

## **Meditation Master JinBodhi's Dharma Teachings**

# **Chanting for Our Mothers**

### **We are Too Busy to Stop, But We are Busy for Nothing**

You're fortunate to have the chance to meditate for seven consecutive days. In your life so far, no matter how old you are, have you ever taken a week to elevate the level of your mental state and to get to know yourself and the world? Other than perhaps at school, I believe most people haven't devoted focused time to this. All, through life, are busy; schoolchildren are busy, as are people in their twenties and those in their thirties, forties, fifties, sixties, even those in their seventies. Everyone is busy. But then we come to the moment of death, and we realize, we have been busy for nothing. We don't know why we have lived our lives so frantically. Therefore, we need to be clear on what is really important and meaningful so that we will not waste time on meaningless activities.

Some are eager to get rich, but it is true that sometimes the harder you try, the worse the odds, because blind hard work doesn't bring big money. It is better to take a break, for career development or to re-evaluate your life path. You should pause your busy life, calm down, think, and observe. When you re-enter the arena, you will be able to see what's important.

I find children who are playing video games and the designers of those games are quite clever. They know the key steps. For those unnecessary enemies, they create many trivialities to distract you from your main purpose to

consume your energy, reduce the number of your soldiers, and waste your time. A connoisseur knows to concentrate on a few important battles. But an inexperienced player might fight everywhere, gaining few points or even getting defeated. Taking time out to calm down, meditate, and chant is tremendously beneficial for your life.

Some of you don't take this class seriously. You have come because of your friends and don't feel a strong need to meditate. Whether you stay or go doesn't seem to matter much to you. But for serious practitioners, this opportunity is invaluable, a rare and precious chance.

### **Seven-day Meditation is Life Changing**

In my experience, seven days of meditation can potentially change your whole life. The change starts from now. Three days' learning will alter 30 years of your life; seven days' learning will change your whole life. Seven is a very auspicious number in astrology. Do you have any understanding of the number seven? So, three plus four makes seven? Smart. Six plus one also makes seven. Is that right? Four plus two makes seven, also. No? You forgot to add 'me' as a number! I see many hands waving. No, I'm not stupid! I correct my mistakes. The number seven is magical, like the famous Monkey King. I see many people can barely sit still, and they are laughing so hard at my jokes. Wonderful! Life is so wonderful. Really, seven days of meditation will change your life.

What I will give you during the retreat is information with secret codes. Whether you can decode it depends on your luck and karma. If you understand my message, it means you have accumulated enough good karma. Once you

understand my message, your life starts getting better. It will get so good that you will not believe it. It will exceed your expectations.

Your destiny is often expressed in numbers in fortune-telling. One ancient way of fortune-telling in China is the 'bone-touching method.' Have you ever heard of it? It goes like this: You pay the fortune-teller, then he says, "Give me your hand." He touches your hand and arm. By touching you, the fortune-teller claims to know how much your life is worth. He might say, "Your life is worth 1 kg of silver." A life worth just 1kg; what kind of a life is that? To the next person in line, he says, "Ah, your life is worth 7.5kg of silver." Then he touches the next client's arm and says, "Why, your life is worth 0.05kg of silver!" That client would be a tenant farmer, without money, a house, or land. He would likely be unmarried. He would have to work hard just to survive. Wealth would always elude him.

If we use numbers to express our expectations from life, say, you think your life is worth 3 million dollars, meaning you want to earn that amount. If this is your dream, to earn 3 million dollars, it indicates that you don't have three million dollars yet, right? If you have such a dream, what you have in your hands is likely less than \$30,000. But if you study hard here at the retreat, if you develop insights, you could earn more than 30 million dollars, more than you have ever dreamed of.

You may wonder why. This is the Buddhadharma. This is the secret in Zen. Also, this is linked to me: My name is JinBodhi, and *Jin* means gold in Chinese. Gold brings money. When you learn from me, money will find you. Of course, not every person named *Jin* is rich. You may know a *Jin* who is poor, and that's because he has not awakened. Many people beg for food while holding a golden bowl. Different people have varied views regarding this. Whether you get the

message depends on your karma. If you feel you are short of good karma, I'd like to teach you a method to make up for it. Does anyone know this method? It is generosity and cultivation. Another quicker way would be to attend classes taught by people like me. You will awaken by listening to what we have to say. Even if you are a slow learner, persistence will lead to success. Study hard, practice your skills, and you will improve.

### **Chanting for Our Ancestors Prevents Suffering and Calamities**

Let's return to the topic of our fate. What we presently experience, whether it is happiness, suffering, disease, calamity, financial pressure, or emotional ups and downs, is what we ought to experience. Even if you deny it, you're still experiencing it. Whether it should happen or not, it is happening. Whether you like it or not, it is happening. It is hard to explain logically. Is there a way to prevent it from happening? Yes, there is. And I know this way is effective.

The method is this: Pray for our ancestors, do good deeds on behalf of the people who gave us our DNA, pray for them, and transfer merits to them. Doing this also benefits our own personalities. Everyone needs to be grateful and return the received favors. Take our parents as examples. Our mothers work so hard for us, from pregnancy to giving birth, to breastfeeding and beyond. They are dedicated to caring for their children day and night.

You all look like capable adults, but when you were young, your life might have been endangered without your mother's constant care. A child often overlooks their mother's dedication, since the child lives daily in maternal care and love. This constant care and love doesn't seem to impress a person like a

helping hand offered by a stranger. We often take for granted something that has been readily available. And we don't give credit to such constant help. If a stranger has helped us, we're deeply touched. A blessed person should cherish everything and returns favors.

Even the animals, as I understand it, though I'm not an expert, the herbivore animals, such as deer, sheep, cows, animals with round hooves, kneel to suckle. Elephants do the same. Have you seen this in animal documentaries? A young animal must feed on mother's milk to grow; it cannot eat grass until it has reached a certain age. It kneels down to suckle milk from its mother, and this kneeling pose seems to express gratitude to its mother. The animals don't kneel to express gratitude toward their mother; their kneeling action is simply natural. As a human being, I believe our morality shouldn't sink below, but rather exceed, that of animals. We need to understand and express our gratitude for our mother's loving kindness of raising us up.

I remember a Chinese opera based on an old story: A young man ranked number one in the imperial exam. His mother lived in a rural area and was very poor. His success drew attention, and a high official's daughter fell in love with him. Just when he was enjoying his success in the imperial court, his mother came to find him. When he saw his mother dressed in rags and looking ugly and dirty, he was so embarrassed that he insisted he didn't know her.

Some bystanders couldn't bear to look on, and thought the young man was cold-hearted. They asked him to calculate the cost of his mother's milk. During that period in history, there wasn't much cow's milk produced in China. If a mother didn't breastfeed her baby, the baby would starve. The young man saw his fault, and he apologized to his mother. He realized that vanity had overtaken him and that he had lost the basic humanity of kindness. There is a Chinese

saying: A son is not ashamed of his mother's ugly appearance, and a dog doesn't abandon a poor owner. Many of us don't repay our parents enough.

I often contemplate this. My parents have both passed away, and I regret I didn't repay what they had given to me. What I did for them cannot be compared to the great love they gave me. They loved me unconditionally, yet I behaved selfishly and narrow-mindedly. Despite rising to Buddhahood, I cannot even be regarded as a good human being. This is how I feel. I hope you will draw lessons from this, and think about what you have done for your parents. Consider whether you have given your mother any sincere, unconditional gratitude, not vain, self-serving gratitude.

Some people buy extravagant birthday gifts for their mothers. They compete with others, asking, "What did you buy your mom for her birthday?" The gift must look good, serving as an advertisement of their worth as a daughter or son. We have all taken such hypocritical actions. And it is not the worst thing. Some people don't even do that. They think: "I'm married, have my own family to raise, and my life has little to do with my mother." This is how some people think. Do you want my opinion about these people? They are heartless.

Yes, this is what I think. How would you be able to make friends? Why do you cherish your spouse? On what basis? Is there any true love apart from bodily desire? When faced with a crisis, you would be the first to run off. It is hard to live with a heartless person, and don't pick such a person as a friend. If they can be heartless to their parents, how would they treat their friends? They will keep you as a friend only if they can use you. I hope my words make everyone think. You may feel hurt, but you need to be hurt by the thorn of truth.

Let me explain how your illnesses come into being, and why you have so many troubles and afflictions. First of all, you forgot to respect and love your parents. Many diseases and difficulties in life are caused by a lack of morality, filial piety, and fraternity. You are heartless, and you then experience ~~the~~ punishment even when your parents are still alive. After your parents have passed away, these negative results will increase. You may not agree with me immediately, but consider my words.

I'd like to speak briefly about how a person's facial features are linked to their circumstances. If a person's nose leans to the left, they may have lost their father at a young age. If their nose leans to the right, they may have lost their mother. If a woman's nose is obviously not in the middle of her face, she could have lost her husband when she was a young woman. Why do we have so much disappointment in life? Why do major life events show up on our faces? Do facial features reveal destiny? Those major life events will naturally affect the mapping of fate. If your own parents carry resentment toward you, how could your life be smooth and happy?

For instance, if your mother is ill, but you don't visit her, even though you have the time, maybe you prefer to spend time on your own enjoyment, you would make up an excuse. You may say, "I've lost my job, and I'm looking for another one, so I don't have enough money to visit you, Mom." Your lie will become reality. Another typical excuse is: "Dad, sorry you're sick, but I've broken my leg, so I cannot visit you." That liar will break a leg within three years. Believe it or not, I've seen this happen. I didn't read about this, I saw it first hand. I meet many people, and I receive information from everyone.

What we experience today is directly related to our ancestors, especially our parents. Sometimes siblings ask for favors to be repaid, but parents never

do. I know you have chanted a lot for your fathers during this class. Now, I ask you to chant for your mother. Chant with your sincere heart.

### **Mother's Loving Kindness is Often Taken for Granted**

For our own benefit, and to be a person with good morals, we need to be grateful to our parents. While chanting for our fathers, we thought of the good things our fathers did for us; when chanting for our mothers, however, we couldn't think of anything good our mothers did for us. Why? Because we have taken them for granted. From the day you were born, your mom always served you, feeding you breast milk or formula. She did so much for you. You have taken her for granted.

When a baby opens his eyes, he sees his mother feed him. A content baby knows his environment provides for him. It is easy to take this for granted. A lot of people only realize what they have lost when their mother passes away. Suddenly flooded by emotion, they are gripped by sadness. This is the blood tie. A mother goes through difficulty in order to raise her children. Yet, some people cannot even find the motivation to pray for their mothers. They don't feel it is necessary to chant seriously or to chant at all for them.

I don't know about your mothers, but I want to talk about mine. I'm from a very ordinary family in China. Neither of my parents went to school. My mother, in my memory, only did one thing: Work to serve her children. Thinking back, I was a lazy and playful child, didn't know about anything, and I feel regret about that now. What job did my mother do? I'm not sure what she did when I was a baby, but as I remember it, she was a loader and unloader on construction sites.



A very strong man, a man with big muscles, could carry two bags of construction materials. Some men could only carry one, not wanting to use up all their strength. My mother carried four bags on her shoulders. She didn't like hard labor, but she was afraid of losing the job. However, this kind of labor didn't pay much, very little pay. At that time, physical labor was low-paying. If a technician earned up to 200 Yuan, laborers like my mom could only earn 60 or 70 Yuan. Every day she came home wearing sweat-soaked clothes. The next morning she would still get up early to wake me up for my meditation practice. She slept only a few hours a day. After a quick lunch, she would nap on the ground, falling asleep instantly.

When money was scarce, she did what an average person would reject because of embarrassment. She bought a cart for 50 Yuan and used it to collect recyclable, reusable stuff from dumps. She sold this for a few Yuan. Qinghai, where we lived, is a high plateau, and its roads are hilly and uneven. It was even difficult to pull an empty cart on those roads, and she was no longer young. She suffered from severe coughing as a child, a result of permanent hunger. She often coughed even when she sat and did nothing. Yet, she did all those hard jobs to raise her children.

Her story may sound ordinary and dull. No matter what, she is gone. Normally, when I teach students to chant, to chant for their parents, I don't like to mention my mother. I believe that my mother worked so hard not because she loved hard labor, no, it was because she saw her children waiting for meals. But we, her children, only wanted to feed ourselves. In a few cases, we were so selfish that we didn't even leave any soup for her. But she still went to work, without blame or complaint. She didn't complain.

Even when she fell ill in old age, I never heard her complain. It is easy to tell other people's stories; I don't think I could do what she did, and if I tried, I would complain for sure. Whenever I bought her clothes, she was always delighted. However, the clothes I bought for her, she treasured too much to wear. Sometimes my brother didn't return home for a few days, and she was too worried to sleep at night. She would go to my Kung fu master and ask him to use his special power to tell his whereabouts. She would also go to a blind fortune-teller to ask if her son was in danger, and in what direction to look. Then she'd urge my father to look for him. She was like that.

For her son's safety, she would kneel on the brick floor, crying and praying to the Buddha, hoping her sincerity would move him and hoping the Buddha would bless her son and guide him home safely. She prayed and cried. She didn't know how to chant any Buddhist sutras, but she dedicated her total heart to the Buddha and Bodhisattva. My mother, she did so much. What I can tell you here is only a little.

Every mother loves her children absolutely; there's no doubt about it. The love is real and flows from a mother's heart to her children's. A mother loves her children more than her own life. All women like to look beautiful, but a mother always puts her desire for beauty after the needs of her children. Once a woman has a child, she puts her child's welfare first, herself second. Therefore, I hope we have such an opportunity here to self-cultivate and get to know the self. I only guide you in the door; the rest is up to you. On your mom's birthday, or if she's passed away, then on the anniversary of her death, and on your parents' wedding anniversary, or on festive occasions, visit your mom with gratitude and give her what she needs in the moment.

I regard this as a good way to return her loving kindness. It is not about how much money or material things you give her. It is about a true heart. The heart is open, like when we pray. If you have your own child, you know how parents love their children, checking every detail to ensure their children are happy. Parents sacrifice themselves, not fearing the toll of hard work on their youth. If necessary, they're ready to give their lives for their children. They don't hesitate to sacrifice themselves. They seem to see their children as extensions of their own lives, and they love them more than themselves. They dedicate their lives to their children's welfare. Such are parents. So, with regard to our DNA, the inherited karma, there's one way to change our karma, and that is to repay the love our parents gave us.

### **Our Mother is the Guanyin Bodhisattva in Our Life**

Our parents are the Buddha and bodhisattvas in our lives. Let me use a metaphor. In my life, Guanyin Bodhisattva has been protecting and guiding me like a mother. I think if you want to change the situation of your life, if you want to be healthier and happier, have a harmonious family and a successful career, and have everything you wish, including improvement in the areas you feel you need, then use this method: Imagine your own mother as the Guanyin Bodhisattva.

In fact, our mothers are like bodhisattvas in our lives. Our parents, regardless of their jobs or social status, regardless of how others perceived them, gave us love that was absolutely pure, real, and unconditional. Sometimes it happens that, for instance, a younger brother has become wealthy, and his older brothers or sisters want a share of his fortune. So, they remind him of the favors

they did for him, say, how they saved his life when he was seriously ill. And they indicate that it is time for those favors to be returned. Is it right?

However, parents are not like this. When their children need help, they give everything to help them. Once their children become successful, they don't demand anything back. They don't try to calculate the effort it took to raise you, or how much that effort is worth now. No, normally parents don't do this. Your siblings might want something back from you, but your parents won't.

Now for the sake of ourselves, let's chant for our mothers, who gave birth to us, who have dedicated their lives to us; let's chant and pray for them, praying for the mothers who are still alive - that they will be healthy, happy, and beautiful. May they live long. Let's pray for them in front of the Buddha. Let's offer incense to the Buddha on their behalf. Let's light a candle in front of the Buddha for them. May their lives be filled with light, no darkness, no coldness, no fear, and no worries. Our mothers are like Guanyin Bodhisattva to us. We should pray to Guanyin, and visualize our own mothers as the Guanyin Bodhisattva. Whatever you want for your mother, pray for her to have it. Let's pray for our mothers; may they receive all wonderful things on Earth.

In the past, we may have failed to be attentive to our parents, didn't bring them flowers, didn't hug them or say, "I love you." Chinese people are shy about saying, "I love you." Perhaps we have never brought them a present. Never. After we got married, we might have bought them gifts out of vanity, to show off. Conversely, our parents' love has never been fake. I hope you understand now that our parents must be happy before we can be better off ourselves.

Let's pray for our mothers; may they be surrounded by everything wonderful. For those mothers who have passed away, may they rise to the Eastern Pure Land of Lapis Lazuli, forever free of affliction and death, where all

their needs will be met, and everything is perfect. As long as you pray sincerely in front of the Buddha and bodhisattvas, everything is possible. As a daughter or son, before you came here today, how often have you focused on your mom's well-being? How many times have you expressed your love to her? How many times have you talked to her tenderly? Ask yourself. No matter what your answer is, the past has passed; let's start from now. If our mothers can receive blessings from the Buddha, we will be better off. This kind of chanting works best with sincerity; the more sincerity, the better.

Our mothers have always seen us as their children, from our infancy into adulthood. No matter how old we become, to our parents, we're still their children. And our mothers never stop caring for us. When we were babies, if our mothers had left us alone for two hours without a reliable babysitter, we may have gotten hurt or died. Now that we have become parents, we feel deeply what our parents felt. During pregnancy, and especially after the baby is born, mothers cannot sleep through the night, and we know that lack of sleep adds to the wrinkles on the face. Some people's mothers have already passed away, leaving them no chance to return the favor in conventional ways. What a pity! By the time they understand this, their parents have already passed away. Let's start chanting and praying silently.