

# Buddhism- Applied Inner-Science in a modern context

by Lene Handberg, 6th January, 2019

**T**he foundation of the Indian spiritual traditions and in particular of the Buddhist insight is that all that exists is of interrelated nature - *Pratītyasamutpāda* in Sanskrit, *Tendrel* in Tibetan. This realization is also acknowledged to some extent in contemporary science, and here, Lene Handberg's teacher, Tarab Tulku Rinpoche, (1934-2004), made one of his genuine contributions, clarifying for contemporary scientists the deep, pervasive interrelationships realized in the ancient spiritual traditions of the East.

At the outset of her talk, Lene Handberg spoke about her relationship with Tibet House due to Tarab Tulku Rinpoche (who was one of the first directors of Tibet House and her guru) and expressed her joy on being back. She said that she and her co-students owed a great debt to Tarab Rinpoche who had come to her country, Denmark, in the early 'Sixties, to work in the Royal Library and the University of Copenhagen where she was a student of psychology. On her visits to India Lene-la had "found it strange to see that in Indian universities you study Western psychology when you have the most eloquent psychology taught in the ancient Indic traditions." She began her lecture by acknowledging "the genius knowledge that the West has received from India" which she studied with Rinpoche who spoke of the vast and elaborate treasure of knowledge accumulated in the Hindu, Buddhist and Jain spiritual traditions. All of these reveal levels of dynamic body-mind-reality interrelations that point to the possibility of transforming the unsatisfactory human condition, and can therefore complement the psychology taught in Western academia.

Tarab Tulku had an inquisitive mind, he wanted to "turn all the stones," not accept any given knowledge without questioning and thoroughly investigating it, and according to Prof. Samdhong Rinpoche, besides his great scholarship, he had attained a very special level of compassion. Although a Geshe Lharampa, his attitude freed him a bit from the way his own tradition was taught. He felt he must do something to save for future generations the knowledge and insights of the ancient Eastern traditions and make



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them relevant to contemporary society. He could see how Western culture was saturating the world and foresaw a time when we would have access to the ancient traditions only in a conceptual way. They would become like museum pieces or dusty archives, closed for experiential and transformative possibilities; we would not be able to access or connect with this knowledge, or know how to apply it and make it really useful to our lives.

"The ancient Eastern traditions are investigative practice traditions," Lene-la said. They enquire into what reality is, the reality that we experience, and how this reality comes about; the 'reference reality,' that is, everything manifest including ourselves. Tarab Rinpoche saw that the Eastern spiritual traditions were all building on each other whereas now academic demarcations are made between them. He always said, "The Buddha was not a Buddhist", and this could be a first step to open the mind to the common ground of the ancient Eastern 'Inner Sciences', *Adhyātma vidyā*, a Sanskrit word translated into Tibetan as nangdon. Why the Tibetans are so



TARAB  
TULKU  
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A great scholar and yogi from Tibet, Tarab Tulku Rinpoche completed his Geshe Lharampa studies in Drepung Monastery, Lhasa, before migrating to India in 1959. In 1965, at the request of H.H. the Dalai Lama, he became the first director of Tibet House, when it was first set up in Jorbagh, New Delhi. Here he facilitated the accession to Tibet House's nascent museum of numerous sacred objects and artefacts brought by monks and lay Tibetans fleeing occupied Tibet.

Tarab Tulku spent over 35 years in the West, as lecturer at Copenhagen University and research scholar/librarian at the Royal Library, Copenhagen, Denmark, where with Hartmut Buescher he contributed to Vol. I-II of the *'Catalogue of Tibetan Manuscripts and Xylographs in Danish Collections'*, for the Royal Library, Copenhagen; and *'A Brief History of Academic Degrees in Buddhist Philosophy'*, for the Nordic Institute of Asian Studies. Much sought after as a teacher in Europe, Tarab Tulku set up, along with his students seven Tarab Institutes in Copenhagen and other EU cities to disseminate the Unity-in-Duality teachings based on the core Buddhist concept of 'Tendrel' or Dependent Arising and the teachings of the great Nalanda University scholars of 2nd -13th century CE.

After his untimely passing in 2004, his close students diligently followed his last instructions to build a retreat and study centre in India to return the ancient wisdom of Buddhist and Indic inner sciences to new generations of Tibetans and Indians. In 2009, Ven. Prof. Samdhong Rinpoche, then Kalon Tripa (elected Prime Minister) of the Tibetan exiles, laid the foundation stone of Tarab Ling Institute in picturesque Asthal village, Dehradun, Uttarakhand. TLI was completed in 2014 and now attracts numerous students from India and abroad to its courses on Unity-in-Duality with its investigative meditation techniques and developmental practices.



important to us today, in this respect, is because it was only in Tibet that the academic traditions of Nalanda, Taxila, and other great universities continued to exist after they disappeared in India. "We have a great debt to Tibet's religious kings, scholars and translators," Lene-la said, "who created a new Tibetan script and a lexicon that enabled them to accurately translate the Indian classics into Tibetan, which is why they can be easily translated back into Sanskrit and thence into world languages for us to read today."

The ancient scholars and yogis didn't develop outer tools for investigating reality. They knew we are part of Nature and that we naturally have 'inner perceptive tools' which also take into account the interrelated nature of the subjective minds and the reference reality – the phenomenal world. Contemporary scientists have the same curiosity about phenomena that ancient Eastern logicians, scientists and yogis had, she said. They're also investigating reality, however they deploy conceptualization, mathematics and technology, the 'outer tools,' to dive into the smallest aspects of matter and far out to the edge of the universe. The ancient and modern sciences can therefore be seen as complementary disciplines - one objectifies reality to explain and work with Nature, while the other, the Eastern inner sciences, seek to investigate reality directly, being based on insight into relational natures using direct, non-language perception and conceptual reasoning in equal balance. Both establish rules of the reference reality, such as of the causal, compositional, transitory nature of existence.

This brings us to what Tarab Rinpoche calls the essential paradigm that informs theory and practice in the ancient Eastern inner sciences. From his study of Dependent Origination, the central philosophy of Interrelatedness in Buddhist thought, he arrived at three sets of particular interrelations that we should be concerned with –

1. Subject (Mind) – Object (Reality experienced as reference)
2. Body – Mind
3. Energy (Potential field) – Matter

Speaking of the first set, Lene-la said we should investigate our own view to see how is it that the ancient inner sciences' view is different. Contemporary sciences are concerned with objectivity, to get to what we call 'objective reality'. The inner scientists start from the subject side, with direct observation, but they do not assert an objective reality, knowing that the appearance of that reality would always be relational to the tool used for experiencing it for which there's always a certain frame and limitation. We all know that our eyes aren't very good, they are functional for what we need but an eagle's eyes are much better! Science and technology have developed tools to extend the capacity of our eyes – optical lenses, telescopes, the electron microscope, for example. Is the reality we see through the senses the real one? Or the one we see through the electron microscope? Inner science would say neither, they are both relational realities. This is not to say that contemporary

science or the technologies using it are wrong. No, we see that they discovered many ways to manipulate, to work matter, often for the good and sometimes to our detriment, as is evident from the manifold problems we now have, from disrupted ecosystems, chemical pollution, nuclear radiation and so forth, a lot of negative side-effects. But it does have a way of measuring probabilities, in identifying cause and effect, for example: because of this or that variable, this and this is happening or is likely to happen.

Tarab Rinpoche convened one of the first conferences between Buddhist scholars and contemporary scientists including Nobel Laureates in 2002 in Munich, to discuss convergences in ancient Eastern and Western sciences. With the auspicious attendance of H.H. the Dalai Lama, it became a deeply inspiring conference, about which books were published in German and English.[DONE]

With respect to the subject in the first set, Lene-la said: “Each time we use a kind of mind, what we experience is limited to this mind’s scope and limitations. We have many different perceptive capacities – the five sense minds, the sixth, mental consciousness. And within all the latter there are many different types and levels of perception/cognition (citta or sem), and their different types of mental functions (semjong), but we are normally not aware of having these different perceptive capacities. At any moment any one of them being active can take over the perception of the mind, and all minds are momentary. In our daily life what I perceive is what, for me, exists out there. And this, the ancient inner sciences say, is absolutely never going to be the truth, what truly exists out there, independent of my perception of it! But we have what is functional for our daily lives and to a certain extent we need to trust what we perceive, at least with our sense perceptions.

“In modern cultures we mostly use conceptual mind, ‘language mind,’ to communicate with and it’s a powerful tool. Of course, I can only name very few of the particulars in my field of direct experience conceptually; I can select a few by means of abstraction, generalization and naming, making some abstract, structural presentation, which is what we do in verbal communication. We have been brought up to believe that the conceptual reality is the reality. The more we engage in inner and outer dialogues, the more we believe we are catching the whole of reality by means of our conceptual mind, which is far from the truth.

The great logicians Dignāga and Dharmakīrti gave amazing analyses of how our conceptual mind functions, what it is good for and how we can make mistakes when we one-sidedly rely on and believe too strongly in this mind-capacity, when it dominates our thought processes. It is extremely important for us but it shouldn’t be standing alone determining our reality for us. Our problem in modern times is that we don’t have sufficient awareness of the non-language perceptive capacities. Our conceptual mind has been trained to be so fast that it quickly captures what we perceive with other types of mind, with the result that we reduce what we observe, with our eyes, for example, to an idea.



#### About Unity in Duality:

Tarab Rinpoche and his successor Lene Handberg, established an all encompassing training programme named ‘Unity in Duality,’ presenting the universalities beyond the cultural and religious boundaries, which reveals the workings of ‘The Mind, Body and Reality’ interrelations in a way that is fresh and innovative, with a theory and methods for Personal Development, Art-of-Relation & Therapeutic Application, as well as for introducing Spiritual Application, whilst referring back to the ancient Buddhist academic traditions of 2nd-7th century Nalanda University. This training gives us the key principles of the Buddhist teachings based on the tenets of interrelated nature — Dependent Origination or *Pratītyasamutpāda* (Skt.)/*Tendrel*(Tib.)

The Unity in Duality training is presently imparted in the Tarab Institutes in Europe and Tarab Ling in India through 4 modules with four weeks full-day teaching or 6-8 weeks half-day teachings in each module that comprises of a theoretical part always combined with investigative meditations and discussions.

By taking part in such a developmental process we naturally open to possibilities of genuinely using the wisdom heritage of spiritual transformation accumulated in all the Eastern spiritual traditions through the millennia.

The courses have proven to be immensely useful, their immediate goal being to reduce our sense of isolation, loneliness and fears, become more relaxed in ourselves and successful in our relationships, and thereafter taking increasingly more responsibility for our inner condition and experience of reality, thereby opening the possibility for a high inner-ethical condition and entrance to the spiritual field. By taking part in such a developmental process we naturally open to the possibility of using the wisdom heritage of spiritual transformation accumulated in all the ancient spiritual traditions through the millennia.



“In modern cultures we’re losing the knowledge and potency of all these other capacities and we are in danger of screening out a very big part of reality because we no longer access these other realities directly but only by means of words. This is why our psychology textbooks, for instance, say: “We don’t have direct sense experience – the sense realities are always being experienced through conceptual mind.” Tarab Rinpoche spoke completely differently. Eastern knowledge states very clearly that we have two very differently functioning types of mind: the language-based cognitions and the non-language perceptive capacities, both of which we need in good balance. He said, “Without that I don’t even have direct perception of and proximity to myself.” The way we objectify reality, the same way we objectify ourselves, by conceptualizing our experiences. We need awareness, especially with the direct feeling perceptions (Tib. Nyongwe namshe), which make up a large group of perceptive capacities characterized by the joining of the ‘subject’ and the ‘object’ – providing a proximity experience with self and others which is also a necessity for meditation.

The first of these capacities is the body-sense perception, that we are normally only aware of when we experience pain or hunger or thirst. The ancients say that we need to actively use our direct perception mind, non-language mind, in equal proportion to the conceptual mind, to be a balanced person, to reconnect with our own ‘beingness’ and inner forces. We are basically living ‘out of ourselves,’ we are not in touch with our base, our inner resources, with which we were born. So we have nowhere to be, to rely on, nowhere to relax, which is so important even in maintaining our physical and mental health.

Lene-la spoke extensively on this phenomenon of ‘beingness,’ how children are being brought up, even in India, from infancy into a purely conceptual field. They then get distanced from themselves and others and can end up becoming vulnerable to depression, isolation and problematic self-identities. We don’t learn that when one vulnerable self-reference feeling takes over it’s just a momentary mind. We react, thinking, “that’s me”. Then we act on that basis. In the UD training for personal development, participants learn to regain proximity to themselves and others, and then to transform their vulnerable self-references, to master the ones they wish to identify with rather than remain “like a feather in the wind”, depending on whichever imprint, *vāsanā*, is opening up which they become a victim of. If we choose to name the construct of our conceptual reality based

on a particular vulnerable self-reference we identify with and then act accordingly, our response becomes inadequate to the situation. We are then entrapped in our own little reality-bubble and don’t communicate with others – something we can see when we watch people in emotional combat.

Concerning the subject-object interrelationship, we know from modern science that if we dive into matter it gets less and less solid. Nothing is really solid in reality, the solidification we perceive is our relational way of experiencing, it’s an illusion. Yogācāra and Mādhyamaka philosophers get to the same conclusion. It is in this sense of the relational nature of appearances that they call our experience “an illusion.”

The Body-Mind interrelationship is explicitly dealt with in the tantras, at many different levels, where they speak of how to acquire more subtle ‘embodiments’. We know of a kind of subtle body from our dream state, although most of us don’t have any awareness of or command over our dreams. Children, however, move in and out of these different levels and realities easily. Tantric adepts, yogis, shamans, know how to make use of this dream mind-body. The ancients knew that if we could master the dream state we could access a state similar to a meditative state, on the basis of which we could develop further subtle states of being, i.e., profound and meditative states. Tarab Rinpoche, who was trained in the dream yoga since he was a child, said that the dream-state, if we could become lucidly aware of dreaming, is a very important way for modern seekers to more successfully access the actual meditation states. It also generates the ability to master the appearances at the time of death. In the ordinary death process, where the physical body is crashing, we’re pushed into one meditative state after the other. The Clear Light yoga trains us to consciously attend to the whole process of dying, to use the moment of death as the incredibly transformative opportunity the ancients found it to be.

#### POTENTIAL FIELD-MATTER

The goal of spiritual ‘transformation’ can best be discussed as bringing awareness and beingness into the subtlest body-mind-reality state, as the ‘salrig’ (Tib.) state, relating to the most subtle trace of body and mind at the subtlest level of being or ‘potential field,’ the border area of duality and unity, to which we naturally reach in deep dreamless sleep and when dying.

This elucidates the third pair of interrelations – of energy (potential field-matter. Tarab Rinpoche said that, in principle, each person has his or her own potential field, but all living beings also participate in many layers of potential fields.. We humans think we are completely differentiated from others but actually we can only demarcate the self-references, ‘dagzin,’ that we grasp. We demarcate the boundaries conceptually. Ancient traditions say that we are not that separate, we are interrelated in many ways and levels of our being. As humans, we have so many imprints/vasana in common, which is why we have similar bodies, sense perceptions and 6th mind functioning. In contemporary science it’s said that nothing gets lost in the universe, everything leaves a footprint. In the 4th century CE, Asanga in his Mahayanasamgraha and Vasubandhu in the Trimsika indicate that all actions of body, speech and mind of all beings leave imprints in their own and the universal potential field, and that these imprints form the basis for the next moment of unfoldment of our reality, that is to say, the next moment of evolution.

Tarab Rinpoche said there is continuous communication from potential-field to matter and back to potential-field. This ‘energy’ (potential field) and ‘matter’ interrelationship is crucial for spiritual transformation as well as in every split instant of time in the process of cessation and becoming -- for the process of entering into deep dreamless sleep and back through dream into the waking state, and in the actual process of dying and becoming in the chain of cyclic existence. Rinpoche said, “In our whole extended existence we’re participating in this non-stop circling, from potential field to matter to potential field.” He said that if we understood these three pairs of interrelationships we could realize the whole of the ancient Eastern traditions, both the theory and the practice side, both the sutras and the tantras.

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