

## Creating Merit for the Center

Be careful, watch your behaviour to other people, be kind.

Offering food to center students is a way of collecting unbelievable merit because students are the pores of the Guru. Disciples of the same Guru collect more merit from offering food to fellow disciples than from offering to Buddha, Dharma, Sangha, numberless statues, stupas. People don't think of this, think only of offering food in monasteries. But you can collect merit this way too.

If you offer with the thought that they are the Guru's pores, as they have the same Guru, if you offer with this recognition whenever you meet someone with the same Guru then even if you offer chocolate, water, or money, anything that you have if you offer with this recognition then that is an unbelievable way to collect merit, by thinking that as they have the same Guru so they are the Guru's pores. So then if you offer to many Sanghas who have the same Guru then you are making offerings to that many pores of the Guru. So this is the easiest way to collect skies of merit by offering. By offering even just one candy, flowers or even one grain of rice to a statue of Buddha or even a visualized Buddha you collect skies of merit but here it is much more powerful than offering to the 3 jewels (Buddha, Dharma, Sangha) as well as all the statues, stupas and scriptures existing in all directions, so no question if offering to really the same Guru's disciple, whether lay or Sangha - it doesn't have to be only Sangha. These benefits should be understood so that when you make offerings to the Guru's pores you think correctly. This is the best business.

Sometimes centers don't have much money, but if the director knows Dharma, they can very skillfully create merit [without needing much money]. When you meet people, support people, you also collect merit, which means that you can achieve enlightenment, support one's own and other's happiness. If organizers at centers are not skilful and wise, knowing how to take care of people, then even having a geshe teaching Dharma may not be enough. Developing the center doesn't only depend on the teacher, but on how you look after people. People can be made to feel welcome so they are attracted to come to the center, or not. So we must pay attention to this.

The essential thing is to make people happy, serve them well. This helps to build up the center, to get material support very easily even without pushing. The purpose of course is to have more facilities because then the center has more ability to spread the Dharma, more comfort, facilities, so more people can enjoy, receive the Dharma, so you can benefit them more, liberate them from oceans of samsaric suffering and bring them to enlightenment.

You need to be aware of so many things. However the key thing is to know how to take care of people. Must cherish every person who comes to the center, feel they are so precious, take care of them. Respect naturally comes from that, then caring, then the person is so delighted.

So many opportunities to collect merit for the center if you know Dharma. Even just offering a bowl of water or cup of tea to a person who is a student or disciple of the same guru collects so much merit.

This is one way to build up the center. Think big. This is a bodhisattva's skilful means to benefit sentient beings.

We have so many words at FPMT meetings, but we need to put them into practice at the center.

*Colophon: Advice given by Lama Zopa Rinpoche at Oseling, Spain, August 24, 2005. Noted and edited by Claire Isitt and Ven Holly Ansett.*