

Who's Gonna Die First?

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February 25th, 2016

There are four of us sitting here: one, two, three, four. Which one of us is gonna die first? Is she gonna die first? Or is *she* gonna die first? Or (pointing at himself) is he gonna die first?

"Sure, he will die first," you think. "He is old and sick." No, no! Don't think like that! It could be any one of us. We are not marked or numbered with a particular order for death, based on our outer attributes.

Everyone's mother and father are dying – I hear news of many people losing their parents and loved ones. So many people are dying continuously, but still nobody thinks, "I am gonna die." Each person, please think about the fact that your own death is coming! Think about death, and practice!

Practice what? Practice buddha, dharma, and sangha. We have the three jewels, we have Chenrezig, we have Vajrasattva, we have Guru Rinpoche, and we have Tara. In fact, we have Red Tara, Green Tara, Blue Tara, Black Tara, White Tara, and a whole bunch of Taras! We have a bunch of Chenrezigs, with many styles and names. We have so many Vajrasattvas and Vajrakilayas and all kinds of buddhas.

How are we going to practice? What is an easy way? Say, "OM MANI PADME HUNG." That is Chenrezig's mantra. His speech is all the buddhas' speech. His body is all the buddhas' body. His compassion is all the buddhas' compassion. In fact, all the buddhas' body, speech, mind, qualities, and activities: Chenrezig embodies them all. Knowing this, then we pray! That kind of practice will benefit ourselves and benefit sentient beings.

When we say, "OM BENZAR SATO HUNG," Vajrasattva's body is cleansing our outer, inner, and secret obscurations. How does he cleanse us? Does he wash us? No. He does it with blessings. We are blessed by liberation through seeing, hearing, recalling, and touching, and then everything becomes Vajrasattva's or Chenrezig's blessing. Then we have that buddha's protection one hundred percent.

Without that, do we have power? I don't know. Without that, is anybody going to protect us? I don't know. Therefore, every time say, "OM AH HUNG BENZAR GURU

PEMA SIDDHI HUNG” or “OM MANI PADME HUNG.” Say anything, any mantra! You can also say, “NAMO BUDDHAYA, NAMO DHARMAYA, NAMO SANGHAYA.” That’s simple. “OM BENZAR SATO HUNG” is simple too. We can practice like that, in a simple way, no big deal. We have no excuse!

But we ignore that side of things as if it were the garbage can, and we look for something else, something fancy. Why are we compelled to lie to ourselves and cheat ourselves like that? Is it because we don’t know what is important? We are not that dumb. But we *are* too flashy. Therefore, we need more honesty, first with ourselves and then with other sentient beings. If you are honest with yourself, then you can be honest with other sentient beings. If you are not honest with yourself, then uh-uh. Doesn’t work.

We need honesty, we need carefulness, and we need to respect our own good situation – our chance to practice. We can practice by focusing on Chenrezig’s outer physical qualities, inner physical qualities, and his qualities of speech and mind, too. We can supplicate to him and his qualities. Likewise, we can recognize and supplicate to Vajrasattva, Buddha Shakyamuni, and all the buddhas. We can simply say, “I take refuge in the buddha, I take refuge in the dharma, I take refuge in the sangha.” And we can look at the thangkas and statues.

When you see images or representations of buddhas, you don’t need to buy them, call them, or grab them. Just recognize them and their attributes. They have the power of liberation through seeing. That means, if you see them with your eye, it makes a connection that brings liberation. They have the power of liberation through hearing, which means, if you hear their names, such as Guru Rinpoche’s name, you can be liberated through that connection. They also have the power of liberation through contact, through taste, and through experience. Stage by stage, they will benefit you and liberate you.

Each of us will die. Therefore, everybody pray. Practice. Don’t gossip. Don’t slander. Don’t be proud. And, don’t show how stupid you can be. We have the perfect opportunity, yet still we are proud to be dumb.

We don’t need politics garbage. People think, “I am smart, I do know politics.” But politicians, oh, ho, ho, they screw themselves up, they turn themselves upside down. If you think, “I can cheat my dharma sister or my dharma brothers,” that’s no good.

Instead, learn from each other. Ask questions, even questions about tiny things, like “what is the name of that buddha?” or “what is this buddha holding?” Don’t be lazy in teaching and don’t be lazy in learning. If you are lazy then you will become stupid like me.

Tashi delek!

-Gyatral

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