

Water-Mirror Turning Back the Tide of Destiny

Essays and Verses by Venerable Master Hua

If You Wish to Become a Buddha, First Learn to be a Good Person

ESSAY:

THERE ARE SOME BUDDHISTS WHO, WHEN THEY FIRST SET OUT TO STUDY THE BUDDHADHARMA, ARE EXTREMELY SINCERE. BUT AS TIME GOES ON, THEY FORGET THEIR INITIAL RESOLVE. NOT ONLY ARE THEY DEVOID OF ANY SINCERITY TO SPEAK OF, THEY GO SO FAR AS TO COMMIT ACTS OF KILLING, THEFT, LUST, AND LYING, STOPPING AT NOTHING. THEY BECOME HUNDREDS OF THOUSANDS OF MILLIONS OF TIMES WORSE THAN PEOPLE WHO DO NOT UNDERSTAND THE BUDDHADHARMA, OR WHO DENY CAUSE AND EFFECT. NOTHING FAZES THEM. IT IS A PAINFUL STATE OF AFFAIRS. PEOPLE LIKE THAT CLEARLY KNOW THAT SOMETHING IS WRONG, BUT GO AHEAD AND DO IT ANYWAY. AND IT WILL BE HARD FOR THEM TO ESCAPE THEIR RETRIBUTION. THEY CUT OFF THE BROAD AND OPEN PATH THAT LEADS TO THE BUDDHA'S COUNTRY, AND INSTEAD CREATE DEEP CAUSES FOR THE HELLS.

I NOW HAVE A MESSAGE FOR ALL BUDDHISTS: DO NOT MISLEAD YOURSELVES OR MISLEAD OTHERS, THEREBY FALLING INTO A PERILOUS PATH FROM WHICH YOU WILL HAVE DIFFICULTY EXTRICATING YOURSELVES. I HOPE THAT EACH ONE OF YOU WILL FORCE YOURSELF TO BE CAREFUL.

COMMENTARY:

Whoever wants to become a Buddha first has to be a good person. If one does not have a good personality, that is, if one does not establish the foundation for being a person, and yet wants to become a Buddha, that is like cooking sand hoping it will turn into rice—it will never happen. THERE ARE SOME BUDDHISTS WHO... Basically the word "some" indicates a minority; however, here it means the majority. As a matter of fact, "almost all Buddhists" is the actual meaning. But, in order to save face for everyone, I'm not saying it so overtly. ...WHEN THEY FIRST SET OUT TO STUDY THE BUDDHADHARMA, ARE EXTREMELY SINCERE. Right at the start, they study the Buddhadharma with great sincerity. They like to follow the Buddha's teaching. BUT AS TIME GOES ON, THEY FORGET THEIR INITIAL RESOLVE. In the course of time, they forget their original earnestness. NOT ONLY ARE THEY DEVOID OF ANY SINCERITY TO SPEAK OF, THEY GO SO FAR AS TO COMMIT ACTS OF KILLING, THEFT, LUST, AND LYING, STOPPING AT NOTHING. Not only do they lose their resolve, but they dare to do anything. They blithely kill, steal, engage in sexual misconduct, false speech, and so forth, and it does not bother them at all. THEY BECOME HUNDREDS OF THOUSANDS OF MILLIONS OF TIMES WORSE THAN PEOPLE WHO DO NOT UNDERSTAND THE BUDDHADHARMA, OR WHO DENY CAUSE AND EFFECT. Such people are even hundreds of thousands of millions of times worse than those who have never heard the Buddhadharma, or who have never believed in cause and effect. NOTHING FAZES THEM. They don't fear cause and effect and they don't fear retribution. They don't fear anything at all. IT IS A PAINFUL STATE OF AFFAIRS. Those people are past saving. They think, "Whatever you say, I have already understood, and my Buddhadharma is more lofty and profound than yours. What can you tell me?" They casually lie. PEOPLE LIKE THAT CLEARLY KNOW THAT SOMETHING IS WRONG, BUT GO AHEAD AND DO IT ANYWAY. AND IT WILL BE HARD FOR THEM TO ESCAPE

THEIR RETRIBUTION. They know clearly that something is wrong, but they still commit the offense. They certainly will have to undergo their retribution in the future. THEY CUT OFF THE BROAD AND OPEN PATH THAT LEADS TO THE BUDDHA'S COUNTRY, AND INSTEAD CREATE DEEP CAUSES FOR THE HELLS. They make the level, flat and broad road which leads to the Buddha's country rough and uneven and hard to travel. Moreover, they build themselves a highway to the hells.

I NOW HAVE A MESSAGE FOR ALL BUDDHISTS: DO NOT MISLEAD YOURSELF OR MISLEAD OTHERS. Now I have a message for all of you: don't commit killing, stealing, lust and lying. Don't be like people who don't hold the precepts themselves and in addition urge others to tell lies. They say, "It doesn't matter if you lie; it's simply being expedient. It's okay to kill cockroaches and bed bugs. It's just exterminating pests." They invent all sorts of rationalizations for themselves. THEREBY FALLING INTO A PERILOUS PATH FROM WHICH YOU WILL HAVE DIFFICULTY EXTRICATING YOURSELF. Those people will fall into the three evil paths: those of hell beings, hungry ghosts, and animals, and they won't be able to get out again. I HOPE THAT EACH ONE OF YOU WILL FORCE YOURSELF TO BE CAREFUL. Make yourself watch out. Be careful and cautious.

THE VERSE SAYS:

BEING A GOOD PERSON IS THE FOUNDATION FOR BECOMING A BUDDHA.
BEFORE YOU'VE COMPLETELY BECOME A PERSON, YOU CANNOT EXPECT TO
REALIZE BUDDHAHOOD.
DILIGENT AT THE START, BUT LAZY AT THE END,
ONE EXPENDS ONE'S EFFORTS IN VAIN.
SINCERE AT FIRST, BUT PHONY AFTER, ONE IMAGINES ONE EQUALS THE
WORTHIES.
KNOWING BETTER, BUT DOING IT ANYWAY, ONE CREATES LIMITLESS OFFENSES.
RECOGNIZING PRINCIPLE BUT GOING AGAINST IT, ONE ERRS TO THE UTMOST.
BE CAREFUL TO EXAMINE THE ROAD AHEAD OF YOU.
AT THE GATES OF THE HELLS IT WILL BE TOO LATE FOR REGRETS.

COMMENTARY:

THE VERSE SAYS: BEING A GOOD PERSON IS THE FOUNDATION FOR BECOMING A BUDDHA./ BEFORE YOU'VE COMPLETELY BECOME A PERSON, YOU CANNOT EXPECT TO REALIZE BUDDHAHOOD./ It is impossible for someone to achieve Buddhahood if he or she has not yet become a good person. DILIGENT AT THE START, BUT LAZY AT THE END, ONE EXPENDS ONE'S EFFORTS IN VAIN./ You might be very diligent and vigorous in the beginning, but you get lazier as time goes on. In that case, all the effort you applied previously is wasted. SINCERE AT FIRST BUT PHONY AFTER, ONE IMAGINES ONE EQUALS THE WORTHIES./ You start out being sincere, but you are hypocritical in the end. You use "expedient speech," thinking that means you 'understand the Buddhadharma. You are laboring under the delusion that you have reached the level of the Sages and Worthies.

KNOWING BETTER, BUT DOING IT ANYWAY, ONE CREATES LIMITLESS OFFENSES. When you know the principle clearly, but nonetheless still commit the violation, your offenses are said to be tripled. Actually, they are not just tripled, they become infinitely greater. RECOGNIZING PRINCIPLE BUT GOING AGAINST IT, ONE ERRS TO THE UTMOST./ Although you understand the law of Heaven, the Proper Way, and the Buddha's teaching, you do not follow them. Instead you do the exact opposite, and act contrary to the law of Heaven, the Proper Way, and the Buddha's teaching. In that way, you err to the utmost.

BE CAREFUL TO EXAMINE THE ROAD AHEAD OF YOU./ All of you who are Buddhists should very carefully look into yourselves to see whether you are going on a bright and proper road, or on a narrow, deviant, and dark path. AT THE GATES OF THE HELLS IT WILL BE TOO LATE FOR REGRETS./ By the time you fall into the hells, regrets won't do you any good. It will be too late.