

On Appreciating the Qualities of Our Lamas and the Three Jewels (Part 2)

Venerable Gyatrul Rinpoche

Excerpts from teachings given during a brief visit with a group of students in Half Moon Bay, California

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Rinpoche asked if one of the visitors was guilty, then said: Actually we are all guilty!

He asked if another had a gun, which he didn't. Rinpoche said it was because he had no guts.

Now we all need to have guts. We all need to stand up. How do we need to stand up? We do need a gun. Which gun do we need? We need the gun of the Three Jewels. That is your gun and that is your helper. That is your protector. The Three Jewels are your protector in this life and they are your protector in future lives. From lifetime to lifetime, in all your many lives until buddhahood, your only protectors are the Three Jewels. You know this more than me.

These Three Jewels, they don't lie. Therefore, you shouldn't lie to them. If you do, you will end up like something nobody wants to look at. The Three Jewels, they do not lie to us, but we always lie to them. Please don't do this. Please, as much as you can, just have faith and devotion. Don't lie to the Three Jewels. Don't give up the Three Jewels. Never give them up.

The Three Jewels are Buddha, Dharma, and Sangha. Isn't that right? Some of you do know. Some of you should know! Some of you, how many years have you been learning and studying? Therefore, you should know by now that the Three Jewels are Buddha, Dharma, and Sangha. Don't forget these!

When we say "Buddha," do we need to go to China or Taiwan to get ourselves that Buddha? No. We don't need to go anywhere. You yourself have the Buddha. You already have the buddhanature. Nobody lacks buddhanature. Nobody doesn't have it.

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We all have the buddhanature. All sentient beings have the buddhanature. All of us here, each one of us has the buddhanature.

And among sentient beings, we are those who have a connection with dharma. And even among those with a connection with dharma, we are those who are followers of Guru Rinpoche.

Who was Guru Rinpoche? Who were his disciples? His disciples included the renowned twenty-five great ones, the “king and subjects,” and their manifestations as the 108 great treasure revealers down through history. These lamas are your very gurus. I’m not kidding. Dudjom Rinpoche, Penor Rinpoche—they are listed among these luminaries. All your lamas, they have connections to these masters. The Karmapa, he is not something shallow or something small, either. These real tulkus—such as Dudjom Rinpoche, Penor Rinpoche, Yangthang Rinpoche, and so on—they are emanations of past enlightened masters, and inconceivable present manifestations in their own right. We should know and understand their qualities. This way our faith and devotion in them will increase, and this will lay the basis for us to understand and practice the dharma very well.

Look at Yangthang Tulku Rinpoche. He is the reincarnation of the great tertön Dorje Dechen Lingpa, who revealed so many termas and so many terma substances—an inconceivable lama, an inconceivable, undisputed master of our time.

We always need to recall the qualities of all the gurus: recall their qualities, and have faith and devotion. Then what do we need to do? Practice ngöndro, the preliminaries. We need to receive teachings and instructions so we know what these preliminaries are, starting with refuge and then bodhicitta...you all know the drill! If you don’t know, you need to ask. If you do know, you need to help others who maybe don’t. Don’t just go jumping here and there, ignoring those around you whose understanding is less than yours. Help them! This way everybody is benefiting each other. This way, all together, all of our qualities will increase, little by little.

Whenever you are listening to a teacher explaining the dharma, you shouldn’t be thinking about the teacher: “Is this person handsome? Is she pretty? This one who is teaching the dharma, are they rich or are they poor?”

That is not your business! What is our business? Is it really our business if the one teaching the dharma is handsome or pretty? If he is handsome, so what? He’s not for sale! If she’s pretty, so what? She’s not here to cheat somebody. So, please, don’t make that mistake.

Whether the lama is high or low, fat or skinny, rich or poor makes absolutely no difference. Some of the lamas who have come to our different dharma centers, such as O.D.D. and Tashi Choling, are lamas of the highest caliber. They have been incarnations of buddhas and bodhisattvas, tulkus with inconceivable qualities. Their whole purpose is to make connections with and bring benefit to beings. Their job is to come in order to benefit us. What is our job? Our job, in turn, is to have faith. We really need to have

faith, and we will have faith if we hear, contemplate, and meditate on the dharma, always more and more deeply.

It doesn't matter where you received teachings—Tashi Choling, O.D.D., Portland, or wherever. The point is you need to put them into practice. Whether the lama was male or female, or was handsome or pretty, has nothing to do with it. That is not your business. Our business is to learn the dharma; and then learning it, to contemplate it; and then we need to meditate on it. That's our business! Pretty, handsome, rich, or smart has nothing to do with it. Don't follow that. Don't try to go that way. That's the American dharma samsara learning teaching style that the hippies started from long ago, 30 or 50 years ago. Buddhism doesn't have that.

Everybody, please try. Try to be clean, and listen with faith and trust. However much you can, please try. Listen well; and then, having listened well, you can contemplate well; and then, having contemplated well, you can meditate well. But if you listen and contemplate well without ever getting around to the practice or meditation, then what's going to be the result? What's going to be the benefit? Just garbage. Unless you die or unless you go crazy, you need to practice—practice as well as you can, as much as you can.

Tashi delek!

-Gyatral