



Saturday Night Dharma  
Group Study on SKYPE  
DaAi TV Wisdom at Dawn  
Dharma as Water

## The Great Merit of Repentance

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Subject: The Great Merit of Repentance (懺悔功德深)

We discuss the mind every day. We have had many discussions on a sense of shame and repentance. Indeed, we should constantly have a sense of shame. With this sense of shame, we need to openly repent.

It is said in the Sutra, "**Feeling shame and remorse, we repent openly. Not only do we eliminate transgressions, but we also accumulate infinite merits and establish the wonderful fruition of Nirvana.**" So if we feel shame and remorse, we can repent openly and sincerely.

As we said yesterday, we must not hide our errors. If we do, it will bring no benefit to us, only harm. So we say to **maintain a sense of humility in our minds. When we openly repent our past mistakes, we vow that we will never commit them again.** This is what we must do. This means we must maintain a sense of humility in our minds.

We are like a dirty container. The dirt inside is useless, so we should promptly remove it and wash the container clean. Once the container has been cleansed, it can be used to carry clean water. It can be used again. Do you remember the story that I told about Rahula, who was quite mischievous? His father, the Buddha, guided him to be a monk when he was still quite young. When Sakyamuni Buddha returned home, He convinced His father to embrace Buddhism. He also guided His aunt, and even His wife and His son, Rahula, to renounce the lay life and enter the monastery. Rahula was still quite young at that time, so the Buddha entrusted him to Sariputra in hopes that Sariputra would



guide him well.

But, Rahula was quite mischievous. When Buddha was staying at the monastery, Rahula would tell people, "He's not here, He went out for a walk." When those looking for the Buddha would turn away disappointed, he would be very happy. He did not do it out of malice; he just loved to play tricks on people. He was quite mischievous. The people in the Sangha learned about it, and thought it was unacceptable. It was a form of lying, and was unacceptable. But he would not change his behavior. Because he was young, everyone adored him. But they also knew that they should report it to the Buddha. If they allowed the child to have such bad habits, he would become troublesome later.

So they told the Buddha of Rahula's mischievous behavior. The Buddha called to Rahula and said, "I just came back from my trip. Please fetch me a bucket of water."

As Rahula loved to be near the Buddha, and to serve Him, he went happily to fetch a bucket of water.

After the Buddha rinsed His feet with the water, He said, "Rahula, I just washed my feet with this water. Is it still drinkable?"

Rahula looked up at the Buddha and said, "The water was clean and drinkable before you used it to wash your feet. But, once you used it to wash your feet the water became dirty. How can one drink the dirty water?"

"Good. Now you can pour it out."

So Rahula poured the water out.

After it was gone the Buddha said, "Come over here with the bucket." When Rahula brought the bucket to him, the Buddha kicked it over with His foot.

Rahula got scared and thought that the Buddha was mad at him.

"What did I do wrong?"

The Buddha said, "Come over here, Rahula. The bucket is upside down. Go and pour some water into this upside down bucket."



Rahula said, "Buddha, to pour water into the bucket. I would need to turn the bucket over first to fill it with water."

The Buddha responded, "Correct. Your character is just like this bucket. Your original nature is very pure and clean like the water in the bucket." Why do you want to deceive people and defile your mind? When you lie, your mind becomes defiled, just like that bucket of useless dirty water."

Rahula said, "But, I have dumped out the water. I want to correct my behavior."

The Buddha said, "Yes, you have dumped out the water. But do you know that you can't fill the bucket with any water when it is upside down? This means you should repent sincerely, and feel a sense of shame and remorse. If the bucket is not cleaned immediately or if it remains upside down, you cannot fill it with water. Even if you turn it over, without cleaning it, the water in it will still be useless. So you must feel shame and repent thoroughly."

Rahula bent his head down in self-reflection and repented to the Buddha. "Buddha, although I lied about where you were I was just doing it for fun. I did not mean any harm."

The Buddha said, "Even if you did not have any ill intentions, over time actions become habits. You should know, if you tell a lie once, the next time someone asks you about my whereabouts, if you say I am not here people will think that I am here. They will believe the opposite. It is like a hand. The front side is the palm. The other side is the back. A hand has a front and a back. We cannot pick up things with the back side and must use the palm. One hand has different parts with different functions, Your mind is the same. Even without ill intentions, [if you lie] it is as if your hand is already backwards, it will not work." By then, Rahula realized his mistake and said, "Now I know. I need to correct my mindset. I will never tell a lie again or behave the wrong way. I'll correct my mistakes."



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This was what the Buddha taught Rahula. The Buddha taught all living beings as if they were His own child, Rahula "He treats all beings as His own children." Thus we say we are all the Buddha's children. We should not make the same mistakes repeatedly, or hide them. Not admitting or repenting mistakes is the same as trying to hide them. In doing that, we cannot live with open minds. If our minds are not open, we cannot embrace all things. As I have said, an open mind can embrace all things. We may make a mistake and try to cover it up, but, as people say, "The best way to hide a misdeed is not to do it." If we do not admit our mistakes, do you think people really won't know? People will criticize us behind our back, and this will bring us worries. We worry about running into old acquaintances. We worry that someone will spread the word about our misdeeds. So our minds will become more and more narrow.

A narrow mind cannot be broad and open. So we must feel ashamed and repent openly.

Then our minds will be as broad as the universe and embrace all things.

We should have pure thoughts. If our thoughts are pure, the mind can be pure and refined. "Repent mistakes and vow never to repeat them." The only way to do this is through repentance. We must practice repentance and take good care of our hearts. If we can do this, we can dissolve the effects of past transgressions. We will vow never to repeat them again, so there will be no more transgressions. Thus repentance can eliminate transgressions. It is more than just eliminating them. Listen carefully. Don't say "I have repented. Why I am still so unlucky?" All that is the result of our past. If we accept this and vow not to repeat those mistakes, there will be no more transgressions. If we can do this, not only will we not repeat the same mistakes or transgressions, we will "develop boundless merits" and "establish the unsurpassable path of Bodhi."



“Establish” means to firmly root our conviction and nurture our merits. Our virtues and merits will lead us to establish the unsurpassable path of enlightenment. **Facing mistakes, if one repents and is willing to accept the punishment it will not happen again. When the transgression is eliminated, goodness arises. We enhance boundless merits and establish the unsurpassable path of enlightenment.**

Everyone, we must exert genuine effort and treat others with an open heart. When situations occur, do not argue or take issue with others. Take a step back to allow some space for growth.

The Buddha once told His disciples at the Jetavana in Srevasi of the war between the King of Heaven and the Asuras. There are also Asuras in the Realm of Heaven. The Asuras always looked for trouble, so they fought with the King of Heaven. At that time, the King of Heaven’s strength was weaker than the Asuras’, so he was defeated and started to retreat. He realized that his power was insufficient, so he retreated promptly.

The driver of his carriage sped up the horses and galloped quickly. The King of Heaven could see a huge nest of Garuda birds in the tree. Garuda are huge. Their wings cover the moon and the sun when opened. So the bird nest was huge. From a distance, the King of Heaven could see this huge nest of Garuda birds inside the big nest, there were two eggs. He ordered the driver to stop. “Do not go forward any further. If we move forward that bird’s nest will fall off the tree, and the eggs will be smashed. We cannot go forward any further. If we disturb the bird and the nest, the nest will fall off the tree, and two loves will be destroyed.

Once they stopped, he said, “Since we cannot go forward



anymore, let's turn around and go back. But the Asura soldiers were chasing them from the other direction. What could the King do? He was willing to sacrifice himself to save the two lives. So he insisted on going backwards and started to backtrack toward the Asura soldiers who were chasing them. When the King's soldiers turned around it scared the Asuras as they thought it was a trick. The King had turned around fled. If he dared to turn back around, he must have reinforcements. So the Asuras got scared, and ordered their soldiers to withdraw. The palace was saved and the King of Heaven returned safely.

After the Buddha finished the story, He said to His disciples, "In order to save these two eggs, the King was willing to sacrifice himself. With such a big, loving heart, he was willing to risk his own life to save these living beings. He was not concerned about his own life and deemed that the truth of the path was more important than his physical body. With such virtues, he defeated the Asuras.

Everyone, this is what we all should learn. Without our minds, there is a constant battle between good and evil. An increase of goodness will diminish evil. Thus we must feel shame, and repent openly. This strengthens our spiritual cultivation. Be prudent, cautious and earnest. Everyone, please always be mindful.  
(Source: Da Ai TV 靜思晨語 法譬如水)