

The 46th, 47th and 48th Vows

We wish all suffering beings on Earth to be free from tribulations and to obtain happiness. We also wish all sentient beings in all dharma-realms to be born into Sukhāvātī. When we bring forth this kind of bodhicitta, we can absolutely resonate with the Buddha-realm. The Ancients said, "When one thought resonates, the Buddha-realm manifests in that one moment; while every thought resonates, the Buddha-realm manifests within every thought."

Today we are going to talk about the last three Vows: the 46th, 47th, and 48th Vows. We will then make a conclusion afterwards. Amitabha's 48 Great Vows, extremely important, are the core of the entire *Infinite Life Sutra*. They are also the essence of all Buddhas' teachings. Now, let's take a look at the text of the last three Vows, please join your palms and read together.

"When I become a Buddha, all bodhisattvas in other worlds, upon hearing my name, will attain the Dharma of being free from "the chain of birth" (*Skt. *nyāma*) and obtain dharanis. They will be pure, blissful, and dwell in the Dharma of Equality. In cultivating bodhisattva-conduct, they will be replete with the roots of all virtues. If they are unable to instantly attain the first, second, and third stages of kṣānti, as well as realize the state of non-retrogression (*Skt. *avinivartanīya*) in all Buddha-Dharmas, I will not procure Anuttara-Samyak-Sambodhi."

46th Vow: All will attain dharani.

47th Vow: Upon hearing Amitabha's name, all will attain kṣānti.

48th Vow: All will instantly realize the state of non-retrogression.

Kṣānti Is Only a Few Steps Away from Consummate Buddhahood!

Bodhisattvas in other worlds refer to bodhisattvas other than Sukhāvātī. They have at least eradicated the afflictions of view-cognition, which denotes that they have transcended the Three Realms of Desire, Form, and Formlessness. Some are working on eradicating the affliction of dust-sand. Some have eradicated the affliction of dust-sand, yet have not eradicated the delusion of avidyā. Some have eradicated the delusion of avidyā, yet have not attained anutpattika-dharma-kṣānti (*the acceptance of all phenomena being illusory and nonexistent)—a much higher realm.

According to *The Sutra for Benevolent Kings*, the anutpattika-dharma-kṣānti refers to the bodhisattvas of the 7th, 8th, and 9th bhūmi. These ranks are very lofty. The order of bodhisattvas' ranks in attainment is as follows: ten stages of faith, ten stages of abode, ten stages of practice, ten stages of dedication (of merit), and ten stages of bhūmi.

The 7th, 8th, and 9th of the ten bhūmis belong to the rank of attaining anutpattika-dharma-kṣānti. Further up is the 10th stage of bhūmi—the Dharma-cloud. The 11th stage is Virtually Enlightened Bodhisattva. And the top is Wondrous Enlightenment—the

consummate Buddhahood. In other words, the bodhisattva who attains anuṭpattika-dharma-kṣānti is only a few steps away from the rank of consummate Buddhahood.

Upon Hearing Amitabha's Name, All Will Receive Benefits

The text of this Vow indicates that the bodhisattvas of other worlds, as long as they hear the name Amitabha, can obtain dharanis, kṣānti, and the position of non-retrogression instantly. And they will be free from the chain of birth.

“Obtaining Kṣānti” refers to attaining anuṭpattika-dharma-kṣānti. Look! Once being reborn into Sukhāvātī, we mortals can attain anuṭpattika-dharma-kṣānti. As for those who are not born yet—the bodhisattvas of other worlds, they can attain anuṭpattika-dharma-kṣānti merely by “upon hearing the name” as well. This is utterly attributed to Amitabha's blessing.

As long as “upon hearing the name,” all will obtain benefit. This sutra states, “Bestow the benefit of thusness upon all beings.” This benefit of thusness is genuine to the extreme, there is no comparison with money, fame, prestige, gain, offerings, or any other joys of external stimulus. Those are not the genuine benefits. This benefit of thusness enables you to eradicate defilements, dispel avidyā, and attain dharmakāya.

The First Type of Birth and Death: Delimited Saṃsāra

The Infinite Life Sutra is the sutra entirely speaking of the merits of the name of Amitabha. Bodhisattvas can be considered as “upon hearing the name” and obtain the genuine benefits only when they are really clear about this sutra. After “upon hearing the name,” the bodhisattvas will attain the Dharma of departing the chain of birth, which refers to being free from birth and death. They have completed their learning and have graduated from the Dharma-method of departing birth-death.

There are two types of birth-death: The first type is called delimited saṃsāra (*Skt. [pariccheda-jarā-maraṇa](#)), the second type is inconceivable saṃsāra (*Skt. [pāriṇāmikī cyutiḥ](#)).

Delimited-saṃsāra belongs to us mortals, our lives are lived section by section. In this life we typically live to 70 or 80 years old, then we die. After death, we go on to transmigrate, then the second section of our lives starts. This is called delimited saṃsāra. The process of delimited saṃsāra is very painful. Birth, aging, illness, and death are the agonies that no one can escape. In this wheel of samsara, we mortals have experienced infinite sufferings, there is no clue as to how many lives we have been through.

The Buddha's Lives as White Dogs and The Blood-Sweat of Arhats

Shakyamuni Buddha mentioned that when He was still a mortal before practicing the Bodhisattva Way, He had been reincarnated as white dogs during the immeasurable kalpas in samsara. And the bones of these white dogs, if piled up, would be higher than Mt. Sumeru.

There are not many bones in a dog, how many lives do you have to be reincarnated as a dog so that their bones can be piled up as high as Mt. Sumeru? Moreover, they are not various kinds of dogs, just one kind, white dog. The bones of the Buddha's numerous lives as only white dogs were higher than Mt. Sumeru. Now think about it, how could it be possible for one's samsara to be only white dogs? During the samsara, life after life, we have become everything. No matter what we were, the bones piled up will also be higher than Mt. Sumeru. Can you imagine how horrific samsara is? Even Shakyamuni Buddha was like this, let alone us. We are no comparison to the Buddha!

So samsara is extremely terrifying; within samsara, our time spent in hells is much more than the time not spent in hells. There was an arhat who told his disciples, "You must cultivate conscientiously. If you do not cultivate conscientiously but engage in activities of samsara, you will inevitably fall into hell in the future." After listening, all the disciples, having not remembered the sufferings of hells, seemed not to be convinced. They suspected, "Is it that the Buddha wanted us to cultivate, so He spoke of hells to scare us?"

One day it rained heavily. This Shifu (**fatherly teacher*), who had attained arhathood, gathered his disciples and said, "Go to the forest, pile up the wood that was blown down by the wind and rain." Not knowing why Shifu wanted them to do so, the disciples were puzzled, yet obediently piled up the soaked wood in the forest together.

Shifu said to them, "Come to ignite the fire and burn all this wood."

"How? This soaked wet wood?" The disciples doubted the possibility but still followed Shifu's instruction. For a long time, it did not even ignite a bit of fire.

This arhat Shifu told them, "I have a way to burn this wood into ashes instantly."

"How?" The disciples were curious.

The Shifu used his supernal power, took a kindling (**tinder*) from hell, then put this kindling on the soaked wet wood, which thus burned to ashes in an instant. Everyone was stunned.

The kindling of hell is different from the kindling of the human realm. The temperature and the heat of hell kindling has no comparison to the kind of kindling in the human realm. The arhat Shifu said, "You must practice conscientiously, if not, you will be so very miserable when you fall into hell in the future."

Think about it, within this samsara, we must have been in various hells, and they definitely took most of the time in our samsara. As such, arhats think of the situation when they were in hells, their bodies sweat blood; not cold-sweat but blood-sweat. It is the sweat mixed with blood. Why? They had a lingering fear. If we do not transcend birth and death, there will be enough unimaginable suffering in the future lives. So, we must firstly eradicate the delimited-saṃsāra.

The Second Type of Birth and Death: Inconceivable Saṃsāra

Arhats have eradicated the delimited saṃsāra and transcended the six-paths, they are in the dharma-realms of the four-sages, namely srāvaka, pratyeka, bodhisattva, and buddha. But they still have the inconceivable saṃsāra because their heart still moves and they still give rise to thoughts. With thoughts arising and ceasing, they will have transmutation and have not yet become completely at ease.

When you transcend the ten-dharma-realms and enter one-true-dharma-realm, your heart no longer moves and you will not give rise to thoughts. You have attained the consummate great ease because you no longer have inconceivable saṃsāra.

The bodhisattvas of other worlds, “upon hearing the name Amitabha,” can be free from two types of birth and death: delimited saṃsāra and inconceivable saṃsāra. They have instantly attained the stage of Dharmakaya-Mahasattva, attained great ease and entered one-true-dharma-realm. How phenomenal the merit of “hearing Amitabha’s name” is!

Thanks everyone for learning with us. Namó Amitabha!