

His Holiness Dorje Chang Buddha III Imparts Dharma

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In Response to A Westerner's Questions

Translated by the True Dharma Translation Group

## **Translators' Notes**

All of us in the True Dharma Translation Group express our profound gratitude to His Holiness Dorje Chang Buddha III for giving us the opportunity to translate this Dharma Discourse from Chinese into English. However, His Holiness Dorje Chang Buddha III has neither read nor acknowledged the correctness of the current translation.

This translation is based on a transcription of the audio recording of this Dharma Discourse. Since the Buddhist disciples, who transcribed the audio recording into Chinese text are from different countries and regions, might not have been familiar with colloquial words or dialects used in the Dharma Discourse, there might be errors in the transcript. The footnotes were not in the original Chinese transcript and were added by us as supplementary information to the translation.

Due to the limited abilities of the translation group, despite our having made the best effort, there are bound to be errors in this English translation. We beseech His Holiness Dorje Chang Buddha III and all Buddhas and Bodhisattvas to absolve us of the sins of making any mistakes in this translation.

Therefore, this English translation is only intended to be used as a reference while you are respectfully listening to the audio recording of the Dharma Discourse. If anyone has any suggestions for the current translation to be improved, you are very welcome to let us know.

Only the audio recordings of the Dharma imparted by His Holiness Dorje Chang Buddha III and the Buddhist books authored by His Holiness Dorje Chang Buddha III that are published by authorized publishing houses can be considered official.

True Dharma Translation Group

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## His Holiness Dorje Chang Buddha III Imparts Dharma in Response to a Westerner's Questions

First of all, you have to be clear about a fundamental concept before you can understand where you will go after you die if you will not be returning to this world.

I have just now said that within the universe, this Planet Earth on which we live is a minuscule world that can be likened to a tiny dust particle. In the universe, there are countless worlds like this on which there are living beings. There is an uncountable and unknown number of such worlds. When I say "this world," I am referring to this human world. There are also countless living beings in this human world. It is stated in Buddhist Sutras that there are six realms of living beings: heavenly beings, asuras, human beings, animals, hungry ghosts, and hell beings. That is in fact only a rough idea. In truth, living beings are not limited to these six realms. Some living beings cannot be classified into any of these six realms. They do not fit into any categories in the Sutras. The term "living being" means any being that is alive.

(Translator: He said he doesn't understand why the human beings in this world are all evil.)

I will tell you, but first, I must make things clear, so you can understand what I say.

This has to do with causality. All living beings are inter-connected through causality. All the myriad phenomena are results of causality. "Causality" means that when a cause is planted, there will be an effect. Do you know what cause and effect are?

(Translator: He said it means what one plants is what one gets. But to him, this kind of reasoning does not make sense.)

I tell you this: Since beginningless time, the causality of these living beings has formed a kind of shared karma 共業. Hence, they are all living in

this world. They share the same kind of karmic force, a collective karma. They have the same kinds of retributions: Living beings with good retributions, bad retributions, and equivalent retributions have converged here at the same time. There are, of course, good karma as well as bad karma.

(Translator: He asks if that means yin and yang.)

No. Causality works like this. For example: When someone has committed a certain kind of bad deed many times and other people also tend to commit the same kind of bad deed, then they have become more alike. People who have performed a certain kind of good deed become akin to those who have performed the same kind of good deed. They have accumulated the same karma and, due to their similarities, they become the same kind of people. Living beings have all developed their own characteristics and nature. They have formed their own kind of personalities and nature. Collectively, they all have the same kind of nature. What is meant by “nature” is their attitude, conduct, personality, and whether they are good or evil. They gravitate toward one another. This is meant by “People of the same kind come together” or “Birds of a feather flock together.”

Those of you who understand English should help with the translating. If the translation is incorrect, other people must speak up. Otherwise, this is not the conduct of a Buddhist disciple.

For example, not everyone on Planet Earth is evil. Whether someone is good, or evil, is their own making. It is their own mentality and conduct that cause other people to perceive them as good or evil. People may have very bad qualities, but they may also have very good qualities. Why? They are living beings. As I just said, different living beings have different nature.

For example, if one becomes a pig, pigs like to mingle with pigs. Dogs like to mingle with dogs. Wolves like to mingle with wolves. Cats innately only mingle with cats. They like to catch mice and that is their nature. Dogs are born to protect their masters. That is why whenever dogs see strangers approaching, they like to bark and want to attack them. By nature, wolves,

tigers, and leopards are carnivorous, and so are coyotes, they also like to eat kittens or puppies.

(Translator: He said that animals are not evil.)

No. Animals are just like human beings. You cannot say all human beings are evil either. There are many people who are very good, but there are also evil people.

(Translator: He said he believes that. But he thinks that in the present era, there are relatively more evil people.)

I will talk about that. Listen to me.

Why are human beings more formidable than other animals? I cannot say that they are evil, they are formidable. Why are human beings more terrifying than other animals? Because human beings have higher intelligence, they can develop many ideas that animals cannot. For example, human beings can easily build houses and install lighting because of their high intelligence. Animals are unable to do such things. Why do human beings have such high intelligence? Because they have accumulated abundant merit throughout many lifetimes for many eons, and eventually they have become human beings.

Since human beings are highly intelligent, they can conceive many good and bad ideas. Naturally, they tend to do many things that do not accord with Buddha Dharma and thereby become manifestly evil. To put it plainly, animals are very simple-minded. Therefore, they are unable to conceive many ideas. But in fact, their minds can also be evil. It is just that they are unable to think of ways to contend with human beings.

Now I will talk about why living beings, including humans, have become the way they are. It is due to their greed, aversion, ignorance, craving<sup>1</sup>, joy, anger, sorrow, and comfort. It is also the result of their attachment to gain, loss, disrepute, fame, praise, blame, pain, and pleasure. All these are caused

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<sup>1</sup> "Craving" is "tṛṣṇā" in Sanskrit.

by their five aggregates<sup>2</sup> being attached to the five sense objects 五塵. Simply speaking, this is because they want benefits and happiness for themselves. For the sake of their own benefits and happiness, they become attached to self. They are so determined to have all the good things for themselves that they take other people's good things for themselves. That is evil.

To achieve all kinds of successes for themselves, they completely ignore everyone else. That's why they are evil. The most crucial issue is their self-attachment. Attachment to self means wanting everything for oneself. They begin to fight for benefit, contend for power, rights, jobs, and everything that is favorable to them. Since human beings have high intelligence, they can develop many ideas and methods to get what they want. That's why they are evil.

The purpose of learning from Buddha is to care for and help other people, care for all living beings, and not to contend for other people's possessions. Only in this way can we become a great person of no attachment. In return, you will be highly respected by others. People will consider you a wonderful and remarkable person. That's why when learning from Buddha to cultivate ourselves, first, we must not plant the wrong causes. Then, the effects we reap will be good.

As to your earlier question about where you will go after you die if you will not be returning to this world, that is not something for you to decide. Whether you return to this world or not isn't up to you. Based on the causes you have planted, you will be dragged by causality into a particular realm. That's why I cannot answer your question regarding where you will go if you will not be returning to this world. Suppose you have intense aversion in your mind, and you are unforgivingly determined to completely ruin someone. A person with such an inconceivably intense hatred in their mind would normally go to the hell realm first, and eventually transition to the asura realm

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<sup>2</sup> "Aggregate" is "skandha" in Sanskrit, "蘊" in Chinese.

because their karmic forces will drag them there. They will be in the same realm and become the same kind of beings as asuras based on their nature.

I have given you the answer regarding where you will go. You will be transmigrated to wherever your karmic force takes you. When will you be transmigrated? After you stop breathing, you will enter the intermediate state 中陰<sup>3</sup> and that is when you will be transmigrated. What is the “intermediate state”? That’s when a person has stopped breathing and can no longer move. Your body becomes cold, your blood stops circulating, and your heart stops beating completely. Simply speaking, you have died, but at that time, your consciousness continues to exist.

What is “consciousness”? Consciousness is what is behind your thinking. It is behind the mind consciousness<sup>4</sup> with which you think. After a person dies, their consciousness remains unchanged and continues to exist. Some people say that there is nothing left after a person dies. This is a serious misconception. Consciousness does not perish and continues to exist. Just like when you fall asleep at night, and you dream. When you dream, you also go into a state where you enter a certain place and do certain things. You also have feelings. You might even laugh, cry, or feel sad, but your body hasn’t moved at all. Why? It is because after you fell asleep in your own bed, your consciousness has gone somewhere else.

After a person dies, their consciousness floats in boundless space. They have no form and are not impeded by anything. When the consciousness encounters a mountain, they can go right through the mountain. When they encounter an empty space, they can instantly levitate to that space. When they encounter an ocean, they can walk on water. They cannot be obstructed by anything. But they do not know that they have already died, because they are dull-minded in that time. After one to three days of being in such a state, they will suddenly realize that they have already died. They then think:

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<sup>3</sup> “Intermediate state” is “antarābhava” in Sanskrit, “bar-do” in Tibetan, also called the “transitional existence.”

<sup>4</sup> “Mind consciousness” is “manovijñāna” in Sanskrit, “意識” in Chinese.

“Something isn’t right. Have I already died?” They begin to wonder. At that time, they no longer feel pain when they pinch themselves. They no longer have anything. So, they start to panic. When they go home to look around, they realize that they can no longer return to their body. Their body has become a corpse and the blood in the corpse has already congealed.

At this time, they can see their family members. They call out to them, but their family member cannot hear their call. They see that their family members are very sad, but their family members are unable to hear or see them. Then, as time goes by, their transmigration will soon begin. That is to say, their karmic force gradually emerges. When their karmic force fully emerges, the realm where they will go is contingent on their state of mind. If their mind is full of hatred, they will be transmigrated to the realm of hatred. If their mind is full of greed and they crave the things that belong to other people, or if their mind is filled with cruelty, they will be transmigrated to the hungry ghost realm. This is how living beings are transmigrated to other realms. If their mind is full of goodness and kindness, they will be transmigrated to the realm of the heavenly beings. They will go to the heaven realm to be with God.

There are many different realms. Just now I said that there are six realms, but I didn’t talk about each of those realms. I don’t want to go into too much detail. Imparting Dharma with too much detail will confuse you.

Here is another situation: When people with rather light karmic force enter the intermediate state, they know immediately that they have died. It doesn’t take them a few days to realize that. Some people know instantly that they have died, and they immediately start practicing Dharma. Once they enter the intermediate state, they start practicing Dharma. That’s how they can quickly transmigrate to one of the upper realms.

Some people know the moment they have died. Some may take a few hours, one or two days, several days, or even dozens of days before they realize it. The time it takes for each person to realize that they have died varies. It is based on the qualities of who they are due to what they have

done, as well as the good karma, sinful karma, and various kinds of karmic forces they have generated. Those are their qualities. Do you understand?

From the perspective of the truth, whether a person returns to this world, or goes to another world, is not up to them. Their karmic forces will cause them to be transmigrated to one of the realms during the intermediate state. In Buddhism, Buddha Dharma can completely and definitively resolve this. Through learning from Buddha to cultivate yourself, and by learning and practicing Dharma, you can control your own death and rebirth, and control where you will go. That involves learning from Buddha. It also involves learning Dharmas. The Dharmas were all imparted by Shakyamuni Buddha when the Buddha was in this world. Buddhism is meant mainly for resolving these problems for living beings: Enabling living beings to become liberated from the cycle of birth and death, as well as removing the pain and suffering of living beings. Buddhas and Bodhisattvas come to this world for no other purpose than to help pitiful living beings, to save them, and to enable them to attain liberation and accomplishment.

I have a suggestion for you. It would be best for you to read the English translation of my ***Imparting the Absolute Truth Through the Heart Sutra*** 藉心經說真諦. Make good effort to read it several times, then you will understand the truth in Buddha Dharma. The translation will be completed as soon as possible, so that it can be published. Why has it taken so long? Because the translation must be done as responsibly for English-speaking people as for everyone else. It must not be done in a sloppy manner. The translation must be done rigorously to avoid misinterpretation.

You asked where you will go after you die if you will not be returning to this world. I have made it very clear to you. By learning from Buddha to cultivate yourself, you can go wherever you want. There was an eminent Buddhist practitioner, Dharma King Gar Tongstan 祿東贊法王, who was my disciple. When he decided upon his time to pass away, he immediately wrote me a farewell letter to pay final respects. When he finished writing the letter,

he added this sentence: “I will pass away in the state of liberation before this ink dries.” He meant that he would pass away in the state of liberation even before his letter’s ink had dried. The moment he put down his pen, he passed away and went to the Buddha Land.

Another thing is, you must believe that not everyone in this world is very evil. No. There are very evil people, and there are also very good people. For example, the people sitting here are all very kind-hearted. Nonetheless, there are definitely too many evil people. I have a European American disciple. One day, he told me he was going to help somebody and needed to find an attorney. He had made a few phone calls, but the attorney hadn’t answered the phone. He told me what happened and said: “Buddha Master, this is no good. I have to find another attorney.”

I asked him why. He said: “I have called three times in three days during office hours. But no one has answered the phone. That means this is not a proper law office, at least, there is no office staff.” He contacted another attorney and told me that one was no good either, because that attorney conducted business over his cell phone and didn’t even have an office. He said that was awful. I asked him why that was awful. He said that he suspected they were both swindlers. I said, “How can there be so many swindlers?” His reply was just like what you were saying: “Buddha Master, there are so many swindlers.”

I stared at him wide-eyed and asked him, “Is this true?” He said, “Yes, there are many of them.” This disciple used to work in the Department of Homeland Security. He said to me, “Buddha Master, there are so many cheaters.” That’s why I feel his words are similar to yours: “There are many evil people.” What you have said makes a lot of sense. In this world, people really need to quickly learn Buddha Dharma. Because in Buddha Dharma, everything is about loving-kindness and compassion; everything is aimed at helping living beings and benefitting living beings in all possible ways. Of course, by doing so, you will receive even more in return, because by being

kind, you will have planted good causes. You will have accumulated good fortune and wisdom.

(Translator: He said that perhaps after several thousand years, humanity will change for the better.)

That will depend on the development of causality. If there are more evil people, it will be worse for humanity. If there are fewer evil people and more good people, and if Buddhism flourishes in the world, humanity will definitely change for the better. At the present time, there are many truly evil people in all walks of life.

What I want to say today is, I have also experienced the things that you have said. It's true, this society is quite awful. Many people are very evil. But there are also very good people.

These are, more or less, the truths that I am telling you today. But you must read my book ***Imparting the Absolute Truth through the Heart Sutra***. This will enable you to take many shortcuts.

(Translator: He and his wife hope that they can present a very small and insignificant gift to the Buddha Master. This is Canadian ice wine from Toronto, Ontario. This ice wine is really good, and it is not sold in regular wine stores. He hopes that this is an appropriate offering to the Buddha Master. They like this wine very much.)

First of all, thank you very much. Secondly, I must sincerely tell you that I do not accept offerings from anyone. All you have to do is to learn from Buddha to cultivate yourself and be a good person, then you can attain accomplishment in this lifetime and truly attain liberation and have control over your own death and rebirth. That will be the best gift you can give me.

(Translator: They want to say that this is not a big gift. This is just to express their regards. They hope that Your Holiness the Buddha will accept it.)

I know. Whether the gift is big or small, my vow is that in this lifetime, I will only help everyone and serve everyone. I don't want money from anyone, and I don't accept gifts from anyone. This is the vow that I have made. I don't want to break my vow. I have a suggestion. See if you would like to do this: Since you have brought this wine and you have come here with Cuomu 措母, go with her to a restaurant and drink it. Would you like to do that?

Here is another suggestion: I want you to feel happiness in your hearts. You can bring a small glass of the wine back to me. I will use that to pray for you and bless you. Would you like that?

(Translator: They ask whether the Buddha Master would like to use red wine or white wine. There are two kinds, red and white.)

Either one is fine. It doesn't matter. As long as you are happy, I will be happy.

You must read *Imparting the Absolute Truth Through the Heart Sutra*. After reading it, you will understand many truths in Buddhism. There is one more thing: Develop your Dharma-listening Center in Toronto well. In the future, after you have accumulated adequate merit, I will transmit Dharma to you. I will transmit the best Buddha Dharma to you and your wife. I will definitely enable the both of you to learn the true Tathagata Dharma in this lifetime, so that you will attain liberation from death and rebirth, help and benefit many more people, and enable more evil people to become good people.

(Translator: He beseeches the Buddha Master to bless his wife, his son, and his family members.)

Yes, I will. I will definitely do that. Whatever I can do for you to benefit you and help you, I will do my best.