

This teaching was given by Ven. Gyatrul Rinpoche in 2013.

It is important to gather for tsok, on the lunar calendar's 10th, 8th, 25th, 30th or other astrologically important days. We have to accumulate merit and wisdom and purify negativity.

First we must accumulate merit. How does that benefit us? It allows us to purify obscurations. What does that mean? In our mindstream we are carrying many afflictive emotions, the five poisons, you know about these. They are desire, hatred, pride, jealousy and ignorance. All of these are self-centered. We make them very important, and they make our self very important! Desire means we want many things, we pursue many things, we always need things. Then if something's not right, we become angry. We have so many different objects of desire and of anger, so many wishes and preferences, because we have many various causes and seeds which ripen. The nature of all these is ignorance. Ignorance means not knowing the benefits of virtue and the harmful effects of nonvirtue. Without this understanding, we are unable to benefit ourselves and others.

To understand the benefits of virtue, we must understand all of the great and small positive effects which virtue brings. We must also understand the harmful effects of nonvirtue, the negative consequences that it has both in this and future lives. Knowing these, then desire, anger and the other poisons will naturally become less and less powerful in our mindstreams. If you have heard about these, please don't ignore this teaching! Don't cheat yourself, don't embarrass yourself by ignoring this. As Buddhists, we should give up fighting, and try to give up all kinds of negative actions. Ourselves and all sentient beings are always engaging in lots of actions, even up to the point of killing ourselves. We do negative things through the power of desire, through the power of anger, and through the other poisons, as well as smoking and drinking, and we do not pursue Dharma or anything meaningful. This only leads to short life, many obstacles and sickness, and even more difficulties in the future, and it exhausts our root of virtue.

All of you went to school, maybe you think you are scholars or smart. We think we are benefitting ourselves. Through ignorance we think, "I am!" "I don't need virtue, don't need to respect that law of karma." "I don't need to avoid nonvirtue, I am higher, I am #1, nobody controls me. I have freedom!" You don't fear nonvirtue and don't respect the benefits of virtue. Then there is no wish to accomplish virtue, no wish to avoid nonvirtue.

Examine the individual sufferings of the six families of beings. These sufferings are caused by fabricating and grasping to “I.”

We are very clever at talking about dharma and knowing it intellectually, but do we follow it?

If we are not successful in our worldly pursuits on one day, how much this disturbs us! But what really disturbs us is desire, anger, jealousy (which comes from pride), and the nature of all these which is ignorance. Examine the five poisons and follow them to their source, which is unknowing, ignorance, or delusion. Ignorance doesn't just mean sleep. It is much worse than that. Forget about benefitting others, ignorance destroys our ability just to benefit ourselves. By enacting nonvirtue based on ignorance, we experience all manner of sufferings and short life, and it destroys our chance to be liberated and our chance to benefit others. We grasp to our own side and have aversion to anything which opposes that.

All of this is taught in the preliminary practices and their commentaries, such as The Words of My Perfect Teacher, which you should read again and again. There are extensive commentaries on the preliminaries in the Payul tradition, Dudjom tradition, Kathog, Dzogchen, and in the other schools such as Gelug, Sakya and Kagyu. You should read about the qualities of the Three Jewels, according to all of these traditions. In fact, understanding the qualities of the Three Jewels is really the first step on the Buddhist path. And, think about the sufferings of each of the realms of sentient beings. What are they like? What causes them? Is someone punishing them, or are they creating it themselves? Understand the impermanence of life. Our life might be 50 years, or 100, or just 10. We just don't know. There's no guarantee. But we go on pretending that there is, we lie to ourselves, we cheat ourselves with false assumptions. So, wake up, with the preliminaries! They are everything you need to liberate yourself and benefit others. They are the foundation of all the 84,000 Dharma teachings. Without the preliminaries, we won't know how to accomplish virtue. Without them, we will mix the eight worldly concerns with Dharma. There's nothing smart about that, that's a dumb job! So, think about the preliminaries again and again, carefully.

How many teachings have we received from Khenpo Namdrol and others, on generation stage, completion stage and so many topics. Some of you received teachings from Dudjom Rinpoche, empowerment, transmission, and instruction, as well as from H.H. Penor Rinpoche, from Yangthang Tulku Rinpoche, and others. But still, I think we are blessed by demons, black, red, blue or any demons! Even though we've received all of these teachings, we can not really

internalize them, we have kept them superficial. What's the result of this? We will go to hell or the lower realms.

There are so many states of suffering. There are the hot hells and cold hells, you can read their enumerations. There are the hungry ghost realms, hungry ghosts with inner or outer obscurations. And the animal realms, there are those who live in the water or under the earth, on land or in the sky. In the human realms, we suffer from birth, sickness, aging, and so many different diseases you can see, and death—what suffering this brings! Humans have so many kinds of suffering! You guys are a million times smart, so why do you ignore these? The jealous gods suffer from fighting. In fact, thesedays there's lots of fighting here in the human realms. Every country has bombs, we have weapons that can destroy all the realms of this world, nuclear weapons. This can help us understand what the jealous gods' realm is like.

Examine, what is the cause of each of the six realms? Why are beings born there?

Shakyamuni Buddha taught about these realms, but not only him. Guru Rinpoche as well as every emanation, every high being who has appeared in this world, has taught about the sufferings of the six realms. Maybe one of them would lie, but two or three, or in this case millions of sacred holy beings all lying about the same thing? It seems unlikely.

We are humans, and the distinguishing characteristic of human beings is the ability to speak and understand language. We can learn and understand the Dharma, and we can understand the negative effects of nonvirtuous actions. Knowing this, if we continue to do them, we are like someone who knowingly drinks poison. We know the poisons, we know the evils of killing, stealing, sexual misconduct, and so many negative acts. But we still do them. Some buddhists even sell the Triple Gem, the representations of enlightened body speech and mind, for their own profit. They live off of that money.

Think carefully. Through the kindness of the teachers we have received teachings on the hinayana, mahayana, outer, inner and secret mantra, and even dzogchen. But we forget all of that and don't even keep the refuge vow. We know what is correct, we have been learning for 20 or 30 years, but we still ignore it.

This temple has all of the supports of enlightened body, speech and mind complete, but it is sort of small so we are not amazed. So many sacred beings such as H.H. Penor Rinpoche, Yangthang Tulku Rinpoche, and others have come and blessed it. You can tell this place is special, just from the gate where there are prayer flags, hung there to remove obstacles so that beings can accomplish

dharma. But still you ignore the Dharma, you don't accomplish it; instead you sell it. You are buddhist but it seems it is not benefitting you at all.

What do we need to do? We need to chew the meaning of the preliminaries more. We need to consider the qualities of the buddha's body, speech, mind, qualities, activities, and ask, how do they benefit us? What are the qualities of the Buddha's speech, for example? The sutra and tantra teachings? How do they benefit us? If we know the qualities of the buddhas, then their blessings will enter us. The inconceivable five poisons and negative actions of our body, speech and mind will decrease. Like the sun rising on a glacier, they will slowly melt and disappear.

If you just read the dharma like a newspaper, and don't carefully digest the meaning, if you don't care about it or respect it, then it won't work. Because you are ignoring it, not appreciating it. This is like a cancer patient who doesn't take the medicine he receives from the doctor. Our doctors are Shakyamuni Buddha, Guru Rinpoche, the 108 treasure revealers, the teachers and scholars of the lineage. If you refuse thier medicine of sutra and tantra, outer, inner and secret, then will it cure you?

You are not stupid! Just maybe too arrogant!

You should always be trying to learn what you don't know. How do you learn? Ask someone. For example, cleaning the temple--you can ask someone to show you how. Then you can clean the temple, which means you are cleaning your mindstream of the negative emotions.

Likewise, you can slowly learn the traditions of this lineage. For example, if you know how to offer the kartor and gegtor, the white and red tormas offered at the beginning of the practice to make circumstances conducive to practice, then in the future when you want to do retreat, you will be able to make that offering correctly. Beyond that, you can learn so much about tormas. There are tormas which represent the three roots, protectors, fulfillment offerings, and many different things. You can learn how to arrange offerings and butter lamps. You can learn what the chopon (ritual master) is doing and why. For example, why does the chopon wear a mask? Is he afraid of catching some disease from the offerings? No. He is protecting himself from accumulating negativity, he is trying to make a pure offering by keeping the substances very clean. He is protecting himself from the disease of his own poisons, from obscuring himself by acting in a careless or lazy manner.

If you don't know how to offer, you just embarrass yourself. Or if you try to lead the chants but don't know how to do it, then you are embarrassed again. Some of

you have been here 20 or 30 years, but you still don't know how to even beat the drum correctly. You say, "I didn't learn." Why? Because you are too high? Or too dumb? At least you should know how to play the bell and vajra correctly!

We need to train in the qualities of the buddha's body, speech and mind. We need to follow that style, instead of following go-go girls' or cowboys' style. Look in the preliminary teachings. Do we go for refuge only for ourselves? No. For all sentient beings. Shakyamuni Buddha accumulated merit and purified obscurations for 3 limitless aeons, and he did this for the sake of all sentient beings. He became enlightened only for their sake, and he enacted enlightened activity only for their sake, emanating countless high beings to lead them, in both India and Tibet.

Try to give up arrogantly thinking "I don't want to learn," or just saying "I am busy, busy, no time to learn." We might have a short life, and quickly lose our opportunity. Look at me, I have been in America for 40 years, now I am so old I can hardly get up. I didn't try to learn anything, and now I am just doing doggie style, piggy style. Nowadays, I am going to die.

Through the great kindness of the Dalai Lama I have been able to stay here in this country and practice patience, and have a chance to see my own faults. You have had a chance to work hard to build these supports of the outer body, speech and mind of the Triple Gem. This is through the kindness of the Dalai Lama, Karmapa, Dudjom Rinpoche, Penor Rinpoche, and the other high lamas who have blessed us. I appreciate all your work. I appreciate it if you just give one penny. If you keep on in the right direction, by this merit you will be liberated in the future. This is all due to the kindness of these high lamas, and how they have emanated in this world, with wisdom that knows the nature of things and wisdom that knows whatever appears.

Great lamas have been invited and have come, Penor Rinpoche, Dudjom Rinpoche, Khenpo Jigme Phuntsog Rinpoche, Khenpo Namdrol, Khenpo Palden Sherab, and so many others. They come because we are sentient beings and they teach dharma in order to benefit us. If we don't practice, then we are wasting their time. In that case, we are not only missing out on virtue, but accumulating nonvirtue and causes for lower rebirth.

So we need to recognize our own faults a little bit and wake up a little bit. If we don't know our own faults, we are just like animals. Then we have pride, thinking "I am special." You are nothing special, you are just showing yourself to be stubborn like an ox! Please wake up a little. Help these young people (who are here at the center). Don't teach them your dumb things. Enough is enough. You

are not afraid of dying, of the hot or cold hells. That is the dumbest sentient being!

It is time to wake up. You might think, “Gyatrul Rinpoche is upstairs lying down every day complaining!” I won’t, soon it will end, I will be gone. But the dharma is still there inside the books. Thousands of years ago, all the scholars were practicing the same thing.

You gonna do retreat? No. First recognize the qualities of your refuge objects. For example, the gem of the buddha, for the sake of all sentient beings, manifests inconceivable qualities and inconceivable compassion. Now that we have taken refuge, if we don’t keep our vows by appreciating the triple gem, then we are eating poison. We are knowingly eating the five poisons.

Lots of people are here, trying hard, down at the Guru Rinpoche statue, here at the temple, the geku and workers and everyone. If you need an opportunity to help, you can help with these things. You can help improve the different shrines and offerings, such as the Vimalamitra shrine. These things are not just a few people’s problem, they are everyone’s chance to accumulate merit. Some people offered beautiful chandeliers. Why? In order to accumulate merit and purify obscurations. You can rejoice in this, in fact you can rejoice in anyone’s efforts in virtue, and you gain an equal measure of virtue. It says in the teachings, when you appreciate and rejoice in others’ merit, you gain the same merit. So instead of ignoring or having jealousy or slander toward others, rejoice in their good qualities and all they are able to accomplish! All of the buddhas taught this.

Don’t copy me, I am just lying down and blah blah. Sorry. But I do have some little responsibility, because the Dalai Lama made me come here, and the Karmapa, and Dudjom Rinpoche. If you do virtuous things, it benefits me, because it benefits all sentient beings. If you do nonvirtue, it harms me and all sentient beings, more than poison.

Support each other. Every year it is getting better here. Thesedays, some people are really working hard to support this place. Some I don’t see at all. Maybe they are liberated already. But, if you don’t come, it doesn’t harm me. I am not asking you to come for my sake. Everybody, just take your opportunities to accumulate merit and purify negativity!

If you want liberation, do good works and study the dharma as you can. The blessings of working hard with body, speech and mind will bear fruit. If you don’t trust me, read about it in the preliminary teachings. If you do trust me, then wake up! What are you waiting for? Some escape, some plug their ears. Some say, “I don’t care!” Maybe we are heroes and don’t care, but someday we will

have to face it, when it's too late. We can benefit others, through listening to the teachings. If we don't listen, then we can't contemplate, and if we don't contemplate, we have nothing to meditate upon. Generation stage requires this process of learning and thinking, and so does completion stage. But I haven't done that at all. Still, I am like an ox, stupid. Sorry, I have so much harsh speech and blah, blah, blah.

Right now, I am poking you guys a little. The reason is that we ignore the preliminary practices so much. We have heard the teachings lots, but we have no patience or enthusiasm for them. Tortured by our negative emotions, we have no patience.

If you learn the qualities of the refuge objects 100 times from 100 teachers, then you can really understand them. You can see where the different teachings are the same and where they vary. We don't need to search for the buddha outside. The teachers need to teach and we need to listen, read, and contemplate. We need to recognize the buddha nature that we already have, instead of forgetting about it.

When you come to tsok, you like to greet each other and be social, "Ha ha, ho ho, how are you?" This is good, but don't go too far. Desire, anger and the five poisons will pop up! More than being social with each other, we need to accumulate merit together and purify obscurations. A very effective way to purify negativity is to recite the 100 syllables of Vajrasattva. This will cleanse the negativity and obscurations which we carry in our mindstreams. If we don't purify, we are like a rocky mountain.

We need to learn and think more about the teachings. Liberation is something we don't need to buy, don't need to steal or hijack. We must simply recognize what we have. Your own body belongs to you. In the same way, your own buddha nature belongs to you. If you ignore what you have, that's the very worst! Please don't ignore yourself, your own nature, what you possess. We have the buddha nature, and it can liberate us from samsara! We must recognize it, and how do we do this? By learning and meditating upon the teachings. This is our chance to internalize the dharma and make manifest our nature. Don't ignore this!

We just need to focus on the simple stuff, the basics, the most fundamental teachings. Consider the sufferings of samsara, the plight of sentient beings. Examine the three jewels as an authentic refuge, and investigate if there is any other true refuge from samsara. Learn how to cultivate the mind of awakening, bodhicitta, and its benefits.

Hey, everybody help Sonam Tsering, the artist, while he is at Tashi Choling! This is your chance to accumulate merit and purify obscurations. You might think, “Stone is stone. Clay is clay.” No, no! You have to look at the motivation, which is faith and the wish to benefit sentient beings.

Everyone look, right now it is an amazing time. Other countries are killing each other, in India everyone is washed away by the floods, in other places there is famine, disease and war, and everybody is carrying weapons. But we find ourselves in a very peaceful place.

The republicans think weapons are important, sure. They think everyone needs a gun. Guns are for what? To kill each other. In my country, first there were no weapons, no opium, just a little whiskey. Later we got opium from Hong Kong or somewhere, slowly the whole country smoking, selling it, getting rich. Then we got whiskey from China. Then, lots of weapons from China, and pretty soon everyone was packing. People became so touchy. On the road, if you just brushed past someone, suddenly you are killing each other. Everybody had so many guns, and they were so proud. Then, they got bombs and everything, and different groups formed in the country. Then, the communists came, smashed us, and we fought with them for five or ten years. By that time, I was gone.

Anyhow, this country is so peaceful, we really have the freedom to practice. So everybody, try. Take advantage of this opportunity.

Tashi Delek!

Gyatrul