

One Will Obtain Rebirth after His Repentance

Next, let us see the 21st Vow, please read together. “When I become a Buddha, all beings in ten directions, upon hearing my name, will set their minds on my land, bring forth their bodhicitta, firmly uphold it without regression, plant the roots of all virtues, transfer their merits with utmost sincerity, and aspire to be born into my land; none of them will fail. If someone committed evil faults in the past, upon hearing my name, he will spontaneously repent those faults, practice Dao, do good deeds, uphold sutras and precepts, and aspire to be born to my land. When his life comes to an end, he will not fall into the three evil paths but instantly be born into my land. If such vows are not realized, I will not procure Anuttara-Samyak-Sambodhi.”

21st Vow: One will obtain rebirth after his repentance.

The beginning of this Vow is still talking about the merit of “upon hearing the name.” The numerous repetitions of this sentence “all beings in ten directions, upon hearing my name” indicates that the Pure Land Method particularly emphasizes “hearing my name.” In other words, *The Infinite Life Sutra* is extremely important, because it lets us “hear Amitabha’s name.”

When understanding all the merits of “hearing the name,” we can then set our minds on Sukhavati. If we do not “hear the name,” we will neither keep Amitabha’s land in remembrance, nor will we seek Sukhavati rebirth. Seeking Sukhavati rebirth is because we have “heard Amitabha’s name.” Thus, “hearing Amitabha’s name” is the initial cause, it is also the most important cause.

Many people often neglect this. They think, “Well, it is just Sukhāvātī rebirth, merely reciting Amitabha will be enough.” So, they do not learn the sutra teachings but forcefully recite; they neither can control their defilements nor can they let go of all sorts of worldly matters, leading them to have no confidence and fail Sukhavati rebirth at last. This kind of person has been reciting Amitabha for his whole life, but if you ask him, “Do you have the assurance of rebirth?” His eyes are anxious and helpless. What is the reason? He does not “hear the name.”

This signifies that the merit of “listening to the sutra teachings to learn Dharma” is enormous. Why do all Buddhas in ten directions incessantly expound *The Infinite Life Sutra*? It is to let all beings “hear the name.” The biggest benevolence that all Buddhas in ten directions bestow upon all beings is to tell them about Sukhāvātī and the merits of this name “Amitabha.”

Bestowing Genuine Benefits to All Beings

In *The Infinite Life Sutra*, the Buddha bestows upon us three kinds of *genuineness*. These three kinds of *genuineness* are “bestowing upon all beings the *genuine* benefit,” preaching the *genuine* realm of thusness, and imparting the method of dwelling on *genuine* wisdom—reciting Amitabha.”

Bestowing *genuine* benefit to all beings is to tell us the Pure Land Method and to let us “hear Amitabha’s name.” After “hearing the name,” we are then able to be reborn. Because, by “hearing the name,” we give rise to faith. Having faith, we bring forth aspiration. Bringing forth aspiration, we would then recite Amitabha. One cause leads to one effect which becomes a cause leading to another effect. At last, it leads all beings to the third *genuineness*—dwelling on *genuine* wisdom (of reciting Amitabha). Once reciting Amitabha, we would undoubtedly be reborn. *The Infinite Life Sutra* encompasses these three *genuineness*, it utterly divulges the inconceivable merits of all Buddhas.

Shakyamuni Buddha came to our world and went through all kinds of ordeals. In our evil world of five turbidity, He demonstrated to us that “By keeping Buddha in remembrance, one becomes a Buddha.” After attaining Buddhahood, He further spoke the Dharma that is difficult to believe for all beings in all worlds. This difficult-to-believe Dharma is the Pure Land Method. What is the reason that He came to our world? To propagate this Dharma-method.

Master Shandao said, "The sole reason that a Tathagata comes to a world is exclusively to propagate the Sea of Amitabha’s Fundamental Vows." Shakyamuni Buddha coming to our world was simply for this matter. Therefore, the benevolence of all Buddhas towards us is truly enormous. Not only all Buddhas but also all patriarchs and great virtuous practitioners of all generations who passed down this Dharma lineage are all “bestowing the *genuine* benefits to all beings.”

Master Ou Yi said, "The vast and profound benevolence lies wherever the condition is." This condition we have encountered is so phenomenal that the benevolence for us is too enormous. Why? It allows us to transcend directly from a birth-death mortal to an avastarika bodhisattva instantly and to attain Buddhahood in one lifetime. Yet, this method, to our surprise, is so simple. When we understand and believe it, we will make the vow and we can definitely be reborn within ten recitations. This Vow has repeated the significance of “upon hearing Amitabha’s name” again.

The Knack of Bringing Forth Bodhicitta

Among these Forty-Eight Vows, what was repeated the most is “hearing my name.” This phrase has appeared so many times that we must not let “this meaning” slip through when reading this sutra. If we neglect such an important message, our studying would be wasted. We must pay attention to this cause and effect, “all beings in ten directions, upon hearing my name,” will set their minds on Sukhavati, bring forth bodhicitta, firmly uphold it without regression, and ultimately it will definitely lead them to attain Sukhavati rebirth.

The Infinite Life Sutra extremely stresses bringing forth bodhicitta. The three ranks of rebirth—top, middle, and low—all require “bringing forth bodhicitta **and reciting with one focus.**” But, how can our bodhicitta be initiated? We have now found the knack, it is “hearing the name.” That is why we accentuate listening to the sutra teachings as much as possible, especially *The*

Infinite Life Sutra. Only when we thoroughly understand the Sutra, can we bring forth our bodhicitta and further “firmly uphold it without regression.”

Look! Even Śāriputra had regressed his bodhicitta. As an arhat, he still regressed. We are mortals, yet we can firmly uphold the bodhicitta without regression, what is the cause? It is because we have “heard the name.” We are blessed by this Amitabha's Vow, which allows us to bring forth bodhicitta and firmly uphold it without regression.

If there was no such Vow, it would be very hard for us to initiate bodhicitta, and we would very easily regress even if we had initiated it. It is exactly because Amitabha had made this Vow to give us assurance, so we are able to bring forth bodhicitta and firmly uphold it without regression. However, there is nothing for us to be proud of for being able to do so. Why? Because it is not our own capability, it is the blessing from Amitabha. How can we possibly have this ability on our own? We must know, who can initiate bodhicitta? Only the bodhisattvas of first-abode and above have the capability to bring forth the genuine bodhicitta.

According to *The Avatamsaka Sutra*, they dwell on initial bodhicitta. This “they” refers to the bodhisattvas of first-abode. Once having brought forth the bodhicitta, they are Buddhas who have eradicated one level of avidya (*[subtlest affliction of primal nescience that prevents one from realizing the ultimate reality](#)) and attained one part of dharmakaya ([self-nature](#)). They are indeed the Buddhas of Progressive Realization on Dharmakaya. The reason that we mortals can bring forth bodhicitta is due to our reliance on the power of Amitabha's blessings. The appearance of bringing forth bodhicitta is “seeking rebirth with genuine faith and imperative aspiration.” Only when we have this outward form, can we be regarded as bringing forth the supreme bodhicitta.

Reciting Amitabha Is the *King* of All Goodness

Once bringing forth bodhicitta and firmly upholding it without regression, we will then be able to “plant the roots of all virtues.” What are the roots of all virtues? According to *The Annotation of the Larger Sukhavativyuha in Modern Chinese Language*, Laity Huang Nian Zu said, “The roots of all virtues are reciting Amitabha. Reciting Amitabha is the *king* of all goodness.” Among all goodness, it is the best.

When we recite Amitabha, it is cultivating the roots of all virtues—the most essential of all goodness. Why? Because, the moment when we recite Amitabha is the moment we become a Buddha. Is there any worldly or even supra-worldly goodness better and more phenomenal than becoming a Buddha? Truthfully, reciting Amitabha is indeed the *king* among all goodness. When we genuinely understand this connotation, will our recitation cease? Of course not.

Thanks everyone for learning with us. Namó Amitabha!