

The Pointing-Out Instruction to the Old Lady*

When the nirmanakaya, Master Padmasambhava, was invited by King Trisong Deutsen and was residing in Glorious Samye at Red Rock, the virtuous Lady of Ton, a woman of extraordinary devotion, sent her attendant the Lady of Margong by the name Rinchen Tso to offer a morning meal of curd with slices of grapes.

Later, when the master was on his way to Samye Chimphu, just as he was passing through the gate, the Lady of Ton bowed down on the road and circumambulated him, joined her palms before him, and said: "Please, great master, You are about to leave, and this old lady is about to die.

"First of all, since I was born as a girl, I am of an inferior birth.. Having been distracted by activities, I forgot the Dharma. Second, being of lesser intelligence, my wits are feeble. Third, I feel obscured due to my advanced age and my mind is unclear.

"Please, great master, bestow upon this old woman an instruction that requires little hardship, that is simple to grasp, easy to apply, and very effective. Please give an instruction for an old woman who will die soon."

The master replied: "Old Lady, who are you?"
The old woman responded: "I am the one who has been sending a bowl of curd with a lowly maid."

The master joyfully said: "You are surely one who has greater devotion than Trisong Deutsen."

The he instructed the old lady and her attendant with these words: "Old woman, take the cross-legged position and keep your body upright. For a short while, simply remain with totally relaxed attention."

The master pointed his finger to the old lady's heart and gave this instruction: "Old woman, listen to me. If you are asked what the difference is between the mind of the truly perfected Buddha and the mind of sentient beings of the three realms, it is nothing other than the difference between realizing and not realizing the nature of mind.

"Since sentient beings fail to realize this nature, delusion occurs and from this ignorance the myriad types of sufferings come to pass. Thus beings roam through samsara. The basic material of Buddhahood is in them, but they fail to recognize it.

"First of all, the basic material of Buddhahood is within you. In particular, it is in the human beings who have obtained the freedoms and riches. Moreover, it is not such that the basic material for Buddhahood is abundant in men and deficient in women. Thus, even though you have taken rebirth as a woman, you are not prevented from attaining Buddhahood .

"The 84,000 Dharma doors have been taught in order to recognize and realize the wisdom mind of the buddhas, but this understanding is contained in a master's three words of instruction. Thus, even though you may be of inferior intelligence and feeble wits, you are not disadvantaged.

"Now, the meaning of the Dharma, the Buddha-mind, and the master's three words of instruction is this; By purifying externally perceived objects, your perceptions are freed in themselves. By purifying the perceiving mind within, your nonclinging awareness is freed in itself. As the lucid wakefulness between is delightful, you recognize your own nature.

"How are the perceived objects outside purified? This present awareness, the awakened state of mind, is unspoiled by thought and perceives as a natural brightness. Let it be like that, and objects are perceived without being clung to. In this way, no matter how appearances ap-

pear, they are in fact not real and are not held to be actual things. Thus, no matter what you perceive, be it the earth or rocks, mountains or cliffs, plants or trees, houses or castles, goods or utensils, friends or foes, family members or companions, husband or wife, sons or daughters -- towards all these and all other things -- you are uninvolved in the attitude of claiming ownership; and so, they are perceived but not held to be that way. By being free of clinging to anything whatsoever, you are purified of objects perceived externally.

"Objects being purified does not mean that you stop perceiving. It means not to hold and cling while being bright and empty. Like the example of reflections in a mirror, they appear but are empty in that there is nothing to grasp, and your perceptions are known as 'perceptions occurring to yourself.'

"By means of the inner perceiving mind being purified, here is the instruction in liberating nonclinging awareness in itself; No matter what occurs in your mind -- the flow of thoughts, memories, or the five poisonous emotions -- when you do not focus upon them, the movement vanishes by itself; thus you are untainted by the faults of thinking.

"To be flawless within does not mean to become an inert stone. It means that your awareness remains free of the flaws of thinking, like the example of having gone to an island of precious gold; on this golden island, no even the name "stone" exists. Likewise, once your thinking dissolves into original wakefulness, there is not even the name "thought."

"As the lucid wakefulness between is delightful, here is the instruction in recognizing your own nature; While practicing, free from unknowing, your own consciousness is clear, pure, and awake. When practicing, you have the experience that your innate, self-existing wakefulness is neither spoiled by a conceptual attitude nor by clinging to bliss, clarity, or nonthought. As

that itself is the Buddha-mind, you have recognized your own nature.

"It is like the example of not needing to imagine your mother to be your mother, as you have no fear due to thinking that she is not your mother. Similarly, when your awareness recognizes that it is the innate nature of dharmata, you will no longer mistakenly imagine that the phenomena of samsara are the innate nature -- even without knowing it, you were never apart from this innate nature of dharmata.

"As this is known as the unfabricated training, the dharmata mother is the fact that all phenomena are devoid of self-nature; the dharmata abode is the recognition that they are devoid of self-nature; and 'knowing your own nature by yourself' is so called since you recognize that your own awareness is the innate space of dharmadhatu.

"When you have recognized this, there is neither superior nor inferior birth, neither higher nor lower activities, neither sharper nor weaker intellect, neither greater nor lesser intelligence, neither vast nor narrow learning, neither high nor low age, neither clear nor unclear mind.

"This is an instruction of little hardship but simple to grasp, easy to apply but very effective, with which you will have no dread at the time of death. Old lady, practice it! Be diligent, as life does not wait! You get no reward from slaving for husband and child, so do not return empty-handed, but take along the provisions of your master's instructions! The tasks of this life are endless; so reach perfection in meditation practice!

Old lady, keep this advice as your escort for being fearless at the time of death!"

Thus he spoke. Since the master gave this instruction while pointing his finger at the old woman's heart, it is known as "The Pointing-Out Instruction to the Old Lady." Upon hearing it,

the old lady and her attendant were both liberated and attained accomplishment.

Lady Tsogyal of Kharchen committed it to writing for the benefit of future generations. It was written down on the southern slope of Samye on the seventeenth day of the second summer month in the Year of the Hare.

Concealed as terma treasure for the sake of future generations,

May it meet with a worthy emanation!
May it instruct beings in appropriate ways!
Through this, may the destined ones liberate
their stream-of-being!
Seal, Seal, Seal.*

* <<http://www.dzogchenmeditation.com/about-us/what-is-dzogchen/13-teachings/16-the-pointing-out-instruction-to-the-old-lady.html>>