

~From the Archives of Teachings by Venerable Gyatrul Rinpoche~

Sweet, Soft, and Flexible: Discipline's Surprising Inner Qualities

During the holiday season in 2013, Rinpoche was asked if he had any Christmas message to send to the sangha. He gave this teaching in reply.

Part 3

The Six Perfections—Including Discipline—Are Your Splendid Finery

Monks and nuns are not supposed to cut flowers or other growing things. They are also not supposed to pee in rivers, lakes, and so forth. Why? Because they are not supposed to harm their environment. That is the kind of discipline they have. They train in thinking in such ways to discipline their minds.

That does not mean that the ordained have to ask, "Mommy, can I pee here? How about here? Or over there?" every time they need to go to the bathroom. They are not anxious.

When someone has a disciplined mind, then they are very flexible because they are not confused. They know their path and their way to go. Then there is no reason to be uptight; instead, they naturally keep their discipline because they know what the rules are and they know the benefit of keeping them.

It is the same with faith: You will naturally have faith when you understand the qualities of your object of faith. If we need faith or if we need discipline, we need to improve our understanding. Our understanding improves when we wholeheartedly contemplate and investigate the teachings for ourselves.

For example, we can investigate as follows: concerning outer discipline, how should the ordained dress?

They do not need to dress in a fancy way, or a dirty way, or a hippie way. They need to dress nicely, comfortably.

Why?

That keeps their vow on the outer level and supports their discipline.

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~Translated and edited by Shashi Reitz~*

Why do you need discipline?

If you have discipline, you will be able to have patience.

Why do you need patience?

With patience, you will not make many mistakes. You will be able to cultivate samadhi. You will be conscientious and have steadiness of mind. When the five poisons come, you will not jump away wildly. Even as they arise, they will not make you crazy. That is how you will cultivate prajna—wisdom and insight. With prajna, you will no longer be wrong in your thoughts or actions. This is how you practice the six perfections (generosity, discipline, patience, joyful effort, meditative concentration, and wisdom).

If you conquer your five poisons, your practice of the perfections will be perfect.

Take generosity, for example. If you have conquered your five poisons, then whatever way others relate to you, it will only be beneficial to them. That is generosity in the genuine sense.

If you have not conquered your five poisons, then you are still caught up in self-cherishing. That means the ego is naturally underlying everything you do. Sometimes you want to benefit others, but sometimes you don't if it is difficult or inconvenient. Your focus is still on "I need a throne!" "I need a title!" "I need respect!" "I need this and that!" To believe and say these things is to ignore the six perfections. It is to ignore discipline. If we ignore that, we don't have anything.

What is behind such self-absorption? The five poisons. We never give them up, and they are never satisfying. The six perfections, on the other hand, always satisfy.

By the power of your previous discipline, you have this precious human body and opportunity to practice dharma. That is your splendid finery. You do not need to shower and clean yourself up and put on something spiffy to try to show your qualities. Just practice. Just liberate yourself. How? Through practicing the six perfections, the jewel among practices.

All the nirmanakaya emanations manifest their qualities through the six perfections. All the qualities of the sambhogakaya are also the display of the six perfections. And the dharmakaya is unmanifest, since there are no sentient beings there who need to see that display. Does that mean there are no perfections there? No. The three kayas are not separate like they got a divorce.

The six perfections are the very thing that will eliminate all beings' suffering. They nurture all good qualities in the mindstream. To rid yourself of your poisons and afflictive emotions through engaging in the six perfections is your greatest adornment. Thinking you need fancy clothes and jewelry is a sign that you are still under the power of the five poisons. You don't need anything fancy to make the jewelry of your good qualities sparkle.

~ teaching concludes in Part 4...