

All Are Avaivartika Bodhisattvas

The 16th Vow states that there are srāvakas and celestial beings in Sukhāvātī, In fact they are only the images that they manifest due to the realization they attained before their rebirth. They all recited Amitabha with faith and aspiration, thus attaining rebirth into Sukhāvātī; they are all avaivartika bodhisattvas. But in order to distinguish them, their status before rebirth has been used. But after being reborn into Sukhāvātī, they are no longer srāvakas, pratyekabuddhas, or heavenly-beings, they are purely avaivartika bodhisattvas.

We have the sutras as proof. For instance, the *Compassionate Flower Sutra* (**Karuṇā-puṇḍarīka-sūtra*) states, "That Buddha Land has no srāvaka or pratyekabuddha, all inhabitants are purely bodhisattvas, numberless and boundless." We must know that srāvaka and pratyekabuddha are the predisposition of the two-vehicle, they have not brought forth the bodhicitta. Those who do not bring forth bodhicitta are unable to reach Sukhāvātī. So, how can there be srāvaka and pratyekabuddha in Sukhāvātī? There are definitely no celestial beings either. There are only pure bodhisattvas!

With the same reasoning, when arriving in Sukhāvātī, living beings like us from the human realm have not even eradicated one level of defilement, the Buddha addresses us as human for the sake of expounding Dharma expediently. In reality, we are not human anymore, we are avaivartika bodhisattvas. Our enjoyment, wisdom, and capability are all equal to avaivartika bodhisattvas, who are indeed dharmakaya-mahasattvas. We must understand this *truth!*

The Wisdom and Capability from Amitabha's Blessing

Despite the fact that we attain this equal enjoyment as Buddhas, it is actually not from our cultivation. But, how do we get this kind of enjoyment in wisdom and capability if we did not cultivate? It is from Amitabha's blessings. The blessings from Amitabha become ours, we can use them. But we know that we have not eradicated defilement and revealed wisdom in our own cultivation skill. We still need to cultivate gradually. When we obtain results from our own cultivation, we will be enlightened and indeed attain Buddhahood. Then, we no longer need Amitabha's blessing and thus enjoy our own capability. But, before we cultivate to that level, our enjoyment is also equal to Buddha's due to Amitabha's giving. When we cultivate to that level, Amitabha no longer needs to bless us, we achieve it by our own accord.

But we must know that the Sukhāvātī is an equal land. No matter whether it is given by Amitabha or if it is revealed from our own intrinsic nature, it is all the same. Our wisdom, capability, expedience, and enjoyment are all equal to the Buddha. **It is a state of non-duality.** There is no need to differentiate between my ability, my merits, or Buddha's giving. No more need to differentiate! How spectacular that world is! This is our expounding on the Vow of countless srāvakas.

All Supreme Good People Come Together

There is one more thing worth mentioning. The land has countless pre-rebirth celestial beings, srāvakas, and bodhisattvas. Among all bodhisattvas in Sukhāvātī, Virtually Enlightened Bodhisattvas become the most numerous. Why do we say so?

Our Shifu did a calculation, it is very well thought out. He said, “Being born into Sukhāvātī in low grade, low rank, one only needs 12 kalpas to get our lotus to bloom and see Buddha, which means attaining Buddhahood.” Think about it, Sukhāvātī has already been established for ten kalpas, it is certainly true that most of those who were born into Sukhāvātī in the very early time must have attained Buddhahood, or at least become virtually-enlightened bodhisattvas. Now ten kalpas have passed, only two kalpas are left. So there are still a small number who have not attained the level of Virtually Enlightened Bodhisattva. They still have a little bit of catch up to do. Therefore, if we contemplate carefully, those who were born into Sukhāvātī in the early kalpas, most of them indeed have attained the level of Virtually Enlightened Bodhisattva—a Buddha successor in one life—which means that they will become a Buddha next.

According to *The Avatamsaka Sutra*, there were some bodhisattvas such as Samantabhadra and Manjusri who were already Virtually Enlightenment Bodhisattvas before their rebirth into Sukhāvātī during these ten kalpas. Plus, forty-one levels’ dharmakaya-mahasattvas would have also become Virtually Enlightened Bodhisattva very soon after their rebirth. All these facts make Sukhāvātī the place where “all supreme good people come together in one place.” These supreme good people, strictly speaking, are mostly Virtually Enlightened Bodhisattvas. They all come together. We are with Virtually Enlightened Bodhisattvas together everyday, how fast our progress will be!

It is so difficult to cultivate here in the Saha World, even to find a reliable spiritual teacher is hard. I am not a reliable teacher, but others regard me highly and often invite me to give lectures. Honestly, my cultivation is worse than yours, the only thing that I am a little bit better than you at is just preaching. If you really want to be close to reliable spiritual teachers, I urge you to go to Sukhāvātī. That place is full of reliable spiritual teachers. If you follow them, your learning will be uninterrupted; you will be full of Dharma-joy.

We have learned together for just three days so far, I see everyone's faces all glowing with Dharma-joy. This is Dharma-bliss! When you arrive in Sukhāvātī, how much more of the Dharma-bliss will there be? Such a great place, supreme good people all come together, we really should go earlier. Thanks for learning with us! See you later!