

“My Heart Prayer”
That Beings Can Connect With the Dharma

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I have always just tried to help the students make dharma connections. For that I worked so hard. I didn't have money, but I tried. Not only myself! Lots of people worked hard, for so many years. How much have we struggled at all the centers? You do know. For what? Just torturing ourselves? No. For my children? No, I don't have any children. Then what? So that beings can connect with the dharma. For the students, so they could connect and accumulate merit and purify their obscurations. And then everything we made so that any being can connect there—buildings, statues, thangkas, books, offerings, everything. For *your* study. For *your* learning. For *your* practice. For *your* liberation. Everyone. So that when you guys go there, dammit, you can practice!

The centers are not my places. They belong to all the students. “Belong to” means it's their job, their responsibility to watch them and keep them for the future, blossoming everything. “Belong to” means on your head! Who is staying at the centers? The buddhas, the dharma—all the statues and thangkas, books, and everything.

Some people thought I was really crazy—“Why are you buying all these thangkas? All these carpets and brocades? Oh, that one is going to be too big!” But now look—we have them at all the centers, we needed every piece. Nothing too big. I really tried not to waste anything.

You always have to watch people carefully, though—some people are careful and keep everything clean and nice like real human beings; but some people are worse than animals, they break everything or get it dirty or just throw it away: “Oh, we don't need that!” No, no. Don't think like that. That wastes your own merit. Your merit and the center's merit and the sponsor's merit, everything.

With your own things in your own house you shouldn't waste anything like that; and at the center, my goodness, of course! Every piece is an offering to the Three Jewels. Everything was somebody's offering, made with faith and trust. So take care of them nicely! That is your merit and their merit. When someone makes an offering to the center, that is their connection to the dharma. We need to respect that. If you respect the person or don't respect the person, still you should at least respect the dharma, respect the offering. If you make an offering, you don't want somebody to break it or throw it away or just use it like toilet paper. You would get really pissed! So please, I'm not saying you do this—I think actually, in general, people are very good these days; but, in the future, always watch this carefully. We don't want to destroy any being's merit, our own or others'.

Step by step, I have tried so hard, for so many years, so students can connect in different ways. If you teach, sometimes that doesn't work. Lots of people aren't too interested in the teachings.

They don't want to listen to you. But if you build something, they have to build it; and through that, they connect to the dharma. That way all the workers connect. All the builders, carpenters, everybody. Looks like we have a really funky group one way; but through that building or that working, everybody is connecting to the dharma. Nobody is thinking they are a big scholar or practitioner; therefore, they aren't making obstacles for themselves. They just come and work and are happy, making merit, purifying negativity. That really benefits them. Through the body working, they connect. Through the mouth, talking about the building or the offering or whatever and how to do nicely blah, blah, blah, they connect. Through their mind, focusing on each piece of wood, each nail, each stone, or whatever, they connect. Through donations, bringing the materials and buying everything, they connect. Hopefully with their mouth they say a little bit of mantra when they're working, too, and not too much gossip or slander, screwing themselves up and stupidly destroying their merit!

Nothing is wasted, that way. I tried not to waste anything. When workers are working, sincerely, happily, then nothing is wasted. Dharma connection is happening, purely. Dharma supports, we made, one by one. Sometimes they say, "Oh, this one is impossible!" "Then think about it! Check what you can do, piece by piece. Don't just shut the door, dammit, inside your brain!" Then they think and talk to each other and slowly make some plan; then something happens and sometimes they can move again. That way they connect, too.

So many years you have followed my mouth. So many years you have listened to my blah, blah, blah. I don't know if any benefit or not. I have tried to bring real lamas to give empowerment, transmissions, and instructions, so the students could connect to really pure ones.

Real lamas, they do everything so that beings can connect with them, and through that connect with the dharma, which is actually their own nature. They are born for sentient beings, grow up for sentient beings, get old for sentient beings, die for sentient beings. They don't waste any second, real lamas—everything is for sentient beings' benefit, so they can connect. You might see high lamas like H.H. Dudjom Rinpoche or the Dalai Lama laughing and joking, and it looks like they are just playing. No, no. Each piece, each second is to bring beings benefit. Their body is there—it brings liberation through seeing, same as a statue of a deity. Their voice brings liberation through hearing, whether they are laughing or joking or teaching doesn't matter. If you see them, if you hear them, if you think of them, you connect with them. Their blessing is always there.

Our connection depends on our karma, though! Not something somebody can give us. Some people are just naturally good people. We say, "She is a good person." "He is a good person." Actually, it means they have good karma. Person is person. Maybe you think you are something special? Give me a break! Maybe you have a little bit of merit, that's all! Then when it's finished, what are you going to do? Without good karma, there is nothing good, outer or inner. That is why we need merit, all the time. It is the same with our dharma connection. It depends on our merit. Nobody can connect another person to the dharma, nobody can make their dharma connection for them. It depends on the individual's merit. Each student who has come, each being who has made a connection—they came in their own time, according to their own karma,

their own fortune. You think people get a dharma connection because they are smart? Pretty? Rich, maybe? No, nothing to do with that. They have merit. Amazing merit! In their past life, they were of benefit to others; then through the strength of that, maybe they get the dharma. That holds them. That supports them. If you can get dharma, that's your merit. If you can practice, that's your merit. So many students have popped up over the years, and some of them naturally go directly in, into the study and practice, and they stay quite firmly. That's their merit, supporting them there. Others are kind of wishy-washy, "yes, yes—no, no!" We need merit to be stable.

The students, you guys, look like you really love me, really have faith and trust. That's "Wow!" for me. I am just a funky old man. But whatever I say, "Do this," "We need that," you do it, exactly, for so many years. That's really kind of shocking and sort of makes me wake up, how much you have faith in me. Sort of unbelievable. That way my gurus' vision has had some success in America. Really from my heart, I say "thank you" for that, because that can really be of inconceivable benefit, through the connection with those pure lamas, those buddhas. Really, I pray everybody has benefitted that way, through that connection. Through their blessing. That is really my heart prayer.

Tashi Delek!

-Gyatral