

Be an educated Buddhist

Studying Buddhism outside Tibet - how it started at Buxa

It was unbelievably hot and the conditions were very, very poor, but there was unbelievable effort to study Dharma. *Aaaah*, unbelievable! Because of that, for Buddhism, now in south India, they are able to educate many thousands of young monks. That is all because of the kindness of the monks who studied very hard under such unbelievable, bad conditions, so hot, such bad conditions, then studying Dharma... Because of that, many great teachers happened like Geshe Gelek's teacher and many like that. Now Sera, Ganden, Drepung, Ganden Shartse, in these big monasteries there are many, many monks, so they educate many thousands of monks. So Buddhism is able to flourish.

These monasteries are able to produce qualified monks. When they finish studying, then they do examination, like that. So they are able to produce qualified teachers every year. Then they are able to go around the world to teach. Just even our organization, FPMT, has 40 teachers, maybe more than 40? There are about 40 resident teachers just within FPMT, so there is no question there are many in other organizations around the world. That helps many sentient beings to meet the Dharma, especially [in the West]. Buddhism has been in the East, but now it is in the West, which has been dark, from the beginning, there was no light of Dharma, knowing what is right and what is wrong, what is harmful and what is beneficial – not having that knowledge, not having that Dharma wisdom. That includes liberation from samsara, that includes the path leading to enlightenment, the Mahayana path, [this is all included] within that wisdom. So that wisdom is not small. You complete that wisdom only when you achieve enlightenment. That wisdom, knowing what is right and what wrong, what is harmful and what is beneficial, you complete that wisdom only when you achieve enlightenment. When you achieve the state of omniscience, then that wisdom is complete, otherwise it is not.

So the reason we are able to spread the Dharma in the world, not only in FPMT but also in other [organizations], is because the monks at Buxa studied so hard, in such unbelievably hot, bad living conditions, putting effort into Dharma. Day and night, studying, day and night. It is unbelievable, unbelievable. Because of that, the reason why we are now able to help the world is from that, from Buxa. Being able to give wisdom to the world, to enlighten, to bring light in the life, Dharma-wisdom-light to dispel the darkness of ignorance.

The benefits of study

Having studied the teachings more deeply and more extensively, you have less misunderstanding when you practice and do meditation on the path. Because you have so much more and deeper understanding, clean clear, then there are less mistakes, less

misunderstandings. You make less mistakes in the practice, have a more correct practice. Then from that correct realization comes. Otherwise, there is so much ignorance, not knowing, then it blocks. You try to meditate but it is taking a long time, no realizations are happening; there is blockage. Then, after some time, you live your life only with this.

If you don't have the capacity, if you don't have wisdom, if you have no capacity, that is different. If you don't have much capacity, if you don't have much intellect, that is another thing. But if you have an essential understanding of sutra and tantra, an essential understanding of lam-rim: guru devotion, renunciation, bodhicitta, right view, and the two stages... if you have a simple understanding, then you put that into practice to achieve enlightenment. As with the Kadampa geshe, as I mentioned already: the Kadam Zhungpawa study extensive scriptures, then achieve enlightenment and teach others. With Kadam Lamrimpa – you study lam-rim and then you put it into practice and achieve enlightenment and also guide, teach others in that way, bringing them to enlightenment. Then with the Kadam Mengagpa, whatever the guru teaches, then you put that into practice to achieve enlightenment and also guide other sentient beings in that way to bring them to enlightenment. So depending on one's level of intelligence, you can do that. But without studying Dharma, only doing meditation, the understanding of Dharma is extremely limited, extremely limited; then just living the life with recitation of mantra, with not so much understanding of Dharma. Then when you meditate on the path, many mistakes will arise, many wrong practices. Then it is especially difficult to help others, especially difficult to teach others Dharma. If you haven't learned, then how can you teach others?

Study for the benefit of others

Especially for teaching Dharma to others; there are people with great intelligence, middle intelligence, and low intelligence – all kinds, so if you know philosophy, then your lam-rim teaching can be very deep, very clear. With much reasoning you can make the lam-rim very deep, very clear. So you have unbelievable freedom and can help others so much, you can really give others deep, vast understanding of the path.

Like that there is so much incredible help you can do for others, if you have much greater understanding of Dharma, philosophy. Without studying the teachings much – the philosophical teachings, the pandit yogis' commentaries, and Buddha's root teachings, Lama Tsongkhapa, the great Tibetan, the learned and highly enlightened beings' commentaries – without studying those, then after some time, the education of Dharma, the extensive deep learning of Dharma, becomes less and less and less.

[That extensive deep learning of Dharma] is done only in the monasteries at the moment in this world – of course not only in Gelugpa monasteries, but also some of the other traditions' monasteries have philosophical study, because His Holiness emphasizes debate so much, so debate is also happening now in other traditions' monasteries such as Kagyu and Nyingma, it is happening more and more. His Holiness emphasized this very much and the top leaders of the traditions have taken interest to start this in their monasteries, so this is how it is happening.

So in Sera, Ganden, and Drepung, the deep extensive studies, if that becomes degenerated in these monasteries, then in all the small monasteries it won't happen, there won't be a continuation of that. There won't be qualified teachers coming from these monasteries; this will stop, they won't receive qualified teachers from these monasteries. So then some time later, no one will be able to understand the Buddha's teachings, the hundred volumes, and the pandit yogis, the ancient Indian pandits' commentaries. No one will understand. Even if they have them in temples and libraries, but nobody will understand. Then this will happen; it will be a very sad time. No one can understand, nobody can explain.

The danger of neglecting study

Then sometimes there is danger, when no one can understand and explain the subtle subjects, then they might think, "Oh, we need to change this." I heard this happened in other religions. People couldn't understand the original texts, then the recent people want to change the meaning, because they cannot understand. It is not that they realize that there is big mistake, but they can't understand, so they want to change it. That is degeneration.

It is possible that something like this could happen in Buddhism, to the Buddha's direct teachings and the pandits' commentaries. It is possible that these will change over time, if no one can explain them. "This text is not useful for life," that is what they will think. It is not useful for life, so they need to write something else. The heart of all these teachings, lam-rim, if they don't study, don't understand it, then they will think they need to write something else. They will write what they think, not according to the Buddha's teachings. This is possible to happen in the future, if we do not do extensive study of the Buddha's teachings and the commentaries by the pandit yogis and lineage lamas.

Colophon: This transcript follows a compilation of video extracts made for the Basic Program. They were extracted from Lama Zopa Rinpoche's teachings at the Light of the Path retreat, September 2010 in North Carolina, USA. Transcript checked lightly against the audio by Ven. Drimay Gudmundsson and Ven. Kaye Miner. Lightly edited by Kendall Magnussen, December 2010.

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