

ROLAND R. ROPERS



## Dzogchen

### *Gateway to the Supreme Reality*

10th September 1992  
LONG LAKE FOOD SHOP  
Three Rivers / Michigan / USA  
300km east of Chicago

In **September 1992** I accompanied **Dom Bede Griffiths** (1906 - 1993) on a trip to the USA (**Big Sur, San Francisco, Chicago, Kalamazoo, Three Rivers and Ganges**). It was his last trip to America, filled with great encounters.

At the end of **August 1992**, we went on holiday to **Raimon Panikkar** (1918 – 2010) in **Tavertet/Spain**. On 1st September we celebrated the 55th birthday of Benedikt's godmother **Traudl** there in a merry circle. Raimon was almost 76 years old at the time and planned to walk around **Mount Kailash** in October - completely absurd for a person of that age. Raimon hoped not to

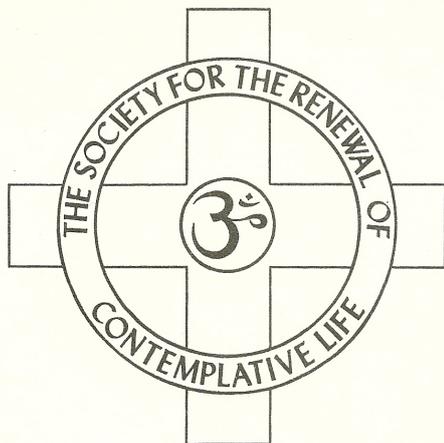
return - too many worries and problems had piled up. **Christiane** had admonished him not to leave the earth until everything was solved.

N.B. In my book "**MYSTIKER unserer ZEIT**" (**MYSTICS of our TIME**"), **Raimon Panikkar's** account of his experience on **Mount Kailash** is published in the chapter "**Alles ist Licht!**" (**Everything is Light!**).

On **5th September 1992**, I flew from Barcelona via Madrid to San Francisco. From there I continued to Monterey, where friends had picked me up. **Bede Griffiths** had already been in the USA since June. We all met at the **New Camaldoli Monastery** in **Big Sur**, where **Brother David Steindl-Rast** was a member of the monastic community until 1997. He celebrated his 95<sup>th</sup> birthday on 12<sup>th</sup> July 2021 – we are in constant contact.

On 6th September, Bede Griffiths had solemnly inaugurated the new **Spiritual Centre** at the **ESALEN Institute**, on the Pacific coast of Big Sur (a few kilometres from the monastery).

On 7th September I was in **San Francisco** with Bede Griffiths, where we had founded together the "**SOCIETY for the RENEWAL of CONTEMPLATIVE**"



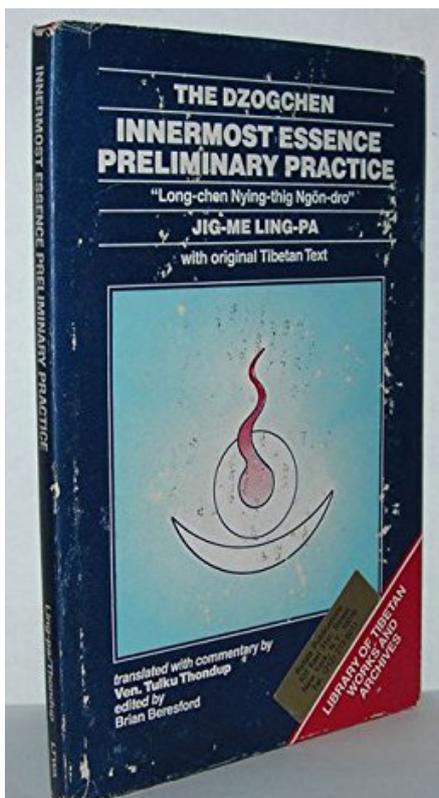
*" I see in the Society a spiritual movement to renew contemplative life in the church and in the world. "*

*Bede Griffiths*

On 8th September we flew together from San Francisco to Chicago, continuing by car to Kalamazoo. Lecture on "**Body, Soul & Spirit**" at the **FETZER Institute**.

9th and 10th September in the small town of **Three Rivers**.

**Bede Griffiths** visited **Helen M. Luke** (1904 - 1995) on her beautiful estate "**Apple Farm**". The English woman was a direct disciple of **C.G. Jung**. Bede Griffiths was in contact with her by letter for many years - now finally the personal encounter. A memorable late summer day.



**Bede Griffiths** had repeatedly urged me to study the little book **DZOGCHEN**. I had tried in vain to get it from **WATKINS BOOKSHOP**, London.

On 10th September, I went for a little walk with some friends through the village of Three Rivers. We had bought some refreshments at the **Long Lake Food Shop**. In the back of the cosy shop was a small antiquarian bookshop. There, miraculously, I discovered the little book Bede Griffiths had put on my heart. I was stunned.

On Friday, **11th September 1992**, we arrived in **Ganges**, about 4 hours' drive north of **Chicago** at the **Vivekananda Monastery**, around noon. More than 400 people had travelled from all parts of North America and Canada for a 3-day conference at which **Bede Griffiths** was the keynote speaker,

giving a great talk each day.

**Ramakrishna's** disciple **Swami Vivekananda** (1863 - 1902) is the co-founder of the **Parliament of the World's Religions**, which was born on **11th September 1893** at the **Museum of Arts in Chicago**. **Christiane**, our close friends **Raimon Panikkar**, **Brother David**, **Sister Pascaline Coff O.S.B.** **Dr. Meath Conlan** from Australia and I were active participants in the centenary celebrations from 28th August to 5th September 1993 in Chicago, where Bede Griffiths, who died on **13th May 1993** in **Shantivanam** / South India, was remembered in a special ceremony. Bede Griffiths was invited to this impressive event as the most important personality besides the **XIV. Dalai Lama**.

**Ramakrishna** (1836 - 1886), who tried the most diverse religious systems and directions, attained enlightenment on each of these paths and therefore

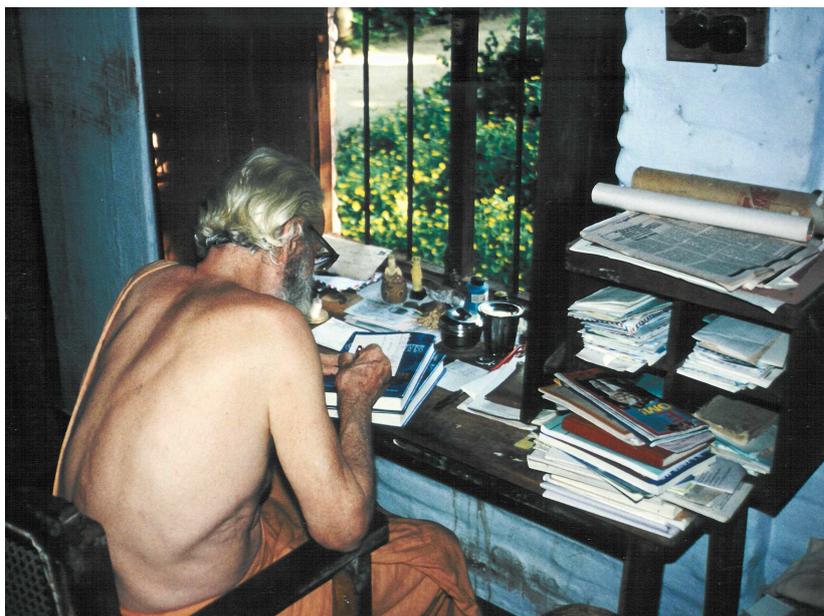
declared from his own experience that the followers of all religions can touch and internalize the *Ultimate Reality* if their devotion to God is intense enough. In a vision he recognized Christ as a divine incarnation. On the night of **25th December 1887**, several disciples of **Ramakrishna** gathered under the leadership of **Vivekananda** and founded a monastery. It was only later that the young monks realized that it was the *Christmas Night* of the Christians and saw it as a confirmation of their close relationship with Christianity, based on Ramakrishna's spiritual experiences. The headquarters of the order is **Belur Math** on the **River Ganges** near Calcutta. There are also more than 200 other monasteries of the order in India, plus some outside India.

**VEDANTA**, a philosophical and spiritual school of *Hinduism* based on the four *Vedas*, teaches that man is divine by nature and that the highest and true goal of all human existence is the unfolding and realization of this divinity.

In the *Vivekananda Monastery* in **Ganges** there was an imposing bookshop which fascinated me as usual. Although I passed by the abundance of highly interesting books on offer several times a day, I had bought only one small paperback book, which was not even placed in a clearly visible position:

***The SERMON on the MOUNT according to VEDANTA***  
by **Swami PRABHAVANADA**.

I immediately read and studied this booklet, which was first published in 1946, several times. I was overwhelmed by this jewel of spiritual literature. **Swami Prabhavananda**, a monk of the Ramakrishna Order, lived and worked in the USA from 1926 until his death in 1976.



# *ONE with the Energies of Life*

**Bede Griffiths** (1906 – 1993), the Benedictine monk and sage was convinced that the practice and knowledge of **Dzogchen** is the direct gateway to realize **Supreme Reality**. In 1992 Bede Griffiths introduced me in the innermost essence of that secret teaching and gave me one of his last handwritten manuscripts on 4<sup>th</sup> **December 1992**. This document is so precious and concise that it evidences the deepest source of a great spiritual master of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

## The DZOGCHEN

(The main teaching of the **Nying-ma**-school of Tibetan Buddhism, regarded as the ultimate and most secret teaching of **Shakyamuni Buddha**)

by Bede Griffiths

**Dzogchen**, which means the great perfection (**Dzog** = perfection, **chen** = great) is a way of realization, a way of experience the fullness of wisdom and compassion. The tradition of the Dzogchen was brought to Tibet in the 8<sup>th</sup> century by **Padmasambhava** and **Vimalamitra** and put into a uniform system by **Longchenpa** in the 14<sup>th</sup> century.

Normally, there are three stages of training required to achieve the great perfection. The first being meditation or **sutra**, wherein you follow the teaching of the **Buddha**. You start with the doctrine and discipline of the Buddha. You also meditate, do yoga, perform rituals and are initiated into the various stages of Spiritual Life. Then comes the tantra, the second stage. Unlike the sutra stage where you tend to leave the world behind and concentrate on the inner world; in the inner self, here in the tantra stage you start with the body, with the breath, with the blood, and with the feelings. It is the opposite of the sutra. With the sutra you leave everything behind. You forget your body, forget your feelings and focus on your mind, opening to the transcendent. At the tantra level, you start with the body, the senses, the feelings and the breath – the breath particularly. In tantra, you begin to draw on the powers of the unconscious.

Christians, generally speaking, are completely ignorant of these powers of the unconscious.

Our religion is on the conscious level which we have developed quite marvelously. But beyond the conscious are all these powers of the unconscious where we are **one with nature**, with the dynamic forces in the unconscious which are tremendously powerful but which can be controlled, and you can learn to control them, in nature and in your own being.

The third stage is where you go beyond meditation and beyond the tantra and discern what is known as the Primordial State, the **Buddha nature within you**. In Christian terms we would say: you have your body, your physical organism and you have learnt to control a great deal of that energy; you have your psychological organism: senses, feeling, imagination, reason, will and then you go beyond your body, beyond your psyche to your **pneuma**, your **spirit**, the **atman** in Sanskrit, and there you open up to the **Divine**, the **Transcendent**, the **Infinite**. The aim of all this practice is to open up to the sphere of the **Infinite** and the **Eternal**, which is in everybody and everything.

GOD is in everybody and everything but is hidden.

We live in our bodies and we forget about the spirit. We live in our psyches and we are occupied by that.

And we Christians, most of us, have not discovered the spirit yet.

Most of our religion is on the level of the body and the psyche; it is all in our mind, our will, our conscious mind – which is good as far as it goes. But beyond the body and the psyche is the **pneuma**, the **spirit**. **St. Francis of Sales** called it: „*the fine point of the soul*“, the point which the great Jesuit and theologian **Karl Rahner** mentions as the point of self-transcendence. We have within us the capacity to transcend the body and the soul and to open onto the Divine, the infinite and the eternal. It is in every human being, it is what is called **Buddha nature**. It is, of course, hidden. It is the ground as it were. But all the work of meditation and of the tantra is intended to open up this hidden centre where we are one with the **Supreme**, the **Eternal**.

The teaching of Dzogchen is that you don't have to go through all the discipline: you don't have to do tantra.

You can get a sudden enlightenment and it is normally by transmission.

This is like the Hindu tradition. In the Hindu tradition the Guru is one who has had experience of **Brahman**, the **Infinite**. He is able to transmit it to another who eventually opens up and becomes enlightened. The person then may have sudden enlightenment: a total oneness with the Supreme – **brahmaidya** - realization of the Atman, realization of your own inner self. Through this you discover the Infinite, the Eternal. In the Buddhist tradition you discover your Buddha nature. You enter into Buddhahood. In India we talk about **jivan-mukta**: the person liberated while still alive. Dzogchen speaks of the ultimate state as the **Primordial State, existing from the beginning, hidden beyond your body, senses, your feelings and all your limitations.**

In the Dzogchen teaching you realize your Buddha nature, the Primordial State, and that state is absolute perfection. In that state everything is contained in perfect wholeness, fullness, bliss. In the Hindu tradition we speak of Saccidananda: being in full consciousness and absolute bliss. That is the goal for all Hindus.

In the Dzogchen, they say the master can initiate you into this experience of the Primordial State. In this state **you do not leave the world behind**. I believe that the danger with the meditation movement is that you tend to leave the world behind. You concentrate on your mind, you go beyond, but the world is lost. You do not know how to relate to it. You tend to think of it all as an illusion, and that is very dangerous: it is a sort of dualism. In the Dzogchen and the deeper traditions of Buddhism and Hinduism you have to integrate all the other levels of reality in the Supreme. The physical, the psyche, with all aspects have to be integrated in the **supreme wisdom**. This is **jnana** – the root **jna** being the same as the English **know** – the **divine knowledge**. In India we speak of **jnana**, in Buddhism of **prajna** and in Greek of **gnosis**, the **Divine Knowledge**. You share the divine knowledge and you have the experience of the **Infinite Transcendent One**.

Dzogchen says that when you have reached that state you have integrated your whole being, the being of nature around you, the being of your body, of your psyche and all its capacities. They are all gathered into unity in the one Supreme Reality. And that is the goal of Dzogchen: to reach that total oneness. This is extremely close to the Christian idea of **pleroma** as found in **St. Paul's** epistles – that means **fullness**. The idea is that Christ is the Pleroma of God. The fullness of the Divine was present in Christ. *„In him dwelt the fullness of the Godhead bodily.“* So for us Christians, Christ is the one in whom the fullness of Divine Reality is totally present. Later on it says: *„He is the first-born from the dead and the Church is the fullness of Christ.“* So, from the Father, the source, the fullness comes to Christ and from Christ the fullness

goes to the Church, to us and to the disciples. And so we experience his fullness. It seems to me that we now see that the Hindu, the Buddhist, the Muslim and the Christian are all seeking to experience this fullness, this pleroma of reality, which in every doctrine is **both wisdom and love**. They are the two characteristics.

In our Christian tradition we say the Father is the source, the origin, the one beyond. We cannot name the Father properly: It is only a name for that which is beyond all name and form.

In the Tibetan tradition, **in that primordial state all is totally one**; everything is gathered into unity and then manifests itself in the universe. The universe comes out from its primordial state in all its multiplicity. The earth, the sky, the trees, people.

We are all manifestations of the supreme wisdom which is reflected as in a mirror. The universe is like a mirror which reflects the primordial state; primordial reality. We all reflect it in our limited way. But we can grow in understanding until we become fully mirrors.

Jesus, we say, is the image of the invisible God, the total reality. Since we are all made in the image of God, we can discover this image within ourselves of this one reality. In Dzogchen we realize it suddenly. In others you approach it gradually through meditation, study, yoga and discipline.

But we must not forget the discipline of love.

It is not only sitting and meditation: **Karuna**, compassion is one of the essential ways to realize God. **You realize the fullness, the wholeness and the non-duality**. This is a very important concept that is just coming into our theology today: that **the ultimate reality is not one and not two**. This is the problem with God. In our Christian tradition we think of God as a person – the Heavenly Father. It is always some person and we project an image of it, and we worship that image as God. But we know that no image and no concept is adequate.

We have to go beyond our images.

We have to leave our images, of Jesus etc.. We have to leave our concepts of the Trinity, the Incarnation, because the reality is always beyond our images, all our thoughts. We are always moving towards the infinite transcendent, the Holy One, and that will be the end of life. And so the Divine mystery is

revealing itself in creation, revealing itself in humanity, and comes to head for the Christian in Christ. Christ is the head of the body of the church; the head of all creation and then He goes beyond and takes the whole of creation, of humanity back to its source in the Godhead.

There is one aspect of Dzogchen which has a very close analogy in Christianity.

In Dzogchen the Primordial State, the Supreme Reality, is realized suddenly without the preparation of meditation or yoga. In the Christian tradition also contemplation is a gift of God. It is not something which we can acquire by meditation or a personal effort. It is a pure grace. It comes to those who are ready to receive it, not as something acquired by human effort but as a gift of grace.

It is God`s action in us, not our own action.
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In the Buddhist and in the Hindu tradition this may come as a gift of the Guru, who awakens the disciple to his presence. For the Christian it comes as a gift of the Holy Spirit given by Christ as the sat-guru, the supreme teacher who communicates his own inner life to his disciples.

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Updated from my archive  
14<sup>th</sup> December 2021