

Lama Lena: Dzogchen Teachings at Ani Gompa, Tso Pema

Are you all comfortable? You all have a translator to hand if you need one.

As always, although I am an individual who was born and who will die, just like you, I have a personality. It's got bumps and sticky-outy bits that you will trip over. Just like yours has bumps and sticky-outy bits that I may trip over. But that's not the level that we are talking on today. We are not denying that level, which is called phenomena — stuff, form. We are not rejecting that level, but we are including the level which is the vitality of the universe, and the level which is the space in which that vitality plays.

Form is considered the play of space. The play of the Dharmakaya. Dharmakaya is infinite, open — it's spaciousness beyond concept, beyond placeness, beyond having a center or edge, a here or a there, a now or a then. It is infinite beyond your tiny little brain's concept of infinite. Therefore, do not attempt to conceptualize it. Simply recognize it.

You are a part of that. Because you are alive. Just as the movement of matter holds open the space of the sky in which matter dances, just as matter is not a real thing — although it appears solid to us; if you investigate quantum mechanics, there is no solidity there, no location, no velocity, no thing — the movement, which is the aliveness, the vitality of the entire universe, permits, allows, holds open the infinite spaciousness in which phenomena plays, dances, creates. The very creativity of mind.

Phenomena itself is dependent on the aliveness of sentient beings, the vitality of the universe, the ability to see — the seer, rigpa. But without the space for this to occur, it could not manifest. Therefore, infinite openness is alive, awake, aware, dancing with phenomena. No thing in nowhere.

You are this. Not other than this. Your funny little bumpy personality that keeps changing — you know that one, the one that answers to your name — it is part of this. It does not encompass all of this. It's just a little personality that's flipping about. Bit different today than yesterday. And it'll change a bit for tomorrow. Yeah. Let it do that. Do not throw it away. For to throw it away, to deny it, you are denying the play of the vitality. The creativity of the vitality. How would you recognize clear light if it didn't bounce off anything?

So, to speak on all three levels: the root in Dzogchen is Guru Yoga. It's not about my little bumpy personality. It is the lineage to infinitude, Kuntuzangpo, primordial Buddhahood. Wakan Tanka — that's Lakota. Some Sufis use the word Allah to refer to this. Don't hold it to the word. The word is a made-up linguistic thing. We say semñi, or Könchok Sum — Three Jewels, three aspects, three most precious aspects.

But how does it get from all and everything to a point when our little bitty nervous personalities can actually enter in, perceive, recognize, take part in? That is lineage. That is the transmission of lineage. That is the four initiations. The first: an explanation. The second: a showing symbolically by symbolic poetic words — not intellectual, but more or less emotional, words that connote feelings of spaciousness, of vastness, of vitality and of playfulness. The third: a visual symbol. And the fourth: telepathic.

These four transmissions are necessary to practice Dzogchen. They are given as part of the pointing out. They are primordial Buddha — Wakan Tanka, Allah, whatever you want to call it, Kuntuzangpo in our language — manifesting through each individual from outside of time, into time, into the symbolic time of the archetypes, into the symbolic time of the clear light of the vitality. And to a human being, and from a human being to another human being who teaches that next human being. And so again passed on and again passed on.

To symbolize this, to recognize this, to bring this forth for you, I sing the song of the lineage.

Above and beyond all lineages that go beyond the beyond and beyond that beyond itself. There is neither beginning nor ending. Following this, you also discover and come to terms with the aspect of yourself which has neither beginning nor ending. It's already there. You don't have to go get it, grasp it, make it, be good enough for it, attain it. It's always been there.

We have once again many words that can be used to point at it. They only point — they are not the thing. No matter how much I point at this water, it will not satisfy my thirst. But I'm thirsty, come on. Trust me, it doesn't work. You gotta drink the stuff.

So in this way, don't take the words all that seriously. Buddha. Wakan Tanka. George. I often call it George. Less sticky connotations. And I'm not a person who has ever been overly fond of religion. I think religions tend to tangle themselves in politics. Politics are nasty, due to their nature, so I tend to avoid organized religion. Which is not the same as lineage. A small personal advice to all of you: stay out of Tibetan politics. It's just as messy as American politics these days. Except they

poison each other instead of arrest each other.

Different customs for different folks. To come to recognize your own nature is the first vital point. Some teachers say that I should keep this secret, that I should not speak freely about it to anyone who wanders in. But one of the teachers I respect greatly, Lopon Tenzin Namdak of the Bön lineage, said to me: "The essence of Dzogchen is a man's own true nature. How can you attempt from your side to keep a man's own true nature secret from him? How could this be right?"

Therefore, I make no demands in advance of teaching. I make recommendations if it doesn't go in. You don't have to do a Ngöndro before you receive the teachings from me. But if you struggle to comprehend the teachings and cannot transcend thinking about the teachings, I might recommend a Ngöndro to get you over that problem. If you don't have that problem, don't do one — do something else, go do some practice.

It is self-secret. I could stand in the middle of 42nd Street on a soapbox and talk about this till the cows come home. And it would still be secret. I can talk to all of you for a length of time about this. For some of you, it will remain secret.

Last time I taught from the text, The Three Words of Garab Dorje. This time I am teaching the same subject but not from a text. Trying to get you to come face to face with your big mind. It's not your own as in it belongs to you and you possess it. It is not another's as in they can take it from you or keep it from you. It is neither singular nor multiple. Neither one nor many. Neither, either, nor, or. These are linguistic concepts of this language in which I am speaking.

To quote Saraha, in his famous Song of Realization: "All is's and isn't's aren't." All "is" is, and isn't. Aren't. It's really cool in Tibetan too.

I came here very quickly because of my teacher's death this year. And so I did not pack with a lot of attention. And I brought no texts. I didn't even bring my bell and dorje, or damaru — I just got on a plane because he was still alive as I was leaving. He was dying, and I wanted to get here before the end. I got here in the process. Good enough.

You will have to let go of algebra to even understand this intellectually. Algebra is created by people. In fact, I believe it was created by the Arabic civilization, back in either North Africa or Egypt, where they got geometry and the idea of zero. Arabic numerals — they were really the greatest mathematicians back in those days. And they came up with a whole set of rules of how numbers work. And we're taught these in third and fourth grade. Basic theorems: if A equals B, B will equal A. And we're taught it so young that we think it's real.

But look. Hair is brown. Is it not some shade of brown? But is brown hair? It doesn't work outside of the simple language of mathematics. So if this is many and that is one, they can both be the same thing, and a thing can be both one and many. The way you feel that they can't is early cultural training. The closer you are to a culture which is very mathematic-based, such as Germany or the Arab lands, the stronger this will be in you. It's a bit lighter in some Italians and a few South Americans.

So, realize that you're going to have to put down these rules, because your true nature is neither one nor many, and both one and many. And you will have to see beyond either-or binary thought. You will have to let go of your attempt to resemble a computer, which has simply binary — on, off, on, off. It's one of the first things you're going to have to let go of, because it's in your way. You'll drive yourself nuts trying to understand in binary thought something which is non-dual.

There's a story. The way it's told is like a child's story. You will have to understand that this is an allegory in words of something inexpressible in words.

In the beginning — which is fresh in each moment. In the beginning, which is now and all nows, which begin the moment they are. In the beginning, long, long ago, far, far in the future, in each moment arising: Kuntuzangpo. Primordial Buddha, primordial mind, original mind, face of God. George. Was alive. Being alive, saw. Seeing, saw objects. It splits. Kuntuzangpo's seeing objects recognized those objects as a pure rainbow projection of mind itself. The dancing creativity of vitality. And so was content in the enjoyment of the senses.

Sentient beings had an oops. You Catholics have original sin. We have — oops. It's not a sin because there was no evil done. It was a moment of misperception, misunderstanding. It occurs in each moment again and again, in this now and every now — this very same oops.

What is the oops? In experiencing sensations, instead of recognizing the sensations as the manifestation of their own mental vitality and so simply enjoying them as they are, the oops is to think they might be outside of you. And like a little baby whose mama has a diamond ring in the sunlight and it shines rainbows about, and the little baby tries to catch the rainbows. Like a kitten chasing the point of a laser pointer. You reach out and try to grasp the thing and so create karma. "I want this." "Scared of that." "Want this." "Scared of that."

And as you create karma, your senses, sensations proliferate. And so there are more things to grab at and run away from, and it gets more and more complex. And you tell yourself stories about it, and you run away from things, and you chase after things. And here we are.

The difference is not in the things. The difference is not in the perceiver. It's this teeny little oops that happens freshly in each moment. Perception — see — name. You can't look at it without naming it.

Look at these. I found something you probably aren't familiar with. The thing on my hat. Pass it around, examine it, perceive it. You're gonna name it, you know. You're going to name it something somewhat similar to something you've seen before. You're not going to be able to know what it is, so you're going to make up a story about it. Bet you can't not.

To recognize your own true nature, you need to look into your own eyes and see yourself. Not limited by who you think you are. Not limited by what you feel you are. Not limited by what you perceive yourself to be. You have to go beyond that. This is mind-mind looking.

To accomplish this, there are three instructions that make it easier: teachings of the body, teachings of the speech, and teachings of the mind.

Teachings of the body. Sit yourself in either a Maitreya position in a chair, or a cross-legged position — either a full lotus or a half lotus — or a Japanese kneeling position. We know these three positions work. Should you wish to attempt a position that is not one of these three, you are being experimental. Go right ahead. Tell me in the end if you got enlightened. I want to know that that position works too. We have no previous evidence that it works or doesn't, except that we know there are certain known side effects from positions that are slumped forwards — they cause depression if you practice like that long term.

And we actually make meditation belts and tie ourselves up so that won't happen.

In that position, there are different hand positions. In the chair position, your hands just sit on your thighs. In the lotus or half-lotus position: right on top of left. Lotus position: right leg outside of left leg. Always put the right on top and the right on the outside. This is the same for both males and females, in most cases. Every so often somebody's got their channels reversed — probably less common than left-handedness. It does happen. In which case, you'd have the left on top.

You have a speed control, a throttle, for how fast you think. You can speed them up by raising it. Slowing down by lowering it. Just a millimeter makes a difference. If you find you're trying to sit and practice and blah, blah — you know that one? — lower your chin. Lower the gaze of your eyes. If you find yourself drowsy, raise your chin. Raise the gaze of your eyes. If that doesn't work, throw water on your head. A quote from my own teacher.

The eyes are the most important part of the teachings of the body. All day today, you've walked around looking at things, objects. You can't walk around up here without looking where you put your feet — it's not paved. All day. All week. All month, all year, all your life. You have focused your eyes on objects, and you have focused your attention on what you think about those objects, and how you feel about them. This is a kind of tunnel vision.

Thoughts, feelings, and perceptions are called phenomena — remember from the beginning? You have got this tunnel-vision obsessive-compulsive disorder where you can't stop looking at phenomena. You're obsessed with phenomena. Even if you take your attention off phenomena for a minute, you will feel a compulsion to put it back on phenomena — to pay again attention to what you're thinking, what you're feeling, what you're perceiving. This is a problem. It's limiting you. It's like walking your whole life with these really narrow tubes coming out your eyes. It's exhausting to keep your attention on stuff.

However, I'll bet any one of you cannot look at the altar without paying attention to it. Go on, look. Your attention follows the gaze of your eyes. If you can take your eyes off objects, your attention will have an easier time letting go of objects.

So how do you take your eyes off objects? Probably the only thing of importance you learned in college: how to sleep with your eyes open. Remember that?

First, take your glasses off. Those of you wearing glasses have a great advantage here — you can't see fuck-all without them. So with your glasses off, it automatically encourages you not to focus your eyes on things because you can't do it very well.

With your glasses off, and your eyes following the line of your nose outwards and down. Don't clench your teeth. Teeth slightly apart. Lips ever so slightly open. This is because you might be trying to do this when you have a cold someday, and you don't want the habit of having to close your mouth because then you can't breathe. Practical matters.

Unfocus your eyeballs. Takes a while to get the hang of that. While you practice with your eyeballs unfocused from things, unfocus your attention. Allow the focus of your attention to expand. Spherically. Not just in front of you. But without grabbing at the little things that emerge in your awareness — such as the sound of a bird, somebody coughing, the itch on your ass. These are all sensations. Normally, we pay attention to what we think about sensations. We evaluate each sensation for: Is it dangerous? Do I want to encourage or discourage that sensation? Then we have feelings of liking and disliking.

In this instance, let go of paying attention to what you are thinking and feeling. Let your attention expand into the ground of mind itself. Where the thoughts happen. Not the thought of where the thoughts happen — don't get trapped by that. Don't be thinking about the ground of mind, or even feeling about or perceiving the ground of mind. Like sliding into a hot bath. Allow your selfness, your self-hold, to relax and dissolve into the ground of mind. Allowing the thoughts to dance freely without following them. We say this is putting your mind in neutral gear. Thoughts are still happening, but you're not paying them any never mind.

Feelings may arise of fear or of bliss, desire, aversion. Allow them to be. Do not constrict. Do not grab. Do not shove. Relax again and again — deeper relaxation. Relax into the natural state.

This is mind-mind looking. There is no thing there to that. There isn't even a "there" there to that. Infinite. Open. Indescribably vast. Dancing with phenomena and empty of all phenomena simultaneously.

Beyond time and space, which are mental creations. In the infinite vastness in which these creations arise, in which they dissolve. No single moment here has duration. The arising of a thought is simultaneous with its dissolving. If you do not stick them together and make a thought form, a thought chain, a thought phrase, a discursiveness — but leave them just *ploop* — the thoughts arise, the thoughts dissolve. Between the arising of a single thought and the dissolving of that single thought, there is no time passed. No duration. The arising and the dissolving are utterly simultaneous.

Like writing with my finger on water. No mark is left. Like the tracks of a bird across the sky. Thoughts leave no imprint. Nor do feelings, nor do perceptions in this state. Utterly clear and totally transparent. Mind itself. Neither yours possessively nor mine possessively. Unlimited by the ideas of you and me. Without denying phenomena, without grasping or entertaining it either. Rest in open awareness.

This open awareness is referred to as Dharmakaya nature of mind. Empty of any thingness. Thoughts, feelings, perceptions arise and dissolve simultaneously. Without either substance or duration, there is no thingness to them. It is alive and dancing with phenomena and empty of phenomena.

In the direct recognition of this, it is obvious — the liveliness of this. For it's not just a big dead-old nothing. It is alive with the no-thingness of phenomena. The dance of emptiness, the dance of stillness. For no thing moves. And yet dancing is, movement is. This innate vitality of movement we call Sambhogakaya nature of mind. Where all magic is born.

And that which dances: no thing in nowhere. Arising and vanishing. Never existing. Never refusing existence. Nirmanakaya nature of mind.

Look, look — they are not separate. There are not three things here: Dharmakaya, Sambhogakaya, and Nirmanakaya. Look: the infinite, vast, open awareness is vital and alive and dancing with phenomena, which is no thing in nowhere.

Having seen it, leave it be as it is. Do not grab it. For there is nothing to maintain here and no one to maintain it. Let go of your hope of enlightenment and your fear of samsara. And leave this infinite open awareness just as it is.

However, it is more common to glimpse this and then suddenly find yourself grabbing onto something — an idea, a sensation, a feeling. When that happens, do not beat yourself around the head for it. Do not say you are bad to yourself and scold yourself for this experience. That grabbing itself is no thing and nowhere — nothing happened.

Nonetheless, there is a path where there is no path. There are instructions for that which needs no creation or acquisition. The instructions are simple: at all times and all occasions, notice the already recognized Dharmakaya nature of mind. What that means is: frequently, while living your life, all the time, while you're doing stuff, whatever you're doing — check and see if your mind is still there. Big mind.

There is nothing unstable that you need to stabilize. It is inherently stable. But until you perceive that, you will have the experience of it coming and going. This experience is not real. This is a story you're telling yourself. It is a clump of hopes and fears, feelings and sensations and thoughts going around.

The antidote to feeling trapped in this clump: just don't pay it no never mind. Let go of your clump, let go of your self-judgment — whether you're good or bad, doing it right, doing it wrong. "Am I doing it right, Mom?" Second most commonly asked question. First most commonly asked question is: "Are we there yet?"

This relates to the second word of Garab Dorje. Meditation. Meditation is not something you do on a cushion — or not exclusively something you do on a cushion. It is something you do at all times and on all occasions. As my teacher's teacher said: "While walking and talking, eating and sleeping, getting up and sitting down — recognize what is known, or the siddhis will not manifest."

If, while doing this practice — without beating yourself up about not doing it right, please; without patting yourself on the back about how good at it you are, please; without value judgments, just doing in a very simple and open way — you get stuck

in a meditative experience, because they're gonna happen: first, check and see if you perhaps have a cold. Let's say you have a headache and you wonder if it's a meditative experience — see if it goes away with an ibuprofen. Check your position — you might be holding your neck funny. See if you've got eye strain.

If you have a ringing in your ears, which is not an uncommon one, drink a liter of water and see if it's still there. A lot of times we get dehydrated in retreat. And what happens is we get ringing in our ears from it. And we think, "Oh, I have a nyam!" No, you're dehydrated.

If you get a weird experience — visually, audially, scent-wise — first check: see if you've got a physical issue occurring. If you don't find one, it might be a nyam. Nyams are traditionally sensations of bliss; incredible clarity where you think you finally got it because everything's so clear — it's gonna wear off; times when time doesn't pass, you're sitting on the cushion and all of a sudden it's six hours later; or a certain state of grouch where every time you sit on your cushion, you think about everything that's wrong.

And it feels good. And you don't want to stop. Other times you get into a period where every time you sit on the cushion, it feels so wonderful and everybody loves you and you like it so much you don't want to stop. Or you get some little magic power — you can levitate a little bit, or you can manifest a cookie. Don't get all "oh wow" on that.

Hit it with PHAT. This is the method I taught you last time. More of a reminder this time. The seed syllable PHAT, made of the symbolic magical letters. Ha is the symbol of method. And T is the symbol of wisdom. When these come together, they spell the seed syllable PHAT.

When you're using it to break a nyam, it has to be used in a very specific way. Specific characteristics: sudden, short, and sharp. Sudden — kind of sneak up on yourself. Don't be thinking, "I'm going to do a PHAT now, here I go now, one, two, three." Nope. It has to be short — not a long PHAT as is used in other practices. Sharp — it can't be wimpy. It can't be timid. It has to be fierce.

Now, just making the noise won't do you any good. You get an experience. You're looking at natural mind. There's an experience happening. You're sitting there, looking exactly there at the experience. Strike it with PHAT. When it pops, you'll see what was behind it — what it was hiding.

You see, our minds are very tricky. Our survival reflex doesn't want to let go of our small and irritating personality. It's all it knows. So it's going to fight you on this and make all sorts of fancy experiences to distract you. And it's going to hide the true

nature of mind behind those experiences. This is the way we all trick ourselves.

So when you pop the experience right there, for a moment, before you can make up another experience — naked mind. To just make the noise and not be looking there at that moment, all you do is startle your fleas.

This is the second word of Garab Dorje: how to meditate.

The third word involves the spontaneous action of non-action. To decide on one single thing. You're going to do this. And to go for it is the second vital point. Otherwise, you won't do it. While walking and talking, eating and sleeping, getting up and sitting down — don't forget. So you have to decide to do that, or it won't work.

The third point has to do with absolute certainty. Last time you were here, I had you get up and walk around, and then pointed out that you were not thinking about gravity while relying on it. In fact, you probably haven't thought about gravity since then much. And yet you rely on it with every movement you make. How do I put this here? I trust gravity to keep it from floating away — without even thinking about it.

You are going to have to come to trust nature of mind. To come to trust the recognition of what thoughts are, so well, so below the level of consciousness, that you can't think a thought without recognizing it. Right now, you can't see the written word without recognizing it. If I write a word and hold it up, you cannot look at that word without reading it. This is true for all of us well-educated and literate Westerners. We cannot see a written word and not read it.

How did you get that way? You weren't born that way. How long did you practice reading before that happened? How long did you take refuge in books from the mean kids on the schoolyard? It'll take about the same amount of time. To develop absolute certainty is the third vital point. At that point, your thoughts can no longer fool you as they can now.

This is the basis of Dzogchen. Your basic how-to.

[Question from an attendee about direct recognition of experiences]

[Lama Lena]: It was an experience, a nyam. You can trip over nyams. In the direct perception that I'm talking about, it is not a lack of practicality, a lack of recognizing a cow as a cow. It is rather a lack of embroidering that out with all the other cows you've ever seen. Fearing the cow or liking the cow. Involving it in your worldview. Rather than leaving that particular cow exactly the way that particular cow is.

This is not instead of thinking. This is thinking transparently. Not embroidering the moment with all your past.

We are complete for today then. Let us relax, walk around. Together with Dzogchen: you know that survival reflex that makes you interfere with yourself, that I've talked about? The only thing that will counter that is *ñingje* — great-heartedness, open-heartedness. Bodhicitta. There are words for it. "Compassion" sounds like we're talking about pity. And I'm not talking about pity. I'm talking about an openness to all life in the universe. Not fearing. Not having fear and anger towards it. Instead having a certain openness — that doesn't mean you don't recognize that a cow has horns and take steps. That doesn't mean you don't recognize the customs of our local monkeys and carry a stick. They'll mug you.

It much more means: you may protect yourself from the monkeys, but you don't eat them. You don't need to. Bodhicitta is an openness.

There is a basic, simple teaching for developing and strengthening Bodhicitta. Which is the clear light nature of Dharmakaya. Which is what I refer to and point at when I speak of the vitality of the universe. The energy of that vitality is somewhat similar to love. I will give a teaching on how to accentuate that next.

[Question from an attendee about quick glances at awareness]

[Lama Lena]: Short moments, quick glances. Yes. But you see, the Dharmakaya awareness is the clear light nature of the Dharmakaya. Vital and lucid. And the dance of phenomena arises in that as that. So when you're glancing at Dharmakaya, you are also glancing at *Könchok Sum*. *Svabhavikakaya*. Dharmata. Dharmakaya, *Sambhogakaya*, and *Nirmanakaya* together.

But because of our habit of focusing on phenomena in this sort of compulsive, obsessive way, you shift off it and focus on "I'm Dharmakaya," again and again. You will notice, as you do this, that it doesn't work. This is because you are standing as *Nirmanakaya*. You are standing as an observer, looking out or over at something and not realizing it's your own mind looking at itself.

So what you have to do is identify with *Sambhogakaya*. This will allow you to see and perceive Dharmakaya and *Nirmanakaya* together, and recognize they're the same thing. You yourself need to identify with the innate vitality of the entire universe. Bodhicitta is the way of that. It's why I emphasize it so strongly. And the next teaching I give will be a teaching on how to actualize Bodhicitta. Not the fake one. The real one.

[Dialogue with an experienced practitioner about clarity and doubt]

[Lama Lena]: Clarity is a nyam. Its name is Selwa Nyam. Put it down. It's what's behind it you want. It doesn't matter whether you're clear or foggy. Whether you're clear or confused, it's really important — you see this when you're drunk, when you're hungover. So please arrange for yourself a hangover by becoming drunk, and practice while drunk. Do this while hungover.

You think there's something you're supposed to get there. No, there isn't. Let go of that clarity. Let go of your accomplishments. Don't grab — just check. Don't be invested in the outcome. Relax.

What doesn't come and go is what you're looking for. Find that which is the same when drunk, sober, and hungover. Find that which is not a thing. Find that which is the same regardless of how you feel or what you think. Homework. It's stable.

The word Rigpa — in Tibetan, the word "to see" is rig. The word for awareness is Rigpa. The seer. Light is the symbol of the ability to see. So we say "clear light" as the symbol for the aliveness which allows perception. But since the aliveness allows perception, of course there will be perceptions. All kinds.

Awareness is a characteristic that can only happen to life. Something which is not alive is not aware. And the emptiness, the vastness — there's no separation there either. We call it Dharmata. In Sanskrit, Svabhavikakaya. It is Dharmakaya, Sambhogakaya, Nirmanakaya as one thing. When you think of Nirmanakaya as the purity of phenomena when they're not being screwed around with by somebody trying to get something out of them, or get away from them. No push-pull.

We are complete. May you see, receive, the true nature of mind and phenomena.