

~From the Archives of Teachings by Venerable Gyatrul Rinpoche~

HEART ADVICE ON TSOG, 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 8

Many Ways to Perform Tsog

We have this opportunity to come in such perfect circumstances and practice Vajrasattva and offer tsog, such a powerful method to purify our negativity. But we shouldn't think that it is only when tsog is happening that we can accumulate merit and purify our faults. Actually, the gathering of merit, the tsog, the accumulation, happens whenever our minds are turned purely toward dharma. Whenever we try to cultivate loving-kindness and compassion, whenever we try to give up our self-cherishing and cultivate an attitude of altruism, whenever we hear or contemplate or meditate on the dharma, that is also tsog, that is also accumulating merit.

Whatever you need—if you need to be rich; if you think you need to be pretty or handsome or intellectually superior; if you are sick and need to be healthy; if you need some kind of high status or position; if you need jewels; if you need a fancy new car (don't buy the one the fancy Chinese lady on television is trying to sell you, I don't trust her!—but if you need another nicer, fancier new car)—whatever you might need, in a worldly way or dharma way, you have to have merit in order to bring it to you and in order to be able to encounter it. However much you offer tsog, however much virtue you accumulate, that much you turn your mind to dharma and you will be able to get those things and more. You will be able to get the best car of all, the very best ultimate jewelry, the very best most wonderful clothing, and partner, and whatever it is you might want—the most delicious meal. It will all come to you if you accumulate merit. The way to accumulate merit is this, the very thing you are

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doing: gathering and practicing tsog.

Here at Orgyen Dorje Den (O.D.D.), we are also building prayer wheels these days. And, of course, in the past we have created this temple itself and renovated it again and again. We have made improvements and we have built many representations of enlightened body, speech, and mind. We have made texts, we have built statues, we have put together this place. And then so much work has gone into maintaining it and improving it over the years, and now we are building these prayer wheels. Actually, every time you work on the representations of enlightened body, speech, and mind, that is also tsog. That is also a great accumulation of merit. That is a powerful method for purifying the obscurations.

These days, you can still go and see great monuments left by great kings of the past. Some of them, like the Egyptian pyramids, are huge and reach up and touch the sky itself and we think, wow, they must have really had a lot of merit to leave such a mark on the earth! But actually, we don't know if they had merit or not. Those are just stones. But if you helped to create a support of enlightened body, speech, or mind, if you helped to clean the temple or build the temple, or put in the floor, or put in the ceiling, or fix the ceiling, or fix the ceiling again, or make the prayer wheels, or paint the statues, or fill the statues, any of these kinds of things—if you helped in that way, then that is an endeavor dedicated to the benefit of all beings from now until all beings are enlightened. That means that the merit that you made is bigger than the pyramids and will last until the very end of days, until all beings are enlightened. That is a great tsog. Whenever you come to work on this place or to help with the prayer wheels, or turn your mind, intention, and energy toward supporting any of these places of dharma—O.D.D. or Tashi Chöling, or other places—when you engage in raising statues and stupas and so forth, when you engage in preserving those and cleaning them, and so forth, you are gathering great and tremendous blessings. You are bringing in merit from all directions. But, you are really only doing that effectively if you don't forget sentient beings.

Hahaha, have you forgotten sentient beings yet? I had forgotten them, but then I

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remembered them again. That is only because of the kindness of my teachers who told me so many times, from the time I was very, very small. Anyway, if you don't forget sentient beings and always fill your mind with the thought of them, trying to work for their benefit, then you will create merit without mistake and you will create the causes of realization. You will make wisdom itself blossom in your mind. Of course, it is there already, but because we are completely enslaved by our five poisons, we have no opportunity to see it or feel it or hear it or taste it or smell it. That is why we need Buddha Shakyamuni, Vajrasattva, and Chenrezig, and all of the deities and all of the methods, so we can try to connect, so we get one little glimpse, one little whiff, one little taste of that buddhanature, of those five wisdoms that are the nature of all things.

How do we actualize the five wisdoms? We try to not let ourselves be enslaved by the five poisons. It's really that simple. All of your obstacles will be dispelled and your understanding will go deeper and deeper more and more easily.

If you want to be a scholar, then sure, be a scholar. But if you think of yourself as a scholar, that means that you have to be careful because, if you are a scholar and you are proud or arrogant, thinking, "I am a great scholar," then you have completely lost it. If you think, "I am a great practitioner," you have also completely lost it, you have lost the point. So, if you think you are a practitioner, that is fine, practice more. Practice with more humility. If you think you are a great scholar, that is fine, go for the meaning. Don't just go for the words—go for the essence.

Here at this time, we have gathered—actually, you have gathered, I am at home in my bed being lazy—but you have gathered and accumulated merit and purified obscurations through this practice of tsog. If we understand the law of cause and result, we will know that the results of this merit will certainly ripen. There is no way that they could not ripen. This is completely beyond doubt.

If we really understood the law of cause and result, then we would just do dharma all the time because we would have no doubt that this is the only way to bring about anything positive whatsoever. We would immerse ourselves in the study and contemplation of dharma, not because we wanted to gain some high name and become a scholar but because we saw, “Oh, this is the only thing that makes any sense; this is the only thing that carries blessings; this is the only thing that will allow me to really get somewhere.”

Everyone is always so worried about getting somewhere. And, in fact, you don't just want to get somewhere, you want to use the carpool lane. If you really want to get there fast, you have to look directly within, you have to go back directly to the teachings themselves. There is no other way around it. There is no other carpool lane. And finally, the carpool lane leads right back to your own doorstep and you are pointing at yourself. If you understand this, that all of the buddhas are only the connection to your own buddhanature, then you think, “May I reestablish that connection, realize or recognize that connection, and may I do it so that all beings may likewise be reconnected to their own buddhanature. May all beings be freed from their suffering of feeling so separate from their buddhanature.” With that as your compassionate intention, then if you offer one butter lamp or one flower or one cookie at tsog, then how extraordinary is that offering.

~ teaching continues in Part 9...