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Essence of the Infinite Life Sutra - Venerable Master Chin Kung



EXCERPT FORTY EIGHT

If in that environment, one can single-mindedly suppress one's thoughts, correct one's behavior and mind, have one's deeds match one's words, have one's actions be of the utmost sincerity, do only good deeds, and commit no evils, then one will be liberated and obtain virtues and good fortune from these.

"If in that environment, one can single-mindedly suppress one's thoughts." "In that environment" refers to today's evil world of the Five Corruptions, which is full of complications and vileness. The most important thing is to "single-mindedly suppress one's thoughts." All the evil thoughts must be subdued. This is where we start concentrating our efforts in our cultivation. What should we do when an evil thought arises?

The wondrous thing about the Pure Land method is the inconceivability of the merit of the Buddha-name. When an evil thought arises, we chant "Amitufo" to transform the evil thought into a thought of Buddha. We can also think about the wondrous merits of Amitabha Buddha or the various deeds of Amitabha Buddha, such as how he cultivated at the causal stage to establish the Western Pure Land to help all beings in the ten directions leave suffering forever behind and perfectly attain Buddhahood.

If we study the sutras well and concentrate on thinking about the magnificent direct and circumstantial rewards in the Western Pure Land, all wandering thoughts will cease. When we truly seek rebirth in the Western Pure Land and truly achieve in cultivation—when we are in this state—our every thought will be of Amitabha Buddha and

the Western Pure Land. We will undoubtedly attain rebirth there. This is the best way to “single-mindedly suppress one’s thoughts.”

One should “correct one’s behavior and mind.” “Correct” means being upright, and following etiquette and laws. We need to follow all the teachings of the Buddha and practice accordingly. “Correct one’s mind” means that at all times, in all places, and in all situations, our every thought never deviates from “Namo Amitufo.” This is having proper thought.

If we do not have proper thoughts, we have evil thoughts. When there is improperness, there is evil. When there is neither proper nor improper thought, we fall into *undefinable delusion*. Delusion is ignorance. The retribution is rebirth in the animal path. We will not be able to transcend the Three Evil Paths. Therefore, it is very important to correct one’s behavior and mind.

One should “have one’s deeds match one’s words.” One should not say one thing and mean another.

“Have one’s actions be of the utmost sincerity.” One should be sincere when interacting with beings, engaging in tasks, and handling objects. One should not be afraid of being deceived or being taken advantage of. If one is not willing to be taken advantage of or to be deceived now, one will continue to transmigrate endlessly in the Six Paths, life after life, to repay or collect debts.

One should only use the true mind. One should have the same regard towards all beings, situations, and objects as one has towards the Buddhas and bodhisattvas. This way, one is truly generating the bodhi mind. The bodhi mind is a sincere mind. Whether chanting the Buddha-name or contemplating the magnificent direct and circumstantial rewards and merits of Amitabha Buddha, one should maintain a sincere mind. Even in daily life, one should also use a sincere mind. This is “generating the bodhi mind and single-mindedly focusing on chanting.”

“Do only good deeds, and commit no evils.” Learning Buddhism is learning to be awakened and wise, and not to do foolish things. When we see others make mistakes, we should try to skillfully and expediently remind them, alert them, or advise them. When we do good deeds, we must do so earnestly and not fear that others will laugh at us or obstruct us. Good deeds are beneficial to society.

As to “commit no evils,” not only do we not do any evil deed, we should not even give rise to any evil thought.

“One will be liberated and obtain virtues and good fortune from these.” Who liberates whom? One liberates oneself. It is truly as stated: “The Buddha did not liberate the beings.” The Buddha only explained the truth to us. When we understand, we have to walk the path ourselves.

EXCERPT FORTY NINE

Trivial matters can develop into matters of great angst and extreme severity. This is all due to a desire for wealth, lust, and an unwillingness to give. Each one thinks of nothing but one’s own enjoyment and disregards what is right or wrong. Compelled by ignorant desires, people want to benefit themselves and compete for gains. During the time of enjoying rank and riches, they cannot endure insults and do not cultivate virtuous deeds. Power and influence will not last long and will soon disappear. The law of nature will prevail and will eventually set things right.

“Trivial matters can develop into matters of great angst and extreme severity.” This sentence is a general statement. “Trivial matters” refers to minor delusions. These will gradually become great evils if we do not awaken in time. Hatred very often starts as a very tiny, trivial grudge. In “great angst and extreme severity,” “angst” refers to tribulation and “severity” refers to harsh vengeance.

We should see through this and not take things to heart. If in our interaction with others we suffer minor unjustified treatment, we should not take it too seriously, get attached to it, or mind it. We should absolutely not harbor any thought of vengeance.

“This is all due to a desire for wealth, lust, and an unwillingness to give.” This points out the root cause of the predicament of the beings in the Six Paths. In many of our past lifetimes, we learned Buddhism, chanted the Buddha-name, and made offerings to and served infinite Buddhas. Why have we not been able to attain rebirth in the Western Pure Land? Because we cannot let go! After infinite kalpas of cultivation, we are unable to succeed, done in by wealth and lust. If we still cannot completely let go of them in this lifetime, we will continue to stay in the cycle of birth and death.

“Each one thinks of nothing but one’s own enjoyment.” One craves wealth. One is lustful. One does not practice giving. One fusses over one’s enjoyment.

One “disregards what is right or wrong.” One cannot tell proper from improper, right from wrong, and good from bad.

“People want to benefit themselves and compete for gains.” They are selfish. They scramble for fame and gain. “The time of enjoying rank and riches” cannot last forever. Moreover, when one depletes one’s wealth and prestige, evil karmas will come forth.

“They cannot endure insults.” If the rich and prestigious are moderate in their enjoyments and are frugal, their endurance will enable them to maintain their wealth. If they live thriftily and practice giving, their good fortune will last for a long time. Cultivating good fortune and accumulating merits while enjoying one’s wealth—this is the right thing to do. If they cannot restrain themselves and quickly deplete their wealth, their good fortune will soon be used up.

They “do not cultivate virtuous deeds.” When people are in an environment where they are enjoying a good life, it is very easy for them to be deluded and thereby lose their true nature. They cannot restrain themselves and are unwilling to do good deeds. They commit offenses.

“Power and influence will not last long.” The time during which they can dominate others is very short. It “will soon disappear.”

“The law of nature will prevail and will eventually set things right.” “The law of nature” refers to principles of morality. “Will eventually set things right” refers to the ways of the world. “Set things right” is commonly known as feeling the prick of conscience. In Buddhism, this is called consciousness.

Those who often do good deeds have minds and behavior that are virtuous. Those who often commit evil deeds have minds and behavior that are evil. Good deeds will bring about good retributions; bad deeds will bring about bad retributions. Retributions will occur naturally. They are not controlled by spirits, deities, God, Buddhas, or bodhisattvas. Karmic results take place naturally.

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