

Ignorant People Create Trouble for Themselves

Master Ou Yi said, "There are no good or bad environments and conditions, good or bad depends on your heart." The environment refers to our material surroundings, while condition refers to the situation of people and matters we encounter. The people and matters we encounter, they are neither good/bad nor kind/evil. Good, bad, kind, and evil come from the discrimination of our hearts. We attach to it and give rise to affliction. It has nothing to do with the external environment and conditions.

Master Hong Yi, in *The Collected Works of Late Sunny Days*, made a very good example. For instance, when someone looks in the mirror, he discovers that there is a dot on the nose of the person in the mirror, black and very ugly. He does not know that it was actually the ink dot on his own nose reflected in the mirror. He felt that the person in the mirror looked so bad. First he thought of educating him, "You, must wipe off the ink dot on your nose." He saw that the person in the mirror was still not wiping it. He thought, "You don't wipe it, let me wipe it for you." He took a towel to wipe the mirror. But no matter how hard he wiped, it did not work. He got mad, pointed at the mirror and yelled at him, "How come you are so filthy?" As a result, the person in the mirror also pointed a finger and yelled at him. He then yelled even more vigorously. And the person in the mirror also vigorously yelled back. At last, they got into a physical fight. With one punch, the mirror was broken, that person also disappeared.

How ignorant the worldly people are in giving rise to affliction in vain. As a saying goes, "Though peace reigns over the land, ignorant people create trouble for themselves." Originally, there is no affliction, we make afflictions for ourselves. A person with real wisdom, seeing that the person in the mirror has an ink dot on his nose, what would he do? He would take a towel and wipe the ink off his own nose. After he wiped the ink off his own nose, he looked again, the person in the mirror was also clean.

This analogy is quite specific. Even though there are seemingly no such ignorant people in our real life, we in fact become so ignorant when dealing with people, matters, and things. Because we have forgotten, the external world of people, matters, and things are merely reflections of our own minds. They are manifested by our minds, it is the same as the person who is in the mirror. All kinds of actions, not conforming with Dharma that we saw, criticized, and scolded, are all due to our own discrimination and attachment. How would there be any outside realms? They are all just the shadows reflected by our own minds. They are the manifestations of the seeds from our alaya consciousness. Thus, the Sutras state, "no phenomena exist outside of the heart."

Can Fixing External World Solve Problems?

Ancients often said, "Our world changes **in accord with** our mind." When our mind turns good, our external world will become good. When we are ill-minded, the external world will also become unwholesome. How do we let our land have no evil names? It is not by fixing the external environment. If we fix the external environment, we will never succeed in our cultivation, and probably the more we fix it the more problems will occur.

So, how should we cultivate? Cultivate from our own inner heart! Let go of the unwholesomeness in our mind, the external world will then become wholesome. The Sixth Patriarch Hui Neng reminded us, "He who treads the Path in earnest sees not the mistakes of the world." If we still see others' faults, we are not a practitioner. People with real wisdom will only introspect themselves, further rectifying their own habits and problems; then the external world will naturally change.

The biggest unwholesomeness is to pick on others and to see others' right or wrong, good or bad, and distinguish kind from evil. These all need to be resolved. How do we resolve them? The name of Amitabha can resolve them. When giving rise to discrimination and attachment, we immediately bring up the thought of Amitabha and use this thought to get rid of other thoughts. Those thoughts are not good for us, they create unwholesomeness for us and make our realm worse and worse. If we are still not awakened, this unwholesomeness will create a bigger unwholesomeness. It will become a vicious cycle. In the end we will be banished all the way to hell and suffer endlessly. This is reaping the fruits of their own actions. So, these three paths of hells, hungry ghosts, and animals, how could they be created by **King Yamaraja**? They are created by our own actions!

Different Minds Induce Different Realms thus Form Different Universes

Mr. Zhang Taiyan, a Sinology Master during the Republic of China period, a Buddhist who delved deeply into sutra studies, had a very mystical experience in his dreams. He worked as a substitute assistant for the King of Mt. East in the netherworld for about a month. The King of Mt. East is like a great royal highness who is in charge of humans' life and death in one area. Mr. Zhang suggested abolishing one kind of punishment—the penalty of hugging a burning pillar. In this torture, the sinners hug a red burning pillar, making their bodies totally burn up and melt. It is particularly brutal. He asked Mt. East King, "This is very inhumane, can we **abolish** it?" The King smiled and said, "I'll let you go take a look first." He then ordered a little ghost to take him to the execution ground of this hell.

After walking for a while, the little ghost said, "We have arrived, it is right in front of you." Zhang Taiyan looked around and saw nothing. He came to a great realization. Since he did not create that karma, he would not see that torture even if the execution ground was right in front of him. The little ghost had celestial eyes, he could see it. If we neither have supernal power nor have we created that karma, we will not see it. What people who create the karma of this hell see is the phenomena of their own perception. This is like family members who live under the

same roof yet cannot see each other's dreams. They eat the same food yet each may experience very differently. Some taste the sweetness, some perceive the bitterness, or even feel it is gross. When the Buddha was in our world, He ate whatever people offered to Him, and everything was like sweet dew because His mind is absolutely pure—no discrimination and attachment at all. We are incapable of experiencing the same as the Buddha due to our contaminated mind. Therefore, we should comprehend this theory thoroughly and learn to transform our world by changing our minds.

Who Can We Blame for the Unwholesome Names In Our World?

No one created that torture for you to suffer. If you did not create that karma, you would not receive that retribution. This is all reaping the fruits of your own actions. So, how could it be possible that our environment is real? Everyone has a different mind thus a different realm arises and a different universe forms. You have your universe, I have mine. Mr. Zhang Taiyan walked right in front of the hell beings, yet they had a different universe. I cannot see your realm, you cannot see my realm either. Each one receives his own retribution.

So, “there is no unwholesome name in the land,” whose land is this land? It is not others' land, it is my own land. If my own land still has an unwholesome name, whose responsibility is it? It is *my own responsibility* because my land is manifested by my mind, don't I have to take full responsibility? Who can I blame? Can I blame an unwholesome person in my land? That person is manifested by me. How can I blame him?!

Why don't we turn him into Amitabha? How do we do it? We regard him as Amitabha, he is then Amitabha. If we regard him as an unwholesome person, he then becomes an unwholesome person. It all depends on this one heart of our own. Why would we be so silly as to manifest an unwholesome person to torture ourselves? Why don't we manifest an Amitabha? When we transform our minds into Amitabha, all people we encounter are all Amitabhas. How wonderful it will be! Look, Buddhas have embraced me, they all come to take care of me. Some take care of my life, some eliminate my karma, and some come to torture me in order to eradicate my karmic habits. How wonderful it is! You only feel grateful. They are all manifested by Amitabha, you are in Sukhāvātī right now.

Thanks everyone for learning with us! Namo Amitabha!