



Postgraduate Dissertation coversheet & feedback form:

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For completion by student:

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support needs:*
No

Dissertation title: A Study on the Meaning and Implementation of the First Blessing of the Three Blessings of Pure Karma
論「淨業三福」人天福的意義及落實

Supervisor: Venerable Chengde

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English Review of Dissertation

The topic of my graduation thesis is the principles, significance, and practical application of the First Blessing in the Three Blessings of Pure Karma 淨業三福人天福 from *the Visualization Sutra* 觀無量壽佛經. In the following, I will begin to introduce the reasons for my choice of this topic, the challenges I have encountered in the writing process and my solutions, as well as my reflections on the writing of this thesis.

The Process of Determining the Research Direction

The reason why I chose this topic for my research is because I know that the Three Blessings of Pure Karma is an essential and foundational teaching for every Buddhist practitioner. Among them, the first blessing is the most important, and many Buddhist practitioners are aware of its significance. However, in many cases, this understanding remains only at the conceptual or verbal level, like some kind of slogan, and is not put into practice. Without this foundation, further progress in cultivation becomes difficult, and the practice will take a lot of detours and waste a lot of time.

Thus, how to put the First Blessing in the Three Blessings of Pure Karma into practice is a matter worth studying, and this requires a comprehensive analysis of the First Blessing in the Three Blessings of Pure Karma. However, current academic research lacks in-depth, specialized studies on this topic. Therefore, this thesis analyzes this topic by referring to *the Five Pure Land Sutras* 淨土五經 and its related annotations, as well as the relevant discourses of eminent Pure Land patriarchs, and by combining them with other traditional classics, folk moral books, and also with contemporary researches, and scientific theories. Through systematic and comprehensive analysis and discussion, the reader will have a clearer understanding of what is the First Blessing in the Three Blessings of Pure Karma, why the First Blessing should be implemented, and how to implement the First Blessing.

What the challenges of the project are

In the process of writing the thesis, the first challenge I faced was the vast amount of source material. In the Tripitaka, there are countless Pure Land sutras

related to it, which I need to sift through and organize them one by one. This consumed a significant amount of my time, and I finally selected 71 sutras and sorted out 60,000 to 70,000 words of reference material, which amounted to nearly 150 pages of Word documents.

Next, I needed to categorize them, not only divide them into three parts, principles, significance, and practical application, but also further subdivide them according to the four sentences of the First Blessing in the Three Blessings of Pure Karma. And continue to subdivide them into each level of each sentence, and even continue to refine it under each level. To manage this, I created 12 separate Word documents to help me find the material I needed more quickly and clearly. But even so, each document still usually has a dozen to twenty pages, which makes me often overlook some content of the document during the writing process.

The second challenge I faced was that I had spent so much time on preliminary research, which compressed my time to write the thesis. As a result, my writing progress is a little behind other students, which makes me feel some psychological pressure, always wishing that I could write faster. However, I must carefully and patiently collect the materials needed for writing the thesis, which is indispensable. Therefore, I have to force myself to improve my writing efficiency.

Moreover, the third challenge I faced was that only a few scholars have conducted specialized research on this topic, and I had little existing framework or methodology to reference. This meant that nearly every step of the writing process required deep and independent thought, and sometimes I got stuck. In this regard, I can only keep trying bravely and keep feeling my way forward through trial and error.

What helped me to overcome these challenges

First of all, regarding the first challenge. Because I have collected a lot of materials, it is easy for me to miss the relevant materials when browsing the Word documents. So I extracted the keywords from each of the 12 documents and transcribed them on A4 paper, I have copied more than 10 sheets of A4 paper in total. And I also used different colored pens to separate them. It turns out that this is very effective, the keywords on the paper could help me locate the point quickly, and the different colors of handwriting could help me find a certain kind of point quickly. This not only saved me a significant amount of time searching, but also gave me a

comprehensive and clear grasp of all the material. This allowed me to quickly find my previous notes and pinpoint specific materials when I needed to supplement my thesis later.

Secondly, for the second challenge, at first I set phased goals for myself, planning to complete certain content within a few days. But slowly, I realized that this method was not very useful because I could not finish on time, which made me more nervous and anxious as I was already lagging behind others in the progress of writing my thesis. Therefore, I adjusted my plan to set a higher goal for myself every day, this goal exceeded what I could comfortably finish in a single day. I was surprised to find that this approach of quantifying my daily writing progress and increasing the level of difficulty helped me to improve my essay writing efficiency. For example, when I was able to complete the day's progress today, which was actually difficult to complete on that day. So when I accomplish the goal for the day, I feel very encouraged. And the next day, I have more confidence and motivation to challenge the next day's goal. And if I do not accomplish the daily goal, I usually do not have much left over. This will motivate me to try to be more efficient the next day, to complete the tasks left over from the previous day while still trying to complete the tasks of the day, thus avoiding a vicious cycle.

Furthermore, with regard to the third challenge, due to the lack of information for reference, I often encounter the problem of being stuck during the writing process. In this regard, I will draw on my experience in writing my undergraduate thesis two years ago. When I encountered such a situation, I would first calm down, so that I would not be anxious. Then I take out a pen and write down all possible ideas and thoughts on a blank sheet of paper. While this method may seem no different from thinking things through in my head, but in reality, many issues that felt tangled in my mind became much clearer when I wrote them down. For me, putting my thoughts on paper was a faster and more effective way to organize ideas. Every time I picked up a pen and started writing, I could quickly develop a clear direction for my thesis. Then, I can quickly find the material I need in the Word documents by combining the key points I wrote on the A4 paper.

Moreover, during this process, my tutor has been very patient in guiding me, helping me to see the deficiencies in my thesis, providing me with pertinent suggestions for revision, and always encouraging and affirming my efforts. This

support greatly motivated me to face and overcome the challenges I encountered while writing my thesis, giving me the courage to push through difficulties.

What are the results of my research

Through my study of the First Blessing in the Three Blessings of Pure Karma, I have made several significant discoveries.

First of all, each of the four sentences of the First Blessing in the Three Blessings of Pure Karma contain more than their literal interpretation without exception. In other words, it is not a simple matter to truly understand and implement every sentence. For example, we should be filial to our parents, not only to take good care of their bodies, but also to be able to put ourselves in their shoes, empathize with their feelings, and take care of their emotions. And even assisting them in Buddhist practice to cultivate wisdom. Further, all sentient beings have been our parents in past lives, so we should respectfully treat every being with reverence, and provide them with care and assistance in the ways mentioned above.

Secondly, although the First Blessing encompasses deep and extensive teachings, in reality, from another point of view, its practice is not inherently difficult. The reason for this is that the contents of the First Blessing may seem to be very complicated and trivial, but in reality they are all related to our sincere mind. As long as we can do it with a sincere minds, then we can naturally do the First Blessing well, and all these things will become less complicated. This is because whether it is honoring our parents, respecting our teachers or loving life, these are all the true nature in all of us, and as long as we are able to do them with a sincere mind, they correspond to this true nature, and so things become no longer complicated.

Finally, the most crucial point is that filial piety to parents is the most foundational and important thing no matter what. In the course of my research on this topic, I found that no matter what the content is, it cannot be separated from the foundation of filial parents. Moreover, I have a deep realization in the process of writing, because I can often recall the love of my parents for me, which fills me with strength and brings my heart closer to theirs. This emotional resonance further strengthened my understanding of the thesis theme, no matter how extensive the doctrinal content of the First Blessing, filial piety is the indispensable core.

What I have learned from the process of writing

Through writing this thesis, I think it has helped me improve my ability in multiple aspects.

First of all, it enhanced my ability to handle large volumes of data. Although I also collected a lot of data when I wrote my undergraduate thesis before, this time the amount of data was several times greater, spanning 3 major dimensions and 12 subtopics. This not only tested my research skills but also my ability to summarize and organize information. In the process, I also took the initiative to find ways to improve my efficiency, which brought me great satisfaction.

Secondly, in the process of collecting and organizing information, I also improved my ability to resist stress and strengthened my psychological quality. In this process, I realized that being anxious and fretting would not help. In addition to making my mood worse, it also slowed down the progress of writing my thesis. Therefore, I learned to remain calm, and I was surprised to find that when my mind started to become calm, I could find many useful ways to adjust myself, such as organizing the key points on the A4 paper, adjusting the daily goals, and so on, which helped me to improve the efficiency of writing the thesis. So, tension and anxiety are the least effective ways to solve problems, and it is only when you face it calmly that many inspirations and ideas will come to you.

Furthermore, in the process of writing my thesis, I have gradually learned to prioritize my physical and emotional well-being. In the past, I seldom thought about my physical and mental health in the process of writing my thesis, my whole mind was only on the progress of the thesis, and I was quite tense. However, I found that a moderate amount of relaxation could help me write my thesis. For example, after completing a section, I might spend an afternoon walking outdoors, chatting with friends, or meeting friends for a meal. These may seem to be unrelated to the writing of my thesis, but in fact, I can relax physically and mentally in the process of taking a walk, and in the process of spending time with my friends, I can also put myself in a good mood. In my opinion, the process of writing the thesis should not feel like being glued to a chair or trapped in a library, it should be an enjoyable, fulfilling, and rewarding process in a healthy state of mind and body.

Finally, in the process of writing, I often think about the time I spent with my parents, relatives, and friends, and I am often struck by warm moments in the past that

make me want to cry. For example, I would think of my mother silently accompanying me and doing what I wanted to do, even if it was not something she was interested in. I also think of my father, who was not good at expressing himself but was always silently happy or sad for me. Or I would think of my former teacher, who always tried his best to guide me in my studies, even though I could not fully understand and do it at that time, but he still chose to believe in me. These are related to the theme of my thesis, the love of my parents and the care of my teachers in my life, these warm memories have helped me to have a deeper understanding of the theme of my thesis. This has helped me to realize and understand the meaning of my thesis in a deeper way. At the same time, it also made me realize that only a paper written from the mind can touch others' minds, and the prerequisite for writing a good essay is to move oneself in the process.

In summary, writing this thesis has challenged me once again. I am glad that I have made some progress compared to what I did in my undergraduate program, and I am pleased to see growth beyond my undergraduate self. However, I remain aware that I cannot be complacent because of this, and that I need to continue to improve myself in order to cope with the greater challenges ahead. But in this process, I gradually learned how to adjust my mindset and how to solve the difficulties. I am no longer afraid of the unknown future and the more difficult challenges, and I think this experience of writing the thesis has given me very valuable spiritual wealth.

What I Hope to Improve in the Further Research

Through this thesis research, I have summed up some lessons and hope that I can be promoted and improved in future research.

First of all, the overall arrangement of time for the dissertation can be more compact, and I should have structured my schedule more efficiently. As mentioned earlier, I spent a lot of time in the preliminary process of collecting and organizing materials, which made my time very tight, and created unnecessary time pressure. To be honest, if I had more time, I think I could have done a better job with this thesis. However, this situation could have been avoided. If I could have finalized my topic earlier, I could have started searching for materials earlier, so as to leave more time for the writing of the thesis. Also, if I could have adjusted my plan earlier and set a higher goal for each day, I would have been pushed to finish the thesis in a timely

manner. In this regard, I hope that in the process of writing my thesis, I can start preparing as early as possible and make timely adjustments to my plan and goals.

Secondly, I have not collected enough information, and my literature review could have been more comprehensive. Although I have cited some secondary literature and the research results of western scholars in my thesis, I still think that if I had more time, I would have seen a richer and wider range of content, which would have made my thesis more comprehensive and well-rounded. Therefore, when I write my next thesis, I hope I can seize the time to collect more secondary literature and research results of western scholars to expand my horizon and enrich the content of my thesis.

Furthermore, I think that the discussion of the First Blessing in the Three Blessings of Pure Karma in this thesis is still a bit brief. If possible in future research, I would like to provide more detailed and rigorous exegesis of each sentence. So that readers can have a clearer and deeper understanding of the principles, significance, and practical application of the First Blessing, and so that they can better cultivate themselves. At the same time, most importantly, I will also benefit greatly from this process, and the research on this topic can help me better understand the First Blessing in the Three Blessings of Pure Karma, and deepen my own comprehension and realization of this essential Buddhist teaching.

To sum up, by writing this thesis, it has helped me to improve my ability in many aspects, and it has also made me realize that I still have a lot of deficiencies and room for improvement. But no matter what, as long as I put my mind into writing the thesis, I will definitely get something out of it. I am very grateful for this experience of writing this thesis, which not only let me learn a lot of knowledge, and let me know thorough preparation, comprehensive investigation, and in-depth analysis are all crucial for quality academic work, but also let me realize that the relationship between children and parents, it is the most intimate relationship and the most sincere love. And this love can help us move up step by step and eventually achieve success and joy. I will try to remember these lessons and carry them forward to improve and enhance my future research. I believe that with the experience of writing this thesis and my willingness to constantly improve myself, I will do better and better in the future.