

On Practices to Benefit Others

Venerable Gyatrul Rinpoche

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We have heard that Yeshe¹ is sick. Everyone recite Vajrasattva mantra for him! Everyone knows the mantra: OM BENZAR SATTO HUNG. Everyone can say it. If we want to benefit him, that is the best way. If we want to benefit ourselves, still that is the best way. That will bring benefit in this life and in future lives.

Some people might say, “We need to do longevity practices and prayers for him!” It’s true, longevity prayers are useful because they purify negativity. Vajrasattva purifies negativity, too. Why do we get sick? Because of our accumulation of negativity. What shortens our lives? Our accumulation of negative karma. Therefore, if we want a long life, we need to purify our negativity. If we want others to have long lives and be free of illness, we need to purify negativity. Vajrasattva is for the purification of all negative karma.

If someone is sick, that is obscuration. If someone is dying, that is still nothing other than obscuration. All of our sufferings are from having obscurations. All others’ sufferings are from obscuration, too. Therefore, to relieve suffering we need to dispel obscuration. All the lamas have explained that Vajrasattva is the principal dispeller of obscurations. Therefore, recite OM BENZAR SATTO HUNG with faith and devotion. You might think, “I’m not sick—I don’t need to recite that.” You might not be sick in your body, but how about your mind? Do you still have obscurations?

For others’ long life, or for your own benefit and deepening of faith—either way, Vajrasattva is unsurpassed as a skillful method. Recitation of Vajrasattva’s mantra purifies one’s own negativity and others’ negativity—that is how it always brings benefit. Our dharma centers are Vajrasattva centers, so of course it is fitting to recite the mantra! It will dispel obstacles to the dharma, obstacles to the center, and obstacles to individuals.

Tashi Choling has a Vajrasattva practice, so does O.D.D., so does Portland, Austin, Montana—anywhere there are students with a brain, they can say the Vajrasattva mantra. It’s simple and everything! Nobody can say they don’t know OM BENZAR SATTO HUNG. Vajrasattva isn’t particularly Gelugpa, or Kagyudpa, or Sakyapa, or Nyingmapa, or Bonpo. It isn’t exclusively male or female, young or old, ugly or pretty, rich or poor, either. It isn’t particularly red-headed, or yellow-headed, or blue-headed, or green-headed, or black-headed. So nobody needs to be jealous!

¹ Lama Yeshe Nyima, one of Gyatrul Rinpoche’s first Western students, who travelled for many years throughout America serving Rinpoche and the dharma with great delight. He has been living and teaching in Mexico for the past several years.

Everybody can recite the BENZAR SATTO mantra, whatever tradition they practice or school they follow, whether they have empowerment or not.

Not just now, either, or just for Yeshe. In the future, whenever we hear someone is sick, needs help, is suffering or dying, we need to do Vajrasattva. Other than that, we can do nothing! How are we going to benefit anybody? We have no power. But we do have the power to stop gossiping and slandering each other and recite Vajrasattva. At least we can do that, to benefit that person...and really we will be benefitting ourselves.

Also, everybody, make offerings to the fish release practices each month and go to do those practices yourself.² You don't need to go and be jealous, that is Americans' whole garbage can full of shit—jealousy, gossip, and slander. Instead, save sentient beings' lives, however you can: fish, bugs, birdies, or whatever. You don't need initiation or empowerment, you can just save lives, relieving suffering however you can. Doing that, we are following in all the buddhas' and bodhisattvas' footsteps. Their commitment was to relieve suffering, and we can do that, too. We are Buddhist, after all.

If you want a long life, protect the lives of others. In Tibet, there were thousands of sheep and other animals that had been saved from slaughter through the life release practices, just as you do with the fish each month. The nomads had no money, they were very poor, but still they would do these practices. People in my country were the most stupid people, but still they did these practices, saving chickens, pigs, goats, and so on. Hunters would take vows not to hunt for one or two years, or give it up altogether, in order to purify their negativity. These people, stupid as they were, still had this wonderful tradition of protecting and saving life. I can't say that in general the Tibetan people were good or bad, but in respecting life they were really following the tradition of decent human beings.

Or look at Chatral Rinpoche, who has lived to be well over 100 years old. Every year he does a huge life release, with truck after truck of fish. Some people gape and stare, thinking he is crazy. He isn't crazy. You are the crazy ones! Some people think, "Oh, that's just something Chatral Rinpoche does." They don't think they can do that themselves, or they don't want to, or they don't care, so they don't give one penny. That's very strange. Such people have no brain, it looks like.

You have the chance to save lives at the fish releases each month, it's in your hands. Whenever you have the chance, save the lives of bugs, birds, fish, or any kind of animal. If you have the chance to save a life, then do so without bias or prejudice about what kind of animal it is. You can even perform generosity to ants, for example—the

² Note: For more information about donating to and participating in the monthly life release practices mentioned in this teaching, go to <http://www.sttcc.org> and click on "Life Release."

lamas would sometimes mix tsampa, ghee, and sacred substances and make a heap of it outside a little hole in an anthill, and then recite MANI mantras over the ants as they all swarmed out to get it. You don't need to be a geshe, a khenpo, a scholar, or a renowned practitioner! This isn't just for men or just for women. Even children, old people, and invalids can protect and save beings' lives. Do that, as much as you can, reciting MANI mantras or Vajrasattva mantras. That will really benefit you, bringing good health and long life like nothing else.

Everybody needs long life and good health. Everybody needs protection from illness and suffering. Everybody needs liberation. Therefore, go straight for Vajrasattva— straight! Everybody pray sincerely.

Tashi delek!

-Gyatral