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## Essence of the Infinite Life Sutra - Venerable Master Chin Kung



### EXCERPT TWENTY EIGHT

Their minds are clean like snow mountains. Their patience is like the earth: with impartiality, it bears everything. Their purity is like water: it cleanses all dirt.

“Their minds are clean like snow mountains.” “Snow mountains” refers to the Himalaya Mountains, which are blanketed with snow all year round.

Sakyamuni Buddha was born in today’s Nepal, south of the Himalaya Mountains. Therefore, when the Buddha lectured on the Dharma, he often used “snow mountains” as a metaphor for cleanliness and purity—a pure mind without any pollution.

“Earth” stores boundless treasures. Grain that grows on the earth nourishes us, and gold, silver, and precious minerals that are stored in the earth are for our benefit. But we need to cultivate land to be able to harvest from it. We also need smelting know-how to extract the underground treasures for our benefit.

This is why Mahayana Buddhism teaches us to start our learning with Ksitigarbha Bodhisattva. “Earth” is a metaphor for the mind. Our minds contain infinite wisdom and capabilities. We need to use the teaching of “filial piety and respect for teachers” in the Ksitigarbha Sutra to plough and plant, and to extract and refine, so that we can obtain benefits.

“Their patience is like the earth: with impartiality, it bears everything.” Should we pour perfume onto the earth, it will not be delighted. Nor will it be disgusted should we pour excrements on it. The earth bears everything impartially. This teaches us to practice the paramita of patience.

The mind should be like the earth, which bears everything impartially. No matter who or what we encounter, our minds should always be impartial. Patience is very important in both worldly and supramundane undertakings. If we do not have patience, we will not be able to accomplish anything. Accomplishing a great undertaking requires great patience; even a small undertaking requires a little patience. Therefore, the Diamond Sutra says: “All accomplishments are attributed to patience.”

It is stated in the sutras that it takes three asamkhyeya kalpas of cultivation for an ordinary being to attain Buddhahood. This is truly an extremely long time. How can one do this without patience? We Pure Land practitioners know that, according to the sutras, when ordinary beings attain rebirth in the Western Pure Land they bring along their karmas and achieve [Buddhahood] in one lifetime. This is how precious the Western Pure Land is!

Of course, there are many factors contributing to this speedy achievement. The most wondrous factor is perfectly attaining the three non-retrogressions. If we practice in other lands, we will progress as well as retrogress. And we will retrogress more than we progress. This is why it will take a long time [to attain Buddhahood].

When we know this truth, we should muster the greatest patience possible for learning the Pure Land teachings. We should have true belief and resolutely vow to seek rebirth in the Western Pure Land. We must have the determination to go there and meet Amitabha Buddha in this lifetime. With this determination, we sincerely chant the Buddha-name until the end of our lives.

We will surely attain rebirth there.

Other than this, “all phenomena are illusory.” We should get by however we can, not fuss about things, and not be attached to things. We should regard all phenomena with impartiality and single-mindedly seek rebirth in the Western Pure Land. We should not seek fame or wealth. We should lead as thrifty a life as possible. This way, the resolve to seek rebirth there will be more sincere and resolute. All good deeds, and even good thoughts, should be dedicated to the adornment of the Western Pure Land, not to the pursuit of worldly good fortune.

“Their purity is like water: it cleanses all dirt.” “Purity” describes the mind. “Dirt” refers to affliction or pollution. This sentence teaches us to have a mind as pure and impartial as water. We make an offering of a glass of water to a Buddha’s image because water symbolizes a pure mind. This offering constantly reminds us that the mind of a Buddha is pure and impartial, just like water, and we should emulate the Buddhas by completely cleansing away our afflictions, wandering thoughts, discriminations, and attachments.

## EXCERPT TWENTY NINE

The minds of these Bodhisattvas are upright. They are tireless in discussing and seeking the Dharma.

"The minds of these Bodhisattvas are upright." "Upright" means sincere. We should treat others with a sincere mind and not be afraid of being deceived. We want to attain rebirth in the Western Pure Land in the future. All the beings there have a sincere mind. If our minds are not sincere, we will not be able to attain rebirth there.

A sincere mind should be nurtured in everyday life. We should interact with people and engage in tasks with the utmost sincerity. This is teaching us to maintain an upright mind.

"They are tireless in discussing and seeking the Dharma." This sentence talks about cultivating oneself and teaching others. "Discussing" benefits both oneself and others. This is what is known about teaching: both teacher and student benefit. When one teaches another, one never tires. When one seeks the Dharma, one is also tireless.

Whether one seeks the Dharma or teaches others, the biggest obstacle is tiredness. When Confucius taught a student, he would not continue to teach the student if the student did not apply what he had learned to three other situations. But when Buddhas and bodhisattvas teach, they are tireless.

I remember one particular time when I saw Mr. Li teach. I was deeply moved. Mr. Li was over seventy years old at that time. Over a period of three hours, his students asked him many questions. He was unhurried and patient in his answers. This was very admirable. From this we know that Buddhas and bodhisattvas are tireless in teaching all beings.

There are many people who get tired in their learning, retrogress, and do not continue to make diligent and focused progress. Why do they get tired? Even though they are learning, they have not obtained the true benefits. If they have, how can they be tired? People get tired or retrogress because their minds are coarse and their goals are shallow. When they achieve a simple goal, they are satisfied and do not want to go further.

During the Tang dynasty, when Precept Master Daoxuan of Zhongnan Mountain was learning the Vinaya in Four Parts, he listened to the lectures on it for more than twenty times. He was thus able to become a patriarch.

People today listen to the lectures on a sutra once and do not care to hear it again. How can they succeed! When I was in Taichung, I listened to Mr. Li Bingnan's lectures on Fourteen Lectures on Buddhism for eleven years. Only when I was thoroughly familiar with it was I able to taste the flavor of the Dharma.

Years ago in Taichung, at the request of eight people including myself, Mr. Li generated the mind to lecture on the Avatamsaka Sutra. Mr. Li would lecture one hour a week, and so it would have taken him sixty to seventy years to complete the lectures on the Avatamsaka Sutra. He was in his seventies or eighties. That meant that he had to live to one hundred fifty or one hundred sixty to complete the lectures. These are good examples for us. We should be tireless in cultivating ourselves and teaching others.

**Web link to the article:**

**<http://www.purelandcollege.org.au/page84.html>**

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