

Everybody Pray—For Others and Oneself

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I was asked to pray for our Ani Jill up in Ashland. Of course I will pray, try, continuously.

But not just me—everybody needs to pray. Everybody can pray for her. Everybody can pray for others. Everybody can pray for themselves. Everybody needs.

Our centers, our temples—who started it all? His Holiness Dudjom Rinpoche. Even myself—why did I come to America? All the lamas forced me, torturing me. I am not boasting, but just giving the general history. It was not only the Dalai Lama, but the Karmapa, too—he yelled at me to go, but he was always yelling at me. And other lamas also said I had to go. Anyway, all the lamas forced me to come here. If we can do something like pray, purely and with focus, then that is their vision, all those lamas. All their reason was for that, all their blessing, all their teaching.

Now, with whatever freedom we have, we need to pray.

With whatever power we have, we need to pray.

If we want to benefit ourselves, we need to pray.

If we want to benefit others, we need to pray.

That is the Buddhist tradition.

Therefore, everybody try.

When you are praying, focus! Don't go in the ten directions.

All the schools of Buddhism have the tradition of praying for oneself and praying for others. It is not only the tradition in Tibet or only the tradition in India; it has been done for as long as Buddhism has existed. It is not just the tradition of two or three people, but has been practiced for many generations. Therefore, pray.

Actually, everybody prays when they want some benefit—benefit for themselves or for others. They pray to peaceful deities and wrathful deities, for enriching activities or powerful activities, and so on. Everybody is praying, anytime, anywhere, for something good. It is not only in Buddhism.

Therefore, I will pray, I will try, whatever I can. I have no power to benefit somebody, I have no blessing, but still I can pray for them, for their benefit and my own benefit. Everyone is the same. Everyone can pray, that same way.

When you really pray sincerely, or you really practice and focus, then all those lamas' blessing is not being wasted. You are not wasting their blessing, or their teaching, or their hope. You are not wasting your own life, your own human precious one. You can pray for others, you can pray for yourself—what do we need beyond that?

Therefore, don't think this is something small. Don't think this is something like toilet paper, just to be thrown away instantly. Pray carefully. Even just for a few seconds or a few minutes or whatever you have, you can pray. Even very short, you can do nicely. Doesn't have to be extensive. Doesn't have to be fancy. Doesn't have to be complicated or difficult. But honesty you do need. Focus you do need. Faith, trust—you do need. Try that way, okay? As much as you can.

We think our freedom is the freedom to screw ourselves up. The freedom to follow the five poisons, that is what we think freedom is. That is what we think is so precious. Hey, did you think about that? If somebody harms you or steals from you or makes you low, do you say, "Thank you! You really gave me my freedom!" You never say that. You want to sue them, or punch them, or kill them. But if you have your own opportunity to harm yourself, cheat yourself, steal from yourself, make yourself the lowest, then you think that you really have freedom. You think you really got a special chance. Hey, that's interesting! We are so desperate for our freedom—freedom to do what? Wonderful things? Beneficial things? No! To screw ourselves up, to lie to ourselves, to cheat ourselves!

Then when we do, we think we are the most powerful! We are right—we are so powerful with the five poisons. How many lifetimes have we been this kind of powerful? What do you think—did that benefit you or not? Being powerful in this way, how many times did we send ourselves to hell? Being powerful in this way, how many times have we been a hungry ghost, lower than the lowest beggar, worse than the worst animal? That is the kind of power we have. That is the kind of powerful we are.

When you die, will you have freedom? Will you have the freedom to choose where you go, the hot or cold hells, the hungry ghost realms, the animal or human or gods' realms? No. Nobody has that freedom. No matter what freedom you have in this life, at the time of your death, your karma has you in handcuffs again. What about your power then? Do you think at that moment you will be really macho?

What will give you freedom at that time? Your dharma. Therefore, right now, examine yourself. What is your real freedom? The freedom to do dharma, to study and practice. The freedom to pray. That kind of freedom won't screw you up. That is your real opportunity—not the opportunity to lie to yourself, to cheat yourself, to cheat other people, to lie to your girlfriend or steal from your own mother. We think we are so powerful because we can steal from our own mommy or daddy, we can cheat our own brother or sister. That is how powerful we are. That is how smart we are. That is our wonderful freedom. How many lifetimes have we had the freedom to make our samsara, so many ways? We did it! We made our samsara suffering,

everything, again and again, countless lifetimes. This time, we have the opportunity to make our dharma instead.

Think about that, a little bit. Check yourself. Watch yourself. When you pray, don't pray with the mouth only. Pray with your heart. When you die, then your mouth is quiet. Whole body is quiet! What you have in your heart, in your mind—that is what you take with you. If you want freedom or power, that is the kind you need. Therefore, pray sincerely, okay? Everybody is the same. This funky old man—still a liar, still cheating everybody, still eating everybody else's food, still someone is feeding me out of their kindness—this one is funkier and funkier, brain doesn't work and body absolutely doesn't work, but still I will try to pray as much as I can. You are all young and strong, body is good, brain is good, you have so many things—I think you can try, too. Don't waste your richness.

Tashi Delek!

-Gyatral

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