

DHARMA -- IMPARTIALITY 101

It's hard for me not to be partial. I naturally like one thing more than another or one person more than another. Always have. Yet, after being around Rinpoche for some 36 years I see him treating everyone equally. How does he do that? For instance, I could never understand how Rinpoche could treat the college student that thought it was funny asking Rinpoche "How is your sex life?" With the same gentleness and thoroughness as he treated me, his devoted student, Rinpoche's answer to this fellow was "What me, a fat old man? LOL.

Of course, I found that amazing and over time my amazement turned into curiosity. How is that possible for Rinpoche to treat a person off the street the same as he treats his long-time students? And he did the same thing year after year.

If you are expecting me to come up with an answer, you will be disappointed because I don't have one. However, I do have some thoughts on the matter. And those thoughts probably came from observing how the Tibetans treat animals. I have watched Tibetans carefully blowing mosquitoes off their arms or gently brushing them away and saw how different that was compared to how we smack and kill them in this country.

And once, when a very high lama, one of the Karmapa's Heart Sons, was visiting us, we went out to a cottage by a lake that we had at the time. And down by the shore His Eminence was standing in front of these trees that were covered with gypsy-moth larva, which were totally destroying the trees. And Rinpoche was in the process of blessing all of the little worms. Whoa, what's that all about thought I? And so, you get the idea here.

And over time, I gradually understood more about how the Tibetan Buddhists treat and consider other sentient beings, all sentient beings. I am sure I don't have it 100% right yet, but my impression is that all sentient beings are equally considered the same. And "the same" here means that every being from the largest whale down to the tiniest microbe are equivalent to one another. I have watched dharma practitioners out at dawn picking up the earthworms that were trying to cross the tarmac before the sun rose and fried them to a crisp. They would pick up each worm and carry it to the grass on the side of the road. And there were innumerable worms.

In other words, we (all sentient) beings (great and small) are said to have what is called Buddha Nature. For example, a common house fly is the same exact being as you and I, only with the body and functional means of a house fly to express itself. That sentient being (house fly or whatever) doesn't change, only the body and capability of the being inhabited.

Certainly, that concept was for me a bit of a revelation. As a life-long nature lover, I already treasure other sentient beings, only I never knew exactly why. This would be a good reason.

If you follow the above reasoning, it's only a hop, skip, and a jump to treating all beings (large of small) with equality, perhaps especially human beings, and even that obnoxious college student who meant nothing nice. Certainly, Rinpoche treats every person he meets like he or she is an equal and holy being. And he will go to great lengths to explain to them whatever they have questions about, if he knows.

I assume that Rinpoche is aware that he is talking to a potential Buddha in everyone he meets. How else would he take great pains to work with each being that addresses him? I mean to take a page from that book.

[Photo by me today.]

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“As Bodhicitta is so precious,
May those without it now create it,
May those who have it not destroy it,
And may it ever grow and flourish.”