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### tummo

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Inner Fire Yoga, or Tummo, is the basic method used in the advanced stage of most tantra systems. When doing this practice, we will need to visualize our body in a certain way. This is called the “Vajra Body” and incorporating it into our self-image provides a useful way to work with our bodily energies.

The structures visualized are not actually there when the body is autopsied. There are correlates with our physical bodies, yet that is only part of the picture. When we close our eyes and feel our bodies, it is hard to deny that different parts of the body have different energies and feelings. In any case, to do the practices, one needs to suspend disbelief and visualize the postulated structures and energies. After extended practice, the visualizations become internalized and become powerful tools for calming ourselves, connecting with the body and channeling energy.

As babies, we are born with blissful energy freely flowing throughout our entire body. As we develop, this energy is inhibited by the traumas of life and stored in our neuromuscular systems. We no longer breathe freely and our muscles become distorted with tension and stored psychic and physical pain. Inner Fire Yoga teaches us a method to free up this trapped energy and use it to our advantage. If we look carefully at emotion, we find that an emotion is actually a energized physical sensation in one part of the body or another. Thoughts are superimposed on these energies. The energy of emotion can scatter us, or we can learn to use it to center ourselves. In Inner Fire Yoga, energy is generated and collected in the navel chakra and spread upward through the center of our body, centering and energizing us in a positive way.

Sexual desire and anger can be very useful. Sexual energy in most adults is usually limited to the area of the sexual chakra. When this energy is spread throughout the body, it really isn't just sexual anymore. It is a total body energized or “blissful” feeling. This is not the ordinary limited bliss of orgasm. Sexual energy can be freed up and distributed throughout the body by moving it into the navel chakra and then doing the Inner Fire Yoga. Anger is energy also, but the energy can be harmful. In the inner fire yoga we can learn to take the energy of anger (usually felt in the solar plexus) and throw it also into the navel chakra as fuel.

#### Emptiness:

The “blissful” body is only half of the equation in Tantra. The other half is the indispensable understanding of non-dual awareness, or “emptiness” (the mind free or empty of conceptual divisions).

The practice of tummo is a core practice in Tibetan tantra yoga. I would like to emphasize that the aim of this article is to present to the reader the technique of tantra yoga. The reader may read this as a reference document: I do not suggest you practice Tummo without the careful guidance of a competent Guru.

In Indian yoga teachings, our spine is an energetic axis, which consists of three energetic lines (Nadis) these are: Pingala (positive), Ida (negative) and a middle: Shushumna. Along the axis there are seven chakras from the perineum to top of the head: Muladhara, Svadhisthana, Manipura, Anahata, Visuddha, Ajna and Sahasrara. Each chakra relates to a seed syllable. Kundalini, the sacred serpent lies in the Muladhara chakra. This system of seven chakras is the Kundalini system.

When it was incorporated into Tibetan Buddhism, the Kundalini system changed; it's because Muladhara and Svadhisthana are associated as one Root zone, so there's one seed syllable "AH" represent for these two chakras. Because the Ajna and Sahasrara are associated as one Top zone, there's one seed syllable "HAM" to represent them. We now see from Muladhara to Sahasrara five seed syllables in order: **AH, TRAM, HUM, HRI, HAM**. These relate to five chakras (or group of chakras).

The principle of Tummo practice is waking the Kundalini (seed syllable A, fire, red, positive) to create the Tummo heat, make it rise up and reach the top of the head (seed syllable **HAM**, water, white, negative). When the Tummo fire liquifies the Sahasrara into Immortal fluid, it causes enlightenment. **AH** absorbs **HAM** to become **AHAM** (in Sanskrit= I, me)

### Preconditions

The practitioner must study well in Buddhist philosophies, behave ethically, have skill in mundane meditation, must be able to visualize vividly the shape and the bright red color of the seed syllable in his mind (see the **AH** seed syllable). And must have powerful contemplation to realize the Tummo flame and its path.

Tantric tradition requires more serious conditions. To practice the Tummo (one of the six yogas) you have to complete the preliminaries practices which consists of two categories:  
The preliminaries consisting of general meditations derived from the common mahayana teachings.  
The preliminaries that belong exclusively to the highest yoga tradition:

The general Vajrajana preliminaries  
Four complete empowerments (Abhisheka)  
The Tantric precepts (Samaya)  
The preliminaries for the Naropa yogas.

### Practice

First, contemplate the seed syllable "**RAM**" in the umbilical chakra.

Next, imagine the Khandroma appear in bright red light.

Then the practitioner absorbs, and becomes the Khandroma: at this time the practitioner visualizes the seed syllable "**A**" in the root zone and visualizes the seed syllable "**HAM**" in the top zone.

With conscious breathing, the practitioner awakens the seed syllable "**A**" to a heating flame. This flame must be imagined as increasing gradually in size and heat level when it rises up along the spinal axis, from the root (Muladhara) to the top (Sahasrara). The spinal axis becomes a tube of flame which begins the tiny flame, then gradually grows. This process may be described in ten

stages:

Stage 1: the flame is imagined as tiny as a hair

Stage 2: the flame diameter is large as a finger.

Stage 3: the flame diameter is large as an arm.

Stage 4: the flame is large as a whole body.

Stage 5: the practitioner's contemplation come to the utmost degree, the flame is immense and the practitioner's body is absorbed in an immense fire-storm.

Stage 6: the process is reversed, the fire storm calms, decreasing to body size

Stage 7: the flame is decreased to the size of an arm .

Stage 8: the flame is decreased to the size of a finger.

Stage 9: the flame is decreased to the size of a hair.

Stage 10: the flame disappears, all becomes void

The practitioner imagines the seed syllable **AH** transform into a fire that is burning red and which rises up the spine rhythmically. Each "breathing rhythm" consists of one breath in and one breath out. In each breathing rhythm the red flame rises up about half a finger, each time.

The meditative practitioner:

- with the first breath, begins to imagine in the Root zone (Muladhara) the red burning flame coming up the spine.
- After the 8th breath it reaches the umbilical chakra (Manipura)
- Continue the breath in Manipura ten times.
- Descend and reach Muladhara at 28th breath.
- Ascend and reach the Anahata at 38th breath
- Ascend and reach the Visuddha at 48th breath
- Ascend and reach the crown chakra at the 58th breath
- Use the contemplative power to imagine the fire heat up the top zone in ten breath rhythms ( from 58th to 68th breath).

Imagine the Tummo fire burns the Sahasrara and produces a cool liquid which flows down the spine and decreases the heat and the size of the Tummo fire.

- At the 78th breath it reaches the Vishudda.
- At the 88th breath it reaches the Anahata
- At the 98th breath it reaches the Manipura
- . At the 108th breath; It reaches, cools down, and extinguishes the Tummo heat itself.

The tummo flame is a spiritual entity, in other words its existence, its position or its rising path depend on the practitioner's contemplative power. When imagining the Tummo fire burn up to the crown chakra, if practitioner could not imagine the great Tummo flame in Sahasrara (thousands petals lotus chakra) change its size to a smaller one and become the cooling liquid, it will cause damage.