

## Shoyo Sensei's Dharma Message

**Q: "How Do Two Acrobats Protect Each Other?"**

**A: "By Protecting Oneself, One Protects the Other."**

"Two Acrobats"

"Once, an acrobat set up his bamboo pole and addressed his girl apprentice, Medakathalika, thus: 'Come, dear Medakathalika, climb the bamboo pole and stand on my shoulders.' Having replied, 'Yes, teacher,' the apprentice Medakathalika climbed up the bamboo pole and stood on the teacher's shoulders. The acrobat then said to the apprentice Medakathalika: 'You protect me, dear Medakathalika, and I'll protect you. Thus guarded by one another, protect by one another, we'll display our skills, collect our fee, and get down safely from the bamboo pole.' When this was said, the apprentice Medakathalika replied: 'That's not the way to do it, teacher. You protect yourself, teacher, and I'll protect myself. Thus, each self-guarded and self-protected, we'll display our skills, collect our fee, and get down safely from the bamboo pole.'

"That's the method there," the Blessed One said. "It's just as the apprentice Medakathalika said to the teacher. 'I'll protect myself,' thus should the establishments of mindfulness be practiced. 'I will protect others,' thus should the establishments of mindfulness be practiced. Protecting oneself, one protects others; protecting others, one protects oneself."

(S. V. 168.)

The Buddha's teaching: One can protect others only by protecting oneself.

To come to think of it, this is a very realistic approach: How can I protect others when I am not mindful of my own anger, attachment, irritation, stress, hatred, depression, anxiety, worry and many more negative mind I constantly have in my own mind. We know that we cannot be nice to others when we are stressed out with our own stuffs. In this sense, mindfulness starts with oneself.

Buddha is neither idealistic nor pessimistic. He is realistic.

Namu Amida Butsu,  
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