

Self-Liberation VS Liberating Others

Self-liberation and liberating others are not different things. When there is a condition for self-liberation, we can liberate ourselves; when there is a condition for liberating others, we should then help others toward the liberation path. The moment of helping others is also self-liberation. When we help all beings, isn't it nurturing our own compassion? If we cultivate purity at home, doesn't it also strengthen our precepts, samadhi, and wisdom ([prajna](#)) to enable us to liberate all beings pervasively in the future?

Self-liberation and liberating others are indeed one thing, however the conditions of each person are different. Conditions include that of past lives, such as the vows you made in your past lives or the different Dharma affinities you have with all beings. Based on your conditions, you will naturally set an objective goal to decide your direction instead of being subjective. The conflict in the past I had between self-liberation and liberating others in me has been resolved.

A Genuine Heart Induces Buddha's Inconceivable Blessings

When I renounced my worldly home, I made vows to restore Buddhism to its original form as Buddha's education. We do not have enough skills in cultivating precepts, samadhi, and prajna ([*wisdom](#)) to face so many external temptations, but we firmly believe that there is Buddha's blessing once we have made this vow. We have no fear and must undertake it! If we don't, who can we expect to undertake it? In this matter we can only throw caution to the wind. We must have the spirit and courage to undertake it.

The biggest fear is that we do not have a genuine heart. If you give rise to a genuine heart, you will notice inconceivable responses from Buddha's blessing. Even when we have a lot of karmic defilements, Buddha will manifest in all sorts of conditions to help us eradicate them. So, if we take this path genuinely, the further we go, the more faith we will have. Our hearts will become more and more settled and we will see problems clearer and clearer. Let alone the reward of "obtaining intelligence and wisdom" from Dharma-dāna ([*Introducing Dharma to others](#)), our wisdom will no doubt at all be revealed gradually. So to bring forth faith is to first bring forth our own faith, we can then influence others to have faith.

When We Have Faith in Ourselves, Others Will Have Faith

On March 23rd, 2012, I went to see Senior Laity Huang Jingxuan, who was suffering from terminal cancer and had lost faith in his Sukhavati rebirth. He said to me with a sad face, "I don't know whether I can be reborn or not." I encouraged him without any special words. I just said, "Senior Laity Huang, you must have faith, you definitely will be reborn. Amitabha will surely

escort you at the end of your life, this is the Vow He made. So, your rebirth is definite, you must have faith. Do not have any doubt!"

The words I said were not much, yet he felt very confident upon hearing it. Why did he have confidence? Because, when I said these words, I was full of faith. My full faith brought forth his confidence. If one does not have confidence, his speaking would be weak as if it was tentative. If the words were spoken hesitatingly, how could one bring faith to others? Different people will render different impacts on others even if the words being said by them are the same. That is because the confidence in each individual is different. When you have full faith, the things you do will be more consummate and your wisdom will be revealed more.

Shifu and Xia Lian Ju Remind Me the Importance of Confidence

For a long period of time, I did not have the confidence to undertake a mission. I always thought of self-liberation. One time, Shifu said to me during a walk, "This is the cause from your past lives, the mentality of practicing Hinayana life after life." The mind of practicing Hinayana has made it difficult for me to bring forth the Mahayana bodhicitta, so I do not dare to undertake the mission. Why do I not dare to undertake it? It is still due to insufficient confidence.

Later, a fellow practitioner who had attained some degree of dhyana went on a retreat in a monastery in Australia, and Xia Lian Ju ([*1884-1965. A great Buddhist practitioner, who compiled *The Infinite Life Sutra* based on nine different versions, is believed to be a returned bodhisattva.](#)) came to see him during his retreat. Of course Laity Xia Lian Ju, without a doubt, came from Sukhāvātī. Xia Lian Ju said to him, "Remind Dr. Zhong, he must have confidence."

At that time I was still Zhong Maosen, and I didn't really understand the implication when these words were passed on to me. I felt that I was quite confident. But, now I have understood that my confidence was indeed not ample. Why? I still did not dare to undertake the mission of guarding and upholding the entire *true* Dharma. This showed that my confidence was still weak.

With Confidence We Can Undertake the Mission

We learned in *The Infinite Life Sutra* how confident Bhikṣu Dharmākara, the former life of Amitabha, was! He vowed that, when he became a Buddha, his land would surpass all lands of ten directions, his name would be praised by all Buddhas in ten directions, and all beings reborn to his Sukhāvātī would attain Buddhahood in one lifetime. We must bring forth this kind of self-confidence. This self-confidence is neither arrogance nor competitiveness. It is through understanding the *truth* of life and the universe as well as knowing that our self-nature fully possesses this kind of virtues and capabilities, only then would we have faith and dare to undertake the mission.

Bodhisattvas who come from Sukhāvātī edifying all beings are to help them bring forth faith. Once all beings bring forth this kind of faith, they will then cultivate bodhi-conduct and practice Samantabhadra Bodhisattva's Way—the King of Ten Great Vows guides homecoming to Sukhavati. Bodhi-conduct is a cultivation for attaining Buddhahood, so is Samantabhadra Bodhisattva's Way. How is it possible that ordinary people can implement these lofty practices? So, in order to be able to cultivate, we must have confidence. Confidence comes from understanding the truth of life and the universe as well as knowing that our intrinsic nature fully possesses all kinds of virtues and capabilities. To obtain this kind of confidence, there is nothing better than listening to sutras and Dharma teaching.

Shoulder the Inherited Undertakings of Tathagata!

Ancient virtuous ones taught us: we must “shoulder the inherited undertakings of Tathagata.” When we undertake it, we will obtain the blessing from all Buddhas. We are the Sons of the Proud Buddha—the First Disciple of Amitabha. There will really be all Buddhas of ten directions coming to bless us. Think about it! In this Dharma Degenerating Era, no one undertakes the mission. When we undertake it, won't the blessing power of all Buddhas shower upon us?

As it states here, "Even if they were born to other worlds, they will forever be free from the evil paths. They either love to speak Dharma, love to listen to Dharma, or may manifest the supernal power of bodily function. They can practice in accord with their wishes and will perfect all of them." These realms are the realms of Mahasattvas. We are mortal, can we do it? Yes, we can. What do we rely on? We rely on our faith and aspiration. When we dare to shoulder it, we will have the blessing from Amitabha's Vows and all Buddhas in ten directions.

Thanks everyone for learning with us. Namó Amitabha!