

## **Bodhisattva Ever-weeping**

One of the tasks of a practising Buddhist is to tell people, albeit gently, that wrong is wrong. We may get into a lot of trouble for doing this: we might be thrown out of a temple, organization or group. Or, we could be blackballed by powerful Buddhists. Still, it is better to be blamed, even hated, for having done what is right and good, than to be praised, or worse, loved, for having done something bad and wrong.

To have wrong views and do nothing about it is like living a predictable animal life. To encourage others in our wrong views is to create far greater bad karma, which makes us less humans. Notice how people with strong views seem to be distant and strange, almost non-human.

In **the Kukkura,vatika Sutta** (M 57), the Buddha warns Puṇṇa the dog-vow ascetic of his wrong views:

“... Puṇṇa, if one’s dog vow is fulfilled [succeeds], it takes one to the company of dogs; if it is unfulfilled, it takes one to hell!”<sup>1</sup>

There’s a sad local reality (mainly amongst ethnic Buddhists) that we need to correct, for the benefit of future lay Dharma workers. As people perceive me to be a lay Dharma teacher without any wealth or title, it is not always easy to be seen or heard with true respect or positive response. There were occasions when I put my palms in anjali<sup>2</sup> to certain well known teachers, and they just casually wave their hand at me. But the next moment, they dutifully bow with palms together to VIPs. This is just one example the “class” problems of ethnic Buddhism of our times.

I used to be angry about this, but now I feel deep compassion for them, to the point of near-tears. They have yet a lot to learn about being a teacher and fellowship. To paraphrase a well known commentarial saying: when non-Dharma practitioners fail, it is like falling from a donkey, but when a Dharma practitioner or teacher fails to remove arrogance and conceit, it is like falling from an elephant.<sup>3</sup>

Some of my concerned friends tried to console me by saying that it is better to regard ourselves as “students,” even as “eternal students,” and not as practitioners or teachers. This is, of course, a great idea for not rocking the boat. However, my friends are also well known teachers. So I’m not sure how they would resolve such a contradiction. Anyway, I’m sure all this is said in true Buddhist spirit, and we should reflect on its meaning. Everyone is teaching us something, especially our friends, even more so, those who do not like us or are trying to hurt us.

The point is that we are all students, even as teachers. In fact, if we are really compassionate, we have no choice of whether we want to be a student or a teacher. When someone asks us a Dharma question, we try to answer it – we are then, at that wonderful moment, a Dharma teacher. In other words, we do not have to seize the moment; the moment will seize us!<sup>4</sup> We

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<sup>1</sup> See also M 57,5.2 @ [SD 23.11](#).

<sup>2</sup> Añjali or lotus-palms is a Buddhist greeting which remind others and ourselves that we are like lotuses rising from the mud of ignorance, through the waters of craving, is able to shine in the sun of wisdom, if we practise the Dharma. Some, however, mistake it to be a show of deference to those in a higher class!

<sup>3</sup> Cf MA 4:165. See **Spiritual friendship**, [SD 8.1](#) (4.2(4)) n.

<sup>4</sup> See Reflection, “Let the moment seize us,” [R376](#).

are simply inspired to speak the Dharma “with wonders” (*sa-p,pāṭihāriya*),<sup>5</sup> that is, show our lovingkindness, compassion, gladness and equanimity. This is a great way to teach the Dharma.

The best Dharma teachers are also the best students; they are quick and good at learning the Dharma and good readers of people. Then, they are able to teach just the right Dharma to them. They are also not afraid of learning from mistakes (as we are yet unawakened): suffering is a great teacher, if we are willing to learn. This is a noble truth.

Mahāyāna Buddhism has a very inspiring story of the Bodhisattva Sadaprarudita (Ever Weeping or, in Chinese, Changti pusa). His story appears in the Perfection of Wisdom in 8000 Lines. He might be said to be the “ideal student.” But, as a Dharma-seeker, he is unable to find any teacher who would teach him the Dharma. So he is terribly sad and ever weeping, on this account.

This was like me in my years as a monk, and the early years as a lay Dharma teacher. I had great difficulty finding good teachers to teach me Dharma. Some of the best of them, sooner or later, showed signs of displeasure, even annoyance, at my asking so many questions, especially those that they cannot answer. One of them, scolded me, “He’s crazy. He thinks only about Dharma, Dharma, Dharma!”

There was one well known monk, who introduced himself to me as, “I’m the CEO of such and such.” Quite flabbergasted, I can only say, “I’m a full-time lay Dharma worker.” He stared at me sullenly, and at once turned away; end of conversation. Fortunately, there were kind monks, who told me, “Let me introduce you to this great monk...!” Today, I have the whole Tipiṭaka in my home, and is able to happily translate and study the suttas everyday or whenever I wish to.

Back to Bodhisattva Sadaprarudita. He heard that a famous Bodhisattva Dharmodgata is teaching in a faraway city. But he has nothing to offer the teacher. (Clearly here, both Bodhisattvas are laymen.) So, he makes a remarkable announcement: he is selling his own body (like meat)!

Sakra’s celestial throne heats up, and he has to investigate who might dethrone him. He disguises himself as an old man and buys some meat from Sadaprarudita. He cuts off a part of his thigh and gives it to him. Then, another man comes along and says he wants his bone-marrow. Sadaprarudita is just going to break his own bone. Sakra stops him and reveals himself, heals him and offers to prepare the gifts for the teacher. (I take this as an inspiring skillful means to support lay Dharma teachers!)

The story of Sadapraruditiya is a also good example of the “giving of the body” (*deha,dāna*) by a Bodhisattva in Mahāyāna. This reminds me of a beautiful story of the nun Subhā. **The Therī,-gāthā** relates how she is pursued by a youth who fell in love with her, claiming that she has such beautiful eyes. So she plucks her eyes out and gives them to him! Understandably, he is horrified, and learns a real lesson – that we cannot love only a part of a person, or a nun!<sup>6</sup>

Thankfully, the Buddha does not encourage us to “sell” our body – although organ donation is a great act of charity, when done in the right spirit. Harming the body does not help us in working towards awakening, as we are damaging our only vehicle for the Dharma journey. Remember

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<sup>5</sup> See eg **Gotamaka Cetiya Sutta** (A 3.123), [SD 11.10](#).

<sup>6</sup> **Subhā Therī,gāthā** (Thī 366-399), [SD 20.7](#).

the story of how our Buddha, after 6 long years of painful struggle, turns to the middle way, that is, avoiding both self-mortification and sensual indulgence.<sup>7</sup>

However, we need to give up something more difficult, in a way, that is, our greed, hate, and delusion. We must give up our habit of treating people as objects or measuring them. We must give up our narrow and unfriendly views of religion (including Buddhism). We must give up the idea that what we “believe” will liberate or save us. Only in really being free of views will we truly awaken. Before that, let us constantly keep our body and mind wholesome, and see impermanence in all things.

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[an occasional re-look at the Buddha’s Example and Teachings]

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<sup>7</sup> See **Dhamma,cakka Pavattana Sutta** (S 56.11,3-4), [SD 1.1](#). See also **Gavesī Sutta** (A 5.180,17) n, [SD 47.16](#) & **The body in Buddhism**, [SD 29.6a \(4.1\)](#).