

On Connection and Trust

Venerable Gyatrul Rinpoche

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These thangkas and statues at the dharma centers and in our homes are so expensive to buy and sometimes hard to take care of – you might say they are kind of a hassle. Why bother? But if we have them, then people can see them. When they see them, it makes a connection that wasn't there before. When they see them, then they can also hear about who is depicted, and that makes a connection, too. These are connections to a lineage that is thousands of years old, reaching all the way back to Shakyamuni Buddha. In the thangkas they can see different buddhas, whether the buddha is a he or a she, and how it looks. They can understand the qualities of the buddha from its picture. Then slowly they can learn more about it and learn to practice that buddha. Or even if they don't practice, just seeing it is "liberation through seeing." Also, the first time they see it, even if they don't have a strong instant connection, as long as they don't have wrong view, it will be a neutral or slight connection and can develop. Then slowly, slowly, as they see more and hear more, they become familiar. Once they are more used to it, it becomes more and more meaningful.

It is the same in everyday life. The first time you see someone, you see they are a human being but you don't know them. Then slowly you get to know them, that guy or that lady, and perhaps they become your neighbor, your colleague, or your employee. Once you get to know them, you can be very comfortable together.

Another example would be the airport, if you travel a lot. The first few times you travel, you don't know anybody; but after a few trips, you get to know the ticket seller at the gate and you start to trust him or her. Once you've spent many hours in the plane, you get to know the steward or stewardess, and then you can talk with him or her more easily and ask for what you need. Today is more easy than yesterday, tomorrow is more easy than today. You don't have to do prostrations to them or anything, you just are more easy and comfortable with them. Easy for you to ask, easy for you to get things. Same with a bus, a train, and even a taxi.

Once you get to know people, then you say, "Hi, buddy," or "Hi, partner," and then you can joke around with them. As a stranger, if you just put yourself forward that way without knowing them, the other person feels uncomfortable, they don't know what to say. You don't know what to say. Then it is easy to become like an animal, dumb. Instead, we can connect, slowly, slowly, and then we can become comfortable together.

I have gone to almost every country. I didn't connect much with the Russians or the Italians. The French, they are strange guys: first you connect with them, then you can fight with them. Indians, one way I can speak their language a little bit, so then it's easy to connect.

Just like that, we can say, "Oh, that buddha, he did that. Oh, this buddha, he has this style." We can learn the history of each buddha and what they did, how long they worked to become enlightened and serve beings. What is the benefit of that? Before, when you had no connection, you had no one to pray to when you needed help. You had no hope. But now, if you have some connection, then you can engage with these guys, the buddhas, when you need help. When you are sick or in a dangerous situation, when you need something, you can pray to them and they will protect you. When it's time to die, you can pray and they can guide you.

But we have to take our opportunity now to connect, to become familiar as much as we can with our refuges. Then, in difficult situations, we can think, "Buddha is gonna protect me!" If we pray with faith and conviction, it makes our minds relax more. We connect through faith. If we have no faith, no trust, then it's hard to connect at those moments.

On a worldly level, if you don't know someone, then when you ask him to do something, maybe he reacts and doesn't want to help you. Or if you ask his permission to do something, again he might react negatively or get upset. But if you connect to someone and slowly, slowly you get to know and trust each other, then you can easily ask him to do things and he can easily ask you.

If you don't trust a person, then he can't help you. If you don't trust anyone, no one can help you. If you have a connection with and trust someone, then he can benefit you. And it's the same with the buddhas.

You don't have to be berserk with blind faith, just be reasonable. Have trust, don't cheat others, and be peaceful. If you want to be happy, you need to be honest. If you want others to trust you, don't be a smart aleck. Calm down.

My teacher and my guru, they told me to be honest and truthful, and have faith. I try to follow that. But honesty is difficult! Still, we have to try. So everybody try, okay?

Tashi delek!

-Gyatral

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