

monsters

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by Lama Thubten Yeshe

If you recognize non-duality, you'll have no fear. All fear and insecurity comes from not being realistic, from the wrong conception that holds fearful objects as concrete self-entities. A story from the life of Tibet's great yogi, Jetsun Milarepa, illustrates this point.

Once Milarepa left his cave to collect wood, and when he returned, he saw a terrifying face with big eyes glaring at him. It blew his mind. But he looked carefully at the face and meditated on it as illusory, and later wrote a song about this experience. By removing the conception that identified that horrible image as a concrete self-entity, it disappeared. This is not a fairy tale; this is a meditator's experience.

People scare themselves with thoughts of ghosts and demons. It is all superstition, the wrong conception believing in a self-entity. There's no such thing. But when you have a superstitious belief, for some reason it manifests. So you say, "It's real. I saw it." What you saw is important? That's completely ridic-

ulous. What you see is absolutely unimportant. You need to know that. People in the West set incredible store by what they see; they really do believe that seeing is believing, that what they see is real. This basic misconception also engenders a kind of pride: "I saw that he is *this*, therefore, he *is* this." "I saw" makes your ego proud. This is a completely wrong conception.

What you see, what you experience, is not necessarily the truth. In fact, believing what you see to be real actually obscures the truth. Buddhist meditation demonstrates this. It is very important to know this. When you have a degree

of flexibility, you will feel, "What I see is not that important. It is relatively true, but not ultimately."

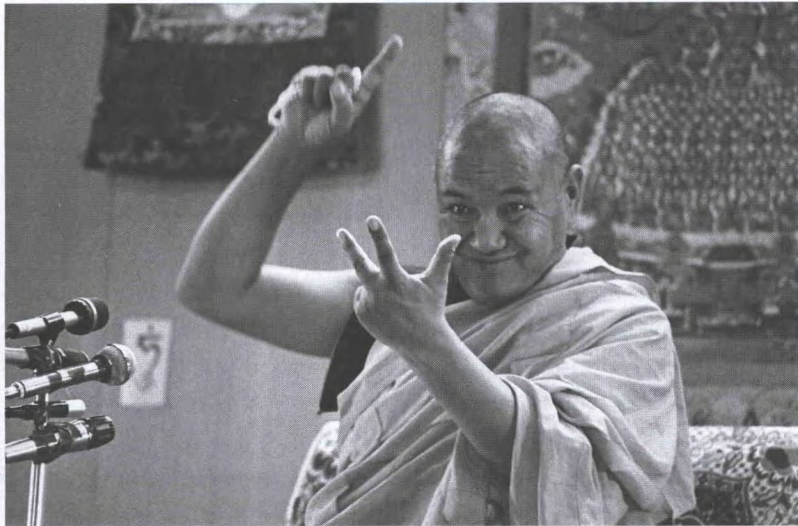
If you believe that the relative truth is the only truth, your hallucinations must also be true, because they produce effects. They make you angry; they make you afraid. What you perceive is not there, but that hallucination still makes your heart shake. It, too, is an interdependent phenomenon.

You say that your hallucinations aren't true and therefore don't matter, but what you see is real. In response, I say that they are equally real; both exist. Why? The thing that determines whether something exists or not, whether something is

or is not a phenomenon, is whether it functions, produces an effect. Since both relative phenomena and hallucinations can cause you happiness or anxiety, they both function; therefore, they both exist. Both are interdependent phenomena. Until you realize the emptiness of a hallucination, it remains real for you.

Toward the end of certain tantric sadhanas

is the practice of the samadhi of fire. While the fundamental basis of this meditation is seeing yourself as the deity, at this point you don't emphasize this part of the meditation as you did earlier in the sadhana. Your main focus is the fire feeling and the sound of the mantra in the fire. In this, you're like a fish swimming through water. Fishes swim through water without disturbing it. Similarly, your visualization of yourself as the deity should not shake your consciousness. Your contemplation is there, but it's kind of by the way and doesn't disturb your fundamental mind.



Lama Yeshe: "You're a fish swimming through water."

PHOTO: Carol Royce-Wilder

Signs of having accomplished this meditation successfully include enhanced physical energy, whereby you don't feel hungry or thirsty, and the development of blissful heat energy. You feel an inner, liberated security that gives you confidence that you could go for long periods without eating or drinking, even when you're not in meditation.

Perhaps we could promote this meditation to people who want to lose weight, those who have the problem of, on the one hand, having an uncontrollable desire to eat and, on the other, tremendous fear of getting fat.

Another sign of success is enhanced sensitivity of the body, whereby everything feels blissful to the touch.

Perhaps we could promote... meditation to people who want to lose weight, those who have the problem of, on one hand, having an uncontrollable desire to eat and, on the other, tremendous fear of getting fat.

Normally our limited conceptions are such that only few, if any, objects induce a rapturous, blissful feeling. We never feel that touching plastic or cement could be blissful. Making this kind of distinction is again a function of our superstitious, dualistic mind. Our dualistic mind tells us that soft things feel good and rough things feel bad, but the psychological truth is that every object of touch has the potential to induce bliss and satisfaction. When our minds are satisfied, they don't wander.

Why do our minds generate superstition and wander so much when we try to meditate? Because we are dissatisfied; because we're devoid of blissful experience, of not having the satisfaction of fulfillment or totality. Our minds wander, crying with superstition, "I'm not satisfied, I'm hungry." All this psychological crying is symptomatic of superstition.

The methods of tantric yoga show us that every object of the five senses can give us a blissful experience so that every time we enjoy the sense world we get blissful energy. The result of this is that our concentration improves. Therefore, it's important to have blissful experiences.

This seems to be the total opposite of what you always hear in the lam-rim teachings, where you're always being told you should not enjoy samsara. It's completely different, isn't it? The lam-rim almost makes you feel guilty if you enjoy yourself. Now I'm telling you to enjoy yourself as much as you possibly can, to have as many blissful experiences as possible. However, these two things are not in contradiction. I'm talking about completely different kinds of experience.

When you're practicing lam-rim, at that stage your mind has no training in the method of transcendence. Tantra, however, teaches you how to elevate your consciousness beyond the ordinary kind of sense pleasure that produces only more grasping and confusion. Your concentration and mindfulness allow you to do all these activities in the space of non-duality, recognizing them as the transformation of blissful wisdom. Thus, samsaric enjoyment and tantric enjoyment are entirely different.

Now you understand the philosophy. The more blissful experiences you enjoy with mindfulness, the greater your psychological satisfaction. The greater your satisfaction,

the less your superstition, the less your mind wanders, the less you look around: "Maybe I'll find happiness here, maybe I'll find happiness there," constantly seeking, seeking, seeking.

I appreciate the young hippies of today. They're not satisfied with their home, culture, or country, so they travel the world, seeing what they can find. They look here, they look there, seeking, wandering, and eventually, some of them come to the East. There they find dysentery and hepatitis, but also meditation courses and Dharma teachings. But that's a good result. Usually, your superstitious mind is like the wind that blows leaves aimlessly, here and there. You don't know where you're going or why and you never find any kind of reality.

When you're having trouble concentrating – objects of superstition arising one after the other without control – you have to deal with that superstition gradually. You can't stop it all at once, just as, if you're in New York, you can't be in Los Angeles the moment you think of it. You can't intellectualize it; it takes time. You have to accept the reality of space and time. The same applies to meditation. You can't get rid of superstition in one session, so don't worry. Accept reality. "That's meditation." ☉

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