

On Excuses

Part III

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We think we are so wonderful but actually we are not wonderful at all. Then we think that others are so negative but actually it is not our business! We love to see the negativity outside ourselves when actually it is our own negativity. We even see ghosts and demons, projecting our negativity outward, when actually there are no ghosts and demons. The ghosts are all yourself. The demons are all yourself. They are you destroying yourself. We walk around and think that we are standing upright, but in fact we are upside-down in every way. I think if you want to respect yourself, you need to stand up—stand up straight, and on your own two feet. Until now we have always been upside-down, with our head under the ground, in the dirt and filth, making only negativity, seeing only negativity, and our feet up in the sky, going nowhere. I think that's enough of that. Now it's time to stand up the right way—that means having your eyes open, pursuing what is positive, not getting involved more and more deeply in the negative.

When we speak of virtue and non-virtue or the positive and the negative, why do we give those things those names? Why do we say that desire and anger are negative things? Think about that. "Negative" means that they harm you. They don't benefit you. What do we call things that benefit us? Positive! If we say someone is a positive person, it means that they bring benefit—they are kind to others and respect them, and they respect themselves and act with decency. They respect all the different kinds of people and all the different kinds of religions. That is someone I would call a real human being. Be a real human being! Wake up! Please, I request you. Be reasonable. Be trustable. Be respectful to others, and be someone that others can respect, too. We think that it is everyone else's job to respect us and praise us. No, no. That is like the thinking of children. It is our job to be someone that others can respect, someone that others can praise. Whether they do respect and praise us or not doesn't matter! People are going to say all kinds of things. Our job is just to be that kind of person—respectable, trustworthy, praiseworthy.

Usually everything we complain about, we have made ourselves. We complain that people don't respect us, but we don't make ourselves worthy of respect. We complain that everything goes wrong for us, but we are the ones who have screwed ourselves up, bringing nothing but negativity into the world with our body, speech, and mind. It looks like our job is to have the nastiest, negative mouth; the same kind of mind; and to always engage in the lowest, ugliest actions. It looks like our job is exactly that, and we are such conscientious people that we do it very carefully! Nobody is

destroying us like we are! Nobody needs to—we already are taking care of that job! This is the heaviest negativity, I think. We destroy ourselves and then blame others. We destroy ourselves and then make excuses why we don't want to change or help ourselves. In one way, our excuses for not giving up our negativity are worse than being killed. If we are killed, we suffer and die in this life. But by making excuses for not giving up our negativity, we guarantee our suffering for many lives to come, and lose our chance to bring an end to our suffering altogether. We make the suffering of not just one life but many lives, not just one death but many deaths, again and again.

When you cheat yourself, does anybody benefit? Others don't benefit. You don't benefit—exactly the opposite! When you cheat yourself by making excuses for not learning the dharma or not practicing or not really putting your brain and focus there, does anybody benefit? All you do is put off virtue! Do you think you are not going to die? We don't have that kind of time, to put off our purification of negativity. Or do you think that at the end of your life, for you death won't be like it is for everyone else? Do you think that when your life ends you will just get to go home? No. It doesn't work that way. Read about the law of cause and result and you will get some idea of the sufferings of samsara that are waiting for all of us at death. We can't stop our death. But we can stop our suffering in its entirety if we are able to free ourselves from samsara. Right now, before death catches us, we have a little chance, a little space to do that. If we want to bring an end to our suffering, we don't have the time to put off our liberation now. But still we don't go into the dharma, we just push it back and push it back.

Read about karma. Read about death and impermanence. There are lots of books of wonderful teachings—read the ones you like! I am not saying you have to read everything. I am not saying you have to become a scholar. Just be honest with yourself. Read the teachings of authentic lineage masters and then ask yourself honestly, “Is this true? Is my situation like this? Do I need to practice? Or should I screw myself up again?”

If you want to be able to respect yourself, you need to be honest with yourself. If you want to be kind to yourself, you need to stop cheating and lying to yourself. Wake up! You have an opportunity. Don't throw it in the sewer.

Stage by stage, we all need to wake up.

Blah, blah, blah—see, I can say lots of things! I don't do what I am telling you to do, though. I just hang out here, my mouth noisy being completely negative, my body busy being completely negative, my mind negative in every piece. Where is my positive? See my style? Don't do that! I am harming myself, day and night, each second. Don't copy that! You don't need to go that way. Be positive—do what is really good for yourself. If you act like a real human being, a decent person, maybe you can be

respectful of yourself, love yourself, and trust yourself. Maybe you can use your precious human body to benefit yourself. You don't need to wait for someone to come and make you be good. You don't need to wait for someone to come tell you that you need to stop screwing yourself up and start being a decent person. If you are waiting for someone to come make you respect yourself, forget it. You have to stand up, yourself. If you need someone else's order, forget it. You have to wake up, yourself. Nobody is going to come tell you to benefit yourself. Just do it, yourself. Just benefit yourself, without waiting for anybody and without showing off just when someone is watching. For billions of years you haven't waited for someone else to give the word for you to create negativity—you always just went ahead and sowed the seeds of your own destruction without any hesitation or doubt, just full of confidence and diligence. You never procrastinate when it comes to turning yourself into a can of garbage or jumping into the sewer! Why can't you do that with virtue now, instead, and create the causes to end your suffering in the same unhesitating way?

Everybody, try! Here at Tashi Choling, everybody is working hard, day and night. Working for what? Making money? No. Making what? Making benefit for the sangha—Ani Baba and Samantha, Ila and Shashi, especially, they are always here, day and night, buzzing in every place and direction, trying to take care of everything. Is it just because they are berserk? Well, they are berserk, but no—they are so busy here because they are serving the sangha. It isn't just these ladies, either—Osugi and Madhu, Matthew and David Pumpkinhead, these guys are all pounding and cutting, and other people are making things smooth and painting them, and others are cleaning up and sweeping and putting things away. All these people working here, they are making everything more and more beautiful as their offering to the sangha and all the beings who connect to this place. They are using their body, speech, and mind to serve the Three Jewels. They are supporting the dharma center, which is itself a support for creating virtue. That way all beings who connect here can save a little merit and purify their obscurations slightly. Or maybe a lot, who knows? It depends on each one's mind and karma.

At any rate, the people who are working here, they are working continuously and harmoniously. That's the way to do it! Why are the rest of us just sitting there as if stunned, as if we'd been wounded by poisoned arrows and can't move?

I came here 40 years ago. At that time there were lots of hippies, they just wanted to hang out. It looks like it's the same old, same old, still. They still have a whole bunch of shit, from top to bottom. They aren't embarrassed, either. They are embarrassed by positive things. They aren't embarrassed by how dirty they still are, outerly, innerly, and secretly. We need to clean ourselves up—clean up our minds, more than washing our clothes and taking baths every few minutes. Is another bath going to wash away your obscurations and negativity? Bullshit! We are not fish; we are not water oxen.

What is the benefit of jumping in the water again and again? Water doesn't clean our minds. We wash our faces a thousand times, trying to be pretty, trying to look young, but we don't care about the filth in our minds: we still spend 24 hours of every day being stupid, trying to harm ourselves. Even when we try to harm others, the bottom line is that we harm ourselves.

Sorry, my mouth is really negative, saying these things. This is not my business, but I am stupid and my ego makes me dumb. That is why I am going on and on, blah, blah, blah, about what is not my business. I am not your leader. I am not your king or queen. I am not your teacher. I am just your friend. Sort of your friend. I don't really know how to be a friend.

If you want to be positive and benefit yourself and others, first you have to open up. That means you have to listen, you have to read, you have to get the teachings and bring them into your mind. If your mind isn't open, you can't bring anything in. You need to be open and you need to stand up on your own feet. Nobody is going to take care of you. Don't think that somebody needs to take care of you. Don't be like me — someone has to take care of me all the time or I complain. That is exactly wrong. Anyway, somebody can take care of me outerly, giving me food and tea and helping me physically, but nobody else can take care of my mind. You have to take care of your own mind. If you want corn or trees or flowers, first you have to plant those seeds. You have to water them. You have to take care of them. Then your sprouts will come, and still you need to take care of them. Then slowly, slowly, the tree will grow up and flower and bear fruit, or the grain will ripen, or the flowers will bloom. Then you get your result. But if you don't plant the seeds and tend the sprouts and water the plants again and again, you won't get anything. If you never water the roots but you still expect the tree to make apples, forget it! If you don't plant seeds or tend them, but just bring your open mouth to an empty field, expecting to find delicious fruit to fill it, forget it! All you will find to put in your mouth is dust. Maybe some garbage. Okay, sorry — my mouth again is making my seeds for my future hot hell rebirth. Right now maybe my mouth is hot or uncomfortable for you who have to listen to it, but in the future it will make things very hot and uncomfortable for me in hell. Anyway, sorry you have to hear those things. The most important thing is that everybody has to try, honestly and sincerely, without making excuses. Otherwise there will be no benefit. There will be no real practice. There will be no Buddhism, either. So everybody try, okay?

Tashi delek!

-Gyatru

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