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A Bit about the Author

Life is strange. For 21 years of my life, I had never heard of meditation, and Tibet was just a small dot on the map. Then I went East and everything shifted.

Imagine—you open up a book on Tibetan meditation, and written inside is an exact description of the visualization you used to picture as a child as you fell asleep.

Imagine—you meet someone for the very first time, and yet your heart is so full of joy to be seeing them again that you burst into tears.

Imagine—you are led through the corridors of a Tibetan monastery, into a small dark room, where one very old monk you've never seen before laughs at you in recognition, bows to you and makes you offerings.

Imagine—you have never meditated before, so you sit down to try, and are instantly transported to someplace...higher.

Imagine—you are staring into the eyes of your heart Teacher, when their face starts to change; into the face of One you knew long long ago.

I had never really thought about rebirth before, but as the evidence of my past lives quickly started piling up in front of me, I became a bit more interested. Who was I really? Was I just a girl from California, or was I also some great Tibetan yogi meditator Lama?

This is not the first time for any of us—we have all been here before and we're all more than we seem. We have been traveling this path together now for many lives. Things happened very quickly for me after I met these teachings, for they say all it takes is a trigger, just a tiny drop of water, and then all the seeds in your mind open like a flower and you are transported to the place on your path where you left off in your previous life. This is certainly what happened to me, and I am hoping this book can be such a trigger for you.

In any case, just a few short years later, and I found myself entering into one of the most rigorous practices you can do—what they call a *Great Retreat*, where you take yourself to an isolated place and meditate there for 3 years, 3 months, and 3 days. No talking, no seeing anyone else, no outside communication of any kind—just a lone explorer in the deepest oceans of the mind.

(If this sounds romantic to you, like something you'd like to try, I would advise starting with a week. Being alone with your own mind can be...challenging, at times.)

There were six of us, and we made our way out to a remote corner in the Arizona desert—a place where no human had ever lived, a place where the coyotes and mountain lions still reigned.

We ordered little round huts from Mongolia called “yurts”—wooden poles stacked together and covered in felt and canvas, with a glass dome at the top for light.

We found three attendants willing to come out and stay with us, to bring us food and water twice a day, and then we built little fences around our yurts with a box on one side, so our caretaker could drop these things off without ever seeing us.

And there we stayed, cut off from the entire world, from March 3, 2000 to June 6, 2003.

How to explain to you all that happened inside my mind during this time? It was beautiful, it was powerful, it was extremely difficult, it was humbling and heart-opening, it was my doorway to the truth.

There are no words to describe it. But one thing I can tell you. The art of meditation is a powerful tool. It is a method you can use to change your whole world. And I pray that I can share a little of what I've learned with you.

2

The Lineage

There is a long tradition of meditation in Tibet. In all the world, it is the Tibetan people who have really mastered the vast realm of the mind. In this particular subject, they are light-years ahead of the greatest western scientists. The great meditators of Tibet are known for their miraculous feats of telepathy, and it is said that through the sheer power of their mind they can control the weather, heal the sick, and even fly in the sky. While you may or may not believe all of this, still we must all acknowledge there is something special about the Tibetan people. We need look no further than the present Dalai Lama—who has dedicated his life to peace, and who travels the world teaching people how to love each other—to figure out that perhaps there is something we should learn from them.

It all started around 750AD, when a few great Indian Lamas braved the long trek across the Himalayas to come and teach the high art of meditation to the Tibetan people. At that time Tibet was quite a rural area, made up mostly of farmers and nomadic yak herders. But these simple folk



took the teachings to heart, and made them their own, and Tibet grew into the rich, high culture we see today.

There was one great Lama from India in particular who is known for bringing the teachings of meditation to Tibet. His name is Master Kamalashila. While he was in Tibet teaching, he wrote a short guidebook on how to meditate, and this book became the classic treatise on meditation instruction—a work which is the very foundation of all Tibetan meditation practice to this day.

The truth of his teachings struck a fire inside of the Tibetan people, and one by one they went off into caves to put them into practice. People like the famous Milarepa, who is known for the 100,000 songs he wrote about his practice; or his student, Gampopa, who started the famous Mahamudra meditation lineage, to name a few. There they each came to a deep, experiential understanding of these teachings, which they then passed on to others. And so the lineage was passed down unbroken from teacher to student, each new meditator adding his or her own insightful commentary.

Because of this, now we have literally thousands of Tibetan texts which illuminate for us what it is to meditate, and how to do it, and why. The only problem? They're in Tibetan! The great majority are as yet untranslated, and though some western scholars are working very hard to remedy this, it will take another 150 years to complete the job.

Thus the birth of this book. This book is a synthesis of all the great Tibetan commentaries on meditation, starting from Master Kamalashila and continuing up to modern day Lamas, as it was passed down to me by my holy Teachers. And so the lineage continues—from India, to Tibet, and on to the lands of the West, in an unbroken chain straight to you.

3

Why Meditate?

There are so many reasons why people meditate. Some people say it gives them a more peaceful mind. That's true. Others will tell you it makes the mind really sharp and creative, so you can accomplish more things. This is also true. And a few people say they just love how it feels.

Once you dive below the surface, you will discover a beautiful, crystal clear place—like a diamond hidden beneath the rubble. It is your own mind, uncovered. And you can't even imagine now the amazing things you can do with it.

Modern scientists tell us we are only using a tiny fraction of our brains. What would it be like to learn how to wake up the rest of it? It is completely possible, if you learn how to meditate.

Want to increase your IQ? Meditate. Want to be more creative? Meditate. Want to be a more peaceful person? Meditate.

All these things do come if you meditate, but they are really only by-products: something that comes automatically as you strive for a higher goal. There are much deeper reasons to learn how to meditate.

Tibetans say we have only just begun the process of awakening—that we still have quite a way to go in our evolutionary process. And

it has nothing to do with building spaceships or computers. The next step in our evolution takes place within.

We were born with this incredible potential, but it mostly lies dormant inside us. We are like baby birds still enclosed within the egg, completely unaware of this vast open sky above us that could be ours. We think this is all there is to life, confined to a body and mind which limit both our vision and our activity. We need to learn how to crack open the shell and break free and fly.

And if you think about it, perhaps you have always sensed this to be true. Perhaps you can feel this constant subtle yearning in your heart for something higher. We were not brought here just to eat and sleep and make babies and die. No, your life was meant to be far more. You were meant for greatness. And perhaps I can show you the way.



ॐ श्रीगणेशाय नमः ॥

1.

Ngenjung:
The Need to Get Out



4

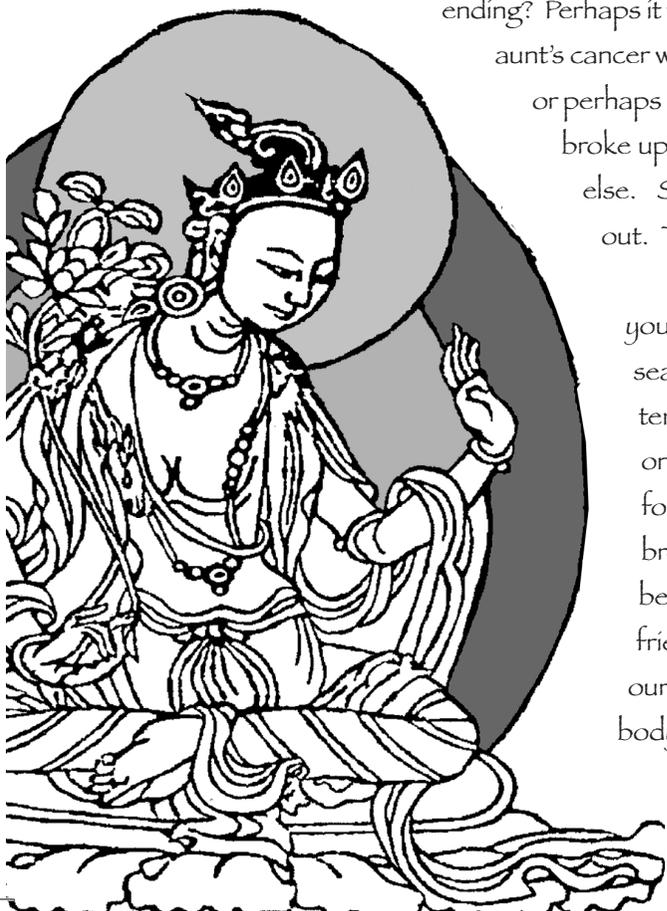
Broken

The Tibetans say we live in a broken realm, and that only by learning the high art of meditation can we learn how to fix it.

What exactly do they mean by “broken?”

When was the first time you realized that life doesn't have a happy ending? Perhaps it was the day you learned your aunt's cancer wasn't going to get any better, or perhaps it was when your one true love broke up with you to be with someone else. Sooner or later, you figure it out. This life, it is painful.

Look around. Everyone you see is like you—struggling, searching for some kind of tiny, temporary happiness to hold onto. But it's a useless exercise, for in the end as we take our last breaths, everything we love will be ripped away from us—our friends, our family, our home, our things, and even our own body.



We all know this. We try our very best to ignore it. Focus on the good things right? But as we get older, and our bodies start to wear out, and our friends and family start to slip away from us, the inevitable end becomes harder and harder to ignore. We will lose it all.

Some people will tell you not to worry about all that—just enjoy life while it lasts. But there's a problem with that too, for even temporary happiness eludes us. We are constantly striving to get some thing, or person, or position that we think will make us happy. And then, if we actually get it, we are still dissatisfied. Why? What makes it so impossible to be happy?

Sure, we get glimpses—moments of joy in our lives that encourage us, that keep us struggling for more. The sleeping face of a child, the beauty of a sunset, a secret shared between just the two of you. But they are few and far between. And they always end. Why can't we ever hold onto them?

We don't question this because it is the only thing we have ever known. "That's just the way life is." But what if that wasn't necessarily true? What if there was a way to make the joyful moments last forever? What if there was a way not to lose everything you love in the end? What if "the way life is" was just a big mistake—if this particular realm we live in just had some kind of fatal flaw, a flaw that we could learn to fix?

What if you had the power to mold reality itself? If there was a door you could walk through, that led to endless bliss for both you and the ones you love?

For Tibetans, this is the real goal of meditation. And even if there is only a tiny possibility in your mind that these things could really happen, it is worth a try. After all, what have you got to lose?