



Have No Grievances, Purify
Afflictions (無怨尤 淨煩惱)



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In learning Buddhism we must abide by the precepts. We should always **“abide by the precepts and not make mistakes, practice good deeds with our best efforts, speak kind words without faults, make good connections to give proper guidance, respect the Buddha-Dharma with pure thoughts, have no grievances and purify afflictions.”**

I encourage everyone with these words. Do you still remember this passage? We should often remind ourselves that, **“This physical life of mind is hard to keep. Once it decays, I do not know when I will regain human form.”** We live our lives day after day. Before we know it, we grow from a child to an adolescent, and then from our prime years to middle age. Then, without realizing it, we reach old age.

Our physical form changes in stages as we age. This is impermanence. Besides this kind of impermanence, there is the inevitable impermanence of life. Not every one of us gets to experience the physical changes in all the stages of life. Those



who often volunteer in the hospital see people of all ages become ill and die. We have all experienced this. When we lose the human form, can we be born as human again? We often say, “This human body is difficult to attain.” Even with human form, can everyone learn the True Dharma? And after learning the True Dharma, can everyone carry it out? On the Bodhisattva-path, as we have said, we have to contemplate two things. The first is the impermanence of physical life, which we have talked about before.

What about the second? Secondly, **“contemplate the preciousness of encountering the Tathagata’s True Dharma in this life. We are not propagating the Buddha-Dharma, nor are we living with pure body, speech and mind.”**

The above passage is telling us that it is precious and rare to have human forms. It is truly precious. But even with the human form, it is even more rare to become a monastic. We have not only obtained human form, we have also heard the Buddha-Dharma. We have not only heard it, we have also been able to become monastics. **“Blessed to encounter the Tathagata’s Dharma, I am ashamed of having heard it without understanding, and having practiced it without realization.”**

Although we can encounter the Buddha-Dharma and hear the Buddha’s teaching, we have to also repent with a sense of shame. What should we be ashamed of? We hear the True Dharma, but do we really practice the teachings, disciplines and the rituals? Can we practice in accordance with the Dharma? We should often feel a sense of shame for “hearing without understanding.” Thought we hear the Buddha-Dharma very often, we do not really listen. We do not truly take it to heart. We often say that we should contemplate what we have heard. After hearing the Dharma, we should think it over. If we hear it without understanding and practice without realization, then we merely look like monastic practitioners.



What is the purpose of being a monastic? To practice. But we practice without any realization because we hear the Dharma without understanding.

Even if you practice, if you do so without understanding, then you cannot realize the Buddha-Dharma. You are practicing without realization and hearing without understanding. Although we hear the True Dharma, we hear it without understanding and practice without realization. So are we all somewhat ashamed of ourselves? Being ashamed means we reflect on ourselves. We should not be indolent and unrestrained. If we do so, then we are “people without shame.” If we have a sense of shame, then we must self-reflect. “Other people practice so earnestly, am I doing the same?”

We feel shame for not being as good as others, for not using all of our strength. We must often ask ourselves why we are **“unable to propagate the Buddha-Dharma or purify the karma of our body, speech and mind.”** Why are we not propagating the Buddha-Dharma? I often say that to recruit Living Bodhisattvas, we moat quickly pass on the Buddha’s teachings to many others, and invite them to do good deeds. That is “truly propagating the Buddha-Dharma.”

“To propagate” mean “to make flourish.” Everyone can get close to the Buddha-Dharma and learn from it. This is like what we often say, “Purify people’s minds with a stream of purity.” Have we let this stream of purity flow? Are we helping people purify their hearts? We should often ask ourselves these questions. Have we purified the threefold karma of body, speech and mind? Are our bodies, speech and mind pure? Though we may not err with our bodies or commit any wrongdoings, do we err with our speech or with our thoughts? Do we eliminate afflictions from our minds? We have to constantly reflect and check ourselves. Otherwise we might think, “Now that I am a monastic, I am engaging in spiritual practice. I am practicing wholesome Dharma.” We often think that being monastic



is a good deed, that we are already on the path of practice. But if you practice only by listening, without understanding, with no true realization, then your practice is superficial. If you only go through the motions of practice, do not assume you are practicing good teachings, and that you are engaged in spiritual practice.

So, “Everyday, I practice the way by diligently doing my morning and evening services. I am a monastic in vain if I only do it for my own transformation.” These verses mean that we assume we are practicing good teachings. We think we are doing enough. It is not enough. Do we engage in spiritual cultivation only with our morning and evening practices? If we only do this, aren't we “monastics in vain?” It is really a waste of our practice. This precious human body is hard to come by. It is so rare to hear the Buddha-Dharma and to be a monastic practitioner. Yet you do not walk the Bodhisattva-path. You only practice for your own benefit. In the temple, we chant in the morning and evening. Is it true practice if you just attend morning and night services at the temple?

Moreover, can you even follow along? Furthermore, during the morning and evening chants, do we mindfully put our bodies and minds into it? Are we earnest and diligent? Are we? Perhaps our minds have wandered or got distracted, drifting to who knows where. Looking dignified, we enter the main hall for morning and evening services. That is all. Just as the Sutra says, “We are monastics in vain.” We are wasting our time and “disappointing those we respect.”

Whom do we respect? The Buddha, the Dharma and the Sangha. We want to learn Buddhism. But if we listen to the Dharma without contemplation and understanding, we can neither understand the Buddha's teachings, nor physically carry them out. Is this living up to my expectations and those of the Sangha? We



disappoint those we respect because we only practice for our own transformation. Even without erring with the body, speech and mind, we practice only for our own benefit. Thus, we waste our intention to be monastics.

To become a monastic, during ordination, we vow to “be monastics to transform sentient beings.” Are we working on it? Are we, in our body, speech and mind, really working to help transform and guide people toward good? Are we? We have to often ask ourselves these questions. Next, **“Today, I and many others do wrong in private and try to hide it, thinking that others will not know or see.”** There is evil hidden in my heart, but I am proud and without shame. This is the most foolish and deluded in this world.

Everyone, from this passage we can contemplate how we are engaged in spiritual practice in a monastery. We have taken complete precepts now, but we only pretend to practice. We seem to be practicing, yet in our hearts, when nobody sees us, do we truly follow the Buddha’s teachings? This is something other people cannot see “Appearance” is on the outside, where people can see. We appear to be practitioners, but inside our hearts, where people cannot see, do we violate the Buddha-Dharma?

“We do not abide by the precepts and practice.” What do we do about that? We usually do evil in private and are unwilling to admit it to others.”

When we commit transgressions, we usually do not want to disclose them and repent. True repentance comes from disclosing our mistakes. Who can be free of mistakes in this world? Everybody has transgressed. Since we have made mistakes, we need to disclose them and let them be seen, so that we can truly uncover the ignorance that is concealed.

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them and let them be seen, so that we can truly uncover the ignorance that is concealed. We often say, “The greatest punishment is regret. If we feel remorseful, why not openly repent right away?”

Repentance brings purity. If we repent, we will not transgress in the future. When we do not transgress again, our minds will be pure. Most of us are “unwilling to admit our transgressions.” We do not admit them or reveal them. This is “hiding, thinking others will not know. As long as people do not know, I do not have to say that I have transgressed. Though I have erred, others do not know. Not only do they not know, they did not see it either.”

So “thinking others will not know or see, we hide it in the heart, making us “outwardly pure but defiled internally.”

Inside, the heart is defiled. It is not pure at all. The inside is defiled; the outside is pure. “But I am practicing!” As monastics, we practice and we seem pure when, in fact, we are defiled inside. We are outwardly pure but defiled inside. And we are “proud and without shame.” We think that since we are monastics, we are already the teachers of other living beings. We raise our heads high and walk with a swagger, thinking that the lay followers should come and prostrate in front of us. Is the right?

We should all have a sense of shame. Do not be outwardly pure but defiled within, then “**proud and without shame.**” In this way, not only do we not create blessings, but also diminish our existing blessings. What virtues and abilities do we have that we deserve people’s respect? So we should often be ashamed and humble. The passage today is for monastic practitioners. If we are like this “aren’t we extremely foolish?” people like this are the most foolish.



Everyone, practice does not mean that “I exist in human form, I have heard the Buddha-Dharma, and I have vowed to be a monastic, so I am already a pure practitioner. In fact, a pure practitioner must be pure inside and out. That is why we say that upholding precepts keeps us from making mistakes. Firstly, we have to rectify our past. After we openly repent and become pure, we must uphold the precepts and never make mistakes again. Thus, we will do good and change for the better. “Whatever mistakes I made in the past, I disclose them and repent, and now I uphold the precepts. So I only engage in good deeds. I do my best to give.”

We should not err in our speech. Speak kind words and make good connections. Thus we can guide people in the right direction. We need to truly propagate the Buddha-Dharma, so we must speak kind words and guide people in the right direction. Our minds must always be pure. After repenting, we have to reflect with a sense of shame. Our minds must be open and pure to respect the Buddha-Dharma. No matter what we encounter among people, we must always be self-aware without any resentment or complaint. Thus we can cleanse our afflictions and be pure internally and externally.

This teaching is for monastic practitioners as well as lay practitioners. The methods of practice are the same. Some people practice at home. The lay Bodhisattvas are very wise. Do not think that what I said today is only for monastics and has nothing to do with you. When you listen, you should understand. When you practice, you should have realizations, the Dharma is like water that eliminates everyone’s defilements. Everybody must accept it, not just the monastics.

So, everyone, please always keep the Dharma in mind. Listen, contemplate and



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practice. Work hard to be pure both inside and out. Please always be mindful.
(Source: Da Ai TV 靜思晨語 法譬如水)