

### 7.7 The clear light of Dharma

#### The Clear Light of Dharma

We often mistake Buddha Dharma for culture, race, politics, or even religion. The Dharma is a clear light that helps us see culture, race, politics and religion better, but it is not what it shines on. The light is not what it reveals: it is the clear sight of wisdom.

The light of Dharma makes us see that they are all means to an end. What is that end? True happiness.

If you place culture above Dharma, then you are a worldling. If you place race above Dharma, then you are a race-member or even a racist. If you place politics above Dharma, then you are a politician. If you place religion above Dharma, then you are a religion-follower.

These are parts of a bigger whole, that is, our life: to mistake a part for the whole is like getting upset over a word or sentence that someone has said (whatever the speaker may have meant it), without understanding the whole picture.

If we often tend to judge ourselves by a single event of what we see as “success” or “failure”, then we have failed to see the bigger picture called *life*. It's like when night comes, we never think of a new dawn only hours away. Why is this so painful and foolish: because we have judged ourselves by our past. Since we have failed in the past, we tend to live as if there is no present. Or worse, we lose ourselves thinking about a better tomorrow.

All we really have is the present. To be “present” means that we are giving ourselves the opportunity to learn and grow.

We should go on giving ourselves every chance to be present right where we are. In this sense, we should be *most* generous

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to ourselves first, before we can really give what is truly valuable to others.

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