

On Lama Sonam's Teaching at O.D.D. on Ritual

Venerable Gyatrul Rinpoche

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Thank you to Lama Sonam for coming to O.D.D. to teach us. That is wonderful, and he does know all the Tersar ritual very well, so everybody can learn from him without hesitation. He is like our daddy and mommy, he can teach us everything like that.

Thank you to everybody who worked so hard to support his teachings, too. Supporting the teachers and the teachings, that is our chance to accumulate merit and purify negativity. That is not just an ordinary job.

Thank you to all the people who came to take advantage of this opportunity to hear the dharma—that is really using the dharma center for its intended purpose and relying on your teachers in the proper way. That way, we don't waste our own merit, our chance to hear the teachings, and we don't waste our teachers' time. We need to learn from Lama Sonam as much as possible.

They say this time he taught about *drupchen*, the more complicated and strict form of group retreat. If you know what drupchen is for, you will care about it. Most people don't care because they don't know. They don't know the reason for it, they don't know the benefits and qualities of that kind of practice, so then they think it's not important or just some Tibetan trip. Actually, that is why you need to learn, so you can understand the powerful blessings not only of drupchen but of all the different rituals and practices. These are not just somebody's idea. These are not made up by some ordinary person. They are the wisdom treasures of His Holiness Dudjom Rinpoche and other great tertons. They saw these directly and then wrote them down—they are not just somebody's lie.

When you learn about drupchen or any kind of generation stage practice, everything is included there—the qualities of enlightened body, speech, mind, qualities, and activities. The more you know about how to do the ritual and the meaning of it, your trust in those qualities gets deeper and deeper. When your faith gets deeper and deeper, you become more and more open and you can practice purely and receive blessings.

Hopefully people understand that, when they come to practice or they come to such teachings, they are not just going to a coffee shop, just tasting the coffee or tea or beer. They talk about the taste but they don't want to get the meaning. We need to get the real meaning of the practice. That means don't just taste it and swallow it right away. Don't just taste it and spit it out if you think it's yucky according to your own idea and phenomena. We need to taste it again and again. If it's sweet, we need to know why it's

sweet. If it's sour like somebody's nasty face, we need to know why it's sour. We need to check, not just go our MY WAY and either throw the deity away or try to make it ordinary like yourself. The deity, the celestial palace, the pure land, the mantra—these are not our own idea. We can't just do whatever we want. We shouldn't try to change them. We need to learn about them, they don't need to learn about us. We need to fit ourselves to them, not try to make them fit to us. If you like them or don't like them, so what? That's not your business. This is the pure vision of Dudjom Rinpoche, which is how he is trying to help us with our dumb brain. But mostly we don't want it, like kicking our mommy or daddy, thinking that we know better.

When you learn about the qualities of the mandala, the deity, and each piece, then you are sort of shocked: "Oh! I didn't know it was like that! I thought it was like my own idea." No, no, no—it's nothing like your own idea. That idea is blocking you. That is just your own dumb brain's garbage. That is exactly our obstacle: We think we know, and we want to do it MY WAY. Slow down, listen to the teachings—they tell you exactly how to do it.

Everybody needs these teachings. Try not to be arrogant, thinking you don't need them or thinking you already know them. None of us are enlightened, which means none of us already know the teachings. Even if you think you've heard the teaching before, you need to hear it again. Maybe you get something new from it, some new taste, then you think, "That's interesting!" Each one of those "interesting" things is really going to benefit you—slowly, slowly, piece by piece, that is how your understanding grows up.

Learning about drupchen and ritual are good, but in the future also request Lama Sonam to teach about how to take care of someone's body when they die, step by step, what to do with the corpse. Learn about how you might do slightly different things whether the person is young or old, male or female, an ordinary person or ordained, if they are a lama and what kind of lama. Learn from the beginning, stage by stage, so then the more you learn you can really establish it, like having good ground to plant a tree in, for example. Knowing how to take care of the dead is our job, too—not just drupchen and mandalas and fancy stuff. We need to learn the good and the bad, both. Learn how to take care of a lama's body, and what is appropriate for different levels of lamas. Learn about what they did when Lama Tharchin passed away. Some lamas might want to be burned, or buried, or given to vultures. Some say to just throw them in a river or ocean, no big deal. Learn what is suitable and what to do—whether there's a difference in putting someone's body high or low in a cemetery, for example.

Also, you should learn about phowa—how to practice it, how to do it in a group, what you can do if you don't know phowa itself, and so on. We need all these pieces. Please don't ignore them.

Anyway, keep squeezing Lama Sonam for his knowledge. His body is small, like you could put him in your pocket, but his knowledge is quite juicy.

Thank you, Lama Sonam, for your teachings and for supporting us. Thank you, everybody, for receiving the teachings this week – and don't waste them. Don't put them in a corner or keep them in a closet. Use what you received, and in the future, then you can add to that bank account. Don't go backwards, okay?

Tashi delek!

-Gyatrul