

To Enlightenment-13

Amitabha's 48 Great Vows

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The Meaning of “Adornment”

The fifth part of the title is “Adornment,” it is about the peerless adornment both on the personal and the circumstantial reward in Sukhāvātī. The adornment of the personal reward refers to Amitabha and all bodhisattvas in the pure great sea of Sukhāvātī. The circumstantial reward refers to the material environment of Sukhāvātī—the environment that they live in. Both are extraordinarily adorned. It is inconceivable!

How are these adornments manifested? It is the achievements from the blessings of Amitabha's Vows. It is also induced by the pure heart of people like us who recite Amitabha and attain Sukhāvātī rebirth. These adornments are one part our own effort, moreover, one part Amitabha's blessings, and with which Sukhāvātī is realized.

This is not the case in our Saha World. How is the Saha World manifested? It is manifested by our deluded consciousness. Our hearts are moving and give rise to thoughts, we have discrimination and attachment, thus manifesting the Saha World.

Yet, there are no delusions, discriminations, and attachments in Sukhāvātī, so it is called “the land of Dharma-nature.” It is the Pure Land manifested by our true heart. This Pure Land is absolutely unimaginable by our cogitation. It is also beyond what our language can express, because this is the land of the Dharma-nature.

To put it simply, this is accomplished by the boundless merits of Amitabha and adorned by His infinite wisdom. We now recite Amitabha, it also adorns Sukhāvātī. Thus, “The Verse of Transferring Merits” states, “May the merit of my practice adorn Buddha's Pure Land.” But, what merits can we use to adorn the Pure Land? We adorn the Buddha Land with our precepts, meditation, prajna wisdom, and our pure heart.

So, when reciting Amitabha, we should recite it concentratedly with single-mindedness, not having wandering thoughts. This kind of recitation will then have merit. We use this merit to adorn the intrinsic pure land of our own self-nature, Sukhāvātī is thus adorned and realized.

The Meaning of “Purity”

The sixth part is “Purity.” This purity refers to the environment of Sukhāvātī, the entire environment of people, occurrences, and physical matter in Sukhāvātī are pure. What does it mean to be pure? It means being completely free from evil deeds and evil karma; there is no defilement nor pollution. This is called purity.

Since Sukhāvātī is manifested by our own pure heart, we should learn to cultivate a pure heart now. By eliminating the defilement and pollution from our hearts, we will then be able to get to Sukhāvātī in the future. *The Amitāyur DhyānaSūtra* explains this principle very clearly, "When your heart is pure, your land will then be pure as the Buddha land." Sukhāvātī is not created by how we fabricate it, it is manifested as long as we possess a pure heart. It intrinsically exists in our own self-nature.

The Meaning of “Impartiality”

The seventh part is the word “impartiality” of “Impartiality-Enlightenment.” Impartiality means that all dharmas are originally equal. They are neither differentiated as superior nor inferior or in opposition to each other. As *The Diamond Sutra* states,

All dharmas are impartial, neither superior nor inferior.

This refers to the original state of all things—self nature. So, if we see that there is inequality, this implies that we have delusion, discrimination, and attachment; we have perceived the original state of impartiality as the state of inequality.

Buddha’s heart is impartial; when a Buddha attains Buddhahood, He sees that all beings are all Buddhas. He is neither arrogant nor self-abasing. There is no way that He would give rise to arrogance. Why? Because He knows that there is no difference between Him and others; He is neither more nor less than others.

The Infinite Life Sutra describes that the bodhisattvas of Sukhāvātī neither are haughty nor feel inferior. Their hearts are in such a state of impartiality that they respect all beings equally as buddhas. So, we should practice using this kind of mind at all times. Do not discriminate and attach! Do not give rise to a mind of impartiality! If we especially respect someone when seeing he is good and particularly despise someone when seeing he is not good, our arrogance has emerged. This is partiality!

We must know when people have partiality and injustice in their hearts, the land will not be flat and it will even have earthquakes. How does an earthquake occur? Serious partiality induces earthquakes and causes natural disasters. When we see that our world has some disasters, we should not blame others, we should seek the causes within ourselves. It is the feeling of partiality in our hearts which induces an earthquake to occur in the environment that we are in, it is our own cause, not others'.

How do we rectify it? We should rectify from our hearts, resolving the arrogance and partiality in our hearts. When we are humble and respect others, the earthquakes will not happen again. So, waking up every morning, we should remind ourselves: Let there be no earthquakes today. Let there be no floods today! Let there be no fire disasters today! Let there be no wind disasters today! And let there be no landslides or sinkholes today!

What is the cause of a flood, fire, wind disasters, and sinkholes?

According to the sutras, greedy minds induce floods. Resentment induces fire disasters. Wind disasters are caused by ignorance, such as not understanding the *truth*, not believing in cause and effect, being presumptuous and opinionated. Skepticism induces landslides and sinkholes !

The Buddha told us, when we resolve greed, resentment, ignorance, arrogance, and skepticism, the disasters of our external world will naturally vanish.

The Meaning of “Impartiality-Enlightenment”

Now let's explain the eighth part, the word “enlightenment” of “Impartiality-Enlightenment.” When the word “enlightenment” is preceded by “impartiality”, it is particularly meaningful. We talked about the meaning of “Buddha” earlier, it implies enlightenment, including self-enlightenment, enlightening others, and perfection in both enlightenment and cultivation. The impartiality-enlightenment here contains a deeper meaning, it includes four implications:

1. First of all, it means that you equally and universally help all beings attain complete enlightenment. It particularly refers to using the Pure Land Method. Because this method can make all beings equally enlightened. Your enlightenment will be equal to Buddha's, neither more nor less. By reciting Amitabha, you will become a Buddha in the future. You will be the same as Amitabha. Equal! It doesn't matter what kind of foundation you had originally, bodhisattva, arhat, or mortal, as long as you recite Amitabha, you will attain impartiality-enlightenment and become a Buddha at last.

2. The second meaning of impartiality-enlightenment is to enlighten all beings with this impartial wondrous Dharma. Buddhas use this method to enlighten all beings. This method is called impartial Dharma. Cultivating this method means that you recite Amitabha to seek Sukhāvātī rebirth; the cause is your reciting Amitabha while the effect is the rebirth and non-retrogression until you attain Buddhahood. No matter who cultivates this method, its cause and effect will definitely be obtained.

Samantabhadra Bodhisattva, a virtually enlightened bodhisattva, states in “The Chapter of the Practice and Vows of Samantabhadra” in *The Avatamsaka Sutra* that he sought Sukhāvātī rebirth by reciting Amitabha. The effect he attained was rebirth and non-retrogression until becoming a Buddha. If you cultivate like him to recite Amitabha, this impartial Dharma will also lead you to the attainment of rebirth, non-retrogression, and Buddhahood. You have the same cause as Bodhisattva Samantabhadra, the attainment will also be the same because this is an impartial Dharma.

We must understand that it is impossible for us to compare with Bodhisattva Samantabhadra in other areas, he is a Virtually Enlightened Bodhisattva, how lofty! We are mortals with innumerable defilements. Yet, under this impartiality-Dharma, we are equal. The cause is equal, the effect is also equal, we are not less than him at all.

3. Thirdly, impartiality-enlightenment refers to the Anuttara-Samyak-Sambodhi of Tathagata. The effect after attaining Buddhahood is that you will fully possess the wisdom, virtues, and laksana (*mark, characteristic, attribute, manifestation) of Tathagata, you are equal to Amitabha, equal to all Buddhas in ten directions.
4. Fourth, this Impartiality-Enlightenment is the name of the Teaching-Master of Sukhāvātī, which means that another name of Amitabha is Impartiality-Enlightenment. We can affirm from Chapter Thirty Eight of *The Infinite Life Sutra*: the Buddha asked Ananda, “Would you like to see the ‘Infinite Purity-Impartiality-Enlightenment’?” This suggests that “Would you like to see Amitabha?”

One of Amitabha's names is Purity-Impartiality-Enlightenment. So, we gain purity-impairtiality-enlightenment at the very moment when we can recite Amitabha.