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Essence of the Infinite Life Sutra - Venerable Master Chin Kung



EXCERPT FORTY SIX

People in this world are indecisive and indolent. They are unwilling to do good deeds, be disciplined in their behavior, or cultivate [proper] karmas. They disobey their parents and rebel against their teachings. They are like foes to their parents, who may as well not have them as children. They are ungrateful, go against ethics, and do not repay kindness shown to them. They are dissolute, fool around, and indulge excessively in alcohol and good food. They are rash, overbearing, and contradictory, ignorant of the ways of the world. They have no sense of righteousness or propriety, and cannot take advice or guidance.

“People in this world are indecisive and indolent.” “Indecisive” means that the mind does not have a stand and has no direction. “Indolent” means laziness and the seeking of momentary comfort and pleasure.

If one wants to accomplish an undertaking, whether mundane or supramundane, the first requirement is to have an aspiration. This serves as the direction and goal for one’s lifelong effort. Some people seek fame and become famous. Some people seek gains and they acquire them. Why? Because they concentrate on one goal. It is the same with cultivation. There are many Buddhist schools and methods but one can delve deeply into only one.

Great Master Shandao said that if one wants to seek understanding, one can use teachings from various schools as reference, but for cultivation, one must choose only one Dharma door. One can know various paths but can

walk only one. One cannot walk two paths at the same time. Therefore, to reach one's goal there must be only one method of cultivation. This is the principle.

All Buddhas urge people to mindfully chant the Buddha-name and seek rebirth in the Western Pure Land. Why? Although there are many Buddhist schools and Dharma doors, they are all different in degree of difficulty. For example, the goal of Zen meditation is to enlighten the mind and see the true nature. But it is hard to see the true nature. Why can't one see the true nature? Because there are obstacles. What obstacles? Affliction of Views and Thoughts, Affliction of Dust and Sand, and Affliction of Ignorance. One must completely eradicate Affliction of Views and Thoughts as well as Affliction of Dust and Sand, and eliminate at least a part of ignorance before one can enlighten the mind and see the true nature.

When one mindfully chants the Buddha-name and seeks rebirth in the Western Pure Land, one will carry along one's residual karmas. It does not matter if one has not eliminated a part of Affliction of Views and Thoughts. This is why the Pure Land method is wondrous and why all Buddhas extol it greatly.

But being indecisive and indolent is a grave obstacle, regardless of which Dharma door one learns and practices. Even when one chants the Buddha-name, one will not be able to attain rebirth in the Western Pure Land.

"They are unwilling to do good deeds." Being able to practice virtuous conduct is good fortune. People in this world all seek wealth, wisdom, good health, and longevity. Can they get them? "In Buddhism, every wish can be fulfilled." If one knows the right principle and method and seeks accordingly, one's every wish will be fulfilled.

Wealth is a karmic result. Where there is a result, there must have been a cause. When one cultivates a cause, one will surely get the result. The cause of having wealth is giving. The more one gives, the more one will get. When one gives, one is planting a cause. When one gives naturally, one will get the result quickly, and in abundance.

Wisdom is a karmic result. Its cause is the giving of teachings. When one willingly and gladly teaches what one knows, whether worldly knowledge or Buddhism, and does not hold back anything, one will have more and more wisdom.

Good health and longevity are karmic results. The causes are the giving of fearlessness. When others have fear or difficulty, we help them or protect them so that they feel secure and are free of all fears. These actions are the giving of fearlessness. The most thorough and ultimate giving of fearlessness is nothing other than having a vegetarian diet. One does not eat the flesh of any being. One should not upset or harm any being. The karmic results are good health and longevity.

They are unwilling to "be disciplined in their behavior, or cultivate [proper] karmas." "Be disciplined in their behavior" means cultivating one's body and mind. "Cultivate [proper] karmas" means cultivating one's wholesome karmas.

"They disobey their parents and rebel against their teachings. They are like foes to their parents, who may as well not have them as children." The children defy their parents. They are like enemies to their parents, who feel that they would rather not have them as children. Such is the disappointment the parents have with their children.

"They are ungrateful, go against ethics, and do not repay kindness shown to them. They are dissolute, fool around, and indulge excessively in alcohol and good food." The children fail to show gratitude to their parents for their kindness in raising them. They do not provide for their parents. In addition, they "indulge excessively in

alcohol and good food.” This means that they are particular about their food. Being dissolute means that they do whatever they like. Fooling around means that they hate to do proper work; they like to eat and loaf about.

“They are rash, overbearing, and contradictory, ignorant of the ways of the world.” “Contradictory” means that they lose their temper and have conflicts with others. They do not know the ways of the world. They are obstinate, boorish, domineering, and unreasonable.

“They have no sense of righteousness or propriety, and cannot take advice or guidance.” They do not want to hear advice or accept good suggestions.

EXCERPT FORTY SEVEN

Between heaven and earth, the Five Paths are separate and distinct. Good retribution, bad retribution, good fortune, and misfortune intermingle continually with one another. One has to bear them alone. No one else can take one’s place.

“Between heaven and earth, the Five Paths are separate and distinct.” “Between heaven and earth” refers to the universe. In the universe, there are infinite planets where human beings and advanced living beings live. The entire Dharma Realm is a place of our activity.

“The Five Paths” refers to the Six Paths. Asuras are found in four paths—the heavenly path, the human path, the animal path, and the path of hungry ghosts—but not in the hells path. So, these paths are called the Five Paths as the asura path is not counted as an additional path. When we talk about the Six Paths, we are referring to these paths: heavenly, human, asura (this refers specifically to the heavenly asuras), animal, hungry ghosts, and hells. The Surangama Sutra talks about the Seven Paths, which are the Six Paths plus the path of immortals.

The heavenly path, the human path, the animal path, the path of hungry ghosts, and the hell path are the Five Paths that are separate and distinct.

“Good retribution, bad retribution.” This talks about the origin and the phenomena of the Five Paths. A virtuous mind and conduct will bring about rebirth into the heavenly or the human path. These are the good paths. An evil mind and conduct will bring about rebirth into the Three Evil Paths. Although people are in the human path, they are all different: there are those who are rich and those who are poor, those of high position and those of low position. This is because people have different individual karmas.

People born in the human path have the same shared karma. But in past lifetimes, they cultivated different goodness and good fortune. Those who cultivated great good fortune enjoy a good life in this lifetime. Those who cultivated little good fortune suffer many hardships and difficulties.

Causes and their resultant effects are very complex. Transmigration in the Six Paths is entirely the result of one’s good and bad deeds. If one’s physical, verbal, and mental karmas are virtuous, one will be reborn in the Three Good Paths. If the three karmas are bad, one will fall into the Three Evil Paths.

“Good fortune, and misfortune intermingle continually with each other.” There is good fortune in misfortune and misfortune in good fortune. Only a person with wisdom can clearly see this and adeptly make use of this.

An example of good fortune in misfortune is one who lives in poverty and is not sure when the next meal will be. As a result, this person feels that life is filled with suffering and wants to get out of this world—he or she lets go of

all worldly concerns, sincerely chants the Buddha-name, attains rebirth in the Western Pure Land, and eventually attains Buddhahood. Thus, this person has good fortune.

[The Buddha said:] “Discipline oneself with a hard life.” As a result, one will have no attachment to this world and will be even more earnest in seeking rebirth in the Western Pure Land and meeting Amitabha Buddha. Oftentimes, one obtains good fortune because of misfortune.

One who enjoys wealth and prestige in this world may chant the Buddha-name but this person’s every thought is still attached to the Saha world—thus causing the opportunity of attaining Buddhahood in this lifetime to slip by.

“One has to bear them alone. No one else can take one’s place.” No one can do these matters for us. Everyone must cultivate for themselves. We must understand this and practice diligently.

Web link to the article:

<http://www.purelandcollege.org.au/page109.html>

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