

To O.D.D. Part II

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Of course you know about faith! The teachings on the importance of, and reasons for, having faith are included from the very beginning, from the first teaching on ngondro. Whatever else you have understood or not understood of dharma, everyone has received the teachings on faith. If you didn't have faith in the Buddha, how did you do the ngondro? If you didn't have faith in the dharma, how could you practice? If you don't know how to have faith in the sangha, how can you call yourself a Buddhist? "I don't know...I've finished my ngondro...I don't think about that anymore."

"Bodhicitta? I don't know about bodhicitta. I don't know about aspirational or engaged bodhicitta. Anyway, I finished my ngondro already." Really? How? How could you even have started it, let alone finished it? So many people have "finished" their ngondro in the sense of having completed the 500,000 accumulations—or more!—but they didn't go inside the ngondro and really get what is there. They did the ngondro, but they ignored the ngondro itself. It is not only you or a few people. We all are like that! We think ngondro is something unimportant and we ignore it. We think that ngondro, which in fact is the most precious, is a trivial practice, and we ignore it.

Ignoring the ngondro, we are ignoring the Buddha. We will never be able to understand the qualities of enlightened body, speech, and mind that way! Failing to understand the buddhas' qualities, we can't take refuge—we have no refuge objects! We can't follow in their footsteps by generating bodhicitta—we have no reason to! Don't be like that. What does that mean? Don't be like me, thinking I was so smart, doing prostrations and mandala and everything as fast as I could, trying to finish. Finish what? Until you are enlightened, ngondro is never finished. Faith is never finished. Bodhicitta is never finished. You need more, more, more, not less, as you go.

That is really how to do the ngondro, it is nothing to do with the numbers but everything to do with the meaning. Even if you are just saying, "NAMO BUDDHAYA," or "Homage to the Buddha," what does "NAMO" mean? Why do you promise or prostrate that way? What does it mean to go for refuge? When you repeat the refuge verses, are you going for refuge in the three jewels, or are you telling them to go for refuge in you? Think about each word, each sentence. That way, learn the ngondro, slowly.

Not just the ngondro, either! Any practice you are doing, you should chew on its meaning and go deeper and deeper into it in this same way, word by word, piece by piece. You have all taken so many empowerments, for example. At the end, when you promise, "Just what the principal one commands, all that I will perform," who is this "principal one" that you are promising to obey? Is it your boyfriend or girlfriend? Your

enemy? Do you know? Maybe your money? No. The principal one is the one you are speaking to, the vajra master. You are promising to do just what the vajra master says. Did the vajra master tell you to cheat sentient beings? To lie to them and bring them harm? To cheat your boyfriend or girlfriend, or your mommy or daddy? No. The opposite. You are supposed to help them. Are you supposed to hold wrong view toward the three jewels? No; you are supposed to cultivate faith in them. Are you promising to follow the vajra master's instructions for today and then throw them out tomorrow? No. If we thought carefully about what our promise really meant, then we wouldn't harm any being, or lie to them or cheat them, and we would try to have more faith in the objects of refuge. But we go to empowerments, plop down, repeat everything, understanding nothing, receive the substances, and then leave. And then we boast about receiving such-and-such special empowerment.

Thank you from the bottom of my heart for your invitation to come to O.D.D. and your offer to take care of everything. I know that it is not just from your mouth, that you always take care of me perfectly. But! – in this same sincere way, you need to be harmonious with each other. You need to remember and keep your samaya with the same earnestness. You need to be considerate of each other in this same wholehearted way. Don't waste your dharma by treating each other poorly!

Now, I'm not saying you need to kiss each other! I'm not saying everyone needs to hug each other desperately—I never said that, don't say that I did! Innerly, you need to keep harmony. You need to hold each other as dharma brothers and sisters in your own hearts, and in your conduct toward each other be helpful and harmonious. Don't plant the five poisons in your baby dharma garden. Just plant loving kindness, compassion, and the five wisdoms. Plant the seeds of method and prajna. You have received such inconceivable blessings and transmissions from amazing masters. You have that! You don't need to hide those blessings and wisdom, and plant the seeds of poison. You have received the antidotes to those poisons. You have received the instructions on the antidotes, and received the transmissions and empowerments for those antidotes. Now please use those antidotes, don't just keep them in your pocket, or just say, "Yeah, I heard that one time." Don't do what I did, wasting the precious blessings I received.

We say, "I am a Buddhist!" Really? "Yes, because my teacher is Buddhist. He is a very great lama, a high tulku, really better than others." What does he teach? "Oh, he teaches many things, but I don't really do things that way." We are so strange! Such a person does not hold the vows of refuge. They are just using the dharma, the lama, and the buddha like their handkerchief. That is not what it means to be a Buddhist! You have direct connections to the emanations of Vairochana and Vimalamitra—Dudjom Rinpoche, Penor Rinpoche, Yangthang Rinpoche. Whoa! Those are the real heavy guys, buddha emanations. The real "Whoa!" You have met them in person and received

transmissions and teachings at their feet. And still you think it's okay to gossip about each other! Shut up and put up!

Or, although you have met sublime masters, you still hold to some kind of sectarianism or prejudice. "I am a Nyingmapa, I am not Gelugpa! I don't want Tsongkhapa!" Really? Tsongkhapa, Je Rinpoche, is the embodiment of non-conceptual love, Chenrezig. So is he a dumb guy? No, he is the emanation of stainless omniscience, Manjushri. Is he a loser? No, he is the manifestation of Vajrapani, who is undefeated by any enemy, any passion, and so his only purpose is to bring benefit to others; like Vajrakilaya, he is without any fault. Tsongkhapa is the embodiment of Chenrezig, Manjushri, and Vajrapani all together. Why don't you want that? You are just showing your own lack of understanding, saying such things.

Are these the qualities of Tsongkhapa alone? No. All realized masters embody these qualities, whether they are of the Gelug, Sakya, Kagyu, Jonang, Nyingma, or any other school. These are the manifestations of buddhas, bodhisattvas, the five buddha families—are you going to say this one is better than that one? All the schools have the same objects of refuge: the three jewels. Even if one school were somehow better or worse than another, still, fundamentally, they have the same objects of refuge and, therefore, they are of the same greater lineage. If you hold any biased or prejudiced view toward any of the schools, you are just screwing yourself up, like stabbing yourself with a knife.

Do you call yourself a Nyingmapa? That's fine! A real Nyingma practitioner doesn't disregard the Hinayana or ignore the Mahayana. A real Nyingma practitioner holds them precious, like their own eyes, knowing that the Vajrayana isn't something superior to them, rather it is their essence. Vajrayana teaches according to the result, Hinayana and Mahayana according to the cause. If you want the result, will you throw away the cause? If you need the fruit, will you get rid of the seed? That sounds really smart! If you claim to be practicing Vajrayana but look down on Hinayana and Mahayana, you are showing your own stupidity, like someone saying they are growing a wonderful fruit tree but throwing the seeds in the garbage.

Or, will you claim that your apple is better than someone else's apple when you are picking off the same tree? That is how stupid it is to be sectarian toward any school or lineage. Know what to eliminate within yourself, and what to cultivate! Eliminate such senseless attachment and aversion and just have faith, purely, in the pure objects of refuge. That way you won't stray into sectarianism—you won't start cultivating what you should be eliminating.

In general, whomever you like or dislike is your own business, like your own property. But as Buddhists, we are trying to decrease the intensity of our attachment to "me and mine" and our aversion to "the enemy" or "the other." Indulging in unbridled attachment and aversion is not the Buddha's tradition, and we are trying to follow the Buddha, aren't we? Rather, it is a sign of being lost in samsara. It is a sign of having

failed to recognize and eliminate your faults. Samsara is made of attachment, desire; it is made of aversion, hatred; it is made of the ignorance that underlies both. These are the causes of our rebirths here and all our experiences of suffering in those rebirths. The five poisons drive samsara, they are its seeds and its fruit. Think on these simple things again and again, and based on your contemplation, as much as you can, do not let yourself continue to fall under the poisons' power.

Who said such things? What is their source? Why should you believe them? The Buddha said them. The teachings of both sutra and tantra explain them again and again, inconceivably. The emanations of the buddhas, the lineage masters and realized beings who in their kindness come to help us, they say these things. We call their teachings Hinayana, Mahayana, and Vajrayana—you know a million times more than I do about those teachings. If you really know about them with your brain, then you shouldn't gossip with your mouth.

Instead of gossip, recite the refuge verses and think about them. The Buddha is not just a yellow-robed guy with a bald head and no pants coming with a begging bowl. Look in the ngondro to see what his qualities are. Otherwise, not knowing the Buddha's qualities, you will think, "He is of no benefit to me!" Not knowing the qualities of his speech, the vast and profound dharma, the innumerable classes of sutra and tantra teachings, you will think, "It is of no benefit to me, either!" If the Buddha and his speech both are of no benefit to you, then of course forget about the sangha, his followers! "Of course! They are not worthy to be my babysitters! I need a rich, handsome guy or pretty lady, day and night taking care of my shit!"

Don't fall into such completely wrong thinking. Likewise, when you are cultivating bodhicitta, you don't just need to have compassion for sentient beings, you need to respect them, too. Sentient beings are not low and you are high. That's not how to cultivate compassion; that's how to cultivate pride! Your compassion isn't business, either. It isn't, "I'll have compassion for you if you take care of me." Parents have compassion for their children, whether the children tell them they love them or not. They aren't waiting for the baby to kiss them back. They just give freely. That's the right idea.

People also sometimes think that the Buddha is their babysitter and needs to change their diaper for them. It doesn't work that way! Our dirty diaper, our negativity, we have to change ourselves! Your diapers, dirty with desire, anger, jealousy, ignorance—slowly, slowly, you can change them. You can become perfectly clean and pure by changing those diapers, recognizing those poisons' nature.

Actually, here I am telling you this, but I am just embarrassing myself. I am the worst! I don't even have a diaper, no pants even! And I never cleaned my bottom, either—worse than that, I never cleaned any part of me. I am just one smelly mess, top to bottom, and my whole brain, too, all smelly with the five poisons. Don't be like me—you can see how dumb I still am! Compared to that, a dirty diaper is no big deal. Don't

be like me—I don't know anything, so I have not been able to be a keeper of the Buddha's teachings or a holder of the blessings of the lineage masters, even though those blessings are so powerful and I have had the great fortune to receive them again and again.

Not just me—you have received these blessings, too. Although you have all the teachings explaining what to do and not do, what to accept and reject, still you close your eyes and open your mouths, wanting to be spoon-fed everything. Close your mouth and open your eyes instead! Open your eyes to study and contemplate the dharma! "I am busy!" Yes, you have been born in samsara, I know; therefore, you are busy. You have no extra busy-ness; you are no more busy with your samsara than any other deluded being. I am the same! I am sleeping all day and all night, but still my mind is so busy, both when I'm awake and when I'm asleep. It doesn't rest one second. What am I so busy with? Attachment, aversion, and ignorance. Don't be like me, don't do that.

I'm not bargaining with you. I did for 40 years, but I am a beggar, not a bargainer. I have nothing to bargain with. High lamas, like Khenpo Namdrol, they do. Don't forget their bargain. What did they bargain for? For your benefit. Don't forget what they put in your bank. Everything is there. Don't waste it! Everyone is telling me they love me these days. If you really love me, don't waste your teachings. Or if you really love yourself, either!

Do I love you guys? I don't know. When I'm happy? ...Maybe. When I'm not happy? Forget about loving you guys—I don't even love myself. And then I screw up myself. But I can't complain, that's my own problem. I have to shut up, swallow it. But I throw it up continuously! Again, don't be like me! You have your chance—my chance is finished. If you are honest, you can use your chance. You can get your best success. Up to you!

Tashi delek!

-Gyatral