

Evidence of Our Buddhanature

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A student asked for advice on understanding buddhanature. They said, oftentimes it feels to them like they don't have buddhanature, and asked: How can we know for ourselves? How can we trust that we have buddhanature? Here is what Rinpoche said:

All the buddhas say that every being has buddhanature. All the great masters of Buddhism, the realized beings of every lineage, say the same thing. If we didn't have buddhanature, how could we become buddhas? How could we become enlightened? It is only by virtue of possessing the buddhanature that enlightenment is possible. Why can we become enlightened? Because buddhanature is present in us. Or you could say that the condition that makes our enlightenment possible is that we are endowed with buddhanature. That is why when we practice, we can get a result. If we didn't have buddhanature, there would be no reason to practice. We would never be able to get any result.

The buddhas are present. That presence is our buddhanature. It is not separate. Where are all the buddhas? They are here. They are everywhere. You can't say there is some place that the buddhas are not present. In the same way, you can't say there is any being who does not have buddhanature. Because sentient beings have buddhanature, they can become buddhas.

If you don't know your buddhanature, learn about it! Don't just complain that you don't understand, or say it is too difficult. Of course, if you don't learn, it will always be too difficult. You will never understand. If you learn, everything becomes easy. Therefore, study! Listen to the teachings, read the books, slowly, slowly. These things are not simple. Of course we can't understand in one instant.

You can read. You can listen. You can understand your language. You do have lots of teachings. If you don't know your buddhanature, you can learn lots about it! You are not poor! But maybe you are stingy—stingy with yourself, just holding your ignorance and not wanting to learn anything. Don't do that. That is really putting yourself in the garbage can. You don't need to do that.

You do have the buddhanature. You can learn what that means. You can study that, contemplate that, practice that, realize that. Because everything is there! It is already there—you don't have to go buy anything! It is called 'nature' because it is already there, already in your hand. More than that, it is already in your heart. Already in your mind. Already your own nature. That is why it is called the nature or essence. Your nature. Not somebody else's nature.

Nobody is poor. Everybody is the most rich: rich with buddhanature. Even if they don't have one penny or one speck of anything, nobody is so poor that they lost their buddhanature. You can't lose it. You can't give it to somebody. Nobody can steal it from you. Therefore, it didn't go anywhere! Where is it gonna go? Therefore, you have it! You already have it, but you need to

recognize it. You have it, but you don't see it. How can you see it? How can you recognize it? By learning.

You don't have to read everything and become a scholar. You don't have to read fast. What is the hurry? More important is that you chew it, whatever you read, whatever you hear. Just go slowly, slowly. The bottom line is not if you have read many books and heard many teachings. Of course, if you have, that is wonderful! But the bottom line is if you have gone deeply into whatever you have received. Don't just space out while you are listening, staring dumbly, or sit slack-jawed like a zombie while you read with an empty brain. What is the benefit of that?

Ask yourself why you are listening to the dharma. It is so then you can think about it! Listening is not enough. Reading the book is not enough. Even if you read a billion books, still that is not enough. Then you have to think about it. If you have doubts, ask questions. If you don't understand, ask somebody! Then chew on it more, more, more, more, again, again, again.

Why are you reading? So then you have something to think about! Why are you contemplating? So you can understand what you heard or what you read. You can go more and more deeply into the meaning, and your understanding will become more and more firm. Then you can really practice, purely, authentically. Then all that study and contemplation finally can really benefit your mind. Actually, it benefits everything—body, speech, and mind, together; yourself and others, both. What is that benefit? It is that you start to recognize your buddhanature.

When you hear the term 'buddhanature,' don't think that it's some ordinary, material thing like an apple or a potato. That doesn't work. If buddhanature is a physical object like that, then show it to me! Do you keep it in your pocket? No. Buddhanature is the wisdom mind of all buddhas. In Tibetan, they call it *deshek nyingpo*. *Deshek*, or *dewarshekpā*, means 'buddha' or 'sugata.' *Nyingpo* means 'essence' or 'nature.' That nature is enlightened mind. So *deshek nyingpo*, which we translate as 'buddhanature,' also means the enlightened mind of all buddhas.

How can we know buddhanature? Actually, one way it is only because we have buddhanature that we are able to stand up, or sit down, or eat. It is only because we have buddhanature that right now we are able to have even the tiniest bit of altruism or concern for other beings, or be generous, or make offerings. And in the future, it is only because we have buddhanature that we will be able to become enlightened.

The enlightened ones tell us that all sentient beings have buddhanature. There is no exception. There is no sentient being who lacks it. Therefore, I have a question: are you a sentient being? If so, you can be sure you have buddhanature.

Therefore, know that you have the buddhanature. You have it right now. You already have it. You don't have to get it from anywhere, go looking for it anywhere, buy or steal or borrow it from anyone. It is already yours. Already your own nature. This instant, you have it. In the past, every instant you have had it. Every instant in the future, still you will have it. It is always with you, always close to you, closer than anything or anyone. More than your boyfriend or girlfriend or husband or wife or anybody, it is always with you. It is the real trustable one. It is

even more trustable than yourself! Why? Because how long have you just listened to yourself and gone your own way, thinking you are so smart, and the result is that still you are suffering in samsara? If you go your buddhanature's way, though, all the buddhas' way, then you can be liberated from all samsara's sufferings. That is how much you can trust your buddhanature. Not your go-go nature or your playboy nature, not your liar nature or your cheater nature — they destroy you, every time. But your buddhanature, you can trust.

Our real nature is buddhanature; it is the same nature as the Three Jewels' nature, every realized being's nature, every deity's nature, every lama's nature, every yidam's nature, every dakini's nature. Those are not different natures! It is not that sentient beings have a worse one and buddhas have a better one. That nature is the same nature: nothing better, nothing worse.

That is what they say! Myself, I don't know these things. I can't say such things from my own experience. I can't say who has the buddhanature or not. But look in your own mindstream. If you have even a tiny speck of faith, that is because of your buddhanature. If you are able to practice dharma, that is because of your buddhanature. If you are able to even think of bringing benefit to others, that is due to your buddhanature. Through the presence of your buddhanature, you can cultivate pure compassion, you can give rise to unshakeable faith, you can bring forth every excellent quality, slowly, slowly. You couldn't buy these things at the market! It wouldn't matter how much money you had, you couldn't pay to get such qualities. They are only possible because of our buddhanature.

One way, that I can talk to you and you can talk to me is because of the power of our buddhanature, too. That you can perceive anything with your five senses, think anything, say anything, do anything — that is because you have rigpa, awareness. That means buddhanature, again! It is the nature of your mind. Just your ordinary mind with ordinary thoughts and concepts, nothing special: its nature is rigpa, or you can say buddhanature. Same-same. Everybody can stand up, sleep, eat, walk, do so many things because they have awareness. In the same way, everybody can have desire, and anger, and jealousy, again because the nature of those is awareness. All the good thoughts and all the bad thoughts, both, can arise because of our buddhanature. The nature of the good one and the nature of the bad one, both are the nature of your mind. That means rigpa. That means buddhanature. Bad thoughts don't block it; good thoughts don't increase it. Their nature is the same. How is the one nature going to block itself? How is the one nature going to increase itself? It is just one nature. Nothing to do. Samsara's nature, enlightenment's nature — same. Sentient beings' nature, buddhas' nature — same. Same as the nature of our own mind, each second. Do we see that? No. We just see naughty things. We just have naughty habits. We don't believe we have buddhanature. We ignore it, and go sniffing after every stupid thing. That is how the whole of samsara functions.

When you study and contemplate the dharma, and then practice and bring forth your qualities, then you see the results of buddhanature. When you have firm faith and pure compassion, those are the results of buddhanature. Those are wisdom results.

At the beginning, maybe you don't see any such qualities. Then slowly, slowly, as you practice maybe you start to get some tiny things. Even tiny compassion, tiny altruism, tiny

understanding—those are like little sprouts from the root of our buddhanature. What is the result? Not something different. Your buddha tree is buddhanature itself growing, buddhanature itself blossoming. Buddhanature is the leaves, the branches, and the fruit, too. The root and the flower do not have different natures. Same thing with the fruit. You don't need to put them in separate corners. They are oneness, inseparable.

Can we say our merit comes from our buddhanature? Of course! Whatever merit someone has, that is how much they are paying attention to their buddhanature. How much merit you have means how much you are connecting to it. Creating virtue means you aren't ignoring your buddhanature. Virtue means you are acting like a buddha, and that buddha is your own nature. Non-virtue means you are failing to act like a buddha, you are just following your own stupid idea. That is just ignorance. Where does ignorance take you? To hell. To every suffering. One way, it's amazing: sentient beings have buddhanature, everything perfect, but still they can go to hell. How? Easily! They follow their own stupidity, their own stupid habit. That is where your stupidity takes you, turning away from your buddhanature, even though you are never separate. Where does virtue take you? It takes you on the same path as all the realized masters, to liberation. That is the path to your own nature. Nothing other than that.

Where can you see your buddhanature? All the deities, they are showing it, even in the tip of a single hair on their head or a single pore on their body. All the lamas, they are showing it, too. They are teaching us, telling us, trying to show us, again and again, even though we don't want to listen. What all the buddhas are teaching, all the dharma, is showing buddhanature. Statues and thangkas—they are not pictures of go-go ladies and playboys. They are to remind us of our buddhanature, glimpse after glimpse! The peaceful and wrathful deities, they aren't handsome guys and scary, nasty guys. They are all showing buddhanature, too, in so many different ways.

The buddhas, when they became enlightened, they didn't get something fancy. What did they get? Their own nature, buddhanature, same as yourself, same as all sentient beings.

Sentient beings, we don't show our buddhanature. It looks like we are really embarrassed, hiding our buddhanature, hiding our qualities like they were something disgusting. You might ask, how are buddhas different from sentient beings? Buddhas are showing their buddhanature. That's it! They aren't embarrassed by their qualities. They see that nature, they realize that nature, all their enlightened body, speech, mind, qualities, and activities are that nature—the same nature, the whole thing, inseparable. Sentient beings, we are so smart, we ignore that nature.

Anyway, that is what they say. I don't know, myself. I am not buddhanature. I am not a buddha. I am just a stupid old man. I am not saying anything, okay?

Tashi Delek!

-Gyatral

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