

Introduction to Weekend Teachings

Minya Tulku Rinpoche

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Beginning prayers

Introduction of the Center Activities

I have been to many of the centers of Akong Rinpoche and I have seen all of his students, who are now taking care of the centers waiting for Akong Rinpoche's return, and I was very happy to see that. And in these centers there are many lamas and many people who take also responsibility to take care of the centers, and they are all staying as they were given the responsibilities before by Akong Rinpoche, I'm really happy to see that. And this time here is Ani Sherab, and Lama Yeshe is the one who asked me to go to the centers. I'm really happy that this is happening now.

Whenever Lama Yeshe asks me to give teachings or initiations I do so happily, but I'm not taking any responsibility to take care of the centers, this is not something that I can do. I'm not a person who likes to socialize much. If one is to do something, one needs to enter into a group of people, so that one can really actually do some work. So, at the moment I'm not doing that, but who knows in the future.

I went also to Africa, in Cape Town and Johannesburg, as well as in Zimbabwe and Congo there are many centers of Akong Rinpoche over there. Particularly in Zimbabwe I think there are five centers, I visited three of them. The two I didn't visit, but they asked me assistance, that I take the responsibility to help them to organize, to do the recitation etc. There is also a big Tara Rokpa Centre (TRC), and they very much asked me to help. However I said this needs to be asked from Lama Yeshe Rinpoche, I wasn't going to take any responsibility.

And actually it's a big organization of centers is pretty big. There is the TRC which itself is big, there is the ROKPA INTERNATIONAL, which is about helping all around the world, and there is the Tara Rokpa Therapy, which is more about the therapy work, and these three altogether are still doing well, so it's a big organization. This one here is also a Tara Rokpa center mainly, with Samye Dzong.

Akong Rinpoche came together with Trungpa Rinpoche from India. They were on the same boat I think in 1963. Then they started establishing Samye Ling. They were the first lamas in West, the very first to come here. They established many centers, many branches, and then they also invited many lamas. And through the ROKPA INTERNATIONAL they helped in Tibet and also in Nepal and in the West, and I'm very happy to see that all the students are still following and taking care of all these activities.

Akong Rinpoche looked like an ordinary person; he would not wear zen and special clothes, but he was in fact a very good practitioner and a very good teacher. His father was also somebody really good and whole his family, his nieces and nephews all are people that are doing good things. So if we look at Akong Rinpoche both from the dharma perspective and from the worldly perspective, we see he was an exceptional person and I feel gratitude for Akong Rinpoche's work.

So, how do people now look at Akong Rinpoche? They look at him as a great teacher, father and friend. He has got these three characteristics. Those who have faith in Akong Rinpoche say he was a great teacher. He was not a teacher who would say many scholarly words, but few words that had a lot of meaning. Many people actually have reported that these few words actually changed their life. For those who had faith he was their great teacher. Many people consider him as a great father. Many among his family and the people working in Samye Ling and so on really have the feeling that he was taking care of them like a great father. And he was also considered like a good old friend. Somebody who had become a friend with him he would connect and help whenever necessary. Many students also reported this type of connection, the feeling of having a close friend. Now Akong Rinpoche is not with us anymore, but he gave all the responsibility over to Lama Yeshe and many people see him the same as they were seeing Akong Rinpoche.

The Life Story of the 5th Minya Tulku Rinpoche

That was my introduction. Then Ani asked me my introduction but I think you are not interested, or what?

Audience: Yes, of course, please.

My introduction maybe not so interesting... I didn't tell much about me, just at the school where we went with Ani I talked a little bit, but before I went to many centers and I didn't tell anything. And now, about me. I was born in Tibet, in Kham. My lineage, like my family name, both my mother and father have quite good family name, it's kind of king's or high people's name in the region where I come from, but my family is not with any power or not even rich. I can say that they have enough to eat, but not much more. I come from nomad family and I was born in 1976.

When I was very small, life was no easy; it was not easy to sustain the family. It was like this, I didn't have shoes at that time. I used to wear my uncle's shoes, he was nine years older than me, but then they were too heavy, and to go in the snow and so on was not easy and I would cry. When I was 6-8 years old I had to look after sheep and goats.

When I was nine years old I was recognized as a tulku by Shukgang Matrul, who was a friend of the previous Minya Tulku. The previous Minya Tulku had asked him to take care of the next incarnation. So he went to fetch me to my monastery Minya Gompa. I was near the monastery in a retreat place, and this is where I was told to read, write and so on.

And then at some point Jigme Phuntsok Rinpoche was giving the kalachakra initiation in Sertar. I went there for three months. I was staying with my uncle Choma for three months and then I returned to my monastery. When I was approximately twelve I was already seated on a throne in the monastery and I had to look after it, give the initiations to people, be the person for the tsok and so on. This I did until I was approximately seventeen. The initiations actually started when I was fourteen, but at twelve I was already on the throne with responsibility. I was actually very small when I was giving the initiations. There are images that you show to people and I was too short, so they said that when I hold the image it's so big that people wouldn't see me behind. I was very small and the card was very big. Then I would read the card and the people didn't see me.

When I was 17, I run away to Palyul Gompa (Monastery), but my teacher was sent to get me back, so I was brought back to my monastery. Then I stayed 1,5 months and run away again to Sertar. In Sertar I stayed continuously for 2,5 years, but altogether going and coming back it was five years.

Then I was thinking about going to India and with a friend we went to Lhasa. From Lhasa we had to cross the border. Once we were caught and sent back to Lhasa. And we tried again, but we were caught again by the Nepalese police at the border and they gave us over to the Chinese. We were sent to jail for two months. At that time we had no money, nothing. When we came out of the jail we could only beg for food and so on, and then I went back to my monastery.

In the monastery the lamas were telling me that now you have studied for 5-6 years in Sertar, school is enough, now you have to take care of the monastery. But I told them I want to study more, so I run away to the Palyul Gompa. My monastery lamas told me our monastery is not so big, just a small monastery like that, your knowledge is enough for us! Then, in the Palyul Monastery I studied very hard for four years. That time I really studied day and night during the four years and I obtained in all my exams the first or second grade. I was like the best student.

Nowadays the Chinese Government gives some document that you are really a tulku, so actually the previous Minya Tulku was a bit famous. So they organized it and checked everything and asked me to go to Thrangu (Monastery). They organized quite big thing, so just after I finished all my exams after the fourth month I was due to go to Thrangu. They had already prepared everything together with my monastery, to make a big event, but at that time, when I finished my exams I left for India. Crazy, yes? Because my studies were not finished, we need to study continually for nine years, and I had studied only for four years, that's why I came to India.

In South India there is the shedra of Penor Rinpoche, Namdroling Monastery, and it is actually the same curriculum as in Tibet. So if somebody has studied like in my case four years in Tibet and succeeded in exams, they were allowed to enter in the fifth year in

India, so this is what I did. I continued and finished my studies and after that I gave teachings in the Ani Gompa (Tsogyal Shedrub Dargyeling Nunnery) and in a high school. Altogether I stayed for nine years in South India.

Namdroling Monastery is quite big, there are about 3000 monks there, and they were all talking very well about me, saying I was a very good tulku, a very good monk, that they trusted I would become good. But then all of a sudden one day it changed and all the monks were shocked and they said: "Who can we trust now?" [Minya Tulku Rinpoche gave his monk's vows back.]

At that time I asked Penor Rinpoche if it was alright for me to go to West, and he gave me the permission. So, I went to Taiwan, to Singapore, to Hongkong, to Australia, sometimes teaching, sometimes doing recitations in people's home, sometimes just walking and visiting around. That lasted for couple of years. Then Akong Rinpoche helped me to come to West and prepared all the papers, so that I could come to West.

When I left Namdroling I went to Taiwan and only half year after that Penor Rinpoche passed away. At that time I went to the monastery for twenty days for the recitation etc. and after that I never went back to the monastery. I had given back the monk's vows and I had in my hands the papers of a khenpo, the diploma. But I had given away all my vows and I didn't have the possibility to ask Penor Rinpoche to give back my vows. So I was in this situation and not knowing what else to do I just went around to Taiwan, Singapore and elsewhere. The other day Ani asked me: "Why did you change like this?" but maybe let's leave it for now!

I'm a person who has pure faith, this is for sure. I'm also a person who thinks of the suffering and happiness of sentient beings, this is for sure, but I have no confidence that I am anything special like a tulku; I am like all the people with attachment, anger and so on. But for sure I have pure faith in the dharma and thinking of sentient beings. That was my introduction.

The Four Immeasurables

I don't know if it was useful or not, but what we know is useful, is to meditate for a while on the Four Immeasurables so let's start and let's sit in the Seven Point Posture of Vairocana.

What are the Four Immeasurables? They are the equanimity, love, compassion, and joy. When these four are meditated on just like this in order to get a good rebirth as a human being or as a god and so on, they are called the Four Limited or Four Measurables. This is already very good if one can meditate on equanimity, love, compassion, and joy. But when we do that for the sake of all sentient beings, then they become the Four Immeasurables.

In all the explanations it is said that first we need to meditate on equanimity. Why is it so? It is because if we don't start with equanimity we will meditate on love, compassion and joy, but these will become partial: partial compassion, partial joy. This is why we start with the equanimity. This word in Tibetan *tangnyom* has two parts, so let's look at the first part, to let go off. What do we let go off? We let go off the attachment to the close ones and the hostility to those we don't like, the enemies. It is the same as in this prayer that we read, the Four Immeasurables, where we come to this line where it says: without attachment and hostility to close ones and enemies. We understand that our enemies want happiness, they don't want to suffer, and it is the same for the close ones, they want happiness, they don't want to suffer, we are all the same with that wish. So we let go the attachment to our close ones and the hostility towards those we don't like.

If we read Shantideva, there is the explanation of these three practices of seeing others as equal to ourselves, the second one exchanging oneself and others and the third one, which is to cherish others more than oneself. The first one, which is to see that others are the same as oneself, this has the same meaning as the equanimity in the Four Immeasurables. So now we will meditate four or five minutes on this immeasurable equanimity. We will think about the equality of everyone, the equality that all enemies and as well as close ones want happiness and they don't want to suffer. We are all equal in that and let go of the attachment and hostility that we may feel for them. We close our eyes when we do that. It is said that when we are stable in meditation we can meditate with open eyes, but at the moment it's not the case, so for now we will keep our eyes closed. We reflect upon that and then we remain in samadhi, which is meditative concentration when we keep in mind something in particular, so here it is the equanimity we meditate on.

The body is in the Seven Point of Vairocana. Do we all know what it is? The legs are in the vajra posture. The spine is straight. The two hands are in the equanimity posture. The shoulders are a little bit straightened. The chin is tucked in a bit. Normally the eyes are

looking at the direction of the nose, but now we are going to close the eyes. The tongue is tucked at the upper palate. It is because if we stay like this for a long time, if we don't do that, the mouth can become very dry. If we put the tongue like that it doesn't happen so often. In some texts it says that we have to put the tongue like this on the upper palate, so that the mouth doesn't become dry, and in some texts it says that if we just meditate tongue down it can happen that some insects can come in the mouth and go directly to the stomach!

It is said that this Seven Point Vairocana posture is useful especially to keep the body straight, because when the body is straight the channels are straight. When the channels are straight the winds are straight, when the winds are straight the mind is straight. It is said in the secret mantrayana that in the body there are channels and in the channels go the winds or energies and in the winds there is the consciousness runs on the winds. And then we can go on and explain the reasons why we put the hands in the equanimity posture, why the back should be straight. They all have a lot of explanation, but not for today.

We will do five minutes meditation on each of the Four Immeasurables and in between I will give the explanations. Now we will start with the Immeasurable Equanimity. So let's think that we are all equal, enemies and close ones are all equal, all want happiness, no-one wants to suffer.

If we are not able to stay one-pointedly on the equanimity, on the thought of all being equal, then we can instead reflect on the enemies as well as the close ones, those who don't want to suffer, who want to be happy. This is analytical meditation, it's also fine to do that. And then when we think of the enemy and the close one, we can think of someone we dislike, an enemy, and then of somebody who is close, and see that actually these are labels we put onto them, it's not a name in their own body that they are an enemy or a close one. And then remain with this understanding. It may be for a girl or a boy that the same person is loved by someone and hated by another one. So we see clearly that it is our mind, it is all the time roaming around and giving labels onto everything.

You westerners like to practice, I'm grateful because you gave me the opportunity to practice. Otherwise I'm someone who likes to study; and then I spend all night studying and do not practice.

[Meditation]

Now let's meditate on the immeasurable love, the wish that all sentient beings may attain happiness; the temporary happiness of higher rebirth and wealth and everything, and also the happiness of buddhahood. I make the wish that it's absolutely fantastic, if I can bring them to the state of buddhahood, but also it's fantastic if somebody else can bring them to that state of happiness, or if they by themselves can go there and be in that state of happiness.

And here again, if we are not able to stay one-pointedly on this love, then we can do analytical meditation. For example we reflect on what is the temporary happiness, what are the higher rebirths, what is the ultimate happiness and what methods we can use to bring them to that happiness and so on.

What is meant by a higher rebirth? It means to have a beautiful body, to be wealthy, to be born with intelligence, to have everything that we wish for easily accomplished in life, to have no difficulty, no sicknesses, all of these are temporary happiness.

[Meditation.]

Third, let's meditate upon immeasurable compassion. In order to do that we have to understand what are the three types of suffering: the all-pervasive suffering, suffering of change and suffering of suffering. The all-pervasive suffering is not something visible but when we have a body we do have the all-pervasive suffering. The sufferings that are visible are the two: the suffering of change and the suffering of suffering. And we make a wish that all sentient beings may be free from these three types of suffering. And then we reflect on what is the essence of suffering, the different classifications and it becomes immeasurable compassion when we are keeping in mind all sentient beings.

And what do I meditate in particular? I make the wish that all who are like me and lack social skills and suffer from that may be free from this type of suffering. Sometimes that is suffering for me, I'm not good with the social situations. And also physical sickness and mental suffering, may the beings who have that be free from it.

As far as meditation is concerned, the kagyü lineage is known for having a good experience of it and explanations are easy to understand. Since you all are kagyü, I believe that you have some experience with meditation.

[Meditation.]

The fourth immeasurable is the immeasurable joy, and here we rejoice of all the excellences that others may have, material or happiness. If we are jealous, this will hurt ourselves and it will not harm the other person. So jealousy is really a useless thing, it's much better to rejoice in all the happiness that they may have.

The great Shantideva said that this immeasurable joy corresponds to the practice of exchanging oneself with others and cherishing others more than oneself. What Shantideva actually said is that the first one, the equality of self and others corresponds to the practice of the immeasurable equanimity. The two others, exchanging oneself with another and cherishing others more than oneself can be included in the practice of immeasurable joy.

What is the practice of changing self and others? It is sometimes to take upon suffering of others and sometimes to give them our happiness. And then we take their suffering on again and like this exchange. And what is the practice of cherishing others more than oneself? This is when we have the idea that whatever happens to me, doesn't matter. I've been wandering in samsara up to now and I will continue for a long time, so now I've decided that I will do the benefit of others exclusively, no matter what happens to me. Even if I lose my life, that's my decision, I will do the benefit of others and not look for my own benefit.

[Meditation.]

It is said that if in the beginning we focus on all sentient beings, it is too big, we are not able to do that, so in the beginning it is much better to take one being in particular and even somebody who is close to us. So it is easier to start with somebody we know, who is sick, suffering physically or mentally, keeping that person in mind and then doing the practice equanimity, love, compassion, joy. If we start by thinking of all sentient beings, it is so vast that we are not able to really focus and then we don't really get the point of the practice. So better to start with one, then two and three, progressively more and more until we can include the infinity of the beings in our meditation.

Okay? It was particularly for you that I was teaching these Four Immeasurables, practicing the equality of self and others and exchanging oneself with others and cherishing others more than oneself. In the future continuously keep this as your personal practice. Understood?

Student: Yes.

We still have half an hour. When I was in Taiwan and Japan there was one Ani who told me: "Don't stay in these countries like Taiwan and Japan, because they will spoil you, give you money. You will not study further and everything that you have studied you will forget it becomes useless. Much better you go to the West, because people there like to study, you continue that. Maybe true, yes?"

Ani Sherab: Maybe Rinpoche, before we close, if anybody has any practical questions about tomorrow or the day after, please do ask now.

Rinpoche: Tomorrow afternoon there will be taking the vows of refuge and bodhicitta. And if among you some people want to take the vows then come tomorrow. And even if you don't take the vows at that time I will give all the explanation of the refuge and bodhicitta, so it's good to listen. If you are interested, please come. And the day after tomorrow, Sunday, first from 11 am to 1 pm I will give short explanation of the practice of Chenrezig, and then there is lunch break. At 2.30 pm we start the initiation of Chenrezig until 3 pm. If after the initiation you have personal questions to ask from me, come at that time.

Ani Sherab: On Monday the teachings continue. There are private interviews after the initiation on Sunday and also on Monday.

Dedication prayers