

## The Three Doors for Entering Knowledge

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An excerpt from Chögyal Namkhai Norbu's teaching, December 30, 2017, Dzamling Gar.

Good day for everybody and everywhere. This morning I explained about *thun-mong* and *thun-min*, which is something very important to understand. When we refer to *thun-mong* and *thun-min* in general what we understand in an intellectual way is mind and nature of mind. What is mind? Mind is very easy to understand. Even though we are not thinking about anything in particular after a little while thought arises. This is not only a kind of idea; it is something concrete. Why do thoughts continually arise? The teachings such as sutra explain that our real nature is emptiness and we can really understand this if we observe. For instance, when thoughts arise, where do they come from, where are they, and where do they go? This is called *chung ne dro sum* (*byung gnas 'gro gsum*). If we observe, we cannot find anything.

When some teachers talk about introducing the mind, they say to observe thoughts as if they were something concrete. And in general we also believe that they are. So where do they come from? When we try to do this practice thought disappears and we cannot find anything. We try to find where thought is, where it goes and what we always find is emptiness. Through this principle we can understand that our nature, our base, is emptiness.

But even though a thought has disappeared, it doesn't mean that now we have no thoughts and we are only in emptiness because immediately another thought appears. Just thinking that we will search where thought comes from and where it goes is another thought. This continual alternation of thought and emptiness is our real condition. When we explain what mind is and how it works we can understand it in this way. So even though thoughts have disappeared, we do not remain only in emptiness.

In Tantrism this continuation is called *gyü*, tantra, which means continuing without interruption. What continues? Thoughts arise, then disappear, and again arise, and this alternation, this continuation is called tantra. In Vajrayana tantra is considered important because it is a kind of introduction to the condition of our mind. So when we search [for our thoughts] for many days without finding anything there is an explanation in the Dzogchen Teaching. When we do not find anything it shows how our real nature is emptiness yet it is important to understand that we are not only being in emptiness.

Some people study Sutra teaching and concentrate a lot on *shunyata*, emptiness. When they have some experience of it they are happy and consider that their practice is working and becoming concrete. But it doesn't correspond to our real condition in which relatively we must understand that there is emptiness and there is also movement. In Sutra teaching when they do practice like *shine*, the calm state, remaining in a one-pointed way in emptiness without thoughts, some

practitioners feel happy. Some Sutra practitioners meditate that way for hours and hours. Then because they do not work with movement sometimes they fall asleep and then there are other practitioners who go around and hit them with sticks. Then once again they are in a one-pointed way in emptiness because they are afraid that if they work with visions or the function of the senses, seeing or hearing or feeling something, they may lose their *shunyata*, their one-pointedness on emptiness.

In Dzogchen we cannot learn that way even though we may not immediately receive more advanced teaching about how to work with these things. In the *thun–mong* teaching, which I explained in general way, we can understand that movement and emptiness alternate. That means that we do not just think about it but we discover its real nature.

There is a story about my father. My father and a group of elderly people went to visit a very famous Kagyupa teacher called Trungram Gyaltrul Rinpoche (*drung ram rgyal sprul rin po che*) who was living on a mountain in personal retreat. They went there and asked him for an introduction to the nature of mind. Trungram Gyaltrul Rinpoche agreed to give them teaching and told them how they should practice. He told them to relax and when a thought arises to observe where it is coming from, where it is and where it goes so that they could discover how thoughts are. They did this practice for a day, then on the second day teacher told them to repeat it again and this went on for a few days.

He did not teach them how to chant mantras or do visualization because they had asked for an introduction to mind, to the nature of mind, not learning some practices in an ordinary way. Every day he would ask them what they had found and they would all say that they couldn't find anything. But even though they couldn't find anything it was not sufficient and so they did this practice again and again.

Then one day one of them said that he had discovered something. The teacher said that this was very good and asked him what he had discovered. He said that when he was relaxing and thought arose sometimes he would see a kind of red flash that would repeat. Then the teacher told him that it was better not to look too much at this red color. To the other people he finally said that the best thing they could find is nothing. That even if they did this practice their whole lives they would not find anything because the nature [of the mind] is empty. Then he did a kind of introduction so that they could understand the real sense and he advised that person who said that he had found something to do a purification practice such as the Vajrasattva mantra and visualization. This is the story my father told me about when they went to receive teaching.

This is an example of what is called *sem ngo tred* which is very important in the Kagyupa and Nyingmapa traditions. *Sem ngo tred* means introducing the mind and the nature of mind. In Dzogchen it is called direct introduction. Direct introduction means that our real condition is the non-duality of *kadag* and *lhundrub*, which is very similar to what we call mind and nature of mind. *Lhundrub* refers to all the qualities of our senses so that we can see, we can hear, we can have

contact with our senses and discover. But its real nature is emptiness, which we cannot see, we cannot hear. For our everyday level of mind it is a complete contradiction and that is why we cannot understand it.

In the introduction to Dzogchen, the non-duality of *kadag and lhundrub* is considered to be the state of Dzogchen. But how we can have the idea that existence and non-existence are non-dual? Our mind cannot accept it. But this is to discover that it is beyond mental concepts and concepts of time and space. In the Dzogchen Teaching this is called direct introduction. The teacher explains to the students how they can have that kind of experience and through experience they can discover that potentiality.

We have infinite experiences in our lives. Everything is related to experience. For instance if we eat a little sugar we have a sweet taste. If we eat a lemon we don't have that sweet taste but another one. In the same way when we see, when we hear, there are many things that we like and don't like. All of this is dualistic vision.

Experience is also indispensable when we follow teaching in order to understand the three existences or three gates. What are these three existences? They are body, speech, mind, which, in the teaching, are called *go sum* in Tibetan. What does *go* mean? It means gate or door, so *go sum* are the three doors for entering knowledge, such as the knowledge of wisdom and so on. We need to enter the precious teachings through the one of them if we wish to be free from the prison of samsara. If, for example, we want to visit a museum we have to buy a ticket and go to the door otherwise we cannot get inside. When we have permission to enter then we go through the door. In the same way the gates are also essential to free oneself from heavy problems and suffering.

The first gate is our physical body. The second is our energy, which is called "voice" or "speech" because in Dzogchen and Anuyoga everything manifests from emptiness through sound and voice. Just like in yantra yoga, if we need to coordinate our prana energy, we work with our breathing and for that reason it is also called voice, which corresponds to our energy. The third gate is our mind that judges and thinks.

## **Direct Introduction**

Everything in our life is experience and basically we consider that there are three kinds of experiences related to body and speech and mind. When we receive, for instance, teaching such as Vajrayana initiations, we can observe that they are all related to one of the experiences that introduce us and make us understand. In particular in Dzogchen Teaching the most essential point is that the teacher should give direct introduction to the students. It is more direct than only introducing the nature of mind. How can we have the experience of sensation, experience of clarity, experience of emptiness related to the three gates? We learn from the teacher's instructions and apply what we have learned, not only in an intellectual way, in order to understand and overcome problems, and have specific experiences of direct introduction to the non-dual state of *kadag and*

*lhundrub.*

When we work with *thun-mong* in an ordinary way we cannot always do direct introduction. However, there are many different kinds of methods of doing direct introduction and it does not really depend on which method is used but rather and most importantly on the teacher who is giving the introduction. When the teacher totally has this knowledge he can use any kind of method related to experience to give the introduction. Direct introduction does not mean that the teacher reads a text by a famous master and urges the students to read it. Introduction does not work that way. It is only possible to give direct introduction by working concretely.

In an ordinary way we can learn to do Ati Guruyoga. We do a very clear visualization and when it is present in our mind we finally relax without any thoughts of good and bad. In that moment we are beyond time and space. This is a very simple way of doing direct introduction although most people cannot understand that because the teacher does not explain everything like with the inner tantras. The teacher does not explain because he should respect the transmission.

Direct introduction is not related to a technique or system. The teacher can also create it because he has perfect knowledge and always has a possibility to give introduction. Students should understand this. Then when we are teaching formally it is sufficient simply to do Ati Guruyoga.

This is to make us understand a little mind and the nature of mind. For us the nature of mind is only a concept of the mind because we know that when there is mind then there must also be the nature of mind. In that way we can understand a little more concretely. In the Dzogchen Teaching direct introduction is very important even when it is done in a more general way in Ati Guruyoga.

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