

Scott Tusa

*How to Cultivate a Healthy Relationship with a Buddhist Teacher*

Week Four: “The Transformative Power of Devotion”

December 24, 2018

Welcome back to the fourth week on how to cultivate a healthy relationship with a Buddhist teacher. I'm Scott Tusa, and in this week, we're going to discuss the transformative power of devotion.

We naturally cultivate devotion after our conviction in the dharma, born of practice, has matured. Devotion comes from a deep conviction and trust in the dharma, and the experience is a heart that's wide open, connected, and joyful.

On the Buddhist path, devotion is not blind. Devotion is based on our previous discernment, examining, and practice of the dharma.

Why do we practice devotion? Because it's an incredibly powerful method for uncovering our buddhanature. Our devotion to the teacher is based on our trust and conviction in the dharma, and where we've grown to see the dharma's efficacy. We naturally begin to appreciate those who pointed out the way. We focus on the good qualities of the teacher and their buddhanature. We don't dwell on the qualities we see that are faulty.

We recognize that what we see or don't see is based on our habits of mind. We begin to develop appreciation based on reflecting on the kindness of receiving the dharma from them. Ultimately, we develop an aspiration to attain qualities similar to the teacher.

In Vajrayana Buddhism, devotion is developed towards not just an individual, but a principle we call the guru or lama principle. This principle has four aspects. The first one is our physical teacher, or our root teacher: the person who pointed out the nature of mind, or the teacher who's the most inspiring for us.

The second principle is the lineage lamas, going all the way back to the Buddha. The third is the nature of all phenomena and the fourth is our own nature of mind.

We might request inspiration through certain devotional prayers, and we're merging with our mind these four types of guru, or four types of lama. What this means is we're supplicating our own buddhanature, indivisible with the mind of our teachers, the mind of all buddhas and bodhisattvas, and also the nature of all phenomena.

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In this week, we covered the power of devotion, how to reflect on the qualities and kindness of the teacher, as well as the dharma, and how to engage with the larger principle of what guru means on the Vajrayana path. Thank you for joining me.