

The first thing that arises naturally in my mind while thinking of the opportunity offered to me by Tsadra Foundation is gratitude. In this materialistic world often inclined to evaluate what is important and deem worth supporting solely by how tangible and profitable things are, it is indeed a rare and precious chance to receive support for something more in the realm of the intangible and spiritual. For this reason, I am particularly recognizant and deeply grateful for your commitment to support and encourage those seriously engaging in authentic dharma practice, seeking the two stages of realization and liberation presented by the Masters upholding the living tradition of Tibetan Buddhism.

Fortunately all the proper outer, inner, and secret conditions for solitary retreat continue to be in place and I have been able to follow my retreat schedule, packed with practice, study and contemplation, without any interruptions whatsoever and plan to continue doing so.

As requested, here is a brief account of this year in retreat, (my second year in solitary retreat but the first one sponsored by Tsadra Foundation), which would not have been possible without your support.

Outwardly:

The ultimate intention of the nyingtik, the actual ultimate meaning, comes about solely through the transference of the blessings of the Lineage, this is particularly true for an ordinary being such as me, so the continual shower of blessings, guidance and care of my Teachers during my retreat, nurture all aspects of my life which slowly becomes one with authentic dharma practice. In this year of solitary retreat I received several visits of Rangdrol Rinpoche, one visit of Jigme Khyentse Rinpoche, and in two occasions that of Tulku Pema Wangyal Rinpoche. In these joyous occasions they were kind to illuminate and clarify several points of practice, offered transmissions, and invaluable detailed and multilevel pith instructions concerning the focus of my practice during this precious time of retreat.

I also have had access to recordings of several teachings that were offered by Tulku Pema Wangyal Rinpoche and Jigme Khyentse Rinpoche during the summer and parallel retreats here in France, as well as teachings imparted by visiting Teachers, such as Matrul Rinpoche and H.H. Sakya Trinzen Rinpoche. Listening to these recordings is not only very inspiring but also an important element that furthers insight and a deepening of my practice.

In terms of numbers, during this time I have finished one and a half million bums (one bum equals a hundred thousand recitations) of a particular mantra. Along with this I have also completed reciting one and half bums, accompanied by reflection and practice, of two particularly precious texts, by Longchenpa and Mipham Rinpoche. At present, and for the coming months, I shall continue with these accumulations and practices but have also begun some other recitations which are always combined with several sessions of meditation.

Inwardly:

The effects of the recitations and meditation, along with reflection, silence, and the seclusion from outward stimulus, are presently expressed by a taming of the crazed wild elephant mind. As a beginner, there is a marked improvement in concentration and the ability to focus the mind one-pointedly quiet naturally. There is a natural relaxation in all activities and a frequent state of mental clarity.

There is also a much greater sensitivity and insight and a sincere delight in the renunciation of worldly pursuits. Although as days and months go by my disenchantment with a world inherently comprised of suffering only grows stronger and renders my resolution to dedicate my life solely to practice to attain liberation for self and others unshakable, at the same time everything is fully embraced with an open gentleness, perceived as more ephemeral, more beautiful, more moving, and intensely poignant. Somehow everything seems to be Dharma.

Secretly:

The secret aspects of practice are to be discussed only with one's Teachers, so I will just say that fortunately there is something to discuss with them. May the teachings be victorious.

The brief account of this year of study, reflection, and intense meditation practice in solitary retreat presented to you here is solely in order to honor my commitment to fulfill Tsadra Foundation's request to do so. However, it neither reflects nor is it considered as any particular qualities or achievements, since the heap of afflictions, faults and dualistic habits in my mindstream is as enormous as mount meru, to do so would be not only dishonorable but utterly mistaken.

I thank you wholeheartedly for supporting any minute but firm steps I am able to take towards the continuous uncovering and unfolding of the qualities, ability, luminous wisdom and compassion exemplified by my Teachers and by all the realized Masters of every Lineage of Vajrayana Buddhism.

Sincerely
Tycho Thal