

~From the Archives of Teachings by Venerable Gyatrul Rinpoche~

Foundations of Practice and Dharma Community

In March of 2009, Venerable Gyatrul Rinpoche sent the following message to the dharma community at Dorje Ling in Portland, Oregon.

Part 7

Waking up to the Preciousness of the Dharma Center

We all need patience—especially when you are starting a center and everything is new and has to be figured out!

Also, everyone needs discipline. Really. Right now, we have no success in our dharma practice and no success in our worldly endeavors because we have no merit. And without merit, we have no wisdom, either. So, we strike out on two counts. It is through discipline that we can generate merit and purify our obscurations, which clears the way for wisdom to arise.

This is really why we need a dharma center—because we need merit in order to accomplish anything, and a dharma center is a hotbed of merit! Any support that we offer the dharma center—coming to practice here, sweeping the floor, making offerings, cutting the hedge—generates merit and purifies our obscurations.

What makes it a dharma center is it offers a place to practice and contains supports of the Buddha's body, speech, and mind. We call them 'supports,' but it isn't the Buddhas and bodhisattvas who need our support—it is *we* who need the support of statues, texts, stupas, and other representations of the Three Jewels. They support our practice by reminding us of our buddha nature, our wisdom nature that we are trying to realize. They also support our progress on the path by giving us opportunities to generate merit through interacting with them.

So how do we use the supports here and the dharma center itself to generate merit? Everything you do to maintain and develop this place is an offering to the objects of refuge

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and generates merit and purifies our negativity. With our ordinary thinking, we can't conceive of the preciousness of our opportunities regarding this place!

If you see a dish that is cracked and you buy a new one and replace it, that produces merit, for example. Even such a seemingly small thing as that.

We can get caught up in thinking that generosity is only on a large scale, that you have to offer millions of dollars and buy fancy gold things and then you are a 'sponsor' and such a big deal. I don't think it has to be that. If you have one penny, you can buy some clean water with it and offer it in the offering bowls. This is generosity, too. Or being generous with your time, coming here to clean or fix something or weed the flowers. There are many ways to make offerings.

This monkey, this yellow one,¹ he has offered this whole house to his lamas and the sangha. If we just think that we are coming here to Clark's house, then we are making a big mistake. Of course he is staying here—he is a monk; he has no other place to stay! He can stay here until he dies, keeping the place nicely. But he doesn't own anything. It is not his house—he gave it to you already.

I think maybe you guys don't see this, one way. If you just see it as Clark's place and you think that coming to help out here is just helping him, then the merit you are making will likewise be small, on that same scale. But instead, you can recognize how much more precious this place is. It is a dharma center, a sacred place of practice, complete with exquisite representations of the objects of refuge and filled with profound teachings and practices in the form of Tibetan pechas and other texts, where lamas like Lingtrul Rinpoche and the Khenpo brothers have given teachings and empowerments. Knowing this, then your activities here will be likewise more deeply meaningful. I think everybody needs to wake up about this a little bit.

~ teaching continues in Part 8...

¹ i.e., the monk, Clark. Clark was blond, and Rinpoche often referred to him as “yellow” or “yellow monkey.”