

Ojai Sangha Video Call

Venerable Gyatrul Rinpoche

July 16th, 2017

On July 16th, Rinpoche had a video call with the Ojai sangha. They had a series of questions.

The first question: What is the importance of remembering one's refuge name?

I don't know about names. Taking refuge, generating bodhicitta, that is important. Then it is very important to remember your samaya regarding whatever yidam deity you are practicing. For example, you might be practicing Vajrasattva. Whatever your samaya was when you received empowerment for that deity, that is very important to remember. When we talk about samaya, the essence of samaya is refuge, bodhicitta, and recalling the deity. "Recalling the deity" means maintaining awareness of the presence of the deity—whichever deity you received empowerment for, whether it was in the category of lama, yidam, dakini, or dharma protector. To remember that deity, which you now have a blessing connection with because of the empowerment, is very important.

And if you can't remember anything, remember Vajrasattva! He *is* the lama. He *is* the yidam.

Don't forget the refuge objects—don't forget the lamas, yidams, dakinis, or dharma protectors. They are your refuge objects. Don't forget Amitabha. Don't forget the Three Jewels—you are a Buddhist after all, aren't you?

And always, always remember Vajrasattva. Never forget Vajrasattva, because all of the buddhas are encompassed in Vajrasattva. All lamas are encompassed in Vajrasattva. And in addition to reciting Vajrasattva's mantra and calling on him, you can always recite the verses of refuge, taking refuge in the Lama, in the Buddha, in the Dharma, and in the Sangha.

Don't forget always to take refuge! In whom? In the Three Jewels. There is always a recitation of refuge at the beginning of each of your practices. And always remember all sentient beings as your objects of compassion and your focus. Then, at the end of the practice, don't forget to dedicate the merit and whatever roots of virtue you have created, again to all of those very same sentient beings who have been your infinitely kind parents.

In addition, whatever specific empowerments you have received, don't forget them. And, since you are Buddhist—in Tibetan we say *nanpa* or "insider," which is the term for Buddhist—since you call yourself an "insider," then that means, of course, automatically you should always be striving to recall the Three Jewels. They are our objects of refuge: the precious Buddha, the precious Dharma, and the precious Sangha.

Really, that is the essence of the whole path. That is the essence of the whole practice, the most important point. You want to know what you should not forget? Don't forget to take refuge in the authentic objects of refuge, who are Buddha, Dharma, and Sangha. Always recall them and their qualities. Likewise, don't forget to cultivate a good mind, a good heart, as a strong sense

of altruism that can finally blossom as perfect bodhicitta. Do this by bringing to mind all sentient beings, so infinitely kind, who have, each and every one, been our parents in the past. Always bring to mind refuge and bodhicitta and never forget these two. Never forget to have faith and never forget to have compassion—that is another way of saying it.

Other than that, I don't know anything!

They say if your mind or your intention—your thought, your focus—is good, then the path—meaning all the stages and paths and accomplishments—will be good. But if your mind—your intention or focus—is not good, then for you all the stages and paths will likewise not be good. This is what the great lamas say. If you want teachings other than these simple things that I can repeat to you, you can get them from other lamas. You do have great lamas who can come and teach.

Always, always remember these two: faith and compassion. They are so simple, yet everything is encapsulated there. Everything that you need on the path is there.

When we say faith, what does that mean? It means recalling the Three Jewels, recalling the objects of refuge—knowing their qualities and deepening our understanding of that.

When we say compassion, what does that mean? It means cultivating the purest kind of altruism for all sentient beings equally, with great, all-encompassing equanimity. It means to have that pure compassion and equanimity well forth in our hearts, so they can ripen finally as authentic bodhicitta.

So don't forget faith and don't forget compassion! Those are really the two crucial things.

You have been so fortunate here in America, you have had so many great lamas come and give empowerments, transmissions, instructions—everything. So as not to waste their blessings, their transmissions, or their instructions, don't forget refuge and bodhicitta. Refuge and bodhicitta, always! Always have faith in the Three Jewels. Why do we take refuge and have faith in the Three Jewels? It is so we can actually be of benefit to all sentient beings who have been our parents. Otherwise to practice is just to repeat words, if you don't have faith and compassion. Without faith and compassion, then practice is just empty, mere recitation, just with the mouth.

The second question: Does one need to do both peaceful and wrathful practices? Is it important to do both?

I don't know! Ask yourself this kind of question! You are still holding to that kind of question? *[Sarcastically]* Well, that is wonderful! What are you thinking?

Hey, don't forget the Three Jewels! Dedicate the merit of your practice to bringing benefit to sentient beings. Remember that the purpose of the Three Jewels is also to bring benefit to sentient beings.

What is of benefit to you? That is. What is of benefit to others? That is. Having faith in the Three Jewels. You have a precious human birth. You have the opportunity to benefit yourself and others, in an inconceivable way. If you recognize that, then you will be so happy and just rejoice! You will rejoice in your chance to practice the dharma.

But if you get caught up in sectarianism, thinking, “I am ONLY Kargyu, I am ONLY Gelug, I am ONLY Sakya,” then that is useless. Just think, “I am a Buddhist.”

In the tradition of Buddhism, there is no cultivation of, or indulging in, the three poisons—attachment, aversion, and ignorance. But maybe this is a special American characteristic or feature, I don’t know!

The third question: It says in the teachings that all deities have the same nature. Then why are there so many different practices, if in all of them you are practicing on the same nature?

Yeah, you are right! Guru Rinpoche made a mistake. Chenrezig made a mistake. His Holiness the Dalai Lama made a mistake, Dudjom Rinpoche made a mistake. They all made a mistake, that is why there are so many practices! Particularly these great tertons—they gave so many empowerments for so many practices! Big mistake!

You *are* right, in one way, though. You are right in the sense that even if you only recite OM MANI PEDME HUNG, if you understand that Chenrezig is inseparable from the nature of all buddhas, then that is the blessing that you will receive: the blessing of all buddhas’ enlightened body, enlightened speech, enlightened mind, enlightened qualities, and enlightened activities.

Some ladies have had hundreds of boyfriends—so then what is the problem with all those deities? Isn’t that true? Not only the ladies, either, the men are the same! Woohoo—nobody is getting away this morning! A man will keep his wife in the house, put her over in some corner, with the children outside running around, and he still goes chasing go-go ladies, whew!

The fourth question: If the nature of all the buddhas is empty, then who is it we are praying to?

Again, you are so right!! Shakyamuni made a mistake! Guru Rinpoche made a mistake! Oh ho ho, you are wonderful, your Buddhism!

Until now His Holiness the Dalai Lama, Dudjom Rinpoche, Penor Rinpoche, Yangthang Rinpoche, so many teachers have given so many teachings—where have you been? Your question is only that? Or are you debating, trying to debate with me? I don’t know anything, so don’t waste your time!

Recognize the Three Jewels as your objects of refuge. Know that. And know their qualities, don’t forget their qualities, because that is the basis of your faith. If you want to be of benefit to yourself or to others, to do yourself or others any good, the Three Jewels are what you need to rely on. A real practitioner is one who relies on the Three Jewels continuously, always recalling them, never forgetting them. I think you all do know what the Three Jewels are. You all call

yourselves Buddhists, and how many years have you been practicing? I think you really must understand by now what the Three Jewels are.

What do you need more than the Three Jewels? The Three Jewels are not enough? Are you saying that the Three Jewels are not okay as an answer, Vajrasattva is not okay, that you need something more than that? You need more, many things here, there, and everywhere like all your boyfriends?

The students protested, saying no, no, it is very good for them to hear this kind of teaching again and again, and thanked Rinpoche.

Oh, you think you just need to say thank you, you don't need to practice? That somebody has to teach you again and again but you don't need to practice or internalize it? That is really shameless and self-centered!

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Anyway, don't forget the Three Jewels. The Jewel of the Buddha, that doesn't just mean a guy in a yellow robe. It means one who has become enlightened, who has purified all negativity—all 84,000 categories of negativity and mental afflictions—and brought forth all enlightened qualities. The Jewel of the Dharma, that means the Buddha's enlightened speech. It is the jewel of wisdom, the jewel of learning. And then the Jewel of the Sangha, that is all of the Buddha's followers, those who sincerely have faith. Not only some grandma! If you really know the Three Jewels, that is generation stage, that is completion stage, and that is the union of the two. If I tell you what to recall is just the Three Jewels, are you satisfied with just a short answer like that, or are you going to complain like grandma and need something much more elaborate and extensive?

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How many of you are there today? Nine? Maybe for the nine yantras? Actually, it doesn't matter if there are nine yantras or just one or whatever, if there are lots or just a few. The important thing is to really practice. In Tibet, there were so many people who really practiced. There were old monks and old lamas practicing, practicing continuously and sincerely; and it is because of them, their kindness and their efforts, that we still have the lineage, we still have practices, we still have teachings.

What happened to me? I am from Gyalrong, which is this region way over on the border of China, in Eastern Tibet. It is said that the people from Gyalrong, they don't have any guts. Which means that they eat and eat and never get full. They can eat lots. Useless! So, of course I am useless. I am your friend, that is why I sleep twenty-four hours a day. Useless. Fearless and shameless, too, a real hero to sleep so much!

Because I am useless, you guys got a wonderful teaching this morning, didn't you?

Anyway, you guys don't ever forget refuge. What is refuge? The objects of refuge, the Three Jewels. When you go for refuge, why do you go? For whose sake? For your own sake? For others' sake? Actually, it is for both. You all know that going for refuge is the best possible way to accomplish your own purpose and the purpose of others. It is the best thing you can do for your own sake and for the sake of others. I thought this, but I don't know it myself. I can say it. The lamas, they say these things.

Having gone for refuge in the Three Jewels, you should always be cultivating faith. Always maintaining awareness of their qualities—the qualities of the Buddha's enlightened body, speech and mind; the qualities of the Dharma, all the different vehicles, all the different categories of teachings; and the qualities of the Sangha, those who are practicing, following the Buddha, implementing the teachings of the Dharma, those with sincere faith, those who have enthusiasm and persevere. Like that.

Anyway, are you guys satisfied playing with me?

A chorus of Yes! and We love you! came through the line.

Love me? I don't love them. I am too old. Anyway, you love me or you don't love me, I don't care!

I don't care if you love me or not. Practice Vajrasattva, practice Chenrezig, OM MANI PEDME HUNG, and refuge of course you do know. Practice compassion for others, respect others, and have compassion for them. Don't think only "Me! Me! Me! Me!" The grandma lineage holders, they say that. They say, "I am beautiful! I am beautiful!" too. If you ask them what is so beautiful about them, they say, "Yesterday I was beautiful!"

Okay, goodbye! You are going to do practice now — good!

Tashi Delek!

-Gyatral