

The Challenges of Propagating Dharma in Our Saha World

When we are born into worlds other than Sukhāvātī, for example, our Saha World—the evil world of five turbidity, we will no doubt at all face many challenges. The time in our Saha World now is the most turbid era of the five turbidity due to the decline of the education of traditional culture and the decay of Buddhism. We must slowly recover it even if it takes a long time.

Do not be fooled by the many temples and many monastic practitioners now. The temples mostly were built for tourism, not for cultivation. Therefore, the monastic practitioners who devote themselves to cultivation are very scarce, let alone to find enlightened ones. This is the phenomenon of Buddhism's decay.

Nowadays, worldly people are fighting for fame and gain. Greed, resentment, ignorance, and arrogance have led them to engage in killing, stealing, sexual misconduct, and deception to the point of committing all sorts of evilness. Killing, sexual misconduct, and abortion happens everywhere everyday. These issues are extremely serious. If you are to edify all sentient beings in this evil world of five turbidity, you definitely will encounter extreme difficulties and dangers because people nowadays are meaner and more evil than ever before.

If you do good deeds, people will be jealous of you, especially when you have fame. If you are not famous, the situation would be better. Once you have fame, you are doomed! Despite the fact that you do not wish to be famous, you definitely will gain fame once you propagate Dharma. If you do not want fame, you can only hide in the deep forest instead of propagating Dharma. You should first seek rebirth in this case.

Forever Free from Evil Realms

If you decide to propagate Dharma, you have no choice but to face these challenges. How can you withstand these tests? If you rely on self-power, it is hard to make it. Anyway I can't. You may be better than me. I simply can't. Honestly, my defilements and karmic habits cannot be eradicated. The reason that I dare to do so, what do I rely on? I rely on Amitabha's blessing from this Vow that enables us to be "free from evil paths when being born into other worlds."

We now practice Amitabha's conduct—to introduce and promote the Pure Land method to others, of course Amitabha will be most happy and all Buddhas in ten directions will also praise us highly. Hence, we will have Buddha's blessing and forever be free from evil paths even if we encounter a very big test in this world. This implies when our defilements of greed, resentment, ignorance, and arrogance are about to arise, Buddha will use all sorts of conditions to help us eradicate these defilements. If we do not eradicate them, it is very difficult for us to be free from evil realms forever. So, we have great faith in Buddha.

We indeed have no capability of our own, but Buddha will take special care of us because people who propagate Dharma nowadays are too scarce. In the past, people may not have received so many blessings from Buddhas because there were many people propagating Dharma. The blessings would probably not fall upon us. Now, people propagating Dharma are not many, Buddha's blessings will surely shower upon us when we do so. We are very confident in this and also very confident about being forever free from evil paths and about Sukhāvātī rebirth in the future.

When people ask me, "Do you have the assurance to be reborn?" I say, "Yes, I do." But, do not misunderstand and say that I have gained some kind of power, thinking that I have attained the unceasing skill-of reciting Amitabha, attained the samadhi of reciting Amitabha, or even had obtained supernal power. Some people hear my words, even ask me to touch their heads and give them blessings. I say, please do not get me wrong and do not misunderstand. I've got nothing. What is the only thing I have? I genuinely believe Amitabha's Vows and bring forth aspiration to seek rebirth. Since I have not left now, I genuinely bring forth an aspiration to edify all beings for Amitabha. I only rely on this faith and aspiration, I have thus attained the assurance. Why? I have confidence in Amitabha.

Amitabha Is Reliable

People are not reliable, Amitabha is. Don't we have enough credence in Amitabha? He brought forth this Vow, clearly written here, black printed words on white paper, how could it be false? To attain assurance for rebirth, it indeed only relies on our genuine faith and imperative aspiration. Laity Xia Lian Ju even revealed this message to me, saying that I must reinforce my faith. So, knowing that "you are very weak in some areas, there will be a Buddha or Bodhisattva to come to tell you." I am really confident in this.

Sometimes it may not be Xia Lian Ju coming to tell me, it may be a person who I do not know suddenly appearing, or an anonymous email telling me a great deal of my mistakes, defilements, and my karmic habits. How did he know? I believe this must be a Buddha or Bodhisattva coming to help me be forever free from the evil paths. Otherwise, how could I get an email out of nowhere? This is truly inconceivable!

To induce Buddha's blessing, we must bravely undertake the mission and cultivate ourselves conscientiously now. Since we have chosen this path, we must "learn to be others' teachers and act as an exemplar for the world." Do not think of gain, loss, success, and failure, simply try our best to be a good example. Also, we must not have a sense of vanity or pride. We must know that "I do not have this ability, this ability is blessed by Buddha who has chosen me to take this path. I should shoulder it without hesitation. By spreading the light of Buddha's teaching to every corner of the planet, we hope that more beings come in contact with this great Pure Land method." This is also a way to repay Buddha's benevolence.

As for when we will be reborn, we hand it all to Amitabha, let Him deal with it. The text of His Vows is here, if I would not be reborn, how could He explain it to me? So, Amitabha will absolutely help me, we must have this faith. However, we must have the same heart as Buddha's heart, the same aspiration as Buddha's aspiration, and the same conduct as Buddha's conduct. The rest, what are we afraid of? We will definitely be reborn.

Love for Speaking or Listening to Dharma

When we are in other worlds, we will “either love to speak Dharma or love to listen to Dharma.” I really love to speak Dharma, I also love to listen to Dharma. Listening to Shifu’s speech for 20 years, I have never tired of it. I believe many of you also love to listen to Dharma, you enjoy listening.

People of Sukhāvātī love to listen to Dharma as well. Except for Amitabha speaking Dharma in the Great Hall, all six dusts of form, sound, smell, taste, touch, and concept also speak Dharma. The eight-merits-water in the seven-jeweled-pond, the rustling leaves blown by the wind on the rows of seven jewels trees, the celestial music from the sky, and the birds chirping all speak Dharma. None of them are not speaking Dharma.

So, if you love to listen to Dharma, you should go to Sukhāvātī. If you do not love to listen to Dharma, I am afraid that you would have difficulty being reborn. Why? You will feel very uncomfortable being there. Twenty-four hours of listening to Dharma unceasingly, you could not stand it. So, we must love to listen to Dharma or love to speak Dharma. This way, you will not feel unfamiliar when you arrive there. You would have gotten used to it.

Guarding and Upholding Those Who Propagate Dharma

Each bodhisattva manifests different vows, some made vows to speak Dharma, and some made vows to listen to Dharma. Listening to Dharma is to guard and uphold those who speak Dharma. Seeing people in the audience love to listen, those who speak Dharma will raise their great spirits when speaking. I am speaking with great spirit here. Why? You all love to listen.

When I see your great expressions, listening so attentively and wearing a smile, further nodding your heads and giving applause often, your listening to Dharma has guarded and upheld those who propagate Dharma. A bodhisattva is eager to guard Dharma. He genuinely loves to listen to Dharma due to his respect for Dharma. People who see the way of his “respecting teachers and honoring Dao” would think that this bodhisattva is so wise, fortunate, and respectful towards the Dharma, what he is learning must be good stuff. He acts as one of the influential groups and attracts others to come to learn. This is the way a bodhisattva guards Dharma. So, a bodhisattva propagates Dharma or guards Dharma, it all hinges upon having procured different vows.

Thanks everyone for learning with us. Namó Amitabha!