

Teaching at the Conclusion of the Bardo Retreat

Venerable Gyatrul Rinpoche

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Each second is a bardo (intermediate state) passing by: first bardo, second bardo, third bardo. There is time and we give it a name. Time is always with us; we can never avoid it. "Bardo" means **that** time. It doesn't mean some other time, it doesn't mean "stuck between," or "something other than our current experience." From karma, the cause, comes the result, which is to wander in samsara. That is the bardo, that is our experience.

Bardos are everywhere. When you sleep, that's a bardo. When you wake, that's a bardo. When you get up, talk, or eat, all of those are bardos.

There are the teachings of the Great Perfection and the Great Seal and the Great Middle Way. There are the teachings of the nine vehicles, including outer, inner, and secret tantra. The Buddha taught all of these, but what is their meaning?

We are in samsara, the world, and the word for "world" in Tibetan is "jigten." "Jig" means destructible, and "ten" means the basis or support. This name is used because everything is impermanent. Each second we are in the world and it is being destroyed; it is disappearing or changing each moment. Who is the support or basis? We are, and we are the ones who are changing. Then there's the outer world, which is also a support, and also subject to destruction and change. This state of change is the bardo. We will be in the bardo until we are enlightened. Whenever we can, we should use our time to listen to, contemplate, and meditate upon the dharma. But if we do these things with the wish to become great scholars or practitioners, then we have gone back to worldly concern.

Just look at the high lamas, the great beings who have graced the world with their presence. Each one has shown impermanence, each one has passed away. Then they come again, and are called "tulku," which means "an intentional emanation." "Tulku" means not merely to have returned, but to have *consciously* returned.

The peaceful, wrathful, powerful, and enriching emanations are all appearing for the sake of bardo sentient beings. Who are bardo sentient beings? Everyone. All sentient beings are wandering in the bardo. They are overpowered by the five poisons and then they wander in the bardo. There are none who do not exist in a bardo. The lamas

manifest for the sake of bardo sentient beings, as do the yidams and the dakinis. Here in the bardo, we see deities, gods, demons, obstacle makers, and many different things. All of these appear to the bardo consciousnesses, the sentient beings. In response to those bardo beings, Shakyamuni Buddha and Guru Rinpoche have countless emanations, as countless as atoms. But we sentient beings are greater in number than that! Actually, “greater” or “lesser” is irrelevant. Sentient beings who have the karma and merit connect with high beings, and by this connection are able to again accumulate merit. By accumulating merit in this and future lives, they can achieve liberation and omniscience, the perfect benefit of self and others.

You might be concerned with making money in order to sustain yourself, or to achieve some kind of worldly status. Will that really benefit you? Look at the American president, or the president of the United Nations. At death, even these exalted positions are not of much benefit. Are they of **no** benefit? It’s hard to say, because bodhisattvas manifest in inconceivable ways to benefit beings.

In this world, high beings emanate according to many different religious traditions. We take these traditions and, through our previous accumulation of negative karma, we twist them and corrupt them with My Way. But there are inconceivable emanations in many traditions, emanations of Buddha, Guru Rinpoche, Vajrasattva, and others. Those are for our benefit.

If you know about each of the bardos, this is number one! Generation stage is complete in this, completion stage is complete, the union of those two is also complete in this. So don’t ignore the bardo teachings, OK? If you recognize, recognize, recognize what is bardo, bardo, bardo, then you are really getting it. Much more than saying “Dzogchen!” – and then spacing out, looking at the sky. Dzogchen is the state of self-arising-ness, the natural state of all phenomena of samsara and nirvana, which has never been confused. This is a permanent state. Recognizing this is the cause for achieving liberation and benefitting others.

You want to go to a pureland? You must recognize your own nature of awareness. To do this, go for refuge in the three jewels. This is your opportunity. Right now you have time. That time is the result of having accumulated vast merit. It is something extremely valuable. Compared to this, a million dollars is just bullshit!

Lots of texts say that the outer world is a pureland. Actually, the outer world *is* the pureland of the five family buddhas – but not knowing this, we see it as sticks and stones. Based on our karma, we can see it as a poisonous tree or a snake: That is our afflictive emotions, our five poisons. If we recognize them, then they are the five

buddha families and their purelands. We don't need a train or a plane or a car to get to the pureland. It is our nature. To find the pureland, we don't have to go far.

Without authentic study and meditation, if we just pretend to know these things, we will remain caught in our own dualistic net. In dzogchen, they talk about *tögal*, "crossing over to spontaneous presence." It doesn't mean to cut the kapala (such as Les' head). It means you recognize awareness, you see the pureland. That is "crossing over." Actually, "crossing over" is there in the preliminary practices. If we internalize them, then we can really cross over. If not, we will just be naughty girls and boys, jumping in the sandbox. If you recognize the bardo, that is "crossing over." If the preliminaries are complete and genuine, then all the bardo teachings are there in them, and all the high teachings such as "crossing over" are there, too. If we are liberated by the preliminaries, that is "crossing over," right? Then we don't need to cut somebody's bald head.

Generation stage is the bardo, completion stage is the bardo, their union is the bardo. Khenpo Namdrol taught lots about generation stage, completion stage, and every stage. Also, you can read this book (*Natural Liberation*). Please read it again and again; it explains each bardo. Don't forget it, don't spit it out, don't just swallow it, but chew it carefully. Digest it! You will know if you are practicing correctly or not, because if you are, the five poisons in your mindstream will decrease, and so will your suffering. You will become more peaceful. What is the noble quality of the five poisons? In their nature, they are the five wisdoms. That is the pureland. That is the nature of all phenomena of samsara and enlightenment.

If you internalize the teachings on the law of cause and effect, and you train in all the bardos, you can recognize the ultimate nature. One who has made that manifest or stable is a "siddha" or "accomplished master." An accomplished master is not a crazy person chasing stupid ladies. An accomplished master has mastery over all phenomena of samsara and enlightenment as all-pervasive purity. These days, we easily confuse the external trappings of an accomplished master for an actual accomplished master.

Slowly, slowly train. Some of you are monks or nuns, and that's really about examining the cause of being born in samsara. Actually, ordained or not, everybody should examine this. What is the cause of being born in samsara? The five poisons: ignorance, desire, anger, pride, and jealousy. Gradually learn about these causes.

Shakyamuni Buddha had no wife. Is that because he got a divorce? Was he fighting with his wife like we do, with attachment, aversion, and delusion? No. He didn't do that. He saw samsara's nature, and he saw that all our problems come from the afflictive emotions, which are the five poisons based on desire. He left his vast

kingdom, wonderful son, and extraordinary dakini wife. He didn't say, "I've had enough! I'm throwing them in the garbage!" He just left, left it behind, let it be. And he rested in meditative stabilization. He didn't rest like us. We say, "I am meditating!" – and then we lock in, latch on. What are we holding? We're just constipated.

In this book (referring to prayers recited during the bardo retreat), in the lineage prayer, it describes our inconceivable lineage lamas. You should follow them, not me. These are high beings, emanations of Shakyamuni and Guru Rinpoche. What do they teach? They teach the six bardos.

They teach that the three jewels are meaningful. They teach that the eight worldly concerns are not meaningful. This doesn't mean you have to get angry at the eight worldly concerns. They won't harm you if you know their nature. In fact, the true nature of all phenomena of samsara and nirvana is already present. If we see it, we will understand that it is a bardo, which is dharmata, the nature of phenomena. Through the bardo teachings, through the Yeshe Lama teachings, and through "crossing over," we can gradually be liberated. The nature of all phenomena goes beyond the impure characteristics of samsara. The meanings of generation stage, completion stage, and crossing over are included in that.

We wander in the bardo of attachment, aversion, and ignorance, the bardo of My Way, for lifetime after lifetime, sinking ourselves deeper into the six realms by not knowing how to give up the five poisons.

For me, America is my bardo. My qualities and faults have been painfully apparent as I have wandered here. I don't know the language, not even the alphabet; I don't know how to get along or relate to Americans; and I don't know what to accept or reject. I have been struggling from 1972 until now. If you don't believe me, you can ask Ani Legshe, because she was there. Why have I been struggling? Am I guilty? Well, yes, I am. I wander in samsara because I am guilty. Here in America, my bardo, I have been tasting hot, cold, sweet, sour, and so many things up until now.

Now, I request that you don't waste your chance. Don't waste the Dalai Lama's compassionate blessings. What you got today, here at this retreat, is the kindness of the Dalai Lama, the Karmapa, and Dudjom Rinpoche. Here, many great lamas have given many empowerments, transmissions, and teachings, even very rare transmissions which you wouldn't have been able to receive in Tibet.

The kindness of Dudjom Rinpoche, Berotsana's emanation, began this. Then, Penor Rinpoche, Yangthang Tulku Rinpoche, and others continued it by giving so many

empowerments, transmissions, and teachings. Khenpo Namdrol gave detailed great perfection teachings. You have received extraordinary dharma blessings from many high lamas!

Trungpa Rinpoche was an amazing lama. I am not gonna boast and say he was “my friend!” But I knew him a bit. I saw him here in the West when the Karmapa was staying in New York and I was in Maryland. I went to see the Karmapa, and at that time I saw Trungpa Rinpoche. Everyone said he had some kind of special secret. I don’t know what that was, but I saw that he was smoking and drinking, and I said to him, “You didn’t smoke and drink when we were in India. What happened?” He said, “True, but in this country, according to their tradition, you need to drink and smoke. So if I do it, then we are the same. Then they can relate to me. Without that, we can’t relate. One way, I am destroying myself. I won’t live long like this. But my intention is to benefit them.” Then I saw, he was right.

Also, he used the Karmapa’s name to inspire his students. He kept saying, the Karmapa is coming, we need to do this or that for the center, we need to build such-and-such, we need to prepare this way, the Karmapa wants this, he will like that. Trungpa said, “I might be destroying myself with drinking and smoking, but we’ve invited the Karmapa and he will see me, he will help me. My life will be short, but I have no regrets because I’ve accomplished the purpose of the teachings a little.”

When I went to his place in Nova Scotia, there were no statues, no thangkas, no books. There was just one Amitabha statue outside in the garden. He said, “I let them give me strong liquor, then I teach. They think it’s me talking, my own crazy wisdom. Then they accept it. Other than that, I can’t “teach” right now. I can’t call it the Buddha’s or Guru Rinpoche’s teaching.”

I said, “Wow, you have amazing patience.”

So you can see, Trungpa Rinpoche was not an ordinary person at all, but a sacred being.

In contrast to him, most of us lamas are just fighting, saying, “He didn’t listen to me! She didn’t listen!” And yelling, “Feed me!” This is demon’s behavior, not the conduct of a high lama.

You should supplicate to your lineage masters. Pray to the Dalai Lama! I am not a Gelugpa, but I follow Buddhism, without bias. I have great respect for all the traditions, such as Sakya, Kagyu, Gelug, Nyingma, and Jonang. I respect their qualities, and at the same time, I know I have my own karma and my own connection. We must know our

connection, know our own family. We shouldn't be constantly changing our family, today and tomorrow, first honest, then a thief, then a liar, each day changing.

Your karma is here (pointing to the Guru Rinpoche statue). You should read the books about Guru Rinpoche's life story – and there is even a movie!

Les, thank you for leading this bardo retreat. Please continue this, whenever you can. It is your offering to the three jewels, your chance to accumulate merit and purify obscurations. You are doing your job nicely, not saying, "I am a lama, I am this, I am that!" These days, lots of lamas need a throne, with brocade and many special things. For us, the students, to arrange such a throne is a chance to accumulate merit and increase our faith. But for the lama to need a throne, well, that's not pure enough.

We have the authentic dharma that we've received from Penor Rinpoche, Dudjom Rinpoche, the Dalai Lama, the Karmapa, Yangthang Tulku Rinpoche, Khenpo Namdrol, and others. We must use that to accumulate merit and wisdom and purify negativity, as we can. This isn't to benefit the lama. The lama already has qualities. His qualities are an inconceivable blessing to us, and his speech, the jewel of the dharma, is also an inconceivable blessing. Your purification and your merit come from that.

Please, continue to study these bardo teachings! Don't put the book on a shelf in the corner and think, "The bardo retreat is something I did once."

Some of you have offered chandeliers and different offerings. This is a wonderful way you have accumulated merit. Thank you. You are very kind, accumulating merit and purifying obscurations for yourself, and this will also benefit others in the same way. Until buddhahood, we need to be benefitting ourselves and benefitting others. We have to help each other. That is better than twisting the dharma to My Way. If you are buddhist, then you have dharma brothers and sisters, and you should try to respect them, without thinking who is high and who is low. Actually, there is no high or low in the spontaneously present nature of things. Whether we are high or low now, we must train in dharma, and by doing so achieve the state of liberation and complete omniscience, which is without high or low.

The best way to benefit yourself or others is to listen to, contemplate, and meditate upon the dharma, and to help each other do so. Until you have tamed the afflictive emotions in your own mindstream, forget about relieving the suffering or taming the poisons of other sentient beings! You will just be pouring oil on the inferno of your own negative emotions. That's why we need to bring dharma into our minds with study and meditation. Through this process, our own afflictions will gradually subside and we

will slowly gain the capacity to benefit others. That is the true goal of being buddhist. I don't know if you are buddhist or not; it's not my business. But if you are, that should be your goal. If you think you can benefit others just by hugging them, without taming your mind, they are gonna spit on you.

The Geku, our disciplinarian, Nick, is here day and night working. He takes care of Tashi Choling, and he will do anything for it. He is a monk, and he is really trying to follow buddhism. You guys, please follow him. Please support him. Hopefully, he's not going to say, "Give me brandy or a cigar!" If he does that, you can spank him! But otherwise, help him. It's not just his job!

Please learn Guru Rinpoche's life story. It will help you to see how this is a gradual process, stage by stage. We don't need to jump, in one day, bourgeois. Nobody will accept that. We need a mommy and daddy, we need to slowly train. We can learn, stage by stage. If you want to benefit yourself, you need to learn and practice. If you have learned carefully, then you will understand what you are practicing. You will understand your connection. Not like a restaurant, where you're not exactly sure what you're gonna get.

Americans are smart, but we are also a little shallow. We need to go to the bottom of the stairs, not try to jump to the top. An airplane flies so high, but you need an airport to get there.

You can help sentient beings, if your mind is kind, not uptight or stingy.

In the future if you can maintain the bardo retreat every year, that would be wonderful! Don't think, "They gonna pay me how much?" There's no hourly rate.

Thank you, everyone, for your money and energy. I don't want anything. I just want you to learn, practice, and keep harmony. That's what will benefit you!

I am not rich. I was born in Gyalrong, a dumb country. Everybody knows that Gyalrong people are very simple. My family was poor, and I was born in a strange way, they say, in a bag (amniotic sac).

Shut up and put up, learn, practice, and teach. When you are becoming a teacher, don't pop up. That's not a real teacher. If you pop up, saying "I am something!" then eat shit!

Please, you guys, try to do everything you can to engage with the dharma. Help each other and respect each other. Everyone has the buddha nature, so there's no reason to

pop up. So what? Is New Zealand buddha nature higher than American buddha nature? Give me a break. They are all lower than Colectine Valley buddha nature! In the future, keep harmony. This is your yidam commitment practice: harmony! The real Buddhists never say, "My Way, This Way." Like the doctors in Canada, they can't do much to get rich because it's not private money.

Help sentient beings, help your brothers and sisters. We need the dharma center because it supports us. And, right now it looks like you are supporting the center, saving merit, and cleansing obscurations, step by step. It's not your geku's problem or your teacher's problem. We each have plenty of problems, so we need to cleanse obscurations and save merit. I don't care if you are Canadian. So what? We need harmony. That means love each other, not hugging ladies. We love to say, "I'm gonna die for you," or "you have taken care of me my whole life so I love you!" Give me a break!

If you need love, go to the buddha, dharma, and sangha. They won't cheat you. Even a baby is shaky and slowly stands up, learning to walk. That is a sign that we need to stand up, too. Babies don't know good and bad; they could eat poison and die. In the same way, we don't know right from wrong, so we need to learn. Don't put these things aside. I heard a million things, but I didn't put them in my heart and head because everyone was always saying, "you are a tulku," making a big deal. Did the lamas cheat me? No. I screwed myself up. The lamas held my hand, they held me with their blessing. I can't blame them at all. My root lamas, such as Dudjom Rinpoche, were emanations of Berotsana and Bimalamitra. If you are put in with a group of buddhas, a group of Guru Rinpoche's emanations, like I was, then you won't change or make progress. Why? Because I already thought I was something special, part of the "tulku" club. But it means nothing. You have to watch yourself, you have to know where you are and be your own teacher.

If you wear the robes of the Buddha, you have to know their meaning. Shakyamuni Buddha's robes mean that you have discipline with you. You are of Shakyamuni's order. Then whatever you are doing, it is part of Shakyamuni Buddha's activity. Therefore, if he gave something up, why don't we want to give it up? If he didn't use that, why would we have success using that? "Individual liberation," Hinayana, means liberating yourself. Hinayana, the "Lesser Vehicle," doesn't mean low or unimportant, it means the first step. Once you've learned that, then you can build Mahayana upon that. "Mahayana," the "Greater Vehicle," is a big name, wow! But you need to cleanse yourself, give up the liar, cheater, and then you can benefit others in a real way (not like me). Then if you need something more swift or more powerful, with more wisdom, you

can go to Vajrayana and ask for help. What is the first stage of Vajrayana? All aspects of Vajrayana begin with ngondro, the preliminary practices.

You think Vajrayana is special? Vajrayana is special, Mahayana is special, Hinayana is special. Come on, you think these three are different? For all of these, first we must have objects of refuge: the Buddha, Dharma, and Sangha. Those never change. Is the Buddha only Shakyamuni? No, there are countless billions of buddhas. Shakyamuni Buddha is easy for us to connect with because of our karma, our opportunity. What is the Dharma? The words of Shakyamuni? Can we trust him? His teachings have many layers. For the Sangha, does that mean these strange ladies and guys, monks and nuns? Sangha has lots of meanings; it includes much more than just the yellow robes. It doesn't mean you must have a yellow robe or white robe or green robe. Don't get mixed up, OK? Some people think, "I am a ngakpa (mantra practitioner), so I can do whatever I want, even things that Buddha said to avoid, I can do those too!" A ngakpa is the most respected, the highest, because of holding all the blessings and initiations. A ngakpa is not respected because of his or her long hair, white robe, thigh bone trumpet, or many husbands or wives. Give me a break! Stay calm and clean, please. However you dress is wonderful, but painting the outside of the building doesn't change the building.

First we must appreciate Shakyamuni Buddha, and try to follow him. Then at least we won't screw ourselves up. The lamas don't teach us to be a ngakpa today, a monk tomorrow, and later something else. I wish we could be liberated through that!

Therefore, check yourself, check where you are gonna step. Check, teach yourself. You don't need to be uptight or upset, to hug or kiss. Slowly, slowly, just be humble. If you pop up, then you will make a mistake! You will break your leg and screw up. Whether you are a lay practitioner, ordained, or ngakpa, all of those are categories of discipline. We must have discipline. Without discipline, we aren't Buddhist at all.

Tashi Delek!

-Gyatral

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