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A STRAND OF CONTEMPORARY TANTRA: ITS DISCOURSE AND PRACTICE IN THE FPMT

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Abstract

This paper utilizes the data obtained from fieldwork conducted at Vajrayana Institute, a Buddhist centre affiliated with the worldwide Gelugpa Tibetan Foundation for the Preservation of the Mahayana Tradition (FPMT), to explore the approach to and practice of Tantra in a contemporary Western Buddhist context. In particular, this paper highlights the seriousness with which Tantra is treated in this religious setting, challenging Urban's statement, largely based on his examination of the Western appropriation of Hindu Tantra, that the West has appropriated Tantra as a form of spiritual hedonism. The paper describes the orientation toward Tantric activity within the FPMT by outlining its relationship to the following aspects of religious activity: to sutra study and practice, ethical training and the Mahayana motivation, the role of taking refuge, and to the purpose of initiation and keeping Tantric commitments.

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