

Messages from Buddha Heart Village

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(Part II, continued)

To shoot an arrow without aiming, the chance of it hitting the center of the target is practically null. To live a life in this world, being pulled in many directions by the sensual stimuli, we must have a goal, an ultimate goal. We, Buddhists, have such a goal - to be a Buddha. We should avail ourselves of all opportunities in this life to approach this goal. What is a Buddha? A Buddha is the perfect, intrinsic, imperturbable, and conservative stage that a human being can possibly reach as a limit in his development. The word "conservative" needs an explanation. Rather than the ordinary meaning, I use it in the more precise meaning as used in physics, like a conservative force field. In this field, there is no energy dissipation or loss; and once one arrives there, it does not matter which path has been taken.

On the other hand, Buddha is an ideal - the independent, free, and happy person with the embracing compassion and wisdom. When a person reaches it, it ceases to be an ideal, nor a person. Dichotomy and differentiation both in space and time are terminated; and the concept of termination is also terminated. At this stage, words have no meaning, because there is no need for words, and no marks to describe. Ultimately, we take refuge with Buddha; with the intrinsic human nature, not with its manifestations. Because of the intrinsic Buddha nature, we are enlightened to our true self, to the Nirvana. The manifestations, the Buddha's images in our minds, are very useful and important to us, just as road signs are to travelers, leading us to our destination. That is precisely what the Diamond Sutra teaches us: "All you Bhiksus should know that the Dharmas I speak of are like rafts; they should be cast off, much more so the non-dharmas."

Having a goal or ideal without a way to approach it step by step is not only incomplete, impractical and unscientific, but also confusing and dangerous because there are many sidetracks in the field of desire, that one may be lured into. More dangerous are that all the sidetracks are circles; though they are not apparent as such to our senses. It is just like an ant crawling on a globe; no matter how straight he goes, he always returns to the same beginning, without even knowing it. That is the vicious circle of the death and birth, suffered by all living beings in the three realms. In order to get out of the vicious circle, we have the treasure of Dharmas spoken by Buddha. They are the ways certified by Buddha and trodden by all Bodhisattvas. The Dharmas take us to and restore our own wisdom, like a clean mirror reflecting the whole world without leaving any residue in it. Hence, we take refuge with Dharmas.

Dharmas are words, which are always subject to certain errors and hence, require interpretations; yet the accuracy of the interpretations depends upon one's wisdom. Furthermore, the Dharmas spoken by Buddha are as many as the roads in a world map. To choose a right one suitable to our individual backgrounds, characters, and external conditions, we need a teacher in this world so we can in a time of need look to him for immediate guidance with which we cultivate our conduct. Hence, we take refuge with Sanghas.

With the Sanghas as teachers, we regulate our conducts. By the Dharmas, we take our journeys safely to the ultimate Truth. By the Buddha, we are enlightened to the true self.

