

Each Person Watch Yourself

On Rules and Discipline, Lineage, and Rinpoche's Hope for the Future

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It is my hope for the future that we can not only maintain the centers and the practices, but improve them. How do we do that? By keeping harmony and pure discipline. That means each person. There is no one who doesn't need to watch their own conduct continuously, to always check themselves and make sure that they are keeping harmony and maintaining their discipline. What does it mean to keep discipline? You can ask Odzer, the cat—he'll tell you that it means you have to kill mice. No, no, no. We shouldn't understand discipline that way. Actually, it looks like these days people are keeping their discipline. That is the best, a wonderful offering. Thank you!

At Tashi Choling you have two new geku (disciplinarian) assistants, Ila and Lisbeth—congratulations! Whether you have one geku or three gekus or a hundred gekus, it doesn't matter. Listen to them. They know the rules and are trying to help you understand them, too. If there were no rules, no discipline, then you wouldn't need to listen to them. But in the dharma there are rules and there is discipline. Not according to any one person's idea, but according to Buddha Shakyamuni and the lineage masters. Are the rules to punish you? No. Are they just to be uptight? No. They are to help us avoid negativity and be able to create merit more easily.

Maybe you don't know your own rules, your own discipline. Maybe you think you don't have any, that rules are only for others. Eat my shit, if you think that way! That just shows you don't have any understanding at all. The foundation of the whole dharma is the vow of refuge. Isn't that a vow? Keeping that vow, isn't that discipline? Following that, doesn't that mean there are rules? My goodness, if you don't even know that then you should really be ashamed! How can you call yourself a Buddhist and think you have no rules or discipline to keep? If you don't know your own rules—Hinayana, Mahayana, and Vajrayana—then you need to study more, listen to more teachings.

Some people think that practicing Vajrayana means you don't have to follow any rules. No, no, no! That is exactly the wrong thinking. Actually it is the opposite. In Vajrayana, there are many more vows, many more rules—billions of them! All the Hinayana you need to know, and all the Mahayana, and then on top of that, all the Vajrayana's own rules, own commitments. We need to learn about that if we think we are practicing Vajrayana. I think you have all heard many teachings on this subject, so you should understand this already and maybe I don't need to say it. But watch yourself carefully! How do you keep the discipline taught in Hinayana? How do you keep your Mahayana discipline, the altruistic bodhisattva vow? How is discipline held according to sutra and according to tantra? Vajrayana doesn't mean you throw away Hinayana and Mahayana like toilet paper. It means you respect Hinayana and Mahayana more than anything, really taking their essence into your heart, and with that then you practice Vajrayana, generation stage and completion stage and the union of the two, which leads to the ultimate

result of dharmakaya for oneself and rupakaya for all others. Learn and contemplate that—how extraordinary! What amazing teachings we have in sutra and tantra, and in the outer, inner, and secret tantras! Whatever method or stage you are practicing, there are vows, rules, and discipline that go with it. If you are practicing Vajrayana, then you receive empowerment. In the empowerment, the lama explains the vows and discipline that accompany that transmission. I know you have all heard this. The samaya—that commitment—is said to be the lifeblood of the empowerment. It is by keeping it, keeping that discipline, that the ultimate result can be attained.

But in general, by keeping all the levels of discipline well we can more easily focus on the dharma and study, contemplate, and meditate. That is the reason for rules and discipline, it isn't just someone's idea. So if we have one geku or a hundred gekus, that's wonderful! Follow them, they are there to support your harmony and discipline and practice. If you have two or three or one hundred umzeds, likewise there is nothing wrong with that! Stage by stage, everybody needs to learn.

Now and into the future you can rely on these leaders you have—the umzeds, the lamas, the gekus. Right now Getse Rinpoche and Lingtrul Rinpoche have come, so you can rely on them, too. That is wonderful.

And for the students, for all those who come to practice? Maybe you think it doesn't matter what they do because they are not leaders? Maybe they think nobody is watching them so they can do anything they want? No, no, no. I say to everyone, whether you are a leader or not, if you have a high position or not: watch your own conduct and be careful. Whether you are a big guy or small, high or low, still you come to the temple to practice. This is your opportunity to practice, to purify your negativity, so don't screw up.

The time for coming to the temple and acting like playboys and go-go ladies is over! Please don't let even a whiff of that behavior spoil your clean practice opportunity. It used to be there was lots of sex talk, and some people were really shameless even at practices and in the temple. Some of you were there, you do know. Some of you did it, some of you saw it. Anyway, whatever anybody did, now that time is over! Please, if you are coming to the temple, whoever you are, remember that it is a place for practice. It is a place to purify our negativity, not a place to indulge in it and increase it. We should be accumulating merit there by focusing on dharma, focusing on the teachings, focusing on Vajrasattva, not accumulating negativity by focusing on who is handsome or pretty or which one you can grab! This is a dharma center, not a playboy center or a go-go center. At least, it's supposed to be! The lamas who came to bless this place and the people who worked to build it, I don't think they were trying to build a place for prostitutes and playboys! I think they wanted to build a place for real dharma, okay?

Think about that, and don't embarrass yourself, don't embarrass the lineage. If you have to be a playboy or act like a go-go girl, go someplace else. That really has to stop. No more. Dharma is dharma. Pure needs to be pure.

Don't fall into gossip and slander, either. In the future, don't bring them to the sangha, to the temple, or to your own practice. They are easy to bring! Try, watch yourself carefully.

The same thing with playboy and playgirl talk—when it comes to that, it's time to shut up! Instead, learn and practice, nicely and purely. I do know how in the past people were buzzing around, their focus only their boyfriend or girlfriend, just sex. No more. Try, instead, to focus on your real focus, which is dharma. Instead of trying to get a lot of boyfriends and girlfriends, try to help others—even ugly ones! Ha, ha, ha! If someone is old or young, rich or poor, pretty and handsome, or ugly and yucky, it doesn't matter. Our focus isn't there. Our focus is dharma, the real one. First, maintain your focus on that. Then if you can help others, support others, then do it! They are trying and practicing, too. Brother and sister. But at least don't cheat them, don't chase them.

This lineage is a dharma lineage. If you make it into a playboy lineage, then it is no longer a dharma lineage. Forget about it being a lineage of Vairochana or Vimalamitra or their emanations such as Dudjom Rinpoche and Penor Rinpoche; forget about it being a lineage of the Dalai Lama, the emanation of Chenrezig—it isn't even a dharma lineage anymore. The lineage of these great beings isn't some playboy garbage. It has nothing to do with playboy guys and go-go girls at all. So I say to everyone, both now and in the future: please don't act like that. No more. Not ever. Calm down! Please.

I know in the past there have been lots of people who have liked and been drawn to such behavior—and some lamas have taught or acted in those ways themselves because it was the only way to get such students to listen to the dharma. In one way, it was a great kindness—based on that, how many people now can connect to the dharma? Because of their efforts to establish the dharma, many of you now know a little about how to study, contemplate, and meditate on the dharma. Don't put down the teachers of the past. They should be respected, not jumped over.

But now you all do know the dharma. We don't need to do that style anymore. We can make things more and more clean, follow the dharma more and more directly. You know the benefits and qualities of the dharma and dharma practice. You understand explanations and have received many teachings. You do know how to listen to the dharma. You know how to study, contemplate, and meditate on its meaning. And you have learned about the outer, inner, and secret qualities that are cultivated through sincere practice. You know these things. What you know, please be the faithful keepers of that understanding. Please be good guardians of your learning and your practice by focusing sincerely on the dharma. If you can help or support others in doing dharma, then please do that as well. The umzeds, the gekus, the lamas, the workers, and the sangha in general, they are supporting each other, supporting everybody, supporting you—please support them in turn, however you can.

Don't think that the umzeds, gekus, or lamas are leading in certain ways or asking you to do certain things because it is just their trip. That is not the case at all. It is not because they have some problem or are on some trip. It is for your benefit and to support you—to support you in

practice, in keeping harmony, and in pure discipline. The lamas teach according to the lineage, not according to their own idea, not according to ordinary worldly view, or because they are drunk! It is the lineage tradition to study, contemplate, and then meditate on the dharma. This is how Buddha Shakyamuni himself and all the great lineage masters of the past have practiced—in India, for example, including those who studied at the great university of Varanasi, and then Guru Rinpoche’s twenty-five disciples and others in Tibet. You can read the accounts of the Tibetan masters for yourself, see for yourself how they practiced the dharma. And not only in Tibet, but in Nepal and other places where the dharma has spread. You can learn how the dharma spread in each place and how it was practiced by the masters who attained realization. They all listened to teachings, and then contemplated again and again what they had heard. None of them practiced dharma that was just their own idea, “my idea” or “your idea.” No. It was really clean. We have that really clean root, that amazingly pure lineage. That is Buddha’s lineage, Shakyamuni’s lineage, Guru Rinpoche’s lineage, all the mahasiddhas’ lineage.

This is not a lineage of hippies and playboys, but of authentic masters practicing purely—all the masters holding the lineage, up to our own teachers. It is by all of their compassion and blessing that we, ordinary men and women today, can study, contemplate, and meditate on the dharma. If we see and appreciate our lineage in this way, we will be inspired to practice in a similarly pure and sincere way ourselves. If we want to do ourselves any good in this life, or be able to be of any benefit to others, either, then we need to study and practice the dharma just as each of the masters of the past have done. Think carefully about the extraordinary qualities of the lineage and the generosity and perseverance of the lineage masters, and you will be inspired to follow and hold the lineage in the same way yourself. Help each other in this, as much as you are able, so everyone is going in the same direction, working together to maintain these precious traditions.

According to Hinayana teachings and the Vinaya, lineage is crucial. It is the same for Vajrayana teachings. Sutra or tantra, all the teachings and practices are maintained by the strength and purity of the lineage. In Hinayana, one keeps the disciplines of the vows of a layperson or those of a novice or fully ordained monk or nun. In the Vajrayana, one keeps the samaya. Everyone keeps the vow of refuge. Everyone has vows and commitments to keep. Nobody who calls themselves a Buddhist should think that they don’t hold vows. So, please, know what your commitments are and keep your discipline purely.

Try to help and support those who are teaching, whether they are men or women. We say “lama,” which means “above all” —that means one who really knows and teaches the dharma. We don’t call just anyone having ordinary conversation at the table “lama.” Not just any blah blah is a teaching; not just anyone is a lama. Similarly, “umzed” means the one who is leading the practice. It doesn’t mean a funky guy smoking and drinking. Likewise with chopons—I have seen our chopons now; they are doing everything very carefully, keeping everything very clean. That is wonderful, thank you! In the future, please continue in that way. Someone gossiping, smoking, and drinking, chasing the ladies or guys, that is not what it means to be an umzed or lama, a geku or chopon. That is just someone breaking their samaya.

And then what about all the practitioners who don't have such names? Maybe you think it doesn't matter what they do? No, no. Each person, each person: each person has to do their own practice, watch themselves, benefit themselves. So don't do your MY WAY. Do the lineage way. We do have a wonderful lineage, of Dudjom Rinpoche, who was an emanation of Vairochana. What he taught, that is the purest. If that becomes dirty, it is because of others, lineage holders who fail to keep it purely. Penor Rinpoche was an emanation of Vimalamitra, and by the kindness of his khenpos his lineage is still okay. But it is not like it was before—the Communists destroyed so much in Tibet, of these and other lineages!

Now you guys are slowly fixing that, working to preserve these lineages. If someone destroys a house, then you have to build it again, properly. Watch and see with your own eyes what needs to be done. This is why we study and contemplate the dharma.

This is not a house we have built, it is a temple. What is a temple? Whether it is big or small, it is a celestial palace. What is a celestial palace? It is where the buddhas and bodhisattvas, the lamas, yidams, and dakinis all reside. It is where they stay. It is where they can be accomplished, too. It is a mandala. It is where the lamas explain the dharma. It is where the followers, the students, the sangha, can hear, contemplate, and meditate on the teachings. It is a place where anyone can come and create virtue, accumulate merit. It is a place to make offerings. It is a place to purify negativity. It makes no difference if your dharma center is large or small. Whatever size it is, when merit is accumulated and negativity is purified there, it is a place of dharma. That is what it means to be a dharma center. It doesn't have to be giant like an army barracks or a huge store—if it is enormous like that but no merit is generated or negativity purified there, then it is not a place of dharma. So, big or small, appreciate the qualities of your center or temple as a place of dharma. Based on that appreciation and respect for such a place—a place to serve beings, a place where they can accumulate merit and purify negativity—then care for it well. Keep it clean and tidy and in good repair.

The students who come should be mindful to keep harmony and pure discipline. That helps maintain the lineage purely and supports sincere dharma practice. Politics does not support the dharma. It destroys it. Clever, sweet-tongued, self-absorbed politicians, they cannot spread the dharma. They could not spread the dharma in Tibet, in India, or anywhere else. These days, they won't be able to spread the pure dharma in America, either. So we don't need that kind of person or that kind of thinking! Instead, please come and practice sincerely and to the best of your ability, keeping everything clean both outerly and innerly.

Tashi Delek!

-Gyatral

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