



Dolpo Tulku Rinpoche Teachings

Self-confidence

I was asked here today to talk about how to deal with handicap and being disabled. You might like some of the things I have to say and some you might not. Therefore please listen with an open mind. I will talk about the Buddhist view and how we can find some peace of mind with whom we are.

One of the central points of the Buddhist philosophy is the view of interdependent arising. There are two aspects to it. One, that phenomena arise due to causes and conditions. The other, that phenomena arise depending on the relationship to another phenomena. In science, the word relativity is often used for what in Buddhism we would describe as interdependence or interdependent arising. For example, we can only talk about the 'right' if there is a 'left'. These two aspects are closely related to one another.

Whatever happens in our life is due to causes and conditions. There has to be preceding causes, and when the appropriate conditions come together we experience a certain situation. The causes by themselves are not sufficient. Therefore, if we are at present intelligent or famous, there must be causes for this, rooted in the past. In Buddhism we believe in former lives during which we have accrued some of the causes for our present situation. This can be having had a beneficial mind-set towards others, or a harmful one. Or our actions having been helpful and warm-hearted, or unwholesome. These causes also have an effect on our present body. The present conditions do influence our present state, and wealth and material things can have a positive effect, but the main point is our mind. Our mind is the root of our happiness. This is what is explained in Buddhism, but we also know that through our experience. Therefore it is important to work with our mind. Regardless of the state of our body at present, we need to think of what is positive in our lives and about our bodies. We need to have an accurate understanding of our abilities and to value our strengths. Sometimes, in society, we have a way of categorizing people as being of more worth than others, being more able or more disabled. But no matter what the people around us think, we need to develop self-confidence in our strengths. I think that this is very important.

I saw an Indian movie about a couple of security guards, which contained some good lessons about self-confidence and how to achieve peace of mind. There was a fight and when the security guards tried to disperse the people watching on, they didn't budge. But when the police arrived, everyone left the scene. One security guard was quite disheartened by the fact that no one had listened to him. His friend told him not to worry about what the people thought of him or whether they took him seriously in his position. Even kings were subject to all sorts of thoughts and judgments of other people. Sometimes his commands would be obeyed, sometimes not. The most important thing is to have self-confidence and to be aware of one's own qualities and qualifications. Then there is no need to feel bad or rejected. 400 people were living in the building the security guards were responsible for and they were able to sleep safely because of their presence. Therefore their work was important. If there had been robbers to come, they would have been the ones catching them and being the heroes. They were the protectors of all these people. Through this conversation, the one who had felt disheartened reclaimed his self-confidence saw his own qualities and the importance of his duties, which revived his interest in his work. Eventually, he became a supervisor in his company. The one who made this possible was a friend, who was always aware of the positive aspects of their work.

My advice, therefore, is whether we have disabilities or other adversities in our life which are challenging, we always need to keep in mind what we can do, what our mental capabilities are, what our qualities are, etc. Then we can gain a healthy kind of self-confidence grounded in reason. Without self-confidence it is of no use even being a king. But knowing how to use our intelligence and our abilities we can develop them and improve ourselves. If we look at Stephen Hawking, we can see that a disability doesn't need to be in the way of a brilliant career. He is a leading figure in physics world wide despite his physical shortcomings. He should be an example for all of us in showing us what can be achieved with the right kind of self-confidence and enthusiasm.

So the most important thing we need is self-confidence. To gain self-confidence we need to like ourselves and have the right intention. If we keep our qualities and positive aspects in mind, we can generate self-appreciation and love for ourselves. At the same time we should be aware of the helpful conditions in our environment. Through this awareness of our qualities, abilities and positive circumstances, we can act in the best way possible. So, the main point is to know what is positive and helpful in our lives.

If, on the other hand, we constantly look for faults then they are all we will see. There is nothing in this world that is faultless. People even found faults in both the Buddha and Jesus. Famous people like Michael Jackson, Schumacher and Maradona were not liked by everyone, even though at the same time thousands of people loved them. So it is impossible to be perfect in everybody's eyes. We have to give up the idea that we must be perfect, but instead we can look for the best in who we are and what we have. As a result others will also come to appreciate us and we can develop healthy

relationships with the people around us. We should not compare ourselves with others, but create self-confidence based on our positive aspects.

We can test this. If we take someone we tend to like, for example someone famous or our partner, and we start looking for something wrong in them, we will immediately find not just one thing but several. If we play this the other way around and try to find something good in someone we don't tend to like so much, we can find several qualities in him or her. It all depends on our way of thinking. Therefore we need to see all the good in our lives, our friends, our environment etc.

If we happen to lose self-confidence, though, we should check our situation to the situation of people who are worse off. Then we can again appreciate what we have. If we compare ourselves to people who are better off than us, we risk feeling even more depressed.

Training our minds in this way we don't need to engage in any special kind of meditation, be religious or perform rituals. When we appreciate our situation and are confident, we feel satisfied and won't be chasing after things we cannot have. A feeling of well-being will naturally arise.

This talk was given on October 30th, 2012, at Siloah (Munich, Germany), a meeting place for people with and without disabilities

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