

## How to Start Cultivation

Hi, everyone, how are you doing? Today is June 19<sup>th</sup>, 2021. How are you doing? There are many Buddhists worldwide today and there are many people who are interested in learning Buddha Dharma. Though it looks like there are many masters, it is risky to just blindly pick one because you don't know if they are truly cultivators especially during this time. Beginners are new to Buddha Dharma. Their wisdom eyes are not open yet. They cannot not tell from the surface. Even those who claim that they have cultivated over ten years, without following a true master, they still don't have the wisdom to tell things. One recent example is the former president of the Chinese Buddhist Association, the Abbot of Longquan Temple in Beijing who was resigned from relevant position in 2018 because of several reports about his sexual misconduct problems.

How to start to cultivate then? The first thing we suggest is always to read the Biography of the Buddha first. The first step in cultivation is to know the Buddha. There are many versions of Biography of the Buddha. These book often were written based on some deep research and also some sutras. Each version may describe the Buddha from different ways. But it seems unavoidable that each version also carries something from the writer. So it's a good thing to read different versions, and to learn about the Buddha from different perspectives. For example, the first Biography of Sakyamuni Buddha I read was written by Venerable Hsing Yun. It has 48 chapters. The book was easy to read and touching. However, after reading another book, Old path White Clouds, written THICH NHAT HANH, I realized that the second book is more complete about the places that the Buddha has been. I realized that there were not just three Viharas when the Buddha lived. There were many. Also in the second book, the Buddha carried more human character and focused more on meditation. What did the Buddha truly look like? I guess nobody really know at this time. But these books are the sources that could provide us the closest description of the Buddha.

Book reading is mind meeting. Reading biography of the Buddha is actually a higher level of cultivation. It's to connect, to resonate, to communicate with the Buddha. The Buddha is everywhere. Sakyamuni is just one manifestation of the Buddha. When your mind is sincere, you will incur those who would help you, lead you. Space and time is not a problem to the Buddhas.

Cultivation has different levels. For some, they may just chant the name of the Buddha when they remember that; for some, they may listen to some videos given by some masters; for some, they may recite sutras, read Biography of the Buddha, hold mantras, and meditate every day. People commit differently. No matter what, remember one foot cannot step into two boats. Commit more, you get more; little commitment, little achievement. It's a common sense.

Besides, the books, there are a list of sutras and mantras that we suggest members to recite and uphold daily.

Also, often, there are people who are only interested in meditation. For these people, after they have meditation for some time, if they are interested in cultivation, we also suggest them to recite sutras. It's wisdom that could bring liberation while reciting sutras is the best way to open our original wisdom. So, meditation alone is not enough if you want to go further. Also, remember, meditation has no form, and meditation can be done when walking, eating, working. Sitting meditation is just one type. Yes, it's a very good one because the quietness of the body helps quiet down the mind.

Amitabha! The Buddha is everywhere. If you are a sincere cultivator, you will be found and helped. Thank you everyone for being here watching this video. I will see you next time. Bye.