

The 35th and 36th Vows

Please see the text. Let's join palms and read together respectfully.

“When I become a Buddha, all beings born into my land will ultimately attain “the position of Buddha-Successor-in-One-Life” (*[eka-jāti-pratibaddhā](#)). Except those who, with their original vow, will wear the armor of great vows to edify all beings to bring forth faith, cultivate bodhi-conducts, and practice the Way of Samantabhadra Bodhisattva. Even if they are born into other worlds, they will forever be free from evil paths. They either love to speak Dharma, love to listen to Dharma, or may manifest the supernal power of bodily function; they can practice them all to perfection in accord with their wishes. If such vows are not realized, I will not procure Anuttara-Samyak-Sambodhi.”

This paragraph includes the

35th Vow: All will reach the position of Buddha-Successor-in-One-Life,

36th Vow: All can edify others as they wish.

Buddha-Successor-in-One-Life

According to the text, Amitabha vowed that, when He becomes a Buddha and accomplishes Sukhāvātī, all beings who are born into His Land will ultimately become the bodhisattvas of Buddha-Successor-in-One-Life. Just like Maitreya Bodhisattva in the Inner Court of Tuṣita Heaven in our Saha World now, he is a Bodhisattva of Buddha-Successor.

What is a Buddha-Successor-in-One-Life? He is a bodhisattva who has attained the status of Virtually Enlightened Bodhisattva. When the conditions of all beings in other worlds or his world are in place, he can then manifest attaining Buddhahood. In other words, as long as being born in Sukhāvātī, you instantly attain Buddhahood and possess Buddha's wisdom, capability, and skilful expedient technique of liberating all beings. He just waits for the condition to be in place to demonstrate attaining Buddhahood. This is the bodhisattva of Buddha-Successor-in-One-Life.

Maitreya Bodhisattva now speaks Sutras and Dharma in the Inner Court of Tuṣita Heaven. When will he descend to our world and demonstrate attaining Buddhahood? According to calculations, he will be here 584 million years later. How do we calculate this? In the Inner Court of Tuṣita Heaven where Maitreya Bodhisattva resides, one day equals 400 years of our world, the lifespan of its celestial beings is about 4,000 years. Based on one year of 365 days on Earth, it is about 584 million years. Expecting for the next Buddha to descend, we have such a long time to wait.

All Can Edify Others As They Wish

If we go to Sukhāvātī, do we need to wait so long? No need to! Firstly, we can see Amitabha immediately. Secondly, we will also attain the position of Buddha-Successor-in-One-Life. So, it is clear that to attain Buddhahood in Sukhāvātī is very easy.

However, some bodhisattvas particularly have great compassion, they think, “If I wait for so long to become a Buddha, what would all beings do with their sufferings?” So, they want to quickly liberate all beings before attaining Buddhahood, just like Kṣitigarbha Bodhisattva who vowed, “If all beings are not completely liberated, I will not attain Anuttara-Samyak-Sambodhi.” Can you do it? Yes, you can! You can do it as you wish with ease.

Everything can be accomplished. If you want to become Buddha first, no problem, you will attain the position of Buddha-Successor-in-One-Life. If you wish to liberate all beings first, it is okay too. When you come back after having been to Sukhāvātī, you are not a mortal anymore. Why? Because you have seen Amitabha and obtained Amitabha’s blessings. You will fully possess wisdom, supernal power, and capability to help all beings.

On this account, the practitioners who have great compassion and vow to liberate all beings before their own attainment should still go to Sukhāvātī first. Otherwise, you would not have the ability to help others. We must know that we are mortals now, not Kṣitigarbha Bodhisattva. Kṣitigarbha Bodhisattva had achieved a great attainment and made the Vow, “If I do not go into hell, who will?” If we also make a vow, “If I do not go into hell, who will?” Well, it will really be a big trouble since we do not have the power of Kṣitigarbha Bodhisattva.

So, we should not be too presumptuous and must know our own limits. We are far worse than Kṣitigarbha Bodhisattva. Kṣitigarbha Bodhisattva is a Virtually Enlightened Bodhisattva, he can say “If I do not go into hell, who will?” He can liberate all beings first and then attain Anuttara-Samyak-Sambodhi. We cannot. The aspiration of liberating all beings we bring forth may be very compassionate and very good, yet we may be “dragged down” by all beings as we liberate them.

Dragging Down by Pestering

People who speak Sutras to propagate Dharma, especially young people, have to face the challenge of the “two wolf deities”: wealth-wolf and lust-wolf. We have heard of some Venerables who spoke Sutras very well and became very popular. Many people gave them offerings, making them give rise to a sense of fame and gain, thus becoming depraved. Plus some female laities kept pestering the Venerable, asking some questions. They probably asked questions sincerely in the beginning, but they still came to ask questions later when they did not really have questions. After being asked again and again the Venerable became muddled. As a result, the Venerable who had renounced the worldly home went back home again. There really are these kinds of people.

So, making a vow to liberate all beings is too difficult in the Saha World. Can you withstand the challenge of the “two wolf deities”? We have not yet eradicated defilement, it is not easy to face this challenge. What can we do? Seek Sukhāvātī rebirth first! No need to rush to liberate all beings. If we rush to liberate all beings, we may have good intentions in the beginning, but we will finally be affected by our encounters. Without the samadhi-power and the blessing of Amitabha, though we do not want to regress in this evil world of five turbidities, it is too difficult.

Inducing the Blessings of All Buddhas to Obtain Non-Retrogression

Only when we wholeheartedly seek Sukhāvātī rebirth, can we induce Amitabha's blessing. With all Buddhas in ten directions to guard and bless us, we can then obtain non-retrogression. This is stated very clearly in the text of *Amitabha Sutra*, "If a good man or a good woman hears this sutra and upholds it, as well as hears the name of all Buddhas..." This means “upon hearing the name.” The name of All Buddhas here refers to the name Amitabha. Why? Because the name Amitabha, a Sanskrit word, means infinite Buddhas. “A” means “no,” “mita” means “limit.” So, Amita means “no limit,” which suggests that Amitabha is the name of all Buddhas in ten directions.

When we really hear the name, hear this sutra, and uphold its doctrine, we have heard the name of all Buddhas and we will be guarded and blessed by all Buddhas. We will not regress from the path of Anuttara-Samyak-Saṃbodhi. So, if we wish to obtain non-retrogression in this life, we must “hear the name” continuously. That means we must listen to sutras and Dharma as well as uphold the doctrine unceasingly, we can then induce the blessings and protection from all Buddhas and obtain non-retrogression.

After being born into Sukhāvātī and coming back with our future-return-vow, we will truly be non-retrogression. We will “wear armor of the great vows” to edify sentient beings of this world. This armor of the Great Vow is a metaphor to signify that it can protect our dharmakaya and wisdom life (*[prajñā-jīva](#)), allowing us not to be deprived and regressed.

Thanks everyone for learning with us. Namo Amitabha!