

Teachings Issue

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Guided Meditation of Inner Refuge—Embracing Impermanence

An Edited Excerpt from Oral Teachings given by Geshe Tenzin Wangyal Rinpoche,
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The following teaching, excerpted from Tenzin Wangyal Rinpoche's April 13, 2013, morning talk during the spring retreat, was edited by Marcy Vaughn. The retreat topic was "Embracing Impermanence—Inner Refuge in the Face of Change." (The Refuge Prayers below are copyrighted by Tenzin Wangyal; please do not copy or distribute without permission.)

First refuge:

*The center of the victorious mandala, one's own body,
The source of all positive qualities without exception,
Is the expanse within the three channels and the five chakras.
I take refuge in this body of emptiness.*

Gradually draw your attention inward. Be fully aware of your body. Feel that stillness in your body. From the soles of your feet to the crown of your head, feel stillness in every cell in your body and in the flow of movement within your body. Just be more conscious of your entire body, more connected with your entire body, and be aware of the stillness in your body. Gradually feel a deep inner stillness.

Finally, through inner stillness, be aware of the first refuge, the unbounded sacred space, the body of emptiness.

When you find or see the inner sacred space of the first refuge, feel as the priest who sees Christ in a vision or a Buddhist monk who sees Buddha in a vision after a period of longing; experience the joy and respect and tears of your genuine heart opening. Many deep experiences can happen. Be open.

These experiences are self-realization, self-knowing, self-seeing, self-encountering, knowing your true self, knowing who you are, knowing the truth. Knowing the inner refuge means all this.

Second refuge:

*All the gathered clouds of suffering and misery
Are completely cleared by the wisdom wind,
Revealing the unelaborated, primordially pure expanse of the sky.
I take refuge in this body of light.*

Listen and hear the silence within. Feel and connect with inner silence. Hear the inner silence not only from your ears or somewhere in your head, but hear through your entire body and entire existence. Feel that silence at your crown, in your throat, your heart, your navel chakra, and in your secret chakra. Feel the silence in the flow of your blood and pulse of your veins. Hear the silence in the movement of your breath.

Gradually feel a deep sense of peace in that silence. When you hear the silence in all your existence, you feel a deep quiet. You feel peace. This silence is the absence of agitation, thoughts, emotions, which are like clouds in the sky. When the clouds disappear, the sun shines. Allow that inner sun. Be aware of that inner sun. Awareness is the inner sun. There is a sense of presence in that inner silence and peace. Recognize that sense of knowing, sense of

being, sense of being awake, sense of being alert, sense of being present. This is the famous presence that everybody talks about. *Present in that openness* is what we are actually referring to when we are talking about presence. It is experiential, this second refuge. Recognize that.

If you feel it, if you are aware of it, that is the body of inner light. Once again, be like that priest, monk or shaman, and feel the devotion, trust and joy, like a lost child reuniting with the mother again. There is joy in recognition. You are that child; that sacred space is your mother. The child would be full of joy and excitement, liveliness and fullness—a peak state of consciousness. Allow that experience.

Third refuge:

*From the pavilion of the five wisdom lights,
Rays of non-dual spheres of light emanate,
Clearing the webs of the darkness of ignorance.
I take refuge in this body of great bliss.*

Be aware of that spaciousness, openness in your heart, in your mind. Be aware of that union of space and light. Be aware of that warmth coming from that open space and the infinite light of awareness. As you discover the warmth and the joy of being, it is like opening the treasury of a king. You are opening the treasury of your inner kingdom. Everything that you will ever need is here. Infinite joy is here; infinite strength is here; deep compassion is here. An ultimate sense of balance is here. The peace that everyone searches for is here. The support that we seek in our life is here in the inner refuge. This is our best friend. There is no reason to feel alone or lonely. You belong. You are part of it; you are it. All that we seek through our outer situations and relationships and all that we do to find inner meaning, all those states of consciousness already exist in us more powerfully than those conditions which are temporary and vulnerable. This discovery is changeless and ceaseless. It is a great discovery. Be aware and feel like you are discovering the treasure of an inner kingdom.

Now gradually reflect in your life upon the changes that are difficult to process; reflect upon the impermanence that you are facing or are afraid of facing. In that vast space, in that infinite awareness, in that incredible capacity of hosting your experience with warmth, just be conscious without analyzing or judging. Just be aware of what is happening. *I am afraid. I feel insecure. I don't know what is going to happen or why it is happening.*

Whatever your thoughts and feelings are, don't judge them but be aware as they are. Be aware of what is happening. We don't need a second thought to judge them; we only need one awareness to know them and host them and care deeply by being. Hosting in that warmth is the definition of care here rather than verbally saying, "I care." It is an ultimate meaning of care

rather than a conventional meaning of care. A conventional meaning of caring is when ego is saying, "I am going to care," and yet is confused about what that means and is unable to truly do so.

Just host in that warmth whatever is happening like a great powerful compassionate mother when her child is in pain and crying. Be like this loving mother—steady, strong, caring, nonjudgmental, present. Be like this mother toward yourself, because you are that child who is suffering, the one who says, "I feel difficulty facing these changes; I feel difficulty processing these challenges; I have a hard time accepting these impermanent situations." That "I" needs care and attention and healing, and you are that healer; that mother space of the inner refuge is the healer.

When you are truly able to connect in this way with the one who is facing difficulties with change and impermanence, you will heal. You are able to help yourself. This sacred inner space within will clear and open and guide and show what to do. It will grow you, because in some way, every pain helps us to grow. For every being who has achieved enlightenment, their pain helped them to grow step by step.

We might think something is changing, something is being lost, but actually, there is no change happening, there is nothing we are losing. For sure, we are experiencing we are losing, we are experiencing we are changing, we are experiencing it might be terrible. But we are not this change—and our journey is to discover that we are not change. Our challenges are like a test or an exam, testing your strength and testing your connection to the inner refuge. What shakes you tests your capacity to trust in the inner refuge and to trust yourself.

Just for a moment, reflect upon your past when you experienced change or separation or a threat occurred. You may not remember everything clearly, but perhaps you remember some of your emotions, thoughts and interactions, and perhaps you thought very similarly to what you are thinking now of these challenges. You may feel completely lost or scared, and it looks like there is nothing clear about your future. Perhaps you even thought, "This will destroy me completely." None of those fears are true. Did those experiences allow you to grow, be more aware, more realistic, more open, more considerate, more respectful of others? Did it expand your consciousness and awareness? Then you were much younger and less mature. Now that you are more mature, these changes might benefit your development all the more. Because of your exposure to the teachings and practices and your experiences of life, you are so much richer. Allow that possibility of growing through challenges with the support of these beautiful practices of the inner refuge and your own inner strength and trust.

