

~From the Archives of Teachings by Venerable Gyatrul Rinpoche~

Advice on Bringing the Dharma into Your Life (Even if You Aren't Buddhist)

*Words offered from a self-proclaimed "funky old man" to the massage therapists at the
Lavendar Hill Spa in Calistoga, April 2012.*

Part 4

The Chance to Give Up Self-Centeredness

The motivation to be of benefit to others is like the pure compassion that is the main teaching of the Great Vehicle. Great practitioners in past times and even these days have trained and are still training in just this way.

The ultimate result of such mental training is said to be freedom from suffering.

Actually, karmically the result of actions based on a compassionate motivation will be that you will not have illness or other sufferings in the future. Even in the short term, the mere fact of briefly loosening the bonds of your self-centeredness by cultivating such altruism is already a relief and delight.

In this way, the clients who come to you are giving you the opportunity to release your self-centeredness and self-grasping, and to cultivate compassion and loving-kindness. They are also giving you the chance to practice patience through the effort and hardship of your work and to be generous with your skill and energy. In this way, you can see all your clients as friends helping you to develop compassion, patience, and generosity—and these are said to be greater than any diamonds or gold.

Compassion is the heart of the Great Vehicle practice. Its practitioners train in generosity to others, enriching themselves with that precious quality instead of material wealth. They take care of others as the highest method of protecting themselves—giving up self-concern and protecting others as even more precious than themselves, which in fact is the greatest protection. In such ways, the Great Vehicle practitioners train in profound kindness.

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~Translated and edited by Shashi Reitz~

In Vajrayana, or the Vajra Vehicle, practitioners likewise practice compassion. They have reverence for the deities of their practices, understanding what they symbolize, and make offerings with the compassionate wish that those offerings might benefit others, not thinking, “may this offering benefit ME.”

All schools of Buddhism are based on the idea of letting go of self-grasping and bringing benefit to all sentient beings. You can read books—there are so many available now in English—on the fundamentals of Buddhism and on how to cultivate compassion particularly, if you think these might be of benefit to you. You can try to be ever more pure—meaning purely altruistic—in your intention and actions. Of course, you are generally working in a positive way, but you can consciously recognize that compassionate motivation and enhance and sustain that, so your mind is more open.

Your sponsor, John, is working for others. You are surrounded by all these statues and images of Buddhas. Therefore, you might want to learn a little about Buddhism, and have your intention in harmony with the intention of the sponsor, that same altruism.

The statues here are all buddhas and bodhisattvas—masters who have developed perfect, unwavering compassion. Actually, the buddhas and bodhisattvas are not different from you, because it looks like your mind is compassionate, just as theirs are.

It’s not their bodies that make the buddhas and bodhisattvas worthy of respect. What makes them enlightened is not if they are handsome, pretty, or powerful. It is their mind that is enlightened, which is perfectly peaceful, perfectly compassionate. Liberation from self-centeredness is the real liberation. If we can free ourselves from mental negativity, that is real freedom.

It looks like you guys are already working in that way. That is amazing, beautiful. Thank you.

I have been to Hong Kong, Taiwan, China, India, Nepal—they do have massage in all those places, but not like what you are doing here, with real caring and compassion.

Therefore, I thought that since you are naturally going in the direction of altruism, you might want to take this opportunity to learn about this amazing tradition that the Buddha Shakyamuni taught about how to cultivate compassion and wisdom.

You don't need to be arrogant or uptight or proud. Just try, humbly. If you connect to any of the Buddha's teachings and find them useful, that will benefit you.

In one way, of course, this is none of my business, but one way every time I come to the spa you are so kind to me—you have kind words, and your work on my body is so kind.

You are all very gentle with your work and your speech, it is like being in a flower garden with you all—but you are not uptight, so we can all enjoy and laugh together.

Thank you for having that quality, and I hope that you keep that quality and slowly deepen and strengthen its compassionate basis.

These are just the suggestions of a funky old man.

Thank you again for your kindness.

Good Luck!

Tashi Delek!

