

On the Passing of Longtime Student Antal Toth

Venerable Gyatrul Rinpoche

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On hearing that Antal Toth, who had been a student for many years, had passed away, Rinpoche sent the following message to the sangha:

Now our Antal passed away. What can we do? Practice. More than crying. Practice Vajrasattva, for example—nothing is beyond that. We are all sangha, everybody together. Antal was sangha, too. That means we all have a powerful connection with him, so when we hear he passed away, we should particularly practice for him.

Of course, whenever we hear that anybody has passed away we should pray for them. It doesn't matter if they were Buddhist or not, or part of our sangha or not, or part of this group or that group. Always pray for sentient beings. Even animals, doggies or whatever. That is just part of being a Buddhist. But someone who was our real dharma brother like that, the student of our same teachers and same lineage, then that connection is especially strong. Then that is really on our head.

Look at our teachers—emanations of Vimalamitra and Vairochana! You don't get beyond that. His Holiness Dudjom Rinpoche was Vairochana's emanation. Vairochana was a buddha. We are Vairochana's students. If one of Vairochana's students dies, then who is going to practice? Other students of Vairochana, trying to help! Antal was our brother, our dharma friend, a student like ourselves of such lamas. Recognizing the qualities of our teachers, then we should recognize our responsibility to each other as fellow students of those great masters. One way our group is a bunch of old hippies, Westerners in funky pants. One way, they are the students of Vairochana's emanation. That means, time to stand up! Do nicely for each other. More than crying and screaming, to practice nicely and with focus really shows your love and respect for each other.

Not just for Antal, but in the future whenever someone in the sangha passes away—even Odzer the cat!—who needs to pray for them? We do. Our sangha. That is what it means to be real sangha. That is our job. We need to stand up. How do we stand up? Practice! Being sangha means we help and support each other. How can we help? Through practice. We don't have anything beyond that.

Also, everybody should help Antal's wife. In general, whenever somebody passes away, then everybody needs to take care of the family nicely, don't ignore them. I think that you have this tradition in America in general, which is very good. It is true for sangha, too, not to ignore the wife or husband or children or whatever. Don't close your eyes or only have them half open. Open them all the way, check how you can help, how you can benefit, what you can do. Don't be lazy or sleepy, okay? If you want to think of yourselves as sangha, then it means each person needs to stand up and open their eyes and help in these ways. Not to do that is to bring shame

on your lineage—the lineage of Vairochana and Vairochana’s emanations, for example. Vimalamitra, too, and countless buddhas and bodhisattvas. Everybody help. Everybody practice, okay? Thank you.

I will practice and I will pray, too, but I am just a funky old man and I have no blessings and no qualities. But I will pretend. If this funky old man is pretending, at least you can pretend, too, and more than pretend, you can sincerely pray. Try, okay?

-Gyatral