

Entering the Dharma from Teachings on the Bardo **By Thrangu Rinpoche**

Each and every one of you has come here for no other reason than your sincere wish to practice Dharma. This in itself is evidence of your having an authentic and remarkable motivation. Because it means that you have recognized the excellence of Dharma and that, based on that recognition, you sincerely wish to practice it. This wish on your part and the practice that results from this wish are both wonderful. It wasn't easy for you to get here. In order to come here you had to cast aside other mundane activities and responsibilities that would normally have filled this time. You had to travel, in most cases, a considerable distance which has involved the purchase of an airplane ticket and all of the other expenses and difficulties of travel. You've done all of this for no reason other than your wish to hear and practice Dharma. So this too is evidence of your excellent and worthy intention. And I rejoice in this. I thank you for this. And I'm very, very pleased with this.

There is nothing for you to do here other than the study and practice of Dharma. Now we all know that that's why we came here. Nevertheless, we have all sorts of habits, habits that have accrued throughout the beginning of samsara. And among these habits are the habits of such things as careless speech and distraction. I remind you of this simply because it's possible that these habits could reassert themselves in this environment in spite of your basic intention. You should remind yourself, "I came here at the cost of great effort and considerable expense and I separated this time out from my busy schedule purely for the purpose of Dharma practice. This time really is quite short. It is just a few days. Therefore, I must not waste an hour or even a minute."

Remember that this short time that we have together is a time of potentially great profit for you in this and in future lives. And I mention this simply because we have these habits of distraction and they do reassert themselves even in this environment and even under these circumstances. We should not regard ourselves as bad or deficient when this happens, but we need to guard ourselves against it. We do so by maintaining the faculties of mindfulness and alertness and being particularly careful, not only with our mind, but also with our body in our physical conduct; and in particular with our speech so that we not engage in either careless or excessive talking. In short, concentrate solely on Dharma with body, speech, and mind. We have habits of doing otherwise, but in spite of those habits, it is necessary that we not waste this opportunity.

Lord Gampopa quoted the Buddha saying that if someone were to take one step toward a meditation retreat with the intention of going there and practicing, and with that single step they were somehow prevented from going any further so that they didn't reach their destination or actually engaged in any meditation practice, this would still be of tremendous benefit for their having taken that single step and it would benefit them and produce a positive result.

Now, normally when we think of such situation we think of it as a situation of failure, something that is useless. But according to the Buddha, rather it is a situation of tremendous benefit because in that situation the person generated a very powerful and

important intention—the intention to go to the place of practice and to meditate. They also did something with body and speech to bring that about. These things in and of themselves are sufficient to instill in that person a strongly entrenched habit that will only increase over time. Such a person will eventually experience tremendous benefit for themselves and be able to benefit others.

Well, in our present situation you have all done much more than that. In the example the person did not get to meditate or reach their destination, but you have succeeded in doing both. To get here you took far more than one single step and you were successful in actually reaching this destination and you have been engaging in the practice of meditation. So it's really not necessary to remark upon the fact that this is going to be beneficial. In short, I rejoice in this and you, yourself should also rejoice in it. The results of what you have done and are doing will be tremendous. So I urge you to use this opportunity to practice.

Yesterday, during the group interview, a question was asked that I think was very, very good and important. The question was, “If we do not succeed in achieving perfect awakening, the state of unity, the state of Vajradhara, in this very life in this very body what result should we seek?” My answer is first of all, it is possible to achieve the state of perfect awakening in this lifetime. We know this because it has been done repeatedly by mahasiddhas; so if we are diligent enough we can and will do so. But even if we do not achieve the state of perfect awakening in this lifetime, we should not conclude from that, our effort has been wasted. It is not the case that if you don't achieve perfect awakening in a certain lifetime, you have to start from the beginning all over again in the next lifetime.

For example, let's say that we wanted to go from here to New York City. The easiest or quickest way to get there would be to get to an airport and fly there in a plane. You could get there in a few hours that way. But suppose you weren't able to do it that way. You could drive there. It would take a few days. You would only get part of the way in each day's journey, but nevertheless, each day's journey would not be wasted. It would be bringing you closer to your destination and after a few days you would have reached your destination.

In the same way, even though we may not traverse the entire path in this life, we will traverse part of it, and we will start from wherever we ended up in our next life. In that way each lifetime will be better than the preceding one. In each lifetime we will progress further along the path. So if someone achieves the ultimate result of perfect awakening in this life, that's wonderful. But even if we do not do so, we should rejoice in the fact, and be enthusiastic that our practice is producing a result and is bringing us ever closer to awakening.