

On Yangthang Rinpoche's Parinirvana

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You might be thinking, “Oh no! What do we need to do? Yangthang Rinpoche passed away, our empowerment lama, our root guru. We need to do something!”

You want to do something? More harmony. Don't break samaya. Learn more compassion. Learn more faith. If you don't have compassion or faith but just mumble prayers for a few minutes, that's like Chinese dragon dancing for a crowd—noisy but meaningless, not any kind of offering or making any virtue. If you want to make virtue, then keep your vows. If you are a ngakpa, a mantrayana practitioner, then that means keep your ngakpa vows. It doesn't mean to see how many ladies you can get. Or if you are a lady, it doesn't mean how many men you can get. Making virtue doesn't mean getting dressed up like a lady for her wedding. Think carefully about your vows, your discipline. Think about the pratimoksha vows, the vows of individual liberation. If you hold the pratimoksha vows well, then you have the foundation for the mahayana vows. Consider that. If you have no pratimoksha vow as your foundation, I don't know about bodhicitta. Try, as much as you can.

If you do have pratimoksha vows, then keep harmony and keep your discipline purely. If you have bodhicitta, then in addition to harmony and pure discipline, work for the benefit of sentient beings, not merely with your mouth. Not like Americans saying “I love you!”

Then if you have mantrayana vows, don't think “I am high!” Who has buddhanature? All sentient beings have buddhanature. How are you going to be high or special? Women who hold mantra vows shouldn't be looking at the men, wondering which one is rich. Men who hold mantra vows shouldn't be looking at the women, thinking about which one is the most pretty. Chasing money or looks, that is not the mantra vows. Who is good in bed, who will have sex with you—those are not what you focus on to keep the mantra vows. The real mantra vows are about method, which is great compassion, and prajna-emptiness. That is the real samaya, all samaya are included there, the millions of samaya that are listed. Actually, I don't know the real number of samaya, I don't know how to count that number.

Without refuge, there are no mantra vows. Without bodhicitta, there are no mantra vows. Without samaya, there are no mantra vows. We say we are practicing mantra but we are entirely self-centered. We have no merit, that way.

Without faith, there is no mantrayana. Without compassion, there is no mahayana. To have no faith and no compassion but to call yourself a mantra practitioner—that's the kind of mantra we know. See for yourself! Look in the vinaya teachings, learn about the pratimoksha vows. Learn about all three vows—vinaya, bodhicitta, and mantrayana. If you are a mantra practitioner, you have to keep all three. It isn't just about having long messy dreadlocks. To covet others' wealth and possessions, that is not how to keep your mantra vows, or bodhicitta, either. Or so it would seem! And pratimoksha? Out of the question. I don't know anything, but you all do know. You have heard teachings. Look at all the lamas you have met, all the lamas who have come. Penor Rinpoche—he was a real ngakpa! Yangthang Rinpoche, same thing. Our lamas have been excellent lamas such as these. Dudjom Rinpoche—inconceivable!

In the future, don't think that chasing guys or ladies is going to somehow spread the dharma and increase the sangha. No, no! That's a whole bunch of garbage. One who knows nothing of refuge and does not hold the pratimoksha vows is not called "sangha." Think carefully about these points.

Now with Yangthang Rinpoche's passing, you are asking, "What are we going to do?" What you should do is keep your vows. Keep your pratimoksha vows well. Keep your refuge and bodhicitta vows. Then keep your vajrayana vows, outer and inner. Do you know what that means? Check. Vajrayana doesn't mean you need something extra or something fancy like a thousand arms or a thousand eyes. All that appears and exists is the nature of the pure expanse—there is no mantra vow beyond that. Benefit for others is included in that. That is bodhicitta. That is altruistic activity. Not only just "for myself." You need wealth and possessions? Yes, we need some. But we don't need to fight like street dogs over a bone. These days it is hard to find those who are holding the vows properly.

Yangthang Rinpoche is showing impermanence. However much he taught about it, however much he showed us, still we don't know the truth of it. So this way, letting you be shocked, then slowly, slowly maybe you will really see. Maybe you will think.

Not only Yangthang Rinpoche, but Penor Rinpoche, Dudjom Rinpoche, lots of high lamas: Gelug, Kagyu, Nyingma, Sakya, Jonang. Look at the supplication prayers, all that is left of all the masters of the past are their names. Those are the signs of impermanence. Rich kings or any people of the past—now just only names.

What is the benefit—saving, saving, engaging the three poisons, struggling so hard for what brings only negativity and non-virtue? Pursuing wealth out of desire—"I NEED that!" Hating others, under the power of aversion. And all this work is the work of

delusion. We trade in virtue for non-virtue and prefer to remain blind. We disbelieve impermanence and still love those who are dead.

You don't need to be a scholar. Scholar? You have desire; if you have desire, you will also have aversion; the basis of these both is confusion. What is there to be scholarly about in that? Slowly, slowly tame your mindstream, tame your passions. When your mindstream is tame, you will naturally benefit yourself. Stage by stage!

Samsara is attachment, aversion, and delusion. The karma from attachment is non-virtue. The karma from aversion is non-virtue. Those are both the work of delusion. And then of course there are pride, jealousy, and on and on. Always think about this, carefully, again and again.

His Holiness Dudjom Rinpoche always was so smooth and agreed with everything, "Oh yaya, oh, yes, it is like that." Dudjom Rinpoche, Penor Rinpoche, and now Yangthang Rinpoche—in one way we almost treated them like doggies, taking them for granted. Then finally they showed us impermanence.

With Yangthang Rinpoche's passing, if you want to do some practice, you can pray, say Vajrasattva mantra—long or short doesn't matter—and do life-saving (tsetar) practices. Everybody pray, because we got many empowerments and transmissions from Yangthang Rinpoche, and we are all continuously breaking samaya. You can say Vajrasattva mantra and purify your negativity all the time, continuously. You can save beings' lives, whether they are fish, birds, or even the tiniest bugs. Everybody pray, everybody purify, everybody try. There is nobody who is not impermanent. What Yangthang Rinpoche is showing you, think about that.

-Gyatral

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