

Study Material for the Preceptor's Retreat

Friday 25 February

Sangharakshita, *Levels of Going for Refuge*, 1978

The Dakini, and there is a masculine form of this name - Daka - the Dakini is any member of the spiritual community with whom one is in close personal contact, who sparks one off spiritually, even inspires one. That's what is meant by Dakini.

But there's another way of looking at Dakini, perhaps even more important and more profound. The Dakini, in any sense is not really even anyone outside one at all. After all, one should be able to spark oneself off. The committed person who's an integrated person should be able to do this. What the Dakini really represents is the higher, more refined emotional side of one's own being. That's what the beautiful figure of the Dakini represents. The Dakini represents friendliness, befriending. The Dakini is compassion. The Dakini is sympathetic joy. The Dakini is peace and tranquillity. The Dakini is faith and devotion. And all these, higher, more refined, more spiritual, positive emotions are to be developed within oneself.

Does this then mean that the Sangha Refuge can be dispensed with? Does it mean that spiritual fellowship is unimportant, because you just go on sparking off yourself apparently? Does it mean that communication is unimportant? No, it doesn't mean that. It means that you cannot go for Refuge to the Sangha, to the Dakini, unless you have your own Dakini within. We may say that Dakini goes for Refuge to Dakini. We may say Dakini communicates with Dakini. In other words, within the context of the spiritual community, the spiritual fellowship, our communication with one another is through our own higher emotional natures, or with the help of our own higher emotional natures. We cannot communicate just with the intellect. You cannot really communicate just through ideas or through concepts, only through, or with the help of, your own higher, more spiritual, more refined, emotions. In other words only through your own personal - which means your integrated - Dakini, addressing as it were the Dakini of the other individual. So Dakini more or less corresponds with what our own English William Blake calls the 'Emanation'.

I don't remember Blake's exact words but he says something like that in the perfect state - perhaps in the state of eternity - individuals converse with one another through their emanations. And what does this mean? It means that without genuine spiritual emotion there is no communication. If you are merely intellectual, no communication. You may talk for ages, talk the hind legs off a donkey as we say, but there'll be no communication. You'll just be talking, and you'll feel very dry and barren and dusty, as it were, as though there was dust in your mouth at the end. If you only communicate through the medium of concepts, if you only talk philosophy in this dry, academic pseudo-intellectual way, there'll be no communication. It's just the dry bones of concepts rubbing up against one another and generating, kindling, no spark, no warmth whatsoever, and leaving you rather dull and dry and dissatisfied afterwards. No. Genuine communication is only through or with the help of emotion, warmth, friendliness, and in the spiritual context - context of spiritual community -

only with the help or through the higher, spiritual, emotions, and this is what is meant by the Dakini Refuge.

Now by emotion one doesn't mean anything soft or sloppy or sentimental. One means it more in the Abhidharma sense of positive mental events.

Saturday 26 February

Codanā Sutta: Reproving AN 167

There Sāriputta addressed the bhikkhus: “**Reverends, a bhikkhus who wants to reprove (codeti: to urge, incite, exhort; to reprove, reprimand, to call forth, to question) another should first establish five things in themselves.**

What five? I will speak at the right time (*kālena*), not at the wrong time.

I will speak truthfully *bhūta: that which is, natural, genuine, true. From natural law*), not falsely.

I will speak gently (*saṇha: smooth, soft, gentle, mild, delicate, exquisite*), not harshly.

I will speak beneficially (*atthasaṃhita: interest, advantage, gain; (moral) good, blessing, welfare; profit, prosperity, well-being*), not harmfully.

I will speak with a mind of loving kindness (*mettacitta*), not from secret hate.

A bhikkhu who wants to reprove another should first establish these five things in themselves.

Take a case where I see a certain person being reprovved at the wrong time, not being disturbed at the right time. They’re reprovved falsely, not disturbed truthfully. They’re reprovved harshly, not disturbed gently. They’re reprovved harmfully, not disturbed beneficially. They’re reprovved with secret hate, not disturbed with a mind of loving kindness.

The bhikkhu who is reprovved improperly should be reassured (*avippaṭṭisāra [a + vipaṭṭisāra] absence of regret or remorse*) in five ways. ‘Venerable, you were reprovved at the wrong time, not at the right time. There’s no need for you to feel remorse (*vippaṭṭisāra [vi+paṭṭisāra] bad conscience, remorse, regret, repentance*). You were reprovved falsely, not truthfully. ... You were reprovved harshly, not gently. ... You were reprovved harmfully, not beneficially. ... You were reprovved with secret hate, not with a mind of loving kindness. There’s no need for you to feel remorse.’ A bhikkhu who is reprovved improperly should be reassured in these five ways.

The bhikkhu who makes improper accusations should be chastened (*vippaṭṭisāra*) in five ways. ‘Reverend, you made an accusation at the wrong time, not at the right time. There’s a reason for you to feel remorse. You made an accusation falsely, not truthfully. ... You made an accusation harshly, not gently. ... You made an accusation harmfully, not beneficially. ... You made an accusation with secret hate, not with a mind of loving kindness. There’s a reason for you to feel remorse.’ The bhikkhu who makes improper accusations should be chastened in these five ways. Why is that? So that another bhikkhu wouldn’t think to make a false accusation.

Take a case where I see a certain person being reprovved at the right time, not being disturbed at the wrong time. They’re reprovved truthfully, not disturbed falsely. They’re reprovved gently, not disturbed harshly. They’re reprovved beneficially, not disturbed harmfully. They’re reprovved with a mind of loving kindness, not disturbed with secret hate.

The bhikkhu who is reprovved properly should be chastened in five ways. ‘Venerable, you were reprovved at the right time, not at the wrong time. There’s a reason for you to feel remorse. You were reprovved truthfully, not falsely. ... You were reprovved gently, not harshly. ... You were reprovved beneficially, not harmfully. ... You were reprovved with a mind of loving kindness, not with secret hate. There’s a reason for you to feel remorse.’ The bhikkhu who is reprovved properly should be chastened in these five ways.

The bhikkhu who makes proper accusations should be reassured in five ways. ‘Reverend, you made an accusation at the right time, not at the wrong time. There’s no need for you to feel remorse. You made an accusation truthfully, not falsely. ... You made an accusation gently, not harshly. ... You made an accusation beneficially, not harmfully. ... You made an accusation with a mind of loving kindness, not with secret hate. There’s no need for you to feel remorse.’ The bhikkhu who makes proper accusations should be reassured in these five ways. Why is that? So that another bhikkhu would think to make a true accusation.

A person who is reprovved should ground (*patiṭṭhita: established in, settled, fixed, arrayed, stayed, standing, supported, founded in*) themselves in two things: truth (*sacca: real, true*) and an even temper (*akuppa: not to be shaken, immovable; sure, steadfast, safe*). Even if others reprove me—at the right time or the wrong time, truthfully or falsely, gently or harshly, with a mind of loving kindness or with secret hate—I will still ground myself in two things: truth and an even temper. If I know that that quality is found in me, I will tell them that it is. If I know that that quality is not found in me, I will tell them that it is not.”

[The Blessed One said:] “Even when you speak like this, Sāriputta, there are still some foolish (*mogha: empty, vain, useless, stupid, foolish*) people here who do not respectfully (*padakkhiṇa: mode of reverential salutation, keeping to the right; lucky, auspicious, turning out well or favourable*) take it up (*ganhati: to take, take up; take hold of; grasp, seize*).”

“There are those faithless (*asaddha*) people who went forth from the lay life to homelessness not out of faith but to earn a livelihood. They’re devious, deceitful, and sneaky. They’re restless, insolent, fickle, gossipy, and loose-tongued. They do not guard their sense doors or eat in moderation, and they are not dedicated to wakefulness. They don’t care about the ascetic life, and don’t keenly respect the training. They’re indulgent and slack, leaders in backsliding, neglecting seclusion, lazy, and lacking energy. They’re unmindful, lacking situational awareness and immersion, with straying minds, witless and stupid. When I speak to them like this, they don’t respectfully take it up.

“There are those who went forth from the lay life to homelessness out of faith. They’re not devious, deceitful, and sneaky. They’re not restless, insolent, fickle, gossipy, and loose-tongued. They guard their sense doors and eat in moderation, and they are dedicated to wakefulness. They care about the ascetic life, and keenly respect the training. They’re not indulgent or slack, nor are they leaders in backsliding, neglecting seclusion. They’re energetic and determined. They’re mindful, with situational awareness, immersion, and unified minds; wise, not stupid. When I speak to them like this, they do respectfully take it up.”

“Sāriputta, those faithless people who went forth from the lay life to homelessness not out of faith but to earn a livelihood ... Leave them be. But those clansmen who went forth from the lay life to homelessness out of faith ... You should speak to them. Sāriputta, you should advise your spiritual companions! You should instruct your spiritual companions! Thinking: ‘I will draw my spiritual companions (*Sabrahmacarin* [*sa+brahmacārin*] a fellow student) away from false teachings and ground them in true teachings.’ That’s how you should train (*sikkha*).”

Sunday 27 February

Sangharakshita, *Stream of Stars*

'Better honest collision than dishonest collusion.'

'Don't argue. Discuss'

'Things that are allowed to remain unspoken eventually build up an insurmountable barrier to communication. Either one communicates or one is blocked. There is no middle way.'

'It is sometimes necessary to criticise the weaknesses of others, but people often seem to find it difficult to do so without doing it in a 'hard' sort of way that excludes compassion. Perhaps, in some cases, people criticise others as a way of paying homage to the ideal without actually having to practise that ideal.'

'The creative mind loves where there is no reason to love, is happy when there is no reason for happiness, creates where there is no possibility of creativity, and in this way 'builds a heaven in hell's despair'

Monday 28 February

Sangharakshita, *Forest Monks of Sri Lanka*, Seminar 1985

Kamalasila : What about the relationship between a bhikkhu and his preceptor, the relationship with the nissaya? I thought that in the *Three Jewels*, you said this was that he was obedient to him at all times, it might be for several years, or it might be for his whole life?

S: Yes, in a sense he is obedient, but it is not unqualified. For instance, he is not obliged to do anything which his teacher or preceptor may ask him to do if he feels it is against the Vinaya, or against the Buddha's teaching. In fact there is even provision made, where necessary, for the pupil, the disciple to point out his preceptor's mistakes, or even criticise him. So the obedience is far from being absolute, and one might say that in the case of Christianity, the training or the object of the training is to make the monk more and more obedient. But in Buddhism the aim is to make the monk less and less obedient. The aim of the training is to make him self dependent. You are as it were, apprenticed to an older monk, as to someone who is more experienced, more skilled than you, and his job is to train you so that you become as he is, you become as responsible as he is, and able to take charge, so to speak, of your own destiny.

So the obedience is quite limited, and quite provisional in the case of Buddhism. But perhaps in the West for certain well known reasons we tend to go to the other extreme. Perhaps in reaction in some cases, to the extreme of the Christian type of obedience. We start thinking that disobedience is a virtue, where as, in the middle, in between, you have the Buddhist conception of a sort of limited and provisional obedience, not unlike on its own level, the obedience of the child to the parents. Perhaps it is not without significance that even that obedience, or at least the idea of that obedience, seems to be rather in abeyance nowadays. We tend to think very often, that it is disgraceful to obey. You feel humiliated by having to obey somebody, even when he's giving a quite reasonable sort of command, or just asking you or telling you to do something.

Even in the case of some modern apprentices, the master says, "Give me that piece of wood," and the apprentice says, "I am not going to be ordered around, I didn't come here for that!" You see what I mean? There is that sort of attitude. So nissaya means dependence, but it is dependence with a view to eventual independence. It is dependence in order that you may become independent. Usually it is considered that a monk needs to stay depending on his teacher for five years, or anything up to ten years. Quite a few monks choose to remain technically dependent indefinitely. They are not in a hurry to become independent by any means, and this is not for any negative reasons. They may be very strong characters in their own right, but they prefer to remain dependent on, in that sense, their teachers and to defer to their teachers. That certainly doesn't mean that they would surrender their power of judgement, or anything of that sort, or their own consciences.

It's a well known comparison in Christian monastic circles and monastic life, that the disciple is to be just like a corpse in the hands of his superior. I think the Jesuits make much of this. You have no more volition of your own than a corpse has. But this sort of way of looking at obedience would be quite unthinkable in Buddhism, because Buddhism does prize autonomy and responsibility so greatly. None the less, having said that, I think in these

days it wouldn't be a bad idea if someone, at least for a limited period, as an experience, was to place himself under somebody's direction or or guidance, especially say in a situation like that at Vajraloka, where life is quite simple, and aim simply to be obedient and to do as he was told, or to do as he was asked. I think that would be a very useful discipline, because he could be quite sure he wouldn't be asked to do anything unskilful, or anything that didn't help him, but he might be asked to do things he did not particularly want to do, or did not like doing, and that would be an extremely good discipline for him, and would also help him to realise the extent of his own self will. I think it should be just for a limited period, so to speak, for the sake of the experience. Because very often people are a mass of quite irrational preferences and whims and fancies, and it is better if these things are just put out of the way.

Sangharakshita, *Milarepa's Third Journey*, Seminar 1980

Then there's another point from traditional Buddhism. It's what is called nissaya. The relationship between a younger monk and an older monk who is teaching him is referred to as nissaya, it's relationship of dependence and it's a sort of official and recognized thing in the Sangha that this relationship of nissaya subsists between two monks, one junior and one senior and you are not supposed to leave someone who is teaching you, a senior monk, without being released from your nissaya, being officially released from your dependence upon him. So of course you are dependent upon him for dharma teaching and dharma guidance so this is a reasonable dependence, that is to say a younger less experienced monk depending on an older more experienced monk.

So you are dependent on others for material things. Usually we are. Even if we earn money and buy things we're dependent on others to make them for us, we don't produce them ourselves. We can be dependent upon others for knowledge quite reasonably because we don't write the text books that we read - we depend upon others for our knowledge, and that would seem to be a quite reasonable thing especially when we are young, to be dependent upon others for knowledge. We may even be dependent upon others for inspiration.

So these are all areas one might say of legitimate dependence. But what about what we might call illegitimate dependence. What is that? What is it that you can be dependent on others for but which you should not be dependent upon others for?

Atula: Supporting your image of yourself.

S: Supporting your image of yourself or even more intimately than that, your experience of yourself. For instance some people can't experience themselves unless there's a lot of people looking at them. This is why it is said that some people become actors and they take to the stage. They don't really experience themselves unless a lot of other people are experiencing them. So you should not be dependent it would seem upon others for your own experience of yourself. Perhaps - I don't know, I'm not sure, but perhaps in a way that is the basic illegitimate dependence.

Peter Shann: I suppose emotional dependence can be either.

S: Yes because there is a legitimate emotional dependence as when you are dependent upon others for inspiration and encouragement to attain higher levels of experience, but not when you are dependent upon others for your very happiness, that you can't even be reasonably happy and contented without certain people around, without the company of certain people, that is an illegitimate dependence. Or when you are dependent upon others for knowledge which you are quite able to find out for yourself, which you are quite able to discover for yourself. Or when you are dependant upon others for making up your mind for you what to do, when you ought at least in certain instances to think it out for yourself and make up your own mind. I 'm not thinking of the situation where you've no alternative but to put yourself in somebody else's hands. So you can be illegitimately dependent for decisions legitimately and illegitimately.

So to recapitulate you can be dependent upon others for material things, for knowledge, you can be dependent upon others for emotional support, inspiration, decisions. You can also be dependent upon other people, this perhaps belongs to the material things, say for protection.

Mangala: This is one of the principal aspects of real friendship, that a kind of mutual unreasonable dependence isn't fostered or encouraged.

S: Right, yes. You don't bolster up each others little weaknesses. But I think the point in view of the attitudes of a lot of people that we know, that we meet, I think we have to emphasize that there's nothing to be ashamed of in a reasonable dependence and a lot to be ashamed of in an unreasonable dependence. You can't be completely independent.

Tuesday 1 March

Speech Precepts in the Dhammapada

Truthful Speech

'There is no wrong that cannot be committed by a lying person who has transgressed one (good) principle, and who has given up (all thought of) the other world.' V176

Kind Speech

'Do not speak roughly to anyone: those thus spoken to will answer back. Painful indeed is angry talk, (as a result of which) one will experience retribution'. V133

Meaningful Speech

'Better than a thousand meaningless words collected together (in the Vedas) is a single meaningful word on hearing which one becomes tranquil'. V100

Harmonious Speech

'Others do not realise we are all heading for death. Those who do realise it will compose their quarrels.' V6

'The faults of others are easily seen; one's own faults are seen with difficulty. One winnows the faults of others like chaff, but one covers up one's own as a dishonest gambler (covers up) a losing throw (of the dice).' V 252