

## Dwell on the Firm Determination for Ultimate Enlightenment

Let us see the text of the next 4 Vows. Please read it together,

"When I become a Buddha, there will be no unwholesome names in my land. All beings who are born into my land will have the same mind, dwelling on "the firm determination for ultimate enlightenment" (\*Skt. *niyata-rāṣi* or *samyaktva-niyata*). They will eternally depart from afflictions and have a pure and cool mind. The bliss they receive is like that of bhikṣus who have "extinguished all defilements" (\*Skt. *āsrava-kṣaya*, *kṣina-āsrava*). If they give rise to greedy thoughts concerning their bodies, I will not procure Anuttara-Samyak-Sambodhi." This paragraph includes four Vows:

28th Vow: The land is free from all unwholesomeness.

29th Vow: All will dwell on the firm determination for ultimate enlightenment.

30th Vow: Their bliss is like that of bhikṣus who have extinguished all defilements.

31st Vow: They no longer give rise to greedy thoughts concerning their bodies.

The opening of this paragraph denotes that "there will be no unwholesome names in my land." This statement corresponds to the text of *The Amitabha Sutra*, in which Shakyamuni Buddha told us that "In this Buddha land, there is not even the name of the three evil paths, let alone their actual existence."

You may ask, "Doesn't the sutra state that in Sukhavati, there are birds like peacocks, parrots, kalaviṅkas, and jīvajīva (\*two-headed birds)? Those birds can even speak Dharma? Don't birds belong to the three evil paths?"

According to the scripture, the multitude of birds in the Land are all transformed and manifested by Amitabha who wishes to let the Dharma be widely proclaimed. The purpose is to help everyone "hear the name" so as to let them keep Buddha, Dharma, and Sangha in remembrance. Ahhh...those birds are transformed and manifested by Amitabha! So there are no three evil paths in the Land at all. There is not even the name of the three evil paths, let alone the actual existence.

In our world, there are good people, yet more unwholesome people are out there. There are also more evil spiritual guides than virtuous ones. In consequence, there are many more regressing conditions than progressing conditions for practitioners in this world. Without wisdom-eyes, we do not know how to choose and cannot distinguish the real virtuous spiritual guides from fake ones. We will be in big trouble if we follow a wrong one. *The Śūraṅgama Sūtra* points out for us that, in the Degenerate Dharma Era, the evil teachers who give teachings are as numerous as the sands of the Ganges River. It is really difficult for practitioners to attain achievement in this world. To cultivate in this world, we really need to closely follow a virtuous teacher.

As an intellectual, I love to do research. Through twenty years of learning from our revered Shifu (\*fatherly teacher), I truly recognize that Shifu is a great virtuous mentor. I hope

that we all follow closely to learn from him. We respect everyone but must choose a reliable teacher for ourselves, because it will be very difficult to correct our wrong views and cognitions once we have deviated. Ancient virtuous ones said, "It is easy for one to give up his life yet difficult for one to give up his views." Once our views deviate or become evil, it may be immeasurable kalpas before we are aware of it. Therefore, we must harbor a solemn, grateful, and utmost sincere heart to learn conscientiously. We must grasp this opportunity to obtain achievement in this life.

## **He Who Treads the Path in Earnest Sees Not the Mistakes of the World**

Amitabha's Land has no unwholesome names, can we also apply this concept and attitude to our Saha World? How do bodhisattvas in Sukhāvātī not see evil paths, people, and names? Because they always keep the Buddha, Dharma, and Sangha in remembrance. Their pure thoughts are continuous, so their hearts are pure. We must also learn to have continuous pure thoughts. But how?

Here comes an unwholesome person, we join our palms, that is Amitabha coming. Is he really Amitabha? Yes, he is. Since all beings are innately buddhas and all buddhas are one unity, shouldn't he be Amitabha? Isn't he "transformed by Amitabha in order to let the Dharma be widely proclaimed"? Not only the birds in Sukhāvātī but also the person coming at this moment in our daily life are all Amitabha. Even a person who comes to harm me and to impede me, I also must respectfully join palms and recite Amitabha to him because he is transformed and manifested by Amitabha. He comes to complete me, helping me to eradicate my karma. I must feel grateful for his benevolence, and I must not oppose or have conflict with him.

Will you go against Amitabha? Amitabha comes to help you reduce karma, aren't you grateful for His benevolence? How could you still haggle with Him? By thinking in this way, doesn't your heart no longer have the name of evils? Other people think he is an unwholesome person but in your heart, he is Amitabha. Doesn't your land no longer have "unwholesome names"?

When you regard this thing as not good, then this thing of not good, such as disaster, will then become not good. But, how do I perceive it in my eyes? "This is arranged by Amitabha for me. It is to let me go to Sukhāvātī earlier. This is a good thing, not a bad thing." Therefore, a disaster is no longer a disaster. To me, it is a good thing. Look! The evil name of "disaster" also no longer exists. Other people say "disaster," we follow their ideas and also say "disaster," but there are no disasters in our hearts. This way, doesn't our land also no longer have "unwholesome names"?

We must understand this principle and implement it into our world. We will be free from all sufferings and receive all bliss just like living in Sukhavati everyday. We can obtain it right now! It all depends on whether or not we are willing to transform our minds. The trouble is that

we mortals do not transform our minds. When seeing someone, we say, "This person is really bad, what he did is not conforming with Dharma, he violates the precepts." Look! An unwholesome person appeared in our hearts. Is that person really bad? No! It is created by the discrimination and attachment of our own hearts. The Sixth Patriarch of Zen Buddhism, Master Hui Neng, said, "He who treads the Path in earnest sees not the mistakes of the world." If we aspire to achieve Sukhavati rebirth in this life, we must set our mind in these pure thoughts, regarding all people, matters, and things as Amitabha.

Thanks everyone for learning with us! Namó Amitabha!