

How Important Is “Upon Hearing the Name

When we truly “hear the name,” we will undoubtedly be reborn to Sukhavati. But why? Because when we “hear the name,” we will understand the *truth*. Once we understand the *truth*, our faith will arise. Once our faith arises, we will make a vow to seek Sukhāvātī rebirth. And once we make the vow, we will definitely recite Amitabha. With faith, aspiration, and cultivation, we will absolutely be reborn. This logic—the cause and effect—is very clear, we must start from “hearing the name.”

18th to 24th Vows

The text of 18th Vow states, “When I become a Buddha, all beings in ten directions, upon hearing my name...” They will “believe and rejoice with utmost sincerity, wholeheartedly transfer the merits of all their good roots, and aspire to be born to my land. Even within only ten recitations of my name, if they are not born into my land, I will not acquire Anuttara-Samyak-Sambodhi.”

So, “upon hearing my name” is the cause, “believe and rejoice with utmost sincerity” is the effect. “Believe and rejoice with utmost sincerity” becomes the cause, “wholeheartedly transfer all the merits of their good roots and aspire to be born to my land” is the effect. “Wholeheartedly transfer all the merits of their good roots and aspire to be born to my land” becomes the cause, “even within only ten recitations of my name, if they are not born into my land, I will not acquire Anuttara-Samyak-Sambodhi” is the effect.” So, our rebirth is definite, we will absolutely be born within ten recitations.

The 19th Vow: One will bring forth bodhicitta upon hearing Amitabha’s name. The 20th Vow: At the end of one’s life, Amitabha will come to escort him. Both Vows are also based on “upon hearing my name.” As long as we “hear the name,” Amitabha will bless us to bring forth bodhicitta, cultivate all kinds of merits and virtues, practice the six paramitas respectfully, uphold them firmly without regression, further transfer the merits of our good roots to Sukhavati rebirth, and we will single mindedly recite Amitabha unceasingly day and night. At the end of our lives, Amitabha, together with an assembly of bodhisattvas, will manifest before us, and we will be born into Sukhavati in an instant and become avaivartika bodhisattvas.

The text of the 21st Vow, “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.” The initial cause is still “upon hearing my name,” and the final result is Sukhāvātī rebirth. “None of them will fail” suggests that we will absolutely succeed. Even “If someone has 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.”

According to Master Ou Yi, “To attain rebirth, it all depends on whether or not you have faith and aspiration.” Where does faith and aspiration come from? From “upon hearing the name.” From the 18th to the 21st Vows are all due to the merits of “upon hearing the name.” So are the 22nd Vow: No females in the Land, the 23rd Vow: She will detest her female body and transform into a man, and the 24th Vow: All will be born through transformation in lotus flowers.

25th to 27th Vow

It is the same with the 25th Vow: Veneration from human and celestial beings, the 26th Vow: One will obtain **fortune** upon hearing Amitabha’s name, and the 27th Vow: Constant cultivation of the Supreme Sacred Conduct. Look! The text for these three Vows states, “All beings in ten directions, upon hearing my name, will rejoice and give rise to faith. They will worship and seek refuge in me.” These actions—rejoicing, giving rise to faith, worshiping, and seeking refuge—are all obtained from “upon hearing Amitabha’s name.”

Furthermore, they will surely be reborn into “a respectable and honorable family” In case they do not obtain Sukhavati rebirth. “All their sense organs will be complete without deficiency, and they will constantly cultivate the Supreme Sacred Conducts (Skt. *brahma-caryā*; a religious practice of purifying the mind).” They will “cultivate the bodhisattva-conduct with a pure mind; all celestial and human beings will respect them.” How wonderful this is! So long as you “hear the name,” the advantage you earn is tremendous, even the heavenly beings will respect you and you will surely be born into a respectable and honorable family if you do not obtain Sukhavati rebirth.

35th and 36th Vows

The 35th and 36th Vows also emphasize “upon hearing the name.” The text states, “When I become a Buddha, all beings born into my land will ultimately attain the position of Buddha-Successor-in-One-Life* (**eka-jāti-pratibaddhā*). Except for those who, with their original vow of liberating all beings, will wear the armor of a great vow to edify all beings to bring forth faith.” This refers to when you “hear Amitabha’s name” to bring forth faith and aspiration and being born into Sukhāvātī, you will still use this Pure Land Method to universally liberate all beings in order to repay Buddha's profound benevolence. Shakyamuni Buddha has set a great example for us.

In *The Amitabha Sutra*, Shakyamuni Buddha states that He practiced these difficult deeds in our evil world of five turbidity. These difficult deeds include bringing forth faith and aspiration through “hearing the name,” attaining rebirth to the Pure Land, attaining Anuttara-Samyak-Sambodhi, becoming a Buddha, and then coming back to the Saha World to speak this Dharma of difficult-to-believe by all beings of all worlds. When we are reborn, we will

do the same. And we will “ultimately attain the position of Buddha-Successor-in-One-Life,” which means that we will definitely become a Buddha in this life.

How do we attain Buddhahood? *Upon hearing the name*, we bring forth bodhicitta, recite Buddha’s name, and become a Buddha. What method do we speak after becoming a Buddha? We will definitely speak this Pure Land Method and will not be different from Shakyamuni Buddha. Or, if you are compassionate, you may choose to postpone your Buddhahood to first edify all beings. Can you? Yes, you can. Once the power of Amitabha's Vow blesses you, you can wear the armor of your great vow for the sake of all beings in ten directions.

What is this great vow? It is to tell all beings the merits of Amitabha, letting them give rise to faith and aspiration and thus recite Amitabha to seek Sukhāvātī rebirth. This is the great vow that you made to help all sentient and insentient beings be born into Sukhavati. Furthermore, you will “cultivate the bodhi-conducts and practice the Way of Samantabhadra Bodhisattva.” The Way of Samantabhadra Bodhisattva is “guiding homecoming to Sukhāvātī with the King of Ten Great Vows.” In other words, “going to Sukhāvātī” is to practice the Way of Samantabhadra Bodhisattva.

Thanks everyone for learning with us. Namo Amitabha!