

On Prayer

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People call me up and say, “I’m dying! I’m sick! Pray for me!” Or they say, “My husband, my girlfriend, my daughter, my father — they have this problem and that problem, please pray for them!”

Okay, I will pray. But who needs to pray? That person needs to pray. Whoever has the problem needs to pray, sincerely. If you try to just pray at the last minute when you are dying, or when you are sick, or when you are suffering, then that’s very difficult. Almost you can say it’s too late. When you are young, healthy, with everything perfect, then that is really the time you need to pray. You need to pray BEFORE. Before you are sick, before you are suffering, when you can focus nicely. Nobody thinks to pray then, but actually that is really the time to pray.

When I say pray, I don’t mean screaming and yelling, “Buddha, help me! Tara, help me!” Praying doesn’t mean ordering the deity around like your servant. Buddha is not your servant. Tara or Vajrasattva or Guru Rinpoche, they are not your servant. Praying isn’t like that.

Whatever you want me to pray for, more important is that you pray, yourself. Pray to the Three Jewels. Pray to Buddha, Dharma, and Sangha. You don’t need long mantras or particularly wrathful things or this one or that one—just say the refuge vow, for example. Everything is there. “LAMA LA KYAB SU CHI-O...” [I take refuge in the lama] and so on. Simple! Everybody knows that. We know but we don’t know. We know but we don’t do it sincerely. We know how to be sincere but we pretend to be stupid.

You need help, you need prayers, you need blessings? Take refuge, without playing games! Really pray, with faith. I don’t think you get anything beyond the Three Jewels—no blessing beyond that, no object of faith beyond that, no refuge beyond that.

The Three Jewels, do you think they are your boyfriend or your girlfriend? Maybe. Maybe that is your situation. Maybe you play games with the Three Jewels like you do with your girlfriend or your boyfriend. Then there is no sincerity, no honest faith. Then how are you going to really pray? How will there be any benefit?

If you play games with your faith, with your prayer, with your refuge object, always “Yes, yes! No, no!” like you are with your girlfriend, and then at the last minute you decide you really do need them and start whining and crying, then what is the benefit of that? How can there be any blessing through that? We love to whine and complain at the last minute: “You MUST help me! I’m losing my shit!”

Bullshit—nobody is your servant. Nobody has to help you. Nobody CAN help you at that time when everything is too late and you have wasted your time playing games. And who cheated you? Who cheated you out of your chance, your time? You cheated yourself. If you want to complain to somebody then, desperately, at the last minute, complain to yourself.

Finally, at the last minute, we see clearly. Finally, at the last minute, we turn to the Three Jewels as we never did before. If someone were to ask us at that time what we want, we would say, “The Three Jewels.” Why? “Because I’m losing my poo-poo!”

Tough luck, at that time! You wasted your time, now you want somebody to help you at the last minute? I think we need to think about that. I think we need to take our chance now to pray, sincerely. All of you, your minds are still clear, your bodies are still strong, everybody has the chance to pray, if they are honest. Dishonesty is the thief, stealing everything.

Praying doesn’t mean screaming and complaining. It means cultivating your qualities, slowly, and cultivating your faith by seeing the Three Jewels’ qualities. Real praying is having compassion for all sentient beings, not just your girlfriend or boyfriend. Compassion isn’t that kind of liar. Compassion isn’t wishing for money or sex, and therefore having compassion for the one you want money or sex from. Compassion is the real thought of others, looking at all others equally, seeing all others equally, trying to benefit all others equally. Bottom line? We are all sentient beings, equally. We are all suffering in samsara, ignorant, equally. We all want to get out of that situation, equally. Really we are nothing different. We are nothing special, we are not more special than others. So slow down. Be humble.

Screaming and complaining, that kind of praying does no good. Have faith and sincerity. Have compassion and be humble, stay low. Don’t get involved in politics and gossip, don’t go chasing all the desire sparkling things here and there. Samsara everywhere looks like it’s sparkling. What is sparkling? Just shit. Even the most sparkling one, if you get it, it gets smellier and smellier until you have to throw it away. That’s because the bottom line is its nature is shit. If someone is chasing shit, desperate for the shit, what do you call them? Crazy. That is ourselves. Crazy. Sentient beings, we are that way, the real objects of compassion. So everybody, please think carefully. Please try.

Tashi delek!

-Gyatral

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