

***The Basis for All Dharma:
Trust in the Dharma and Compassion for Beings***

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September 8th, 2019

What is a real Buddhist? Someone who has faith and compassion. Without those, it doesn't matter if you are a scholar, even the highest scholar. It doesn't matter if you can blah, blah, blah about Mahamudra and Dzogchen and fancy stuff. Without faith and compassion, how can you even call yourself a Buddhist, let alone a Mahayana or Vajrayana or Dzogchen practitioner?

We say 'faith' or 'trust.' What do you need faith in? In dharma. In Buddha. In all the buddhas' enlightened body, speech, and mind. Or you can say Buddha, Dharma, and Sangha—same thing. That is the essence—faith or trust in that: in the qualities of the enlightened ones, in the qualities of their dharma teachings. Ultimately, in your own nature, buddhanature.

What about compassion? Compassion means for all sentient beings. Not just for your boyfriend or girlfriend. Actually, I don't think you even have compassion for your boyfriend or girlfriend—one day you are shrieking, "I love you!" and kissing them desperately; and the next day you've thrown them in the garbage and changed them for a new one, like toilet paper. No, no. There was never compassion like that! Compassion is really like a mother for her baby, just completely giving, even her life she's happy to give. That kind of love. Being that kind of open. Compassion for whom? For all sentient beings. Not just one or two. Not just MINE. All beings, tiny ones to giant ones, high ones to low ones. Sincere altruism, without ego. Being sincerely for *them*, not always holding everything for yourself.

Why do you need trust and compassion? Because that is how you benefit yourself and others. Without trust in the dharma, how can you practice? How can you learn and follow the teachings? How can you benefit yourself? And without compassion, how are you going to benefit others?

Dharma means what brings benefit. That is the essence of the whole thing: benefit yourself, benefit others, together. If you want to bring anybody even one hair's worth of benefit, you need compassion and faith. Without them, you are just artificial. You have no basis for bringing even yourself alone any benefit—forget about being able to benefit others! What kind of dharma is that, without any benefit? Useless!

If someone has faith and compassion, then whether they are a lay person or ordained or have the name 'lama' or whatever, the bottom line is they can call themselves a Buddhist. Then if they are a lama or monk or nun or whatever, they can be an authentic one. Without compassion and trust in the dharma, even if they have the name 'lama,' it means nothing. Actually, then they are not even Buddhist, who's going to call them 'lama'?

It's not just one time, either. You need trust and compassion continuously. You have to check if they are going down or up. If they are always going down, then you are not doing the dharma.

Then no matter how much you might blah, blah, blah and make a big deal of yourself, still you won't even have started to practice the dharma, forget about being a practitioner of the highest teachings of Vajrayana!

These two—compassion and trust in dharma—they are like your own place, your root, your foundation. They are your own home. They are like a solid place you can put your feet and stand up. All the dharma is built on that, from Hinayana up to the highest Dzogchen. If you want your dharma to be firm—any dharma, any level of teaching or practice—you need that firm base at the bottom there. If you have that, then you can do the whole thing. All your qualities can blossom up from that, like crops growing in good soil. Without them, your dharma is a lie. No foundation. No head, no tail. No result. Just more samsara. We need to make our own dharma home, our nest. Then from there we can go anyplace. What is that? Compassion for beings and trust in the dharma.

Okay?

Tashi Delek!

-Gyatrul