

## **Creative Imagination: “Stories Your Mother Told You”**

*The following exercise is the first one given during a Creative Imagination Course taught by Namgyal Rinpoche in May, 2001. Transcribed and edited by Karma Chime Wongmo.*

Creative Imagination basically begins with where you are and then initiates movement to a better future. Creative imagination exercises are not limited to the Western Mysteries or to a western culture. In fact, many of the references in an exercise have a worldwide application. They could be from, or apply to any society anywhere. They will have the same motif but be expressed in many different ways.

The creative imagination exercises are a combination of method and spontaneity. However, instead of sitting in a formal meditation posture for this work, you can lie down, or scrunch up, or deploy yourself in any relaxed way that you want. You don't even have to do the exercises sitting in a chair. The idea behind this is that you are to be very comfortable, without concern about body distractions which, as you know, sometimes come up in formal meditation. In order to help you contact the depth, you don't want messages from the body that say, "I am uncomfortable." That means, also, that you want to have plenty of space in which to do this work, so you can sprawl around when necessary.

Each day I will assign one or more creative exercises. For various reasons, I'm not going to delineate them too much. I will set a theme for you to work with but I am not going to talk about the exercise very much because I want there to be a spontaneous arising as you explore it rather than be influenced by too much talk about it.

One of the basic ideas of creative imagination is that you've got to get to the depth level of your being. So the first thing we have to do is initiate a contact with the depth. You've got to see the underground movement, the out of sight movement in the psyche. However, usually you are too busy in the world doing this, that and the other; you are occupied with life problems and questions. Yet in the midst of all your nonsense (frequently it is non-sense) the depth is pondering, watching for opportunities to try to inch forward.

Even if you are not consciously aware of this you must assume, under the law of creation, that the depth of your being is actually trying to progress you. But you stand in the way. It's not so much that 'you' stand in the way as the things you are doing and occupied with in society intrude: children, parents, family, relationships, work, this and that. All of that preoccupation obscures what the depth is on about. You must see this, it's a very simple idea.

In order to make progress you have to strip away the surface levels of your being and find ways of getting down deeper. This is difficult because to contact the depth you have to be quiet. May I give it in very bold letters? You need to "SHUT UP." You need to let go of the usual mental dialogues you have going and try to get down deeper in memory.

The first theme I would like you to work with is, in fact, an exercise in memory. See if you can recall the stories your mother told you when you were a child. Presumably it was your mother who told you the stories, although it could have been your father or somebody else. It's obvious that many women, when they were children, were told stories about little princesses: "One day Prince Charming came along," and so on. But it could have been something quite different. Maybe she told you stories about demons and goblins and goodness knows what. Whatever they were about, see how many you can recall.

As you go into each story imagine your mother there, her voice, her facial expressions, posture

and so on, as she told you fairy tales or stories from books. As you do this make an evaluation and see which ones influenced you because, for all you know, you may have been captured by one of them. Perhaps it was the *Wizard Of Oz* and you are still, to a certain extent, enacting the role in your imagination. Maybe you started with that theme and then later in life you built on it. So now you imagine yourself as a power being, a super being or a magical being, an intelligent being or whatever it was. That's for you to see. That's your life. I have nothing to say about what you were told. You have to remember it. This work comes under the same principle as a stage of Tibetan meditation called "dredging." You have to bring it up and look at it. As Freud said, "Where the unconscious is, there the ego [the conscious mind] shall be." So, to bring these stories forward you have to do memory work.

I also suggest that you re-create the scene of the house that you lived in then. Maybe your mother came to your bedside and told you bedtime stories. Or maybe she told you stories at other times of the day, perhaps in the middle of the afternoon when you were sitting in the living room or the kitchen. My mother used to tell me stories from Scottish history, like *Joan Bar the Door*. You've never heard of *Joan Bar the Door*? When the King of Scotland was being pursued by his enemies, Joan put her arm through the loops that blocked the door against his pursuers. Her arm was broken but because of her action the king was able to escape.

Go through the stories your mother told you. See if you can guess which ones lingered with you, which were your favourite ones. It's memory work. Take it and work it. Don't do just a light little job on it. Try to remember all the different stories, especially which ones stood out. This is very important because people have become caught in these stories. This is very serious: a lot of grown up men and women are still trying to play Prince Charming and Sleeping Beauty, looking for Cinderella and waiting for the handsome prince to come.

This reminds me of one of the funniest lines I have heard. In Wagner's opera *Siegfried*, the hero comes to a magical forest where he finds a ring of fire and within it is a bier with someone in armour lying upon it. Siegfried doesn't know that it is Brunhilda, the daughter of Odin (a warrior herself) who has been imprisoned there, sentenced to sleep forever for disobeying the Gods. The hero dashes through the flames and when he sees her he almost swoons and utters, "Das ist kein Mann!" ("This is not a man!")

You don't know which one it is but you can assume that you have been heavily influenced by one or another story. The defense system has three; so if it isn't this story at work in life at this moment or in that circumstance and it isn't the second one, it's the third one. You may have up to three stories that you cycle through. When you get tired of one story you go into another one, and when you tire of it, you go into the next one. There's also one that you bring out only on rare occasions.

You can assume that you have been hypnotized. The child with the mother . . . , it's a very hypnotic situation. The child really goes into these stories and gets trapped in them. For all you know, you are living in a kind of post-hypnotic suggestion.

Some of you might think that for many people the substitute for mother would be the television set. I accept that idea, but the relationship to the mother is far more powerful than to the television set. Before television, there was radio and soap operas which went on and on; people would be glued to them, even children would listen. You will need to address the great soap opera of your life eventually. And comic books-I'm sure some of you were entranced by *Spider Man*, *Wonder Woman* or some other comic book super-figure.

So recall as many stories as you can. Then recall one of them and really look at it in detail, then look at another one. It wasn't just that your mother told you that story, but what can you remember about that story? Something in it was very entrancing. One of the reasons for this is that the more boring the events in your life or your environment are - and this is a law - the more you tell yourself stories. When you are not happy you start telling yourself stories, imagining

better conditions. A lot of these better conditions become fantasies. That is the law of masochism. I had a professor who once said that people spend about eighty percent of their time in fantasy, in denial of reality. He was talking about the average being, not necessarily you.

Fantasy can include daydreaming. What kind of daydreams do you have? If you are starring in some role or other you are not in reality, you are daydreaming. This work is moving towards looking at your daydreams, not just night dreams. That's a question to consider another day: What are your daydreams?

For now, concentrate on recollecting the stories your mother told you and see which ones entranced you, which ones you have running through your life. This work is a way to get well and happy. It will initiate depth healing. Strangely enough, when most people do healing work it is very indirect. The work of creative imagination, in its way, is the most direct healing you can do because you are moving the depth to where it wants to be. You can assume that the depth always wants your happiness, your well-being. That's why it is so important to make contact with it and allow healing to take place. That's what this work is for.