



THE
WORDS
of Patrul Rinpoche
MY PERFECT
TEACHER

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TRANSLATED BY THE
PADMAKARA TRANSLATION GROUP

REVISED EDITION

It is important to have a heartfelt and respectful interest in the profound teachings and those who teach them. At the very least, even if the limitations of your own mind make you indifferent to them, never criticize them.

2.4 TRANSCENDENT DILIGENCE

There are three kinds of diligence: armour-like diligence, diligence in action and diligence that cannot be stopped.¹⁵⁸

2.4.1 Armour-like diligence

When you hear the stories of the lives of the great teachers, Buddhas and Bodhisattvas, of the deeds they did and the trials they went through for the Dharma, do not be discouraged. Never think that they were only capable of achieving all they did because they were Buddhas and Bodhisattvas, and that you could never do the same. Instead, remember that it was simply by acting in this way that they all became so accomplished. Since you are their disciple, even though you might not do better, you have no choice but to follow in their footsteps.

If so much perseverance and hardship was necessary for them, how could such things not be imperative for us, lacking as we do their continuous training in Dharma from time without beginning, and weighed down as we are by our past negative actions?

We have all the freedoms and advantages of a human existence. We have met an authentic spiritual teacher and are receiving the profound instructions. Now that we have this opportunity to practise the true Dharma properly, we should vow from the bottom of our hearts to do so, and be prepared to accept hardships, take on heavy burdens, and risk life and limb without a care for our flesh and our blood. That is what is meant by armour-like diligence.*

2.4.2 Diligence in action

While having every intention of studying and practising Dharma, you may well keep putting it off until tomorrow or the next day, day by day all your life. You must avoid wasting a whole human lifetime forever planning to practise. Druk Pema Karpo said:

Human life is like being in the slaughterer's pen:

* "The essence of diligence is to take joy in doing positive actions." NT

Death comes closer with every second.

If you unhurriedly put off today until tomorrow,
Beware of tears and regret upon your deathbed!

Do not wait another second to practise. Do something about it immediately, like a coward finding a snake in his lap or a dancing-girl whose hair has just caught fire. Totally abandon worldly activities and devote yourself to the practice of the Dharma right now. Otherwise you will never find the time—one worldly activity will follow another, endlessly like ripples on water. They will only stop when you decide once and for all to put an end to them. As the Omniscient Longchenpa says:

Worldly preoccupations never end until the moment we die.
But they end when we drop them—such is their nature.

and:

Our activities are like children's games:
They go on as long as we continue, they stop as soon as we stop
them.

Once you feel the wish to practise Dharma, do not let laziness or procrastination take over even for a moment. Set to work immediately, spurred on by the thought of impermanence. That is what is called diligence in action.

3 Diligence that cannot be stopped

Do not feel satisfied just at having done a little retreat, or some approach and accomplishment practices, a few prayers or one or two good works. Vow to practise for as long as you live, and determine to keep your efforts going, with all the constant power of a great river, until you have attained perfect Buddhahood.

The supreme beings of the past said that one should practise like a hungry yak grazing. As a yak tugs at one clump of grass, its eye is already fixed on the next. In the same way, before you finish one Dharma practice, tell yourself that as soon as you have finished your present practice you will start this or that new practice.

Try to make greater and greater efforts each day, all the time, without ever letting your body, speech or mind slip into idleness or separate from the Dharma even for an instant. Rigdzin Jigme Lingpa says:

To practise with greater tenacity the closer one gets to death is the mark of a Dharma practitioner who has not been caught by the

frost.*

These days, those who are reputed to be great meditators or good lamas are often told by people, "Now you no longer need to do prostrations, recite prayers, accumulate merit and wisdom, purify obscurations, and all that."

They soon start to believe it themselves, and think of themselves as being very important and no longer in need of these things. But, as the peerless Dagpo Rinpoche said,

Thinking that one does not need such things proves that one needs them more than ever.

Every day the great Indian master Dipamkara** would set to work making *tsa-tsas*. His hands would soon be covered in clay.

His followers said, "People are talking because a great teacher like you is handling mud. What's more, you're tiring yourself out. Why not let us do it for you?"

"What are you saying?" said Dipamkara. "Are you soon going to start eating my food for me, too?"

Until you attain perfect Buddhahood, you will still have past actions and tendencies to remove, and will still need to attain more and more spiritual qualities. So do not fall into indolent and sporadic practice. Practise Dharma with diligence from the depth of your heart, without ever feeling that you have done enough.

Generally speaking, whether you attain Buddhahood or not depends solely on your diligence. So make every effort to practise the three kinds of diligence. Someone with exceptional intelligence but only a little diligence will only be an inferior practitioner. But someone with little intelligence and extraordinary diligence will become a superior practitioner. With no diligence whatsoever, all other good qualities would be useless. The Omniscient Jigme Lingpa said:

No intelligence, no power,
No wealth or strength can help
Someone without diligence—
He is like a boatman whose boat
Has everything but oars.

* Frost, which destroys one's crop of fruit, symbolizes the obstacles which prevent us from attaining our goal.

** Another name for Atiśa.