

# Chapter 6: The Preciousness of Dao

The world is constantly changing. As time goes by, all people and societies seem to negate themselves and their values. In the present we negate the past. In the future, our present concerns will be negated. In the course of human history, many heroic figures have emerged, and one by one they have been devalued or forgotten and replaced with new heroes.

The history of governments follows the same pattern, with new rulers and political parties overturning the policies of the old. In the field of scientific research, scientists must accept the fact that they can have no absolute academic authority as their findings will be modified, disproved or disregarded by future researchers.

There is, however, one achievement which will never be denied. That is the achievement of sainthood or Buddhahood. Realizing this, we can understand more fully the preciousness of Dao. This chapter will focus on the keys to the preciousness of Dao.

In the words of Lao Zi:

“ It is better to move into the essence of Dao than to be an emperor, one of the three dukes, to hold precious jade or to ride in a carriage drawn by fine horses.

In ancient times, the emperor, as the son of heaven, is a person of the highest character. This symbolizes a position of respect. The three dukes hold official positions second only to the emperor. They stand below one person and above thousands. They represent high status or position.

If a man has servants who hold jade in their hands he must have great wealth. The mode of travel, with four horses pulling a carriage, represents power and status. Respect, status, wealth, and power are great treasures in the world. They are the four things most desired by worldly beings. And yet Lao Zi actually states that they are incomparable to the achievement of Dao.

Knowing this, people of great wisdom in the past and in our own time like Buddha, Confucius, or Buddha Gwan-Yin abandoned all their worldly possessions in order to set out on the path of cultivation.

Why is Dao so precious? Let us consider the following points.

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# 1. The Preciousness of the Heavenly Decree

The Heavenly Decree literally means authority that is in accordance with the will of heaven—that is, the decree from God.

Let us make the distinction now between things that are human-made and things that go according to the will of heaven. Any behavior that has its source in human desire can be called human-made, while behaviors that coincide with heavenly intention are in accordance with the will of heaven. This will of heaven is also known as the Heavenly Decree, or the will of God. It represents the truth of all dimensions, the principles that all things follow.

We can live as human beings because a soul has been bestowed upon us. We are the head of all living creatures. Together with heaven and earth, we form the trinity. Heaven, or God, is the governor of the universe and exists everywhere in the world as Truth. This is the truth of the Universe and it constitutes the guiding principle of all things.

To act according to the direction of the soul is to follow the principle of heaven and to respond to the common wish of human beings. As we follow this guiding principle, our actions will certainly give rise to great vitality and harmony. On the other hand, to act against the principle of the soul is essentially destructive because everything will be in a state of chaos and will finally perish. That is what the saints and sages meant when they said:

“ To follow heaven one will have life, but to act against heaven only brings destruction.

The widespread propagation of Dao is in accordance with the decree of heaven. It does not arise from human desires. The Heavenly Decree passed to our Dien Chuan Shrs is exactly the same as the Heavenly Decree that was bestowed upon the Divine Patriarch and Divine Matriarch.

The propagation of Dao has met with many difficulties and setbacks in its time, but not only has it survived these setbacks, it has actually prospered. Dao has spread from Taiwan to many other countries and is recognized and protected by the governments of various nations. Clearly such prosperity would not be possible if Dao propagation was not in line with the decree of heaven.

Dao cultivators must have been very selfless in their work and followed the wish of heaven in order to benefit all people. That is the consequence of responding to the heart of heaven, cultivating and spreading Dao according to heavenly will.

Our Divine Patriarch said:

“ The decree of heaven far exceeds the emperor's decree.

This is the first preciousness of Dao.

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## 2. Transcending the Cycle of Life and Death

Nothing in the physical world is more important than the question of life and death. Life and death are like a one-way street. Once we enter the flow of traffic, there is no way we can turn around and go back. We cannot suddenly decide that we were born into the wrong family and go back to try again, nor do we have the chance to make a second attempt at dying if our death does not go according to plan.

Life is like a flowing river—the water moves constantly in one direction and does not return. Once our last breath leaves us, our life ends, regardless of whether it was good or bad. Then comes the next life, which has its own form and structure, its own journey. In the course of a lifetime, any deviation from the path of truth results in negative behavior, which in turn produces the seed of reincarnation.

The reason why Buddhas descend into this world is to resolve the cycle of life and death. Before Buddha Sakyamuni became a Buddha, he was a prince called Siddhartha. When he first left the palace to tour the city, he discovered the four kinds of suffering that occur in life: birth, old age, sickness, and death. When he realized that all living beings suffer, he decided to leave his home and family in order to search for the way to end all suffering.

After a period of cultivation, he attained enlightenment. From that time on, through his great compassion and concern for the welfare of sentient beings, he turned the wheel of dharma to free them from suffering and the endless cycle of life and death.

The Dien Chuan Shrs have the Heavenly Decree from our Divine Patriarchs. They can pinpoint our true nature, awaken or initiate our spiritual essence. One of the holy teachings indicated:

“ You can read the Diamond Sutra until the pages are torn and recite the mantra of Great Compassion till your mouth is sore, but unless you have received the initiation of the Divine Patriarchs, you will remain within the reincarnation cycle.

We are yet to find the path that leads to our release from the cycle of life and death. It has also been said that:

“ Even if you are smarter than Yen Hui and Min Zi Qian, don't try to guess the nature of Dao before you receive the pointer of a Divine Patriarch.

Yen Hui and Min Zi Qian were the two most virtuous and wise disciples who learned under Confucius. This proverb says that even if we are smarter than them, we still would not be able to understand the path that can free us from the cycle of birth and death without the pointer of a Divine Patriarch or Divine Matriarch.

From this, we can see the crucial role of the Divine Patriarch and Divine Matriarch in passing Dao onto us. The ultimate way to transcend the cycle of life and death is known only to saints and Buddhas and is passed on to us in the physical realm by the Divine Patriarch and Divine Matriarch.

In the previous chapter we saw how the Emperor Hwang Xuan Yuan had seventy-two masters, all very virtuous, but all ultimately ignorant of the way out of the reincarnation cycle. Even if people know the way, they do not have the authority to pass it on to others, unless they are themselves enlightened. Followers of religions and many other great cultivators have acquired an understanding of truth, but they have not been able to transcend the cycle of death and rebirth.

Our Divine Patriarch and Divine Matriarch received the heavenly decree to descend into this world and pass on the Way. This is prophesied in Ancient texts. The predictions refer to Patriarch Gong Chang and Matriarch Zi Xi. In the *Scriptures of Long Hua*, a poet writes:

“ How many know the birth of Gong Chang?

All religions turn to one.

Time is mature for Dao to be spread,

Saving all the children of heaven.

This poet shows the authenticity of the decree of heaven that was bestowed upon our Divine Patriarch and Divine Matriarch, and their mission in the propagation of Dao. Their purpose is to ensure that all religions are united; all people can receive and cultivate Dao in order to transcend the cycle of life and death, and to be at one with the universe.

The Dien Chuan Shrs carry out heavenly duties and also work to fulfill the unaccomplished tasks of their predecessors in spreading Dao to every corner of the world. Their aim is to facilitate a world of great unity.

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### 3. The Preciousness of the True Teachings

Dao is now spread to all people no matter whether they are rich or poor, talented or unskilled, wise or foolish, virtuous or mean. No matter where we come from in this life or what our worldly circumstances may be, the three treasures offer a simple and accessible form of cultivation that can free us from the cycle of rebirth. We do not need to practice meditation or chant the sutras.

The reason why the three treasures are so effective is that the teaching they embody encompasses the heart teachings that were passed on from generation to generation by the Patriarchs in the past. Most importantly, our Heavenly Mother bestows the three treasures on us.

The heart teaching of the three treasures is not limited by language. Regardless of ethnic background, levels of literacy or the strength of our spiritual foundation, we can use the essence of the three treasures as a daily practice in our lives. This is the third preciousness of Dao—the preciousness of the true teaching.

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## Conclusion

The preciousness of the Heavenly Decree, the Divine Patriarch and Divine Matriarch's help to us in transcending the life and death cycle, and the teachings of the truth are unique to Dao.

If it were not for the pressure of impending disasters, the mercy of God, the protection of heavenly grace, the great vow of Buddha Me-Ler, and the virtues of our predecessors, we would not be able to benefit from the preciousness of Dao.

We are honored and extraordinarily fortunate to be able to receive these gifts. We should maintain a heart of gratitude and truly cherish the treasures we have gained.

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