

EIGHT AWAKENINGS OF GREAT BEINGS

The seventh awakening is “to cultivate wisdom.” It is to listen, contemplate, practice, and have realization.

The Buddha said, “Monks, if you have wisdom, you are free from greed. You will always reflect on yourself and avoid mistakes. Thus, you will attain liberation in the dharma I am speaking of. If you don’t have wisdom, you will be neither a follower of the way nor a lay supporter of it, and there will be no name to describe you. Indeed, wisdom is a reliable vessel to bring you across the ocean of old age, sickness, and death. It is a bright lamp that illuminates in the darkness of ignorance. It is an excellent medicine for all who are sick. It is a sharp ax to cut down the tree of delusion. Thus, you can deepen awakening through the wisdom of listening, contemplation, and practice. If you are illuminated with wisdom, even if you use your physical eyes, you will have clear insight. This is called ‘to cultivate wisdom.’”

The eighth awakening is not to be engaged in hollow discussions. It is to experience realization and be free from discriminatory thinking, with the thorough understanding of the reality of all things. It is called “not to be engaged in hollow discussions.”

The Buddha said, “Monks, if you get into hollow discussions, your mind will be scattered. Then, you will be unable to attain liberation even if you have left the household. So, you should immediately leave behind a scattered mind and hollow discussions. If you wish to attain the joy of serenity, you need to cure the sickness of hollow discussions. This is called ‘not to be engaged in hollow discussions.’”

These are the eight awakenings. Each awakening contains all eight, thus there are sixty-four awakenings. When awakenings are practiced thoroughly, their number is countless. When they are practiced in summary, there are sixty-four.

These are the last words of the Great Teacher Shakyamuni Buddha, the ultimate admonition of the Mahayana teaching. He said at midnight of the fifteenth day of the second month, “Monks, always endeavor wholeheartedly to search for the way of liberation. All things in the world, whether they are in motion or not, are insecure and bound to decay. Now, all of you be still and do not speak. Time is passing and I am going to cross over. This is my last admonition to you.” Without expounding dharma any further, the Buddha entered pari-nirvana.

All disciples of the Buddha should study this teaching. Those who don’t learn or know about it are not his disciples. Indeed, this is the Tathagata’s treasury of the true dharma eye, the wondrous heart of nirvana. However, there are many who do not know about this teaching, as there are few who have studied it. Many may have been confused by demons, and those who have few wholesome conditions from the past do not have the opportunity to see or hear this teaching.

In the Ages of True Dharma and Imitation Dharma, all disciples of the Buddha knew about this teaching and practiced it. But nowadays, less than one or two out of a thousand monks seem to know about it. How regrettable! The world has declined since those times. While the true dharma prevails in the billion worlds and the Buddha’s pure teaching is still intact, you should immediately practice it without negligence.

It is rare to encounter the buddha-dharma even in the span of countless eons. A human body is difficult to attain. A human body in the Three Continents of the world is preferable. A human body in the Southern Continent, Jambudvipa, is particularly so, as it can have the chance to see the Buddha, hear the dharma, leave the household, and attain the way. But those who entered nirvana and died before the pari-nirvana of the Tathagata could not learn and practice these eight awakenings of great beings.

Now you can see, hear, and practice these awakenings because of the merit of your wholesome conditions from the past. By practicing and nurturing these awakenings birth after birth, you can certainly arrive at unsurpassable enlightenment and expound these eight awakenings to all beings, just as Shakyamuni Buddha did.

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