

2014 Ngondro Retreat Teaching Part II

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Thank you for coming and doing the ngondro practices. Please be patient. Practice is very important and takes patience. To understand the meaning takes patience. To know how to do each section takes patience.

When you are contemplating the Four Thoughts, don't make them something far away or "over there." Don't put the Four Thoughts That Turn the Mind over in one corner and then you sit in the other corner thinking about them. You are IN the experience that you are thinking about in the Four Thoughts. Think, "I am in hell, the hot hells and the cold hells." "I am a jealous god." "I am a hungry spirit." This isn't even something that you have to pretend. We ARE jealous gods and we ARE hungry spirits. We just have to recognize those tendencies in our own minds. If you recognize that you are jealous, then that is your jealous god experience. Recognize that you are angry--there are your hell realms, hot and cold. You can easily recognize that you are a hungry spirit because you want everything and you are never satisfied. As for animals, we are even more stupid than the animals because we don't care what will happen to us in the next life or when we die. We are obsessed with these few minutes, our immediate experience of this life alone. Are we stupid or what? What greater stupidity could we need to prove our animal tendencies? Actually we are worse than them.

We have the experience of every realm right here. We should ask ourselves if we want to perpetuate these experiences. Do you want to nurture the experiences of those realms and cultivate them in your mind? Are they so useful to you? Sure they are! We think that everything negative is useful to us. That is the conclusion reached by our upside-down brain. That is why we need to do ngondro.

Or consider this precious human birth. Are you using it or wasting it? Our general tendency is to throw everything positive, everything possibly beneficial or useful to us, into the poison ocean of our own negativity. Then slowly we dive in after it and end up in the lower realms. Sorry, all you will find there are poisonous snakes and crocodiles. That is your karma waiting for you. But we ignore the thought of that--even the tiniest thought. We don't want to have to think about that! We just want to think about, "I need this!" "I need this man!" "I need this woman!" "I need this position, this job, this car, this house!"

We want to cheat others but the bottom line is that we are cheating ourselves. We try to harm others but we are only harming ourselves. We think that by being very clever we can screw up someone else, but actually we are screwing up ourselves. We mix up a

batch of poison intending it for someone else but we drink it ourselves. This is how karma works. Everyone thinks that they are pointing the sharp end of the weapon at the other guy, but somehow they cut off their own foot. Or when they fire they find their gun pointed at their own head. Why is that? That is how karma works. We created the weapons, and because we created them we can never let go of them. We can try to use them on others but actually we don't use them on anyone but ourselves. Thinking about this is what we call the contemplation on karma.

This habit of creating negativity toward others, creating the weapons of our own destruction, is very strong. This is why we blow our own heads off again and again and will continue to do so until we address their source, where those weapons come from: our five poisons. Until we address that, we will always make weapons, we will always think we are pointing them at others, and we will inevitably always shoot ourselves--in the foot or head or whatever. Who will experience the harm from those weapons? You will. When? Well, that depends on circumstances, which is why we think that it isn't our fault or our problem. "I am innocent! Somebody shot me in the foot!" Actually it is your weapon in your own hand that shot you. What do you mean, you are innocent? Give me a break!

Watch your motivation. In comparison to the powerful habits of self-destruction just described, our habits of virtue, such as compassion and patience, are very weak. We try to have a pure motivation but we fail to understand how strong our negativity is. Although compassion, for example, is quite powerful, our compassion is very small in light of the strength of our hatred. When we are trying to meditate on compassion, it is like we still make the weapon and we still point it at someone, but we put a little lotion on the end of it. If I tell you this, you will protest, "Not me! My mind is very clean and pure! I put honey on my bullets!" Don't kid yourself. You are still killing yourself again and again, just like all the other sentient beings.

On the other hand, don't be discouraged, either. All we can do is try--try to cultivate compassion and patience and strengthen the habits of virtue. But we should know how strong the tendency to negativity is. Nobody should pop up, thinking they are so pure: "I am a great bodhisattva now! I cultivated compassion in one day!" Nobody is like that. Nobody has that kind of practice. Be humble. Practice with faith and devotion. And thank you for doing your ngondro! It will make everything good possible. Who needs something beyond that wisdom?

Tashi Delek!

-Gyatral

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