

Vajrasattva Retreat Second Day Teaching

Venerable Gyatrul Rinpoche

June 5, 2014

I want to thank everyone for practicing together so well. I heard that you did more than 10,000 tsok accumulations yesterday. That explains it--everything felt so nice last night, now I know why. I am glad you are using your opportunity to practice. You do have a beautiful place here: beautiful land, with a baby temple with everything you need for practice, a beautiful place to make offerings. So many people have worked so hard for so many years, and through their kindness now there is this dharma place. You have a mandala and a shrine where you can make offerings any time. I hope you use them! You have everything set up right now for the practice, and all the different parts are happening--the mandala, the chanting, the instruments, the tsok and other offerings. I hope you are taking your opportunity to learn about each part rather than just spacing out.

It looks like you are keeping your samaya purely. That is so good! That is so important. Because our samaya has deteriorated, we need to accumulate merit and purify obscurations. Now this is your chance to do just that. You have the Vajrasattva practice the whole day, with offerings and confession again and again. That is your chance. I hope you are taking it! Confession isn't saying 'sorry.' Confession means having faith, first. Confession means having compassion for all ignorant beings. Confession means having genuine regret for your negativity and damaged samaya. That is the kind of confession that will be able to restore your samaya, and purify both large and small transgressions of your vows.

In Tibet many monasteries did the accumulations of tsok as you are--100,000 or whatever. That is confession you are doing, all throughout the recitation. That is making offerings, of course. That is your merit and purification, 100,000 times. Many times they would dedicate the accumulation to a lama's long life or some such, but really it is the chance for the participants to create virtue and rid themselves of negativity. That is the best way to accomplish your own purpose. The tsok accumulations can lengthen life and increase wealth, purify negative karma and bring success in worldly endeavors as well as dispelling obstacles in practice. In Tibet, when a great lama would pass away, the tsok accumulations were the principal offering that was made. So what you are doing is no small funky thing. Think about that!

Of course, tsok isn't the only powerful and effective way to accumulate merit. I have been reading in the *Pema Katang*, Guru Rinpoche's biography, about the benefits of constructing statues and other images of Guru Rinpoche, and the power of his blessing when one performs his practices. Of course, those teachings do not apply to Guru Rinpoche alone but to any deity, any Buddha. You have been accumulating merit in these ways, too: look at the many supports of enlightened body, speech, and mind that are here because you have been making them and preserving them. That is an absolutely certain way to accumulate merit. Also, look how everyone comes together to practice now, so much better than in the past, now so much more harmonious with each other, with respect and love, supporting each other. That is how you keep pure samaya! It means you must be dropping your MY WAY trip. There is no question that to drop MY WAY is to purify negativity.

These are the very things that will liberate us from samsara. Dropping your MY WAY doesn't mean you are losing something. It means you are more free than before. You are free to benefit yourself and others. To be harmonious with your dharma brothers and sisters; to respect your parents and teachers, remembering their kindness; to be generous with your offerings and to those in need: not only is this how

you keep your samaya, but there is no better way to gather merit. These days everyone is improving, and the dharma center is slowly blossoming. Right now while you are practicing, you have the supports of enlightened body, speech, and mind surrounding you, and you have a pure and authentic lama, Lingtrul Rinpoche, presiding as vajra master. It doesn't get any better than that! That is our merit; that is the blessing of our gurus coming to fruition. Therefore, since you have such extraordinary circumstances, make the most of them. Make the presence of the statues and thangkas and books, and all the effort it took to bring them here, meaningful by coming to practice and rely on them.

This is not some idea of mine. These are the teachings of Guru Rinpoche and the lineage lamas, who are his emanations anyway, inseparable from him. Buddha Shakyamuni himself awakened through accumulating merit and purifying obscurations. He didn't buy or steal his awakening from someone else, nor can you just pay someone a lot of money for your own liberation. You can only actualize your own ultimate purpose as dharmakaya and the purpose of all others as rupakaya by doing just as Buddha Shakyamuni did. You know better than me how that works, I don't have to tell you, because you are all smart and I'm just a dumb guy. But this is what the great lamas have said.

The lamas also teach about the opposite of awakening: our accumulation of non-virtue. Just as virtue brings you liberation, non-virtue, which is created through the three poisons, creates all the sufferings of cyclic existence. What forces you to take birth in all the terrifying realms of samsara? What sends you into the deepest hells and imprisons you in their myriad levels of torment? Non-virtue. Again, this is not my idea--this is what the Buddha himself said! Therefore, why don't we check our own minds to see if we have the five poisons, the seeds of that non-virtue? Why don't we practice to purify the negativity we find there? Look in your mind, and then come and do one hour or one minute of practice, sincerely praying to Vajrasattva for purification. You have to have faith or purification can't happen, so as you pray, remember the outer, inner, and secret qualities of the deity. And don't just practice for the few minutes that you are on your cushion or in the temple! When you get up, think that you are still in Vajrasattva's pure realm, or Guru Rinpoche's, or whatever deity's. That is how you will receive siddhis, and the only way--nobody can give them to you.

Anyway, that is what the great masters have said, from Guru Rinpoche and Buddha Shakyamuni onward, and they have no reason to lie.

I would like to come down and practice with you all, but not only do I have no qualities, I have no merit, either. Through all of your kindness I have this wonderful room and wonderful, comfortable bed, my heaven, where I lie sleeping while you are all purifying your negativity. Thank you all for practicing, it is more than I am doing. Use your practice opportunity! That is why we have retreat. It is not an opportunity for gossip and slander, okay?

Tashi Delek!

-Gyatral