

Opening Talks by Steven Landsberg and Costantino Albini at the International Dzogchen Community Annual Meeting

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Steven Landsberg

Steven Landsberg – President of the International Gakyil

Good morning everyone. On behalf of the International Dzogchen Community I want to welcome everyone to our annual general meeting. We hold this meeting once a year so our members can approve the new board and budget and answer any outstanding questions that there may be.

You all may be aware that this is a kind of precarious situation that we are in and we are facing many uncertainties going forward. Fortunately we are held together by our common mission to preserve the legacy of Rinpoche's Teachings and Transmissions, and so the best thing we can do

in this moment is to practice individually and collectively, and do our best according to our circumstances to insure the continuity of our Community. The International Dzogchen Community Gakyil is well aware of the questions that everyone has, in regards to transmission and membership. It's not like we are not discussing this a lot. We discuss these points regularly. It's a real predicament.

We know that from the time Rinpoche passed away, that no one again is going to receive a direct transmission from Namkhai Norbu Rinpoche. Just like I'm never going to receive a transmission from Padmasambhava or Vimalamitra or Vairocana or somebody. That's over.

So if we consider that in order to be a member of the Dzogchen Community you must have transmission, then logically that comes to mean that after 50 or 100 years, we won't have any new members.

On the other hand, we have to wonder could that have possibly been Rinpoche's intention? Many times we heard him say that this teaching was not just for now, it's for generations to come and into the future. So we cannot answer this question right in this moment. It's just not a simple thing to do; we are kind of caught in between these two issues.

So we have to remember we are in a period of mourning, and it's not our mission at this moment to come to some critical or definitive decision about any of these issues. So if you have this kind of question and this is what you want to ask, maybe put it to rest for a little bit, because I don't think that anyone in this particular moment can give you an answer to resolve that or make a conclusion about it.

So we may all have our personal opinions about this situation, I know I do, but as far as taking any kind of official position, we have to just remain open minded and wait for the appropriate time to come to make an appropriate decision. So we just remain patient, accept our responsibility, and practice according to what we've received.

This is it. I welcome you to this meeting and I hope we get other kinds of things resolved, and on behalf of the International Gakyil I welcome you and it's great to see all of you.

Thank you very much.



Costantino Albini

Costantino Albini – Santi Maha Sangha Instructor

Good morning everybody. I am just talking for myself I am not representing any side of the organization. I am just a student of Rinpoche. But I have a feeling I have something to share with you, which are my personal opinions, and I know this is the year of mourning and silence, so we are still mourning and dealing with our emotional and deep suffering.

I want to offer just a few personal reflections, very personal, on our Dzogchen Community after the passing of our beloved Master. So as I said, it is just my opinion and you can take it the way you want to. Don't take it as anything very important, it's just my opinion. If you like you can agree or disagree.

For over 40 years Rinpoche has been teaching us. Besides his activity as a teacher, he has been the heart of our Community; the source of all inspiration as well as the source of our supposed identity. So as long as he was with us physically, his presence did not raise in us the question of what we are and how we want to be perceived.

And now he has passed away we begin to feel the need to define what we want to be and how to present ourselves as an organization. So the first point I see like this, it is just a question I am posing to myself. This is the question: Are we defined as a religious group, or as a spiritual group, or as a social aggregation of individuals with an agenda, a specific agenda as much as you want, but social. Or what else?

We know very well that the Dzogchen Teaching is not a religion. It is not a philosophy. It is not even just a set of rules to live a better life. It is much less than that but much more than that. But you know these Western definitions of the Western culture are kind of wide. And what really counts is the actual presence of the IDC in the world, and its function in the world. We are here. We are living here.

Anyway my personal reflection is always limited to how we can continue as individual practitioners because my feeling is that the Community is made of individuals. And the value of the Community is because of the value of the individuals inside. If the individuals do not have any value then the Community doesn't have any value.

For this issue of transmission I have something to say that is very similar to what Steven just said. Until now the transmission has been given to a number of persons around the whole globe for 42 years. That number is now closed. We can no longer facilitate new people's access to Rinpoche. Rinpoche is in another dimension. So our concern now I think is to make Rinpoche's precious legacy mature and bear fruit within each of us. We are the ones who one day will become a testimony of the teachings through our realizations, our conduct and through our example in this

world.

There is no one now who can teach Rinpoche's teaching. There is no one now who can be Rinpoche. What we can and must do is gather together, practice together, do our best to deepen our understanding of what we have received without forgetting the real spirit of relative and absolute bodhicitta, which is the base of everything.

We are not a normal dharma group. We are not ordained Sangha, we are not even ngakpa. We do not belong to one particular tradition of Buddhism, Tibetan or not, in the West. The Dzogchen Community was envisaged by our Master as something completely new and original. We are lay people from all over the world with jobs and families. From many different cultural backgrounds, we speak many different languages, and we have received, each one of us, individually, personally and subjectively, direct access to a knowledge that is not limited within the boundaries of organized religious churches or cultures. It is not limited by anything but our own limitations.

That direct knowledge being a subjective experience, and because it is a subjective experience, it cannot be shared. Only a fulfilled Master can share direct experience by giving direct transmission. Our direct knowledge must and can be cultivated so that it can engender an evolution; this is what Rinpoche used to tell us. What we can do is use the transmission that we have individually and collectively in order to mature and engender evolution. And at this point if that evolution manifests then the subject of transmission can be considered again.

My personal opinion is that we are the students of Rinpoche, we have been studying and practicing with him and receiving teachings, receiving, receiving, receiving, now we have a big legacy and a big inheritance. But now like in all families when the father passes away it is a moment of coming of age, a ritual of passage. Now there is no more the father of the family, now we are adults. This is my idea.

In all these years I have no memory of Rinpoche ever giving us rules and regulations. Instead he always encouraged us to make our decisions in full presence and awareness and to take full responsibility for them. If I know a certain course of action can and will determine a certain karma, it is only my responsibility to take that action or not.

If a Vajra Brother or Sister, for example, decides to give an initiation of Dzogchen Longde to the public, who of us can question whether he can or cannot give it. I believe it is only his or her karma, to take that decision. And I want to believe that he or she knows what they are doing and the motivation they have is respect for the teaching and great compassion. That is what I want to believe. But then this remains his or her private business with guardians of the precious teaching. It has nothing to do with us. We cannot judge.

The vision of Rinpoche I already said many times. Rinpoche's vision of the Dzogchen Community is that we are primarily a community of Dzogchen practitioners, so the Dzogchen practitioners are

the content and the container is the organization of the Dzogchen Community. The only principle I can think of about the container is how the individual acts within the container, and that is the principle of collaboration, but today my reflections are primarily about individual practitioners. I think the first concern for any of us must be to question ourselves in this perspective. As our teacher used to say, observe yourself. Am I a Dzogchen practitioner, **am I** a Dzogchen practitioner? To what extent and with what level of commitment? How much am I ready to collaborate with my Vajra sisters and brothers?

If at this moment I don't feel that I am a practitioner of Dzogchen just yet, how committed am I to truly become one in this life. A Dzogchen practitioner, in the most basic definition, is somebody who has been empowered with transmission by a true holder of the Dzogchen lineage and is committed to train and remain for as much time as possible in the state of Guruyoga, or primordial awareness, or instant presence, many names, aiming to develop the capacity to integrate this state in all daily life. The aim of a practitioner is to reach a condition where there is no more difference between his or her practice and his or her life. So the only person who can judge you is yourself. On the other hand none of us is entitled to judge anyone else. We are fundamentally free. We always have been free but we didn't know it; but we are free to choose our course of action moment to moment. And we are the only ones responsible for the consequences thereof.

And then another concern, given that we have a primary and essential mission, I think you all agree to that, a mission to accomplish; that is to attain realization for the benefit of all beings, right? And, not only do we have a mission, but we have a received an incredibly precious, powerful and beneficial instrument for that purpose. And then I want to say this. My feeling is that we **can** make a difference in the world if we are aware of the gift we have received. We are empowered. We have everything that we need. It's time that we realize that we have grown up. How do we want to integrate with this society where we live, how do we intend to proceed, in order to make a difference at this time in history, in a society that is riddled with suffering, not only in our Community but everywhere around us, uncertainty, many changes, tumultuous changes, so what are the most skillful means for us to achieve effectiveness. The most skillful means, I think, are the ones we have already been taught, to open our hearts, as a bodhisattva does, to radiate kindness, to radiate love, to radiate presence and awareness, continue in the state of Guruyoga, be in presence and awareness, work with circumstances, follow Rinpoche's example. Follow Rinpoche's teaching. Follow Rinpoche's footprints. This is what we can and must do if we want the continuation of this Community. This is my personal opinion. At the moment that is all I have to say.

Thank you.

