

How to Respect the Three Jewels and How to Keep the Refuge Vow

An important message from Buddhist teachings

Buddhist Dharma student you will eventually accomplish Buddhahood even though you may initially misinterpret the teachings.

You may think that Dharma books and other kinds of books are the same, but they are not. Their meaning is different because they were not written by a Buddha or Bodhisattva. Also, other kinds of books offer only temporary support. They should not be respected in the same way, but merely studied. Whoever wrote them may be very intelligent, but that is not necessarily a Buddha or Bodhisattva.

Like our heart, the most vital organ in our bodies, the Dharma is the most vital part of our soul. It illuminates our darkness and purifies our ignorance. The meaning of Dharma is the wisdom of Buddha. Any other kind of book does not have the power to lead you to Enlightenment. Rather they will lead you to activities of samsara.

One sutra says, “in degenerated times I will manifest in a form of a Letter. Whoever respects faithfully will be liberated from samsara. If there is no understanding about this, then the Buddhist Dharma texts will be not respected and cannot bring blessings, and then even those who have already received the refuge vow will be breaking vows. But people do not know this, so this message is very important. I'm sending this message because people everywhere consider Dharma books as equal to regular books.

“If you do not believe what I am saying, you should study and ask a qualified teacher. He will agree with me if he is a qualified teacher; **I'm not trying to deceive you with Tipitaka.** You will find this teaching by reading the Buddha's teachings.” If you are Dharma practitioners, then you must respect Dharma, and if you do, then will receive blessings. Also, if we have respect, other sentient being will receive blessings, too. If you are a Dharma practitioner and do not have respect, then other students will not respect as well, and vows shall be broken.

When taking refuge, we make a promise. Every Buddha statue is the same as a Buddha and we should have respect and devotion. When we take refuge in Dharma, we must respect every single word of Dharma. When we take refuge in the Sangha, even the small red-colored cloth must be respected. This is a commentary of the teaching of refuge. So, by not destroying the refuge vows, this will make us have good karma and a happy life, without suffering.

Part two: The Method of Practicing Sadhana

This is the method of practicing Sadhana. Sadhana is a very powerful object. We can not destroy it and make it wrong. Nowadays so many people translate the Sadhana or don't use the Tibetan words within the Sadhana. Some people think Buddhist Dharma comes from India and that the text was translated and that we should be translating all the text. But if we do not have enough Dharma knowledge, we may think that when translating, we'll be benefiting more people. This is a mistake.

The meaning of the Sadhana may be wrong because of the translator. In regards to the translators translating from Indian to Tibetan, we cannot compare their knowledge. Those translators were really Great Bodhisattvas. We are not Bodhisattvas. We are just sentient beings and some of us have just been studying dharma for 10 years, which is not enough. The meaning of Buddha dharma is like an ocean. We can not completely understand it. Even Bodhisattvas on the tenth bhumi receive teachings from other Buddhas; it has no end. So even though we may wish to benefit other beings, beings misinterpret the Dharma, and then Buddha dharma is destroyed.

Terma is special. Nobody should attempt to change the Terma. The words of Terma are very important are very powerful and full of energy. Sometimes people believe they can translate the Sadhana. This is wrong because destroys the original meaning, and if the Tibetan words are not used, then the meaning and power of the word is also destroyed.

We think we are supporting Dharma and doing a good service but actually we are destroying Buddhist Doctrine. Then the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas are not rejoicing nor protecting and more obstacles arise.

I'm not saying that Tibetan culture or the Tibetan language is important. The Sadhana and Books were written by Buddhas and Bodhisattvas, in the Tibetan language, so they have real power in their original language. The Sadhanas were not written by regular Tibetan people, but Great Teachers. Even if hundreds of years pass, their power never changes. Now we are translating. If you become a Bodhisattva, then of course we'll believe you and in the original power of your translation and commentaries.

I'm not saying you must read Tibetan, but know it is important to pronounce the sounds of the letters, which are already in the Sadhanas.

If you were the last beings in samsara, then it would not be necessary to protect the Dharma because in the future there would be no sentient beings. But that is not the situation.

Look inside yourself, when you practice Dharma, you feel happier. Is this not so? But if you destroy the Dharma, how can other people in the future receive any benefit? You think that you are receiving good merit by translating, but actually you are gathering bad karma.

Also, look at the Christian religion. They have their Bible, but most people do not believe the Bible because the Bible was changed so many times in history. People did not protect the original, now it is not useful, so samsara do not let this happen to the original Dharma. You must protect and respect Dharma like your own heart. This is my request.

Part Three: Maintaining Dharma

Some people are using names of Deities or Buddhas for their Sangha or Group. These people do not know how to maintain the Buddhist Dharma. This is also a misinterpretation.

It's important to understand that the group or Sangha are only temporary support system. If you have attention and mindfulness, you will not use the names of Deities because this is like putting the vast sky into a small vessel.

Let's say that in your life you have a grandson. He has one glass and calls the glass the name of the grandfather, and the family is not happy about this.

They understand that this is not a beautiful way to use the grandfathers' name, and it is most important to respect the grandfather's family name. Deities are even more important. They protect all sentient beings. In Tibet, in the 6000 Monasteries, none of them have deified name. You think you are intelligent by putting the Deity name in your group or Sangha but you are missing the point.

These commentaries are not my ideas. They are found inside Dharma teachings, and further – in the Great Teachers. Many people, true Dharma practitioners, already know and have received the same teachings. So please, respect Dharma. I hope this is of benefit to you and other beings.

Nowadays people are very thirsty: they leave a cascade of pure spring water but instead only look for small drops of water, and they never quench their thirst. In the same way, people don't pay attention to qualified masters, but instead listen to false teachers or teachers without much knowledge. This is not very intelligent. Their suffering will never stop. I cannot build devotion in this kind of student or teacher of Dharma.

In my life, I have drunk a river of pure water. Right now I am not thirsty. I suggest you drink from this river and not choose small drops of water because a drop of water will never satisfy you. My goal is that you will satisfy your thirst with good teachings. Don't be so desperate for Dharma that you can't tell the difference between pure and impure water. Follow the true spiritual life, a really meaningful life.

This was written in Sao Paolo by Lopon Osel on march 5, 2007.