



Saturday Night Dharma  
Group Study on SKYPE  
DaAi TV Wisdom at Dawn  
Dharma as Water

## The Eighteen Distinctive Dharma ( Part 1)



<https://youtu.be/6PuqVAyZwU4>

### **Subject: The Eighteen Distinctive Dharma Part2**

We talked about the Eighteen Distinctive Dharma, Distinctive Characteristics that distinguish the Buddha from Bodhisattvas, sentient beings, and followers of the Two Vehicles. Bodhisattvas are not totally different, they just still have subtle afflictions to overcome. They have not realized all of the Eighteen Distinctive Dharma that the Buddha has. It is that simple.

First is body with No Faults, Speech with No Faults and Mind with No faults. This is what we often talk about. We have to keep our body, speech and mind pure, just as the Buddha always taught. The teachings often instruct us to keep our body, speech and mind pure, so we always work hard to do so. But in the Eighteen Distinctive Dharma, the Buddha accomplished perfection in body, speech and mind. That is what we strive to do. However, we have not yet reached the same



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state of purity and luminosity as the Buddha. We know that the Distinctive Dharma can be accomplished from a simple start. To attain a state of purify without defilement, we must have No Discrimination.

With one mind and one mission, we strive to be pure and in absolute tranquility, and remain unwavering for countless eons. Absolute tranquility means being single-minded and very pure. Being unwavering for countless eons, our minds stay determined, with no other thoughts.

In summary, the Buddha is firm in His determination and His “mind is in constant Samadhi.” When the mind is in a firm and determined state, it is in a very deep state of Samadhi. We often hear people say, “I have altruistic intensions and great vows.” Indeed, we have also made great vows. But when we encounter challenges and difficulties, we retreat and lose our resolve. We are unable to remain unwavering with single-mindedness and a sense of mission. It is really difficult to remain in deep Samadhi.

When we do sitting meditation, can we reach the state of deep Samadhi like the Buddha? The Buddha has attained profound Samadhi, “Knowing All the Letting Go.” He knew everything about His past. He let go of everything. If we do not understand the suffering of life, we will not be able to let go. Since Beginningless Time, the Buddha has completely realized the suffering of life. He can completely let go of everything that appears in front of Him. In His past lives, since Beginningless Time, He has given up His body for the sake of seeking the Truth. He could let go of everything.

Next is the Constant Wish to Transform Others, which never fades. When working among others, we must never complain about there being too many sentient



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beings who need to be helped. Take Earth Treasury Bodhisattva for example, he vowed not to attain Buddhahood until all sentient beings in Hell are transformed. His vow is great and unwavering. But has he accomplished his vow? No, he has not. The Earth Treasury Bodhisattva keeps watch in Hell to transform sentient beings. However, countless beings continue to create karma and fall into Hell. The Buddha wants to transform all sentient beings, not just those in Hell. So we often say that Earth Treasury Bodhisattva's work is hard. We can guard the gate to Hell from the outside by purifying living beings in this world. By turning evil into good, we guard them from falling into Hell. The Earth Treasury Bodhisattva's job will be easier if we help prevent more sentient beings from entering Hell. With His Constant Wish, the Buddha vowed to transform sentient beings in the Saha World. His vow will never fade. Sentient beings, even Bodhisattvas, cannot reach the same level of resolve as the Buddha.

Next is the eighth, Constant Diligence Constant Diligence never fades. With a Constant Wish to help, diligence naturally arises. There are many sentient beings that have not yet been transformed, Their number is infinite. Even those who are already on the Path, those who have resolved to become Bodhisattvas, still need to be helped by the Buddha. Even Bodhisattvas can become discouraged, so the Buddha must continue to work diligently to help all beings. He has accomplished perfect diligence of body and mind. To attain this, we must strive to always transform sentient beings without rest. Some people have already done a lot, but they feel that they still have more to do. This is why we see some people who have done a great deal and need to rest, but continue to work hard. They feel they still have many things to do.



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Since Beginningless Time, the Buddha has been transforming sentient beings. Yet many are still yet to be transformed. Some may have the affinity but have not yet been transformed. Although the Buddha is already enlightened and is already free and at ease, with Constant Diligence, He continues to fulfill His vow to transform all sentient beings. The Four-in-One that we often talk about is the organizational structure for Tzu Chi volunteers. It encourages horizontal development to spread the teachings far and wide. It is like the mindset of the Buddha. He has to be diligent to fulfill His vow to help sentient beings.

**The eighth of the Eighteen Distinctive Dharma is Constant Diligence. The Buddha is always perfectly diligent in body and mind so that He can transform all sentient beings without rest.**

**The Ninth is Constant Thought, which all Buddhas of the Three Periods realize. It is the perfect wisdom that remains unwavering.**

Whether in the past, present or future, Sakyamuni Buddha always has the same vow, which is to teach the Bodhisattva-path. In the Lotus Sutra, it says that past, present and future Buddhas come to teach the One Vehicle to sentient beings, which is the Bodhisattva-path. Buddha of the present, past and future are all the same. They are endowed with “the perfect wisdom that can connect.”

What is perfect wisdom? The Sutra of Infinite Meanings states, “Infinite Dharma will appear before us.” Without working with people, it would be impossible to transform challenges into wisdom. So the Buddha always worked among people to perfect His practice. You see, time continuously changes. The mindset of



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sentient beings changes with time. People today have many views that are different from views in the past. The lifestyle, ecology and circumstances of the past are totally different from those of the present. Using the principles of the past in order to teach the people of today sometimes does not work. We should teach according to the capacities of sentient beings in order to help them transform. We should know the “teachings of the Buddhas of the Three Periods, ”are “the perfect wisdom that can connect.”

The mind, the Buddha, and sentient beings must connect so that sentient beings can be transformed. In this way, the Buddha’s vow can be fulfilled. The Buddha’s vow remains constant. Knowing that the vow has not yet been fulfilled, He continues to move forward without turning back. If one thinks, “I have accomplished my vow, then one will stop there.” The Buddha’s vow to transform sentient beings has not been realized yet, so His resolve does not diminish.

Next is Constant Wisdom. **The Buddha has perfected Infinite Wisdom that is vast and boundless, so His teachings are infinite. This is called Constant Wisdom.** In the Sutra of Infinite Meanings, Buddhas and Bodhisattvas are the unsummoned teachers of sentient beings. Sentient beings do not ask for help, no matter how great or diverse their suffering. But the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas cannot bear to see the suffering of sentient beings. So, endowed with complete wisdom and accommodating all circumstances, the Buddha will teach according to the varying capacities of sentient beings, without even being asked. With all kinds of teaching methods, both skillful means and the Ultimate Truth, the Buddha works to comfort all. This is the wisdom that gives refuge to all sentient beings, This is what the unsummoned teachers do.



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**The eleventh is Constant Liberation. The Buddha is free from all attachments. Endowed with the two Liberations, He is completely without attachments. If He still had attachments, He would be a Bodhisattvas, a Pratyekabuddha, a Sravaka or an ordinary being. Bodhisattvas still have subtle afflictions. They are subtle compared to ordinary people who are still completely bound. Hinayana practitioners and Bodhisattvas, strive to attain liberation as well, but they still have subtle afflictions.**

In contrast, the Buddha has reached perfect and complete liberation. Though He has reached perfect liberation, He continues to transform sentient beings. He is free from attachments and bondage. If there is attachment, there is no liberation. So there are two things we should pay attention to. First is Conditioned Liberation, which is achieved through perfect wisdom. “Conditioned” means relative. It refers to all kinds of suffering in this world. Affection, hatred, love, and everything else that we do in life are things that no longer entangle the Buddha. The things we do in this world are conditioned, and therefore relative. But the Buddha is no longer entangled by any of it.

In my last talk, I mentioned that everyone has Buddha-nature. However, we are bound by many worldly matters. There are many things that bind us. We often say that doing good and being filial cannot be delayed. How do we prioritize between doing good and being filial? Some do everything to accommodate their parents. But there are still many things for them to accomplish [in the world.] So how do we prioritize?



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Some people say that when the Buddha left the palace, He left His father, the king, and other people who relied on Him. How could He have left? Isn't this unfilial and irresponsible? Some people might say it is. However, the Buddha had mentioned that there is great filial piety and limited filial piety, just as there is Great Love and limited love it takes wisdom to make the choice. Living with Conditioned Dharma, He had to use wisdom to prioritize. So He attained Conditioned Dharma.

Next is unconditioned Liberation, which refers to the Ultimate Truth. How do we choose among so many teachings? Do we choose the Dharma of Emptiness or the Dharma of Existence? How do we choose among so many teachings? Do we choose the Dharma of Emptiness or the Dharma of Existence? The Buddha did not choose Emptiness or Existence. He realized True Emptiness and Wondrous Existence. Thus, He is completely free afflictions. There is not a trace of attachment in Him. He is completely free from attachment, and has attained Conditioned Dharma.

The eleventh of the Eighteen Distinctive Dharma is Constant Liberation. All Buddhas are free from all attachments. They have realized the two Liberations, the Conditioned Liberation of realizing the perfect wisdom, and the Unconditioned Liberation of eliminating all afflictions.

Everyone, whether it is Conditioned Liberation or Unconditioned Liberation, whether among worldly desires or among the teachings on Emptiness or Existence, the Buddha is completely free He has realized. True Emptiness and Wondrous Existence. There is no more attachment.



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Everyone, in learning Buddhism, we should apply the Dharma just like cleaning water. When there is Dharma in our hearts, regardless of external defilements, we can safeguard our hearts. Our mind should be like the lotus flower; it is not defiled by the mud because it is surrounded by water. With Dharma in our hearts, we will not be affected by external conditions. In practicing the Dharma, we must cherish it. Please always be mindful.