

## Is the Body Yourself?

The next Vow is the 31st Vow: They no longer give rise to greedy thoughts concerning their bodies. Amitabha vowed that He will not become a Buddha if those who have been reborn give rise to greedy thoughts to linger on and to attach to their bodies. We must know that Amitabha became a Buddha ten kalpas ago, which indicates that this Vow has been realized. So, those who are born into Sukhāvātī, none of them are attached to their own bodies. They have neither actions nor thoughts, they have completely let go of “the view of regarding the body as oneself” (\*satkāya).

“View” is a perception through senses. The view of “regarding the body as oneself” is the first and foremost wrong view among all Delusions of View-Cognition. How could this body be ourselves? We constantly leave one body and enter another in the samsara. Each body is like a piece of clothing, it is not a real self; we must not attach to it. If we have the wrong view to regard this body as ourselves, it will become a big obstacle for us to practice Dao.

Secular people, indeed, attach to the idea of the body as themselves. Inevitably, they particularly care for it. They think of how to maintain it every day: eating nice food, wearing nice clothes, even thinking of how to gain longevity and stay forever young. These thoughts are all the greed of concern for their own bodies. With these thoughts, can you really stay forever young or gain longevity? No, you can't. Especially to elderly people who were busy working every day before retiring, they did not have time to think of these problems; once retired with no work, they cannot help but think of how to care for their bodies, thus bringing all the problems with those thoughts.

You might as well not think of it, because when you do not think of it, your mind is purer and when your mind is pure, your body will then be pure. Why think about it? You should ignore it, just recite Amitabha conscientiously! How wonderful it is to think of Amitabha! Buddhas will not be aging or ill, nor will they die. If you think of Amitabha all the time, you can also stay young and receive Amitabha's escort before the end of this life!

## A Dharma-Method of No Death

Many people who recite Amitabha seem to have no changes from year to year, forever young. So, when you care for yourself with a pure heart, your physical strength will not become feeble though your age grows. Moreover you even will have no death! Reciting Amitabha to attain Sukhāvātī rebirth means no death! When you recite Amitabha until the conditions are all in place, which implies that your skill has reached the realm and your Dharma-affinity with all beings of this world has also completed, Amitabha will then come to escort you. At that time, it is not necessarily that you have reached the end of your lifespan. You may still have lifespan, but you can renounce it. You depart while alive, letting go of this foul skin bag. And of course, it will be even more of “no death” after arriving in Sukhavati, you will have infinite longevity. So, the

method of Sukhāvātī rebirth is “a Dharma-method of no death.” As long as we practice genuinely, all will attain it.

## How to Protect Your Bodhicitta

There is another implication with this Vow. According to *The Treatise on Rebirth*, if one is always greedy for offerings as well as expecting others' respect, this will become the dharma to impede his bodhicitta. To bring forth and retain our bodhicitta is to assure our rebirth! It is critical to bring forth, retain, and remove obstacles to our bodhicitta. Many Patriarchs taught us that we must stay away from others' respect and offerings! In other words, we must relinquish all fame, prestige, and gains to prevent our bodhicitta from being impeded.

If someone gives you offerings, you must become alert and think, “This is not a good thing, it is bad for me. **If I am affected and give rise to avarice**, my bodhicitta will regress or be lost. Once it is lost or regresses, my Sukhāvātī rebirth in this life will have no hope.” This is the demon's test, we must quickly raise a high alert. Fame, prestige, gain, and offerings, we should try our best not to accept them. When there is no way to reject, we must offer them to others right away. We must not give rise to the mind of controlling, possessing, and enjoying, for they are all very troublesome!

Especially for people who propagate Dharma, their fame, prestige, and offerings are particularly plentiful. Our Shifu often reminds us, “Unless you do not propagate Dharma, once you do, you will absolutely face the temptation of fame, prestige, gain, and offerings.” We must know that we really are not good enough to speak Dharma on stage due to not eradicating our defilements to have a true attainment. But, why do we appear on stage? It is simply for the reason of not being able to bear the decline of holy teachings, nor can we endure the suffering of all beings.

The holy teachings have been declining badly owing to it not being promoted. We have no choice but to make up for it with our meager ability. We come to the stage, simply echoing what the texts say, giving some encouragement to everyone, and hoping that in this life, everyone will achieve attainment. We do not dare to regard ourselves as others' teachers.

## What Mindset Should We Have to Propagate Dharma?

Shifu often exhorts us, “People who propagate Dharma must always be humble. We are students giving a speech on stage, we come to the stage with the status of a student. Who is the teacher? All the people who sit in the audience seats are teachers. These teachers come to listen to how this student learns lately. They come to see your report, giving the student a grade and checking whether the student has progressed or not.

With this kind of mindset, it is more secure and safer to propagate Dharma on stage. If we have one thought of “I can be a teacher, I’ll come to teach you,” that will be troublesome. If we stand high above masses with the status of a teacher and let others prostrate, worship, and give offerings, we will definitely be deprived. When we give rise to arrogance, our realm will regress tremendously.

Confucius said in *The Analects*, "Though a man has abilities as admirable as Zhou Gong, but if he is proud and miserly, his other qualities are really not worth mentioning." Zhou Gong, the duke of Zhou, established a solid foundation for the Dynasty during the 11th Century BC, playing a major role in consolidating the kingdom. He was also a Chinese culture hero credited with writing the *Book of Changes (I Ching)* and the *Book of Poetry*, establishing the rites of Zhou, and creating Chinese classical music. Confucius admired Zhou Gong the most and for all his life, he only wanted to be like Zhou Gong. He told his students that if someone has the talents of Zhou Gong yet is arrogant and stingy, this person would have no actual virtues and his talents are false, which are just like flowers without roots, they would only last for a few days no matter how pretty they are.

So, we must be humble and put ourselves in a low position. We must keep **away** from others' respect, praise, and offerings. We must not accept them. This “not accepting” refers to “not attaching to it in mind.” Others' praise is their business, I just recite Amitabha with a low profile, Amitabha, Amitabha, Amitabha..., not hearing the praise. It will be good this way.

Other people’s offerings, I do not dare to accept. If they really want to give, we must offer them to others right away. I have now learned this **expediency** from Shifu. It is very useful. No matter which bodhimandha\* (**\*a place where religious practice is carried out**) I went to deliver the lectures, when people gave me offerings with their devout sincerity, it hurts their enthusiasm if I do not accept it. What do I do after accepting it? I turn around and put them in the merit box, or offer them to the **permanent residence** of the bodhimandha. I do not keep even one cent for myself. Once you keep it, you are doomed, you begin to undermine your virtues.

This is about the Vow of “They no longer give rise to greedy thoughts concerning their bodies.” All bodhisattvas in Sukhāvātī are like this, they have totally let go of themselves. They can sacrifice everything, even giving up their lives to help all beings because they know this body is not themselves.

Thanks everyone for learning with us, Namó Amitabha!