

## The Core of *The Infinite Life Sutra*

Today we are going to elaborate on  
**the 18th Vow: One will definitely be reborn within ten recitations.**

This Vow is the core of Amitabha's Great Vows. It is extremely important! We can summarize all Forty Eight Great Vows into this eighteenth Vow which embodies the consummate skillfulness and expediency of Amitabha's liberating all beings. We must learn it earnestly with a very sincere and solemn heart. If you truly comprehend this Vow, you are sure to have 100% confidence in rebirth.

Let us join our palms and read this Vow together, “When I become a Buddha, all beings in ten directions, upon hearing my name, will believe and rejoice with utmost sincerity. They will wholeheartedly transfer the merits of all their good roots and aspire to be born to my land. Even within only ten recitations of my name, if they are not born into my land, I will not acquire Anuttara Samyak Sambodhi, except for those who have committed the five heinous sins (\*Skt. *pañcānantarya*: killing father, harming mother, killing an arhat, making a Buddha bleed, disharmonizing the Sangha) and slandered the true Dharma.” This Vow is the  
**18th Vow: One will definitely be reborn within ten recitations.**

## The Vow that Guarantee Us to Be Reborn

The general idea of this Vow is that, when Sukhāvātī has been established and Amitabha becomes a Buddha, all beings in ten directions, upon hearing His name, will bring forth utmost sincerity to believe and accept it. When they believe, accept, practice respectfully, and further bring forth a joyful heart to seek Sukhāvātī rebirth, they will then strive to keep their pure, sincere mind in all thoughts and transfer the good roots that they have planted to their Sukhavati rebirth.

In other words, when one recites Amitabha for even as little as ten recitations at the moment of their death approaching—such a low standard—they can be reborn. Amitabha said that He would not procure Buddhahood if this Vow could not be realized. Of course this ten recitations also includes the practice of ten-recitations-method at ordinary times. However, as stated in the 18th Vow, this excludes those who have committed the five heinous sins plus slandered the true Dharma. If one creates these extremely heavy sins and still refuses to turn back, he will be an exception and will definitely not attain rebirth. As long as we are not this kind of person, we will absolutely attain rebirth even within only ten recitations if we can bring forth the utmost and imperative sincerity to seek Sukhavati rebirth and recite Amitabha at the death approaching moment.

This is a guarantee of being reborn into Sukhāvātī and attaining Buddhahood that Amitabha grants to us. Unless you do not want to go, if you are willing to go, no one will fail. You can be reborn within even only ten recitations. Ten recitations are too easy, from one count to

ten, Amitabha, Amitabha, Amitabha; Amitabha, Amitabha, Amitabha; Amitabha, Amitabha, Amitabha, Amitabha. You are reborn! If you are not reborn within even only ten recitations, Amitabha would not procure Anuttara Samyak Sambodhi. Look! It is this simple, it all depends on whether you are willing to believe it or not.

This Vow is truly inconceivable! We can never see a method that is simpler and easier than this. Where in the universe can you find another one? Among 84,000 methods, is there any other method simpler than this? This “surely being reborn even within only ten recitations” perfectly embodies Amitabha's skillfulness and expediency of liberating all beings. He knows that all beings have very heavy karma, which leads to real difficulty in their practice. Well, practice the ten-recitation-method now, nothing is simpler than this, isn't it? So long as one has genuine faith and imperative aspiration to seek Sukhāvātī rebirth, one can attain rebirth. No matter how heavy one's karma is, all can be born carrying their karma along.

## **The Most Genuine among All Genuineness**

This Vow is really like Senior Laity Huang Nian Zu stated, “Among Shakyamuni Buddha's teachings, this is the most genuine among all genuineness.” Nothing is more genuine than this. Laity Huang had mentioned in *The Annotation of the Larger Sukhavativyuha with Modern Language* that ancient patriarchs and great virtuous ones gave an overall comment to Shakyamuni Buddha's teachings, they all agreed that *The Avatamsaka Sūtra* is the Perfect Teaching, surpassing all other doctrines of Hīnayāna-teaching, Initial-teaching (\*The preliminary teaching of the Mahāyāna, the second stage in the evolution of the teaching as explained in the commentarial works of Huayan School), final-teaching (\*the final metaphysical concepts of Mahāyāna, as presented in the *Laṅkāvatāra-sūtra, Awakening of Faith*), and instant-enlightenment-teaching. It is the number one sutra and it leads to Sukhāvātī.

This suggests that the destination of *The Avatamsaka Sutra* is *The Infinite Life Sutra*. Therefore, *The Avatamsaka Sutra* has been eclipsed when compared to *The Infinite Life Sutra*. *The Infinite Life Sutra* has become number one. And in the compilation-version of Xia Lian Ju, there are forty eight chapters. Which chapter is number one? It is Chapter Six that we are learning now: Bringing Forth the Great Vows. This is number one—the core of the whole scripture. And among the Forty Eight Vows stated in Chapter Six, which Vow is number one? It is this eighteenth Vow. This eighteen vow is the most genuine among all genuineness of the teachings in Shakyamuni Buddha's entire life.

## **The Name of Amitabha Sums up the Buddha's Life Long Teachings**

What is this eighteenth Vow about? It is about reciting Amitabha. We have found out at last that the teachings of Shakyamuni Buddha's entire life can be summed up in the name of Amitabha. This name of Amitabha is the general title of the tripiṭaka and twelve divisions (\*dvādaśāṅga) of Shakyamuni Buddha's canon. Not only the scriptures of Shakyamuni Buddha

but the scriptures of all Buddhas in ten directions of the past, present, and future, their general title is just this name of “Amitabha.” That is why the merits of Amitabha can truly be called “inconceivable.” But, how do we obtain this inconceivable merit? It is as simple as stated here: believe and rejoice with utmost sincerity upon hearing my name.”

All beings in ten directions are specified in this vow. This “all beings in ten directions” does not exclude any type of sentient beings. All are included. None of the worlds in ten directions will be left out. Of course we will also not be left out, we are definitely included. So “believe and rejoice with utmost sincerity” is the effect, “hearing my name” is the cause. Nevertheless, this “hearing” does not mean just hearing through ears without understanding. The real hearing is that we truly understand the merits of Amitabha, because it is impossible for us to “believe and rejoice with utmost sincerity If we do not comprehend it.”

Nevertheless, can we interpret this “hearing” as “simply having heard of”? There probably really is one kind of person whose good roots are especially deep-seated. They do not know the principles yet have believed and rejoiced with utmost sincerity simply upon having heard the name of Amitabha. Yes, you can also interpret it in this way. It does not mean that you must listen to the preaching and learn the Dharma. People with deep-seated good roots will believe and rejoice with utmost sincerity upon having merely heard of the name of Amitabha even if they did not listen to the preaching or learn the Dharma.

To believe denotes to have faith, and rejoice implies that you are delighted to learn and practice; you feel very fortunate to hear the true Dharma and know this method of Sukhāvātī rebirth that allows you to eternally depart the sea of misery in this life. You, very willingly and happily, cultivate this method. This is called “believe and rejoice with utmost sincerity.” Yet these kinds of people who believe and rejoice with utmost sincerity without knowing the principle, they are not ordinary people. According to *The Infinite Life Sutra*, only those who have made offerings to innumerable Buddhas in ten directions can have these good roots.

Thanks for learning with us, see you later to find out more about the people who have such good roots. Namó Amitabha!