

On Our American Dharma Centers

Venerable Gyatrul Rinpoche

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While viewing pictures of the prayer wheels in the Vajrasattva statue garden at Tashi Choling, Rinpoche remarked:

Once I am gone, will you know what we have at Tashi Choling and the other centers? Not just the physical objects, but what is inside the statues, prayer wheels, etc. — the substances, relics, and blessings? Will you remember how special they are? You might say, “I don’t know, Rinpoche was always saying they were very special. We worked hard to build them. But I don’t know what is there. Looks like lots of prayers.”

You have to do better than that!

While viewing pictures of the altar in the Orgyen Dorje Den shrine room, he said:

This is *in* America. American men and women made these tormas and arranged the offerings. American men and women received amazing empowerments, such as the Rinchen Terdzod, the Kama, and many others from sublime masters such as Yangthang Tulku Rinpoche and H.H. Penor Rinpoche. This is the beginning of Buddhism in America. This is how it is starting. The tormas are there, the statues, the empowerments and ceremonies, where they have never been before. First nothing, now this. This makes possible all the buddhist lineage of the future.

We must remember the first Americans, those who worked, those who made the tormas, who were lamas, who led the chants. We have thangka painters and artists. They made the parasols, victory banners, and everything. We have builders who built the shrines and even the practice tables. We must remember these people, not because they are something special but because they held these positions which have not been held before in this land. We should teach our children about them and the roles they played. We should teach our children that these dharma centers didn’t just pop up like mushrooms. We aren’t all going to die in one day, so there’s time for the older people to teach the newer people how it all happened. Don’t forget our history! Honor it and pass it along.

We didn’t just come from funky guys. Our centers, statues, and thangkas have been blessed by Their Holinesses Dudjom Jigdral Yeshe Dorje, the Karmapa, Penor Rinpoche, and other lamas. The Dalai Lama has not visited our centers, but all the other high

lamas have blessed these places with their presence. We have amazing statues, thangkas, and other supports.

What else do we have? We have students who are trying hard. Everybody is trying to practice and trying to learn. You can see it. People are trying to be humble and trying to watch their own garbage can. Through all of this trying, slowly, more thangkas and more statues appear, and gradually we develop more centers: Tashi Choling, Orgyen Dorje Den, Dorje Ling, Yeshe Nyingpo Mexico, Ojai, Palri Pema Od Ling, and Namdroling Montana.

We should know how our tradition is being held in America: where we came from, how we started, how we maintain it, and what exists right now. What is the reason for all of this? What is the benefit? It is only for the buddha dharma, and the buddha dharma is only for the benefit of beings—for the benefit of you guys. If we have pictures and records of our history, it will help us understand this.

We have had amazing teachers. We have also had stupid teachers like me; I don't know anything but still I try everything. We still have wonderful teachers, such as Lingtrul Rinpoche, who is standing here for us. And then who? There are lots of monks, lamas, and ngagpas still alive and able to teach us.

Since we have these amazing centers, everybody must help, more than gossiping. We had lots of gossip before. We had ladies who would work a little and then start to gossip. These days, everything is getting better; the gossip is calming down. This is not a political group or a gossip party. So everyone, try to be clean nicely, and please take care of these centers!

Tashi delek!

-Gyatral

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