

## *2014 End of the Year Teachings*

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Are you forgetting about your sentient beings? We need to remember sentient beings every day. We need to cultivate kindness and compassion every day, every hour, every second. It doesn't cost anything! You don't have to lift anything heavy. Just remember. Look at His Holiness the Dalai Lama, going here and there every year to every country without ever slowing down, complaining, or getting tired. Is this because he is worried about making a good living? Does he not have enough to eat, enough to drink, or clothes to wear, that he is so busy with his job? Does he have many places to go because he thinks he is such an important person? No. It is to benefit all sentient beings. Whoever has interest in the dharma, or who has the wish to study and practice, His Holiness goes here and there trying to help them. Help them do what? Attain the states of liberation and omniscience, attain the dharmakaya for their own ultimate benefit and the rupakaya for others'. The Dalai Lama is not the only one--think of all the great masters who have come in the past and still are coming now: the Karmapa, H.H. Dudjom Rinpoche, H.H. Penor Rinpoche and Yangthang Rinpoche, the Sakya throneholders, and so on. Great masters from every tradition are working tirelessly everywhere to benefit beings however they can.

The blessing and compassion of such masters as these means that just to see them, hear of them, and so forth--to make any connection to them at all--is to be liberated. They are like many leaves of the same great tree. It doesn't matter which tradition they belong to or what school claims them for its own. They are all realized masters, realizing the same nature, and they are all performing the same enlightened activities to benefit beings. To have any kind of bias or prejudice about the masters of different schools, or about the teachings of the different schools themselves, is completely upside-down. If you study, contemplate, and meditate on the dharma until you reach the ultimate result, buddhahood itself, then you can say "I am Mahayana!" "I am Vajrayana!" "I am not Sakya!" or whatever you want. But for ordinary beings, this is like saying, "The leaves on the east side of the tree are better than the ones on the west!" Or, "I am only on the south side of the tree"! It is one tree, with one kind of leaf, and one kind of blossom, and one kind of fruit. An apple tree produces apples all over, in every direction, right? If the tree produces delicious apples, they will be delicious whether they are on the east side of the tree or the west side, right? Then what is the problem? Why is there all this bias and feeling special?

We should be happy that we have our leaves, and our flowers, and our apples! That is our merit--our connection to the dharma. To think we are good and others are

bad, and so forth, all our blah blah blah sectarianism, is just bringing ordinary attachment and aversion into the pure dharma.

Try as hard as you can to eliminate both attachment to "me" and "mine" and aversion to "other" from your mindstream. That will be of great benefit. If you want a long life, you need to reduce your attachment and aversion, your likes and dislikes. Actually, if you really want a long life, take refuge in the Three Jewels sincerely, reduce the power of your attachment and aversion, and be at ease in your mind. Then your life can be long. Illnesses will diminish. That is how great the benefit of reducing your attachment and aversion is! Likewise, if you need merit, if you want to make progress on your path, be successful in your work, or benefit others, you need to reduce your attachment and aversion.

What are we so attached to, anyway? What we have aversion to now we used to be attached to, except something happened and we couldn't maintain that attachment so now we hate that person. Or you used to hate someone but then some little things changed and now you are almost dying for them, saying "I love you" a million times. What good are our attachment or aversion, our love or hate, doing? Does aversion bring you success and wonderful things? I think all aversion brings us is World War Two and maybe World War Three, with bombs everywhere--what's the benefit in that? Why do we bomb ourselves with the attachment bomb and the aversion bomb? The only result we bring ourselves is that we suffer continuously in samsara. The result we bring others is also suffering. Enough's enough! The buddhas and all these enlightened masters are trying to tell us "Enough's enough!" about our causes of suffering, attachment and aversion, but usually we don't want to listen. If we reduce our attachment and aversion, slowly we can free ourselves from samsara, bringing ourselves the best result--the end of our suffering--and then slowly bring others this best result, too.

Where do we start? First we take the vows of refuge. Why do we even go for refuge? Before we consider even the Buddha, Dharma, and Sangha we are taking refuge in, what does it mean to take refuge at all? You are asking for protection. You are not saying, "Buddha, do you think I am rich and handsome?" Or, "Buddha, look! I am so smart and pretty!" No. You are saying, "Buddha, help me! Protect me, please!" You need help and all sentient beings need help. Visualize all of you together, supplicating all the buddhas in the ten directions for their help and protection. All beings need their sufferings and fears soothed, all need a long life and good health, all need freedom from obstacles so that they can swiftly be liberated from samsara and attain omniscience. That is why you are going for refuge--not to get rich or so you can get a lot of go-go ladies or playboys.

No matter how lofty your position, even if you are the highest in all America or king of the world, still you are going to die. Life is impermanent. Nobody can take their hard-earned money, possessions, or accomplishments in this life with them when they die. If you are driven to amass wealth, amass the wealth of merit! Look at all the rich

countries--how much wealth China has, or the Mongolian kings of the past, or Germany. The upper classes of those countries are unimaginably rich. Even if you become wealthy, already there are tons of wealthy people in the world. What good will wealth do you? They got there first! So many people are wealthy--it benefits nothing. Not only that, have any of these rich leaders been able to take their wealth with them when they die? No. Or look at some of these formerly happy, peaceful countries, such as Nepal. They killed their own king and many of his family, and turned the country upside down. For what? For power, position, and wealth. For these temporary material advantages they made themselves the slaves of desire, hatred, and ignorance. Therefore ordinary wealth is really useless, except as a cause of non-virtue. Instead of putting all your hard work and patience into becoming a rich guy or a rich lady, try to become rich in merit. That is something you can take with you. That will be of benefit. Everything that you want, all worldly success and success in dharma, will only come about through merit. The vast aspirations of all buddhas and bodhisattvas are only accomplished through the power of merit, and our wishes can only be fulfilled the same way.

If you ask, what is our path? It is to attain what the buddhas, bodhisattvas, and realized masters have attained. How do we do that? We need to do what they did. How did they accumulate merit? How did they purify their negativity? How did they study and internalize the dharma? How did they generate bodhicitta? We can learn what they did, and then we can do it ourselves. We have that freedom. Everyone wants "my freedom!"--how could there be any greater freedom than the freedom to bring ourselves what we want, and to do the same for others? Isn't the real freedom the freedom to benefit ourselves? Isn't the real freedom to be free of samsara's sufferings? If we need freedom, this is it. This is how to benefit yourself: learn, contemplate, and meditate on the dharma, slowly, slowly.

Therefore, we take refuge in the Three Jewels. There is no better way to benefit yourself or to begin being of benefit to others than by taking refuge in the Three Jewels. All the buddhas have taken refuge in the Three Jewels as they have practiced on the path, as have all the great bodhisattvas, learned scholars, and accomplished masters of the past, and all the genuine tulkus, lineage holders, and sincere scholars today. They have not taken refuge in the eight worldly dharmas, but in the Three Jewels. Why? They are not stupid. They know what is a stable, trustworthy refuge and what is not. The scholars study the buddhas' dharma, not the eight worldly dharmas. If you just study the eight worldly dharmas, you might get some temporary success, but in the long run since you lack awareness of virtue and non-virtue, you will become rich only in the causes of lower rebirth. Knowing this, all realized beings take refuge in the Three Jewels, eyes open. They know there are no better refuge objects in all the world.

Learning the dharma means understanding for yourself more and more deeply why this is so. Learning the dharma is learning the qualities of the objects of refuge, the Three Jewels. Why is it important to know their qualities? First, so that we can

appreciate them. They all three have inconceivable outer, inner, and secret qualities; none are lacking. If we know something of their qualities, we will have proper regard for them and won't treat them like a newspaper or something to be thrown away. We won't treat them like a garbage can. We will care for their representations and practice their meaning. That will benefit ourselves and others very effectively--far surpassing what we could do with ordinary wealth, position, or power.

Second, knowing the Three Jewels' qualities more clearly, we will become more humble. "Study liberates the mindstream," as the saying goes. In this case, "the mindstream" means the ordinary mind filled with attachment, aversion, and delusion. Our mindstreams are bloated with pride, ego, and self-concern. Study slowly subdues this demon of ego, so the mind becomes soft and flexible instead. That is what it means to be "liberated" here. The mind becomes sweet like milk, soft like melting butter, pretty like a flower. The ordinary mind can pretend to be like milk, butter, or a flower, but if you look somewhere else for a minute then suddenly it shows its nature: ego like lava, desire and hatred like fire, with no faith in the Three Jewels anywhere to be found. If you genuinely become more humble through study and increased understanding, you don't have to pretend. Those qualities naturally emerge. Naturally you are more considerate and kind to others.

Look at the Jewel of the Buddha: for three incalculable eons he accumulated merit and purified his negativity. Was this because he was hoping for a good salary? Did he not have a nice shopping center nearby where he could buy all the wonderful things he needed? No. It wasn't out of self-concern at all. It was only to bring benefit to others. It is the same story for all the buddhas. Likewise the dharma was only taught in order to bring benefit: sutra, tantra, Hinayana, Mahayana, or Vajrayana, it makes no difference. The various vehicles and different classes of teachings are all the same in existing only to help all beings. Their variety is so great because beings are so diverse in their merit and kind. It is not that so-called "high" teachings such as Vajrayana are only taught to benefit the beings that the teacher likes, or only the handsome and pretty ones, or only the smart ones. Any vehicle or any teaching is intended for whatever beings can benefit from it. That is what it means to be a 'suitable vessel' for a particular teaching. To be an unsuitable vessel for dzogchen, the Great Perfection teachings, or this or that esoteric transmission, means that such teachings would fail to benefit you, and perhaps even prove harmful. It has nothing to do with being a good or bad person, or smart or dumb, or pretty or ugly. It also has nothing to do with some flaw in the teachings themselves.

That reminds me of another thing I have been wanting to say: Sometimes people misinterpret when a great lama refuses to give a particular empowerment or transmission. Some people think that it means that the lama is stingy or prejudiced. A great lama, a pure lineage holder, will not be either stingy or prejudiced. The reason such a being would refuse to give a particular transmission is for the protection of the

disciples. If the disciples lack the foundation of adequate merit and qualities, sometimes certain transmissions will not be of benefit to them--in fact, can be the very cause of their rebirth in the lower realms because the students are ill-suited to receive such teachings and misunderstand them. This is why some teachings and transmissions are kept secret, because of the danger to those unsuited to make use of them, not out of any other consideration, such as a fault in the teachings themselves.

What would make a person unable to benefit from profound transmissions? If they have not developed any qualities through practicing the ngondro or studying any dharma, and have no faith in the profound Secret Mantra, then they will have no foundation for receiving the Secret Mantra transmissions. They will not understand the qualities of the objects of refuge, nor will they understand the reasons to take sentient beings as their objects of compassion. Without respect for authentic lineages or faith in the refuge objects, they will not be able to benefit from the Mantrayana teachings, and if they fall into misinterpretation of the profound instructions, they can create the causes of lower rebirth. Therefore, please don't misunderstand the great masters on this point, thinking they are stingy like you are! They are thinking of the protection of the students and what is the most skillful method concerning their dharma path. They are not filled with self-concern or any other motivation, if they are a pure lama. But don't take my word for it--check and see what the qualified lineage masters say on the subject. You don't have to believe my mumblings. You are intelligent and discriminating, and you can learn and decide for yourselves.

Also on the subject of the Secret Mantra and the Great Perfection, I am not saying that you don't need to know dzogchen teachings. We do need dzogchen--it is the fundamental nature! We need to know what real dzogchen is--not something that sounds high, not some fancy stuff. It is the enlightened mind of all the buddhas. It is the qualities of enlightened mind, enlightened speech, enlightened body, enlightened activities. That is dzogchen. What is first in dzogchen practice? Bodhicitta. Sincerely taking refuge, in Buddha, Dharma, and Sangha. Do you have those two well cultivated in your mind? You can check your own mind. If you know well the qualities of the buddhas' body, speech, and mind, and receive their blessing, there is no other dzogchen beyond that. All the bodhisattvas achieved realization through the power of their bodhicitta, and all buddhas attained enlightenment the same way, by relying on sentient beings as the objects of their compassion. So of course there is no dzogchen that can surpass cultivating bodhicitta. It is the power that brings about the ultimate result: dharmakaya for oneself and rupakaya for others. Bodhicitta is not something superficial, like telling someone "I love you." It is quite profound, with many layers going deeper and deeper. If we are Buddhists, we should have compassion and serve others. That means to serve all others equally! There aren't some beings who should be helped and others who don't need it. Don't fall into bias or favoritism. That is like ordinary desire and attachment. Bodhicitta is not that shallow. Bodhicitta is also quite

powerful. As you cultivate it, it will rid your mindstream of illness and suffering, bring you a long life and great merit, and make all circumstances harmonious and conducive on your path.

Without bodhicitta, not only dzogchen but all the dharma you do is just like the rattling of a bagful of horns--sheep horns, yak horns, cow horns, and deer horns all mixed together and making a big ruckus. It makes a loud noise but has no substance; it is just a show; you are just playing dharma. If we are reciting practices but without compassion, it is just the recitation of rattling horns. If we are listening to the teachings but proudly, without bodhicitta, it is like we are listening to rattling horns, our brain dried up and useless. Then we are not engaging in the dharma, we are contributing to destroying it--destroying ourselves and destroying our path. We think we are so smart because we are Chinese, or Tibetan, or American, or Indian. Who do we think is so smart? The self. But it is the self that is continuously reborn in samsara. What kind of smart is that? If we were really smart, we would practice sincerely, with bodhicitta, which brings benefit to us wherever we are in the six realms. That is the really smart thing to do.

As much as we have tamed our mindstream and have genuine humility and compassion, that is how peaceful we will be, wherever we go. If we want peace, we need to first recognize and then slowly eliminate our negativity, afflictions, and the five poisons. We aren't stuck with our passions and poisons. We make them; we can give them up. We say, "No, I can't give them up!" But nobody has made them but ourselves; nobody can stop making them but ourselves. If they are transformed, they become the five wisdoms. You don't lose them. Their nature is revealed as the five kayas, the five inconceivable pure realms. These are the results of cultivating bodhicitta. All buddhas are the fruit of bodhicitta. So, please, cultivate bodhicitta sincerely as much as you can.

You begin in cultivating bodhicitta by cultivating compassion and loving-kindness. If you have love for the Three Jewels, but not for sentient beings, then you are missing something. Half is missing. That is the sign of your lack of understanding of the dharma. It is through compassion for beings that all the buddhas became enlightened. The Three Jewels are only to benefit sentient beings. Not for business, or for go-gos' or playboys' purposes. If beings go for refuge in the Three Jewels, they can be protected from samsara's sufferings, because that is the Three Jewels' reason for being. Therefore, we can't ignore sentient beings. We must take them as our objects of compassion and loving kindness. If you are on a boat in the middle of the ocean, why not love the people on the boat with you? But you don't need to tell everyone you love them. You don't need to advertise it. You don't need to go your MY WAY and show everyone your butt to show how special you are.

In the future, leave off with all the MY WAY. What is our way? It is our way to be born in samsara. Our way is the way of delusion, isn't it? If you really want to go the buddhas' way, it is this: Bodhicitta. The wish to benefit others. And faith. If you have no

faith and no bodhicitta, then what? You have no more hope than an animal does of being liberated in this life. Therefore, in order not to waste your human time, cultivate bodhicitta.

A bodhisattva is one with bodhicitta, which means they are not just a funky guy but a hero, one with great courage. What does that mean? Because of the strength of their bodhicitta, they are able to endure what cannot be endured. They are able to persevere even when it seems they can go no further. This is not because they are giant and plastic like Arnold Schwarzenegger. It is because of the power of their compassion. They have the armor of patience. In the place of ordinary beings' weapons of ignorance, desire, and hatred, they have the tree of compassion with its trunk of loving-kindness and the blossoms and fruit of bodhicitta slowly coming. When we speak of attaining buddhahood, it is as a bodhisattva, with the qualities of a hero. That is the kind of being the Buddha was--not running around, naked, not caring, showing his butt like the hippies. He was a great bodhisattva, a compassion hero and a wisdom hero. He completely rid himself of the two obscurations and all habits of them. How could he eliminate these obscurations, which are so strong and deep? By the power of bodhicitta and faith. Faith in whom? The Three Jewels. Unchanging, sincere faith. And pure bodhicitta towards all beings impartially. If you want to find out more about bodhicitta--what it is, how to cultivate it, what the benefits of cultivating it are, what results it will bring--you can read *The Guide to the Bodhisattva Way of Life*, it is in English. There are many other wonderful and beautiful teachings on bodhicitta, but this book encompasses them all concisely.

Even dzogchen is included, in the chapter on wisdom. Everything is there--mahayana, great madhyamika, emptiness. This is not dumb. This is the enlightened mind of all the buddhas. The enlightened mind of all the buddhas has always been free of the two obscurations and their habits; this is what emptiness means, dzogchen's emptiness. Without the eighty-four thousand categories of afflictions, everything is peaceful, soft, and smooth. That is the quality of the buddhas and bodhisattvas. The qualities of enlightened body, speech, mind, qualities, and activities are like the ornaments, branches, or blossoms of bodhicitta. Pure, authentic bodhicitta, when perfected, is dzogchen--there is nothing in dzogchen beyond that. Some people say, "I am a dzogchen practitioner--don't disturb me!" Give me a break! Nothing can disturb dzogchen! There is no need to say "I am!" and there's no need to say "don't disturb!" either! Look at such masters as Milarepa: he didn't say, "Don't disturb me!" He didn't say, "I am a dzogchen practitioner," either, pretending to be something. There are slight differences in names among the schools--dzogchen, mahamudra, great madhyamika, and so on--but they all refer to the enlightened mind of all buddhas. There are vast teachings on the inconceivable qualities of enlightened body, enlightened speech, and enlightened mind. These three of course are of one nature. The Great Perfection is the utter perfection of that nature. One rests in that; there is no reason to push or pull or

contrive anything. Everything is open and perfectly relaxed, so finally sentient beings can stop working so hard at their afflictions and get some rest.

Ordinary beings' mindstreams are filled with the afflictions and attachment and aversion, obsessed with "Me! Me!" and so they can never relax. "I need some rest!" everyone is always saying. If you need some rest, give up your attachment, aversion, and delusion. At least slow them down, if you need rest. Then rest and relaxation can come. The pure land actually is when you cultivate bodhicitta, then there is nothing that is not okay, and this all is a pure land. Then all beings are pure beings, everywhere is a pure land, everything is enjoyable, everything is a pleasure. The afflictions in our mindstream are the impurity; material things are not impure. They didn't do anything! Trees are naturally growing up, the land is naturally there, flat or with mountains or whatever. Grass and flowers are all growing naturally, water is flowing. None of them said, "I am impure!"

If you wonder what makes everything impure, look at the passions in your own mindstream. If you need things to be clean, wash the negativity from your mindstream. If you want to be pretty or handsome, smart or gentle, if you need peace, or to slow down, or to rest finally, or if you want to lie down in flowers and need a wonderful garden, you need to wash the negativity from your mindstream. It is our self-grasping that we need to slowly free ourselves from if we want peace, our attachment and aversion. Whatever we want or need, all is fulfilled with the attainment of liberation and omniscience. How do we reach that state? By slowly eliminating our attachment and aversion through the power of bodhicitta. Sincerely taking refuge and cultivating pure bodhicitta will accomplish everything--there is nothing you need to look to beyond those. Nothing has qualities surpassing those. One attains the peace of freedom from attachment--"peace" meaning the poisons and passions have all been quieted, and "freedom from attachment" meaning one's fixation on samsara finally comes to an end and one is ultimately free of all attachments whatsoever. That is buddhahood. The meaning of this is described in many teachings, which have been translated into English, Chinese, and other languages. Descriptions of the outer, inner, and secret qualities are all available. Read those! Listen to teachings on them!

You don't need to be a great scholar. But you do need to have correct understanding for yourself. Even if you just practice very simply, reciting OM MANI PEME HUNG, still you need to know about Chenrezig. What are his thousand arms and eyes for? Is it just because he is messy and distracted, that he needs that many? No. They represent his inconceivable qualities--knowing the nature of all things and seeing all things precisely as they appear. The wrathful deities' qualities are the same, as are the peaceful, the male and the female, the gurus and the yidams. "Lama" means "nothing above it" or "above all." Above whom? Above your own poisons. Where did your poisons come from? They came from their seeds, their causes, just like a flower comes from its seed. We created our poisons, and then we have always been so diligent

and painstaking in tending and perpetuating them that we are rich with our crop of poisons, always harvesting it and always planting it again. We work like slaves day and night for our money, power, position, partner, wife, or girlfriend. In the end, we never see the results we are seeking. We find some temporary success in business, but then lose everything. We fall in love and everything is WOW! Our boyfriend or girlfriend is more wonderful than Shakyamuni or Tara or Chenrezig. Then, impermanence strikes: maybe our spouse dies, or maybe--the #1 favorite in America--we get divorced, or something, and then that's it! No more husband, no more wife. We don't need to be liberated, we'll just get divorced! No, I don't think it works that way. Don't try it!

Instead, everybody try to learn the dharma and practice, okay? Everybody try! Everybody is my friend--I am not saying they are my girlfriends and boyfriends. I'm not gay! But it doesn't matter--everybody is my friend, and more than friend. We have all received empowerment, transmission, and instruction from His Holiness the Dalai Lama, the Karmapa, H.H. Dudjom Rinpoche, H.H. Penor Rinpoche, and so many other great lamas. Of course we are friends! We need to act like the brothers and sisters that we are. For myself, I have no qualities. You, who have intelligence and other qualities, don't be proud. Don't show off and boast. Don't be arrogant. Love and respect each other. I'm not saying kiss each other, okay? Don't misunderstand me. Your kissing and hugging is a lie. Don't lie like that, but heart to heart respect each other for all your lives.

If you respect each other well, you will have love for each other, you will be honest with each other, and you will be able to trust each other. That way you can benefit each other. If you don't respect each other, forget about benefitting each other, you will not be able to bring benefit even to yourself. Even in business, if there is no trust, nobody will have any success. Your work will be wasted. As human beings we should respect and trust each other. As Buddhists, we must trust and respect the Three Jewels. We need to trust bodhicitta. If we don't, we are just like dope smokers, and our refuge is nothing more than smoke.

You should respect each other, anyway, because we are none of us in a high position. What is your position? We are all servants. We are all working for the dharma and for sentient beings together. Everyone calls each other "chopon" when they are doing the rituals. Actually, "chopon" means the boss, the leader, master of the ritual activity. Norbu Tsering, who came with Yangthang Rinpoche during the Rinchen Terzod and Kama empowerments, he is a real chopon, as is the monk Tsonдру from Taiwan. Really what you all are is called "choyok," which is the servant or assistant. Of course, everyone likes to be called "chopon," which is fine. Whatever you are called makes no difference; the main point is to do your job well, carefully and mindfully, and recognize that it is your opportunity to accumulate merit and purify your obscurations. That way you are not wasting your chance by being proud or thinking you are

something special. Don't ignore your opportunities. Stay humble. Don't be in a rush to go jumping up on a throne.

It is difficult to receive empowerment from up on a throne. You don't have a throne anyway, but if you have one and think you are going to receive empowerment properly while you sit proudly on your throne, forget it. You get nothing, no empowerment, just non-virtue. If you need a throne, be humble. Conquer your poisons and eliminate your attachment and aversion. That is the real throne, more than a material one a thousand feet high. Practicing the six perfections and having bodhicitta is greater than a throne adorned with diamonds and jewels. The Buddha's throne is not made of gold and diamonds, but of the six perfections. In the future, it is the six perfections that will enable you to dispel your obscurations, to free yourself from samsara's sufferings, bring your own ultimate benefit, the dharmakaya, and the ultimate benefit of others, the rupakaya. Thus have all the buddhas, bodhisattvas, and realized masters of the past taught, and they don't lie, do they? You can read the books for yourself to see what the Buddha and others have said.

They say bodhicitta and faith are indispensable. Without bodhicitta, your pride and hatred will be boundless. Without faith, you will have no trust or respect toward the objects of refuge. You will think they are just like yourself. Pride is the number one enemy. Americans have a lot of pride and jealousy. These have destroyed many dharma centers and caused a lot of broken samaya. Now there is much less pride and jealousy and more harmony. Therefore things are getting better, more stable. In the future, always continue in this way. You don't need to think, "She is not one of our center's people!" "He is not one of us!" That is showing your sectarianism and complete lack of understanding of the dharma teachings. That is the biggest stupid political thing to do. You don't need to lick everybody as if they were so wonderful, and follow exactly what they say without thinking about it, either. There are lots of garbage sellers with no brains! Check carefully for yourself. Respect and watch carefully--then you have the freedom to move forward or back, as needed. You haven't jumped hastily and ended up in the sewer. But don't be sectarian and don't be jealous. Too many dharma centers have gone down because of thoughtless gossip.

I have wasted your time for 40 years, OM BENZAR SATTO HUNG. I prayed, I tried, blindly, dumbly, going everywhere. We did connect to lots of places. Now we have Tashi Choling, O.D.D., Austin, Portland, Montana, Ensenada. It looks like mostly every place is getting okay. For me, everyone has always supported me and taken care of me, since I first arrived in America. Sometimes if someone wanted to conquer me or take something from me there might have been a problem, except that I am just a dumb guy and have nothing, so there was nothing for them to conquer, nothing for them to steal. I am like dust, useless and hopeless, sometimes up and sometimes down, like dust sometimes lands on the table and sometimes in the garbage, but I have lost nothing and gained nothing. I could have told those people that they didn't need to waste their time

trying to get something from someone like me without any qualities or money. The one thing I have been able to get is some little benefit for my students--that is my one success, in inviting great masters for them to connect with, and establishing the centers where they can practice. That is all through the kindness of our gurus, nothing to do with my having any qualities. There have been various obstacles and difficulties for the centers in the past, but now it looks like everything is getting calm and successful. Thank you!

I don't know dharma and I don't have worldly knowledge, either. For me, it's time to go to hell. Why am I going to hell? Because I came to your country and I have done no dharma, I have done nothing useful, just eating and drinking up everything. I have taken and eaten everything, without being careful of what to adopt and reject. That is my karmic debt. But through your kindness, here and there beautiful supports of enlightened body, speech, and mind have been built. If they were built with faith and compassion, then that is of benefit to all sentient beings, including me and all of you. It is of benefit to all who have connection to them, to the dharma teachings, and of course to sentient beings, since whatever benefits the dharma benefits all beings.

Oh, also you should look at our geku, the disciplinarian, Nick the monk. Over the years, many people have thought that he was like a handkerchief or servant and ignored him. One way that doesn't matter--he has lost nothing by it! He is very humble, and has practiced patience with all of it. That is the essence of the six perfections. He always works only for the benefit of the centers and the sangha, whether they are praising him or spitting on him and stepping on his head. He has used his opportunities to accumulate merit and purify his obscurations, to benefit himself and others. That is what each person needs to do. Rather than thinking he is there to be used as your handkerchief, you could use him as your example of how to work humbly and diligently, because that is always his style.

Others, though, seem to have been growing bigger and bigger horns: deer horns, and then moose horns, which are quite heavy, and then even more nasty than that, becoming a porcupine, poking in every direction, or burning everything like lava in Hawaii. As for others, lots of ladies want to sell their butts, and lots of men want to show off their butts. That is worse than dogs or pigs! I think we need to do better than that. Please, try to be real human beings and not demons.

How are we like demons? If you have pride in your mindstream, that is the greatest demon. If you are filled with pride, you can't generate bodhicitta--it will be extremely difficult. Faith, too, will be very difficult. You can't have reverence and devotion because you are too busy thinking, "I am something!" So, you see? You have invited a demon into your mindstream. People make a big deal about demons and negative spirits, blah, blah, blah. A demon is nothing other than this: pride and arrogance, having no faith or patience, keeping no discipline, telling nothing but lies. People think a demon is a growling monster with horns. No, no. The real one is in our

mindstream: jealousy, pride, the passions, desire, ignorance itself. Therefore we need to study and contemplate the teachings, decreasing the passions and poisons and increasing our compassion, understanding, and faith. These qualities of compassion and so on are our friends and helpers, the opposite of demons and ghosts. If you cultivate bodhicitta well, the blessings of all the buddhas and bodhisattvas will be with you. If you have faith in the Three Jewels, their blessings will come to you. If you don't have faith, you receive nothing. The Three Jewels don't care if you say that you love them or hate them. But on your part if you wish that their blessings will be able to enter your mindstream, you need to have faith. If you wish to be able to benefit sentient beings, you need bodhicitta. There is no passion or poison that is more powerful than bodhicitta. I am not a scholar, I don't know anything myself, but all the lamas say such things.

It is because we have no discipline that our pride is so strong in our minds, or that any of our poisons have us under their command. On this subject, I have been wanting to say that it is excellent to read and study the Vinaya teachings, the teachings on discipline. These describe the difference between virtue and non-virtue, and explain clearly how to eliminate one's faults. They lay out plainly the trainings if one is a layperson, novice, or fully ordained member of the sangha. They describe all the faults and errors that can arise for us as Buddhists, having taken the vow of refuge. Even the right way to wear one's clothes and belt, how to eat and drink, how to respect the elderly--everything is explained. Someone who knows and works to follow these instructions has a special quality. They are peaceful. Knowing nothing of these, your mind is wild and your behavior is animal-like, stupid. Knowing the Vinaya, you will know how to eliminate your faults. First you have to recognize them, whatever they are. Then slowly you will be able to rid yourself of them. That is the essence of the Vinaya teachings. Many people think that to study and follow the instructions in the Vinaya means you have to become fully ordained. That is not at all the case. Some people are sort of too humble, thinking it would be wrong to study the Vinaya if they are not fully ordained and so they never look at them because they don't want to break a rule. That is just wrong understanding. To them I say, you don't need to be afraid! Others don't want to study the Vinaya because they are proud or aggressive about the fact that they are not ordained, they don't want to be involved in "that stuff," or they think that they don't need discipline in order to follow the Buddha. To them I say, that is stupid! Don't destroy yourself with that kind of ego trip. The Vinaya teachings are the basic instructions on how everyone can keep their discipline purely and thus purify negativity and accumulate merit, regardless of their level of ordination.

Of course, the teachings on the trainings and conduct of the ordained are also included, those particular methods for eliminating faults and achieving individual liberation. "Individual" means oneself; "liberation" means to be liberated from one's faults, to be able to get rid of them or free yourself from them. First, of course, you have

to recognize your own failings and negativity, otherwise how can you get rid of them? If you don't know if you have faults or qualities, or which is which, then you are like a growling monster or a moose with its giant shameless horns. Whether or not you are a monk or nun, if you have entered the path of Buddhism you need to be working on seeing and eliminating your faults. You should become more and more peaceful as you train on the path. You should know to prostrate when you enter a temple, and when a lama arrives to teach, and so on. You should know the correct way to sit, talk--each thing. If you know nothing of the Vinaya, then everything is awkward and complicated. You don't know how to sit, where to go, what to do, how to say what you need to say. You are uptight, stuck not being sure what to do. The Vinaya teachings show clearly how to do each thing. They explain what faults are. Without such explanations, of course we aren't going to know these things ourselves. Having received the instructions, however, we can discern our faults for ourselves. Recognizing a fault as such is itself a quality, not a fault.

If you want to see qualities when you look at your mindstream, first see your faults. Then slowly eliminate each one, cultivating good qualities in its place. Then slowly you can see qualities when you look in your mind. Eliminating a fault does not mean cutting it up or something laborious. Just don't do it! Then that fault is gone. You lose nothing. On the contrary, you gain qualities.

Okay, sorry, now I have been talking lies and nonsense for many hours, everything all mixed up like soup, wasting your time. Anyway, you are all much smarter than me, no reason to listen to this funky old man, talking on and on blindly. These are just some things I have been wanting to remember to say, I am just taking my opportunity to talk to you guys. This lady is here, it looks like she is from the CIA with her tape recorder, getting everything. Hopefully she is not recording the smell, too, that would be embarrassing for somebody.

[The morning of Dec. 31st, just before this teaching was sent out, Rinpoche added:] Anyway, Happy New Year tomorrow to all you guys and girls, or ladies and gentleman-- hopefully you are gentle, really! Hopefully you have a good year, not a naughty year or a crazy year. Everybody try, okay?

Tashi delek!

*-Gyatral*

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