

turn The 25th to 27th Vows

Let us join our palms and read the text together, "When I become a Buddha, all beings in ten directions, upon hearing my name, will rejoice and give rise to faith. They will worship and seek refuge in me. Moreover, they will cultivate the bodhisattva-conduct with a pure mind; all human and celestial beings will respect them. If they hear my name, they will be born into respectable and honorable families after this life ends. All their sense organs will be complete without any deficiency. And they will constantly cultivate the supreme-sacred-conduct. (Skt. *brahma-caryā*, a religious practice of purifying the mind to ensure a rebirth in the Maha-Brahma Heaven or beyond form-realm). If such vows cannot be accomplished, I will not procure Anuttara-Samyak-Sambodhi." Thank you!

This paragraph includes the following three Vows.

25th Vow: Veneration from human and celestial beings.

26th Vow: One will obtain fortune upon hearing Amitabha's name.

27th Vow: Constant cultivation of the supreme-sacred-conduct.

The cause of these three Vows is still "upon hearing my name." When people, with deep-seated good roots (*Skt. *Kuśala-mūla*, the three primary good roots are "no greed, no resentment, no ignorance), believe, accept, let go of all kinds of things in this world, and seek Sukhāvātī rebirth with sufficient faith and aspiration, they then utterly obtains the merit of "upon hearing the name." But there are some people, despite having brought forth faith and aspiration, their faith is like a "half bucket of water," can they be reborn? No, they cannot. But, "upon hearing the name" will allow them to obtain blessing and fortune to plant good roots for their future lives.

For example, you have listened to seven days of lectures here and obtained great joy, but you return to your same ways after going home. If you only have the joy of "hearing the name" but do not actually practice, do not rectify your problems and habits, and are not willing to let go of what you should let go of, you only plant some good roots. So, we must stop complaining about our own fate and others' doings, must let go of all kinds of worldly likings and haggles, and must purify our mind until there is only one thought of seeking Sukhāvātī rebirth; only then can you be reborn.

How do we examine whether our aspirations are genuine or not? When encountering temptation, do I give rise to avarice and forget the aspiration? When encountering adversity, do I give rise to resentment, antagonization, and forget about the aspiration? If these are the cases, it will be very difficult for us to be reborn. We must seek Sukhāvātī rebirth with a pressing and earnest manner. The sutra states, "Wordly people commonly fight for things which do not need to be rushed." What things do not need to be rushed? The things of samsara do not need to be rushed—such as how well we eat, what we wear, whether or not we have enjoyment for our daily life, how other people treat us, whether or not they are polite—all of these we do not need to take to heart.

When we “rejoice and give rise to faith,” we will “worship and seek refuge in Amitabha.” Not only will we worship and take refuge very sincerely, even more remarkably, we will further “cultivate the bodhisattva-conduct with a pure mind.” As a result, all celestial beings of twenty-eight layers of heavens will respect and guard us. So will human beings. These are all obtained by “hearing the name.”

Two days ago some Japanese friends invited me to speak Dharma and talk about how to eliminate disasters. I told them our Shifu's concepts. I said, “The disasters that Japan is facing are also a pain in our hearts, because all beings are one unity. Confucianism emphasizes that “All who are human, I must love. Because we are all sheltered by the same sky and live on the same planet Earth.” Why do we hold this seven-day Buddha-retreat here? Why do we recite Amitabha and speak of Amitabha’s Forty Eight Great Vows here? The purpose is to help this region eliminate disasters. Not for fame, not for gain, we simply help people in this region. This is practicing bodhisattva-conduct.

Those Japanese friends heard what I said, they were very moved and respectful. They felt “how lofty you are!” It is indeed like what is said here; if you can practice bodhisattva-conduct with a pure mind, human and celestial beings will all respect you. Perhaps they know neither Buddha-Dharma nor your language, they will still respect you. What is this? It is the innate virtues of all beings, the virtues that are intrinsically in our self-nature. More specifically speaking, it is benevolence and compassion.

Shifu summed up Confucianism with four words: benevolence, righteousness, loyalty, and forgiveness. What does Mahayana Buddhism speak of? Sincerity and compassion. Therefore, if we can implement benevolence, righteousness, loyalty, forgiveness, along with sincerity and compassion, we are practicing Bodhisattva Conduct. We will undoubtedly obtain respect from all human and heavenly beings.

All Beings Are One Unity

Of course, we do not expect others’ respect. If we have the thought of expecting others’ respect, we are wrong. That would not be a pure mind, that would still be greed for fame, prestige, gain, and offerings. We do this simply because this is what we should do; it is our obligation, our duty. All beings of the multiverse are one unity, when any sentient being in any area of the multiverse encounters disaster, in theory, we should help them.

Take the human body as an example, if your left hand was pinched, the right hand would rub it. The right hand helps the left hand, would it ask about conditions? No need to ask, it is supposed to help. Why? Because they are one unity. Buddhas and Bodhisattvas possess unconditional great compassion and vast empathy due to having perceived all beings as one unity. This “unconditional” refers to helping all beings under all circumstances. They naturally give rise to mercy and sympathy because their innate virtues have been revealed.

Each one of us is like a cell in the same body. How many cells are in one's body? According to biologists' statistics, there are about fifty trillion cells in the human body. Suppose there are fifty trillion sentient beings in the universe, each of us is one of the fifty trillion. No matter which cell is suffering, we should help them all even if that cell did not treat me well in the past. He killed me, mutilated me, invaded me, and ravaged me, and I still treat him with sincerity, compassion, benevolence, righteousness, loyalty, and forgiveness. Why? He does not know that he is the same unity as me. I am awakened. I know that I am the same unity as him. So, I do not fuss with him, this is forgiveness. When he needs help, I will still help him, this is benevolence.

It is as if some of our organs fight sometimes. For instance, when we are talking, the teeth bite the tongue. Everyone has had this experience, haven't you? The tongue will help and lick the teeth when the teeth get hurt. Why? Because they are one unity. If you pull the teeth out, it will not benefit you either. If you eat without teeth to chew, the tongue will be quite tired, right? We are one unity, we should love, help each other, and live harmoniously together. Once we can recognize all beings of the universe as one unity with us, love and compassion will naturally be brought forth from our true heart. We will help others with sincerity without the slightest hypocrisy, this is practicing bodhisattva-conduct with a pure mind. Only by practicing in such a way can we truly move others. If we are hypocritical, others will feel that something is not quite right.

The reason for "being respected by human and heavenly beings" stated in this Vow is because you have those virtues. What other people respect are your virtues. Where do the virtues come from? From "hearing the name." When we are truly clear about Amitabha's intention by understanding Amitabha's fundamental Vows, we will surely bring forth our aspirations to follow suit. Take a look at Amitabha's Forty Eight Vows, which Vow is for Himself? None of them, all Forty Eight Vows are purely for all beings, especially for all suffering beings of the six paths.

The Forty Eight Great Vows are particularly for helping those in the six paths, because all beings of the six paths suffer the most. According to the scripture, "All kinds of sentient beings, who transmigrate in all paths, quickly come to my land to receive peace and bliss." This specifically refers to all beings in samsara. As after transcending the six paths, one achieves the attainment of an arhat, of pratyekabuddha, or becomes a bodhisattva; they do not suffer so much. That is why Amitabha made Vows to let all beings—from heaven to hell—who suffer the most due to being reincarnated in the six paths "quickly come to my land to receive peace and bliss."

We must learn this kind of intention from Buddha. Wherever there are disasters, we should not run away. Conversely, we should go to help. Amitabha teaches us by setting an example, while Shakyamuni Buddha teaches us in words to guide us. After "hearing the name," we must emulate them, regarding Buddha's heart as our own heart, regarding Buddha's aspiration as our own aspiration, and regarding Buddha's conduct as our own conduct. Despite insufficient ability and wisdom, we must bring forth aspiration and help others as much as

possible. What if we are incapable of helping now? Then we should hurry to seek Sukhāvātī rebirth! After attaining the state of avaivartika bodhisattva, we can come back with our future-return-vow to help them.

After being born into Sukhāvātī, though we can enjoy peace and bliss—"free from all sufferings and receive all bliss" as stated in *The Amitabha Sutra*—we must not go for this reason. If we go for this reason, we have not brought forth bodhicitta. Why do we go to Sukhāvātī? Because only by being reborn into Sukhāvātī can we then learn skills and go to all worlds in ten directions to help all beings with ease; this is impelled by our great bodhicitta.

How is bodhicitta brought forth? I have very much emphasized it here, it is brought forth by "hearing the name." If we do not listen to the sutra teachings, it will be very difficult for us to bring forth bodhicitta. So, the Buddha preached all His life and never stopped. The purpose is to help us bring forth our bodhicitta. Once we understand the truth, we will bring forth bodhicitta. Once we bring forth bodhicitta, cultivation will be our own business. Buddha does not need to worry about us anymore. If we have not yet brought forth bodhicitta, Buddha urges us to do so. Once we bring forth bodhicitta, cultivation relies on individuals.

Thanks everyone for learning with us! Namo Amitabha!