

How to Let Go

Lama Thubten Yeshe gave this talk on how to integrate emptiness with everyday life at Vajra Yogini Institute, France, September 5, 1983

What is emptiness? Emptiness (*shunyata*) is the reality of the existence of ourselves and all the phenomena around us. According to the Buddhist point of view, seeking reality and seeking liberation amount to the same thing. The person who doesn't want to seek reality doesn't really want to seek liberation, and is just confused.

If you seek reality, and you think that it has to be shown to you by a Tibetan lama, that you have to look for it outside yourself, in another place – maybe in Shangri-La! – then you

are mistaken. You cannot seek reality outside yourself because you are reality.

Perhaps you think that your life, your reality, was made by society, by your friends? If you think that way, you are far from reality. If you think that your existence, your life, was made by somebody else, it means that you are not taking the responsibility to understand reality. You have to see that your attitudes, your view of the world, of your experiences, of your girlfriend or boyfriend, of your own self, are all the



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interpretation of your own mind, your own imagination. They are your own projection: Your mind literally made them up. If you don't understand this, then you have very little chance of understanding emptiness.

This is not just the Buddhist view, but also the experience of Western physicists and philosophers – they have researched reality too. Physicists look and look, and they simply cannot find one entity that exists in a permanent, stable way: This is the Western experience of emptiness.

If you can imagine that, then you will not have any concrete concepts; if you understand this experience of physicists, then you will let go of your worldly problems – but you don't want to understand.

At the energy level there is space and there is body, and both have the same four elements. There is an interdependence between these two energies, the one around us and our own energy. You check up, analyze: Your skin, your bones, your nose, your face are only energy, no more. If you try to separate them

from energy, then nothing will be left of your skin, your bones, your nose, your face. Everything is simply energy. If you understand the energy level of existence, if you really understand who you are, and what you are in this way, then you will break your concepts, your uprightness, you will break down the preconceptions you have of your own self-existence. But no way! You are always uptight and that is why you have problems.

It seems to me that we twentieth century people are against nature, against reality, the very opposite of reality. Each moment we build up our artificial, polluted ego; we cover ourselves with heavy ego blankets – one, two, ten, one hundred blankets against nature, against reality.

In industrialized countries we disturb nature, we don't appreciate the value of nature. Nature has its own value but we shake nature, we



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completely change it, we don't respect the harmony of nature. We destroy this harmony because we don't communicate with nature.

Modern life is the product of the intellectual mind, and we create it – the intellectual mind of superstition. We don't understand reality, and the intellectual life that we live keeps us far from reality.

So we don't accept what we are. We are always looking to cover ourselves with thick blankets and say, "This is me." We hide our own reality and run away from natural beauty, completely neglecting it. By not touching our reality, our modern life becomes so complicated, and we create problems with our superstitions. We are like a spider spinning his web, climbing on his thread, then falling down; climbing up again and falling down again. In the same way, we build our own intellectual web, a way of life that is so complicated that it doesn't touch reality, that is so difficult to live in. This construction arises from our own mind, and does not arise from anything else.

If I told you that you are nothing, you are zero, that you are nothing that you think you are, then you would be shocked. "What is this monk saying?" But what if I say that it is the truth! In fact you are non-duality, non self-existence. You do not exist, relatively or absolutely, as you think you do. If you really understood this, then you would really gain satisfaction and peace. But as long as you hold on to the fantasy, concrete conception of yourself, and project this wrong conception onto your environment, then no way will you understand reality!

In Western cities nowadays, you can see that the older you are, the more problems you have. When we are young, not so many problems, but then there are drugs and sex, and eventually they become dissatisfying. Then marriage is dissatisfying, then more depression, more depression. You can see that this technical society produces more depressed people than the countryside does. Countryside people live more naturally.

So as your body becomes bigger and your brain becomes wider, you have more and more problems, and become more and more depressed. The more money you have, the more

problems come. You can see this. It shows we are deluded, polluted, degenerated, that our life is too intellectual, too covered by wrong conceptions.

You only take care of your body, you never take care of your mind and the result of this imbalance is depression. For most Western people this is the case: Only the body is reality and they don't care about the existence of the mind, the soul, the consciousness. They don't believe they can change their mind. They can change their nose through an operation, but they don't believe they can change their mind. And when you believe this, then no way can you resolve your depression.

Our thoughts, our mind or consciousness, is mental energy and cannot be localized in form and does not travel in time and space. We cannot touch it or grasp at it.

What is important to understand is that the view you have of yourself, and the view you have of your environment, are based on your own mind: They are a projection of your mind, and that is why they are not reality.

I will give you a good example. When a French man or woman looks for a girl or boyfriend, there is this research energy from both sides, and when suddenly they see each other they make up an incredible story. Oh, so beautiful! Nothing wrong inside or outside. They build up a perfect myth. They push and push, the mind makes it all up. If they are Christian they say, "Oh, he looks just like Jesus." "She looks just like an angel. She is so nice, so pure. I wish always to hear her!" Actually, they are just projecting their own fantasies onto each other.

If she is Hindu, then he would say, "Oh she looks like Kali, like Mother Earth, like my universal mother. I hope to always be near her. She will teach me who I am and where I'm going. Each time I see her, my whole body shakes. I'm sure that it must be incredible karma! And because it is our karma, I have to serve her, to accept!" You understand? Actually, you are making the karma at that moment, you are inventing it. Of course, you do have some connection, but ...

And if you are Buddhist, you fold your hands and say, "Oh, she is a dakini and she is showing me the true nature of all things." You understand? "When I'm near her she gives me

energy, energy. Before, I was so lazy, I couldn't move, I was like a dead person. But now whenever I go near her, I can't believe my energy!" I tell you, all this is superstitious interpretation. You think that she is your spiritual friend, and that before you were not so clear, and now she speaks to you about Dharma and everything becomes clearer. And all she does is really perfect, even her kaka and pipi are so pure! Excuse me, perhaps I shouldn't talk like this – I'm a Buddhist monk! But when we speak about Buddhism, about reality, then we have to speak practically from daily life, about what is earthy, what we can touch and see, not just get caught up in concepts.

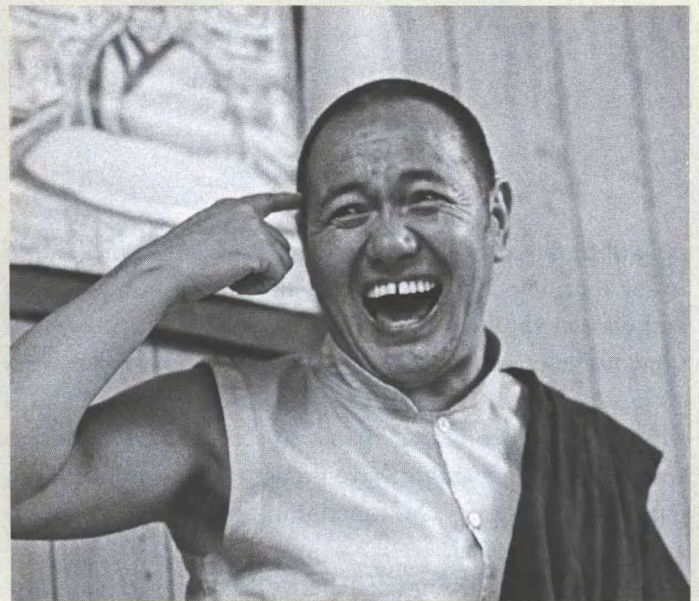
What I mean is this: You should recognize how every appearance in our daily life is in fact a false projection of your own mind. Your own mind makes it up and becomes an obstacle to touching reality. This is why our entire life, no matter what kind of life we have, is a disaster. If you have a rich life, your life is a disaster. If you have a middle class life, your life is a disaster. If you have a poor life, your life is even more of a disaster! You become a monk, and your life is a disaster. You become a nun, and your life is a disaster. If you become a Christian, your life is a disaster. If you become a Hindu, your life is a disaster. If you become a Buddhist, your life is a disaster. If you become a Muslim, your life is a disaster. Be honest. Be honest with yourself!

Even if you go to a cave in the snowy mountains, still you carry your ego with you. You carry your entire world with you and all your fantasy clothing doesn't help.

I'm not talking about religion here. I'm talking about personal things, *who* we are, *what* we are, *where* we are going, *what* we are doing! *I* am disaster, my mind is making it. Everything is always with me, my attitudes poison me. *That* is what I'm talking about.

All this religion you follow... as long as you don't touch reality in yourself, as long as you don't eradicate your fantasies, you are a disaster. (Now I'm disaster hot!)

In fact, reality is very simple. The simplicity of the mind can touch reality, and meditation is something that goes beyond the intellect and brings the mind into its natural state. We have this pure nature already. This reality exists in



us now, it is born with us. Of course, I'm not saying that having this pure nature means you are Buddha or God already: That is not what I'm saying. There are two interpretations possible about this pure nature.

Our consciousness or our soul are conventionally not contaminated, not really, absolutely contaminated or polluted by our fantasy. And our consciousness can be compared to the sky that is temporarily covered by clouds: The pure nature of our mind can be temporarily covered by our fantasy-ego. Our fantasy-ego is like clouds, sometimes black, heavy; sometimes a little bit of white comes, sometimes yellow clouds, sometimes red. Eventually, they all pass and disappear.

What I'm saying is that the essence of your consciousness, your truth soul, is not absolutely negative; it does not have an essentially negative character. Our mind is like the sky and our problems of ego grasping and self pity are like clouds. You should not believe "I *am* my ego, I *am* my problems, therefore I cannot solve my problems." WRONG!

You can see. Sometimes we are so clear in our life, we are almost radiating. We can have this experience RIGHT NOW. NOW!

So it is wrong to think that we are always a disaster: Not true. Sometimes we are clean-clear, sometimes we are disaster. So, stay in meditation, just keep in that clean-clear state as much as possible. All of us can have this clean-clear state of mind.

I will give you an example. You will notice that most of the time when we first wake up our mind is clear. Why? Because we are not yet influenced by the artificial intellectual

pollution of our thoughts. This is why we advise meditation in the morning. When you sleep, all your rubbish problems and disaster thinking just naturally go into an unconscious state, into clean-clear consciousness. Just naturally the senses close, and there is no more grasping at sense objects. This is why sleep is sometimes very good, especially if you are restless and full of fantasy and garbage thoughts in the mind. It is a natural thing, sleep. The functioning of a human being is something so natural.

The tantric teachings of Tibetan Buddhism explain that at death time also you experience this reality. And it is complete bliss, it is the best experience of your life, and the highest experience of reality. You have heard about this clear light? It is the highest experience of reality. Why? Why is death the highest experience? Why is life not the highest experience? Because our life-mind is full of intellectualizing, full of thinking, full of speculation, full of fantasies. But at the time of death fantasies naturally stop, the gross "I" naturally stops. Our nose and mouth and ears, our six consciousnesses, naturally stop. These consciousnesses, these busy fantasy resources are packed away into the soul, the clear light consciousness, and this becomes like our own nuclear energy that everything else has completely gone into. This is the natural, absolutely natural explanation of the human being.

With meditation we can change the inner flow of our energy, we can change bad times, that time, this time, we can release our emotions.

Actually, maybe this is the moment to meditate. My feeling is to meditate now. So close your eyes. Don't think, "I'm meditating," just close your eyes, and whatever view is there, whatever vision is there in your mind, just be aware. Don't interpret good, bad. Just be like a light, your consciousness is like a light, and light doesn't think, "I like this. I like that." It is just a light. Whatever is in your consciousness, whatever experience, just be aware, that is all.

Whatever you experience at the moment, whatever color, whatever appearance is there, just stay aware. Be aware. If it's black energy, then that black energy is clean-clear. If it's white energy, just feel that clean-clear state.

Be aware of whatever is happening. No interpretation. Especially if nothing is coming, believe that this is the truth, and if nothing is going, that is zero: That is truth reality.

Don't try to hold on to something or to reject something. Just have intensive awareness. The entirety of you has the characteristic of space, of non-duality. This non-duality is your character. Your energy floats into the space of non-duality. The cosmos energy comes into your entire body and your body energy goes into the cosmos energy.

All your egotistic, individualistic views vanish, all interdependent relationships disappear. Try to actualize this experience.

Therefore Buddha said: There is no dualistic form, there is no dualistic sound, there is no dualistic smell, there is no dualistic taste, there is no dualistic touch, there is no dualistic view, there is no dualistic nose, tongue, there is no dualistic leg, no dualistic stomach, there is no dualistic bone, no dualistic heart, no dualistic brain. All this energy is conventional. At the absolute level there is only the non-dualistic reality.

So, try to touch this non-dualistic reality. LET GO!

There are no dualistic friends because there is no dualistic me. There is no dualistic enemy because there is no dualistic me. There is no dualistic girlfriend because there is no dualistic me. There is no dualistic boyfriend because there is no dualistic me.

Therefore, the mind is in an equal state of non-duality. It is an experience of equality, of harmony, a universal experience, because all individual objects are just projected by concepts and superstition.

Experience this total harmony, this total peace. In this state there is no more pleasure, no more suffering. Everything is simply a projection of the human mind.

So, now we dedicate with prayers: May all sentient beings discover that all the appearances of their ego are projections of their mind. Whatever self-existent thought, whatever fears they have, may they discover them to be mental projections and also may the nature of the mind be recognized as non-dual. ☉

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