

CHAPTER VI.

ON REPENTANCE

(*Ksamayati*).

Once there was a big gathering of scholars and commoners from Kwong Chow, Shiu Chow, and various places to wait upon the Patriarch to preach to them in this mountain (*i.e.*, the mountain where the monastery was). Seeing this, the Patriarch mounted the pulpit and delivered the following address:—

Come, you good people. In Buddhism, we should start from our essence of mind. At all times, let us purify our own mind from one Ksana (momentary sensation) to another, tread the Path by our own efforts, see our own Dharmakaya (Body of the Law), realise the Buddha of our own mind, and deliver ourselves by a personal observance of the disciplinary rules (*silas*); then your visit here is not in vain. Since all of you came from very far, the possibility of our meeting here shows that there is a good *Pratyaya* (relationship or affinity) among us. Now let us kneel down in the Indian fashion. I'll first transmit you the 'Formless' Repentance.

When they had knelt down, the Patriarch continued:—The first is the *Sila* (disciplinary rules) Incense which means that our mind is free from taints of misdeeds, evils, jealousy, avarice, anger, spoliation, and hatred. The second is the *Samadhi* (exalted ecstasy) Incense which means that our mind is unperturbed under all circumstances—favourable or unfavourable. The third is the *Prajna* (Wisdom) Incense which means that our mind is free from all impediments; that we constantly introspect our essence of mind with wisdom; that we refrain from doing all kinds of evil deeds; that although we do all kinds of good acts, yet we do not let our mind be attached to (the fruits) of such actions; and that we are respectful towards our superiors, considerate to our inferiors, and sympathetic to the destitute and the poor. The fourth is the Incense of Liberation which means that our mind is in such an absolutely free state that it clings to nothing and bother itself neither with good nor with evil. The fifth is the Incense of 'Knowledge obtained consequent on the Attainment of Liberation'. When our mind clings to neither good nor evil, we should take care not to let it dwell upon the 'void', or remain in a state of inertia. What we should do at this juncture is to further our study and broaden our knowledge, so that we can know our own mind, understand thoroughly the principles of Buddhism, be congenial to others in our dealings with them, get rid of the idea of 'self' and that of 'being', and realise that up to the time when we attain *Bodhi* (enlightenment), the 'true nature' (or essence of mind) is always immutable. Such then is the Incense of 'Knowledge obtained consequent on the Attainment of Liberation'.

Learned Audience, this fivefold Incense fumigates us from within and we should not look for it from without. Now, I am going to instruct you the 'Formless' Repentance which will expiate our sins committed in our present, past, and future lives, and purify our physical, oral, and mental *Karmas* (actions).

Learned Audience, please follow me and repeat what I am going to say. Now let us say this together:—

May we, disciples so and so, from the past Ksana (momentary sensations) to the present and the future ones be always free from the taints of ignorance and delusion. Allow us to repent of all our past sins and evil deeds committed under delusion or in ignorance. May they be expiated at once and may they never arise again.

May we, disciples so and so, from the past Ksana to the present and the future ones be always free from the taints of arrogance (Mada) and dishonesty (Sathya). Allow us to repent of all our evil deeds, arrogant behaviour, dishonest dealings, etc. committed in the past. May they be expiated at once and may they never arise again.

May we, disciples so and so, from the past Ksana to the present and the future ones be always free from the taints of envy and jealousy. Allow us to repent of all our past sins and evil deeds committed in an envious or jealous spirit. May they be expiated at once and may they never arise again.

Learned Audience, this is what we call 'Formless Chen Fu' (repentance). Now what is the meaning of Chen and Fu (the Chinese phonetic rendering of Ksamayati)? Chen refers to the repentance of past sins. To repent of all our past sins and evil deeds committed under delusion, ignorance, arrogance, dishonesty, jealousy, or envy, etc., so as to put an end to all of them is called Chen. Fu refers to that part of repentance concerning our future conduct. Having realised the nature of our transgression, (we make a vow) that hereafter we shall put an end to all kinds of evil committed under delusion, ignorance, arrogance, dishonesty, jealousy, or envy, and that we shall never sin again: this is Fu.

On account of ignorance and delusion, common people know not that in repentance they have not only to feel sorry for their past sins but also to refrain from sinning in the future. Since they take no heed of their future conduct, they commit sins anew before the past ones are expiated. When this is the case, how can we call it 'Repentance'?

Learned Audience, having repented of our sins, we shall take the following four all-embracing vows. Now listen very carefully.

We vow to deliver an infinite number of sentient beings of our own mind (Buddhists believe that all things are nothing but phenomena in mind).

We vow to get rid of the inexhaustible evil passions (Klesa) of our own mind.

We vow to learn the countless systems of Dharma of our essence of mind.

We vow to attain the Supreme Buddhahood of our essence of mind.

Learned Audience, all of us have now declared that we vow to deliver an infinite number of sentient beings; but what does that mean? It does not mean that I, Wei Lang, is going to deliver them. And who are these sentient beings within our mind? They are the delusive mind, the deceitful mind, the evil mind,

and such like minds—all these are sentient beings. Each of them has to deliver himself by means of his own essence of mind. Then the deliverance is a genuine one.

Now, what does it mean by delivering oneself by one's own essence of mind? It means the deliverance of the ignorant, the delusive, and the vexatious beings within our mind by means of Right Views. With the aid of Right Views and Prajna-Wisdom, the barriers of these ignorant and delusive beings may be broken up; so that each of them is in a position to deliver himself by his own efforts. Let the fallacious be delivered by rightness; the delusive by enlightenment; the ignorant by wisdom; and the malevolent by benevolence: such then is genuine deliverance.

As to the vow, 'we vow to get rid of the inexhaustible evil passions', it refers to the substitution of our unreliable and illusive thinking faculty by the Prajna-Wisdom (transcendental wisdom) of our essence of mind.

As to the vow, 'we vow to learn countless systems of Dharmas', it may be remarked that there would be no true learning until we have seen face to face our essence of mind and until we conform to the orthodox Dharma on all occasions.

As to the vow, 'we vow to attain Supreme Buddhahood', I wish to point out that when we are able to bend our mind to follow the true and orthodox Dharma on all occasions, and when Prajna always rises in our mind, so that we can hold aloof from ignorance as well as from enlightenment and do away with falsehood as well as truth; (Note: Because these are only pairs of opposites) then we may consider ourselves as having realised the Buddha-nature, or in other words, having attained Buddhahood under the very utterance of (our teacher).

Learned Audience, we should always bear in mind that we are treading the Path; for thereby strength will be added to our vows. Now, since all of us have taken these four all-embracing vows, let me teach you the 'Formless Three-fold Guidance'.

We take 'Enlightenment' as our Guide, because it is the culmination of both Punya (merit) and Prajna (wisdom).

We take 'Orthodoxy' as our Guide, because it is the supreme means to get rid of desire.

We take 'Purity' as our Guide, because it is the noblest quality of mankind.

Hereafter, let the 'Enlightened One' be our teacher; and on no account should we accept the evil Mara (the demon of passions, etc., the personification of evil) or any heretic as our guide. This we should testify to ourselves by constantly appealing to the 'Three Gems' of our essence of mind, which, Learned Audience, I advise you to take refuge in. They are:—

Buddha which stands for Enlightenment.

Dharma (the Law) which stands for Orthodoxy.

Sangha (the Order) which stands for Purity.

To let our mind to take refuge in 'Enlightenment' so that evil and delusive notions arise not, desire decreases, discontent is unknown, and lust and greed bind us not—this is the culmination of *Punya* and *Prajna*.

To let our mind to take refuge in 'Orthodoxy' so that from one *Ksana* to another, we are always free from wrong views (without wrong views, there would be no egotism, arrogance, conceit, craving, and bigotry)—this is the supreme means to get rid of desire.

To let our mind to take refuge in 'Purity' so that no matter under what circumstances it may be, it will not be contaminated by the wearisome sense-objects, craving and desire—this is the noblest quality of mankind.

To practise the 'Threefold Guidance' in the way as above mentioned means to take refuge in oneself (*i.e.*, in one's own essence of mind). Ignorant persons, from day to night, take the 'Threefold Guidance'; but they understand it not. If they say they take refuge in Buddha, do they know where He is? If they cannot see Buddha, how can they take refuge in Him? Would not such an assertion amount to a lie?

Learned Audience, each of you should consider and examine this point yourself and let not your energy be misapplied. The Sutra distinctly says that we should take refuge in the Buddha within ourselves, and it does not mention that we should take refuge in other Buddhas. (Moreover), there is no other place for us to retreat, if we do not take refuge in the Buddha within ourselves.

Having cleared up this point, let each of us take refuge in the 'Three Gems' within our mind. Within, we should control our mind; without, we should be respectful towards others—this is the way to take refuge within ourselves.

Learned Audience, since all of you have taken the 'Threefold Guidance', I am going to speak to you on the *Trikaya* (three bodies or aspects) of the Buddha of our essence of mind, so that you can see these three bodies and realise clearly the essence of mind. Please listen very carefully and repeat this after me:—

With our physical body, we take refuge in the Pure *Dharmakaya* (Body of the Law) of Buddha.

With our physical body, we take refuge in the Perfect *Sambhogakaya* (Body of Compensation or Body of Endowment) of Buddha.

With our physical body, we take refuge in the Myriad *Nirmanakaya* (Body of Transformation or Body of Incarnation) of Buddha.

Learned Audience, our physical body may be likened unto an inn (*i.e.*, a temporary abode), so we cannot take refuge there. Within our essence of mind, the above-mentioned *Trikaya* of Buddha are to be found; and they are common to every body. Because the mind (of an ordinary man) labours under delusions, he knows not his own inner nature; and the result is that he ignores the *Trikaya* within himself, (erroneously believing) that they are to be sought from without. Please listen, I am going to show you that within yourself you can see the *Trikaya*, which, being the manifestation of the essence of mind, are not to be sought from without.

Now, what is the Pure Dharmakaya? Our essence of mind is intrinsically pure: all things, (good or evil), are only its manifestations, and good deeds and evil deeds are only the result of good thoughts and evil thoughts respectively. Thus, within the essence of mind, all things (are intrinsically pure), like the azure of the sky and the radiance of the sun and the moon, which, when obscured by passing clouds, may appear as if their brightness had been dimmed; but as soon as the clouds are blown off, brightness pervades and all objects are fully illuminated. Learned Audience, our whimsical habits may be likened unto the clouds; while sagacity and wisdom (Prajna), the sun and the moon respectively. When we attach ourselves to outer objects, our essence of mind is beclouded by wanton thoughts which prevent our ever-illuminative sagacity and wisdom from sending forth their light. But should we be fortunate enough to get learned and pious teachers to make known the Orthodox Dharma to us, then, we may with our own efforts do away with ignorance and delusion, so that we are enlightened both within and without, and the (true nature) of all things manifests itself within our essence of mind. This is exactly the case with those who have seen face to face the essence of mind, and this is what is called the Pure Dharmakaya of Buddha.

Learned Audience, to take refuge in a true Buddha is to take refuge in our own essence of mind. He who does so should get rid of, from his essence of mind, the evil mind, the jealous mind, the adulatory and crooked mind, egotism, deceit and falsehood, contemptuousness, snobbishness, fallacious views, arrogance, and all other evils that may arise at any time. To take refuge in ourself is to be constantly on the alert for our own mistakes, and to refrain from criticism of other's merits or faults. He who is humble and meek on all occasions and is polite to every body has thoroughly realised his essence of mind, so thoroughly that his Path is free from further obstacles. This is the way to take refuge in ourself

What is the Perfect Sambhogakaya? Let us take the illustration of a lamp. Since the light of a lamp can break up darkness that has been there for thousand years, so a spark of Wisdom can do away with ignorance that has lasted for ages. We need not bother about the past, for the past is gone and irrecoverable. What demands our attention is the future; so let our thoughts from Ksana to Ksana (momentary sensation) be clear and round, and let us see face to face our essence of mind. Good and evil are opposite to each other, but their quintessence cannot be dualistic. This non-dualistic nature is called the true nature (i.e., the absolute reality) which can neither be contaminated by evil, nor affected by good. This is what is called the Sambhogakaya of Buddha.

One single evil thought from our essence of mind would spoil the good merits accumulated in æons of time, while a good thought from that same source can expiate all our sins, though they are as many as the grains of sand in the Ganges. To realise our own essence of mind from Ksana to Ksana without intermission until we attain Supreme Enlightenment (Bodhi), so that we are perpetually in a state of Right Mindfulness, is the Sambhogakaya.

Now, what is the Myriad Nirmanakaya? When we subject ourselves to the least discrimination or particularization, transformation takes place; otherwise, all things are as void as space, as they inherently are. By dwelling our mind on

evil things, hell arises. By dwelling our mind on good acts, paradise becomes. Dragons and snakes are the transformation of venomous hatred, while Bodhisattvas (Enlighteners of sentient beings) are mercy personified. The upper regions (various heavens) is Prajna crystallized, while the underworld (Narakas, the place of the wicked) is only another form assumed by ignorance and infatuation. Numerous indeed is the transformation of the essence of mind! People under delusion awake not and understand not; they bend their minds always on evil, and as a rule practise evil. But should they turn their minds from evil to righteousness even for a moment, Prajna instantly arises. This is what is called the Nirmanakaya of the Buddha of the essence of mind.

Learned Audience, the Dharmakaya is intrinsically self-sufficient. To see face to face from Ksana to Ksana (*i.e.*, continuously, without interruption) our own essence of mind is the Sambhogakaya of Buddha. To dwell our mind on the Sambhogakaya (so that Wisdom or Prajna arises) is the Nirmanakaya. To attain enlightenment by our own efforts and to practise by ourself the goodness inherent in our essence of mind would be a genuine case of 'Taking Refuge'. Our physical body consisting of flesh and skin, etc. is nothing more than a tenement or an inn (for temporary use only), so we do not take refuge therein. But let us realise the Trikaya of our essence of mind, then we shall know the Buddha of our essence of mind.

I have a 'Formless' Stanza, the reciting and the practising of which will at once dispel the delusions and expiate the sins accumulated in numerous Kalpas. This is the stanza:—

People under delusions accumulate tainted merits (for favourable rebirths in this world or in upper worlds), but tread not the Path.

They are under the impression that to accumulate merits and to tread the Path are one and the same thing.

Their merits for alms-giving and offerings though are infinite,

But (they realise not) that the ultimate source of sin lies in the three venomous elements (*i.e.* greed, hatred, and infatuation) within their own mind.

They expect to expiate their sins by merit-accumulating

Without knowing that felicities obtained in future lives have nothing to do with the expiation of sins.

Why not get rid of sin within our own mind?

Then it is a case of true repentance, *i.e.* repentance within our essence of mind.

(A sinner) who realises suddenly what constitutes true repentance in the Mahayana (The Great Vehicle) School,

And who ceases from doing evil and practises righteousness, is free from sin.

A treader of the Path who keeps a constant watch on his essence of mind
May be classified in the same group as the various Buddhas.

Our Patriarchs transmitted no other system of Law but this 'Sudden' one.
May all followers of it see face to face their essence of mind and be at
once with the Buddhas.

If you are going to look for the Dharmakaya,

See it above Dharmalakṣaṇa (things and form, phenomena), and then your
mind will be pure.

Exert yourself in order to see face to face the essence of mind, and relax
not;

For Death may come suddenly and put an abrupt end to your earthly
existence.

Those who happen to understand the Mahayana teaching and are thus able
to realise the essence of mind

Should reverently put their palms together (as a sign of respect) and
fervently seek for the Dharmakaya.

The Patriarch then added:—

Learned Audience, all of you should recite this stanza and put it into
actual practice. Should you be able to realise your essence of mind, after reciting
it, then you may consider yourself to be always in my presence, though actually
you are thousand miles away from me. But should you be unable to do so, then
though we are face to face to each other, we are really thousand miles apart. In
that case, what is the use of taking the trouble to come here from such a long
distance? Take good care of yourself. Good-bye.

The whole assembly, after hearing what the Patriarch had said, became
enlightened. In a very happy mood, they accepted his teaching and put it into
practice.