

# *On Practicing Together in Retreat*

Venerable Gyatrul Rinpoche

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*The Vajrasattva Retreat at Tashi Chöling started a few days ago, and Rinpoche was asked how going to practice Vajrasattva at the retreat is different than practicing alone in your own house.*

Of course different! One way, the same, Vajrasattva is Vajrasattva. Your faith is your faith, in your own place or in the temple or on your toilet. But practicing together, then each person is supporting everybody. Just being there and having focus and faith, you are supporting everybody else there practicing, and everybody is supporting you. That is really something more, something special.

If you practice nicely! If you just go there to see what everybody else looks like, and chase the guys or the ladies, without focus or trying to do the practice, then forget it! That is just making the dharma ordinary, making the center, the temple, the statues, the lama, everything ordinary—and worse than ordinary, it is like you are putting it in the garbage can. That kind of focus you can have anyplace, focusing to see if somebody is pretty or watching their butt carefully! But if you come and try, and focus on the practice, and follow the umzed, and help each other, and be harmonious, with faith, that's a different story. Then you can really accumulate merit and purify negativity in an extraordinary way.

That is really something special. They say! Not just from this funky old man's mouth! Also they say this is Saga Dawa and that's a very special time to practice—we need to pay attention to that, too, it is not just some Tibetan trip. It is really a chance to focus and practice, even just doing something tiny. Don't waste that stupidly!

Don't think if you can't come to the retreat then for you there is no Saga Dawa! No. Your faith, your trust, your focus, *that* is your Saga Dawa, anytime. That is your retreat, too. Of course, if you can go, that is best! Really we have a nice temple and good lama and umzed, everything perfect—don't waste that! How many years has everybody worked so hard for that? Now you have it. That is your merit, your opportunity! If you can, absolutely you should go—why not?

But if you can't go to Tashi Chöling at this time, still you can say Vajrasattva, anytime, any place. Don't think, "Oh shit! I lost my Saga Dawa! I lost my Vajrasattva!" No, no. Anyway, you can't lose, if you try, if you trust Vajrasattva. That is your nature. We need to pay attention to that a little bit!

I have been seeing lots of pictures and videos of everyone up there preparing for the retreat for many days, and making a big smoke offering on the first day, and it looks like everyone is trying really nicely. Please, for everybody trying so hard, and everybody coming to practice nicely, tell them from me, "Thank you." Really, that is like all my lamas' heart wish, to have that kind of thing here in America and to have people practicing, it's sort of shocking. So very thank you!

Why does everybody need to come and clean and take care of the temple? Is it because otherwise the lama will get angry? No, no. The reason is because then everything feels really clean and nice. Then when practice is happening, all the practitioners can feel really good! Then they can focus more on the practice, and everyone is more happy and kind of open, because they are practicing in a wonderful, beautiful place. That makes a different kind of feeling, it really supports everybody. So thank you for cleaning each piece and making everything sparkling. That's a really good American tradition!

And to Lingtrul Rinpoche, he comes every time to be the vajra master and help us, always supporting us, really thank you to him for his kindness every year.

And Sangye and other older students, I hear they are teaching and helping new people—that's really supporting everybody, too. Thank you! When everyone has more understanding, then naturally they practice more kind of deeply, and that benefits the whole thing.

Older students, don't think that you already know everything and don't need to listen! Maybe you do know something, or maybe you even know more than the one who's teaching; but still you need to be reminded because it could be you have been so busy chasing the ladies or chasing the guys that you forgot a little bit. So don't be proud.

Okay, it looks like everything is starting really nicely. Wonderful! Maintain like that, and each day really try to focus. Then you aren't wasting anything. Okay, enough of my blah!

Tashi Delek Vajrasattva Time, or Vajrasattva Tashi Delek, everybody!

*-Gyatral*

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