

## STUDYING AND TEACHING DHARMA

We meet as a learning community, a loose but hopefully collaborative Sangha. Revealing the mind to the mind is our central work. To do this we need to be clear about the difference between our mind itself and the ever-changing contents of our mind – although actually they are non-dual.

In the Tibetan tradition a pure lineage of transmission is considered to be vital if our study and practice is to bear fruit. We need to have confidence that what we hear from teachers and what we study in books is authentic and essentially unchanged from the time it was first taught by the Buddhas. CR Lama instructed me to maintain our lineage tradition to the best of my abilities so that those who wish to learn and practise it can be helped in that process.

Teaching the Middle Way follows the middle way, not too tight and not too loose. This is especially important since we are adult learners and we need to be able to reflect on what we study while avoiding both mindless dogmatism and the creation of a spurious mélange mixing by mixing in our own ideas. We all need to be able to hear the beat of the Dharma drum and align ourselves with this. For this, humility is essential. If Dharma feeds an ego gain for the teacher, or for the learner, then our motivation to help all beings is distorted and diminished. The desire to help others is precious but this must be linked with a clear knowledge of our own tendencies and our own capacity. Therefore we need to study and practise more until we ripen fully, so that we don't lead others astray.

If you feel you want to share the Dharma, then, at the start of each practice session make your Bodhisattva intention, then hold all beings in mind while you do your practice and finally dedicate the merit for all sentient beings at the end of your practice. The one practice you can share with others is Calm Abiding (shiné) where we focus our attention on the sensations of our breath as it enters and leaves our nostrils. This promotes non-distraction and is useful for everyone.

The five poisons of mental darkness, desire, aversion, pride and jealousy are always available and it is easy to go astray. Actions have consequences which can last a long time for both self and others. I have not authorised anyone to transmit and teach Dharma so please do not set yourself up as a teacher of Dharma. When it is clear to an established and authentic Dharma teacher that you are ready to teach then they will authorise you according to your capacity.

Moreover in our Western culture it is important to understand the relationship between Dharma and psychotherapy since the language of psychotherapy has become part of public discourse and its underlying assumptions have been normalised.

The views, practices and behaviours encouraged by Dharma and by psychotherapy are very different. Pure Dharma will lead to enlightenment whereas psychotherapy will not. Dharma is freely offered whereas psychotherapy is a fee-based practice. If you mix the two and charge for some mixture of Dharma/therapy then that is likely to lead to you and your 'clients' astray.

May our study and practice bring benefit to many and harm to none.