

## Nine Times Ten-Recitations

Next, we are going to talk about “even within ten recitations of my name.” The previous text told us to “believe and rejoice with utmost sincerity, and aspire to be reborn into my land.” What does this mean? It refers to having sufficient faith and aspiration. Master Ou Yi said, “Whether one can be reborn or not, it all depends on his faith and aspiration.” So, if we can believe and rejoice with utmost sincerity, even within only one to ten recitations at the end of our life, we can definitely be reborn.

As for recitation at ordinary times, of course it should be at least ten recitations regularly. At the end of life, you will definitely be reborn within ten recitations. However, we should of course not use the lowest standard at ordinary times. If we only do one recitation, it shows no sincerity at all, doesn't it? We should at least follow the method of ten-recitations at ordinary times.

Our Shifu says, “If you are really busy, you should be able to do ‘nine times ten-recitations’.” “Nine times ten-recitations” refers to doing “ten-recitations nine times a day.” In the morning when getting up, you join palms and count from one to ten, reciting Amitabha ten times. Before sleeping at night, you do another ten-recitations. Plus you also do ten-recitations before three meals. This will be five times. These five times adding four times' ten-recitations before and after work in the morning and afternoon will be nine times' ten-recitations in total.

Everyone can do it. If you say that you cannot do it, it is not because you are not able to, but that you are not willing to. Don't you even have such meager time? Ten recitations only take less than one minute. As long as you have genuine faith and aspiration, you absolutely can do it. How could it be possible that you cannot even do just ten-recitations? Of course, the more recitations the better. Whenever you have time, you should recite as much as possible.

## Practice Diligently with a Compassionate Heart in One Focus

As *The Infinite Life Sutra* states that, if you are busy at ordinary times, then “whenever having leisure time, you should dignify your heart, right your mind, and diligently practice with compassion in one focus.” Just like us now, we have leisure time during this Golden Week, what do we do? We come here for a seven day Buddha-retreat. This is “whenever having leisure time, you diligently practice with compassion in one focus.” Why do we come here to recite Amitabha? We are doing this for disaster-relief and world-protection, this is a compassionate heart.

To diligently practice in one focus means to concentrate on one method: I only recite Amitabha and learn Amitabha's Forty Eight Great Vows. Learning Forty Eight Great Vows is to establish my faith and aspiration, while reciting Amitabha is cultivation. With faith, aspiration, and cultivation, plus diligent practice in one focus, the merits will be inconceivable after seven

days. When we really understand this sutra, we will fully possess faith and aspiration; and when we further recite to seek rebirth with utmost sincerity, we will be reborn with no doubt at all. Nothing is easier than this ten-recitation method. These ten-recitations exactly refer to reciting Amitabha ten times, one after another, just ten times, not many at all.

## **Cattle Heads Are Coming to Take My Life**

“Even within ten recitations” also refers to attaining rebirth by ten recitations as death approaches. There are people who have not learned Buddhism, have never heard of the Pure Land method, of course they would not recite Amitabha. But before their departure, if a well learned practitioner convinces them and if they could believe, accept, and bring forth aspiration to seek Sukhāvātī rebirth, they can also attain rebirth with one to ten recitations at that moment. Even if someone has created heavy karma and the fierce fire of hell has already manifested—he will soon fall into hell—at this time, someone urges him to quickly seek Sukhāvātī rebirth by reciting Amitabha. If he believes and accepts it, this last thought of Amitabha can also bring him Sukhavati rebirth.

In the Tang Dynasty, *The Rebirth Record of Pure Land Saints and Sages* recorded: Zhang Shanhe of the Tang Dynasty slaughtered cattle as his profession all his life. He killed many cows. At the end of his life, he saw people with cattle heads coming to claim his life. These were all his karmic creditors. They came to torment him, causing him to feel excruciating pain throughout his body. He moaned loudly, very miserable.

I saw Senior Laity Huang also moaning at his last stage. Why? Because he had created the karma of killing. His hotels have restaurants that offer meat. This has created “killing karma,” and he had to take this responsibility. It was quite scary to hear his moaning. He was on the second floor with his door closed. I was eating on the first floor, yet I could hear his moaning and howling. I helped him to recite Amitabha, he felt better after reciting Amitabha. I urged him, “You must recite Amitabha, the more pain, the more you should recite. Recite loudly.” I also recited with him loudly. “Amitabha, exert your strength...” As a result, he forgot his pain when exerting his strength. The more pain, the more you should recite. This is “reciting Amitabha at death approaching moment.”

We can imagine, the karma of Zhang Shanhe in the Tang Dynasty was much heavier than senior laity Huang Jinxuan. He slaughtered cattle all his life. His pain was unbearable at the end. His howling could be heard all the way to the entrance of the alley. At that time, a monk happened to pass by. He heard the howling and wondered who it was from. He went to take a look. Zhang Shanhe saw the monk, as if he was the life-saving straw. He said, “Hurry to save me please, many people with cattle heads are coming to take my life.” His mind was quite clear. This was his fortune.

Seeing this situation, the monk said, “Recite Amitabha quickly.” The monk immediately began to burn incense and beseech Amitabha's blessing. The monk said to him, “Hurry up,

recite Amitabha with me now." Less than a quarter of an hour after starting their recitation, Zhang Shanhe said, "Those people with cattle heads are gone, all gone." After reciting one more quarter of an hour, he told the monk, "Amitabha has come to escort me, I am going with Amitabha now." He took his last breath after saying this and was reborn into Sukhāvātī.

Look! At the end of his life, the karma of hell manifested in front of him; people with cattle heads came to take his life. It is sure that he would have fallen into an evil path, a hell. With such a karmic condition, he met a well learned advisor who urged him to recite Amitabha, and he really recited. This was due to his deep-seated good roots from his past lives, so he could believe, rejoice, and accept with utmost sincerity upon hearing it. Of course, he had no other choice except to recite Amitabha. This had helped him to bring forth the utmost sincerity. As a result, he was born after only reciting for a short time.

## What Is Utmost Sincerity?

Inspired by these two true cases, we must not have doubt. The merit of this name of Amitabha is truly inconceivable. According to sutras, "Every recitation can eradicate the birth-death heavy karma of eight billion kalpas." We must believe, it can truly help us attain Sukhāvātī rebirth. Master Kumārajīva had a metaphor to let us comprehend this "utmost sincerity." You may think that you have recited Amitabha with utmost sincerity. Not necessarily!

What is utmost sincerity? You may contemplate with this example:

If you went out into the wilderness and all of a sudden a group of bandits wielding big broadswords began chasing you, you would desperately run away at that time. You know that you would die if being caught, so you strive to run with all your strength while the bandits chase you with all their effort. You endeavor to run away and see a river in front of you. As it gets closer and closer, what are you thinking? "How do I cross the river the fastest?"

You can only think of this one question. You would not think of other things at that time. You would absolutely not wonder if your CD has matured or if there is anyone to take your children to school and pick them up? You absolutely would not think of these things. You would only think "how do I cross the river"? This thought is very pure and utterly sincere. You can comprehend with this example from Master Kumārajīva. It is very inspiring. So, if you want to be reborn into Sukhāvātī, you must bring forth this mentality. This is "utmost sincerity."

We must know that we are now in the evil world of five turbidity. Our evil karma threatening us from behind is indeed no different from bandits chasing us. What is chasing behind us may be the fierce fire of the evil paths. How much karma did we make in this life? Plus there are past lives. If we are not reborn, we will definitely fall into an evil path in the future. This is more terrifying than being chopped by bandits, isn't it?

Thanks for learning with us! Namō Amitabha!