



Ancient Tibetan Dream Wisdom

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Tibetan dream work has an extensive history incorporating pre-Buddhist folk religion, Bon and Buddhism. Tibetans who experience problems with Nature spirits use dreams to resolve these, in addition to consulting with Oracles. The use of spirits and oracles is entrenched in Tibetan culture; there is a State Oracle, and each person has a birth spirit or protector spirit, which helps the person throughout his or her life. When people were disturbed by a negative spirit, they would call on their helping spirit, and whether this occurred in the waken state or dream state made little difference. This facility of working with spirits in the dream state still prevails amongst Tibetans today.

Tibetan Buddhism developed an even more sophisticated system of working with dreams and the dream state, but still incorporating some features of the Folk and Bön traditions. This started with the transmission from North India to Tibet of The Six Yogas of Naropa, Suggasiddhi's Six Yogas and Neguma's Six Yogas. The Six Yogas belong to the Tantric tradition, and several Tantric works describe working with dreams and the dream state. Tantric dream work is connected with attainment of lucid dreaming and mastering the dream state especially for spiritual purposes.

As a Tibetan Lama I was able to work with dreams from an early age. In the beginning, I was strongly influenced by the Folk religion way of dealing with harmful spirits by calling my

protectors. As a Tibetan child I simply listened to adults talking about spirits and protectors, I took part in their rituals from the age of one, where I was enthroned in my monastery in Kongpo as the reincarnation Lama Tarab and from the age of four I started to lead those rituals, one of the roles of the Lama. It was therefore natural for me to deal with spirits both in Dreams and in the waken state.

When I was ten or eleven my main teacher, Ven. Kensur Gyaltzen Rinpoche, started to formally train me and three other Lamas in how to work with the dream state. He did not teach us the complicated formal practices of the Dream Yoga, but a simpler method. This was visualizing Manjusri (the Deity of Wisdom), repeating his mantra before going to sleep, and when in the dream state we would experience Manjusri and ask him the questions our teacher had prepared for us. We were then expected to wake up with an answer.

We did this for about a month, asking questions about different people's health and so on, every night on going to sleep. At the end of this time Kensur Rinpoche told me I had special abilities for working with the dreams in the dream state. He must have told some of his other students too, because many people started to come to me asking questions about their health, how to survive specific illnesses, and what to do in certain situations. I took their questions into my



dreams and tried to find answers, to gain clarity about their situation through my dreams.

Kensur Rinpoche kept me busy taking questions into my dream state each night to find answers. The next morning I would tell him the answers and he would teach me to interpret them. I did this every day for about three years. When I was thirteen I received the formal teachings of the Six Yogas, including the Dream Yoga. So from this time on I started to practice the Tantric way of working with the dream state, attaining the full abilities of lucid dreaming, using the dream state for spiritual development. I continued the dream work alongside many other practices as well as my formal studies for the Lharampa Geshe degree in Buddhist 'science of mind and phenomena', psychology, metaphysics, which I had just completed when I was twenty four, and had just fled Tibet.

It was under the circumstances of being in the prison camp not knowing what would happen that I seriously started to find out how this precious knowledge I had received could be practically useful not just for strict spiritual development alone but also for everyday purpose for everyone at any stage of development.

When I came to the West in 1962 and since I have tried to discover the best way to use the great richness of Buddhist 'science of mind and phenomena' and practice that anyone despite belief and culture could benefit from. I wanted to find out how normal people living in the West could use the universal aspects of Eastern wisdom in their everyday lives. So, my guideline was how people could practically benefit themselves in normal life from what I had learned in Tibet. I knew straight away that dream work, in particular in regard to transformation of one's problematic structures, of which the dreams are often an expression, could be useful for everyone.

I found that many practices from both Sutra and Tantra can be used to heal our normal weakness experiences of ourselves, especially Dream work, Energy work, methods using the Death process as well as the final Death-like experience. Practicing these methods and meditations can radically change our problematic experiences of reality, and thereby change our negative way of experiencing and dealing with our environment. Some of the important methods that I find most useful for transforming ourselves in our normal lives are contained in the Ancient Tibetan Dream Wisdom.

In Tibet we did not have dream workshops, we had spiritual practices, we also trained in the dream state, and we had the ancient ways of dealing with dreams drawn from the Folk religion and Bön. However, I started to give dream workshops in Europe at the end of the 1970's. First I was asked to give a workshop on Buddhist psychology and psychotherapy at one of the first International Transpersonal Conferences. I attended this conference in Lapland, north Finland with my teacher, the former Kensur Rinpoche, whom I had invited to Europe. Subsequently I was invited to give workshops at Esalen in America by Stanislav Grof, I was also invited to Brazil and to various European countries.

Many of our unpleasant dreams arise because our basic problematic mental pattern of vulnerable self-references appears in the dream state. So, if we can deal with these dream appearances as they arise in the dream state, we can contact and change the underlying patterns, which otherwise rule our lives. Therefore, the main practice I will introduce is how to work directly with problems in the dream state.

These are old shamanistic methods and methods deriving from the Dream Yoga, and presents a very deep way to work with one's problems. Essentially you resolve problems by fighting, transformation by means of dual



methods or by means of non-dual methods. Of course this is not as simple as it sounds. In the dream you must first attain lucid dream abilities, otherwise you cannot transform the basic mental patterns manifesting in this state.

However, if we have not yet attained lucid dreaming skills, I am suggesting that we can work in an imagery dream state. In this way we recreate and re-enter the dream, which is manifesting the problems you wish to transform. This imagery work is helpful, but the quality depends on how deep we can enter the imagery dream, how real it becomes to us. Particularly for transforming the mental patterns using non-dual methods, we need to attain a deep imagery dream state to unite with the adverse object.

Once a student is firmly established in lucid dreaming or in the imagery dream, I introduce transformation methods, which are methods drawn from the ancient shamanistic tradition. I do not actually introduce working with the spirit world, but some of the methods I use are based on the underlying knowledge of the ancient methods. The deeper non-dual methods of transformation are inspired by Tantric methods, which enables us to reach our essential, basic energy in order to free your-self from the problematic structures.

These non-dual methods of transformation are connected with the death process and the final state of death. These natural states of dream and death have an essential place within Tantric meditation, and in accordance with the higher Tantras, in the Dream Yoga practice, in the dream state, we are supposed to do death related practices too. These practices are connected with the methods I am introducing here, but not identical.

I have also incorporated the special ways I was taught to contact and receive answers in the dream state and in meditation, which derive from the shamanistic and the Buddhist tradition both.

The shamanistic tradition trains you to go consciously into the dream state without the specific meditations suggested in the Buddhist tradition. Tibetans grow up believing that in the waken state we can contact a similar state as the dream state, raising our energy to a vivid presence, whereby we have access to so-called magical powers. This is part of our culture, so we know it is possible.

You will not find the dream work presented this way in either the shamanistic tradition nor in the Buddhist Tantras, but all aspects presented here can be traced back to one of these ancient traditions. I developed this particular way of working with dreams, specifically to enable anyone, despite his / her beliefs or cultural connection, to be able to transform their problematic structures by themselves in a radical way utilizing the ancient wisdom still available.

When I started teaching this Ancient Tibetan Dream Wisdom, and in this connection presented the underlying philosophical / psychological theory, I noticed the importance to deeply engage in the philosophy and science of mind in order to understand the reality we experience and in order to develop oneself.

Due to the importance of this connected understanding, I decided to make this material available to people who are seriously working on themselves and with others. To this end I established a four year training program in 'Science of Mind and Phenomena', Personal-development and Art-of-Relating, Psychotherapeutic and Spiritual Application, which I named "Unity in Duality".

All the Buddhist philosophies consider subject and object to be interrelated in the traditional view of *tendrel*, the interdependent origination. "Unity in Duality" is the name I have given my approach, which basically implies the view of Subject – Object, Body – Mind and Energy – Matter



interrelationship. Unity in Duality – abbreviated to UD – is thus my particular way of presenting Indo-Tibetan Philosophy, Psychology, Personal-development, Art-of-Relating and Psychotherapeutic as well as Spiritual application.

If the interrelationships between subject and object did not exist, it simply would not be possible to transform ourselves, and even if we could, it would not affect our experience of reality. Without this interrelationship we would not be able to change our experience at all, as what we would experience would exist out there the way we experiences it, but independent on ourselves. In my view, understanding this and the other interrelationships is as essential to Buddhism as to personal-development, art-of-realing and psychotherapeutic application as well as spiritual development.

Published before in “Tricycle” and in “[A Tibetan Lama in Denmark](#)”

Tarab Tulku Rinpoche (1934-2004), was one of the foremost Tibetan Scholars, was fully educated in Tibet, graduating from Drepung University Monastery with the highest degree of Lharampa Geshe. Rinpoche lived in the west for over 30 years, and held the post as Lecturer at the University of Copenhagen as well as Research Librarian at the Royal Library. Rinpoche’s lifework, which has manifested in ”Unity in Duality”, has His Holiness the Dalai Lama’s full interest and support. His Holiness thinks Tarab Rinpoche’s work does not only have a great importance for Buddhist in the West, but likewise for Tibetan people, why His Holiness’s office 2003 October arranged an extensive teaching tour for Tarab Rinpoche in India, giving lectures in 21 institutions of the Tibetan exile community from various Schools & Colleges to the Dialectic School and the Exile Administration. Due to Tarab Rinpoche’s untimely passing away already in September 2004, he could unfortunately not return to teach at the big University Monasteries in South India, as His Holiness had wished for.