

Section 1: My Room, Bouddhanath, Space

1a. (after 'Yeh')

The page is blank
The pen wet,
Poised above the pregnant emptiness.
Anything,
Anything
May arise,
May appear
In forms
That speak their truth
Through a multitude of displays.

2. (after hearing word 'microphone')

The Circle of Immortality... it's the end of the story so far and the beginning of this new one.

I like to start at the end because at least you get to know where you are heading.

1b. (on evening stupa)

For inside each character,
Each letter,
Is contained
The essence
Of the unity of light and sound.
Thus with light as pure bliss
And sound as pure emptiness
The great truth is proclaimed.

3. (cat and tank)

The fish just go on with their fishy lives in the tank, not to mention my cat. Her name is Yogini. At this time, she was just a young, innocent cat, being a young, innocent cat.

4. (yogini drinking)

But as young, innocent cats do, they investigate everything... and time was to show that her youthful innocence was passing into maturity.

5. (COI & 2 keys)

Dear friend, it is from here, from beside the famous stupa of Bouddhanath in the Kathmandu valley of Nepal that I write to you this letter to express my deep sorrow at the news of your terminal sickness. I am sorry I didn't write before... but somehow it is only in the face of death that we really face up to the truth of life.

1c. (stupa & sun cross)

Oh pen,

Please keep your true nature in mind
And form union with the empty space!

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Section 2: Kali Gandaki, to Muktinath

6a. (on sun mandala)

You are no longer
A pen
And blank page
Separated,
But together you invite awareness.

6b. (on ting, ting)

It had been going on all night so that the sound of a mantra-like name was still upon my lips as I awoke from the dream, 'Annapurna... Annapurna... Annapurna'.

It was only a couple of months later that I found myself here, in Nepal, in the Kali Gandaki gorge with the great Annapurna range of mountains directly to my right hand side.

Pilgrims from all over India and Nepal have been travelling this way for centuries, on their way to Muktinath. I too was on my way to Muktinath. Mukti – 'Salvation', Nath – 'Place', Muktinath – 'Place of Salvation'.

6b. (on end of girls-birds)

For I came to learn that pilgrimage is about overcoming the obstacles and reaching the destination.

6a. (on sparkly lights)

For as your letters appear,
Dear pen,
They stir the perception,
The third participant
In the game of being.
Remember that awareness
As an immortal combination
Of bliss and emptiness.
Whatever appears
Remains ever this.

7. (on KG river)

The entrance to the valley of Muktinath is guarded by a great female energy. Her hair flowing in the fields is combed by the ploughs of men, her body of water stretching endlessly into the distance, cuts her a pathway through the floor of that empty channel,

space revealing itself as her life force running through it, reaching on and on.... until dissolving into the ocean.

6b. (on woman)

Really it is a story of a film and a bunch of photographs.

It was on my first journey here to conduct a field study for another film concept that I broke my camera and a year later was given an old Pentax by one lama of this valley with whom I had been travelling at the time. It was 25 years old and a little broken, but I had it repaired. The light meter was unfixable, and there was no other automation whatsoever and I, to my annoyance for all things technical, was forced to learn its ways. One photographer friend offered me some advice, 'More light in when dark, less light in when light. Faster when lighter, slower when darker' and you work it out from there.

8b. (on panning (just before seeing cliffs))

There are three main roads that lead into Muktinath from this direction. One is where I am standing and another is above the sandstone cliffs on the other side of the river bed. The third lies down by the river, and is by far the hardest. For you have to cross the water many times since the path is often cut off by the great, towering, vertical cave cities that line the walls of the basin. You are walking along a bed of rocks, fighting the wind that rushes through the channel, the sun beating down from a clear sky. It is a timeless place, the elements in their constant dance.

It looks so easy from here.

Faces and objects, contents of the valley that like a huge container, holds all these passing images, a grand display of the five elements !

But is it not the harder path that always leads to higher places? Just imagine being down there.

8a. (after mantra ends)

So my dear friend, in these precious last days of your life, I would like to share with you some important moments of mine. For all the times that my adventurous spirit had flirted with danger, it was here among these rocky mountains in the centre of the Himalayas that I decided upon my greatest adventure yet, a challenge of unrivalled magnitude. I mean, what could be more daring, what could be a more fulfilling journey, a greater pilgrimage, than to conquer death itself !

(on flag)

But... in order to go about conquering death, one needs a guide, a supreme master who has already traversed that path, who can by experience, lead one there.

8b. (on Buddha)

Lord Buddha Shakyamuni, the supreme teacher of all Buddhist paths.

His Eminence Chogye Trichen Rinpoche, head of the Tsarpa branch of the Sakya sect of Tibetan Buddhism.

8a. (on close up rainbows on floor)

A bunch of rainbows fallen upon the ground...

(on light)

...just rays of light shining through crystals, invisible made visible.

8b. (on LK's photo) *

Ludhen Khenchen Rinpoche, head of Ngorpa branch of the Sakya sect of Tibetan Buddhism

Not only humans, but all beings including animals and insects have one same wish in mind,

to be happy.

But because we lack the understanding of what to take on and what to refuse in our lives,

we continue to suffer again and again.

Realising that all beings are suffering, we should try to help each other as much as we can.

Then as we perfect ourselves,

we are naturally able to give more and more of ourselves to others.

8a. (after LK's photo)

So dear friend, let's transfer to the birthplace of Lord Buddha, through whose teachings we have come to learn the path beyond death.

8b. (on Holiness photo)

As he was in meditation retreat during the filming of this, the physical absence of the supreme head of the Sakya sect of Tibetan Buddhism, His Holiness, Sakya Trizin, lent a subtle interpretation to the meaning of guru, teacher.

8a. (on Holiness fading)

...a rainbow dissolving into a clear empty sky.

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Section 3: TRLing Monastery, Lumbini

9. (immediately candles appear)

From northernmost to southernmost point, in totally the opposite part of the country to Muktinath, is the place named Lumbini.

(after song ends)

Filming, although it does in so many ways incorporate the same technical aspects as still photography, first and foremostly deals with moving objects and their corresponding sound. Photographs capture a single moment in time, but filming requires working with both sound and light. Nevertheless, in both cases one is simply creating an impression of what was there, as the camera can only capture what lies within its limited frame and focus.

10. (after first gong)

Oh pen,
Your job is futile
For whatever you display
Is always that same combination
Of bliss and emptiness.

If your perception,
The manifesting tool of awareness,
Strays from that understanding
Then you will write
Nothing of the essential truth.

(2nd gong)

But just as you may not speak that truth,
It will always be contained within.
For the nature of the letters on the page
Are simply your union with it.

11. (3rd gong)

Many communities of monks and nuns, known as ‘Sangha’, practitioners of the teachings of Lord Buddha, have gathered from Sakya monasteries located in places all over the world, to perform the Monlam prayer festival.

(4th gong)

During this period of 10 days at the last part of the lunar year, a special prayer is recited here at the new Tashi Rabten Ling monastery that was inaugurated only three years ago.

(5th gong)

One of the principal reasons for its establishment was to house the Monlam prayer festival when ‘The Aspiration prayer of Samanthabhadra’ is recited 100,000 times, a prayer that is principally a dedication of all the virtuous merits of all beings, so they may benefit from these, so they may reach enlightenment.

(many gongs)

Enlightenment is the principal goal of Buddhism, a state beyond the sufferings of existence, where one is freed in the perfect realisation of one's own nature of mind.

(on little monks)

This is the first prayer session of the morning, when prayers are made to Tara, a main tantric deity of the Buddhist pantheon. She is, among other aspects, the remover of obstacles, the healer of disease, one's own compassionate nature.

It's pretty cold out here at this time of the morning!

12. (on music surge) *

True to the dance of routine the feeds the need, these young monks take it in turns to serve at the morning break. A lovely sweet cup of Nepali tea and a kind of oily bread after much chanting is a moment welcomed by all. At other times of the day, another type of tea with additions of salt and butter like a kind of broth that is traditional to Tibet is offered, a necessity for the country also known as 'The Land of Snows', with a mean altitude of around 3000 metres above sea level across its plateau like structure. Here in Lumbini, the land lies at a mere 100 or so metres above sea level, that's nearly 3 kilometres of difference, straight up!

Practitioners from different traditions also partake in the festival.

How beautiful were the candles of last night !

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Section 4: My Room, Bouddhanath, Wind

14a. (on two keys)

All the photos that make up this design of "Two keys, One lock", are taken in Muktinath. Each one is a frozen aspect of that place, a frozen aspect of my mind in that moment, now a timeless moment. Here, I have chosen photos that give the impression of wind, for wind is inherently invisible and only revealed by the objects it blows.

14b. (on COI)

Thus, bliss appears as letters
And emptiness as their sound,
Perception as their meaning,
All inherent within.
How wonderful,
Dear pen,
The marvels that may appear
From your tripartite union.

14a. (...continued)

You see, the Circle of Immortality is the same as the Two Keys one lock. It is a kind of 3 dimensional representation of it. There are four corners at its base that all lead up to a central point, which is simply the central point of the Two Keys one lock, elongated.

14b. (on cat and tank)

But even though they seem to appear,
They never actually appeared at all.
That blissful emptiness
Of intrinsic awareness
Stirred,
Played and then rested again
In its true state,
Yet in truth it never awoke
From its timeless poise,
But seemed to
Whilst spontaneously holding
The marvellous display,
Of bliss and emptiness,
Understanding itself
As their union.

15. (on 2 angel fish)

Unknown to us at this moment, most of these little fishies were soon to disappear from the tank. For a white spot disease had started to spread.

(on photos)

True to tantric symbology, the colour green signifies wind. Movement, like a kind of shifting gear, up and down; changing the direction of focus, again and again, the winds of change continuously blowing.

14b. (on stupa)

And so True mind
is revealed
From the union of these three,
The eternal guru.
You pen,
Are the guru.
Trust firmly in your true nature
And inject confidence
In your form.

16a. (on COI)

Time, a wind of its own creation twisting round and round upon itself.

16b. (on cat)

And the cat just goes on perfectly being a cat, although the winds of change are upon her too. Dear friend, if there is one thing we can be sure of, it is that everything is constantly changing, even though it sometimes seems to hold still... **(fade out sound)**

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Section 5: TRLing Monastery, Lumbini

13a. (on circle)

Oh pen,
You are but a novice to the page.
Do you know where you are going
And why?
What is your reason
For such work?

(after green flash)

For all that appears
As a result of your union with the page
Is but an expression
Of the nature of that union.

(on Buddha reflection)

Let your design
Reflect that blissful state
Your constant empty nature.

13b. (outside)

Taking refuge is a principal aspect of Tibetan Buddhism. Like if you were out on a mountainside during a storm, you would seek shelter, like this you take refuge in the Buddha, Dharma and Sangha, collectively known as the three jewels, as a shelter from the usual sufferings of existence. Among many other meanings, Buddha represents the enlightened mind, Dharma - Speech, like the teachings, prayers, mantra recitation etc... and Sangha, the body of practitioners who follow the path of the teachings, support on the journey to enlightenment.

(close to HH's picture)

The guru is considered an embodiment of these three aspects of refuge.

...a rainbow dissolving into a clear empty sky.

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Section 6: Jharkot Activities, Kilaya dance, Muktinath

17. (on 3rd visual)

Oh pen, your words
Have power on perception,

Can influence
Can mould
And mutate it
Into anything at all.
Take responsibility,
For such endeavour,
As the ways of perception
Can bring rise to trickery.
Then the essence seems lost
Although it is always there.

18. (boys)

This is where I developed the idea of simultaneous filming – I mean showing a whole load of different activities that are going on at the same time within a close range area, one by one, again and again, but each time looking more closely at the details.

(near gompa group)

It's like I mentally visualise a spiral placed around the courtyard here at Jharkot monastery, a path for my vision to see everything that is going on more and more closely each time.

This is one of the three monasteries, known as 'gompas' associated with the Sakya tradition of Buddhism, located in the Muktinath valley. It is considered to be at least more than 500 years old.

A coconut in Muktinath, not to mention the nails!

19. (on Alex)

Eco-Himal, an Austrian development cooperation has been coordinating the restoration of the place as well as building additional facilities for its ongoing activities, with the financial aid of the Purnell foundation.

(continued)

I love to watch the hand movements as they reveal so much of the subtleties simultaneously occurring in our mind. It's like getting a subtle insight into the situation, invisible made visible.

(kids around book)

Through the eyes, our wisdom and through the hands we perform the activity of that wisdom, thus they are a method.

(doctor)

The Tibetan doctor can tell the disease of the patient through taking her pulse. All diseases are considered to be an imbalance of the 5 elements of the body. Tibetan medicine seeks to restore the balance.

(end of girl)

Both wisdom - intelligence and method – action, are required simultaneously, whether it's to dry clothes or apples.

(cat jumping)

The standard Nepali cat. Look, same markings as Yogini. Yet so far away from here in Kathmandu! Whereas the capital is situated at 1450 metres above sea level, Jharkot gompa is located at 3500 metres (more than 10,000ft). As well as having an ongoing academic curriculum for the little monks of the monastery and local children of Muktinath, it also houses a Tibetan medical school. Tibetan medicine is made from natural herbs, flowers and minerals, many of which are only found here in these high Himalayan regions. Dal Bhat, the standard nepali meal that runs length and breadth of the country. Dal is a kind of bean and bhat is rice. Often meat and vegetables are served with it.

20. (ridge)

I once climbed along part of the top of this ridge. It was one of the scariest experiences of my life. For at times, the path is extremely thin, like less than 30cm wide, so that within your vision is what lies both to the left and right of it, like looking down 2 practically vertical cliffs at the same time. Then a kind of confusion hits you and you don't quite know where to place your vision, which is crucial at that point otherwise you lose balance and finito!

The river that runs through the whole valley has come from two directions that meet at the end of the triangle at Chongyor. Many many years ago, one ngagpa lama came from Tibet and settled here. His one extended family has developed into the village of Chongyor, where the boys usually carry on the tradition of becoming married lamas, known as ngagpa.

(after first chanting stops)

The lama who told me this story continued to say that the men of Chongyor must find wives from other villages. 'Otherwise they'll have children with 3 heads, 6 arms and 4 legs', I joked, 'Like deity!' Indeed, the symbology of tantric deity forms is vast and a few words cannot do it justice. From the jewellery, to the clothing, number of limbs, head ornaments, colours, etc... each have a symbolic meaning to aid the practitioner meditating upon its form, like a reminder of one's higher potential.

A ngagpa lama is often the holder of a lineage practise that must be handed down from father to son, but is also used to refer to lay practitioners who have taken certain vows and practise regularly.

(after singing)

This is a kind of home produced barley beer, commonly known as 'Chang', but for the purposes of the ritual it is a nectar of offering. All three aspects of the nectar itself and the offering of it and the one to whom it is offered have outer, inner, secret and super-secret meanings attached to them. Much can be said of these, of course, but much can only be

experienced. Even though some methods of one or another branch of Tibetan Buddhism may be slightly different, they are many times identical and in the end the goal is the same for all. Each tradition preserves its own lineages and thus the whole, vast canon of teachings is preserved, like an entire water system that flows from all different parts to one, same ocean.

21. (inside gompa)

This part inside the gompa actually takes place at the beginning of the ritual. Offerings are made to those who may be trying to disturb the practise, thus they are appeased, feel happy and do not create further obstacles. Dear friend, I like this very much, it seems like such a good way to deal with our conflicts!

Appease and then ease!

...a rainbow dissolving into a clear empty sky.

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Section 7: Long Life offering, Lumbini

22. (after Jetsunma)

So, dear pen
Remain with that essence
Using sound
And light
As your tools
To display its truth,
The blank page as space
Upon which it may appear,
The meaning encoded within
Yet designed perfectly
On the exterior
To mirror that core.

23. (on Rinpoche's face)

The Guru manifests as an embodiment of enlightened mind. Like invisible made visible. So that he may be perceived by ordinary beings who have not realised their enlightened nature, he appears in human form to guide beings who are willing to be guided to theirs.

This is a long life offering ceremony to His Eminence Chogye Trichen Rinpoche. Here, our immortal nature is invoked through making prayers to a personified deity form of that state. The ultimate long life is immortality, a state of mind that never moves from its essential being, yet beholds and shines forth all the beautiful qualities of the mind, a state of mind beyond the sufferings of ordinary existence. It does not need to be developed as such, for it is and always has been there, but just accessed.

I saw the ceremony as a kind of dance of offering and receiving. For generosity never fails to echo itself back onto one who has given with heart. One of the main methods of offering here is by using a mandala plate. In brief, it has 5 protruding parts, one at the centre, representing Mount Meru, a pyramidal shaped mountain hailed as the centre of the universe, with four others in the four cardinal directions.

In this way, the lay practitioners of Tibet, meaning non-monastics, members of the Sangha community and the next generation of masters of the various lineages of practises make offerings of long life to the elderly master and so he too has offered his wisdom and knowledge to them. The young eventually grow older and become accomplished practitioners of the teachings and subsequently pass it on to the next generation. In this way the methods of practise and teachings are immortalised as they are handed down from generation to generation, from master to disciple in an unbroken fashion, remaining perfectly in tact and unspoilt by misunderstandings.

In full, the mandala plate incorporates 37 different types of offering each containing various meanings.

(ending on Rinpoche)

For it is said that birth and death, life and dream state are all but figments of that vast imagination... they happen, but they do not affect the immortal state of mind in any way. Many masters have remained conscious of the entire process of transferring from one body to another and have reported similar findings. To have taken control of the process, to have mastered one's mind, is enlightenment.

24. (on Rinpoche and bells)

Dear friend, achieving immortality, conquering death, does not mean that one does not physically die anymore. One must pass out of the loosely grouped gross elements of physical body that have formed a temporary shelter, when the lamp of life force is dry. That is its nature.

...a rainbow dissolving into a clear empty sky.

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Section 8: Dzong, Muktinath

25. (on man and sticks)

And where do you stand?
In truth your words,
Dear pen,
Have no position
Yet they appear on the page
In specific places.
One in front of the other
Lending meaning to the next
And the one before.

(continued)

Like a breast feather released from one or another object that had held it down briefly, blown by the wind that comes along, swept accordingly with that wind, so does the natural course of our lives carry us to different destinations and associates.

After His Eminence Chogye Trichen Rinpoche left Tibet, he came to Mustang. Here at Dzong, reputedly the oldest village of the valley, he once gave a special transmission of the sacred Lamdre teachings, at this little Sakya gumpa situated above the village at the start of the ridge.

An open valley.

A cloud, water in a gaseous form,

Yet the same cloud is but a black shadow on the ground.

Wind moving the leaves,

Snow on the ground, water in solidified form.

Solid leaves without movement from the wind,

One leaf that says it all in its shape.

(moving)

A seemingly still picture, yet with an infinity of detail, a picture that reaches on and on across an endless chain of snow peaks, beyond the horizon.

(on small stupa)

And so, the elements are existing in many different aspects.

Still water that contains the reflection of the sun

Just water alone is appearing in so many aspects, all at the same time as ice, snow, water, cloud etc... and at different speeds,

(moving water 1)

And fire or rather the heat value is automatically revealed by the appearance of water.

(Faster moving water 2)

For if water is in the form of ice, it is obvious that less heat is activated.

(faster moving water 3)

Fire cannot hide where there is water, even if it does not actually appear as flames !

(faster moving water 4)

Many different speeds of water, all at the same time. All pouring forth as the same river that is simultaneously fast at its source and slow at its mouth.

Caves, like faces everywhere seem like guardian sentinels watching over the activities of the valley. Solid, Earth, Stable, the aspect that holds water, that feeds fire, whose surface is continuously caressed and shaped by the wind.

26. (on triangle)

Immortal in the sense of time

(on double triangle)

and infinite in the sense of space, within which all the elements are held.

The Great Mahasiddhas of India who came to Muktinath likened many of the mountains around the valley to that of the mandalas of tantric deities. A mandala, 'khil khor' in Tibetan, means something like 'centre, circle', demonstrating that dynamic energy is moving outwards towards its edge as well as inwards towards the central point at the same time.

27.

I had printed out the photos of Two Keys, One Lock, laminating them on the respective coloured card according to their element. Space, blue, in the centre.

The monks were not quite sure what to make of it, how to acknowledge it.

See, each arm corresponds to a particular element. Water – circle – white

Wind – bowl shaped – green

Fire – triangle – red

Earth – square – yellow

Some water had mistakenly fallen on the floor as the puja started and looked like a kind of dancing deity!

(drum)

The Bardo Thodol, authored by the infamous Guru Padmasambhava, often translated as 'The Tibetan Book of the Dead' is a full guide of the different visions, sounds and experiences one may have as one is dying, after one's breath has extinguished, after one's mind disconnects from the physical body etc... all the way to taking a new form and life. A key point that is emphasised again and again is to remain totally conscious of the

process... For example, most of us when we dream, do not even know we are dreaming and perceive the whole thing as real until we wake up and... how amazing that moment of recognition is, as the dream of the night fades into the dream of the day...

...winds of existence blowing us from one state to another.

Here it is customary to eat with your fingers cupped in a kind of spoon like shape. Dal Bhat again !

When I passed around the individual photos of the Two keys, one Lock, they received a much more welcome response than when they had been collectively formed into one shape, as the monks could now recognise and relate to so many places of the valley. Indeed it seems that single pictures lose much of their individuality when they are gathered together in a group formation, but do at the same time, form a collective power that beholds another message. Automatically you no longer look at the pictures individually, but at the whole shape.

There is a 3-day puja going on regarding a tantric deity. By displaying the raw elements of our being in our behaviour towards people and events, if consciously processed, we are able to tame the five elements of our mental being that usually arise as uncontrolled jealousy, anger, pride, desire and ignorance as the captain of that ship.

Many different musical instruments create many different sounds throughout the puja and despite everything else, do keep you attentive!

...a rainbow dissolving into a clear empty sky.

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Section 9: Lunchtime, lamps, Lumbini

28. (out of monastery)

Whereas the scenes of Muktinath do not have any specific time pattern and all seem to happen at the same time, the visuals of Lumbini run in a fairly strict linear time sequence, from the candle lighting of the night before, leading into the early morning puja and so on. Now it's lunchtime... Dal Bhat,... again!

30.

Holding this clinic daily at this time, the medical team from Singapore Buddha Sasana Society, Sakya Tenphel Ling offer general medicine and medical advice to anyone who may seek it. This compassionate gesture has been going on for many years and has become a recognised feature of the prayer festival.

The younger monks spend much of the year here at the monastic school of Tashi Rabten Ling, where there is a full ongoing curriculum for their overall education.

31.

Life is like a butterlamp, it keeps on burning until the oil is dry and there is no more fuel for the wick to remain alight. Like this, the energy that we have created through past thoughts, words and deeds is that which determines our life force.

32.

Here I play with time, for in accordance with the wishes of His Eminence Chogyé Trichen Rinpoche, a total of 500,000 butterlamps were lit over a period of 10 days, day and night during the Monlam festival. Not just here, in the butter lamp house at the new Tashi Rabten Ling monastery, but also down by the garden of the birthplace of Lord Buddha, where his first Tashi Rabten Ling monastery is situated.

For the physical body is like a great time machine running on its own generated energy that starts ticking at the moment of birth and stops ticking at the moment of death. A perfect machine that the mind may use to process its enlightenment, a state of mind beyond the mechanisms of birth and death.

(on fade in to moon)

For the lamp will keep on burning as long as there is oil and a wick.

33. (in butterlamp house, end of night)

Lighting lamps is another way of earning merit. The one who does it, the one who appreciates it, the one who pays for it even are all directly purifying their mind stream by partaking in such an activity. Just think, when you light a lamp, even if just for a moment, a certain level of peace touches you. Then invisible to this is the offering of the merit itself by those who directly partake in it, so that all beings, who are not even there and who do not even know about it, may benefit from it too.

(on Dharmachakra)

Like expanding a point outwards infinitely so that it may reach everywhere and everyone.

29. & 34. (on roof)

By the power of your union
With the page,
Oh pen,
You give birth to space and time.
As you write,
Both the moment
In which you write each syllable
And the place it occupies
Form an impression
On perception,
That inherently
Knows its true nature,
Yet perceives a meaning.
Do not cause perception
To awaken its judgment

For there is nothing to judge.

35.

Pink flowers of compassion, red and white mixed in love, fire and water mixed in essence.

36.

The moment freezes, trapped by itself, inside itself.

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Section 10: My room, Bouddhanath, Fire

38. (on cross at centre)

There are so many different ways to look at this and from some angles it becomes a real test to understand what truly exists here in solid form and what is just a reflected illusion of it?

(early on zoom out)

The Circle of Immortality is an expression of the five elements. It is made out of different shapes assembled simultaneously one on top of the other. A circle as a base for a pair of equilateral triangles that creates the impression of a square base and resting upon them all, a spiral cut out of a perfect circle. But the aspect that creates the mystery here is the mirror that unfailingly reflects whatever is placed upon its impartial face.

As the timeless state
Becomes a moment
And the eternal space,
Place,
Choose wisely the coordinates
Of your awareness, dear pen.

For as perception
Grasps the moment
And its position,
It is in danger of losing
The correct viewpoint.

39. (on letter)

Conquering death, I had come to understand was far beyond a morbid meditation on the subject as we know it. It's not that you must give up life to conquer death, no, no way.

Yogini entered a sleepy state of pregnancy.

It is more like a way of seeing things that carries you beyond the surface appearance of things as they seem and beyond, beyond, yes eventually beyond death itself as the consciousness becomes re-associated with its natural being.

She is one of the four survivors of the illness in the tank; I wonder if their colours had anything to do with it, for only the two brown ones and two pink ones came through unscathed. The death of the other 12 had left me staring at its straight face as they were removed from the tank one by one. Death does not lie, that's for sure.

40. (on 1st fish eye)

It's like asking what is a circle. So, it's a round line that continuously turns without breaking, which means that there is no way to tell where it begins and where it ends. An infinite line. Therefore you could say that it has neither end, nor beginning. But if that is so then how could it even exist? And the colour of it and the size – all are different according to your own image of it. So, we are better off saying that my circle is not the same as your circle, but that they are both just circles.

(on triangle part)

I used images of the cave cities of the Muktinath valley to represent fire, creating a kind of image of a volcano with a main shaft in the centre. For these are hailed as homes to the guardians of the sacred fire, who can fly to these high rocky parts. Invisible barriers blocked my way into their intricate networks of pathways lined with sandstone towers, for the solid human form cannot pass through these such doors.

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Section 11: Lunchtime, Lumbini

37. (on monks)

All this I speak of, dear friend is not a way that I can somehow save you from your imminent death, which has to come sooner or later anyway - for one who is born is destined to die, but a way in which I can share with you something of what I have come to learn about our process of existence, amongst this Holy Sangha of Lord Buddha.

(on Holiness photo close – ending on rainbow dissolve)

Stand in the core,
Dear pen,
For that is the only place
In the vastness of time and space
From where your perspective
Remains all-pervasive.

But if you search for the centre
You will never find it,
For how can one pinpoint infinity?

...a rainbow dissolving into a clear empty sky.

.....

Section 12: MCG, Jharkot meet, Chongyur, DVD

41a.

Yet in the world of time and space,
The centre appears,
Perfectly emanating forms and sounds
And perception of its creation,
That cut up infinity
Obscuring its pure,
Continuous,
Stainless nature
With its multitude of designs.

42.

Muktinath Chumig-Gyatsa as a place of worship for both Hindus and Buddhists is the destination of many pilgrims to this valley. Many come to pray to and make offerings to the Vishnu statue inside the classical Newari pagoda style Hindu temple and to bathe in the waters that are channelled through 108 pipes from the source behind.

These bunches of rocks and stone gathered in this area of the site are stupas to the dead who were either cremated or chopped into pieces for the birds to consume, known as sky burial. This actually takes place outside the walls on the mountainside behind, where these days, the stupas are also erected.

One of the main phenomenal aspects of the Muktinath valley is found here inside this small Buddhist gumpa of the site. Under its main shrine, flames of blue fire appear from water and stone. One more used to burn on earth, but went out a few decades ago.

41b. (on Dhaulagiri)

Your words too, dear pen
Are clutter
For the eternal space.

43.

Amongst issues of how to raise money for the ongoing restoration and education of the local children, the parents and members of Jharkot gumpa management are deciding how to deal with the children's travel to their winter school location in Kathmandu. Many inhabitants of Mustang migrate to the warmer climate of the lower valleys in winter as from December to March it is extremely cold and facilities, fairly basic.

(after children)

Meetings are meetings all the world over, although they may be enacted in so many different ways. The bottom line is an exchange of ideas, trying to reach a conclusion, but much other change is provoked by a group of people just gathering together. For the topic of discussion is never the only topic at hand.

44. (on red flower)

Different forms, different colours steal my attention as I watch the dance of transmutation of energy from one form to another, the dynamic action of the elements constantly dancing, one with the other.

(on tea)

For energy although it is constantly changing aspect, can neither be created nor destroyed.

45.

Last year, we made a film of the building of the statue of Lord Buddha in the new Tashi Rabten Ling gumpa in Lumbini. Most people in Mustang are familiar with His Eminence Chogyi Trichen Rinpoche and I was interested to film their reaction to these visuals. There were no questions, no comments, just a kind of total absorption in the activity of the guru. Dear friend, is it not the energy of faith, the backbone that gets us through.... But faith in what? In someone that portrays an energy that you believe in, something that you experience that raises in you a kind of energy that you like to feel... faith or rather trust is kind of an abstract thing, and reflected back on ourselves becomes a way that we find the means to go on. Without faith in whatever, we would not and could not go on. We would seek death, thinking that it would provide that resting space that we so much want to reside in, but cannot due to the constant pressures from the outside that create a kind of torment in our minds. But the moment to rest is now, whilst we are alive carrying out the activities of our daily lives, for the resting state is the immortal state that does not begin and end, but is a constant truth of our being.

.....
Section 13: UNESCO Meeting, Lumbini

46.

Everything takes its own sweet time in Nepali time – things get done when they get done, but they do get done.

(on pond)

Stand in the heart
Of time and space
Oh pen,
So that you may connect
To its essential truth,
The eternal guru,
To become its meaning,
By trusting its meaning.

47. (on Mukunda)

Although the predominant topic of this meeting was how to keep the traditions of Buddhism alive in the mountainous Himalayan region in general, the three Sakya gompas of Muktinath were represented here as well as mainly the other monasteries from the

district of Mustang. The repairing of old temple buildings, safe storage of old texts, reviving the lama dances and mandala building were just some of the issues raised. But underlying all of this is a determination to encourage the young members of the community to join the monasteries and to continue the traditions and practises. And these days that means having some modern facilities.

(After GV + shadow)

I was once again caught by more subtleties of the meeting, for it seemed that it was the hands that were communicating with the eyes of the listeners and that the response too, came from the hand movements.

(on individual monks speaking)

This focus does not mean to undermine the importance of the topic of discussion, which is taking place in words, but somehow forms an even deeper understanding of its true expression.

48.

The land is as flat as you can find here and the people more accustomed to Indian ways and dress as the border is less than 10km away.

Dear friend, there is love for everyone. In Lumbini, the birthplace of Lord Buddha, even the animals are feeling the vibes.

May I therefore accomplish countless benefits for living beings in all the ten directions, by the power of perfect wisdom in its myriad incarnations.

Through whatever small virtue I have gathered by reciting this Aspiration of Samantabhadra, may all the virtuous aspirations of living beings be accomplished in a single instant.

Through the boundless merit gained by so dedicating these Aspirations of Samantabhadra, may the countless beings drowning in the torrent of suffering reach the stage of Amitabha.

May this greatest of dedication prayers benefit countless living beings.

May reciting this ornament of Samantabhadra release all beings from the suffering of the lower realms.

...a rainbow dissolving into a clear empty sky.

.....
Section 14: Kyinga, Kagbeni, Muktinath

49a. (on pool)

Manifest in form and sound,
You too are the guru
Dear pen,
But a reflection

Of your inner awareness.
Keep your awareness
In that nature
And you will reflect this threesome
Perfectly
In your words.

A pyramid shaped rock in a pool of water reflecting the space,
.....

Section 15: My Room, Bouddhanath, Earth

52. (on top of panning, space of 2 keys)

...a cycle of wind leading to its centre.

Earth is represented by the colour yellow and is square in shape. Also at the base of the Circle of Immortality is a square base, not defined as such by lines, but can be seen if you mentally join the four corners of the equilateral triangles that rest on the surface of the mirror, like a kind of invisible foundation, the stability of mind.

53. (on stupa)

For your words, dear pen
Are but the mere tips
Of the rays of light
Upon which dance
The deities of perception,
Manifest through the
Songs of intrinsic awareness
That lies at the core of the ray.

54. (abandons toy)

So Yogini abandoned her childhood toy as the time for her motherhood came closer and closer.

(on fish)

And the fish seemed angry these days. I didn't want to put new fish in the tank until the cycle of the white spot disease had fully passed. The other three fish did not play like the others used to and, I mean, just imagine being stuck inside a vast mirrored kingdom, where everywhere you look you see your own reflection. Perhaps it is just the nature of our own vision to understand this... perhaps she doesn't see it like that, who knows?

(fat belly)

Looking like a mountain against the clear blue sky of Muktinath, Yogini's belly full of treasures, expanded to maximum.

55.

Dear friend, for many days I thought upon the journey of these little creatures from inside there, to outside here. In the same space already, yet in another frame of mind as the breath of life that connects us to this reality had not yet entered into their forms.

56. (on stupa zoom-rock)

So too, when the breath of life expires, we pass into a different frame and focus.

.....
Section 16: Kyinga, Kagbeni, Muktinath

49a. (Kyinga)

On my way back down the valley, I passed through the village of Kyinga where its inhabitants were in full swing of their daily activities.

Although Mustang lies within the geographical boundaries of Nepal, the people are Tibetan in culture, as the border with present day China lies around 70 kilometres or so from here.

49b. (on end of boys)

Bursting into rainbow colours,
That playful energy
Of true being
Displays itself
In your speech.
Oh pen,
Feel the deities dance
As you scratch
the surface
Of the blank page,
Intrinsic awareness
Manifest as words.

50. (on end of ridge)

Hermits used to meditate in these rocky caves at the end of the ridge – I wonder if they are still there? I don't know how they could get there, as it would seem you would need the power to fly!

(on prayer wheels)

Here, on the roof of the small Sakya gumpa in Kagbeni, I could feel Earth held in a kind of stillness. Undisturbed by the habitual daily wind of the Kali Gandaki that does not rise until late morning and persists through to early evening, the prayer wheels spoke of something untouched, yet something vividly present.

51.

I look East to where I have come from, the valley of Muktinath and the rocky road leading to here, to the ancient fortress town of Kagbeni at its mouth.

I look north to where I want to go, to Upper Mustang, along a seemingly endless trail of cave cities.

I look west to where I cannot go, for there is a mountain blocking the way.

Hermits have been meditating in these caves too for centuries, their gaze upon the valley of Muktinath that lies directly opposite.

I look to where the river of Muktinath flows into the Kali Gandaki. By Hindu tradition, aeons of sins may be purified by dipping in the water three times at this confluence point.

I look south, to where I have to go,

Across that bridge.

Indeed it would seem better to behold it gently in one's vision as a constant means of joy just from feeling that it is present, here, with you, right now, for as long as it can remain, according to its natural lifespan. Why pick at it and watch it shrivel at your fingertips.

'Please do not pluck the flower of life'

From far away, there seems to be a statue encased within the glass, but close up from this angle, it has become a mirror.

And the musical instruments cannot sound without players, so it is silent in here, silent, but loud, for even though the room is dark, the objects that appear in my vision speak to me of many things.

The young 14th Dalai Lama, flame of knowledge burning in his mind. Elderly Dalai Lama, flame of compassion, flame of wisdom.

...a rainbow dissolving into a clear empty sky.

.....

Section 17: Sun setting, candles, Lumbini

57b. (on mani wheel)

So remain in the centre
And proclaim your message,
Oh pen.
But what is that message
You may consider.
But why be curious,
For the matter is self-revealing.

57a. (on flower garden)

As an offering to Lumbini, that was just a few years ago scarcely forested scrub ground, His Eminence Chogyi Trichen Rinpoche created a nursery for all types of plants that may be suited to this difficult climate, making offerings of them to all the establishments of the area, now beautified by such a colourful display, worthy to the birthplace of Lord Buddha.

This is the first Tashi Rabten Ling monastery located right next to the garden of the birthplace of Lord Buddha.

There are an estimated 5 million flowers now blooming in the UN designated four square kilometre master development plan area of Lumbini and people who stay and visit here receive much subtle pleasure from this brightened landscape.

The tea pots now resting, cauldrons of rice and thugpa – a kind of noodle soup busily provide nourishment to thousands, whose temporary camp has fully operative facilities.

Food and water keep our bodies alive and clean. Just think that all villages, towns and cities are based around access to these fundamental necessities. Without them, we would die.

(on 1st flags and ruins)

I meditate on the nature of birth in this garden, the place of the birth of Lord Buddha.

(on flags)

Again, no wind and that timeless feeling that appears when it is at rest in its spacious aspect.

(on ruins and flags later)

It is through Lord Buddha's taking birth that all the deeds of his life were to unfold. If he had not taken birth, then these would not have taken place and the vast canon of teachings that followed would have never been revealed. Teachings that contain so many different methods according to the many varieties of human beings, depending on their style of life, their capacity of intelligence, their determination etc..., different ways to come to understand the existence beyond suffering.

58. (ending on final sun setting)

I would like to spend more time on this expression to you, allowing it just to arise with the natural unfolding of time, but I also feel constrained to finish this letter soon. For even though time may be infinite in essence, in our human consciousness it is limited,... as you well know.

59. (on pond and lights)

Accumulating merit is one way to subdue the negative forces of our mind streams. For we create merit by doing things for others that destroys our selfish addiction, by making

offerings we are creating generosity that kills stinginess, etc..., incense to please the smell sense and light, the vision, to illuminate the mind.

By offering the merit that we create through whatever activity, for the benefit of all others, we create a kind of energy of sharing that leaves a pleasant feeling in the mind.

(on 1st of 3 candles)

The offering of light in all traditions is a highly revered and sacred act. For it is to awaken what is currently dark... it enables vision, it subdues fear.

... and just one small light can illuminate an entire room.

(after 'It's a ghost movie)

Indeed, it is just like a ghost movie!

.....
Section 18: My room, Bouddhanath, Water

60a. (after 'Yeh')

Your perception
Remains ever
As that nuclear energy
Of Intrinsic awareness
Appearing
As a multitude of
Its own forms,
Driven by its playful energy
And blissful knowledge
That it is actually
Nothing at all !,

61.

So, the kittens were born, Yogini became a mother and life for everyone moved on in a new way with the appearance of these little beings. What a joy !

62. (on letter)

Although I have been writing all this time, it seems like I've written nothing and that all my words have merely faded into space.

63. (on 2 keys, water circle)

The circle of water, the circle of life, the circle of immortality. For water when stilled is like a mirror and can reflect the entirety of space within its pool. It is where heaven meets earth, for it is the earth that cradles the water.

Moving water does not create such reflection, for it is busy on its own route, yet automatically pouring onwards, towards the ocean.

60b. (end of water circle)

The mirror of awareness
Ever revealing
Itself to itself,
Bliss and emptiness
Dancing together
In inseparable union.

(on pigeons)

This was the first rain in 7 months, a great relief from days of constant sunshine that had parched and dried up the land.

64. (on kitten in tank)

I had watched this little white kitten being born and around a month after this, I had also held her in my hands as she died at the jaws of a bunch of dogs. I often wondered in what form this little stream of energy that was once a bunch of gross bodily elements arranged in the form of cat, now discarded and dissolved, had ended up. For it was like she had merely passed through another short chapter of her existence with us, on a long journey of births and deaths, again and again, until reaching enlightenment. I prayed for her to reach that immortal state.

For to conquer death, is to conquer life, to be able to dance with its manifesting elements, whilst resting in the immortal nature of one's own mind, so that when one does experience death, just like when dreaming, one merely experiences a change of appearance.

That is what the masters say.

Really it is just a story of a film and a bunch of photographs.... Remember !