

# Confession & Repentance

IBDSCL, Jan. 5<sup>th</sup>, 6<sup>th</sup>, 2019, by Nancy Yu

Good morning! Happy New Year! Welcome to the International Buddha Dharma Society for Cosmic Law to listen to today's Dharma talk. Our subject for the first month of year 2019 is Confession & Repentance. In this first month of the year, we will repent what we have done wrong in the past and will be cautious not to do wrong again in the future.

In September last year, we actually already talked about Confession & Repentance once. We talked about why we need to repent and went through some methods. We will review what is Confession & Repentance.

Confession means an individual acknowledges his wrong doings; repentance refers to the feeling of remorse about doing something and one is committed not to do it again. Confession might not involve a change in the individual after he confesses; repentance involves a change in the individual. A person may confess a crime, but he may not repent his actions. Confession could be imposed; repentance comes from the individual himself.

About repentance, you may have some similar experience. If we do something wrong and not repent, it feels like we bear some kind of burden inside. Once we repent it, our mind would feel light and free.

Today, I will first share a story about repentance with you, and the name of the story is **Repentance for Liberation**.

In the past, when the Buddha was instructing people at Jetavanavihara, one day, Venerable Shariputra came. He respectfully bowed to the Buddha and sit by his side. He said to the Buddha, "World Honored One, I Have finished my summer retreat here in Sravasti and I decided to go traveling to transform people."

The World Honored One said, "It's the right time." So Ven. Shariputra rose up from his seat, bowed to the Buddha and left.

Shortly after, one malicious bhikkhu reported to the World Honored One, "Shariputra criticized other bhikkhus and did not know to repent, how could he travel and teach people."

The World Honored One told another bhikkhu, "Go look for Shariputra and tell him that I am looking for him."

Then the World Honored One told Ven. Maudgalyayana and Ven. Ananda, "Tell all bhikkhus to come here. Shariputra will lion roar in front of me." So all bhikkhus gathered around the Buddha. They bowed to the Buddha and sit around him.

The Buddha said to Shariputra, "After you left, one bhikkhu told me that you argued with other bhikkhus. You did not confess what you had done, and instead, you left to travel outside. Is what he said true?"

Ven. Shariputra said, "World Honored One, you knew the truth."

The Buddha said, "I knew the truth, but not all the bhikkhus. They have doubts. You may clear this up in front of them."

Shariputra told the Buddha, "Since I was born, I am almost 80 years old. I never killed; I never lied, even when playing, I never argued with anybody. If one's mind is scattered, one may do such things. However, World Honored One, my mind is peace and quiet. How could I argue

with bhikkhus who hold precepts? Like the earth, it accepts the pure, and also the filthy, even faeces, urine, pus, blood, snot and saliva. It accepts all without dislike, so do I. World Honored One, my mind is not moving, how could I argue with others and then leave to travel? Only people with scattered mind will do so. My mind is proper, how could I do that? Also like the water, it cleans the good, also the bad. Water will not think: I only clean this, not that. I am also like water, and I won't discriminate. So I won't argue with others and then leave to travel outside.

Also like the blazing fire burning the the mountains and plains, it won't differentiate the beautiful and the ugly. It burns everything without a single thought.

Also like when Blooms brooming, no matter good or bad, everything is cleaned up.

Also like the bull without the two horns, tamed and tractable, could be subdued according to the shepherd's mind.

World Honored One! My mind is also like this, without any harming thought. How could I argue with someone and then go traveling?

Like a Chandala woman in rags, begs everywhere only for food and clothing without other thoughts.

World Honored One, I am also like this without undirected thoughts. How could I argue with someone and then go traveling?

Also like an ointment container with holes everywhere, everyone would see the ointment leaking from all the broken holes.

World Honored One, I am also like this. Filthy stuff like faeces, urine, pus, blood, snot, saliva, leaks from nine holes in this body. I observe this body not clean, how could I argue with others?

Like a beautiful lady with a corpse bound on her back, she must be sick of it. World Honored One, I am sick of my body just like the beautiful lady sick of the corpse on her body. How could I argue with bhikkhus and then go traveling? World Honored One knew that was not true, so did that bhikkhu. If it was true, I would like to repent before him."

At this time, the World Honored One told that bhikkhu, "Now, you should repent deeply."

That bhikkhu with remorse rose from his seat, bowed to the Buddha and said, "I know I have slandered Shariputra. World Honored One, please accept my repentance."

The World Honored One said, "Bhikkhu, you should repent to Shariputra."

The bhikkhu bowed to Shariputra and said, "Please accept my repentance. Please have mercy on my ignorance."

The World Honored One told Shariputra, "You may accept this bhikkhu's repentance. Caress his head. If you don't accept his repentance, his evil karma will manifest soon."

Shariputra caressed the bhikkhu's head and said, "This is a stupid and deluded thing. I accept your repentance. The Buddha dharma is profound and wide. If one can repent in time, it is a good thing. I accept your repentance and do not do it again."

After the bhikkhu repented three times, Ven. Shariputra said, "Do remember, do not do it again because there are six kinds of mistakes will pull one into the hells; there are six kinds of good deeds will raise one to the heavens and there are six dharma doors can lead one to Nirvana. What are the six mistakes that will pull one into the hells?"

1. One raises the mind to slander and harm others;
2. One not only has the mind to harm others, but also is pleased with that thought;
3. One not only raises the mind to harm others, even more one abets others to do the same;
4. One feels happy after harming others;
5. Knowing the situation of the slandered person, if that person is harmed, one feels happy;
6. If failed to harm others, one is sad.

The above six mistakes would pull one into the evil realms.

What are the six kinds of good practices that will raise one into the good realms?

One's body holds complete precepts;  
One's mouth holds complete precepts;  
One's mind holds complete precepts;  
One's karma is clean;  
One has no killing thoughts;  
One is not jealous of others.

These six good practices will raise one up to good realms.

Which six Dharma doors will lead one to Nirvana?

1. The body practices compassion without flaw;
2. The mouth practices compassion without flaw;
3. The mind practices compassion without flaw;
4. If one receives different kinds of offerings, one is able to equally distribute to others, not even a little bit stingy;
5. One hold precepts, pure and clean, which is taken seriously by the wise ones;
6. Holding complete precepts, one is able to differentiate right views, evil views, and believes in the sages' way of getting rid of birth and death, so one could get liberated from all afflictions.

The above all Dharma doors should be all clear. Cultivate according to these, one would reach Nirvana.

Bhikkhus, you all should learn and practice these six methods diligently.

The remorse bhikkhu, again rose from his seat, bowed to Shariputra and said, "I again repent what I have done. Please accept my repentance. From now on, I won't do it again."

Ven. Shariputra said, "I heard your repentance. A sage's mind is as wide as empty space, as long as you are sincere, willing to correct, and not to make the same mistake."

At that time, that bhikkhu heard what Shariputra said, he was rejoiced and agreed.

It's said in the sutra: In all the merits, the merit of repentance is the greatest because it is the fastest way to eradicate evil karma.

Then how to repent? Today, we will read one sutra, **Buddha Pronounces the Repentance Sūtra in Response to Śāriputra**. We will listen to the Buddha about how to repent in this sutra.

**Verse for Opening Sutras**

The unsurpassed, profound, subtle and wondrous dharma is difficult to encounter,  
even in a hundred, thousand, million kalpas.  
Now we see and hear it, and are able to receive and maintain it.  
We vow to understand the Tathagata's true meaning.

## **Buddha Pronounces the Repentance Sūtra in Response to Śāriputra**

Translated from Sanskrit into Chinese in the Eastern Han Dynasty  
by The Tripiṭaka Master An Shigao from Anxi

At one time the Buddha was staying on the Gr̥dhrakūṭa Mountain, near the city of Rājagṛha, together with 1,250 bhikṣus and 1,000 Bodhisattvas. His foremost disciple Śāriputra rose, came forward, and fell on his knees. He joined his palms and asked the Buddha, “If good men and good women aspire to seek bodhi, but have done evil in their past lives, how should they repent?”

The Buddha praised, “Very good! Very good! Śāriputra, you are so concerned about the welfare of gods and humans.”

The Buddha said, “If there are good men and good women who seek the bodhi of Arhats, the bodhi of Pratyekabuddhas, or the bodhi of Buddhas, or wish to know past and future events, day and night in the six periods they should bathe, rinse their mouths, dress properly, and make obeisance [to Buddhas in worlds] in the ten directions. Facing a given direction, they should join their palms and state their repentance: ‘Out of greed, anger, and delusion, not knowing the Buddha, the Dharma, and the Saṅgha, nor good versus evil, from my past lives in innumerable kalpas to this life, I have done evil with my body, voice, and mind, whether I have attempted to harm the Buddha, maligned the Dharma, or attacked the Saṅgha; whether I have killed Arhats or my parents; whether I have done the three evil body karmas or the four evil voice karmas; whether I have killed or incited others to kill sentient beings; whether I have rejoiced for others upon seeing them kill sentient beings; whether I have stolen or incited others to steal; whether I have rejoiced for others upon seeing them steal; whether I have deceived or incited others to deceive people; whether I have rejoiced for others upon seeing them deceive people; whether I have used or incited others to use divisive speech; whether I have rejoiced for others upon hearing them use divisive speech; whether I have lied or told others to lie; whether I have rejoiced for others upon hearing them lie; whether I have harbored or told others to harbor jealousy; whether I have rejoiced for others upon seeing their jealousy; whether I have been greedy or incited others to be greedy; whether I have rejoiced for others upon seeing their greed; whether I have disbelieved or told others to disbelieve [the truth]; whether I have rejoiced for others upon seeing their nonbelief; whether I have disbelieved that doing good reaps good and that doing evil reaps evil; whether I have rejoiced for others upon seeing them do evil; whether I have stolen sacred things from Buddhist temples or personal things from bhikṣus, or incited others to steal such things; whether I have rejoiced for others upon seeing them steal such things; whether I have cheated people with smaller containers or shorter rulers, or with larger containers or longer rulers; whether I have rejoiced for others upon seeing them cheat people; whether I have committed or told others to commit the rebellious sins; whether I have rejoiced for others upon seeing them commit the rebellious

sins.

“I have been repeatedly reborn as hell-dwellers, animals, hungry ghosts, humans [or gods]. The evils I have done on these five life-paths include not honoring my parents or teachers, not respecting my beneficent friends, not respecting śramaṇas or elders, disdaining my parents or teachers, disdaining seekers of the bodhi of Arhats or the bodhi of Pratyekabuddhas, slandering such seekers or envying them, denouncing the bodhi of Buddhas, supporting the evil paths, calling wrong what is right, and calling right what is wrong. I beseech Buddhas [in worlds] in the ten directions for their pity, and I repent of all such sins. For the rest of this life and in all future lives, I will never again commit such sins. Why do I beseech Buddhas [in worlds] in the ten directions for their pity? Buddhas can see and hear through me, and I do not dare to deceive them or conceal my sins. From now on, I will never again commit them.”

The Buddha told Śāriputra, “If there are good men and good women who do not wish to be reborn as hell-dwellers, animals, or hungry ghosts, they should repent of their sins and should not conceal them. After they have accepted the precepts, they should not do evil again. If they do not wish to be reborn in fringe countries where there is no Buddha, no Dharma, no Saṅgha, no virtuous principles, and no distinction between good and evil, they should repent of their sins and should not conceal them. If they do not wish to be reborn blind, deaf, mute, or stupid, or reborn into families of butchers, fishers, hunters, or wardens, or reborn into poor families, they should repent of their sins and should not conceal them. If women wish to be reborn in male form, they should repent of their sins.

“Those who wish to enter the holy stream, becoming Srotāpannas and never becoming hell-dwellers, hungry ghosts [or animals], should repent of their sins. Those who wish to become Sakṛdāgāmins and be reborn in a heaven, to become Anāgāmins and be reborn in one of the twenty-four heavens, to become Arhats and enter parinirvāṇa, to abide in the world as Arhats or Pratyekabuddhas, or to know past and future events, should all repent of their sins and should not conceal them.”

The Buddha told Śāriputra, “Good men and good women should, during the three periods of the day, make obeisance to present Buddhas [in worlds] in the ten directions, who give the right teachings to all under the sun and the moon, enabling them to do good. By analogy, the sky pours down rains for grains, grasses, and trees to flourish. Similarly, Buddhas give teachings in sūtras to enable all to do good, to be reborn as human kings, the four god-kings, or gods in Trayastriṃśa Heaven, and to enjoy wealth and pleasures as requital. Buddhas also enable voice-hearers to become Srotāpannas, Sakṛdāgāmins, Anāgāmins, or Arhats.

“[Good men and good women] should pray that Buddhas [in worlds] in the ten directions hear their words: ‘For sentient beings in the world that do good, including people and flying or wriggly insects, whether they give alms, train diligently for bodhi, observe the precepts, remember others with lovingkindness, do innumerable good deeds, make offerings to Bodhisattvas and bhikṣus, or give charity to ordinary beings and the poor, and even to animals in distress, I persuade them to do good, and I express my sympathetic joy. For those who have been taught by past Buddhas to attain nirvāṇa, I express my sympathetic joy. For those who will be taught by future Buddhas to do good, to end the five evils on the path of birth and death, and even to become Arhats or Pratyekabuddhas, I persuade them to do good, and I express my sympathetic joy. For those who are taught by present Buddhas [in worlds] in the ten directions to give alms, to observe the precepts, and to have compassion for people and even

for flying or wriggly insects, I persuade them to do good, and I express my sympathetic joy.

“For Bodhisattvas who, in the past, have given alms in practicing dāna-pāramitā, observed precepts in practicing śīla-pāramitā, endured adversity in practicing kṣānti-pāramitā, made energetic progress in practicing vīrya-pāramitā, meditated single-mindedly in practicing dhyāna-pāramitā, and developed wisdom in practicing prajñā-pāramitā, I persuade them to rejoice over their practice of the six pāramitās, and I express my sympathetic joy. For Bodhisattvas who, in the future, will practice the six pāramitās, I persuade them to rejoice, and I express my sympathetic joy. For Bodhisattvas who presently practice the six pāramitās, I persuade them to rejoice, and I express my sympathetic joy.

“I give away the merits I have acquired, as alms, to all sentient beings [in worlds] in the ten directions, including people, who have been my parents [throughout my rebirths], and including flying or wriggly insects with two, four, or multiple feet, enabling them all to have the good fortune to become Buddhas or Pratyekabuddhas. Transferring my merits to them is a hundred, a thousand, ten thousand, and a koṭi times greater than giving them, as alms, treasures, such as gold and silver, that fill up four big cities.”

The Buddha told Śāriputra, “Good men and good women should, day and night in the six periods, make obeisance to Buddhas [in worlds] in the ten directions and say, ‘I pray that They hear my words. If Buddhas [in worlds] in the ten directions do not wish to pronounce sūtras, I request them to pronounce sūtras to gods, humans, and even flying or wriggly insects, liberating them all from the life-paths of hell-dwellers, animals, and hungry ghosts, and from stupidity and poverty, and enabling them to attain nirvāṇa. If Buddhas [in worlds] in the ten directions wish to enter parinirvāṇa, I beseech them not to enter parinirvāṇa, but to give benefits to gods, humans, and even flying or wriggly insects, enabling them all to avoid the life-paths of hell-dwellers, animals, and hungry ghosts.”

The Buddha told Śāriputra, “In my past lives, when I was a Bodhisattva, I always beseeched Buddhas not to enter parinirvāṇa, but to pronounce sūtras. Therefore, I became a Buddha. Then the four god-kings of the first desire heaven and the god-king Śakra of the second desire heaven, together with innumerable gods, came down [from their heavens]. They joined their palms, made obeisance, and beseeched me not to enter parinirvāṇa, but to pronounce sūtras to gods and humans.”

The Buddha told Śāriputra, “People reap what they sow. While those who do good receive good fortune, those who do evil receive misfortune.”

Śāriputra asked the Buddha, “If good men and good women aspire to seek Buddha bodhi, how should they pray to attain it?”

The Buddha replied, “Good men and good women should, day and night in the six periods, make obeisance to Buddhas [in worlds] in the ten directions and say, ‘I pray that Buddhas [in worlds] in the ten directions hear my words. I have acquired merits from my good deeds in my past lives in innumerable kalpas, whether I have given alms, upheld the sūtras, held goodwill, or done good for the Buddha, for the Dharma, for the Saṅgha, for ordinary beings, or for animals. Knowing that one receives misfortune from one’s evil and good fortune from one’s good, I repent of my evil. I uphold the sūtras and the precepts without violation, whether I observe the precept against being intimate with women, whether I request Buddhas and

Bodhisattvas to benefit the multitudes, whether I beseech Buddhas not to enter parinirvāṇa. I gather all the merits I have acquired since I began to learn the Dharma, and with lovingkindness give them away, as alms, to all sentient beings, including people, who have been my parents [throughout my rebirths], and even flying or wriggly insects, enabling them all to receive good fortune. I will keep a small leftover part to enable me to carry out the teachings in the sūtras, delivering those who have not been delivered, liberating those who have not been liberated, and enabling those who have not attained nirvāṇa to attain it.”

The Buddha told Śāriputra, “Suppose all men and women in the world have become Arhats or Pratyekabuddhas. Suppose someone makes offerings to these Arhats and Pratyekabuddhas for one thousand years. Is his merit not great?”

Śāriputra answered, “The merit acquired from making offerings to even one Arhat or Pratyekabuddha for one day is immeasurable, much more the merit acquired from making offerings to all Arhats and Pratyekabuddhas in the world for one thousand years.”

The Buddha said, “Making offerings to all Arhats and Pratyekabuddhas in the world for one thousand years cannot compare with reading this repentance sūtra for one day and one night in the six periods. The merit acquired from reading this repentance sūtra is a hundred, a thousand, ten thousand, and a koṭi times greater than that from making offerings to all Arhats and Pratyekabuddhas in the world.”

Amitabha! You may contemplate on the story to understand Repentance. After you go back, read the Repentance Sutra again and again to eradicate the bad karma and increase your blessings.

Thank you! See you next week!

### **Verse of Transference**

May the merit and virtue accrued from this work,  
Adorn the Buddhas' Pure Lands,  
Repaying four kinds of kindness above,  
And aiding those suffering in the paths below.

May those who see and hear of this,  
All bring forth the resolve for Bodhi.  
And when this retribution body is over,  
Be born together in ultimate bliss.