

On Maintaining the Dharma Centers

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Re-watching a video of the sang (smoke offering purification practice) that was performed at Tashi Choling on Losar (Tibetan New Year on February 27th), Rinpoche gave the following teaching:

Not just doing *sang*, we need to maintain all the practices at Tashi Choling. Everything that we have, we need to take care of it. Take care of Tashi Choling well. Take care of each center well.

What do they need? How do we take care of them?

What does Tashi Choling need? It needs this, what you are doing! That kind of practice, clean way. That kind of harmony, everybody together.

Each of you, its caretakers, as you care for it, have faith in the Three Jewels. That means being aware of their qualities. You need to understand what they are. We need to come to appreciate their qualities more and more, by learning about them, looking at them, recalling them, thinking about them. Even touching them, such as touching your head to a statue or other representation of enlightened body, speech, or mind to show your devotion and reverence. There are many teachings on the blessing and power of merely hearing of the Three Jewels' qualities, or seeing their representations, or recalling them, or touching them. In the future, always do this. Always fill your heart with faith whenever you engage with the Buddha, Dharma, and Sangha, and their representations, the representations of enlightened body, speech, and mind. This in turn will help you to appreciate their qualities more and more, and your faith will naturally deepen.

That is necessary to maintain the center and care for it.

Whether you are a man or a woman, it makes no difference: Going forward and always in the future, everyone needs to deepen and strengthen their faith continuously.

If you are maintaining Tashi Choling or any of the dharma centers, you will certainly accumulate merit and purify negativity. Then in the future, you will have good rebirths and few obstacles. So always, as much as you can, serve the dharma centers purely. Not just for one or two years, but for many generations, for many lifetimes, we need to maintain the dharma centers so that they can continue to be of benefit. It doesn't matter if the center is large or small. That makes absolutely no difference. The important thing is if it is a place of dharma.

We call these dharma centers, centers of dharma. Not centers of negativity. Not centers of pride or jealousy. These should not be centers of the three poisons. They should be centers for the antidotes to the three poisons.

What is the root of the three poisons? Our attachment and aversion, our desire and hatred, our strong favoritism and intense self-concern. These centers should not be havens for the three poisons, nurturing their root. These centers should be nourishing and supporting the antidotes to the three poisons and bringing their opposite to blossom and bear fruit. What is the fruit or

result of really eliminating the three poisons and the attachment and aversion which are their root? Buddhahood. Who can show us how to do this? Who can show us that this can be done and give us the tools and methods to do it ourselves? The Three Jewels. There is none beyond them. The centers should therefore be places of Buddha, Dharma, and Sangha. Then they are really of benefit.

Therefore, maintain them like this, for a thousand years and more if you can. Please. Everybody try, please. Keep the centers and the pure lineage and traditions well, and in the future, then your children will know how to keep them, too. They will know how important and precious they are and how valuable. They will know the reason to keep them, they will know how to keep them. That is going to really benefit. It will benefit them and it will benefit others, how many beings?

If you don't keep them well but are just wishy-washy, just funky, then your result will be wishy-washy and funky, too. There will only be wishy-washy lineage. Don't be like that. Don't be attached to some areas and dislike or hate others, and so you only keep some parts nicely, according to your own idea. That is to fall under the sway of your three poisons, your bias and preference. If you act from the three poisons, the only result you will get is the three poisons, too. Just nothing. Worse than nothing.

So please try, purely, as much as you can.

Tashi Choling and all the dharma centers started by His Holiness Dudjom Rinpoche, at one time they had the name "Yeshe Nyingpo" or whatever. His Holiness prayed for them all and held them in his wisdom mind. His Holiness Penor Rinpoche did likewise, as did the Dalai Lama. There is that kind of blessing in them, that kind of benefit that can be brought to the beings who connect there.

All these great lamas, including the lamas you have received empowerment and transmission from, such as H.H. Penor Rinpoche, Yangthang Tulku Rinpoche, and others, actual emanations of Vimalamitra and Vairochana, they have all held the Three Jewels as their refuge. Gurus with such realization and learning, truly pure, undisputed masters—even they didn't have any greater refuge than the Three Jewels. There is no greater refuge, no greater protection or guardians than the Three Jewels. They are absolutely dependable, absolutely trustworthy. Among all the things you could rely on or look for refuge in, the Three Jewels are the best. They are number one! What benefits you in this life? The Three Jewels. What will benefit your future lives? The Three Jewels.

Their benefit is not just in the future. The Three Jewels bring benefit on many levels. The Three Jewels bring outer benefit when we hang prayer flags and build statues or other representations of enlightened body, speech, and mind, for example. Inner benefit comes from studying and learning the dharma. Secret benefit comes from pure, genuine faith. Through sincere faith and then practicing purely and diligently, unchangeable faith arises. The heart of all dharma is faith. Faith and compassion. That is the heart or essence. Without faith and compassion, there is no dharma. You have nothing and less than nothing.

You all do know this, I don't need to tell you. You do understand these things. That is very good. Now don't forget! Don't forget your faith and compassion! Whatever practice you are doing, don't forget! However smart and learned you are, don't forget! Whatever dharma activity you are doing, don't forget!

Thank you, to all of you I am seeing there in the picture, everyone offering sang on Losar. Really, I got so happy seeing that, seeing you maintain the practices, making offerings, purifying your negativity. If you maintain the centers like that, it is the best way to accumulate merit and purify negativity. How wonderful, the number one best, to be able to do that for generations into the future, for a thousand years and more! So please direct your efforts and focus toward that, as much as you can.

Do you need benefit? Do you need good things? For yourself, for others? If you need benefit, if anybody needs benefit, nothing and no one is of more benefit than the Three Jewels. There is no greater refuge or source of protection in all the world than the Three Jewels. The lamas, great masters, they say this.

So, do you know what the Three Jewels are? Buddha, Dharma, and Sangha? We are all Buddhists—we should know what “the jewel of the Buddha” means, shouldn't we? And then you know what the jewel of the Dharma is, don't you? The Dharma is the teaching of the Buddha. The jewel of the Sangha means those who are practicing the Dharma taught by the Buddha, in order to benefit both themselves and others. That is the jewel of the Sangha. The sangha is focused on bringing benefit to both themselves and others. They are not focused on gossip and slander. They are not focused on chasing the go-go ladies and playboys. Not that!

Please, learn more and more about the Buddha, Dharma, and Sangha, what they are, their qualities, the benefits they bring. Try, everybody, as much as you can, sincerely and humbly, okay?

Of course, everybody makes mistakes. We all make mistakes continuously. Again and again, we forget that the Three Jewels are important. We begin to think they are not so important, and so we put them behind the door or leave them on a shelf somewhere and don't look at them. Again and again, we make the mistake of thinking samsara is so important. We think it must be important, everybody thinks it is! Yeah, it's important in one way; it's kind of interesting, but you don't need to go that way too much. Just go the NAMO BUDDHAYA, NAMO DHARMAYA, NAMO SANGHAYA way. Just slowly, slowly. Just recognize these things. Check and see for yourself. Open your own eye, hear with your own ear. Keep the understanding of the Three Jewels' qualities in your own brain.

That way, when you say NAMO BUDDHAYA or take refuge in the Buddha, you know the Buddha's qualities, the qualities of enlightened body, speech, and mind, and you can recall those. When you say NAMO DHARMAYA and take refuge in the Dharma, similarly you can recall the qualities of the Dharma. What is the Dharma? It is the Buddha's speech, all the teachings. The teachings on the benefits of virtue, the harm of non-virtue, how to accumulate merit and purify negativity—all the teachings of sutra and tantra, outer and inner. You know, I don't need to tell you! The dharma's teachings, they aren't just some magazine. Not naughty children's talk, not go-go ladies' gossip! The dharma's real qualities, you need to know them,

more and more deeply. Not in a book but in your own brain. The Sangha, their qualities, same thing—think about them!

Anyway, try, everybody. Try with your own eye, your own ear, your own brain, your own hand.

Thank you, really, this is my happiness, seeing everybody practicing there together so nicely. I don't care about Losar, but this is my Losar happiness. In the future, please maintain this—temple and practices; study, learning, teaching, contemplating, meditating. Outer and inner, stage by stage, please maintain everything. Right now, everyone is doing so nicely, thank you. In the future, don't change that. Don't go MY WAY. Just stay together, humble, happy, helping each other. So many lamas have blessed these places. If we can maintain them—buildings, lineages, practices, teachings, everything—then that really can benefit beings a long way into the future. Not our quality but our lineage gurus' qualities. Their kindness. Their blessing. That we are trying to maintain. We don't need to maintain our garbage. Just their pure teaching, transmission, blessing, what they gave and what they established. Everybody try, okay?

Tashi Delek!

-Gyatral