

## *Vajrakilaya Retreat—Last Day Teaching*

Venerable Lingtrul Rinpoche

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I just have a few words to say. We have just finished 10 full days of practice. In the past, I have come here for many 10- or 11-day Vajrakilaya and Vajrasattva retreats, and we always did them in three sessions: morning, afternoon, and evening. At this retreat, I requested you to change it a little bit, so we have a morning and a long afternoon session. But we really haven't lost any practice time: The afternoon session is so long that we are able to do mantra recitation and all of the concluding sections of the practice.

For me, this retreat has been very wonderful, and especially I have enjoyed the new schedule. The main reason is that it seems like more people are able to commit to the whole practice. It is great that people have tried to come to a full day when they can. For those who have only been able to come for individual sessions (which is also fine), still, they have tried their best to finish the practice on their own. Thus, everyone is trying to practice in a complete and correct way. And there also isn't the feeling that we have lost a big part of the group and there are just a few of us practicing at some sessions. It seems like there are more people coming and attendance is stable or increasing. I am pleased with that.

I just wanted to thank everybody, from my heart, for hearing me and giving my idea a try.

Secondly, I wanted to mention that when we say "dharma," it really refers to one's state of mind. When we say "practicing dharma," what it means is that we are understanding the dharma with our mind. We are bringing the dharma into our mind, we are mixing our mind with the dharma. If someone is doing that, if they are really listening, really meditating, and really bringing it in, then we can call them a "dharma practitioner." If we seem to be practicing dharma but we are not actually applying it to our own minds, then we might look like a dharma practitioner on the outside but we won't really be able to act according to the dharma.

All of you are so lucky because you have so many authentic teachers—you are students of authentic, amazing high lamas. You have received the ripening empowerments. You have received the liberating instructions. You have received the transmissions. So that is something very, very special.

I have been to many dharma centers in America, and that doesn't mean that I have great qualities, but I have just gone around and seen things. In general, at dharma

centers I have noticed that there can be a lot of jealousy, a lot of in-fighting, a lot of politics, a lot of worldly activity, and a lack of respect—a lack of treating each other well. Now in one way, in bringing this up I am showing my own lack of qualities, because instead of looking at my own faults I am pointing out the faults of others. But anyway, here I go.

Mixing dharma and worldly things in that way is really like mixing fire and water. If you mix fire and water, the fire will never be able to burn. In the same way, if you mix the worldly and dharma together, then you will never see any improvement in your practice and you will never mix your mind with the dharma.

At this dharma center, everyone is so lucky because you have these amazing high teachers, and there are many people who are practicing and really trying to mix their minds with the dharma. You have Gyatrul Rinpoche, you have Sangye Khandro, and you have many older students who have many outer, inner, and secret qualities of practice and understanding, and you also have this wonderful Tibetan temple which is quite authentic. So you can look at the outer temple and say, wow this is amazing. But what is really amazing is if the sangha is actually practicing. And that means practicing with harmony, practicing with pure conduct, and practicing in a very pleasant, cooperative, and comfortable way. That is what will increase or make strong the longevity of your teacher. And that is how we can accumulate merit and purify negativity.

So when we are outerly practicing dharma, we always have to be checking to see what is going on innerly. Do we have the three poisons? Do we have aversion, attachment, and ignorance? We must check.

Of course, we are all beginners, we are all ordinary beings, and so we are going to have the eight worldly concerns. Those thoughts will arise. It is impossible to say, “Oh, stop being worldly,” and that’s it. But in the dharma center you have to try hard to reduce that as much as you can. So for example, if you come here several days for practice, for that period of time, try not to be too concerned with worldly things.

Then when you go out into the world and work, of course you have to be concerned with money, you have to be concerned with your status, you have to be concerned with your needs and all of those things. You can’t give up worldliness completely. But when you come to practice dharma, you try to give up being worldly. And you have to try to see your own faults. That is what dharma practice really is: looking at your own faults. In fact, if you point at other people’s faults, they will just get mad at you. But if you point at your own faults, you won’t get mad at yourself and you will actually have a chance to change.

So Gyatrul Rinpoche has been amazingly kind that we have this chance to be here and that I have this chance to be here. What we all must try to do is practice the dharma just as he has taught. We should be thinking to ourselves, "I need to serve Gyatrul Rinpoche, which means I need to practice the dharma just as he has taught it. I need to serve all sentient beings, so I need to practice and slowly achieve the state of awakening." We should have that attitude. At the same time, we have to externally try to conduct ourselves as Buddhists. What that means is that no matter who comes here, we must treat them well. Especially if non Buddhists come here and they want to look around or come in the temple and relate to it, it is very important that we be as welcoming as we can, and that we really try to bring out the best in ourselves. We should treat them well and bring them into the temple so they can behold the enlightened images present here.

We must understand that all human beings have minds, and if you have a mind you want happiness and you don't want suffering. So all of us are the same; we are all human in that way. We must treat everyone in the same way we wish to be treated. Also we depend on each other; in fact, each person's dharma connection depends on somebody else. Somebody brought you into the temple, somebody showed you the statues, somebody gave you a connection. We all depend on each other. That is what it means to be interdependent. We always talk about "interdependence;" well, this is it—our dharma connections are interdependent. In fact, it's very rare for someone to become a Buddhist spontaneously; generally, they come and make some kind of connection by meeting somebody.

Everyone please encourage new people, treat everyone well, and enact the conduct of a good Buddhist. As much as you can, when you relate to people, try to use compassion and wisdom; try to be positive and helpful.

We all know that Buddhism is quite extraordinary. When new people come and relate to us, we have to reflect that in our conduct. We must express that because if people come and meet us and we are very kind, respectful, and act well, then they will say: "Oh, Buddhism is really something. Look at the followers, look at who is practicing, look at what it is doing for their minds!" They will be impressed and they will want to keep connecting. But if people come and try to connect and we treat them badly or we don't respect them, if we are unwelcoming, then they will think to themselves: "Oh, Buddhists, they are just jerks. I thought Buddhism was something special but I guess not." They will be discouraged. So it is really about people connecting to the dharma.

In fact, Khenpo Tsultrim Lodro was talking about dharma and politics and he said: "Really, there is no place in Buddhism for politics. They are complete opposites." It is very important to remember that.

I am not talking to you like a lama, thinking “Oh, I am a lama and it must be THIS way; I am giving you advice and you must follow it.” I am just talking like family—we are all family here, and we all really appreciate each other and care about each other. So these are just my thoughts as offerings to you. If they are useful, please keep them in mind; and if not, then you can just forget them.

Thank you.

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