



What Is The Buddhist View On...

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Q: Why should we pray or follow any spiritual path? Why isn't it good enough just to be decent human being towards others ?

Ans: Praying is like calling the object of your respect, as well as awakening something within you, so that you become more focused on what you are seeking. It's as simple as you wanting help from a friend but you never call him. Even though he is willing to help you, he might think that you don't need help. But when you ask and show your sincerity in seeking help, it moves him to come to help you. Same with the Buddhas – they have abilities to help us but the door to receive the help is the sincere reaching out from one's heart. This is what prayer is. Another aspect is that prayer enhances the affinity between yourself and the divine beings/Buddhas. The more you pray, the greater the karmic affinity, the easier it is for the benefit to be received. Prayer is not just words and superstition – it needs to be done from the heart and with understanding.

To be a decent human being may be sufficient if one only refers to one life, ignoring the continuum of consciousness, life after life. The ultimate benefit of pursuing an ethical spiritual life is to guide us in this life and rescue us during the transition period between death and rebirth (which every samsaric being has to go through), where experiences arising during the dissolutions (of the physical form) and the passage the consciousness, can be difficult if one has no spiritual understanding. An ethical spiritual life means to have total understanding, faith and conviction in the karmic law of cause and effect and living one's life according to that. Being a decent being in itself may not provide this knowledge or quality.



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Q: Is it proper for Sangha to handle cash?

Ans: If this were times like 2600 years ago during Buddhas' time, then it would be more appropriate for Sangha not to handle cash. But in the 21st century, if Sangha don't handle cash, then most likely, one would starve to death, have no opportunity to create the conditions to receive education, medical attention, arrange for funerals. Handling cash is not a bad thing. Only mishandling cash is and this applies not only to Sangha but also to lay people.

Q: To get rid of problems, we have to change our karma but that takes a long time. What solutions does Buddhism have to help people deal with immediate problems?

Ans: Understand your mind, train it and you will be able to be positive about the situation/circumstances. How? Firstly, we have to realize from the depths of our heart, all rebirth, the body, the consciousness, all that we possess, are totally dominated by afflicted emotions; they are contaminated externally and internally. The fault began by taking birth in samsara (cyclic existence) in the first place. The fact is that there is not even one single true happiness in this samsaric environment. By understanding this, one begins to understand the situation oneself is facing. However, the fact that we



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are still alive to do something about it means we are not in the worst case situation.

Whoever is reading this book is already in a good condition because you have the opportunity to understand what is happening and you now know the environment in which you are; the body and mind you have; and you start to have a sense of awareness and this will help make you feel you have choices. There millions of human beings who live in constant physical and mental torment. Although your situation may not be good, if you look closely, compared to those, you can regard yourself as being in a happy realm. Thinking this way, this will bring you some relief.

Secondly, reflect on the reason you are facing such a situation – it is entirely due to your past karma (action) and delusions (anger, attachment, ignorance, pride and the like). Hence, to stop your problem, learn about karma in order to stop the cause of your troubles and instead, create new positive causes to have a better life. The initial step to do this is to engage in learning about karma and mind-training.

This mind-training refers to having a positive attitude and eliminate the negative view of the situation, of yourself, of others, of the whole world. At least this much we have to do. You need to explore mind-training (lojong) and karma teachings and various solutions provided there to make our problems subside and stop the kind of karma that produces problems right now and in the future. Then there is the real possibility of liberation.

Q: Some people cannot accept the karma explanation that we create the causes for our own troubles and because of that, turn away from Buddhism. How can we help such people?

Ans: If a person cannot see or accept the process of cause and effect, then it will be quite difficult to help such a person. Of course, not accepting the karma explanation and having to go through intense suffering is also due to their karma. What we can do is to pray that their minds be blessed to realize the fact of the karmic law of cause & effect. Some people's minds are stubborn. Cause and effect is so obvious in day to day life as there are so many examples. There are some who assert that they are free-thinkers without beliefs, yet they are very strong in their belief that they are non-believers, which itself is a contradiction! No wonder that Chenresig cracked her head into 9 parts. But we cannot neglect these people. We need to pay extra attention to these people. These people need to be the objects of our compassion and prayer. Some people even make themselves non-believers of fact of death and rebirth and claim not to fear about the next life. Yet in my conversations with such people, they fear death the most and what might follow in the next life the most. They try to cope with this fear by denying it.

Q: Modern society has a variety of lifestyles, example:

- (a) homosexuality**
- (b) pre-marital sex/co-habitation (living together without being married)**
- (c) unmarried women who opt to get pregnant through scientific procedures**
- (d) surrogate motherhood (having another woman give birth to one's child)**

What is the Dharma view on each of the above - are they positive, negative or neutral karma? And why?

Ans:

(a) Homosexuality – from Buddhism viewpoint, this is unethical because it involves the use of wrong body parts. Even when a man and a woman engage in sexual relations using body parts other than the conventional parts used for reproduction, are considered “wrong body part”. This is the general explanation according to Buddhist viewpoint. For any further details, you are advised to go to your respective Gurus for them to give you a clear explanation and guide you in the correct understanding.

(b) Pre-marital relations/co-habitation: As long as the society you live in accepts this and no one is harmed by this type of relationship and it is consensual and there is some promise of obligations towards each other and not just for fun, then maybe negativity can be avoided. Hence a prostitute is a wrong partner. Example, during Buddha's time in India and present day remote Himalayan communities, having



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sexual relations before marriage is regarded as unethical and are even punished. Different societies and different cultures have different ways. Based on this, the core factor is not to cause harm to anyone and a commitment to the other is very necessary. If one wants other than a Buddhist viewpoint and base it on purely cultural/societal norms, I've nothing further to add.

(c) Artificial impregnation – If we don't venture into philosophy and just aim to bring about a human being through technology, then one could say it is nothing wrong.

According to Buddhist view, a child needs to be conceived through mother-father activity (as a fusion of egg and sperm) in the womb and given birth through that womb. The reason why we are able to actualize Buddhahood in one lifetime is because a womb-conception arising from the father and mother activity and womb-birth together with 6 elements (consciousness, space etc..) enables one to practice precepts and hold vows. Any action which prevents this benefit from coming to a human life, is regarded as negative/unethical.

(d) Surrogate motherhood – it would be the same explanation as above.



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Q: Is anger always bad? If we get angry at a person who is harming another person or doing a great injustice to that person, our anger will move us into action to stop the harm. Similarly, is attachment always bad? Isn't the Buddhist goal of attaining enlightenment a kind of attachment to an idea?

Ans: Anger is always bad because it destroys the clarity of mind, one's positive intention and the peace within oneself and others. Anger brings about exaggeration and hallucinated viewpoints which enhance one's negative outlook and this is simply not a good way to solve any problem. Similarly, attachment is always bad. The goal of enlightenment however, is not attachment but an inspiration that was introduced by non-attachment.

Q: Organised religion i.e spiritual paths whose teachings have people-based organisations to promote their philosophy, usually end up putting pressure on people to see their viewpoint. Why should anyone want to be part of organised religion including Buddhism?

Ans: True Buddhist organisations don't push because true Buddha's followers follow Buddha's advice that each person must analyse Buddha's teachings carefully in many different ways and not just believe through blind faith but establish the truth through research



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and investigation. Such analysis and investigation cannot be rushed or pushed. Only when one concludes through all these methods that the teachings are good for oneself and others and solves problems and bring more happiness, only then should one accept it. Therefore, Buddhist organizations exist not to propagate Buddhist concepts but rather offer opportunities of discovery to understand Buddhist teachings, as they have seen the benefits of doing so. As far as other religions, I'm sorry I've no idea about them.

Q: Some cultures believe that people who do seriously wrong things cause their children/descendants to suffer. That does not conform with the karmic law of cause and effect (whereby the one who creates the cause will be the one to experience its results). However, looking around at some live cases, the said belief seems to be quite true. Why is this so?

Ans: Even though karma created is by oneself and experienced by oneself, there is a thing called collective karma. A group of people committing a similar action at the same time create the group karma to experience a similar result. That's why people come together as one family because they created to be connected as a family. Arising from such collective karma of a group, when one member of this grouping does right or wrong, there is some effect on the others in the family. The effect is marginal (let's say about 20%) but it is still present. The rest is each person's (within the group) own individual karma. Hence prayer dedications done by members of a family, the 20% effect due to collective karma, helps.



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Q: Although Dharma teaches us to care for people who harm or hurt us, it is difficult to do this without feeling like a fake. If we are not able to immediately do this, what can we do in the meantime?

Ans: Reflect on karma and look into one's own delusions (afflictive mental attitudes) to see where they come from, rather than analyse other people's delusions/faults. Eventually, one will see that the main delusion is self-grasping and egotism, then apply the antidote of contemplating on dependent arising and one will find the solution not only to present problems but the way to liberation.

Q: What is the cause of spirit harms?

Ans: Spirits are mostly preta realm beings. In many cases, this form of being arises due to having been very miserly in past life or had strong attachments or had a highly agitated mind and also those who die with much shock & fear.



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Q: I was a Christian for 26 yrs and recently declared my new faith in Tibetan Buddhism. Since then, I have faced so many trials because my wife and christian friends cannot accept my decision. Our husband-wife relationship is now in a critical state and I don't want to lose my family. Hereby I seek your sincere prayer for peace and harmony in my family.

Ans: I totally understand how you feel and what state you are in. I have this small piece of advice to you. Your family is very important. Your practice in Buddhism has nothing to do with the changing altars or changing the family or visiting temples or chanting different prayers. Buddhism is an inner practice, a practice within our mind. So whatever things that are Buddhist which make your family members feel uncomfortable, there is no need to have those things there. Don't change the outer aspect of yourself and relationship with your family members. You practice the refuge of Buddha, Dharma from your heart. You continue with the same lifestyle as before – including going to church to pray and using the sign of the Cross - you just visualize from your heart that Jesus is the emanation of the Compassion Buddha and you are praying to Compassionate Buddha. Whatever word you hear from the bible, you can visualize that you are hearing the heart mantra of the Compassionate Buddha. Regard all the Christian friends around you as virtuous/spiritual friends or emanation of bodhisattvas. In this manner, you become the perfect and inner Buddhist practitioner because you will be following the perfect advice of Buddhas, which is to respect all others. You should rejoice and feel happy that you are doing this inner practice, wherever you are, in whatever aspect because the welfare and happiness of yourself and your family is also part of Compassionate Buddha's practice. Every thing that hinders you from practicing Buddhadharma shouldn't be seen as obstacles but as a means to deepen your practice;

taking those as conditions for you to practice perfectly and with patience and compassion.

Q: If one has already taken Refuge, is it proper to continue to consult with tarot card readers, psychics or other such people about worldly matters and problems?

Ans: The straightforward answer is that as long as one has Refuge, there is no need to do consultation with any other. We can create for ourselves some excuses to do this by saying that we are ordinary practitioners who still need to go through much more study and merit to have full conviction in Triple Gem and that, sometimes, we encounter problems in our lives, we lose our direction and thus go to such people to seek advice. Whilst it is possible to get such advice but one should not to take refuge in these (they themselves have not escaped samsaric hardships, so how can they help you with yours). If one has wholehearted and full conviction in refuge, all answers and protection will come from the Triple Gem.



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Q: We are taught that people who have passed away only remain in the intermediate state for a maximum of 49 days (in ordinary cases), after which they must find rebirth. Yet, there are mediums who communicate with deceased loved ones, even years after they have passed away. The medium even speaks in the same voice and displays the same mannerisms as the deceased person! How is this possible?

Ans: Some are not true mediums and just acting. In other cases, spirits/preta beings who are not the deceased loved ones but in need to something, enter into the medium and due to their ability to have some limited form of clairvoyance, they are able to extract information mentally from the person asking who to connect with a deceased person and then begin to act like the deceased person in order to get what the spirit wants. In some other cases, it is possible that the deceased has been born as a preta which then enters the medium. The MAIN point is that there is no need to grasp onto whether the spirit being is really the deceased person or not. Rather, to recite Mani and generate compassion to the being and mentally communicate with them and give teaching on emptiness, if one is familiar. Spirits are mentally very sharp and there is a high possibility of them understanding. The moment they let go of attachment or anger, they will gain a better rebirth. Do purification practices and dedicate to them e.g. Vajrasattva practice or making Mitrukpa tsa-tsas or host a holy object in the name of the deceased or recite sutras.



Q: Once one becomes a Buddha, what does the Buddha do?

Ans: When one becomes a Buddha, one achieves the Path of No More Learning and after that, a Buddha takes on more tasks because the Buddha has actualized supreme abilities and the Buddha's courage makes him use his abilities fully to help all beings and is totally infused by bodhicitta. So until there are no more samsaric beings, the Buddha works 24/7. As stated in Mahayana teachings, bodhisattvas in initial preliminary stage focus on actualising bodhicitta; when the bodhisattva then progresses to training in the Grounds and Paths, that is also to fulfill the task of bodhicitta. It's all about actualizing bodhicitta, whose object is the lasting happiness of all sentient beings.

Q: Why are Buddha deities decorated with jewelries and we also offer jewelries to statues. In fact, khadrola also wore earrings. I find it contradictory as to why buddhas and deities can do certain things (be adorned with jewelries) but advise us not to.

Ans: As long as you wear things or do things with selflessness and non grasping mind and non-attachment mind then is alright. It is one's mind and not the object that is important.