

Tenzin Wangyal Rinpoche: Soul Retrieval and the Pain Identity

Introduction: Ligmincha and the Bön Tradition

In this lecture for the "Well of Being" collective, Tenzin Wangyal Rinpoche explores the teachings of the *Bön* tradition on "Soul Retrieval" (*La Gug*) and overcoming what he calls the "Pain Identity." Rinpoche emphasizes the importance of reconnecting with the natural world not as a transaction, but as a deep relationship of wisdom.

The Three Precious Pills

The foundation of the practice is the "Three Precious Pills," which act as doors to our true nature or source (*Dzogchen*):

1. **Stillness (Body):** Through the body, we access physical stillness that allows us to rest and "recharge" our energy.
2. **Silence (Speech):** By becoming aware of the silence behind our words and internal noise, we heal our communication.
3. **Spaciousness (Mind):** We recognize the open and luminous nature of the mind, allowing thoughts and emotions to dissolve like clouds in the sky.

The Pain Identity vs. The True Self

Rinpoche introduces the concept of "Pain Identity" to describe how we cling to limited and self-destructive roles:

- **Temporary Identity ("Someone"):** This is rigid, predictable, and based on our limitations and past traumas (e.g., "I am an insomniac" or "I am sick"). By identifying with these roles, we block our capacity for healing.
- **True Self ("No One"):** This is the state of "No One" in the sense of being infinite possibility, boundless space, and dynamic energy (*Ma Bu Tsal Sum*). By recognizing that we are not a fixed ego, we regain the power to be "anyone" and act with freedom.

Autonomic and Spontaneous Healing

Healing occurs naturally when the body enters a state of rest (parasympathetic nervous system). Stress and the "Pain Identity" activate the fight mode, which drains our energy and shuts down self-recovery mechanisms. The practice of the Three Doors (Stillness, Silence, and Spaciousness) is the method to "plug in" again to the source and allow healing to be spontaneous.

Relationship with Nature and Spirits

In the *Bön* tradition, the soul is also retrieved through natural elements:

- **Respect for Spirits:** The elements (earth, water, fire, air, space) have "owners" or spirits. We must treat them with respect and humility, not just as resources for entertainment.
- **Provocations:** Many modern diseases ("time diseases") are seen as provocations from spirits due to the environmental damage we cause.
- **Elemental Practices:** Rinpoche recommends *Sun Gazing* in the morning to adjust the circadian rhythm and activate the inner light (*Rigpa*), as well as *Salung Trulkor* (Tsalung) exercises to activate the elements in the body.

Evolution and Letting Go

Rinpoche clarifies that his transition from monastic life to teaching in the West is an evolution, not a break. He invites students to "break" or dissolve cultural or social identities that are no longer useful, in order to advance on the path of self-realization.

Conclusion: The Inner Refuge

Soul retrieval is not something external, but the process of returning to the source that already dwells within us. By resting in stillness, silence, and spaciousness, we stop draining our life and begin to live from the fullness of Great Perfection (*Dzogchen*).