

Chapter 5: Why People Do Not Advance After Receiving Dao

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The ancient sages said: "Receiving Dao is easy, cultivating Dao is hard; cultivating Dao is easy, fulfilling Dao is hard." This saying, too, confirms the meaning of our topic. Upon careful investigation, the causes of not advancing are of two kinds.

The first is that after receiving Dao, one has not undertaken adequate study, does not understand the true meaning of Dao, and gives rise to all manner of doubts. Such as: doubting that the Heavenly Dao is not authentic, that a single transmission alone cannot accomplish what is promised. Doubting that the heavenly timing has not arrived, that the Great Gathering has no set date. Doubting that one's karmic affinity is shallow and karmic debts heavy, that the trials and tests are too severe and harsh. Doubting where the merit-contribution funds are spent. Doubting that heaven's plan may shift, that everything is vague and without proof. Doubts and misgivings arise in profusion, layer upon layer.

The second is that because one is obscured by temperamental disposition, there are obstructions to advancing along the path of Dao. Thus the Buddhist tradition says: "People of the world cannot cultivate because of six kinds of obstacles." First, regarding the six sense faculties and the illusory compound of the four elements, one does not awaken to this truth. Thus arises the obstacle of physical form. Second, regarding food, drink, and the desires between men and women, one recklessly gives rise to greedy attachment. Thus arises the obstacle of craving. Third, heroes and outstanding persons exhaust their wisdom and strength to manage worldly affairs. Thus arises the obstacle of ambition. Fourth, scholars and talented persons parade their learning and elaborate upon ornamentation. Thus arises the obstacle of intellectualism. Fifth, bound by convention and following custom, one is tied and cannot free oneself. Thus arises the obstacle of worldly affairs. Sixth, exhaustively probing the mysterious and contemplating the subtle, one reaches understanding yet turns back to doubt. Thus arises the obstacle of doctrine.

With all these forms of obscuration, the mind becomes confused and disordered — how could one cultivate Dao? Tracing this to its root, it is entirely due to the error of not understanding the true principle. Yet the source of this ailment is one for which those who serve in leadership and those who bear the role of Introducer and Guarantor all carry a considerable responsibility.

Consider the immortals, Buddhas, sages, and divine beings of the past — which one of them did not rely on a teacher's guidance and support to awaken? Although it is said, "There are those who come to learn, but a teacher does not go out to teach," those who succeed without being taught number not one in a thousand. Therefore the Holy Teacher says: "In the Final Catastrophe of the Three Eras, the great undertaking of the Great Gathering is being carried out. The success or failure of each congregation rests entirely upon whether the one in charge gives full effort." All who have entered Dao hold a heavenly duty at their own congregation, and each of you has junior students of your own. I hope that all of you will recognize the true principle, rouse your spirit, and become forerunners who establish themselves and help others stand, who advance themselves and help others advance. You must never shrink from difficulty and settle for comfort, misleading yourself and misleading others, and thereby become sinners for all ages.

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