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Essence of the Infinite Life Sutra - Venerable Master Chin Kung



EXCERPT ELEVEN

I will constantly use compassion to uproot [the misery of] sentient beings and to awaken the boundless beings who are suffering.

“Constantly” refers to time, and “boundless” refers to space. Time and space cover all manner of beings. Amitabha Buddha, out of great compassion, wants to teach and help all the beings in all the Dharma Realms.

EXCERPT TWELVE

If one wholeheartedly seeks the Way and ceaselessly makes focused and diligent progress, one will surely attain Buddhahood.

There is no wish that one cannot fulfill.

It is difficult to attain the Way. When one can attain what is difficult, one can surely attain everything else. But one must first know the principles and methods of seeking. The principles lie in the word “wholeheartedly.”

“Wholeheartedly” means having a true sincere mind, that is, one with the utmost sincerity. Mr. Zeng Guofan[14] once said, “Not having a single thought arise is called sincerity.” Master Huineng said, “Originally, there was nothing at all.” This describes the true mind. If one seeks the Way with this mind, one will attain what one seeks because everything in the world is generated by the true mind.

Buddhas and bodhisattvas have extraordinary powers and can make boundless treasures appear. Why is it that they can do so but we cannot? Because their minds are the true mind and ours are the false mind. The true mind can create [everything]. Everything in the Ten Dharma Realms is created by the true mind. The Mahayana sutras say, “All phenomena are created by the true mind and altered by the consciousness.”

The beings in the Western Pure Land make food and clothing appear at will. This is because their minds are pure. A pure mind is the true mind. Today, we have numerous wandering thoughts, afflictions, worries, and concerns—we do not have the true mind. The “wholeheartedly” is important.

Learning and practicing Buddhism is nothing other than letting go of wandering thoughts, discriminations, and attachments. When one does so, the true mind will manifest. It is true that “in Buddhism, every wish can be fulfilled.”

“Ceaselessly make focused and diligent progress”—this is how one should seek. When one makes progress, one will not go backward. “Focused” means heading in one direction and towards one goal. Be it Buddhism or worldly pursuits, one will surely succeed in one’s seeking. There are many Buddhist practitioners who seek progress in their cultivation but have little success. What is the reason? They learn too many things, and the things they learn are too varied. They are not making focused and diligent progress; instead, the progress they make is unfocused. This is why their efforts are to no avail.

There are many sutras. From the aspect of principle, every method is number one. All methods are equal, and no one method is superior or inferior to another. But from the aspect of phenomena, every person’s capacity, intelligence, and living environment differ. They find some methods easier to learn and practice, and others harder. Hence, the question of easiness or difficulty does not lie in the methods. It lies in a person’s capacity and living environment.

The Buddha-name chanting method is suitable for everyone to learn and practice regardless of one’s capacity. Other methods such as Zen meditation and Tibetan Buddhism are not as easy for one to learn and practice. The Buddha-name chanting method is simple and convenient. It does not matter whether one has a Buddha image at home or if one has flowers to offer. Everyone can learn and practice. This method does not emphasize appearances or learning environment. It is the most convenient method.

Everyone has a different capacity. If one forces oneself to learn an unsuitable method, one will have a difficult time. But if one learns a method that one is interested in, then the learning will be easier. Will one be able to attain rebirth in the Western Pure Land if one practices another method? Yes, one will. It is clearly stated in the Infinite Life Sutra that if a practitioner of another method dedicates merits to be reborn in the Western Pure Land, he or

she will attain rebirth there. From this we can see that Amitabha Buddha did not say that one has to learn the Infinite Life Sutra and mindfully chant “Amituofo” to achieve rebirth in the Western Pure Land.

Regardless of which method one learns and practices, one must be able to suppress one’s afflictions and vow to seek rebirth in the Land of Ultimate Bliss where one will be close to Amitabha Buddha. If one cannot suppress one’s afflictions, one will not be able to attain rebirth there. This is the true requirement.

As long as we grasp the principle of “focused and diligent progress,” we will surely achieve in our practice. Ancient accomplished practitioners said that mastering one is more important than studying many. It is also said, “When one masters one sutra, one naturally masters all sutras.” If we want to have a deep understanding of the Buddhist Canon, what should we do? Should we learn many or delve deeply into one method?

Historically, many of those who delved deeply into one method achieved in their learning and practice. Of those who learned many methods, very few succeeded in their cultivation. Those who learned a variety of methods and succeeded were exceptionally talented. People who have a medium or low capacity do not have the ability to learn many methods and succeed.

Therefore, we should delve deeply into one method.

If one “ceaselessly makes focused and diligent progress, one will surely attain Buddhahood. There is no wish that one cannot fulfill.” If we understand the principles and methods, we will be able to fulfill any wish. Be it academics, one’s work, or a Buddhist practitioner’s cultivation, applying this principle and method will lead to complete success.

It will not be hard to accomplish any undertaking in this world or beyond if we have a sincere mind. What makes it difficult is our deviated thoughts. Obstacles are created by us. Indeed, “no phenomena exist outside the mind; the mind does not exist outside any phenomena.” We must understand this.

[14] 1811-1872. An eminent government official, military general, and Confucian scholar of the Qing dynasty.—Trans.

Web link to the article: <http://www.purelandcollege.org.au/page65.html>

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