

## Never Tired of Training

By Rev. Master Phoebe

On a recent Sunday during the ceremony for the Bodhisattva of Wisdom, Manjusri, we recited a piece of scripture which describes a king, his wife and servants all making offerings, long before they even thought about practicing to realize Buddhahood: "...and never tired of it, though they made offerings for years."

Making offerings is something everyone does, in all walks of life. Parents give of themselves to their children and pets; people do their jobs, treat each other with courtesy and produce and maintain their social structures, gardens, homes, art work, blogs and books. All these activities also occur in the context of our training, or religious practice, as practice meditation and work on our understanding of the Buddhist Precepts. Both within and outside of the practice there is a certain element of selfishness: we do things because **we** think it is a good idea, or because **we** get gratification out of a job well done, or because **we** wish others to see us in a certain light, or because **we** need the money. In training we often get started on the Path because **we** want to suffer less, or become calmer, more in control of ourselves, even enlightened. Fair enough; Rev. Master Jiyu used to call this the "positive use of greed". It will get us going, and perhaps keeps us going for quite some time.

Then we get tired. Tired from working hard, perhaps getting sick, and all too easily that translates to being tired of getting up early to meditate, tired of going to the temple or group, tired of wasting time just sitting on our meditation seat, tired of making contributions without getting much tangible return for our money and effort, tired of our teachers who keep saying the same things over and over.....

How is it possible to not get tired? When the Dalai Lama once was asked how he kept from getting discouraged, he said that when he feels tired, he looks to his motivation. I have found that a very helpful thing to remember. Motivation lies at the root of our enthusiasm, our dedication, our stick-with-it-ness. Often our initial motivation to do something is a desire, a love—love can move mountains and take a lot of pain. People love their children and pets, feel strongly about a social issue out of love for others, will keep a healthy lifestyle out of love for their bodies and minds. The reverse of that is aversion, wherein we do something because we really would hate what would happen if we did not do it. We do not eat too much junk food, because we do not wish to be in bad physical shape; we keep our house and yards neat, because we do not wish our neighbors to think badly of us; we go to work because we simply cannot afford to lose our jobs and the money.

In training also we can be motivated by love/aversion, and when that initial enthusiasm begins to wear off, our practice of making offerings becomes a bore and a burden. Now it becomes clear that there were strings attached to our offerings: expectations of reward, of being acknowledged, of a certain outcome. When those expectations are disappointed, a profound sense of tiredness may well set in and perhaps we feel a need to take a break. If we are not aware of having those expectations, or are convinced that they are reasonable and we are entitled to have them fulfilled, our thinking takes a certain turn. It seems attractive, even wise, to give up the training, which has lost its appeal. Maybe it is time to look for something else?

Or we can decide to revisit our motivation, and see if by now something else can take the place of those expectations. Looking at how much our meditation group or teacher has helped us in difficult times may inspire the gratitude that says: now I can be there for others, even though perhaps I do not seem to get much out of it myself. Rational thinking and the wisdom of our teachers and our own experience tell us that Training and Enlightenment are really not distinguishable, and that just doing the

practice **is** exhibiting Buddha Nature. In practice there is a very important shift from doing our training out of a mild form of greed to training simply for the sake of training. Once that shift takes place the tiredness, that is **me-** based, will dissolve and we can keep going for a while again. And then often the surprising effect of devotion will make itself known in those precious moments of insight and joy that come when we least expect them. We can join Manjusri in his vow to not give up the practice, and to benefit beings “until the end of the future”.

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