

Benefits of Reciting the *Arya Sanghata Sutra*

Probably I don't need to tell you what the text says about how much merit you collect each time you hear this sutra. Each time you hear it, how much merit do you collect? First of all, one buddha has completed the merit of wisdom and the merit of virtue – there is nothing more to collect...and then how many buddhas? The number of buddhas equaling the number of sands of grain in the Ganga River times twelve. And these sand grains are not ordinary grains of sand. It is explained in the teachings, in the great enlightened Pabongkha Rinpoche's notes, that these grains are made of extremely subtle atoms. There are seven kinds of subtle atoms, water atoms, earth atoms, and so forth. These sand grains are much, much finer than what we usually think.

In addition to that, when it comes to talking about the benefits of bodhichitta, or the benefits of the *Arya Sanghata Sutra*, the Ganga does not refer to the Indian River Ganges. It refers to the Pacific Ocean. Now, that many numbers of buddhas times twelve. The merit of just one set of buddhas equaling the number of sand grains in the River Ganga, even just one set – how much merit that is...is beyond words, unimaginable. Even just the merit that *one* buddha has collected is beyond words. So, now, beyond that, the merit that you collect every time you hear the *Arya Sanghata Sutra* is equal to *twelve times* the merit of the number of buddhas as there are sand grains in the River Ganga.

So, that is just by hearing it. This means that anyone hearing it - animals, frogs, birds, so no question about pets like your beautiful cat, your darling cat, even spirits – collects that much merit. Can you imagine? It is like an impossible thing in the life that happens. When those animals, your cat and other animals, hear you recite Buddha's teachings, it definitely makes them to receive higher rebirth and to meet Dharma.

The very minute you hear it, the five uninterrupted negative karmas - the extremely heavy negative karmas that right after death, immediately without interruption of another life, you get born into hell; you get reborn in the lowest hot hell, which has the heaviest suffering of the lower realms, of which the life span lasts for one intermediate eon – those get completely purified. This happens even for the sentient beings who hear the sutra, the minute they hear the sutra. Therefore, in the past, when I was in Washington, I played the CD in the car going on the way to go shopping, which is a 40-minute drive away. I was sitting in the front of the car, so I kept the window down. Sitting behind me there were two nuns, Holly and Chosang. It was not sunshine weather; it was a bit foggy and cold. The cold wind was going back through the window and making them cold. But if I had cared only for them, then all those people living in the houses along the road and all the cows and animals, they could not hear. There is a big difference. So, I kept the window down and played the CD very loud, like young people playing their music in the car – those young people, teenagers who have that strange hair that goes straight up onto their head or who have a lot of rings on their ears or on their face, around the eyes or whatever...just to be descriptive.

So, just going one way to shopping, you are liberating so many sentient beings on the way there – just one way. During that time there was one deer in the road, so the car

stopped and then, they had the opportunity to hear a little bit. So, (if the five uninterrupted actions get purified), that means no question about the ten non-virtuous actions, they get purified also. So, I thought that was a great thing to do. But also, the people in the car get purified of all those negative karmas – collect that unbelievable merit. It is such an unbelievably easy way to make the life meaningful. You just put the CD in the car and you play it, that's it. As long as you are not deaf and can hear, you don't need to put much effort there. It's the easiest way to purify negative karma, the easiest way to collect unimaginable extensive merit. That means it is the quickest easiest way to achieve liberation from samsara, to finish all the oceans of samsaric suffering that one has experienced over and over numberless times without beginning, from time without beginning. Not only the people in the car, but also for anyone who hears it – it is a quick way to achieve enlightenment. Also, more merit makes it easy and quick to realize the emptiness of the "I," the aggregates, phenomena; it is a quick way to eliminate the root of samsara, ignorance, and a quick way to actualize bodhichitta. You need so much merit, unbelievable, unbelievable merit to actualize bodhichitta. If you have bodhichitta, you are a bodhisattva. In that second, you become the spiritual son of all the buddhas, you receive the name. You become the supreme object of offerings of all the sentient beings. They collect inconceivable merits when they make offerings to you. So when they see you, hear your voice, or you give something to them, or touch them. Even if some of the sentient beings harm you, after you have realization of bodhichitta, then from your side, you only benefit in return. You pray for good things to happen to that person. There is a saying with the bodhisattvas, "if you can't make a good connection by doing good things, then by doing some harm, make a connection with the bodhisattva."

What it means is – it is not saying you must harm a bodhisattva, but in the case that it happens – it is saying it is worthwhile. In return the bodhisattva only benefits, only prays, so in return that sentient being is guided by that bodhisattva from life to life. For example, the Buddha, during his time as a bodhisattva, sacrificed his blood for the five yakshas; they drank his blood. Then, due to that connection, in the next life, they became his disciples as human beings – they became the first five disciples and Buddha gave them teachings at Sarnath. That was the first turning of the Dharma Wheel. They drank his blood, but what the bodhisattva made as a prayer for them was in the next life for them to be his direct disciples and to be able to receive teachings, and so forth; and, of course they go forth to liberation and enlightenment. There is unbelievable benefit for sentient beings if one is a bodhisattva. Only with bodhichitta can you complete the two types of merits and achieve the two kayas. Without bodhichitta, even if you have wisdom directly perceiving emptiness, you cannot achieve the two kayas. The highest you can achieve is arhatship, liberation from samsara – ceasing the delusions and karma.

So, if you *read* the *Arya Sanghata Sutra*, there is far greater merit (than just hearing it); then, if you write it – much, much more. Remember the merit of the buddhas equaling the number of grains of sand in the Ganges River times twelve? The amount of merit if you write it is eight times *that* (e.g., 96 x one set of buddhas).

The last time that I went to Singapore, and Malaysia, because of my little advertisement about how much more merit there is if you write it, many people wrote it and have

finished it already. This is unbelievable. The director of the Singapore center told me about when they recited it - incredible things happened. Each time they gave me a little bit from that. That happened already two times. Also, it happened in Malaysia. Somebody offered \$100K for a school. In New Zealand, Bruce Farley just read it maybe one time. When he read it in the gompa, he thought, "Buddha wouldn't lie," and with that strong faith he read it. He won the lottery – a large house in Australia. He didn't tell his wife or his parents. He invited his wife and his parents to Australia to see the house. He didn't tell them about the house, he just invited them. He wanted it to be a surprise. His idea was to sell the house and to use the money for Dharma projects. Then, a lady in Istituto Lama Tsong Khapa (in Italy) who had been smoking her whole life - she has been translating Dharma texts for Dharmarucci Publishing. She was unable to stop smoking for so many years. When she read this the first time, she was able to stop smoking like that (finger snap). That means that, really, Buddha is working, blessing through this text. Buddha is really in action.

So, through this merit, how much you collect, then you are able to fulfill all the wishes of all the sentient beings. You should realize that - the numberless hell beings, you are able to liberate them; bring them to higher rebirth, and then liberation from samsara, and to enlightenment. Then, it is the same, you are able to help the numberless hungry ghosts, able to help the numberless animals, able to help the numberless humans, able to help the numberless sura beings, and able to help the numberless asura beings. Also, you are able to help all the numberless intermediate state beings. So, remember these things. These incredible advantages for yourself and for others you can offer from collecting so much merit – remember them each time you begin to recite the *Sanghata Sutra*....

Not only you, but so many people who have recited the *Arya Sanghata Sutra* have received so much benefit to their mind and to their heart, becoming more and more Dharma. So, also, every day to write even a few lines is extremely, unbelievably good. When you write it, of course you don't finish many pages, it is quite slow, but when you write, also you read, so that is the benefit. The only thing is if you only read it, you can finish in that day, in those hours. Of course, one can do a few lines writing and then read the whole text. That also can be done. Like that then, gradually, you can finish writing. I am extremely happy that you enjoy so much. You see the benefit that is working for your mind and you see that it is an amazing sutra.

Colophon:

From letter dictated by Lama Zopa Rinpoche at Buddha Amitabha Pure Land, April 12 2006. Scribed and edited by Kendall Magnussen.