

To Enlightenment-10

Amitabha's 48 Great Vows

Venerable Ding Hong

Meaning of the Word "Mahayana"

The third part of the title is "Mahayana"— a sanskrit word which means great vehicle. It is a simile. Vehicle is a tool of transportation. There are big and small ones.

In the past in India, there were transportation vehicles pulled by deer for only one person called Hinayana or Theravada, a "small vehicle." There were also transportation vehicles pulled by cows or horses for many people called Mahayana, a "great vehicle." The Buddha used this metaphor to explain, "If you can liberate yourself only, it is called a small vehicle—Hinayana or Theravada; if you liberate others in addition to liberating yourself, this is called a great vehicle—Mahayana."

*The Buddha expected us to learn Mahayana
—not only to liberate ourselves.
He suggests us not to take a small vehicle
but to benefit and liberate both ourselves and others,
further attaining Buddhahood together.*

The Infinite Life sutra is Mahayana, because it is liberating not only oneself but all beings. Many people misunderstand and think, "Learning Pure Land, reciting Amitabha all day long, isn't this Hinayana?" They perceive Pure Land practitioners "seeking rebirth for themselves by reciting Amitabha, disregarding others and not caring for others" seems to be a small vehicle. In fact, they do not understand that one is actually liberating himself and others if he can recite Amitabha conscientiously.

There is no doubt in regard to self-liberation; one recites Amitabha, he eradicates his own defilements and escalates his own realm. When reciting until single-minded in noumenon, he will then attain Buddhahood.

But how do we liberate others?

When reciting Amitabha in such a way, we will absolutely induce the blessings from Amitabha to allow the disasters of our area to be eliminated. So, why do we come here to recite Amitabha? We are not here for self-liberation, not taking the small vehicle

and being self-liberation men. We recite Amitabha here for disaster-relief and world-protection. We are here for ourselves and all beings who have affinity with us to attain Buddhahood and to pursue Sukhāvātī rebirth together. We recite Amitabha for this reason!

When we are born into Sukhāvātī, it will be an even greater vehicle. We can transform ourselves into countless forms in boundless worlds at the same time. This capability is blessed by Amitabha, we will be the same as an avaivartika bodhisattva.

Avaivartika means non-retrogression, it is non-retrogression in position, in cultivation, and in mind. Not only are we bodhisattvas of the three non-retrogression, but we are bodhisattvas who attained the consummate three non-retrogression. Strictly speaking, as stated in the “perfect-enlightenment-teaching” in *The Avatamsaka Sutra*, this is the bodhisattva of the seventh bhumi and above. This status is very high! You can help boundless beings to attain Buddhahood together. Isn't this a great vehicle—the Mahayana?

Before I came here, someone tried to convince me not to go, "You want to go to Japan, what if the disastrous earthquake hits and you cannot make it back home?" I said, "Isn't it the best opportunity to be reborn if I cannot make it home?" We deeply believe that Amitabha will definitely come to escort us when we are facing the moment of death.

Some people asked, “What do you rely on to believe?”

I rely on the Vows that Amitabha made as stated in *The Infinite Life Sutra*. If I really want to go, Amitabha will definitely come. He will not break His promise, He will absolutely not lie to me. I believe that there is absolutely no mistake. At the time of our rebirth, Amitabha will undoubtedly come to escort us to Sukhāvātī. And in our vowed future return, we can liberate many more sentient beings universally.

They said, “What about your preaching? You have to propagate the Dharma. it would not be okay if no one propagates Dharma.” Propagating Dharma will also have to be renounced. Not seeking rebirth for the purpose of propagating Dharma is to impede your own future, because your propagating Dharma will become heavenly or human fortune. Your fortune in the future will be immense; you would enjoy your fortune in heaven, or even become a king of the Brahma Heaven. But what would happen in the end? When your fortune is used up, you will still suffer from the depravity of samsara.

So, everything can be renounced. Even good things must be renounced. We resolutely seek rebirth. If I want to propagate Dharma, it will all be okay no matter how I

want to propagate after the Sukhāvātī rebirth. I can come back and transform to be a Venerable Ding Hong, the preaching will be much better than it is now. Much better! Why do I have to rush now? We aspire and set our mind in every thought wholeheartedly in only pursuing Sukhāvātī rebirth. Everything else can all be let go.

What do we do now? Since we have not left yet, we then continue to propagate Dharma. It is okay as long as it does not affect our rebirth, right? Of course, this is not contradictory, it is actually complementary. We are going to be reborn, going to Amitabha's Land; we have not left yet, we have an obligation to do something for Amitabha. What is it? To convince more people to seek Sukhāvātī rebirth! Amitabha has also only this aspiration, we have the same heart and aspiration as Amitabha's. Having not yet left, we should convince more people to go. Whenever Amitabha comes, we relinquish everything and leave. We must have this kind of mindset.

Bestowing Abhiseka with the Dharma of One-Vehicle to All Beings

This is Mahayana, not Hinayana. Not only is it a great vehicle but the greatest vehicle among all great vehicles! *The Lotus Sutra* states, "There is only the Dharma of one-vehicle (*Skt. eka-yāna), neither two nor three." This Dharma of one-vehicle refers to Buddhayāna. The Dharma of two-vehicles refers to Mahayana and Hinayana/Theravada, while the Dharma of three-vehicles refers to srāvaka, pratyekabuddha, and bodhisattva.

*There is no Dharma of two-vehicles or three-vehicles,
only the Dharma of eka-yāna.
Two-vehicles and three-vehicles are Buddha's expedient teachings.
In other words, there is only the vehicle of becoming a Buddha!*

In a Buddha's eyes, He sees that all beings are all buddhas, there is only the Dharma of one-vehicle. This sutra embodies only the Dharma of eka-yāna, so it is the ultimate, the most consummate mighty-Dharma.

Esoteric Buddhists practice an empowerment rite, abhiseka, which is a Sanskrit word. In the Second Chapter of this sutra, those mahasattvas "ascend to the altar of abhiseka and are granted the assurance of bodhi." The Buddha gave abhiseka to these mahasattvas. What is this abhiseka? It is to teach them *The Infinite Life Sutra*. So, when we are learning *The Infinite Life Sutra*, we are indeed receiving the abhiseka from all Buddhas.

What does this abhiseka mean? It signifies supreme wondrous Dharma. Using the highest point of one's body, the top of one's head, as an implication represents granting one the supreme Dharma. Awarding this supreme Dharma to you, you have received abhiseka. It is definitely not saying that dipping tender willow branches in holy water to sprinkle on your head would be called abhiseka. That is wrong!

Our Shifu explained it in a very humorous way, "If that is abhiseka, it is better that you go home and take a shower in your bathroom. Using the showerhead to thoroughly drench yourself, that would be more satisfying." We have been wrong! This action is a Dharma-demonstration, which implies that a supreme Dharma is granted to you. You must not think that sprinkling a few drops of water from the tender willow onto your head is abhiseka. All Buddhas will feel wrongfully treated.

So, if you want to receive an abhiseka, how do you do it?

*Reading The Infinite Life Sutra everyday,
listening to the commentary of The Infinite Life Sutra everyday,
that would be the abhiseka from all Buddhas to you.
This is the explanation of abhiseka
from the perspective of Mahayana Buddhism.*

Thanks for watching, see you soon!