

## **Regard the Five Ethical Relationships as Role Playing**

In the last episode, we mentioned that there are five ethical relationships in our world: parents-children, siblings, husband-wife, leader-subordinate, and friends. And the beloved affection between family members makes them differentiate others as outsiders, they thus give rise to discrimination and attachment and fall into endless reincarnation. So, we must transcend the five ethical relationships and put ourselves into a higher realm to better deal with various relationships like the actors and actresses who play different roles on stage.

Whatever role you need to play, you play it. For example, if you are a husband, you play the role of a husband. If you are a wife, you play the role of a wife. As a mother, play the role of a mother. As a son, play the role of a son. When playing it, you do not attach to it, just like acting on stage. There are mother-son, husband-wife, as well as friends and siblings in the plot, yet they are not really in those relationships in their life. They are just acting, very lifelike. Why do they act lifelike? For liberating all beings. They demonstrate a good example for all beings but do not attach to it in their hearts at all, as if the actors of husband and wife on stage love each other dearly to perform a harmonious family.

You must not let other people see that the families who learned Buddhism are ruptured, because it will make them scared of learning Buddhism. You demonstrate husband and wife being courteous to each other like guests and happily together in harmony. Other people see it, thinking that "Learning Buddhism is great! Look how wonderful the husband and wife in that family are, we should learn from them." They came to ask you, "Why is your family so wonderful?" You said, "We have learned Buddhism, you should come and learn as well." This is acting!

## **The Purpose of Bodhisattvas Coming to a World**

What do bodhisattvas come to the world for? They come for acting! Since they are acting, they will not attach to it. The husband and wife on the stage are actors and actresses. They are mostly not husband and wife but classmates, perhaps even learning from the same teacher. If you attach to it, you are deluded.

There is a very inspiring story about a Buddhist practitioner. A neighbor, whose family members do not get along, came to ask, "How do your family members get along so well?" The Buddhist practitioner replied, "Your family are all good people, so when something happens, everyone thinks they are right, a dispute thus occurred. But everyone in my family are bad guys, when something happens, we think we are bad to cause the problem, so we only blame ourselves and apologize to the other." "Ah...the key is to be humble and introspect ourselves instead of blaming others!" The neighbor sighed with an epiphany.

So, we must fulfill our duties of the five ethical relationships without losing ourselves or having affection-attachment. I remember when I renounced my worldly home, there was a saying in the ordination ceremony which moved me deeply. The words in the ritual read, “He who relinquishes worldly beloved affection can then be called the one who genuinely repays the debt of gratitude.” If we do not let go of these affection-attachments, we cannot truly repay the debt of gratitude. We must let go and seek Sukhāvātī rebirth. After we arrive in Sukhāvātī and become an avaiartika bodhisattva, we can then come back with our future return vow to help our beloved ones.

### **Create Good Affinity with Others, Hear the Name, and Let Go**

Whoever has connections with us—the husband-wife, parents-children, or siblings and friends in past lives—they can be liberated by us. Without connections, it is very difficult to liberate them. No matter good or bad connections, we can help them awaken and lead them to the liberation path as long as there are connections. So, all connections are a good thing because it will be convenient for us to liberate them in the future lives. However, having good connections, they will easily listen to us when we speak to them, otherwise they are likely to be against us. So, we must create as many good connections with all beings as possible, even the closest people like husband-wife, parents-children, and siblings, we should make good connections with them all.

What is creating good connections? Never have confrontation or conflicts with them. Do not create resentments with anyone. Whatever they want, we give it to them. We just concede all the way and respect them all the way. We must bring forth the heart of taking care of them, having concern for them, helping them and not expecting any return from them, this is “creating good connections.” We have bestowed benevolence on them in this way.

When we bestow benevolence on them, they may not feel grateful in this life but you have planted good seeds in their alaya consciousness. These seeds will function and manifest in future lives, they will then feel grateful to you. They do not remember things of past lives but they will have good feelings towards you when seeing you. They will be willing to repay you because you had bestowed benevolence on them in a past life. This life they came to repay the benevolence. They are willing to listen to you, you then have the ability to easily lead them to the path of liberation. So now, before we leave the world, what do we do? In addition to reciting Amitabha, “hearing” the merits of Amitabha’s name and learning the sutra teachings, we must broadly create good connections with all beings, never create bad connections.

This is the Vow of “being born through transformation in a lotus flower of the seven-jeweled pond.” Although it speaks specifically of women here, men are no exception. Men of course should also detest the male body and “aspire to be born to Amitabha’s land.” At the end of life, you can then also be born through transformation in a lotus flower and obtain an incorruptible adamantine body.

"If such vows are not realized, I will not attain Anuttara-Samyak-Sambodhi." If you are unable to get the result, or you slip from the net, Amitabha said, "I will not attain Anuttara-Samyak-Sambodhi." In other words, if you truly "hear the name," yet you do not attain a pure faith, do not bring forth bodhicitta, do not detest your body, do not wish to be born into Sukhāvātī, and are not born through transformation in the lotus flower of the seven-jeweled pond, Amitabha will not procure Anuttara-Samyak-Sambodhi.

Since Amitabha already procured Anuttara-Samyak-Sambodhi ten kalpas ago, these Vows are all realized and consummate. What are we still worried about? Rebirth is affirmative, what we have to do now is to *hear the name often*, enforce our faith and aspiration, and let go of everything in this world in our hearts. If we do not let go, it means our faith and aspiration are still not enough. What can we do? We should keep "hearing the name."

Thank you everyone for learning with us. Namo Amitabha!