

《佛说大乘无量寿庄严清净平等觉经》

之

三辈往生第二十四

Three Levels of Rebirth

(Chapter Twenty-four)

From

The Buddha Speaks of the Mahayana
Infinite Life Adornment Purity Impartiality
and Enlightenment Sutra

Or simply

The Infinite Life Sutra

(The Longer Sukhāvativyūha Sūtra)

Compiled Version by Upāsaka Xia Lianju



Three Sages of the Western Pure Land
(Amitabha Buddha, Bodhisattva Guanyin/Avalokiteshvara
and Bodhisattva Dashizhi/Mahāsthāmaprāpta)

西方三圣

(阿弥陀佛，观世音菩萨，大势至菩萨)

Introduction

The **Three Levels of Rebirth (三辈往生)** is one of the most important chapters (Chapter Twenty-four) in the **Infinite Life Sutra** (Full title: *the Buddha Speaks of the Mahayana Infinite Life Adornment Purity Impartiality and Enlightenment Sutra* 佛说大乘无量寿庄严清净平等觉经), in addition to the Forty-eight Great Vows of Amitabha Buddha. This new translation is based on the compiled version by Upasaka Xia Lianju (夏莲居) due to its completeness (see the Introduction written by Jiawen for the Forty-Eight Great Vows). For instance, in the version translated by Sanghavarman, it did not mention if other Mahayana practitioners (i.e., practitioners of other Mahayana paths) can also seek rebirth to the Pure Land if they Nianfo, whereas the compiled version deals with this aspect clearly in the last part of

Chapter Twenty–four). When you read this sutra, you can also combine your study with a review of Jiawen's Sutra talks on the Three Levels of Rebirth (a total of three sessions), in which which she goes through each level in great details.

Namo Amitabha Buddha

Namo Amitufo 南无阿弥陀佛

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Merit Transfer

We transfer the merit to all beings
in the entire Dharma Realm.

May all beings hear the Name of Amitabha Buddha
and be reborn in the Western Pure Land of Ultimate Bliss!

Namo Amitabha Buddha!

Namo Amitufofo!

三辈往生第二十四

Chapter 24. Three Levels of Rebirth

上辈往生

(1) High-Level of Rebirth

佛告阿难，十方世界诸天人民，其有至心愿生彼国，凡有三辈。其上辈者，舍家弃欲而作沙门。发菩提心。一向专念阿弥陀佛。修诸功德，愿生彼国。此等众生，临寿终时，阿弥陀佛，与诸圣众，现在其前。经须臾间，即随彼佛往生其国。便于七宝华中自然化生，智慧勇猛，神通自在。是故阿难，其有众生欲于今世见阿弥陀佛者，应发无上菩提之心。复当专念极乐国土。积集善根，应持回向。由此见佛，生彼国中，得不退转，乃至无上菩提。

The Buddha said to Ananda, "Heavenly beings and humans in the worlds of ten directions who with utmost sincerity, vowing to be born in the Pure Land can be classified into three levels: the high-level beings are those who leave their homes and renounce

worldly pleasures to become Sramaṇas (monks). Generating Bodhicitta, they single-mindedly reciting the Name of Amitabha Buddha, cultivate all kinds of merits, and vow to be born in that Land.

For these beings, when they are at the time of death, Amitabha Buddha, together with many Sages, will appear before them. In one instant, they will follow the Buddha and attain rebirth in His Land, at once they will transform spontaneously from the seven-jeweled lotus flowers, with vigorous wisdom and freedom in Divine Power. Therefore, Ananda, if there are beings who vow to see Amitabha Buddha in this life, they should generate the supreme Bodhicitta, also being mindful of the Land of Ultimate Bliss, accumulate good roots and transfer the merit towards rebirth. For this reason, they can see the Buddha and being born in that Land, attaining the state of Non-regression¹ and even the Supreme Bodhi (Perfect Enlightenment).

¹The State of Non-regression is a high level of enlightenment on the Bodhisattva Path, which means one will never fall back in one's position of Sagehood, one's Bodhisattva practice, and one's thoughts for helping sentient beings (Bodhicitta). On the fifty-one stages of the Bodhisattva path, the state of Non-regression refers to minimum first stage of Dwelling (non-regress in the three above-mentioned aspects) and to complete non-regression one will have to attain to eighth stage of Grounds.

中辈往生

(2) Middle-Level of Rebirth

其中辈者，虽不能行作沙门，大修功德，当发无上菩提之心。一向专念阿弥陀佛。随己修行，诸善功德，奉持斋戒，起立塔像，饭食沙门，悬缯燃灯，散华烧香，以此回向，愿生彼国。其人临终，阿弥陀佛化现其身，光明相好，具如真佛，与诸大众前后围绕，现其人前，摄受导引。即随化佛往生其国，住不退转，无上菩提。功德智慧次如上辈者也。

For the middle-level beings, although they cannot become Sramanas, cultivating great merit (like the high-level beings), they should generate the supreme Bodhicitta, all the while single-mindedly reciting the Name of Amitabha Buddha. Cultivating various good merit according to one's abilities, uphold the precepts, building stupas, giving alms to Sramanas, hanging Buddhist banners, lighting lamps, offering flowers, burning incense, and transfer the merit towards vowing to be born in that Land.

When this person is at the time of death, Amitabha Buddha will

appear in His transformed body, and the brightness of His great appearance is like that of the Real Buddha. Together with the assembly of Sages, surrounding this person, appear in front of him and guiding him forward, he immediately follows the transformed Buddha to be reborn in the Land, dwelling in the state of Non-regression and supreme Bodhi. Their merit and wisdom are second to those of the high-level beings.

下辈往生

(3) Low-Level of Rebirth

其下辈者，假使不能作诸功德，当发无上菩提之心，一向专念阿弥陀佛。欢喜信乐，不生疑惑。以至诚心，愿生其国。此人临终，梦见彼佛，亦得往生。功德智慧次如中辈者也。

For the low-level beings, if they cannot cultivate much merit, they should generate the supreme Bodhicitta, single-mindedly reciting the Name of Amitabha Buddha. Joyfully believe and do not give rise to any doubt, with the utmost sincere heart, vowing to be born in the Land. At the time of death, such person will see Amitabha Buddha in a dream and can also attain rebirth. Their merit and wisdom are second to those of the middle-level beings.

住大乘者

(4) Other Mahayana Practitioners

若有众生住大乘者，以清净心，向无量寿。乃至十念，愿生其国。闻甚深法，即生信解。乃至获得一念净心，发一念心念于彼佛。此人临命终时，如在梦中，见阿弥陀佛，定生彼国，得不退转无上菩提。

If there are beings who practice the Mahayana path, with the purity of heart, admire Amitabha Buddha, with even ten recitations and vow to be born in the Land. Upon hearing the profound Dharma, one instantly gives rise to belief and understanding, so that a pure heart is attained. With this pure heart one recites the Name of Amitabha Buddha. When this person is at the time of death, he will see Amitabha Buddha as if in a dream, and guarantee to be born that Land, attaining the Non-regressing Supreme Bodhi.