

What Is Pure Faith and How to Bring Forth Bodhicitta

The text of the 22nd to 24th Vows states, "If a woman, upon hearing my name, obtains pure faith and brings forth bodhicitta..." What is this pure faith? It is to believe that "there is Sukhāvātī and there is Amitabha who will escort all beings to be reborn into Sukhāvātī." It is also to believe in ourselves being a buddha innately. In this pure faith, there are neither intermixed thoughts nor suspicions and defilements. She undertakes it straightforwardly and believes that "I can go to Sukhāvātī to become a Buddha."

Bringing forth bodhicitta is to bring forth the heart of seeking Sukhāvātī rebirth with genuine faith and imperative aspiration. Faith and aspiration is bodhicitta. Two words: faith and aspiration. Isn't this simple enough? If you still do not feel it is simple enough, then there is just one word: willing. Are you willing to go? This heart of "willing" is very rare to come by, it is the supreme bodhicitta. But this "willing" must be genuine. If you say that you are "willing to go", yet your heart lingers in all kinds of secular matters such as wealth, children...etc, then you will not be able to be reborn. As a woman, the most difficult thing to let go of is affection-attachment, which you must let go of, but it is also the most challenging one.

Who Ties Women to the Saha World?

There must be objects of your affection-attachment. Who are the objects that you attach to? Generally speaking, it is your husband. If someone asks you, you may say, "I have let go, I don't care about what he is doing." Look! There is a subtle tone in your voice, divulging that you still have not let go. What is it like for one who has let go? She has a placid mood and does not feel differences between "there is" or "there isn't."

Nevertheless, you must fulfill your ethical duty, taking the responsibility of a wife and being a good example for all beings because the most critical factor for a harmonious society is the harmony of families. When husband and wife divorce, it will cause social unrest. So, you must fulfill your ethical duties, yet you do not have any attachment in your heart. You can be reborn at any time and in any place, there is no hindrance in your heart at all. This is "letting go." Everyone must work hard on this matter.

As a woman, the next thing you have not let go of is children. This is probably more serious than the attachment to the husband. Nearly ten months' pregnancy, one day's labor of giving birth, you have given so much. Plus the three years of nurturing, you take care of them meticulously in every aspect. You raise them to become adults, helping them to get married and taking care of grandchildren for them. Now you have more objects that you cannot let go of. Isn't it all like this?

The attachment to these affections has tied you up in this Saha World forever. Therefore, in this life we must awaken, we must let go. "Let go" does not mean disregarding them, you still

need to fulfill your obligations. As a mother, you must educate your children well, raising them to become good people to benefit society.

If they turn out bad, it does not matter since you have tried your best. When you cannot influence them, you must let go. Of course you must try your best if you still can influence them, but you should let go when you have no influence over them. As an old proverb goes, “Children have their own fortune and destiny.” So, you should not worry anymore. What you should worry about is your own great undertaking of rebirth. This is what you must worry about.

Actually, your worry does not necessarily benefit them. You use your own perspective to worry, to plan, and to consider for them, it probably cannot really help them but creates restrictions for them instead. Their achievement will never exceed yours because they have grown based on your plan. If you wish your children to surpass your achievement, you must let them experience life on their own. It is wiser that you let go of them, just observing calmly by their side. If you deliberately seek all means, it shows that you have no wisdom.

The purer one’s mind is, the higher his wisdom will be. But, how do we obtain a pure mind? The key is to “let go.” If you do not get away from this binding, you honestly cannot help them but only create a big obstacle to your own rebirth. You must prevail over it and aspire to be born into Sukhavati, because you can truly help them after you attain the supernal power of an *avaivartika bodhisattva* with your future return vow.

So, how do we “obtain pure faith, bring forth bodhicitta”? It is to “hear the name.” Teacher Liu Suyun has set a good example for us. She stayed home to hear the merits of Amitabha by listening to the teachings of *The Infinite Life Sutra*. She attained the Samadhi of Reciting Amitabha within ten years. The secret is right here! The key to success: honestly listen to the sutra teachings. As long as you settle down your mind, let go of all external temptations, and “hear Amitabha’s name” repeatedly for at least three years, you will definitely obtain pure faith with no doubt, bring forth bodhicitta, and be reborn into Sukhāvātī. How phenomenal this merit is!

When Would I Have Heard Enough?

Why is it that our hearts are restless and we seemingly have no assurance of rebirth? It is because our minds are not settled. We have not obtained pure faith and our aspiration is not imperative. Consequently, we do not have assurance for rebirth. This is all because we do not listen to the sutra teachings enough.

You may ask, “When would I have heard enough? What kind of status is it? What kind of signs are there? Can you show me some criteria? When will I graduate?” The criteria are what is stated here: obtaining pure faith, bringing forth bodhicitta, and setting the mind on the Land. Have you set your mind on the Land yet? Has your recitation of Amitabha ceased? When your

recitation is unceasing, you have heard enough. This is called the Samadhi of Reciting Amitabha.

Teacher Liu Suyun has attained the Samadhi of Reciting Amitabha within ten years, she has heard enough. Yet, she is still listening to the teachings ten hours a day. Her “hearing the name” is no longer a mortal's cultivation, she is heading to the direction of attaining the rebirth of top-grade, top-rank. She belongs to the type mentioned in the text, “bodhisattvas in the worlds of other directions, upon hearing my name, attain anutpattika-dharma-kṣānti.”

As long as we take three years to delve deeply into one **focus**, we definitely can attain great achievement. Most importantly, do not change the subject. Try your best to listen to only the teachings of *The Infinite Life Sutra* with absolute determination. When I was studying abroad, I always carried a small audio player when walking to school. Each and every day, I listened to it while I was walking, eating, doing house chores, washing dishes, sweeping the floor. It would be worth the value of one sentence even if I only heard and comprehended one sentence. Sometimes I only listened to it for ten minutes. Even ten minutes was great. We grasp all the possible time to cultivate the merits of “hearing the name.”

Foul Skin Bag

We have explained that the female body has more suffering and more karma. The biggest trouble is that females naturally have deeper affection-attachment, which causes their rebirth to have a bit more obstacles. What can you do about this “a bit more”? You must work harder and pay more attention to this issue, because this is a big issue, not a small one. Sukhavati rebirth is the biggest issue in life! We must not take it lightly under any circumstance.

In fact, not only the female body should be detested but the male body as well. As long as it is a body, it should be detested. This foul skin bag, all the filthy stuff inside, what is there to enjoy about it? Buddhism talks about the “Four Bases of Mindfulness,” the first mindfulness is “to Contemplate the Body as Impure.” This is to tell us to detest our bodies.

When we are young, the body functions well, yet many problems slowly emerge after middle age. This is quite troubling. In addition, whatever delicacies we eat will all become excrement, what can we love about this body? If whatever we eat becomes gold after coming out, then this body is worthy of love, isn't it? *The Infinite Life Sutra* states, “It has foul smells and is impure, it is nothing to be enjoyed.”

Some people particularly love their bodies. They beautify their bodies with make-up, decorations, and perfume. They thought the perfume can really cover that foul smell and its impurity. This is topsy-turvy because they have not heard Buddha-Dharma and have not transformed their minds. Once they hear the Buddha-Dharma, they will know that these are too ridiculous and foolish. So, for the sake of Sukhavati rebirth, we must not attach to this body, we must let it go.

A Pure Heart Leads to a Healthy, Energetic Body,

Letting go of this body does not mean to disregard it. Having this body of five skandhas, it needs to eat and sleep, we have to follow its regulation; we can do nothing about it. However, the simpler the life, the healthier we actually will be. The ancients said, “The external world will transform in accord with our mind.” When our minds are pure, our body—the closest external object to our mind—will transform accordingly and become pure and healthy.

In addition, being a vegetarian and reciting Amitabha can all help us adjust our physique and mentality. We should follow the regulation of our bodies. Do not force or overload it. Also do not over protect it. If we are sick, we can get well by reciting Amitabha with a pure heart. Teacher Liu Suyun has given us a testimony. When the hospital gave up on her treatment, she went home and recited Amitabha. At last, she was cured by simply reciting Amitabha and there have been no after-effects during these ten years. Reciting Amitabha can really eliminate our past karma. This is the way to truly nurture our hearts and bodies.

When one has a genuine heart for Dao, he would absolutely not fear death. Master Yin Guang always kept the word “death” on his forehead. He said, “When we never forget the word *death* in our every thought, our path to Dao will naturally be realized.” Once we have let go of this body and ascend to Amitabha’s lotus throne when Amitabha comes to escort us with a lotus flower, we immediately transform our foul skin bag into a bodhisattva body, neither male nor female. It is an incorruptible adamantine body—the body of śubha, the noumenon of amita. This body, being transformed through a lotus flower and not having parents, will not have a lustful mind and is free from the affection-attachment between parents and children.

Thanks everyone for learning with us. Namó Amitabha!