

Venerable Master Chin Kung: How to become rich? How to gain social status? How to become intelligent? How to gain wisdom? How to have good health? How to have a long life?

There are two types of karma determining our lives in this world. This first type is directing karma. It directs us to be reborn in one of the six realms. This karma is called directing karma. We were reborn in this realm, for example, we are now in the human realm, our directing karma is the same. What is the directing karma (of us being reborn in the human realm)? It is (practising) the Five Precepts and the Ten Good Deeds. In China, before Buddhism was brought to China, what was the directing karma for us Chinese? It was (practising) the Five Fundamental Human Relationships, the Five Constants and the Eight Virtues. They are very similar to the Five Precepts and the Ten Good Deeds in essence.

Let us also look at other ethnic groups in the world, look at the teachings of their ancient sages. You see, in their scriptures there is mentioning of the Five Precepts. Although they do not (necessarily) mention alcoholic drinks, almost all of them mention no killing, no stealing, no sexual misconduct and no lying. This means that being reborn into the human realm has a factor. Since we have come to the Earth and gained the human body, all of us definitely share the same directing karma. In our previous lives we practised quite well, we truly practised no killing, no stealing, no sexual misconduct and no lying.

However, after we were reborn in this world, there are great differences between individuals' wealth, social status (and other aspects). This is the result of the other type of karma, and it is called filling karma. Speaking of the two types of karma, our directing karma is the same, but our filling karma is different. What is filling karma? The Buddha taught us that filling karma is the result of us practising good or bad deeds. Amongst the result of practising good deeds, the Buddha clearly explained that our (good) filling karma include wealth, intelligence and wisdom, good health and long life. These are the three main categories (of filling karma). The causes of these three categories, the Buddha taught us, are three types of giving.

Why are some people super rich? It is because they practised wealth giving in their previous lives. They liked giving, they liked helping the poor. As a result, they have a huge amount of wealth in this life. They were very happy when they gave (in previous lives). Consequently, they can gain wealth without much effort (in this life). Money comes to them like flowing water. Why are some people poor? It is because they did not practise wealth giving. They were even very stingy and greedy, and practised all sorts of bad deeds. Speaking of the bad deeds, these people wittingly or unwittingly got in the way of other people's material life and social status in previous lives. So, in this life they experience poverty, very low social status and many unfavourable situations in life. So, the consequences came from these causes.

Intelligence and wisdom are the result of dharma giving. What is dharma? It is what we know, be it skills or abilities. We really like teaching others. (For example) I know how to cook. Whenever I meet someone, I teach them how to cook. This is dharma giving. I know how to make clothes and really like teaching others how to do it. So long as other people like learning it, I am very happy to teach them. These are all dharma giving. What is dharma? It is method. If we know a method, we teach it to others. Dharma giving results in intelligence and wisdom.

The third type is called fearlessness giving. When someone is horrified, anxious and needs help, you can help them resolve their fear and gain peace. This type of giving is called fearlessness giving. Chinese Buddhism chose to go vegan. Going vegan is fearlessness giving. You see, animals, if you do not kill animals and you love them, they are very happy to see you (because they know) you will not harm them. The consequence (of fearlessness giving) is good health and long life. Animals are also

very sensitive. You see, birds and other animals would run away when they see those who kill animals or eat animals. Why? Because these people have an aura of killing.

The atmospheres they generate are of killing. The Chinese call it killing aura. Animals are horrified and anxious. So, they run away. (But) those who are loving and compassionate, who raise and look after animals, the atmospheres they generate are good. Wild animals would go to them when they signal to the animals. Sometimes we see wild squirrels. We hand out food, such as peanuts, to them and wave at them, they will come to us. So, animals are very sensitive. They are very clever, but not foolish.

Speaking of practising the three types of giving, the bigger the scale of giving is, the more influential the giving will be and the longer it will last. So, good fortune resulted from these three types of giving will be huge. In China there was a person who enjoyed all three types of good fortune to a great extent. So, we can deduce that he must have practised (the three types of giving) in more than ten previous lives. Had he not practised them for ten previous lives, he would not have accumulated that much of good fortune. Who was he? He was Emperor Qianlong (of the Qing Dynasty). He called himself the Old Man of Ten Perfections. He was the richest, very intelligent, of good health and had a long life. Amongst all Chinese emperors, his life was the longest. He had been on the throne for 60 years, plus four years of holding the ruling power after he passed his throne to his son. All these were the result of his practising the three types of giving. We must know this. If we do not practise (the three types of giving), then there is no way out.

Amongst the three types of good fortune, wisdom is the most important. It is all right if we do not have much of the other two types. People with wisdom do not do bad deeds. In other words, they do not debase themselves. So, they were reborn into a human body in this life and will continue to be reborn into a human body in their next life. If they have the opportunity to receive teachings of sages, teachings of the Buddha, they will be greatly elevated, and the good fortune resulted from that is too great to be enjoyed in the human realm.

But, if a person does not have wisdom, even though they have a long life and wealth, they will commit bad deeds if a single thought of theirs is wrong. And the bad deeds they commit will be severe and harm many people. If the bad deed has a lasting impact of a large scale, as mentioned in the part of the sutra that we are learning today, when their good fortune is completely spent and the end of their life arrives, the person will definitely be reborn in one of the evil realms and it will definitely be the hell realm.

Respectfully excerpted from 'The Essence of the Infinite Life Sutra', 2009, Lesson 10

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