

~From the Archives of Teachings by Venerable Gyatrul Rinpoche~

HEART ADVICE ON TSOQ AND OTHER MATTERS

*A teaching read to those gathered at Orgyen Dorje Den on January 14, 2012,
to practice Vajrasattva in connection with Dungse Thinley Norbu Rinpoche's Parinirvana.*

Part 4

Selfishness: We All Have the Potential to Become Langdarma

So how do we accumulate merit? Well, if we are not careful—meaning if we do not really understand merit and karma—and we think that we can make something up on our own, we might think it's a good idea to accumulate merit just to benefit ourselves. We might think it's a good idea to purify our obscurations just so our own experience will improve. But this kind of selfishness and self-concern is actually how the great demons begin their downward spiral, like Chairman Mao or King Langdarma. Self-cherishing and self-concern are really the root or basis for their negativity. Intense self-grasping is what led those beings to do the terrible things they did. We all have that potential—to become a Mao, or to become a Langdarma, or to become a rudra.¹ We do have that potential, just as we have the potential for buddhahood. So we want to be careful! We want to be mindful that we know the right way to go about accumulating merit, and keep watch so that we don't stray into negativity.

So how do we protect ourselves from selfishness? How can we guard against this great negativity? Well, you have to remember sentient beings, you buggers!² If you remember sentient beings and you always try to cultivate loving-kindness and compassion, if you always try to remember them when you practice, if you always try to do whatever you are

1 A rudra is a demon, the embodiment of self-cherishing.

2 One of the English words Rinpoche was fond of was 'bugger,' meaning to pester or irritate someone. He frequently used it in the form 'bugger,' which he explained meant someone who could be pestered, or who was fun to joke with, or somewhat mischievous—someone 'buggable,' as he said. Over the years, it was pointed out several times that the term bugger can have quite another interpretation, but he always brushed this alternative aside and insisted on his own definition. Thus, you will find 'bugger' often used in his teachings and correspondence as a term of endearment and affection, and he would frequently describe his own activity of teaching as “I'm just bugging you guys.”

doing for their sake, then that will protect you. That will be your armor, that will be your guide that keeps you on the right rather than the wrong path. That will be the force, the fuel, the engine that gives you the power to actually accumulate merit and purify obscurations. Look at the buddhas and bodhisattvas—they are not asking you to do anything different than they have already done. What did they all do? Again, go back to their biographies and read the histories. What did they do? They worked tirelessly for other beings, all beings. They left none out, they had perfect equanimity, they had loving-kindness and compassion—and that is where we can start. If we start there, we can know that we are starting at the proper place, upon the proper path. But if we are always mixing in our own attachment and our own aversion with our dharma practice, then pretty soon we start to wobble, we start to waver, we start to stray from the path, and that is how we start to find the path of rudra, the path of Mao, the path of Langdarma.

You shouldn't think that this is just being said to frighten you. Of course, in one way, if you're frightened that could be good, in the sense that maybe you will practice more fervently, with greater faith and devotion and less self-concern. In that case, that's fine—go for it, be frightened. But really, the point isn't to frighten you; the point is to help you stay on the right path. You should know that this is a very real danger, that beings do find the incorrect path and practice it with great diligence and perseverance and bring about terrible results from that negativity.

These days, there is the protector nobody wants to talk about, Shugden—there, I said his name.³ Yes, you can lock me up now! It is said that actually this protector was once a disciple of Tsongkhapa himself. I don't know if this is true or not, I just know that it is said. But at any rate, the point is that even a being of such amazing good fortune as to be a disciple of a great master like Tsongkhapa can end up on the wrong path. So we need to be careful to

3 At the time this teaching was given, there was much controversy around this protector, and many people said it was not appropriate even to say its name.

avoid such mistakes ourselves. As far as anything else to do with that protector, it is really none of our business and none of our concern. Our concern is ourselves, our own negativity—that should keep us plenty busy. So we need to accumulate merit and we need to purify that negativity.

~ teaching continues in Part 5...