

# *Delicious Ngondro Breakfast*

## *On the Importance of the Preliminary Practices*

Venerable Gyatrul Rinpoche

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*Rinpoche was delighted to hear that senior student, Matthew Small, recently gave a day of instruction on ngondro (the five-part “preliminary practices”) at Dorje Ling in Portland, Oregon. Rinpoche sent his thanks to Matthew and all those who came to study and practice and gave the following teaching:*

Please tell Matthew thank you for teaching, and the students thank you for learning. It doesn't matter if there are many students or not—even just one person studying is precious. If people take their opportunity or not, that is not our business. Anyway, when one person is teaching, that is a way for them to remind themselves of the teachings, also. That is useful. Then whoever comes to listen, if they don't know, they can learn together.

If they already know, still they can learn—ngondro is not shallow and simple. You think you know the ngondro? Can I ask you something, mister or lady? Are you already enlightened? Maybe you think some parts are in samsara, but at least your butt is enlightened? Then how come it's smelly? I never heard of smelly enlightened things. Anyway, until you are enlightened, still ngondro is useful for you. You think you know it? Maybe you know but you forgot. That means you need someone to remind you. Hahaha! That means absolutely you are not beyond that.

You can go deeper and deeper every time, into the deepest. The deepest means your own nature, your own buddhanature. People make a big deal of dzogchen and mahamudra, blah blah blah. You think ngondro isn't there in that same space? You think ngondro doesn't connect to that?

Every practice is inside the ngondro; ngondro itself is inside every practice. Each word, actually, if you know, refuge is there, bodhicitta is there, mandala, confession, everything! My goodness, we need to think about that, the meaning. Not just going blah blah blah with the mouth and holding the vajra and bell or whatever. The meaning, that is our treasure, each word. All the practices' meaning is in the ngondro.

Everybody likes breakfast, don't they? Ngondro is like our breakfast. We can enjoy it every day—again and again drinking tea, again and again eating bread or whatever delicious things. Every day you eat your breakfast and get your belly filled up nicely. That makes you feel good, and then you can work or whatever you need to do. That way you are strong and you don't need to be hungry or upset. If we practice ngondro step by step, understand more and then practice more, teach more and then practice more, and again more understanding comes—then slowly you really get something solid, you become sort of satisfied and confident. That is like having your breakfast in your belly. You don't just get it instantly. You have to chew and swallow, again and again, each piece. Then you are more and more strong. Our teachers gave

us ngondro breakfast, delicious things—are we going to eat or just leave it on the table? Do we think it's not the right one? Do we want our own special one, or something new? Do we think we know better than all the lineage masters?

No. We just need whatever exists already there in the ngondro. Tea is already delicious. Bread is already delicious. We don't need to put in something extra. Don't be complicated. Don't put in your own extra things that you think are so wonderful. That is our ordinary stupidity, every time, thinking we need to go our own way. Just slow down and watch carefully. Nothing's missing.

It doesn't just have to be Portland where they study and practice ngondro—all the centers can do this. Students can gather and teach each other, repeat the teachings they have heard, practice together, and that way support each other. That is why we have centers and sangha. For everybody. Ngondro is for everybody, benefits everybody, old students and new students, rich ones or poor ones, ladies and gentlemen and funky guys, high ones or low ones. Maybe not the smelly ones? I don't know. You can practice and check for yourself. Anyway, the important thing is anybody, any kind of person, do the practice!

Therefore, thank you, thank you!

*-Gyatral*