



Finding Inner Refuge Through the Spaciousness of Mind

An Excerpt from Geshe Tenzin Wangyal Rinpoche's New Book *Awakening the Luminous Mind*

The third aspect of refuge is associated with the mind. The principles of body, speech, and mind are interrelated, but the mind is primary. Consider your sense of self. You have some idea of who you are. I'm not talking about the strong voice that says, "I am a professor," or "I am a mother." Let's look at the "three o'clock in the morning" voice. At that time the professor or the mother is sleeping and someone else is there. There is a sense of not knowing who you are rather than asserting that you are somebody. The asserting voice is the ego. It is more active, and so it is not hard to find. If you meet someone and have a ten-minute conversation, you have a good sense of who they think they are. That's not what is interesting here. More interesting is that they don't know who they are. There is a pervading dullness—the absence of knowing oneself—called ignorance. Do I know myself in this moment? Or is not-knowing present in me at this moment? You may say, "What do you mean by that? I can understand what you're saying, but..." That's a voice. But beyond that voice there is a sense of not knowing. It is not about not knowing the meaning of what I'm saying. I am talking about the root not-knowing—not knowing yourself. This pervades everything happening in your mind, in your speech, and in your activities. What don't you know? You don't know yourself. There is a traditional Bon prayer that is sung to one's teacher: "Bless me to recognize my true face with my own eyes." Some people might think this refers to their actual face, but this is not what the prayer refers to. It is not referring to appearance or to form. At the gym, people are interested in looking at their own form, face, and muscles. How many mirrors are there? How many mirrors do you have at home? What are you looking at? You are looking at your face, your hair, your body. Wouldn't it be nice if you could simply look in a mirror and recognize who you truly are?

We feel uncomfortable whenever we engage in doubt, when we lack confidence or lose our sense of direction. Those are the moments we face challenges. What can we do? I recommend taking the medicine I call spaciousness. How do we take the medicine of spaciousness? As before, draw your attention inside—not to the body, not to the voices, but to the mind itself. Instead of feeling stillness or silence, try to feel the spaciousness. Why is this important? The nature of mind is very spacious. The root texts in the Bon tradition describe the nature of mind as clear and luminous. All pain, confusion, and struggle that you feel are simply because you don't recognize the mind's true quality.

As you become still and silent, it is then easier to close your eyes and draw attention to your mind. You can feel space around and within that sense of not knowing. You can discover awareness in that ignorance. You recognize the light within that darkness. You don't try to renounce ignorance and find awareness. You are finding awareness within that ignorance. You are not living with the effort of trying to renounce that ignorance. Effort is becoming effortless. The mind that was not aware is now conscious of that state, that base. The moment you feel that, you feel incredible protection. You feel a sense of security, a sense of peace, a sense of balance. The notion of refuge is about really feeling protection. So the third door to discover inner refuge is the door of the mind, and that door is accessed through spaciousness.

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