

8. The Effort of Cultivating Dao After Receiving It

In earlier times, cultivation required leaving home for the monastic life. But now, in the Final Catastrophe of the Three Eras, the true Dao has descended into the world to save and deliver primordial souls, to universally ferry the Three Realms. An enlightened master has been specially mandated to descend and transmit the True Transmission of Nature and Principle. Thousands of Buddhas and myriad Patriarchs have been commanded to descend together to this great spiritual gathering, proclaiming on behalf of Heaven and broadly expounding the heart-dharma of Nature and Principle.

This path proceeds directly from the merit of cultivating one's nature. There is no need to abandon wife and children, give up one's family, or withdraw from the world. At home, husband and wife, sons and daughters can cultivate together. Fathers need not sacrifice kindness, sons need not abandon filial devotion, husbands and wives need not forsake righteousness, and brothers need not lose fraternal love. Whether one is a scholar, a farmer, an artisan, or a merchant — all can cultivate Dao.

The primordial Great Dao can be advanced and practiced while worldly enterprises are also pursued. Half-sage, half-worldly: on one hand cultivating Dao, on the other hand carrying out one's own work. No matter what field one is in, this path does not hinder one's occupation.

So easy. So simple. This is because Heavenly Mother, with Her urgent love for Her children, has broadly extended vast compassion and widely opened the gates of grace. She enables us, no matter who we are, to cultivate Dao. Even women and the illiterate can transcend birth and death, escape the cycle of rebirth, and ascend to Ultimate Bliss. She enables scholars and literati, through pursuing learning, to be counted among true Confucian sages, to become worthies, to become sages, to become immortals and Buddhas. Such a fine opportunity is rarely encountered in a thousand years.

Completing Oneself and Completing Others

We only wish that all faithful devotees who have received our Dao will quickly — quickly — cultivate it, completing themselves and completing others.

Completing oneself means cultivating one's own person: personally reforming faults and repenting, ensuring that all conduct accords with principle. Completing others means delivering them: having

received Dao oneself, one must proclaim its truths, so that all relatives and friends also come to understand the meaning of Dao, together ascending to the Heavenly Dao — everyone reforming faults, all conduct according with principle.

The *Doctrine of the Mean* says: "Following one's nature is called the Dao" — this is cultivating one's person. "Cultivating the Dao is called teaching" — this is delivering others.

Proclaiming on behalf of Heaven and delivering others is outer merit. Reforming faults and moving toward goodness — cultivating one's person — is inner merit.

At this present time, in the Final Catastrophe of the Three Eras, the Heavenly timing is urgent. Outer merit is valued over inner merit: when outer merit is complete, inner merit accomplishes itself. Therefore, in cultivating Dao, outer merit comes first.

Yet if one does not cultivate one's own person, one cannot bring order to one's household. There has never been anyone whose household was not well-ordered yet who could teach others. Only by completing oneself can one complete others; only by rectifying oneself can one transform others. Then it seems, again, that inner merit comes first.

In summary: the effort of the Great Dao lies in not dividing inner and outer. Movement and stillness are not two. There is no inner, no outer — yet it can be inner, it can be outer. The unity of knowing and acting: always responding, always attaining. Precisely this is the non-dual dharma gate — the true effort of the Great Dao.

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