

On Pure Vision

Message from Venerable Gyatrul Rinpoche

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You think that your body is real, that pain is real, and that pleasure is something else, also real. There are so many different sensations. But all of these are just appearances. Pain is just an appearance, pleasure is just an appearance.

All appearances are the same as dreams. Look at dreams: we have one experience, then another, then the whole thing changes, then we wake up or maybe have another dream. Dreaming, waking, dying, then a new life: all of these are just appearances.

Always try to see where you are as a pureland. We think that someday we will arrive in the pureland, that it is someplace we have to go. Actually, the pureland is something you train in, something you recognize. Until now we have always gone into samsara too much, we have always focused on impure appearances. We have trained in these so diligently that even if Guru Rinpoche or Tara were to come in front of us, we wouldn't believe they were actually there, because we don't have any habit of seeing them.

So, we must train in pure appearances instead. Try to see all of this as a pureland. You should read about purelands, such as Guru Rinpoche's pureland, Tara's pureland, and Vajrasattva's. Read the descriptions of what it's like there.

If it's Guru Rinpoche's pureland you are thinking of, that means Vajrasattva can't be there, right? Tara can't appear there. And Buddha Shakyamuni? No way! Isn't that how you think?

Actually, there is no difference between them!

Or maybe you think that, unlike the others, Buddha Shakyamuni doesn't have a wisdom body, but a flesh body?

He IS a wisdom body! But since he is appearing to impure beings, he must also appear impurely, as flesh and blood. In the temple there are all those thangkas depicting the Buddha's past lives. He manifested in so many different ways. Each one was only for the benefit of beings, each was just an appearance. He seemed to be flesh and blood but really he was just wisdom appearing for the sake of beings.

Appearances change continuously. So if you die, it's nothing much. It is just appearances, changing a bit. In terms of your body, maybe death seems like a big

change, but in terms of appearances, it's not a big deal, because appearances are changing all the time anyway. Watch how they constantly arise, constantly change-- whether waking or in dreams, morning and night.

If you die but to you everything is a pureland, then you are still in the pureland. Sentient beings' experiences are changing, but it is all your pureland. You don't need to buy a ticket to the pureland. You just need to recognize what you have right now. In your pureland, all happiness and suffering are liberated. They call that quality "all-encompassing purity." "All-encompassing" means it is even, evenly pervading everything. "Purity" means all obscurations are purified, like the syllable "sang" ("purified") in the Tibetan word for buddha, "sangye."

At the same time, that purity is inseparable from compassion for sentient beings. All appearances are all-encompassing purity, but beings don't recognize this. Instead, they suffer in the realms of samsara. Thus, they are naturally objects of compassion.

That purity is also manifesting unceasingly. You think that Vimalamitra and all the great masters of the past came and then they went away? No! They are present, here, now. These manifestations are but the expression of the qualities of all-encompassing purity, your buddha nature. They emanate and appear in all different forms in response to the needs of beings. They are made by the mind, and the mind can do anything. It can appear in any way.

It's important to consider skillful method (which is great compassion), and wisdom or prajna (which is emptiness). When these two are unmistakable, they are inseparable. They are the union of method and wisdom. Everyone likes to think this is just referring to sexual union, but it's not.

For example, your body, speech, and mind are method, great compassion, because without a form, you can't benefit others. But they are empty; that is wisdom. They are completely empty, just appearances, nothing else.

The nature of awareness is clarity, and that clarity is wisdom.

A scholar without method is nothing, no matter how much he knows. Look at the Dalai Lama, he can sit anywhere, high or low, he doesn't care. Others, by contrast, can't just sit anywhere; they feel they need a special place to sit. That means they don't have method and wisdom together.

In the future, if you have learned many things and then you pop up, thinking you are something special--that means you blew it! It means you couldn't give up the afflictive emotions, the five poisons. You didn't get real method or real wisdom.

You don't need to go anywhere; you already have it. What you need is to study and train in pure appearances. Then, your grasping to ordinary reality, grasping to this and that as good or bad, grasping to subject and object as impure: all these will decrease slowly.

Learn about how, if you recognize the nature of the elements, then all earth is the yellow goddess Sangye Chenma (Buddha Locana), all water is the white goddess Mamaki (Mamaki), all heat is red Gokarmo (Pandaravasini), wind is green Damtsig Drolma (Samaya Tara), and space is blue Yingchugma (Dhatvishvari). Those are the outer elements. For the inner elements of the body, all flesh is Sangye Chenma, blood is Mamaki, the body's warmth is Gokarmo, the breath is Damtsig Drolma, and space is Yingchugma. All of these are different from each other, right? No. They are the same nature; they are oneness. All of the buddhas, whether wrathful, peaceful, enriching, or magnetizing, are the nature of the five wisdoms. We must gradually understand this.

When we say "The earth is Sangye Chenma," what does that mean? Does it mean the earth has eyes ("chenma" means eyes)? No. It means that the nature of earth is not separate from our buddha nature. It means that anything made of the five elements is our buddha nature, arising as the 5 wisdoms. When they are not recognized, they are the 5 poisons. When they are recognized, they are wisdom. If you ask, for example, where does discriminating wisdom come from? You can answer, the 5 poisons. Do I know this for myself? No. I heard it, but I didn't see it myself.

You might say, "Don't disturb me! I am in a pureland!" But whatever disturbance comes, that disturbance energy is the five poisons, which are the five wisdoms. How is that going to disturb your pureland?

You also can't say "Muslims are wrong! Hindus, put them over in some corner. Hinayana? Put it down. Vajrayana--put it up high." You actually can say nothing like that! All have the same nature. Vajrayana is the tradition of Buddha's enlightened mind. The Buddha has enlightened body, speech, mind, qualities, and activities. There are so many! How can you make them high or low?

Similarly, we have so many negative things, too: all the poisons, including desire, pride, jealousy, anger and ignorance. If we recognize them, they are the five wisdoms, the five kayas. There are not just five--we have numberless, inconceivable conceptual

elaborations. They are there, countless, but we have to look at their nature, which is the same. Babies don't have so many concepts, so they will eat shit or anything--they don't know the difference. It's all the same to them. It's only once you grow up that you make a big deal, saying, "That's dirty!"

In Dudjom Rinpoche's pure visions, many, many purelands appeared, in the east, south, west, and north, upstairs, downstairs, and everywhere. In these, there were many different deities--peaceful, enriching, magnetizing and wrathful ones--and all of them gave him teachings and blessed him. It wasn't that some were high and others were low.

Train, bit by bit. Check. Old or young, everybody try to train in this. First, read about the qualities of Guru Rinpoche's pureland, and then read the visualization of Tara's pureland, and then others. Read whatever generation stage juicy teachings you can find that describe the palace and the environment. This way you will become more and more familiar with them.

We think we need to go to the pureland today, but we don't know how to get there. Actually you don't need to go there, you don't need to "go" anywhere, in any ordinary way. Recognize that right now you are already there, in the middle of it. We have the five elements in our bodies as our flesh, blood, heat, breath, and mind. In truth, those five are the five dakinis, they are awakened. For example, our breath is Damtsig Drolma. If we slowly try to understand this, then when we do the Chimed Sok Tig Longevity Practice or any other deity practice, we will recognize that they all have that same meaning.

The buddhas know that all these appearing phenomena are not ordinary. They know that earth is Sangye Chenma, heat is Gokarmo, etc. We think, "A pureland, wow, sparkling! Someplace special, I want to go there!" No, it's not like that. If we need to go to a pureland, we need to slowly, slowly understand the purity of appearances. Then all the buddhas are with us. Understanding the purity of appearances is understanding the nature of the buddhas. If you understand the nature of refuge in the buddha, then you know that the nature of the dharma is the same, and the sangha are just the emanations of that same buddha.

Guru Rinpoche is, too. He is the emanation of the forms of all the buddhas. He is also the emanation of their speech, mind, qualities, and activities. They say there are eight manifestations of Guru Rinpoche, but actually there are countless emanations. When we awaken, the benefit of others will manifest like this, and we don't need to be kissing and hugging everybody to try to benefit them.

Kuntuzangpo is the primordial buddha, and he is called that because he has never strayed into confusion about appearances. He has always understood their nature, and thus he has never had any learning or training to do. That accurate and unchanging understanding is the ultimate teacher. It is our own nature. In fact, all the buddhas have that nature, and so do all sentient beings. So you can see, the buddhas are not something far away, out there; all their qualities are present, evident, and manifest. If you know them, that's enlightenment. If not, that's samsara.

If you practice listening, contemplation, and meditation, those are relative method and wisdom. By exerting yourself in these, learning and practicing generation stage, completion stage, and each of the levels step by step, then you become liberated. In that nature of liberation, the dharmakaya, all efforts such as listening, contemplating and meditating are liberated as well.

Tashi Delek!

-Gyatral