

## **How Can I Recite Amitabha When I Have So Many Responsibilities?**

Some fellow practitioners inquired, "Reciting Amitabha, what do I do with my work? I still need to make a living for my family. I have to take care of my children at home. I still have a lot of things that I need to do. How would it be possible that I just recite Amitabha?" This is because you have not yet understood that there is no contradiction between reciting Amitabha and your daily life. How do you recite Amitabha? Your heart truly holds Amitabha, this is reciting Amitabha. Let me give you an example, you will then understand.

In the past, our Shifu (*\*fatherly teacher*) propagated Dharma in America, speaking of Pure Land Buddhism. A senior lady, who often came to listen, approached Shifu and said, "Shifu, I have understood all the sutras you spoke. You urge us to let go, I have let go of everything. But only my grandson, I have not yet let go of." Shifu replied, "If you do not let go of your grandson, you would not be able to attain Sukhavati rebirth." She said, "I just can't let go of my grandson, how do I let go?" Shifu said, "Try this, you regard your grandson as Amitabha. Originally, how you remember your grandson, you simply remember Amitabha in the same way. Let Amitabha replace your grandson, you will then succeed."

Look! This elderly lady, she did not always say out loud, "Grandson, grandson, grandson" with her mouth, but her heart truly held her grandson. Why does she truly have her grandson in her heart? It is because she has not let go of him. Can she, in her heart, regard her grandson as Amitabha? Once she has done so, she would transcend the Three Realms of Desire, Form, and Formlessness and be born into the Pure Land. How phenomenal would that be?!

So, when you truly have Buddha in your mind, it is fine even if you do not recite with your mouth because your heart is truly a Buddha heart. When we truly hold Amitabha in our heart, it is called keeping Buddha in remembrance. It will not impede our daily life and work. It is just like the elderly lady keeping her grandson in her mind at all times, yet when it is time to eat, she eats; when it is time for sleeping, she sleeps. Try to comprehend this meticulously! We still fulfill our ethical duties in every position and deal with people, matters, and things by principles, yet in our hearts, we have the thoughts of Amitabha and seeking Sukhavati rebirth at all times.

## **Have Amitabha in Our Hearts and Do Worldly Matters with No Attachment**

Let me give you one more example. At the beginning of the reform and opening of China, in the 1980s, many people were doing business, "ten thousand yuan households" thus appeared in the society. Ten thousand yuan (RMB) was remarkable at that time, many people were attracted to do business.

There was a mother and son; the mother was thinking about how to let her son start a family. She thought, "First we have to make a certain sum of money, then let my son get married." What could they do to make extra money? The mother and son planned together and decided to sell stuffed buns. They decided to work earnestly for three years; after making enough money, the son would then get married. The mother and son thus worked from dawn to dusk. They made the dough and stuffed all the buns at night, then got up early the next morning to steam the buns. After the buns were steamed, they brought them to sell on the street while they were steaming hot. People who went to work would buy two or three. They did this every day and worked very vigorously.

We can liken this analogy to our seeking Sukhāvātī rebirth. What do we work for? Seeking rebirth into the Pure Land. Whatever needs to be done in the world, we must do it earnestly and fulfill our ethical duties in every position. But we do not think of doing this forever. For example, as a mother, we must educate our children well. As a child, we must be filial to our parents. We must set a good example yet absolutely not cling to it. We do not do it endlessly, we do it for a certain time then seek Sukhāvātī rebirth. Even propagating Dharma—a good thing—we do it very earnestly, very vigorously, but we do not do it for our whole life and still not let go at the end. After doing it for a certain time, we must let go and seek Sukhavati rebirth. What we do now is to accumulate merits and accrue virtues. What for? For seeking rebirth.

According to *The Sutra of Good or Ill Luck Brought by Practicing Buddhism that Is Asked by Ananda*, "We can engage in worldly matters, but we must not have the mind of clinging to them." The mind of clinging to worldly matters indicates that we still linger and attach to the world. This is wrong! Worldly matters are okay to do, but we must not have attachment.

When we do not have attachment while fulfilling worldly duties, this is "setting our minds on Amitabha's land." Just like we previously mentioned, there are no intermixed thoughts within the utmost sincerity. The only wish we have is to be born into Sukhavati, so we can let go of everything to recite Amitabha, to think of Amitabha, and further to "transfer merits with our utmost sincerity." "Let go," the earlier the better!

### **Do Not Let the Opportunity of Sukhāvātī Rebirth Slip by**

Some fellow practitioners said, "I am still young, twenties or thirties, it is still not the age of letting go. It will be okay to wait until the age of fifties or sixties." Yet, you may still not let go then. I have heard of such a case about a professor. Someone urged him to learn Buddhism, he said, "It is still early for me, there is no hurry. Wait until I am retired then I will learn." Unfortunately, he died before his retirement. How pitiful! This life, he had missed the opportunity. He has now truly fallen into reincarnation, who knows how many kalpas it will be before he can transcend?

So, encountering Buddhism in this life, especially encountering the Pure Land Method, we must not let this opportunity slip by. We must grasp this extraordinary opportunity and

condition, and be determined to attain Sukhāvātī rebirth in this lifetime. The key is to “let go.” Can we let go? People who have let go absolutely do not care about the external things like fame, prestige, gain, or offerings, nor will they care about others’ respect and praise. If we still cannot relinquish worldly fame and gain, how will we possibly be reborn into Sukhāvātī? We should ponder these issues carefully. The decision is up to us.

We no longer engage in things for any other purpose, we accumulate merits, accrue virtues, and plant the good roots only for transferring to our Sukhāvātī rebirth being smooth. So, we do things that can benefit all beings, helping them as much as possible when there are conditions. We also try our best to recruit more people to Sukhāvātī, this can then repay Buddha’s benevolence and honor Amitabha’s Fundamental Vows.

The scripture states, “Aspiring to be born into my land, none of them will fail.” This means that all of them will obtain the achievement. When we genuinely seek rebirth wholeheartedly, how will we not be reborn? Whoever could not be reborn, the only reason is that he did not seek rebirth wholeheartedly. So, the “cause” is not on Amitabha but on ourselves. I am now asking you, “Do you have assurance for rebirth?” That is asking you, “Are you seeking Sukhāvātī rebirth wholeheartedly?”

Please raise your hand if you do. Good! We have many more people raising their hand than on the first day, this is the merit of “upon hearing the name.” Indeed, if we understand this scripture after listening to the lectures, we have obtained the assurance. But the important thing is that we must seek rebirth wholeheartedly in order to get assurance. It won’t work if we are half-hearted or double-minded.

### **Step on Two Boats, Lose Both**

Some fellow practitioners said, “I want rebirth, I also want my wealth.” Stepping on two boats, I am afraid that you would lose both. Why? You definitely cannot get rebirth because you are not seeking it wholeheartedly. What about wealth? You want wealth, but it depends on whether or not you have wealth in your destiny? Where does wealth in your destiny come from? It comes from the wealth-dāna of your past lives. Wealth-dāna is to donate your external wealth or your internal energy, time, and wisdom to benefit others.

If you want to have wealth in this life, you should cultivate wealth-dāna vigorously, then you may have a lot in your old age. The wealth comes in this way, it is not obtained from your desire. Nevertheless, it is best to let go of pursuing worldly things in our hearts. What do we want it for? We brought nothing with us at birth, And we cannot take anything with us at death. We want so much money, for whom? Even if we have boxes full of gold and silver, it is useless. It is better to let go of everything now. There is one phrase in a poem of the Chinese classic novel, *The Dream of the Red Chamber*, “In the end, we find out that we are all just busy making wedding dresses for others.”

However, it is not a bad thing to have wealth, for we can cultivate more dāna to benefit all beings with this fortune as much as possible. What if we have no wealth? It is even better. As a saying goes, “When nothing needs to be done, it is better than doing something good.” This means that we'd better not try to find something to do when there is nothing needed to be done.

We must often introspect ourselves and repent our wrongdoings! We must remind ourselves not to be deluded. The scariest thing is *being deluded*. If we do not want to be deluded, the only way is to listen to the sutra and Dharma teachings every day, which means “hearing Amitabha’s name” every day. When we do so, we will be blessed by Amitabha’s great Vows every day. “Upon hearing Amitabha’s name,” we will keep Sukhāvātī in remembrance, bring forth bodhicitta, firmly uphold it without regression, plant the roots of all virtues, transfer the merits with utmost sincerity, and thus be reborn into Sukhāvati. None of us will fail! All of these depend on listening to Dharma every day to obtain it.

Thanks everyone for learning with us, Namō Amitabha!