

*On Bardo Practice*  
Venerable Gyatrul Rinpoche  
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We are all in the bardos all the time. We are in the bardo of this life, we visit the bardo of dreaming every night, the bardo of death can be upon us at any second--we have lots of bardos to experience. Therefore bardo practice is so important! Everything is our bardo, and it is through these bardos that we perpetuate our delusion; likewise it is through these bardos that finally we will become liberated. If we know how to navigate the bardos, then we will have some hope for liberation rather than confusion.

If you have never been to America, but you have a very good map and you have studied it well, then it will not be so difficult when you arrive. We are in the bardo of this life right now, each second; when it's time for us to go at death we will go to another bardo. Right now we can't recognize the terrain of the bardo, we have no map, and that is why for most people at death there is only terror. The more confused you are, the more difficult it is. Now you have the chance to do bardo practice, which means you can get a map and learn not only the streets but where the restaurants are, the bus station, airport, train station, and hotels. If you know all of this, then you have some hope. Each person has their own car, which means they have the ability to go where they like, but they need gas and they need to know the road. Merit is our gas; having done bardo practice is the only way to know the road. That is what will make the difference between being liberated in the bardos or not. If we know the bardos--how they arise, what we will be facing--then we will know what to do in each situation. Otherwise we will just be scared, overcome by the bardo of death or the bardo of existence and not knowing what is happening or what to rely on. It is so good to learn about the six bardos, to think about the bardos and train in what to do in them. If it were me, I would do bardo practice rather than Yeshe Lama.

I don't think you will get any benefit from thinking that your bardo teacher is not a lama or is not Tibetan or whatever. If you want to overcome the terrors of the bardo, I don't think you can be hung up on that. What is important is what you are learning and practicing. Whoever is going to have to face the bardo, they need to know the information about it. We are the ones who confuse ourselves and lie to ourselves; that is why we are sentient beings. When we stop confusing ourselves and are honest with ourselves, that is how we will liberate ourselves. We are the ones who will experience all our bardos. Therefore it is so important to know them for ourselves!

Now, in the bardo of this life, we cannot even imagine the experiences of the bardo of death and beyond. The overwhelming appearances, the all-consuming noise, the pure terror. Right now we should be afraid of the bardo of death because we have no map! If you know something of the bardos, however, then it will be easier. If you can recognize the bardo, you can be liberated. If you know something of the bardos, it will also be easier in this life, especially to do dharma practice. If you know the bardos well, you will naturally have more interest in dharma, rather than having wishy-washy, slipper-slopper, teeter-totter faith.

Whatever level of practice you are doing, you need to know the bardos. Whatever level of vows you hold, whether you are a lay practitioner or novice or fully ordained monk or nun, whether you engage in the bodhisattva trainings or hold the outer or inner secret mantra commitments, if you know the bardos then you will know the reasons to keep your vows and how to keep them. I think if you know the bardos, generation and completion stage practices are also easier. Dzogchen also is practiced through the bardos. There will be the bardo of the nature of phenomena (dharmata) and all of that blah blah blah. You don't

get more dzogchen than that! If you know the dzogchen view well, you can recognize the bardo of the dharmata and be liberated in that.

If you know the bardos, you have the possibility of liberation in them. If you do not know them, however much of a scholar you might be, still you are finished! Therefore, everybody, male and female, young and old, should study the bardos and learn the bardo practices. Listen and learn, and especially think about them! You don't have to wait for a bardo, making a plan for a far-off time when you will finally meet one. We have our bardo every second. Learning and contemplating it, that will benefit you. Then at death you will have freedom, power, choice. There is nobody who is not going to die, so there is nobody who can afford to not prepare for the bardo. Whatever vows you do or do not hold, and even if you are not a buddhist, still at the moment of your passing the bardo of death will arise for you, I guarantee it. Even if you think you are a dzogchen practitioner, you still were born, you still are in the bardo of this life, and you still will die.

The Yeshe Lama practices are wonderful and amazing, but for me the bardo practices are more important. Everybody is in the bardo already, everybody is facing the bardo of death. We need to know where we are and where we are going. Finally, it is time to open our eyes to that. So please, everybody practice!

Tashi Delek!

*-Gyatrul*

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