

Course on Meditation (Stopping & Deep Looking) November 21, 2010 – February 20, 2011

<u>Verse 13:</u>

Not discriminating between the practice offered by the Tathagata and that of the ancestral teachers, the Four Noble Truths perfectly interwoven should serve as the foundation of an authentic transmission.

Alternate Translation:

There should be no discrimination Between the Buddha and the Patriarch School of Meditation The Four Noble Truths must be based on each other To Make the foundation of Transmission and Reception.

Reflection Question:

What is my experience of giving and receiving? Is it easier for me to give or to receive? Why do I think this is?

Practices:

The Three Touchings of the Earth

Sutra Readings

The Diamond that Cuts through Illusion



The Three Earth-Touchings

T

Touching the Earth, I connect with ancestors and descendants of both my spiritual and my blood families. [bell] [all touch the earth]

My spiritual ancestors include the Buddha, the Bodhisattvas, the noble Sangha of Buddha's disciples, [insert names of others you would like to include], and my own spiritual teachers still alive or already passed away.

They are present in me because they have transmitted to me seeds of peace, wisdom, love, and happiness. They have woken up in me my resource of understanding and compassion. When I look at my spiritual ancestors, I see those who are perfect in the practice of the mindfulness trainings, understanding, and compassion, and those who are still imperfect. I accept them all because I see within myself shortcomings and weaknesses. Aware that my practice of the mindfulness trainings is not always perfect, and that I am not always as understanding and compassionate as I would like to be, I open my heart and accept all my spiritual descendants. Some of my descendants practice the mindfulness trainings, understanding, and compassion in a way which invites confidence and respect, but there are also those who come across many difficulties and are constantly subject to ups and downsin their practice. In the same way, I accept all my ancestors on my mother's side and my father's side of the family. I accept all their good qualities and their virtuous actions, and I also accept all their weaknesses. I open my heart and accept all my blood descendants with their good qualities, their talents, and also their weaknesses. My spiritual ancestors, blood ancestors, spiritual descendants, and blood descendants are all part of me. I am them, and they are me. I do not have a separate self. All exist as part of a wonderful stream of life which is constantly moving. [three breaths] [bell]

Π

Touching the Earth, I connect with all people and all species that are alive at this moment in this world with me. [bell] [touch the earth]

I am one with the wonderful pattern of life that radiates out in all directions. I see the close connection between myself and others, how we share happiness and suffering. I am one with those who were born disabled or who have become disabled because of war, accident, or illness. I am one with those who are caught in a situation of war or oppression. I am one with those who find no happiness in family life, who have no roots and no peace of mind, who are hungry for understanding and love, and who are looking for something beautiful, wholesome, and true to embrace and to believe in. I am someone at the point of death who is very afraid and does not know what is going to happen. I am a child who lives in a place where there is miserable poverty and disease, whose legs and arms are like sticks and who has no future. I am also the manufacturer of bombs that are sold to poor countries. I am the frog swimming in the pond and I am also the snake who needs the body of the frog to nourish its own body. I am the caterpillar or the ant that the bird is looking for to eat, and I am also the bird that is looking forthe caterpillar or the ant. I am the forest that is being cut down. I am the rivers and the air that are being polluted, and I am also the person who cutsdown the forest and pollutes the rivers and the air. I see myself in all species, and I see all species in me. I am one with the great beings who have realized the truth of no-birth and no-death and are able to look at the forms of birth and death, happiness and suffering, with calm eyes. I am one with those people — who can be found a little bit everywhere — who have sufficient peace of mind, understanding and love, who are able to touch what is wonderful, nourishing, and healing, who also have the capacity to embrace the world with a heart of love and arms of caring action. I am someone who has enough peace, joy, and freedom and is able to offer fearlessness and joy to living beings around themselves. I see that I am not lonely and cut off. The love and the happiness of great beings on this planet help me not to sink in despair. They help me to live my life in a meaningful way, with true peace and happiness. I see them all in me, and I see myself in all of them. [three breaths] [bell] [stand up]

III

Touching the Earth, I let go of my idea that I am this body and my life span is limited. [bell] [touch the earth]

I see that this body, made up of the four elements, is not really me and I am not limited by this body. I am part of a stream of life of spiritual and blood ancestors that for thousands of years has been flowing into the present and flows on for thousands of years into the future. I am one with my ancestors.

I am one with all people and all species, whether they are peaceful and fearless, or suffering and afraid. At this very moment, I am present everywhere on this planet. I am also present in the past and in the future. The disintegration of this body does not touch me, just as when the plum blossom falls it does not mean the end of the plum tree. I see myself as a wave on the surface of the ocean. My nature is the ocean water. I see myself in all the other waves and I see all the other waves in me. The appearance and disappearance of the form of the wave does not affect the ocean. My Dharma body and spiritual life are not subject to birth and death. I see the presence of myself before my body manifested and after my body has disintegrated.

Even in this moment, I see how I exist elsewhere than in this body. Seventy or eighty years is not my life span. My life span, like the life span of a leaf or of a Buddha, is limitless. I have gone beyond the idea that I am a body that is separated in space and time from all other forms of life. [three breaths] [bell] [stand up]

The Diamond that Cuts Through Illusion

Opening Gatha

How may we overcome the fear of birth and death and arrive at the state that is as indestructible as a diamond? What way can direct us in our practice to sweep away our thousands of illusions? If the awakened mind shows its compassion and opens up for us the treasure store, then we may bring into our lives the wonderful diamond teachings.

Discourse

This is what I heard one time when the Buddha was staying in the monastery in Anathapindika's park in the Jeta Grove near Shravasti with a community of 1,250 bhikshus, fully ordained monks.

That day, when it was time to make the almsround, the Buddha put on his sanghati robe and, holding his bowl, went into the city of Shravasti to beg for food, going from house to house. When the almsround was completed, he returned to the monastery to eat the midday meal. Then he put away his sanghati robe and his bowl, washed his feet, arranged his cushion, and sat down.

At that time, the Venerable Subhuti stood up, bared his right shoulder, put his knee on the ground, and, folding his palms respectfully, said to the Buddha, "World-Honored One, it is rare to find someone like you. You always support and show special confidence in the Bodhisattvas.

"World-Honored One, if sons and daughters of good families want to give rise to the highest, most fulfilled, awakened mind, what should they rely on and what should they do to master their thinking?"

The Buddha said to Subhuti, "This is how the Bodhisattva Mahasattvas

master their thinking: 'However many species of living beings there are —whether born from eggs, from the womb, from moisture, or spontaneously; whether they have form or do not have form; whether they have perceptions or do not have perceptions; or whether it cannot be said of them that they have perceptions or that they do not have perceptions, we must lead all these beings to nirvana so that they can be liberated. Yet when this innumerable,

immeasurable, infinite number of beings has become liberated, we do not, in truth, think that a single being has been liberated.'

"Why is this so? If, Subhuti, a bodhisattva holds on to the idea that a self, a person, a living being, or a life span exists, that person is not a true bodhisattva.

"Moreover, Subhuti, when a bodhisattva practices generosity, he does not rely on any object — any form, sound, smell, taste, tactile object, or dharma — to practice generosity. That, Subhuti, is the spirit in which a bodhisattva practices generosity, not relying on signs. Why? If a bodhisattva practices generosity without relying on signs, the happiness that results cannot be conceived of or measured. Subhuti, do you think that the space in the Eastern Quarter can be measured?"

"No, World-Honored One."

"Subhuti, can space in the Western, Southern, or Northern Quarters, above or below be measured?" "No, World-Honored One."

"Subhuti, if a bodhisattva does not rely on any concept while practicing generosity, the happiness that results from that virtuous act is as great as space. It cannot be measured. Subhuti, the bodhisattvas should let their minds dwell in the teachings I have just given.

"What do you think, Subhuti? Is it possible to grasp the Tathagata by means of bodily signs?"
"No, World-Honored One. When the Tathagata speaks of bodily signs, there are no signs being talked about."

The Buddha said to Subhuti, "In a place where there is something that can be distinguished by signs, in that place there is deception. If you can see the signless nature of signs, you can see the Tathagata." The Venerable Subhuti said to the Buddha, "In times to come, will there be people who, when they hear these teachings, have real faith and confidence in them?"

The Buddha replied,"Do not speak that way, Subhuti. Five hundred years after the Tathagata has passed away, there will still be people who appreciate the joy and happiness that come from observing the precepts. When such people hear these words, they will have faith and confidence that this is the truth. Know that such people have sown seeds not only during the lifetime of one Buddha, or even two, three, four, or five Buddhas, but have, in fact, planted wholesome seeds during the lifetimes of tens of thousands of Buddhas. Anyone who, for even a moment, gives rise to a pure and clear confidence upon hearing these words of the Tathagata, the Tathagata sees and knows that person, and he or she will attain immeasurable happiness because of this understanding. Why?

"Because that person is not caught in the idea of a self, a person, a living being, or a life span. He or she is not caught in the idea of a dharma or the idea of a non-dharma. He or she is not caught in the notion that this is a sign and that is not a sign. Why? If you are caught in the idea of a dharma, you are also caught in the ideas of a self, a person, a living being, and a life

span. If you are caught in the idea that there is no dharma, you are still caught in the ideas of a self, a person, a living being, and a life span. That is why we should not get caught in dharmas or in the idea that dharmas do not exist. This is the hidden meaning when the Tathagata says, 'Bhikshus, you should know that all of the teachings I give to you are a raft.' All teachingsmust be abandoned, not to mention non-teachings."

The Buddha asked Subhuti, "In ancient times when the Tathagata practiced under the guidance of the Buddha Dipankara, did the Tathagata attain anything?"

Subhuti answered, "No, World-Honored One. In ancient times when the Tathagata practiced under the guidance of the Buddha Dipankara, he did notattain anything."

"What do you think, Subhuti? Does a bodhisattva create a serene andbeautiful Buddha Field?"
"No,World-Honored One. Why? To create a serene and beautiful Buddha Field is not in fact to create a serene and beautiful Buddha Field. That is why it is called creating a serene and beautiful Buddha Field."
The Buddha said, "So, Subhuti, all the Bodhisattva Mahasattvas should give rise to a pure and clear intention in this spirit. When they give rise to

this intention, they should not rely on forms, sounds, smells, tastes, tactile objects, or objects of mind. They should give rise to an intention with their minds not dwelling anywhere."

"So, Subhuti, when a bodhisattva gives rise to the unequaled mind of awakening, he has to give up all ideas. He cannot rely on forms when he gives rise to that mind, nor on sounds, smells, tastes, tactile objects, or objects of mind. He can only give rise to the mind that is not caught in anything.

"The Tathagata has said that all notions are not notions and that all living beings are not living beings."

Subhuti, the Tathagata is one who speaks of things as they are, speaks what is true, and speaks in accord with reality.

He does not speak deceptively or to please people. Subhuti, if we say that the Tathagata has realized a teaching, that teaching is neither graspable nor deceptive.

"Subhuti, a bodhisattva who still depends on notions to practice generosity is like someone walking in the dark. She will not see anything. But when a bodhisattva does not depend on notions to practice generosity, she is like someone with good eyesight walking under the bright light of the sun. Shecan see all shapes and colors.

"Subhuti, do not say that the Tathagata has the idea, 'I will bring living beings to the shore of liberation.' Do not think that way, Subhuti. Why? In truth there is not one single being for the Tathagata to bring to the othershore. If the Tathagata were to think there was, he would be caught in the idea of a self, a person, a living being, or a life span. Subhuti, what the Tathagata calls a self essentially has no self in the way that ordinary persons think

there is a self. Subhuti, the Tathagata does not regard anyone as an ordinary person. That is why he can call them ordinary persons.

"What do you think, Subhuti? Can someone meditate on the Tathagata by means of the thirty-two marks?" Subhuti said, "Yes, World-Honored One. We should use the thirty-two marks to meditate on the Tathagata." The Buddha said, "If you say that you can use the thirty-two marks to see the Tathagata, then the Wheel Turning King is also a Tathagata?"

Subhuti said, "World-Honored One, I understand your teaching. Ones hould not use the thirty-two marks to meditate on the Tathagata."

Then the World-Honored One spoke this verse:

"Someone who looks for me in formor seeks me in sound is on a mistaken path and cannot see the Tathagata."

"Subhuti, if you think that the Tathagata realizes the highest, most fulfilled,

awakened mind and does not need to have all the marks, you are wrong. Subhuti, do not think in that way. Do not think that when one gives rise to the highest, most fulfilled, awakened mind, one needs to see all objects of mind as nonexistent, cut off from life. Do not think in that way. One who gives rise to the highest, most fulfilled, awakened mind does not say that all objects of mind are nonexistent and cut off from life."

After they heard the Lord Buddha deliver this discourse, the Venerable Subhuti, the bhikshus and bhikshunis, laymen and laywomen, and gods and asuras, filled with joy and confidence, began to put these teachings into practice.

Vajracchedika Prajñaparamita Sutra, Taisho Revised Tripitaka 335*