

Faith in Ourselves and Amitabha

We must pay attention to the words “utmost sincerity” here. It means sincere to the extreme without slightest intermixed thought and hesitation. You believe in it wholeheartedly. Upon hearing the Buddha speaking of the noumenon, phenomena, cause, and effect of Sukhāvātī, you truly believe in it. You further believe that you are innately a buddha. This is extremely important because faith in yourself is essential!

Believing in yourself is more important than believing in Amitabha. If you do not believe in yourself, only believing in Amitabha, this shows that you do not dare to undertake the merit of your own self-nature. You may think, “How can Amitabha bless me? I am a mortal with such heavy karma, what do I rely on to go to Sukhāvātī, even becoming an avaiartika bodhisattva?!” You dare not to undertake it due to not having faith in yourself. The Buddha convinces us, “You must believe that you are innately a buddha.” Master Ou Yi also interpreted faith in six different aspects, of which the foremost is faith in yourself, believing that you are innately a buddha.

All phenomena of the universe are manifested by your own self-nature, Sukhāvātī is no exception. In other words, Sukhāvātī is your original hometown, you are supposed to go there. To attain Buddhahood is your duty, you are supposed to do so. Not to attain Buddhahood is not what you should do. If you truly believe in this way, what do you do now? You vow to become a Buddha now. It will not be difficult for you to become a Buddha since you are innately a buddha. In the *Awakening of Mahāyāna Faith*, Bodhisattva Aśvagoṣa observed, “Innate enlightenment is an inherent existence, while an unenlightened state is intrinsically non-existent.” Innate enlightenment reveals to us that we are intrinsically enlightened, we are innately a buddha; this is an inherent existence. An unenlightened state is not supposed to exist. A mortal is not enlightened, but this unenlightened state is not an inherent existence due to delusion, discrimination, and attachment being not existing intrinsically.

Since they do not exist innately, they should certainly be gotten rid of and are surely able to be eliminated. The innate existence should be restored. It may be restored. It can be restored! Comprehending this, we will then have faith in ourselves. However, we have heavy karma and tons of karmic habits now, it seems to be difficult to rectify them even if we want to. What can we do? Do not be discouraged! Do not be disheartened! We must believe that we can get rid of all our defilements and karmic habits one day. Reciting Amitabha now will help us resolve our karmic habits. Relying on the blessing of Amitabha’s Fundamental Vows, we can be reborn by carrying our karma along. Once we have the power of this self-confidence, we will then dare to undertake it. Rebirth is my duty, I should undertake it!

As the Chinese proverb proposes, “When facing a benevolent cause, one should not be outdone by others.” So we do not need to be polite. Since Amitabha wants us to go, we will go. It is okay to be polite with other things, yet with the rebirth matter, we do not need to be polite and concede. We must shoulder it straightforwardly. Nonetheless, believing in ourselves, we still need to believe in Amitabha. How do we go? We recite Amitabha now and take the Vessel of

His Great Vows, we will then be reborn into Sukhāvātī. No matter how heavy our karma is, the Vessel of Amitabha's Great Vows can carry it all.

Comparing our karma with Amitabha's Great Vows, the power of His aspiration far surpasses our karma. Master Yin Guang has a very good simile which states that the power of Amitabha's Forty Eight Great Vows to escort us to be reborn into Sukhāvātī is like a mighty crucible of thousands degrees to temper steel. It doesn't matter how heavy the karma we have created is, it will be like a snowflake falling from the sky and will be melted before reaching this thousands degree crucible. No matter how heavy all beings' karma is, it is insignificant compared to the power of Amitabha's Vows. As long as we are willing to accept the blessing of Amitabha's Vows, we can carry all our karma along to be reborn. Understanding this, we should have faith then.

The Method of a Genuine repentance

Even if we made very heavy karma in the past, don't think about it. Because thinking about it is equal to creating karma one more time. You created karma with your body in the past, now you create it with your mind. Why do you bring suffering to yourself? Thinking one more time, you create karma once more. This karma will become heavier and heavier. That is not repenting your karma. What is repentance? After having created it, you never do it again. Not only do the body or mouth not create it, but the mind does not create it either.

Body, mouth, and mind all take refuge in Amitabha. You prostrate to Amitabha with your body, recite Amitabha with your mouth, and remember Amitabha with your mind. When "one is in remembrance and reciting Buddha's Name," his karma will all be gone. "He will definitely see Buddha at the present or future time." This is a real repentance when you recite Amitabha like this, and you are able to obtain Sukhavati rebirth with no doubt at all.

Many fellow practitioners also feel that they have heavy karma. How do you repent? Don't think about it. The past has passed, let it go. It will be alright as long as you never do it again. Once you focus on reciting Amitabha and hold onto this name now, no matter what kind of karma you have, they can all be eliminated. Those karma that are still not eliminated, you can carry them along to be reborn. When your mind does not have any intermixed thoughts, you can then be regarded as "believe and rejoice with utmost sincerity." It signifies that you truly believe in it and are genuinely willing to go.

This "rejoice" also means being cheerful. Upon hearing the name of Amitabha, you are cheerful and joyous. When talking about Sukhāvātī, you genuinely want to go. This kind of person is sure to be reborn. I observe that all of you have this kind of expression. Look! Each of you are all full of smiles. Upon hearing Sukhāvātī, hearing the name of Amitabha, you are so joyful. You believe and rejoice. Worldly people may think, "What is there to rejoice about?" It's Golden Week, it's better to go traveling, to a party. People like you come here to recite Amitabha from dawn to dusk every day; they think this is arduous, they cannot understand what this is for.

Well, they feel singing, dancing is a very happy thing. What are they engaging in? They are definitely engaging in samsara, in the six paths of reincarnation. They love to do those things. What do you love? You love listening to Dharma teachings and love reciting Amitabha. The truth is that one's preferences and aspirations will determine his destination in the future. What you love is different from what they love, which will lead to a very different destination. So, your action is very rare and precious.

Thanks for learning with us, see you later! Namó Amitabha