

To Seek Buddha by Form or Sound Treads the Heterodox Path

Despite manifesting thirty-two features to all beings, the Buddha told us that His **physical form** is not the real Buddha. If we want to see Buddha, we should see Buddha's **Dharma body**; do not get attached to His physical body. If we attach to His physical form, it is one sort of affection-attachment. When Ananda saw such a solemn appearance of Buddha, he then thought to follow by Buddha's side. He was reprimanded by the Buddha later. This is not really following Buddha. What is really following Buddha? You really learn Buddha's teaching and respectfully practice in accordance with His teaching. When you can enter Buddha's realm, you will then see the real Buddha.

The Diamond Sutra states, "One who sees me by form and seeks me in sound treads the heterodox path, he will be unable to perceive Tathagata." This is the instruction that the Buddha gave His disciples. We can imagine, there are probably some disciples who were particularly attached to Buddha's **physical form** at that time. They desired to stay and learn by Buddha's side. They felt lost without seeing Buddha even for one day. Buddha has a very strong power of enchantment, but we would not see His true body if we attach to His physical form.

The Buddha told them that, If they see Him by form and think this material body is Him, or they seek Him by sound and recite the name of Shakyamuni Buddha or even Amitabha, all of these are not really seeing Buddha. The Buddha reprimanded them in a very severe way, saying, "This person treads the heterodox path."

What is this heterodox? Deviation from self-nature.

There is intrinsically nothing within self-nature, how could you seek a Buddha through His form and sound? You must renounce all these thoughts, you can then see Tathagata. This suggests us to let go of delusion, discrimination, and attachment, you can then see Buddha's dharmakaya.

Upholding Amitabha Recitation to Replace All Other Attachments

However, for the ordinary mortals, we cannot use such a high demand. As mortals, it is impossible for us not to have attachment. So the Buddha uses some skillful expedencies; form and sound are all used for shepherding mortals. A Buddha

manifesting His incarnation is to encourage mortals. And the reason that He teaches us to recite Amitabha's name is to let our minds dwell in Buddha's realm. By reciting Amitabha, even though we do not let go of attachment, we can still attain Sukhāvātī rebirth! We will be born to the Land of Saints and Sinners Dwelling Together.

So, we still have not renounced attachment, and we use attachment to recite Amitabha. Can we be reborn? Yes, we can, but only to the Land of Saints and Mortals Dwelling Together, that is still a mundane realm. However, once we arrive in Sukhāvātī, even if it is the low grade in the low rank of the Land of Saints and Sinners Dwelling Together, our enjoyment, capability, and graceful features will all be the same as avaivartika bodhisattva. This is the most wondrous and marvelous trait of the Pure Land method.

Practicing other methods, if we do not renounce attachment, we are fundamentally mortals. It is impossible for us to enter Buddha's realm. Probably we can not even transcend from the three realms (*Skt. *trailokya*, the realms of desire, form, and formlessness), not to mention transcend from the ten dharma-realms (*six-paths plus four-saints-dharma-realms) to “the dharma-realm of one true reality”* (*thusness).

But the Pure Land Method is extremely special, we do not need to renounce attachment, we transcend the three realms from sideways. When we arrive in Sukhāvātī, we are avaivartika bodhisattva and have entered the dharma-realm of one true reality. This is an inconceivable method! We mortals can be rescued!

Being Born into One Land Equals to Being Born into Four Lands

After contemplating, I realized that, other than the Pure Land Method, I, as a mortal, indeed cannot be liberated by other methods. Let's see, can I eradicate my defilements? I really cannot. When situations happen, my heart still moves, my thoughts still arise, and I still give rise to discrimination and attachments. I really can not eradicate them. What can I do? Recite Amitabha conscientiously, bring forth a sense of shamefulness, and think that I am really not good at anything; I can only recite this name of Amitabha to seek rebirth with determination. Even if I am only reborn to the low grade in the low rank of the Land of Saints and Sinners Dwelling Together, I will be very satisfied. Master Ou Yi also thinks the same way: be satisfied with low rank, low grade.

*Despite being born into the land of low rank, low grade,
we are equal to being born into four Lands.*

*We enjoy the same conditions as the bodhisattvas
at the Adorned Land of Absolute Reward,
and enjoy the same conditions as the Buddhas
of The Land of Eternally Tranquil Light.
This is extremely phenomenal.*

So, with the Pure Land method, we can use attachment to uphold reciting Amitabha. Using this attachment to replace all the other attachments, we will then be successful. We can seek with the sound to see Amitabha. We can also seek to see Amitabha through His physical form. Because His physical form is dharmakaya (*Dharma body) and the sound of His name is also dharmakaya. Ancient virtuous ones said, "Sound and words are all thusness." This name of Amitabha is also the thusness, the self-nature, and the dharmakaya. Even the characters of the word Amitabha are also dharmakaya.

Some people asked me, "When I recite Amitabha, can I think of the word 'Amitabha'?" Just thinking of the word, would that work? I said yes. If you think you can concentrate better, you can do that. This word is also thusness, it also represents Amitabha and the innate virtues of self-nature. Sound and words are all thusness. This method is really an unimpeded method and can be practiced by both saints and mortals.