

Respecting One's Teacher with Utmost Sincerity

Let's take a look at the verse of this chapter. Bhikshu Dharmâkara said, "I solely hope that Bhagavan would listen to and examine my vows with great compassion." Look! Bhikshu Dharmâkara implored the Buddha to listen to and examine his vows with great mercy. He is so respectful to his teacher Bhagavan, the Buddha. No wonder he is the best student of Lokêśvararāja Buddha.

How can we tell if a student is good or not? From how sincerely and respectfully he treats his teacher. Master Yin Guang said, "With ten percent sincerity and respect, you earn ten percent benefit. With 100 percent sincerity and respect, you earn 100 percent benefit."

*How does a teacher find his Dharma successor?
The teacher only uses one standard,
that is, among all his disciples,
whoever has the highest degree of respect for his teacher.*

It is not as if the teacher wants students' respect, that is not the case. The teacher had renounced fame and wealth long ago, he does not need people's respect. But, why does he use this standard to choose students? Because

*only if one can respect the teacher,
can he then value the Dao.
And only those who respect teachers and honor Dao
can attain big achievements,
because he would then
learn the "true wisdom" from his teacher.*

So, the teacher's successor must have one hundred percent sincerity and respect for his teacher.

How Did Master Hui Neng Attain Buddhahood?

Our Shifu also pointed out, "Why did the Fifth Patriarch of Zen Buddhism, Master Hong Ren, hand down his mantle and alms bowl to Hui Neng instead of Shen Xiu? Master Shen Xiu had followed the Fifth Patriarch for many years. He was already the

Assistant Instructor of the Fifth Patriarch and was also held in high prestige. However, his sincerity and respect to his teacher was 100%, very good already. But, the Sixth Patriarch, Master Hui Neng, paid 10,000% sincerity and respect to his teacher.”

Sixth Patriarch Hui Neng was born poor and illiterate with no culture. At the young age of twenty four, a woodcutter with no background, he received the mantle and alms bowl from the Fifth Patriarch. He gained true enlightenment, saw self-nature, attained Buddhahood, and became a patriarch. The reason is that he was extremely sincere and respectful.

How Bhikshu Dharmākara Showed Respect for Lokêśvararāja Buddha

Bhikshu Dharmākara was the first disciple of the Lokêśvararāja Buddha. Let's see how he respected the Bhagavan. It is mentioned in the preceding verse, when he arrived at the dwelling of Lokêśvararāja Tathagata, he prostrated at the teacher's feet with utmost homage. He walked around the Buddha three times, then he stood upright and joined his palms.

This is the way he made a report to the Buddha. He possessed full sincerity and respect. The Lokêśvararāja Buddha, seeing that his disciple had such accomplishment, of course, was extremely joyous. He said immediately, "Sādhu! Sadhu! Now is the right time to fully speak your vows so that all the living beings would rejoice."

The verse above means, this moment is the time for you to report. Say it quickly, it can benefit the public and universally liberate all beings. The method that you are going to proclaim will be the best method within the entire dharma-realms. All Buddhas in ten directions will praise this method. This method is the Pure Land Method, seeking Sukhāvātī rebirth by reciting Amitabha.

Following Amitabha to Sukhāvātī in Our Own Lotus Flower

Since Sukhāvātī is truly a Dharma-nature land, and Dharma-nature pervades everywhere and includes everything, Sukhāvātī thus pervades everywhere as well. National Master Zhong Feng stated,

“Pure Land is this land,

this land is Pure Land."
It indicates that the pure land is
pervading everywhere.

According to the verse, "intrinsically, all places in ten directions are Sukhāvātī." "Intrinsically" means "as it is." All worlds in ten directions are all Sukhāvātī, this is "pervading everywhere." Why? Because Dharma-nature is as thusness. We will understand completely when we enter Dharma-nature.

Where is Sukhāvātī? Right here in front of us. We now recite Amitabha until the heart is purified, Sukhāvātī will naturally manifest in front of us. The inconceivable solemn merits are immeasurable and are the solemn merits of our own self-nature. Let me give you a few examples of its solemnness.

The lotus flowers in Sukhāvātī are very solemn and are manifested by our recitations. When we determine to seek Sukhāvātī rebirth by reciting Amitabha, that Land will then grow a lotus flower. The more we recite, the more glorious, beautiful, and bigger this lotus flower will grow. At the end of our life, Amitabha will bring this lotus flower to manifest in front of us and greet us with His hand reaching down. We then sit in this lotus flower and follow Amitabha to Sukhāvātī. Once we see the lotus flower and Amitabha, all our karma will be eradicated. We attain anutpattika-dharma-ksanti and become an avāivartika bodhisattva; we have arrived in Sukhāvātī.

Some fellow practitioners said, "We recite Amitabha, Shifu told us to see only one version of Amitabha's image, but I have seen many different versions, how do I know which of Amitabha's versions will manifest to escort me? What if I have mistaken Him?"

This is "needless worrying." At that moment, Amitabha will emit light to greet you; your karma will all be eradicated, and your wisdom will be revealed. You will know right away if it is the real Amitabha, you would not mistake Him. Amitabha would also not manifest an image that would confuse you. Absolutely not. Once you arrive in Sukhāvātī, your lotus flower will be even more glorious. That lotus, as stated in the sutra, emits 360 trillion lights. Can you imagine how a flower could emit so many lights?

Each flower emits 360 trillion lights, each light manifests 360 trillion Buddhas, each Buddha has His own land and liberates incalculable sentient beings right in His land by "proclaiming wondrous Dharma to all beings." What Dharma do They expound? It is the Pure Land Method of Sukhāvātī. They convince all beings to seek Sukhāvātī rebirth.

Think about it, the lotus flower of yours has so much merit, can you imagine? I cannot. Not to mention 360 trillion lights, even with only 36 lights it would be difficult for us to imagine, wouldn't it? It is really not easy. That is why it is defined as "inconceivable"! It is unthinkable and unspeakable! This is the dharma-realm of non-obstruction among all phenomena; it is genuinely inconceivably solemn. The lotus flower is only one of the examples.

The Dharma Sound Pervades All Lands in Ten Directions

Not only are the lotuses like this, everything in Sukhāvātī is inconceivably solemn like this. The precious fragrances permeate the ten directions pervasively, the sound tinkles when the wind blows the trees... The trees are all made of seven jewels, such as gold, silver, liuli, pearl, and agate. All the highest grade jewels in the world that we can imagine can all be seen in Sukhāvātī. They are all at our fingertips and all grow on the trees. They are not artificially carved but naturally grow like this. When the wind blows, the tinkling sound appears just like wind chimes. What sound is that? It is the sound of Buddha, Dharma, and Sangha, the sound of stillness and tranquility. After hearing this, you would attain anuṭpattika-dharma-ksanti. You could get enlightened and attain Buddhahood.

This Dharma-sound pervades all lands in ten directions. You have the supernal power to hear them when you visit all Buddha lands in ten directions if you want to. What sound is that? It is the sound of self-nature, which pervades everywhere. The volume will not sound lower when you go to a very far place. It absolutely will not become lower! Unlike in our world, if we shout on this side of a square, people on the other side probably cannot hear us. But Sukhāvātī is different, no matter how far away you are, it always sounds like it is right next to your ears. So, in Sukhāvātī, when the six roots (*eye, ear, nose, tongue, body, and mind) contact the six dusts (the field of form, sound, odor, taste, touch, and concept), the realms are all full of inconceivably solemn merits.