation) and refuge. This retreat will be supported by the practice of the historical and archetypal teacher *Shakyamuni Buddha*.



Learning Objectives:

- Learn ways of being with feeling, emotion and sensation that become a stable resource in life
- Restore and open a healthy relationship to the body
- Learn to listen to the inner wisdom that comes through a deeper relationship to the body and feeling
- See the ways of being that bind us in unconscious ignorance
- Cultivate the intention to awaken from these unconscious ways of being (renunciation or definite emergence)
- Cultivate the quality of refuge in the three Jewels: awakened mind (*Buddha*), truth (*Dharma*) and community (*Sangha*)
- Develop a relationship to the meditation of historical and archetypal teacher *Shakyamuni Buddha*.

MODULE 2: AWAKENING RIGHT INTENTION



During this retreat we will begin to explore the healing of some of our wounding to our sense of self, through developing compassionate presence. On the basis of compassion for ourselves we will develop the practices of *tonglen* and the meditations for awakening *bodhicitta*, the aspiration to serve the welfare of others, entering the Bodhisattva path. This retreat will be supported by practices associated with the spiritual archetype or deity *Chenrezig*.

Learning objectives:

- Cultivate a healthy sense of self-acceptance through compassionate presence
- Begin to open the quality of compassionate presence for the sake of others
- Deepen the experience of compassion and loving kindness through *Tong Len* (taking and giving)
- Open the heart of *bodhicitta* as the intention at the root of tantric practice
- Take the *Bodhisattva Vow*
- Develop a relationship to the spiritual archetype (deity) *Chenrezig* through meditation

MODULE 3: DISCOVERING THE NATURE OF MIND

In this module we will bring together the insight of emptiness from *Madyamika* philosophy with meditation on the nature of mind in *Mahamudra*. We will look at the cultivation of the insight of emptiness and explore the stages for developing the practice of tranquil abiding; we will deepen the understanding of Buddha nature, of *dharmakaya* as the innate clear light nature of mind. This retreat will be supported by introducing the spiritual archetype or deity *Manjushri*.



Learning objectives:

- Develop the capacity of clear present awareness resting in the nature of mind from the *Mahamudra* tradition
- Deepen insight into the nature of emptiness in relation to self and phenomenon
- Establish an understanding of the stages of tranquil abiding and the obstacles to be overcome in the process
- Gain a taste, on a more felt level, of the underlying presence of *dharmakaya* as the ground of being
- Develop a relationship to the spiritual archetype (deity) *Manjushri*



MODULE 4: THE NATURE OF DEITY YOGA

In this module we will look more deeply at the psychology of deity practice and the *sadhana* developing our relationship to the sacred through prayers, offerings, prostrations and creating sacred space. We will look at the deity as gateway to our innate Buddha nature and how visualization and *mantra* bring a taste of the deity's quality. We will also explore the meaning and significance of devotion and the role of the deity in *guru yoga*. This retreat will be oriented around the practice of the spiritual archetype or deity *Green Tara*.

Learning Objectives:

- Experience a sense of the sacred in the practice of *Kriya tantra* as we create the environment in which the deity is invoked
- Learn the essential heart of the practice of *sadhana* or method of awakening the deity
- Learn the rituals of offering and exploring a personal creative relationship to prayer in relationship to the deity
- Learn to create sacred space and to sustain a deity practice in the context of retreat
- Integrate the relationship between the deity and the energy body as a felt experience
- Develop the relationship to the spiritual archetype (deity) of active compassion, *Green Tara*

MODULE 5: AWAKENING THE ENERGY BODY

During this retreat we will shift attention to developing awareness of the energy body, introducing the processes of healing and purification and the significance of working with exercises such as *Kum Nye*, five Tibetan *yogas* and movement. We will explore the nature of the *chakras* and their function and the relationship to the elements of nature. We will look at the kind of energy problems that can arise in the body because of our emotional life or through meditation, and how they can be healed. We will explore the role of an alchemical vessel in the process of transformation and healing. The practice of the spiritual archetype or deity *Vajrasattva* will be introduced as a basis for healing.



Learning Objectives:

- Increase sensitivity and awareness of the nature of the energy-wind body and how it moves within us
- Learn ways of being with energetic processes that emerge in meditation
- Gain a deeper experience of the processes of healing and purification and how they can be applied in practice
- Begin a relationship to the spiritual archetype (deity) *Vajrasattva* as the root of healing and transformation

MODULE 6: WORKING WITH THE SHADOW

During this retreat we will begin to look at the transformation and purification of the shadow. We will go deeper into ways of working with the energy of our emotions and psychological patterns, looking at their purification and transformation through symbolic ritual. We will explore the relationship between peaceful and wrathful deities, introducing the principle of transformation used in higher *tantra* practice. At this retreat we will introduce the fire practice of the spiritual archetype (deity) *Dorjexhadro* and also introduce the practice of *Vajrapani*.



Learning Objectives:

- Learn to recognize aspects of our nature that need to heal and transform
- Learn ways to purify and transform emotional and psychological patterns
- Deepen understanding of the archetypal nature of deities in the transformation process
- Understand the meaning of the alchemical vessel in the process of transformation
- Learn to work with channels of transformation in life
- Learn the fire ritual practice of the spiritual archetype (deity) *Dorjekhadro*, as a means of purification
- Develop a relationship to the spiritual archetype (deity) *Vajrapani*

MODULE 7: THE MASCULINE AND FEMININE



In this module we will begin to look at the inner and outer relationships between the masculine and feminine expressed in the nature of tantric *daka/dakini* and Jung's anima/animus. We will begin to explore the significance of our search for union on psychological and energetic levels. We will look at the meaning behind the divisions of mother and father *tantra*. This process will be supported by deepening the practice of the spiritual archetype *Heruka Vajrasattva*, looking towards the practices of higher *tantra*.

Learning Objectives:

- Open up our relationship to our male and female sides and how they live within us
- Recognise the meaning of the *daka/dakini* as profound aspects of our nature
- Understand and experience a taste of our innate unified male and female nature in the aspect of the spiritual archetypes or deities *Vajrasattva/Vajraprabhavati*
- Understand the outer, inner and secret aspects of our male/female nature and their awakening
- Understand the psychological significance of the journey of Mother *tantra*

MODULE 8: THE MANDALA AND VISIONS OF WHOLENESS

At this final retreat we will begin to draw together elements of practice that have gone before into a more cohesive whole. This will emphasize the relationship between form and emptiness and its expression in the mandala as a symbol of the homeostatic nature of the psyche. We will explore the five Buddha families and five elements and their contribution to the psychological nature of wholeness. During this weekend we will also begin to look at the way forward in terms of individual practice and further personal retreat.

Learning objectives:

- Gain an experience of the nature and meaning of the mandala as a vision of totality
- Recognise the non-dual relationship between form and emptiness
- Bring our relationship to the process of the retreats to a sense of completion, both individually and as a group working together
- Look at ways to carry practice out into the work or life
- Learn how to bring together the conditions for personal retreat
- Explore where personal practice may need to go from here
- Any other business!



THE PROGRAM

FOR WHOM?

This retreat will be useful both to those who are relatively new to the Tibetan Buddhist tradition and to those with experience. It is favourable to have had some years of meditation experience. The bottom line is your willingness to develop a foundation in the meditative practices and theoretical views of Tibetan Buddhist practice. Depending on your previous spiritual/Buddhist practice and study, you may need some extra preparation or support. This will be decided on the basis of your spiritual/Buddhist background and personal communication.

PROGRAM PREREQUISITES

- These retreats will be at approximately six-month intervals; participants will be asked to maintain daily meditation practice between retreats, following the practices that have been taught.
- The students will also receive advice on books, articles or multimedia that can be of help and support.
- Participants are encouraged to look at their own personal experience in this journey and take part in discussing it, as this helps practice to become more relevant to individual needs.
- Specific needs for preparation for each module will be communicated on the basis of the topic and one's spiritual/Buddhist background and personal communication.

SUPPORT BETWEEN SEMINARS

- Practice, integration & discussion sessions will be organised at KenKon
- Audio recordings will be made available
- Support materials for preparation, practice & integration will be provided

Prerequisites and support details will be provided when needed.

ABOUT YOU

If you would like to attend, it will be necessary for us to have a clear idea of your relevant experience and background in general, and particularly in relation to the Tibetan tradition, as well as your meditation and retreat experience. We will also need to know of any mental health issues that you have had as well as any particular physical disabilities that might be relevant to this process.

You may be required do some preparatory study and practice.

While it is preferable – for the sake of continuity – for participants to attend the entire program, it may be possible to attend some of these retreats individually. This will depend upon the availability of space and the experience and background of those concerned.

DATES

All seminars start on Friday at 2:00 pm and finish on Sunday at 4:00 pm.

1. Becoming a stable vessel → 10 – 12 October 2014
2. Awakening right intention → 17 – 19 April 2015
3. Discovering the nature of mind → 2 – 4 October 2015
4. The nature of Deity Yoga → 15 – 17 April 2016
5. Awakening the energy body → 7 – 9 Oktober 2016
6. Working with the shadow → 7 – 9 April 2017
7. The masculine and feminine → Fall 2017
8. The mandala and visions of wholeness → Spring 2018

TIMES:

Friday 2:00 pm – 5:00 pm

Saturday 10:00 am – 5:00 pm

Sunday 10:00 am – 4:00 pm

LOCATION

KenKon, Integral Life & Training Centre, Nieuwe Kanaal 11, 6709 PR Wageningen, Netherlands.

☎ +31 – (0)317 – 452946

✉ info@kenkon.org 🌐 www.kenkon.org

FEES

For the first seminar, 'Becoming a Stable Vessel' (includes 2½ days, 2 lunches & support materials):

General fee: € 210 (€ 175 + voluntary donation if paid before 15 September).

Fee for KenKon members, students and those with minimal income: € 160 (€ 135 + voluntary donation if paid before 15 September).

Fees for Modules 2 – 8 will be approximately the same, although a small inflation correction may apply.

PAYMENT

Payment should be done after receiving the invoice.

Please fill in: Rob Preece, TTEOT, module 'X'. BANK: ABN-AMRO, Wageningen, Netherlands; account number 44.70.28.286 (IBAN: NL04ABNA0447028286, BIC: ABNANL2A).

CANCELLATION POLICY:

More than 3 weeks before course: full refund; more than 2 weeks before: 60% refund; more than 1 week before: 20% refund; less than one week before: no refund.

LODGING

Optional dormitory with yoga futons, self-service breakfast: € 40 for two nights. There are hotels and B & B's in the area.

REGISTRATION & INFO

info@kenkon.org; www.kenkon.org; +31(0)317-452946

For more general background information, see:

www.mudra.co.uk

www.kenkon.org

RECOMMENDED GENERAL READING:

- *The Wisdom of Imperfection* by Rob Preece
- *The Psychology of Buddhist Tantra* by Rob Preece
- *The Courage to Feel* by Rob Preece
- *Preparing for Tantra* by Rob Preece
- *Introduction to Tantra* by Lama Yeshe
- *The Three Principle Aspects of the Path* by Geshe Sonam Rinchen
- *An Ocean of Ultimate Meaning* by Khenchen Thrangu Rinpoche
- *Awakening the Heart* by John Welwood
- *Breath by Breath* by Larry Rosenburg

