



美國波士頓行願淨宗學會 - 行願蓮海月刊 Amita Buddhism Society - Boston, USA

25-27 Winter Street, Brockton MA. 02302 歡迎流通, 功德無量

Tel & Fax: Brockton (508)580-4349 (508)646-8168

歡迎光臨: Welcome to <http://www.amtb-ma.org>

June 30, 2015

Essence of the Infinite Life Sutra - Venerable Master Chin Kung



EXCERPT THREE

Constantly, they used the Dharma sound to awaken all the worlds.

“Dharma” refers to methods and principles. The teaching in the previous two excerpts is for self-cultivation and self-benefit. The teaching in this excerpt is for benefiting others. When we benefit from our learning and practice, we should use the experience, through words and our examples, to help others achieve the same results we have.

“All the worlds” refers to the beings in the Nine Dharma Realms.

EXCERPT FOUR

[They] . . . cleansed dirt and pollution, and revealed cleanliness.

This excerpt is a metaphor. The purpose of our chanting the sutras and the Buddha-name is to cleanse the contamination in our character, thoughts, and views so as to “reveal cleanliness”— to restore a pure mind.

The full title of the Infinite Life Sutra is Buddha Speaks the Mahayana, Infinite Life, Adornment, Purity, Impartiality, and Enlightenment Sutra.

Purity, impartiality, and enlightenment are the guidelines for learning and practicing. What are we learning? We are learning to (1) cultivate a pure mind, (2) cultivate an impartial mind, and (3) be awakened and not deluded. Purity, impartiality, and enlightenment are one in three and three in one. The Pure Land school focuses on the cultivation

of a pure mind. When the mind is pure, the land will be pure. The connection between us and Amitabha Buddha of the Western Pure Land lies in a pure mind.

In the present age, pollution is an extremely serious problem. The whole world is urgently calling for protection of the environment. Scientists also warn that if the pollution on earth is not abated, then in fifty years it will not be a fit place

for the human race to live. From this we can see how serious pollution is.

Although many people try to reduce pollution, their efforts produce very little results. Why? Because they only know the phenomena—they do not realize the noumenon [the underlying root cause of pollution]. All the efforts for environmental protection provide only superficial solutions: they do not get to the root cause. What is the root cause? It is the polluted human nature—a polluted mind, polluted thoughts, polluted views, and polluted feelings. This kind of pollution is much more harmful than environmental pollution!

Twenty years ago, when I was at Mr. Fang Dongmei's home one day, two officials from the Department of Education happened to be there on a visit. At that time, the Taiwan government was promoting the revival of Chinese culture. An official asked Mr. Fang, "Is there a method that can revive Chinese culture?" Mr. Fang looked very serious and was silent for several minutes. Then he said, "Yes, there is." The officials happily asked him what the method was. He said, "The publication of all the newspapers and magazines in Taiwan must stop. All the television and radio stations must also shut down." Upon hearing this, they shook their heads. "Impossible!" they said. Mr. Fang explained, "Newspapers, magazines, and television and radio programs are polluting the human nature and destroying traditional Chinese culture every day. As long as these things exist, efforts to revive Chinese culture will be ineffective."

This is why I often urge Buddha-name chanting practitioners not to read newspapers and magazines or to watch television, in order to shield their pure mind.

EXCERPT FIVE

Their minds constantly and truly dwell on the Way to enlighten all beings.

The first of the Four Great Vows is “Sentient beings are innumerable; I vow to help them all.” Always having this thought is “the Way to enlighten all beings.”

This excerpt is about generating the bodhi mind—a mind that constantly abides by the Four Great Vows.

But before we can help others, we must first succeed in our practice. The Four Great Vows not only refer to a great bodhi mind, they also spell out the sequence for our cultivation and attainment. The vows are our guide as well as our driving force.

Cultivation should start with the eradication of afflictions. Following one teacher helps us eradicate afflictions. When we eradicate afflictions completely, Mara’s enmities are no more, and we accomplish meditative concentration and wisdom.

We next learn the boundless Dharma doors.

People today forsake the first two of the Four Great vows and start with the third one, “Dharma doors are boundless; I vow to master them all.” Many of them spend only a few days learning and then start telling others that they are incarnates of a certain Buddha or bodhisattva. This is complete nonsense. They are deceiving themselves as well as others.

In the past, when one started to learn Buddhism, one had to first learn the precepts for five years. The precepts refer to the teachings and rules set by the teacher. One had to spend at least five years learning from one teacher before one was able to achieve meditative concentration and wisdom. With this foundation [achievement of meditative concentration and wisdom], one was allowed to learn extensively. In the past, when life was much simpler than today, five years were required for following the teacher’s rules. Today, the living environment is very polluted, more than ten times what it was before. Therefore, if five years were required in the past, fifty years are required for learning the precepts today.

But if we tell everyone to do so for fifty years, then no one will want to learn Buddhism.

Therefore, it is best to mindfully chant “Namo Amitufo” unceasingly, and only after we meet Amitabha Buddha do we learn extensively.

Our cultivation of the Four Great Vows should be divided into two stages. Presently, we cultivate only the vows of “helping innumerable sentient beings” and “ending inexhaustible afflictions.” When we get to the Western Pure Land, we then cultivate the vows of “learning boundless Dharma doors” and “attaining supreme Buddhahood.” This is the correct sequence. If we start with cultivating the last two vows, this will obstruct our Buddha-name chanting practice. This is why it is a matter of immediate urgency to wholeheartedly chant “Amitufo” and seek rebirth in the Western Pure Land.

EXCERPT SIX

To all living beings they were friends, [who would help] without being asked.

When teaching all beings, the bodhisattvas have this vow of compassion: on their own accord, they become good friends to all beings. When we emulate the bodhisattvas, we should learn to perceive the suitable way and the right time to teach a being. If we do not help this being when the condition is mature, then we would be failing the being. By helping the being when the condition has not matured, we are courting a rebuff.

Every being is different in capacity; additionally, the condition for learning Buddhism is not the same for every being. If a being likes Zen meditation, let the being sincerely cultivate Zen meditation. If a being likes to recite mantras, let the being do so respectfully. All methods are equal, and no one method is superior or inferior to another. To accommodate people with different capacities, the Buddha taught many methods. If a method could help every being, then there would be no need for Sakyamuni Buddha to teach all these methods.

We Pure Land practitioners cannot make people practice the Pure Land method. When someone's condition has matured, we should voluntarily introduce Buddhism to help the person. There are many stages in learning Buddhism. As the person gradually advances in practice, he or she will naturally find the most direct route—the wondrous Pure Land method. Therefore, to help all beings skillfully and expediently, we should be patient.

Web link to the article: <http://www.amtb.cn/e-bud/Essence-of-the-Infinite-Life-Sutra.html>

Boston Amita Buddhism Society new website: <http://www.amtb-ma.org/>

Group Buddha Recitation Every Saturday and Sunday

For details please call ABS (508)580-4349 or email to amtb.ma@gmail.com