

The Misery of the Third Lifetime

If we cultivate very well in this life yet do not seek Sukhāvātī rebirth, we will enjoy great fortune in the next life. This fortune is due to our cultivation in this life. The problem is that people with great fortune easily become deluded and do not want to learn Dharma. As the saying goes, "Learning Dharma is difficult for people with fortune and nobility." You will then definitely create the misery of the third lifetime.

Rich people enjoy life very much, why would they want to live like an ascetic monk? You say Sukhāvātī is great, but they have not seen it yet. They feel their lives now are very good. They do not want to go to Sukhāvātī, they do not want to cultivate. And they will surely create karma. No need to say much, let's say eating. They will eat meat, seafood..., won't they? And eating meat involves killing. Their sins will then be boundless.

Furthermore, society is flaming with lustfulness nowadays. Ancients said, "Sexual misconduct is the top of all evils." And Confucius also pointed out, "Those who are well-fed and well-clad are inclined to lustful thoughts." People from wealthy families are susceptible to invoking this kind of cause and condition. They will absolutely commit all sorts of evil karma and will definitely be arrogant when being wealthy and noble. Once having arrogance, they will easily lose their temper when little things go against their wishes. How much karma will they then create? That's why they will definitely fall into an evil path, even a hell, for the third life.

Think about it, if you are not born into Sukhāvātī, how horrendous would that be! Honestly, you are not much different from those who are wicked to the extreme no matter how well-cultivated you are in this life. Those who are wicked to the extreme will fall into hell in the next life, what about you? You will fall into hell only one life later than they do. Because you will be born with great fortune in the next life yet commit a lot of sins and fall into hell in the following life. So, it is only one step later than those who are wicked to the extreme.

In consequence, with regard to the issue of not being reborn in this life or not, it is not that you will only be a little bit worse than those who have been reborn. It is genuinely a huge difference like heaven and earth. No matter how well cultivated you are in this life, you will be only one step later from falling into hell than those who are wicked to the extreme if you are not reborn in this life. It is too dreadful! You will die, fall into evil paths, and your cultivation will all be interrupted.

The Core of All Joy— the Vow of Infinite Life

When arriving in Sukhāvātī you will no longer die, which means that there is no condition for you to regress. You will be constantly improving, and you are sure to attain Buddhahood in this life, because in Sukhāvātī Amitabha pervades everywhere, all six dusts are expounding

Dharma, and you can make offerings and listen to Dharma in all Buddha lands. Your enlightenment will of course be very fast due to listening to Dharma unceasingly.

Everyone can try to sense this: You have probably learned Buddhism for one year, intermittently. Its effect will be very different from focusing all your time and energy to learn seven days straight like now. Why? Because the interruption-time of your learning is relatively less. You are learning the entire day! The power of this immersive practice is strong. When you arrive in Sukhāvātī, your learning will be twenty four hours nonstop, not even interrupted for one minute or one second. Can you imagine how fast your improvement will be?! So, the speed of attaining Buddhahood in Sukhāvātī is very quick.

According to the scriptures, even when being born into the worst level—low grade, low rank of The Land Where Mortals and Saints Dwell Together, the time that you wait for your lotus to bloom and see Buddha would not be more than twelve kalpas. This twelve kalpas is a time calculation from our human realm because “time” does not exist in Sukhāvātī. Since they do not have day and night as well as four season differences, how would time possibly be calculated, right? By using the algorithm of the human world, it is twelve kalpas. How long is twelve kalpas in Sukhavati? It will probably feel like only twelve days. *The Avatamsaka Sūtra* points out that one day and one night in Sukhāvātī equals to one kalpa in our Saha World. Therefore, twelve kalpas is only twelve days. It feels like in less than two weeks, your lotus would have bloomed and you would have seen the Buddha and attained Buddhahood.

The worst would feel like only twelve days to become a Buddha! If being born into a high rank, you would probably attain Buddhahood in one day—being reborn in the morning and attaining Buddhahood in the afternoon. Hence, a great virtuous patriarch in Japanese history, Master Wang Xi, said "The core of all bliss rests only on this Vow of Infinite life."

Sukhāvātī does not have any suffering, inhabitants only receive all bliss. What is the core of all bliss? It rests on this infinite lifespan. Because of this infinite lifespan, you can be near Amitabha and never leave Him; you eternally hear wondrous Dharma, never cease. You have only upgraded conditions for your cultivation at all times and in all places. The flowing water, falling flowers, jeweled trees, and palaces...all help you to become enlightened. Even your eating and dressing...all conform with Dao. How phenomenal is Sukhāvātī!

This infinite lifespan will be obtained as soon as you are reborn. But, it does not mean that you will only obtain it after you are reborn. In fact, if you seek rebirth with genuine faith and imperative aspiration, you have attained this infinite lifespan right now. How do we interpret this? If we seek rebirth with genuine faith and imperative aspiration, we are destined to be reborn. If we are destined to be reborn, Amitabha will come to escort us at the end of our life. This “end of life” is not necessarily determined by our karma, because our lifespan can be either extended or shortened!

If we have genuine faith and imperative aspiration, Buddha's power will bless us, and we can surpass the bondage of the three realms of desire, form, and formlessness. Our fate would be changed, even a fortune teller would not be able to predict our fortune and lifespan. We

would be “neither in the three-realms nor made of five-elements that form all natural phenomena.” In other words, we should have died at a certain time, but we didn’t. For example our Shifu, many fortune tellers had predicted that he should have died at age forty five. But he lived more than twice the lifespan of his destiny. This is because he has become selfless and his lifespan depends on the needs of all beings. Those who truly seek rebirth with genuine faith and imperative aspiration will be also like this.

When the Lotus with Your Name Matures

Master Ou Yi said, "As long as you now recite Amitabha with faith and aspiration to seek Sukhāvātī rebirth, your lotus flowers in Sukhāvātī will be glorious and your golden throne will take form as well. You will then not belong to the Saha World." This glorious lotus will be the lotus flower that Amitabha brings along to escort you. Amitabha can come to escort you anytime when the conditions are in place. This lotus flower even has your name written on it. If you recite Amitabha diligently, your lotus flower will be particularly beautiful and its color and radiance will also be especially exquisite. At the time of your rebirth, Amitabha brings the lotus that you nurtured with your own recitation merits to escort you!

This is the only ever changing phenomenon that can be seen in Sukhāvātī. Everything else stays unchanged, only lotus flowers change. Because these flowers not only have Amitabha's blessing but are also influenced by the power of all beings' minds. If you recite Amitabha for a while and feel that it seems to be ineffective, you then change to another method; your lotus will shrink once you change. If you no longer recite, the flower will get withered and disappear. So, this is the only changing phenomenon seen in Sukhāvātī due to the impact of the minds of all beings.

Amitabha uses this lotus to escort you at your rebirth, you attain infinite lifespan once reborn into Sukhāvātī. More amazingly, you do not leave after you have died, you leave while you are still alive. So, from the moment you start to recite Amitabha with your faith and aspiration until you obtain rebirth, you are always alive; you do not die. Doesn't this signify that you have attained infinite life right now? How rare and precious this Pure Land Method is! At the very moment, you have attained both the infinite life and the virtues of dharmakaya. The Pure Land Method is too inconceivable! This is the Vow of “All will have an infinite lifespan.”

Thanks for learning with us! Namo Amitabha!