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Essence of the Infinite Life Sutra - Venerable Master Chin Kung



EXCERPT FORTY TWO

All kinds of beings in this world want to do evil. The strong overpower the weak, with both of them overwhelming and killing one another in turn. They cruelly harm and slaughter, and alternately devour one another. They do not know to do good deeds and will thus suffer misfortunes and punishments later. . . . [Karmic foes will] in turn take revenge on one another. . . . The suffering is beyond description.

This excerpt describes the saying "the weak are the prey of the strong." Is this statement true? No. What is true is that reprisal breeds reprisal. It would seem that the weak are to be eaten or dominated by the strong, but it is not so. The Buddha, who had perfectly realized the five kinds of eyes, [39] clearly saw the truth of transmigration within the Six Paths. He said that the beings in the Six Paths alternately take revenge on one another, lifetime after lifetime.

It is said, "A human dies and is reborn a sheep; a sheep dies and is reborn a human." In this life you are the human and you are stronger than the sheep; you kill and eat it. In the next life, the sheep becomes the human and you become the sheep; he will kill and eat you. Each one, in turn, pays back. This is "in turn take revenge on one another." Such agony!

The weak being the prey of the strong is an abnormal phenomenon. It is a malicious relationship—one of continual reprisals. In addition, when one takes revenge, one will not do it in the exact amount—one will overdo it a little. Therefore, the enmity will continue lifetime after lifetime without end and will never be resolved. The retributions will become more and more terrible.

The first part of The Complete Works of Zhou Anshi is Lord Superior Wen Chang Tract of the Quiet Way. In the first section, Lord Superior Wen Chang talked about seventeen of his lifetimes of karmic causes and effects. The retributions were terrible—truly horrifying. It is worthy of our vigilance.

We understand the truth, so we should feel empathy for all beings—we should love them, not harm them. What is the cause of wars in this world? The Buddha told us that it is killing. Therefore, if wars are to end forever, beings should not eat meat.

Years ago when I was lecturing in Taipei, there was an elderly lay practitioner, a Mr. Wu from Ningbo. He used to do business in Shanghai and started to learn Buddhism in his old age. He told me a true story that happened in Shanghai.

A friend of his, who was also a businessman, worked for a German before World War II. This friend was very honest, trustworthy, and hardworking. Therefore, the German businessman was very fond of him.

When the war broke out, the German businessman returned to his country and entrusted the company to Mr. Wu's friend, who ran it well. After the war ended, the German did not come back. It was said that he had died. Mr. Wu's friend ended up owning the company. Of course, he did not take it by force. It naturally became his because the owner died.

Mr. Wu's friend had a child. When the child was eleven or twelve, he dropped ten dollars (at that time, ten dollars was a lot of money) on the ground. An acquaintance of his father picked up the money and said, "Call me 'Uncle' and I'll give you back the ten dollars." The child retorted, "You call me 'Uncle' and I'll give you ten dollars."

That year, the father, Mr. Wu's friend, was fifty years old. At his birthday party, he suddenly saw that his child looked like his late German employer (the father alone saw this). Having started learning Buddhism, the father realized that his late employer probably was reborn in his family and became his son. There and then, he announced the transfer of all his property to his son. This was a very smart thing to do.

This story illustrates that a child is born into a family to collect debt, repay debt, repay kindness, or exact revenge. This is definitely true. The Buddha talks about the four kinds of karmic links that exist between parents and children. Those who come to repay kindness are filial children. Those who come to exact revenge hold grudges from past lifetimes and will cause families to break up and family members to die. Some come to collect debt. The son of Mr. Wu's friend is a good example. Some come to repay debt. These are the causes for those who are in the same family.

When a child is born into one's family, one needs to know to change—to transform bad relationships into Dharma relationships.

“They do not know to do good deeds and will thus suffer misfortunes and punishments later.” “Misfortunes and punishments” are the Five Sufferings and the Five Burnings. People in general know only to kill animals to satisfy their desire for food—they do not know the disastrous consequences of such actions.

Before Venerable Guanghua became a monk, he handled military supplies in the military. At that time, he was eating one chicken a day. That’s three hundred and sixty chickens a year—a thousand chickens after three years!

After he became a monk, he was diligent in cultivation and strictly abided by the precepts. He was well versed in the precepts and also wrote books. One day when he was taking a shower, he suddenly saw that the bathroom was full of chickens, and they were all trying to jump on him. When he tried to dodge them, he fell down, breaking his leg. He told me that as a result of learning Buddhism and observing the precepts, this was a light retribution for the grave offenses he had committed. From this we see how horrifying retributions can be. Had he not learned Buddhism, his retribution would have been even more terrible.

Therefore, we should make a vow that when we attain rebirth in the Western Pure Land and attain Buddhahood, we will first help those beings we have killed. “When I attain Buddhahood, you will be the first ones I help. Please do not cause trouble or obstruct me. If you obstruct me, I will not be able to succeed in cultivation, and you will continue to suffer in the Six Paths.”

The Dedication of Merit says “Repay the Four Kinds of Kindness above, and relieve the suffering of those in the Three Paths below.” In the Three Paths, the first ones to be helped are those who hold grudges against us.

When we encounter animals, we should mindfully chant the Buddha-name and dedicate the merit to them. It is quite usual to chant “Amitufo.” It is even better if we chant the Three Refuges. “Return and rely upon the Buddha so as not to be reborn into the hells. Return and rely upon the Dharma so as not to be reborn as a hungry ghost. Return and rely upon the Sangha so as not to be reborn as an animal.” We chant this to the beings in the Three Evil Paths. When we encounter animals, we can chant the Buddha-name and dedicate the merit to them, as well as chant the Three Refuges.

[39] The five kinds of eyes are human eye, heavenly eye, wisdom eye, Dharma eye, and Buddha eye.—Trans

Web link to the article:

<http://www.purelandcollege.org.au/page93.html>

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