

## When the Bell Rings, the Suffering of Hell Beings Ceases

The following is about the Vow “All will be skillful in speaking the essence of all Dharma.” The text of the 34th Vow reads, “They will be skillful in speaking the esoterism and essence of all Dharma. When they proclaim sutras to practice Dao, their voices will be like a bell tolling. If such vows are not realized, I will not procure Anuttara-Samyak-Sambodhi.”

The Buddha-Dharma is extremely profound, some are too profound to speak directly; this is due to the **esoteric implication** of all Buddhas. Thus *The Lotus Sutra* states, "**Halt, halt, this Dharma does not need to be said, because it is too wondrous to deliberate.**" In fact, there are no secrets in Buddha-Dharma. But why must some Dharma not be spoken? Because the spiritual capacity of all beings is not adequate, they would not understand if it is spoken; it is of no help to them. It is okay that they do not understand, the problem is that they may give rise to the mind of slandering. In order not to let them slander and make karma, it must not be spoken.

To reveal the profound and esoteric Dharma, one must use an extremely expedient measure. It requires wisdom to let all beings gain inspiration. Therefore, Amitabha blesses all beings who are born into Sukhāvātī to obtain the ability of talking about the profound and esoteric principles of all Dharmas. Especially the essence, the most important part, they can immediately grasp the core, not beating around the bush.

Ordinary people usually speak this way and that way, beating around the bush, yet are unable to get to the point. All they talk about is the end of the twigs! In stark contrast, Bodhisattvas, when speaking Dharma, are absolutely concise yet comprehensive, every sentence points to the core. They will let you comprehend explicitly and let you gain unusual Dharma-joy due to the genuine **epiphany that you gain**.

They practice Dao by speaking sutras, their voices will be like a bell tolling, very resonant and righteous. It can be heard from afar, awaken people's hearts, and can bring out the goodness in them. After hearing this kind of Dharma, people will aspire to eradicate evilness and practice goodness. So, the voice itself has its own merits.

This is like the large bronze bells in ancient temples engraved with scriptures. Some are even engraved with the whole scripture of *The Avatamsaka Sutra*. You strike the bell one time, it is like striking the whole scripture of the Sutra. In Buddha-Dharma it states that, when a bell rings, the suffering of hell beings can be temporarily ceased. As such, temples often strike a bell, it is also equal to striking the entire scripture of the sutra to benefit all beings.

The sound of the bronze bell signifies the unimpeded eloquence of Bodhisattva's speaking sutras and Dharma. The voice and doctrine that they speak all possess a very **powerful enchantment**, which is something that all beings love to hear and are most fascinated by. While speaking sutras and Dharma, they can explain the most profound principles in simple terms. Having this ability, they can then deliver all beings to liberation with ease.

## Rehearsing the Expedient Teachings to Unveil the Truth

While speaking sutras and Dharma, Bodhisattvas can explain the most profound principles in simple terms. For example, due to the doctrine of *The Lotus Sutra* being extremely profound, the Buddha must **rehearse the expedient teachings to unveil the truth**. The purpose is to use expedient ways to lead all beings to enter the *truth*. After all beings have entered the gate of truth, the Buddha then tells us the Dharma of ultimate reality—all beings can all attain Buddhahood.

Before giving the speech of *The Lotus Sutra*, the Buddha speaks of Mahayana and Hinayana—the two-vehicle Dharma, also speaks of the method of attaining śrāvaka, pratyekabuddha, and bodhisattva—the three-vehicle Dharma. But, in *The Lotus Sutra*, the Buddha stresses that there is only the Dharma of becoming a Buddha—the one-vehicle Dharma. There is neither the Dharma of two-vehicle nor three-vehicle, unless a Buddha speaks for expediency.

*The Lotus Sutra* divulges this esoteric essence: all beings primordially are buddhas. So, we can all attain Buddhahood. This is the **definitive doctrine** (\*Skt. *nītārtha*). It tells us straight to the point that everyone has inner Buddha-nature. As if a bright pearl is buried in a piece of very old and filthy clothing, it will appear in front of us when we open the clothes. So, when we remove all our contamination, our Buddha-nature will then be revealed. This is the definitive doctrine of one-vehicle Dharma.

*The Lotus Sutra* and *The Infinite Life Sutra* both tell us one-vehicle Dharma. However, *The Infinite Life Sutra* further tells us straight to the point that we can be a Buddha in this lifetime. Some people do not dare to accept it, saying “My karma is so deep and heavy, can I still go and be a Buddha?” The Buddha assured you that you can become a Buddha. No matter how heavy your karma is, you can still be born and become a Buddha as long as you seek Sukhāvātī rebirth with faith and aspiration.

## What Will Bodhisattvas with “Future Return Vow” Speak?

After the rebirth, Bodhisattvas come back to our world to speak sutras and Dharma, what will they speak? They will speak the Pure Land Method. Because these Bodhisattvas also practiced this method and attained rebirth in the past. And now they **come back with their “future-return-vow,”** they surely will speak this method. Unless you cannot accept it, they have no choice but to speak other expedient Dharma to lead you gradually. When you can accept it, they will **leave out the expedient teachings and reveal to you the true Dharma,** which is to urge you to seek Sukhāvātī rebirth.

Now, we must learn that, when meeting people, we also try our best to convince them to recite Amitabha and seek Sukhāvātī rebirth. If they cannot accept it, we do not need to use other expedient ways, just leave them alone. We recite Amitabha conscientiously first; waiting until we are reborn and coming back, we can then lead them with expedient ways.

So, do not rush to **deliver** them now. If they can accept it, great! You can talk to them more about the method. If you do not know how to explain it, you can introduce some materials to them. As for ourselves, we still recite this name of Amitabha conscientiously. This is also similar to learning from those Bodhisattvas “speaking skillfully the esoterism and essence of all Dharma.” Because persuading others to recite Amitabha equals to speaking the esoterism and essence of all Dharma skillfully!

Thank you everyone for learning with us! Namo Amitabha!