

~From the Archives of Teachings by Venerable Gyatrul Rinpoche~

## TEACHINGS ON THE PRELIMINARY PRACTICES (NGÖNDRO)

*Rinpoche sent the following teaching for those gathered to do the preliminary practices (ngöndro) at Dorje Ling in Portland, Oregon, on May 12, 2013.*

### Part 15

### The Dharma Makes the Difference

In Tibet in general, we can say that the karma of the Tibetans was very bad in that their country was taken over by the Chinese and destroyed. But even within that horror, some individuals had good karma. Some individuals practiced very purely, even in the midst of disaster, and they were reborn in pure realms, or there were signs of incredible realization at the time of their deaths. So, although in general, things were very, very bad, they themselves, through the power of their own minds, made their experience very good. In addition, they made the very good causes for their future positive experience as well.

Some Tibetans had terrible experiences in Tibet and managed to escape to India; but in India, they had a slightly better situation, a little more stable, and they used that opportunity to practice and liberated themselves there.

Some of them, of course, did not. Some of them used the whole experience to go deeper and deeper into samsara and wanted to torture and cheat other Tibetans even when things were so bad. They had no compassion; they had no merit that let them do anything with their minds except create more negativity in a situation of terrible suffering. If you do not have the dharma, there is nothing you can do to turn the thrust of negativity as it ripens in your mind.

Many Tibetans don't have dharma. Of course, all Tibetans know something of the dharma, but many of them don't have any dharma inside. They don't have real faith and devotion. If they don't really have the dharma—meaning they don't really have an object of refuge because they don't really put their trust in one—then they are just like hungry ghosts.

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~Translated and edited by Shashi Reitz~*

If you are in a terrible situation—here using the example of the Chinese invading Tibet—and you have no dharma, then you have no way to use anything in that situation for positivity or virtue or goodness, and then you are just like a hungry ghost. Your experience becomes very bad, like the worst experience in the human realm that you can think of. It is like you are a hungry ghost in a human body.

But if you have some experience and understanding of dharma, if you have faith, if you are able to practice, then even if your outward experience is like that of a hungry ghost, inwardly you are richer than the gods. The gods are nothing; the gods are stuck in samsara like all other beings, even the lowest of beings. But if you have faith in Buddha, Dharma, and Sangha, and you put your trust and your focus there, you can be born in a pure realm. That is way beyond the gods! So, without the dharma, your suffering is like a hell being's suffering in a human body; but with the dharma, even when your body is suffering like a hungry ghost, actually your understanding and your focus are creating an experience which is beyond even the god realms.

*~ teaching continues in Part 16...*