



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 : 508-646-8168

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

September 29, 2015

Essence of the Infinite Life Sutra - Venerable Master Chin Kung



EXCERPT TEN

I will constantly practice the Six Paramitas of giving, precept observation, patience, diligence, meditative concentration, and wisdom. For those sentient beings who are not yet awakened, I will help them attain awakening. For those who are awakened, I will help them attain Buddhahood. Rather than make offerings to sages as countless as the Ganges sands, I would perseveringly and courageously seek proper enlightenment.

The statement “I will constantly practice the Six Paramitas of giving, precept observation, patience, diligence, meditative concentration, and wisdom” describes the conduct of bodhisattvas in this world. In other words, it is the standard for their mindset and practice. We should learn this.

“Giving” is letting go—letting go of everything in this world. All the afflictions, even illnesses, birth and death, and the root cause of transmigration come about because one is unwilling to let go of wandering thoughts and attachments. One truly reaps the fruit of one’s actions. The purpose of giving is to help one let go of one’s concerns, worries, afflictions, wandering thoughts, discriminations, and attachments.

Many people think that they are walking the bodhisattva path, practicing giving and making offerings everywhere. But their

intent is to gain a lot through giving a little. They give some money because they want to have wealth and give teachings because they want to have intelligence and wisdom.

If one practices giving with such thinking, one is not a bodhisattva. Such thinking comes from an ordinary being's wandering thoughts of greed, anger, ignorance, and arrogance.

The purpose of bodhisattvas practicing giving is to let go of their wandering thoughts. When they let go of all the wandering thoughts, boundless wisdom, capabilities, and wealth innate in the true nature will naturally manifest. [Once we let go,] there is no longer a need to seek or to cultivate.

When Master Huineng attained enlightenment, he said, "Who would have expected that inherent nature is originally complete in itself? . . . Who would have expected that inherent nature can produce myriad things?" All enjoyment is as one wishes and manifests from one's thoughts.

When the Buddha taught giving, he was teaching us to let go of wandering thoughts and to uncover innate virtues. This is a true benefit.

A big problem with ordinary beings is that we cannot let go. Therefore, we trouble the Buddhas and bodhisattvas to use various expedient means to indirectly and tactfully help us gradually let go. Bodhisattvas set examples with their behavior to teach us to practice giving and to let go of fame, prestige, gain, wealth, the Five Desires, the Six Dusts, affliction, worry, and birth and death. When we let go of everything, we will attain great freedom.

The Diamond Sutra says: "Even the Dharma has to be laid aside, let alone worldly teachings." "Dharma" refers to the Buddha-dharma. One should not be attached to the Buddha-dharma either. Any attachment is a mistake. The Buddha-dharma is like a boat, something we use for crossing a river. Upon reaching our destination, we should let go of the tool that got us there. The Buddha-dharma is to help us overcome difficulties. When we have done so, we should not be attached to the Buddha-dharma and should let go of it too.

"Precept observation" means abiding by laws. When one abides by laws, one will naturally have peace of mind and be free of all fears. Etiquette taught in Confucianism and the precepts taught in Buddhism are the norms for our daily behavior. The most important fundamental precepts set by the Buddha are these four: no killing, no stealing, no sexual misconduct, and no lying. These four offenses are intrinsically wrong. Regardless of whether we have received the precepts, we commit an offense when we do any of these four acts.

The precept of not taking intoxicants is a preventive measure. When we carefully look at people who committed grave offenses, we will see that a lot of them were alcohol related—one loses reason when drunk. This was why the Buddha included not taking intoxicants as a major precept.

In addition, we should also abide by the country's laws and customs. This way, we will get along harmoniously with others. This is the true meaning of precept observation.

"Patience" is forbearance. The Prajna Sutra says: "All accomplishments are attributed to patience." Therefore, patience requires resolute endurance. Considerable patience is needed for any accomplishment in worldly undertakings, let alone in learning Buddhism. One must be able to exercise patience. When one is patient, one will be able to maintain a tranquil mind and advance in one's cultivation. If one is not patient, one will not have any progress in one's cultivation no matter how diligently one cultivates. Patience requires true effort. It is a prerequisite for meditative concentration.

The Chinese term for "diligence" is jingjin. Jing means "unadulterated" and jin means "making progress." Many

practitioners resolve to exert themselves but their efforts are unfocused. They learn many things, but they get all mixed up. This is adulterated progress, so they cannot achieve in their practice.

When one concentrates on one Dharma door, one's progress will be rapid. For example, if a person learns only one sutra, after one year this person will achieve in his or her learning. On the other hand, if another person simultaneously learns ten sutras, his or her achievement in learning cannot compare with that of the person who concentrates on one sutra.

After one learns a sutra, for example the Amitabha Sutra, and studies it for ten years, wherever one goes in the world, people will say "Amitabha Buddha is here" or "You are Amitabha Buddha manifested." If one learns the Ksitigarbha Sutra for ten years, one will become Ksitigarbha Bodhisattva. If one learns the "Universal Door Chapter" for ten years, one will become Avalokitesvara Bodhisattva. The question is whether one is able to focus on one sutra.

People today like to learn extensively; that is, to learn many things. This concept is wrong, and such thinking will lead to failure—definitely not success.

I had a little exposure to my teacher's lineage. I followed the teaching of my teacher Mr. Li Bingnan but not completely. Had I completely followed his teaching, I would have achieved more than I have today. I am regretful now.

In ten years I learned five sutras under Mr. Li's guidance. He set a rule that a student had to learn one sutra well, before starting the second sutra. What was the criterion for "learning well"? Mr. Li's acknowledgement. If he did not think that the student had learned it well, the student had to continue learning it. As a Chinese saying goes, "If one does not listen to the advice of an elder person, one will soon suffer disadvantages." Young people have little experience and act rashly. They do not believe the experience of older people and thus suffer disadvantages.

"Meditative concentration" means being in control and not being disturbed by the environment. In the Buddha-name chanting method, it is One Mind Undisturbed, which is a pure mind. "Wisdom" is rational and not the same as mundane intelligence. When one has wisdom, one will not make any mistake when interacting with people and engaging in tasks.

The statement "I will constantly practice the Six Paramitas of giving, precept observation, patience, diligence, meditative concentration, and wisdom" talks about the Six Perfections. The first five are about cultivation. When one cultivates according to the methods and principles, wisdom will naturally be uncovered. How does one know when one's wisdom is uncovered? It can be seen in one's daily life. These six are the norms for the daily behavior of a bodhisattva. When wisdom is present in giving, one will practice giving without being attached to the act of giving—"the Three Wheels^[13] are essentially empty." This is wisdom. In observing the precepts without attachment to form, one naturally conforms to the standards of the precepts. When wisdom is present in one's activities—in patience, in diligence, and in meditative concentration—the same applies. This way, one will truly be able to leave suffering behind and attain happiness.

"For those sentient beings who are not yet awakened, I will help them attain awakening." For those who have not been in contact with Buddhism, we should find ways and opportunities to introduce Buddhism to them; for those who do not understand Buddhism, we should find ways and opportunities to help them understand Buddhism.

"For those who are awakened, I will help them attain Buddhahood." For those who have learned Buddhism and aspire to quickly achieve in their practice, we should teach them the Buddha-name chanting method to help them achieve in one lifetime.

"Rather than making offerings to sages as countless as the Ganges sands, I would perseveringly and courageously seek proper enlightenment." This sentence is very important. Many people in this world seek good fortune. They make offerings every day in order to get good fortune, longevity, and wealth. The Buddha said that it is better to have firm aspiration and

confidence, and courageously and diligently seek rebirth in the Western Pure Land. When one is reborn in the Western Pure Land, one will attain Buddhahood in one lifetime.

The good fortune from making offerings to Buddhas and bodhisattvas is tremendous. But not only can we not make offerings to a Buddha or a bodhisattva today, we cannot even meet an arhat or a stream-enterer. The offerings we can make are only to the images of Buddhas or bodhisattvas. Is it possible to accrue any good fortune by making offerings to these images? It depends on how we go about making offerings.

The offerings are symbolic. The flowers offered to a Buddha image symbolize cause. Just as a plant blooms first and then bears fruit, fruit symbolizes effect. The flowers offered serve to remind us to have belief, vow, and mindfully chant the Buddha-name. This is cultivating the cause. Attaining rebirth in the Western Pure Land in the future and being close to Amitabha Buddha is the effect. Making offerings in this way will bring good fortune.

The simplest offering is a glass of water. Water serves to remind us to maintain a mind as pure, as impartial, and as tranquil as water—without the slightest dust, pollution, or ripple.

Lamps offered symbolize light. Our minds should be as just and as honorable. We should help others, even at our expense. The lamps offered should be oil lamps. The burning of oil represents sacrificing oneself to illuminate others. This is great compassion. Today, light bulbs are used and this symbolic representation [of the oil lamps] is hardly seen.

Therefore, these things seen in a Buddhist cultivation center are educational in nature and serve to remind the practitioners [of the Buddha's teachings] at all times. But today many people forget the true meaning of the offerings. They use the offerings as a way to fawn on or to ingratiate themselves with Buddhas and bodhisattvas. A true gentleman in this mundane world would not accept any flattery, let alone Buddhas and bodhisattvas. Hence, we must understand the true meaning of making offerings.

[12] The Sutra of Hui-neng, trans. Thomas Cleary (Shambhala, Boston and London, 1998), 11.

[13] The Three wheels refers to the person who gives, the person who receives the giving, and that which is given.—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)646-8168 or email to ambt.ma@gmail.com