

The Echo Effect

Transcription which was excerpted from a lecture by Geshe Michael Roach during the Tibetan Heart Yoga Series 3 Teacher Training in September of 2005, in Tucson, Arizona.

There's a famous text from ancient India called Samadhi Raja. Raja means king, like regal, royal, and *samadhi* means meditation—so it's called the King of Meditation. It's a Sutra, like the Heart Sutra, the Yoga Sutra, or the Diamond Cutter Sutra. It's a very famous Sutra which was taught by Lord Buddha. There's a very famous part in there and we were working on it this summer and I thought it was good for you that every time we have a yoga series we should review how yoga works and how it doesn't work.

We should talk about how yoga works. Yoga can't do anything for you. It's just neutral. It's just blank. It's what we call empty. And empty is not just a Buddhist thing? In the Hatha Yoga Pradipika, which we'll be starting in early spring, and which will take two years to finish I think, there are four extraordinary chapters. It's the second most famous book about yoga from ancient India and the last chapter is basically about emptiness. Master Pantanjali, in the Yoga Sutras, also talks a lot about emptiness.

So yoga is empty—it can't do anything for you. Nothing. Ok? If you have the right seeds in your mind, it will make you strong and healthy and maybe take you to heaven, right? If you don't have the right seeds, you'll try it for a while

and then give up. If you have negative seeds in your heart and you try yoga, you will hurt something—like you'll blow out your shoulder or hurt your neck.

Yoga doesn't hurt you, yoga doesn't make you bored, and yoga doesn't take you to heaven. Yoga is completely and totally neutral. It can't do anything for you. You must collect the proper seeds in your mind, in your heart, for yoga to work and then yoga becomes a path to enlightenment. And, if you don't then you'll just get tired after a while—series six you'll say “God, I don't know, there's all these series, I dunno, let's just forget it”, and you won't come. Everything in your life, says the King of Meditation Sutra, Samhadi Raja, everything in your life is like an echo. Say *pacha*. *Pacha* is this famous word in Tibetan.

So there's a story in the Samadhi Raja Sutra about a guy who lives in this busy city like New York or Barcelona or something, and he's overworked and getting tired of being in the city and his job. I did it for fifteen years, corporate life, I know the weekend is a big deal. A four-day weekend, a three-day weekend, it happens twice a year and you're like “ah”! So he gets a chance to get out of the city, and go to the country and relax.

We did a retreat in Ireland this summer, perfect, quiet, green, mountains, nobody there, just sheep wandering around and banging on the door one day, but anyway ... totally quiet, totally nice, and this big stone mountain with these green pastures all around. We didn't see anybody.

So he goes out there and sits down and he's so happy ... nothing, quiet, no trouble, no telephones, no computers, no email and he starts to sing “Ahhhhhhhh” [singing] and then he hears this “RNNNNNG” [loud buzzing

sound]... and he wanders outside and he's like "what is that"? Then he relaxes, he comes back in and starts his song again, probably like Cowgirl in the Sand or something [laughter] ... then "RNNNNGGG" this thing comes back and he gets angry, "they told me there was nobody around"! "They told me it was quiet." "They told me it was a good place." "There are people making fun of me." "I'm singing this beautiful song and they're yelling stuff back at me!"

Finally he leaves and goes back to his job and he loses the three-day weekend. That's a big thing in corporate life to lose a three-day weekend, and he just goes home and is disgusted. And the whole point is what? He heard an echo. It was just a *pacha*, you know? That's how bad he sounds, and he didn't even know. He thought it was somebody else.

So there's this whole mistake going on—big mistake. And he loses a whole three-day weekend because of this mistake. Who cheats him out of the three-day weekend? Himself, you see? So his suffering, A) is not real suffering it's an illusion. B) Who's doing it to him? Himself! Life is like that. Life is a big echo. Every single thing you don't like in life is bouncing back to you from something you did to somebody else. It's this terrible irony of life. Every bad experience you've ever had in your life, every distasteful person you've ever met, every person who said something bad to you today, every person who irritated you, the weather, the car, or anything—it's 100% you.

It's just bouncing back from you. You yelled a week ago, ten days ago, a year ago. You cheated someone, you hurt somebody, you thought something bad about somebody—which is also karma, raw karma—and then it's bouncing back to you. And then you're at who? At Christie! [laughs] Why? Because she

won't let me have the dessert I want. You see? So it's her fault, she's doing it to me.

But there's no such thing—everything is an echo. Every misery in your life, every problem with your body, every pain in your body, every war in the world, every bomb that goes off, every death you see is you. It's all coming from you. It's an echo. It's just bouncing off the world and coming back to you. On the one hand that's extremely depressing to think that you caused Iraq, and you caused the World Trade Center, and you caused the person next to you at work, and you caused your last bad relationship. Everything is just an echo of what you've been doing, you see? It's very depressing. But we like to twist it around. If it's true that everything is an echo then I have total control over my life. I can absolutely call the shots. There's no more random guesswork about life. I can decide what my life will be.

Choose the thing that bugs you the most. Your nose, the person next to you at work, the weather, or the state of violence in the world. Choose anything you're tired of, and that or you don't want, and just do the opposite to somebody else today. "You're telling me if I'm nicer to Christie then the war in Iraq will end?" "Exactly, yes, exactly!" Because it's just an echo. That's an echo of a small-scale thing in your own life. "Well don't I have to like stop a war in South America to get the war in Iraq to stop?" No, you just have to be less violent, in a tiny way, to the people right around you. And you don't have to send a letter to anybody. It doesn't have anything to do with that. The large-scale violence is caused by small violent seeds in your own mind. If you are consciously less violent, even just saying little bad things to people around you—that thing will stop the war in Iraq. It's unbelievable. It's unbelievable.

Like you say “oh that’s not possible”. You can make a \$250 million company with this principle, with the echo effect. You can turn a very bad body into a healthy body. You cannot have any relationships and then have the best relationship in the world, right? You can do all those things on purpose—you can design it.

If you know about this echo thing, you just do the opposite of what’s going wrong to the people around you on a tiny scale. Every morning when you wake up, you pick the thing you don’t like the most about your life. “I don’t like this person, this person bugs me.” “What bugs you about them?” “They talk to me, they diss me all the time.” “Ok so get rid of him. Terminate him.” “How?” “Don’t use a gun. Stop disrespecting other people, in the tiny ways that you do—just stop, completely. Watch it 100%. That person will change in a week, two weeks, something like that, a month. They will change or they will move away, which is just as good.” You see? You can call the shots. You design your reality. You don’t have to be a victim of your reality. It all doesn’t have to be random anymore. You can choose what you want to happen in six months and it will happen. “How?” Just give the thing to other people that you want. All the great religions say that, right? It just takes time to study.

Where does the echo stay when that guy screams at that mountain? Where is it? It’s in the air I guess. The sound waves are going towards the mountain and then the sound waves are coming back. And once someone explains echoes to you, then you don’t get angry. “Ok, that’s me, I don’t sound as good as Neil Young as I thought. But at least I know if I don’t yell at the mountain, I can have some peace. And the same thing in your life, you need to know where the storage happens, how does the storage happen? And then you can believe it.

Anything you do to someone else is planted in your own mind, in the subconscious, by the act of being there when you do it. How often are you there when you do karma to someone else? How often are you there? You're always there. The recorder is always on. Even a thought about someone else is planted in your subconscious and then it comes out and colors your world. You have those sunglasses on all the time. Red sunglasses. Green sunglasses. "I don't know why everything's green?" "Duh, you've got sunglasses on!" "Oh! Oh!" What you do to other people creates these very subtle filters on your perceptions and the whole world becomes grumpy. "The whole world is grumpy. I don't know why?" "The whole world is violent—like it wasn't violent five years ago, I don't know what's going on." You're the one, you see? There's something in you. There's something about you, and it's coloring how you see the world. It's very cool. It's very interesting. You can un-color it, you see? You just plant something different.

So every morning, personally, the first thing when I get up, I meditate and I say "What do I want to get rid of in my life? How can I make my life....my life is like 99.9% incredible, you know? So I want to make it like .01% more incredible. So ok, well no angel came to me in the last half hour. So I can sort this problem out, and then it gets cooler and cooler, and life gets more and more amazing. It's called the Echo Effect.

What does that have to do with yoga? You decide how far your yoga will go. You see? When will you get to Naropa's number one? When you get to Naropa's number three? By the way, to go from zero—which is where you're at in this

series—to number one, requires an authentic initiation. Someone has to bop you on the head in a certain way, in a very authentic initiation.

So you need to go from zero to one you need an initiation. If you want to go through the six—if you want to get to a place where you can help every living creature; even just a place where you can see every living creature in your meditation, you can do it. You just design it. That's yoga. You just design it. You plant the seeds. You plant your own seeds. I call it the chocolate wrapper. And then we'll stop, ok?

I'm just talking about the chocolate wrapper, right? If you're able to get a Twix bar, you gotta go through the wrapper to get to the chocolate, right? I mean, that's just the way it is. You can't get to the chocolate unless you get the wrapper off of it. You gotta get through the wrapper to get to the chocolate. So, I never heard anyone complain. Once you get your hands on the Twix bar, the wrapper is no problem. No one is like, "oh I hate these wrappers." You know? You just like get it off and get into the chocolate. You don't think about the wrapper. You don't even think about it.

To get to your yoga goals, to change into a being of light, you must help other people! That is the wrapper, you see? You must go through other people. It's an echo. It has to bounce off other people. All things are an echo. You can't ignore other people anymore. There's no way you can get what you want without paying attention to other people, because everything is bouncing off other people. Everything that comes to you has to bounce off of someone else. It's impossible to get anywhere in anything without paying attention to, and

taking care of other people. It's just impossible. It's a minor inconvenience, like a wrapper on the chocolate.

You can't ignore other people anymore. You have to take care of them. To the extent that you take care of other people, you will reach Naropa's goals. That's all. No one can do it for you. You can study all the exotic texts in all the exotic languages you want. John Brady can find some Urdu text, that is only in Italian by the way, Fabio is going to translate and he doesn't even know it yet. *Guhyasamaja* from Pakistan, only in Italian. Anyway, it doesn't matter. It doesn't matter. Someone can teach you all this exotic stuff and it just won't work. You see? It's neutral. If you want it to work you have to take care of other people. You have to pay attention to other people. Even in your yoga class, you have to be serving other people. You have to be thinking, "what will make these people happy", you know? "What can I do that would make this person happy?" The intention and the focus has to be, how can I make these other people happy? Every person around you. Even little things you know?

Like, do they care that I'm burping during the asanas? Maybe I can do it more quietly. All day long, all night long—just fantasize. What could I do to make other people happy? You see what I mean? Concentrate on other people and then the echo will come back and Naropa will happen, and you'll be enlightened and we'll have a big party. Twix bars that don't have any sugar in them or something. And it's more fun to make other people happy than to make yourself happy. Right? Its just more fun. To fantasize, "oh what does this person like?" "What would they like? What do they need? How can I make them happy?" You see? And then it just comes back to you, and so that's how yoga works.

And we'll never stop saying it. It can't happen unless you're taking care of other people. It just will never happen. And it's more fun to take care of other people, so to get to the twix bar. So anyway, we'll stop there.