

Who Has Never Fallen into Hells?

Among hells, there is hell of stone grinding. A ghost straps the sinner to a grinding stone. Wouldn't the sinner become a bloody pulp after being ground? He is ground every day, more than tens of thousands of times a day. After grinding, the hell wind blows over, he would wake up just to be ground again. He would have ten thousand births and deaths within one day and night.

Hell, who has never fallen into there? Everyone has been there. If we are not reborn into Sukhāvati in this life, we would still go there in the future. The variety of hells is boundless, too many to mention. As stated in *The Fundamental Vows of Ksitigarbha Bodhisattva Sutra*, "To speak only the names of hells, it would not be completed in one kalpa." No need to be specific, just the names of hells, such as the hell of volcanoes, the hell of iron beds, the hell of hugging pillars, it cannot be finished even in one kalpa merely speaking their names. Yet, we will surely fall into them all in the future because our evil karma has not been eradicated. We will undoubtedly create karma and fall into hells in the future.

How Is Hell Manifested?

Think about it, how is the realm of hell formed? It is manifested by the power of our karma. What is karma? It is our thoughts. So long as we have such thoughts, we will receive such retribution in the future. For example, the hell of hugging pillars, what karma induces this hell? It is induced by the karma of sexual misconduct. A man sees a woman, an evil thought arises, he has planted the cause of hell. If one's lustful mind is very strong and he cannot control himself, he will then create a lot of karma due to his very strong karmic habit and fall into hell. When he sees the red burning pillar, he would think that it is a beautiful woman, and he would hug it. His whole body would then be scorched and he would die.

It is not over yet; the hell wind blows over his dead body, he comes back to life again. Once he comes back to life, his eyes dazzle again due to his heavy karma and strong karmic habit; he thinks the burning red iron pillar he just hugged is another beautiful woman, he then goes to hug it and dies again. Just like this, dying after being born and being born after dying, it will be endless, kalpa after kalpa. Why is it endless? Because his thoughts do not cease. His karma and this phenomena will be gone only when he renounces this thought. If he is not willing to eradicate his thought, the continuity of the phenomena will be uninterrupted and always be there. Thus, we suffer endless bitterness within these karmic phenomena.

Think about this life, do we create the following karmas? Killing, stealing, sexual misconduct, lying, as well as greed, resentment, ignorance, and arrogance, each is connected with a hell. The Buddha often said in the sutras, "Wealth, lust, fame, eating, and sleeping are the five roots of hell". As long as we have one of them, it will chain us down in hell; we cannot get out. Not to mention if we possess all five of them, we are in more trouble. So, thinking about this meticulously, we will really have a cold sweat. I think of myself, it is the same; if I am not reborn

when this life ends, the karmic causes I have created will eventually lead me to fall into hell in the future.

In the past, Master Yin Guang, the Thirteenth Patriarch of Pure Land School, wrote a pair of couplets and placed them in front of his bed. My mother and I went to visit Ling-Yan-Mountain where Master Yin Guang used to reside, he hung the character of “death” above the altar. In front of the bed where he slept, he wrote the couplets. The right scroll reads, “If I am not reborn into Sukhāvātī, it is difficult even to obtain the hungry ghost or animal realms.”

Three evil paths refer to hell, hungry ghosts, and animals. If we do not attain Sukhāvātī rebirth, even the paths of hungry ghosts and animals are very difficult for us to obtain. In other words, the only path we will get is the path of hell. Master Yin Guang demonstrated to us, even hungry **ghosts or animals** paths are difficult for him to get. What about us? It is horrendous! So, we must attain rebirth. To be reborn into Sukhāvātī, there is nothing but “to believe and rejoice with utmost sincerity.”

When we think of the anguish of **hells**, it is too frightening! When a sense of dread arises, your utmost sincerity will then **be forced out**. Why do you have utmost sincerity and bring forth the single-mindedness to cross the river when bandits chase you? You are forced. Now, **if you truly realize that** the fierce fire of hell forces you, you will also give rise to the utmost sincerity. There is only one route, that is, you will fall into hell if not being born into Sukhāvātī. When thinking of this, you will desperately seek rebirth and conscientiously recite Amitabha unceasingly, because only Amitabha recitation can help us be eternally free from the sea of misery.

Conscientiously Reciting and No Doubts about Being Reborn

Reciting nonstop, your karma and defilement will then be eradicated without your intention of eradicating it. This is the wonder of this method. No need for you to eradicate defilement and eliminate karma, you will tacitly coincide with the wondrous Dao as long as you recite conscientiously. This is what we call “from upholding in phenomena to upholding in noumenon, a mundane heart will then transform into a Buddha-heart.”

Upholding practice in phenomena is to uphold reciting this name of Amitabha. In phenomena, we must recite Amitabha honestly! In other words, we must not abolish the phenomena! We must uphold the phenomena of reciting Amitabha conscientiously! As we keep reciting Amitabha, Amitabha, Amitabha...we will then enter the realm where our delusion, attachment, and discrimination naturally be shed. At that time, we have reached the noumenon. We have entered the state of Single Mindedness in Noumenon.

From upholding in phenomena to upholding in noumenon, it goes naturally, without the slightest contrivance. It does not require us to do it deliberately. This is “transforming a mundane heart into a Buddha heart.” All we need is just using a mortal heart to recite Amitabha, we will then transform our mundane heart into a Buddha heart, and eventually transform our mortal position into Buddhahood. How brilliant this method is! It is unspeakably wondrous.

Lastly, it states here, "Even within ten recitations of my name, if they are not reborn into my land, I will not procure Anuttara-Samyak-Sambodhi." Look! So long as you recite Amitabha to seek Sukhāvātī rebirth, you undoubtedly will be reborn. So, if someone asks you, “Do you have the assurance of rebirth?” How do you answer? If you are not sure, it proves that you have not believed and rejoiced with utmost sincerity, you have not “aspired to be reborn into Amitabha's land.”

If you really “believe and rejoice with utmost sincerity, and aspire to be reborn into His land,” you will undoubtedly be reborn and have the assurance. Why? Amitabha has given you a guarantee with His Vow. Are you still not sure? Do you still not have assurance and not believe in Amitabha? Amitabha will not brush you off, He will not tell a lie or talk big. He keeps His promise.

If you still do not believe, it proves that you still do not have faith in Buddha. What can you do? Continue listening to the sutra teachings! When you really understand, you will then believe. Today is the third day, there are still four days left. There will still be opportunities. The earthquake is not coming so soon. We still have a big chance, let us keep it up! If you now believe and rejoice with utmost sincerity, and aspire to be reborn into my land—Congratulations! —you have the assurance of rebirth! What is left is how you retain it. Retain it without losing it. Do not regress in cultivation! Once you regress, it won't work. You must keep working earnestly.

Thanks for learning with us. Namo Amitabha!