



# The Gods and the Demons Are Not Two: A Tantra of the Great Perfection

*Christopher Wilkinson*

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To those familiar with the esoteric traditions of Buddhism, the Great Perfection is well known as a pathway of instant enlightenment, a vehicle for a sudden breakthrough of enlightened awareness here in the present. We may wonder, though, what the Great Perfection has to say about the obvious reality that there are all kinds of different beings who live under all kinds of conditions, and the reality that we ourselves go through all kinds of emotional turbulence even as we study the Great Perfection. What does the Great Perfection have to say about the demonic side of things? What does it say about our understandings of what divine beings are? How does it integrate a vision of the divine and the demonic into the fabric of instantaneous enlightenment? How do practitioners of the Great Perfection understand their own demons and preferred deities, and come to terms with them? In a world view wherein everyone is already enlightened, what is the function of compassion? These concerns are addressed in *The Gods and the Demons Are Not Two*. This Tantra offers a lengthy discussion of the demonic and the divine, with information on the recognition of demons and their different classes, how we can know whether our lives are controlled by demons, a discussion of exorcism, and a thorough presentation on the Great Perfection's concern for all classes of living beings. We are introduced into a mythological world populated by a wide variety of demonic and heavenly beings and are encouraged to "share the taste" (ro snyoms) of what life is like for them, a kind of sympathetic comprehension of other beings. We are guided through the realms of samsara, and encouraged to share in the taste of what it would be like if we were some other being. How would it feel to be an element, a demon, an illness, a denizen of hell, an animal, or a god? Empathy is used to point us toward an understanding of a kind of perfection that there is in each and every living thing, a great perfection.

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