

88 BUDDHAS REPENTANCE CEREMONY

In the 88 Buddhas Repentance Ceremony, participants repent by chanting the names of 88 buddhas, which is an excellent way to clear our karmic obstacles and draw out our inner wisdom.

The sources of the names of the 88 buddhas were not recorded in the repentance liturgy and remained unknown until Dao Pai, a Qing Dynasty Dharma Master, decided to look them up. Master Dao Pei was ordained as a monk at a young age. The very first time he chanted the 88 buddhas' names, he experienced a cool serenity never felt before. Even when he became an old man, he would experience the same pure joy each time he chanted the buddhas' names, so he set out to look for the sources of the names in the sutra collections. He discovered that the first 53 buddhas' names came from the Sutra of Visualizing the Two Bodhisattvas, the King of Medicine and the Superior Physician, and the last 35 buddhas' names came from the Maharatnakuta Sutra. Fearing that without this knowledge, future readers of the liturgy might not treat it with the proper respect and veneration, he added this documentation in the preface to the liturgy with the aim of strengthening the faith and earnestness of the practitioners as they chanted the names of the buddhas.

The power of chanting the buddhas' names is documented in the past life story of Shakyamuni Buddha at the time of the Buddha Suryarasi. One day, Shakyamuni Buddha, a practicing monk, heard the chanting of the 53 buddhas' names and immediately sensed an indescribable joy, which he felt must be shared with all beings. He had the message passed along to 3,000 people, who followed his example and chanted the 53 buddhas' names with deep respect and remembered each buddha's name by heart. These people subsequently attained buddhahood in three different time periods, or kalpas.

Shakyamuni Buddha also felt the suffering of beings who had to carry with them heavy karmic obstacles, so he taught them to repent by chanting the 35 buddhas' names.

Chanting the 88 buddhas' names is a practice that allows us to pay respect to all the buddhas who have already attained enlightenment and the buddha-to-be in each of us. Reflecting on and repenting the bad habits that keep us from enlightenment will reduce our false pride and clear new paths for us in our lives.