

The 41st Vow: The Trees Will Manifest All Buddha Lands

The scripture also states, "Those who wish to see the adornment of other Buddhas' pure lands can see images among the trees, as clear as one's face is seen in a bright mirror. If such vows are not realized, I will not procure Anuttara-Samyak-Sambodhi." This is speaking of the inhabitants in Sukhāvātī, if they want to see other Buddha lands in ten directions, where can they see them? They can see those lands in the jeweled trees.

Those who have just arrived in Sukhāvātī will surely get homesick. For instance, people from our Saha World have been reincarnated for immeasurable kalpas. Now they have finally transcended, they will think, "How's the Saha World now? The family members in my past lives, in which paths are they now? How are they doing? Are they suffering or happy? When will their good roots be enough to accept the Pure Land Method?" You would want to know. How would you know? They will all be seen among the jeweled trees.

These jeweled trees are like 3D TVs but much more advanced than what we have developed. It allows the roots of our entire six senses to easily enter the realm as we wish. To see all beings and all realms of the Saha World from Sukhāvātī is just like seeing our face in a bright mirror, as near as at hand. Look! Those are the people in the past who listened to sutras with me and did not attain rebirth. Why were they not reborn? Not enough faith and aspiration due to not "hearing the name" enough.

"Now I have to go help them." But how? When you see a chance, just give rise to a thought, your body will be in front of them. You can manifest to them either in their meditation or dreams. Or you can bless and empower them secretly to let them become awakened, be able to let go, and further bring forth faith and aspiration for Sukhāvātī. Even if you want to manifest an image of Amitabha to them, you can do so as well. Because you and Amitabha are One Unity; your body, heart, and material environment are all given by Amitabha. You have entirely become Amitabha, you can of course come to help them!

Changing the Form and Path

Some fellow practitioners who have a deep attachment toward their family have difficulty letting go. If you savor these texts delicately, you will be able to let go. Think about it, when you arrive in Sukhāvātī, you do not separate from them and you have the ability to help them. What will happen otherwise? You will be reincarnated. By then, you are not able to recognize them due to both your and their form and appearance having changed. You cannot even protect yourself, let alone help them. *The Infinite Life Sutra* describes this condition as "changing the form and path."

For instance, even if you reincarnate to the human realm, you will become a baby when being born. You might be his mother, but now you become his daughter. You have changed form. The relationship in the past has disappeared. And you will not necessarily transmigrate

into the same family, you may transmigrate to a family of a different country; of course you would not recognize them when meeting them again.

Even more dreadful is to change paths. They are in the human realm, what about you? If you are deeply attached to them, cannot forbear to leave them, and could not find a place to transmigrate, you may enter a mouse nest and become a mouse in their house! This affection-attachment is really troublesome.

There is a story in a Sutra, speaking of a couple loving each other dearly. They both learned Buddhism quite well. When the husband reached the end of his life, the wife was extremely sad. Due to her deep love, the wife could not help herself but miss him constantly. Her husband was supposed to be born into Trayastriṃśa Heaven. When he saw his wife crying so sadly at that moment, his affectionate love quickly arose and he could not bear to leave.

Consequently, he reincarnated as a small bug in his wife's nostril. Following her nasal mucus, the bug fell to the ground. This wife, subconsciously, lifted her foot wanting to step on it. Luckily, a monk, whom she invited for the transcendence-service, had attained arhathood, knew that this small bug was her husband, and stopped her immediately.

He said, "Do not step on your husband." This wife was startled and greatly puzzled, "It is only a small bug, how could that be my husband?" This Venerable said, "Your husband had a deep attachment to you, he reincarnated in your nostril as a small bug. Fortunately, I stopped you in time. Otherwise, with one stomp, your husband would have been crushed. Then the original loving couple would have become foes." In the wheel of samsara, this kind of thing often happens.

This Venerable spoke Dharma to the bug. Its soul thus departed from the bug body and ascended to the Trayastriṃśa Heaven. What if he had not encountered this Venerable? He would definitely die and give rise to resentment. Once having resentment, where would he go? To hell. The hell realm is induced by a resentful mind. Look! He was supposed to be reborn to Trayastriṃśa Heaven but suddenly falls into hell. Why? Because the ten dharma realms are manifested by our thoughts. At the end of our life, the strongest thought leads us to our next destination.

A Corresponding Realm Manifested in Accord with Our Thoughts

In the six paths, the celestial realm is induced by practicing five precepts, ten virtuous deeds, plus the four-immeasurable-minds (compassion, empathy, joy, and giving). The human realm is induced by the Five Precepts and Ten Virtuous Deeds. As for the cause of the animal path, it is ignorance. What about the ghost and hell realm, they are induced by heavy greed and resentment.

Those who always lose their temper must be very careful, this is planting the karmic seeds of hell. With regard to jealousy, grudging, arrogance, grievance, and greed for lust, these all plant the karmic seeds of hell.

Nowadays, people have heavy greed for wealth, lust, fame, gain, food, and sleep. As long as we long for one of those, we will fall into the ghost realm in the future. What if I am not greedy for worldly things but greedy for Buddha-Dharma? I recite Amitabha, uphold mantras, practice meditation, and even learn Tiantai, Hua Yen... This is very intermixed, very greedy for the Dharma, which will lead us to the ghost realm. Why? Because being greedy for Dharma is still greed. Buddha said, "A Greedy mind induces the realm of hungry ghosts." We may change the object of greed, but if the greed in our mind is not transformed, we will still go to the ghost realm. However, with greed for Dharma one would become a ghost who enjoys his fortune in that path, such as groundskeeper deity (**a deity who guards an area of the land*), but it still does not mean much.

Confucianism speaks of "benevolence, righteousness, etiquette, wisdom, and trustworthiness," this is similar to the five precepts. If we wish to keep human form, we must possess these virtues, otherwise we are not human. Despite having a human form and wearing human clothes now, the ancients said, "We are just "a beast in human clothing." Why? Our heart is not a human heart.

Particularizing and Directive Karma

We must meticulously ponder, what kinds of karmic seeds have I created the most in my mind, and to which path will they lead me to? If we have a lot of greed, resentment, and ignorance, we should know that there is a very high possibility for us to end up in the three evil paths. That is why our thoughts are very important. The thoughts accumulated in ordinary time are called particularizing karma (Skt. karmântara) which decides our circumstantial retribution, such as our look, fortune...etc. The thought that suddenly arises at our death is called directive karma (Skt. karmâkṣepa), leading our consciousness to transmigrate.

The thought arising at the time of our death is usually the strongest thought that we had accumulated. But, occasionally it may change. As in the example we just mentioned, the laity who was supposed to ascend to heaven, seeing his wife crying, gave rise to a thought of rapacious love and became deluded. A topsy-turvy thought at the time of death led him to fall into the three-evil-paths. This is directive-karma.

However, the good fortune one cultivated in the past, such as accumulated merits, upheld precepts, and practiced goodness, can be used as his enjoyment in the realm where he is born. He will enjoy those fortunes on that path. This can be observed from those who reincarnate to the animal path and enjoy their great fortune, such as some pets. There are quite many in Japan.

For example, pet dogs are well taken care of. Their masters give them baths, polish their hair, buy the best dog food for them, take them to the animal hospital when they get sick, and find a pet hotel to let the pets enjoy a five-star treatment when they go on a vacation. They are taken care meticulously in every detail. The fortune of those dogs is greater than many people.

I Wish to Be a Dog in Your House

This morning we saw a senior walking a dog. One hand pulled the leash, the other hand held a white plastic bag. All of a sudden the dog needed to poop. He takes care of dog stools everyday. What have these people become? The servant of the dog! These pets have good particularizing karma, they definitely had cultivated much goodness in their past lives, especially having favor towards their master. That's why those masters took special care of them, to repay its favor.

Think about it, to enjoy fortune like this, it is a bit of a pity! One cultivated so much goodness but became a pet dog to enjoy the fortune in the end, it really makes no sense. So, we must be reborn into Sukhāvātī. Otherwise, in the future, we have no idea on which path we will enjoy the fortune we have cultivated.

A report in China mentioned a mother who wrote a letter to her son titled as "Son, I Wish to Be a Dog in Your House." This mother discovered that her son treats the dog better than her. The mother envied that dog. Nowadays, due to the lack of ethical and moral education in societies, this situation often happens: people's condition is worse than that of pets. What is the cause? This son was not educated well. We must know, teaching children well itself is cultivating fortune and accumulating goodness. A statement is emphasized in Confucianism, "To teach your children well is the greatest goodness." If we do not teach children well, we do not fulfill our duties and we disgrace our society. As such, it will lead us to have little particularizing-karma when being reborn as a human and our fortune will then be scarce.

This six-path reincarnation does not make much sense. It is better that we all seek rebirth. Once reborn into Sukhāvātī, we will be truly at ease. We will "endure none of the sufferings but enjoy all bliss." And if we want to come back to help our original family and all beings who have connections with us, we can immediately come to them as long as we give rise to thoughts. Everyday, we can monitor with the 3D TV in the jeweled-trees. We can see clearly and distinctly all sentient beings as well as the evolving matters and objects in all other worlds. This is the blessing from Amitabha's Vows and His supernal power.

Thanks everyone for learning with us, Namō Amitabha!