

Advice on Selling Holy Objects

(This advice was given by Lama Zopa Rinpoche in regard to prayer wheels, but it can be applied to Dharma books, statues, photos of gurus and deities, mani wheels, mantras to go inside mani wheels, double dorje brocade for thrones, stupas, and dorje and bells sets as these are all Dharma items.)

Regarding prayer wheels I have some very important advice. First of all the main thing is you should not think that you are selling them. As they are holy objects then if you think you are selling them, thinking that they are just ordinary material, then it is against the refuge precepts.

Also the money received from selling holy objects, such as prayer wheels can cause very heavy obscurations if it is used for food and so forth.

There was one yogi of Chenrezig called Lama Serkampa, he was visiting one family's house, and the family had sold a copy of the Prajnaparamita (8000 stanzas) and with the money from selling it they had bought the food that they offered Lama Serkampa. The yogi had very high realizations and so karma immediately ripened and after eating the food he had so much pain all over his body. He was able to see Chenrezig and Chenrezig told him that the cause of the pain was because he ate the food that had been bought from selling the Prajnaparamita text, and because he had less obscurations that is why he experienced the karma immediately and therefore he would not have to experience the hell realms for an incredible amount of time. (Here the problem is not just suffering in the hell realms but the mind gets so obscured and it makes it difficult to have realizations.)

So the same thing can happen by selling prayer wheels.

The fact that you are taking responsibility to make prayer wheels is really good, it is a great thing, which has incredible benefit, it's unbelievable, not only for yourself but also you cause so many sentient beings to purify heavy negative karma collected from beginningless rebirths, and also you collect skies of merit everyday, especially to develop compassion and bodhichitta. It not only brings liberation but it also brings beings to enlightenment quickly, and then each of these beings are then able to liberate numberless sentient beings from the sufferings of samsara and bring them to enlightenment. Also prayer wheels help them to achieve all realizations and successes, happiness, whatever they need. If there are 100 million mantras then just by turning the prayer wheel one time collects the same merit as having recited 100 millions mantras, so it is like many years of retreat. It is a way of saving many sentient beings from suffering. So it is extremely good.

So my suggestion here is of course you can charge for the cost of the material and you can charge for your time for working, like a set wage per hour for making it. So these 2 things you can do and it is OK but without any idea of selling the actual prayer wheels. So then you say the cost of the prayer wheel is this much:

Working time XXXX

Material cost XXX

So you charge for your working time. This way you can make the prayer wheel without any idea of selling it, so that way the money that you make won't be coming from selling holy objects. By doing it this way you won't have heavy obstacles and suffering in the lower realms.

In the cost of materials you can include everything you have spent, like on gas to drive to buy things etc. The main thing is to avoid any idea of actually selling the holy object, instead you sell your time.

Another way to do it is when somebody offers a donation then you give the holy object, but without any idea of selling. So when they make a donation you give the prayer wheel to thank them, without the motivation of selling. So that is the main thing

I think the first way of doing it is easier (to charge for materials and time).

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