

Treat Supernal Power with Extreme Caution

Generally speaking, supernal power can be shown to great Dharma guardians, because such manifestations can reinforce their faith to guard Dharma. When someone always shows supernal power, especially showing to ordinary people, that would be a problem. That is usually a deception to earn others' trust in hope that everyone comes to give offerings and respect him. This has fallen into the pit of fame and gain. On the journey of learning and practicing Buddhism, we must be vigilant to such encounters.

Buddhas and Bodhisattvas absolutely do not use supernal power to do Buddhist tasks. Their major mission is to propagate Dharma by speaking sutras, to solve all beings' delusion and let everyone understand the *truth* of supernal power being fully possessed intrinsically in our self-nature. When we remove obstacles, our innate capability will naturally be revealed. It is not a big deal due to it being our intrinsic capacity. But this power can absolutely manifest only under special conditions, not very often.

Ancient and Modern Masters Manifest Supernal Power

We have seen many stories regarding supernal power that were recorded in Buddhist books. For example, Ji Gong, the living Buddha of the Song Dynasty, manifested supernal power. He was not like us, putting on a robe and speaking Dharma on stage methodically. He edified all beings at any time, very flexible.

During the modern era of the R.O.C., there was another living Buddha, Jin Shan. Venerable Zhu Yun, a friend of Master Chin Kung, followed this living Buddha for a period of time. He later wrote a biography of the living Buddha Jin Shan, who never took a shower, similar to Ji Gong. When people got sick, he would rub on his own body, take out the old dirt from his body, and let the patients eat his old dirt. Amazingly, such patients would be cured after eating it. This is supernal power!

As you all know, Chinese Buddhism is the only Buddhism advocating vegetarian diet. This is attributed to Emperor Liang Wu's influence. Emperor Liang Wu, 464 to 549 AD, was the first one to advocate vegetarian diet in Buddhist history. However, he was originally a carnivore and loved eating pigeons. He often ate many pigeons a day. His National Teacher, Zen Master Bao Zhi Gong, was a magical monk and believed to be the manifestation of Avalokitêsvara Bodhisattva. Emperor Liang Wu always sought advice from him and Master Bao Zhi Gong often persuaded him, "Do not eat meat, eat vegetarian food." Emperor Liang Wu was in disagreement at that time.

One time, Master Bao Zhi Gong asked Emperor Liang Wu, "Today, let us eat pigeon together." "Why? Don't you always persuade me not to eat meat? Why do you want to eat pigeon with me today? No problem, I'll have the chef make it for you."

Later, Bao Zhi Gong went to the kitchen. He knew that the chef had eaten one wing of a pigeon after they had been cooked. He asked the chef, "How's the taste?" The chef was startled, saying, "I did not eat, I just tasted the gravy." Bao Zhi Gong said, "Is it so? Let me try it. You have two pigeons here, already cooked. I'll eat them first. But, this pigeon seems to have lost one wing. If you do not believe it, watch." He then ate those two pigeons.

After eating the first pigeon, he pulled it out from his mouth, and the pigeon came alive and flew away. The second pigeon, also alive, only had one wing. Upon seeing this, Emperor Liang Wu was shocked. The chef was even more shocked. He knew that he had lied and asked for a pardon right away. Of course Emperor Liang Wu pardoned him.

Emperor Liang Wu thought, "These pigeons came back to life after being eaten, they are all indeed lives." Later, he read the *Lañkavatāra-Sūtra* and the text states, "Bodhisattvas are compassionate and cannot bear to eat the flesh of any being." Emperor Liang Wu was finally determined to be a vegetarian.

Due to the fact that he was an Emperor and also a great Dharma guardian in Buddhist circles—having helped 100,000 people to be ordained and built 480 temples in the Southern Dynasty—when he advocated a vegetarian diet, all monastic practitioners followed. Since then, it has become a characteristic of Chinese Buddhism. This is Bao Zhi Gong who manifested his supernal power.

Restore Buddhism as Education,

Nowadays in this evil world of five turbidities, it is very important to speak sutras and Dharma. Just like our Shifu said, "We must bring Buddhism back to education and restore its proper name." Many people have misunderstood Buddhism, they thought it is a religion or a superstition. Now we must, through speaking sutras and Dharma, help everyone reacquaint with Buddhism.

Bodhisattvas came to our world, they have procured different vows. Some manifest "love for speaking Dharma," some manifest "love for listening to Dharma," and some use supernal power to fulfill Buddhist tasks and inspire the faith of the general public. However, at this stage nowadays, Shifu said, it is important to still focus on propagating Dharma by speaking sutras. This is about the Vow of edifying all beings in accord with one's wishes.

Thanks everyone for learning with us. Namo Amitabha!