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Essence of the Infinite Life Sutra - Venerable Master Chin Kung



EXCERPT THIRTY

They are good, pure, and gentle. They abide in quiescent concentration and are wise in perception. “Good” refers to honesty and simplicity. Good and “pure” describe mindset. Good refers to good fortune; pure, to wisdom. When one has both good fortune and wisdom, one has true merit. “Gentle” describes attitude: gentle, kind, respectful, thrifty, and humble.

This sentence tells us what attitude we should have when interacting with people and engaging in tasks. It also shows the true benefit of the Buddha’s teaching.

“Quiescent concentration” refers to a pure mind; externally, behavior is composed. As stated in the sutras: “Naga^[30] is constantly in meditative concentration. There is not a time when it is not.” Every movement and every action is composed and dignified, just like in meditative concentration.

“Wise in perception” is a pure mind in function. It is also wisdom coming forth—the mind is bright, and one is clear about everything in the external environment. Therefore, “abide in quiescent concentration and are wise in perception” means the mutual cultivation of meditative concentration and wisdom. One has meditative concentration and wisdom.

Letting go of all worldly concerns and single-mindedly chanting the Buddha-name—this is cultivating meditative concentration. In addition, this is also cultivating good fortune and wisdom. As Great Master Ouyi said,

single-mindedly chanting the Buddha-name will “bring ample good roots and good fortune.” “Ample good roots” is wisdom. “Ample good fortune” is good fortune. Therefore, mindfully chanting “Amitufo” is cultivating both good fortune and wisdom.

Sakyamuni Buddha praised Amitabha Buddha’s light as “the most exalted of all lights and the most supreme of all Buddhas’ [lights].” Light signifies wisdom. “The most exalted of all lights” means the most exalted wisdom. “The most supreme of all Buddhas’ [lights]” signifies that of all Buddhas, Amitabha Buddha’s wisdom and good fortune are the greatest.

Therefore, if Buddha-name chanting practitioners sincerely chant “Amitufo,” they will receive a response from Amitabha Buddha. As it is said, “When one accords with Amitabha Buddha in a single thought, one is Amitabha Buddha in that thought.” “When one accords with Amitabha Buddha in a single thought” means Amitabha Buddha’s wisdom and good fortune become one’s own wisdom and good fortune.

When one mindfully chants “Amitufo” for a long enough time, one will merge with Amitabha Buddha and become one. This is why Buddha-name chanting practitioners attain inconceivable achievements in a short time. “Abide in quiescent concentration and are wise in perception”—these are achieved through Buddha-name chanting.

[30] A class of serpent-like beings in Hindu and Buddhist mythology. They are said to live in the underworld and inhabit a watery environment. Frequently considered to be benevolent, they also believed to act as guardians of hidden Mahayana texts. The philosopher Nagarjuna is said to have been given many scriptures by them, such as the Prajna-paramita Sutras.— Damien Keown, *Oxford Dictionary of Buddhism* (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2003) 185.

EXCERPT THIRTY ONE

Their bodies and minds are pure. They have no craving or greed.

“Their bodies and minds are pure.” The mind is the master. When the mind is pure, the body will be pure. But the body can also affect the mind. The Buddha taught us that our behavior should accord with the precepts and proper codes of behavior. The purpose is to help us nurture good habits in daily life—so that the mind will naturally be calm.

“They have no craving or greed.” Of the Twelve Links of Dependent Origination, craving, grasping, and becoming[31] are the causes of one’s transmigration within the Six Paths. When one eradicates any one of the three, one will transcend the Six Paths. Craving is delusion, grasping is attachment, and becoming is karma. If one cannot eradicate craving or greed, one should eradicate grasping. If one cannot eradicate grasping either, then one can only try to eradicate becoming, but this requires advanced cultivation.

When Buddhas and bodhisattvas manifest in this world, they act the same way as we do. For example, Living Buddha Jigong, who was very well known to Chinese people, seemed to have craving and attachment. So how did he succeed in his cultivation? Because he did not have becoming. This was a very advanced achievement! We ordinary people cannot eradicate grasping or becoming, so we can only try to eradicate craving and greed.

When we have craving, we will have anger. When we have greed, we will be filled with greed, anger, ignorance, and arrogance. Greed is the root. When greed is uprooted, our afflictions will all disappear and the mind will become pure. When the mind is pure, the body will be pure. Ordinary beings can achieve this.

No craving or greed; pure are the mind and body. With this foundation, and with belief, vow, and the mindful chanting of the Buddha-name to seek rebirth in the Western Pure Land, we will definitely be reborn there.

[31] These three are called Trishna, Upadana, and Bhava in Sanskrit.—Trans.

EXCERPT THIRTY TWO

Steadfast and unmoving are their vows. . . . They [bodhisattvas] seek the Way in a gentle and correct manner. . . . They are pure, firm, calm, and joyous.

“Steadfast and unmoving are their vows.” “Steadfast” refers to a calm mind. “Unmoving” means that they are set on one direction and one goal. Great Master Shandao said that if one seeks understanding, then one can learn any sutra. But if one wants to achieve attainment in cultivation, one can only succeed by delving deeply into one method. Therefore, cultivation is different from seeking understanding.

In today’s society, we should focus our energy on practice. This is the way to success. When the mind is focused on one method, one will realize the truth and be at peace.

“They seek the Way in a gentle and correct manner.” “The Way” signifies an impartial, upright mind. In the sutra title, the words “purity, impartiality, and enlightenment” convey the meaning of “gentle and correct.” “Gentle” signifies the Middle Way—not too fast and not too slow. “Correct” means according definitively with the Buddha’s teachings.

For example, we mindfully chant the Buddha-name and seek rebirth in the Western Pure Land. We have deep belief and we sincerely vow. This is “steadfast and unmoving are their vows.” In daily life, we learn and practice based on the principles and methods taught in the sutras. This is “correct.” Our learning and practice will not go wrong.

“They are pure, firm, calm, and joyous.” When we learn and practice according to the principles and the methods, we will naturally have a pure and calm mind, and be filled with Dharma bliss. We will have a happy and perfect life. These are the wondrous benefits that we will get now.

Web link to the article:

<http://www.purelandcollege.org.au/page86.html>

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