

On Vajrakilaya Retreat Preparations

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I heard that the chopons (ritual assistants) and drummers are studying a lot in preparation for the Vajrakilaya retreat at Tashi Choling. That is wonderful, thank you! But actually not only chopons and drummers should be studying. Umzeds (chant leaders) should be learning, too. Many people should be studying how to lead the chants and play the cymbals. And not only men, but ladies and children can all act as umzed.

Everyone learn for the future! In 100 years, it will still be useful to know how to act as umzed, chopon, play drum, play cymbals, and act as geku (disciplinarian). Hopefully.

A geku is not just an angry bozo, like some people think. No. The geku sees everything, step by step. He or she can teach more and more every year, his or her wisdom can become more and more clear.

Nowadays things are very different than they were before. In the old days, I bought the long horns, gyaling (reeded horns), kangling (short horns), drums, and other instruments. I came back from Nepal, excited, with a suitcase full of shiny instruments. But the students didn't know how to play, so they said, "These don't work," and they threw them away. They threw them down on the ground right in front of me. Wow. I didn't have money, I was not rich, but I thought it would benefit you guys to have those things. I was so disappointed.

At O.D.D. we had brocade hangings, but somebody angrily took them down and stepped on them. I thought, "That thing you are stepping on is an offering. It's OK, you didn't know. You don't need to be angry, but even if you are angry, still you don't need to step on it." Whoa, that was interesting. They were really teaching me patience. I was not forcing them, I was trying to help and support them; but it looks like I didn't have merit or they didn't have merit or something was wrong. A few times, that kind of thing came up.

Then, up there at Tashi Choling it also happened lots of times. They dropped and broke and dented and cracked and chipped the long horns, kangling, conches, and everything. If you can't blow or don't know how, you don't need to break it! They were so stupid! It was not human being style at all. Oh ho! And then I would think to myself, "Cool down. You better practice patience with these guys because His Holiness the

Dalai Lama, the Karmapa, and Dudjom Rinpoche, all of whom sent you here, they are all maybe watching you!" Then I tried to politely eat shit and drink pee for many years. If you guys had gone through that kind of thing you would kill yourselves!

I tried so hard for many years. I don't think anybody is gonna try like that. Hopefully you don't have to try that hard, you guys.

Kay tried hard for many years. These days she is getting a little bit of a break, and she deserves it. But still she can share what she knows with others. And not only her, but Nick the Geku, he knows lots, and he needs to rest too. And Chris, and Matthew, especially Matthew knows many things. He really needs to rest but he can teach. Everyone can teach, if they want to give up the other style of being angry, breaking things, and making bad karma for themselves.

Nowadays you guys are taking care of everything nicely. Maybe some people think, "Why do these ladies have to take care of everything like that? So uptight." No.

Early on, Matthew, Chris, Phillip, and others helped us build giant buildings. They said, "Rinpoche says we need to build the temple, step by step." And they did. But there was no money, nobody had it, so we had to work to get it from Taiwan, Hong Kong, and other places. Some American donors such as Mimi were also very generous. I went through lots of hardships. I wasn't lazy, I didn't cheat, I just tried to help Tashi Choling. I was happy to, so that then the sangha could use it nicely for dharma. Hopefully, all of you will do this.

I saw pictures of students making many tormas for the protectors at Tashi Choling, and they even have very nice flame decorations. Yes! Thank you! This is wonderful. This is not just helping out Ani Baba, this is an offering to all the protectors of the buddha dharma. That's not a small thing. The protectors are not just go-go ladies or playboys. This is not just for a religious ceremony, some kind of obscure tradition; this is not just garbage. Look at how many billions of people this activity benefits!

Everybody is studying and learning piece by piece. That's the way! Even the small details, like how to make a torma "lenchag," you don't know how to do it but you are learning. In the future you can ask the khenpos, "What does 'lenchag' mean?" Each piece, "len" and "chag," has a meaning. Actually, a lenchag is for paying back karmic debts that we owe or repairing broken commitments, and it has concise and extensive versions. It is not just a simple thing.

Learn, don't space out! Our umzed, Keith, is young but he can teach. He didn't ignore learning and practicing. He didn't think, "I am extra special, beyond buddha, so there's no reason to learn that stuff." He studied and now he knows how to do it. All of you who are learning, thank you! If you need benefit in this life and next life, this is the way to bring it about.

I saw pictures of the altar at Tashi Choling also, and I am really happy that you guys are keeping everything very clean and nice. This is liberation through seeing, hearing, touching, tasting, and practicing.

Tashi Delek, and Happy Kilaya!

-Gyatral