

THE VOICE OF CLEAR LIGHT

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"THE CONFIDENCE OF KNOWING ONESELF" – an edited excerpt from oral teachings given by Geshe Tenzin Wangyal Rinpoche, 2006

When we talk about ignorance, especially in tantra or dzogchen, we are referring to a lack of knowing oneself, a lack of realization of oneself, or a lack of knowing the nature of mind. The classic definition of ignorance is "the mind that does not know itself." But it is hard for people to relate to that definition from an ordinary perspective. We ask: What does "not knowing myself" mean? Or for that matter, what does "knowing myself" mean?

What we are more familiar with is the result of not knowing oneself.

When you don't know yourself, then as a result there manifests a lack of confidence. "Lack of confidence?" you ask. "Yes, that I know."

There are people, though, who only recognize their lack of confidence as it relates to something in particular – like their job, or their ability to do something. They are more aware of their lack of confidence in action than they are of their lack of confidence in the stillness. They are more aware of their lack of confidence in appearance, rather than in its essence. They are more aware of their lack of confidence in objects, rather than in the subject. These are all weaker understandings of lack of confidence. But if you can really sense the more deep-seated lack of confidence that comes from not knowing your true self, then you will come to understand that its source can only be from within oneself, from one's mistaken view. The teachings talk about "having confidence in the view." They don't talk much about having confidence in the action, or in the appearance.

Confidence in the view for a practitioner has nothing to do with trying to change anything or do anything. So, having confidence in the view doesn't make sense to those in the Western mainstream, where the conventional focus is all about action, about the result, about what is produced, about the expected return. You are taught that confidence is found in the doing.

This issue of confidence is similar to the notion of trust. Trust as it relates to the dharma can also be confusing to Westerners.

Generally, when we think about trust in the worldly sense, it has to do with getting some sort of return. When you lend money to someone, you say, "I trust you to return my money, or to return the money in this amount of time, or with this amount of interest." Or, "I trust that you will be nice to me because I have been nice to you." "I trust that you will be generous back to me because I have been generous to you." From this perspective a "no-return trust" in the dharma seems almost meaningless.

But then we also on occasion hear people say something like, "I have been sick, and I've been trying to do everything that I can to heal myself. I am going to try this last possible thing, and I trust that if it works, then it was meant to work. And I trust, too, that if it doesn't work, then it wasn't meant to work. I trust completely in the outcome of this last attempt at healing, whatever the outcome is." That is a deeper kind of trust or confidence based not on externals, but instead on oneself. It has more to do with one's view, one's own experiences of mind and of who one is, rather than its being dependent on and conditioned by situations and by actions.

EXCERPTS FROM TEACHINGS BY BON AND BUDDHIST MASTERS ON THE ROOT POISONS

OF AVERSION AND DESIRE

"Seeing One's Anger," an edited excerpt from oral teachings given by Geshe Tenzin Wangyal Rinpoche, 2006:

When you feel yourself getting really angry at someone, in those moments you feel like there's no way out. You feel like there is no way out because there is no clarity, no space, there's no direction there. In those situations, it's as if you are suddenly trying hard to push something very heavy, and the only tools you have to push it are the wrong tools. And it may dawn on you in that moment of pushing that you are, indeed, using the wrong tools. That leads to even more stress as you begin to see the hopelessness of what you are continuing to do, doesn't it?

As we were saying, our first rule is that we don't have to do anything when we feel anger. Try just saying: "I don't have to do anything, I don't have to discuss, I don't have to argue, I don't have to talk, I can just walk away from this." That doesn't mean you shouldn't come back and reflect on it and talk about it later. It just means that

right now is absolutely the wrong time to act. By your simply being conscious of that fact, you release yourself from that moment rather than getting more wrapped up in your trying to do something, your trying to push something even harder in that moment.

From the edited transcript of oral teachings given by Yongdzin Tenzin Namdak Rinpoche during Ligmincha's summer retreat, 2000:

So this famous "I" is the basis of anger, attachment, jealousy – everything. When the "I" is projected out there without realizing the empty nature, then that is eternalism. If you fall into emptiness without any balance of clarity, then that is called nihilism.

The "I" doesn't exist in the way we grasp and feel it. Everything you have is "my" – my head, my nose – but where is this "I"? You might say it depends. You can say, "I am here." You might feel that when you are hungry, the "I" is more in the stomach. You say, "I am hungry." But if you look at the stomach, at the object, you can't find "I" there. You create it by yourself. Sometimes when you have a headache you say, "I have a headache." You make your head as "I." You create the "I" in everything else in the same way.

When you look to the object, you cannot find "I." When you realize nothing exists, and you realize that everything is created by you, then there is no need for emotion. Where is the anger? Everything is created by you; nothing is created from the object side. Normally, we are thinking "I" very strongly exists. That is true of all sentient beings, even birds and insects. You can make them angry. They grasp and have emotions even if they are unable to speak. That is real ignorance. We are following ignorance and that is the source for the emotions. If you pull apart this ignorance, there is no need for anger or emotion. Just like at a cinema: You never think the screen is going to create something real. It is the same for the emotion. So this is the real teaching.

From "A Path With Heart" by Jack Kornfield:

When we look, we see that wanting creates tension, that it is actually painful. We see how it arises out of our sense of longing and incompleteness, a feeling that we are separate and not whole. Observing more closely we notice that it is also fleeting, without essence. This aspect of desire is actually a form of imagination and accompanying feeling that comes and goes in our body and mind. Of course, at other times it seems very real. Oscar Wilde said, "I can resist anything but temptation." When we are caught by wanting it is like an intoxicant and we are unable to see clearly.

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Like desire, anger is an extremely powerful force. We can easily become caught up in it, or we can be so afraid of it that we act out its destruction in more unconscious ways. Unfortunately, too few of us

have learned to work with it directly. Its force can grow from annoyance to something that is present with us now or that is far away in time or place. We sometimes experience great anger over past events that are long over and about which we can do nothing. We can even get furious about something that has not happened but that we only imagine might happen. When it is strong in the mind, anger colors our entire experience of life. When our mood is bad, no matter who walks in the room or where we go that day, something is wrong. Anger can be a source of tremendous suffering in our own minds, in our interactions with others, and in the world at large.

From “Gates to Buddhist Practice” by Chagdud Tulku:

When you give in to aversion and anger, it's as though, having decided to kill someone by throwing him into a river, you wrap your arms around his neck, jump into the water with him, and you both drown. In destroying your enemy, you destroy yourself as well.

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We often think the only way to create happiness is to try to control the outer circumstances of our lives, to try to fix what seems wrong or to get rid of everything that bothers us. But the real problem lies in our reaction to those circumstances. What we have to change is the mind and the way it experiences reality.

Our emotions propel us through extremes, from elation to depression, from good experiences to bad, from happiness to sadness – a constant swinging back and forth. Emotionality is the by-product of hope and fear, attachment and aversion. We have hope because we are attached to something we want. We have fear because we are averse to something we don't want. As we follow our emotions, reacting to our experiences, we create karma – a perpetual motion that inevitably determines our future. We need to stop the extreme swings of the emotional pendulum so that we can find a place of centeredness.

From “Fearless Simplicity” by Tsoknyi Rinpoche:

Mind is fickle and objects are seductive, it is said. The Buddha told us not to be that way. Don't chase after one object, then another, then a third. That pursuit is not your real home, your real mother. This futile pursuit is steered by, influenced by, and affected by circumstances. Whenever something feels unpleasant, one gets disturbed by it; if it's pleasant, one gets caught up in it. Throughout this course of events, we are so unstable, so unsteady. Sometimes the obsession becomes so intense that one can lose one's own life. This way of being creates incredible anxiety. One experiences fear, worry, feeling lost, feeling uncared for: “Nobody loves me, nobody takes care of me, nobody worries about me.” This lonely frame of mind is because of being unstable, being steered by objects, being oversensitive in a wrong way.

Instead of this relentless chasing about, we ought to take a break.

From “The Hundred Verses of Advice” by Dilgo Khyentse and Padampa Sangye:

Generally speaking, we feel attachment to our family, to our belongings, and to our position, and aversion to anyone who hurts or threatens us. Try turning your attention away from such external objects and examine the mind that identifies them as desirable or hateful. Do your desire and anger have any form, color, substance, or location? If not, why is it that you fall so easily under the power of such feelings?

It is because you do not know how to set them free. If you allow your thoughts and feelings to arise and dissolve by themselves, they will pass through your mind in the same way as a bird flies through the sky, without leaving any trace. This applies not only to attachment and anger, but also to the experiences of meditation – bliss, clarity, and the absence of thought. These experiences result from perseverance in practice and are the expression of the inherent creativity of the mind. They appear like a rainbow, formed as the rays of the sun strike a curtain of rain; and to become attached to them is as futile as it would be to run after a rainbow in the hopes of wearing it as a coat. Simply allow your thoughts and experiences to come and go, without ever grasping at them.

SOURCES:

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SANGHA SHARING – “REFLECTIONS ON THE SUMMER RETREAT”

I’ve been to America twice, and both times for half a year - onetwentieth of my entire life. And for the first time, I found such nice, generous, sometimes funny, never frowning, always kind and willing-to-help people - I found them at Serenity Ridge. I didn’t hear a rude word from a single person there. It was a little shock for me to get back to the ordinary world. But something changed in me - I quit finding the

reason of my worries and obstacles in the outer world, and I started finding them inside. And that's great: One always should know he should change the inner first when trying to change the outer.

And that's just one thing I loved about being on this retreat. All the practice I did affected me somehow. Maybe I didn't feel it at once, but it's like a glass that is not full till the water reaches the brim. You don't feel progress with each drop of water added, but with a single drop, you are fulfilled.

Rinpoche is not just a teacher. He is The Teacher, the one that I was looking for for a long time.

I know that the time will come when I'll be at Serenity Ridge again, because if you really try to achieve your dream, it's impossible not to achieve it. Thank you to everyone I was so lucky to meet at the retreat.

- Alex Sudakoff (from Russia)

My Tummo Experiences

I read about the Tummo practice in the late '50s, but had given up on the idea of ever learning it. I knew the teaching was complex, and yet Tenzin Rinpoche made it simple. So simple that even I could do it.

Amazing clarity of teaching.

I have done esoteric training within Eastern and Western spiritual traditions since the late '50s but never obtained such a deep level of cleansing of karmic seeds and negative emotions.

I have attended many retreats, but never gained so much from such clarity and simplicity of teaching as at this one. The sangha are among the friendliest I have seen at any retreat. They made me feel at home and welcome, even though I was from another tradition. During the retreat I made up my mind to devote my practice fully to Bon, and with Rinpoche's blessing, I am now doing Bon as my practice.

In Bon,

Ron Loving

(Oklahoma City, Ok)