

Emulate the Buddha's Indomitable Spirit

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Good morning everyone. I am very grateful that each week we have the chance to gather here with our dearest Shifu, with all the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas and all the guardians who have been instructing us and protecting us all along. Each one of us has gone through a long way to come here. Everyone has a long story to tell. In this world of kaleidoscope, it is not easy to put away all the desires; it's not easy to read sutras and mantras and follow the Buddha instead of watching TV or spending time with the family; it's not easy to simply find some time to sit alone and quietly instead of indulging in various parties. It is just not easy to give up all the pleasures one can get in this materially prosperous world. In short, it is not easy to walk on the road of cultivation, find our mission and do what we are supposed to do. Of course, It's impossible for us to sit here without help from Buddhas and Bodhisattvas and we all know this. To be able to sit here, we have gone through many tests. And on the road to the end, there are still many waiting for us. Wish every one of us emulate the Buddha's indomitable spirit and continue to cultivate our mind, get rid of all the bad habits, dedicate ourselves to what we are supposed to do and laugh the last laugh.

As we all know, 2500 years ago, a little prince was born in Rumbini. After he came out of the womb, he pointed one hand toward the heavens and one

hand toward the earth, and said, "In the heavens above and the earth below, I alone am honored." He grew up in the palace as an honorable and well-educated prince. When he realized that everyone in the human world had to suffer birth, oldness, disease and death in his or her life, he decided to leave the King's palace to find a way that can free people from all these pains. After 6 years of ascetic cultivation, he was enlightened under the Bodhi Tree and became the well-known.

Some students asked before, "Buddha Sakyamuni spent few years in cultivation before he could reach enlightenment. How long should I practice for that?" And the answer was, "Cultivation is not a one-life thing. You just saw what Buddha Sakyamuni experienced in our world in his present life, but you ignored what Buddha Sakyamuni experienced in his previous lives."

If you read the whole story of Buddha Sakyamuni, you will find that in his former lives, Shakyamuni Buddha "cultivated blessings and wisdom for three asamkhyeyas of eons, and planted the causes for his hallmarks and characteristics for a hundred eons." He undertook ascetic practices, doing what was difficult to do and enduring what was difficult to endure. He sought enlightenment and universal wisdom, and committed his life to teaching beings. In life after life, he toiled and suffered, eating what others would not eat, yielding what others could not yield. Eventually he accomplished Buddhahood.

The Buddha didn't attain Buddhahood overnight. He cultivated for three great

asamkhyeyas of eons before manifesting the Eight Signs of Attaining the Way. The first sign is the descent from the Tushita Heaven. The Tushita Heaven is where the Dharma Prince who will become the next Buddha dwells. The second sign is that of entering the womb. The third is that of dwelling in the womb. Even while in the womb, the Buddha turned the Dharma wheel and taught those beings with whom he had affinities. The fourth sign is that of birth. The Buddha was born on the eighth day of the fourth lunar month. After he came out of the womb, he pointed one hand toward the heavens and one hand toward the earth, and said, "In the heavens above and the earth below, I alone am honored."

Was the Buddha being arrogant? I'm really not arguing for Buddha, but the answer is no since the Buddha was indeed qualified to say that. He said it to let beings know who he was.

On the day that the Buddha was born, nine dragons spouted water to bathe him. Being born as a prince, he began learning worldly skills in the palace. The prince mastered the skills of ordinary people without having to learn them. Later upon walking out of the four gates of the palace, the young prince witnessed birth, old age, sickness, and death and felt that these were great sufferings. He saw that everything comes into being, lasts for a while, and then decays and becomes extinct. Regarding the sufferings of birth, old age, sickness, and death as bleak and meaningless, he resolutely renounced his royal position and left the home-life.

We can say that the Buddha was the foremost practitioner of asceticism. For six years in the Himalayas, he cultivated vigorously while living on a daily fare of one sesame seed and one grain of wheat. He certainly didn't take vitamin supplements.

Later, he accepted an offering of porridge with milk offered by a shepherdess. When he went to sit in meditation beneath the Bodhi tree, he made a vow, "I will not rise from here until I have attained Proper, Equal and Right Enlightenment." He sat there for forty-nine days, and then saw a star at midnight and awakened to the Way. He suddenly realized the original, pure, wonderfully bright, true mind which knows neither birth nor death, neither defilement nor purity, neither increase nor decrease.

This is the age of the Dharma's decline, and we must be true disciples of the Buddha. In the past, our forefather, the Buddha, did not take it easy in his cultivation. Even though we cannot live on one sesame seed and one grain of wheat a day, we should not pay too much attention to the fine food and forget the indomitable spirit of Buddha--after all, the reason you won this body is not for eating and consuming, it is rather to learn, to experience, to cultivate and enlighten.

As I see this body is a stinking skin bag; it is only a false combination of the four elements. We have been slaves to our bodies long enough; we have committed too many offenses on its behalf. If we still can't see through the body and put it

down, and we continue to slave and toil for it, it is nothing but wasting our time. Therefore, we should understand that life is full of suffering, and then we should study Buddhism in order to return to the source. Only by realizing sage hood and becoming a Buddha can we find true happiness.

The Buddha came to the earth to light the wisdom light, the heart light of all the beings. Once the heart light is lightened, all the ignorance will be dispelled. We should take the Buddha's body as our own body, the Buddha's conduct as our own conduct, the Buddha's mind as our own mind, the Buddha's vows as our own vows, and the Buddha's will as our own will. We should bear the toil and hardship, and emulate the Buddha's indomitable spirit. Anyone who can be this way has a chance to become a Buddha, and will quickly be able to end birth and death.

In his quest for perfect wisdom, the Buddha dedicated his life to vigorous cultivation. How can we expect to achieve Buddhahood without exerting any effort at all? Having left the home-life, if we don't cultivate seriously, how can we face the Buddhas, Bodhisattvas, and our ancestors? If we are greedy and contentious, pursue fame and profit, and become more and more selfish, how can we face our parents and ancestors? We should considerate towards others, and not just care about ourselves. We must master our spirits and cultivate. We can't put it off until tomorrow, for who knows when the ghost of impermanence will arrive? When he comes, we may want to live for a few more days, but it won't be possible. I still remember a Chinese poetry that I read when I was young,

Don't wait until you're old to cultivate the Way.

The lonely graves are filled with young people.

It sounds sad, doesn't it?

You have to know, in this world, we are born and we die, and after dying we are born again. It never stops, just different containers for our soul. A fair maid in the present life might be a snake next life. We call it karma and we probably think like --ah, I will just take time, because anyway I will attain Buddhahood someday, and Buddha can help me attain that, so I do not have to work hard. But I would like to remind you the story of Ananda: He was the Buddha's cousin and followed Buddha for decades and Buddha couldn't give him samadhi still. He had to diligently apply himself to his own cultivation.

And this is the point today, treasure your time and your human body, emulate the Buddha's indomitable spirit, make effects on cultivation, this is the best way to memorize Buddha and the best way to be with Buddha.

A thousand-mile journey starts with the first step. Be a practitioner, not a watcher. Babies walk without thinking, and we just do without doubting.

Thank you for listening!