

On Focusing During Practice

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I hear that some people are doing Vajrasattva practice in connection with Chatral Rinpoche's passing. Of course he doesn't need you to do practice for him, okay? Nobody should think that. We are practicing for ourselves—it is our opportunity, our chance, our merit. If everyone keeps harmony, that is the best offering for him or any lama, whether they have passed away or are still alive. If everyone practices harmoniously and supports each other, loves and respects each other, that is the best offering. Of course you can offer flowers, butterlamps, and tsok, that is wonderful; but it isn't enough if you are being political and unharmonious even as you make those offerings. The real offering is to offer your body, speech, and mind to the lama and the Three Jewels, to all the refuge objects. So that means to keep harmony with our actions, with our words, and with our thoughts, and to be respectful. When you are focusing your body, speech, and mind on the dharma, whether you are studying or practicing or working or whatever, that is your offering of all your three pieces—body, speech, and mind—together.

To come together and do ceremonies and practices, that is wonderful, but don't leave your brain outside the temple. When you are practicing, you need to have your brain there in the practice, not just your body.

That means don't forget refuge and bodhicitta! You need to bring your mind into the practice with refuge and bodhicitta. Don't forget that you are practicing as a way to benefit others. Don't forget that it is for their sake that you come to the temple, that you bring offerings, that you arrange tsok or whatever you have, that you do prostrations, that you sit and chant—blah, blah, blah—for hours, that you play the bell and the drum, all these things. You are Buddhists, you know this! You know what the vow of refuge means. It means you give up your “foolish”—foolishly destroying yourself through non-virtue constantly. You know what the bodhisattva vow means. It means you give up your “selfish.” Enough with the foolish selfish—how long have you done only that? Does it work? Obviously not, because you are still complaining! If we really listened to our own complaining, we would want to benefit ourselves instead of destroying ourselves again, and we would practice virtue rather than non-virtue. But we don't want to listen to our own complaining.

Actually, nobody wants to listen to our complaining but still we do it! That is how strange we are. We don't want to listen to anybody else's complaining, either, because ours is more important. “Shut up, mommy! Shut up, daddy!”—we are almost

like that, almost that bad. Actually we should think about our mommy and daddy and all sentient beings. Of course they are complaining – they are stuck in samsara, and that is the real way of being stuck.

If we think of all the mommies and daddies, all beings stuck in samsara, everyone suffering, everyone complaining, everyone crying like babies who are hungry and have shit in their diaper, or maybe they have no diaper, then we need to practice for them, like parents take care of their crying babies. We do have a crying baby – one, two, hundreds, millions, pervading all space. Don't forget them! It is for all their sakes that we accumulate merit and purify negativity – that way we can have the power and ability to be better mommies and daddies to them all. That is why we practice, not for the sake of the dharma center or because Chatral Rinpoche needs us to – good luck with that! – or because someone is forcing us to. Right now we don't know how to take care of ourselves even, let alone know how to take care of others – and forget about having the ability to actually do something even if we did know! That is how obscured and weak we are. Right now we are like babies ourselves. We need to grow up and get stronger so that we can be of use to ourselves and others. That is why we need refuge in the Three Jewels, and that is why we need bodhicitta. That is why we need patience in everything. That is why we need faith, too, the foundation underlying it all.

If you don't have faith when you practice, how are you even going for refuge, let alone doing any further practice? If you have forgotten all sentient beings, how can you have bodhicitta? If you've lost your refuge and bodhicitta, how can you be doing practice while you sit there?

Anyway, I'm very glad that everyone is practicing. Please focus as you practice, and remember refuge and bodhicitta. Everybody try that way, harmoniously and humbly, and not popping up with pride like a giant smelly mushroom in the middle of your virtue garden, okay?

Tashi delek!

-Gyatral