

2014 Vajrakilaya Retreat--Fourth Teaching

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I want to tell you something. You have time now. You are none of you ninety years old like I am. You are all young. People say, I'm sixty, or fifty, or forty--I'm too old to practice! I'll tell you something--do you still have functioning eyes and ears and a brain? That means still you can practice. When you really get old, then all your faculties will become sunken, dull. Then you will have no choice: Even if you want to practice, it won't work, because nothing will function. Right now everything works, but you don't want to practice. How can we be human beings and still be so stupid? We are not even animals, but it looks like we are worse than animals in our stubbornness. When we are functioning, we don't want to benefit ourselves; and then when we no longer function, we just cry about our wasted chances. Congratulations! Good job with your precious human opportunity! And although this is how we live our lives, we still manage to think we are so smart! I think that's a little bit embarrassing.

When you really get old--not just pretending to be old as an excuse--your body won't work and your mind won't work either; but right now, when your faculties are still perfect, you avoid practice by giving priority to your desires, your jealousy, your attachment, and your ego with its endless needs. You enslave yourself to your three poisons and toil in their service, making all your choices in deference to them. Being thus constantly reinforced and enhanced by our efforts, our poisons are like ever greater and greater waves coming in, and we are constantly jumping headfirst into them. "I need another thing! I need something else! I need more! I need it again!" Even when people support you, still you want more and more. However much you get, though, you end up with nothing. Tough luck! No matter how much you get, still you are never satisfied. If you had all the wealth in the world, still you wouldn't be satisfied. If you had all the power in the world, still you wouldn't be satisfied. Why? Because you haven't liberated yourself from samsara; you haven't liberated yourself from your attachment and aversion.

What is binding us in samsara? Is it some person? No. It is our attachment. What is attachment? It isn't only desire for sex or delicious food. Whether you are experiencing acute desire or not, attachment and desire are still with you. Desire really means the great thought of self: I exist! That is the essence of attachment. Because of the self, there is attachment to what is held close to the self. Because there is 'me,' there is 'mine.' There is attachment to the self and those close to the self; there is aversion to others who are against the self. That doesn't work!

There is never going to be a time in samsara when you are satisfied. You can't be satisfied by your desires or your aversion, no matter how long your life or how great your good fortune. Practice is the antidote to desire and attachment, it is the antidote to hatred and jealousy, and it is even the antidote to the big one that underlies them all: delusion. Our time is going swiftly and our attachment is still quite strong, our hatred still burns quite hot, and our delusion still covers up everything. Wake up, okay? Do you still want your samsaric trips? Is that the best you have? Is that where you want to put your energy and focus, your precious life force? Your faculties are sharp and working clearly. Do you want to use them to serve your poisons again--is that how you want to prepare for your next life? Or use them to serve the dharma and sentient beings? You are still young--you still have that choice. I hope you don't waste it!

Tashi Delek!

-Gyatrul

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