

THE TEN DHARMA REALMS

*-Dharma Talk by Venerable Master Hua
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The Four Sagely Realms are those of the Buddhas, Bodhisattvas, the Sound Hearers, and Those Enlightened to Conditions, and each of these realms has its own retinue. The Buddha Dharma Realm has the retinue of Buddhas; the Bodhisattva Dharma Realm has the retinue of Bodhisattvas; the Dharma Realm of Sound Hearers has its retinue of Sound Hearers; and the Dharma Realm of Those Enlightened to Conditions has its retinue of Conditioned-Enlightened Ones. But these Four Sagely Realms are beyond the scope of common people. Why is this? It is because common people don't have so much wisdom. Therefore now we'll just discuss the Six Common Dharma Realms.

The first is the Dharma Realm of the gods, with its retinue of gods. There are many different kinds of gods--they aren't all the same. There is also the Dharma Realm of asuras with its retinue of asuras. Then there's the Dharma Realm of people, and they are also of many different kinds. Those are the Three Wholesome Paths: gods, humans, and asuras.

Then there are the Three Evil Paths: the hells, hungry ghosts, and animals. The Realm of animals has its own retinue which is made up of many different kinds of animals. Then there's the category of hungry ghosts with its own different particular kinds of hungry ghosts. Lastly there is the realm of hell-beings, and its hundreds of thousands of different varieties of hell-beings. Each one of those categories is further divided into sub-categories, and each sub-category has many different kinds of beings within it. How did these differences and divisions into ten Dharma Realms come about? They are not apart from the present thought that you and I bring forth with our minds. The mind creates these Dharma Realms; the mind is able to create the myriad things as well. With the thoughts of our minds we are able to create all the many different things. So it's said,

If one wishes to know the Buddhas of
the three periods of time,
One should contemplate the nature of
the Dharma Realm:
Everything is made from mind alone.

And so it follows:

If one wishes to know the Bodhisattvas
of the three periods of time,
One should contemplate the nature of
the Dharma Realm:
Everything is made from mind alone.

Further,

If one wishes to know the great Sound
Hearers of the three periods of time,
One should contemplate the nature of
the Dharma Realm:
Everything is made from mind alone.

If one wishes to know the great Ones
Enlightened to Conditions of the
three periods of time,
One should contemplate the nature of
the Dharma Realm:
Everything is made from mind alone.

If one wishes to know the great Worthies
of the three periods of time,
One should contemplate the nature of
the Dharma Realm:
Everything is made from mind alone.

If one wishes to know the asuras of
the three periods of time,
One should contemplate the nature of
the Dharma Realm:
Everything is made from mind alone.

If one wishes to know all the animals
of the three periods of time,
One should contemplate the nature of
the Dharma Realm:
Everything is made from mind alone.

If one wishes to know the different kinds
of hungry ghosts of the three periods
of time,
One should contemplate the nature of
the Dharma Realm:
Everything is made from mind alone.

If one wishes to know the different kinds
of hell-beings of the three periods of
time,
One should contemplate the nature of
the Dharma Realm:
Everything is made from mind alone.

So this statement that everything is made from mind alone does not just refer to the Dharma Realm of Buddhas, but it means that all ten Dharma Realms come about just because of the thoughts you and I produce in our minds. We create the heavenly palaces or the hells with our thoughts. The mind can become a Buddha or it can become a hungry ghost. The mind can become an animal, the mind can fall into the hells, or it can become a Bodhisattva. The mind can become a Sound Hearer or One Enlightened to Conditions. If in our minds we produce Buddha-thoughts, then we are one of the retinue of Buddhas. If we bring forth the mind of a Bodhisattva, then we are one of the retinue of Bodhisattvas. If in our minds we produce the thoughts of Those Enlightened to Conditions, then we are one of the retinue of Those Enlightened to Conditions. If we produce in our minds the thoughts of Sound Hearers, we are one of the retinue of Sound Hearers. If we create the mind of a god, we become one of the retinue of the gods. If we create asura thoughts in our minds, we become one of the retinue of asuras. If our minds produce the wish to be people, then we are one of the retinue of people. If we produce the wish in our minds to be animals, then we become one of the retinue of animals. If in our minds we want to be hungry ghosts, we become part of the retinue of hungry ghosts. And if in our minds we want to create the hells, we become one of the retinue of hell-beings.

So everything is made from the mind alone and nothing is apart from the mind. In walking, standing, sitting, and lying down--in our every action--we should regulate ourselves and return to propriety. We should do straight and true things, not false things and not be sloppy or casual. As it is said,

Just because of a single wrong move
One loses the entire chess match.

So if you want to create the Buddha Realm, you should practice kindness, compassion, joy, and giving, and benefit all living beings. But yet, in benefitting living beings you shouldn't be attached to the mark of benefitting. Don't spend all your effort on externals. You should act truly and not falsely. Put your feet firmly on the ground and don't just speak on the one hand but fail to act accordingly on the other. The importance in the doctrine "everything is made from the mind alone" is right here. You have to act within your mind and not waste time on externals.

Why is it that on the one hand one may want to bring forth the thought of the Realm of Buddhas while on the other hand one is unable to do so? It is because one's intent is not fixed and solid and one is turned by states. Once you are moved by situations, you forget everything. It causes you to forget about becoming a Buddha or a Bodhisattva, a Sound Hearer or One Enlightened to Conditions, and instead you only know how to fall into the hells.

When one's thoughts move,
the myriad things appear.
When the mind is still
the ten thousand things don't exist.
When thoughts are put to rest,

this is true wealth and honor.
When thoughts are cut off,
 this is the true field of blessings.

Does anyone have questions about what was just lectured?

Question: We know that there are demons and that they exist in the human realm as well as the realm of the gods. It seems that they are able to manifest in any realm in the same way as the asuras do. Since one of the Ten Dharma Realms is that of asuras, why isn't there a Dharma Realm specifically assigned to demons? What are the causes and conditions that make one a demon?

Answer: In this world there are people who are guerillas and mercenaries and professional militants. People of this ilk desire to carve out an empire for themselves, and so they go about to the north, south, east, and west as self-made warlords. But these empires don't really belong to them and they just roam about like brigands. Brigands don't hold to any particular area, nor are they loyal to any particular leader. So even though one may be a leader among mercenaries for awhile, it's not for sure that the others in one's gang will always follow one's orders. Mercenaries always go for the highest bidder--they aren't loyal to any particular place. Demons are also like this. Demons are found among the retinues of humans in the form of bandits. Bandits are people, but not all people are bandits. However, bandits come from people--they are people. For this reason we don't have to set up a separate Dharma Realm for bandits and the principle is the same for demons. This is my viewpoint on the subject.

In the heavens there are heavenly demons and there are also demons among the asuras. The good asuras make up the basic retinue of that particular Realm and the evil ones are its demons. The Six Common Realms are pervaded throughout by demons and they appear throughout the Four Sagely Realms as well. Demons can transform into Bodhisattvas, Sound Hearers, Those Enlightened to Conditions, and demons can even appear as Buddhas. So basically there's no difference between demons and Buddhas, except for one single thought: Buddhas are compassionate, but demons have thoughts of wanting to struggle and be supreme. They want to be on top. They want to be the winners. For example, Devadatta was a cultivator of the Way but he wanted to be a winner. So he was always fighting with the Buddha. He wanted to be number one. And so it turned out that the Buddha became a Buddha and Devadatta became one of the retinue of demons. And yet Devadatta had the Buddha nature; it's just that he went down the wrong road; he went too far off the track and couldn't get back on the right track again.

According to the Great Vehicle, a Buddha will sometimes manifest a demon's body in order to teach and transform demons. If one were to really discriminate it in fine detail, the divisions would be boundless and limitless. The principle here is immeasurable. But to sum it all up, the good ones become the rulers of any particular Dharma Realm. There's not a separate Dharma Realm set up for demons. They can be found throughout the Six Common Realms and even in the Four Sagely Realms. But whether they are found in the sagely or the common realms, in the end they are all empty and false. They

are not really true. You could say that they are like impersonators--quacks. They are just like the bandits and mercenaries among people. They can even appear as soldiers and travel about, but what they end up doing is killing for pleasure, committing arson and just casually harming people. So in this way, they are different from the regular military. That's the difference between them.