

The Incredible Buddha Light

Next are the 13th and 14th Vows. Let's read the paragraph together, "When I become a Buddha, the infinite brightness of my light will illuminate all ten directions. It will surpass the lights of all other Buddhas and surpass the brightness of the sun and moon by thousands of trillions of times. Any sentient being, seeing my light shine on his body, will be serene, blissful, and further give rise to a compassionate heart to do good deeds and seek to be born into my land. If such vows are not realized, I will not procure Anuttara-Samyak-Sambodhi." This is the **13th Vow: The light will be infinitely bright;** and the **14th Vow: All will be serene and joyful when the light shines on them.**

This Vow is incredible. But after seeing this Vow, it makes us think, "Is Amitabha too competitive?" He wants His light to surpass all Buddhas' lights, He wants to be better than all other Buddhas, isn't this competitive? In fact, this is not competition as we mortals comprehend. It is because the sentient beings who receive Buddha's light will depart suffering and attain happiness, He wished that the blessings of His meritorious Vows can reach wherever the light shines due to His immense compassion.

From the latter Vow of "being serene and joyful when the light shines on him," we can see that Amitabha made this Vow for the sake of all beings. He does not intend to flaunt Himself and make Himself the boss. We must not use our mundane perspective to speculate about Buddha's intention. That would be "gauging the big heart of a virtuous one with our narrow mind." Amitabha is indeed merciful and selfless, only thinking of helping all beings. He uses the greatest power and expediency to effectively help all beings of all worlds in ten directions. That's why Amitabha's light is pervasive and He can embrace and liberate infinite sentient beings.

Why Do We Not Feel Amitabha's Incredible Light?

Since Amitabha's light can reach everywhere, it implies that all sentient beings have an affinity with Him. What about our place? Of course there is no exception, Buddha's light can surely shine here. Do you feel it? Some nod, some shake their heads. Why can't you feel it? It is not that Buddha's light does not shine on you. If Buddha's light does not shine on you, this Vow would not be real, because Amitabha explicitly said that He would not procure Buddhahood if such Vows are not realized. Amitabha attained Buddhahood ten kalpas ago, so this light is definitely pervasive in all directions without discrimination. It won't shine only on good people but not on bad ones, or shine only on practitioners but not ordinary people. It universally shines!

No matter what kind of being you are, the light will equally shine on you. It can reach all corners of all worlds in ten directions. This light is the light of self-nature. Since all worlds in ten directions are all manifested by self-nature, the light of self-nature surely reaches everywhere. But why can't we feel this light? The problem is not on Buddha's side, the problem is on our side. We have delusion, discrimination, and attachments, which have obstructed the light.

It is like the sun pervasively shining on the earth. There is no place it does not reach. Ironically, we shield ourselves with umbrellas when we go out; we block the sunlight, we are the ones who do not accept it. The umbrella is like our delusion, discrimination, and attachments. Buddha's light shines universally, but it will be obstructed when we have delusion, discrimination, and attachment.

No Disasters Once We Let the Buddha Light Shine on Us

At the moment we start to bring forth our mind to recite Amitabha, the Buddha light instantly and simultaneously shines on our physiques and mentality. People who recite Amitabha will be illuminated by Buddha's light, so they are not scared of disasters. As the text states, "One will be serene and joyful when the light shines on him." Therefore, we definitely attain peace and joy. Wherever we go, there will be no disasters.

Before I came to Japan, many fellow practitioners tried to convince me, "Don't go! The news reports everyday, there will be a very dangerous earthquake. Don't go!" However, my mind is serene and joyful. I know there will be no problem because Buddha's light is shining. We have Buddha in our hearts, and the intention of our trip is to fulfill Amitabha's Great Vow of protecting the world and eliminating disasters. How could it be possible for Buddha's light not to shine on us if our mind is the same as Amitabha's? In addition, we are here to study Amitabha's Forty Eight Great Vows together, this place shall receive extraordinary Buddha light. Once Buddha light shines on us, it can eliminate our karma and eradicate our defilements. It makes us full of Dharma-joy. This is because Amitabha's Fundamental Vows bless us.

Buddha Light Eliminates Our Karma Allowing Us to Be Reborn

If we hope to attain Amitabha's blessing, what should we do? Learn sutra teachings every day, learn Amitabha's 48 Vows, learn *The Infinite Life Sutra*, and recite Amitabha. By doing so, we will definitely attain Amitabha's blessing, and not only Amitabha's blessing but the blessing of all Buddhas in ten directions. So all beings, as long as they recite Amitabha, will be under the Buddha light. The benefits are truly infinite and boundless.

At the time of our rebirth, due to our faith and aspiration, we will elicit Amitabha with the power of His Fundamental Vows to appear in front of us. Yet, He does not come from Sukhāvātī, He simply manifests from self-nature. He has never left us, He simply emerges in our hearts while we recite His name. He shines the light upon us, eradicating our defilements so as to eliminate our karma. At the moment we see Amitabha, we immediately achieve *avaivartika* (non-retrogression), attain *anutpattika-dharma-ksanti* (*the realization of non-arising, realized by the bodhisattvas in the eighth bhumi—immovability).

This is stated clearly in *The Amitabha Sutra*, "At the end of their life, Amitabha and the assembly of holy ones will appear in front of them. At the last moment, without a topsy-turvy mind, this person will then be reborn into Sukhāvātī." Isn't this scripture very familiar? Think carefully, this scripture is inconceivable! Many practitioners worry and say, "At the end of my life, what if I become unconscious, in a coma, or even suffer from Alzheimer's? How will I be reborn if I have a topsy-turvy mind?" This kind of doubt proves that you still do not understand Amitabha's Fundamental Vows. *The Amitabha Sutra* states so clearly that Amitabha and the assembly of holy ones will appear in front of you. What would Amitabha do when He appears in front of you? Amitabha will definitely emit light on you when He appears in front of you, your karma will be eliminated and thus be free from a topsy-turvy mind. You will be serene and joyful as stated in the 19th Vow. So, it is needless to worry as long as we have genuine faith and imperative aspiration.

A Simple Criteria of "Good Man or Woman"

The scripture of *The Amitabha Sutra* states that, if there is a good man or woman who hears and recites Amitabha, and further upholds reciting His name for one day to seven days single-mindedly, when approaching the end of their life, Amitabha will appear before them to emit light on them. First of all, are we good men or good women? "Good" has its standard. In fact, the "good" here contains a simple criteria. It is mentioned in *The Amitabha Sutra* that, as long as you hear and recite Amitabha, and further uphold reciting His name, you then belong to the category of good man or good woman.

Master Lian Chi, the Eighth Patriarch of Pure Land School, told us in *The Sub-commentary* (*Skt. Tīkā) of *Amitabha Sutra* that "Reciting Amitabha is the primary practice, and the assisting practice is also reciting Amitabha." This saying is different from what is said by most great practitioners who told us that reciting Amitabha is the primary practice, while assisting practices are eliminating evilness, practicing goodness, upholding precepts, and accumulating merits. Both primary and assisting practices need to be cultivated.

But Master Lian Chi said, "Reciting Amitabha is the primary practice, and the assisting practice is also reciting Amitabha." This is in line with the teaching of *The Amitabha Sutra*: One who hears and recites Amitabha, and further upholds reciting His name. This person is then a good man or a good woman by doing so.

Thanks for watching! See you later!