

Your Own Nature's Picture on the Wall: On Tangkas and Buddhanature

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Rinpoche was looking at the tangkas of the Eight Manifestations of Guru Rinpoche and the picture of His Holiness the Sixteenth Karmapa on his walls. He gestured to them and said:

Look! These are amazing things! We can keep them on our wall and look at them every day. We love to keep pictures on the wall and books on the shelf, but we don't want to bring them into our hearts. If you just keep on the wall, sort of useless. What is the picture for? To remind you of your own real tangka, your own nature. Don't just look with your eyes closed and mouth open, thinking Guru Rinpoche is going to feed you like a baby. Open your eye and recognize yourself: There is your own nature's picture on the wall!

These all are our real boss. If we would accept them as our boss, do what they teach, follow their rule, we would be enlightened! But we don't want to accept them. We want to pray to them, but we don't want to listen to them. We want them to liberate us, but we don't want to accept their teaching on how to do it.

Human beings, really strange! Everyone wants to be the boss! If you are not the boss, you get upset! Give me a break! You are not your own boss; why would anyone else listen to your orders?

These [*looking at the tangkas*] are the *real* boss. The real boss means their own boss. They tamed their own minds. They cleaned up all their five poisons and negativity so nothing dirty is left. That is a real boss. We think a big boss means a big mouth. No, no. Your big mouth has a big shit smell, all the five poisons smell.

Still, we think we must be the boss! We must be the special one! We must be the high one! Everyone else is low! You have a bad smell yourself—why aren't you embarrassed to be pretending to be high?

Actually, funky people, ordinary ones, poor ones, crazy ones, even animals like birdies and doggies—if you really think about them, they are not just funky and simple either. They also have buddhanature. Do you think their buddhanature is small because they aren't rich? Because they aren't handsome or pretty? Because they don't have the name "lama" and sit on a high throne? No. Even the lowest, most funky or humble or smelly or ugly or stupid one—one way, we ignore them and think they are no big deal. One way, it's true. No big deal. Yourself is not, either! But they do have buddhanature too.

Are you going to call buddhanature, the buddha essence, “no big deal” and put it in the garbage? No. We prostrate to that! When we do prostrations, the real prostration is to that. So, is it wrong to have faith in someone ordinary, even a funky old man or ugly old lady? No, nothing’s wrong with that. They still have buddhanature! Even Ani Rioh’s little doggies have buddhanature!

In the same way, all sentient beings have the buddhanature. Even if you kill them, chop them up, cook them, and chow down on their meat, you are eating buddhanature’s meat, too. Think about that!

You have buddhanature—what is the big deal? Does it mean you have something extra, some special extra thing? No. Nothing like that. Buddhanature is not another of your trips. You don’t know what your buddhanature is! Therefore, practice. Just shut up and practice and learn. Don’t be an ignorant ego. Don’t be like a big, drunk, crazy ox.

These tangkas, statues, pictures are showing all the deities and amazing lineage masters. Those beings, real enlightened beings, they are so soft, so humble, so flexible. They gave up their horns and acting like an ox a long time ago. They don’t embarrass themselves, and they are always comfortable. If you put them in low places, they’re happy to be low. If you put them in high places, same thing. They don’t care. They don’t have ox horns like you, so they don’t get upset. They are the real boss, but they don’t care if anybody thinks they are the boss or not. If they can benefit, that is yes! That makes them happy. If they can benefit a funky guy or rich guy, humble one or proud one—any being—then they are happy. They are not like us; for us it must be this one and not that one. We are so stupid and stingy! We think we are special? Our stinginess is special!

Try to slow down, okay? You have wonderful tangkas, statues, all kinds of dharma books. Look at your tangkas, look at your statues. Read your books. Don’t just look blindly. Recognize what your eyes are seeing. Really take into your heart. More than being somebody’s boss, human beings need to be the boss of their own heart and brain.

Tashi Delek!

-Gyatral