

~From the Archives of Teachings by Venerable Gyatrul Rinpoche~

Relating Skillfully to
Our Lamas, Our Dharma Centers, and Our Own Habits
Spontaneous Teaching on January 3rd, 2013 in Half Moon Bay, California.

Part I

Taking Care—Of the Centers and in Our Own Conduct

Now the centers are improving more and more—Orgyen Dorje Den (O.D.D.), Tashi Chöling, and so on. Thank you. For me, this is the best medicine. This brings long life and benefits both the body and mind.

I hope everyone can continue in this excellent way without any obstacles. I heard you are doing *nyung ne*¹ practice, so that means outerly, innerly, and secretly you are purifying your three doors. That is how we dispel obstacles. There are many different texts that explain the benefits of such practice.

Actually, whether we are doing nyung ne or any other kind of practice, really we have to watch all of our behavior. It doesn't matter whether the action is great or small. You need to understand that all paths have one idea, one goal. What is that? To go for refuge in the Three Jewels, essentially—which includes not only formal refuge itself but making offerings, confessing negativity, purifying obscurations, and accumulating merit.

We should evaluate our own behavior based on understanding this point. In watching our conduct, we should watch to see if we are aligned with that one goal.

The path is this: You watch, check, see your mistakes, and then don't go that way. Then slowly, slowly the path gets straighter and straighter, clearer and clearer. Your conduct gets cleaner and cleaner, more and more effortless. Then it will become more and more

¹ Nyung ne is a practice that involves taking special vows—including fasting—for 24 hours and focusing on intensive dharma practice.

natural for your path to be the path of virtue. If we practice in this way, things will be better and better in the future.

Right now, at O.D.D. everything is clean, outside and inside. The building is clean, the energy is clean and good like it hasn't ever been before, and the people all look like good and decent folks.

It looks like nobody is having a bad attitude these days or ignoring what needs to be done, saying "Not mine!...Not my temple!...Not my problem!" too much.

It looks like people are starting to wake up instead and actually open their eyes!

From thinking about parking spaces, to caring for all the supports of enlightened body, speech, and mind on the property, to making sure there are nice cushions for the sangha, it seems people are standing up. Outside and inside, not just in the temple but in the kitchens and the bedrooms as well, everything is clean. Upstairs, the lama's room is very nice. I don't think we need to push to change things too radically, but if we could soundproof the windows that would be helpful.

The areas for making tormas, ritual activity, and the places to sleep—everything is being taken care of and put in order. That is amazing, so good.

It is so much better than before, when everyone would stand around with their mouths open for months; and then when it was too late, they would finally clumsily try to prepare—almost afterward!—rushing heedlessly and wasting money, making everything difficult and complicated.

If things are already organized and ready to use as they are now, then everyone can do their jobs, functioning nicely. What does that mean? In lots of buildings people are doing different kinds of jobs, working at this and that. But this building, its purpose is to be a place where the dharma can be heard, contemplated, and meditated on. That is what it means to do your job here or for this place to be doing well. It is a place for receiving empowerment,

transmission, and instruction on the profound teachings. That way your qualities can develop.

That is why we hope the Kama empowerments² will happen—that will be pure dharma happening in what is now a nice, clean dharma place, as intended.

~ teaching continues in Part 2...

² “The Kama empowerments” refers to an extensive series of rituals that takes several weeks. At the time of this teaching, Rinpoche was trying to arrange for Venerable Yangthang Tulku Rinpoche to come from Sikkim to bestow them at O.D.D., which did happen later that spring.

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Part 2

Recognizing the Qualities of Our Lamas and Lineage

Regarding our hope that Yangthang Tulku will give the Kama empowerment cycle, we can examine the lineage of the lama himself in order to determine if it is a pure and authentic one or not. Who is the original source of that lineage? The great master Vimalamitra. He was such a sublime being, one can say all empowerments—peaceful, enriching, powerful, and wrathful—were established and accomplished by him. You already understand this, I don't need to even say it. So, the authenticity and power of the lineage is obvious.

The treasures of Vimalamitra's emanation, Dorje Dechen Lingpa, are pure visions, and similarly unmistakable in their potency. Dorje Dechen Lingpa was also known as Dhomang Terchen, "the Great Treasure Revealer of Dhomang," who was a reincarnation of Namkha Jigmed, a renowned Dzogchen master of Sikkim. The master of that lineage and holder of all those treasures is the direct reincarnation of Dorje Dechen Lingpa, Venerable Yangthang Tulku Rinpoche. That great lama, the tulku of the tertön Dorje Dechen Lingpa himself, already came and gave the Rinchen Terdzod there at O.D.D. —that transmission was the lineage of treasures. Now we are hoping he will give the Kama—the unbroken lineage known as the transmission of the Buddha's word—as well as his own lineage of pure visions, the Dorje Dechen Lingpa empowerments, in their entirety. Then you will have *ka*, *ter*, and *dagnang* lineages, all three—the lineages of the Buddha's word, of treasures, and of pure vision.

What you are getting here you couldn't get back in Tibet. It would have been very difficult. You don't have to take my word for it—you can ask any lama. In Tibet, only the greatest lamas and tulkus would have the chance to receive the kinds of transmissions that you have gotten in this foreign country. And look at what kinds of lamas come here to give them—His Holiness Penor Rinpoche, for example, gave so many empowerments and transmissions, including the Namchö. Two or three times, Yangthang Rinpoche has come. And His Holiness Dudjom Rinpoche, of course.

By their kindness you have received so many connections to the authentic lineages of the Buddha's teachings and the blessings of such masters as Guru Rinpoche. You can study, contemplate, and meditate on these teachings with complete confidence that they are flawless, untarnished by any mistake. Regarding empowerments and transmissions, you have received so many, great and small. To practice now is the most important thing, the most precious. If you practice single-pointedly, that benefits yourself and benefits others: others receive benefit and you get enlightened!

Therefore, thinking of how precious it is to have the chance to receive such transmissions from such masters, your mind should be filled with joy.

~ teaching continues in Part 3...

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Part 3
Creating Merit and Purifying Our Obscurations

Of course, you don't need someone like me to say all these things, but I am an old geezer and I never shut my mouth. Therefore, I have lots to say to you guys.

Always be mindful to create merit in whatever ways you can. How? Always be generous, without stinginess. Always make offerings that are clean. Don't ignore or waste the possessions, money, or wealth of the sangha. Don't waste your skillful methods or wisdom.

As much as you can, please remember these.

Think about them.

Thank you.

If you accumulate merit, then you will have no obstacles. If you dispel obscurations, then you will have no obstacles. It doesn't have to be something big: Whether the actions are big or small, creating merit and purifying obscurations is what it means to practice the path of right conduct.

Myself, I don't know anything at all. But in this country there are so many books—in English, Chinese, and many other languages—that you do understand a lot about accumulating merit and purifying obscurations. You do have amazing merit to understand these things. If you use your understanding and don't just throw the meaning away, then you can create merit in all situations. Then good things will come to you easily in this life, and in your future lives you will have no obstacles to your study and practice of dharma. Thus, you will be able to swiftly attain buddhahood.

As the first step, we have to go for refuge. What is our refuge? Our refuge is Buddha Shakyamuni, our own buddha for this time. When he was on the path, he first had to practice, too. For incalculable eons, he accumulated merit and purified his obscurations.

And he didn't do it for himself, okay? Look for yourself and see if he had any self-concern. In Nepal you can go to Takmo Lujin, the sacred site where he offered his body to the starving tigress—learn and understand the significance of his actions!

In the teachings on the preliminary practices, it explains the Buddha's qualities—how he developed them, what he did. You can check: These stories are the same whether told in the Kagyu, Sakya, Nyingma, or Gelug teachings. The teachings on how to purify obscurations and how to accumulate merit just as he did are also the same across all the schools. How to benefit yourself and others, in both the short- and long-term, likewise, they all agree.

If you want to learn about purifying obscurations and creating merit, you can read books in English, Chinese, French, Spanish—so many languages! Therefore, how are you gonna say you don't know? That you don't have the opportunity to learn those methods?

~ teaching continues in Part 4...

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Part 4
Masters Like Jeweled Vases Filled with Bodhicitta Nectar

If Yangthang Rinpoche is coming or not, and whether it might be soon or much later, we don't know. But even if he isn't coming, we should still prepare everything. *Some* lama is coming, of that we can be sure. They are coming all the time, again and again, countless lamas!

Look at the tertons, the ones who reveal spiritual treasures—there hasn't been just one. There are the five great tertons corresponding to the five buddha families: Dorje Lingpa in the east, Ratna Lingpa in the south, Pema Lingpa in the west, Karma Lingpa in the north, Sangye Lingpa in the center. Then each one has had so many further emanations all over Tibet.

From Vajrasattva and Garab Dorje to you, the three transmission lineages contain how many lamas, how many emanations and manifestations? Look in the Namchö, for example, and so many other traditions that describe the multitudes of sublime masters, one by one, through the lineage. All of those great beings have come again and again, not just one time, in order to bring benefit to sentient beings.

You can study and contemplate the qualities of the holders of the lineages to see if they are just okey-dokey lamas or not. You can check and see for yourself the qualities of the ones you have been able to meet in this very lifetime: Penor Rinpoche, Yangthang Rinpoche, Dudjom Rinpoche, Khyentse Rinpoche, and others.

All these great masters, outerly, innerly, and secretly, are filled up with compassion for beings. That is why they come. That is why they undertake any action, great or small. They

aren't like you—if we look inside you, it's yucky with self-concern inside and pretty with compassion on the outside. If we look inside them, they are just filled up entirely with bodhicitta, outside and inside the same in being pure. They are like jeweled vases filled with delicious nectar, precious on the outside and the inside, both. Not fake, not lying.

Don't waste any connection you have with them.

Don't waste the opportunity to appreciate these lineages and connect with them.

Be joyful in your chance.

Don't think, "I am busy! I have this and that to do! Such important things are making me so busy!" Actually, you are only busy out of self-interest. But this busyness never brings the success you are hoping for. Your busyness doesn't free your body, speech, and mind from suffering. It only takes you deeper and deeper into samsara.

You have the opportunity in this life, this one chance, to free your three doors from such suffering forever. You have this one chance to attain constant, ultimate joy. You can accumulate merit and purify obscurations, and bring perfect, everlasting benefit to others. You can even experience the results in this very life, having good health and long life and so on.

For generation after generation, the lamas have all agreed on these points. Please consider them carefully when you are deciding how to use your time.

~ teaching continues in Part 5...

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Part 5
Building Merit and Performing Tulku Activity

The Guru Rinpoche statue in Canada, the one at Tashi Chöling, and all the various statues, stupas, and other sacred objects that have been built, whether they belong to outer, inner, or secret categories: When you build these, you build your merit.

That merit is precious. Don't waste it! Only with the power of merit can you free yourself from obstacles, have a long life and good health, take birth in a body that gives you the chance to practice dharma, and in your future lives be able to practice more and more until you become enlightened. I am not saying it is only the opportunity for these Kama empowerments we have been talking about that is precious in terms of creating merit! We have many chances. If you give me one billion dollars or one penny, either way I am happy; but better than either one—best of all, in fact—is to do this: Take your opportunities to make merit.

As I always say, these are not my ideas. All the lamas say not to waste your merit. Long life, wealth, dharma, and worldly success—all the paths, both worldly and spiritual, need merit. Therefore, we need to accumulate virtue and eliminate obscurations.

That is why we need to save the lives of beings—it benefits them and it benefits us at the same time, making merit. But we don't need to help just some of them but not others. It must be equal.

If we want our own body to be free of illness, we need to protect others from harm. If we want vast merit, we need to have vast compassion. The lamas explain what the results of such things are.

Lamas are vast in their compassion; therefore, their presence can benefit a whole country, a whole land. That is the incredible strength of compassion, if we choose to make it like that.

If you want to benefit yourself or others, you need to go for refuge and you need to generate bodhicitta, just as all the masters of the past have done, working for others and ultimately attaining enlightenment. For sentient beings' benefit alone, inconceivable peaceful, enriching, powerful, and wrathful manifestations have appeared. For incalculable eons, the tulkus and bodhisattvas all have come only for that same, single purpose. That is why they have that name, tulku, “enlightened body of emanation”—because they have that job, to emanate for the benefit of beings.

Tulkus don't have to be sparkling. But they do have to have sentient beings as their one-pointed focus, beings' benefit as their sole purpose. As you accumulate merit and purify obscurations, then slowly that becomes your purpose, too. If you are working for the dharma and for sentient beings, then that is tulku activity. There is no question. Other things called 'tulku,' I don't know.

~ teaching concludes in Part 6...

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Part 6
Concluding Advice

But what do I know—I am just an old geezer. I am lazy all day every day, lying down. I worship my bed, it looks like. Don't be like me!

Try, as much as you can, to make merit.

If others or yourself have merit, then rejoice. Be happy, like a dog wagging its tail.

Don't be jealous, or stingy, or just talking blah blah blah. Don't indulge in gossip and slander, or get greedy—"They don't deserve the nicest one! I do!" Avoid all such disgusting ways that we destroy our own merit. Try not to ruin yourself like that. Instead, support each other.

Bodhisattvas don't need to be sparkling. And anyway, they don't care whether they are or aren't. They just need bodhicitta and bodhicitta conduct, that is their job and that is their happiness. Through compassion, they bring themselves the greatest benefit—there is nothing beyond that. They attain buddhahood.

Maybe you don't believe that, though. Maybe instead you argue, "Well, what if I don't attain buddhahood through bodhicitta? Then what do I get?"

Well, maybe you don't believe it, but I think if you work for sentient beings, you *do* attain buddhahood. I think that *is* what you get, because that's what the great masters all say. All the buddhas' emanations agree.

It's not me saying that—I don't know such things. Don't follow me. If you follow me, you will be too late!

Instead, first learn the dharma, then chew it thoroughly through examination, and then apply it in meditation. If you don't study, what do you have to contemplate and examine? If you don't contemplate, how can you meditate? If you don't meditate, what result can you get?

Therefore, please be diligent in these, as much as you can. If we want to benefit ourselves and be free of obstacles, that is how. The real way to benefit yourself is that. If you want to benefit others in any way, small or vast, that is how.

Check for yourself if you have any good fortune or not. We do have good fortune but we don't care. We have the Three Jewels, as well as how many buddhas who have already been liberated? Countless. That's the kind of amazing fortune we have!

Don't just practice with your mouth.

Don't just have faith with your mouth.

Don't be arrogant and stubborn.

Read the life stories of the great masters, appreciate the inconceivable blessings of the Kangyur [the Buddha's words], the Tengyur [the commentaries], and the termas [revealed treasure teachings] of all kinds. These are all the buddhas' teachings. The tertons who revealed those treasures are all the emanations of Guru Rinpoche.

Look at what we have! I don't think we can say we are poor. We have the opportunity to practice and make connections with them. We have the writings of these great masters, their teachings. We have access to their enlightened intent. We can learn it and understand it. We need to appreciate that.

We can have real faith if we know the Buddha's qualities. If we apply ourselves to study, contemplation, and meditation, we can know those qualities. If not, we won't know.

These days we have the chance—but next time? Good luck with that! We have the chance now, but we are always pushing it back, pushing it back. We have the chance but we put it off.

Don't push it back like I do. Being stupid like me means at the time to die, you are empty. Actually, empty would be okay but I have collected so many non-virtues. Now it's too late to study, so I have no chance at understanding. I just watch TV, hang out, just entertainment.

Don't copy me! Okay?

