

The Good Roots of Making Offerings to 40 Billion Buddhas

According to the *Infinite Life Sutra*, "When one has already made offerings to all Buddhas, he can then joyfully believe in this matter." This connotes that you would not dare to believe in it otherwise; you would have karmic obstacles and would not dare to believe in it. Therefore you would not practice this method.

Do you believe in it? Please raise your hand if you do. Thank you! You can believe in it, that is all due to "you have made offerings to all Buddhas." How deep-seated are your good roots? I guess only all Buddhas know. I surely have no way to deduce it. How can we tell? Let me tell you a short story.

In Chapter Ten of this Sutra, it states that at Mount Gr̥dhra-kūṭa-parvata, also known as Vulture Peak, where there is no lecture hall, only a large open space. The Buddha had an audience of 20,000, including 12,000 bhikṣus (*monks), 500 bhikṣuṇīs (*nuns), 7,000 upāsaka (*male laity), and 500 upāsikā (*female laity). In this great assembly of 20,000 people, with no microphones, no amplifier, yet everyone could hear distinctly as if the Buddha spoke right next to their ears. The supernal power of the Buddha is truly amazing!

After the Buddha finished speaking Amitabha's Forty Eight Great Vows, suddenly 500 people stood up. They were very excited, very inspired. Amitabha is so spectacular, He made 48 Great Vows to pervasively liberate all beings! So, these 500 people brought a golden floral canopy (*Skt. puṣpa-cchatra) to make offerings to Shakyamuni Buddha simultaneously. The leader was the son of Ajātaśatru Vaidehīputra.

Ajātaśatru Vaidehīputra, along with Devadatta, wanted to kill the Buddha. He made four of the five-heinous-sins, which are killing father, harming mother, destroying the harmony of the Sangha, and making the Buddha bleed. Devadatta wanted to be a Buddha and let Ajātaśatru Vaidehīputra be his Dharma-guardian. They wanted to usurp Shakyamuni Buddha by creating a new Buddha and Dharma-guardian. At last, Devadatta fell into hell, and Ajātaśatru Vaidehīputra became seriously ill. Later he repented and sought Sukhāvātī rebirth. In the end, he was reborn. He demonstrated Dharma to us, proving that one can still be reborn when he acknowledges his mistakes and reforms himself.

Ajātaśatru Vaidehīputra's son, the prince, had very good roots. He came to listen to Buddha speaking the Dharma. After hearing the 48 Vows of Amitabha, these 500 people offered the golden floral canopy to the Buddha. Shakyamuni Buddha was very happy when seeing these 500 people. He said to everyone, these 500 people practiced the Bodhisattva Way in the past and made offerings to 40 billion Buddhas.

Shakyamuni Buddha has the consummate supernal power of knowing the past and future. He sees distinctly the past lives' condition of each sentient being. He said, "These 500 people practiced the Bodhisattva Way and made offerings to 40 billion Buddhas." How

phenomenal this is! It is now extremely difficult to even make offerings to only one Buddha. How can we make offerings since the Buddha is no longer in the world? So, it must be during Buddha's True Dharma Era when Buddha lives in the world, you can then make offerings.

When making offerings to Buddha, you definitely listen to Buddha's preaching and may even cultivate and attain realization. The Buddha said, these 500 people were all his disciples during the time of Kāśyapa Buddha. At that time, Shakyamuni Buddha was a bodhisattva, these 500 people followed him and had great connections with him. In this life, they met again and learned Dharma from the Buddha as His eternal followers. Without a connection, people would find it impossible to encounter each other.

Your Good Roots Is More than Making Offerings to 40 Billion Buddhas

After Buddha recounted this history, all mahā-bhikṣus were very happy. The Buddha even gave assurance of future attainment of their Buddhahood, saying that these 500 people will absolutely become Buddhas in the future. But Shakyamuni Buddha did not say when, He only said that these 500 people will become Buddhas in the future.

Would they become Buddhas in that life? Not necessarily. Why? Let's see what vow these 500 people made? Did they vow to seek Sukhāvātī rebirth? No, they did not vow to seek Sukhāvātī rebirth and to see Amitabha. The scripture tells us in Chapter Ten, they said, "When we become Buddhas, we all wish to be like Amitabha." They only made this vow.

They vowed that, when becoming a Buddha in the future, they want to be like Amitabha, building a Sukhāvātī and escorting all beings who have affinity with them to be reborn into their lands to attain Buddhahood. Of course this vow is also very phenomenal, very rare. They made this vow also based on the good roots of having made offerings to 40 billion Buddhas. But, can they become a Buddha in one life? Not necessarily. Why? Because they did not say, "I want to go to Sukhāvātī."

You must know that there is an esoteric implication in it. It implies that, if they were not reborn into Sukhavati, their Buddhahood attainment could be infinite kalpas because it is very possible that they still need to cultivate infinite kalpas. During the samsara of such a long time, the possibility for them to fall into the three evil paths is extremely high. So, this is a very serious issue.

Do all of you here make the vow to see Amitabha and go to Sukhāvātī in this life? Please raise your hand if you do. Thank you! Thank you! Congratulations to you all! Your good root is more deep-seated than those 500 people. Why? Your vow is more spectacular than theirs. They only vowed to be like Amitabha in the future, they did not say "now." Yet you vow to be reborn now, which means you are going to be a Buddha in this life. Thus, your good root is definitely more than making offerings to 40 billion Buddhas.

From this point alone, you can understand that it is not simple at all that you are able to believe in it. Your deep-seated good roots are inconceivable and exceed that of those 500 people. The Buddha spoke to them, they did not even seek rebirth, Dharma teacher Ding Hong speaks to you and you want to be reborn, this is incredible. The deep-seated good roots of yours is inconceivable. You are truly Buddha's good students and All Buddhas of ten directions praise you. So, as long as you grasp the opportunity in this life and wholeheartedly seek rebirth, you will absolutely be reborn.

A Mortal in the Lowly Land Attains Bodhi Instantly

The people in Sukhāvātī, each of them, from beginning to the end, all attain Amitabha's blessing. Starting from this moment, as soon as we bring forth a heart to seek rebirth, we would have instantly attained the position of non-retrogression. This position of non-retrogression relies on the formidable power of Amitabha's blessing, it has nothing to do with ourselves at all. We must not think that we are wonderful and become conceited and arrogant. We are totally wrong if this is the case.

We should be neither arrogant nor feel inferior, and we should dare to undertake it. Amitabha's blessing is impartial. As long as we can believe it and make a vow, the aspirational power of Amitabha will bless us, we will then immediately attain the position of non-retrogression. In other words, we are now an *avaivartika bodhisattva*, which is a non-retrogression bodhisattva. We will not regress on our bodhi path until we become Buddhas because there are all Buddhas of ten directions and Amitabha to guard, bless us.

How splendid this subtle and wondrous method is! A mortal in the lowly land can instantly attain bodhi! It is the most perfect among all perfections, the swiftest among all swiftnesses. It is more consummate than the perfect-teaching in *The Avatamsaka Sutra* and *The Lotus Sutra*, more swift than the realm that is stated in Zen Buddhism, "Dropping the "butcher's knife"* (**signifying defilements*), you become a Buddha instantly." It is impossible to find a second one.

Thanks everyone for learning with us. Namó Amitabha!