

In Thought after Thought, Never Forget about the Sufferings of Birth and Death



念念莫忘生死苦

比丘尼恆頤講於 2010年1月1日 萬佛城大殿
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1979年上人率團到馬來西亞弘法，我就皈依了上人。當時北海佛教會邀請上人到北海弘法，因此就很積極參與北海佛教會的各項活動，常常為會員家眷或者相關的團體助念。從此覺得念阿彌陀佛很好，不但保護自己，也可以幫助別人，自利利他。

記得當時有一天就去了三個地方助念。第一個助念是去離我家不遠的地方——北海；接著又坐船到檳城去助念。回到家來已經十點多了，又接到電話，去雙溪大年的鄉下助念，這要開車幾個小時才能到的，結果回到家來已是半夜一點多了。這三個地方，有的是富豪人家，或是名流政要，有的卻是很窮困的小家庭。讓我感慨很深，因為不管擁有多少的財產、權力及事業，或是一貧如洗，到最終難免一死。上人開示：「念念莫忘生死苦，心心想脫輪迴圈。」「若要人不死，先要下死功夫。」死功夫是什麼呢？就是平時要念佛，早日備妥信願行三資糧，將來才能往生西方極樂世界。

還有一次，在沒有去助念之前，被通知說是去為一個「病人」念佛，幫助他趕快往生，不要像《地藏經》所講的，不能捨壽是件很痛苦的事。這是很富有的家庭，但是那個病人卻讓我們感到非常害怕。他的頭上已經帶上壽帽子，身上也穿上壽衣，身體發臭了，可是他還不肯走。為什麼呢？因為有很多錢放不下，而且讓他更氣憤的是，他才倒下去沒多久，還沒死，

The Venerable Master Hua led a delegation to propagate Dharma in Malaysia in 1979, where I took refuge with him. The Butterworth Buddhist Association invited the Venerable Master to propagate Dharma in Butterworth, so I became actively involved in the association's activities. I joined the association's recitation-assistance group and recited for the association's family members and relatives. From that experience, I felt that reciting "Namo Amitabha Buddha" was excellent because I was able to protect myself and to help others – benefiting oneself and others.

One day I participated in reciting the Buddha's name in three different places. The first place was in Butterworth, not far from my home. The second was in Penang which required a boat ride. I arrived home at 10:00 p.m. and received a phone call to go to the rural area of Sungai Petani to assist in the third recitation. The rural area was several hours away, so I got home at 1:00 a.m. One family was extremely wealthy, the other was a political celebrity, and another one was very poor. I gained a deep realization that – regardless of how much wealth and power one has accumulated or how many industrial enterprises one has built, or whether one is indigent and penniless – one ultimately has to die.

The Venerable Master said, "In thought after thought, never forget about the sufferings of birth and death; in wish after wish, always think about liberation from the wheel of transmigration." He also said, "If one does not want to die, then one must apply effort on death." What does this mean, "... apply effort on death"? It means to always be mindful of the Buddha, to prepare early for the three provisions of faith, vows, and practice so that one will be reborn in the Western Land of Ultimate Bliss.

On one occasion we were asked to recite the Buddha's name for a "patient", so he could be reborn quickly. This was unlike a situation in *the Earth Store Sutra* in which one who is "unable to die" undergoes a great deal of sufferings. This place was more frightening than any of the other places where we had assisted the recitation. It was in the home of a wealthy family. The sight of the patient filled us with terror because his family had placed a funeral hat on his head and had dressed him in funeral clothes. The patient's body was already emitting a foul odor. He was not willing to die. Why? Because he had so much wealth that he couldn't let go off. Yet, there was something that angered him more. Soon after he became ill – and definitely not dead yet – his sons and daughters began to fight and squabble over the inheritance. They were brawling and exchanging

家裡的兒女們就開始吵架，開始爭遺產。他們吵到大打出手，一不小心，有人將扇子丟到他臉上去，讓他更生氣。

在助念之前，有一位佛友很熱心地在他耳邊小聲的勸他說，「趕快走吧！不要流戀這個世界……，這個世界是很苦的……」正當她講得很起勁的時候，一個已經死了一半的人，已經不能講話的人，竟然氣得「啊啊啊……」的喊起來。聽到他這樣恐怖的聲音，我們差一點都被嚇跑了，他會不會爬起來打我們呢？我們立刻去勸阻那位佛友，「算了吧！不要再講了，我們念佛就好了。」還好在我們虔誠念佛的音聲中，他慢慢的平靜下來。念了一天沒有反應，再為他念第二天、第三天，後來聽說他就真的走了，很希望他真的放下一切到西方極樂世界去。

所以我們現在念南無阿彌陀佛，就是成就我們自己的極樂世界，每一個人在莊嚴自己的極樂世界，每一個人也成就自己的極樂世界。這個極樂世界雖然說有十萬億佛土那麼遠，但是沒有出你我現前這一念的心，因為它沒出我們現前這一念的心，所以就沒有十萬億佛土那麼遠，也就是在我們的心裡面。

這個極樂世界就是你我衆生本來的真身，如果你得到本來的真身，就算在極樂世界裡面。如果你沒有明白自己本來的真身，就沒有生到極樂世界。阿彌陀佛和我們衆生沒有分彼此，所以說極樂世界不是那麼遠。我們一念迴光，知道本來就是佛，本來是佛就是極樂世界。

所以如果能夠把我們的懶惰性去了，私慾、雜念也沒有了，沒有嫉妒的心，沒有障礙的心，沒有自私的心，也沒有利己的心，一心學菩薩怎樣利人，覺悟一切衆生，這就是極樂世界現前了，所以也不須要向外去找了。

現在我們在這裡念南無阿彌陀佛，在西方極樂世界的七寶池八功德水裡面就有蓮花出生。我們念佛念得越多，蓮花長得越大，但是它沒有開，等到我們臨命終時，我們的自性就會生到極樂世界蓮花那裡去。

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blows in his presence. During one of the brawls, one of them threw a fan intended for another sibling and it hit him in the face, which angered him even more.

Before we began to recite the Buddha's name, one of our overzealous members whispered in his ears, "Go quickly! Don't linger and hang around this world any longer. This world is full of suffering..." As she was speaking to him, he, being on the verge of death and unable to speak, became so angry that he let out a cry, "Ah! Ah! Ah!" We were so frightened that we wanted to run away. Would he get up and try to hit us? It was horrifying. We immediately persuaded our Dharma friend, "Let it go! Don't talk anymore. Let's just recite the Buddha's name." Fortunately the patient gradually calmed down in the midst of our recitation of the Buddha's name. We recited a full day; there was no response. We continued to recite a second day and a third. We heard that he eventually let go and died. I sincerely wish that he was able to put down everything and was reborn in the Western Land of Ultimate Bliss.

When one recites, "Namo Amitabha Buddha," it is bringing accomplishment, realization, adornment, and achievement to one's own Land of Ultimate Bliss. The Land of Ultimate Bliss is ten thousand billion Buddhalands away, yet it is not beyond one thought in the present mind. And because it is not beyond one thought in the present mind, it is not really ten thousand billion Buddhalands away. It is actually in our own mind.

This Land of Ultimate Bliss is the true body of you, me, and all living beings. If you have attained the inherent true body, then you are within the Land of Ultimate Bliss. If you have not realized your inherent true body, then you have not been reborn in the Land of Ultimate Bliss. Amitabha Buddha and we living beings are not apart from each other, so the Land of Ultimate Bliss is not so far away. If we can, within one thought, reverse the light back to ourselves, then we would understand that inherently we are the Buddhas and the Buddhas are also the Lands of Ultimate Bliss.

If we eliminate our own laziness, desires and other defiling thoughts and can be free of the jealous mind, the obstructive mind, and the self-profiting mind, then we can singlemindedly seek to learn from the Bodhisattvas how to benefit others and how to awaken and enlighten all living beings. This is the manifestation of the Land of Ultimate Bliss. We would no longer need to seek for anything outside.

As we are here reciting "Namo Amitabha Buddha," in the Western Land of Ultimate Bliss, lotus flowers will be growing in the Seven-Jeweled Pool's Water of Merit and Virtue. The more we recite the Buddha's name, the larger the lotus flower grows. Yet, the lotus flower is not yet blossoming. When we die, our inherent nature will be reborn in the lotus flower of the Land of Ultimate Bliss.

The grade of our lotus flower – whether the upper grade upper rebirth, middle grade middle rebirth or lower grade lower rebirth – is dependent on the amount of our recitation of the Buddha's name. If we recite often,

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如果想知道品位的高下，是上品上生，是中品中生，還是下品下生，就靠念佛念得多少。如果念得多，蓮花就大一點；如果念佛念得少，蓮花就會小，如果不念呢？這個蓮花就乾枯了，就死了。知道自己的蓮花是非常小，因為念得很少，工作多，所以我要加油。

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then our lotus flower will be larger; if we recite little, then our lotus flower is small. If we stop recitations altogether and no longer want to go to the Land of Ultimate Bliss, our lotus flower will wither and die.

It is entirely dependent on how much effort we apply in earning the grade of rebirth. I know that my lotus flower is tiny because I work too much and don't often recite the Buddha's name. I must devote more time on reciting the Buddha's name.