

EXHORTATION TO BRING FORTH THE BODHI RESOLVE

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ESSAY:

WHAT IS MINDFULNESS OF THE DONORS' KINDNESS? NONE OF THE MATERIALS WE PRESENTLY USE IN OUR DAILY LIVES BELONG TO US. PORRIDGE AND RICE FOR OUR TWO MEALS, CLOTHING AND GARMENTS FOR THE FOUR SEASONS, THE MEDICINES FOR OUR ILLNESSES, AND THE EXPENSES FOR OUR PHYSICAL NEEDS ALL COME FROM THE STRENGTH OF OTHERS. IN ORDER TO PROVIDE THEM FOR US, THEY EXHAUST THEIR STRENGTH IN PLOWING THE FIELDS, AND BARELY MAKING ENDS MEET. YET WE COMFORTABLY SIT TO RECEIVE OUR FOOD, AND STILL FEEL DISSATISFIED. THEY, THEN, SPIN AND WEAVE AND STILL SUFFER HARDSHIP. YET WE COMFORTABLY HAVE MORE CLOTHES THEN WE CAN WEAR, AND DO NOT CHERISH THEM.

COMMENTARY:

Why should we repay the kindness of the donors? What kindness have they shown us? A donor gives to others. There are three kinds of giving:

1. the giving of wealth
2. the giving of Dharma
3. the giving of fearlessness

The giving of wealth: One can give inner wealth, and external wealth. External wealth is that of a country, of a city, or one's wife and children. Inner wealth is one's own head, brains, marrow, and eyes.

Anything can be given. One can give the control of a country to others, or give away one's eyes or blood. We want to be unattached and give them away. Give money, or anything you have that others need; give in order to benefit others.

The giving of Dharma: This entails speaking the Buddhadharma to teach and transform all living beings. The giving of Dharma is the foremost gift, because it can benefit beings in the best possible way.

The giving of fearlessness: This refers to comforting someone who is agitated or frightened.

We should repay the kindness of the donors for their giving of wealth. Left-home people don't plow but have food, don't weave but have clothes. Others offer these items to them. By giving, the donor wishes to plant blessings; therefore, we must be genuine and true Sanghans, true and pure fields of blessings.

NONE OF THE MATERIALS WE left-home people USE IN OUR DAILY LIVES BELONG TO US. All the things we use every day are not our own; a donor offered them to us. These include PORRIDGE AND RICE FOR OUR TWO MEALS. Previously, left-home people ate rice-porridge in the morning and rice at lunch. Some monks humbly and politely call themselves "porridge and rice monks," implying they could do nothing but eat. We are given CLOTHING FOR THE FOUR SEASONS, worn in the autumn, summer, spring, and winter, MEDICINES FOR OUR ILLNESSES, AND THE EXPENSES FOR OUR PHYSICAL NEEDS. ALL THESE COME FROM THE STRENGTH OF OTHERS. Our provisions of food and clothing come from the donors. IN ORDER TO PROVIDE FOR US THEY EXHAUST THEIR STRENGTH IN PLOWING THE FIELDS. In Zhung Gwo, the farmers slaved away in the fields. Here in America, farming methods are different; machines do the work. Machines consume gasoline and plow the fields so men need not toil. Yet the farmers must still work hard and "exhaust their strength" to provide gasoline. We must therefore know the difficulties involved in producing food. The ancients said:

Be careful not to waste even a single grain of rice.
Think of the toil of the farmer laboring in his field.

Certainly, we must not waste food and drink, or casually throw them away. I was sixteen when I was in the Way Virtue Society. For lunch we usually ate potatoes. Some new-comers, however, didn't like to eat the skins. However, I told them to eat the skins and not waste food. They didn't listen, but continued to spit out the skins onto the floor and onto the tables. I was the instructor then, but since I was only sixteen years old, no one listened to what I said.

"My virtuous conduct is insufficient to influence them," I thought. So I took a bowl and scooped up all the skins, and filled my bowl with them. The others had finished eating, but I sat there eating the potato peelings. After that incident, no one dared to waste food.

The students didn't want to follow my advice so I said, "Fine, I'll have to solve the problem of waste myself, and be a model for you."

We shouldn't waste food because the farmers toil all day and live BARELY MAKING ENDS MEET. At times they don't have good food to eat and don't eat their fill. YET WE COMFORTABLY SIT TO RECEIVE OUR FOOD. Farmers work hard; they put their sweat and blood into their work. Yet we left-home people get things without working for them. We have food and drink yet don't plow. We sit comfortably and eat, AND STILL FEEL DISSATISFIED. At meals, we still want flavorful dishes. If the food is not cooked well and well seasoned, we feel that we are missing out.

THEY, THEN, ENDLESSLY SPIN AND WEAVE. The weavers toil away at making cloth. Nowadays, machines make cloth. It seems easy, but there are still difficulties involved. The increase in population makes the demand for more cloth and for more food. Without machines to increase production, the demand could never be met. AND the weavers STILL SUFFER HARDSHIP. They don't wear what they make; they must sell it to earn money. YET WE COMFORTABLY HAVE MORE CLOTHES THAN WE CAN WEAR. We are very comfortable and at peace and have an excess of clothing. AND DO NOT CHERISH THEM. We should know to take care of these things because,

When eating rice and porridge, remember they are difficult to produce.
Even an inch of thread is hard to make.

Remember the difficulties involved in making these goods and consider the hardships involved in providing them for us; we should always be mindful of the donors' kindness.

We should consider the Three Recollections when we eat. With the first bite of food we think, "I vow to cut off all evil." "All evil" includes greedy thoughts about whether or not the dishes are flavorful. Eat whatever dishes there are without being picky. With the second bite of food, we "vow to cultivate all good." One wishes to correct all of one's bad habits and faults, and to do no evil but respectfully practice all good. With the third bite, we "resolve to cross over all living beings." One wishes to cause all living beings to separate from suffering and to attain bliss. With the first three bites of the meal, we make these three reflections.

We should also consider the Five Contemplations. They can help us to correct greed for flavors and to take our meal properly.

The first is to consider the work involved in bringing the food to where it is eaten. Think about how much work the farmer does. He toils bitterly to raise the crops.

Second, consider your own virtuous conduct. Is it sufficient to accept the offering? Is it perfect? Are you worthy of eating the food?

Third, guard the mind against transgression, of which greed is the principle cause. Guard your mind. Get away from mistakes. Do not be greedy for good-tasting food and avoid the less flavorful dishes. Be impartial towards good tasting food and bad tasting food.

Fourth, properly taken, the food is like medicine to keep the body from wasting away. Why do we eat? Eating food is like taking medicine. If we don't eat, we can't live, just as a car can't run without gasoline. Flavor is unimportant; we eat to cure the illness of hunger.

Fifth, the food is taken only so that you can accomplish your karma in the Way. I want to cultivate and to accomplish my karma in the Way, so I accept this food and drink.

Clothing should be dealt with in the same way. Consider what merit and virtue you have to wear the clothes offered to you. We must cherish and protect all items of clothing, food, and drink by using them carefully. By deeply contemplating the Five Recollections while eating, we can make meal times into proper cultivation periods. Eating is not a time for creating offenses or becoming afflicted.

ESSAY:

THEY LIVE IN HUMBLE DWELLINGS AND POOR ABODES, AMID CLAMOR AND NERVE-WRACKING DIN TO THE END OF THEIR DAYS, BUT WE DWELL IN VAST COURTS AND IN VACANT HALLS AMID REFINEMENT AND EASE THROUGHOUT EACH YEAR. THEY OFFER THE FRUITS OF THEIR LABORS TO SUPPLY OUR LEISURE; HOW CAN OUR HEARTS BE AT PEACE? IS IT REASONABLE TO TAKE OTHERS' BENEFITS TO NOURISH OUR OWN BODIES?

IF WE FAIL TO FOSTER BOTH COMPASSION AND WISDOM, AND FAIL TO ADORN WITH BOTH BLESSINGS AND WISDOM, SO THAT THE FAITHFUL DONORS ARE BLESSED WITH KINDNESS, AND SO LIVING BEINGS RECEIVE THE BOUNTY, IF WE AREN'T THIS WAY, THEN EVEN ONE GRAIN OF RICE OR AN INCH OF THREAD INCURS A DEBT. IT MUST BE REPAYED, OR THE EVIL RETRIBUTION WILL BE DIFFICULT TO ESCAPE.

THIS IS THE FOURTH CAUSE AND CONDITION FOR BRING FORTH THE BODHI RESOLVE.

COMMENTARY:

The farmers and weavers LIVE IN HUMBLE DWELLINGS AND POOR ABODES--like hovels and shanties with thatched roofs and cheap doors. AMID CLAMOR AND NERVE-WRACKING DIN that is annoying and tedious; they can barely put up with it. TO THE END OF THEIR DAYS, BUT WE DWELL IN VAST AND VACANT HALLS. We live in huge buildings. There are so many halls and flower gardens that

some are unused. AMID REFINEMENT AND EASE THROUGHOUT EACH YEAR. Every year passes and we are comfortable, delighted, and at ease, with everything the way we like it.

THEY, the farmers and weavers who slave away as busy with their work as they are, OFFER THE FRUITS OF THEIR LABOR TO SUPPLY OUR LEISURE. We sit comfortably and have no troubles at all. HOW CAN OUR HEARTS BE AT PEACE? They toil as hard as they do, don't eat their fill, don't have enough to wear, and live in humble dwellings, yet we are comfortable and happy; how can this rest well in our hearts? IS IT REASONABLE TO TAKE OTHERS' BENEFITS TO NOURISH OUR OWN BODIES? Is it reasonable to support one's own life with the fruits of others' labor?

IF WE FAIL TO FOSTER BOTH COMPASSION AND WISDOM, and don't produce the heart of great compassion and don't seek wisdom, and then use our compassion and wisdom TO ADORN WITH BOTH BLESSINGS AND WITH WISDOM, SO THAT THE FAITHFUL DONORS ARE BLESSED WITH KINDNESS, they receive kindness, AND LIVING BEINGS RECEIVE THE BOUNTY, they get blessed rewards--if we fail to have this happen, THEN EVEN A GRAIN OF RICE OR AN INCH OF THREAD INCURS A DEBT. And you will have to repay it in the future; you can't eat others' food for free. So it says,

A grain of rice from a faithful donor is as heavy as Mt. Sumeru. If you eat it and don't cultivate the Way, you'll have to repay it by wearing fur and by being capped with horns.

The clothes and food don't come from your own efforts (we don't plough but eat food; we don't weave, but wear clothes). If you don't cultivate well, then in the future it's to be feared that you'll become a horse or a cow in order to work off your debts, which MUST BE REPAYED OR THE EVIL RETRIBUTION WILL BE DIFFICULT TO ESCAPE.

THIS IS THE FOURTH CAUSE AND CONDITION FOR BRINGING FORTH THE BODHI RESOLVE.

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