

Week 2 – Love as the golden rule

Buddhism Level 2 – Buddhist Ethics

Love is the so-called golden rule of all ethical systems; this is the first precept out of which the rest naturally follow.

THE FIRST PRECEPT

Positive form: "With deeds of loving kindness I purify my body."

Negative form: "I undertake the training principle of not harming living beings"

Pali "Panatipata veramani sikkhapadam samadiyami"

Panatipata = "taking life".

Observance of the First Precept will naturally result in one's being a vegetarian - Sangharakshita

Discuss!

"Violence indeed consists in our doing to another person, by whatever means, what he does not want us to do to him." Sangharakshita

Killing is the most extreme form of violence, taking from another what they value most. It is the most extreme negation of one self by another, and thus one cuts oneself off in a very damaging way from others by killing. Non-violence springs from a state of mind: *metta*, loving kindness, love

Seeing the interconnectedness of all things one feels *metta* – just as one cares for one's bruised fingers. We start with a healthy self love:

*I visited all quarters with my mind
Nor found I any dearer than myself;
Self is likewise to every other dear;
Who loves himself will never harm another.*

Udana: Raja Sutta [V.1, 47]

Imaginative identification with others ("self is likewise to every other dear") leads to *metta* for them – that's why *metta bhavana* starts with ourselves.

"The great secret of morals is love; or a going out of our own nature, and an identification of ourselves with the beautiful which exists in thought, action, or person, not our own. A man, to be greatly good, must imagine intensely and comprehensively; he must put himself in the place of another and of many others; the pains and pleasures of his species must become his own."

PB Shelly

Love mode vs Power mode

Love mode = cherishing of others

Power mode = attempt to force others to do one's will, against their will.

There are gross & subtle forms of power mode. This is the standard of society; without a police force society would break down rather quickly. It is not always possible to act totally in the love mode, in this case one tries only use the power mode in subordination to the love mode.

To operate according to the power mode means to relate to other living beings in such a way as to negate rather than affirm their being. To operate in accordance with the love mode is the opposite of this.

Sangharakshita, The Ten Pillars of Buddhism .

Examples of Power Mode
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Using the legal process to coerce an outcome or have someone punished • Giving or withholding love/approval to gain co-operation • Using managerial power over a subordinate • Inducing guilt to motivate someone to act how you want • Physically restraining or attacking someone • Withholding inconvenient information which may sway someone's decision • Queue bargaining

Remember, using power mode isn't necessarily wrong – sometimes we may need to. In working environments, there's usually the underlying operation of power mode – the unspoken “obey your boss or get the sack”.

Practising the first precept is about moving from power to love mode in as many ways as we can. Within the Sangha we are trying to create an environment where we don't have to use the power mode. To the extent that power mode is used, it is not a Sangha.

HOME PRACTICE

Start trying to notice when you're acting in power mode in the area or areas you discussed. Feel the quality or flavour of it – how does your body feel? Remember to keep the love for yourself – be kind & patient with yourself when you don't act as lovingly as you'd like to. From this basis, can you try to act with a little more love in this situation?

FURTHER READING

The Threefold Path: Ethics in What is the Dharma? by Sangharakshita
Vegetarianism, by Bodhipaksa, Windhorse Publications