



‘Sleep Well and Awaken to Luminous Mind’

An Edited Excerpt from Oral Teachings by Tenzin Wangyal Rinpoche



Every single night when we go to sleep, there is this sense of there being a great opportunity to have a lucid dream and to have a clear light sleep. And lucid dreams and clear light sleep will both have a direct impact in the process of dying. When we're dying, we will more likely be able to be aware in the first stage of the intermediate state if we have more experiences with sleep yoga. And we will be more awake in the second stage of intermediate state if we have more experiences with the dream yoga practice. Both of these, dream and sleep yoga, are very much preparing you for that moment. Not only that, but every single night is a great, great opportunity to explore and develop yourself.

What do you normally do every night for your process of going to sleep? What is your attitude as you're going into the bedroom and to the bed, and you're lying down, turning off the light, closing your eyes? Is it a sense of totally letting go and losing connection, losing awareness? Or is there a sense that you are entering into the sacred space, entering into the sacred dimension, entering into the infinite possibility, entering into the space of freedom, entering into the infinite light? We don't go to sleep that way, we just give up, give up, give up. But recognize that as you are giving it all up, it's not that nothing happens after that. Actually, a lot of things are happening. Your awareness is diminishing, but the hidden experiences of your fear, your pain, your conflict, your challenging experiences of the day, your stress, they are still there – many of

them ignored, unacknowledged, unconscious, manipulated, suppressed. And the more disconnected you are and the less conscious you are, the more they will come alive. Be aware of that.

They come alive as experiences that show up in your body and in your dreams when you are sleeping. You say that you simply slept last night, but so many things were alive, so many stories were active, so many interactions were there, so many energies were produced, so many thoughts and feelings and emotions were produced, so many things were accumulated when you slept. So it's not just that you went to sleep and then there was nothing. There is this other side of ourselves that we don't want to be active, but which becomes very active when we are asleep. And just imagine how many years it's been going on like that – each time you've fallen asleep everything becoming active again and again. Amazing!



Why am I saying all of this? Because if that dark side – negative thoughts, emotions, feelings, fear and the pain – can become so alive when we sleep, then that means that the light, the awareness, the warmth, the virtues, compassion, love, joy, the bliss, the creativity, solutions, discovery, that part can also become *equally* alive. That is a very important point. But just as important is that you come to trust that you'll be able to do that yourself, or at least be curious enough to want to explore the possibility.

Think about the possibility that every single night as you go to sleep, you are preparing yourself to be more conscious and more aware, so that while your body is sleeping, and your conscious mind is sleeping, your awareness is fully awake. Because, while you are deep asleep, there is the possibility of being conscious, of awakening to the clear light, your true nature.

If you think, “How will it be possible for me to awaken in my sleep?” remember the conceptual and emotional side of sleep and how alive all those stories and interactions can be once they awaken. Well, if the ignorance can awaken in your sleep, why not the wisdom? Why not the light? Why not the awareness? Why not the warmth? If you can lose those in your sleep, then why can't you also find them there, too? I'm not just saying that, I have personally experienced it and have seen many other people who've experienced it, too.

Many people have reported similar kinds of awakening in their near-death experiences – they die in a very real sense, and during that time, they become alive. They wake up in a different dimension. They wake up in a space that they were never familiar with in their life. They wake up in a light that they've never seen before – an intensity, clarity, vastness, boundlessness. And with an infinite ability to do things or move things.

There have been many reports like this. And many people who've gone through a near-death experience report becoming much more spiritual people than before they had that experience; something awakens in them.

So think about that in relation to sleep practice. Imagine going to sleep and every morning you wake up, you are a little more spiritual. And there's more development happening in that period of your sleep than during the daytime when you're going to the temple, to the church, and you are doing all these complicated things, trying to convince everyone to be kind and nice, and meanwhile you're getting stressed out trying to be *too* kind. No development happening there. But imagine that you go to sleep and you wake up, and you are a better person. Without doing anything. Why? Because your conceptual effort is not there, but the potentiality of awareness *is* there; the connection of awareness is there.

So, before death comes, or a near-death experience occurs, is it possible to have experiences similar to that? Absolutely you can! Every single night you go to sleep you have the opportunity.

As your body goes down, as your ego goes down, as your conflict and pain go down, as your ignorance goes down, in that darkness, the light can arise. In that ignorance, the wisdom can arise. In that sleep, the awareness can arise. I'm sure many of you have had those experiences, but you haven't paid so much attention to them or made that big a deal of them. But in a way, you should, because if you witness it happening one time, you can witness its happening many more times. And with practice you can even develop control over its happening.

From the Sleep Yoga practices from the Ma Gyud there is one simple exercise that I would like to share with you. To be clear, the purpose of doing this exercise is to connect with the clear light of sleep. And the purpose of doing that is to be conscious during the process of dying and to connect with the clear light of the death.

For those of you who are not as familiar with dream and sleep yoga, you can learn much more about them from my book *The Tibetan Yogas of Dream and Sleep*.



This exercise from the Sleep Yoga teachings from the Ma Gyud is very simple and the explanation is very simple. As it is very simple, I hope that you will apply it as much as possible in your life. You can pray and trust in it. And don't give up – it is a lifetime practice.

The exercise is as follows: sit in the five-point position, close your eyes, breathe deep three times – each time you do it, inhale and hold, re-inhale a little more and hold, then breathe out

through your nose and release the tensions in your body, breath and mind.

Be aware of the stillness, silence and spaciousness.

Then look at all of the objects of your ego and pain and fear and imagine dissolving those objects into light. If you look right now in your life, you can find that you are afraid, you are afraid of something – there's an object of that fear. Or you are feeling pain – and there's an object of that pain.

Visualize those objects, those places and people, and then imagine dissolving them into light. So first imagine one of them very clearly – and then have it dissolve into light.

Continue in that way imagining every object and transforming into the light.

In every object you have stored some emotions. When the mind goes back to that object and transforms that object into light, there are no longer any stories there. Its hard-drive is broken, and the memory can no longer hold them. So it's completely free from those stories. It doesn't occupy the space. It is dissolved.

And then, imagine and visualize that the light from each object that is dissolved comes back toward you, and when it touches a part of your body, for instance your hand, then your hand gently transforms into light, or it touches your head and your head transforms into light. As you proceed, every part of your body, every cell in your body, transforms into the light.

The idea is – if you can feel pain, the more concrete forms of pain, the shapes of pain, the pain identity, the pain body – if you can feel that, you can also transform that into the light in the same way as with all the external objects.

So, everything transforms into light. Light, light, light. Transforming your body into a light body. Then imagine that the light coalesces into one single sphere of light in the area of your

forehead. So that you are nothing more than that sphere of light. Your sense of self – there's no solidity – only a sense of a sphere of light in the region of your forehead.

Once you come to that place and feel very clearly about that, then let it dissolve – let that sphere of light gently explode into the boundless space, dissolving into the space. Pixels of light spreading out into the vast unboundedness of space.

Now what is there? There's nothing but that boundless space and that pure presence of awareness of that space. Simple pure presence of light. You don't have a solid body anymore. Unbounded space is your body. You don't have a concrete limited mind anymore. Your infinite awareness is your consciousness. You have this unbounded body, you have infinite awareness consciousness. The possibility is infinite since you are not identifying with your body, your body is gone, but your awareness is still there.

If you exercise this, develop this more and more and more, then as your physical body – which is not who you are – goes to sleep, your awareness starts to wake up – that's who you are. Awaken the luminous mind. Awaken yourself. That is what that means.

(You can learn more about dream and sleep yoga from Tenzin Wangyal Rinpoche's book *The Tibetan Yogas of Dream and Sleep*,
available at Ligmincha International's [Bookstore and Tibet Shop](#). This book has been translated into many languages.)