

The Open Doors of Our Six Senses Invite Six Thieves Every Day

When we arrive in Sukhāvātī and enter the cool pond, whatever afflictions we have will all be cleaned once we are washed by the Eight Merits Water. Our bodies and hearts will all be cool and at ease, and we will immediately obtain anutpattika-dharma-kṣānti (*realization of non-arising). We no longer have affliction. Not only is our delusion of view and cognition eliminated but our delusion of dust-sand and the delusion of avidyā are also eradicated. All defilements are gone, so our heart has settled in the great samadhi. We enjoy the incomparably profound and wondrous bliss amidst this samadhi and Dharma. This is all from the blessing of Amitabha's aspirations, not from our own skill.

Our Saha World is contaminated (Skt. *sāsrava*). Once our six senses contact the external world of six dusts, our eyes, ears, nose, tongue, body, and consciousness are like six constant open doors allowing the six thieves to enter. Every day, our defilements flow out from these doors, we thus live amidst afflictions. These afflictions are not from outside, they are caused by discrimination and attachment of our own minds. So, when we have afflictions, we must not blame the external realm. What we need to let go of is not the external realm, it is to let go of the discrimination and attachment in our minds.

Who can enjoy the bliss of a bhikṣu who has "extinguished all defilements"? Arhats and above can. Yet, when we arrive in Sukhāvātī, we instantly eradicate the delusion of dust-sand and the delusion of avidyā, we are dharmakaya-mahasattvas; we will enjoy more than arhats who eradicate only the delusion of view and cognition.

Secular Happiness vs. Dharma-Joy

The secular happiness we claim is full of affliction. For instance, when you pursue external happiness such as wealth, you seem to be happy when you obtain wealth during the process. You have good business today, you make \$1 million, you are happy for a while; suddenly you think, "That store makes \$2 million, twice as much as mine." You feel somewhat of a disparity. That is an affliction, not real happiness. At most, it is just a stimulation.

As for the satisfaction of lust, at the moment of pleasure, you seem to feel very happy. In fact, that desire is endless. Ancient virtuous ones depict it as "Licking honey from the tip of a blade." When you lick, your tongue is cut. So, you get hurt before you taste the sweetness. The enjoyment of the external pursuits are also like this. The more you pursue, the more afflictions you have. The sea of desire is difficult to fill up, because it is a bottomless abyss. No matter how hard you try, it just cannot be filled up. What can we do?

Ancients said, "Those who are content will always be happy." When we do not have the thought of desire, we obtain joy at that very moment. This joy is the kind of happiness flowing out of our inner heart like spring water. This is called Dharma-flavor or Dharma-rasa in Sanskrit.

How can the flavor of worldly happiness be better than Dharma-rasa? Worldly happiness cannot possibly compare to the joy of a practitioner. So, a practitioner can peacefully dwell in an ascetic life of poverty.

For example Confucius said in *The Analects*, "Having only coarse rice to eat, water to drink, and a bent arm as a pillow, I still have joy in the midst of it." Confucius also praised his student Yan Hui who, "with a bamboo bowl of rice and a gourd of water, resided in a destitute lane, he does not change this kind of joy." A bamboo bowl refers to the fact that he was too poor to even have a regular bowl, so he used bamboo to make a small basket to hold the rice. As for drinking, he did not even have a cup, he used a gourd to drink. Living in a destitute lane, he did not let his joy be affected.

Confucius applauded him, "Others cannot endure the distress, yet Hui does not change this kind of joy." Why was he so happy and was not willing to change this kind of life? Because he had Dharma-joy. He realized and attained the realm of saints and sages every day, he was full of Dharma-joy. He was not willing to give up this kind of pursuit to run after secular happiness. Even Confucian gentlemen can achieve it, we learn Buddhism and want to be a Buddha, it requires us even more to renounce the enjoyment that is stimulated by external phenomena. We should make earnest and vigorous effort into practicing bodhi.

In the beginning, it will be hard. To enter the door—starting the first step—is quite difficult. Why is it difficult? Because we are not used to it. We have been used to dancing, singing karaoke, traveling, or partying, going crazy with others in the past. Now having learned Buddhism, we have to calm down our hearts, staying home to practice everyday, we do need a period of time to adjust ourselves. After this period of time, we will be fine. We must grit our teeth during this adjustment period to let our minds calm down! We will taste the joy after making this kind of effort for about three months, the Dharma-joy will emerge. Once the Dharma-joy emerges, we will not be willing to change this kind of lifestyle.

The Probability to Obtain a Human Body

Listening to sutras, we must use a sincere and respectful heart, a heart understanding how rare and difficult it is to encounter Buddhism. We do not encounter Buddhism nor obtain a human body in every life. There is a saying in Buddhism, "The human body is difficult to obtain, Buddha-Dharma is difficult to hear, and the Pure Land Method is difficult to encounter." Think about it, in immeasurable kalpas, the probability of obtaining a human body is very, very scarce, yet the probability of falling into the three evil paths is the highest.

One day the Buddha grabbed a handful of soil from the ground and then spilled it back to the ground. He opened his palms to show his disciples and said, "Look at my fingernails, there is some soil under my fingernail? This soil, the small particles left under my fingernails, compared to the soil I spilled, which is more?" "Of course the amount you spilled on the ground

is more” the disciples answered. The Buddha said, “To obtain a human body is like the soil under my fingernail, to lose the human body is like the soil of the earth.” It is disproportionate.

So, the probability of obtaining a human form is very, very rare. One must cultivate five precepts, ten virtuous deeds, and pass the standard before he can gain a human body. After obtaining a human body, not necessarily would everyone encounter Buddha-Dharma. Look! The world’s population is seven billion, how many have encountered Dharma? According to the statistics, there are about six or seven hundred million Buddhists in the world. Buddhists are about one tenth of the population of the Earth. But, among the six or seven hundred million Buddhists, not all of them hear the True Dharma (*Skt. *sad-dharma*).

The Rarity Among Rarities

Buddhism is an education, not a religion. But nowadays, very few people are propagating Buddha's education, so many people learn Buddhism but do not know “What is Buddha? What is Buddhism? What does Buddhism teach? What will it do to me after learning? What is the benefit? And what is the goal of my learning and practicing?”

Our Shifu made a speech titled ***Understanding Buddhism***. If you wish to introduce Buddhism to people, this is great material. Only after understanding it can they start to learn. So, among the six or seven hundred million Buddhists, it is estimated very few have really heard the true Dharma. People who have heard the true Dharma, and also heard the Pure Land Method, are the rarity among rarities.

As ancient virtuous ones said, “The human form is hard to obtain, now we have obtained it; Buddha-Dharma is difficult to hear, now we have heard it; Pure Land Method is scarcely encountered, now we have encountered it.” Since it is too rare to encounter, we must use an eager and solemn heart to earnestly learn this precious sutra. Encountering other methods will not necessarily help us achieve attainment in this life. The *Infinite Life Sutra* can help us to attain rebirth and become a Buddha in this life. So, we must learn it with a sincere, respectful, eager, and solemn heart, we can then truly enter this realm of Dharma-joy.

Thanks everyone for learning with us, Namó Amitabha!