Entries 11–20

11

In serving Dao, the work naturally involves guiding others, expounding the teachings, pioneering new regions, and establishing prayer halls. Yet one must not forget the practical work of caring for society's suffering and uplifting the people — supporting and promoting efforts such as caring for the poor, tending to the elderly, aiding orphans, protecting the environment, and assisting the intellectually disabled. Even the release of captive animals and the protection of wildlife deserve your support. All of these are ways of forming broad affinities with sentient beings of the ten directions. Do not dismiss such work as merely worldly. If you do not mend the worldly, how can you perfect the spiritual?

12

Your teacher faces every disciple fairly. The palm and the back of the hand are both flesh — I would never favor one over another. So long as you are willing to serve and willing to do the work, things will certainly be turned around for you. As for some of you expanding greatly while others progress slowly, that is largely a matter of conditions, and there is no need for envy. My hope is that my disciples' resolve will not waver. Your teacher blesses you deeply. Wait for the clouds to part, and you will see the bright moon. In the end, when all bitterness is spent, sweetness will come.

13

Toward the many tragedies in the world and the beings who have perished in disasters, you must offer a measure of compassion, grief, and sympathetic dedication of merit. When offering incense and performing prostrations morning and evening, you cannot pray only for the expansion of your temple's work. Otherwise, even if the work expands, you will lack the great compassion of shared being and unconditional loving-kindness toward those without affinity — those benevolent and merciful thoughts that define a practitioner's true character. Only by cultivating care for those unfortunate strangers with whom you have no connection can you draw those with affinity to come.

14

In fulfilling your vows, resolve your karmic ties. It is enough to express your heartfelt intention fully — do not create unnecessary entanglements, so that you may achieve liberation here and now, free as drifting clouds. Only then will you avoid falling into another layer of cause and effect, where in future lives and future ages you must still repay what is owed — which would be a misfortune in itself. In those early years, your teacher, in a moment of playfulness, wrote a few casual couplets on a whim, and planted the seeds of division in this life's temple community, causing disorder to appear across the Dao arena. I urge my disciples: be careful with your thoughts. Do not provoke emotional entanglements.

15

Your teacher may be a poor monk, but so long as you — throughout every level — harmonize your hearts and spirits and stand as one, how could your teacher turn a deaf ear? Even when conditions at this moment are not yet ripe, I still help in ways both visible and hidden, bestowing a great prayer hall upon every place. But if your own community's resolve cannot hold together, how can your teacher face the sorrowful gaze of the Buddhas of the ten directions? Truthfully, is that not putting your teacher in a difficult position?

16

Those who cultivate Dao must lighten their worldly attachments and deepen their sacred sentiments, remaining at ease and at peace wherever they are. A practitioner must never indulge in luxury, flaunt extravagance, or pursue grandeur. Your teacher is accustomed to poverty — one bowl, meals from a thousand homes; alone, wandering ten thousand miles — carefree and untrammeled. I simply cannot accept, nor can I train, these wealthy and privileged disciples.

17

For those who cultivate Dao, the sacred and the worldly must be clearly distinguished, and public and private affairs plainly separated. The slightest attachment and one easily goes astray. Since antiquity, where has there ever been a temple that used its sacred halls to conduct business? If you are greedy and grasping, Heaven will one day return to you exactly what you deserve, and perfection will elude you.

18

Regarding all the disputes and rumors within the temple, do not spread them to one another, and still less should you fan the flames. Cultivate a generous spirit of compassion and tolerance. If we treat others this way, Heaven will treat us the same.

19

In every thought, seek to open up future blessings for all beings. You must not seize power or hoard authority, damaging the good name of spiritual cultivation and harming innocent junior practitioners. Your teacher may be unworthy, but I have still left behind a temple in the human world for my disciples to carry on. I dare not make demands of you. I only hope you will safeguard it well and not betray the vastness of Heaven's grace.

20

Toward the suffering and disasters that befall sentient beings across the six realms, you should give rise within your heart to limitless care and prayer, hoping that they may soon encounter wholesome conditions and find the chance to transcend the sea of suffering.

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