

~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 7

Habits vs. Enlightened Qualities

Through the three poisons, this is what we have created. This whole thing we call samsara, all of the six realms, we have created all of this through our ignorance. And *only* through our ignorance. There has never been any trace of samsaric experience or suffering that has actually existed or been true in an absolute sense. Only the pure nature has ever been true. Samsara, however long it has been going on and however terrible its sufferings, has only ever been the most fragile of illusions, the thinnest of projections onto that nature.

So, then you might ask, “What is the power of samsara, that it seems to be so solid and so dreadful and go on for so long?” That is the power of our own habit. Our own habit of ignorance and our habit of the three poisons. When we have faith in the Buddha’s enlightened body, speech, and mind, that is having faith in our own nature, in that original nature that always has been and always will be perfectly pure. When you think of that, even for a moment, this impure body, speech, and mind cannot endure in the same way anymore. Impure, confused phenomena cannot continue to prevail when confronted with the truth—the truth of the purity of their own nature.

But our habit of holding to the impure is very strong. That is why when we do practice it sometimes feels like the practice is maybe only something tiny and our ordinary mind and impure experiences are huge in comparison. That’s why it feels like our practice doesn’t have much effect on our ordinary mind.

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~Translated and edited by Shashi Reitz~*

However, the more you do practice, the more the qualities of enlightened body, speech, and mind begin to come out. They cannot be suppressed. They only can be temporarily obscured because of our ignorance. Those qualities cannot ever be eliminated because they are the nature itself. We say the qualities of a vajra are the qualities of reality itself, and that vajra indestructible quality is described by the great masters again and again. The enlightened qualities we are talking about are the same. They have that very same vajra quality. That is why we say vajra body, vajra speech, and vajra mind when speaking of all the enlightened manifestations.

Once you begin to practice, those qualities begin to come forward. Through practice, you make contact with and begin to familiarize yourself with those qualities. Merely making contact with those qualities through practice is a very powerful purification of our negativity and all our habits of believing in impure phenomena. Even if we are not doing a practice that's explicitly for purification, it still has that effect. You might think, "I'm not doing Vajrasattva, I'm just doing refuge now. So, right now I am not purifying my obscurations." It doesn't work like that. Every time you engage in practice with faith, you are purifying your obscurations. Why? Because you are turning your attention to enlightened body, speech, and mind. That means you are lessening your fixation on ordinary body, speech, and mind. In the final analysis, that is what we have to purify — that fixation.

~teaching continues in Part 8...