

By Tarab Tulku Rinpoche

Biographical Background for Unity in Duality

As a Tibetan reincarnation lama, I worked with dreams from an early age. In the beginning, I was strongly influenced by folk religion and dealt with the harmful energies of nature by calling on my protector. This was not something I learned from a book; as a Tibetan child I simply listened to adults talking about protectors and other natural energies and by the time of my second birthday I had taken part in many such rituals. I was enthroned in my monastery in Kongpo as the reincarnation of the Tarab Lama at two years of age; from the age of three I learnt to read and write; and from the age of four I started to lead those rituals, which is one of the roles of the lama. With such a background it was quite natural for me to deal with so-called positive and negative energies in the dream state and in the waking state as well.

When I was ten or eleven, my main teacher, Ven. Kensur Pema Gyaltzen Rinpoche¹, began to formally train me and three other lamas in how to work with the dream state. He did not teach us the complicated formal practices of Dream Yoga, but a simpler method. This method taught us to visualise Mañjuśrī (a wisdom Deva²), repeating his Mantra before going to sleep. We should then experience Mañjuśrī in the dream and ask him the questions our teacher had prepared for us. We were expected to wake up with an answer. We did this for about a month, asking questions about different people's health every night when going to sleep. At the end of this time, Kensur Rinpoche told me I had special abilities for working with dreams in the dream state. He must have told this to some of the other monks of Drepung,

¹ Late Ven. Kensur Gyaltzen Rinpoche (around 1910-1985) became abbot at the Loseling College of Drepung University, Tibet, which had approximately 6.000 monks.

² Is visualised as a symbolic means for one's spiritual quest, for opening and re-engaging in this deeper level of oneself (body-mind wise) and the corresponding reality. Therefore, in accordance with the Eastern spiritual- and shamanistic traditions, these visual forms are ways to relate to and communicate with deeper universal forces of existence that are equally part of ourselves as of everything else too.

because many monks started to come to me asking questions about their health, how to survive specific illnesses, and what to do in certain situations. I took their questions into my dreams and tried to find answers, to gain clarity about their situation through my dreams.

Kensur Pema Gyaltsen Rinpoche also kept me busy taking questions into my dream state each night to find answers. The next morning, I would tell him the answers and he would teach me how to interpret them. I did this every day and night for about three years. When I was thirteen, I received the formal teachings of the Six Yogas, including Dream Yoga and from this time I practiced the tantric way of working with the dream state, attaining the full abilities of lucid dreaming and using the dream state for my spiritual development.

From this young age I continued my dream work and many other practices as well as my formal studies for the Lharampa Geshe³ degree, which I completed when I was twenty-four shortly after fleeing Tibet in 1959. So, I had acquired a great amount of Buddhist and pre-Buddhist knowledge by this time.

I then lived in an Indian refugee camp, actually an old English prison, for the next two years with many other Tibetan monks and lamas. It was under these circumstances that I began to find out how this knowledge could be used more practically, not just for strict spiritual development alone, but also for everyday purposes and for everyone at any stage of development.

Partly on the basis of my experiences of working with dreams in the dream state, and by refining my dream state abilities, and partly from my waking state investigations, I developed ideas, theories and practices that I believed would be useful to people living in the modern world. Part of what has emerged from this work is how to deal with dreams at a psychological level for the purposes of personal development and psychotherapy.

The different Buddhist schools deal with, among other things, analysis of the relationship between 'subject' and 'object'. Here, the term subject

³ *Lharampa Geshe* is the highest *Geshe* degree conferred by the *Gelug* School of contemporary Tibetan Buddhism. In the Tibetan degree system at Drepung University Monastery there exists 4 levels of *Geshe*. The *Geshe* degrees are respectively called: *Geshe Doram* (tib. dGe-bshes rdo-rams); *Geshe Lingse* (tib. dGe-bshes gling-bsre); *Geshe Tshokram* (tib. dGe-bshes Tshpgs-rams), and *Geshe Lharam* (tib. DGe-bshes Lha-rams).

refers roughly to the mind that experiences, and object refers to the experienced object, and at times also that to which the experience of an object refers⁴. And, partly on the basis of this simplified understanding, my aim was to articulate how we actually experience reality, what kind of perceptions (for example: sensation, cognition, evaluative feeling, emotions) we use, and to learn more about the objects of these, as well as the dynamics and relations between these different perceptive capacities and existence.

I looked at the world around me, tried to discover distinctive results from using the senses, on the one hand, and conceptual cognition, on the other, and how these different perceptions influence and establish our normal reality in different ways. I had already studied the analysis of these epistemological theories⁵ in the context of the different Buddhist Inner-science schools, but dissatisfied with just book knowledge, I now went further. I wanted to experience how all these mental functions worked together or inhibited one another, and how they determined the way existence appears to us.

From this research I developed more insight into how the inner-sciences I had learned were deeply connected with and similar to some extent to the modern science of mind, psychology. I also found that this new psychological understanding supported the views and findings of my earlier work. Through this work, I saw the kind of impact that different Buddhist spiritual practices could have, and in fact had already had on mental health, when thought of in such modern terms. What we experience is most often not the final or ultimate truth; we just believe it to be so. But if we practice some of the meditations and gain the related insight, the way we experience and our belief in what truly exists changes.

We can reach a much deeper understanding of the view by studying the Buddhist Sutras like the Abhidharma works, Triṃśikā by Vasubhandu,

⁴ According to the perspectives of Yogācāra and Mādhyamaka Inner-science of mind and existence, as the perceptive/cognitive means always determines the way in which the reference-object is perceived, we cannot experience the reference-object as such. The experienced object is always dependent on the subject-pole (perceptive/cognitive means) in the frame of which the experience appears.

⁵ Epistemology is the theory of knowledge or how we know, especially with regard to its methods, validity and scope.

*Mahāyānasamgraha by Asaṅga, etc., which tell us in general terms that the way we experience the reference-objects depends partly on the specific minds involved and partly on the way we experience ourselves and everything else on the base of self-reference awareness or conceptual self-identity. The self-reference awareness is a term that broadly refers to the specific existential centre, which we momentarily refer to as oneself, as one's self-feeling, which we will later see has determining influence on our experience of existence.*⁶

Throughout this book we will talk in much detail about the nature of the self-references and how they appear in daily life and in dreams. By working with our self-references, we can become more aware, empowered, in inner control (instead of controlling from outside), and stronger and more harmonious in our relations. Our problems become less solid and our experience softer and more agreeable, and most importantly, our experience of the object changes in relation to changes in our patterns of self-reference and in relation to the awareness we may have of deeper self-reference levels. The latter takes us into what we could call the spiritual dimension.

Since I came to the West in 1962, I have tried to discover the best way to use the great richness of the Eastern Inner-science of mind and existence⁷ and related practices so that anyone, despite belief and culture, could benefit from it. I wanted to find out how ordinary people living in the West could use the universal aspects of eastern wisdom in their everyday lives. So, my guideline has always been that people should be able to receive practical benefits in their everyday lives from what I had learned in Tibet.

⁶ Generally, self-references are dispositional and fall into one of these two basic categories, experiential core-feeling changing from moment to moment and cognitive identification. Self-reference awareness can be positive, negative or neutral, usually operating subconsciously and always have a strong effect on how we perceive existence—especially when conceptually dominated.

⁷ “Inner-science” relates to what has normally (misleadingly) been translated as philosophies. However, the term philosophy doesn't cover the extent of these ancient works. For instance, Buddhist Inner-science of Mind and Existence has a much wider scope, including investigations into the interrelationship of the different minds, their corresponding realities and the reference-existence. Therefore, Tarab Rinpoche adopted the term, “inner-science”, which he found more suitable to cover the scope of these ancient works.

I knew straightaway that dream work, especially regarding transformation of one's problematic structures or self-references, which are often expressed in dreams, could be useful for everyone.

In Tibet, we did not have dream workshops; we had spiritual practices. We trained in the dream state and had the ancient ways of dealing with dreams drawn from the folk religion and Bön.

I started to give dream workshops in Europe at the end of the 1970's. First, I was asked to give a workshop on Buddhist psychology and psychotherapy at one of the first International Transpersonal Conferences. I attended this conference in Lapland, north Finland, with my teacher, the late Kensur Pema Gyatsen Rinpoche, whom I had invited to Europe. Subsequently, I was invited by Stanislav Grof⁸ to give workshops at Esalen⁹ in California, and taught in Brazil and various European countries.

I found that many practices from both Sutra and Tantra could be used to heal our normal vulnerable experiences of ourselves, especially those related to dream work, energy work and the death process. Practicing these methods and meditations can radically change the way we experience and change our negative way of experiencing and dealing with our environment. Some of the important methods that I find useful for transforming ourselves in our normal life will be contained in this book of Lucid Dream Wisdom.

Many of our unpleasant dreams arise because our vulnerable self-reference patterns appear in the dream state. So, if we can deal with these dream appearances as they arise in the dream state, we can become familiar with and change the underlying patterns, which otherwise rule our lives. Therefore, the main practice I will introduce is how to work directly with these personal problems in the dream state.

There are old shamanistic practices that serve as a background material for the later unfoldment of the dream work presented here, as well as other newer methods derived from Dream Yoga, and these present a deep way to work with difficulties arising from negative self-references. Essentially, problems are transformed or resolved using dual or non-dual

⁸ Stanislav Grof is the founder of Transpersonal Association of Psychology, who had a significant influence on Esalen Institute and elsewhere.

⁹ Esalen, a well-known retreat and conference centre on the Pacific coast of California near Big Sur.

methods. In simple terms, dual methods rely on using resources to transform negative self-references, and in the more advanced non-dual methods the practitioner merges with the present pattern of self-reference, dispelling it entirely through a kind of death process. Of course, this is not as simple as it sounds. For example, one must first attain lucid dream abilities before the basic mental patterns manifesting in dreams can be completely resolved, regardless of the method used. However, we can still make progress in transforming our negative patterns during the waking state while we train and develop our dream abilities through the use of imagery.

People who do not have lucid dreaming skills can use a type of imagination while awake to enter an imagery state. The imagery-body-mind and the imagery reality are our terms for the body-mind being and experience you have when you immerse yourself in an earlier dream or imagery realm, while still in the waking state. This state is an embodied use of the imagination that, with practice, becomes real in a way similar to dreams¹⁰. People training in dream work can use the imagery state to re-enter a former dream that is connected with problems and self-reference patterns they wish to transform.

This work using imagination is helpful, even from the start, but the quality of the result depends on how deeply one is able to enter the imagery-body and partaking in the corresponding imagery reality, and how real the experience becomes, all of which will improve with practice. Successful use of advanced non-dual methods requires a lucid dream state in order to unite with the negative object and completely resolve the mental patterns, but one can still practice with dual and non-dual methods using the imagery state.

Once a student is either firmly established in lucid dreaming, which is rare, or is at least able to clearly manifest dreamlike experiences in the imagery state, it is possible to introduce the dual transformation methods that are partly drawn from the ancient shamanistic tradition and partly from inner-science and Tantra. We do not introduce working with spirits or energies of nature, traditionally used in the Tibetan culture, but some of the methods presented are connected with this underlying knowledge of

¹⁰ The imagery state is similar to the way a figure skater or gymnast uses the imagination for mentally rehearsing a routine from a first-person perspective, which helps improve their actual performance.

utilising supportive and protective means. The deeper non-dual methods of transformation are inspired by tantric methods, which enable practitioners to uproot the imprint of the vulnerable self-reference and be free of its influence.

The word imprint, in regard to self-references, is a way of talking about the root of these self-references, which we have made at a certain time under certain circumstances, and these are of potential nature until one of these imprints, under secondary causes, opens and actively becomes the central self-reference. However, the uprooting of one of these old vulnerable imprints would remove the potential for the vulnerable self-reference to become activated as the central self-reference again. As we deepen our awareness through imagery and dream work, we consequently deepen our understanding of self-reference patterns and the underlying imprints. Further, we can develop our ability to work with and transform the vulnerable imprints at deeper and more effective levels, which is one of the main goals of UD Personal Development program.

The more advanced non-dual methods of transformation are connected with the death process and the final state of death, and deal more directly with imprints than dual methods. As natural processes, the dream and death states have an essential place within tantric meditation, particularly in the Dream Yoga practice, where the practitioner engages in death related practices while in the dream state.

I have also incorporated the special ways I was taught to contact and receive answers in the dream state and in meditation, which derives from both the shamanistic and the Buddhist tradition. The shamanistic tradition trains you to go consciously into the dream state without the specific meditations suggested in the Buddhist tradition. Tibetans grow up believing that in the waking state you can enter a state similar to the dream state, raising your energy to a vivid awareness where you have access to so-called magical powers. This is part of our culture, so we know it is possible.

In neither the shamanistic tradition nor the Buddhist Tantra will you find exactly the way I present dream work, but all aspects presented here can be traced back to one of these ancient traditions. I developed this particular way of working with dreams, specifically to enable anyone, despite culture and beliefs, to be able to transform their problematic structures (vulnerable self-references) in a radical and direct way.

When I started teaching ancient Indo-Tibetan dream wisdom and presented the underlying philosophical/psychological theory, I noticed the importance of deeply engaging with the inner-sciences in order to understand the reality we experience, and to develop ourselves.

Due to the importance of this understanding, I decided to make this larger material available to people who are seriously working with themselves and others. With my assistant, Lene Handberg, I established a four-year training program containing the subjects of Inner-science of Mind and Existence, Personal Development, Art-of-Relating, and Psychotherapeutic as well as Spiritual Applications, which I named Unity in Duality¹¹.

*We use the basic Indian Buddhist texts from the 2nd to the 7th centuries, including commentaries by notable Tibetan scholars and teachers. The complete theory of each of the four major Buddhist studies of Inner-science of mind and existence is not offered here. I have instead selected essential points that present how these philosophies or inner-sciences understand mind and existence and their interrelations. All the studies of Buddhist Inner-science consider 'subject' and 'object' to be related in the traditional view of the interrelated nature of existence, Sanskr. *Pratītyasamutpāda*, Tib. *tendrel/tenjung*¹². Unity in Duality is the name I have given to my approach, which is based on the interrelationship of 'subject'–'object'¹³, 'body'–*

¹¹ Unity in Duality is Tarab Tulku's free translation of *Pratītyasamutpāda* (*tendrel*), interrelated nature of existence.

¹² *Pratītyasamutpāda*, Tib. rTen-cing 'drel-bar 'byung-ba (Phon. *tenching drelwar jungwa* often abbreviated to *tendrel* or *tenjung*) meaning interrelated nature of existence. However, it has often been translated as dependent arising or interdependent origination, which in Tarab Rinpoche's view doesn't completely cover that to which the term refers.

¹³ *Subject*, in this context, refers to the specific perceptive or cognitive means, (also referred to as the subject-pole), with which we perceive a specific *object* ('object-pole'); where *object* refers to two different things: 1) the 'object-pole', which is a mind's specific experience of a reference-object; and 2) the reference-object is that which exists and that to which the 'object-pole' refers. The 'object-poles' are always seen as interrelated with the 'subject-poles', meaning that the 'object-poles' don't exist out there in and of themselves, but come about only in relation with this specific 'subject-pole', i.e. mind or perception.

*'mind'*¹⁴, and *'energy (PF)'*–*'matter'*¹⁵. These interrelationships are simultaneously in duality and in unity. *Unity in Duality*—abbreviated to *UD*—is my particular way of presenting the subjects of *Inner-science of Mind and Existence, Personal Development, Art-of-Relating, Therapeutic and Spiritual application*

¹⁴ *Body* and *mind* are – in an evolutionary perspective – seen as intertwined and each has many corresponding levels. *Mind* always operates through an embodiment and any living embodiment is saturated by *mind*. Therefore, no living body exists without *mind*; and no *mind* experiences without at least a trace of body. In this sense *body* and *mind* are always interrelated.

¹⁵ *Energy (PF)* relates to its most subtle form in terms of the potential field of everything that exists. When relating to matter, it includes a deeper but still active level of substantial existence, which is of a more subtle nature than that which we normally refer to as *matter* (i.e. beyond solidity).