

To Refresh Our Understanding: Part 3

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(spontaneous instruction given to students visiting on April 9th, 2017, who made the aspiration at that time that these precious reminders be made available to all in order to be of the greatest benefit)

Your three poisons, just drop them. Leave them aside. If you think that you are a scholar, then there is attachment. If you think that you are so smart, being puffed up with arrogance, there is your ignorance! And, of course, you are going to have aversion—these three always go together. The three poisons, there they are! The passions, right there. Thinking in that way you are fully involved in the three poisons. You are never going to be able to benefit yourself that way, and if you can't benefit yourself how could you benefit anyone else?

Whoever your teacher is, man or woman, if you are proud, you might think that they don't know anything. If your teacher is too humble and you are proud, then you are never going to get exactly what they are talking about.

The three poisons, they are the cause for the six realms—they make the six realms, they are what bring rebirth in the six realms. If you accumulate merit and purify obscurations, you will certainly achieve the results of that, which ultimately are liberation and omniscience. But if you only engage in and indulge in the three poisons, then you will only experience their results, which are the six realms. If you think that you are rich or that you are some pretty Columbian, something special, you will get no success.

We are dharma brothers and sisters. It is not our samaya and not our discipline to hug and kiss and fuck around with each other. We have received empowerment, transmission, and instruction together. What did the lama say at those times? What did the lama say when he gave us empowerment? How did the lama explain we should conduct ourselves?

We take refuge. We should make sure that we are really taking refuge in the objects of refuge. Not taking refuge in our boyfriend or our girlfriend, they are not the Three Jewels.

Your real parents, your real mother and your real father, the ultimate, *genuine* mother and father, are actually the single, fundamental nature of all phenomena of samsara and enlightenment. The fundamental nature of all phenomena of samsara and enlightenment is your genuine mother and your genuine father. There is nothing beyond that.

So, slow down. Don't be excited. Increase your loving kindness, increase your compassion. Don't lie to yourself, don't cheat yourself, and don't cheat others. Cultivate compassion, really sincerely. Without lying to others, have compassion for them—don't cheat them. And don't cheat yourself either, be honest with yourself. Have faith as much as you can, work for others' benefit as much as you can, have altruistic intent and genuine concern and consideration for others as much as you are able to.

What is the reason for that? As much as you are able to benefit others, your own qualities increase. This is our opportunity for that: our opportunity to benefit others, and our opportunity to increase our own qualities. Do you think it is going to do any good to just say “I love you” or to hug someone? No. That is just being a liar. There is no benefit in that, only suffering. To pretend to be having compassion or to say things like “I love you” when actually you are lying, that is of absolutely no benefit. That is just deception. That is like a doctor coming to help someone but actually they are a fake. They say, “Oh, I am a doctor, sure! ...But I don’t know anything about sickness. I don’t know anything about medicine.” That kind of doctor is useless.

In India when the doctors come, the nurses say, can you poke this person, can you put a needle in this one? Then the doctors give them who knows what—could be garbage medicine, could be nothing. We shouldn’t have compassion like that. Not fake like that, not lying and cheating like that. We need to have pure, genuine compassion. We need to have pure, genuine faith in the Three Jewels. We need to cultivate great compassion which is skillful method, and we need to cultivate wisdom or *prajna*, these two, inseparable. We need to know these two and we need to know their qualities. We need to know a little bit about the qualities of great compassion, skillful method. And we need to know a little bit about the qualities of *prajna*, the *prajna* that realizes emptiness.

But usually people get some small understanding of these things and they pop up, all full of arrogance and puffed up with pride. In that instant, when you puff up with pride based on your understanding or knowledge, you have destroyed whatever qualities of enlightened body, speech, and mind you were cultivating. You have made the lamas, yidams, and dakinis just names, nothing more than words. If you have no faith, then it is like that.

Everyone is so focused on material things—on material possessions, on wealth, on riches, on external things. The lamas, they are obsessed with wealth, the sponsors they are obsessed with possessions and so forth. Everyone is caught up in the eight worldly concerns!

Step by step, practice. Step by step, read. If you never hear the dharma by studying, reading, and listening to teachings, then you will have nothing to think about. Conversely, if you have heard maybe a great deal of dharma, but you never bothered thinking about it, then that is wasting all of that study. You need to do all of the steps: hear the dharma, contemplate the dharma, and then meditate on it.

In Tibet, there were many old guys in retreat here and there. Some of them, if they had heard the dharma well, and then they had thought about it well, and now they were putting it into practice, they were making good progress. But some of them, maybe they didn’t really internalize the dharma that they heard, or maybe they didn’t study well, and instead all they were doing was just puffing up their pride, like a prayer flag that is in tatters and falling apart but still flapping, making such a great noise and such a great flap. Here we have many ragged flags, like that. We should not practice the dharma like that. Don’t waste it like that, by doing it in a fake or superficial way. If you hear the dharma, then think about what you have heard. If

you have not heard the dharma, then you need to hear it, you need to study, you need to listen to the teachings. Once you have heard them, then you have to contemplate them, you need to think about them and investigate them again and again and again. Then you need to put into practice what you have understood. This way the dharma will be an antidote to the five poisons and to all the passions. But only if we do it correctly!

We need to have faith in the Buddha and the Three Jewels. If we want to accomplish our own benefit and bring benefit to others, this is exactly what we need: faith and compassion. That faith needs to not just be artificial. That faith needs to not just be lip service. It needs to be genuine faith, faith based on an understanding of the qualities of the buddhas' enlightened body, speech, mind, qualities, and activities; the qualities of the lamas, yidams, dakinis, and dharma protectors. We need to have real, genuine faith in them. If we understand their qualities well, we will have good, firm faith. Our faith will deepen the more and more we understand. If we have no understanding, then we will have no faith.

The more understanding we have, the more we will come to realize that the nature of all these objects of refuge is the same, just as we are taught that nature, intrinsic nature, and compassion are the same. Then our faith can deepen and deepen. If we know that essence, then we will know that the essence of all these objects of refuge, all these enlightened qualities, are the same.

In Tibet, there were many people in retreat. Some of them were really zomb-ed out, meaning it looked like they were zombies. You might ask them, are you dead? No. They weren't dead. They had come to understand the qualities of the buddhas' enlightened body, speech, and mind and they were practicing upon that very peacefully. Not dead, not zombies. Some of them were reciting MANI mantras, some of them were reciting BENZAR GURU mantras, some of them were reciting Vajrasattva mantras. Having received empowerment, transmission, and instruction, then they were practicing. Some of them were really practicing in an authentic way, and at their deaths there would be signs and relics left behind. Some of them even had white, red, blue, and green relics, all different colors of relics left behind in their bones and on their bodies at the time of their death.

In my country, Gyalrong, there was one lama called Lama Jamyang at Dhomang Monastery. He stayed in retreat for many years and was still in retreat when he died. When they examined his body, he had white, red, blue, and green relics in all his bones. I saw it with my own eyes. Some were like that, lots were like that. Some, though, had this big hope that they would achieve that kind of attainment, but when they died all that was left was shit. If you are like me and you have no merit, then this is how it goes. Someone who has no merit, or who wasn't able to meet with authentic teachers, or wasn't able to practice in an authentic way, then who knows what the result will be, because they didn't create the proper causes so they can't be guaranteed the proper result.

But some lamas, you absolutely can trust their qualities. For example, Dodrup Rinpoche. When I was small in Tibet, I had one lama called Yukok Chatral or Yukok Lama. He was in retreat for 50 or 60 years, and there were 2,000 or 3,000 monks who would come and receive teachings

from him and so forth. He was universally revered, even by the greatest masters of his time. At that time, Dodrup Rinpoche was just a small boy like I was. This lama, Yukok Lama, he held the young Dodrup Rinpoche with such reverence and respect, he really thought the boy was an exceptional lama and exceptional being. At the time I thought he was just this naughty boy! I am not saying that Dodrup Rinpoche is the greatest of scholars or the greatest of all practitioners, but this incredibly esteemed lama called Yukok Chatral had great reverence for him. So, we can understand Dodrup Rinpoche's qualities through Yukok Lama's recognition of them.

Dudjom Rinpoche was Vairochana's tulku. Penor Rinpoche was Vimalamitra's emanation. The Dalai Lama is an emanation of Chenrezig. I don't know myself! But it seems like these lamas are not ordinary lamas, so whatever you want to call them seems to be ok. If they are Chenrezig or Buddha Shakyamuni or what-have-you, they certainly have inconceivable qualities.

When we say buddhanature, that means the qualities of enlightened body, speech, and mind. We all have buddhanature. It pervades all sentient beings. That means we all have the opportunity to bring that buddhanature to blossom. If we have a precious human rebirth, that means we have the chance to hear, contemplate, and meditate on the dharma. And because we have buddhanature, that process will bring the result of the full blossoming of that nature as fully endowed enlightened qualities. However great our understanding is regarding those qualities of enlightened body, enlightened speech, and enlightened mind, that is how much their blessings will be able to enter our own ordinary body, speech, and mind and transform them.

At the beginning, we don't know anything. We don't know even one quality of the Buddha's enlightened form, not even on the outermost level. But then slowly, through study and contemplation, as we internalize the dharma that we have heard and read, what was misunderstanding or lack of understanding becomes understanding. This is the real meaning of liberation. Our lack of understanding is liberated as understanding. Our not knowing is liberated as knowing. If we come to understand even the qualities of one pore on the Buddha's enlightened body, the previous not-understanding of that quality has now been liberated as understanding that quality. The final result of our understanding as it deepens and deepens is that eventually it will blossom as all qualities—ultimately as all qualities of liberation and omniscience. These are our own buddha qualities coming forth to blossom in a complete, fully endowed way. That is the final result of transforming our lack of understanding into understanding by hearing, contemplating, and meditating on the dharma. That is liberation.

Each of us, we have the buddhanature. So, we should not ignore it. If we stop ignoring our buddhanature but instead pay attention to it outerly, innerly, and secretly, we have the opportunity in this very life to transform all lack of understanding to understanding, which means attaining omniscience. Those mean the same thing. So, don't ignore the qualities—outer, inner, and secret—of your own buddhanature. Don't ignore the qualities of all buddhas' enlightened body, speech, and mind. Shashi has a big butt, but her buddhanature she ignores. Therefore, her big butt does her absolutely no good.

What do we usually do with our buddhanature?

We don't open it, we don't reveal it, we don't let its qualities blossom forth. Generally, we cover it up.

We need to stop covering it up. We need to stop ignoring our buddhanature.

How do we stop ignoring it?

By paying attention to it.

How do we pay attention to our buddhanature?

We need to learn about its qualities so we can understand what is there.

What do the lamas say about those qualities? The lamas say blah blah blah, lots of things—what are they saying?

They are talking about the qualities of enlightened body, enlightened speech, enlightened mind, enlightened qualities, and enlightened activities.

They are saying that the Dalai Lama is an emanation of Chenrezig. Wow!

They talk about the qualities of enlightened body. Wow!

They talk about the qualities of all buddhas being inseparable. Wow!

All of these enlightened qualities, they *are* "Wow!" We need to hear, contemplate, and meditate so we can understand that more and more deeply, and slowly we will attain those qualities for ourselves. This is the only way to get those qualities: to bring them forth in our own mindstreams. We already possess them! You can't get them from somewhere else. You can't get them externally. Can you go buy them at the market? No. You already have them. They are already in your bucket. Enlightened qualities of body, speech, mind, qualities, and activities are already present as your buddhanature. That is your nature, that is your essence. Already there! That pervades all sentient beings, not only Columbians. When we say one MANI mantra, for example, all the blessings of all enlightened body, speech, mind, qualities, and activities are there in that mantra and they are all present as our buddhanature. If we know that and if we have faith in that, that is the level and depth of blessing that will enter our minds when we recite just one MANI mantra.

There is no one who does not have faults. No one in the world has no faults! Only the Buddha is without fault. The rest of us, we do have faults. Each of us, we have our own faults, and we need to recognize them. By accumulating merit and purifying negativity, we are able to get rid of our faults.

How do we bring forth the buddhas' qualities?

By getting rid of our own faults.

How do we do that?

By reading and learning and then practicing what we have read and what we have learned.

Please do this. Don't be lazy like me. There is no one who is without faults, no one who is without flaws or problems, complications or difficulties. Therefore, we need to hear, contemplate, and meditate, stage by stage, so that we, too, can become buddhas. First, we hear the dharma, then we contemplate it, then when we know it well, we practice.

Don't be stuck thinking, "I need to know! I have to know now!" No, no, no. It is not like that. It is nothing to get excited or uptight about, it just goes stage by stage.

As you practice, your afflictions and the five poisons should be decreasing and your qualities should be increasing. Your outer, inner, and secret qualities should all be increasing. These days, so many practitioners are uptight! They are real complainers. How do I know? Because I myself am like that. I am just pretending, an artificial lama, an artificial teacher. If you are not a practitioner then how are you going to teach? I am no practitioner and so I am no teacher, I am just artificial. Don't do like I do, doing dharma in an artificial way. Instead do it sincerely and authentically, step by step. Right now you have an opportunity—don't ignore it! If you ignore your opportunity right now, you are finished.

We need to hear, contemplate, and meditate on the dharma, and what is really going to make the difference on the path is if we have faith. We need to have faith in the objects of refuge, in Buddha, Dharma, and Sangha. If we do, then as we take refuge, for example by saying simply, "I take refuge in the Lama, in the Buddha, in the Dharma, and in the Sangha," then we will be bringing forth the qualities of enlightened body, speech, and mind in our own mindstream.

We cannot know how inconceivably various the emanations of the buddhas are, how many different forms they manifest in. There isn't just one way that the buddhas manifest. The buddhas' emanations will manifest in every possible way—as Buddha, as Dharma, and as Sangha. As Dharma, not only as sutra or only as tantra but as all the buddhas' teachings. As Sangha, not only as the fully ordained, not only as the lay practitioners, but as all, inconceivably. As Buddha, that means all buddhanature. All sentient beings actually have the buddhanature, there is no sentient being without it. Really when we say, "I take refuge in the Buddha," it is that buddhanature of all sentient beings that we are taking refuge in.

Whatever it is that you are reciting, have faith and understanding. It doesn't matter how simple the recitation is. You can say, NAMO BUDDHAYA, NAMO DHARMAYA, NAMO SANGHAYA, or you can say, OM BENZAR SATTO HUNG—whatever it is you know, recite that!

And always when you are practicing, relax your mind. Your mind doesn't need to be uptight, buzzing here and there incessantly, thinking, "Oh, I have to build this, I have to destroy that, I

need to build a thousand foot high image of myself, etc.” No, you don’t need those kinds of things. Just have faith in the Three Jewels as much as you can. Hear and contemplate the dharma, always study and think of the dharma more and more.

Buddhanature pervades all sentient beings. That means each and every being, even those with horns, even all the animals, their nature is the very same. That is the same inseparable three—nature, intrinsic nature, and compassion—as the nature of all buddhas. That nature is the ultimate benefit to oneself as dharmakaya, and the ultimate benefit to all others as rupakaya. The buddhas all say this and the buddhas don’t lie. Guru Rinpoche and so on, all of the lineage lamas, they say this and they don’t lie, either!

The problem is that, although buddhanature pervades all sentient beings, we don’t recognize that. So, we waste that buddhanature, that all-pervasive buddhanature. We need to have faith and we need to have compassion. If you have faith a little bit, if you have compassion a little bit, then that means that you are going in the right direction. Whatever faith, whatever compassion you have, you can enhance it, increase it, and deepen it by hearing, contemplating, and meditating on the dharma. This is our opportunity and our hope. Our opportunity and hope is that we will study and practice the dharma, because buddhanature does pervade all sentient beings, this is their very nature. This is the very nature of all buddhas. That means our study and practice can bring results—finally bring the ultimate result, which is buddhahood itself. Understanding these qualities of our buddhanature and coming to recognize it, that is the real meaning of developing qualities.

“Qualities” are positive things. That doesn’t mean becoming more arrogant! It doesn’t mean boasting, “Oh, I got a teaching!”

What teaching, anyway? “Oh, I plugged up my asshole and became uptight!”

Not like that. If really you are developing qualities, you don’t become more uptight. The dharma should not be increasing your five poisons, such as making you more uptight or more arrogant. The dharma should be the antidote to your passions, to the afflictions, to the five poisons. So, if you are practicing dharma, you should see these decrease, and you should see qualities—qualities of enlightened body, speech, mind, qualities, and activities—increasing. Stage by stage, this is the only way that you will benefit yourselves. This is the only way that you will benefit others. If you ask, “What is really of benefit to myself or to others?” Just that. And other than that, I don’t know!

Tashi Delek!

-Gyatral

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