

~From the Archives of Teachings by Venerable Gyatrul Rinpoche~

On Working for the Dharma, Making Use of this Precious Human Life, and Repaying Our Parents

Teaching given at Guru Rinpoche tsok practice at Tashi Chöling, October 2011.

Part I

Thank You for Working Here

Thank you, everybody, working the whole day and then maybe you only got to eat a half or a quarter of your dinner, and then you all came to tsok. Thank you, thank you.

Why?

Because you are working hard. You are painting, you are putting the roof on two houses. Houses or buildings or whatever: one temple for Guru Rinpoche, one storage building for keeping the center's things. Even Phillip [*Phillip Thomas, who continuously helped with construction on the land from the earliest days*], he thinks he is still young, doing this and that. He is not young too much, sorry!

Maybe he would say he is younger than me, though.

This one [*pointing to Keith LaCoste, who was 25 at the time*]—he is young. Young and handsome, but not slick, though.

If you [*Keith*] are gonna learn, what do you need to know? You need to know what your responsibility is. You have a human precious birth. Your body, speech, and mind—all are human. If you don't learn the dharma, then you will become busy a little. Just a little at first, but here and there busy, busy with samsara. Samsara never ends! You live a million lives, and still it never ends. In samsara, everybody is trying so hard. In the whole country, everywhere people are struggling so much—to get rich-rich and smart-smart.

Nobody has success.

Why?

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~Translated and edited by Shashi Reitz~*

Because we don't have long lives. That is impermanence.

You all think you are young, pretty, and handsome. I don't care!

Actually, I have to care a little bit. You do care lots! You think you are pretty and handsome. I am not those things, so a little bit I am embarrassed.

Your daddy and mommy gave you the opportunity to learn—learn the Buddha, learn the Dharma, learn the Sangha. If you learn and practice these things, then you can pay them back for that inconceivably precious chance, that incredible kindness. To be able to repay one's parents in that way is really pure and clean and powerful. Nothing is more precious than that.

You pay them back by learning, and also by teaching them a little bit. There is really no other way to pay back that debt or that kindness they have shown you. Each country has one or two hundred million rich people in it; but no matter how rich they are, none of them can pay back their mommy and daddy with their money.

Instead, after their parents die, they fight with their brothers and sisters, becoming garbage.

Rather than that, study, learn, and teach pure dharma. You have this life, one opportunity. Just one.

If you think, "I am young, pretty, with a wonderful frizzy head!" —what are you gonna do with that?

Everybody try. Right now learn. Share that, teaching others.

We started the center twenty or thirty years ago, working hard. Look at this guy [pointing to Richard Schwindt, who had been involved in supporting the center since the beginning]. He used to be handsome!

...Sort of.

Now, really...well, I don't want to say 'ugly' because he sponsored this land and worked so hard.

One way, he doesn't have anything to show for all his work, to show his daddy and mommy something that he did. But one way he did the most important thing: Because of what he helped do in this place, we can practice and learn here, and from this place we can then benefit others purely. We can benefit all sentient beings purely. Really benefit them, not just with our mouth. Not just saying 'I love you' with your mouth, which means nothing. That is not pure.

~ teaching continues in Part 2...

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Part 2

Our Parents Gave Us This Most Precious Human Chance

Everybody is saying, why did we get this human body and opportunity?

That is our daddy and mommy's kindness. Because of them, we were born. Then they took care of us. They made it possible for us to go to school, to have the opportunity to learn more and more.

...And then we can teach others and be of benefit.

So how are we gonna pay back our daddy and mommy? With money? Sure, a little, but that's nothing. Working for them, for example—maybe they like that. But, really, if you want to pay back your daddy and mommy, you can learn dharma and then teach. Right now, we think "I do know!" although actually we don't even have a clear idea of what is positive and negative. But we can learn. Thank you to the daddies and mommies for giving your children this opportunity!

Let them learn. Let them practice. Let them teach the dharma. This is your bank. This bank is how you can benefit us, all of us. It can benefit all sentient beings.

But if you think, "My daughter, she needs to work and help me. My son, he needs to do this and that for me"—that is something else again. Especially the umzed [Keith], he looks like maybe he is quite strong and can do lots for you, but still—let him learn. Let him practice. Then your son or daughter really is of benefit.

Try, everybody. You [Keith] are not the only one who has a human precious body — everybody has one. With it you can all pay back your mommies' and daddies' kindness. You can pay back all sentient beings' kindness.

And for yourself, more than a million billion dollars: You can liberate yourself. Our opportunity is more precious than money — look! If we were born in the hot or cold hells, how intensely would we be sick and suffering? That means we would have no freedom for dharma.

What about the hungry ghosts? Same thing. Every moment, how hungry are they? Think about how intense it is possible for their hunger to be. We are hungry for an hour and look how complicated that is, how our struggle and distress are all-consuming. They are starving, and continuously. How many eons upon eons do they starve? You can't liberate yourself as a hungry ghost.

Can we liberate ourselves as an animal? Is enlightenment possible from that realm, in that state of being? No. Not from anywhere in the animal realm.

We are lucky. We are not in any hell, and we were not born as any kind of hungry ghost. Are we animals? No, we are not that kind of sentient being, either.

We have freedom, that is the difference.

Also, we are not jealous gods. We are not like them. Instead, we can liberate ourselves. We have the freedom to practice, so we can learn and practice and be liberated.

Similarly, there are many categories of gods' realms, but nobody is liberated in any of them. Nobody becomes buddha as a god. Only human beings. We can speak and comprehend. We human beings have freedom so, therefore, we can learn and practice and benefit ourselves and others.

~ teaching continues in Part 3...

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Part 3

Don't Waste This Human Life, Don't Waste the Lama's Kindness

First we have to learn how to benefit others.

How can we learn that?

Follow someone. Someone who knows how to do it.

Who is the guy we should follow?

Guru Rinpoche, Buddha Shakyamuni—we have so many enlightened beings we can follow. Thousands of buddhas. They taught the Foundational Vehicle, the Greater Vehicle, and the Vajra Vehicle, the entire path, step by step. Because of their teachings, we can follow them—step by step—and give up our negative things. Buddha doesn't feel the need to lie, for example. We can follow him in that. We can follow him in liberating our negative things, and deepening our positive things.

Among the six realms, we have reached the human realm for the moment. But how long will we stay here? How long can we keep our human realm experience? Do you know how long? For us, reaching 100 years old is a big deal. Who has ever reached 200? Nobody almost. Maybe a buddha.

So, if in that short time we don't go toward the dharma and learn and practice it, then what do we think is going to happen?

If we want to make good use of our opportunity as human beings, we have to follow a pure teacher. Then, to keep from wasting the teacher's compassion, we need to learn and practice pure dharma. That way we don't waste their wisdom. We don't waste their kindness.

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Simultaneously, for ourselves, we aren't wasting our freedom. We don't waste our opportunity to benefit ourselves and others, all sentient beings.

Ani Baba [a nun at Tashi Chöling], she thinks she is handsome. What is she thinking? She's not even a man, how is she gonna be handsome? And Tendar [a young man at the time] thinks he's pretty. Oh God!

Anyway, everybody is rich with opportunity right now.

Do you want to benefit yourself? You need this human body.

Do you want to benefit others? You need this human body.

Why? Because with it, you can follow these amazing teachers.

We do have amazing lineage lamas—Buddha Shakyamuni and these other guys.

Their power comes from their great compassion, their great kindness.

Without great kindness, what kind of powerful would they be? Without compassion, how could they benefit us? Like Qaddafi—do we think that his kind of power and money lets him benefit us the way that the kindness of the buddhas does?

Therefore, wake up! If you want to benefit your relatives, your friends, your “all sentient beings,” this is the time. If you don't do it now, and try your best, then you will lose this opportunity. If you waste this chance, it won't matter how smart you are, or how great a scholar—useless!

~ teaching continues in Part 4...

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Part 4

Relying on Our Lineage Masters and Supporting Each Other

Because of their kindness, the buddhas and bodhisattvas have emanated in so many beneficial forms—as statues, stupas, and books, for example. You have some of these things here.

But more than that, you have the lineage lamas.

There is that Gelugpa, the Dalai Lama, an embodiment of Chenrezig and Guru Rinpoche—he is in your lineage. Penor Rinpoche, Dudjom Rinpoche, Buddha Shakyamuni—you have amazing lineage masters!

And Vajrasattva or whatever.

What are you going to do with them?

Are you going to put them in a corner, put them in that Cozy Corner, and then not follow them?

Are you going to go the opposite way instead?

Isn't it that we're crazy, doing such things?

Come back into your own nature. You do have wisdom. You do have everything.

Don't hesitate—starting right now, your choices and actions should be determined by the teachings on karma, which all of you have heard, most of you many times. Those precious explanations from our lineage masters clarify what is positive and what is negative, which reveals the right way forward. Put them into practice without delay. Don't procrastinate any longer!

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I'm not saying you have to do everything tonight. I am saying: Try, everyone.

I didn't say just drop everything tonight!

Anyway, Ani Baba¹ won't drop everything—she is holding it, like her drum stick.

Try, everybody. If you push it back, put it off, it will be too late.

I came here to ask Richard [Schwindt] what he is, because I am an ugly short person but not like him! And Matthew [Small] is Funky Army—ask him why. And Mr. Kay [Kay Henry], she got that wonderful opposite-of-herself name from her teacher, Khenpo Namdrol.

Anyway, everybody has a daughter or a son or a friend or whatever who needs help, some kind of support, at least a little something you can do for them. Try to help them that way.

Try to help your parents as well.

Don't go off some other way, ignoring everybody. That's upside-down. It looks like mostly everybody goes the upside-down way.

We don't need to go that way. Instead, support each other. In some countries, they really do this, taking care of each other. You Americans need to think in this way, too. You are still human beings.

This one, though [David Gordon], he is a human noodle. Human udon, but actually still not a capable noodle, either. And Wei [Yang] thinks she is Chinese, something special. And the Japanese guy [Michael Osugi], he thinks, "I am sushi." And Tuprig Dorje, he thinks, "I am Tibetan." So what? "I don't smell." Just pooping, no smell, is that it? And Ngawang Drolma, she thinks, "I am Nyingmapa. And pretty. And smart." But she walks upside down. Uh-oh. That's embarrassing!

~ teaching concludes in Part 5...

¹ Ani Baba, Richard Schwindt, Matthew Small, Kay Henry, David Gordon, Wei Yang, Tuprig Dorje, and Ngawang Drolma are all students that Rinpoche names who were present in the temple at the time.

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Part 5

Understanding Refuge and Offering to the Workers

Try, everybody. In this life we got to come together—you guys had prayers or karma or merit, so we shared something here, receiving all the lamas' and buddhas' blessings. If we use this lifetime nicely, that way we will benefit sentient beings.

Using this life nicely means not “my way.”

Buddha's way. Shakyamuni's way. Guru Rinpoche's way. Until now, you have learned but it looks like you are still chewing. Still chewing on what you have learned.

My life, it is finished. Today or tomorrow, I'm gonna split.

Do I have the freedom to stay?

No.

“Where will you go?” someone asked me.

My big mouth! I said, “Hell. Or hungry ghost.”

“Why?”

Guilty. I am guilty. Because I didn't practice or learn. I tell you, really, I have had amazing teachers—Penor Rinpoche and Dudjom Rinpoche, and lamas in India and Tibet. Everything—I wasted it. Please don't follow my tradition.

The deepest samaya breaker still sits on high places, then has to go to the deepest hell because they didn't respect the Foundational Vehicle, or the Great Vehicle, or the Vajra Vehicle.

Don't copy me. Don't follow my style.

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You do have so many lamas who are excellent examples to follow: the Dalai Lama, the Karmapa, Dudjom Rinpoche, Penor Rinpoche, Khyentse Rinpoche, the two Holinesses in the Sakya lineage, and many others. These are real buddhas. I swear to Buddha, they are buddhas! These lamas, they don't cheat you. You cheat yourself—*they* don't lie to you.

Or if you didn't meet those lamas, here we have statues, thangkas, everything. For what? To sell? No. For taking refuge. We do know who is positive, who is negative, who is going to lie to us or cheat us. One way, we do know which one we can take refuge in.

[He chuckles.] We know that negative means you guys—you guys are all negative!

Anyway, try. Stage by stage. If you offer one drop of water to each other, that is still a dharma offering. These days you are offering tea to the workers here. People are cooking food, many different styles. Maybe this benefits the workers because they get something delicious. But I don't think they are that desperate! We are making the offering because we are saving our merit, purifying our obscurations.

These guys here, working so hard day and night—why are they working like that? Are they getting money? No. In fact, they are paying! So, what are they getting? If they have faith and trust, then they are getting merit. They are saving the merit and purifying the obscurations—that way there is benefit.

Every time, all the time, in all situations, we need to chew on refuge: Namo Buddhaya, Namo Dharmaya, Namo Sanghaya stuff. Chew on it means think about it, again and again, deeper and deeper. But we don't chew it, so we don't understand how important it is to learn and practice the dharma. We work for MY son, MY daughter, MY husband, MY wife—those are the ones we think are so important. How many years in this life until now, and how many past lifetimes and generations have we worked like that—what did we get? Nothing. Stuck.

Now you have a little opportunity to move, to save up merit and purify negativity. So, thank you. Thank you for not wasting it. Now I won't waste, either...won't waste your time.

What do you think, Cozy Corner lady? You think I am crazy?

You are too late! Starting from a long time ago, I was already crazy crazy, dumb dumb.

Good night.

Dream nicely.

See you tomorrow.

