



衆生和合 Relationships

A talk given by Brooks Hansard on February 24, 2018

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Tonight I would like to discuss relationships. I believe relationships are one of the key hallmarks in Mahayana Buddhism. I first started thinking about relationships within the context of the Mahayana Path when I would sometimes hear the Venerable Master's senior disciples say that precepts are ultimately about our relationships with others.

For instance, when we kill beings, we are causing them physical and emotional pain, depriving them of their lives, and taking them away from their loved ones. When we steal, we are impoverishing others. When we lie, we are deceiving others. When we engage in sexual misconduct, we are creating an unwholesome relationship with that person and therefore harming that person and possibly that person's own relationships with others. When we consume intoxicants, we are putting ourselves at risk of harming others by giving up control over our actions.

This focus on creating a caring and wholesome relationship with others through upholding the precepts is a key teaching found in both the Sravaka teachings and the Bodhisattva teachings. However, the Bodhisattva Path goes one step further by including the Paramita of Giving and the Paramita of Patience, in addition to the Paramita of Precepts. All three of these paramitas are ultimately about nurturing a positive relationship with others. Every time we give to another living being, we are creating an affinity with that being. Joy arises in their minds when they receive the gift. The gift enhances their lives by helping to sustain them physically and giving them more prosperity.

Patience also fosters a wholesome relationship with beings. Someone yells at us, slanders us, steals from us, abuses us, takes advantage of us, or harms us in any way, and yet we don't get angry. By not responding in anger to others' mistreatment of us, we are thereby stopping contention from developing in that relationship, or perhaps we stop the cycle of contention from continuing if it has already started. Practicing patience also provides us with the opportunity to teach others, by showing them that there are other noble ways to respond to mistreatment besides getting angry and fighting. It can therefore open up their perspectives on what is possible. Benefiting a person by embodying the Buddha Dharma for them also improves one's relationship with that person, because the greatest gift of all is the gift of Dharma.

今晚想討論與眾生之間的關係，我認為這是大乘佛教的主要特點之一。開始思考這個議題，是因為曾經聽過上人的資深弟子說，戒律的精神最究竟在與眾生的關係。

譬如殺生，造成對方身心的痛苦，不僅剝奪對方的生命，也迫使與摯愛的人分離；偷盜，造成對方財物的損失；打妄語，令對方被蒙騙；邪淫，不正當的親密關係不僅傷害對方，也破壞了對方的家庭；飲酒或吸毒後的失控行為，危害他人的安全。

因此，聲聞戒和菩薩戒都很重視藉由持戒，與眾生建立良善健康的關係。除了持戒波羅蜜，菩薩戒更擴及布施波羅蜜和忍辱波羅蜜，因為布施、持戒、忍辱這三個法門，都能改善我們跟眾生之間的關係。布施的當下，就在創造一個善緣。受施者接受布施，獲得更無虞的生活、更充裕的資財，而心生歡喜。

忍辱，也是和眾生結善緣。當別人罵我們、誹謗我們、偷我們的東西、虐待我們，佔我們便宜，甚至用各種方式傷害我們，我們能不生氣。對於別人加諸在我們身上的痛苦，不以負面情緒來回應，就不會結惡緣，已結的惡緣，也能因此而停止循環。修行忍辱，也讓我們有



Fostering a positive and caring relationship with others through the practice of giving and patience reminds me of a Jataka tale the Buddha once told to his Sravaka disciples. He said innumerable eons ago there was a child of exquisite beauty and grace who was born to a Brahmin family. When he turned 20 years old, his parents told him it was time for him to move out and get a home of his own. He responded to his parents that he had no desire to live in a home with a family and that his only wish was to live in the deep mountains as a hermit. His parents consented and so he entered into the mountain forests and made that his home.

While wandering in the mountains he saw two aged Brahmins who were immortals. He approached them and asked them what they were doing dwelling in the forest, and they said, “My son, we dwell here in order to benefit living beings by practicing all kinds of austerities.” The young man said he had also come there to endure all kinds of painful austerities with the desire to benefit all living beings. So he dwelt with the immortals in the mountain forests and from the merit and virtue that he accumulated from practicing the austerities, he eventually gained the heavenly eye. With his heavenly eye, he looked around the forests and saw a pregnant tigress. He thought, “Not long from now this tigress will give birth and then either die of hunger or in her famished state desire to eat her young.”

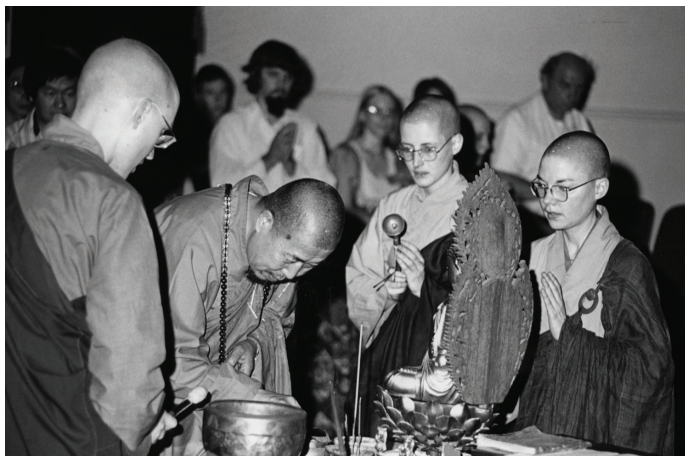
After seeing the tigress, he went to the two Brahmin immortals and asked, “Which of you will cut up his body and give it as food to this tigress?” They responded, “Neither of us is willing to do that.” Eventually the tigress gave birth, and after seeing this with his heavenly eye, the young ascetic again approached the two Brahmins and said, “Great immortals, the tigress has given birth to her young. If now you indeed seek to benefit all living beings, and for this purpose are suffering austerities, now is your opportunity. You may now cut up your body and give the your flesh to

機會教導別人，除了憤怒和對抗以外，事情還有更好的回應方式，從而開拓他們的觀點視野。讓其他人看到我們力行佛法的誠心，也是一種結善緣的方式，因為最珍貴的布施莫過於法布施。

用布施和忍辱來跟眾生結善緣，讓我想起一則佛陀的本生故事。無量劫以前，有一個婆羅門家誕生了一位非常俊美的嬰孩。當這個孩子二十歲的時候，他的父母告訴他該是成家立業的時候了。然而這個年輕婆羅門向父母表達，自己並不想成家，唯一的願望是在深山裡當一名隱士。父母同意了他的請求，於是年輕婆羅門從此以山林為家。

當他在山林經行時，看到兩位修練成仙的年長婆羅門，於是走近請教他們為何要住在森林裡。仙人回答：「孩子，我們是為了修種苦行來利益眾生。」年輕婆羅門告訴他們，自己也是為了這個目的來到森林裡修行，於是就和這兩位仙人住在一起。因為修行苦行所累積的功德，年輕婆羅門得到了天眼通，當他用天眼環顧森林四周，看到一隻懷孕的母虎。這隻母虎不久就要分娩，而且會因為過於飢餓而死，或者因此而吃掉剛出生的小虎。





the tiger-mother to eat.”

Upon hearing this, the two immortals went to where the tigress was, and when they saw her, they thought: “Who can patiently endure such pain as this in the practice of giving? Who can cut off the flesh from his body that he cherishes to give to a starving tiger?” At that point the tiger-mother began to follow them at a distance. When they saw her following them, they were filled with fear and, rising up into the air, quickly flew away.

When the two Brahmins returned to the young ascetic, he said, “Do you claim to be truly upholding your vow and your oath?” He then immediately vowed, “I now give my body to feed this tiger. May the reward of this sacrifice be my attainment of annatarasamyaksambuddha.” After making the vow, he took a knife and cut the flesh from his body, giving it as a gift to the tiger-mother.

Then, after concluding the story, the Buddha told the Bhikshus that it was he who cut off his flesh to feed the hungry tiger, and it was they who were the Brahmins, not willing to sacrifice themselves to benefit another being. He claimed that because in the past he was willing to bear suffering and to sacrifice himself in order to give to others, he has now attained annatarasamyaksambuddha.

With this story, he shows the supreme importance that he gave to his relationship with that tiger, and that the difference between becoming a Buddha and an Arhat is the difference in the type of relationships one creates with living beings while still on the causal ground: the fruition of Buddhahood results from fostering relationships of kindness, compassion, and sacrifice, while the absence of such relationships leads to Arhat fruition.

Most everyone would view an animal as a lowly creature, not worthy of making any great self-sacrifice for. Yet the Buddha, who was the greatest of beings, was willing to sacrifice his own worthy life in order to save the life of a mere beast. This shows that the

因為預見即將發生的一幕，年輕婆羅門就去問這兩位婆羅門仙人：「你們有誰願意割肉給這隻飢餓的母虎？」他們都回答：「我們都不願意。」年輕婆羅門用天眼看到母虎終於分娩了，於是他再問這兩位婆羅門仙人：「偉大的仙人啊，母虎已經生下小老虎了。如果你們真的想利益一切眾生，並且為此修種種苦行，現在正是好機會。你們可以割下身上的肉來餵母虎。」

聽完這番話，兩位仙人就去探視這隻母虎；但是當他們看到時，卻心想：「誰能忍受這種割肉的痛苦？誰會不珍惜自己的身體，而願意割下身上的肉給一隻飢餓的老虎？」就在這個時候，母虎在遠處開始跟著他們了。當發現自己被老虎跟蹤，兩位仙人嚇得騰空而去。

見到婆羅門仙人回來，年輕婆羅門說：「你們還記得自己發的願，要利益眾生的誓願嗎？」於是，他當下發願：「現在我要用我的身體去餵這隻老虎，願這樣的布施讓我成就阿耨多羅三藐三菩提。」說完，就用刀子割下身上的肉，布施給這隻飢餓的母虎。

說完這個故事，佛陀告訴弟子，那位捨身餵虎的年輕婆羅門就是佛陀的前生，不肯布施身肉逃走的仙人就是你們。佛陀往昔因為願意忍受痛苦，犧牲自己利益別人，因此才能證到阿耨多羅三藐三菩提的果位。



Bodhisattva cherished his relationship with that animal, not merely treating the tiger-mother like she was his own mother, but rather like she was his own flesh and blood, an extension of himself. He created a precious and wonderful affinity with that tiger-mother by making the ultimate sacrifice for her. This perspective is far different from the predominant view in the world today, where animals are seen as so unimportant and trivial that they can be forced to live miserable lives, treated inhumanely, and finally slaughtered and eaten.

This reminds me of a talk I heard recently that was given by someone of another religious tradition. For some reason he is adamantly anti-vegetarianism. He gave the logic behind this view as follows: All animals endure myriad forms of suffering. If everyone on the planet were to become vegetarian, would the animals suddenly stop experiencing suffering? They wouldn't, because it's too immense. It would never be possible to eliminate all the suffering they must undergo. For instance, animals would still be victims of other predatory animals who would continue to eat them, and that's just one of many forms of suffering they must undergo. He implied vegetarianism is like a drop in a vast ocean in terms of the amount of suffering it would reduce for animals, and therefore it is useless.

When I heard this, I immediately realized he doesn't understand the entire point of vegetarianism, which is to develop a good, wholesome relationship with beings. By not eating animals, we are creating a wholesome affinity with the animal kingdom. We are nurturing them and our relationship with them. We know we can't take away all their suffering, but we also know our relationship with each individual animal is very important from a karmic perspective and we want to create the best relationship we can with them.



佛陀藉由這個故事，說明與這位老虎結緣的殊勝意義，以及在因地修行時跟眾生結的緣，將決定修行成就的果位。若能以慈悲喜捨來利益眾生，與眾生結緣，將成就無上正等正覺的佛果；缺少任何一項，就是成就阿羅漢果。

大部分的人都視動物為低等生命，不值得自己為彼做任何重要的犧牲。然而尊貴的佛陀，卻願意犧牲自己的生命去挽救一頭猛獸。這代表菩薩珍惜自己與動物之間的關係，不僅把母虎視如自己的母親一般對待，甚至將老虎視為自己的血肉，與自己是一體的。佛陀用犧牲自我的這種方式，與母虎結下這份殊勝的善緣，這個觀點與當今主流觀點截然不同。大部分的人認為動物是微不足道，應該被迫過著悲慘的生活，遭受不人道的待遇，乃至被屠宰成為人類的食物。

這讓我想起最近聽到一位其他宗教人士的論點，

基於某種原因，他堅決反對素食。他認為動物終將要遭受各種形式的痛苦，即使地球上的人都吃素，動物會因此免除痛苦嗎？當然不會，因為牠們要受的苦實在太多了，我們永遠不可能讓這些痛苦消失。例如，牠們仍然會成為其他獵食動物的食物，而這只是牠們必須經歷的多種苦難之一。其實就是暗示想要藉由吃素來減輕動物的苦難，就像大海裡的一滴水，效果微乎其微。

聽到這個論點，我立刻意識到這個人並不了解吃素的真正意義，是要與眾生建立良善的關係。不吃動物，就是與牠們結一個很好的善緣。我們當然知道不可能因此



Relationships are an important principle that the Venerable Master stressed. For instance, the Venerable Master really stressed filial respect. He said we should treat our parents with kindness and respect, take good care of them, look after their needs, and try to return their immense kindness in any way we can. This shows that he gives our relationship with our parents a prominent place in the Buddhist Path. He said the Confucian teaching of filial respect is the first step one takes on the Buddhist Path.

Without the Venerable Master's focus on relationships, we might get tunnel vision and exclusively focus on our Dharma door to the point that we completely ignore or neglect our basic interactions with others and the kinds of relationships that we are creating with other beings. We might notice this situation in other Buddhist traditions when cultivators focus exclusively on their Zen practice, or on yogic attainments, but all the while ignore their relationships with others—embodied through filial respect and the practice of the first three paramitas. Without the Venerable Master's teachings to remind us of the importance of relationships, Buddhist principles such as kindness, compassion, and the vow to liberate all living beings might become abstractions instead of lived principles embodied in our relationships with others. The Brahmin immortals in the Jataka tale exemplified this when they upheld the noble wish to benefit living being but were unable to put those principles into action.

This filial regard for our parents can be extended to all living beings when we transfer merit. When transferring merit, we vow that that merit will repay the kindness of our four benefactors. Our four benefactors include our parents, as well as the Three Treasures, our country and its leaders, and all other living beings. We do not forget their kindness and how they have helped us during our lives, and we make sure to develop a good relationship with them by transferring our merit to them and thereby repaying their kindness in an unseen and inconceivable way.

Every day we recite: To the Sangha, I return and rely, vowing that all living beings form together a great assembly, one and all in harmony. This is the end goal we as Mahayana practitioners aspire towards. We hope that all living beings will become Buddhas, and thereby unite and live as one in a state of perfect harmony. However, the Path is in the Fruition, and the Fruition is in the Path. On this Mahayana Path, we make every effort to live harmoniously with others. As the Venerable Master instructed us: We don't fight with others, nor do we lie to them. We don't benefit ourselves to the detriment of others by being greedy and selfish, nor do we seek and pursue our own personal advantage at the expense of others. If we can nurture our relationships with others according to these Six Guiding Principles, then we can work towards the ultimate goal of helping all living beings unite as one Dharma Body in perfect harmony. May this Fruition be realized by one and all. ❀

終止牠們一切的苦難，但是我們也知道從業力的觀點來看，我們與每個動物之間的緣分很重要，我們希望與牠們建立最好的關係。

上人也很重視與眾生的關係，例如他很強調孝道。上人說，我們應該慈心恭敬地對待父母，好好照顧父母，關心父母的需求，並且盡我們所能來報答父母的恩德。這表示上人認為與父母的這份關係，在成佛的路上是非常重要的。上人說，儒家的孝道是成佛的第一步。

如果沒有上人指出這些關係的重要，我們可能只會狹隘地專注在自己修行的法門，以至於忽略自己與他人的互動，以及與眾生之間所建立的關係。在其他佛教傳統中可以發現這種情況，有些人只著重在禪修或瑜伽的修煉，而完全忽視與其他人的關係——這必須藉由孝道以及前面的布施、持戒、忍辱波羅蜜來實踐。如果沒有上人提醒我們這些關係的重要，佛法所講的慈悲以及度脫眾生的誓願，最後會變成一種嘴上功夫，而不去落實在自己與他人的關係之中。佛陀本生故事中的婆羅門仙人就是一個例子，他們雖然發了利益眾生的弘願，但卻沒有對此付諸行動。

當我們在迴向的時候，我們把對父母的孝擴展到一切的眾生。我們發願要上報四重恩，這就包括父母恩、三寶恩、國家恩以及眾生恩。我們沒有忘記他們的慈愛，以及他們在生活中所給予的幫助。藉由功德迴向，我們以一種無形、不可思議的方式回報他們，與他們結這個善緣。

我們每天唸的「自皈依僧，當願眾生，統理大眾，一切無礙」，正是大乘佛教徒努力的最終目標。我們希望一切眾生都能成佛，都能因此共存於最究竟的和合。然而即因即果，即果即因，因此在因地修行的時候，我們會盡一切努力與眾生和諧相處。正如上人教導我們的：不與人爭、不打妄語、不貪、不自私、不自利、不求個人的好處。如果能用這六大宗旨長養自己與眾生的關係，我們就能同入毘盧性海，同共一法身。願一切眾生都能早證菩提。❀