

The 2017 Vajrasattva Retreat: Chow Down Time

Venerable Gyatrul Rinpoche

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Everybody, you have a chance, the human precious body. And you have the heart of that chance, which is the chance to actually practice the dharma. If you don't want to waste that, if you want to make that meaningful, then do it! Practice the dharma by hearing it, contemplating it, and meditating on it! For what? Why should you practice? For yourself. That means for your own benefit. And for others. That means for the benefit of all other sentient beings. If you want to benefit yourself ultimately, that means attaining dharmakaya. If you want to benefit others ultimately, that means attaining rupakaya—sambhogakaya and nirmanakaya.

You have the methods for that. You have the practices. Particularly, right now there is Vajrasattva practice happening at Tashi Choling. That practice is a treasure of Jigdel Yeshe Dorje, His Holiness Dudjom Rinpoche, who was an emanation of Vairocana. Such precious things you have! And not only that—consider the other great masters that you have had the chance to connect with: Penor Rinpoche, Yangthang Rinpoche, and others. You have received empowerment, transmission, and instruction directly from them. Why? Why did they give such precious transmissions and teachings, and why did you receive them? Not to sell. Not for power or position. Not for prestige. Not so that there could be gatherings of playboys and go-go girls. Not to feed our attachment, aversion, and ignorance but for the opposite—to remedy them.

That is the purpose of practice, the purpose of all dharma: it is the remedy for our three poisons. Without that remedy, we wouldn't even be able to recognize them as poisons! Without recognizing them as poisons, of course there would be no possibility that we could eventually put them to rest. Without eliminating our poisons, we would never be able to purify the negativity from our mindstreams, and we would continue on as we are now, forever under the power of our poisons and forever at the mercy of the resulting negative karma. You know all this!

The dharma is the remedy for our three poisons, and practicing the dharma is our chance to free ourselves from the three poisons' power. That is why we have practice. That is why we have dharma centers. That is why we have Tashi Choling. Look at its name: "Auspicious Land of Dharma." That is its name and that is its purpose: to be a place of dharma. That means a place where you can eliminate your poisons and negative habits. It is a place to bring an end to suffering, our own and all other beings'. That is why it was built. That is why so many people worked so hard over so many years to establish it and maintain it. Even though people had no money, still they came and tried. Still they gave what they could. Look at Sangye Khandro, how many years she and I went in all the ten directions—to Taiwan, Malaysia, Singapore, Australia, everywhere!—trying so hard to get money so that the temple could be built. What was it all for? It was so students would have a place of dharma. A place to study dharma and a place to practice dharma.

How many years have everyone worked so hard? Not only building the buildings but inviting lamas to give teachings and transmissions, supporting everything. You all know – so many of you were there. You know how much work it was, how difficult! What was the point? The point was for students to have the opportunity to receive pure transmissions from genuine lamas. Now you've got it! You got everything! Not only through your own efforts but through the efforts of how many students, lamas, sponsors, and everyone over the years. Through everybody's kindness, look what you got! Look how much work it took!

Now don't waste it!

What do I mean by wasting it? I mean running away from the practice! My goodness!

Isn't that embarrassing, to waste everybody's hard work? Isn't that foolish, to waste your own chance? Aren't you embarrassed?

Then come to practice! It is embarrassing not to come and practice while you have the chance! Practice is going on right now – everything is there, the food is on the table! Are you going to run away? Where are you going to run to, anyway? If you are hungry and the food is on the table, do you run away because you are too busy? If you can get everything you need, are you too busy to stretch out your hand and take it?

You know what you have – the amazing lamas you have connected to, the precious transmissions they have given, the wonderful opportunity to practice. Since you have it, and you know it, then you are really stupid not to use it! You are not dumb guys and ladies. You know how to talk about the qualities of the dharma, the benefits of practice, how they bring purification and merit in the short term, and ultimately they bring liberation and omniscience itself. Sure, your mouth is skillful in saying such things. Your brains are perfectly good, you can think about such things. You have heard the teachings on the benefits of doing practice, and particularly Vajrasattva practice, so many times, and you have had plenty of chances to think about them and understand them.

So what's the problem? Do you think you don't need to practice? Do you think you don't need to benefit yourself? Do you think you don't need to benefit others? Do you think you don't need to accumulate merit and purify negativity like all the buddhas and bodhisattvas before you?

Please, think about this carefully! I am an old man, ninety-something years old, but still you could die before me. There is no guarantee! Right now, with a precious human birth and a clear mind, you have everything perfect. For you, every second is worth more than a hundred billion dollars! Don't waste that! Please, everyone, don't go running away from the practice. You have the opportunity to run after worldly things all the time, 24 hours a day, day and night, month after month. Now for a few days you have the chance to practice. I think, more than other things, right now everybody needs to come to the practice. Then when we die, at least we had a few minutes or a few hours or a few days of our Vajrasattva, our confession, our purification, our offering. That is more precious than anything. Like having a piece of bread in your pocket when you are hungry.

You think other things are more important than that? When you are hungry, you won't let anything make obstacles for you getting the food in your mouth. You go straight, directly, berserk-ly, desperately. Or the guys chasing the girls, girls chasing the guys, same thing, they never get tired! Right now is your chance to go chasing Vajrasattva. If you are hungry, there is Vajrasattva breakfast, Vajrasattva lunch. Maybe delicious Vajrasattva noodle soup at dinner, too! Why don't you come eat? How come you are shy to practice but you are never shy to shamelessly indulge in your five poisons?

In one way, if you are shameless, then now is the time to come shamelessly practice. Like children, when they are hungry they are nothing polite—it looks like they are going to put their whole head in their bowl, or they are happy to chow down on a piece of meat or bread or whatever that is almost as big as they are, and they aren't embarrassed at all! Actually, grown-ups sometimes pretend to be polite but they are almost the same. That way, practice! Don't push it back or put it off. You don't need to be shy. You don't need to hesitate. You can just come chow down on the practice, straight. All the food is on the table like a New Year's celebration. Why are you pretending to be polite? Chow down time!

Tashi Delek!

-Gyatral