

Not Just Wasting Tsampa: On Learning to Make Tormas

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At the last Guru Rinpoche tsok at ODD, some students gathered before the practice to start learning how to make the tormas and talk about the meaning of the ritual. Rinpoche saw photos of them working and said:

Good! Thank you! That way you can teach and learn! People are learning and trying—without that, they will never understand. Do they complain? Sure, plenty! But why not? They don't know. If you don't know the reason, then no reason not to complain!

Americans have never heard of tormas and such things, they have never seen such things, they have never even thought of them before! They don't have a dharma lineage to follow, they don't have that kind of rule or law or tradition. Therefore, they need to learn the pieces of the practice, piece by piece, and not only outerly but the meaning, too.

People wonder, "Why do we need to do this practice? Why not something different? Why do we need to chant this way, following the umzed? Why does the umzed need to do these things? Why does the lama need to do those things? Why does the chopon need to do their things?" You might look at all the offerings and the tormas and ask, "Why does the chopon need all this complicated stuff?" You might see the chopons, they are always working so hard, day and night—you might ask, "Why are they working so hard? What is the reason? Are they just berserk?" You might look at the tormas and ask, "Why are they wasting so much tsampa and butter? It looks like there's no benefit—they just make them and then throw them away! Where did the butter and other materials come from? Who bought all that stuff? Why? It looks like you are just wasting people's money!" If you are wondering that, it means you don't know. It means your brain is a little bit Communist! That means you need to learn.

People don't understand the practices and the meaning of lineage, that is why they don't see value in these kinds of things. They only understand the value of their own bucket or their own pocket. One way, I agree with them—if you never learned the meaning, of course you don't understand what's going on! Of course you are going to think such things! If you don't know the reasons, then it looks like the umzed and the lama and the chopons and everybody are a little bit cuckoo—how come they have to sit and chant for hours? What are all these tsampa things you put on a plate and then throw away outside and all the birdies and the deer eat them? Is this a ceremony to be the birdies' servant? If you want to feed the deer, you can just put the tsampa outside—no need for so much chanting and mantras and fancy stuff! Is everybody crazy?

Actually, you ARE crazy! But anyway the lamas were not crazy. The tertons who revealed the treasures were not crazy. Sometimes slightly but not like you guys. Do you think His Holiness Dudjom Rinpoche was crazy? [Rinpoche places his palms together at his heart when saying His

Holiness's name.] He was a real wisdom being, 100% I guarantee. Oh-ho! He was not crazy. This is his treasure you are practicing, Guru Rinpoche tsok or dakini or whatever. Not just something some crazy guy made up. Not just somebody's idea. Real wisdom idea. Real wisdom tormas; real wisdom chanting; real wisdom long horns and gyalings and everything, all the music; real wisdom chopon; real wisdom lama. When to ring the bell, this, that—step by step, you name it! Everything is his wisdom vision. Then we try to follow that. I don't think he's just going to waste a lot of tsampa! Come on! Give me a break! I don't think he's just going to tell everyone to make a big noise with their bell and jump around pretending to dance. Tibetan Buddhism is not some ego trip! Not about doing practice to make you more arrogant. We need to understand that! What is the real purpose of practice? You need to understand that especially, and not just like ice skating on the surface but go inside that understanding more and more deeply.

Nobody can say you don't have teachers to explain these things. Now there are lots of older students—they learned, and now they can teach and share and show others. We have umzed teachers, chopon teachers, torma teachers. Some know what the lama does in the practice, too; so if we don't have a lama, they can be the lama. That's no big deal, you don't have to call them 'lama' or anything, just if they know how to do the lama's activity nicely, then they can do it. Just like different people can be the umzed or the chopon. They can be the lama, and they can teach others how to do that, too, how to ring the bell and damaru and everything. Everybody, share your knowledge, whatever you know. Especially about the meaning of the practices.

You don't need to be shy or embarrassed. Coming to the practices so many years, not understanding one word and not asking one question about it—now that's embarrassing! Especially if you think the practices are wasting your time or wasting money, that means you don't understand. Actually nobody's wasting anything! You think they are crazy, that they have some kind of problem? Actually, no problem. Actually, whoever's learning has the problem, which is that they don't know! That's not a negative problem, it just means you need to learn the positive. Therefore, you learn, step by step. Therefore, you practice, step by step. That's your job! If you complain or not, it's still your job!

If you don't know something or don't understand, then ask somebody, dammit! How else are you American buggers going to learn? Even the highest lamas have to learn—look at the Dalai Lama! First you have to learn. Then you practice. That way you understand, more and more. What are you understanding? The meaning of what you are practicing! What are you practicing? The meaning of what you are learning! Stage by stage, they go together! When everybody does the practice, when people are practicing nicely and chanting with the umzed and so on, then even people who don't understand get more and more interest: "Wow! Everybody is doing this together, the same. What does it mean?" Playing the bell, and having beautiful offerings, and the umzed, chopon, and lama all doing their jobs perfectly—even someone who doesn't understand one word will still recognize there is something special there and want to ask about it. Then ask! And if you know, then answer them!

We think about ourselves but we don't think in a large way. We don't think, "Oh, when we are learning, when we are teaching, when we are practicing—that is really going to benefit our country, our state, our city, our area, our people around here and everywhere." Even if we recognize there is some benefit, we don't see with a large eye. That is because we don't understand the dharma's benefit, how powerful it is. Maybe if we understand a little, we think it will benefit ourselves alone, but we don't think about our whole world. Hey, wake up! This is your world. Your state. Your town or village or whatever. Your people, you Gomars (red-headed ones). If you study the dharma, if you practice the dharma, if you are teaching or learning the dharma, it benefits them! Your place and your people, whoever has connection to you. That is the kind of blessing of these practices. That is the kind of powerful lineage of these teachers. These are not small things, okay? We need to think a little bit large way. Mahayana means the 'great vehicle.' It doesn't mean MY vehicle, something tiny. You think your ego is great but it is smallest. Smallest bullshit arrogant one. Your ego way is the smallest, stupidest way, not the tiniest hair 'great.' So I am not saying your ego is great, okay? But your dharma is great. Your lineage is great. Your gurus are great. Your practice, if you practice sincerely, that is great. Great means what? Great benefit. The greatest benefit. Benefit all beings throughout space, down to the tiniest bugs and hell beings and you name it! Therefore, Mahayana is the great vehicle. When you practice, remember that. When you study, remember that. Don't be small brain.

You guys are learning to make tormas, learning more and more about the practice—that really makes me happy. When you study, when you teach, when you practice, pray to the lamas, the yidams, and the dakinis. They are like your daddy and mommy, taking care of you, blessing you. They are nothing far away. Billions and billions of them, supporting you, they aren't crowded or anything. Just have faith, be happy, enjoy your dharma dinner party or tea party or whatever you have. That means enjoy your practice and your learning. You need to keep your discipline, too. That keeps everything clean and helps us clean up our mess. The un-positive one, it's time to grow up into a positive one. The positive one becomes teacher. You feed yourself; and when you got yourself okay, your stomach filled up with learning, then you can feed others, benefit them, teaching step by step. Okay? Thank you! You guys got really good!

Tashi Delek!

-Gyatral

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