

On Each Person's Role in the Sangha

Including Announcement of O.D.D.'s Geku

Venerable Gyatrul Rinpoche

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I asked Angie to be the geku (disciplinarian) for O.D.D. a few months ago. I heard that she is really standing up and doing that, trying to watch everything and keep everything nicely, step by step. I heard she is working hard and trying honestly. Therefore, I say thank you! We don't have a large community of ordained, we don't have a lot of monks and lamas here—if so, we might choose one of them to be the geku. But we have only Jigmed and Lama Drimed, not a large group. Maybe it is good right now for our geku to be a Westerner, too.

To be the geku is just another opportunity to be a servant of the sangha. You are serving the Buddha, Dharma, and Sangha. We can serve all sentient beings in that way, since we are serving the dharma and that benefits all. For oneself, one is also saving merit and cleansing away obscurations. Now, does this mean I am saying that these things are the geku's job alone? No. Everyone has the opportunity to serve the Three Jewels, and everyone has the opportunity to benefit themselves and others by accumulating merit and purifying negativity. Each of us has our own job in the sangha. Our business is that job -- our *own* job, not other people's job or other people's business. Do you think you don't have a job just because you don't have the name of "geku," "treasurer," or "secretary"? No, no. That is wrong thinking. Each person has the job of supporting and helping the dharma center and supporting and helping the sangha, however we can and without indulging in or insisting on our own trips.

Am I saying this to benefit myself? Am I saying this so that everyone will take care of MY center? No. I don't need a center. The center is not mine—it is yours, all of yours. It is for you. It is for your benefit, for you to make use of to benefit yourself. It is also for you to take care of, so that it can continue to be of benefit to others. That is the only reason to have a center. Not for any one person. I am not telling you to take care of MY center to benefit ME. I am asking you, please—my request is to please take care of YOUR center, to benefit YOU and all sentient beings with you. Please use the center to accumulate merit and purify negativity. That is why it is there! That is why all the great lamas have come and blessed it, again and again!

That is why I request everyone again and again to keep harmony and not to get involved in gossip, slander, or politics. I tell you these things again and again. Sometimes I tell you in a very nasty way because that is the habit of my nasty mouth. Maybe you don't like it when I yell at you, but I don't care. Keeping harmony and avoiding politics are more important, I don't care if you want to hear about it or not! Anyway, if you listen or not, that's your business. If you want to purify your negativity

in this life, then you need to listen. If you want to accumulate merit, then you need to listen. If you want to relate to the dharma center properly, and be helpful to the sangha, treating them like the Jewel of the Sangha which they are, not just treating them like toilet paper, then you need to listen. But if you listen or not, that's up to you.

Right now I am up at Tashi Choling and I can see that everybody is trying—trying to be helpful and keep harmony, the same thing that you guys are trying to do down at O.D.D. I say thank you to everybody for that.

Here at Tashi Choling we have the old geku, Nick; there at O.D.D. you have the new geku, Angie. Whether it's the old geku or the new geku, we need to listen to them. Their job is to watch everything and to help us by telling us when something maybe isn't right, or if we need to do something different, or to help keep us from screwing up. That is their job. That is how they serve the sangha. We need to recognize and appreciate what they are doing.

We are not little children. Little children are one way innocent and one way naughty, but both ways they don't want to listen to their parents. They say, "No, Mommy! I want to do it my way!" Or they say, "No, daddy, I'm not going to listen to you!" We are not that innocent. We are not that stupid, either. But we are maybe naughty, stubborn, wanting to do things our own way. Therefore, some people don't want to listen to the geku. Please don't grow horns like this. It shows you don't understand how to serve Buddha, Dharma, and Sangha. The gekus are trying to serve the Three Jewels by helping us do things the right way. We need to appreciate that and help and support them in turn. That will benefit you. The gekus aren't here to take anything from us. They are here to support us. They bring benefit, they don't take away anything. Recognize that, and respect and support them, harmoniously.

At O.D.D., this means supporting Angie in her role as geku. Respect the lama, Lingtrul Rinpoche, when he comes, too, of course. Lama Drimed is your teacher—same thing. Respect the treasurer, the chopons [ritual assistants], and so on—each person has their job. Actually, in the greater sense, this means to respect each person who comes to the center—each one has their job of purifying their negativity and accumulating merit, and they benefit everyone when they do that job, even if they just come and turn one prayer wheel or do one prostration or say one mantra.

Then, of course, the people who are actively and continuously serving the center and supporting everything, they are more involved and have more experience, so we need to respect them particularly. Respect the people who hold the center's various jobs—geku and so on. They are not stupid—if you need to talk to them, you can talk to them. They are all open, nothing uptight. We are family. In the family, the children respect the mother and father, and the younger children respect the older children. It is the same thing in the sangha. That is the way it works, and that is the tradition in

Buddhism, too. You do know these things—you can see how this is important so that everyone can blossom together like one flower garden with many blooms.

During the months of the Rinchen Terdzod transmissions at O.D.D., everyone supported each other so wonderfully! Everyone supported the lama, of course. Also, the gekus did their job and everyone respected them, so there was harmony and everything was smooth. The lamas and monks all supported and helped each other, and the sangha supported them, whatever they needed. The senior chopons were supported by the new chopons, these young ladies who stood up and tried to do everything. Each person did their job well, and everyone kept harmony—that is why we were all able to receive all those hundreds of blessings perfectly. I got so happy! It looked like how it used to work in Tibet when everything was really functioning.

At the Rinchen Terdzod, the old chopons were training the new chopons. That is how it should work. That way the young ones will learn and the old ones will have a recipient for their knowledge, not as if it were a secret they don't share. It should be the same with gekus, with treasurers, and so on—step by step, support each other, help each other. The ones with some experience can help the new ones. The new ones can support and learn from the old ones. If the old ones are tired and busy, the young ones can support them physically and with work; the old ones can support the young ones with their experience and advice. That is the real Buddhist way of doing things. That is the authentic tradition.

Politics is not the authentic tradition, okay? None of that garbage.

It used to be that the fighting and politics were very bad—worse than animals. I don't think even animals are stupid enough to have our kinds of politics. But now, slowly, everything has been getting cleaned up and is so much better than before. Thank you so much! Buddhism doesn't need that kind of political garbage. Dharma has no politics. The politics don't come from the dharma. Where did we get them, then? From political people. Some people love to make everything political! They are samsaric. They have just a samsaric brain, a MY WAY brain. They don't know dharma. They don't know what is positive and what is negative. They don't even know who is really harming them and who is really benefitting them! They want to make everything complicated with politics, but they don't even know who to try to screw up first—such stupid people!—because they can't tell who is their real friend and who is their real enemy. They just like to make obstacles for everybody, it seems, screwing everybody up. Sometimes it has really looked like that. Sometimes there have been people who seem only to want to focus on making obstacles for the people who are sincerely trying to practice the dharma. That is a great negativity. We call that non-virtue. As Buddhists, we are trying to avoid non-virtue -- and not only avoid it, but get rid of what we have already created. People who bring politics into the dharma and make obstacles to others

and harm them in that way, they are ultimately harming themselves more than anyone through the creation of that heavy non-virtue.

They are harming everybody, it looks like everybody is their enemy. But who is actually harming such people? The real answer is that they are harming themselves. Such actions are entirely negative—making obstacles for others' virtue and destroying their own. That is why I am so happy now that it seems like the politics and non-virtue are really being done away with and there is more and more harmony. That makes me think we are really getting solid. People are growing up, finally! That way this can work.

Now, in the future, we need to stand up and be more aware of what is needed at the dharma center. Right now, we have Angie as the geku at O.D.D. But in the future, we need others to learn and train for that position, too—to wake up and step up. We need to always be thinking about who can be in training for these positions, so the next one is well-prepared.

At O.D.D., you have a house: O.D.D. temple, which is a very nice building, giant and strong and perfect, in the middle of the city. Offices, restaurants, and stores are all close by, and even the police station is right around the corner! Everything is right there! What more do you need? What more are you expecting? Are you still waiting for something more before you can start really studying and practicing at O.D.D.? What are you waiting for? Whatever it is, I don't think you're going to get it! I don't think you're going to get something beyond the perfect, conducive circumstances for dharma that you have there now.

Everyone who has contributed to making O.D.D. the wonderful temple it is today, to you I say thank you. So many people have supported it over the years. Now that you have everything perfect, you need to maintain it. We don't need to go MY WAY anymore. If somebody still wants to keep to their MY WAY, that is shameless. That is ignorant. That is dumb-dumb stupid, too, not like a real human being. Human beings do know what is positive and what is negative. Dumb-dumb people like me, they don't know what is positive and what is negative. Then they go the negative way, like the communists.

What is the geku for? He or she tries to do everything according to the dharma—Hinayana, Mahayana, and Vajrayana—and tries to support others in doing things the correct dharma way, too. A geku doesn't jump to this or that or according to their own idea, they just go stage by stage according to the dharma. A geku doesn't necessarily have to be a monk or a nun or anything like that. They just have to follow the dharma rules, and explain to others what those rules are and support them in following the dharma, too. According to our own way of doing things, there are no rules, just MY WAY! Actually, our "MY WAY" isn't even deep enough to have rules. It isn't something smart or something we can teach someone or debate about, because it is just

our ignorance. It isn't a system or a path that anyone can follow, it is just this idea and that idea. That is all our MY WAY is, yet we think that it is so wonderful! We are so strange.

Guru Rinpoche, on the other hand, you could say he had his own way—that was a real path, real wisdom. Not his dumbness of MY WAY like we do. Buddha Shakyamuni, he also taught his own way—we call that the dharma. We don't call it Buddha Shakyamuni's stupid MY WAY, which is like our own dharma. Look at Dudjom Rinpoche or Penor Rinpoche—they followed the dharma exactly, they never had any MY WAY. Look at others—the Dalai Lama, the Sixteenth Karmapa, there is no question about them, of course, nobody ever heard of them going their MY WAY, not one word. Then here we have other teachers and khenpos—Khenpo Norgey, Khenpo Tsewang Gyatso—you can ask them and they'll tell you that the real dharma isn't anybody's MY WAY.

Some new teachers think that their way is the best, but that's a little bit shameful because there is no lineage in that—no lineage teachers have ever taught MY WAY, including Buddha Shakyamuni and Guru Rinpoche. All the lineage teachers have only taught the dharma way, the Buddhist way, the way of karma, the law of cause and effect. Just to go MY WAY is to bring destruction like the communists brought in Tibet. We don't need that, please. We had enough of that communist rule. It's time to step by step support the geku, support the lamas, support the teachers, support the umzes and the chopons, support the people in their different jobs.

When you go to the temple, you offer three prostrations. To where? To the toilet? No. At O.D.D. you have a giant buddha—a Buddha Shakyamuni statue. You have a giant Guru Rinpoche statue, too. You have a whole bunch of thangkas and other refuge objects, too. Why do you prostrate to them? You are taking refuge so that their blessing can protect you in this life and in the next life. Not just acting out a prostration or acting out an offering. Not just following somebody's rule that you have to prostrate or you have to make offerings. No, no, no. These are for accumulating merit and purifying obscurations, so do them consciously, with focus, with faith and compassion, and dedicate their merit to all beings. If you don't have faith, you won't have compassion, either. Then the temple becomes just like a children's playground. Hopefully, now we have had enough of playing on the playground of pretend dharma. Stage by stage, everybody try to practice sincerely. Practicing something low or high or big or small doesn't make any difference. Practicing sincerely or just pretending—that is the real difference in whether you are following the profound dharma or not.

When Sangye Khandro or any teacher comes and teaches, everybody should sit and listen nicely. Just watch yourself, if you are listening to the dharma well or not. You just need to watch yourself, and watch the meaning that is being taught. Just watch the dharma, you don't need to watch everybody else to see who are the handsome young

men and the pretty young ladies, who is rich, who is powerful, who is smart. If Shashi and Ila come, don't think that they are just dumb young ladies who don't know anything. If they explain something, listen and keep that in your brain. Step by step, that can benefit you. They are not empty buckets. They have learned through positive teachers, and so they can teach and share different things. They have learned from Khenpo Namdrol, Yangthang Rinpoche, Penor Rinpoche, and others. They didn't learn from Dudjom Rinpoche, but they do have tapes and books of his teachings. Of course, many of you received teachings from those same teachers, I do know how many teachings you have received. But for you, what is most important to you is your MY WAY. We call that the demon of self-grasping. Through that, you destroy yourself and harm others. Through that, understanding of the dharma and blessings can't enter your mindstream.

Because all beings are under the power of their demon of self-grasping, they destroy themselves and cause all their sufferings. That is why we should have compassion for them. We don't need to hold to that demon any more. What do you need to hold instead? Compassion for other beings. That will be of benefit to you. What else do you need to hold? Faith and trust in the Three Jewels. Some people say they are Buddhist, but if you ask if they have faith in the Buddha, Dharma, and Sangha, they say they don't care about them. That is not Buddhism! Lots of people think they are higher than Buddha and smarter than Buddha, and, therefore, they don't care anything for Buddha. No reason to, of course! No reason to have faith! You just have faith in yourself. Very smart!

That is shameful and disgusting and bringing shame on all of Buddhism, to call yourself a Buddhist and then say things like that. Buddhists respect Buddha, Dharma, and Sangha. Through that, they respect the buddhas' images, the buddhas' teachings, and the buddhas' followers—Hinayana, Mahayana, and Vajrayana—respecting them all as sangha.

I am not saying that the point of being a Buddhist is that all the other Buddhists have to respect you, okay? Don't twist the meaning like that in your stupid ego brain. I am saying that to benefit yourself, you need to respect all the sangha—including all the Hinayana, Mahayana, and Vajrayana schools. Respecting the sangha is part of having faith in the Three Jewels. Faith is like our key on the path, our key to the door of dharma, the door of blessings, the door of realization. Having faith and expressing our faith in acts of reverence with our body, speech, and mind generates tremendous merit. When we show respect to the sangha, that is a method to accumulate merit. People who do the opposite, who make much of themselves and put down others in the sangha, they are bringing great shame on themselves, as if they were showing off their shit or bragging about their poisons. I am talking about people who demand that others respect them, saying "I am Hinayana! I am Mahayana! I am Vajrayana!" That means

nothing, it is not dharma and has nothing to do with the Buddha's teachings. It is just you showing your ugliness. Actually, boasting in that way shows that your words are a lie—one who does such things is absolutely NOT Hinayana, definitely NOT Mahayana, and there is no way that they could be Vajrayana, either, because they are not even Buddhist. They don't even carry the faintest whiff of dharma!

Therefore, everybody please try not to embarrass yourselves but instead to practice sincerely. If you are just doing one prostration, or three prostrations, or doing a practice, or reciting a mantra just one time or a few times, still do it with a virtuous focus and intention: compassion for sentient beings and faith in the Three Jewels. Those are the reasons to practice, not in order to pretend to be a Buddhist or to want someone to respect or praise you. Then at the end of your practice, still with faith and compassion, dedicate the merit to all sentient beings.

How many thousands of years has Buddhism been in this world? In all those years, in all those teachings and practices, I don't think any authentic Buddhist tradition has taught that we should practice for our own pride or ego. They have all taught that practice must be for the benefit of sentient beings, and that practice must have faith as its foundation. Our centers are not Hinayana alone; they are not just Hinayana and Mahayana, either; they are Vajrayana centers. There is no Vajrayana without faith! We have the foundation of Hinayana—seeing your own shortness, your own dirtiness, your own ways of harming yourself. To practice Hinayana means to see these faults and give them up. That is how you can benefit other sentient beings, practicing this way with compassion, which is the basis of Mahayana. Mahayana doesn't mean kissing everybody and having sex with them—that's not compassion, as some people these days like to say. But I don't think Buddha Shakyamuni taught that. I don't think that Guru Rinpoche taught that. This is not the teaching of a wisdom lineage holder of the dharma—this is the teaching of a lineage holder of a samsaric trip. Following their teachings, being educated by their wisdom, where will we end up? Stuck in the six realms again!

I don't think we need to go back to the six realms again. Do we? Do we need to go back to the hells, the hungry ghost realms, the jealous god realms? I don't think we need those. I don't think we need stupid human realms or animal realms either. We don't need those rebirths. Time to wake up! Facing in the direction of virtue, turning toward the positive, we should take our steps, step by step, carefully.

Everyone needs to be educated in important things. What are the important things? What to accept and reject, what to do and not do, what to say and what to do in order to bring benefit. Everyone is intelligent and smart, everyone can learn Buddha Shakyamuni's way, Guru Rinpoche's way, all the high, pure lamas' way—look at their qualities! Learning their way, then we don't need to pretend at our own way anymore.

Then even we dumb-dumbs can slowly come out of the sewer of our self-grasping. Try, okay?

I'm sorry — my speech is not wonderful, beautiful, or fancy, but I can say honest, nasty-looking, dirty-looking or -sounding stupid things. Sorry I don't have for you something more sweet, I am just trying to be honest. Everybody try.

How much money have we spent at O.D.D. and other centers? Do you think that money falls from the sky? No. The sponsors have squeezed themselves, the workers have squeezed themselves, everyone has squeezed themselves for their time and energy. Everybody has worked so hard — that is how we have what we have.

When it's time to sit, now squeeze yourself that same way. As long as we are in samsara, we have to squeeze ourselves. Everyone has to squeeze themselves to create virtue. When it's time to sit, sit nicely; when it's time to listen, listen nicely; when it's time to practice, practice nicely. That's our job. Nobody needs to use their MY WAY, their sneaky way, doing all the negative things and pretending they are positive. We don't need that anymore. If you have that habit and you won't give it up, then get out. Go someplace else — you have plenty of space in this giant United States, and you have the freedom to go anywhere — and don't come back, please. I don't care if you are handsome, pretty, or smart, or even if everyone thinks you are wonderful — we don't need that kind of negativity here, destroying what so many people have worked so hard to create and maintain.

Sorry I have to say these things, sort of nasty and negative words. Until now, for 20 or 30 or 40 years I have been polite, and nobody has understood, almost. Now it's time — I'm going to throw up and have dysentery at the same time, saying what I have to say directly.

Good luck, everybody. Everybody try sincerely, and everybody help each other.

Tashi delek!

-Gyatral

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