

Chögyal Namkhai Norbu: Dzogchen in Daily Behavior

That which is called Atiyoga or Dzogchen, meaning the Great Perfection, we understand as globally including base, path, and fruit.

Our primordial state is said to be "jinyer jormé," that is to say, base, path, and fruit are not separate. This means that there is nothing to produce. That which is called "the fruit" is not something which has to be produced. The fruit is, from the beginning, what it is. One enters, one finds oneself in this knowledge, and this is called the fruit.

And when one understands, then there is a way to develop, to find the true manifestation in this state, and this is called — for example, Lam Dzogchen, the teaching of the path. So what we mean by the Dzogchen of the path is entering into and applying.

When we talk about Dzogchen, the idea we have in mind, generally speaking, is this Lam Dzogchen Bo. And that is the knowledge of our true state. That which we have to find is not something to be found in the teaching, but in ourselves. The Lam Dzogchen, the path of Dzogchen, is like a key to open ourselves up, to enable us to discover this primordial state.

When we speak about the base, we speak about the three primordial wisdoms we've already talked about: essence, nature, and energy. And one has to understand these as the three bodies of the base. If we don't understand what we mean by the three bodies of the base, then we won't understand why this is called "jinyer jormé," the non-separation of the base and of the fruit.

To bring about this understanding of the base, we have the path, which can be categorized as having three parts: tawa, gompa, and chöpa — the view or vision, the practice, and the conduct or attitude.

These three principles are also well understood through the Three Words of Garab Dorje. Remember that the first word of Garab Dorje is that which says "direct introduction." Through this direct introduction, an individual is brought to understand what this primordial state is all about. Through the various types of nyam or experience, one comes to clearly distinguish the nyams or experiences from the state of rigpa.

Then you have the second word of Garab Dorje: not remaining in doubt. This is linked to the second aspect of the path, which is gompa, actual practice. Through these actual practices, one not only knows about the primordial state, or the state of rigpa, but finds oneself actually in it.

The Tibetan word "gompa" is usually translated as meditation, contemplation, a bit of everything. But what we generally mean by meditation is something connected with a path involving the mind, the reasoning mind. That is to say, one creates in the mind, constructs something, and through reasoning does something — that would be meditating.

Sometimes we say: "To meditate: there is nothing to meditate; this non-meditation is better." It seems like almost a play on words, but this means finding oneself beyond any concept to meditate upon. The knowledge of this we call contemplation.

Contemplation no longer has to do with the path of the ordinary mind, but with the state of rigpa, the nature of mind. So this is what the second word of Garab Dorje — not remaining in doubt — really means.

Maybe we have presented many ways of doing practice, including various types of samten. It might be that there are a hundred, or maybe only one. However, one must understand what the purpose is and what the arrival point is. There might be a hundred different ways of practicing, but one should never forget what the real goal of it is.

So this is what gompa means. In the Dzogchen teaching, gompa doesn't mean doing anything in particular. It means finding oneself in whatever the circumstances one is in, in this state — the primordial state.

Tawa, gompa, and chöpa, when we explain them, become a kind of concept. When we make the introduction, we also introduce tawa, gompa, and chöpa.

So then, what is tawa, the view? It is our state of knowledge beyond all limits, beyond concepts, and also beyond any kind of experience, any kind of nyam. This is the state of rigpa, this is what the state of Dharmakaya means.

When one finds oneself in this state of rigpa, the knowledge that continues in this... how must it continue? It must continue through clarity. Because that which we say exists from the very beginning as pure, is a state. And this state manifests, and one notes it through experience.

All these experiences which can arise through our sense contact are all said to be a part of clarity. So through experience in practice, one can have many types of clarity, many different kinds of experience. This is called gongpa — applying various kinds of practice and arriving at various different kinds of experience.

It's enough just to be present without being distracted. Whatever thought arises, one notes that it is part of clarity. Being present without being distracted: that presence we can call gongpa.

No matter how complicated the practice we may be doing, the real inner meaning of it is this gongpa. When one understands this, then there is a way of integrating whatever aspect of clarity with one's practice.

Then we have what is called chöpa, the attitude. The real meaning of chöpa is something linked with our existence — our movement and our contact with body, voice, and mind.

So when this knowledge, this presence with its clarity, integrates with whatever is part of our existence, this is the principle of the chöpa of Dzogchen. As regards the chöpa, one notes it with four principal moments of our activities: when eating, when sleeping, when walking, and when sitting.

Whatever attitude we carry out is linked to these four moments. If we have our presence, and whatever we are doing is not distracted or conditioned by mental judgment, and we have this presence that integrates in this state, in this condition, at any moment, any attitude — then this is also within the path as the principle of the application of the three states: Dharmakaya, Sambhogakaya, and Nirmanakaya.

The most difficult thing is to integrate. But the principal thing is, first of all, knowledge. Many ancient texts advise: "The principal thing is not meditation, but to truly understand." But this true understanding doesn't mean understanding intellectually. One may first understand through one's intellect, but then one has to enter really and truly, concretely in practice. Then we can have a real direct connection through experience.

But that depends very much on practice. If one doesn't apply the practice, if one doesn't through that practice enter into this primordial state, then it is only intellectual knowledge. There are many examples given in the Dzogchen Upadesha:

A householder who has many riches and much food. And there's a cook who loves to talk about all the wonderful things to eat, all the different dishes he knows how to

cook. This cook has an incredible knowledge of all the dishes. But suppose this cook has never cooked anything. One keeps hearing about all these fantastic types of food, fantastic dishes, but nothing's ever cooked. It is said that knowledge which is not applied is like a non-cooking cook.

And then there's another example: suppose somebody knows about all the various types of illnesses and how to cure them, and lives in a room full of every possible kind and quality of medicine. He knows all these explanations of medicine, he possesses all these medicines. But living in the midst of his dimension of knowledge of medicine and in his possession of so many medicines, he himself is sick — and he dies. It is said that having knowledge but not applying it is like that.

There are many examples like these. But you can get the idea. So it is very important to apply, to make experience arise, and through practice, this experience enters and knowledge develops.

For these things we have many types of practice, and it is also necessary to do retreat. There are practices that one can do in front of other people, but as we've explained, there are some practices which have to be done by yourself, such as the Yantra Yoga practice, the practice with the channels.

When one no longer remains in doubt and has the capacity of this concrete knowledge, then we have to integrate that with whatever we encounter in our lives. When one has arrived at a point where one can have this lived state of knowledge and integrate with whatever one's doing in one's life, then one doesn't have to live within the limits of a retreat. Not living within those limits is what we speak of as chöpa, the attitude.

When we speak at the level of the three bodies, the level of Nirmanakaya means that we find ourselves in our concrete condition. One is aware of what our condition is. Having this presence, everything integrates with this.

First of all, one must understand that we have body, voice, and mind. What characteristics do we have at the level of body? The body walks, sits, eats, sleeps — those types of movement. We also have our aspect of positive, negative, and neutral movement.

The positive idea would be doing something spiritual: someone sitting in the lotus position with a straight back, or someone doing the Yantra Yoga movements with breathing. And neutral movements: it could be someone dancing, someone who likes to walk, some kind of gymnastic movement or work. And as far as negative movement is concerned, punching people in the nose might be classified like that.

Now, as far as real awareness of our level of body is concerned, it's not that we have to start selecting out the good from the bad. The principle is that you have to integrate. That which presents itself to us as apparently good, bad, or neutral depends on our awareness. But the principle now, the fundamental thing, is to integrate: the state of contemplation with whatever movement.

In the chöpa, you must integrate your state of contemplation with whatever activity or movement you are carrying out. Instead of visualization, one integrates one's mind — that is to say, one's presence and one's clarity — into contemplation.

So practically speaking, whilst I'm doing prostrations in the way I'm now speaking of — integrating my prostration with the state of contemplation which I have — instead of thinking of myself as prostrating to all the illuminated beings together with all my relatives and all the beings of the six realms making prostration together, I find myself in the state of contemplation and carry out this movement.

It's much easier to carry out this kind of integration with something like prostrations because you already have visualization. And then afterwards one can link one's contemplation and integrate it with other kinds of movement — for example, if you get the idea of walking into the kitchen to prepare yourself a nice cup of coffee, you can walk in the state of contemplation.

And then with regard to voice: perhaps what's easiest to integrate with is something we've trained a good deal with, such as the Song of the Vajra. But it doesn't have to be that you are always integrating with something like the Song of the Vajra or a sacred chant. Maybe you could also try to integrate with some pop song or even with your national anthem. If it's not bothering anybody else, yes, you should try to integrate whilst shouting, laughing, doing whatever comes. And if you can succeed in integrating like that, maybe then you could also succeed in integrating whilst you're talking. One can be fully present in the state of contemplation even whilst making a speech.

And then we have the mind. Instead of a complicated visualization, one is more present in this state of presence, as they do in Anu Yoga.

This is the principle of what is said in the Dzogchen teaching: the way of self-liberation. When one doesn't have sufficient capacity at the beginning, one trains through what's called "cher-drol." Cher-drol means that you might need a kind of push or helping hand to develop that presence. For example, if I see an object with my eyes, then not entering into or following a mental judgment, that moment brings the presence, and through this presence whatever it is dissolves of itself.

The example given to explain this capacity of self-liberation is of a droplet of dew which is on a blade of grass. When the rays of the sun touch it, the dew dissolves of itself. The dew is a symbol of the clarity which arises with whatever is present. Coming into contact with the rays of the sun represents our presence.

When one has developed one's capacity a little more, there is a level called "shar-drol." Shar-drol means that whatever arises in our mind or whatever arises through the contact of our senses with its object, in the very moment of its arising, it liberates of itself. In this case, you don't need any little push or any kind of recalling or reminder. The example given is like snow falling into the sea. As soon as the snow touches the sea, it dissolves. There isn't any kind of subject and object here.

And when one has a higher capacity of self-liberation, there comes about what is called "rang-drol," which means truly automatic self-liberation. The very arising itself is liberation itself. The example given is like a snake that seems to have made a complicated knot, but it made it itself, and it unties itself. There is nothing like two things, dualistic. This is what is called true self-liberation.

So then our concepts, our problems, our ideas, our passions — whatever arises — don't remain anything for us to struggle with or to overcome. Everything that arises self-liberates because it finds itself in integration. Even our thoughts, whatever comes to mind, can be found perfectly in integration, in the state of contemplation.

Many people may say: "But how is it possible? I can find myself in the state of contemplation when I'm working? I have to think, there are so many things to do and to reason about." This principle shows that one hasn't understood that the state of rigpa is beyond the mind. And the mind is that which reasons and operates at the relative level. The state of contemplation, the primordial state, is what is called Dzogchen, Great Perfection. There, all possibilities exist — all dimensions of body, voice, and mind.

When one manifests in the fullness of one's qualification, then one possesses the wisdoms of both quality and quantity. Quantity means that if hundreds or perhaps thousands of beings exist in relation to you, one can have perfect knowledge of what each one of them is thinking. Wisdom of quality means it doesn't depend on time or on the limits of our material dimension. One can have all these capacities, all in the same moment. Beyond time, beyond measure and limits.

We are always caught up and blocked in our logical limitations. We only know ourselves intellectually. But really the state of rigpa is a whole other thing. And when we hear of certain things, just hearing about them, they seem kind of contradictory.

There is a famous story about Milarepa. There was a man who was very skilled in philosophy and felt himself to be very important. He was jealous of Milarepa because many people kept going to the mountain to visit him and receive teachings. This learned man thought: "I'm a super scholar who understands all these analyses and all these intellectual things, but these stupid people keep going to Milarepa instead of me." So one day he went to visit Milarepa.

When he saw him, first he wanted to have a most elegant discussion. He said about the rock where Milarepa was sitting: "Is this rock material or non-material? Will it stop something that hits up against it, or will it not?"

Milarepa said: "No, it is non-material." The learned man thought: "Since he says rock is non-material, he's really stupid. He doesn't understand philosophical terms." So he said: "Okay, explain to me why a rock is non-material." Milarepa stretched out his hand and just passed it straight through the rock. When two people together are seeing this same thing, it means direct logic — nothing to argue about.

Then the learned man asked: "And space, is that material or non-material?" Clearly, normally people say that space is empty. But Milarepa said the opposite: space is material. The learned fellow was extremely pleased — "Now I've got him! How is it possible space is material?" Milarepa said: "I'll show you." He picked up a stick and began banging on space as if it was a drum. The learned man began to understand a little. This is a way of demonstrating that we are simply limited. Milarepa is beyond this limit.

And there's another story about Milarepa and his disciple Rechungpa. One day they were walking together along a road and an incredibly heavy rain began to fall. Each of them ran off to find a place where they wouldn't get too wet. Rechungpa arrived under a rock overhang and looked around, but Milarepa wasn't there. He waited a bit and the rain finished. He called out: "Mila, where are you?" He looked for him.

Then at a certain point he seemed to hear Milarepa singing. He looked around everywhere, but he couldn't see him. On the ground there was a yak's horn, and the singing seemed to be coming from around there. He looked, and inside the yak's horn, Milarepa was sitting in position, singing very elegantly. He was singing: "The nature of existence is beyond limits. The real nature of existence is like this."

Rechungpa was rather surprised. The strange thing was that Milarepa's size was his normal size. But nor had the yak's horn gotten enormous. What does this mean? For us, such a thing is quite impossible. It's a contradiction for us. Milarepa didn't get smaller, the yak's horn didn't get bigger, but they both found themselves there normally. This is the condition beyond our limits.

There are many explanations also in the Buddhist sutras of the qualities of wisdom. What this goes to show is that in the state of contemplation all possibilities exist, beyond our limits, beyond our capacities of senses and mind.

But you shouldn't think that when a practitioner finds himself in contemplation, there are kind of two things going on all the time — the presence and the state of rigpa alternating with the manifestations. Nor, when they speak in the Buddhist sutras of the absolute and relative truth, should you think that when we're contemplating we're in the absolute, and when we're doing ordinary things we're in samsara. When one doesn't have the state of integration, there is an alternation. But when one has this state of knowledge, everything is Dzogchen. There is a way of integrating, and then everything is this Great Perfection — and that's why it's called Dzogchen.

The destination of a Dzogchen practitioner is to find oneself in this state of total integration. And when one finds oneself in that, it is called "thün chenpo," the Great Thün. When we have a practice and do what is called a "thün" — a session — we find ourselves in visualization, etc., and this brings us to contemplation at a certain point, and we think: "Okay, we've finished the practice." That means a thün has finished.

But the Great Thün is when the whole of our existence, without limit, without stopping at all, enters into contemplation. When there isn't a limited thün, then one speaks about the Great Thün.

There is an important book by Nüden Sangye Yeshe called "The Light of the Eye of Meditation." He gave many names to the state of contemplation of Dzogchen, including one which means: "The state of contemplation, which is the wheel of sleeping." What does this mean? Generally, when we think of contemplation, we think of somebody sitting in a controlled position in an extremely wakeful state. If somebody is sleeping comfortably in bed, totally relaxed, we don't think of that as contemplation. But if one really and truly has this state of integration, then one can perfectly well sleep in complete contemplation. Whether one's sleeping in one's bed or sitting in the position of Vairochana, it's just the same thing.

But it's not sufficient for us just to hear about this and then think: "Great, now I'll go to sleep." Because if we just fall asleep distractedly, that doesn't mean contemplation. You shouldn't confuse it with that.

Until one has such a capacity of integration, what should one do? Above all, one must cultivate awareness with presence. If we talk about being aware and having presence, that's different from the state of contemplation. The state of

contemplation or the state of rigpa does not involve somebody having to do something. It's a lived knowledge of a state. But to develop this possibility, normally one trains — with effort — to be present and not distracted.

When one is distracted, many things can happen. If one's walking along and bumps one's head on something, then walks by again and bumps a second time, then a third time — that totally means distraction. And if you're carrying something and it slips out of your fingers, you drop it. Or you're in the kitchen with your knife — instead of cutting the vegetables, whoops, there goes your finger. A lot of different things can happen through distraction.

When one doesn't want to be distracted — for example, for one minute: "Now I'm going to the kitchen to get a glass of water, and I don't want to be distracted." You get up and walk with full awareness, pour the water, bring the glass back. But without blocking the mind. Many people, when they hear about this kind of maintaining a presence of awareness, think that what's involved is blocking the mind in some way, holding the mind to one single thought.

If while going to get a glass of water the telephone rings, I can't just pretend the phone isn't ringing because I don't want to be distracted. That would be stupid. Without becoming distracted, naturally there's space for everything — also the telephone. I can turn and go non-distractedly to answer the phone. And when the call is finished, if I was truly present, I will complete what I was doing. But if after the call I find a glass of water somewhere and say, "Where did that glass come from? Who put that there?" — it means I was distracted. Presence without distraction means that one completes everything one was doing with that presence.

It is very simple to apply. It is very important both for life and for developing contemplation. Every day we move and do things. When we are functioning with body, voice, and mind, then try to be aware and present. It is so simple, this practice. It's not that you have to go to a temple, sit down, do breathing exercises, something complicated. If you say nothing about it, they won't even notice you're doing this practice. You can do it anywhere, at any time.

Then one must remember what is said about awareness — it is something very useful for developing our state of knowledge. But one must guide this awareness with presence, otherwise awareness doesn't function.

Many people talk about awareness and the importance of awareness. But practically speaking, it is just a kind of knowledge. And knowledge must always be guided with presence, otherwise it becomes only something intellectual.

The famous example: somebody sitting with a cup of poison in front of them. This person is aware that in that cup is poison. If you drink that poison, you can die. So the individual knows that it's poisonous and it kills. But just knowing it's poison and it kills isn't enough. That knowledge must be present. This presence is continuous. As long as the presence is there, then he can overcome the problem of sitting there with a glass of poison in front of him.

But if that awareness isn't present, then even knowing that it's poison, he could be distracted by some concept or by some conversation. In a moment of distraction, he distractedly drinks it. As soon as he's drunk it, with his awareness he thinks: "What on earth have I done?!" But what's the use of saying "what have I done?" — because he's going to die shortly. And they put him in his grave. "Here lies Mr. So-and-so who died with awareness." And the one who died without awareness is going to feel a bit superior.

That's all for this evening. Good night.