

## The Bodhi Mind

Good morning, everyone! This is today's Dharma Espresso on the Bodhi mind (bodhicitta).

A few days ago, I told the story of a regular temple volunteer who asked me, "Why did the master at the temple say that I have not yet awakened the Bodhi mind, whereas I keep doing volunteer work and practicing good deeds at the temple?" He was very perplexed and kept asking that question.

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I mentioned earlier the saying: "*Without awakening the Bodhi mind, even if you practice all good dharmas, it's still the the karma of demons*", which is a very well-known saying in Buddhism. It means if you do all kinds of wholesome deeds, such as going to temples, bowing to the buddhas, etc. but don't bring forth the Bodhi mind, your deeds are still considered demonic karma which does not lead to buddhahood or awakening. It is this karma that makes us more and more selfish and narrow-minded, that drives us away from the desire to awaken and be liberated, and especially keeps us from wanting to do something good for others and for society.

Talking about the Bodhi mind is to talk about the Buddha karma, not demonic karma. There are 10 points about the Bodhi mind, but now we will talk about its three main manifestations of which I'll explain more. The previous dharma espresso was just an introduction.

There are 3 things that show we are going in the right direction when we do good deeds, such as volunteer work at temples:

1. We know that we have a mission. This mission can be summed up in three words: altruism, optimism, and service. Altruism is the consciousness that knows that everything we do is for the sake of others and done with a very optimistic attitude. Altruism is the why, optimism is the how, and service is the what. Our mission lies in these three words.

When we have this mission, we will find that all our actions are meaningful. We will stop when we realize that our actions lead to pleasures, luxury, or when they are selfish and pleasure-driven. We will stop self-indulgence because we know that our mission is to bring joy and benefit to others and our actions are always service-driven.

That why I said previously that sometimes our mind is so calculating, always thinking of this and that advantage as if we are doing business, always wanting to get profit for ourselves. Although we don't want to harm anybody, we always want benefit for ourselves. But if we keep wanting to get benefit for ourselves, we might feel that life is not comfortable or relaxing. Others will see clearly that we do things for our own good, but we ourselves don't realize it, because our mission is not very clear. This mission is altruism, optimism, and service.

2. If we go a bit further, the Bodhi mind is the mission to evolve constantly. What is to evolve constantly? It means to always grow and expand vertically, horizontally, and spirally.

The vertical direction means spiritual growth. The horizontal direction is the expansion of goodness. The spiral direction is the progression toward beauty. This is a very important mission. It is the only signpost of the Bodhi mind, a mind that is always fostering progress and growth.

Nowadays, what we lack most is the vertical direction of spiritual growth. Spiritual growth means we meditate and practice until we can feel the serenity in our mind and become aware

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of the clarity and the unceasing openness of our inner mind. We usually lack the spiritual growth because we are too busy with survival issues and therefore forget our mission of altruism, optimism, and service. If we are not preoccupied with survival issues, we may have such an opulent and comfortable life that our only thoughts are toward enjoyment. This also leads to demonic karma. So both extremes, survival preoccupation and overindulgence, will make us forget our mission of altruism-optimism-service.

Let's go back to our talk of constantly evolving, expanding, and opening up which are the signs of bringing forth the Bodhi mind.

-The vertical direction of spiritual growth is to always practice meditation and open up the inner mind.

-The horizontal direction of expanding goodness is to always do good for others. Even with a good word or a good deed, we always open up loving relationships with others. Loving relationships will lead to other beauties in our relationships.

-The spiral direction of progressing toward beauty is to increasingly know the rules and regulations of life and the trends that enhance our life. A woman in Malaysia noticed a street filled with garbage. It looked very ugly, so she asked the government for permission to draw murals on the walls along that street to beautify it, so that people wouldn't litter anymore. She rallied many of her friends to help her, among whom was an excellent artist. Consequently, the walls were adorned with beautiful murals. Gradually, many people came to admire that street, and no one littered any more. It is a story of turning toward beauty. It also shows us that sometimes we have to know how to paint as well as how to organize so that people can collaborate with us. We have to do a lot of things in life, not just sit in meditation or develop love. We also have to develop the beauties of life. These are the directions in life that we have to develop unceasingly.

So when we talk about awakening the Bodhi mind, we have to think of constantly fostering our spirit and always evolving vertically, horizontally, and spirally for truth, goodness, and beauty. Our mission is larger than just living for ourselves. The spirit of altruism, optimism, and service is essential to activate the Bodhi mind.

So, going back to the question that was asked: *"Why did the temple master tell me that I have not yet activated the Bodhi mind although I have done good deeds by doing volunteer work at the temple every week?"* Actually, this man was doing temple chores because first, he had time, and second, his goodness pushed him to develop the horizontal direction. As for the vertical direction, he did not want to practice spiritually; he would not meditate if asked; he did not have the serenity. He only wanted to do volunteer work and help with chores but did not like stillness.

3. If we look into the matter more deeply, we will see that the man was not comfortable or nice with other people. When he worked with others, he always felt superior, scorned those who did not work, or criticized them that they were selfish, because he felt that he did more good deeds than the others. Such comparison destroys the spiritual growth direction. We are so busy with others's unwholesome stories and forget that we need to develop beauty, goodness, spirituality, and meditation for ourselves.

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In other words, the temple master wanted to tell that man that he has not developed holistically but only in one direction, toward goodness. However, it is not sure that he did develop loving-kindness, concentration, or his sense of beauty while doing good deeds.

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Thus, awakening the Bodhi mind is a holistic path of cultivation that allows us to see the beauty of other people and of things happening around us, while at the same time, constantly evolve and overcome our own limitations. By constantly improving, we always progress with optimism. This kind of consciousness always opens up without getting stuck. It is the consciousness of the Bodhi mind.

Thank you for listening. I wish you a beautiful, peaceful, and awakened day.

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