

~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 8

Wisdom and Compassion, Step by Step

In one way you do have compassion, but in one way you don't know what compassion really is.

Also, you do have a kind of wisdom, but you don't know which wisdom, or if this wisdom or that one is the most important.

What kind of wisdom can benefit you and all others? What kind of wisdom will be useful to you when you die?

You can learn about authentic compassion, what it is and how to cultivate it, in *The Words of My Perfect Teacher*. There are also students who have been studying a little bit, and they can help answer some of your questions. Everyone should help each other! Share what you do know. We are all trying to learn the same things.

For wisdom, you can say that there are three wisdoms: the wisdom of study or listening, the wisdom of contemplating, and the wisdom of meditation, which comes from practice. It is the wisdom of meditation that brings you the result. Each wisdom depends on the previous one: you must hear and study the teachings, which brings the initial wisdom of listening, in order to contemplate them. You must investigate and consider the teachings you have heard: This brings the wisdom of contemplation. But if you don't listen to begin with, how are you going to contemplate? What are you going to contemplate? And if you don't hear or contemplate the teachings, how could you begin to meditate on them? Without sustained practice, which brings the wisdom of meditation, how can you get the result?

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~Translated and edited by Shashi Reitz~

Notice that in this explanation there are three steps. There are stages, showing that the path is gradual. So don't think that wisdom is push-button. Nobody has push-button wisdom. Even Buddha Shakyamuni himself didn't have that kind of wisdom, which is why he showed the example of his own liberation stage by stage. Actually, maybe somebody in some universe does have push-button wisdom, but we are not qualified.

In Tibet, we have a bad tradition of praying to the lamas: “Please, lama, save me! Help me!” And then we expect the lama to take care of our liberation for us while we run out and commit non-virtue! If we are being negative all the time, how can the lama, or even all the Buddhas of the three times, save us?

We pray, “Please save me! Be compassionate!” But then we ignore the teachings of Buddha Shakyamuni and our lineage lamas. They can't save us. They teach us, planting seeds, telling us to purify our negativity and accumulate merit. They teach us, and we ignore it. We are lazy and don't even try.

But we have plenty of enthusiasm for accumulating negativity and non-virtue, and we are quick and eager to give up what little virtue we have managed to cultivate. This is like going to a doctor and saying, “Doctor, save me! Cure me! Help me!”—begging him. So, then the doctor gives us medicine and gives us instructions on how to take the medicine and what we should and shouldn't do. But if we ignore his instructions and leave the medicine in the bottle, we will not be cured. Instead, we will end up dead. Then, knowing our crazy thinking, we will blame the doctor for not saving us!

It is the same with the teachings. We each need to take them in. Just leaving the teachings in the book or on the tape recorder doesn't work—it doesn't benefit us and it doesn't benefit the tape recorder, either! We are the ones who need to practice, we are the ones who need to take the Buddha's medicine.

But we are so blind, so ignorant, we don't know how to begin to benefit ourselves or anyone else. Instead, we throw away the precious medicine of the Buddha's teaching, and we

make our five poisons—or more like countless poisons!—into a big, important deal.

Even if someone does some studying, they just say, “I am a scholar, so important!” and then do things their own way. A person like this doesn't need a lama, doesn't need the Buddha! A guru wouldn't do them any good, because they only listen to themselves!

But beings like us, if we see we are suffering, if we want to practice the path, then we do need a lama. And it doesn't matter if that lama is a she or a he, if they are poor or ugly or black or brown or red or yellow or green or whatever. It doesn't matter who teaches you, if they teach you pure dharma. The most honest, humble one—that one we do need. But we always look over that one, and want a Tibetan one, and the one on the high throne. Doesn't work! Sorry!

And if we somehow manage to get a real, good lama, and they speak the precious dharma to us, telling us to give up the five poisons, then we don't listen. We say, “Oh, this other lama gives me hugs, kisses, praise, gives me something.” But that is not a lama of real compassion.

Real compassion is to give us the dharma, even when we spit it out. A real lama thinks only of the dharma, and of sentient beings.

~ teaching concludes in Part 9...