

Vajrakilaya Retreat—First Day Teaching

Venerable Lingtrul Rinpoche

November 4th, 2016

I don't have anything particularly special to say today, but you might have all noticed that we have changed the schedule a little. There were reasons for this, and so I wanted to talk about that a little bit with everyone. I had some ideas about this, and I spoke with the geku (disciplinarian); he spoke with others and with Rinpoche and we decided to make the change for this year for the Kilaya retreat.

I know that for many, many years—I don't know the exact number, but for many, many years—we have kept the other schedule with three sessions a day. I have noticed that over the years mostly those who are coming to these retreats are older students. It is rare to see newer students coming to these. Older students are coming and the numbers are not really increasing. It seems like people are busy and there are many other reasons—they have work and so forth—that it is difficult for people to come to these retreats. According to the Tibetan tradition, a retreat like this for just ten days is not so very long. In Tibet they would do such retreats for weeks or a month or some months, from morning 'til night. But, here the sangha is primarily made up of householders, of lay practitioners, not of the ordained living in monasteries and so forth. I know that everyone is very busy, and everyone has work, and if it goes on for too long, then maybe that is a hardship for everyone. As everyone is getting older, then maybe it would be a little bit easier if the sessions during the day didn't go on for so long. Maybe that would be of benefit and a support to everyone. This was my first thought.

Then, my second thought was for the completion of the practice itself—that everyone might have the opportunity to more easily take part in the entire practice from beginning to end. I noticed in general in years past, in the morning we will have lots of people, and then in the afternoon not so many, and then sometimes a few more come in the evening for tsok, but most would not. So, the people who would come just for the morning session would be there only for the beginning of the practice up through the mantra recitation section. If they didn't come back again for tsok in the evening, they wouldn't have done the tsok or any of the other concluding sections of the practice, including dedication of merit and aspirational prayers. Also, they wouldn't have done the dissolution of the visualization, the actual conclusion of the practice. So a person who would come just for the morning session would not be doing the entire practice. The thought was, by making the sessions shorter and just two sessions rather than three, it would be easier for people to stay for the entire day, and they would be able to

complete the practice—be there for all the stages of the practice right through to the end. They would get to do a complete practice, from beginning of the practice all the way up through dedication and aspirations. So that was the second thought.

Then, the third thought is that there are students here who are coming, traveling from long distances, and so for them to have the third session in the evening, it gets very late, and of course that is very difficult. Even for those who are staying here, there is so much work to be done, everyone is so busy. I look around and I see everyone, rushing here and there, so busy during the breaks and so forth. And, so, thinking that if it would be a little bit easier for everyone to be able to do their jobs or travel (if they need to travel), whatever the case may be, keeping two sessions rather than three also might make it easier for everyone to participate in a full practice.

So, I don't know what anyone else's thinking in the decision was, but these were my ideas, my three reasons for suggesting this change.

All of you, Gyatrul Rinpoche's students, you are always very kind to me. Many of you I know are concerned about my health, as I have had troubles with my health—heart issues, and so forth—in the past. My doctor has advised me to exercise and rest and this and that. But, I really don't want you to worry, and I want you to know that for a short time like this, ten days, it is fine for me to maintain this kind of schedule. I am really not concerned about my own health or my body at all, and that is also not my reason for suggesting that this change to the schedule be made. My reasons for thinking it might be beneficial to change the schedule are the ones that are listed above, for the benefit of the students and their practice, and not for reasons of my own personal health.

My foremost wish is that with this schedule everyone will be able to stay for the entire practice. Of course that is most excellent—everyone can come for the morning, then if you need to work, you can during the lunch break, but then come back in the afternoon so that you can complete the practice. That way we can all complete the practice together, and everyone will have done the full practice.

If people are not able to do that, then second best would be if you know that you are going to have to leave during the lunch break and you are not going to be able to come back in the afternoon and complete the sadhana with everyone, then when everyone else gets up to leave at lunch you can stay in the temple just a few minutes and complete the practice on your own. It doesn't take long, and you don't need an umzed there or anything like that, but you can complete the practice on your own, by going in

the practice book to where the completion of the practice is. At that point, we have done up through the mantra recitation as a group, so at that time individually you would do the dissolution of the visualization and the dedication of merit and some prayers of auspiciousness according to how much time you have. You don't need an umzed or anything like that, just whoever knows that they are not going to be able to return in the afternoon can go ahead individually and make it a complete practice for themselves by doing those few concluding sections before you leave at the lunch break to go work or whatever. In that way everyone would still be doing a complete practice, one way or the other.

These days there are many different dharma centers all over, but among them Tashi Choling is one of the oldest, maybe one of the oldest Nyingma temples in America. And Tashi Choling is a very special place that has been here for a long time, and has received the blessings of many great lamas. It is really looked to as an example by others, as well. You who are students here should know this and think about this carefully.

You should recognize how precious this place is, and that it didn't just suddenly sprout up from the ground or fall down from the sky. First, this place was blessed by His Holiness Dudjom Rinpoche. Then through the tireless efforts of Gyatrul Rinpoche, Sangye Khandro, and the older students—some of whom are still here—the place itself was actually built, piece by piece, stage by stage. So we who are here now, who are able to enjoy it and use it, then what is our responsibility to them, being now in this fortunate position?

It is our responsibility to take care of it. That doesn't mean just keeping it clean on the outside and the inside, it means outerly, innerly, secretly, on every level. The disciples need to be holding one another with respect. The disciples need to be keeping their responsibilities not only to this physical place, but also their responsibility as sangha. Because it is only together that it is possible to maintain and carry on what has been established here.

There is a saying that no matter how large or heavy something is, if there are enough hands it can be lifted, whatever it is. In the same way, everyone has to work together, and the only way that people will be able to work together is if there is harmony. Whenever you are doing dharma it is so important that there be mutual respect. There must be respect among all the members of the sangha.

Of course, the younger should respect the elder. Why is that? They should understand what it is that those who have gone before have done, and that they themselves as the younger generation are now benefitting from. How hard the elders have worked, what they have brought forth—recognizing that, the younger should respect those who have gone before, who have made what is going on now possible.

Likewise when you are here at the center, there are those who are serving in certain functions or in positions of authority, including the geku (disciplinarian), the umzed (chant leader), the chopons (ritual assistants), and others who are working here. They should be respected for the functions that they are serving and for the positions that they hold. Others should look to them as the examples.

But those who are holding those positions also should know that others are looking to them as the example, and should keep pure conduct themselves with that in mind. Those who are in those positions also need to respect all others in the sangha. It is so important that there be mutual respect among all the members of the sangha, whatever their name, title, or position.

We are all students together of Venerable Gyatrul Rinpoche, our root guru, and you all know what he has said, again and again, on these very points. You have each heard him say these things so many times, I don't need to repeat his words. How often has he said that we shouldn't go MY WAY? We really need to think about that, we really need to think about what he means by that. We really need always to cultivate respect for each other in our own hearts. Not going MY WAY means not holding what you yourself think as being of the greatest importance. "I think this" or "I think that"—if you think that only your MY WAY is the correct way, it means that you have not been listening to Rinpoche's teachings. You are not respecting or taking to heart the meaning of his words.

That is what I am invoking here, just trying to remind you of what our teacher Venerable Gyatrul Rinpoche himself has said, which is that we all need to respect one another. I am not saying you should listen to me, that these are my words and therefore they are special. I am someone who has no qualities, and although I have been given the name Vajra Master for this retreat, and you put me up here on this plywood box, I really have no qualities. You are Gyatrul Rinpoche's students and you should remember what his words are, and bring them to mind, and then work to actually engender their meaning and essence in your own behavior. I myself am one who is still attached to good things and still have aversion to bad things, I am not one with great qualities. I am not here putting these ideas forward as my own, saying you should

listen to them because I have great qualities or have some high position or have arrived at some special state. I am not saying you should listen to me, that this is some kind of opportunity for you because I have something so wonderful to say. That is not at all what I am saying. I am just here like a part of the family, as if we all were one family, and wanted to remind you of a few points as family members would remind each other.

We are here to practice the dharma, and you have all heard the teachings so many times, so you know what that means. The essence of the dharma is to tame one's own mind. It is for this reason that we practice. The example that has been used before is that a person might stockpile weapons for many years, but if they were to just run away and not use those weapons when an enemy finally showed up, we would think that was ridiculous. In the same way, to have received the dharma teachings and have at hand dharma practices, all of which are the weapons, the antidotes that we can use against the 84,000 kinds of mental afflictions, then not to use those weapons or antidotes when those enemies of the afflictions arise, is just as ludicrous. There are 84,000 kinds of mental afflictions. There are 84,000 categories of dharma that are the weapons or antidotes against them. That is what we must use. We have the resources at hand to actually counter them. That is precisely what we must do.

And remember, too, that when you are practicing dharma you need to practice dharma according to the dharma itself. That is of the greatest importance.

When you are here at the dharma center, if you want the center to thrive and flourish, you need to look around. What is it that makes a pleasant place? What is it that makes a happy, flourishing dharma center? If the people are happy, if they like each other, if they are mutually respectful, if they treat each other well, then the dharma center is going to thrive. People will come. Others will be drawn to that kind of dharma center or group. If people are unpleasant to each other, if they don't treat each other well, if they don't like each other, and they are acting from that sentiment, there will be fewer and fewer people. The dharma center will not flourish.

We should always consider that others want to be treated just as we ourselves do. We should keep in mind the Buddha's words because the Buddha said this himself. We should not act towards others in ways that we do not wish to be acted towards ourselves. Others want the same things that you want, they want to be treated well just as you want to be treated well. To treat others as we wish to be treated, this is our responsibility--our responsibility to each other, our responsibility in the sangha. We should think again and again on these points. This is really my hope for the dharma

center, that it can thrive and flourish because everyone is sincerely practicing in this way, everyone is contemplating these things, and everyone is internalizing these truths.

Tashi Choling is well known, and it is held up as an example. We should know that, and we should be particularly mindful that it be a good example--that it be an example of dignity and one worth following.

Our precious teacher, Gyatrul Rinpoche, he is still with us in this physical body. Everyone of course wishes him to have a long life. Actually, if we wish the teacher to have long life, what we as disciples must do is keep harmony and keep your samaya. If we really want to do all that we can for the long life of the teacher, we need to keep harmony among ourselves and we need to keep our samaya pure. That is what will make sure that there are no obstacles to the long life of the guru.

So please think again and again on these points. Please think often of samaya. Please always be mindful of this. This is really my wish for all of us, and I didn't really have anything more than that to say. I don't want to waste your time.