



□ Longevity, Well-Being and Finding Freedom

An Edited Excerpt from Oral Teachings Given by Geshe Tenzin Wangyal Rinpoche, Fall 2017

It's definitely true that as humanity – as a society and as individuals – we do want to live as long as possible, and as well as possible. We want to learn as much as possible, serve as much as possible and live with each other in harmony as much as possible. That's for sure, there's no question about it. But it seems like it's limiting yourself if you are always thinking about trying to keep your body alive forever. First of all, it's not going to happen. Second, you might be wasting your time and also draining your energy faster than necessary. Sometimes, the more you struggle with life and aging and its many challenges, the more you are going to drain your energy rather than preserving it.



According to the principles of the teachings, when we turn toward that boundless space, infinite awareness, the warmth – that inner refuge – there is no death. In that sacred space, there is no death. In that unceasing, unfolding energy there is no death. This sense of the deathless, ceaseless, changeless – the essence of ourselves – this is the ultimate realization, the ultimate recognition, what we need to achieve. So in some sense, longevity is important here, but not for

trying to keep this body forever. I'm trying to convey what the relative and what the ultimate sense of longevity mean. Both are equally important.

At the same time, whatever your life situation is, it is important to be able to maintain some sense of well-being. We may find that we wake up in the morning feeling weak, lost, misplaced. We may feel like, "I don't know what to do, who I am, where I am, how I can feel stronger, better today, to do what I'm doing for the rest of the day." Sometimes we do feel that we lose those energies. But we don't have to lose those energies if we have a better way of working with them. That is the place where these kinds of teachings are of benefit: working with relativity, working with circumstances, working with the natural elements, working with our own psychological states, working with inner knowledge and inner wisdom, working with the supports of the guardians, deities and wisdom beings.

So there are a lot of possibilities for what to work with. And, of course, no one has to work with what they don't believe in, or don't understand or don't want to understand. I always say this wherever I am teaching. No one has to do anything. One thing I have learned and that I try to practice in life is that you don't have to do anything if you don't want to do it. In the Bön teachings, Tonpa Shenrap always taught based on people's ability, what they are capable of understanding.

What matters is what you personally understand, and that you connect with what you understand, and that you apply what you understand directly to your life. Along with your understanding, there's always a sense of your staying open and trusting that there are more places for your growth. Because you are staying open with that trust, then those things that you are not capable of understanding at the moment, you won't undermine them, saying that they are bad, thinking that only what you are able to follow at the moment is the correct path and that all other paths are not good. It's not like that.

Now, I don't know if any of you feel that you are in the final stage of your development . . . [laughter]. If so, then I'm not sure why you would even be here. But because you are here, you believe there is still more space to step into and explore, and at the same time you believe that you know enough and are practicing as best you can. Holding that sense of space and trust I think is very important, even though what you are stepping into may not be very clear, and you may not know it very well at the moment.

