
On an everyday basis, we can put what we know about Dharma and the ten non-virtuous actions into practice and think about increasing the qualities of love and compassion within us, for other beings. In this way, what we are actually doing is performing true Dharma, with very positive actions. Ultimately, these actions will benefit us, both in this life and in our future lives.

Whatever spiritual path we chose, it is important that we carefully consider whether or not those teachings benefit us. Even if we already have a practice, we must make sure that we are receiving some benefit. Also, it is especially important to check if these teachings will benefit or help us in the worst times of our life, for instance, at the time of death, which we consider to be the worst thing that could happen to us. If we take these things into account, then we will see that the spiritual teachings can definitely provide some benefit in our everyday lives.

It is said that if you make good progress in your spiritual practice, then death should not necessarily be a frightening thing. Rather, death can be experienced with a very joyful mind. Through spiritual practice it is possible to meet death with the same feeling that a child has when meeting his beloved parents. Also, spiritual practice can help us to avoid regret or fear when we are dying. These are just some examples of the benefits of practicing the spiritual teachings.

It is important that we see the connection between what we learn about the spiritual teachings and the results of actually putting these teachings into practice. For example, in the Buddhist teachings there is strong and continuous emphasis on lessening desire or attachment towards objects such as our body, other people or material possessions. The way to bring lasting peace and happiness to our mind is to overcome our attachment or desire towards these objects. This makes a lot of sense when we think of the suffering, confusion and problems we go through when we have a mind of desire or attachment.

The cause of mental anguish or problems in the mind, such as frustration or anxiety, is usually related to unfulfilled desire and attachment in the mind. For example, if we do not have such attachment and desire towards our body and friends, we can at least have some notion of enjoyment, of lasting peace in our mind. We must not only get rid of this desire and attachment, but we should also try to cultivate a different state of mind or attitude to replace it with. What we need as a replacement is a mind of kindness and compassion towards others.

In saying that we should not become obsessed with things, the teaching is not suggesting we should throw away what we are attached to, or minimize the number of material possessions or friends we have. Also it is not saying that when we think of our body with attachment, we should degrade it or make it ugly. Instead, by replacing the mind of attachment with loving kindness, we might find that we have more friends and even become richer. These are things we can do right now as part of our spiritual practice.

One way of knowing and appreciating the benefit of spiritual beliefs and teachings is to consider that, when we come to the end of this life, all the external objects that support our life and give us security will be useless. When we get closer to death, the value of these things will fade. So ultimately there is a need to have some system of belief. Without such a belief system, all external things can fail to support us and we can feel very completely unhappy and hopeless, like there is nothing to turn to.

It doesn't matter what system or school of religion you follow because they all teach something beyond the value of material objects, like, for example, the concept of God. If you have some sort of belief system, then you have something to believe in when all external objects fail. Spiritual teachings can provide something to help you find peace and hope, so the experience of dying is not completely empty and frightening.

Now we will continue with the next few lines of the verse which say:

Our spiritual fame has been spread far and wide,
Yet inwardly all of our thoughts are repulsive,
Not only to gods but to demons and ghosts.

This is saying that no matter who a person is, whether a highly renowned Lama or Geshe, or a high reincarnation or scholar, when that person focuses attention on his own mind and deeds and finds many flaws and faults, they are not only repulsive to gods, but also to evil forces like demons. As explained earlier in the text, the root cause of this, and of our failure to fulfill the practices of our vows and commitments, is our self-cherishing mind.

The next few lines of the text support this by saying:

Trample him, trample him, dance on the head
Of this treacherous concept of selfish concern.
Tear out the heart of this self-centred butcher
Who slaughters our chance to gain final release.

We will leave the teaching here and as usual, we will chant the Buddha's mantra seven times. Please try to sit in the meditation posture, fully relaxing your body and letting go of all the distracting thoughts, letting the mind turn inward. When we begin chanting, try to focus the mind on the mantra without getting distracted by outer objects.

TAYATHA OM MUNI MUNI MAHA MUNIYE SOHA

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