

Intermediate Dzogchen — Lama Lena in the Caves of Tso Pema

[Lama Lena]: The essence of Dzogchen is Guru Yoga, because the transmission must be telepathic, not only in words. You need to be able to practice sufficient Guru Yoga to the lineage—to the Primordial Buddha, Kuntuzangpo, and whatever symbol of that you have chosen—in order for the transmission to enter you. It is not about the personality of the individual who is standing in front of you assisting the lineage in its transmission.

Personalities are personal things. We all have them. You have one, I have one, he, she, and it has one; even bugs have them, after their own fashion. Why one bug behaves differently than another bug is personality. It is held in the patterns of your energy channels, your Tsa and Nadis. Your energy channels do not end at your skin; you look more like a luminous egg made of fiber optic tubing than a man-shaped figure when one examines the energy body. The only reason it's egg-shaped is because you tend to keep your energy channels wrapped around yourself due to self-interest.

Your primary interest in this world is yourself: your stuff, your job, your plans, your hopes, your fears. This is the self-interest which limits the expanse of your energy channels and the expanse of your View. Your personality is comprised of the dim spots, bright spots, dents and lumps, and protrusions of the energy channel pattern. Your energy channels are constantly moving like a tree in a windstorm; they don't hold still. They point at whatever you are paying attention to. You perceive through your six sense organs with the energy channels that extend from the chakras involved in those sense organs. You interpret those perceptions according to the patterns held in the energy channels.

Some of it is genetic. Levels of intelligence and certain kinds of "brain farts" are genetic, like ADHD or intrauterine environmental factors. Old Karma. Learning eccentricities like dyslexia or autism are patterns inborn in how you hold your channels, and they probably won't change unless you achieve the Rainbow Body. Rainbow Body is where all the channels relax and open up to their full extent.

You just had a perception. You heard a sound. You saw me picking this up and checking it. You heard someone speaking. These are sensations you had. But what was going on was your interpretation of those sensations—the whys and

wherefores. Those interpretations are according to your channel patterns, which is your personality. If you happen to be inclined toward optimistic and approving channel patterns today, you will find a happy feeling about an interruption. If you happen to be having grouchy or judgmental patterns due to drug use, dizziness, or a headache, you will probably have a negative feeling.

Your feelings are not based on what happened; they are based on your interpretation of what happened. A sensation happens in your sense organs; the interpretation of "good, bad, pleasant, unpleasant" happens in your thought process. Once you have interpreted a sensation, it's called a "perception." Once you have a perception, you then arise a feeling of liking or disliking. Having arisen a feeling, you then perform an action—mental, verbal, or physical. These actions, of course, will change your energy channel pattern; they will either entrench it or change it.

When we practice the Six Paramitas, specifically Generosity of Mind, we are changing how our Tsa and Nadis are hanging. Therefore, we are changing our personality slightly over time. You're always changing anyway. You no longer have the personality you had at sixteen—one hopes. Most of us were pretty messed up as teenagers; it's normal. Even Tulkus have hard teenage years. Being a teenager is one of the most difficult things we go through in life.

Understanding the nature of personality and energy channels is important, but what is being transmitted is not the personality. Choose your teacher as someone whose personality you can deal with. If you can't deal with that personality, please pick a different one. Chögyam Trungpa Rinpoche had a "promiscuous drunk" personality, but what he was pointing at was way beyond that. Everybody tried to be a promiscuous drunk just like him, except for one nun who couldn't—Pema Chödrön. She followed where he was pointing.

So when we talk about Guru Yoga being the basis of Dzogchen, it is the ability to not get tangled up in the personality of the teacher, but to focus on where they are pointing. This is difficult. My own root teacher was a fundamentalist toward all the Tibetan texts. He was exceptionally difficult personally, but it worked for him. I had to adjust to that personality, so vastly different from mine. He was very sweet and gentle, a complete opposite to me—a person who tends to not have a problem with verbal or physical directness. It's not about the personality; look at the lineage and what is being pointed at.

Don't fall in love or in hate with the personality; it's just passing by and will change by tomorrow. Instead, look past that at what is being shown. Dharmata—the nature of reality—is the root of Gom (meditation) and the root of Tawa (view), but it can

only be experienced and shown in a telepathic manner called the Fourth Wang. The First Wang is an intellectual explanation. The Second Wang is a poetic emotion. The Third Wang is the showing of something transparent. Usually, it's shown with a crystal; I don't have one, so we'll look at this transparent bottle. This is the key: your thoughts, your feelings, and your perceptions are transparent.

That is the essence of the Third Wang. Don't try to get rid of thinking. Thoughts are not the root of all evil; they are the lively creativity of the Nirmanakaya. Don't fight your thoughts, and for God's sake, don't fight your feelings. Just feel. If you're angry, feel angry, but don't take it seriously or believe it's real. Don't try to stop feeling it in the practice of Gom.

This group has seen the Tawa (the View) and is working on the practice of Gom. Tawa is simply your own mind. It is not as important that a teacher be able to see their own mind; you want a teacher who sees the innate Buddha Nature in everybody, including you. Otherwise, how can they show you where to see it yourself? Part of Guru Yoga means having the responsibility to see the innate Buddha Nature of each and every sentient being. When we exchange white scarves (Khatas), that's the symbol.

The other responsibility is to be kind rather than nice. Sometimes kindness is not niceness, and that's hard because of our conditioning. Especially in the West and among Tibetans, we are conditioned to be nice, polite, and smiley. As a Western woman, you get a double dose of it. But niceness is not always the most useful thing for Dzogchen. We have chosen this practice because we want to get past the conditioning—self-conditioning, cultural, family, and physiological. Getting past those was not always comfortable or "nice" when I was with my teacher.

The View (Tawa) is an utter relaxation. You cannot get it by tensing at it; you can only relax into it as the completely natural state. Your tensions and holding patterns are made of your belief systems—what you think is right, wrong, real, or not real. These belief systems need to be released. Yet a part of us doesn't want to, thinking they protect us. "The whole world is out to get me"—if I believe that, I feel safe, right? These are the cocoons that wrap around our true nature and distract us from relaxing into it. It is by the practice of Gom (meditation) that we relax these patterns most quickly.

Gom is simply looking right through those perceptions at all times, regardless of what you are doing, experiencing, or thinking. You rest in Tawa. It's not something big and "woo-woo"; it's the utter simplicity of here and now, un-complexified. It's utterly simple: here and now as it is, wide open, without interpretations. That doesn't mean rejecting your interpretations; they are transparent. Recognize their

transparency.

Look not at what you are thinking in this moment, but at where that thought is happening. Not a place, not a "here" or "there," but vast beyond concept, luminous, lucid—the shimmering spark of creativity. Thoughts arise and vanish, feelings arise and vanish. Look through them right now. You can never meditate "later"; it has to be now, in each and every "now." You are looking directly at the Great Mother Ocean of Dharmakaya in all her vibrancy of Sambhogakaya.

One thing, no thing, beyond concept. This is Mind looking at Mind. It does not preclude thinking, feeling, and perceiving, nor do those interfere with it. Your thoughts, feelings, and perceptions are utterly transparent and insubstantial when you choose to notice this. This choosing is the key to Gom—to decide to look there, at that "there" which has no "where." The key to meditation is the decision to meditate now, in this now and every now. If you don't decide this utterly, you won't do it.

Once you have clearly noticed the Dharmakaya nature of mind, the Great Mother Ocean, then you need to decide to look there. "Deciding on one single thing" is the second vital point from Garab Dorje's text. This doesn't mean you won't become distracted; everybody falls off the horse. Just don't beat yourself over the head with a dead fish because you fell off. Just get up and stay "Oops." If you don't really want to practice Dzogchen, find a practice you do want to do. Otherwise, go back to understanding the Four Noble Truths and why you're going to suffer if you don't practice.

The Ordinary Ngöndro—understanding suffering, karma, and impermanence—leads to the desire to escape the "crap" of Samsara. If you really understood the nature of karma, you would be terrified by what you've been creating. You would have the motivation to get out of this mess. If Dzogchen is the practice you really want to do, then goddammit, you just have to decide to do it.

That's what it takes. To understand how to do it: first, sit with your channels in alignment. Stop slumping. It's easier with a straight back. Unfocus your eyeballs—not into blurriness, but into allowing peripheral vision to be as clear as central vision. Attention follows the gaze. Open the focus of your attention. Have a thought—I find nouns easiest. Imagine a pickle. A big green kosher dill. Your body reacts; you can imagine the scent, flavor, color, and texture.

All of these are "thought-feelings." Where are you perceiving the scent of that pickle? You can move that pickle anywhere. You can have it orbit Pluto. You can send it out of the galaxy. Where are you seeing all this? Thinking, perceiving,

tasting, imagining... where is your imagination? Do not answer intellectually. Use the perception. Perceive the infinitude of open awareness—Longchen Rabjam's "Infinite Vast Expanse." This is where your thoughts occur. Where your imagination occurs is not limited by what you imagine.

Your thoughts are limited by the languages you know, but where they occur is not. Your thoughts are transparent. Imagine a unicorn on the tip of my finger. Can you see my face through it? Yes, it's transparent. All thought has no substance and no duration. If you think a thought has substance, try to grab one and hand it to me.

As for duration, a "thought" usually seems like a chain—discursive thoughts stuck together to make a story. We spend our time sticking thoughts into phrases, phrases into paragraphs, and paragraphs into a story. Then we believe the story and get upset. The idea of Dzogchen meditation is to slow down, look through the thoughts while you think them, and put your mind in neutral. It becomes easier with practice, but you have to decide to do it.

We have the habit of putting all our attention into thoughts rather than Tawa. Once you decide, rest in that infinite openness. We call it "Clear Light" because to see, you need light. Transparent light is the symbol of the Seer—that which enables awareness to be aware. The confusion of sentient beings is that they think things really are the way they think they are. Even though we've noticed that things rarely turn out as we thought they would, we still cling to our beliefs. Please understand that I haven't said a single "true" word today; the words are just fingers pointing. Don't memorize the words; look where the fingers point.

We rely so much on our thoughts and interpretations. "I perceive he is scowling in anger"—maybe he's just trying not to fart! But you make up a story, you get angry back, and then you realize you made it all up. Meditation on your cushion, several times a day, for short sessions in the beginning, is about straightening your channels. Pray to the lineage, to Kuntuzangpo, Guru Rinpoche, or however you wish to symbolize it. "Arising Guru Yoga and Bodhicitta" are the same thing. You can't love all Buddhas without loving all sentient beings.