

Dzogchen Teachings on Light and Dark

[James]: Okay. Sorry about that. I'm live now.

[Lama Lena]: Tell me when to start.

You can start now. Okay, well, hello y'all. First teaching since I've been back in New Orleans. It took a little while to deal with jet lag. That was a long time. And being as travel is a bit squirrely these days, it was an even longer way, with an assortment of odd glitches that you get when you fly.

Anyway, I'm now here and I'm going to remain here for quite a while. Good morning. Pick a spot and sit in it. Don't sit in the one she's sitting in, though. So we do have a few people turning up here.

Before I forget: just back from India. The library which we have been sponsoring, paying the rent on—it was started by Tenzin Pelkyong. It is not the custom among either the Tibetans or the local Indians in that town to own books. So you have children growing up in houses with nary a book in the house. Maybe not even a pencil and a piece of paper, unless it's required for school. So this is making literacy more difficult in the area.

Tenzin Pelkyong, together with the Dalai Lama, started a library. It has several floors. It has Tibetan books, English books, Hindi books, German, French. But for the most part, it has a number of Tibetan texts on the upper floor and a whole big bunch of children's books in Tibetan, Hindi, and English on the first floor. And you see kids that have no access to books coming in there after school and looking so happy to be able to read something fun.

Anyway, we are working this year on making rent, since Tenzin's not there to wrangle it. And Vicky has been kind enough to offer to catch and send on the money for that. So if anyone wants to contribute to literacy in our village—both among the Tibetans and the Indians, and any other stray kids that wander through—please feel free to send something to Vicky designated for that. Don't send it directly to me; I am not a good bookkeeper. Vicky is.

Karen handles sponsorship, which is where you merge your practice with one of our practitioners, a yogi up in the Himalayas, and you both get the results of both

your practices. That's good for when you are at that time of life where you have more money than time, like you pay somebody to mow the lawn instead of doing it yourself anymore. But a lot of people don't feel in a position, especially the way things are now, to do something regular. So there's the library; feel eminently free to offer them \$5, or \$10, or \$2, or whatever you feel comfortable with. And hopefully we will again this year have collected their rent.

Anyway, I started with these two things because I always get spacey and forget at the end. So you got the commercials first. This teaching is for the Solstice. At 9 a.m. this morning, approximately, was Winter Solstice—the longest night and the shortest day of the year. It is, among many traditions, the time when you offer light. Light in the dark. These are symbols. To understand the symbolic nature of perception will free you from being trapped in it.

So before we begin, the symbols of Bodhisattva and Guru Yoga, where all sentient beings in the whole wide world are, in the fullness of time—in the fourth time, beyond time and space—all Buddhas of infinity, without differentiation or separation. In this particular minimal, tiny little moment of *now*, there are differences of light and dark, of ignorance and Rigpa. But in the fullness of time, in the fullness of space, beyond the limitations of the space-time continuum, all beings arise as all Buddhas.

So your love for your teacher, for the symbol of teacher—such as Guru Rinpoche or Tsongkhapa, depending on the lineage you happen to have an affinity for—all of this does not separate. Duality is an illusion and an error. A piece of darkness in the light of aware wisdom. There is no separation between the Buddhas you love and the sentient beings that annoy you. Therefore, there's no reason to feel differently toward them—even the "Great Idiot" and the minions of the "Great Idiot." Depending on which country you're in, you will have your own "Great Idiot"; we shan't name names here.

In all of this, do not feel differently. Do not hate one and love the other; that's the darkness, that's the ignorance coming. That's not realizing that the ignorance and the foolishness of this moment are merely a momentary illusion, and people are merely symbols of Buddhas.

(Singing Lineage Prayer) Kuntuzangpo... Dorje Sempa, Garab Dorje... Orgyen Pema Jungne la solwa dep... Dorje Chang, Tilopa, Naropa... Marpa, Milarepa, Gampopa... Pakmo Drupa, Palden Drukpa... Kargyü Lama nam la solwa dep...

That last paragraph: without exception, not separate from Garab Dorje and all the others. I said I would tell you about darkness and light today. Light is the symbol of

vitality. It is not a particular color of light, or white light, or that glowy, fuzzy light you see when you take acid. Not that light. It's much simpler. It's this light right here between my hands: Clear Light. Transparent Light. There's nothing to see here, but when you place an object there, the light illuminates the object. Awareness, awakens, is symbolized by light. These are all symbols.

What you perceive as you walk through daily life—objects, people, animals, pretty things, ugly things, scary things, fun things—this is all no less symbolic than what you experience when you walk through the dream time. Each thing you see, each singular thing, appears to be matter but is a symbol of Mind. You don't see, hear, touch, or smell what is *actually* going on around you. You see, hear, touch, and smell what you *think* is going on around you.

Those little thoughts that interpret everything that happens—try for a moment taking that thought stream and leaving it be. Ceasing to listen to what it says. Let those thoughts natter on! Allow your attention to open wide enough to encompass the *where* those thoughts are happening rather than the *what* they are saying. It is virtually impossible to do both at the same time, unless you have certain types of ADHD. If you do have that type, then go ahead with your double vision, but let 60% of that attention be on the *where*, not the *what*.

Open without judgment—"I'm doing it right, I'm doing it wrong, this is good, this is bad"—without any of that crap, which is made of thoughts but you're not paying any mind to. The *where* is right there. There is a vast, unlimited openness of mind itself. For as far as the imagination extends, the Mind extends. And y'all have really big imaginations, especially if you read sci-fi or poetry, or paint, or play music.

Open the attention to the light, which is the source of all creativity—the Clear Light which illuminates the vast emptiness of the *where* of Mind itself. That luminous vitality. You see, when you shift your attention from *what* you're thinking to *where* those thoughts are happening, it's not a big dead nothing. Oh, it's big and it doesn't have "things" in it—Great Mother Ocean of Dharmakaya Emptiness—but notice that it is not dark. It is brilliant with the indescribable transparent light which is the symbol of vitality.

That light, that vitality, known as the Sambhogakaya nature of mind—where all the gods are born, the sea of creativity—manifests itself as all the symbols that you experience through your six sense organs. Light. So in the darkest time of the year, we offer light. The dates are sometimes on a lunar calendar in India and Asia, but the old custom is to burn an oil lamp in the window all night.

Now here in the West, we've got fancy stuff. Last night I finally got the lights up, which is to offer light to the passerby, to the stranger—a custom of the Solstice that my family has done for as long as I can remember. Remember, I wasn't raised Christian or Jewish; I was raised pagan.

When you practice, you have a habit—an obsessive-compulsive habit—of focusing entirely on your thoughts and what you think. You've got to break that habit to free yourself from their tyranny, into the light which is the aliveness. Before the minuteness of thoughts are created, this vast, unoriginated, self-luminous wisdom space is the ground of being. Dungsé Rinpoche on the beginning and the end of confusion. It is from this Sambhogakaya nature of mind that the thoughts are born, for this itself is the ability to think—the vitality of light.

If you are not alive and vital, you will not think or move or be. Light is the vitality that permeates the universe. It is also a symbol of the forces of love, just as darkness—lack of light, ignorance—is a symbol of the forces of fear, which easily turns into aggression. When someone has road rage, it's usually right after somebody cuts them off and scares the shit out of them. Then they're angry because they are not comfortable experiencing fear.

So fear manifests, as Sigmund Freud said, as jealousy, avarice, competitiveness, as the desire to show that you are better. You know, you need a jacket—are you satisfied with just any old jacket, or do you want a jacket that pleases you? That pleases your ego? Like a nice leather bomber jacket, or a cashmere camel-hair coat with a belt. That's not just "not being cold"; all the things you want are to show people that you have them. When nobody's coming around, you tend to stay in your jammies. When I'm just doing groups by video and nobody's here, I wear pajama bottoms and my top robes. Don't you?

All the beautiful things we want are to show others that we have them, to make us look good. This is fear. This is darkness. We "shade" others to take the sun, competing like trees in the forest. We blame. We do so many things out of fear. The first point to work with this is to actually recognize that you're scared, and not have it instantaneously flip into anger or annoyance, which is a lot more comfortable for many people. Of course, others can't accept anger and flip it into fear.

But this pattern pulls in the opposite direction of Bodhicitta. Bodhicitta is the urge to merge, to recognize and experience the interconnectedness of all life. In that, shyness and shame are impossible. So when the darkness of fear—and these times have many fearful symbols swirling around in our "agreed-upon reality"—it's not particularly real, but it's the one everybody thinks they see. Of course, it's pretty fragmented these days; not everybody sees the same one, unless you're following

an algorithm. The algorithm in my news reports is very different from the algorithm in my friend Mickey's news reports. Mickey's a Republican; in America, that matters.

Neither is real. What the algorithm feeds you is not real. You see? We are hardwired through evolution to pay attention to danger so that we can duck. So we always have our eye out for the saber-tooth tiger. What's the first thing Rinpoche asks whenever he comes to a new land? "What eats people around here?" It's a very important question. Sometimes it's a mosquito, sometimes it's a yeti or leopards. But it's always quite important to know what eats people so you can duck.

So when you look online at a feed, it wants you to click and explore further. It wants your attention. What will get your attention fastest? "Hi, I'm a tiger. Look closer." So for clickbait purposes, fear and its twin brother, anger, are being emphasized and spread by the unintelligent algorithms. And so as you look around you, you will experience dangerous symbols—guys in black with masks. It's a part of your reality.

Make light. Do not further the darkness. Do not spread it. Spread light. This is not to pretend it is not there. Light and dark in the universe will always balance and swirl like a dance. A very beautiful dance. When I first saw it swirling, I thought light and dark were fighting. It took a long time to notice they were actually dancing and "fucking."