

## Ringu Tulku Rinpoche



**Kathryn Solie:**

Hi.

**Ringu Tulku Rinpoche:**

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**KS:**

At your talk last week you were talking about mind as space, like sky. That part of the talk felt really powerful. Can you say more about that?

**RTR:**

When we talk about basic goodness, and consciousness, our mind... we're talking about how our consciousness. Usually we identify ourselves with our body and everything that's happening around my body. Usually this completely affects us. We feel very fragile and weak. Therefore we have lots of fear and anxiety. So in our tradition, we look at our consciousness and see what we really are. Is it just this body and these surroundings, or something more. So there we look back into the nature of consciousness, of our mind, and we sometimes find that our mind or our consciousness is much more vast, much more reliable, more sustaining. If we look at our mind, there is a clarity, an awareness. The awareness doesn't have a shape or form. We see that mind is not something we can destroy because there is nothing there to destroy; it is an experience of awareness. This is why it looks like an

experience of sky. You cannot destroy the sky because there is nothing to destroy. Through contemplating on this, we can feel more spaciousness, more peace, more fearlessness, more stable. Feeling these qualities allows us to live more compassionately because we are not running away from anything, we are not afraid of anything.

**KS:**

For someone who isn't living a monastic life, a lay person, what would you advise? What is the best way to know mind as sky?

**RTR:**

I think there is no difference between monastic or non-monastic. There is no difference whether you are monastic or non-monastic at all. It's just a way of understanding, if you have some kind of understanding or not, that doesn't matter. Same thing.

**KS:**

So then what advice would you give to anybody - monastic or non-monastic?

**RTR:**

Anybody who likes to introspect a little bit, and look at your awareness, your consciousness, that's where it matters. It's not about monastic or not.

**KS:**

Would you say that that space is the same thing as enlightenment?

**RTR:**

When we talk about enlightenment, it's basically saying that you really understand how exactly you are, what exactly you are, how exactly the way you relate to everything as it is without confusion. The only problem with us is that we have so much aggression, so many negative emotions, so much fear, so much suffering and pain, problems... and we impose so much pain and problems on others. If you look deeply, it is that we really don't understand ourselves. So therefore, if we really understand ourselves, understand what exactly is it that I am, then you can get rid of your confusion. And once you can lessen, get rid of, your confusions, then there is no need of this disturbed state of emotions. If I am aggressive, if I am angry, if I am too sad or feeling guilty or feeling agitated or depressed, that's because my mind is disturbed. My mind is disturbed because I'm not clear. I'm confused and I don't know what I am, in connection with everything else, and so therefore everything I see is something I might have to get, to run after and hold on to. So when that kind of situation is changed that's what we call enlightenment, when we see things clearly and there is no confusion, that's called wisdom. And when we have that kind of wisdom, then naturally we feel peaceful and joyful. And when we feel peaceful and joyful naturally we become kinder and compassion arises naturally. Therefore what we call enlightened is somebody who has wisdom and compassion. Of course it is not easy, but that's the way.

**KS:**

I know of two difference perspectives - one is that to become enlightened you have to be very special, only for the people like buddha and then there's another perspective that enlightenment is already our natural state so anyone can become enlightened through clearing away confusion to find that enlightenment is already underneath it all. What do you feel about that?

**RTR:**

Everybody, all of us, have a certain amount of love. We all feel love. We all have love in our hearts, we all have kindness in our hearts. Every being, every human being, we are here because somebody loved us. All human beings live by the love of others. If somebody didn't look after us, be kind and dedicate lots of time and energy, I wouldn't be surviving, you wouldn't be surviving. So that shows there is love, this love is there, compassion is there. In the same way we all have a certain amount of wisdom that we know, we know we have a kind of natural knowing of what's right and what is wrong. If you want to cross a busy road and don't want to be hit by the cars, you can't cross the road not because of fear but because we have wisdom. So, we have some wisdom. Now, that's there, that's there but what we have to work on is to develop that, to strengthen that, to make that more visible, more expressed, and stronger.

We have the habitual tendency to neglect that though. We get annoyed by everything and then we forget about compassion and love. We love somebody but then it's clouded by other things. Even if we love somebody very much, if this person says something that is a little bit not so nice, we feel lots of feeling of resentment and all kinds of things, and we keep it for a long time. We need to change the way we are acting and reacting if we want to make ourselves more peaceful, more joyful, more wise... to live better and more purposeful, and happier. If we want to create a kinder, compassionate, and happier society we need to change these things.

It's not so difficult because, theoretically, if we, all the people in the world, started to be kind to each other starting today, by tomorrow we would have world peace. We would have no problems, no atrocities, no injustice, we would have heaven on earth. It is very much possible, but this is something which everybody has to understand and everybody has to work on. It's not something impossible but it's difficult because we are so caught up with negative emotions and a wrong way of seeing things: trying to find fault in each other and trying to get things from each other... and then being kind and wise to each other.

**KS:**

Do you feel that you are enlightened?

**RTR:**

No, no, I am far from it. Not at all.

**KS:**

So, what do you think you personally would have to do to reach that state?

**RTR:**

Well, I'm hoping that I'm a little bit working on that. (laughs) I'm not really hard working. I'm lazy. I have received lots of very important teachings and instructions and I feel that I know how to work on it, but somehow I don't do it diligently. Therefore I call myself "lazy lama" because I must be very lazy, because there is no other reason why I am not doing this.

**KS:**

Where are the places you notice that people get stuck or caught on on the spiritual path that maybe they don't even notice happening?

**RTR:**

On the spiritual path, this ego is very difficult to deal with because of our self centeredness. Even if we want to be loving, it becomes attachment, even if we try to be compassionate, it becomes suffering. So whatever we do, there

comes the agenda. Some wrong agenda comes up and then we become jealous, we become pretentious. I think is a very important part of it, that we genuinely watch our motivations, and not only on the spiritual path. Many people try to do something for the benefit of many, for the good of everybody, and then something comes up and we become corrupted and that's because it becomes self-centered. You become too selfish and then you become corrupted. (laughs) So this is something very important I think.

**KS:**

Are there places where you personally get stuck that keep coming back throughout your life?

**RTR:**

Oh this is something which happens to everybody. I need to look at my intentions, my motivations, my emotions, my way of reacting, my way of thinking, all the time. It's the most important practice because all kind of thoughts come up and all kinds of emotions come up and then if the thought is so negative that it's taking over then I will be dragged into the wrong direction. I have to see it and let go of it, and that's the practice.

**Alec Story:**

There's a quote where Hanuman speaks to Ram and he says, "when I do not know who I am, I serve you, when I know who I am, you and I are one" Do you have an experience around that quality of unity or oneness?

**RTR:**

I think that's talking about devotion, you can say guru devotion if you like. Hanuman is regarded as one of the examples of devotion in the Indian mythology because he is in one pointed devotion to Ram and because of devotion he experienced miracles - he can cut his chest and show that there is a figure of Ram in his heart. When you are not enlightened, when you don't know yourself, then you have to try to learn. That's why you follow the teacher. Then when you actually learn this then there is no separation from yourself and the Buddha, with the enlightened mind, with the teacher. All people want to be free from pain and suffering and problems and we want to have the highest and lasting peace, happiness, joy - everybody wants that. To understand deeply that it is really like that: there is nobody who doesn't wish for that. To have that intention, that wish, makes us feel that everybody is very much the same. I and you and everybody is totally similar and the same, it's not something different. That understanding brings more closeness, more compassion. I am nothing different than you, whatever I wish, you also wish. I don't wish suffering, you also don't wish suffering, and she also doesn't wish suffering. I want to be loved, you also want to be loved, she also wants to be loved. I want to be happy, you want to be happy, she also wants to be happy. When we understand this more, then we need to slowly learn to react that way. I want to be loved so I try to show my love. I need to feel kindness from people so I feel kindness towards others. Nobody wants to be hurt so I should not try to hurt people. That's the kind of beginning of becoming a better human being. This is what we should try to learn and try to exercise.

I want to feel compassion, but why is it that I don't feel compassion all the time? I want to feel peaceful, so why do I not feel peaceful all the time? Because my mind has been disturbed for a long time, it has this strong habitual tendency, strong habit of focusing on negative things and reacting with negative emotions and things like that; that's the problem. I've been acting the wrong way all the time; acting as if that was the right way. That has become my habit, my second nature, my addiction, so now how should I reverse this? How should I change this? So that's where meditation comes in, this taming the mind.

I cannot just order myself to feel a certain way. So when I feel agitated, when I feel angry, unhappy, disturbed, then I have to learn to make my mind more flexible, by very lightly, skillfully, and slowly, relaxing. Relax. Let your mind calm down a bit and then you relax your body, relax your mind, not going into the past or the future. I think it's Lao Tzu who said that, if you're depressed it means your mind is in the past, if you are anxious then your mind is in the future, if you are at peace that means your mind is in the present moment. Try to let your mind relax in the present moment.

Deeply breathe in and breathe out so you calm down and allow your mind to become under control. When you do this again and again your mind becomes a little bit more flexible. You train your mind so much that it becomes tame, it's like you have a trained dog. You say stand up and it stands up, you say sleep, and it sleeps, go away and it goes, come and it comes. Through training, you can tame your mind so you say relax and it relaxes, say to think and it thinks, say to act compassionate and it will act with compassion and then your mind becomes tamed. Then you can do what you want - whatever you know is the way you should act, you will act, or you will react. This training of the mind is necessary because sometimes we want to be kind, we want to be peaceful, but we can't be because our mind is too much disturbed. That's the practice.

**AS:**

Ghandi said, "you must be the change you wish to see in the world," and so with all the suffering in the world and all the pain and atrocities and acts of violence against each other, is it okay to feel joy, in your own experience, to laugh, even while there is all this suffering that you know is going on right now, all over the world.

**RTR:**

I think you have to. You have to feel joy, have to love, have to be happy, have to be kind, have to be peaceful. Then can you change yourself and only then can you help others because if you are as disturbed as everybody else, as angry and upset as everybody then you can't help anybody. I think this is very, very important. Everybody wants to be happy and joyful and loving but they think that they cannot because somebody did something, or somebody said something, or something happened. If I can't be happy or if I can't be joyful, or if I can't love because something happened, that's not so good. Then I will never laugh in this life. I will never be happy in this life. I can't enjoy anything ever because something negative is happening all the time. But at the same time something good is also happening all the time so that's why it's very important for us to also be able to see this.

There is lots of news that this war is happening, this atrocity is happening, this negative thing is happening in the world. That's why we feel that there are only negative things happening in the world but that's not the case. Of course negative things are happening, but there are lots of other things happening which are not reported: there is peace. When there is peace in some country it is not in the news, but it's there. I feel that as long as the news is bad news, it's good news. The news is something sensational, something happened that is shocking. Headlines are full of those things but it is happening only occasionally and very rarely, and very shockingly. It means that it is not always happening because if it were always happening every day, then it would not be in the news. If it were a normal thing it would not be in the news. At the moment the news is bad news, that means it's not that bad. As long as news is bad news it's still not that bad. If the news were the good news then it's a really bad time.

I think we also need to know that of course there are bad things happening but at the same time there are good things happening, it's just not in the news, at least in the headline news. There are lots of people in the world and they are surviving because somebody really loved them and cared for them, dedicated their life for them, lots of love. Everybody, you and me, we are strong and in good health because people took care of us. When we are born we are not even like a chicken. Chickens, as soon as the egg hatches they can run and pick their food. We cannot do it. We are just useless little things which can cry and make shit. (laughs) People have to care for us for not only days, but months and years, and only then we grow up. That shows that there is so much love in the world. Sometimes we forget that. Something negative happens, somebody who is very upset or angry or crazy does something very aggressive and we think, 'oh there is no love or compassion in the world.' We feel like that sometimes and that I think is wrong. That doesn't mean that there are no bad things. There are lots of bad things also. There are lots of negative feelings in the world and things like that. But we need to learn to also focus on positive things, focus on the positive qualities of other people. You might have some good qualities and you might have some bad qualities also, everybody does. If I only focus on everybody's bad qualities then I will become a very sad person. If I can also focus my mind on those positive qualities I immediately feel different, I feel oh there is lots of goodness. When I see your good qualities and I focus on your good qualities then my own good qualities come up and I feel much better and I see the world in a

better light and I feel more confident. Therefore the way in which I focus my mind is very important.

**AS:**

It makes me think of the ground of basic goodness.

**RTR:**

Basic goodness means that there is a possibility for us to feel kindness, compassion, wisdom, all those things. We naturally have love, we naturally also have some wisdom and they can be improved. Of course we also have bad habits and negative feelings and things like that but that's not our true nature because when we have negative feelings, when we get angry, we feel disturbed, we don't like it. Nobody will say 'Oh I had such a wonderful day, I'm so angry', (laughs) we don't want it because it's not our natural state. If you feel loved and very kind you say 'Oh I enjoyed it' because that's our true nature. It's easier to be that way because it's easier to be natural but somehow we don't learn how to do that and we need to do that. It will help us to lessen our negative thoughts and negative emotions and negative reactions and when that happens then we might become better, more happy, more joyful. If I am better, at least I don't disturb everybody around me. (laughs) Then that might also help everybody around me to live a little bit better. I influence you and you influence your friends and your friends influence others and that's how the world becomes better.

**AS:**

One final question, and it's related to your talk at the Padmashambhava meditation center. You said the most important part of the practice is to learn to relax. Can you say more about that?

**RTR:**

We need to make our mind, our disturbed mind, more flexible so that we react the way that we should react. Now, how do we tame our mind and make it more flexible? We cannot do it with a stick. We will get more agitated, more tense (laughs). The only way is to learn to relax and be peaceful and let be. Relax means letting it be as it is. Whatever it is, we know it is okay and then we relax. That's relaxing, no? That's letting be. If I say - "oh this should not be like this. I do not like this. This should not be" - I can't relax. If I accept it, it's ok. If it's raining it's ok. If there's some cars going around, it's ok. It's getting to be 5:30, it's ok. The more I can say that the more I can relax and that will bring peace.

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