



美國波士頓行願淨宗學會 - 行願蓮海月刊 Amita Buddhism Society - Boston, USA
25 Winter Street, Brockton MA. 02302 歡迎流通, 功德無量

Tel : 508-646-8168

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

August 31, 2015

Essence of the Infinite Life Sutra - Venerable Master Chin Kung



EXCERPT NINE

May I attain the pure sound of a Buddha and may my Dharma voice spread everywhere limitlessly, propagating the teachings of precept observation, meditative concentration, and diligence. May I thoroughly understand the profound, wonderful Dharma. May my wisdom be as vast and as deep as the sea. May my mind be pure, void of dust and toil. May I transcend boundless doors of the evil paths and quickly reach the shore of ultimate enlightenment. May I be forever free of greed, anger, and ignorance, and with the power of samadhi end all delusions and faults.

“May I attain the pure sound of a Buddha and may my Dharma voice spread everywhere limitlessly.” This is a magnificent vow of Amitayus Buddha. The purpose of being a Buddha is to universally help all beings. This is done by lecturing on the Dharma. This verse is even clearer than what Master Huineng said in the Platform Sutra, as it reveals the purpose of becoming a Buddha. We Buddhist practitioners should aspire to this.

We bring nothing with us at birth and we take nothing with us at death. Not fame, nor prestige, nor wealth, nor gain. If every day we wished for them, it would be very foolish of us. As the Diamond Sutra says: “All phenomena are illusory.” It also says: “All conditioned existences are like a dream, an illusion, a bubble, or a shadow.”

Therefore, we should constantly think about spreading the Dharma and benefiting all beings throughout all the Dharma

Realms. This way, we will be of the same mind, the same vow, and the same practice as all Buddhas without realizing it. We will definitely attain Buddhahood!

The words “propagating the teachings of precept observation, meditative concentration, and diligence” refer to the Six Paramitas that bodhisattvas cultivate, which are giving, precept observation, patience, diligence, meditative concentration, and prajna wisdom.

But only precept observation, meditative concentration, and diligence are listed here. They refer to the Six Paramitas, which are the practice of Mahayana bodhisattvas. If precept observation, meditative concentration, and wisdom were listed here, then this would be referring to the Three Learnings.

The words “thoroughly understand the profound, wonderful Dharma” mean “enlightening the mind and seeing the true nature,” as taught in Mahayana Buddhism. If one cannot thoroughly understand the profound, wonderful Dharma, one will not be able to help all beings extensively.

In this sutra, the sense of these words is more thorough, more complete. Based on the principles, method, and level of practice taught in this sutra, we can see that the profound, wonderful Dharma refers to this wondrous teaching of the Pure Land school: “This mind is Buddha, and this mind becomes Buddha. Enlighten the mind and reach the original nature. Mindfully chant the Buddha-name, attain rebirth in the Western Pure Land, and, without retrogression, attain Buddhahood.” This teaching is not found in any other Mahayana sutra. The words “the profound, wonderful Dharma” convey this meaning specifically.

The forty-eight vows open up the supreme Dharma door for us—this is completely the state of Tathagata at the attainment stage. This Dharma door teaches us to mindfully chant the Buddha-name and attain rebirth in the Western Pure Land. This is taking [Amitabha Buddha’s] rewards and making them our causes. Great Master Ouyi said that the sentient beings in the Nine Dharma Realms (bodhisattvas, sound-hearers, pratyekabuddhas, and the beings in the Six Paths) who rely on themselves alone cannot understand this. That is why this is “the profound, wonderful Dharma.”

The Avatamsaka Sutra and the Lotus Sutra are both wonderful Dharma. But when they are compared with the Infinite Life Sutra, the latter is number one. Therefore, the Infinite Life Sutra is “the profound, wonderful Dharma.”

It is not hard to believe the teaching in the Avatamsaka Sutra and the Lotus Sutra, but it is hard to believe the teaching in the Infinite Life Sutra, which is the most hard-to-believe method. Therefore, if we introduce the Infinite Life Sutra to others, it is quite normal that they will not believe it. If a person believes it when we introduce it to them, this person is not an ordinary person. As stated in the Infinite Life Sutra, this is a bodhisattva who has manifested as a human being; he or she is not an ordinary person.

“May my wisdom be as vast and as deep as the sea.” To widely help all beings, one must first help oneself. To help others achieve in their practice, one must first achieve perfect wisdom. In this way, one will have the ability to help others. After stating the great vow of helping others, Dharmakara Bhiksu said that he then sought deep, vast wisdom. This deep, vast wisdom is innate in the true nature, not attained from the outside. How does one attain profound wisdom? The next sentence tells us the method.

“May my mind be pure, void of dust and toil.” “Dust” refers to pollutants: when something is tainted with dust, it gets dirty. “Toil” refers to afflictions. In order to restore a pure mind, we must stay far away from all pollutants and eradicate afflictions.

“May my wisdom be as vast and as deep as the sea. May my mind be pure, void of dust and toil.” The two sentences complement each other. Because they complement each other, boundless Dharma bliss will arise. The more one achieves in practice, the more wisdom one will have. The more wisdom one has, the deeper is one’s belief and thus the more one will achieve in practice. As one achieves more in practice, one will have even more wisdom. This is how meditative

concentration and wisdom complement each other perpetually. When one practices this way, one will transcend all evil paths.

“May I transcend boundless doors of the evil paths.” The cause to achieve this is cultivation of a pure mind. Once the mind is pure, all obstacles that prevent us from obtaining good fruits from our cultivation will be eliminated, and one will stay away from the evil paths. When one is free of anger, one will transcend the door of hells. When one is free of ignorance, one will transcend the door of animals. When one is free of greed and miserliness, one will transcend the door of hungry ghosts. Therefore, when one eradicates greed, anger, and ignorance, one will transcend the Three Evil Paths. And if one does not have the slightest yearning for the good fortune in the human and heavenly paths, one will transcend the Six Paths.

The sentence in the excerpt is also a statement of comparisons. When the path of hungry ghosts is compared with the path of hells, the path of hungry ghosts is good and the path of hells is bad. When the path of animals is compared with the path of hungry ghosts, the path of animals is good and the path of hungry ghosts is bad. When the realm of arhats and pratyekabuddhas of the Theravada tradition is compared with that of Mahasattvas, the realm of arhats and pratyekabuddhas is bad and the realm of Mahasattvas is good. When the realm of bodhisattvas is compared with that of Buddhas, the realm of bodhisattvas is bad and the realm of Buddhas is good. Therefore, “boundless doors of the evil paths” also encompasses the realms of sound-hearers, pratyekabuddhas, and bodhisattvas. Only when one perfectly attains Buddhahood will one transcend the evil paths.

In “quickly reach the shore of ultimate enlightenment,” the words “shore of ultimate enlightenment” refer to perfect and complete Buddhahood. In other words, “boundless doors of the evil paths” means that the path of the bodhisattvas of the Provisional Teaching and all the paths below are bad paths. Therefore, the bad paths include not only the Six Paths but also the realms of sound-hearers, pratyekabuddhas, and the bodhisattvas of the Provisional Teaching.

“Forever free of greed, anger, and ignorance” is saying that the three kinds of affliction—Affliction of Views and Thoughts, Affliction of Dust and Sand, and Affliction of Ignorance^[11]—are completely eradicated. This is the state of Tathagata at the attainment stage.

The words “with the power of samadhi end all delusions and faults” are saying that one is no longer deluded about anything in this world and beyond. Whether cultivating, teaching, interacting with people, or engaging in tasks, one will definitely not commit wrongdoings. How does one achieve this? With the power of samadhi. “Samadhi” used here refers to the Buddha-name Chanting Samadhi.

The last few sentences [starting from “May my wisdom be as vast and as deep as the sea”] were Amitabha Buddha’s guidelines for learning and practice when he was at the causal stage. Compare our practice to that of Amitabha Buddha at the causal stage. Do we also seek wisdom as our ultimate goal and seek nothing else?

If one seeks wisdom, one must achieve a pure mind. When one has a pure mind, wisdom manifests. A pure mind is like a mirror. Its function is to see everything clearly in its reflection. This [seeing everything clearly] is having wisdom. If one wants to have a pure mind, one’s mind must not be contaminated even in the slightest way—by mundane teachings (the Five Desires and the Six Dusts) or by supramundane teachings (that is, Mahayana, Theravada, True Teachings, or Provisional Teachings). This is very important. One must try to have a mind of the utmost purity, and speech and behavior of the utmost virtuousness.

There are two approaches in learning Buddhism. The first is practice—here one starts with cultivating a pure mind. The other is understanding—here one studies the teachings. Which approach is more advantageous? Practice. As long as one has a pure mind, it does not matter that one has no knowledge of Buddhism. If one eradicates affliction, then the mind is pure and the Buddha Land will also be pure. One will be able to attain rebirth in the Western Pure Land.

If one uses the approach of understanding, after one is clear about all the principles, methods, and states, one still needs to

practice, starting from the basics. One cannot achieve in one's cultivation with only knowledge and no practice. When one uses the approach of practice, one mainly cultivates mindfulness; understanding of the teachings is supplementary. One need not make painstaking effort to seek understanding—it will come naturally. Practice is the correct approach. If one uses this approach, whether one reads the sutras or listens to lectures, one will benefit from each particular sentence that one understands. If one does not understand a sentence, it does not matter, as one will understand it when one listens to the lectures again. One will naturally understand after listening to lectures a few times. One need not get stuck on a sentence or a paragraph; otherwise, one's mind will become disturbed.

In the title of this sutra are the words “purity, impartiality, and enlightenment.” These three are one in three and three in one. When we attain one, we attain all three. Of the three, cultivating a pure mind is the easiest. The way to cultivate a pure mind is to mindfully chant the Buddha-name. When we are not chanting the Buddha-name, we should listen to the chanting of the Buddha-name. It is best if we can listen to our own chanting. So, we could record our chanting, and when we are not chanting, listen to this recording. This is very effective. This is cultivating a pure mind.

[In the part of the excerpt that talks about Dharmakara Bhikṣu's practice for his own enlightenment,] Dharmakara Bhikṣu put wisdom as his first priority and the result of his practice is this: with the power of samadhi he ended all delusions and faults. [This samadhi places] equal emphasis on both meditative concentration and wisdom. The purpose [of Dharmakara practicing this way] is tremendously profound. It truly provides a very valuable reference for our learning practice.

[11] The three kinds of afflictions refer to attachments, discriminations, and wandering thoughts respectively.—Trans.

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