

## **What Do You Practice in Your Life?**

IBDSCL, Nov. 18<sup>th</sup>, 19<sup>th</sup>, 2017, by Nancy Yu

There is a little Chinese story that I used to talk to my students quite often: there was an archer who came to town. He was exhibiting his talents. He was showing off and it was wonderful. He was an incredible archer, one arrow after one right on the bull. There was a guy standing back of the crowd, instead of cheering him, just saying 'just matter of practice, just matter of practice'.

Certainly, this archer taught a lot about himself and did not like this comment. He was expecting praise, not the comment 'just matter of practice, just matter of practice'. He got fairly turned down. He went over to the guy and asked, "What did you mean? what did you mean 'it is just matter of practice'? Can you do what I can do?"

He goes well, "No, but let me show you something." Because the guy used to sell oil, he took out a bottle which had very narrow opening long tube and then a ball at the bottom. He was able to take a big container of oil and pour the oil right through that little opening right through the bottle --not a drop spilled. He looked at that archer and said, "Can you do that?"

And the archer realized that no he could not do that. He had not practiced that. And the guy said I cannot shot the arrows like you while you cannot pour oil like me, for it is a matter of practice.

Now what's the point of this story?

The next question is what do you practice?

Because virtually no matter what you practice, you are going to be good at it, and this is not a question of good or bad. If you practice doing good deeds, you will get good at doing good deeds. If you practice complaining, you will be very good at complaining. I mean you will be able to complain about everything without blinking an eye or having a second thought. For example, when all your friends are standing there, looking at the big harvest moon in a beautiful night, you might be able to pour out of your complains, without a second thought, something complain like, but it is so dark....

So, what do you practice in your life? If you practice peace in your life, you will be good at it. If you practice joy and smile in your life, you will be very good at these. If you practice knowing yourself in your life, you will be good at it and you will know who you are.

If...

I know there must be something confusing in your mind. What's this story for? What's this about Buddha's dharma or Buddha's teaching?

Let me have a question for you first, what will happen if you practice Buddha's teaching in your life? Who can tell me that? You may become calm and peaceful, you may feel more joy of life, you may approach the truth of life. Yes, I believe that you could definitely achieve that, but --but have you ever imagine that maybe you could experience the enlightenment just like Buddha? In other words, you may become Buddha by practising Buddha's teaching. Remember that when Shakyamuni Buddha first accomplished Right Enlightenment beneath the Bodhi Tree, he said, "How strange,

how strange! All living beings, without exception, possess the wisdom and virtuous characteristics of the Tathagata (the Buddha). It is because of their idle thoughts and attachments that they cannot certify to them."

According to this theory, Buddha gave his students -- Bhisku, bhikkhuni and lay persons a series of teaching-- we can find it in the sutra or the book 'Sakyamuni Buddhism'. ---Now, I guess you are going to ask me, yes, but how? How to practice them?

What if I tell you that you are practicing now? Will you believe that? Do you feel that? In this few minutes, you were focused on the oil guy and the archer story and curious about how to practice Buddha's teaching and to be good at it or even become Buddha. You do not have time to think about your house lottery last week. You did not get your thought from here to the hottie Cuba girl in your office. You are not struggling between an Angus steak or a salmon sushi... All those idle thoughts and attachments are far away from you. You are right here, right this moment, thinking about following to the teaching of Buddha, and this is my point, you are practicing Buddha's teaching, you are on the way of enlightenment, you are on the way of becoming Buddha. Maybe some little birds would confuse. Is that easy? Is that easy on the way to approach Buddha? Now I have go back to my Chinese story--it is just the matter of practice.

Do not get me wrong, I did not mean that you could become Buddhas just by sitting

here and listening to me. At least as I know, it is not as easy as like this. Well, at least, you get a chance sitting here, listening some of Buddha's teaching.

We all know that, as a Buddhist we have to obey the 5 precepts, which are

to abstain from killing

to abstain from stealing

to abstain from sexual misconduct

to abstain from lying

to abstain from intoxication

When I was talking to my students and other Buddhists, they told me some understanding like this, I have to obey all kinds of precepts, then I could practice Buddha's teaching, like reading sutra, chanting, meditating, attending some special ceremony, or even get blessing of some senior monks ...

Do you agree with that?

I guess probably you will say no now. As I always told my students, the most secure, the simplest, the most safe, the most secure way of practicing Buddha's teaching are:

Far off evil,

Do good-deeds

Clam the mind,

Keep the precepts,

Being vegetarian,

Confession

Dedication

What I want you to remember today, are these lovely simple behaviours, instead of those enigmatic and mysterious methods, these simple things would make your path of Bodhisattva? Following them, practicing them, you are practice Buddha's teaching. Your life is ascending. Each small, simple but enlightened behaviour or mind you make brings great change to your life and karma. You not only know yourself but also heal the world around you and enable the awakening or ascension of others.

As we always said, the most meaningful things in the world is not hero movies, super hero who saved United States, saved the world. Most of them are unimpressive or unnoticeable, like these small things I told you before. An ordinary people, anti-hero, keeps practicing some small but meaningful things, and gradually he will link his potential of being a real wise man, being enlightenment. This is Buddha's teaching, this is the way Buddha expected and hopefully, this is the way you practice in your life.

Should we start now?