

## Manifesting the Same Form As Theirs

When you wear the armor of the great vows, you will vigorously and diligently make progress. You will not have fear for all sorts of difficulties, hardships, temptations, and challenges. Why? You have obtained Amitabha's blessings, you have nothing to fear. You can edify all beings within the six paths. When you liberate humans, you manifest in human form. When you liberate animals, you have to manifest in animal form. If you want to let a pig obtain Sukhāvātī rebirth, you must transform into a pig and speak sutras and Dharma to him in his language, he can then understand. This is stated in *The Infinite Life Sutra*, "Manifest the same form as his".

Even though your appearance and all aspects of the living style are the same as theirs, they are in fact different. You have special inner qualities to let them feel your compassion, wisdom, faith, and your great capacity. In Buddhism, it is called the captivating power. People nowadays call it the power of amity or the power of attraction. They love to be with you just like children under the protective umbrella of their parents, feeling very safe. When they have troubles and ask for your advice, you can enlighten their mind. Your wisdom, compassion, and purity make them feel joyous to be with you. You can then slowly guide them to the Pure Land Method, and they will also love to practice respectfully based on your teaching.

## Avalokitêśvara Bodhisattva of the Fish Basket

To edify all beings, you must accord with their karmic defilements. If you cannot accommodate them, you will contradict them and would not be able to edify them. For instance, all beings have their own affection-attachment, you must accommodate their affection-attachment. They have their greedy avarice, you must accommodate their avarice. As sutras state, "First use their desire as bait to attract them, then guide them to enter Buddha's wisdom." What they wish for, you must satisfy them first, you can then plant good roots for them and slowly guide them to enter the door of Buddhism.

There is a story called *Avalokitêśvara Bodhisattva of the Fish Basket*. Despite being a legend, it really shows the method of how a bodhisattva edifies sentient beings. The story goes like this: In ancient times, there was a fishing village where people had created a very heavy killing karma. One day, a very beautiful young lady came to this village and brought a fish basket. She said she came to buy fish and also wanted to find a husband.

Her stunning looks and graceful temperament brought wide attention and desire from everyone. "Who do you choose to be your husband?" the villagers asked. The lady said, "I want to choose a husband with a great deal of talent. Whoever can recite *The Heart Sutra* within one day and one night. I will marry him" As a result, everyone was earnestly reading *The Heart Sutra* all day and all night. By the second day, many people could recite it. The lady said, "So many people, I cannot marry you all. I can only marry one. Let's keep on screening."

She took out a volume of scriptures, it was *The Chapter of Universal Liberation Method of Avalokiteshvara Bodhisattva* in *The Lotus Sutra*. She said, “You all bring it home to read it, whoever can recite it first in three days and three nights, I'll marry him.” Those people went home making earnest efforts for days and nights again. As a result, many of them could recite it. “No... I can only marry one person. What can we do? Hmm... Let's do this: among you all, I will marry whoever is the first to recite *The Lotus Sutra* from beginning to end.”

One man made an all-out effort to recite it and finally made it to be first. So the lady agreed to marry him. They chose a date for the wedding and he finally married her. On the wedding night, not long after he went to the newlywed room, the groom rushed out of the room crying out, “The bride has passed away, she just took her last breath.” Everybody was very sad and incredulous, truly feeling the impermanence and bitterness of life and death. They had no choice but to bury the bride.

About a few months after the burial, a monk came to the village. They told this monk their story. This monk laughed loudly after hearing this. He said, “That was Avalokitêśvara Bodhisattva coming to liberate you all.” “How could that be?” the villagers questioned. The monk said, “Seeing that you fishermen had created heavy karma of killing and were not willing to learn Buddhism, Avalokitêśvara Bodhisattva came to help you to eliminate disaster by making you all recite sutras. Now disaster has been eliminated and still you have no idea.” Those villagers still half-believed, half-doubted it. The monk said, “If you do not believe me, you can dig up the lady's tomb and open the coffin, it is definitely empty.” They were stunned when they dug up the tomb and saw the coffin was indeed empty.

“First use their desire as bait to attract them, then make them enter Buddha's wisdom,” this is the skillful expediency of bodhisattvas' edifying all beings. When we arrive in Sukhāvātī, we will also possess this capability. Now we cannot. If we use desire to attract them now, I am afraid that we will be dragged down by them. So, we must understand what kind of realm we are in now. We are mortals, not Bodhisattvas. We must seek rebirth first. Once we arrive in Sukhāvātī and come back with our future-return-vow to edify sentient beings, it will not be too late.

## **The Purpose of Edifying All Beings**

What is the purpose of “edifying all beings”? From the point of view of this sutra and the Pure Land method, it is to let all beings bring forth the faith of Sukhāvātī and Amitabha. In other words, it is to believe that there is Sukhāvātī and Amitabha, believe that Amitabha will escort all beings to be reborn with His 48 Great Vows. Only when we truly believe these, can we then bring forth aspiration, make the vow to seek Sukhāvātī rebirth, and practice bodhi-conducts.

What is bodhi-conduct? Once bringing forth the heart of liberating all beings pervasively, one will listen to sutra teachings, learn Buddha Dharma, and recite Amitabha. These are all bodhi-conducts. Not only bringing forth bodhicitta, one must practice bodhi-conducts genuinely.

Only by practicing bodhi-conducts genuinely is his bodhicitta genuine. Without practicing, it is a drifting heart, not necessarily a genuine aspiration.

Some people ask, "Just listening to sutra teachings and reciting Amitabha at home, what benefit can I bring to all beings? Is this also called bodhi-conducts?" That's right, this is also cultivating bodhi-conducts. Firstly, being able to listen to sutras and recite Amitabha, you are "cultivating a pure mind." Since disaster is engendered by the impure minds of all beings, when we cultivate a pure mind, our pure magnetic field can certainly resolve the impure magnetic field of society. So, when cultivating a pure mind, you are certainly eliminating disasters in society.

Do not look down upon our seven days of reciting Amitabha, in fact, we have already helped resolve the impure magnetic field in this area, at least resolved one part of it. The more people who practice, the bigger the pure magnetic field is and the better the effect of resolving disaster will be. That's why we are indeed helping the world to resolve disasters when we can recite Amitabha with a pure heart.

The science of Quantum Mechanics has explained this issue very clearly now. They know the origin of substance is our minds. When our mind is pure, the environment will be pure. There is no disaster in a pure environment. When we recite Amitabha, firstly, it is absolutely helpful to society, to humans, and to all beings of our planet Earth. Secondly, we also set a good example for practitioners. How should we practice? We must settle down our minds to cultivate the merits of precepts, samadhi, and wisdom (*\*prajna*) with the method of "dive deeply in one focus and immerse in practice for the long term."

## **Self Liberation vs Liberating others**

More than three years ago, I followed Shifu to participate in many international conferences. Now, Shifu lets me go by myself. At that time, I had found a place with a very good environment and wished to quietly retreat there for three years, just like laity Huang Zhongchang reciting Amitabha to seek rebirth. I once asked, "Shifu, I very much want to settle down to study and practice, I wish to go on a retreat. After I obtain an achievement, I will then go out to help others, is it okay?"

Shifu said, "By the time you attain achievement, this world would have been destroyed." Upon hearing this, I was stunned. I asked Shifu again, "Doesn't Buddhism have a saying: one should liberate himself before liberating others? Now I have not yet liberated myself, how can I liberate others? Besides, self-liberation and liberating others are one thing. So, when I practice for self-liberation, it is equal to liberating others. Isn't it so?" Shifu again criticized me, "Sure, self-liberation and liberating others are not different, so liberating others is also self-liberation!" I was left speechless, Shifu is still sharper. Afterwards, I had let it go. I have tried my best to do whatever Shifu instructed me to do!

Thanks everyone for learning with us. Namó Amitabha!