

2. THE PRACTICE OF THE NIGHT

The night is very important for people because half our lives pass during it; but often we quietly sleep away all that time without any effort or commitment. There has to be real awareness that practice can occur at all times, even during sleep or eating, for example. If this does not happen, progress on the path is difficult to make. Therefore, the practice of the night is very important, and I will explain its theory and practice.

When someone says “practice of the night” we usually think of the practice of lucid dreaming. There are many explanations of lucid dreaming. But in the Dzogchen teaching, the practice of dream work, and development of lucidity, is not fundamental. It is a secondary practice. In the case of dream practice, *secondary* means that this practice can arise spontaneously or automatically from doing the principal practice, which is called the “practice of natural light.”

This practice, the practice of the natural light, actually has to do with the state prior to dream. For example, a person falls asleep; *fall asleep* means that all of his senses vanish into him, and thus he is sleeping. From that point on there is a passage, a period of transition, until dreams begin. That period may be long or it may be short.

For some people, the state of dreams begins almost immediately after falling asleep. But what does it mean, that the state of dream begins? It means that the mind begins to function again.

In contrast, that which is called the state of natural light is not a moment or a state in which the mind is functioning. It is the period beginning when you fell asleep and ending when the mind begins to function again. What exists after this? After this exists what we call the *milam bardo*.¹

There is a correspondence between the states of sleep and dream and our experiences when we die. When a person dies, first of all the senses vanish. In speaking of bardos, we speak of the moment when the senses vanish into ourselves as the bardo of the moment of dying, *chokyi bardo*. At this moment the person has many sensations of the disappearing or withdrawal of the senses.

After that comes a state like unconsciousness; it is similar to a faint. There then begins what is called the arising of four lights. Various tantras² explain this with some slight differences. Some divide it into four lights; some refer to five lights. The truth is that it is as if you had fainted and—with the arising of lights—slowly, slowly consciousness is beginning to reawaken.

For example, the mind must begin working in order for reasoning to occur. First we must have an awareness of the senses. The mind begins to receive these perceptions, but there are no reasoning and thinking yet. Slowly, step-by-step, thinking actually arises.

There is the presence of the state of awareness, and yet mind has not begun to enter into operations such as thinking. This is the passage through which one moves in that state which is called the state of natural light. It has always been considered that it is during this period that the practitioner of Tantra realizes him- or herself. In Tantrism this period is also described as the moment in which one meets the mother light.³ It is exactly this moment after the faint, in which awareness develops again, or reawakens.

In Tantric initiation, there are four sub-initiations, and the last of them is called the initiation of the word. If you have understood, at that time the master gives a kind of introduction to natural mind.⁴

Even if you have not realized natural mind but you have a lot of participation, commitment, and faith, and you practice with devotion, it is sometimes possible that in the moment of the last awakening of consciousness there will come a flash of recognition of natural mind or rigpa. It is not easy, but if you have really had knowledge, it is possible. As you are passing or moving through, there is a series of the development of lights, for which there are many explanations.

In the Dzogchen teaching, the last of these phases, the fifth light, is spoken of as *lhundrub*,⁵ the state of self-perfectedness. In that moment you have a reawakening of consciousness. It is possible for you to recognize that which has been transmitted to you through direct introduction by the teacher. The experience of that transmission is what we call the experience of wisdom. Let us use the analogy of the sun. Imagine that the sky is covered with clouds, and among these clouds you catch a glimpse of the sun. Even if the clouds have not allowed full sunlight, you have had an experience of what is meant by sun and sunlight. This experience is analogous to that of wisdom.

This knowledge is spoken of as the “son” knowledge, in comparison to the “mother” knowledge or full experience. When we practice, we try to develop this son knowledge. This knowledge is the son of the mother.

Some people succeed in practicing and fully developing this knowledge, and thus realize themselves totally in this life. It is said that such a person can realize the Body of Light.⁶

But even if you have not realized yourself totally and yet have had experience of practice, then in the moment after death, in this state of lhundrub when you encounter the mother light, you will recognize the full presence of wisdom before you return into the workings of mind. The analogy that is used is that of a son uniting with his mother. The books speak of the meeting between the son light and the mother light, but what is really meant is that what we had only an example of, we now encounter in its fullness.

This state—as we proceed through the lights to the ultimate light, the lhundrub, or light of self-perfectedness—is the state in which any and every practitioner of Tantrism realizes himself or herself. It is only after that experience that the state of *sipa bardo* begins. Up to that point, we experience the *chonyid bardo*, the bardo of the *Dharmata*. Why do we call it the *Dharmata*? Because it represents our actual underlying state, or underlying consciousness.

Only after that begins the sipa bardo, the bardo as one normally knows it, the bardo of existence. In other words, it is where the workings of the mind begin again. It is as if we’d now gone into the state of dream. As in dream you can dream anything and then at a certain moment you wake up and another day begins, so it is considered that you come out of the bardo, and another existence begins. This existence is determined by its karmic vision, and that is how you transmigrate. This is how we continue day in, night out.

So we see that the state of the bardos is not something to be read about or understood abstractly. It is relevant to practice. The way to practice for death and the sipa bardo is to do this practice of the natural light. If you have become knowledgeable of, or have awareness of, the state of natural light, you will also have that awareness and presence in the moment of dying. If you are capable of dying with presence and awareness, it means you are knowledgeable about the manifestations of light. In this case you will have no difficulty recognizing the mother light.

To repeat: With the beginning of the bardo of existence, the functioning or working of the mind, what is called the mental body, also begins. This is equal to the arising of the state of dreams. In the

practice we do, there has to be an awareness of, or mastery of, the state of natural light. When one has an awareness of the presence of this state of natural light, then even if afterwards the state of dreams arises, one spontaneously becomes lucidly aware that one is dreaming while dreaming, and automatically one achieves mastery of one's dreams. This means that the dream does not condition the person, but the person governs his or her dream. For this reason, the practice of dreams is secondary, and I cannot overemphasize how extremely important it is to do the practice of the natural light.

When we start to dream we may have one of two general types of dreams. One type is karmic dreams and the other is dreams of clarity. In addition to those dreams reflecting karma from our current life, karmic dreams can also be linked to our past lives. For instance, if someone murdered me in a past life, I may still in this life have dreams of being murdered. It is not true that what we dream is always about our experiences from this life. If an event is very weighty, then you may feel it life after life. When you sleep very deeply, you may create a perfect potential for past karma to manifest within your dreams.

If you merely have heavy tension, it may repeat in your dreams. For example, when you are a child and someone makes a problem for you it could repeat in your dreams. Or, if today I have a problem with someone, it may repeat tonight in my dream. The principle is that if you have heavy tension, and you sleep deeply, the tension tends to repeat. This is one kind of dream, a karmic dream of *bhakshas*. Bhakshas means traces of something left. For example, if there is an empty bottle which once contained perfume, you can still smell the trace of perfume. That is bhakshas.

The other type of dream is a dream of clarity. Why do we have dreams of clarity? Because everybody since the beginning has infinite potentiality; that is a qualification of the natural mind that we all possess. Sometimes, even if we are not doing a particular practice, a dream of clarity will manifest because we have that nature. If you are doing practice of the night and becoming more familiar with it, then not only occasionally, but on a regular basis, you will become familiar with manifestations of dreams of clarity.

What is a dream of clarity? A dream of clarity manifests when there are secondary causes; through the secondary causes it manifests as clarity. We can even obtain advice and predictions for the future because there are secondary causes for future events. A dream of clarity generally manifests in the early morning. Why? It is because when we first fell asleep, we sleep very deeply. Slowly we consume this heaviness and our sleep becomes lighter. As it becomes lighter, clarity can manifest more easily. If your practice of continuous presence succeeds, then karmic dreams diminish. This is because they are linked with tensions. The state of contemplation or presence represents total relaxation. Consequently there will be no manifestation of tension. In the place of karmic dreams, you can have more dreams of clarity. You may now understand what the theory is and what is its importance. Now I will explain how you practice it. If you are an agitated person, then before you go to sleep, you can do a little deep breathing to regulate the flow of air and calm yourself. Then concentrate on a white Tibetan syllable "A"



at the center of your body. If you prefer an English "A" it is acceptable. The important thing is that it correspond in your mind to the sound *Ahhh*. It is important that when you see that letter you automatically know what its sound is.

If you do not succeed in concentrating and seeing this at first, it may be that you do not know how to visualize. Try writing an “A” on a piece of paper, put it in front of you, and stare at it for a while. Close your eyes and this “A” will appear before your mind immediately. In this way you will get a more precise image.

So, you try to concentrate on this white “A”. Or you fix on the presence of this white “A”, and you stay with it as long as you can.

You can also do a kind of training to have greater precision in feeling this presence: Imagine that from the central “A” a second arises, and from the second, a third arises, until you can see a chain of “A”s going up to the crown of the head. Then you visualize these “A”s coming back down. You can repeat this a number of times if you do not fall asleep immediately. Whenever you have difficulty in feeling the presence of the “A”, it is very useful and important to do this chain. This is a way of charging your clarity.

The most important point is that when you fall asleep, you try to have this “A” present. Initially, it should be accurate and sharp; afterwards you relax. Relaxing does not mean you drop the “A” or that you give it up. You retain a sense of its presence, and you relax, and thus you fall asleep.

For those who have not practiced this before, the first, second, or third time you attempt it you may not succeed at all. In fact, you may find you try it a little and then suddenly you are asleep.

Like anything, until you have learned it, it is difficult, but if you exert your willpower, it becomes familiar to you.

If one is capable of falling asleep like this, one would find the full presence of the state of natural light. One falls asleep, and one is asleep with virtually full awareness. If one has this presence of mind when one enters into the state of dreams, it is easy to recognize that one is dreaming. It may not happen right away; some may arrive slowly at this result.

Even if this natural light does not occur directly, the first results will begin to show themselves in the state of dreams. You may find yourself dreaming strange dreams. What do I mean by strange dreams? As mentioned above, we normally have two types of dreams. The karmic type comes from the traces of our difficulties, problems, memories, and preoccupations.

Then there is the type of dream in which our natural clarity manifests. For example, towards morning, interesting dreams of things you have never thought about may occur, things that have no relationship to the traces of your thought and past but are more linked to your clarity. If you have practiced the natural light, dreams of natural clarity will manifest more frequently. If you persevere in the practice of recognition of the state of natural light, it will progressively become easier to repeat the lucid recognition that you are dreaming. There will arise a steady awareness within the dream, and you will know that you are dreaming. When you look in a mirror you see a reflection. Regardless of whether it is beautiful or ugly you know that it is a reflection. This is similar to knowing that a dream is a dream, to being lucid. Whether the dream be tragic or ecstatic, you are aware that it is merely a dream.

Awareness within the dream state becomes a way to develop oneself and to break one’s heavy conditioning. With this awareness, one can manipulate the dream material. For example, one can dream whatever one wishes or one can pick up a desired theme. One can continue from where one left off dreaming on a previous occasion.

Within the tantric system, the specific dream yoga practice is oriented towards preparing the practitioner for the bardo after the time of death. This is not the case in the Dzogchen system. In the Dzogchen system, it is not necessary that one commit oneself to working on dreams. That will arise naturally out of the practice of the natural light. The most important thing for this practice, as I have described, is to do the particular visualization of the white “A” before sleeping. In doing this visualization we use the working of the mind in order eventually to go beyond the mind.

What position you use while practicing this visualization is not ultimately important. Many people do this visualization practice after they are lying in bed. You must see what kind of person you are. One person may fall asleep merely by shutting his or her eyes, while another person might need to take a sleeping pill.

Let us take the example of the person who lies down and immediately falls asleep. If this person becomes distracted from his or her practice for a moment, he or she is already asleep. This is the type of person for whom a particular physical position might be useful. If the practitioner is a male it may be beneficial for him to lie on his right side. Assuming he does not have a cold which has blocked his breathing, it might also be useful for him to close the right nostril with his hand.

For women, the position is reversed. A woman should lie on her left side and try to block her left nostril. I am not saying to stop breathing, if you have a cold. This of course would not be a good thing. But what usually happens is that when you lie down on your side and the unclosed nostril is congested, within a few minutes that nostril will open.

The reason that the positions are reversed for men and women has to do with the solar and lunar channels.⁷ The reason we take these positions is to make it easier to enter the state of contemplation, or presence of the natural light. If they make your sleep more difficult, then they are not recommended. That is why I said that these positions are primarily for a person who tends to fall asleep easily.

Let us consider for a moment the opposite situation, that of a person who has real problems falling asleep. In such a case it would not be advisable to do this kind of visualization practice or to take this position. It is likely that this type of person would merely become more nervous and perhaps not sleep at all. An alternative for people of this type would be to observe their thoughts.

Whatever thoughts arise should be merely observed. Then, in this state of observing the thoughts without becoming involved or conditioned by them, one sleeps. As long as one is not distracted, this is something that anyone can do without creating obstacles to falling asleep. If you have difficulty sleeping at night, there are other practices you may employ to assist you. For example, having this difficulty often means that you need to coordinate the energy and function of the different elements within your body. If your energy is disordered, it prevents you from sleeping. In this case, a deep breathing practice done repeatedly can be beneficial.

You might do the nine-fold purification breathing⁸ before going to sleep. There are also physical exercises such as a series of eight movements⁹ found in Yantra Yoga that can help develop your capacity for correct breathing and also balance your energies as an aid to sleeping. In addition, there are Tibetan medicines to assist a person who has difficulty sleeping. Unlike sleeping pills they do not cause dependence or other side effects.

These medicines, such as Agar 35 and Vimala,¹⁰ can be used for one or two months—as long as you need, really—and will not cause any negative side effects. Rather, they will help your health and

coordinate your energy. When you do not need the medicine anymore, you can stop without withdrawal symptoms or negative effects. That is the benefit of these Tibetan medicines.

If you have become habituated to Western sleeping pills, you can initially alternate them with Tibetan pills in order to lessen the dependency. One night you use Western medicine, and the next night you use Agar 35. After one or two weeks of alternating, you will be able to stop taking the Western medicine without a problem.

You must not think only of Tibetan medicine when it comes to assuring a good night's sleep. You should also work with breathing in the manner previously mentioned, as this is very related to sleep.

Sometimes you cannot sleep because one of your three humors¹¹ is disturbed. When the wind humor is disturbed one has particular trouble sleeping. Wind is linked with *prana* or energy. When prana is disturbed it is difficult to sleep. For more information on this you can consult books on Tibetan medicine. In a book I wrote 12 on the topic there is an explanation of the three humors and of how to overcome problems. For example, to overcome problems related to wind disease, it is helpful to go to bed earlier in the evening, to sleep with warm clothes, and to have something like soup to eat just before going to bed. If you are not sleeping at night, and instead of relaxing you work hard until late hours, or you eat raw vegetables, this may further aggravate the condition. There are many things to learn in Tibetan medical books.

Everything is related. First try these preparations so you can fall asleep. If you have succeeded, then you can do the practice of the night. If your situation is between falling asleep immediately, and not being able to fall asleep, then visualize a white



or “A”, but one that is not very bright. If you have a problem falling asleep, you must not visualize the white “A” as too bright, and you could also visualize it in a sphere of five colors. This makes it easier to fall asleep. There are many kinds of people and many situations; we should know about all of them.

If one does this practice with commitment, one slowly may become a master of one's dreams. As one has more awareness and more dreams of clarity, dreaming becomes a practice. For example, as I mentioned, if one has achieved sufficient mastery of dreams, one can transform them. If I am dreaming something ugly, I could transform it into something beautiful, I could cause the dream to deal with some theme or argument that I have chosen, or I could play out some fantasy of my imagination. One could visit a paradise or contact a certain teacher. There are many things one can do; one can oftentimes work out the dream as one wishes. This can become a test of one's actual progress.

Let us discuss this in greater detail. As previously mentioned, there are preparations for dreamwork as well as the actual practice. In regards to preparation, it would be advisable for one to conduct a retreat to first practice concentration on the six syllables 13 and their purification.

After doing this practice for some time, many disordered dreams may appear. The arising of numerous disordered dreams is a sign that preparation is complete and then one can proceed to the practice.

In regards to practice there are three essential points. The first is to examine the dream; the second to control it; and the third to distinguish and recognize the *bag-chag* or karmic traces.

Prior to sleep each night it is advisable to relax the body, through baths and massage, for example. One must then resolve with full intention to progress on the path towards full awareness and lucidity within dreams.

Next, one may initially make use of the efficacious positions mentioned above that assist in the practice. One thus lays oneself down on one's side—the right side having to do with the void, the left with clarity—and closes the corresponding nostril with a finger of the corresponding hand, which lies under one's cheek. The right side actually governs or allows the void to operate, and the left side helps with the operation of clarity. It may be preferable, initially, to lie on the left side, thus promoting clarity—the work of the unimpeded right. Later as one's practice becomes stable, position will not be important.

If it seems that you have not dreamed, or there is only a faint memory of a dream, it is indicative that sleep was too deep. In this case, place the pillows higher, using lighter or fewer covers, let more air and/or light into the sleeping place or move to a more open spot. If dreams do not come regularly, you may experiment by sleeping in whichever way you find comfortable, on either the right or the left side. If dreams still do not come, concentrate on the throat chakra, and visualize a red



(“A”); if this is difficult, a red ball will suffice. If you still do not remember dreams, visualize the red letter or bead as increasingly more luminous each successive night. If difficulty persists, think of a white bead on your forehead, at the location of the third eye. If there is still nothing, visualize the white bead with increasing radiance each successive night. These concentrations are performed only if dreams are not remembered.

If you have not mastered the lucidity—awareness that one is dreaming while doing so—then during the day you should continually remind yourself that all that you see and all that is done is not other than a dream. By seeing everything throughout the day as if it were a dream, dream and awareness are thoroughly mixed. Subsequently, before sleeping, continue to focus well on the red “A” in the throat. Thus, you will fall asleep while fixing on the “A”. Focusing in this way before falling asleep unites the *lung* or prana there with concentration.

On occasion, a fearful nightmare may arise. If due to shock you instantly become lucid, this is called “distinguishing the dream by violent means”. Achieving lucidity in this manner is relatively common; subsequently you must continue to practice concentration on the red “A”, and gradually there will also develop the capacity for lucid awareness within dreams with peaceful themes.

Continued progress in dreamwork, even after lucid awareness is commonly achieved, depends very much on the activities of the day. Intense concentration on a theme or on any subject will lead to its arising. If you wish to cause yourself to dream of a Tibetan deity, for example, think of transforming yourself into that deity by concentrating on the deity intensely.

Similarly, imagining that you are traveling or making imaginary voyages to unknown or even known places will influence your dreams. Later, you can extend the voyages to paradise, for example, causing it to actually appear in the dream.

If you concentrate a great deal during the day, imagining that you are living a dream, then during the night the dream itself will also seem less real. The subject, that which experiences the dream, is the mind. By holding the thought that all is a dream, you begin to dissolve this “subject”. That is, the mind begins to dissolve itself, automatically.

Or, to put it another way, when the object or vision is dissolved, the action runs back towards the subject, causing complete dissolution. Thus, neither vision nor dream exists any longer.

One finds that the subject is not concrete and that vision is only “reflections”. One thus becomes aware of the true nature of both. Vision created by karma and the psychic “tail” or background imprint is the origin of all illusions; if authentic awareness of the illusory reality arises, one arrives at the disappearance of “solid reality.” Realization means true understanding of the waking state and the dream state.

Knowing the true nature of the dream, you may subsequently transform it. If you dream of a snake, for example, upon recognizing that you are dreaming, you should transform the snake into whatever you like, perhaps a man. Thus, it is not the dream which commands the dreamer, but the dreamer who commands the dream. When you have become able to change the dream, develop your skill by further scrambling the dream elements—for example, putting what is in the east in the west, multiplying or condensing the elements, turning things upside down, putting high things low, or making what is big, small. This process applies not only to forms, but also to sensations. If you dream of something pleasing, transform it into something unpleasant. Systematically reverse everything.

If you have difficulty transforming dream vision, it may be that in your dreams there arise too many images of the past, of childhood, for example, or even of other lives. In this case one could say that the dreams are influenced by the psychic “tail” or background. One finds considerable difficulty in transforming such a dream, whereas if one dreams of items or events linked to present or recent situations and happenings, transformation is much easier.

If one dreams of events which never happened—for example, of unknown countries and people—it may also be quite hard to put an end to dreaming or to exhaust the dream state. If all three phenomena arise, intermingled and confused (*bag-chag suma*) it is an indication that the process of transcending the dream state will be long and extremely difficult. If we have obstacles that hinder us from the final overcoming of dreams (*ja-lu-pho-wa-chen-mo*), we must make a deeper commitment and pray for progress.

Amid intentional transformation, spontaneous images may arise. For example, if you dream that you are in a forest, and choose to change the situation and place yourself in a desert, some items that appear may be different than what was intended to be projected. As one progresses and manages to maintain meditative awareness, experiences of clarity arise spontaneously.

As one continues towards mastery of the dream state, the principal technique next becomes the mixing of daytime vision and dreams. One must constantly carry one’s awareness into the dreams. As soon as the dream arises, instantly be aware that it is “unreal” (*sha-dro*). One must also bring this same recognition of unreality to one’s daily vision.

As we develop our awareness of the dream nature we may use dreams to deepen our meditative awareness. For example, a meditator who penetrates to the nature of “vision” (of phenomenal existence) finds it void. This perception of the emptiness of vision can then be transferred into the

dream. If, while dreaming, you are not only aware of dreaming, but also conscious that all vision is an illusion, you penetrate to the Void at its heart. Thus a dream can be transformed into knowledge of emptiness, *shunyata*.

Although awareness of the true nature of the dream may enhance one's meditative awareness, there is also the danger that by becoming skilled at transformation of the dream images one may become attached. The attachment must be overcome.

The principal means of cutting the attachment through the dream experiences are three. First, during the day, do not dwell upon the dreams you have had. Second, while actually dreaming, watch without judging, without pleasure or fear, regardless of whether the visions seem positive or negative and thus might provoke joy or unhappiness—that is, attachment. Third, while dreaming and then afterwards, do not “clarify” what is “subject” from what is “object”—that is, do not consider which of the images that appear are real. By proceeding in these ways, you will find that complex dreams gradually simplify, lighten and eventually may vanish completely.

Thus, all that was conditioned will be liberated. At this point, dreams end.

You should try to do the practice of natural light each night, just as you should try to be in the state of contemplation continually. For every moment and every activity there are ways to do Dzogchen practice. If, however, Dzogchen practice of the night is difficult for you, and you have more experience doing tantric style dream practice and you have had an initiation on a particular deity, then perhaps it would be useful for you to continue with your tantric practice. For example, if you do the practice of Vajrayogini¹⁴, then upon sleeping you should try to visualize a very tiny Vajrayogini at the center of your body. We call this tiny being *jnanasattva* which means wisdom manifestation.

You keep this presence and continue your sleep. There are other visualization practices similar to guru yoga¹⁵ in tantric dream practices. For example, you might visualize Vajradhara¹⁶ as the unification of all your gurus and manifest that visualization in the center of your body.

You would keep the presence of this visualization, relax, and slowly, slowly go to sleep.

Because these are tantric exercises, you should practice only the special instructions you receive from your master.

By contrast, in Dzogchen we generally do the visualization of a white “A”, as mentioned above, for the purpose of coordinating the energy. We visualize the white “A” at the center of the body. After having manifested this white, luminous “A”, we slowly relax. We relax slowly but completely when we do this visualization, so as not to have tension. If we do not relax completely, we will be unable to sleep. We must spontaneously manifest the white “A” without thinking, without creating, and then relax all effort and go to sleep.

In order to remind yourself to visualize the white “A” and to do the Dzogchen practice of the night, it is very useful to put a picture or sign of a white “A” near your bed. No one will know what it is; perhaps they will think it is a piece of artwork. You, however, will know its precise function.

It is also very important to remember the practice of the white “A” when you awaken in the morning. If possible you may sound “Ah” immediately. If you cannot sound loudly because there is someone else sleeping, it is enough that you exhale with “Ah,” as long as you can hear yourself and feel the presence of that white “A”. This is a method of guru yoga. It is not necessary to say many words or

prayers; simply having the presence of the white “A” and recognizing that the “A” is the unification of the mind of all your gurus is sufficient. Then you integrate in a state of contemplation or rigpa.

Starting your morning yoga in this way is wonderful and will help very much with all your practices and particularly your practice of the night. There is a kind of connection you make by remembering the white “A” in the morning and again when you are going to sleep. If you maintain the presence of the white “A” in your sleep, you will have clearer dreams. Your dreams will become more associated with clarity, and slowly, slowly you develop greater awareness.

If you are aware in the dream, you can experience many things within the dream state. It is easier to develop your practices in a dream than in the daytime. In the daytime we are limited by our material body, but in a dream our function of mind and our consciousness of the senses are unhindered. We can have more clarity. Thus there are more possibilities. For example, it is possible to practice advanced Dzogchen practices of togel and the Dzogchen *longde*¹⁷. If you practice these in the daytime you can certainly have meditative experiences, but in a dream you can have experiences beyond the limitation of the material body. That is why the practice is very important. In the daytime all experiences we have are very much conditioned by our attachment and tension. We feel that everything is concrete. In a dream we may initially feel that everything is concrete, but then suddenly remember that it is a dream. When you are aware in a dream, you know you are dreaming and that it is unreal. You know you are in a state of unreality. Once you have this experience, you can also make discoveries about your daily life such as about your major attachments. The ultimate result is to diminish your tension.

For those people who find it difficult to have the kind of presence I’ve described, the practice of the dark retreat¹⁸ is very useful. After two days or three days in the dark, you lose your sense of day and night. Your sleep becomes lighter and lighter. You sleep and wake up, sleep and wake up. Such a retreat offers a good opportunity to develop your presence and clarity. In this environment you can more easily discover what it means to have presence when you are sleeping. Your waking and sleeping states thus become integrated.

Normally, for a practitioner, one of the principal ways that signs of progress manifest is in dreams. Sometimes there occurs, in dream, an intervention on behalf of the practitioner. For example, if I am doing something wrong, I may have a communication through a dream. This may come by way of transmission of the teaching. It may also come through the protectors of the teaching, or the dakinis.

Many problems can be resolved through the transmission that comes in dream. You can’t expect that you are going to have the master at your beck and call in the flesh all your life. When I, for example, had been in Italy for about three years, I had a dream of my master Changchub Dorje.¹⁹ In the dream I actually felt that I had returned to Tibet. It seemed so real, and I was in fact a bit frightened about the Chinese. I was worried, and I said to myself, “Who knows if the Chinese will let me out again.” Then I met my teacher. I felt embarrassed, as my intention was to greet him quickly and then get out of there, and go back to Italy. My master said to me, “It has been many years that we haven’t seen each other. How is your practice going?”

I said, “Well, like this and like that.”

And he asked, “What practice have you been doing?”

I explained that I had been doing my best to take into daily life the practice of *trechod*²⁰.

“You haven’t been doing any of the practice of *togel*²¹?” he continued.

And I said, “Well, no, I haven’t been doing the *togel*.”

He asked, “Well, why not?”

“Well,” I answered, “because you told me that I had to perfect the *trechod* first. I had to get it very stable. So I’m working to perfect and make very stable my *trechod*.”

He said, “Well, do you have any doubts about your knowledge of *togel*?”

I said, “No, no, I don’t have any doubts. I just haven’t been doing that practice.”

He said, “Well you better get to it. Do the practice of *togel*. That is very important.”

I said, “Okay, that’s what I’ll be doing from now on.”

He said, “Now listen, if you do have any doubts about *togel*, or anything you don’t understand clearly, go ask Jigme Lingpa.²²”

I said, “Where is Jigme Lingpa?”

“Up the mountain there, in the cave,” he answered.

“Where up?” I said, because right behind the village where my master is, there is a sheer cliff.

When I was living with my master, I went up that mountain many times to collect medicines. I knew perfectly well there is no cave up there. At least in those times there was no cave. I thought to myself, “Well, why is he telling me there’s a cave up there?”

The master became wrathful. He said, “If you really want to understand something, you’ll get up there and find Jigme Lingpa in that cave.”

So I didn’t argue anymore. I was very curious about it. I went out and started climbing up the mountain to see where the cave was. A certain part of the rock face is white, but in this dream I found it a little bit different from how it had been. It was all carved with innumerable letters which I could read in Tibetan. It seemed like a tantra. I thought, “This is very strange. It wasn’t like that before.” And I thought to myself, “Well, from walking, climbing, over this tantra, I’m going to accumulate some bad actions.” This is a Tibetan way of thinking about things. So with this preoccupation, I started reciting the one-hundred syllable mantra.²³ Then slowly, slowly I continued to climb up.

At a certain point there was a sort of curved rock that I had to climb on; this rock appeared to be a title page, with the title of the tantra which I’d just been climbing over. It was called the *Todral donsals ningpo gurd*. *Trodral* means beyond concept; *donsal* means to clarify the meaning; *ning-po* means the essence. Later I discovered that there actually is a tantra of that name.

So then I climbed up and slowly, slowly approached the very peak of the mountain and there was a cave. Coming close, I looked inside this rather large cave. At the very center, there was a stone—a white boulder, hard and like granite. It was not a tiny stone; it was a big boulder. Sitting on this rock

was a little boy. I'm sure that he wasn't more than seven or eight years old. I looked around. There was nobody else in there. I said to myself, "This is pretty strange. Jigme Lingpa lived a long time ago. He couldn't be a little boy like that." Meanwhile this little boy was looking at me. I thought to myself, "Well, since my master told me to come up here and meet Jigme Lingpa, who knows, maybe this is some kind of emanation of Jigme Lingpa." I thought that I had better behave well towards him.

So I directly approached the child. He was wearing a garment that was like a transparent blue shirt. He had nothing else on. He had long hair, but not tied up like that of a yogi. He just looked like a normal little boy. I found this pretty strange. So I came up right in front of him. I said, "Master Changchub Dorje sent me to you." The little boy looked at me. He looked almost as if he were surprised to hear this. Looking at the boy I began to doubt him, but I watched what he was doing. Finally he gestured me to sit down. When I sat down, he reached and touched the back of his head, and brought forth a roll of paper, a scroll. He opened the scroll and began to read from it. When he read, it was in the voice of a little boy, but he was not giving a teaching or an explanation. He was reading. He read four or five sentences. Immediately upon hearing his voice, I realized that the scroll was a tantra. At that moment it struck me, "Oh it's true, it is Jigme Lingpa. Because it could hardly be some ordinary little boy who can produce a scroll and then read in this fashion." And with this emotion, this startling thought, I awoke from the dream.

Afterwards I did elaborate research to find those texts, and I found specific texts on the Dzogchen togel practice. This is an example of the fact that a relationship between master and disciple always exists regardless of questions of time and distance. My master was far, far away in Tibet; I was living in Europe.

These are some of the possibilities that can occur within dreams as one's practice progresses. If you fall asleep with the presence of the "A" you may find yourself waking in the morning with it still present. You can then assume that you have spent the entire night in practice. As the night is rather long, and you have nothing else to do but sleep, it is very important to utilize the time. Night can become, for a practitioner, even more important than the practice of the day.

The final goal of dream practice is that dreams become awareness and at that ultimate point dreams actually cease. You use your practice so that your dreams influence daily life. This is the principal practice of the nighttime.

Notes To Chapter Two

1. . Bardo: literally, "intermediate state". There are six bardos:

The **first** is the bardo of the ordinary waking state (Tibetan, *kye ne bardo*). It is the experience of the awake and conscious reality as we know it.

The **second** is the bardo of the dream state (Tibetan, *milam bardo*). It is the experience of dream time while sleeping.

The **third**, the meditation bardo (Tibetan, *samten bardo*), includes all experience of meditation, from novice meditation to total realization.

The **fourth**, the bardo of the dying process (Tibetan, *chilkai bardo*), is the process during which the five elements of which our body is constituted (space, air, water, fire, earth) dissolve into one another. According to the *Tibetan Book of the Dead*, first the element of earth, which is yellow in color, dissolves into the water element. The dying person simultaneously sees yellow and feels weak and unable to stand, as though all of his or her surroundings were falling apart.

Secondly the element of water dissolves into the element fire. Inwardly the dying person sees white and outwardly feels as though his or her surroundings were flooded with water. At this point the face and throat feel dry and great thirst arises. Thirdly, the element of fire dissolves into the air element. Inwardly the dying person sees red while outwardly his or her surroundings feel hot. The person may feel a burning sensation as the body's heat dissolves. Fourthly, the element of air dissolves into the element of space or ether. The dying person inwardly sees green and outwardly experiences the surroundings as though they were being destroyed by a ferocious wind and loud thunder. At the fifth stage, the ether dissolves into consciousness, phenomena become dark, and momentarily consciousness is lost, as in a faint. The **fifth** bardo, (Tibetan, *chonyid bardo*), the bardo of reality, entails the arising of apparitions and hallucination-like experience as a consequence of one's karmic propensities. Using meditative awareness the individual has an opportunity to recognize these images in their illusory, true nature. These hallucinatory visions are similar in nature to the images in dreams.

Hence the capacity for lucid dreaming may be useful for understanding them as illusion. According to the Tibetan Book of the Dead, an enlightenment experience is possible if one can maintain the view that the frightening experiences are nothing more than manifestations of one's mind.

The **sixth bardo**, (Tibetan, *sipa bardo*), the bardo of the search for rebirth in samsara, corresponds to the Tibetan Buddhist view of reincarnation. The sipa bardo details the process whereby an individual will be reborn in one of six realms (the god realm, demi-god realm, human realm, animal realm, hungry-ghost realm, and the hell realm), depending on karma. In an interesting parallel to psychoanalytic theory, the Tibetan Buddhist tradition asserts that the individual, while still in a mental body, will be sexually attracted to the parent of the opposite sex, and have an aversion to the parent of the same sex. In fact, according to Tibetan Buddhist philosophy, all that the disincarnate being sees are the sexual organs of the parents-to-be. This is perhaps the most basic foundation of what we call the Oedipus complex.

2. . Tantra: literally, "continuation", in the sense that although all phenomena are void, nevertheless phenomena continue to manifest. All tantric methods work with the principle of transforming deluded thought to pure perception. See *Crystal and the Way of Light*, p. 30. The word *tantra* also refers to the texts within which these methods are described.
3. . Mother Light: In Dzogchen, one practices dream yoga or the practice of the Clear Light at the moment of falling asleep and before the arising of the dream state. The experience of Clear Light is known as the "son" experience. If, through correct meditative practice or contemplation, the Clear Light has been clearly recognized during life, then at death the practitioner once more recognizes and integrates with the "mother" Clear Light. This is known as the joining of the "son" and the "mother". The mother Clear Light is the natural, innate luminosity as it appears in its fullest expression in the after-death state. See John Reynolds, *Self-Liberation Through Seeing with Naked Awareness* (Barrytown, N.Y.: Station Hill Press, 1989), p. 153, note 63.
4. . Introduction to natural mind: In the various methods of introducing one's natural mind, the master is assisting the student in developing awareness, also called rigpa or the intrinsic awareness of one's natural state, referring to pure presence.
5. . Lhundrup: literally, "self-perfection." This refers to one's state or existence which is perfect from the beginning, and all that manifests. These manifestations or reflections arise spontaneously, and are complete within themselves. *Lhundrup* specifically refers to the innate clarity of the self-perfected state.
6. . Body of Light: Tibetan, *ja-lus*. Also known as the "rainbow body." Certain realized beings (practitioners of Longde and Managede levels of Dzogchen) achieve the transformation of

their ordinary bodies into a Body of Light at the time of death. In this process the physical body dissolves into its natural state, which is that of Clear Light. As the elements of the body are purified, they transform from their gross manifestation (body, flesh, bone, etc.) into their pure essence as the five colors: blue, green, white, red, and golden yellow. As the body dissolves into these five colors a rainbow is formed and all that remains of the physical body are fingernails and hair. Twentieth-century practitioners of Dzogchen who have attained the Body of Light include the teachers and family members of Namkhai Norbu Rinpoche—for example, his uncle Urgyen Danzin (Togden), his two teachers Changchub Dorje and Ayu Khandro, and Changchub Dorje’s master, Nyala Pema Dendul.

7. Solar and lunar channels: Within the esoteric tsa–lung treatises found in Anu–Yoga texts of Tibetan Buddhism, there are elaborate explanations of the channels (Tibetan *tsa*) in which internal winds travel. The solar and lunar channels are considered to be located on either side of the central channel (*uma*), which parallels the spinal cord. These solar and lunar channels represent masculine and feminine energy. Their colors—red and white—as well as their placement on the right and left side differ amongst various Tantras.
 8. Nine–fold purification breathing: Tibetan, *lungro salwa*: A breath exercise performed before a session of meditation (*tun*), or before practicing Yantra Yoga. In these exercises one visualizes oneself inhaling purified air and exhaling negativities and impurities. It is used as a practice preliminary to meditation to balance the energy and settle the mind.
 9. The eight movements: Tibetan, *lung sang*: Yogic exercises to purify the prana or breath. The eight movements are described within the Yantra Yoga text, “The Unification of the Solar and Lunar” (Tibetan, *Trulkor Nyida Khajor*), written in the eighth century by the master Vairocana. See Namkhai Norbu, *Yantra Yoga*, edited by Oliver Leick (Gleisdorf: Edition Tsaparang, 1988), p.33.
 10. Agar 35 and Vimala: Tibetan herbal medicines. Agar 35 is made of thirty–five natural ingredients; both Agar 35 and Vimala are taken for insomnia and to balance “lung”, a disordered wind condition. These preparations can be purchased through the Tibetan Medical and Astrological Institute, Khara Danda Road, Dharamsala, Dist. Kangra, H.P. 176215, India.
 11. Three humors: *lung* (air or wind), *dripa* (bile), and *bad–kan* (phlegm). The correct balance of these three humors is considered essential for health. An imbalance will lead to one of the myriad diseases to which humans are prone.
 12. Namkhai Norbu, *On Birth and Life: A Treatise on Tibetan Medicine* (Arcidosso: Shang–Shung Editzioni, 1983).
 13. Concentration on the six syllables and their purification: The six syllables—A, Aaah, Ha, Sha, Sa, Ma—are each symbolic of a realm of existence, including those of the gods, demigods, humans, animals, hungry ghosts, and hell beings. Karmic tendencies to be reborn in one of these samsaric realms, which originate through improper actions, must be purified. Meditation on the six syllables unites *lung* (prana) and mind concentration in order to purify these tendencies. The specific practice of concentration on the syllables employs visualization and mantra directed at specific points of the body where these propensities are believed to concentrate.
 14. Vajrayogini: A meditational deity in sambhogakaya form, representing the feminine aspect of primordial wisdom.
 15. Guru yoga: Unification with the mind of the guru (one’s master teacher), who is seen as a manifestation of the minds of all enlightened beings. The mind of the guru is considered the same as one’s intrinsic awareness. Through the practice of guru yoga one receives blessings from the guru, thus enabling one to rest in the primordial state. There are elaborate and simple forms of guru yoga. In Tantra, one finds a more elaborate style, whereas in Dzogchen a simpler version may be practiced.
- One of the forms of guru yoga taught most frequently by Namkhai Norbu Rinpoche employs

a white



a Tibetan “A” The “A” is visualized in the center of one’s body as the union of all one’s masters. By sounding “Aaa..h” and feeling the blessings of the teachers, one may enter into a state of union with their enlightened awareness.

16. Vajradhara: A male meditational deity, the form through which Shakyamuni Buddha reveals the teachings of secret mantra.
17. Longde: One of the three series of Dzogchen teachings. The three series are: “Managede”, or essential series, the “Longde”, or the series of space, and the “Semde”, the series of mind. These series of Dzogchen instruction ultimately have the same goal, that of bringing the practitioner into absolute contemplation. The Longde series works specifically with symbolic introduction and is widely known for practices that bring one to contemplation through assuming special positions of the body and holding pressure points. See Norbu, *The Crystal and the Way of Light*, p. 80.
18. Dark Retreat, also called *Yangtik*. A highly advanced Dzogchen meditation technique practiced in complete darkness. Through the Yangtik practice, an initiate who is already capable of maintaining contemplation may proceed swiftly to total realization.
19. Changchub Dorje: The principal master of Namkhai Norbu Rinpoche. Changchub Dorje was a tertön and master of Dzogchen. He was the master whom Namkhai Norbu Rinpoche credits as having truly introduced him to the state of Dzogchen. He also gave Namkhai Norbu Rinpoche transmission on Semde, Longde, and Managede. Though an extraordinary master, Changchub Dorje had a simple lifestyle, dressing in the garb of an ordinary country person. At Nyalagar, in Derge, Eastern Tibet, he directed a small community of Dzogchen practitioners. In addition to being a lama, he was an adept physician. People would come from distant places to receive both Dharma teachings and medical consultations. Namkhai Norbu Rinpoche acted as a scribe and secretary for this master and assisted him in his medical consultations. At the end of his life Changchub Dorje attained the Rainbow Body of Light. See *The Crystal and the Way of Light*, p. 108.
20. Trechod: Literally “cutting through”, this term refers to the experience of total relaxation. Trechod is the method of maintaining one’s state of rigpa throughout all situations. Trechod is the ability to cut through discursive and dualistic thought at any moment, bringing oneself to pure presence.
21. Togel: “Surpassing the uppermost” or “leaping over.” After perfectly succeeding with one’s practice of *trechod*, one practices togel. Togel is useless without a perfected practice of trechod and is hence secret until that time. Togel is considered the fastest of methods for achieving total realization. Togel practice brings about the union of vision and emptiness. One continues to develop meditative contemplation through vision until the Body of Light is manifest. See *Crystal and the Way of Light*, p. 101 and John Reynolds, *Self-Liberation Through Seeing With Naked Awareness*, p. 136, note 33.
22. Jigme Lingpa (1729–1798): A reincarnation of Vimalamitra, Jigme Lingpa was a great Nyingmapa Dzogchen Master from East Tibet. He was a great scholar and compiled and edited the *Longchen Nyingthig*, the compiled teachings of Longchenpa. Jigme Lingpa also wrote extensively on Tibetan medicine and Tibetan history, and worked for the development of the non-sectarian “Rimed” school of Tibetan Buddhism before achieving the Body of Light.
23. The one-hundred-syllable mantra of Vajrasattva: One purifies negative karma and obscurations through recitation of this mantra, one of the most renowned within Tibetan

Buddhism.

3 THE PILGRIMAGE TO MARATIKA

In 1984, Norbu Rinpoche traveled to northern Nepal on a pilgrimage to the monastery of Tolu, and to the cave of Maratika¹ where the great Mahasiddha² Padmasambhava³ did a retreat with his consort Mandarava.⁴ The following is an account of a series of remarkable dreams he had on this trip, beginning with a dream he had two days after reaching the monastery.

The location of the dream was Tolu Monastery itself. If you dream about a place or a thing where you have been in the past, this usually reflects a repetition through karmic trace; if you dream of a place or a situation where you are not, this reflects a desire or a wish. On the other hand, if you dream of the place you actually are, this is often significant. Thus I was clued that this might be an important dream.

In this dream I was at the cave of Tolu, and even the people who had actually accompanied me on the trip were there. As I was teaching my students, we were joined by my uncle. I should tell you that this man who joined us was not only my uncle, he was also one of my principal teachers, and an extraordinary practitioner and tertön.⁵

I will tell you a short story which will illustrate the remarkable quality of my uncle's life.

When I was a child I was living near a monastery. At the time I am recalling, a young horse had died. Vultures had eaten the horse, but even after they had finished, one of the vultures remained.

My uncle asked two of the monks to go and fetch this vulture.

Upon their return to the monastery with the vulture, the monks announced that the bird had been wounded. There was a piece of iron lodged in its shoulder. One of the monks attempted to pull it out, but the vulture became quite agitated, and my uncle instructed him to stop and to put the vulture in an enclosed garden area. I remember thinking how strange it was that the vulture would remain so silent and passive while this was occurring. In fact the whole situation was becoming more and more unusual.

The next day my uncle instructed me to feed the vulture some milk. When I arrived at the garden, which was semicircular in shape, with a wooden floor and a covering over it, the vulture was sitting immobile. I placed the milk before it. Moving its head slightly it began to drink. It drank up all of the milk I had offered, and when it had finished began to run, and as it did so it moved its wings slightly. Insofar as the area was quite long it was able to run a long distance. It ran clear to the end of the garden, and then half way back; then it stopped and the metal piece, an iron rod, dropped from its wing. The very moment the iron piece fell out, the vulture flew away, heading due East in the direction of a large mountain called Sitang. The famous Dzogchen Monastery⁶ is behind that mountain. It was also on that mountain that my uncle normally lived in a cave.

We examined the iron that had fallen from the vulture's wing. It was quite long. The top that had been embedded in the wing was triangular. I can still remember the beautiful sound that the iron piece made when it fell from the wing. This event was merely one of the oddities that frequently occurred around my uncle.

So, on that occasion at Tolu, my uncle manifested within my dream. In the dream he was no older than fourteen or fifteen years old. He said to me that he was very pleased that I was giving such a

beautiful teaching, and that it was useful to everyone. I asked him if he had really been listening. He replied that he had heard every word. In the dream I had been teaching the Thik Sum Nedek,⁷ the famous three final statements of Garab Dorje.⁸ Then my uncle asked me to explain my *gomter*⁹ about the Namkha.¹⁰ I replied to him that my dream about the Namkha hadn't been a gomter.

Allow me to explain what I was referring to. A few years ago, I was in New York City. I was giving a seminar there about the function of elements and energy, as well as about Tibetan history. At this seminar I gave an explanation of the elements and their functioning according to the ancient Bonpo.¹² I was a bit nervous about sleeping. With a concern as to what would happen now, I went to bed, but for quite awhile I couldn't sleep. Finally, when I did sleep, I found myself in a kind of dream, in which I was speaking with someone. I actually don't know if I was speaking with someone else, or carrying on a conversation with myself.

The voice instructed me to relax, first the breathing, and then the body, until I found myself in the relaxed state of Samaya.¹³ I thought to myself that I had never heard of this relaxed state of Samaya. Nevertheless, I tried again and again to relax, and to put myself into that state. Each time, largely due to my discomfort with the sleeping conditions at Tolu, I would wake up.

Indeed, I awoke at least two or three times in the course of trying to get into the state of relaxation. On one of these occasions I received instructions within the dream to loosen the mountaineering leggings that, due to exhaustion, I had failed to remove before falling asleep. When I awoke remembering the instructions, I untied them, and fell asleep once again, slowly relaxing into the state of Samaya. "It's not perfect yet," the voice said, "we have to have fresher, easier breathing." In order to comply I opened the tent to let in some fresh air, even though it was very cold and a fierce wind was blowing. Once again I returned to sleep and entered Samaya. I was again thinking that this Samaya wasn't that terrific, not really a state of contemplation.¹⁴

The voice returned, and said "Now that you've done that, you have to get to the state of Dharmadhatu."¹⁵ As instructed, I relaxed, and directed myself towards this state of Dharmadhatu. Meanwhile, I was awakened by a cough from a nearby tent.

I went back to sleep yet another time, and directed myself to go through the successive levels of relaxation. Again and again I awoke for one reason or another, and had to start from the beginning. Then suddenly the voice was saying, "We're here, this is the state of Dharmadhatu," which seemed to me to be the state of contemplation.

The voice now instructed me to direct myself to another state.

As I did this, there began to appear a kind of tige¹⁶ similar to one which had appeared in a previous dream at Tolu cave. I also saw some writing, and then I woke up once again... I had to start at the beginning, relaxing through the different stages until the tige reappeared.

What I had seen in the tige was the title of a text. This time after the title there appeared a text itself, just as if I were looking at a movie screen. One after another, an entire series of meditation practices appeared. I was reading page after page, but if at any point I couldn't read one, I would only need to think to myself that this wasn't clear, and the unclear portion would return. It would repeat itself as if I had some sort of telecommand. In this manner I read the whole text from beginning to end at least three or four times. Due to interruptions I awoke frequently. But each time I would go back to sleep, and begin with Samaya and all the rest, and then the text would go on.

Suddenly the voice said, “You are now in the next state.” What distinguished this state from the previous one was that now the few words which had not been completely clear appeared to occupy all of space. Without any focusing or staring on my part, they just appeared. Thus I went on reading, and it continued without interruption until almost morning.

At this point I coughed intensely and awoke. The words were still there even with my eyes open. It wasn't a dream. I saw them for a short time, and then they disappeared. I thought that perhaps this was just the influence of the dream. Curious, I continued to look into the sky. The sky was very clear, and there was no more vision.

I remembered one time when I was doing a retreat in Norway. I was in the middle of a practice when the same thing happened. I told some people about my experience at that time. Previously I had read about *Snang-ba-yi-ger-shar*¹⁷ in the biographies of some accomplished teachers. In Norway I recall having thought that I had not previously understood what the phrase “Snang-ba-yi-ger-shar” meant. Anyway, I fell asleep once again, and relaxed through the successive stages. In the dream, while being instructed to enter the various states of relaxation I suddenly had a thought about an even further state—something entitled “Bya-grub-yeshe,” the furthest state of wisdom. The voice answered my thought saying, “It will come when all is completed.” Then morning came. I was truly exhausted. Everyone else was still pleasantly asleep. That is the story of the twenty-fifth day.

The next day we had a long climb. That evening, when I fell asleep, it all happened again. Again I read the text through several times, and particularly the areas where the letters hadn't been sharp. At a certain point I suddenly woke up. I found my head covered with a blanket.

There had been so much wind that I must have been protecting myself. Uncovering my head, I opened my eyes, and immediately looked into the sky. There, very briefly, were the letters again.

I'd like to tell you now about a dream I had on the first night that we arrived at Maratika cave.

Before going to bed I thought to myself that tomorrow would be a good day to begin a long life meditation practice that I had brought along. I still hadn't entirely developed a particular method for doing this practice, but I had carried the practice text along with me because I had had the idea that Maratika would be a nice place to practice it.

That night I dreamed that I was preparing to do the practice in a big cave. I was explaining how the practice would be done, and was giving an initiation which would enable the students to do the practice themselves. Normally, in our tradition, in order to do a long life practice, one needs a long life initiation.

Those of you who know me know that I am not the type who typically does elaborate formal initiations,¹⁸ but I have always said that it is necessary to do some kind of initiation for empowering. In my dream I had the idea that I would first give a careful explanation of the meaning of the initiation. When the people had understood it well, I would give empowerment with the mantra. After that, we would do the practice together; that would constitute the voice transmission.

So, in my dream I was explaining each point of what the initiation was, starting with the initiation of the body. At that moment I noticed that there was a person near to me giving me something. I turned to him, and saw that he was not a normal human being. Of this I was certain, because the first thing I observed while looking at him was that the lower part of his body was that of a serpent. I thought that perhaps this was Rahula,¹⁹ one of the guardians, but when I looked at his face this seemed

unlikely. I then thought that perhaps it was, or represented, someone that I knew. I looked again—his face was dragon-like in appearance. His body was white. Suddenly he placed something into my hand.

If you have taken an initiation, you know that there is usually someone assisting the teacher by giving him things. At the appropriate point in the ceremony, the assistant offers the correct object. In my dream the dragon-like being was giving me a round object with which I was about to authenticate the initiation of the body that I had just given.

I took the round object into my hand. It was a mirror, but on the rim surrounding the mirror were what seemed to be twelve smaller mirrors. Around them all was a kind of rainbow. And around this perimeter were peacock feathers. It was very beautiful. As I took it into my hand I knew that this was the object with which I could give the initiation of the body.

Normally in an initiation, the mirror represents the mind, the aspect of understanding.

Immediately in the dream an explanation came to me: “The body seems to be substantial, but inherently it is void. The symbol of this is the reflection that appears to be our form in the mirror.” Conveying this explanation, I used the mirror in my dream to give the initiation of the body. In my dream I touched the mirror to the heads of each of the people receiving initiation. As each went past I also said a mantra.²⁰

I next began to explain the initiation of the voice. At this very moment I sensed the presence of another being on my left. This being also offered an object for authentication. The object was a mala²¹ made of deeply colored red rubies shaped into a figure eight. I looked carefully at the being who was offering the mala. It had a dark red body, and only one eye. I thought again that this was no ordinary human being, perhaps it was Ekajati.²² On the other hand it didn't seem quite like Ekajati, and in her hands were these strange objects. In any case, just after she gave me the mala, I found that I was again giving an explanation.

“This mala represents the continual utterance of the mantra.” Not only did I explain the function of mantra, but I also gave a very unusual explanation about this form of mantra which is presented in the form of a figure eight. It was all quite strange because the explanation had nothing to do with the particular long life practice (*Cedrub Gondus*) of Nyala Pema Dendul²³ with which I had arrived.

The next day, after dreaming about another long life practice featuring the dakini Mandarava, I discovered that there is really a Yantik practice, which in fact includes this visualization.

Meanwhile the Ekajati figure had placed another object in my hand, this one a symbol for empowering the initiation of mind. The object resembled a swastika, but at the top there were tridents. It was the center which was the swastika. It was constructed of a transparent, precious blue stone.

I then explained the meaning of the transmission of mind. Afterwards, I put this object at the heart of each person in turn. At the same time I was pronouncing the mantra related to initiation of mind. After I placed the object at the first person's heart, I saw that it left an impression, and that the impression of the object was turning, with a small sound. It seemed very alive. When I initiated the next person, the same thing happened. When I was finally finished I saw that all the swastika impressions were still turning. That was how I conducted the initiation, and then I awoke. The next day I decided to do a retreat inside the cave. Many of the students who accompanied me on this

pilgrimage joined me to do the practice of Pema Dendul in the cave of Mandarava.

The next day I had yet another special dream. Although many of our people had not actually arrived yet, I dreamed that we were all together in the cavern. We had already done a practice together, and I was giving teachings. In the dream it seemed as if the dream of the previous night had been recreated exactly. At my left there was the figure that was reddish-brown with one eye.

Once again she was holding many objects in her hand; this time she gave me a bead of crystal.

It was now clear that this being was assisting me as I gave instruction. I took the crystal into my hand, and looked at it. At the center of the crystal I saw a word. As soon as I saw that special word, I knew that this being was indeed Ekajati. I also had a very clear dream vision of the guardian Ekajati who advised me, saying: “This is the time to open your mind treasure of life’s circle of Vajra, the dakini practice for obtaining long life.”

Looking inside the small crystal ball, I could see light rays radiating in all directions from the word, but they did not radiate outside the ball. As I took the ball, I asked, “What is this thing?”

She said, “This is ‘Ta-te.’ You have to do Ta-te.” “I don’t understand,” I replied. The moment I said that, it seemed as if the crystal disappeared inside me. I looked around to see Ekajati, but she too had disappeared.

Upon awakening, my first thought was “Ta-te,” and what it could mean. It was still far from dawn, I had a lot of time, so I continued to concentrate on the word “Ta-te”. This is not a familiar word. “Ta” means pure, “te” means to confront, or sometimes it means to list. In my half-awake state I was thinking of this word, when it came to me that what was required was that I write down the text, and later write it again without referring to the first version in order to test its authenticity. It was now perfectly clear what must be done.

After washing myself, I took a paper and pen, and went out onto a rock. Then, without a plan, I wrote whatever came to my mind. I wrote several pages, and what emerged was a ceremony of Ekajati. This was the beginning. Afterwards I went to have breakfast. During breakfast I asked one of my students to fetch me a notebook. When I had finished breakfast she still had not returned, so I took another notebook to a specific place where I had been on the first day, a power location of Maratika, and sat down.

I had almost begun when the student arrived with a black notebook and a red pen. With these I started writing. It was as if I was starting off a letter. I headed it Maratika, along with the hour and the day. It was 9:15 in the morning. While I was writing, various people from my group came over. Some of them didn’t know what I was doing. As they came over to greet me I tried to get rid of them.

Despite interruptions, I finished writing at 12:15. When I had finished I had used up the last page, right up to the last line of the notebook. It almost seemed as if it had been deliberately planned. I reflected to myself that this was a good sign.

Returning to our campsite, I gave the text to two students to hold for several days. I was thinking that after a few days I would write it out again. That would be the “Ta-te,” the second version to be compared with the first in order to confirm its authenticity. This would be proof that the text was genuine, and not merely my intellect at play.

Two days passed. On the third day, I had a dream indicating that the time had come to write and make some clarifications. After completing morning practice I again sat down to write, and continued until lunchtime. The second time I wrote it out very calmly in an easy script. This time it took me two and one-half hours. I then asked that the original be returned, and that my older sister compare the two versions. There was virtually no difference, only two or three grammatical corrections.

This is the story of the origin of that practice text, a practice for developing a long and firm life. The text includes mantras, exercises for breathing and control of one's energy, as well as visualization. There are also instructions pertaining to chakras and channels. In the Tibetan tradition this type of practice is often sealed, meaning that it has to be kept secret for many, many years. When you are keeping such a thing secret you are not permitted even to say that you are keeping something secret. In this case it has not been necessary. There has been no indication that this should be sealed. I have no secret to keep; therefore, I have talked about it. I also talked about it at Maratika, and have done transmission of the mantras.

Notes To Chapter Three

1. Mandarava's Cave at Maratika: In Northern Nepal, where Norbu Rinpoche did a retreat in 1984, there are two sacred caves. The larger one is associated with Padmasambhava, and the smaller one with Mandarava. In the seventh century, Mandarava—together with Guru Padmasambhava—practiced and attained immortality in this cave, which has consequently become known as the Cave of Long Life.
2. Mahasiddha: Sanskrit, literally "Great Adept". *Maha* means great, while *siddha* is one who has attained siddhi—psychic and spiritual powers. In Tibetan Buddhism there is the example of the Eighty-four Mahasiddhas who were men and women with supernatural powers. These tantric practitioners lived in India and Nepal during the eighth century.
3. Guru Padmasambhava: Sanskrit, from *padma* (lotus) and *sambhava* (born). An Indian Buddhist master of Tantra and Dzogchen from Oddiyana. He is known as the "lotus born" because of his miraculous birth. Guru Padmasambhava is said to have spontaneously manifested as an eight-year-old boy sitting on a lotus flower in the middle of a lake at Oddiyana. He brought Buddhism to Tibet from India in the eighth century. With his extraordinary powers, Guru Padmasambhava overcame obstacles that had prevented Buddhism from taking root in Tibetan soil.
4. Mandarava: This Indian princess from Mandi was one of the principal consorts of Padmasambhava. She left the royal life in order to practice the Dharma. She is most renowned for mastering the long life practice with Padmasambhava. She is invoked in certain Tantric rituals which aim to extend life.
5. Terton: One who discovers terma, or Dharma texts that were hidden with the purpose of being discovered at a later date. Termas are believed to be hidden in trees, lakes, the earth, and even the sky.
6. Dzogchen Monastery: In the seventeenth century, in Kham (East Tibet) the Dzogchen Monastery was founded by the first Dzogchen Rinpoche, Pema Rigzin. This became the largest Nyingma monastery. The monastery was considered one of the twenty-five great pilgrimage places in East Tibet. Close by the monastery is a sacred cave of Padmasambhava and three sacred lakes. Many famous scholars of all four schools of Tibetan Buddhism and from the Bon tradition studied at Dzogchen Monastery. These include Patrul Rinpoche and Mipham. In 1959 Dzogchen Monastery was destroyed by the Chinese. The monastery is currently being rebuilt in Mysore, South India.

7. Thik Sum Nedek: The Three Statements of Garab Dorje. This text summarizes Dzogchen teachings in three essential points:
 - i. *The direct introduction* of the primordial state from teacher to student.
 - ii. The practitioner *does not remain in doubt* in reference to what the primordial state is.
 - iii. The practitioner *continues in the state* of primordial awareness until total realization.
8. Garab Dorje: According to traditional Nyingmapa sources, Garab Dorje lived 166 years after the *parinirvana* of the Buddha, dated in Tibetan sources as 881 B.C. Western scholars say it occurred 200 years later. It is said that Garab Dorje was immaculately conceived by the nun–princess daughter of a minor king of Oddiyana. This nun had been practicing on an island in the middle of a lake when she had a dream. She dreamt of a handsome, white man holding a crystal vase with mantras engraved on it. This man bestowed initiation on the nun, and then dissolving into light he entered her body and impregnated her. Sometime after this dream she gave birth to Garab Dorje. According to Nyingmapa sources, Garab Dorje was the first human Dzogchen master. In his previous life in another dimension, Garab Dorje had received Dzogchen transmission directly from the sambhogakaya manifestation of Vajrasattva. After being born in the human realm, Garab Dorje immediately remembered these Dzogchen teachings and instructed a class of beings known as dakinis in the sacred land of Oddiyana. He also had human disciples, one of whom was Manjushrimita, who organized his Garab Dorje teachings on Semde, Longde, and Managede. For further information on Garab Dorje see John Reynold’s *The Golden Letters*, Station Hill Press, forthcoming.
9. Gomter: “mind terma”, a terma discovered in the mind stream of a tertön (one who discovers terma).
10. Namkha: A method of practice to balance one’s bodily elements. A namkha is made in accordance with one’s astrological birth chart. It is formed by two pieces of wood and five colors of string, each representing a different element: white, metal; green, wood/air; red, fire; yellow, earth; and blue, water. The colored string is wrapped around the wood in a pattern that functions to harmonize one’s elements. The namkhas are empowered by a master, and the practitioner is given meditation instruction on a ceremony, which, if practiced together with the namkha, can balance one’s elements.
11. Bonpo: A practitioner of the Bon religion. Bon is the ancient and indigenous religion of Tibet, whose origins far predate the advent of Buddhism in Tibet. According to Lopön Tenzin Namdak, the Bon religion in Tibet dates as far back as 18,000 B.C.E. Bon is divided into two categories: Old Bon and New or “Yung–drung” Bon. Old Bon was characterized by animistic and shamanistic practices, whereas Yung–drung Bon shares many similarities with Buddhism, which came to Tibet in the eighth century A.D. from India. According to Namkhai Norbu Rinpoche and Lopön Tenzin Namdak, Dzogchen is part of the ancient tradition of Bon, and was practiced in Tibet long before the arrival of Buddhism.
12. Twenty–fifth day: The twenty–fifth day of the lunar month (Tibetan calendar), when the moon is waning, is known as Dakini Day. Dakini Day is associated with enlightened feminine energy. Therefore, many Tibetan lamas do practices associated with feminine energy at this time. Dakini Day is an auspicious time to do Ghana Puja (Tantric Feast Offering).
13. Samaya: Although the term samaya is often translated as “commitment”, and frequently pertains to the commitment to maintain a meditation practice or vow in a pure way, the dreams’ meaning of this term is idiosyncratic. In Norbu Rinpoche’s dream, the terms *Samaya* and *Dharmadhatu* refer to successively deepening levels of relaxation.
14. Contemplation: The primary practice of Dzogchen in which one remains continually in a state of self–liberation. In this state one is beyond all concepts of the ordinary dualistic mind, yet one is fully capable of using the intellect and rational mind. Contemplation does not involve trying to find experiences of calmness or clarity, nor does it involve avoiding

- distractions. In contemplation, when a thought arises it is neither suppressed nor followed, but is spontaneously self-liberated and dissolves. It is this practice of liberating all that arises which a Dzogchen master introduces when he gives explanations on the nature of mind.
15. Dharmadhatu: This term normally refers to the ultimate ground of being, and the dimension of reality as it is. However, in this dream it refers specifically to the deepest level of relaxation.
 16. Tigle: There are different definitions of tige. On one level it is defined as something without any corners or angles, a circle or perfect sphere, like the Sanskrit *bindu* (drop), for example. Tige is also defined as the dimension inside a sphere. *Tige Chenbo* (Great Sphere), meaning “that which embraces everything”, is another term for Dzogchen. Tige is also known as “the essence,” as in *nying thik*, “essence of mind.” In another definition, tige is semen in men, and vaginal fluid in women, which are physical vehicles for carrying energy. In terms of Yantra Yoga, tige is defined as the most essential form of the body’s subtle energy, also known as Kundalini in Sanskrit. Tiges are also tiny spheres of rainbow light that may arise with the beginnings of vision in togel practice.
 17. Snang-ba-gi-ger-shar: The spontaneous arising of letters.
 18. Initiation: Initiation, transmission, and empowerment of body, speech, and mind. Human existence is made up of body, speech and mind. First, there is the dimension of “body,” which is the dynamic interrelationship between one’s body and the physical environment. There are two different Tibetan terms for “body.” *Lu* refers to the gross body of an ordinary human being, whereas *ku* refers to the sublime body of an enlightened being. Secondly, there is the dimension of our energy known as “speech”, which is represented by speech, breath, and psychic energy. Ordinary speech is known as *ngag*, whereas enlightened speech is *sung*. In the dimension of mind or mental activity there is *gid*, ordinary mind, and *thuk*, enlightened mind. Through transmission (*gyudpa*) from the master to the disciple, there occurs a potentiation which is communicated on the three levels: material, energetic, and mental. Dzogchen transmission by the master is for the purpose of revealing the true nature of the individual. Empowerment or *wang* is a ritual ceremony in which this transmission takes place. Empowerment, especially within Tantric Buddhism, may be extremely elaborate, utilizing symbolic instruments and ceremonies. In Dzogchen, the method of direct introduction, which may be elaborate or non-elaborate, is used to introduce one to the nature of one’s mind. For information on direct introduction see John Reynolds, *The Golden Letters*, Station Hill Press, forthcoming.
 19. Rahula: A principal guardian of the Dzogchen teachings. Rahula manifests in a terrifying and ferocious form. He has extreme power and, according to Namkhai Norbu Rinpoche, if not respected can cause considerable harm.
 20. Mantra: Literally, “mind protector.” Mantra is the sounding of sacred syllables. Different mantras have different functions: some are used to stir up and activate one’s energy while others create a calming and pacifying effect. Ultimately the goal of mantra is to help the practitioner to transcend dualistic thought. Many mantras are associated with particular deities, and within Tantric ceremony they are repeated until one has attained the same enlightened qualities as the deity.
 21. Mala: In the Buddhist tradition a mala or rosary is a string of 108 beads used for counting mantra.
 22. Ekajati: Ekajati is the principal guardian of the Dzogchen teachings. Enlightened from the very beginning, Ekajati is a direct emanation (*trulpa*) of primordial wisdom, Samantabhadri, who is the feminine aspect of the primordial Buddha Samantabhadra. As the primordially enlightened one, Samantabhadri Ekajati has all-knowing wisdom regarding the 84 million teachings of Dzogchen. Ekajati visibly manifests in a particularly wrathful form in order to subjugate the very powerful and potentially destructive class of beings called Mamos.

“Ekajati” means “one-eye”, which is symbolic of wisdom. What is unique about her physical form is that it is one-eyed, one-toothed, and one-breasted. These features symbolize non-dual awareness. As chief protectress of the Dzogchen teachings, she may make contact with a tertön or Dzogchen master when the time is ripe to reveal a certain teaching or terma. Norbu Rinpoche received a sadhana from Ekajati as part of this gomter of the Mandarava practice. The sadhana is an invocation, within which the practitioner asks that Mandarava clear all obstacles to total realization and provide protection on the path.

23. *Cedrub Gondus*: “The Union of Primordial Essences”, the long life practice Norbu Rinpoche brought to Maratika. This long life practice was a terma of the root master of Changchub Dorje, Nyala Pema Dendul (1816–1872). The practice was originally transmitted directly from Buddha Amitayus to Guru Padmasambhava. Together as consorts, in the sacred cave of Maratika in North Nepal, Dakini Mandarava and Guru Padmasambhava practiced and mastered the Union of Primordial Essences, thus attaining immortality. In the eighth century, for the benefit of future generations, Guru Padmasambhava wrote out the practice and placed it as a hidden treasure within a rock in East Tibet. Approximately one thousand years later, in the nineteenth century, Nyala Pema Dendul rediscovered this “hidden treasure” or terma. For several years he practiced this long life terma intensively. At his life’s end he attained the rainbow body of light. Nyala Pema Dendul transmitted the practice to Changchub Dorje and Ayu Khandro, who both practiced it and subsequently lived unusually long lives—137 years and 116 years respectively. They also attained the body of light. Namkhai Norbu Rinpoche received transmission of this terma from both Changchub Dorje and Ayu Khandro, and presently gives transmission on the practice for the benefit of his students.

4 AN INTERVIEW WITH NORBU RINPOCHE

Michael: I would like to ask you a few questions about dreams. First of all, what is the history of the dream practice that you do?

Norbu: What do you mean “history”?

M: When and by whom was the first dream practice taught? Who was famous for teaching it?

N: It is not easy to answer this, because dream teachings come from different kinds of tantra teachings, particularly the Mahamaya Tantra, but also from Dzogchen teachings.

M: When was the Mahamaya Tantra written?

N: Beyond time; you cannot say when it was written.

M: Was there any particular author?

N: (laughing) There is no author of tantric teachings. Maybe a mahasiddha transmitted this teaching and introduced it from Odiyanna¹ in India. After all, Saraha introduced the Guyasamaja Tantra, and Tilopa introduced the Chakrasambhava Tantra. It is possible that something like that can be said to be the history of the transmission of a tantra, but there is no original history of the tantras.

M: Rinpoche, sometimes you have taught dream practices where one visualizes a white syllable “A”² at the heart, but at other times you have taught that one should visualize an “A” at the throat. What are the different conditions in which one should visualize the “A” at one’s heart or throat?

N: The visualization of “A” at throat is particularly for remembering dreams. The visualization of “A” at the throat has the function of controlling energy and clarity. When you visualize a white “A” at the heart, you are working with the principle of natural light; that is another method.

M: Why do we dream?

N: Well, sometimes dreaming is due to bhakshas, the impressions of the day. These include our anxieties, attitudes, and preoccupations. There is also another type of dream which arises from our clarity. This type of dream is dependent on the dreamer’s circumstances and clarity.

M: How do we distinguish between dreams that arise from our clarity and dreams that arise from our daily impressions and bhakshas?

N: If we have had an exhausting day, and all we can do is eat and fell into a heavy sleep, it is not likely that we will have a dream of clarity. More often, in such circumstances we have dreams about something with which we are preoccupied. It may even be somewhat difficult to remember this dream due to the heaviness of sleep. On the other hand, as we approach the early morning and are almost at the point of awakening, our dreams may become quite clear. It is more likely that they will be associated with our clarity during this period. If a dream is associated with clarity, it may have special meaning for our lives. It may indicate many things.

M: Is this true also for someone who practices dream yoga?

N: If you are a practitioner of dream yoga, dreams arising out of clarity will develop and increase. Nevertheless, dreams linked with clarity do exist for everyone. Everyone has innate clarity.

M: When do babies begin dreaming? Does their dream content reflect previous lives as well as bhakshas?

N: Yes, we say babies do have more dreams that arise from the impressions of a previous life. Small children can more easily remember events from a previous life; their clarity is less obstructed. Slowly this changes as the child grows up and the tensions and attachments of ordinary life are created.

M: Would you suggest that parents who are practitioners teach their children dream yoga at an early age and encourage them to develop their dreams?

N: I don't think so. It's not so easy for children.

M: Is there a particular age when babies start to dream? **Or** is it something which starts immediately from birth?

N: I think they dream almost immediately.

M: There are occasions when we have a dream in which we are receiving advice that seems logical. Are we really getting advice?

N: Yes, there are again two possibilities. If your dream is linked with clarity you can really receive advice and truly useful information. On the other hand, if you have very strong tensions or attachments you might also receive advice in a dream, but you wouldn't say that this is perfect advice.

M: Can you give us an example of a specific dream you had that was linked with clarity?

N: Yes. Many years ago I had a friend in Italy. She was a good friend, a talented singer, and she was also interested in practice. This was not true of her family. Anyway, one night I dreamed that I was driving a car to Naples. Then I saw a red car heading towards me. When I looked closely, I recognized the driver—it was my friend and she seemed angry. I turned my car around and headed back to Rome and after a short time arrived in front of my building. My friend arrived a short time later. She no longer seemed angry, but instead said, "I want to thank you for your help." In my dream I gave her a watch from Switzerland. Then I looked at her again and she had no head. I was very surprised. I awoke feeling very strange. I tried to call her home but her mother answered, and said she had gone to Lugano, Switzerland. I asked her mother to give her the message to call me, but I didn't hear anything so I called again. Her mother told me that she had returned briefly from Lugano and then had gone off to Yugoslavia on a singing engagement. Her mother hadn't given her the message because she didn't approve of our friendship. When she returned from Yugoslavia she left again, this time for Naples. On the road she had a fatal car accident. This is an example.

M: Rinpoche, you had dreams in which you remembered a particular book of teaching. How does this work?

N: Such a dream is also a type of dream linked with clarity. In this type of dream one can do many things, such as study, read, or learn.

M: Can you give us some examples of dream symbols that Tibetans believe are important?

N: I will give you two possible interpretations of the same dream. If you are doing some purification practice, to dream that you are washing or taking a bath would be positive. It would indicate that your purification is succeeding and that you are developing your clarity. If you are not practicing meditation and you have a dream like this, we would say watch out, for it might indicate that you are in danger of losing your money or wealth.

M: You have implied that when clarity develops in dreams, sometimes one can predict the future. Do you have any examples in your experience with your own dreams or those of your teachers?

N: If you develop your clarity you can certainly have these types of manifestations within dreams. Through these you may sometimes discover something about the future. Dreams of clarity are linked with our innate wisdom and the karmic seeds which we have created through our experience with meditation practice and the positive actions we perform within our life. In regards to the karmic seeds which we have accumulated, there is also the possibility that these potentials may become manifest. These potentials may become manifest when there are secondary conditions³ to ripen them. With the proper secondary conditions, manifestations such as dreams of the future may occur. We may find many examples of these manifestations in the biographies of meditation masters.

We ourselves can also have dreams like this, dreams that enable us to see or understand something. That is an aspect of a dream of clarity. For example, many years ago, in 1960, when I had been in Italy for only about one year, I had a dream where I was talking to someone, but I did not know who it was. This someone explained to me how the political situation would be after some time.

I was told that China and Russia would have concrete problems. I replied in the dream that this was impossible, because I knew that these two countries had a deep relationship—they both shared the same communist point of view. When I had been in China there was a Soviet Association that collaborated with the Chinese in publicity and communist education.

Thus I thought it was impossible that China and Russia would have problems. Still, the voice told me that there would be conflict between the two countries. It went on to say that not only will the Soviet Union and China have problems, but there will be friendship between the United States and China. I responded that this was impossible.

The voice said nevertheless it would happen because the situation between China and the United States is of a different nature than the relationship between the Soviet Union and China.

The United States and China are both interested in business and commercial exchange. They have no problems arising from sharing a border, unlike China and the Soviet Union, because the United States and China are very far from one another. This was one of my dreams. The next day I recounted this dream to my collaborator, Geshe Jampa Sangye. He thought that this dream sounded very unlikely.

After a few months, we saw newspapers stating that China and the Soviet Union had serious problems. My friend Geshe was very surprised. Later he was even more surprised when the United States and China developed a better relationship. This dream is an example of a dream through clarity; the dream proves out in a real situation.

A principal way for practitioners to develop clarity in dreams is to succeed in doing the practice of

the natural light. Through this, dream awareness comes. But not only awareness. By doing this practice we continue to develop dreams of clarity and diminish our ordinary dreams of bhakshas. Through developing dreams of clarity, awareness of dreams develops. Thus one may use many methods of practice within the dream state. There are many techniques of practice we cannot easily employ during the daytime, because we have limitations on a physical level. Even if we have a good idea of how to do these techniques, they are still not so easy to apply. In dreamtime, however, we have no functioning of our sense organs, so we are not limited by the material body and thus can more easily apply many methods.

Through the experience of practice in the dream state, we can have a very strong experience and understanding of the dream-like nature of daily life. In this way we diminish our attachments and our tensions, and can truly understand what Buddha Shakyamuni meant when he said that everything is unreal and like an illusion or a dream. The result that attachment diminishes is due to the fact that attachment is based on a strong belief that the phenomena of this life are important and real.

M: One time I had a dream in which I received a ticket from the police for parking in the wrong place. I remembered the dream the next day and decided to be very careful. I made a point of putting money in the meter so that I would not get a ticket. As I walked around I kept aware of the time so that I knew when to return to my car. However, when I got back to my car it was one minute after the meter had expired and I found a ticket exactly as I had seen in my dream. I had tried very hard to avoid this consequence. Is it possible to change the outcome of a sequence of events after having dreamed them a certain way?

N: Sometimes you can collaborate with your dream of clarity. It can become very useful for you in overcoming many problems. But changing events is not so easy because everything is linked with secondary causes. Sometimes they are very complicated secondary causes, and you cannot do very much. I told you the story of one of my friends in Italy. I had a very complicated dream about her, but I could not do anything. That is an example. Nevertheless, sometimes when we know that a dream says something about the future, we can modify our plans to avert a potential problem.

Once, when I was preparing to go to China on my second visit I had many bad dreams night after night. I was disturbed by these dreams and became concerned about traveling to China. Then my wife Rosa and son Yeshe went to the north of Italy for the holidays. My own plan was to leave for China. However, the day they left to go to the north of Italy they had a car accident.

That early morning I had had a bad dream that I was driving a car very fast. I was approaching a place where the road ends and tried to stop the car, but I couldn't, because I was going so fast. If I were to go ahead, I would fall off of a cliff. I did not know what to do and was very frightened. At that moment I recognized that I was dreaming and that the situation was unreal. Immediately I thought, "I must transform." Instantly I transformed the car into a horse. I was then riding on the back of a horse, a very big stone horse. I did not fall off the cliff. After I woke up, at breakfast, a student of mine came from Rome to drive me to the airport. I told him about my strange dream the night before, and that over the past few nights I had had bad dreams.

Later, before I was to leave, I received a telephone call from Northern Italy. I heard that my wife Rosa and Yeshe had been in the accident.

I thought the dream corresponded to only their negative situation, which was not very dangerous. They were in the hospital, but it was not serious. I still intended to go to China and the next day I was to go to Rome. But that morning I had another negative dream. I half woke up. In this state

between dream and wakefulness someone told me very clearly, “You must not travel.” It was very clear. Then I woke up. I had thought someone was really talking, but I discovered the voice was a dream.

I changed my plans, and did not travel to China. I don’t know what would have happened to me if I had gone that time. It is not easy to know what exactly was the problem. The only thing I could say is that one month later I heard news that in China and Lhasa they had put many people in prison, and some were killed because they were regarded as threats to communism. I don’t know if this was the problem, or if it was perhaps related to the airplane. Sometimes it is possible to overcome ill fate by clarity in dreams; this is very useful.

M: Rinpoche, you have said that at the time of death one can use the awareness developed in the practice of natural light and in tantric dream practice. I have also heard it said that one’s awareness becomes seven times as strong after death. Would you talk about how to liberate oneself at the time of death and how much experience a Westerner must have with lucid dreams to make it likely that he or she can accomplish this liberation? What are your ideas on this?

N: If you have had some dreams of clarity, you can have benefits and possibilities related to the teaching and the path. However, if you are interested in using the practice for liberation after death, then you must have transmission of the method, and teachings on this subject in your lifetime. As an example, let us discuss *shitro*,⁴ what is called in the West *The Tibetan Book of the Dead*. It is a practice related to the peaceful and wrathful manifestations.

When you receive a transmission—a teacher’s empowerment of a student to practice a specific method—then, through the power of that transmission, something is connected with your potential which, until then, is latent as an unmanifest karmic seed. Subsequently, you use your experience of practice in your lifetime. It means you are developing the possibility of the manifestation of your potentials.

A simple example of potential is a mirror. If you look in a mirror you discover it has infinite potential, beyond limitation. It could be a small mirror, yet even a small mirror can reflect a whole view of a countryside. The reflection is beyond the size of the mirror. Through the reflections you find in the mirror, you can discover its infinite potential; the reflection is very important for discovering that nature.

If in our lifetime we receive a transmission and then unify the power of that transmission through the power of mantra, and subsequently practice and prepare for the series of wrathful and peaceful manifestations of the *shitro* method which occur in the bardo of the nature of existence, before the ordinary bardo, then we have that possibility of that manifestation. Because we already have done preparation, we have the potential for this specific manifestation, and at the same time we recognize it is just our potential, nothing else.

When we recognize this through the transmission and through the method, then we can have real liberation. *Liberation* means entering into our real nature. No longer are we dependent on thoughts and judgments and conditioned karmic vision.⁵

When practitioners of the night die, they will have the possibility of liberation. For those who do not have the capacity to realize at the moment of death in this way, there is a return to the bardo of existence. Such a return means that once again we will be reborn and have the function of the mind and the consciousness of the senses, both very similar to their counterparts within the dream state.

The difference is that within the dream state our functions of consciousness are not dependent on the material body and its sense organs. For this reason we have seven times the amount of clarity in the bardo than we have during our lives, as explained in Tantrism.

M: I have read many accounts of people in the West who have had lucid dream experiences. They can transform a nightmare into a peaceful situation or can overcome their fear in a dream. If they have never heard of the practices of Tantra and Dzogchen but have had experiences of lucidity and know enough to transform their negative dreams into positive circumstances, could they in the bardo of existence transform a wrathful manifestation into a positive one and achieve at least a favorable rebirth, if not complete liberation?

N: If one has the experience of transforming a bad situation into a peaceful situation in a dream, it only means that one has this experience in the dream. When one has the capacity of transforming bad into good or peaceful within a dream, it doesn't mean one also has that capacity in the bardo, after death.

If you want to be liberated you must have the power to connect with the awareness of your real nature. Your real nature is not a dualistic vision. Ideas of good and bad are linked with perception which is itself the result of our karma. Having knowledge of the bardo is another situation. First you need a method to discover your potential, then you discover how your potential is beyond life and death, and beyond the limitations of your ordinary vision of good and bad. If you don't have this understanding of your real nature I don't think there is a possibility of liberating yourself in the bardo.

M: This brings us to the methods of Dzogchen, knowing one's true nature through direct transmission and the practice of dream and natural light. Can you say something about the practices of Dzogchen and how one receives transmission? How do Dzogchen practices lead to the capacity to liberate oneself at the time of death, or even to have experiences of clarity in the time of life? What is the relationship between all of the dream practices and all that we have talked about in terms of Dzogchen, that is, between the practices of the night and the awareness of Rigpa during the day?

N: The principle in Dzogchen teachings is knowledge. We need to understand our real condition. We can know this only through knowledge of our existence. For example, we say mind is one of our three existences—body, speech, and mind. It is also the root of the three existences. When we speak of mind, we mean mind as a relative condition, with which we think and judge. We are going deeper when we say *nature of mind*. But there is no way to discover nature of mind if we don't know what is the mind.

The mind is part of our relative condition, our existence of body, speech, and mind. When we discover the knowledge of our real condition in the Dzogchen teachings, we call it the state of Rigpa, or being in our real nature. This knowledge is the root of the practice of dreams also. Dreams are a part of our life. In our life we have daytime and nighttime. In the nighttime we have confusion in our dreams; in daytime we have confusion with our mind—judging, thinking, creating many things. This is how we pass our life. Being aware or continuing our awareness in dreamtime means maintaining the same awareness we have during the daytime. If we have no capacity to be in the state of Rigpa, the state of real knowledge, in the daytime with practice of contemplation, we cannot have it in the nighttime either. It is the same principle. If we have at least this knowledge of Rigpa in the daytime with many experiences, then when we use this knowledge in the nighttime it will be easier to be in this state. We can have more experiences in dreamtime than daytime. So this is the relationship of practice to night experience.

M: Is it the same for Tantra?

N: Yes, in Tantra it is more or less the same as in Dzogchen.

M: I have heard it is essential to have transmission from a master to receive these practices, to understand them, to develop them. Must you also have a transmission from a master in order to develop the practices of dream awareness? It seems many people in the West have had experiences with lucid dreaming. What is the relationship between transmission and developing lucidity within the dream state? How essential is it?

N: If you want to have only a limited experience of dreams, to have awareness in dreamtime or even some clarity experiences, you can do so even if you receive no transmission. However, if you want to consider the dream experience as your path, to see how it affects you beyond your life, after death, and to use your dream practice to prepare for the bardo, then you must get transmission. Otherwise you cannot go beyond, and have the possibility of using different methods of practice. People can eventually discover the meaning of a teaching, even if at the moment of transmission they do not understand. You need transmission for awareness. Awareness is related to our clarity and our energy. If you have a transmission there is a continuity, a possibility of repetition. For example, if you have had the transmission for Shitro practice during your lifetime, you have the possibility of its manifestation in the bardo.

M: If you read about these dream practices in a book could you practice even without transmission?

N: It depends. One person can have some results while someone else has none. There is no guarantee. But if you follow the transmission the precise way you can have many experiences.

M: So transmission itself does not lessen one's karma or create merit?

N: Everything is relative.

M: Rinpoche, there is a Dzogchen text by Mipham [Chapter 5 of this book] that explains the practice of awareness and contemplation. How can one deeply understand this text and apply it day and night?

N: When you read a book you can understand all concepts in an intellectual way. If you receive a transmission from a teacher, you can have a different taste.

M: Rinpoche, you seem to have a more informal method of transmission than many other lamas.

N: That is not my invention. This is the tradition of Dzogchen teachings. In Dzogchen there is a way to transmit. Analogously, a philosophy teacher, through the language of philosophy, transmits understanding and knowledge. This method works for people who are conditioned for it. People who are conditioned by the method of Tantra can receive transmission through ceremony. Simple people can receive a transmission through talking, like two people, two friends, together. This too is a way of transmission and understanding. The point is that one must experience real knowledge. Without that, one may receive hundreds of initiations and explanations, but they don't account for very much in the Dzogchen view.

M: Is it important to be aware that you are receiving a transmission?

N: It depends on who it is that receives the transmission. If someone is really prepared and has the capacity to receive transmission, then any way a teacher transmits could be very useful, and the person would benefit. If one is not prepared and has no capacity, then it is not easy to receive the transmission.

M: If someone receives transmission, but does not immediately understand, is there still a great value in receiving it, or is the value only in the understanding?

N: If someone receives a transmission but does not understand, then at the moment there is not very much benefit. When you receive a transmission and you wake up, really getting into a state of knowledge, then there will be benefits.

M: In the West there is at least one tradition which believes that all elements of a dream represent aspects or projections of the dreamer. They might ask a person to dramatize each element in order to gain information about the dreamer. What do you think about this?

N: We must distinguish between the dreams that originate from bhakshas and those that arise from clarity. If they are dreams originating from daily impressions, you can certainly learn about the dreamer's condition in the manner you describe. If the dreams originate in clarity, it is a different case; they are not only a projection.

M: What is the significance of walking or talking in one's sleep?

N: If people are sleeping very deeply and they have a dream associated with bhakshas, their preoccupations, they feel it is real and very concrete. They are very integrated with this condition. That's why they not only dream but also talk and walk. If you are really angry in a dream, you might also jump.

M: Sometimes it seems as if dreams are occurring in fast motion. Why does this occur?

N: There are two reasons. One is that in general our minds have no limitation. The mind functions very quickly. Sometimes in a very short time we can dream the actions of an entire day. Another is that dreams may be associated with agitation, and when we are agitated the dream becomes fast.

M: Is there any link between dreams and putting information into our memory?

N: It is possible to learn and even train yourself within the dream if you are aware.

M: When one sleeps in the Clear Light is there still dreaming?

N: If you sleep in the Clear Light then your dreams become more linked with clarity and much less linked with bhakshas. Your dreams become more clear and meaningful.

M: What is the difference between our dreaming state and our ordinary waking experience?

N: Waking experience is more concrete and linked with our attachment, whereas dreaming is slightly detached. We use the word *unreal* because in dreams we already have an idea or knowledge of the subject.

M: For a lama or a strong practitioner, is there any difference between dreaming and waking

experience in an absolute sense?

N: Maybe if one can integrate one's experience completely, one can find the same principle and the same condition in both states. Then life really is a dream.

M: What relationship does the *mayic*⁶ body, which is discussed in the *Six Yogas of Naropa*,⁷ have to do with dreaming?

N: Dreaming is the principal path for realizing the mayic body. If you have experience of the mayic body you will easily understand how dreams function.

M: What is the value of developing your mayic body?

N: With a developed mayic body you have total realization of the unreal.

M: When one develops the capacity of the mayic body, is one able to project this body during the time one is awake as well as during sleep?

N: It is possible because one integrates everything.

M: If one receives a teaching or transmission in a dream, is this as valid as if one were awake and receiving a transmission?

N: If you are really aware in the dream state then it has the same value.

M: Would you say that in general if you are not lucid in your dream state when you receive a transmission, then this transmission is not of great value?

N: Sometimes a dream of transmission may indicate a disturbance of *jabo*,⁸ for example.

M: Recently I had a dream that I was with a lama and he was explaining what another dream I had meant. Is this a dream of clarity?

N: It depends on what was explained and who was explaining. Such a dream is not always one of clarity. It could also be demons creating problems.

M: How can one distinguish between a dream of real transmission and one that is a disturbance?

N: It depends on your understanding and how you feel. As your clarity develops you will distinguish. If it is a disturbance you may feel upset the next day.

M: Can a teacher enter into his or her disciple's dreams?

N: Yes.

M: Are there other unusual things that can occur in dreams or through them?

N: *Unusual* is a relative term, but I will relate several stories that may be illustrative. Once upon a time many, many years ago in east Tibet there was—and still is today—a province. There were two families who lived there, and they were related. One of the families had a daughter. Every day she

went to a mountain called Gundron.

Gundron is the home of an important guardian of this area. There is a particular rock on this mountain known to be the support of this local guardian. The young daughter went near the rock every day, bringing animals there to roam. When she arrived she would rest under an overhang of the rock while the animals, the dogs, and the sheep would graze. One day when it was raining, she went under the rock and fell asleep for a long time. In her dream she was near the rock with a young, very strong man. For her it seemed very real even though it was only a dream. They talked together and had sexual contact.

Later she woke up and found her experience to be a dream, but then after a few months she discovered that she was pregnant. Her parents were very surprised because there were no other men around where they lived. They were very remote from any other families.

After nine months she gave birth to a very strong baby. He grew up to be a special man. He was not nice-looking, but physically he was very strong. He built a house constructed of many big trees, and became very famous because he was so strong.

There was a king of Derge, in east Tibet, during this time, who had a problem with Mongolian invasions. The lord asked all the men of the region to come as soldiers to defend Tibet. The strong man became very famous because he conquered many Mongolian soldiers, and later became chief of the province. This story was written in a book that I read, about the history and origins of my mother's family. You would like to know if I believe this story? Oh yes. There are many similar family histories in Tibet. Such stories are not so very uncommon in the ancient history of Tibet.

Within the ancient Bonpo tradition there is frequently reference to the Tirang. The Tirang is a type of being, close to a human being, but not quite human. Tirang belongs to the class of Nyen.⁹

Most local guardians are considered to be from the class of Nyen. Within the class of Nyen there are beings called Masang or Tirang.

These beings are considered close to human. As mentioned, there has been sexual contact between humans and Tirang, and generations have been formed. In fact there is another book about the history of the first Tibetan King. He came from East Tibet, from a region called Puel.

According to this account, written by an eleventh-century Dzogchen master, there was a woman who had contact with a Tirang being and had children. One of these children was called Ouer. When the child was growing up, some Bonpo priests did divination and astrological calculations for discovering what kind of a child he was, because he had extraordinary powers. They were a little afraid of these powers. So they said that this could be a Tirang child, and that he must be taken out of their region or they could have problems. Subsequently, they did rites to draw away the Tirang and then they sent him outside of Fuel. Eventually he arrived in Central Tibet. At this time in Central Tibet there was no king. When the people discovered that the boy had extraordinary power, he was soon appointed the Tibetan King. He was called Pu-Gel. *Gel* means king and *Pu* means from the region of Pu-el. His name is widely known as the name of the first Tibetan king, but most people do not know the source of the name. The history book that I mentioned gives this story and other examples of contact between human beings and Tirang beings.

The next example occurred quite recently. I decided to go visit the place of the ancient Shang-Shung kings in Tibet. We had been traveling by cars, but just before arriving, we left our cars and arranged

to go on by horse and yak. At the place where we stopped were some ancient ruins, for older than the ones destroyed during the Cultural Revolution. We put up our tents amidst these ruins. Many ruined structures surrounded us. Nearby was an intriguing heap of earth, and I asked the local people what this place was. They said that in ancient times it was a Bonpo monastery called Shang–Shung Monastery. Since this was a very ancient monastery, no more information was available.

That night I had an interesting dream. In it there was a very nice temple with four doors facing the four directions. I entered through the eastern door. Inside was a gigantic statue of a yogi with three eyes. In his right hand was a gyan–sen, a victory flag. In his left hand was a *kapala*,¹⁰ a skull cup. I went very close to the statue and noticed Tibetan writing under the yogi; it read “Tempa Namka”. Tempa Namka was a famous Bonpo master of Shang–Shung. This was not the Tempa Namka of Tibet, who was one of Guru Padmasambhava’s twenty–five disciples.¹¹ This was Tempa Namka of Shang–Shung, who is from a more ancient time than the other Tempa Namka.

In my dream, I left the temple through the western door. Outside were many chortens,¹² all around me. Suddenly my vision transformed back to my present vision; again there were only heaps of earth and no chortens.

I wondered what happened. I then turned back to see the temple, only to discover that it had vanished. All that remained were heaps of earth. I was surprised. I thought to myself: “There was once in the past a temple and many chortens here, which only exist as heaps of earth today.” In my dream I was aware that this was an experience of clarity. Then I looked west at a heap of earth, the ruin of a chorten. There was a light coming from this chorten, similar to sunlight that reflects off a crystal or piece of glass. As I walked towards the light, it began to diminish. When I reached the chorten, the light had totally vanished, and there was a hole in the chorten. I thought, “There must be something interesting inside this hole,” and put my hand inside. It was a very deep hole and I was able to put my whole arm inside up to my shoulder. Feeling an object inside the hole, I took it out. It was a garuda¹³ statue of the ancient time of Tempa Namka; I was very happy with my find. However, I was aware that I was dreaming throughout this whole event.

Then I woke up. It was time to pack our tents and I forgot my dream.

As people were packing up their horses and yaks I was filming the ruins. At a certain point, I found myself near the same heap of earth that had been the chorten where I found the garuda in my dream. At that moment I remembered my dream, and looked towards the chorten to see if there was any light. Although there was no light, I did see the hole. I put my hand in; it was not as deep as in my dream. I had to dig out the earth, breaking my fingernails in the process. When I had reached in almost up to my shoulder I felt something. I pulled out this object. It was a metal garuda, just as in my dream. It was very old. You can see a photo of it in the film we made of our journey in Tibet.

This event occurred near Mount Kailash¹⁴ in Tibet during the summer of 1988. It is an example of how a dream relates to something concrete.

M: What are the ultimate results of doing the dream work?

N: If one is highly advanced one may cease to dream. If one is moderately advanced one will come to recognize that one is dreaming. At the least, if one practices, one’s dreams will become more clear and positive.

M: Rinpoche, are you always lucid in your dreams?

N: Not always. It depends on the circumstances.

Notes To Chapter Four

1. Oddiyana: The location and existence of this country has long been debated by scholars. It has been variously placed in the Swat valley of Pakistan, Afghanistan, and western Tibet. Oddiyana is the reputed origin of both the Anuttara Tantras and the Tantras of Dzogchen, and is considered to be the birthplace of Padmasambhava.
2. “A” Norbu Rinpoche describes practices that utilize the Tibetan syllable **ཨ** in Chapter two of this book.
3. Secondary conditions: The way in which primary conditions, or karmic seeds, might interact with secondary conditions to manifest a dream which seems to predict the future is explained below in a fictional example.
 Due to misdeeds either within this life or within previous lives, most individuals have debts. These debts are karmic potentials that could result in the individual’s injury or death when they are repaid.
 In our example, an individual who is a strong practitioner of meditation and who has led a virtuous life takes his car to a mechanic to have the brakes repaired. Neither he nor the mechanic remembers that in a previous life he caused the mechanic personal injury.
 Due to the force of the karmic seed, the mechanic unintentionally fails to fully repair the brakes. As the practitioner is driving, he subconsciously registers a subtle squeaking of the brakes. Due to his meditation practice, he generally remembers his dreams vividly, and that evening he dreams that he is in a car accident due to brake failure. The next day he returns his car to the auto shop, and upon further inspection the brake defect is discovered before there is an accident.
 In our story, both the subtle cue of the squeaking and the individual’s experience in remembering his dreams are secondary conditions that help manifest the dream of what might have occurred. In the case of a very advanced practitioner of meditation, the secondary conditions may fall into the realm of what is ordinarily considered miraculous.
4. Shitro or Kar-gling-zhi-tro, a terma of Karma Lingpa. The practice of the 58 wrathful and the 42 peaceful deities which may arise as visions during the chonyid bardo. Shitro, which is associated with the dying process, brings clarity to those who practice it and prepares them to overcome obstacles at death. It is also practiced by the living for the benefit of those who have recently died. The texts of this terma have become incorrectly known in the West as the *Tibetan Book of the Dead*, due to the mistranslations by Evans Wentz. (See John Reynolds’ *Self-Liberation Through Seeing with Naked Awareness*, p. 132, note 2.) The correct name of the two main texts is *The Bardo Thodrol* and *Liberation Through Hearing in the Intermediate State*. Ultimately there are six bardos or “intermediate states” corresponding to experiences from death to rebirth, including the after-death experience, all of which are described within the Shitro Terma.
5. Karmic vision: According to the Buddhist theory of karma, our very perception is the result of previous actions which lead to incarnation in a realm where there is a shared “reality”. Indeed, the same environment may be perceived differently depending on one’s “vision”. According to a classic Buddhist example, a river which to a human being is seen as refreshing might be viewed as a river of molten lava by a hell dweller, while to a fish it is seen as its very atmosphere.
6. Mayic body: The illusory body, developed through practicing one of the Six Yogas of Naropa.

7. The Six Yogas of Naropa: These yogas were compiled by Naropa, a Mahasiddha of the Kagyud tradition, and include the following: The Yoga of Dumo (heat), the Yoga of the Mayic or illusory body, the Yoga of Milam (dreams), the Yoga of Light, the Yoga of the Bardo, and the Yoga of Phowa (transference of consciousness).
8. Nyen: A class of Dharma Protectors, often associated with a particular location such as a particular mountain or lake.
9. Kapala: Ritual container often made from a human skull. The kapala is a ritual object from the Anuttaratantra. It represents compassion, as the blood of all sentient beings is symbolically carried inside of it.
10. Guru Padmasambhava's twenty-five disciples: The chief Tibetan disciples of the great Master Padmasambhava during the time he taught the Dharma in Tibet. Each of the twenty-five disciples took a vow to take future rebirths in human form in order to discover Terma for the benefit of future practitioners. It is important to note that not all Termas come from Guru Padmasambhava; some also come from Vimalamitra, for example.
11. Chorten, also called stupa: A monument whose design reflects the stages of the path to enlightenment. The interior of the chorten is often filled with religious relics.
12. Garuda (Sanskrit) or khyung in Tibetan: A mythical bird resembling an eagle. In Tibet the garuda represents the fire element. It is also a manifestation of lightning. The garuda subdues the class of *nagas* (snake beings). The garuda or khyung is especially invoked to heal disease provoked by the nagas, such as skin diseases and different types of cancer. In the Hindu tradition the garuda is half human and half bird and is also the vehicle of the deity Vishnu. The garuda is related to the Thunder Bird or Fire Bird in other mythologies.
13. Mt. Kailash: Located in West Tibet, Mount Kailash is the mountain most sacred to Tibetan Buddhists. It is considered an archetypal manifestation of the sacred mountain at the center of the world. It is also highly revered by Bonpos, Hindus and Jains.

5 THE BUDDHA NO FURTHER THAN ONES'S PALM

Editor's note: The following is a previously untranslated text on the Dzogchen path. The author, the great Nyingma meditation master Mipham Rinpoche (1846–1914), has attempted to point out the "true nature of mind."

The Quintessential Instructions of Mind; The Buddha No Further Than One's Palm

I.

I bow to Padmasambhava, and to the glorious Lama who is the emanation of the wisdom being Manjushri¹ and like all the Buddhas and their sons.

To those desiring to learn the meditation of recognizing the profound meaning of the mind, I will explain in brief, the beginning path of the pith instructions.²

It is initially necessary to rely on the quintessential instructions of a Lama who has the experience of realization.

If one does not enter into the experience of the Lama's instructions, Then all persevering and effort in meditation is like shooting an arrow in the dark. For this reason, renounce all corrupt and artificial views of meditation.

The pith point is placing one's awareness in the unfabricated, self-settled state; the face of naked wisdom which is separate from the shell of the mind i.e., that which identifies. By recognizing this wisdom, one reaches the essential point.

The meaning of 'abiding from the beginning' is the natural, unfabricated state.³

Having developed an inner conviction that all appearances are the essence of the Dharmakaya⁴, do not reject this knowledge. Indulging in discursive explanations about the path is similar to chasing after a rainbow.

When meditative experiences arise as the product of awareness of the great unfabricated state, it is not through external focus, but rather through maintaining non-activity.⁵

Amazing, how one reaches this knowledge.

II.

At the fortunate time of reaching the intermediate state, One maintains the unwavering state continuously by recollection of the self-settled state of 'mind-itself.'

Just placing in that state is enough. The unfabricated mind is no other than this.

If obstructed by the arising clouds of mental analysis which create a distinction between the subject and object of meditation, at that time recall the nature of mind which from the beginning is unfabricated— 'mind-itself,' vast as the sky.

By relaxing, free tightness and dispel grasping to these conceptions.

Self-settled knowledge is not thoughts which flow in various directions. It is clear, radiant emptiness that is separate from all mental grasping. This state cannot be described by example, symbol, or words. One directly perceives ultimate awareness through discriminating wisdom.

The state of great impartial empty awareness has not moved, is not moving, and will not move. It is one's own face which is obscured by the stains of sudden conceptions; various delusory meanderings. How sad!

What will be obtained by grasping after a mirage? What is the purpose of following after these

varied dreams?

To what benefit is grasping onto space?

By various concepts one turns one's own head around.

Put aside this exhausting meaninglessness and relax into the primordial sphere. The real sky is knowing that samsara and nirvana are merely an illusory display. Although there are multifarious displays, view them with one taste. By being intimate with meditation one can immediately recollect sky-like awareness which is naked, self-settled, vivid awareness, free from conception.

The natural mind is without knowing or not-knowing; happiness or anguish.

Bliss arises from this totally relaxed state.

At this time whether going or staying, eating or sleeping, one is continuously familiar with the state, and all is the path.

Thus the meaning of mindfulness is awareness similar to the sky. And even in the period after formal meditation one's conceptions are greatly reduced.

III.

At the fortunate time of the final state, with regards to the four occasions of going, staying, eating, and sleeping,⁶ the habitual imprints, from which all conceptions arise, and the karmic winds of the mind are transformed. One possesses the capacity of resting back into the city of unmoving, innate wisdom. That which is called samsara⁷ is mere conceptualization.

The great wisdom is free from all conceptualization. At this time whatever arises manifests as completely perfect. The state of great clear light is continuous—day and night. It is separate from the delineation of recollection and non-recollection, and from deviating from its own place through recollection of the all-pervading basic ground.

At this time one does not make accomplishment through effort. Without exception, the qualities of the paths and grounds: clairvoyance, compassion, etc., are self-arising;⁸ increasing like the ripening grass in summer. Free from apprehension and conceit; liberated from hope and fear, It is unborn, unending great happiness, expansive as the sky. This great yoga is like the playful Garuda in the sky of the impartial Great Perfection. Wonderful!

Having relied on the quintessential instructions of a teacher, the way to manifest this heart-essence wisdom, Is to accomplish the two accumulations of merit and wisdom⁹ in a vast way like the ocean. And then, without difficulty realization will be placed in one's hand. Amazing!

Accordingly, may all sentient beings by the virtue of this explanation come to see the youthful Manjushri, who is the compassionate activity of one's own awareness; the supreme teacher, and diamond-essence the clear-light Dzogpa Chenpo. Having seen this, in this very life, may we attain perfect enlightenment.

Composed by Mipham Jamyang Dorje Rinpoche.

Translation by Khempo Palden Sherab, Khempo Tsewong
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Notes To Chapter Five

1. Manjushri: the Bodhisattva of Wisdom. According to Buddhist mythology Manjushri was in a previous incarnation King Amba, who vowed to become a bodhisattva for the benefit of all sentient beings.
2. Pith instruction: The lama's heart instruction. Condensed essential instruction for meditation presented by the lama to his heart disciples.
3. Unfabricated state: The awareness arising at the instant of perception; pure presence arising without correction, and uncreated by causes. For additional information, see *The Cycle of*

Day and Night by Namkhai Norbu.

4. Dharmakaya: *Dharma* means the whole of existence; *kaya* means the dimension of that. The essential ground of being whose essence is clarity and luminosity and within which all phenomena are seen to be empty of inherent existence.
5. Meditative experience arising through non-activity: The meditation of Dzogchen is non-conceptual and only accomplished by the effortless recognition of one's true unconditional nature. Activity or efforts to accomplish meditation are contrary to the relaxed presence of Dzogchen practice.
6. Going, staying, eating, or sleeping: The all-inclusive four activities within which a Dzogchen practitioner strives to maintain awareness.
7. Samsara: Cyclic existence marked by birth, old age, sickness, death, and rebirth. Governed by desire, hatred, and ignorance, sentient beings continue to migrate throughout the six realms of samsara the realms of the gods, demi-gods, humans, animals, hungry ghosts, and hell beings according to their karma.
8. Self-arising qualities: As a natural consequence of Dzogchen meditation advanced practitioners may develop transcendent qualities such as great wisdom, compassion, clairvoyance, etc.
9. The two accumulations: The accumulation of merit through good deeds and the accumulation of wisdom through contemplation. Though both are important on the path of the Dharma, the Buddha said that if one could maintain the state of contemplation the accumulation of wisdom for the time it takes an ant to walk from the tip of one's nose to one's forehead, this would be more beneficial than a lifetime of accumulation of good merit through virtuous action and generosity.
10. Mipham Rinpoche: the famous nineteenth-century Tibetan Buddhist master and scholar, originally a student of Patrul Rinpoche Mipham, who wrote original commentaries on Dzogchen and other important Buddhist scriptures.

6 BRIEF BIOGRAPHY OF NAMKHAI NORBU

Namkhai Norbu Rinpoche was born in East Tibet, on the eighth day of the tenth month of the Earth–Tiger year 1938. His father was a member of a noble family and sometime official with the government.

When he was two years old, he was recognized by two meditation masters as the reincarnation of Adzom Drugpa. Adzom Drugpa, one of the great Dzogchen masters of the early part of this century, was the disciple of the first Khyentse Rinpoche and also the disciple of Patrul Rinpoche. Both of these illustrious teachers were leaders of the Rimed or non–sectarian movement in nineteenth–century eastern Tibet. Adzom Drugpa became a tertön, or discoverer of hidden treasure texts, having received visions directly from the incomparable Jigme Lingpa 1730–1798 when the former was thirty. Adzom Drugpa subsequently became the master of many contemporary teachers of Dzogchen. Among them was Norbu Rinpoche’s paternal uncle, Togdan, who became Norbu’s first Dzogchen teacher.

When he was eight years old, Norbu Rinpoche was additionally recognized by both the sixteenth Karmapa and the then Situ Rinpoche to be a reincarnation of the illustrious Drugpa Kagyu master Padma Karpo 1527–1592, the historical founder of the state of Bhutan. From the time he was eight years old until he was fourteen, Norbu Rinpoche attended monastic college, made retreats, and studied with renowned teachers including the woman master Ayu Khandro 1838–1953. At this time she was already one hundred and thirteen years old and had been in a dark retreat for some fifty–six years. Norbu Rinpoche received numerous transmissions from her which he subsequently practiced in intensive retreat. In 1954 he was invited to visit the People’s Republic of China as a representative of Tibetan youth. From 1954 he was an instructor in Tibetan language at the Southwestern University of Minor Nationalities at Chengdu, Sichuan, China. While living in China he acquired proficiency in the Chinese and Mongolian languages.

When he was seventeen years old, returning to his home country of Derge following a vision received in dream, Norbu Rinpoche came to meet his Root Master, Changchub Dorje, who lived in a remote valley to the east. A practicing physician, Changchub Dorje Rinpoche headed a commune consisting entirely of lay practitioners, yogins and yoginis. From this master, Norbu Rinpoche received additional initiations into, and transmission of, the essential teaching of Dzogchen. More importantly, according to Norbu this master introduced him directly to the experience of Dzogchen. He remained with him for almost a year, often assisting Changchub Dorje Rinpoche in his medical practice and serving as his scribe and secretary.

After this, Norbu Rinpoche set out on a prolonged pilgrimage to Central Tibet, Nepal, India, and Bhutan. Returning to Derge, the land of his birth, he found that deteriorating political conditions had led to the eruption of violence. Traveling on, first to Central Tibet, he finally emerged in Sikkim. From 1958 to 1960 he lived in Gangtok, Sikkim, employed as an author and editor of Tibetan textbooks for the Development Office of the Government of Sikkim. In 1960, when he was twenty–two years old, at the invitation of Professor Giuseppe Tucci, he went to Italy and resided for several years in Rome.

From 1964 to the present, Norbu Rinpoche has been a professor at the Istituto Orientale, University of Naples, where he teaches Tibetan language, Mongolian language, and Tibetan cultural history. He has done extensive research into the historical origins of Tibetan culture, investigating little–known literary sources from the Bonpo tradition. In 1983, Norbu Rinpoche hosted the first International

Convention on Tibetan Medicine, held in Venice, Italy. Although still actively teaching at the university, for the past ten years Norbu Rinpoche has informally conducted teaching retreats in various countries. During these retreats, he has given practical instruction in Dzogchen practices in a non-sectarian format, as well as taught aspects of Tibetan culture, especially Yantra Yoga, Tibetan medicine, and astrology. Norbu Rinpoche is also the author of more than ten books on Dzogchen meditation, including *The Crystal and the Way of Light* and *The Cycle of Day and Night*.

The above information was largely extracted by John Reynolds from a biography in Tibetan, and revised by the editor.

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