

The Fundamental Wisdom and the Post-Enlightenment-Wisdom

Learning Buddhism is to reveal our wisdom to help all beings to the path of liberation. But what is the sign that our wisdom has been revealed? It is that, when reading a sutra that we have never learned before, we can understand its meaning and even comprehend it very thoroughly. When sharing with others, we can make them feel that it is very beneficial. We know what the audience needs to hear. What we say complies with their spiritual capacity (*Skt. *indriya*), and they can implement it after hearing. This wisdom is intrinsically within our self-nature, and it can be revealed gradually when we settle our mind down and purify our heart to eradicate our defilements.

But it is important to know that the Four Universal Vows have their order, we must follow their sequence when practicing. Only by having our wisdom revealed, can we then learn Dharma methods. In other words, we can only learn Dharma methods after completing the second vow of “eradicating our defilements.” If we learn Dharma methods without eradicating defilements, the more we learn, the more chaotic and the less pure our mind will be. If we aggressively study a lot of Dharma-methods in the beginning, we will not be able to eradicate our defilements in the end.

What is the purpose of learning Dharma-methods? Not for ourselves but for guiding all beings to the path of liberation! The spiritual capacity of all beings are varied, we cannot use a single method to help them all. So, we must learn many different methods to help sentient beings of different *indriya*.

There is a rule in Buddhist circles, when will a teacher allow his disciple to learn different methods and visit spiritual guides? It must be when his Fundamental Wisdom (Skt. *jñana-sattva*, the innate cognitive ability to penetrate to the ultimate truth) has been revealed. In other words, he has seen self-nature and attained Buddhahood. Buddhahood here refers to the attainment of eradicating one level of *avidyā* and above. In the Avatamsaka Perfect Teachings, it refers to the bodhisattvas who have reached the First Abode and above.

As it is stated in the end of *The Avatamsaka Sūtra*—the Fifty-Three Visits of Sudhanakumāra that, Sudhanakumāra, under the guidance of his teacher Mañjuśrī Bodhisattva, had eradicated all his defilements, had seen self-nature with a purified heart, and had revealed the Fundamental Wisdom. His teacher then let him visit spiritual guides and learn different Dharma methods. What does it mean to learn Dharma-methods? It means to broadly make contact with society, dealing with all good people, bad people, good things, and bad things.

During contact, he no longer gives rise to the defilements of greed, resentment, ignorance, and arrogance, nor will he have discrimination and attachment. He forges himself through dealing with all different people and matters to nurture his pure, impartial, enlightened, and compassionate heart. During this process, he continuously develops his own Post-Enlightenment Wisdom (Skt. *prṣṭha-labdha-jñāna*; the wisdom attained as a result of

enlightenment, bodhisattvas use it to liberate all beings). Post-Enlightenment wisdom must be based on the foundation of Fundamental Wisdom. He accomplishes wisdom and the skillful expediency of liberating all beings through learning Dharma-methods. If he does not make contact with society, does not get in touch with all kinds of people, he will not have the skillful expediency of liberating all beings. This is very important.

The Method of World-Ease

Why must bodhisattvas not limit themselves to only practicing Hinayana? Because they depend on interacting with all beings to lead them to liberation, and finally to perfectly reveal their Post-Enlightenment Wisdom, which makes them attain supreme bodhi and become a Buddha. Thus, Sudhanakumâra visited fifty-three spiritual guides and eventually accomplished Wondrous Buddhahood.

We must understand that the Pure Land Method is an extremely special method and very convenient for all beings of the Degenerate Era to learn and practice due to the fact that we have no choice but to be in contact with society. In practicing other methods we have to depart from society because we do not have the wisdom to prevent ourselves from being polluted. But the Pure Land Method is called “the method of world-ease”! Look! Amitabha's teacher is Buddha Lokeśvararāja, the Tathagata of World-Ease-King, which contains a hidden implication. It implies that this method is “world-ease” and can let us achieve true attainment without leaving our world.

How does a mortal cultivate it? By simply relying on the name of Amitabha. We can make contact with society as long as we do not stop reciting Amitabha. However, we must also be aware that, if we give rise to greed, resentment, ignorance, or even being lost and having a topsy-turvy mind when connecting with society, we must immediately withdraw ourselves. Practicing the Pure Land Method, we are free to go forward or back out. We can pull ourselves back immediately from a contaminated realm if we find that we cannot resist it.

This is the same as our seeking Sukhāvātī rebirth. Why do we seek rebirth? This world is contaminated, we thus seek Sukhāvātī rebirth; we will come back after being reborn into Sukhāvātī where we accomplished our pure, impartial enlightenment. Understanding this truth, we must work hard with this attitude at all times. Especially when interacting with those who have a deep affinity with us such as family members, relatives, and friends, we must not be polluted by them but use our wisdom to interact with them and further transform them.

The key is to often contemplate our own minds, check if our recitation has often ceased. If our recitation has not ceased, still reciting earnestly, we can then make contact with society to forge our genuine skills through phenomena. If our recitation often ceases, we should hold off for a while. So, this method is very flexible. It does not require us to depart from the world. We can elevate our realm right in the moment, **right in the counters of our daily lives.**

Prajna Wisdom Is Extremely Important!

Of the forty-nine years of teaching by Shakyamuni Buddha, twenty-two years were about prajna—the wisdom to ferry one to the shore of liberation—almost half the time. The prajna teaching is so significant that it is the key to lead us to eradicate delusion and attain enlightenment. A mortal attaches to phenomena, clinging to existence. The Buddha therefore explained to us, "All dharmas (phenomena) are non-existent, ultimately empty; nothing can be obtained at all." However, if we let go of existence and no longer adhere to the phenomena after learning prajna yet attach to emptiness, it would not be okay either. Because adhering to emptiness of noumenon is still an attachment. These are falling into two extremes, emptiness and existence are the two extremes. You originally adhered to existence, now you cling to emptiness!

Who adheres to emptiness? Those who practice Hinayana. Even arhats all adhere to emptiness, that is why they cannot initiate an aspiration to liberate all beings. In other words, they still do not understand the truth of life and the universe completely. If they fully understood, they would know that emptiness and existence are not two separate things. *The Heart Sutra* states, "Form does not differ from emptiness, emptiness does not differ from form; form is emptiness, emptiness is form." Form is substance, it is existence. Yet, existence and emptiness have no differences. With this understanding, one can then not fall into two extremes.

Why do they have no difference? In the past, it was very difficult for us to comprehend. Now quantum scientists have revealed this for us through advanced physics. They told us clearly that, when we analyze the material world to the utmost, we find that it is only the vibrations of our minds. There is no entity. It proves that all material phenomena are intrinsically empty. If we adhere to it, aren't we silly? It is intrinsically nothing, we regard it as real, that is our delusional thought.

Comprehending this, we now do not adhere to its existence, we should not cling to the emptiness as well. Because the existence of phenomena truly exists by the vibration of our minds; when there is vibration of mind, there will be phenomena. Now that we are aware of these phenomena and their cause, we should help all beings to be awakened amidst these phenomena as per the conditions. If we deliberately dissociate ourselves from the phenomena, that is not right either. The truth is that we are unable to dissociate ourselves from phenomena because the phenomena will manifest once a thought arises. When we are thinking to dissociate, that is an arising-thought already; one more phenomenon will then manifest accordingly. So, it is absolutely impossible for us to dissociate from it.

A bodhisattva clings to neither existence nor emptiness. His heart no longer moves and his thoughts no longer arise. An arhat still gives rise to thoughts, his mind adheres to emptiness so his heart still moves. He forcefully refuses the existence and is not willing to liberate all beings. As such, arhats are not able to practice the Middle Way as bodhisattvas do.

Thanks for learning with us. Namó Amitabha!