

Ending the Disaster of the Dharma's Demise

-talk by Venerable Marster Hua

-translated by Bhikshu Heng Wu

-reviewed by Bhikshuni Heng Tao

-edited by Bhikshuni Heng Ch'ih

*All conditioned dhamas
Are like dreams, illusions, bubbles, and shadows;
Like the dew and like lightning:
They should be contemplated thus.*

-Vajra Sutra

What is meant by "conditioned dharmas"? They have form and appearance, limits, and intention. They are worldly dharmas. Everything of the world is called a "conditioned dharma."

Since there are conditioned dharmas, the opposite is unconditioned dharmas. Conditioned dharmas are "like the dew and like lightning." Unconditioned dharmas are not like the dew and like lightning. Conditioned dharmas "are like dreams, illusions, bubbles, and shadows;" unconditioned dharmas are not "like dreams, illusions, bubbles, and shadows." Since we know that all conditioned dharmas are not permanent, not ultimate but superficial, then we should search for unconditioned dharmas. Unconditioned dharmas are indestructible; they have no beginning and no end. They are without shape and appearance. They are not representational dharmas.

There are very many kinds of unconditioned dharmas. The kind spoken of here is "unconditioned, but without anything not conditioned." They belong to the grand scheme of creation and transformation. This kind of unconditioned dharma is not easy to seek. It is also very difficult to understand. Most people in general really overlook the unconditioned dharmas; they feel that conditioned dharmas are really worthwhile pursuits. So, from morning to night, they seek for fame and profit. In this world, they are blown by the winds of karma and bob up and down along with the currents of the sea of karma. If they are not careful, they will be blown about by the winds of karma until they completely vanish without a trace. They vanish without a trace because it is not known into what species they fall. There are many kinds of humans, and many kinds of animals, and many kinds of hell-beings. There are uncountably many different kinds of hungry ghosts. The wind of karma blows people about until their minds are muddled and their brains are fuddled; they don't even know east, west, north, or south, nor the time.

Now, on this planet it is the Dharma Ending Age. Dharma Ending means the Dharma will soon become extinct. The Dharma has become superficial; people have forgotten the basics. Everyone is looking into the superficial. The more they look, the more they are unable to find the truth, and so they grab onto what is false. They grab onto conditioned dharmas. They basically don't know about unconditioned dharmas; they have even forgotten the name. Because of this situation, the Dharma is ending.

Not only is the Buddhadharma reaching its Dharma Ending Age, so too are Catholicism, Christianity, Judaism, Muslim, and so forth--all religions are heading toward the demise of their doctrines.

Just take a look at Catholicism. All the Fathers and Sisters have changed their appearances. Those in the Buddhadharma have changed too. They are all "turning with the wheel of the times." But this turn has turned into the end of the Dharma. So I always say that we have arrived at the Dharma's demise. For this deplorable situation, members of all religions must take full responsibility.

All educational institutions are following the same pattern, too. Present day educators do not resemble those of the past who taught for the sake of education. Educators and scholars of the past truly wished to groom all young people into useful material for the world. They themselves studied so industriously that their hair would turn white, and they still would continue to study with diligence.

They wouldn't have said, "How can I be famous in the world?" Be it famous as a person, or famous as a scholar or famous as a professor, they never thought to seek for any of these. They were totally dedicated to creating a future generation of wholesome and talented individuals who could rectify customs and habits and influence the world for the better.

But nowadays, professors teach their students how to obtain a good reputation or personal advantages. So I always say that the scholars of the past studied for the sake of understanding principles (*ming li* 明理). The Confucian teachings in the Central Kingdom (China) say:

By investigating material things one can perfect one's knowledge. By having a sincere intent, one can rectify one's mind. By cultivating oneself, one will harmonize one's family; and by regulating the country, all under heaven becomes peaceful.

These are their Eight Aims. By investigating these doctrines deeply, young people will develop proper thinking and wholesome characters.

According to what I know, the present-day scholars in the most renowned institutions of learning, advise young people to take drugs, to take birth-control pills, to be unfilial to their parents, and also teach them how to become outstanding social activists.

Therefore, I say that the daily decline of religions is a fact for which the exponents of the different religions should take complete responsibility. The daily decline of moral and ethical behavior among the people of all societies is a fact for which professors at well-known educational institutions should take full responsibility.

Moreover, nowadays the programs being broadcast on television turn people upside-down. They cause people to go downhill and are a chief cause for the spiritual decline of our youths.

The present age is a time when people's minds are no longer like those of old, and morality reaches a low ebb. There are causes and conditions for this. It is not created only from one cause; there are many aspects that cause young people to not be able to stand on their own, and to have no samadhi-power. This is a very pitiful matter.

Therefore, all religious leaders and educational faculty should immediately change their actions and thinking for the better. Then this world might have one chance in ten thousand. But if things continue as they are now, and people don't change, then we won't know which day, but Doomsday will quickly arrive.

Is it the case that this world is definitely going to have a Doomsday? No. Everything is flexible. Everything hinges on people's minds. If people's minds are good, then the world will be good. If people's minds are rotten, then Doomsday will come. So to be rid of the Dharma's end, which is the reason for the coming of Doomsday, we must truly strike up our spirits. Within the raging gales and heavy storms, we must undertake the work of rescuing people. Rescuing people is not a matter of dashing into the violent storms to save people at the risk of one's own life. Rather, we hope to eradicate the raging gales and heavy storms altogether.

Look now at how many natural and manmade disasters there are! There are unknown numbers of water disasters, and fire and wind disasters that kill countless beings. Wars, too, kill unknown numbers of people.

As if these large disasters aren't enough, there are also small disasters. There are train wrecks, plane crashes, auto accidents, and the like which also kill unknown numbers of people. All of these various kinds of disasters are created from people's violent energy. People don't have virtuous thinking, and this creates various kinds of disasters. Yet people still don't wake up; they still don't personally take responsibility. They put the blame on others. They never stop to think that the reason the world is not good is because they themselves are not good. The world, therefore, gets worse day by day.

If we want things to get better, what should we do? There is a way; it is very simple and doesn't take much work or money. If all people in the world would stop eating the meat of living creatures and become vegetarians, if they would abstain from killing and liberate the living, then the disasters of the world would disappear. Being vegetarian is extremely important. All disasters are the result of killing-taking life. The resulting vengeful energy fills up the entire universe and creates various kinds of disasters. If all people can abstain from killing and liberate the living, and not eat the flesh of any kind of living creature then people's violent thoughts will disappear. Why is it that people have such huge tempers? It is just because of eating meat. Meat-eating increases thoughts of desire and hate and leads to a lack of compassion.

This is the important principle of today: if we wish the world to be without disasters, we must quickly abstain from killing, liberate the living, and not eat the meat of living beings. Then disasters can certainly be eradicated.
