

Dharma Talk at Dr. Ambedkar School, Sajókaza

Here we are: Hungarians and Austrians together.

Labelling everything puts things into a certain systematic order and we think it easier to find our way, to put everything into the picture, to know what we like or dislike, what is familiar and what is alien, what is good and what is bad even.

There are Europeans and Non-Europeans, Gypsies and Non-Gypsies, Buddhists and Non-Buddhists. Realising that labels can be useful at times, we should also be aware that they can blur our vision, cover up our clear mind with a smokescreen.

But here I am, an Austrian visitor to this place, a Buddhist, having the pleasure of being with you, speaking to you.

What does it mean to be a Buddhist?

The simple answer is that every woman or man, who takes refuge in the Three Jewels is a Buddhist.

But what does it mean to take refuge in the Three Jewels? Does it mean to hand over my life to Buddha, Dharma and Sangha and wait what happens? Or does it mean starting my life anew, escaping worries and fears, anger, resignation and depression and all other forms of suffering?

Taking refuge in the Buddha means taking an example of a person, who left everything behind to search for a way to overcome suffering, to make life meaningful and happy. He involved himself in his own life instead of sticking to habits and fashions. He went out to experience life as it is, shook off all beliefs and illusions and awakened to reality as it appears in front of our very eyes from moment to moment.

Taking refuge in the Dharma means trusting in the Buddha and his experience. We participate in his experience, listen to his teaching, and are guided to insights into ourselves and the condition of the world around us.

Taking refuge in the Sangha means not isolating ourselves from the family of human beings, getting together with friends, feeling the strength and fascination of friendship and community, leaving the company of unwholesome and false friends behind and looking for the company of noble friends. Maybe we are surprised and enthusiastic when seeing what a group of well-connected friends, determined to work together on a wholesome path, can manage and achieve.

Taking refuge in the Sangha also means understanding ourselves, all the different wishes and aspirations inside this person that we call “myself”, all the messages of parents, teachers, friends and enemies echoing inside ourselves and letting the noblest of these voices guide us.

Taking refuge in the Dharma also means realising the complex oneness of our reality. We live in a wonderful interdependence of everything with everything. We live because we are enfolded in an atmosphere allowing our breathing in and out day and night, we live because

we can eat and drink regularly to keep our bodies healthy. We are in a constant swing between happiness and unhappiness because of our relations with the people around us. Don't ever try to put too much energy into avoiding or escaping from unhappiness, this just robs you of your energies. Rather try to experience happiness, wisely balancing what makes you alive and joyful in the long run, not falling prey to false promises of immediate happiness like consumerism, alcohol and distraction. Real happiness comes from being one with oneself and opening up to good friends, helping each other, teaching each other, being creative and constructive together.

Taking refuge in the Buddha also means realising deeply that each of us is carrying the qualities of a Buddha in herself and himself. Being aware of this precious asset, unfolding and developing it is the essential meaning of taking refuge in the Buddha, as it is our task and duty to walk the path of a Buddha-to-be, fulfilling it as a Bodhisattva and turning into a Buddha eventually.

Realising the way of the Bodhisattva also means engaging conscientiously, being fully and completely one with the project I am pursuing. And of course we are much happier if our efforts are crowned by success, but even if success is not the immediate outcome of our efforts we should be proud of what we have done and cultivate an open mind, as our engagement might have set the course for later success.

As Engaged Buddhists we must know that our helping hand is free only if we do not cling to anything. It is the hand letting go of everything it has been holding, which is really free to act. Letting go of so many convictions and doubts that hamper and obstruct the wholesome and fruitful actions that we have in mind, sets our hands and minds free and we become real and effective Bodhisattvas for the benefit of all sentient beings. This includes pursuing our way of Engaged Buddhism single-minded without passing a judgement on other Buddhists, who might practice in a different way, focussing on academic studies, meditation, ritual or whatever seems to be advisable to them at this moment in their lives.

Following Dr. Ambedkar's guideline to educate ourselves and each other, to organise and stand together in the harmony of noble friends, and then to agitate and strive to change what is unsatisfactory and inhuman should be our orientation. This will level the way for wholesome improvement and lead to joy and sympathetic joy on the viable basis of compassion and wisdom.

May all beings be free from fear and worries!
May all beings overcome the causes of suffering!
May all beings discover the path to liberation!
May all beings be happy!

Jai Bhim!
Dzsaj Bhím