

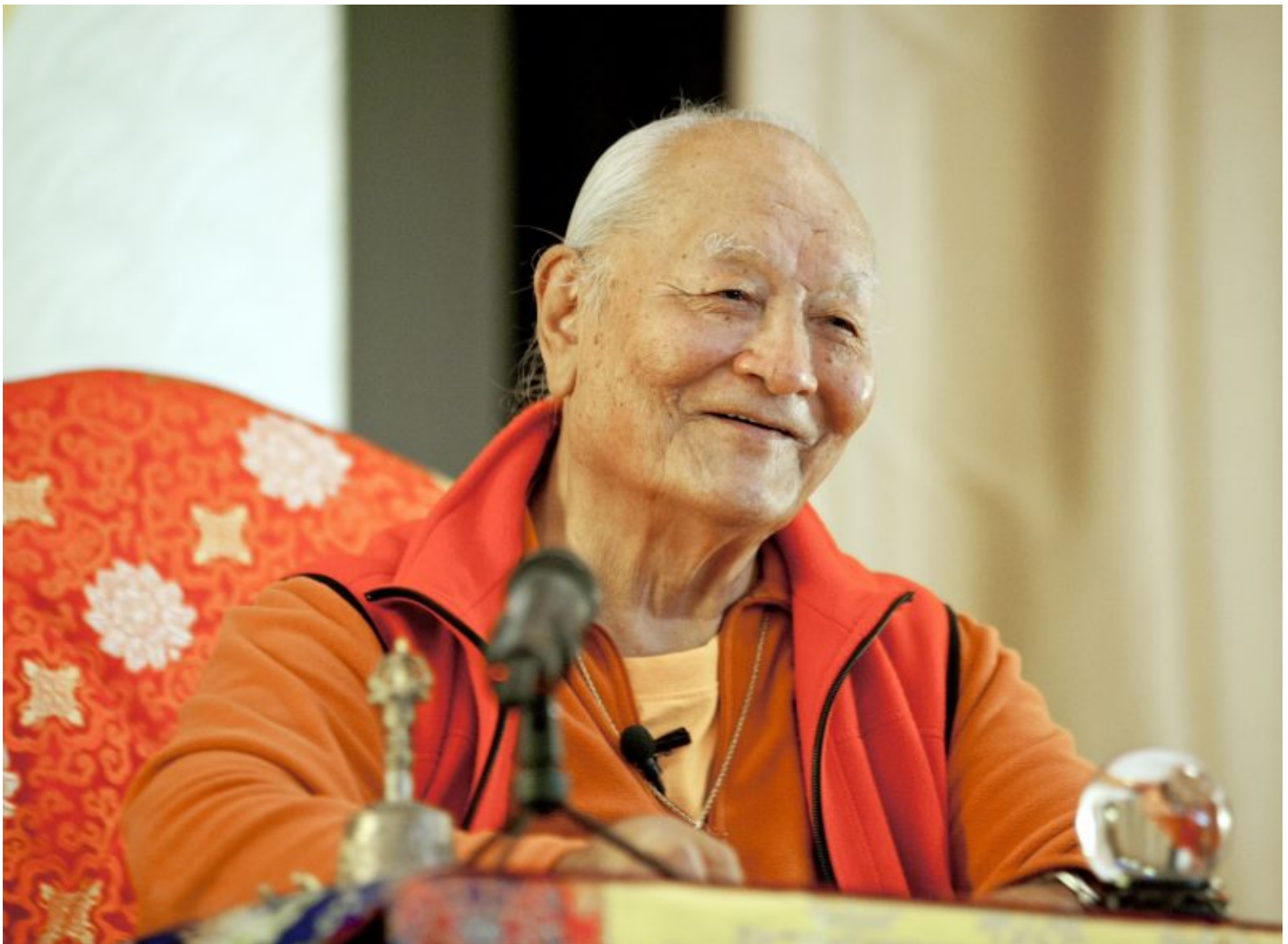
The Importance of Being Present .

Date : January 18, 2018

Chögyal Namkhai Norbu

**An excerpt from the Longsal Rushen Retreat in Tenerife
(Jan.27-Feb.3, 2017)**

29 January 2017, afternoon session



After finishing Ati guruyoga what should you do? We do not have any kind of rule that says, “In the Dzogchen teaching you should do this or that”. Dzogchen teaching is beyond rules.

In the Dzogchen teaching the rule is that you are present. You are not distracted. This is what you should learn. This is the second most important thing in the Dzogchen teaching. If you like to do some visualization of deities, chanting mantras, invocations, etc., the Dzogchen teaching does not say that you shouldn't do that. You are always free. You should work with circumstances and when there are possibilities, you can apply [these things]. But after being in the state of Ati guruyoga, what is really necessary is that you should be present, not distracted. You should learn this.

Some of my students say, "You always tell us that being present is very important. I have tried to do this, but it is not so easy. I am always distracted". Then that person no longer tries to be present. This is not good. Even though it is not easy, you should learn because it is not as difficult as, for example, making a sacrifice. I am not telling you to spend many years on a mountain and do like Milarepa did. That would be really difficult. I am not asking you to do anything like that. I'm only asking you to be present, not distracted. So, maybe if you don't know that then you should learn.

Our concept of not being distracted is a little different from not being distracted in the teaching. Our concept of not being distracted is this. If you think about something in your mind, for example, you want to write a letter, then you think that you don't want to be distracted by anything else. You always concentrate on what you should say in this letter and go ahead. If you are not present about that and do something else, then we say that you are distracted.

But in the teaching this is not being present. This is going after your mind and your concepts and being distracted by them. You are giving importance [to the concept] of writing letters in a perfect way. In the teaching being present is not like that. In the teaching what you should learn is just like how we drive a car. This is good example because everybody has had this experience. At the beginning when you are learning to drive, it is not so easy. In the same way when you are learning to be present it is not so easy, but when you have trained one time, two times, three times, etc., it soon becomes easier and easier.

How should you do this kind of practice? You think, "Oh, today I want to learn how to be present, not distracted. I have an hour of free time that I want to dedicate to being present". Now you have decided. You look at your watch. What time is it? Now you start in that moment. Then you think, "Which technique is it? What should I do now?" You don't do anything. You remain in your condition in general. In your mind there will be some ideas, "So, I am free, I am here being present". Then you think, "Oh, now I want to go to the kitchen to prepare a coffee". Now you are being present and you know that you are thinking to go to the kitchen. You are not distracted. You know that you are thinking that. But it doesn't mean you need to relax now. You are not doing contemplation, you are being present. Now that you are getting up and going to the kitchen, you know that you are getting up, that you are walking to the kitchen. You know what you are doing. Then you are making a coffee and bringing it back. You are always being present, not distracted.

In general, a lot of ideas come to our minds and we are conditioned by them, but you continue to be present about everything very precisely. You should be careful because you have a lot of mobile phones. When someone calls immediately you should be present. You notice that someone is calling. Now you pick up your phone and talk to that person, or your friend says something and you reply. You can be present – this is really what being present means. If you decided to do this practice for an hour, try to be present and not distracted. It is just like driving a car. When we become familiar with driving, we don't always need to concentrate only on the road and driving. When we are driving we can talk with our friends, we can look around, but we are not distracted from driving otherwise we would have an accident. This is the only thing we learned when we drive a car. But our life is not only driving a car, there are infinite things. Learning how to be present means in all circumstances. Whatever is happening we are being present.

If you learn [how to do that] today and dedicate one hour, for example, when you repeat it tomorrow you will feel it to be a little easier. When you train another time it will become easier and easier, much easier than driving a car at the beginning. A good practitioner of Dzogchen is always present. Even when you are talking, you are working, you are doing any kind of activity, it is always possible to be present. When you are being present it is also very good and also helps very much in your relative condition. Particularly if you are being present you notice immediately when you have tensions. Then you are being present and you relax. When you relax you have no problem of the relative condition. So, being present is a very important practice in the Dzogchen teaching.

You can do that training with any kind of movements, not only when you are chanting and praying and reciting mantras, etc. For example, every evening we do Khaita dances. They are not a particular practice of Dzogchen, but it is training in presence. If you know how to be present, you dance and you train [your presence] and this is automatically Dzogchen practice. There is no difference between sitting some place for an hour and doing *thun* practice and dancing Khaita dances. Most people don't understand that. But the principle of integration in movement in the Dzogchen teaching is very important.

For example, you may think, "Now I am a Dzogchen practitioner, what I should do?" You should do *Ati guruyoga* and try to be in the state of contemplation as much as possible in any moment. This is really the path of realization. But when you are not in that state then you should try to be present, not distracted. If you apply that then you become a Dzogchen practitioner. Why? Because we know what the principle of the Dzogchen teaching is, that is, being forever in the state of the contemplation, in our real nature. In order to have this possibility we need to integrate all aspects of our body and speech and mind. Intellectually we can understand what we should do in the Dzogchen teaching, but in a practical way it is not so very easy with all the aspects of the physical level and those related with our body. But it is easier with all the aspects related to our voice and energy level, and even easier with our mental concepts. So, being present is related to our mental concepts. This is the first method in which we can apply integration in the state of the contemplation. When you become more and more familiar with that then there is also the possibility to gradually integrate the aspect of the voice. When we succeed in integrating all aspects of body

and speech and mind totally, in the Dzogchen teaching this is called *ting 'dzin khor yug chen mo*. It means life is total contemplation. Now even though you are living physically with a human body, your real condition is Samantabhadra, totally. That is what it says in the Dzogchen *Dra Thalgyur* tantra.

So, this is very important and you should try to remember it. This is my hope for all my students – at least they have learned Ati guruyoga and being present. That way when we finish the retreat and you go back home, I am very happy. And your life will also automatically change. Some people say, “I am following your teaching and you have changed my mind and my situation”. This is not true. I have not changed anything for you. I have only made you understand how to integrate Dzogchen teaching. When you have understood that, with your being present you now feel relaxed. Before you had so many problems, you felt that life was very heavy but now you feel life is more harmonious and not really heavy. Then it seems you think that I have changed you, but you have changed by yourself. This is the effect of the Dzogchen teaching. This is what I want to ask everybody to try to remember, to not forget. If you have learned something about *rushen* that is also fantastic, it is good. And when you have time and possibility you should try to apply it. And that way, for example, you can understand what the difference is between mind and nature of the mind.

Transcribed by Agafonova Polina
Edited by Liz Granger