

# To Enlightenment-1

## Amitabha's 48 Great Vows

*Venerable Ding Hong*

### (1) Purifying the Mind to Save the Earth and Beyond

#### The Purpose of the Buddha's Teaching

Siddhartha Gautama, after seeing the suffering of birth, aging, illness, and death, relinquished his throne in order to find a solution to escape these sufferings. He learned from all the famous gurus of his time, living an ascetic life for six years. But still, he did not find the answer. So he went to the Ganges River to explore by himself. During deep meditation into a samadhi, he was enlightened. After enlightenment, the first words He uttered were

*“What a wonder! What a wonder!  
All beings have the same wisdom, virtues,  
and laksana/features as Tathagata,  
but they cannot prove and attain them  
due to their delusion and attachment.”*

He therefore began a voluntary edification of forty-nine years.

He began from assisting all beings to eradicate evilness and practice goodness, leading to the final goal of His edification—helping all beings transcend the suffering sea of birth and death. Master Shan Dao, the second patriarch in Chinese Pure Land School, said,

*“The sole reason that a Tathāgata comes to a world is to  
exclusively proclaim the Fundamental Sea of Amitabha's Vows.”*

We can conclude that Shakyamuni Buddha's forty-nine years teaching is to tell us about transcending reincarnation with the Pure Land Method—Amitabha's Forty Eight Vows. The core of His forty-nine years teaching is the Pure Land Method.

Now let us start to learn this most important Buddha's teachings— Amitabha's Forty-Eight Vows.

## The Root-Cause of Disasters

Lately we have witnessed so many disasters happening to the Earth. Many people ask why and are looking for a solution. But..,

Can we solve the problems without knowing their causes?  
The probability is very slim because  
*the problems will manifest in different forms to haunt us.*  
*Worst of all, it not only haunts us in this life but life after life.*  
*The retribution following our reincarnation will be endless.*

In order to resolve the disasters from the root, we must find out the cause. What is the root-cause of these disasters? Thousands of years ago, Shakyamuni Buddha already explained to us in *The Śūraṅgama Sūtra* very clearly:

*Greed induces floods.*  
*Resentment induces fire, such as volcanic eruptions and global warming.*  
*Ignorance induces wind disasters.*  
*Arrogance and grievance induce earthquakes.*  
*And skepticism, especially towards ancestor's sacred teachings, induces landslides, debris flows, or sinkholes that are reported often nowadays.*

The root-cause of these disasters lies in the people's minds, which are filled with unwholesome thoughts of greed, resentment, ignorance, arrogance, and skepticism. Mahayana Buddhism explicitly tells us that all phenomena of the cosmos, including the physical and spiritual environments of all beings, are all manifested by our own heart. As elaborated in *The Avatamsaka Sūtra*,

*All phenomena are simply manifested by the heart  
and altered by consciousness.*

This means that the Earth is the manifestation of our heart-nature, so is the universe. All manifestations, good and bad, are of our own making and thus entirely our own responsibility. Let's review the paragraph depicting the situation in our Degenerate Dharma Era in *The Sutra on the Annihilation of the Dharma*, "There will be extreme weather bringing drought and flood, followed by crops being ruined before they ripen. Plus the pandemic will be prevalent causing many people to die. Civilians suffer in toil while officials scheme to exploit them. People no longer observe principles but seek personal joys and create chaos."

This is the Buddha's prophecy regarding the condition of the degenerate Dharma-era. When we carefully observe people's speech, action, and mind today, it is not difficult to understand the Buddha's prophecy.

## **The Best Way to Resolve Disasters**

According to the Buddha-Dharma:

*To resolve all the man-made and natural disasters of the present time,  
there is no need to seek external help.  
Simply by resolving the greed, resentment, ignorance, arrogance  
and skepticism within our own heart,  
the outside disasters will then be eliminated naturally.*

But, how do we resolve these unwholesome thoughts in our minds? There is no better way than reciting Amitabha. Because Amitabha remembrance is a pure thought, the purest among all good thoughts. As a saying goes,

*Only in remembrance of a Buddha  
can we eliminate our past karma,  
and with utmost sincerity  
a mortal's heart can then be naturally transformed*

When we keep Buddha in our mind, we will bring about a pure land in our environment. This is especially so when we use a sincere, respectful, pure, impartial, and compassionate heart to recite Amitabha. This kind of recitation will then resonate with Buddha's realm.

*When one thought resonates, one Buddha realm manifests;  
when all thoughts resonate; the Buddha realm manifests continuously.  
During the moment of recitation,  
we have transformed our realm into Sukhāvātī,  
the Western Pure Land of Ultimate Bliss.*

According to *The Zhong Feng Thrice Yearning Ceremony*,

*My heart is Amitabha, Amitabha is my heart;  
this land is the Pure Land, the Pure Land is this land.*

The language of these words is very simple yet the principle is very profound. When we transform our heart into Amitabha remembrance, indeed, the world before our eyes will transform into the pure land as well. The pure land does not exist extrinsically, it exists in the heart of the moment of our reciting Amitabha. It is a reflection of our Amitabha remembrance.

What if we do not recite Amitabha but have thoughts of greed, resentment, ignorance, and arrogance? By the same token, the impurity of this mind will also manifest a turbid land like ours which is full of all sorts of disasters. Therefore, the best way to resolve disasters and protect the world is to recite Amitabha. Why? Please stay tuned to find the answer. See you soon.