



Studying Buddhism in Boudhanath

Feature

**Part 2: How I met the Guru and started practicing the path
of highest yogic Tantra of Tibetan Buddhism.**

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Boudhanath is one of those places you can just fall into. It may start with a casual association with the little store owner on the corner of the street, or as an inspired thought emerging as you sip your coffee in one of the numerous terraced restaurants overlooking the stupa, while you're sub-consciously watching and settling your mind into

the rhythm of the flow of *kora* going on continuously around its base; people walking and clacking at prayer beads, or engaged in conversation with a fellow kora-goer around its circular perimeter. Whatever it is, it can grasp and hold onto you so that you may easily come to call this place, 'home'.

The fact that I first came to Nepal under the auspices of conducting pre-

production research for a film project is ironic, because much of the time I spent studying under Rinpoche, I was also making films. First, ones associated with him and his monastery, and then, my own. It was through this medium that Rinpoche was guiding me to develop my creativity, itself a process of freeing and expressing one's inner light. Editing a movie also trains you to be precise



in your choices, and that you have to throw out what is not needed, skills that are also required in managing 'the movie of life'!

Because, throughout the whole period I was extensively training on the path of *Tantra*, filmmaking was one of the ways in which I could fuel the energy that was being released and exposed to me, into something constructive and worthy. The path of Tantra is not, as common opinion would dictate, associated with sexual union, until a highly advanced stage of practice. It's also not only dangerous to undertake the Tantric path without proper guidance; dangerous in the sense that, through this style of meditation practice, which includes visualization, focusing on energy points within your inner system, and the repetition of powerful mantras, at an increasing range as you get more advanced, you're releasing your own powerful, inherent energy that doesn't get activated until provoked by certain methods to do so. As well as requiring a proper attitude to handle it, there also needs to be an end usage for it, otherwise this kind of exposure can make you literally crazy!

There were a number of reasons why I came back to Nepal a second time. My first trip to the valley of Muktinath, in Mustang, during the previous summer, although 'out of this world' in the sense of being explorative on both an outer and inner level, had left me with a sense of incompleteness. It seemed like a taster, and not the end of the road! On the one hand, I was ecstatic at having received approval from our

Italian producers to go ahead with the Muktinath film project, along with the promise of half-a-million dollars on the table to fund it, yet despondent, after the director, who on a subsequent visit to Nepal had been to see Chogyé Trichen Rinpoche (who I hadn't met yet), and had been told by him that the time was not right to make such a film, to which he had halted it, half-a-million dollars and all. Left in a state of dichotomy, I intuited that there was a much bigger picture that I couldn't see at the time.

I was also looking for life experiences, to live in other countries, but there were practical reasons, too. I had split from my partner, shut the doors to a failed business, and come here with my two young children of four and five, to start again...continue, rather! Returning to Nepal was an option that just wouldn't let me go! In the months before coming back, I started having a number of premonitions and dreams, and even saw myself walking through a doorway to the right of a building and up a staircase...

I had been crying out for a guru, a teacher, to help me understand what was happening to me as I wrote down the meaning of life into my notebook. Deeper down, I knew I was coming to Bouddhanath to meet and study under a great master. Each time I heard the name, Chogyé Trichen Rinpoche, I would take notice. But, I would wait, I told myself, until he called me to see him. This was the absolutely surest way not to mess up the timing and precision for such an event as this. So, I waited.



Setting up a home, and finding a kindergarten school for the kids and job for myself would happen in neat succession, sealing my feeling of being welcomed. Bouddha, Nepal, was allowing me in. I was settling down, and my job as the copy editor of a national daily truly plugged me into the system, a crash course in Nepal, as I edited article after article of local news. Every month, I would duly receive a cheque for just about exactly the amount I needed to cover all our expenses, including housing, feeding, and educating myself and the kids. Then, I started getting requests from people I had met at various functions around town to do contractual work for them. I could do this from the comfort of home, in my own time, and get paid as much, if not more than at the newspaper. Within six months, I quit the job and trusted in the flow.

It was roughly around that time that I got the first 'invitation' to meet Rinpoche. Well, that was how I perceived it then. I had set myself up and created the space for something else in my life, so it was time to start what I was really here for!

**I enter through a door on the right hand side of a building and climb up the staircase...I can almost tell you the way from here, but I remain in file behind the friend, who I've just met by chance nearby the stupa, who's now suddenly bringing me here.*

"Whatever you wish, whatever you desire, will be fulfilled by simply requesting the Stupa," Rinpoche had told me on that first visit. A simple enough statement, the inner meanings of which would take years for me to decipher.

And, after this, Rinpoche's other close disciples, who would also become dear friends of mine, started gathering just like that. I bumped into several of them, randomly in the street, in the middle of Kathmandu, and then two more joined our little group and we started meeting every day, going on trips in the valley, drinking tea, and eating meals together, intellectually discussing the laws of Esoterics that would end up in long debates. All of us wanted 'to practise Buddhism', for whatever reason, and by the end of the first week, decided to collectively go and meet Chogyé Trichen Rinpoche and ask him specifically what form of meditation we should be doing and how to actually do it.



And Rinpoche, of course, replied without us even having to ask him!

As we're arriving at his rooms, we're ushered in. A number of people are already sitting on the carpeted floor. He's going to give us the blessing of the deity, Green Tara, and the ceremony is literally just about to start. Here's my answer... happening in perfect synchrony to my question...this is the meditation I should be doing! About an hour and a half later, we leave, with a little booklet printed in English in hand, containing instructions on how to follow the meditation and layout of the practise of Green Tara.

And so I started a daily meditation, something that became a habit as the weeks, months, and years went by.

I remember that carpet now. I must have sat on nearly every patch of it in the next six years, as Rinpoche took me from one meditation to the next, in a chain of practises that, like climbing up a chord, helped me ascend to more subtle levels of perception.

Sometimes, these practises entailed staying in meditation retreat for whole periods of time. These I would carry out in my own home, with strict timings for the sessions, moulding my timetable so that my first meditation of the day would be over when the kids were waking up, and I could therefore spend time with them before they went to school, my morning session after that, and then my lunch break and afternoon one would be over by the time they returned and then left again for their daily wushu class. We'd then have the early evening together before they'd go to bed. My last session of the day would be after that.

Every so often, I'd pop in to meet Rinpoche at lunchtime, to iron out confusions over matters both spiritual and practical, and from my questions, he could understand which level of consciousness I was emanating, and what guidance and focus I would need to help me refine through to the next.

The journey was only beginning.