

Happiness – joy and gladness

The aspiration to gladden beings, which is central to Buddhism, especially to the Mahayana, is an important one. To make people happy, to stimulate positive emotion in them, is one of the principle activities of the Bodhisattva (the Bodhisattva being Mahayana Buddhism's ideal Buddhist). This does not mean merely being entertaining. Gladdening all beings does not involve anything frivolous; it means arousing genuine joy, in the sense of helping people overcome their deepest fears and anxieties, and awakening them to the truth of the Dharma.

This is the opposite of making oneself feel more powerful. It is not about trying to control others for your own purposes. You are like the rain cloud, giving people what they want and need in order to be truly happy. Like the rain cloud, you open up and give yourself. A significant implication of this is that the aspiring Bodhisattva has a duty to be joyful. You can't gladden others if you are not glad yourself. If you want others to be happy, in more than a theoretical sense, if you want to do something about making them happy, then you need to be emotionally positive yourself. If you're a wet blanket, if you're a prophet of doom and disaster, if you're a Dismal Jimmy, then you're hardly en route to becoming a Bodhisattva.

So, if you are looking for Buddhist teaching, follow the joy. A Buddhist centre or community should have a happy, friendly, and peaceful atmosphere. The most important qualities for a Bodhisattva, and for anyone whose life involves teaching or leading fellow Buddhists, are inspiration and metta. If you cannot name the seven bodhyangas, for example, that does not matter so much. But you cannot do without inspiration and metta, and these need to be cultivated.

Sangharakshita, *Living Ethically*, p.37-38

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