



This book of devotional readings, pujas and articles relating to Amitabha has been compiled for use by those who practice the Amitabha sadhana. I worked on it for several years - originally printing many copies by hand. I experienced the compilation, layout and printing to be a deeply rewarding act of devotion. It was a wonderful thing to do. Ramtin Zanjani then very generously laid the book out in a single file for printing and I would like to express my deep gratitude to him for this work.

This book can be updated at any time so if you have any poems, readings or pujas you would like to contribute then please email me, vidyamala@breathworks.co.uk

with thanks

Vidyamala
June 2011

May Amitabha's light shine brightly in the world



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NOTES ON THE
SIX ELEMENT PRACTICE

EARTH

Outer manifestation: trees, rocks, mountains, etc.

Inner manifestation: muscle, bone, ligaments, hair, teeth, etc.

Element of earth characterised by resistance, solidity, rigidity.

Reflections:

Is it fixed, hard?

Is it abundant?

Am I separate to trees, rocks, etc?

What about fixed views, can I let them go?

Am I a box of unyielding views?

Earth represents solidity and hardness - how would I tell what is hard or soft without the earth element?

Mind's ability to serve as the ground for all experiences is the quality of earth.

WATER

Outer manifestation: streams, rivers, oceans, rain.

Inner manifestation: saliva, blood, urine, tears, gastric fluids, all bodily fluids.

Element of water characterised by fluidity, mobility and undulation.

Reflections:

What does the water element mean to me?

Calm water - mirror-like - seeing things as they really are.

Rough water - distorted emotions, delusion.

Water represents fluidity and undulation - how would I know what is still or moving without this element?

Continuity and adaptability of mind is the quality of water.

FIRE

Outer manifestation: sun - source of warmth, energy and light. Transformation as sun energy is the start of the food chain in nature: sun energy converted into other forms of energy to sustain life.

Fires of all sorts in the world are manifestation of this element.

Inner manifestation: heat, warmth, biological processes where oxygen and food are burned up to create energy in the body.

Element of fire is characterised by vibrancy, radiance, vitality, mobility, warmth, transformation.

Reflections:

What does the fire element mean to me?

When one dies, one gets colder and colder as the fire element leaves the body.

We are totally dependent on the fire element for life: no fire element, no sun, no light, no life!

Flame as a symbol for change/transformation: a flame constantly transforms, each new moment arising in dependence on the previous moment - shows impermanent, insubstantial nature of things.

Fire represents radiation and temperature - how would I know what is hot or cold without this element?

Mind's ability to experience clarity and capacity to perceive is the quality of fire.

AIR

Outer manifestation: wind, air.

Inner manifestation: breath, air in body generally.

Element of air characterised by free-flowing movement in any direction.

Reflections:

What does the air element mean to me?

One day I will breathe in and out and that will be it. I won't breathe in again. We are just borrowing air, sharing air. I breathe in someone else's out-breath - therefore antidote to pride, I have no way of owning air. My air is no different to anyone else's.

Air is delicate and subtle - invisible, yet vital. All-pervasive.
Air expands and contracts.

Air vibrates - how would I hear sound without air?

Mind's ability to experience freedom and spaciousness is the quality of air.

SPACE

Outer manifestation: Space we occupy and take up in the world.

Inner manifestation: inner space.

Element of space characterised by being that which contains all the other elements - infinite space.

Reflections:

If you have more inner space you need less outer space - inner space is very important. Find more space between thoughts. Meditation involves dwelling in inner space.

Practice looking at beauty - just see it without thinking about it.

While alive I take up the same amount of space wherever I go. When I die I won't take up any space anymore.

No 'me-shaped' space will exist - there will be no trace of me left when I die.

Space is what gives size and location - how would I know what is large and small; what is near or far without the element space?

Mind's ability to experience unlimited emptiness is the quality of space.

CONSCIOUSNESS

From Bhante Sangharakshita (verbatim)

We reflect that with each life form there is associated a 'degree' of consciousness, and in our bodies too, so to speak, there is a consciousness, a self awareness that is associated with all the other elements: earth, water, fire, air and space; but when we have given these up, and are no longer borrowing them, there is no need for our consciousness to associate with any of these elements or any combination of these elements, we no longer need to distinguish externally or internally, subjectively or objectively. We can, so to speak, give back our limited, defined consciousness to Absolute Consciousness, we can expand our limited consciousness to Infinite Consciousness, we can be at one with the Reality not defined by any element or time. (We can be free.) We can be enlightened.

From Subhuti

Consciousness is bound up with the five elements: earth, water, fire, air and space.

Consciousness is identified with these elements, individualised by them. We think of it as 'my' consciousness because it is associated with the body, but without earth, water, fire, air and space - what is there to individualise consciousness?

Consciousness ceases to be limited, bound up, tied down.

Consciousness completely free and open.

So we give up that limited consciousness; limited by identification with the five elements and we can just let consciousness be completely limitless.

PAUSE

Because we think of ourselves in terms of the five elements we restrict ourselves - so we let go, give up that restricted bounded consciousness, for unrestricted, completely free consciousness. Limitless Potential.

PAUSE

Because we identify our consciousness with the five elements it is relatively dull and heavy. So we let go of that dull, heavy consciousness.

Experience consciousness as bright and light. Infinite Radiance.

PAUSE

And because our consciousness is tied up with the five elements we experience suffering - so we let go of that painful, restricted consciousness and experience the unbounded bliss of Infinite Consciousness.

PAUSE

We just rest in the experience of this unrestricted
Consciousness. Rest with sraddha - faith and confidence.
Happily, easily.
Just relax in that state of Infinite Consciousness.

PAUSE

OM! SVABHAVA SUDDHA,
SARVA DHARMAH
SVABHAVA SUDDHO HAM! (x 3)

All dharmas are essentially pure by nature. I also am essentially
pure by nature. Pure as in sunyata.

Om! Pure and empty are all events, pure and empty am I!
All is pure and empty, like infinite blue sky. (alternative
translation)

Let this human body, so apparently real,
So cherished and protected by me,
Be seen as non-different from a pure empty sky.

THE SIX ELEMENTS SPEAK

I am Earth. I am rock, metal and soil.
I am that which exists in you
As bone, muscle, and flesh,
But now I must go,
Leaving you light.
Now we must part.
Goodbye.

I am Water.
I am ocean, lake, rivers and streams,
The rain that falls from clouds
And the dew on the petals of flowers.
I am that which exists in you
As blood, urine, sweat, saliva and tears,
But now I must go,
Leaving you dry.
Now we must part.
Goodbye.

I am Fire.
I come from the Sun,
travelling through space
To sleep in wood, flint, and steel.
I am that which exists in you
As bodily heat, the warmth of an embrace,
But now I must go,
Leaving you cold.
Now we must part.
Goodbye.

I am Air.
I am wind, breeze, and hurricane.

I am that which exists in you
As the breath in your nostrils, in your lungs,
The breath that gently comes, that gently goes,
But now I must go,
For the last time,
Leaving you empty.
Now we must part.
Goodbye.

I am Space.
I contain all,
From a grain of dust to a galaxy.
I am that which exists in you
As the space limited by the earth, water, fire, and air
That make up your physical being,
But now they have all gone
And I must go too,
Leaving you unlimited.
Now we must part.
Goodbye.

I am Consciousness.
Indefinable and indestructible.
I am that which exists in you
As sight, hearing, smell, taste, touch and thought,
But now I must go
From the space no longer limited by your physical being
Leaving nothing of 'you'.
There is no one from whom to part,
So no goodbye.

Earth dissolves into Water,
Water dissolves into Fire,
Fire dissolves into Air,
Air dissolves into Space,

Space dissolves into Consciousness,
Consciousness dissolves into ?

HUM

Sangharakshita, summer 2002



THE SADHANA OF
AMITABHA

Firstly one sees a vast expanse of clear blue sky - a brilliant deep blue.

Then, underneath the blue sky, one sees a vast expanse of sea. It is quite calm, with just a few small waves on the surface. The sea is a deep blue-green colour.

Next, one sees to the left of one a disc, the setting sun, a rich red in colour, just going down below the sea. It is half showing.

Then one sees rays of brilliant golden light coming from the setting sun across the surface of the sea, forming a kind of golden pathway across the sea.

And on this pathway, at the centre of one's vision, one sees an enormous red lotus flower.

On this lotus flower at its heart, there is a brilliant white moon mat.

And seated on this moon mat one sees the figure of the Buddha Amitabha, sitting cross-legged. He is wearing orange-red robes embroidered with gold. His skin is brilliant red. His left hand is placed in his lap, while his right hand holds up by the stalk a red lotus blossom. His hair is blue-black and in curls. His eyes are clear and radiant. In the centre of his forehead and between his eyes, there is a brilliant white curl of hair, curling to the right. He has a compassionate smile and his demeanour is one of compassion. His body is surrounded by an aura of soft red light, edged with a rainbow. His head is surrounded by an aura of soft green light also edged with a rainbow.

At his heart there is a brilliant white moon crescent. And on this brilliant white moon crescent one sees the seed syllable HRIH, red in colour. This seed syllable HRIH is the essence of Amitabha.

From the red HRIH there emanates a beam of rich red light, a clear ruby red. This ray or beam of ruby red light reaches the top of one's head and travels down the median nerve to one's heart.

And on this ray of light emanating from Amitabha's heart comes the mantra:

OM AMIDEVA HRIH

in red lettering. It follows the light to one's head and then down into one's heart, and one repeats the mantra over and over again.

Finally one dissolves the visualisation gradually, step by step thus:

Amitabha dissolves into the white moon mat

Moon mat dissolves into the lotus flower

Lotus flower dissolves into the sea

Setting sun dissolves into the sea

Sea dissolves into the blue sky

Blue sky dissolves leaving the mantra.

NOTES

The following notes were made after some questions were put to Bhante through Paramartha on the 1991 Men's Convention.

1. At the very end of the above description, '... leaving the mantra.' means keeping the mantra going, not keeping the visualisation of the bija going.

2. The sun is to the left of us and to the right of Amitabha.

3. If one really wanted to visualise Amitabha in the more common Dhyana mudra, then initially visualise Amitabha as described above, holding the lotus up. Once this is established, then visualise Amitabha

slowly moving the hand with the lotus flower down into the Dhyana mudra.

4. The lotus blossom is held between the thumb and forefinger of Amitabha's right hand with the palm facing towards us.

5. We could take the time at the end of the practice to reflect on why Amitabha is holding the flower up.



THE VISION IN THE CAVE

One night I found myself as it were out of the body and in the presence of Amitabha, the Buddha of Infinite Light, who presides over the western quarter of the universe. The colour of the Buddha was a deep, rich luminous red, like that of rubies, though at the same time soft and glowing, like the light of the setting sun. While his left hand rested on his lap, the fingers of his right hand held up by the stalk a single red lotus in full bloom and he sat, in the usual cross-legged posture, on an enormous red lotus that floated on the surface of the sea. To the left, immediately beneath the raised right arm of the Buddha, was the red hemisphere of the setting sun, its reflection glittering golden across the waters.

How long the experience lasted I do not know, for I seemed to be out of time as well as out of the body, but I saw the Buddha as clearly as I had ever seen anything under the ordinary circumstances of my life, indeed far more clearly and vividly. The rich red colour of Amitabha himself, as well as of the two lotuses, and the setting sun made a particularly deep impression on me.

It was more wonderful, more appealing, than any earthly red: it was like red light, but so soft and, at the same time, so vivid, as to be altogether without parallel. In the course of the next few days I composed a series of stanzas describing the vision. Contrary to my usual practice, I failed to write them down afterwards, with the result that they gradually faded from my mind. But the experience itself never faded. Nearly a quarter of a century later, the figure of the red Buddha is as clear to me, in recollection, as it was the next morning in the Virupaksha Guha.

*From pg 338 of 'The Rainbow Road' by Sangharakshita.
Published by Windhorse Publications 1997*

INVOCATION OF AMITABHA

Primordial vibration of the Universal Conscience,
Transforming syllable of the throat centre,
Restorer of the throat centre,
I call upon your sacred resonance.

With the entrancing rays of the setting sun,
From the western quarter,
From the Happy Land,
Comes the Wisdom Being of Infinite Light,
Enchanting Amitabha.

His body is red, like the blood of light,
Richer than rubies,
He comes with a blossoming lotus
Cradled in his loving hands.
He comes absorbed in profound meditation
On a throne borne by splendid peacocks.
His boundless compassion embraces all things
and his blushing effulgence,
Burning with the fire of love,
Sees all beings in their uniqueness.

By the grace of this mystic song,
Beings are released from neurotic obsessions.

O Amitabha, please heal the cancerous greed in our lives.
That we may feel the peace of cravings' end.
Please bestow upon us
The power to fascinate,
That we may draw all beings
Towards sublime unfoldment.

OM AMIDEVA HRIH

INVOCATION OF AMITABHA

OM, Homage to all the Buddhas, Bodhisattvas, noble disciples, and solitary Buddhas who abide in endless, boundless world systems in the ten regions of the universe in the past, the present, and the future.

Homage to Amitabha. Homage to Amitayus.

Homage. Homage to him whose person is a mine of inconceivable virtues.

Homage to Amitabha, the Conqueror, to you, O Sage.

I shall go to the Land of Bliss through your compassion,
To the Land of Bliss, adorned with colourful golden forests,
Delightful, adorned by the presence of the sons of the Sugata.

I shall go to this land, wherein are gathered multiple virtues
and jewels,
The abode for you, who are wise and widely honoured.

*From The Longer Sukhavativyuha Sutra - The longer discourse on
'The Array of Wondrous Qualities Adorning the Land of Bliss.'
(English translation of the Sanskrit text by Luis O. Gomez in 'The
Land of Bliss')*

INVOCATION OF AMITABHA

Turning to the West,
And the rays of the setting sun,
I bow to the ruby red light
Of the Buddha Amitabha.
Lover of light,
You sit on a rich red lotus,
Adrift on the ocean of existence.
Your hands touch together in your lap,
A soft red lotus growing between them.
You are deep in meditation,
Completely at peace with yourself.
Rich red light emanates
From every pore of your skin.
Your red robes are embroidered with gold.
Soft red light and a rainbow surrounds you,
The wisdom aura of green encircles your head.
You are the rich red light of the setting sun
Sinking into the ocean of existence,
Your rays extending across the sea to meet us,
With your light comes your love,
A warm passionate love for all that lives,
Suffusing all things,
Nourishing and healing,
Bringing back to life the hurt and wounded.
The red light washes over us,
Melting the ice of our hearts.
Yet always you are deep in meditation,
Your energy drawn inwards,
Moving from the senses
To the riches of your inner world.
Fabulous colours and healing energies
Are continually present to you.
The glorious world of your inner life
Is constantly refreshed and inspired by your meditation.

From this wholeness and containment,
Your love shines out.
And the lotus growing in your hands,
Each red petal slowly opening
And emanating light,
This lotus echoes the growth in us
Of our own inner life, our own aspirations,
The gentle warming and unfolding of our own hearts.
Your love brings to life,
We that have been lost in the world of the senses.
Through you there is continual renewal of life.
Lover of light,
Your discriminating vision
Sees each person exactly as they are,
Loves each one according to their need.
You perceive clearly the nature of all things,
Seeing with the eye of reality
Beneath the form to the thing itself.
Amitabha
You are the fire element,
The spark of life,
The warmth and heat that is life itself.
Let the fires of your love burn brightly for all to see.
O Amitabha,
Help us to come alive to a world beyond the senses.
Help us to experience the joy of meditation,
The ever-renewing energies of our own minds.
Help us to enter Sukhavati
The blissful land of your light,
The blissful land of your love.

INVOCATION OF AMITABHA

A Ho Ye

In the pure land of Dewachen,
Dharmakaya Lama, Amitabha, dwells.
I pray, please look upon your child kindly,
Bless me with the supreme empowerment.
Clear light empty awareness, without centre or borders:
Is this not your realisation, Lord?
Original nature beyond movement and change:
Is this not Amitabha, limitless light?
Not for a moment have I been separate,
Never separate, still I was unaware.
At the instant of awareness,
Buddha Amitabha is gone,
Dewachen's pure land vanishes -
Within mind's unborn nature, sha ra ra,
In the play of awareness and empty bliss, ya la la,
Whatever arises is the sparkling dharmakaya.
Holding to the pure land is a delusion,
The label "buddha" is a hurdle of attachment.
Amitabha is not outside, look within.
This finding the dharmakaya through oneself, a la la!
This being happy, always and ceaselessly, e ma ho!
This again is the sublime lama's kindness,
This again, the profound blessing of pith advice.
Let's sing the noble song of supreme happiness,
Let's step to the dance of ultimate fulfilment.

*from Playful Display of Original Nature:
A Song and Dance of Ultimate Fulfilment
Dudjom Rimpoche*

HOMAGE TO AMITABHA!

He of Infinite Light who rules the Western quarter
The realm of the setting sun and the Abode of Bliss - Sukhavati.

He rescues beings from the preta realm
And overcomes craving with his Wisdom of Discrimination.

He is master of the Padma family -
The unfolding creative powers of meditation
And he is Lord of the element fire -
Symbol of transformation and seeing.

He is associated with the skandha of perception
Which, when purified,
Develops into the faculty of Intuitive Vision.

He sits atop a magnificent peacock throne
And performs the Dhyana mudra,
Contemplation of the evening.

Homage to Amitabha!

By Vidyamala

PRAYER TO AMITABHA

From the vast boundless blue sky,
The deep blue-green ocean,
And the radiant evening sunlight,
Emerges your mysterious form.

Diaphanous, shimmering, rainbow-golden light
Heralds your presence.
You sit absorbed in profound meditation,
Tenderly holding an exquisite red lotus,
Eyes of clear, steady, loving compassion.

HRIH

Reverberates from the moonlight at your heart centre
And the world shimmers into delighted reverence.

I prostrate to you again and again,
Lifetime after lifetime,
May your wisdom suffuse every cell of my being,
Penetrate my foolish ignorance,
Protect me from my own evil,
Transform my mind.

May our unshakeable bond be unbroken
Through life, dreams, death, rebirth.

May all beings be freed from suffering.

By Taraka:

*Visualisation and Imagination retreat with Kamalashila, April 2000
at Taraloka*

Oh Amitabha,
in the full blown hues of a passing day,
surrounded by the brilliance of the sun
at its most red and peaceful time,
with the sea restfully rippling below
your lotus throne,
Your moon-mat radiantly white,
the auras that surround you, green and red,
are edged in rainbow light.

The radiant red lotus you hold in a
gesture which is both a
mystery and a challenge.
Let it be there forever.
Let its mysteries and challenges
never cease to enrich my life.

Your smile - it encompasses everything,
expresses your heart.
You, know each little spark of life
for its own special essence.
You, bathe all in your superabundant
warmth of unlimited compassion.

You are unshakeable
in the serenity of that extraordinary smile,
your face, your body and its robes burst with life,
life at its most full blooded and passionate,
- the red of fire
-the red of the naked dakini
-the blood red of the nectar in Padmasambhava's skull cup,
-the red of passion.

You are my friend, my lover, my ultimate guide.
Let your smile never leave my consciousness.
Let your warmth always remind me to appreciate

the needs of others, always to look, to see,
whatever their needs are and to give.
Give from a bed rock of positivity, joy,
contentment and energy.

The full sun setting on this world ocean.
I give you everything I am, my heart, my mind,
everything, everything . . .

by Tenzin Dechen, adapted by Harshaprabha.

Tell me Amitabha
What is your Wisdom?
What does it mean?
For you Amitabha
to see everything and everyone
as unique.
Even though we are as interwoven,
as a fine lace shawl of many colours
You say each blade of grass, each grain of sand,
each person,
has its own particular uniqueness,
We go from unity in diversity,
to diversity in unity.
The scientists talk of the DNA molecule.
With you it is perception,
With your clear mind,
your love for all beings,
you see the uniqueness
in one and all,
with such love
you see with the eyes of a lover,
seeing each nuance, each toss of the head,
for what it is.
You love both the wind and the rain,
the stormy skies,
the sun and the vast stretches of blue sky.
The sea in its many moods,
they are dear to you,
each tree, each flower,
You look with the eyes of a lover,
seeing afresh their beauty, their life.
You see each of us afresh
with new eyes for the way we are.

By Ratnasuri

Amitabha of infinite light,
My good friend
Sometimes you sit in front of me, laughing!
It is such a friendly and loving laugh.
Your blue eyes alight with love,
You care for me and all other sentient beings,
Sitting, with the setting sun
the soft glowing rays
matching the warmth of your heart,
Holding aloft a deep red lotus
It speaks to me urgently, urgently!
Look at me, look at me,
Impermanence! impermanence!
Meditate, reflect
You are impermanence,
In body, speech and mind
I care for you, and all others,
So meditate and reflect...

By Ratnasuri

Amitabha of infinite light,
Your light shining in all space
Penetrating us with all your love
A warm, soft, glowing red light
That catches us in our meditation
Bringing warmth to our hearts
Setting them aglow
Our hearts bursting open
In response to yours
Your love for all beings
Shining in the warm glow
Of your light.

By Ratnasuri

Amitabha
Everyday you meet me
with infinite compassion
Your light shines through
Even the darkest of days
Your wisdom speaks to me
of love
Your love speaks to me
of wisdom.
Your mantra sings to me
Of your care for all beings.
Amitabha!
Oh you of infinite light
To you, I bow down,
With deep devotion.

By Ratnasuri

The Western sunset on the ocean
is eclipsed by Amitabha!
Buddha ruby-red with passion.
He blushes, swept by tender feelings,
He glows on fire with all his passion.
The Buddha of light infinite,
throned upon two splendid peacocks
who gorge themselves on deadly poisons
gorge upon them but transmute them
to plumage green and blue and golden,
to plumage wondrous to behold.
He sits poised in meditation,
sits upon a deep red lotus,
Padmavasini he clasps,
The White-Robed One: unspoiled, unstained,
protected by her purity.
The Buddha of unending light,
Who sees the difference in each star,
the difference in each grain of sand,
and loves according to each need,
offers me a deep red lotus -
Dare I take this deep red lotus?
Dare I pray ten times his name?

By Subhadramati

Amitabha
Full of red
Full of love
Full of humour
Full of life
Full of emptiness.
Oh great mysterious Being
Let me rest before your gaze
With an open heart.
Let me receive your abundance
As a pool receives a waterfall.
May I let you flood into me
On and on and on
Until all is still
And you and I are One.

By Vidyamala

Lord, my thoughts ever turn to you,
When I am tired and wearied by this troubled mind,
And blossom and flower into thoughts of love and peace.
May I never leave your side, nor you mine,
To wander in this illusory world, chasing ephemeral delicacies
Which only scintillate and entice.
May your radiant light ever shine on me
Like the soft beauty of the setting sun,
And illumine my hours of work and play.
May I always see or feel your presence
In my deep or distracted meditation
And may the rich rays of your overflowing love
Ever fall like tiny red rubies
Sparkling in iridescent sunlight
To bless my most sincere efforts.
Lord, may my deepest wishes come true
May I with great determination
Ever strive to attain that wondrous goal,
And may I too lead all beings
To that glorious realm of Buddhahood.

Rich ruby red, body of light,
Seated in meditation posture on a dazzling red lotus
Floating on the surface of a calm blue-green sea.

The golden rays of the setting sun suffuse your form
Draws me near to meet the challenge
of your raised right hand
Holding aloft for all to see
a vision of spirituality
Embodied in the red lotus flower blossoming forth
From the deep green stem held aloft between your fingers,
Whilst your left hand resting in your lap
Reflects the stillness of deep meditation.

Amitabha!
You whose eyes look out, on this our world,
With Discriminating Wisdom born of Awareness.
Please take me as your disciple,
Please guide me on the path.

By Sanghadevi

Blue sky
Blue eyes
Sky-blue-eyes.

Red light
Blood light
Ruby-heart-light.

White flashes of moon.

The sky is full of sunset.
There is so much glory at this cusp of day and night,
Silence descends as the turning world
Breathes out into perfect stillness.

We look at one another
Or rather - you look at me.
I only manage to glance at your gaze
Before turning away in awe.
Your gaze that is bold and unflinching
From your exquisitely tender heart-break eyes.

“How can I learn to love like you?” I ask
“Impermanence means interconnectedness means love”
comes the answer.
You demand I reflect on this
As it reverberates like a mantra
Over and over
“Impermanence means interconnectedness means love”.

“But how do I love that which I will lose?” I ask
“Ah - how can you lose that which is everywhere”
you say with a smile.

I hear a bird song outside the shrine room.
Just a bird singing
But it is everything.

The world becomes beautiful.

Amitabha

I know you love me

Both for my particularities and for my emptiness.

I thank you for that.

You are always here

Blazing - sometimes tender, sometimes fierce.

You pour

Your light

Your life

Your abundance

Your vitality

Your faith

Your heart-song

Your love

Into me.

I am beginning to hear your message:

Wake up!

Be present

To moments

With love -

Now and now and now

Forever.

By Vidyamala:

Visualisation and Imagination retreat with Kamalasila, April 2000

at Taraloka

Thou who liveth within my heart,
Awaken me to the immensity of thy spirit,
To the experience of thy living presence!
Deliver me from the bonds of desire,
From the slavery of small aims,
From the delusion of narrow ego-hood!

Enlighten me with the light of thy wisdom,
Suffuse me with the incandescence of thy love,
Which includes and embraces the darkness,
Like the light that surrounds the dark core of the flame,
Like the love of a mother that surrounds
The growing life in the darkness of her womb,
Like the earth protecting the tender germ of the seed.

Let me be the seed of thy living light!
Give me the strength to burst the sheath of self-hood.
And like the seed that dies in order to be re-born
Let me fearlessly go through the portals of death,
So that I may awaken to the greater life:

The all-embracing life of thy love,
The all-embracing love of thy wisdom.

By Lama Anagarika Govinda

Lord, from the sun-orb of Thy grace
The radiant rays of light have shone
And opened wide the petals of the lotus of my heart,
So that it breathes forth the fragrance born of knowledge,
For which I am forever bounden unto Thee:
So I will worship Thee by constant meditation.
Vouchsafe to bless me in mine efforts,
That good may come to every sentient being.
Not one movement of my body will I give to any worldly
purpose:
But, body, speech and heart I dedicate to winning Buddhahood.

By Milarepa

Translated by Lama Kazi Dawasamdrup in Tibet's Great Yogi Milarepa ed. by W.M. Evans-Wentz, pg 143

READING ON WISDOM AND LOVE

Thereupon, Manjusri, the Crown Prince, addressed the Licchavi Vimalakirti: “good sir, how should a bodhisattva regard all living beings?”

Vimalakirti replied, “Manjusri, a bodhisattva should regard all living beings as a wise man regards the reflection of the moon in water or as magicians regard men created by magic. He should regard them as being like a face in a mirror; like the water of the mirage; like the sound of an echo; like a mass of clouds in the sky; like the previous moment of a ball of foam; like the appearance and disappearance of a bubble of water; like the core of a plantain tree; like a flash of lightning; like the fifth great element; like the seventh sense-medium; like the appearance of matter in an immaterial realm; like a sprout from a rotten seed; like a tortoise-hair coat; like the fun of games for one who wishes to die; like the egoistic views of a stream-winner; like a third rebirth of a once-returner; like the descent of a non-returner into a womb; like the existence of desire, hatred, and folly in a saint; like the thoughts of avarice, immorality, wickedness, and hostility in a bodhisattva who has attained tolerance; like the instincts of passions in a Tathagata; like the perception of colour in one blind from birth; like the inhalation and exhalation of an ascetic absorbed in the meditation of cessation; like the track of a bird in the sky; like the erection of a eunuch; like the pregnancy of a barren woman; like the unproduced passions of an emanated incarnation of the Tathagata; like dream-visions seen after waking; like the passions of one who is free of conceptualizations; like fire burning without fuel; like the reincarnation of one who has attained ultimate liberation.

“Precisely thus, Manjusri, does a bodhisattva who realises ultimate selflessness consider all living beings.”

Manjusri then asked further, “noble sir, if a bodhisattva considers all living beings in such a way, how does he generate the great love toward them?”

Vimalakirti replied, “Manjusri, when a bodhisattva considers all living beings in this way, he thinks: ‘Just as I have realised the Dharma, so should I teach it to living beings.’ Thereby, he generates the love that is truly a refuge for living beings; the love that is peaceful because free of grasping; the love that is not feverish, because free of passions; the love that accords with reality because it is equanimous in all three times; the love that is without conflict because free of the violence of the passions; the love that is non-dual because it is involved neither with the external nor with the internal; the love that is imperturbable because totally ultimate.

“Thereby he generates the love that is firm, its high resolve unbreakable, like a diamond; the love that is pure, purified in its intrinsic nature; the love that is even, its aspirations being equal; the saint’s love that has eliminated its enemy; the bodhisattva’s love that continuously develops living beings; the Tathagata’s love that understands reality; the Buddha’s love that causes living beings to awaken from their sleep; the love that is spontaneous because it is fully enlightened spontaneously; the love that is enlightenment because it is unity of experience; the love that has no presumption because it has eliminated attachment and aversion; the love that is great compassion because it infuses the Mahayana with radiance; the love that is never exhausted because it acknowledges voidness and selflessness; the love that is giving because it bestows the gift of the Dharma free of the tight fist of a bad teacher; the love that is morality because it improves immoral living beings; the love that is tolerance because it protects both self and others; the love that is effort because it takes responsibility for all living beings; the love that

is contemplation because it refrains from indulgence in tastes; the love that is wisdom because it causes attainment at the proper time; the love that is liberative technique because it shows the way everywhere; the love that is without formality because it is pure in motivation; the love that is without deviation because it acts from decisive motivation; the love that is high resolve because it is without passions; the love that is without deceit because it is not artificial; the love that is happiness because it introduces living beings to the happiness of the Buddha. Such, Manjusri, is the great love of a bodhisattva.”

From Chapter 7 'The Goddess' in The Holy Teaching of Vimalakirti Nirdeśa, translated by Robert Thurman

Infinite light, infinite splendour, infinite brilliancy
whose light is never finished
whose light is not conditioned
whose light proceeds from flames of light
whose light is that of heavenly jewels
whose light is the colour of unimpeded rays
possessed of beautiful light
possessed of lovely light
possessed of delightful light
possessed of attractive light
possessed of pleasant light
possessed of light that cannot be stopped
possessed of extremely powerful light
possessed of incomparable light
possessed of light greater than that of the Lords of men,
nay Lords of the three
worlds
possessed of light which bends the full moon, the sun
possessed of light which bends all the conquered Gods,
Mahesvara, the Suddhavasas, Brahman and the Lokapalas

from the Larger Sukhavati Vyuhā Sutra

AMITABHA'S APPEARANCE IN THE BARDO

O son of noble family, listen without distraction. On the fourth day, Blessed Amitabha's circle of deities will come to invite you, together with the light-path of the hungry ghosts, built from desire and meanness. A red light, the purified element of fire, will shine, and at the same time Blessed Amitabha will appear before you from the western realm, Sukhavati, the Blissful. His body is red in colour, he holds a lotus in his hand and sits on a peacock throne, embracing his consort Pandaravasini. He is accompanied by the male bodhisattvas Avalokitesvara and Manjusri and the two female bodhisattvas Gita and Aloka, so that six buddha forms appear out of the space of rainbow light.

The red light of the skandha of perception in its basic purity, the wisdom of discrimination, brilliant red, adorned with discs of light, luminous and clear, sharp and bright, will come from the heart of Amitabha and his consort and pierce your heart so that your eyes cannot bear to look at it. Do not be afraid of it. At the same time, together with the wisdom light, the soft yellow light of the hungry ghosts will also shine. Do not take pleasure in it; give up desire and yearning.

At the same time, under the influence of intense desire, you will be terrified and escape from the sharp, bright red light, but you will feel pleasure and attraction towards the soft yellow light of the hungry ghosts. At that moment do not fear the red light, sharp and brilliant, luminous and clear, but recognise it as wisdom. Let your mind rest in it, relaxed, in a state of non-action. Be drawn to it with faith and longing. If you recognise it as your own natural radiance, even if you do not feel devotion and do not say the inspiration-prayer, all the forms and lights and rays will merge inseparably with you and

you will attain enlightenment. If you cannot recognise it in this way, supplicate it with devotion, thinking, "It is the light-ray of Blessed Amitabha's compassion, I take refuge in it." It is the light-ray hook of the Blessed Amitabha's compassion. Feel devotion and do not escape. Even if you escape it will stay with you inseparably.

Do not be afraid, do not be attracted to the soft yellow light of the hungry ghosts. That is the light-path of unconscious tendencies accumulated by your intense desire. If you are attracted to it you will fall into the realm of the hungry ghosts, and experience unbearable misery from hunger and thirst. It is an obstacle blocking the path to liberation, so do not be attracted to it, but give up your unconscious tendencies. Do not yearn for it. Feel longing for the luminous, brilliant red light, and say this inspiration prayer with intense one-pointed concentration on Blessed Amitabha and his consort:

When through intense desire I wander in samsara,
On the luminous light-path of discriminating wisdom,
May the Blessed Amitabha go before me,
His consort Pandaravasini behind me;
Help me cross the bardo's dangerous pathway
And bring me to the perfect Buddha state.

By saying this inspiration-prayer with deep devotion, you will dissolve into rainbow light in the heart of Blessed Amitabha, Infinite Light, with his consort, and become a sambhogakaya Buddha in the western realm, Sukhavati.

*From Tibetan Book of the Dead. Translated by Francesca
Freemantle & Chogyum Trungpa, Shambala Publications.*

KARANIYA METTA SUTTA

DISCOURSE ON LOVING KINDNESS

From the Sutta Nipata - in Pali

Karaniya mattha kusalena
Yantam santam padam abhi-samecca
Sakko uju ca suju ca
Suvaco cassa mudu anatimāni

Santussako ca subharo ca
Appa-kicco ca sallahuka-vutti
Santindriyo ca nipako ca
Appa-gabbho kulesu ananu giddho

Naca khuddham samācare kinci
Yena viññu pare upava-deyyum
Sukhino vā khemino hontu
Sabbe sattā bhavantu sukhi-tattā

Ye keci pāna bhū-tatthi
Tasāvā thāvarā vā anava sesā
Dighā vā ye mahantā vā
Majjhimā-rassa-kānuka thulā

Ditthā vā yeva additthā
Ye ca dure vasanti avidure
Bhūtā vā sambhavesi vā
Sabbe sattā bhavantu sukhi-tattā

Na paro param nikubbetha
Nāti-maññetha katthaci nam kanci
Byāro-sanā patigha-saññā
Nāñña-maññassa dukkha-miccheyya

Mātā yathā niyam puttam
Āyusā eka-putta-manu rakkhe
Evampi sabba bhutesu
Manasam-bhāvaye apari-mānam

Mettanca sabba lōkasmin
Mānasam-bhāvaye apari-mānam
Uddham adhō ca tiriyanca
Asam-bādham averam asa-pattam

Tittham caram nisinno vā
Sayāno vā yāva tassa vigata middho
Etam satim adhittheyya
Brahma metam vihāram idha-māhu

Ditthiñca anupa gamma silavā
Dassa-nena sampanno
Kāmesu vineyya gedham
Nahi jātu gabbha seyyam punaretiti

Etena sacca vajjena
Sotthi me hotu sabbadā

KARANIYA METTA SUTTA

DISCOURSE ON LOVING KINDNESS

From the Sutta Nipata - English translation

He who is skilled in doing good and
who wishes to attain that state of calm
(i.e. Nibbana) should act thus
He should be able, upright, perfectly upright,
obedient, gentle and humble.

Contented, easily looked after,
with few duties, simple in livelihood.
Controlled in senses, discreet, not impudent;
Not greedily attached to families.

He should not commit any slight wrong,
so that other wise men might find fault in him.
May all beings be happy and safe,
may their hearts be wholesome.

Whatsoever living beings there are;
feeble or strong, long, stout or medium,
short, small or large,
seen or unseen.

Those dwelling far or near,
those who are born and those
who are to be born.
May all beings, without exception,
be happy minded.

Let not one deceive another nor despise any
person whatsoever in any place.
In anger or ill-will,
let him not wish any harm to another.

Just as a mother would protect her
only child at the risk of her own life,
even so let him cultivate a boundless heart
towards all beings.

Let thoughts of boundless love pervade the
whole world; above, below and across
without any obstruction,
without any hatred, without any enmity.

Whether he stands, walks, sits or lies down,
as long as he is awake,
he should develop this mindfulness.
This, they say is the Highest conduct here.

Not falling into error,
virtuous and endowed with insight,
he discards attachment to sensuous desires.
Truly, he does not come again;
to be conceived in a womb.

By firm determination of this truth
May I ever be well.

KARANIYA METTA SUTTA

DISCOURSE ON LOVING KINDNESS

*From the Sutta Nipata - English translation
by Ayya Khema*

What should be done by one who is skilled in
wholesomeness.
To gain the state of peacefulness is thus:
One must be able, upright, straight and not proud,
Easy to speak to, mild and well content,
Easily satisfied and not caught up
In too much bustle, and frugal in one's ways,
With senses calmed, intelligent, not bold
Not being covetous when with other folk,
Abstaining from the ways that wise ones blame,
And this the thought that one should always hold:
May beings all live happily and safe
And may their hearts rejoice within themselves
Whatever there may be with breath of life,
Whether they be frail or very strong,
Without exception, be they long or short,
Or middle-sized, or be they big or small,
Or thick, or visible, or invisible,
Or whether they dwell far or they dwell near,
Those that are here, those seeming to exist,
May all beings all rejoice within themselves.
Let no-one bring about another's ruin
And not despise in any way or place,
Let them not wish each other any ill,
From provocation or enmity.

Just as a mother at the risk of life
Loves and protects her child, her only child
So one should cultivate this boundless love
To all that live in the whole universe
Extending from a consciousness sublime
Upwards and downwards and across the world
Untroubled, free from hate and enmity,
And while one stands and while one walks and sits
Or one lies down still free from drowsiness
One should be intent upon this mindfulness -
This is divine abiding here they say.
But when one lives quite free from any view,
Is virtuous, with perfect Insight won,
And greed for sensual desires expelled
One surely comes no more to any womb.

KARANIYA METTA SUTTA

DISCOURSE ON LOVING KINDNESS

From the Sutta Nipata - English translation by Vipassi

If you know your own good
and know where peace dwells
then this is the task:

Lead a simple and frugal life
uncorrupted, capable and just,
be mild, speak soft, eradicate conceit,
keep appetites and senses calm

Be discrete and unassuming,
do not seek rewards,
do not have to be ashamed
in the presence of the wise.

May everything that lives be well!
Weak or strong, large or small,
seen or unseen, here or elsewhere,
present or to come, in heights or depths,
may all be well!

Have that mind for all the world,
get rid of lies and pride,
a mother's love for her baby,
her love, but now unbounded,

Secure this mind of love,
no enemies, no obstructions,
whatever or however you may be!

It is sublime, this,
it escapes birth and death,

losing lust and delusion,
and living in the truth.

KARANIYA METTA SUTTA

DISCOURSE ON LOVING KINDNESS

From the Sutta Nipata - English translation by Ratnaprabha

If you know what is truly good for you and understand the possibility of reaching a state of perfect peace, then this is how you need to live.

Start as a capable person, who is upright (really upright), gently spoken, flexible, and not conceited.

Then become contented and happy, with few worries and an uncomplicated life.

Make sure your sense experience is calm and controlled, be duly respectful, and don't hanker after families or groups. And avoid doing anything unworthy, that wiser people would criticise.

(Then meditate like this:)

May all be happy and feel secure.

May all beings become happy in their heart of hearts!

And think of every living thing without exception:
the weak and the strong, from the smallest to the largest,
whether you can see them or not,
living nearby or far away,
beings living now or yet to arise -
May all beings become happy in their heart of hearts!

May no one deceive or look down on anyone anywhere, for any reason.

Whether through feeling angry or through reacting to someone else, may no one want another to suffer.

As strongly as a mother, perhaps risking her life,
cherishes her child, her only child,
develop an unlimited heart for all beings.

Develop an unlimited heart of friendliness for the entire
universe,
sending metta above, below, and all around,
beyond all narrowness, beyond all rivalry, beyond all hatred.

Whether you are staying in one place or travelling,
sitting down or in bed,
in all your waking hours rest in this mindfulness,
which is known as like living in heaven right here and now!

In this way, you will come to let go of views,
be spontaneously ethical, and have perfect Insight.
And leaving behind craving for sense pleasures,
from the rounds of rebirth you will be completely free!

KARANIYA METTA SUTTA

DISCOURSE ON LOVING KINDNESS

*From the Sutta Nipata - English translation by Sharon Salzberg
From Loving Kindness - The Revolutionary Art of Happiness*

This is what should be done
By those who are skilled in goodness,
And who know the path of peace:
Let them be able and upright,
Straightforward and gentle in speech.
Humble and not conceited,
Contented and easily satisfied.
Unburdened with duties and frugal in their ways.
Peaceful and calm, and wise and skilful,
Not proud and demanding in nature.
Let them not do the slightest thing
That the wise would later reprove.
Wishing: in gladness and in safety,
May all beings be at ease.
Whatever living beings there may be;
Whether they are weak or strong, omitting none,
The great or the mighty, medium, short or small,
The seen and the unseen,
Those living near and far away,
Those born and to-be-born -
May all beings be at ease!
Let none deceive another,
Or despise any being in any state.
Let none through anger or ill-will
Wish harm upon another.
Even as a mother protects with her life
Her child, her only child,
So with a boundless heart
Should one cherish all living beings;
Radiating kindness over the entire world:

Spreading upward to the skies,
And downward to the depths;
Outward and unbounded,
Freed from hatred and ill-will.
Whether standing or walking, seated or lying down,
Free from drowsiness,
One should sustain this recollection.
This is said to be the sublime abiding.
By not holding to fixed views,
The pure-hearted one, having clarity of vision,
Being freed from all sense desires,
Is not born again into this world.

SUNRISE

You can
die for it -
an idea,
or the world. People

have done so,
brilliantly,
letting
their small bodies be bound

to the stake,
creating
an unforgettable
fury of light. But

this morning,
climbing the familiar hills
in the familiar
fabric of dawn, I thought

of China,
and India
and Europe, and I thought
how the sun

blazes
for everyone just
so joyfully
as it rises
under the lashes
of my own eyes, and I thought
I am so many!
What is my name?

What is the name
of the deep breath I would take
over and over
for all of us? Call it

whatever you want, it is
happiness, it is another one
of the ways to enter
fire.

by Mary Oliver

SUNSET

Slowly the west reaches for clothes of new colours
which it passes to a row of ancient trees.
You look, and soon these two worlds both leave you,
one part climbs toward heaven, one sinks to earth.

Leaving you, not really belonging to either,
not so hopelessly dark as that house that is silent,
not so unswervingly given to the eternal as that thing
that turns to a star each night and climbs -

leaving you (it is impossible to untangle the threads)
your own life, timid and standing high and growing,
so that, sometimes blocked in, sometimes reaching out,
one moment your life is a stone in you, and the next, a star.

Rainer Maria Rilke

READINGS ON SUN AND OCEAN

Imagine a sky, empty, spacious and pure from the beginning; the essence of the nature of mind is like this.

Imagine a sun, luminous, clear, unobstructed, and spontaneously present; the nature of mind is like this.

Imagine that sun shining out impartially on us and all things, penetrating all directions; the energy of mind, which is the manifestation of compassion, is like this; nothing can obstruct it and it pervades everywhere.

pg 153.

...In the ancient meditation instructions, it is said that at the beginning thoughts will arrive one on top of another, uninterrupted, like a steep mountain waterfall. Gradually, as you perfect meditation, thoughts become like the water in a deep, narrow gorge, then a great river slowly winding its way down to the sea, and finally the mind becomes like a still and placid ocean, ruffled only by the occasional ripple or wave...

pg 73

...just as the ocean has waves, or the sun has rays, so the mind's own radiance is its thoughts and emotions. The ocean has waves, yet the ocean is not particularly disturbed by them. The waves are the very nature of the ocean. Waves will rise, but where do they go? Back into the ocean. And where do the waves come from? The ocean. In the same manner, thoughts and emotions are the radiance and expression of the very nature of the mind. They arise from the mind, but where do they dissolve? Back into the mind. Whatever arises, do not see it as a particular problem. If you do not react impulsively, if you are only patient, it will once again settle into its essential nature...

pg 74

Think of a wave in the sea. Seen in one way, it seems to have a distinct entity, an end and a beginning, a birth and a death. Seen in another way, the wave itself doesn't really exist but is just the behaviour of water, "empty" of any separate entity but "full" of water. So when you really think about the wave you come to realise that it is something made temporarily possible by wind and water, and is dependent on a set of constantly changing conditions. You also realise that every wave is related to every other wave.

pg 37

by Sogyal Rinpoche in Tibetan Book of Living and Dying, Rider Books, 1992

The ultimate nature of existence is open to all sentient beings, whatever or wherever they are: without this we cannot exist. Whatever happens all is going on in this vast expanse of the ultimate nature of existence. If you cast a pebble into the quiet ocean, the ripples extend in all directions and finally melt into the ocean. This is really human life. So, from this vantage point, whatever kind of ripples you can see - suffering, up and down waves - whatever kinds of things come up, remember they are happening in the vastness of the ocean, and sooner or later they melt back into the immense ocean. This is characteristic of the ultimate nature of existence, in which all sentient beings are present moment to moment.

by Dainin Katagiri in Returning to Silence.

KINDNESS

Before you know what kindness really is
you must lose things,
feel the future dissolve in a moment
like salt in a weakened broth.
What you held in your hand,
what you counted and carefully saved,
all this must go so you know
how desolate the landscape can be
between the regions of kindness.
How you ride and ride
thinking the bus will never stop,
the passengers eating maize and chicken
will stare out the window forever.
Before you learn the tender gravity of kindness
you must travel where the Indian in the white poncho
lies dead by the side of the road.
You must see how this could be you,
how he too was someone
who journeyed through the night with plans
and the simple breath that kept him alive.
Before you know kindness as the deepest thing inside,
you must know sorrow as the other deepest thing.
You must wake up with sorrow.
You must speak to it till your voice
catches the thread of all sorrows
and you can see the size of the cloth.

Then it is only kindness that makes sense anymore,
only kindness that ties your shoes
and sends you out into the day to mail letters and purchase
bread,
only kindness that raises its head
from the crowd of the world to say
'It is I you have been looking for',
and then goes with you everywhere
like a shadow or a friend.

By Naomi Shihab Nye in Words Under the Words, Eighth Mountain Press, 1995

LOVE AFTER LOVE

The time will come
when, with elation,
you will greet yourself arriving
at your own door, in your own mirror,
and each will smile at the other's welcome

and say, sit here. Eat.
You will love again the stranger who was yourself.
Give wine. Give bread. Give back your heart
to itself, to the stranger who has loved you
all your life, whom you have ignored
for another, who knows you by heart.
Take down the love letters from the bookshelf,

the photographs, the desperate notes,
peel your own image from the mirror.
Sit. Feast on your life.

*By Derek Walcott, in Collected Poems 1948-1984, New York,
Farrar Straus Giroux, 1986.*

AMO ERGO SUM

Because I love
The sun pours out its rays of living gold
Pours out its gold and silver on the sea.

Because I love
The earth upon her astral spindle winds
Her ecstasy producing dance.

Because I love
Clouds travel on the winds through wide skies
Skies wide and beautiful, blue and deep.

Because I love
Wind blows white sails
The wind blows over flowers, the sweet wind blows.

Because I love
The ferns grow green, and green the grass, and green
The transparent sunlit trees.

Because I love
Larks rise up from the grass
And all the trees are full of singing birds.

Because I love
The summer air quivers with a thousand wings
Myriads of jewelled eyes burn in the light.

Because I love
The iridescent shells upon the sand
Take forms as fine and intricate as thought.

Because I love
There is an invisible way across the sky
Birds travel by that way, the sun and moon
And all the stars travel that path by night.

Because I love
There is a river flowing all night long.

Because I love
All night the river flows into my sleep
Ten thousand living things are sleeping in my arms
And sleeping wake, and flowing are at rest.

By Kathleen Raine

FRIENDSHIP

And a girl said, Speak to us of friendship
And she answered saying:
Your friend is your needs answered.
She is your field which you sow with love and reap with
thanksgiving.
And she is your lodging and your fireside.
For you come to her with your hunger, and you seek her for
peace.

When your friend speaks her mind you fear not the “no” in
your own mind, nor do you withhold the “yes”.
And when she is silent your heart ceases not to listen to her
heart;
For without words, in friendship, all thoughts, all desires,
all expectations are born and shared, with joy that is
unacclaimed.

When you part from your friend, you grieve not;
For that which you love most in her may be clearer in her
absence,
as the mountain to the climber is clearer from the plain.
And let there be no purpose in friendship
save the deepening of the spirit.
For love that seeks anything but the disclosure of its own
mystery
is not love but a net cast forth: and only the unprofitable is
caught.

And let the best be for your friend.
If she must know the ebb of your tide, let her know its flood
also.
For what is your friend that you should seek her with hours
to kill?
Seek her always with hours to live.
For it is hers to fill your need, but not your emptiness.
And in the sweetness of friendship let there be laughter,
and the sharing of pleasures.
For in the dew of little things the heart finds its morning and
is refreshed.

from The Prophet, Kahil Gibran

MINDFULNESS AND LOVE

It seems that mindfulness walks hand in hand with love.
Why should this be so?
Perhaps boundlessness could be another word for emptiness
You and I are not so separate after all.
Rising and falling; forming and dissolving
Who can find the hard edges between us?
Is it like a line sketched on wet sand with a piece of
driftwood?
One moment it is there
The next moment it is dissolved into a memory
By the gentle wave of the in and the out breath.

Let us bring a little kindness
Into our experience of the world.

By Vidyamala
Dhanakosa 26 November 2004

LOVE

Love means to look at yourself
The way one looks at distant things
For you are only one thing among many.
And whoever sees that way heals his heart,
Without knowing it, from various ills -
A bird and a tree say to him: Friend.

Then he wants to use himself and things
So that they stand in the glow of ripeness.
It doesn't matter whether he knows what he serves:
Who serves best doesn't always understand.

Czeslaw Milosz

ANDY GOLDSWORTHY ON THE COLOUR RED

In Japan the red of the maple is one of the strongest I have found - not just for its colour but in its context. I have worked with red leaves in the American fall, but there the colour is part of a wide variety of colours, including many different reds. The isolated Japanese red maple set amongst green trees on a mountainside is so violent that it appears as an open wound. I would climb up to such a tree in an attempt to work the red, but it faded away like a rainbow as I approached. The colour gained its strength from its place and the way the mass of leaves caught the light when seen from a distance. By working the leaves in the river I was able to bring the red alive...

I have found and worked with red in many countries and talked of it as the earth's vein - a description confirmed by the realisation that the earth and stone are red because of their iron content which is also why our blood is red.

The beauty of red is its connection with life - underwritten by fragility, pain and violence - words that I would have to use in describing beauty itself. This sense of life draws me to nature, but with it also comes an extremely strong sense of death. I cannot walk far before seeing something dead and decaying. Uprooted trees, fallen rocks, landslides, flood damage... A grip on beauty is necessary for me to feel and make sense of its underlying precariousness. So many of my sculptures are within a hair's breadth of failure. I often see works - a balanced column of rocks, stacked icicles - looking stronger with each piece that is added, but also know that each addition takes it closer to the edge of collapse. Some of my most memorable works have been made in this way, and some of my worst failures could have produced great pieces. Beauty does not avoid difficulty but hovers dangerously above it - like walking on thin ice.



ARTICLES RELATING
TO AMITABHA

AMITABHA: INFINITE LIGHT
from a book on the Mandala of the Five Buddhas
By Vessantara

Next we turn to the red Buddha, Amitabha, whose name means 'Infinite Light'. Amitabha is a glowing warm red, with curly blue-black hair. He is always seated in the full-lotus posture, and generally his hands are in the meditation mudra, though occasionally he may be holding up a red lotus in his right hand. He is dressed in deep red ornately embroidered robes. Around his head is usually a glowing green aura, and around his body a red one. Both are edged with rainbows.

Sometimes he is seen seated on a deep red lotus which floats on a calm ocean, so that his radiant form - like a setting sun - casts a path of light across the waters. Through repeatedly dwelling on this we can absorb the glowing warmth of love and compassion that radiates from Amitabha. Our mind gradually acquires something of his oceanic depth of feeling. We become like the great ocean, with a warm centre of unflinching love at our heart; the restless waves of thought all stilled.

For Indo-Tibetan Buddhism red is the colour of love and compassion, and of the whole emotional aspect of life. Amitabha, then, is the Buddha of Love and Compassion. As such, he is totally approachable. His time of day is sunset, and his direction the West. So he is like the setting sun. Sunset is a miracle; you can look directly into the fierce power of the sun, and it is gentle and causes you no harm. As it disappears into the West the sun is like a proud and fierce king, who at the end of the day's hunting turns gentle and jovial, and allows anyone to approach him. (Also the setting sun may suggest the withdrawal of the light of consciousness from the world of the senses as it turns within to higher states of meditative concentration.)

The spiritual power of Amitabha is all warmth and gentleness. He is the colour of ruby. His colour is the most striking, the first colour recognized by children. He is the colour

of fascination. He is the colour of blood; he is the blushing colour of delicate emotion, the suffusing shade of emotional arousal. Through him, all one's emotional energy is gently led into the quest for Enlightenment.

The poison with which he is associated is raga - passion. The nature of passion is that it attaches itself strongly to a particular object. Meditating on Amitabha arouses emotional energy, but transmutes mundane passion into Discriminating Wisdom. This is the counter-balance to the Wisdom of Equality of Ratnasambhava, which saw the common factor in all changing appearances. The Wisdom of Amitabha sees the uniqueness, the distinctive characteristics, of every phenomenon.

A passionate lover wants just to be with the one unique, seemingly irreplaceable, person who is the object of their love. They are highly aware of that person's distinctive qualities. Small things about them are endearing: a particular mannerism, a way of moving the head, a typical phrase. All these are special and lovable because they are signs, distinguishing marks, of the loved one. Similarly, the Discriminating Wisdom of Amitabha sees and loves the minute differences in things. The distinction between the lover's appreciation and Amitabha's Wisdom is that Discriminating Wisdom is non-dual. It introduces no idea of self and other. Hence it does not make its loving appreciation of uniqueness into a basis for exclusive attachment.

Amitabha's special emblem is the lotus, and he is head of the Lotus family. He is thus associated with all the attributes of the lotus: gentleness, openness, and the more 'receptive' qualities. The quality of openness is further stressed by his element, fire, which consumes everything, creating space. Even more so, the totality of his openness is reflected in a legend associated with his heraldic animal, the peacock. According to

myth, peacocks are capable of swallowing poisonous snakes without coming to harm. This symbolism, of being open even to poison, and transmuting it into beauty (as the snake nourishes the peacock's beautiful plumage) is very striking. It gives us a feeling for the transforming approach of power of Amitabha's love and compassion. On an everyday level, this legend suggests that even our darkest and most venomous aspects can be transformed by practising the Dharma.

The realm of the Wheel of Life which Amitabha transmutes is that of the hungry ghosts. These are beings whose lives are spent in frustrated craving. They are usually represented with large stomachs and tiny mouths. Amitabha's love dissolves away the feelings of desperation and being unloved and unlovable which cause them to grab at life. His power of meditation takes them away from their restless and unfulfilled state on to a deeper and more satisfying level of themselves.

In general, the path to Enlightenment represented by Amitabha is the reverse of Akshobhya's. The approach of the Vajra family is more overtly dynamic. Through it you become increasingly vajric, breaking through obstacles, hurtling towards Enlightenment. The approach of Amitabha is more 'organic'. Gently and gradually you unfold the petals of your spiritual potential until you ripen into Enlightenment. The path of Akshobhya, transmuting hatred, is one of aversion to samsara, the mundane world permeated with suffering. Amitabha's path is one of attraction to nirvana, the longing desire to embrace that warm red sun.

Amitabha also has a reflex form - Amitayus. Ayus means life in Sanskrit, so Amitayus is 'Infinite Life'. He is particularly associated with practices for gaining longevity. Whilst Amitabha is usually represented holding a begging-bowl, Amitayus holds a precious vase, full of the nectar of immortality. The two figures Infinite Light and Infinite Life

clearly represent the same principle viewed from the points of view of space and time respectively. Indeed, Indian Buddhism seems to treat Amitabha and Amitayus as the same figure, and it is only in the Tantric Buddhism of Tibet and Japan that one finds them regarded as separate.

Though it is simple, Amitabha's figure has an archetypal quality to it. He is a meditating Buddha, with his hands in the dhyana mudra - the mudra of meditation. When people without any special interest in Buddhism think about it, it is this image that frequently comes to mind. The meditating Buddha can now be found in many places in the West: in museums and galleries, in books and junk shops. (I have even seen one turned into a lampstand.)

The meditating Buddha is the central image of Buddhism, arising out of the crucial experience of the entire Buddhist tradition: the Buddha's attainment of Enlightenment whilst seated in deep meditation under the bodhi tree. One should be able to tell a great deal about a spiritual tradition just by contemplating its central symbol. Surprisingly, I think this is particularly true if you just contemplate the image, without any explanation of its supposed meaning within the tradition. (For example, contemplating a crucifix, purely as an image, can tell you a great deal about the nature of Christianity.) The meditating Buddha, the central symbol of Buddhism, is, I think, part of the reason why Buddhism enjoys a good reputation in the West. People are often well disposed to Buddhism because, without their necessarily being very conscious of it, the meditating Buddha image has deeply affected them.

If you look at a meditating Buddha figure, in stone, bronze, brass, plaster, wood, or whatever, you pick up certain impressions from it. Its posture is regular, well-balanced, pleasing. It has a solidity about it. It is upright and immovable. It doesn't worry or bite its nails. It is centred. In fact it looks

almost as though it had put down roots into the earth.

The figure just sits, silent, contented. He has no appointments to make, no train to catch. He is peaceful, calm, welcoming. If you have a few minutes to sit with him and join him in meditation, before you have to rush off, he will be pleased.

He is timeless. He could sit there for ever. Some of the old stone Buddhas seem to have been sitting silently, deepening their concentration, for a thousand years or more. The Buddhas at Nalanda in India have meditated steadily through changing fortunes. First covered in garlands and cared for by devoted monks, then suffering patiently as Muslim invaders beat at them with sticks, now they are still rapt in concentration while planes fly overhead and tourists wander by.

There is something awe-inspiring about a meditating Buddha. What is he gazing at deep within, with that faint smile of knowledge on his lips? One feels he has dived into an endless inner ocean, to find the sunken treasures of the universe, the rubies of the mind.

A figure in the meditation posture can be awe-inspiring whether made of stone or of flesh and blood. A story is told of Daito, a Zen master, who for a while lived with beggars under the bridges of Kyoto. In those days it was the brutal custom for a samurai to test a new sword on a human victim. One evening a samurai was seen roaming the area with a new sword. The beggars were terrified as they knew that after dark the samurai would come to test his sword on one of their 'expendable' number. Daito told them all to hide. Then he sat himself calmly in the meditation posture on the road. Night fell. The samurai came along, and saw an unmoving victim. He cried out to Daito to prepare to die, as he was going to cleave him in two with his sword. There was no reply. The

calm figure sat in front of him, giving off that feeling of vast, gently harnessed energy which comes from someone in deep meditation. Looking at his serene victim, the samurai faltered, unnerved. Finally he slunk away into the night.

Let us come back to contemplating Amitabha, our meditating Buddha. Look at his hands. They are joined, one hand resting on the other, thumbs lightly touching, placed near the centre of his body. What can come along, and saw an unmoving victim. He cried out to Daito to prepare to die, as he was going to cleave him in two with his sword. There was no reply. The calm figure sat in front of him, giving off that feeling of vast, gently harnessed energy which comes from someone in deep meditation. Looking at his serene victim, the samurai faltered, unnerved. Finally he slunk away into the night.

Let us come back to contemplating Amitabha, our meditating Buddha. Look at his hands. They are joined, one hand resting on the other, thumbs lightly touching, placed near the centre of his body. What can they tell us? They speak of how relaxed he is. They express the union of opposites. They are both active and receptive. The thumbs just touch. With less exertion they would not meet, with more they would press upwards and break the perfect oval formed by the hands. They are suggestive of the Middle Way and the Buddha's advice to Sona. Sona was a monk who practised walking meditation for so long, pacing up and down, that his feet bled. The Buddha explained to him how in his meditation he should be like a well-tuned lute. If the strings are either too slack or too tight it cannot be played. The gently-touching thumbs maintain a constant awareness of a balanced spiritual development.

We have looked at the hands but we have yet to consider the most important aspect of the mudra. What we have not looked at is the oval space enclosed between the palms and the arch of the thumbs. Amitabha, like all meditating Buddhas,

embraces space as his most precious possession. That empty space is like an egg, an egg of Emptiness which the meditating Buddha sits patiently 'incubating'. What will be hatched from it? A Buddha's only concern is to create conditions which will be helpful for living beings to escape from suffering. So from the egg of Emptiness an entire Pure Land will emerge, with its infinite radiance and inexhaustible Dharma teachings.

It is through the power of his meditation on infinite love and compassion that Amitabha brings into existence his Pure Land. However, even love and compassion would not be enough to create this greatest of all masterpieces of the mind. It is only when combined with an understanding of Emptiness, of the insubstantial nature of all phenomena, that Amitabha's feelings for all beings can create a world for them to live in.

Watching Amitabha creating a Pure Land through his mental power should raise a question in our minds. If a Buddha creates a mental world, is the situation any different for ordinary beings such as us? The general answer of Buddhism seems to be that we are creating our world all the time - not a Pure Land, but a world which is pure or impure depending on our volitions.

Contemplating the serene figure of our meditating Buddha we can understand more clearly what is at stake in meditation practice. We learn the lesson of that oval of space he cradles in the meditation mudra. It is through the spacious awareness we can create in meditation, space to look at how our thoughts create a world, that we can change our world. When we see that we do create our world we can begin to take responsibility for it, and then work to create a new world for ourselves by raising our level of consciousness, creating worlds of greater and greater happiness and beauty.

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MEANING OF THE MANTRIC
SEED-SYLLABLE 'HRIH'

By Lama Govinda

The mantric seed syllable HRIH has the nature of the flame: it has its warmth, its intensity, its upward movement, its radiance and its colour. It is the sacred sound-symbol of Amitabha, whose colour is red and whose seat in the mandala of the Dhyani-Buddhas is in the West, the place of the setting sun and the hour of meditation (*upasana*), when the day's work is done and peace descends upon the world. Physical activity has come to rest and gives place to inner activity: the mind is freed from the fetters of mundane cares and soars up to the the spiritual realm of Amitabha, symbolised in Sukhavati, the abode of bliss.

Contemplating the setting sun, the meditator (*sadhaka*) visualises the radiant deep-red figure of Amitabha, glowing with love and compassion for every sentient creature; and as this radiance surrounds and fills the *sadhaka*, the petals of his heart are opened, and in deep devotion he repeats the mantra "OM AMITABHA HRIH."

In the OM he makes himself as wide as the universe (the sound "OM" is all-embracing; its movement is like opening one's arms), so as to make room for the Infinite (*amita*) Light (*abha*) that is Amitabha, and in the HRIH he kindles the upward-leaping flame of inspiration and devotion, by which he partakes of the very nature of Amitabha.

Nothing could give a more adequate expression of his feelings of devotion than Milarepa's heart-stirring prayer:

Lord, from the sun-orb of Thy grace
The radiant rays of light have shone
And opened wide the petals of the lotus of my heart,
So that it breathes forth the fragrance born of
knowledge,
For which I am forever bounden unto Thee;
So I will worship Thee by constant meditation.

Vouchsafe to bless me in mine efforts,
That good may come to every sentient being.
Not one movement of my body will I give to any worldly
purpose:
But body, speech and heart I dedicate to winning
Buddhahood.

Amitabha's "Distinguishing Wisdom" (*pratyaveksana-jnana*) is the wisdom of inner vision (*dhyana*); in other words, it is not intellectual analysis or discrimination, but a perfect and unprejudiced awareness of the manifold forms of life and phenomena against the background of fundamental oneness. The significance of this awareness and the acknowledgement that differentiation is as important as unity (because both condition each other) becomes apparent in Amitabha's manifestation on the plane of individuality and action, when he appears in the form of Avalokiteshvara, in whom the rays of his infinite light are transformed into innumerable helping arms and outstretched hands. In the palm of each of these hands appears the "eye of wisdom," to show that *upaya* (skilful means, i.e. the power of love and compassion) must always be accompanied by *prajna* (transcendental wisdom). Only in this way can Avalokiteshvara be the guide and helper of all those who are desirous of liberation.

Thus, on the plane of individuality and action, the *bija-mantra* HRIH, like a living and growing seed, expands and blossoms out into the formula OM MANI PADME HUM. MANI, the jewel, is Avalokiteshvara, who is being realised in the "lotus (*padma*) of the heart" also known as the *anahata cakra*.

In other words, HRIH is the sum total of OM MANI PADME HUM; it is the seed from which this mantra springs and into which it is integrated again. Therefore the HRIH is generally added to the OM MANI PADME HUM. It goes without saying that the above-mentioned interpretation of this mantra does not exhaust its meaning, because every mantra

is multidimensional and can be applied to various planes of experience. Therein consists its living value and its creative faculty.

On the first plane we have to consider the pure sound value of a mantra and its psychological associations; on the second plane its verbal meaning (as far as this can be established) and its mental and traditional associations; on the third plane its creative or evocative value (which depends on the particular experience of initiation in the supreme moment of the transference of power); and finally its growing and expanding spiritual value in the practice and experience of progressive *sadhana*.

In such a *sadhana* the mantra takes on different dimensions and evokes different mental images and visualisations, depending on whether the mantra is applied to the universal realm of the *Dharmakaya*, or to that of the *Sambhogakaya*, the realm of creative vision and spiritual enjoyment, or to that of the *Nirmanakaya*, the realm of action and transformation of both body and mind.

In the case of *bija* or seed-syllables, we have furthermore to consider in which connection or combination they are used, because - as in a chemical formula - it is the combination that determines their specific meaning. For this reason we can discuss here the seed syllable HRIH only on the first and second of the above-mentioned planes.

“H” is the sound of the vital principle, the sound of breath, the symbol of all life. “R” is the sound of fire, the seed-syllable of which is RAM. The “I” stands highest in the tonal scale of vowels; it has the greatest intensity, the highest rate of vibration and, therefore, represents the highest spiritual activity and differentiation. The aspirated after-sound (*visarga*), which we have transcribed as “H”, has no tonal value and is used in Tibet only as a written symbol (the two small circles

after the main body of the letter), without being pronounced. It distinguishes the seed-syllable from the ordinary use of the word and emphasises its mantric character.

The literal meaning of “*hri*” is “to blush” (which consists in taking on the colour of Amitabha), “to feel shame”. In the Pali Abhidhamma “*hri*” takes the third place in the list of wholesome or “beautiful” (*sobhana*) factors consciousness, next to faith (*saddha*) and mindfulness (*sati*). If we analyse the psychological origin of the feeling or innate faculty of shame, we shall find that it is based on the noblest quality of the human character, namely an inborn sense of values and responsibility. It is one of the strangest and most subtle of phenomena, in which the deepest forces of the human soul act independently of our desires, our will, and our intellect, and set in motion physical reactions (diversions in the bloodstream) which likewise are not under our control.

What is this intangible, mysterious force? It is the inner voice, the moral law (*dharma*) within us, the voice of conscience, of inner knowledge (*bodhi*) - not the intellectual, but the intuitive, spontaneous knowledge - due to which we do the right thing without expectation of reward or advantage. It is the guiding principle and the special virtue of the Bodhisattva, who acts without being bound by the results of his action (*karma*), because he has renounced its fruits, being bent on the enlightenment of all, unconcerned with his own welfare. He is like the sun which shines equally for sinners and saints; he is one who has realised the force of HRIH, of Amitabha's wisdom of inner vision.

This may suffice to give an introduction to the inner meaning of the seed-syllable HRIH. But just as written music cannot convey the emotional and spiritual impact of heard or performed music, so the sound-syllable of a mantra and intellectual analysis cannot convey the experience of an initiate and of the profound effects it creates in the course of

prolonged practice (*sadhana*).

Though the first impetus is given by the Guru through his “transference of power” (*Abhiseka*, Tib, “wangkur”) (and how much he can transfer depends on his own status, as well as on the preparedness and receptivity of the recipient), it depends on the *sadhaka*, whether he is able to keep the mantra alive and to put it into practice. A man may possess a formula for atomic power; yet, unless he knows how to put this formula into practice, he remains as impotent as before. A mantra has no power in itself, but only serves to concentrate and to direct and release those forces and faculties which are always present in the individual but beyond his reach.

A mantra, like a koan, defies rationalisation, but at the same time it has the advantage of starting with a direct experience (and not only perchance leading to one) and of containing a specific direction, which leads the *sadhaka* into ever deeper realms of awareness, irrespective of whether he succeeds in reaching the ultimate realisation. And what is more - it never can mislead, because it does not seek the solution of a problem but rather the dissolution of impediments, the loosening of the knots (*granthi*) into which we have entangled ourselves consciously and unconsciously by our desires, prejudices, and the accumulated effects of our attachments.

Every thought creates a new thought, and every answer a new question. But is only when our thoughts have come to rest and our consciousness regains the state of pure luminosity and sensitivity, that the gates of the great mysteries of the spirit are opened and the fullness of power, or realisation, descends upon us.

If I use the word “power,” I do not mean it in the sense of something that acts outwardly or can be used for personal ends or for our own aggrandizement, but as something that

brings about a complete transformation of the individual in whom it is present. And it is this transformation into an exponent of super-individual reality that can act upon others.

Thus a Guru is able to perform the rites of initiation at the transference of power only if he has generated this power within himself through years of hard training - and even then he will generally spend many days and nights in deep meditation before performing any of these rites.

Only those who have had the good fortune to witness the physical and spiritual transformation which takes place in the Guru can imagine what it means and how it is possible to confer upon others something of the bliss and inspiration of a realm beyond words: the realm of the Buddhas, the realm of Enlightenment.

*From 'Creative Meditation and Multi-Dimensional Consciousness'
Chapter 7.*

EYE OF THE FIRE
By Vidyamala for Dharma Life magazine

Red. Fire. Warmth. Radiance. Abundance. Love. Responsive. Fascination. Light. Life. Sun. Quiet. Still. Deep. Red. Gentle.

All this is Amitabha. Buddha of the West. Buddha of the evening. Buddha of the setting sun. Buddha of meditation and the quiet at the end of the day. Buddha of love. Buddha of the kind blue eyes.

In the Western Buddhist Order we visualise a form of Amitabha that our teacher, Sangharakshita, saw in a vision many years ago. In this form Amitabha is a deep ruby colour, glowing with extraordinary light and resting on a deep red lotus on a still, calm sea. He is seated in meditation posture, his right hand holding up a red lotus in an intriguing and mysterious gesture. His left hand is resting in his lap - completely relaxed with the palm upwards and open. Over his right shoulder the setting sun is resting on the horizon. This casts a warm track of golden light across the ocean. It is inviting, gentle and peaceful. It is also magical - evening is the only time of day we can look into the sun without injuring our eyes.

The whole image contains a deception of perfect stillness, it appears unmoving and serene, but look closely and see how it is made purely of shimmering light. Nothing is still or fixed - the sun is made of pulsating light, the sea is gently moving, the track of light across the ocean invites us to walk along it to Amitabha, but as soon as we set foot upon it, it will disappear like a mirage. It is insubstantial. It is a symbol of Reality, the way things are - appearing to our perceptions to be deceptively fixed and solid, when in essence nothing in life has any fixed unchanging essence and there is only change.

I am spellbound by his radiant, shimmering stillness - so alive and yet so still. So much redness and yet so much tranquillity. I have always longed for this vibrant stillness - a deep, warm,

alive stillness that has a resonant presence to each moment of life. Amitabha is my guide to this quality. As I was approaching the time of my ordination into the Western Buddhist Order I was not sure which Buddha or Bodhisattva I would take on as a daily visualisation practice. I was on solitary retreat and trying to cultivate a sense of stillness - a seemingly impossible task as my wild and unruly energies were refusing to be tamed. I was trying to quell them and forcibly contain them when suddenly Amitabha was vividly before me with the loud and clear words: "the way to stillness is through abandonment". In a flash I saw I had been facing in completely the wrong direction - it was as if I had physically spun around and instead of looking out towards a landscape of restraint and fearful control I was suddenly looking out at a free-flowing vista with enormous horizons. A place of complete abandonment and complete stillness. I wanted to laugh and laugh with the huge sense of relief and freedom that welled up in me. I knew then that Amitabha had come to me with a tremendous life-changing gift in his paradoxical message about abandonment and stillness. He was seated before me offering to be my guide and friend and I felt blessed.

Another image came to me shortly afterwards: take a body of water and give it walls or forces of resistance and you have rapids, deep rushing gorges and ravines, waterfalls and turbine power. Take this same body of water and remove any sense of boundary and you have the ocean. Deep, still and vast. My energies are no different. Give them their head, release the reins and they quite naturally come to rest. The innate quality is stillness, it is only self-made limitations that create agitation and unease.

Amitabha is a master of paradox in all kinds of ways. It is said that the Bodhicitta arises out of the tension between the two extremes of withdrawal and engagement - like a star between two poles - and I see Amitabha as embodying and unifying

these two opposing movements beautifully and perfectly:
He is a red solar figure pouring outwards, but his posture of meditation is drawing inwards.

He shows how only full-blooded engagement will lead to quiet and stillness; that we must be alive and wholehearted in order to find peace and ease.

His right-hand is raised in an active gesture holding up the red lotus that is calling urgently “impermanence!” It is a gesture that suggests energy and movement out towards the world in compassionate activity. In contrast the left-hand is still, deep, open, quiet, at rest - reaching down into the depths of the ocean where wisdom resides.

He is fiery urgency and deep tranquillity.

He is fire on water. His element is fire and yet he sits on the sea. It is as if the lotus he sits on emerged from the depths of the ocean and then burst forth into the flaming figure of Amitabha. For once, fire and water in harmony as a wonderful contradiction of the material world. His connection with fire is fascinating. Fire is both destroyer and transformer. It destroys anything that stands in its way, but it needs fuel to survive. When there is nothing left to burn, there is no fire. And so, fire has consumed matter to create space. Vast, still, blue space. Fire also illuminates. Not only does it destroy the dark weight of matter, consuming it as fuel, but it illuminates the darkness and as such brings light into the world. I liken this to meditation: in order to change and transform ourselves we have to be prepared to enter the fire, to let the flames illuminate the darkness of unawareness, the darkness of fears and to let them burn - burn up to create space and light in the heart. The jewel in the lotus of the heart is born out of the heat of the fire in the belly. We need to enter the furnace of transformation in the depths to create space for the lotus to bloom in the heart. Amitabha invites us to enter the flames with faith and confidence, knowing that there is no other way forward. Have you ever thought about how lotus petals are a similar shape to flames? Reaching skywards, unfolding from

a centre and moving up and out into space. I don't think you get one without the other - you must enter flames to find the gentle lotus. The blooming of the magical fire lotus is another of Amitabha's gifts.

Many years ago when I was meditating I had a vision of a raging bush fire before me. In my mind I turned and ran as fast as I could with the birds and animals fleeing along side me. Eventually I realised that it was impossible and I could not out-run the flames. I turned to face them and slowly walked towards them. Gradually they engulfed me and I was burning up completely. To my surprise and amazement, I discovered that what had seemed an endless sea of flames was in fact just a narrow wall. Once the forest was burned up by the flames, the fire was exhausted and only space remained. I walked out through the flames into an empty landscape full of the sky. This seemed to hold the same message: be prepared to walk into the flames rather than run away and the reward is freedom.

Amitabha is the Buddha of receptivity. His is the path of Faith. The pure Land schools say it is meaningless to use the ego to overcome the ego and so they teach the path of 'Other Power'- the path of opening out to the benevolent influence of Amitabha. With this approach to the spiritual life we can think of Insight as being a 'change of heart', a profound arising of unwavering faith and gratitude to the Transcendental, to Buddha nature. Amitabha shines his light on us as an expression of his Bodhisattva vow to save all beings and upon realising this we feel a deep and natural gratitude. His is the path of the heart, of abundance, of love - he touches us with his beautiful red glow. He invites us to Enlightenment. He makes the goal immensely attractive and compelling.

If we can open ourselves to his attractive presence with a receptive heart then transformation will assuredly take place. It is good to sit in his presence and be seen. Good though it

is, it is also very difficult to let down the barriers and defences and meet him with an open heart. This is the kind of gentle courage his searing redness demands. When I meditate on him I know I need to get my headstrong, willful, defended, know-it-all self out of the way. Amitabha becomes the 'cup of plenty' that I drink from. I am parched as if in a desert and I long to drink every drop of his rich redness. Drinking is a primal, life-giving act of receptivity as the nourishing light pours in. He is like rich red wine, blood, rubies, vitality and life force. I am the vessel, the chalice - he pours into me, fills me up until he and I are overflowing, spilling out into space, spilling out into humanity. So much love. Sometimes I also say to myself "I am going to sit in the sun" when sitting down to meditate on him. Again a deceptively difficult practice - it is not easy to sit and do nothing more than bask in the light when there is always the urge to be doing, overcoming, cultivating, generating.

He is head of the lotus family, another symbol of soft, gentle, tender and gradual change. He embodies the refined yet powerful energy of the plant growing and the flower blooming. It is a wonderful symbol for the imperceptible change that is constantly taking place - we cannot see a flower opening with the naked eye and yet a flower's blossom is constantly unfolding. This is a helpful metaphor for personal change and development. Sometimes it is difficult to see our progress, but if we look back over time we then realise a great deal of change has taken place. Amitabha upholds the steady consistency of the spiritual path lived with steady and regular effort - the path of regular steps.

For me, perhaps more than anything, I see his path as the path of love. To love and be loved - this is what Amitabha gives me. This is his path, his teaching and his gift. Loving the uniqueness that makes each person who they are, each blade of grass what it is. This is his Discriminating Wisdom. But for it to be wisdom and not attachment we must love

this uniqueness on the basis of fundamental emptiness, impermanence and interconnectedness. We are all equally made up of change and yet we manifest this 'sameness' in our own unique and remarkable ways. As the Heart Sutra says: "Form is only emptiness and emptiness is only form".

Amitabha transforms the limited yet heartfelt passion one feels for a lover into a limitless nonattached love. But if you think that non-attachment means some kind of bland, lukewarm equality to all, then Amitabha will make you think again. It means strong, engaged, heartfelt love - but with no boundaries and not attached exclusively to any one object. I try to let this inform the way I live my life: being wholeheartedly and deeply engaged with each moment as it unfolds and yet at the same time letting it slip through my fingers. Transforming the two extremes of attachment and apathy into a non-attached vitality. Amitabha is a wonderful guide to this kind of quality.

Lately I have been dwelling on the connection between impermanence and love: The phrase "impermanence means interconnectedness means love" echoes urgently through my mind. Watch a leaf falling from a tree in autumn - we see change, we see impermanence but do we see love? If we see change then with a deeper seeing we also see interconnectedness as the illusion of fixed boundaries falls away. With this lack of separation, the natural response is to love all that lives based on a deep sense of connection. This is what Amitabha teaches. A beautiful harmony of loving the unique perfection of that particular leaf falling, falling, whilst knowing it is not in essence separate. I want to get to the point where I see a leaf falling and I don't think "impermanence", I think "love" as a perfectly instinctual response.

Perhaps the most tantalising and intriguing aspect of doing

the sadhana of Amitabha is the questions that he raises
- questions that burn into my heart and fuel my quest.
Questions like:

“How do I love something that is transient and will end, die,
pass away?”

“How do I let go into the present in the knowledge that this
is all there is?”

“Why is compassion the expression of wisdom?”

“Why does the truth of impermanence mean all life is
interconnected?”

“Why is love the natural response of deeply seeing into the impermanent interconnectedness of all life?”

At different times he raises different questions, but they are all important and resonant. I sit with them day after day after day and gradually some kind of understanding emerges. Above all else he tells me to love, even savour, the questions.

‘Have patience with everything unresolved in your heart and try to love the questions themselves...Don’t search for the answers, which could not be given to you now, because you would not be able to live them. And the point is, to live everything. Live the questions now. Perhaps then, someday far in the future, you will gradually, without even noticing it, live your way into the answer.’

Rainer Maria Rilke

CONTEMPLATIONS ON THE
FOUR SUBLIME STATES

By Nyanaponika Thera

Wheel publication No 6

LOVE - METTA

Love, without desire to possess, knowing well that in the ultimate sense there is no possession and no possessor: this is the highest love.

Love, without speaking and thinking of “I,” knowing well that this so-called “I” is a mere delusion.

Love, without selecting and excluding, knowing well that to do so means to create love’s own contrasts: dislike, aversion and hatred.

Love, embracing all beings: small and great, far and near, be it on earth, in the water or in the air.

Love, embracing impartially all sentient beings, and not only those who are useful, pleasing or amusing to us.

Love, embracing all beings, be they noble-minded or low-minded, good or evil. The noble and the good are embraced because love is flowing to them spontaneously. The low-minded and evil-minded are included because they are those who are most in need of love. In many of them the seed of goodness may have died merely because warmth was lacking for its growth, because it perished from cold in a loveless world.

Love, embracing all beings, knowing well that we all are fellow wayfarers through this round of existence — that we all are overcome by the same law of suffering.

Love, but not the sensuous fire that burns, scorches and tortures, that inflicts more wounds than it cures — flaring up now, at the next moment being extinguished, leaving behind more coldness and loneliness than was felt before.

Rather, love that lies like a soft but firm hand on the ailing beings, ever unchanged in its sympathy, without wavering, unconcerned with any response it meets. Love that is comforting coolness to those who burn with the fire of suffering and passion; that is life-giving warmth to those abandoned in the cold desert of loneliness, to those who are shivering in the frost of a loveless world; to those whose hearts have become as if empty and dry by the repeated calls for help, by deepest despair.

Love, that is a sublime nobility of heart and intellect which knows, understands and is ready to help.

Love, that is strength and gives strength: this is the highest love.

Love, which by the Enlightened One was named “the liberation of the heart,” “the most sublime beauty”: this is the highest love.

And what is the highest manifestation of love?

To show to the world the path leading to the end of suffering, the path pointed out, trodden, and realized to perfection by Him, the Exalted One, the Buddha.

COMPASSION - KARUNA

The world suffers. But most men have their eyes and ears closed. They do not see the unbroken stream of tears flowing through life; they do not hear the cry of distress continually pervading the world. Their own little grief or joy bars their sight, deafens their ears. Bound by selfishness, their hearts turn stiff and narrow. Being stiff and narrow, how should they be able to strive for any higher goal, to realize that only release from selfish craving will effect their own freedom from suffering?

It is compassion that removes the heavy bar, opens the door to freedom, makes the narrow heart as wide as the world. Compassion takes away from the heart the inert weight, the paralyzing heaviness; it gives wings to those who cling to the lowlands of self.

Through compassion the fact of suffering remains vividly present to our mind, even at times when we personally are free from it. It gives us the rich experience of suffering, thus strengthening us to meet it prepared, when it does befall us.

Compassion reconciles us to our own destiny by showing us the life of others, often much harder than ours.

Behold the endless caravan of beings, men and beasts, burdened with sorrow and pain! The burden of every one of them, we also have carried in bygone times during the unfathomable sequence of repeated births. Behold this, and open your heart to compassion!

And this misery may well be our own destiny again! He who is without compassion now, will one day cry for it. If sympathy with others is lacking, it will have to be acquired through one's own long and painful experience. This is the great law of life.

Knowing this, keep guard over yourself!

Beings, sunk in ignorance, lost in delusion, hasten from one state of suffering to another, not knowing the real cause, not knowing the escape from it. This insight into the general law of suffering is the real foundation of our compassion, not any isolated fact of suffering.

Hence our compassion will also include those who at the moment may be happy, but act with an evil and deluded mind. In their present deeds we shall foresee their future state of distress, and compassion will arise.

The compassion of the wise man does not render him a victim of suffering. His thoughts, words and deeds are full of pity. But his heart does not waver; unchanged it remains, serene and calm. How else should he be able to help?

May such compassion arise in our hearts! Compassion that is sublime nobility of heart and intellect which knows, understands and is ready to help.

Compassion that is strength and gives strength: this is highest compassion.

And what is the highest manifestation of compassion?

To show to the world the path leading to the end of suffering, the path pointed out, trodden and realized to perfection by Him, the Exalted One, the Buddha.

SYMPATHETIC JOY - MUDITA

Not only to compassion, but also to joy with others open your heart!

Small, indeed, is the share of happiness and joy allotted to beings! Whenever a little happiness comes to them, then you may rejoice that at least one ray of joy has pierced through the darkness of their lives, and dispelled the grey and gloomy mist that enwraps their hearts.

Your life will gain in joy by sharing the happiness of others as if it were yours. Did you never observe how in moments of happiness men's features change and become bright with joy? Did you never notice how joy rouses men to noble aspirations and deeds, exceeding their normal capacity? Did not such experience fill your own heart with joyful bliss? It is in your power to increase such experience of sympathetic joy, by producing happiness in others, by bringing them joy and solace.

Let us teach real joy to men! Many have unlearned it. Life, though full of woe, holds also sources of happiness and joy, unknown to most. Let us teach people to seek and to find real joy within themselves and to rejoice with the joy of others! Let us teach them to unfold their joy to ever sublimer heights!

Noble and sublime joy is not foreign to the Teaching of the Enlightened One. Wrongly the Buddha's Teaching is sometimes considered to be a doctrine diffusing melancholy. Far from it: the Dhamma leads step by step to an ever purer and loftier happiness.

Noble and sublime joy is a helper on the path to the extinction of suffering. Not he who is depressed by grief, but one possessed of joy finds that serene calmness leading to

a contemplative state of mind. And only a mind serene and collected is able to gain the liberating wisdom.

The more sublime and noble the joy of others is, the more justified will be our own sympathetic joy. A cause for our joy with others is their noble life securing them happiness here and in lives hereafter. A still nobler cause for our joy with others is their faith in the Dhamma, their understanding of the Dhamma, their following the Dhamma. Let us give them the help of the Dhamma! Let us strive to become more and more able ourselves to render such help!

Sympathetic joy means a sublime nobility of heart and intellect which knows, understands and is ready to help.

Sympathetic joy that is strength and gives strength: this is the highest joy.

And what is the highest manifestation of sympathetic joy?

To show to the world the path leading to the end of suffering, the path pointed out, trodden, and realized to perfection by Him, the Exalted One, the Buddha.

EQUANIMITY - UPEKKHA

Equanimity is a perfect, unshakable balance of mind, rooted in insight.

Looking at the world around us, and looking into our own heart, we see clearly how difficult it is to attain and maintain balance of mind.

Looking into life we notice how it continually moves between contrasts: rise and fall, success and failure, loss and gain, honor and blame. We feel how our heart responds to all this with happiness and sorrow, delight and despair, disappointment and satisfaction, hope and fear. These waves of emotion carry us up and fling us down; and no sooner do we find rest, than we are in the power of a new wave again. How can we expect to get a footing on the crest of the waves? How can we erect the building of our lives in the midst of this ever restless ocean of existence, if not on the Island of Equanimity.

A world where that little share of happiness allotted to beings is mostly secured after many disappointments, failures and defeats;

a world where only the courage to start anew, again and again, promises success;

a world where scanty joy grows amidst sickness, separation and death;

a world where beings who were a short while ago connected with us by sympathetic joy, are at the next moment in want of our compassion — such a world needs equanimity.

But the kind of equanimity required has to be based on vigilant presence of mind, not on indifferent dullness. It has

to be the result of hard, deliberate training, not the casual outcome of a passing mood. But equanimity would not deserve its name if it had to be produced by exertion again and again. In such a case it would surely be weakened and finally defeated by the vicissitudes of life. True equanimity, however, should be able to meet all these severe tests and to regenerate its strength from sources within. It will possess this power of resistance and self-renewal only if it is rooted in insight.

What, now, is the nature of that insight? It is the clear understanding of how all these vicissitudes of life originate, and of our own true nature. We have to understand that the various experiences we undergo result from our kamma — our actions in thought, word and deed — performed in this life and in earlier lives. Kamma is the womb from which we spring (kamma-yoni), and whether we like it or not, we are the inalienable “owners” of our deeds (kamma-ssaka). But as soon as we have performed any action, our control over it is lost: it forever remains with us and inevitably returns to us as our due heritage (kamma-dayada). Nothing that happens to us comes from an “outer” hostile world foreign to ourselves; everything is the outcome of our own mind and deeds. Because this knowledge frees us from fear, it is the first basis of equanimity. When, in everything that befalls us we only meet ourselves, why should we fear?

If, however, fear or uncertainty should arise, we know the refuge where it can be allayed: our good deeds (kamma-patisarana). By taking this refuge, confidence and courage will grow within us — confidence in the protecting power of our good deeds done in the past; courage to perform more good deeds right now, despite the discouraging hardships of our present life. For we know that noble and selfless deeds provide the best defence against the hard blows of destiny, that it is never too late but always the right time for good

actions. If that refuge, in doing good and avoiding evil, becomes firmly established within us, one day we shall feel assured: "More and more ceases the misery and evil rooted in the past. And this present life — I try to make it spotless and pure. What else can the future bring than increase of the good?" And from that certainty our minds will become serene, and we shall gain the strength of patience and equanimity to bear with all our present adversities. Then our deeds will be our friends (kamma-bandhu).

Likewise, all the various events of our lives, being the result of our deeds, will also be our friends, even if they bring us sorrow and pain. Our deeds return to us in a guise that often makes them unrecognizable. Sometimes our actions return to us in the way that others treat us, sometimes as a thorough upheaval in our lives; often the results are against our expectations or contrary to our wills. Such experiences point out to us consequences of our deeds we did not foresee; they render visible half-conscious motives of our former actions which we tried to hide even from ourselves, covering them up with various pretexts. If we learn to see things from this angle, and to read the message conveyed by our own experience, then suffering, too, will be our friend. It will be a stern friend, but a truthful and well-meaning one who teaches us the most difficult subject, knowledge about ourselves, and warns us against abysses towards which we are moving blindly. By looking at suffering as our teacher and friend, we shall better succeed in enduring it with equanimity. Consequently, the teaching of kamma will give us a powerful impulse for freeing ourselves from kamma, from those deeds which again and again throw

us into the suffering of repeated births. Disgust will arise at our own craving, at our own delusion, at our own propensity to create situations which try our strength, our resistance and our equanimity.

The second insight on which equanimity should be based is the Buddha's teaching of no-self (anatta). This doctrine shows that in the ultimate sense deeds are not performed by any self, nor do their results affect any self. Further, it shows that if there is no self, we cannot speak of "my own." It is the delusion of a self that creates suffering and hinders or disturbs equanimity. If this or that quality of ours is blamed, one thinks: "I am blamed" and equanimity is shaken. If this or that work does not succeed, one thinks: "My work has failed" and equanimity is shaken. If wealth or loved ones are lost, one thinks: "What is mine has gone" and equanimity is shaken.

To establish equanimity as an unshakable state of mind, one has to give up all possessive thoughts of "mine", beginning with little things from which it is easy to detach oneself, and gradually working up to possessions and aims to which one's whole heart clings. One also has to give up the counterpart to such thoughts, all egoistic thoughts of "self", beginning with a small section of one's personality, with qualities of minor importance, with small weaknesses one clearly sees, and gradually working up to those emotions and aversions which one regards as the center of one's being. Thus detachment should be practiced.

To the degree we forsake thoughts of "mine" or "self" equanimity will enter our hearts. For how can anything we realize to be foreign and void of a self cause us agitation due to lust, hatred or grief? Thus the teaching of no-self will be our guide on the path to deliverance, to perfect equanimity.

Equanimity is the crown and culmination of the four

sublime states. But this should not be understood to mean that equanimity is the negation of love, compassion and sympathetic joy, or that it leaves them behind as inferior. Far from that, equanimity includes and pervades them fully, just as they fully pervade perfect equanimity.



PURE LAND READINGS

THE LONGER SUKHAVATIVYUHA SUTRA

*Excerpts - The English translation of the Chinese version attributed to
Sanghavarman*

The Longer Discourse

The Sutra of the Buddha of Measureless Life
Sanghavarman's Chinese version, the Wuliangshou-jing
-translation by Luis O. Gomez in 'The Land of Bliss'

Amitabha Buddha's Purified Field

62. “This buddha-field is naturally composed of the seven precious substances: gold, silver, lapis-lazuli, coral, amber, mother-of-pearl, and agate. The ground is vast and extensive; it is impossible to define its limits. The precious substances intermix everywhere, gradually coming together with one another to form different combinations. And these metals and gems are luminous, resplendent, exquisite, rare, and pure, so that this land surpasses all the worlds in the ten regions of the universe. Made from the essence of all the precious substances in the world, its jewels resemble those of the Sixth Heaven.

63. “Furthermore, in this land there is no Mount Sumeru, or any of the other mountains or land features of a world system down to the ring of Diamond Mountains. There are no great oceans, no small seas, no torrents, no canals, wells, or valleys. Through the majestic power of the Buddha, whatever one desires to see, one will see. Furthermore, there are no hells, hungry ghosts, animals, or any of the painful destinations of rebirth. Furthermore, this land does not have any of the four seasons: spring, fall, winter, or summer. It is neither cold nor hot. The temperature is always moderate, constant, and agreeable.”

64. Then, Ananda addressed the Buddha, saying: "World Honoured One, if there is no Mount Sumeru in that land, where would its gods dwell - the four Heavenly Guardian Kings and the others, up to the gods in Indra's Heaven of the Thirty-Three?" The Buddha said to Ananda: "What about the gods of the Third Heaven, that is, the Realm of the Yama Gods, and all the others, up to the highest gods of the Realm of Pure Form, where do they dwell in this, our world system?"

Ananda said to the Buddha: "The fruits and retributions derived from actions are incomprehensible."

The Buddha said to Ananda: "If the fruits and retributions derived from actions are incomprehensible, every world system over which a buddha presides must be likewise incomprehensible. This is so because all living beings, by the power of their merits and their virtue, inhabit a place corresponding to their actions."

Ananda said to the Buddha: "Personally, I have no doubt with respect to this aspect of Dharma. If I have asked questions on this point, it is only because living beings of future generations will want to overcome these doubts."

Amita Buddha's Radiant Light

65. The Buddha said to Ananda: "Because of his majestic and celestial radiant light, the Buddha of Measureless Life is the first among the Most Honoured Ones. The radiant light of all the buddhas cannot surpass the light of this buddha. His light radiates into the world systems of a hundred buddhas or into the world systems of a thousand buddhas - one would have to say even more, it radiates as far out as all the world systems of all the buddhas in the eastern regions of the universe, which are as numerous as the grains of sand in the Ganges, and one would have to say that it radiates into all the world systems to the south, to the west, to the north, and to the four intermediate cardinal points, and to the zenith and the nadir. Or the light of this buddha radiates to a distance

of only one fathom, or radiates further out to a distance of one league, or two, or three, or four, or five leagues. And it continues to increase again in this manner until it radiates into every corner of a buddha-land.

66. “This is why the Buddha of Measureless Light is called the Buddha of Measureless Light, the Buddha of Boundless Light, the Buddha of Unimpeded Light, the Buddha of Unopposed Light, the Buddha Monarch of Flaming Lights, the Buddha of Pure Light, the Buddha Light of Joy, the Buddha Light of Wisdom, the Buddha of Uninterrupted Light, the Buddha of Inconceivable Light, the Buddha of Ineffable Light, and the Buddha of the Light that Surpasses Sun and Moon.

67. “When living beings come into contact with this light, the three kinds of defilements disappear in them. Their bodies and minds become supple and gentle. They become full of joy and enthusiasm and good thoughts arise in them. Even if they find themselves in one of the three impure realms or in the travail and sufferings of this world, if they see his radiant light, they all find repose and relief and never again are subject to sorrow and afflictions. After their life span comes to its end, they are all led to liberation.

68. “The radiant light of the Buddha of Measureless Life appears and shines in all the buddha-lands in the ten regions of the universe. No one is deprived of hearing and knowing about it. Not only do I praise now his radiant light, but all the buddhas, disciples and individual buddhas, and the host of all the bodhisattvas also praise it in unison in the same way.

69. “Any living beings who hear of his radiant light, his divine majesty, and his virtues, and single-mindedly praise him day and night, without interruption, will obtain, according to the resolution that they expressed in their vows, rebirth in his realm. And there the great host of bodhisattvas and disciples

in unison sing, extol, and praise his virtues for the sake of those reborn there. Subsequently, when those reborn there attain the path of the buddhas, all the buddhas and all the bodhisattvas everywhere in the ten quarters will praise their radiant light, as I now am praising the light of the Buddha of Measureless Life.”

70. The Buddha said: “Even if I were to describe day and night for one whole cosmic age, the majestic power of the radiant light, sublime and extraordinary, of the Buddha of Measureless Life, I could never exhaust its praise.”

Marvels and Ornaments of the Pure Land

77. “Furthermore, that buddha-land is a world system surrounded on all sides by trees made of the seven precious substances. There are trees of gold, trees of silver, trees of lapis-lazuli, trees of rock crystal, trees of coral, trees of agate, and trees of mother-of-pearl. Some trees are made of two precious substances, some are made of three, and so on, up to trees made of the seven precious substances.

78. “Some gold trees have silver leaves, flowers, and fruits. Some silver trees have gold leaves, flowers, and fruits. Some lapis-lazuli trees, trees of agate, and trees of mother-of-pearl. Some trees are made of two precious substances, some are made of three, and so on, up to trees made of the seven precious substances.

78. “Some gold trees have silver leaves, flowers, and fruits. Some silver trees have gold leaves, flowers, and fruits. Some lapis-lazuli trees have leaves, flowers, and fruits made of crystal, and so forth. Some crystal trees have leaves, flowers, and fruits made of lapis-lazuli, and so forth. Some coral trees have leaves, flowers, and fruits made of agate. Some agate trees have leaves, flowers, and fruits made of lapis-lazuli. Some mother-of-pearl trees have their leaves, flowers, and fruits

made of all sorts of gems.

79. "Some jewel trees have roots made of purple gold, trunks of white silver, branches of lapis-lazuli, boughs of crystal, leaves of coral, flowers of agate, and fruits of mother-of-pearl. Some jewel trees have roots made of white silver, trunks of lapis-lazuli, branches of crystal, boughs of coral, leaves of agate, flowers of mother-of-pearl, and fruits of purple gold. Some jewel trees have roots made of lapis-lazuli, trunks of crystal, branches of coral, boughs of agate, leaves of mother-of-pearl, flowers of purple gold, and fruits of white silver. Some jewel trees have roots made of crystal, trunks of coral, branches of agate, boughs of mother-of-pearl, leaves of purple gold, flowers of white silver, and fruits of lapis-lazuli. Some jewel trees have roots made of coral, trunks of agate, branches of mother-of-pearl, boughs of purple gold, leaves of white silver, flowers of lapis-lazuli, and fruits of crystal. Some jewel trees have roots made of agate, trunks of mother-of-pearl, branches of purple gold, boughs of white silver, leaves of lapis lazuli, flowers of crystal, and fruits of coral. Some jewel trees have roots made of mother-of-pearl, trunks of purple gold, branches of white silver, boughs of lapis-lazuli, leaves of crystal, flowers of coral, and fruits of agate.

80. "These trees all stand in neat rows next to each other, the trunks facing each other, the branches following one after the other, the leaves facing each other, the flowers following one after the other, and the fruits touching each other. Their blazing colours and lights shine so that one can barely look at them directly. Occasionally, pure breezes blow among these trees, producing the five tones of the musical scale, and these delicate and mysterious tunes harmonise spontaneously.

Amita Buddha's Tree of Awakening

81. "Furthermore, the tree under which the Buddha of measureless life practised the Way of Awakening is four million leagues high, its roots spread out five thousand leagues,

its branches and leaves extend in the four directions for two million leagues. All kinds of jewels combine naturally in this tree - the jewel called Moonbeam Pearl, the jewel called Bearing the Circle of the Sea, and other monarchs among the jewels. And between its boughs covered with ornaments hang jewelled garlands with hundreds of thousands of myriad colours of different and varying hues, shining with numberless dazzling lights. Extraordinarily rare and precious jewelled nets hang over the tree. Every ornament appears in response to a person's desire.

82. "And a subtle breeze stirs, so that marvellous sounds of Dharma flow from that tree into all the buddha-realms in the ten regions of the universe. Those who hear these sounds attain the serene acceptance of the Deepest Dharma and remain in the condition of not falling back from awakening: they will attain the Way of a Buddha without ever again encountering pain or sorrow. The eyes that have seen the colours of this tree, the ears that have heard its sounds, the nose that has smelled its fragrance, the tongue that has tasted its tastes, the body that has been touched by its light, as well as the mind with all its thoughts and mental states - they all attain the serene acceptance of the Deepest Dharma, they will continue on the Path without ever falling back until they attain the Way of a Buddha, and their six sense organs remain pure and serene, free from all pain and sorrow.

83. "Ananda, when humans and gods in this realm see this tree, they attain the three levels of serene acceptance of the Dharma: first, serene acceptance of the word, second, serene acceptance of compliance, and third, serene acceptance of non arising. All this comes from the majestic power of the Buddha of Measureless Life, from the power of his former vows, from the fulfilment of his vows, from the full realisation of his vows, from the establishment of his vows, from the completion of his vows.

The Music and Other Marvels of the Pure Land

84. "The Buddha said to Ananda: "Earthly Kings enjoy a hundred thousand varieties of music. From the musical tunes enjoyed by wheel-turning emperors, up to those enjoyed in the Sixth Heaven, each surpasses the preceding by ten thousand billion times. The ten thousand kinds of musical melodies of the Sixth Heaven, even if they were a hundred million times better than they are, cannot be compared to any one of the varieties of tunes produced among these trees in this country of the Buddha of Measureless Life - trees made of the seven precious substances. Moreover, in this realm there are ten thousand varieties of spontaneous music. Furthermore, these musical tunes consist only of the sounds of Dharma heard in a clear, soft, and exquisite symphony, which is the first and foremost among all the sounds in all the world systems in the ten regions of the universe.

85. "And again the lecture halls, the monks' quarters, the palaces, and the watchtowers are all adorned with the seven precious substances, created miraculously. And curtains studded with genuine pearls, the Bright Moon jewel, and other gems hang over and envelop these buildings.

86. "Inside and outside, on the left and on the right, are bathing ponds - some measuring ten leagues, some twenty, thirty, and so on, up to ten thousand leagues. In the width, length, and depth each measures the same and is filled to the brim with water possessing the eight good qualities. Pure, clean, and fragrant is the water, and most sweet to taste, like ambrosia. The floor of those ponds that are made of yellow gold is spread with white silver sands; the floor of ponds made of white silver is spread with yellow gold sands. The floor of crystal ponds is spread with lapis lazuli sands; the floor of lapis-lazuli ponds is spread with crystal sands. The floor of coral ponds is spread with amber sands; the floor of amber

ponds is spread with coral sands. The floor of mother-of-pearl ponds is spread with agate sands; the floor of agate ponds is spread with mother-of-pearl sands. The floor of white jade ponds is spread with purple gold sands; the floor of purple gold ponds is spread with white jade sands. Some are adorned with sands of two precious substances, others with sands of three precious substances, and so forth, so that some are adorned with sands made of all seven precious substances.

87. "On the banks of these ponds grow sandalwood trees: their leaves and flowers spread perfume all over the sky. And various blossoms spread on the surface of the water - the blue water lily, the lotus, the white water lily, and the white lotus - shining with the various colours. If the bodhisattvas and disciples enter these jewelled ponds and wish that the water cover only their feet, the water will only cover them up to the feet. If they wish that the water reach only to their knees, the water will reach up only to the knees. If they wish that the water reach only to their waist, the water will reach up only to the waist. If they wish that the water reach only as high as their neck, the water will reach only as high as the neck. If they wish that the water bathe all their body, the water will spontaneously and naturally bathe their whole body. If they wish to make the water recede, it will recede at once. How warm or cool the water will be is regulated spontaneously, naturally, and exactly as they may wish it to be. It opens the mind, delights the body, and washes away all impurities from the heart. It is pure, clear, and limpid - so pure that it is imperceptible. The sands made of precious substances are so brilliant that there is no depth that they will not illuminate. Gentle waves ripple back and forth on the surface, flowing into each other softly as they slowly fade, never too slowly, never rushed - yet these ripples miraculously produce endless marvellous sounds.

88. "There is no sound in that land that one will not be

able to hear if one so desires. One will hear the sound of the word 'Buddha', or one will hear the sound of the word 'Dharma', or one will hear the sound of the word 'Sangha'; or one will hear the sound 'calm', the sound 'empty and without a self', the sound 'great compassion', the sound 'perfect virtues', or the sounds 'ten powers, ten conditions of fearlessness, eighteen unique qualities of a Buddha', or the sound 'supernormal powers and knowledges', the sound 'unconditioned', or the sound 'neither arising nor ceasing', or the sound 'serene acceptance of non arising', and so forth, even up to the sound of the words 'bodhisattvas anointed with the ambrosia of Dharma', and the sound of the words for all kinds of other sublime truths, virtues, and states of spiritual advancement.

89. "The joy of anyone listening to such sounds has no limits. It is a joy that reflects purity, freedom from desire, calm, and truth. It is the joy associated with the Three Treasures, the ten powers, the ten conditions of fearlessness, and the eighteen unique qualities of buddhas. It is the joy found in the path of supernormal powers and knowledges, which is followed by bodhisattvas and disciples.

90. "In this land the names of the three impure realms, of suffering, and of the difficult forms of rebirth are not to be found. On the contrary, the sound of the word 'bliss' occurs spontaneously. This is why this realm is called 'Land of Peace and Happiness'.

The Living Beings Inhabiting the Pure Land

91. "Ananda, all the living beings that go to be re-born in this buddha's land possess the following qualities: bodies of pure colour, marvellous voices, supernormal powers, and merits. The palaces in which they reside, the clothing they wear, and the food they eat, the flowers that adorn them, the

perfumes and ornaments they wear are like the possessions of the gods of the Sixth Heaven, which appear spontaneously. If they wish to eat, vessels made of the seven precious substances appear spontaneously before them according to their wish. According to each one's desires, there will appear different vessels made of gold, silver, lapis-lazuli, mother-of-pearl, agate, coral, and amber, as well as genuine Moonbeam pearls. Many vessels such as these, if one so desires, are filled spontaneously with food and drink of a hundred different flavours. But, even though their meals appear before them in this manner, these living beings do not consume the food; rather, they look at the colour, taste the flavour, and, by merely thinking of eating, their hunger is sated miraculously. Their bodies and minds become supple and tender, and the taste of this food does not cling to them. When the vessels have served their purpose, they disappear; as time passes, they reappear.

92. "That buddha's land is pure and peaceful, blessed with the exquisite and rare joys found in the unconditioned Way of nirvana.

The Splendour of the Pure Land

99. The Buddha said to Ananda: "As to the gods and humans in the country of the Buddha of Measureless Life, the clothing, the meals, the flowers, the incense, the strings of gems, the parasols and banners, the wonderful sounds they enjoy, and the mansions, palaces, and towers where they live are in shape and size variously high or low, large or small. Or, again, these gods and humans obtain one precious substance, or two, or even as many as countless different kinds of precious substances the moment the wish comes to mind and exactly as they want them to be. And wonderful tapestries, studded with all kinds of gems, are spread on the ground all over, and every human and god walks on these.

Nets studded with countless gems are stretched all over this Buddha-land. All are decorated with golden laces, genuine pearls, and hundreds of thousands of various kinds of gems that are rare, wonderful, and unique. These ornaments extend everywhere into the four corners of that land, with jewelled bells, perfumes, and bright colours shining splendidly, in the most charming way.

100. “Breezes blow spontaneously, gently moving these bells, which swing gracefully. The breezes blow in perfect harmony. They are neither hot nor cold. They are at the same time calm and fresh, sweet and soft. They are neither fast nor slow. When they blow on the nets and the many kinds of jewels, the trees emit the innumerable sounds of the subtle and sublime Dharma and spread myriad sweet and fine perfumes. Those who hear the sounds spontaneously cease to raise the dust of tribulation and impurity. When the breezes touch their bodies they all attain a bliss comparable to that accompanying a monk’s attainment of the samadhi of extinction.

101. “Moreover, when they blow, the breezes scatter flowers all over, filling this Buddha-field. These flowers fall in patterns, according to their colours, without ever getting mixed up. They have delicate hues and strong fragrance. When one steps on these petals the feet sink four inches. When one lifts the foot, the petals return to their original shape and position. When these flowers stop falling, the ground suddenly opens up, and they disappear as if by magic. They remain pure and do not decay, because, at a given time, the breezes blow again and scatter the flowers. And the same process occurs six times a day.

102. “Moreover, many jewel lotuses fill this world system. Each jewel blossom has a hundred thousand million petals. The radiant light emanating from their petals is of countless different colours. Blue coloured flowers give out a blue light. White coloured flowers give out a white light.

Others have a deep colour and light, and some are of yellow, red, and purple colour and light. But the splendour of each of these lights surpasses the radiance of the sun and the moon. From each flower issue thirty-six hundred thousand million rays of light. From each one of these rays issue thirty-six hundred thousand million buddhas. Their bodies have the colour of purple gold and in them the major marks and minor signs that adorn buddhas and bodhisattvas are rare and extraordinary. Moreover, each one of those buddhas emits hundreds of thousands of rays of light that spread out everywhere in the ten quarters and proclaim the subtle and sublime Dharma. In this way, each of these buddhas firmly establishes innumerable living beings in the Buddha's True Way.

***Bodhisattvas from Other Fields
Come to Praise Amita***

114 The Buddha said to Ananda: "The august majesty of the Buddha of Measureless Life is unsurpassable. All the countless, boundless, inconceivable buddhas tathagatas in all the world systems in the ten directions of the universe without exception praise him. The throng of the countless, innumerable bodhisattvas of the buddha-fields in the eastern regions of the universe, bodhisattvas that are as many as the sands of the river Ganges, come to visit the Buddha of Measureless Life, in order to pay homage to him and to worship him with offerings. And the great assembly of bodhisattvas and disciples hear the great sermon on the Dharma, and they spread it far and wide, guiding others in the Path. Buddhas, bodhisattvas, and disciples in the southern, western and northern regions of the universe, and those in the four intermediary regions, and those in the regions of the zenith and the nadir do likewise".

115 Then the Buddha pronounced these verses:

WORSHIP AND PRAISE

- (1) “From the Buddha-fields in the eastern direction, as many as the grains of sand in the Ganges, come bodhisattvas to this land to pay their respects to the Awakened One called Measureless.
- (2) “And likewise, bodhisattvas from the lands in the south, west, north, in the intermediate directions, in the zenith and nadir, come to this land to pay their respects to the Awakened One called Measureless.
- (3) “Each of these bodhisattvas brings wonderful heavenly blossoms, jewels, incense, and priceless garments, worshipping with these offerings the Awakened One called Measureless.
- (4) “In perfect harmony they play heavenly music, producing harmonious sounds. They sing praises to the One Most Worthy of Honour, worshipping with these offerings the Awakened One called Measureless.
- (5) “And they say:
“ ‘You have realised fully the supernormal powers and superior knowledge;
you have entered easily the gates of the profound Dharma; you possess a treasury of merits;
your marvellous wisdom is without compare.’

- (6) “The sun of his wisdom shines on the world, and dissolves the clouds of birth and death, as they reverently walk around him three times, and bow before him - no one being more deserving of honour than him.
- (7) “And they say:
“‘We see this adorned and pure land, sublime and inconceivable. We resolve to attain the unsurpassable Way, resolving that our lands too will be like this one.’

SMILE AND PROPHECY

- (8) “At this moment, Measureless, the Worthy One, changes his expression and breaks into a warm smile, and from his mouth issue numberless rays of light, shining everywhere into the ten regions of the universe.
- (9) “Returning to him, this light envelopes his body, circles him three times, and enters through the crown of his head, and the host of all heavenly beings are all filled with enthusiasm and joy.
- (10) “Then the Great Master Avalokiteshvara, Who Watches Over the Cries of the World, rearranges his robe, and, prostrating himself on the ground, asks, addressing the Buddha:
‘Why do you smile like this? Pray, tell me!’
- (11) “The Buddha’s voice, like that of a Brahma, rolls like thunder,
with the eight good qualities, unimpeded, and resounding marvellously:
‘I will give now the bodhisattva prophecy.

I will declare it. Listen attentively!

- (12) “ From the ten quarters come men of the right path. I know fully all their vows - they seek to adorn and purify a field. They will attain assurance, and they will surely attain buddhahood.
- (13) “They have fully realised that all things are like dreams, magical creations, or echoes. Yet, they have fulfilled all their marvellous vows and surely will create a field like this one.
- (14) “They know that all things are like a flash of lightning or like shadows. Yet, they practice fully the Bodhisattva Way, gain possession of all the roots of merit, and attain assurance that they will certainly reach buddhahood.
- (15) “They have thoroughly realised the true nature of all things, understanding that all things are empty and without a self. Yet, they will single-mindedly seek to purify a buddha-field, and surely will create a field like this one.
- (16) “All buddhas exhort the bodhisattvas to go and pay their respects to the Buddha of the Land of Peace and Nurturance, and to listen to the Dharma he preaches, rejoice in it, adopt it, and put it into practice, that they may swiftly attain their own purified land.
- (17) “Once you reach this adorned and purified field, you will rapidly gain supernormal powers

you will definitively receive from the Worthy Buddha called Measureless the prediction that you will realise full awakening.

THE VOW

- 115 (18) “By the power of the former vows of this Buddha, they hear his name and desire to go to be reborn in his land.
They all will reach his land, and themselves reach that state from which there is no falling back.
- (19) “Each bodhisattva has made this resolution:
‘I vow that my land will be the same as this one, and that I will only think of ferrying across all living beings, by revealing my name throughout the ten regions of the universe.’
- (20) “They present offerings and serve a million tathagatas, flying by their magical powers to every field, paying homage, rejoicing, and returning then to the Land of Peace and Nurturance.

WHO CAN HEAR AND UNDERSTAND

- (21) “A person who has no roots of good will not be able to hear this sutra.
But those who are pure and in possession of the precepts will eventually hear the True Dharma.
- (22) “Those who in the past saw the Buddha are now able to put their trust in these words.
With humility and reverence they hear how one should adopt the practice,
and they are filled with enthusiasm and great joy.

- (23) “Arrogant, conniving, and lazy minds
can never trust his Dharma.
Those who saw the Buddha in their past lives
will rejoice in hearing such a teaching.

ONLY BUDDHAS UNDERSTAND

- (24) “Neither disciples, nor bodhisattvas
can fathom the Buddha’s holy mind -
it would be as if one who is born blind
might desire to become a guide to all people.
- (25) “The ocean of the Tathagata’s wisdom is deep,
wide, immeasurable, and without shores or
bottom.
The followers of the two other Vehicles
cannot fathom it.
Only buddhas can understand it clearly on
their own.
- (26) “Even if all human beings
gained possession of the Way,
and with pure wisdom knew the fundamental
emptiness of all things,
and for a million cosmic ages meditated on
the Buddha’s wisdom.
- (27) “And even if they mustered their best efforts
in teaching the Dharma to the utmost,
until they had exhausted their own lives,

still they would never get to know the Buddha's
wisdom,
which has no bound - such is this wisdom pure.

- (28) “It is extremely difficult to obtain a reasonably long
life span;
it is also difficult to meet a buddha in this life,
and it is difficult for a human being to have faith and
wisdom.
If you hear this, seek the Path with vigour.
- (29) “If you hear the Dharma and are able to keep it in
mind,
examine it with reverence and wisdom and great joy;
then you will be my good friend.
You should resolve, therefore, to follow the Way!
- (30) “One should resolve:
“Even if the whole world were on fire,
I would nevertheless remain in it to listen to the
Dharma,
so that, once I have attained the Way of a buddha,
I will be able to save from this flood of birth and
death,
every living being everywhere.”

*from The Land of Bliss. The Paradise of the Buddha of Measureless
Light Translated by Luis O Gomez, published by University of Hawaii
Press, 1996*

THE SMALLER SUKHAVATIVYUHA SUTRA

The Buddha speaks of Amitabha Sutra

Thus have I heard, at one time, the Buddha dwelt at Shravasti in the Jeta Grove in the garden of the benefactor of orphans and the solitary, together with a gathering of great Bhikshus twelve hundred fifty in all, all great Arhats whom the assembly knew and recognised: elders Shariputra, Mahamaudgalyayana, Mahakasyapa, Mahakatyayana, Mahakaushila, Revata, Suddhipanthaka, Nanda, Ananda, Rahula, Gavampati, Pindola-Bharadvaja, Kalodayin, Mahakaphina, Vakkula, Aniruddha, and others such as these, all great disciples; together with all the Bodhisattvas, Mahasattvas: Dharma prince Manjushri, Ajita Bodhisattva, Gandhastin Bodhisattva, Nityodukta Bodhisattva, and others such as these, all great Bodhisattvas; and together with Shakra, chief among gods, and the numberless great multitudes from all the heavens.

At that time the Buddha told the elder Shariputra, “passing from here through hundreds of thousands of millions of Buddhalands to the West, there is a world called Ultimate Bliss. In this land a Buddha called Amitabha right now teaches the Dharma. Shariputra, for what reason is this land called Ultimate Bliss? All living beings of this country endure none of the sufferings, but enjoy every bliss. Therefore it is called Ultimate Bliss.

Moreover, Shariputra, this land of Ultimate Bliss is everywhere surrounded by seven tiers of railings, seven layers of netting, and seven rows of trees, all formed from the four treasures and for this reason named Ultimate Bliss.

Moreover, Shariputra, the land of Ultimate Bliss has pools of the seven jewels, filled with the eight waters of merit and

virtue. The bottom of each pool is pure, spread over with golden sand. On the four sides are stairs of gold, silver, lapis-lazuli and crystal; above are raised pavilions adorned with gold, silver, lapis-lazuli, crystal, mother-of-pearl, red pearls and carnelian. In the pools are lotuses as large as carriage wheels: green coloured of green light; yellow coloured of yellow light; red coloured of red light; white coloured of white light; subtly, wonderfully fragrant and pure. Shariputra, the realisation of the land of ultimate Bliss is thus meritoriously adorned. Moreover, Shariputra, in that land there is always heavenly music, and the ground is yellow gold. In the six periods of the day and night a heavenly rain of mandarava flowers falls, and throughout the clear morning each living being of this land, with sacks full of the myriads of wonderful flowers, makes offerings to the hundreds of thousands of millions of Buddhas of the other directions. At mealtime they return to their own country, and having eaten they stroll around. Shariputra, the realisation of the land of Ultimate Bliss is thus meritoriously adorned.

Moreover, Shariputra, in this country there are always rare and wonderful varicoloured birds: white cranes, peacocks, parrots and egrets, kalavinkas, and two headed birds. In the six periods of the day and night, the flocks of birds sing forth harmonious and elegant sounds. Their clear and joyful sounds proclaim the five roots, the five powers, the seven bodhi limbs, the eight sagely way limbs, and Dharmas such as these. When living beings of this land hear these sounds, they are altogether mindful of the Buddha, mindful of the Dharma, and mindful of the Sangha.

Shariputra, do not say that these birds are born as retribution for their karmic offences. For what reason? In this Buddhaland there are no three evil ways of rebirth. Shariputra, in this Buddhaland not even the names of the three evil ways exist, how much less their actuality! Desiring that the Dharma sound be widely proclaimed, Amitabha Buddha by transformation made this multitude of birds.

Shariputra, in that Buddhaland, when the soft wind blows, the rows of jewelled trees and jewelled nets give forth subtle and wonderful sounds, like one hundred thousand kinds of music played at the same time. All those who hear this sound naturally bring forth in their hearts mindfulness of the Buddha, mindfulness of the Dharma, and mindfulness of the Sangha. Shariputra, the realisation of the land of Ultimate Bliss is thus meritoriously adorned.

Shariputra, what you think? Why is this Buddha called Amitabha? Shariputra, the brilliance of that Buddha's light is measureless, illumining the land of the ten directions everywhere without obstruction; for this reason he is called Amitabha.

Moreover, Shariputra, the life of that Buddha and that of his people extends for measureless limitless asankhyeya kalpas: for this reason he is called Amitayus. And Shariputra, since Amitabha realised Buddhahood, ten kalpas have passed. Moreover, Shariputra, that Buddha has measureless, limitless sound-hearer disciples, all arhats, their number incalculable; thus also is the assembly of Bodhisattvas. Shariputra, the realisation of the land of Ultimate Bliss is thus meritoriously adorned.

Moreover, Shariputra, those living beings born in the land of Ultimate Bliss are all Avaivartika. Among them are many who in this very life will dwell in Buddhahood. Their number is extremely many; it is incalculable and only in measureless, limitless asankhyeya kalpas could it be spoken. Shariputra, those living beings who hear should vow, "I wish to be born in that country". And why? All those who thus attain are all superior and good people, all coming together in one place. Shariputra, one cannot have few good roots, blessings, virtues, and causal connections to attain birth in that land. Shariputra, if there is a good man or woman who hears spoken "Amitabha" and holds the name, whether for one day, two days, three, four, five days, six days, as long as seven days,

with one heart unconfused, when this person approaches the end of life, before him will appear Amitabha and all the assembly of holy ones. When the end comes, his heart is without confusion; in Amitabha's land of Ultimate Bliss he will attain rebirth. Shariputra, because I see this benefit, I speak these words: if living beings hear this spoken they should make the vow, "I wish to be born in that land".

Shariputra, as I now praise the inconceivable benefit from the merit and virtue of Amitabha, thus in the East are also Akshobya Buddha, Sumeru Appearance Buddha, Great Sumeru Buddha, Sumeru Light Buddha, Wonderful Sound Buddha; all Buddhas such as these, numberless as Ganges sands. In his own country each bring forth the appearance of a vast and long tongue, everywhere covering the three thousand great thousand worlds, and speaks the sincere and actual words, "all you living beings should believe, praise and hold in reverence the inconceivable merit and virtue of the Sutra of the mindful one of whom all Buddhas are protective".

Shariputra, in the Southern world are Sun Moon Lamp Buddha, Well Known Light Buddha, Great Blazing Shoulders Buddha, Sumeru Lamp Buddha, Measureless Vigour Buddha; all Buddhas such as these, numberless as ganges sands. In in his own country each brings forth the appearance of a vast and long tongue, everywhere covering the three thousand great thousand worlds, and speaks the sincere and actual words, "all you living beings should believe, praise and hold in reverence the inconceivable merit and virtue of this Sutra of the mindful one of whom all Buddhas are protective".

Shariputra, in the Western world are Measureless Life Buddha, Measureless Appearance Buddha, Measureless Curtain Buddha, Great Light Buddha, Great Brightness Buddha, Jewelled Appearance Buddha, and Pure Light Buddha: all Buddhas such as these, numberless as ganges sands. In his own country each brings forth the appearance of a vast and long tongue,

everywhere covering the three thousand great thousand worlds, and speaks the sincere and actual words, "all you living beings should believe, praise and hold in reverence the inconceivable merit and virtue of this Sutra of the mindful one of whom all Buddhas are protective".

Shariputra, in the northern world are Blazing Shoulders Buddha, Most Victorious Sound Buddha, Hard to Injure Buddha, Sun Birth Buddha, Net Brightness Buddha; all Buddhas such as these, numberless as Ganges sands. In his own country each brings forth the appearance of a vast and long tongue, everywhere covering the three thousand great thousand worlds, and speaks the sincere and actual words, "all you living beings should believe, praise and hold in reverence the inconceivable merit and virtue of this Sutra of the mindful one of whom all Buddhas are protective".

Shariputra, in the world below are Lion Buddha, Well-known Buddha, Famous Light Buddha, Dharma Buddha, Dharma Curtain Buddha, Dharma Maintaining Buddha, all Buddhas such as these, numberless as Ganges sands. In his own country each brings forth the appearance of a vast and long tongue, everywhere covering the three thousand great thousand worlds, and speaks the sincere and actual words, "all you living beings should believe, praise and hold in reverence the inconceivable merit and virtue of this Sutra of the mindful one of whom all Buddhas are protective".

Shariputra, in the world above are Pure Sound Buddha, King of Stars Buddha, Superior Fragrance Buddha, Fragrant Light Buddha, Great Blazing Shoulders Buddha, Varicoloured Jewels and Flower Adornment Body Buddha, Sala Tree King Buddha, Jewelled Flower Virtue Buddha, Vision of all Meaning Buddha, Mount Sumeru Buddha; all Buddhas such as these, numberless as Ganges sands. In his own country each brings forth the appearance of a vast and long tongue, everywhere covering

the three thousand great thousand worlds, and speaks the sincere and actual words, "all you living beings should believe, praise and hold in reverence the inconceivable merit and virtue of this Sutra of the mindful one of whom all Buddhas are protective".

Shariputra, what do you think? Why is it called Sutra of the mindful one of whom all Buddhas are protective? Shariputra, if a good man or good woman hears this Sutra and holds to it, and hears the name of all these Buddhas, this good man or woman will be the mindful one of whom all Buddhas are protective, and will irreversibly attain to annutara-samyak-sambodhi. Therefore, Shariputra, all of you should believe and accept my words, and those which all Buddhas speak. Shariputra, if there are people who have already made the vow, who now make the vow, or who are about to make the vow, "I desire to be born in Amitabha's country", these people whether born in the past, now being born, or to be born in the future, all will irreversibly attain annutara-samyak-sambodhi. Therefore, Shariputra, all good men and good women, if they are among those who have faith, should make the vow, "I will be born in that country".

Shariputra, just as I am now one who praises the merit and virtue of all Buddhas, all those Buddhas equally praise my inconceivable merit and virtue saying these words: "Shakyamuni Buddha can complete extremely rare and difficult deeds, in the Saha land, in the evil time of the five turbidities, in the midst of the kalpa turbidity, the view turbidity, the affliction turbidity, the living beings turbidity, and the life turbidity, he can attain annutara-samyak-sambodhi and for the sake of living beings, speak this Dharma which in the whole world is hard to believe".

Shariputra, you should know that I, in the evil time of the five turbidities, practise these difficult deeds, attain annutara-

samyak-sambodhi, and for all the world speak this Dharma, difficult to believe, extremely difficult!”

After the Buddha spoke this Sutra, Shariputra and all the bhikshus, all the Gods, humans and asuras, and others from all the worlds, hearing what the Buddha had said, joyously welcomed, faithfully accepted, bowed and withdrew.

End of the Buddha speaks of Amitabha Sutra.

THE JODO WASAN THE HYMNS OF THE PURE LAND

By Gutoku Shaku Shinran

Namu Amida Butsu

From the time Amitabha became a Buddha
Till the present, ten kalpas have elapsed;
The Dharma Body's light boundlessly
Shines on the darkness in the world.

Immeasurable is the Light of Wisdom.
Of all beings with limited attributes,
None is there unblessed by the Light.
Take refuge in the True Illumination.

Boundless is the Light-wheel of Deliverance.
All those illuminated by the Light
Are freed of being and non-being, says the Buddha.
Take refuge in the Equal Bodhi.

Unhindered like space is the Light-cloud,
Free from all impediments.
None is there unblessed by the Light.
Take refuge in the Inconceivable One.

Unequaled is the Pure, Clean Light.
When we meet (and trust) this Light,
All our karmic bonds are removed.
Take refuge in the Ultimate Resort.

With utmost brightness the Buddha's Light shines;
We call Him Buddha of 'Majestically Flaming Light'.
He breaks the darkness of the Three Realms.
Take refuge in the Great Arhat.

Surpassing is the bright Bodhi-light;
We call Him 'Buddha of Pure Light'.

Once illuminated by the Light, are we
Delivered, with karmic taints removed.

Far-reaching is the Light of Compassion.
Wheresoever the Light reaches,
Will Joy of Dharma arise, says the Buddha.
Take refuge in the Great Consoler.

As He breaks the darkness of ignorance,
We call Him 'Buddha of Wisdom Light'.
All Buddhas and the sages of the Three Vehicles
Praise and laud Him together.

As the Light shines continuously,
We call Him 'Buddha of Unceasing Light'.
By believing in the Power of Light,
Are we born with continuant thought.

As the Buddha's Light is unfathomable,
We call Him 'Buddha of Light Difficult to Conceive'.
Admiring our attainment of Birth,
Buddhas extol Amida's Virtue.

As the formless divine Light is beyond description,
We call Him 'Buddha of Light Ineffable'.
The Light of the One who became the Buddha through the
Vow of Light,
Is praised by all other Buddhas.

As His Light outshines the sun and moon,
We call Him 'Light Outstanding Sun and Moon'.
Sakya's praises cannot exhaust its merit.
Take refuge in the Peerless One.

The holy ones at Amida's first sermon
Were more than could be counted.
The Pure Land aspirants should all
Take refuge in the Great Assemblage.

Innumerable Great Bodhisattvas in the Land of Bliss

Attain the stage of Bound to One Birth.
By relying on the virtue of Samantabhadra,
They surely save men in the defiled world.

For the sake of sentient beings in the ten quarters,
They collect the Tathagata's Dharma-store,
And lead them to rely on the Universal Vow.
Take refuge in the Great Mind Sea.

Avalokitesvara and Mahasthamaprapta together
Illuminate the world with compassionate light;
In order to save those who are related,
They rest not even for a while.

Those gone to the Land of Bliss
Return to the evil world of five defilements,
And like Sakyamuni Buddha
Benefit sentient beings endlessly.

The free use of their divine power
No-one can ever fathom or measure.
Endowed are They with inconceivable virtue.
Take refuge in the Most Honourable One.

In the Land of Bliss, Sravakas, Bodhisattvas,
Men and devas excel in wisdom;
Their adornments and physical marks are all alike.
As in the other worlds, these names also exist.

Serene are Their visages incomparable;
Unlike men and deva's are Their forms exquisite;
Their bodies are empty and limitless.
Take refuge in the Equalising Power.

The aspirants for the Land of Peace and Bliss
Dwell in the Rightly Established State;
Men of Improperly Established and Indeterminate States
Are not in the Land. Hence, Buddhas praise Him.

The sentient beings of various existences

Of the ten quarters, hearing of Amida's name
Of utmost virtue and attaining True Faith,
Rejoice exceedingly at what they have heard.

Due to His vow, ['If (they are not born'...),]
The time for awakening Serene Faith being ripe,
For him in whom One Thought of Joy arises,
Birth is certainly determined.

The subordinate and the principal fruitions
Of the Buddha Land of Bliss were perfected
By Dharmakara's Vow-power, unsurpassed in heaven or earth.
Take refuge in the Great Mind Power.

The adornments in the Land of Peace and Bliss,
Even by the Sakyan Sage, with unhindered eloquence,
Cannot be fully described. So says the Buddha.
Take refuge in the Ineffable Buddha.

Those born in the past, present or future
Are not beings of this world only,
But those from the Buddha-lands in the ten quarters;
They are immeasurable, innumerable and countless.

When one hears the Name of Amida Buddha,
Adoring It with a joyful mind,
He, possessing the treasure of merit,
Attains the Unsurpassing Great Benefit in One Thought.

If the great chilocosm be aflame,
He who dares pass through the fire
To hear the Sacred Name of the Buddha,
Will attain the Non-retrogressive Stage forever.

Amida of the Limitless divine Power
The immeasurable Buddhas praise and laud.
From the eastern Buddha-lands, (as many as) sands of the
Ganges,
Countless Bodhisattvas visit Him.

From the Buddha-lands of the other nine quarters
Bodhisattvas visit Him in a like manner.
The Sakyan Sage, Tathagata, in a gatha
Praises Amida's immeasurable virtues.

Immeasurable Bodhisattvas of the Ten Quarters,
In order to implant the root of virtues,
Revere and praise Him with gathas.
All men, take refuge in the Bhagavat.

The seven-jewelled Hall and Bodhi-tree
Of the Pure Land of the Expedient Transformed Buddha.
Countless are those coming from the ten quarters.
Homage to the Hall and Bodhi-tree.

The Exquisite Land, vast and immense,
Has arisen from the glory of the Original Vow.
Bow to and take refuge in
The Pure, Magnanimous Embracer.

Self-benefiting others have been perfected,
The expediently and skilfully designed adornments on which
we rely,
The mind fails to grasp or find words to describe.
Take refuge in the Inconceivable Sage.

The divine Power and the Original Vow!
The Perfect, Clear, Firm and Fulfilling Vow.
Inconceivable is the Compassionate Means.
Take refuge in the Truly Unfathomable One.

Delicate sounds of the jewelled trees of the jewelled forests
Produce natural music, serene and consonant.
Excellent are the pathos, grace, elegance and resonance.
Take refuge in the Pure Music.

The Land abounds with seven-jewelled trees and forests;
Their radiances reflect each other;
The blossoms, fruits, bough and leaves shine likewise.
Take refuge in the Merit-store of the Vow.

When the pure breeze wafts the jewelled trees,
Producing the sounds of the five notes,
Each harmonises with the other naturally.
Worship the Pure, Meritorious One.
From within each and every flower,
Thirty-six hundred thousand kotis
Of rays shine forth brilliantly;
No place is there where they do not reach.

From within each and every flower,
Thirty-six hundred thousand kotis
Of Buddhas appear, equal in number to the rays;
Their signs and marks are like the golden mountain.

From each sign and mark, a hundred thousand
Rays are sent forth to the ten quarters;
He preaches the wondrous Dharma always,
And leads the beings into the Path of Buddhahood.

The seven-jewelled treasure-ponds are pure and clean,
Filled to the brim with the water of the eight merits.
Inconceivable is the undefiled subordinate Recompense.
Take refuge in the Utmost Honourable One.

Infinitely Wise Ones of the three periods in the ten quarters,
All by riding the vehicle of Oneness,
Attain the perfect Twofold Wisdom and Equal Bodhi;
Inconceivable is the act of saving according to the conditions.

To take refuge in the Pure Land of Amida
Is to take refuge in all the Buddhas' (Lands);
To praise one Buddha with one mind
Is to praise the Unhindered Ones.

If you have Faith and Joy, rejoicing at what you have heard,
And raise a Sincere Mind even once,
In adoring the Buddha of Inconceivable Light,
You should bow your head at His feet.

I have praised the Buddha's Mercy and Virtue

So that the sentient beings of the ten quarters may hear it.
Those who have already attained Faith
Should always try to repay His Benevolence.

THE JODO WASAN

ANOTHER TRANSLATION OF PART OF IT

By Gutoku Shaku Shinran

Since the attainment of Buddhahood by Amitabha,
Ten kalpas have now passed away;
The Light radiating from the Dharmakaya has no limits:
It illumines the world's blindness and darkness.

The Light of his wisdom is measureless,
All conditional forms without exception
Are enveloped in the Dawning Light:
Therefore take refuge in the Pure Light.

Amitabha's Light is like a wheel radiating without bounds.
Buddha declared that all things embraced by his Light
Are freed from all forms of being and non-being.
Take refuge in the One who is universally Enlightened.

The clouds of Light have, like space, no hindrances;
All that have obstructions are not impeded by them;
There is no one who is not embraced in his Soft Light
Take refuge in him who is beyond thought.

Nothing can be compared to His Pure Light;
The result of encountering this Light
Destroys all karma bondage:
So take refuge in Him who is the Ultimate Haven.

Amitabha Buddha's Illumining Light is above all,
So he is called the Sovereign Buddha of Flaming Light,
The darkness of the three evil paths is opened:
Take refuge in the Great Arhat.

The radiance of His Light of Truth surpasses all,
So He is called the Buddha of Pure Light;
Those who are embraced in the Light
Are cleansed from the dirt of karma and attain emancipation.

However far His Light illumines, love penetrates,
The joy of faith is attained,
So we are told,
Take refuge in the Great One who gives comfort.

He is known as the Buddha of the Light of Prajna
Because he dispels the darkness of ignorance;
The Buddhas and the beings of the Three Vehicles
All join in praising Him.

As there is a constant flow of Light,
He is known as the Buddha of Constancy;
Because of perceiving the power of light with uninterrupted
faith,
We are born into the Pure Land.

As the Buddha of Light knows naught of measurement,
He is known as the Buddha of Unthinkable Light;
All other Buddhas praise the Ojo
And the virtues of Buddha Amitabha are extolled.

As his Wondrous Light transcends form and description,
He is known as the Buddha of Inexpressible Light;
His Light has the power to enlighten beings:
He is praised by all the Buddhas.

As his Light surpasses that of the Sun and the Moon,
He is known as the Sun-and-Moon surpassing Light;
Shayamuni could not praise him enough:
Take refuge in the One who is peerless.

At the first Discourse given by Amitabha,
The holy multitudes were beyond calculation;
Those who wish to go to the Pure Land
Should take refuge in the Buddha who commands great num-
bers.

The numberless great Bodhisattvas in the Land of Bliss
After one birth more will become Buddhas;
When they have taken refuge in the virtues of Fugen

They will come back to this world in order to teach beings.

For the sake of all beings in the ten quarters
They gather up all the Dharma-treasures of Tathagatahood,
And to save them lead them to the Original Vow.
Take refuge in the Ocean of the Great Heart.

Together with Kannon and Seishi,
He illumines the world with the Light of Mercy;
Leading all those in ripe condition for the Dharma,
He knows no time for rest.

Those who reach the Land of Purity and Happiness,
When they return to this world of five defilements
Like Buddha Shakyamuni work without cessation
For the welfare of all beings.

The miraculous power and self-mastery
Enjoyed by them is beyond calculation;
They have accumulated virtues beyond thought:
Take refuge in the Honoured One who is Peerless.

Sravakas and Bodhisattvas in the Land of Happiness,
Men and gods all radiant in Prajna,
In form and appearance are equally majestic;
But different names are given according to this world.

They are incomparably perfect in features,
Exquisite in bodily form, their equals cannot be found;
Appearing from the Void, yet they have infinite form:
Take refuge in the Power to whom all beings are equal.

Those who aspire to the Land of Happiness
must abide 'in the group of perfect faith'
None are to be found there who long for wrong or unsettled
faith,
and they are praised by all the Buddhas.

When all beings in every condition within the ten quarters,
Endowed with all the excellent virtues,

Hearing the name of Amitabha with sincerity of heart,
Attain faith; how they will rejoice at what they hear!

SHOSHINGE

By Shinran Shonin

I take refuge in the Tathagata of Infinite Life;
I take refuge in the Buddha of Inconceivable Light.
Dharmakara, at the outset of his career as a Bodhisattva,
Was in the presence of Lokeshvarar, the Enlightened One.

He saw the pure lands of many Buddhas, observed how they
had been established,
And examined everything, good and bad, about the humans
and devas inhabiting them.
He then brought forth the unsurpassed and most excellent
Vows,
The Great Vows, immeasurable in scope and depth, which the
world had never known.

Dharmakara chose and cherished his Vows after
contemplation for five kalpas.
He further promised that his name would be heard
throughout the ten directions.
Amida sends forth universally the immeasurable and
boundless Light,
The unimpeded, incomparable and majestically flaming Light,

The Pure Light, The Light of Joy, the Light of Wisdom,
The unceasing, inconceivable and ineffable Light,
And the Light outshining the sun and the moon; with these
Lights He illumines the innumerable worlds.
All sentient beings are shone upon by His Light.

The Name promised in the Primal Vow is the Act of Right
Assurance;
The Vow of Sincere Mind and Joyful Faith provides the cause
of our birth;
To attain the state next to the Buddha and realize Great

Nirvana

Is due to the fulfillment of the Vow which assures our unflinching attainment of Nirvana.

The reason for the Buddha's appearance in the world
Is, above all, to expound the Primal Vow of Amida, wide and
deep as the ocean.

All beings in the evil age of the five defilements
Should believe in the truth of the Buddha's words.

If the single thought of Joy and Gratitude is awakened in us,
We shall realize Nirvana without severing our blind passions.
When ordinary people and sages as well as those who
commit the gravest offences and abusers of the Dharma are
taken into the Vow,
They become one in spiritual attainment, just as many rivers
become of one taste upon entering the sea.

The Light of All-embracing Compassion always illumines and
protects us;
The darkness of ignorance has already been destroyed by it,
But still the clouds and mists of greed, desire, anger and
enmity
Continually cover the sky of True Faith;

Yet, just as the sunlight is obstructed by clouds or mists,
Below them it is light and there is no darkness.
When we receive Faith, regard and revere the Dharma, and
attain great Joy,
We immediately transcend the five evil realms.

If ordinary people, whether good or evil,
Hear the Dharma and trust Amida's Universal Vow,
Shakyamuni praises them as 'men of great and superior
understanding';
Such people are called 'white lotus flowers'.

The Nembutsu promised in the Primal Vow of Amida Buddha
Is difficult for evil people who have wrong views and are
arrogant

To receive and retain with Joyful Faith;
Of all difficulties nothing is more difficult than that.

The discourse-writers of India, the land in the west,
And the Noble masters of China and Japan
Revealed the true purpose of the Great Sage's appearance
And clarified that Amida's Primal Vow responds to our need.

Shakyamuni, the Tathagata, while dwelling on Mount La,
Prophesied to the assembly of monks that in Southern India
A Great Being named Nagarjuna would appear in the world
And destroy all the wrong views on 'existence' and 'non-
existence'.

Proclaiming the unsurpassed teaching of Mahayana
He would reach the Stage of Joy and attain birth in the Land
of Peace and Bliss.
He taught that the difficult practices are toilsome, like
travelling by land,
And urged us to believe that the Easy Practice is pleasant, like
sailing on water.

When a thought of mindfulness of Amida's Primal Vow arises,
At that instant we spontaneously enter the Stage of
Assurance.
Always reciting only the Name of the Tathagata,
We should seek to repay our indebtedness to His Great
Compassion.

The Bodhisattva Vasubandhu composed a discourse,
in which he professed that he took refuge in the Tathagata of
Unhindered Light;
In accordance with the sutras he expounded the true merits,

And clarified that the Great Vow enables us to leap over
Samsara crosswise.

He revealed One Mind in order to emancipate multitudes of
beings

Through Amida's transference of merits by the Power of His
Primal Vow.

Upon entering the Great Treasure-Ocean of Merits,
We will unfailingly join the Great Assemblage.

Upon reaching the World of Lotus-store,

We will realize True Suchness and attain Dharma-body.

Then, playing in the forests of evil passions, we will display
supernatural powers;

Entering Samsaric states, we will manifest accommodative and
transformed bodies to save beings.

Master T'an-luan was venerated by the King of Liang;

Facing toward his place, the king worshipped him as a
Bodhisattva.

When Bodhiruci, the Tripitaka master, gave him a Pure Land
scripture,

T'an-luan burned his Taoist texts and took refuge in the Land
of Bliss.

He wrote a commentary on the Bodhisattva Vasubandhu's
discourse, explaining in it:

Both the cause and effect of our birth in the Land of
Recompense come from Amida's Vows:

The karmic energy for our birth and returning to this world
originates from Other-Power.

The cause of attaining the Stage of Right Assurance is Faith
alone.

When Faith is awakened in the minds of deluded and defiled
ordinary people,

They are made aware that birth-and-death is Nirvana.
After they unfailingly reach the Land of Infinite Light,
They will save sentient beings everywhere, so says T'an-luan.

Master Tao-ch'o determined that by the Path of Sages Bodhi is
difficult to attain
And clearly presented the Pure Land Path [gate] as the only
way of salvation.
He disparaged practicing thousands of acts with self-power
And urged us to recite exclusively the Name of perfect
virtues.

He kindly taught us imperfect faith and perfect faith, each
having three aspects.
He compassionately guided those of the ages of Semblance
Dharma, Decadent Dharma and Extinct Dharma alike.
Whatever evils we may commit through our lives, if we
encounter the Universal Vow,
We shall reach the Land of Peace and Provision and realize
the Supreme Fruition.

Shan-tao alone clarified the true intent of the Buddha
Shakyamuni.
Out of compassion for those who practice meditative or non-
meditative good as well as those who commit the five gravest
offences and the ten transgressions,
He clarified that the Light and the Name are the cause and
condition for birth in the Pure Land.
When aspirants are led into the Sea of Great Wisdom of the
Primal Vow,

They are endowed with Faith, indestructible as diamond;
After attaining a single thought of Joy of oneness with Amida,
They obtain the three insights, as did Vaidehi,
And will realize the Eternal Bliss of Dharma-nature.

Genshin widely expounded the Buddha's lifetime teachings;
While he devoutly sought refuge in the Land of Peace and
Provision, he urged all to follow him.
He distinguished between deep faith in practicing the
Nembutsu exclusively and shallow faith in doing miscellaneous
acts of merits,
And so clarified the different states of attainment: birth in the
Land of Recompense and birth in the Transformed Land.

Those with extremely heavy evil karma should only repeat
Amida's Name.
I, too, am in his embracement;
Although my evil passions hinder me from seeing it,
His Light of Great Compassion always shines on me untiringly.

Honen, the master of our school, was well versed in
Buddhism;
He compassionately regarded both good and wicked ordinary
people.
Disseminating the teaching of the True Way throughout Japan,
He spread the selected Primal Vow in this evil world.

Transmigration in the house of Samsara
Is definitely caused by the fault of doubt;
Quick entry into the Capital of Uncreated Tranquillity
Is necessarily realized by Faith.

TSAN A-MI-T'O FO CHI

Canticles to Amita Buddha

Composed by Dharma Master T'an-luan in one roll

Translated by Roger J. CORLESS

PRAISE OF SUKHAVATI:

34. HAIL! AMITA, BUDDHA OF THE WEST!
WITH A FULL HEART I HONOUR YOU!

That marvellous Land is vast,
its borders cannot be measured;
it is spontaneously overspread with the seven precious things;
Its decorations arose from the Buddha's Founding Vows;
I bow to the ground before the Pure and Great Recipient.

MAY I AND ALL BEINGS BE BORN
IN BLESSED PEACE!

35. HAIL! AMITA, BUDDHA OF THE WEST!
WITH A FULL HEART I HONOUR YOU!

That Land is radiant and effulgent with a brilliance all its own,
it is charming, tranquil, and untroubled by seasons;
The power to assist both oneself and others is there
complete:

I take refuge in the skilfully contrived adornments.
The jewelled earth is pure, and flat as the palm of a hand,
there are no mountains, rivers, canyons or other barriers;
Whatever one needs is there by the Power of the Buddha:
I bow to the ground before the Ineffable Holy One.

MAY I AND ALL BEINGS BE BORN
IN BLESSED PEACE!

36. HAIL! AMITA, BUDDHA OF THE WEST!
WITH A FULL HEART I HONOUR YOU!

In that Land is a Bodhi Tree,
four million miles high and fifty yojanas around at its base,

Whose branches spread out two hundred thousand miles,
spontaneously trimmed with myriads of jewels:
With rare gems like the Moonstone, and the Star of the Sea,
that king of all jewels, it is richly adorned;
Strings of precious stones hang on its branches,
sparkling in a billion colours which constantly change;
Points of light brighter than one thousand suns endlessly cloak
it with a gem-like net.

These ornaments appear just as one wishes:
I bow to the ground to that Tree and its Space.

MAY I AND ALL BEINGS BE BORN
IN BLESSED PEACE!

37. HAIL! AMITA, BUDDHA OF THE WEST!
WITH A FULL HEART I HONOUR YOU!

Soft breezes cause the tree to emit sounds of Dharma
which travel in all directions towards all the Buddha lands;
On hearing the sound, one gains deep Dharma Composure
and goes up to Buddhahood without painful rebirths.

Its power is vast, great and immeasurable;
I bow to the ground before that Tree and its space.

MAY I AND ALL BEINGS BE BORN
IN BLESSED PEACE!

38. HAIL! AMITA, BUDDHA OF THE WEST!
WITH A FULL HEART I HONOUR YOU!

When the Tree's scent, the Tree's colour,
the Tree's elegant sound, the Tree's touch,
the Tree's taste, the Tree's objects of mind,
Meet the six senses, one gains a Dharma Composure:

I bow to the ground before that Tree and its Space.

MAY I AND ALL BEINGS BE BORN
IN BLESSED PEACE!

39. HAIL! AMITA, BUDDHA OF THE WEST!
WITH A FULL HEART I HONOUR YOU!

In the presence of that Bodhi Tree,
one's darkened perceptions become finer and finer,
on up to Buddhahood.
The Composure of Hearing,
of Practice and of Nothing-Arising, are attained,
be one's faculties shallow or deep.
Radiating from that Tree is wondrous virtue:
this all comes about through the Tathagata's Five Powers.
His Power and His Vows are in every way perfect;
wholly wise, firm and complete was His Resolve,
And His Compassionate Skill cannot be told:
bowing low, I take refuge in the Truly Immeasurable.

MAY I AND ALL BEINGS BE BORN
IN BLESSED PEACE!

40. HAIL! AMITA, BUDDHA OF THE WEST!
WITH A FULL HEART I HONOUR YOU!

From earthly kings up to the King of the Gods,
music becomes finer by eight degrees:
But millions and millions of times superior
is the exquisite sound of the trees of jewels,
Which is spontaneous, fine and skilful music of the Dharma,
melodious, lifting the spirit;
Plaintive, serene, dignified and resonant:
wherefore I bow to that impeccable music.

MAY I AND ALL BEINGS BE BORN
IN BLESSED PEACE!

41. HAIL! AMITA, BUDDHA OF THE WEST!
WITH A FULL HEART I HONOUR YOU!

Trees of seven jewels completely fill that Land,
their sparkling brilliancies glancing off each other -
Reflecting in the flowers, the fruits, the branches and the
leaves:

I bow before the virtue of the Founding Vows.

MAY I AND ALL BEINGS BE BORN

IN BLESSED PEACE!

42. HAIL! AMITA, BUDDHA OF THE WEST!
WITH A FULL HEART I HONOUR YOU!

From time to time, light breezes blow on the jewel-trees,
and they give forth the Five Notes do, re and the rest -
Spontaneously, in fine and dignified concert:
wherefore I bow to the Pure and Merit-Bearing One.

MAY I AND ALL BEINGS BE BORN
IN BLESSED PEACE!

43. HAIL! AMITA, BUDDHA OF THE WEST!
WITH A FULL HEART I HONOUR YOU!

Vast is that Land, and quite without limits!
A net of many jewels is spread upon its surface,
Made of pearls on golden threads, rare and priceless:
the precious stones that make it cannot be named.
On every side are strings of pendant jewel-bells which,
stirred by the breeze, ring out the True Dharma.
Incense, agreeably refined, wafts to and fro:
when smelled, it does not arouse the passions.
Those breezes touch the body,
and one is calmly rejoiced as a bhikshu come unto Perfect
Ecstasy.
The breezes scatter flowers throughout that Buddha Land,
not haphazard, but in ordered patterns of colour;
The flowers' nature is soft,
their fragrance is strong:
treading on them, the foot sinks four inches;
Lifting the foot, the flowers return as they were.
Their use ended, the ground opens, and they disappear com-
pletely.
Six times, at the proper hours, the flowers come and go.
Wherefore I bow to the Inconceivably Recompensed.

MAY I AND ALL BEINGS BE BORN
IN BLESSED PEACE!

44. HAIL! AMITA, BUDDHA OF THE WEST!
WITH A FULL HEART I HONOUR YOU!

Lotuses of jewels fill that Realm,
each flower having hundreds of thousands of petals.
The flowers emit light of innumerable colours -
vermillion, purple, blood red and emerald -
The five combined colours -
and they dazzle the sun:
wherefore with one mind I bow to the ground.

MAY I AND ALL BEINGS BE BORN
IN BLESSED PEACE!

45. HAIL! AMITA, BUDDHA OF THE WEST!
WITH A FULL HEART I HONOUR YOU!

Each and every flower emits trillions and trillions of rays of
light:

With a Buddha's body in every ray,
as many as there are rays, so are there Buddhas.
Those Buddhas' bodies, with their Marks and Signs,
like gold columns, shine with a billion rays each.
They teach the True Dharma in all directions,
the peace of the Buddha Path to all living beings.
Just so are the bounds of their power immeasurable;
therefore in Amita I take refuge.

MAY I AND ALL BEINGS BE BORN
IN BLESSED PEACE!

46. HAIL! AMITA, BUDDHA OF THE WEST!
WITH A FULL HEART I HONOUR YOU!

The palaces and mansions are altogether wakeless
and set with the seven gems, cut and shimmering
And moon-bright curtains of pearls and bells.
Each palace has a bathing pool of suitable shape:
And the pools have water of the eight good qualities
whose colour, taste and smell is like nectar.
The pools of gold have sands of silver;

the pools of the seven gems have corresponding sands.
On their banks are fragrant trees caressing the waters;
the scent of sandalwood perdures and spreads far.
Flowers like jade, as a brilliant ornament
Spread across the waters like bright, shining clouds.
That purified Consequence is beyond imagining:
wherefore I bow to the Store of Virtues.

MAY I AND ALL BEINGS BE BORN
IN BLESSED PEACE!

47. HAIL! AMITA, BUDDHA OF THE WEST!
WITH A FULL HEART I HONOUR YOU!

As the Bodhisattvas and Sravakas enter the jewel lakes
they find them shallow or deep according to their wish;
Spontaneously, they are immersed as far as they desire:
when they require it to recede, the water draws back.
It is cool or warm, it is never disagreeable:
It delights spirit and body, and purifies the mind;
It is limpid, unclouded and lacking in shadows;
the jewel-sands are clearly seen,
as if the waters had no depths.
Placid ripples mingle together,
charming to look upon and gratifying the spirit.
The wavelets endlessly make marvellous sounds
which one hears as a Teaching according to one's needs:
Whether it be passages on the Triple Jewel,
or on Quiescence, Emptiness or Not-Self,
Whether on the limitless paramitas,
Whether on the Trackless, or the Knowledge of Non-Arising,
on any Dharma, up to the Immortal Anointing;
As one's capacities, so is one made glad with them,
in accord with the Triple Jewel and the Perfection of Truth.
The Bodhisattvas and Sravakas practice in the Way
by this all-sufficiency of hearing the Dharma.
Even the names of hell's sufferings are eternally hushed,
and all that is heard is spontaneous joy:

Wherefore the name of that Land is 'Blessed Peace'.
I bow down and worship the Unsurpassed Holy One.
MAY I AND ALL BEINGS BE BORN
IN BLESSED PEACE!

PRAISE OF NAGARJUNA:

48. HAIL! AMITA, BUDDHA OF THE WEST!
WITH A FULL HEART I HONOUR YOU!
Nagarjuna Mahasattva, my Father in the Lineage,
reinvigorated the Dharma and restored the Transmission,
Closed the doors to error and opened the Path of Right,
so that in Jambudvipa every eye should see it:
At the Bhagavan's Word, he gained the Joyful Stage,
took refuge in Amita and was Born in Sukhavati.
MAY I AND ALL BEINGS BE BORN
IN BLESSED PEACE!

49. HAIL! AMITA, BUDDHA OF THE WEST!
WITH A FULL HEART I HONOUR YOU!
Like a dragon, he moved on the clouds as he wished,
and rained on the hundreds of Jambudvipa's plants.
Hail! Venerable and Compassionate Dragon-Tree!
I sincerely bow down and take refuge in you!
MAY I AND ALL BEINGS BE BORN
IN BLESSED PEACE!

TRANSFERENCE OF MERIT:

50. HAIL! AMITA, BUDDHA OF THE WEST!
WITH A FULL HEART I HONOUR YOU!
I have circled in the Three Realms from without beginning,
rolling and turning on the Wheel of Vanity;
With every thought, at every moment,
my deeds have borne karma,

tightly binding me to the Six Life-Forms and stalling me in hell:
The loving light of the Resolve alone guarded and minded me,
so that I did not miss the Bodhi Mind.

I praise the Buddha's wisdom in merit-bearing song!
May it be heard everywhere by all conditioned beings,
That they all may desire to be born in Sukhavati!
Universally, freely and without hindrance may it be
That if I have gained merit,
whether much or little,
it may equally help all beings to Birth.

Hail! Buddha of Inconceivable Light!
I go for refuge with one mind, and bow to the ground.

MAY I AND ALL BEINGS BE BORN
IN BLESSED PEACE!

51. HAIL! AMITA, BUDDHA OF THE WEST!
WITH A FULL HEART I HONOUR YOU!

The Infinitely Wise Ones of all places and times
ride together on Suchness and gain Perfect Enlightenment;
Their Double Wisdom is complete and their Way is the same:
one is unable to count their skillful means.

I take refuge in the Pure Land of Buddha Amita:
by so doing, I take refuge in all of the Buddha Lands.
With one heart and one mind to one Buddha I give praise;
may it reverberate everywhere to all the Unhindered Ones:
By this I shall, to the innumerable Buddhas,
to all and to each, with a full heart, bow down.

MAY I AND ALL BEINGS BE BORN
IN BLESSED PEACE!

PENITENTIAL CONCLUSION:

52. HAIL! AMITA, BUDDHA OF THE WEST!
WITH A FULL HEART I HONOUR YOU!

Mercifully turn and protect me!
Cause the Seed of Dharma to mature!

From this time forth, throughout my future lives,
I resolve always to take refuge in the Buddha!

MAY I AND ALL BEINGS BE BORN
IN BLESSED PEACE!

HAIL! AVALOKITESVARA,
BODHISATTVA OF THE BLISSFUL REALM IN THE
WEST!

WITH A FULL HEART I HONOUR YOU!
MAY I AND ALL BEINGS BE BORN IN BLESSED
PEACE!

HAIL, MAHASTHAMAPRAPTA,
BODHISATTVA OF THE BLISSFUL REALM IN THE
WEST!

WITH A FULL HEART I HONOUR YOU!
MAY I AND ALL BEINGS BE BORN IN BLESSED
PEACE!

HAIL, ALL BODHISATTVAS OF SUKHAVATI!
A MULTITUDE PURE, AND VAST AS THE SEA!
WITH A FULL HEART I HONOUR YOU!
MAY I AND ALL BEINGS BE BORN
IN BLESSED PEACE!

For the sake of my Dharma Teachers,
my parents, my spiritual friends
and all the beings of the Dharma Realm,
that they may cast down the Three Barriers
and all be Born together in Amita Buddha's Land,
I now go for refuge and confess my transgressions.

*The end of the Canticles to Amita Buddha.
One hundred and ninety-five lines of praise
and fifty-one of worship.*



A PUJA TO AMITABHA:
THE SADHANA OF SUKHAVATI

This puja was compiled by Dharmachari Prakasha at the Guhyaloka Vihara during Spring 1997 and is intended for the sole use of Members of the Triratna Buddhist Order.

A Puja to Amitabha is based on a terma text called the 'Sadhana of Sukhavati - a mind treasure from the deep whispered lineage of the space Dharma' by Chagmed Rimpoche. The Dedication of Merit is the prayer of the Tulku Migyur Dorje, which he received from Amitabha when he was thirteen years old. The text was translated by Karma Thinley and David Stott in 1977.

1. GOING FOR REFUGE

In the sky before me appears Amitabha,
Surrounded by a host of Buddhas and Bodhisattvas
In all directions of space.

I and all sentient beings
From this time forth
Until I reach Enlightenment,
Go for Refuge to our glorious Gurus,
Go for Refuge to the perfect Buddhas, the blessed ones,
Go for Refuge to the sacred Dharma,
Go for Refuge to the Sangha.

To the sky which is completely full
Of the assembly of Buddhas and Bodhisattvas,
I and all beings of the six realms
Go with devotion for refuge.

2. GENERATING THE BODHICITTA

Once I have attained the state of a complete Buddha,
I shall free all sentient beings
From the ocean of Samsara's suffering
And lead them to the freedom of Enlightenment.
For this purpose I shall practise
All the stages of the Bodhisattvas's path.

May all beings be happy,
May all beings be freed from suffering,
May all beings never be separated from their happiness,
May all beings have equanimity,
Free from attachment and aversion.

3. PURIFICATION

All Dharmas are pure and Empty by nature,
I am also pure and Empty by nature.

*OM SVABHAVA SUDDHA SARVA DHARMAH
SVABHAVA SUDDHO HAM x 3*

From the pure primordial space come emanations;
Space and earth are filled with clouds of offerings,
Made by innumerable offering goddesses.
May they become inexhaustible: PUNDZA HO.

4. THE EVOCATION OF THE BUDDHA AMITABHA

There is a vast expanse of clear blue sky,
A brilliant deep blue.
Beneath the sky is a vast expanse of sea.
It is blue-green in colour
And calm with just a few waves on the surface.
To the west is the disk of the setting sun,
A rich red in colour,
Sinking below the sea.
Rays of brilliant golden light
Radiate from the setting sun
Across the surface of the sea.

In these rays of golden light
There is an enormous red lotus flower.
On the lotus flower is a brilliant white moon mat.
Seated cross legged on the moon mat
Is the glorious figure of Amitabha.
He is wearing orange-red robes embroidered with gold.
His body is brilliant red like a ruby.
His left-hand is placed in his lap,
While his right hand holds up by the stalk
A beautiful red lotus blossom.
His curly hair is blue-black
His eyes are clear and radiant
His smile is compassionate
And he radiates love and compassion.

His head is surrounded by an aura
Of soft green light,
His body is surrounded by an aura
Of soft red light, edged with a rainbow.
At his heart there is a brilliant white moon crescent;
Surmounted by the red syllable HRIH,
The essence of Amitabha.

Gathered around are Buddhas and Bodhisattvas,
Sravakas and Arahants in a limitless assembly
Who have all arrived from the pure land of Sukhavati.

5. ENTREATY AND EMPOWERMENT

HUM

Amitabha and all the assembly of deities, without exception,
I supplicate all of you who are on the moon and lotus;
Please take your places.

I supplicate you to remove all obstacles

I supplicate you to come and grant your great blessing.

Grant supreme empowerment to I who am worthy and confident.

HUM

You who dwell in Sukhavati,

Please turn the wheel of the Dharma.

Regard all beings with your compassionate eyes.

You made the commitment of giving protection to all beings.

I supplicate you that I and all beings

May be reborn into the pure land of Sukhavati,

To Amitabha, holder of the lotus, I prostrate.

OM AMIDEVA HRI - VAJRASAMAJAH - JA HUM BAM HO
- TISHTA LHAN - ATIPUJO

From the red HRIH at Amitabha's heart

There emanates a beam of rich red light

The colour of a ruby.

This reaches the top of my head

And travels down into my heart.

I receive the empowerment

And am blessed with all Buddha qualities.

OM SARVA TATHAGATA ABISHEKATA SAMAYASRIYA HUM

Recite: OM NAMO AMITABHAYA BUDDHAYA

6. MAKING THE OFFERINGS TO THE BUDDHA AMITABHA

Firstly, the four offerings of purification -

HUM with this perfumed water
I bathe the body of Amitabha.
Although the deity is completely unstained
This brings about the condition
Of the purification of faults and obscurations.

HUM with this soft white perfumed cloth
I dry the body of Amitabha.
Although his body is completely unstained
This brings about the condition
Of the separation from suffering.

HUM with these beautiful saffron robes
I clothe the body of Amitabha.
Although his body does not experience cold
This brings about the condition of increasing radiance.

HUM with these beautiful precious jewels
I adorn the bodies of the victors and their sons.
Although their bodies do not need adorning with jewels
This brings about the condition of great brilliance.

Secondly, the offerings of the eight goddesses -

HUM if in order to quench Amitabha's thirst
I wish to offer him pure sparkling water,
My own ordinary body is unworthy,
And so the white goddess develops from my mind
And in this way I make the offering for his mouth.

HUM if in order to purify Amitabha's feet by washing
I wish to offer him perfumed water,
My own ordinary body is unworthy,
And so the brown goddess develops from my mind
And in this way I make the offering to his feet.

HUM if in order to please Amitabha's eyes
I wish to offer beautiful flowers,
My own ordinary body is unworthy,
And so the pink flower goddess develops from my mind
And in this way I make offerings to his eyes.

HUM if in order to give rare and supreme scents to Amitabha
I wish to offer pleasing incense,
My own ordinary body is unworthy,
And so the blue incense goddess develops from my mind
And in this way I make offerings to his nose.

HUM if in order to please Amitabha's hands
I wish to offer lighted lamps,
My own ordinary body is unworthy,
And so the red lamp goddess develops from my mind
And in this way I make offerings to his hands.

HUM if in order to complete the radiance of Amitabha's body
I wish to offer perfumed balms,
My own ordinary body is unworthy,
And so the green perfume goddess develops from my mind
And in this way I make offerings to his body.

HUM if in order to view to beautify the radiance of
Amitabha's body
I wish to offer rare and tasty foods,
My own ordinary body is unworthy,
And so the yellow food goddess develops from my mind
And in this way I make offerings to his tongue.

HUM if in order to please Amitabha's ears
I wish to offer music,
My own ordinary body is unworthy,
And so the orange music goddess develops from my mind
And in this way I make offerings to his ears.

The offering goddesses emanate from my heart
And perform the offerings:

OM AMITABHA ARGHAM PRATICCHA HUM SVAHA
(Water for washing)

OM AMITABHA PADYAM PRATICCHA HUM SVAHA
(Water for drinking)

OM AMITABHA PUSPA PRATICCHA HUM SVAHA
(Flowers)

OM AMITABHA DHUPA PRATICCHA HUM SVAHA
(Incense)

OM AMITABHA ALOKA PRATICCHA HUM SVAHA
(Lamps)

OM AMITABHA GANDHA PRATICCHA HUM SVAHA
(Perfume)

OM AMITABHA NAIVEDYA PRATICCHA HUM SVAHA
(Food)

OM AMITABHA SABDA PRATICCHA HUM SVAHA
(Music)

Thirdly, the four auspicious offerings -

HUM all eight of the auspicious substances
Especially the principal one, white mustard,
Which is like the supreme king
I offer to the deity.
May the two accumulations be completely perfected.

MANGALA AH TA SIDDHI HUM

HUM all eight of the auspicious symbols
Especially the principle one, the vase
Which is like the supreme king
I offer to the deity.
May the two accumulations be completely perfected.

MANGALA KUMBHA HUM

HUM all seven jewels of sensory experience
Especially the principle one, the precious gem,
Which is like the supreme king
I offer to the deity.
May the two accumulations be completely perfected.

OM MANI RATNA HUM

HUM all of the universe
Especially Mount Meru
And the four continents and islands
I offer to the deity.
May the two accumulations be completely perfected.

OM RATNA MANDALA HUM

Fourthly, the Four Special Offerings -

HUM If to Amitabha who is my refuge
I wish to offer torma
My own ordinary body is unworthy,
And so the torma goddess develops from my mind.
Amitabha, as I make this offering to you
With your compassion for me and all others
Please grant me ordinary and transcendent siddhis.

HUM If to Amitabha who is my refuge
I wish to offer amrita
My own ordinary body is unworthy,
And so the amrita goddess develops from my mind.
Amitabha, as I make this offering to you
With your compassion for me and all others
Please grant me ordinary and transcendent siddhis.

HUM If to Amitabha who is my refuge
I wish to offer rakta
My own ordinary body is unworthy,
And so the rakta goddess develops from my mind.
Amitabha, as I make this offering to you
With your compassion for me and all others
Please grant me ordinary and transcendent siddhis.

HUM If to Amitabha who is my refuge
I wish to offer the bejewelled goddess
My own ordinary body is unworthy,
And so the beautiful consort develops from my mind.
Amitabha, as I make this offering to you
With your compassion for me and all others
Please grant me ordinary and transcendent siddhis.

OMVAJRA BALINGTA KHARAM KHAHI (torma)
OMVAJRA PANCHA AMRITA KHARAM KHAHI (amrita)
OMVAJRA PANCHA RAKTA KHARAM KHAHI (rakta)
OMVAJRA MUDRA AH HUM (bejewelled consort)

7. PRAISING THE BODY, SPEECH AND MIND OF AMITABHA

OM

You of the supreme vajra body
To which even Brahma and Indra cannot be compared,
Your body is pure and Empty like space:
To the Dharmakaya I prostrate and give praise.

AH

You of the supreme vajra speech,
Its greatness unmatched by thunder,
Its sweetness unmatched by music,
You look with eyes of compassion:
To the Sambhogakaya I prostrate and give praise.

HUM

You of the supreme vajra mind,
You take complete care of beings,
Your gentle mind is unmatched by Brahma and Indra,
Your kindness is incomparable:
To the Nirmanakaya I prostrate and give praise.

8. MAKING CONFESSION

Under the power of unawareness
In whatever way I have strayed in mind from Amitabha
I confess OM VAJRA SATTVA HUM

OM: I confess all broken samaya of body
I prostrate and give praise to your body.

AH: I confess all broken samaya of speech
I prostrate and give praise to your speech.

HUM: I confess all broken samaya of mind
I prostrate and give praise to your mind.

OM AMITABHA HRI
SVAHA
VAJRASATTVA OM
VAJRASATTVA AH
VAJRASATTVA HUM
EMAHO

9. THE RECITATION OF THE MANTRA

Wondrous is the Buddha of Limitless Light
And all the countless Buddhas and Bodhisattvas.
I supplicate you with one pointed devotion
Grant me transcendent siddhis
Bless me so that I may attain to the Limitless Light.

At the heart of Amitabha is seen a small white crescent moon
Upon which is the seed syllable HRIH.
From this HRIH comes a soft beam of pure red light
Down which float the syllables of the mantra
OM AMIDEVA HRIH
Which enters the crown of my head
And fills my body with pure red light.
In my heart is a crescent moon with an upright HRIH
Round which spins the mantra mala to the right.
Light streams out from the crown of my head
Blessing and cleansing all the obscurations
And defilements of all beings in all realms.
They are transformed into Amitabhas.

I and all beings recite the mantra OM AMIDEVA HRIH

10. THE FINAL DISSOLUTION

Afterwards the mantra begins to spin like a circlet of fire
And rays stream out to Amitabha
To please his body, speech and mind.
His body emanates many Amitabhas.
His voice issues many mantra malas.
His mind produces many red vajras.
They abound like snowflakes in a snowstorm
And are absorbed into the bodies
Of myself and all beings.

Then in front of me is the Bhagavan:
He dissolves into light and is absorbed into me.
My own body becomes like a rainbow in the sky.
The Bhagavan reappears:
The coincidence of luminosity and openness.

11. THE ASPIRATION

Wonderful Buddha of limitless light
Surrounded by Buddhas and Bodhisattvas measureless in
number.
Joy and happiness without limit
Is the land called Sukhavati.

May I be born there as soon I pass from this life
Without taking birth anywhere else in the meantime.
Having been born there may I see Amitabha's face.
May the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas of the ten directions
Give their blessing that this wish expressed in this prayer
Be accomplished without hindrance.

12. THE DEDICATION OF MERIT

Buddhas and Bodhisattvas

Of all the three times and ten directions,
Please pay attention to me.

I rejoice in the completion of the two accumulations.
All the merit gathered by me in the three times
I offer to the three jewels;
May the doctrine of the victors spread.

I dedicate all this merit to sentient beings
In order that all beings may attain Enlightenment.
May all the roots of merit be brought together,
May the merit mature in myself
So that the two obstacles be removed,
And the two accumulations be completely perfected.

May I have long life without sickness
And may my understanding increase.
In this life may the ten stages be ascended.
At the end of this life,
May I be born immediately in Sukhavati.
May Avalokiteshvara open my lotus where I am born.
From that state, may I attain Buddhahood.
Having become Enlightened, from then on
May my emanations guide all beings.

13. CONCLUSION

OM Amitabha, may it be accomplished!
The Vajra body is free from birth and death.
The Vajra speech is the melodious song,
Unborn and unchanging.
The Vajra mind is immutable and immortal
Throughout the three times.
May I possess your completely pure,
Deathless body, speech and mind!

OM Amitabha, king of the drum of deathlessness.
May I attain your body, speech, mind, qualities and action.
May my practice in this life be fulfilled
May there be a great wave of blessings
For the benefit of all beings!

OM Vajrasattva samaya
Manupalaya
Vajrasattva tvenopa tishta
Drdho me bhava
Sutosyo me bhava
Suposyo me bhava
Anurakto me bhava
Sarva siddhim me preycha
Sarva karma sucha me
Cittam sreyaḥ kuru hum!
Ha ha ha ha hoh!
Bhagavan sarva Tathagata
Vajra ma me munca
Vajri bhava
Maha samaya sattva
AH HUM PHAT!

May the precious Buddha mind
Arise in those in whom it has not been born
And may it increase more and more

In those in whom it has already arisen.

Through this merit,
May I quickly realise the Mahamudra,
And having done so,
May I help all beings without exception
To reach this profound state.

THE LONG LIFE PRAYER

HUM Bhagavan Amitabha is the Lord.
He has one face, two hands and is red in colour,
His two hands are in meditation position, holding a begging
bowl.
His two feet are resting in vajra posture.

The emanated goddesses are the five swift ones
Holding long life vases and waving dadars.
The elements are brought together
And absorbed into the begging bowl.
Then it is absorbed into myself.

HUM When one waves the dadar to the East
This brings together the essence of air
Green lights flame from the green rainbow.
In the centre is the goddess of air
She has one face, two hands, and holds a green dadar;
She holds a vase and dances in a zigzag manner
Stamping and quivering with the green flaming lights.

When one waves the dadar to the South
This brings together the essence of fire
Red lights flame from the red rainbow.
In the centre is the goddess of fire
She has one face, two hands, and holds a red dadar;
She holds a vase and dances in a zigzag manner
Stamping and quivering with the red flaming lights.

When one waves the dadar to the West
This brings together the essence of space
White lights flame from the white rainbow.
In the centre is the goddess of space
She has one face, two hands, and holds a white dadar;
She holds a vase and dances in a zigzag manner

Stamping and quivering with the white flaming lights.
When one waves the dadar to the North
This brings together the essence of water
Blue lights flame from the blue rainbow.
In the centre is the goddess of water
She has one face, two hands, and holds a blue dadar;
She holds a vase and dances in a zigzag manner
Stamping and quivering with the blue flaming lights.

When one waves the dadar upwards
This brings together the essence of earth
Yellow lights flame from the yellow rainbow.
In the centre is the goddess of earth
She has one face, two hands, and holds a yellow dadar;
She holds a vase and dances in a zigzag manner
Stamping and quivering with the yellow flaming lights.

Above are the five goddesses of the four directions
This brings together the radiance of the five elements;
Please make my complexion radiant.

Above are the five goddesses of the four directions
This brings together the essence of the five elements;
Please make my long life stable.

Above are the five goddesses of the four directions
This brings together the essence of the five elements;
Please make my life essence develop.

Above are the five goddesses of the four directions
This brings together the light of the five elements;
Please increase my own light.

EMAHO

To the perfect Buddha Amitabha

And to all the countless Buddhas and Bodhisattvas
I prostrate and praise with a devoted attitude
I supplicate you to grant the spiritual power of long life.

(Recite this mantra as much as you can)

OM AH HUM AMIDEVA AYU SIDDHI HUM
MANGALAM

PUJA TO AMITABHA

GURU, DEVA, DAKINI

1. GOING FOR REFUGE

Honour to the Three Jewels
and the Three Roots
to all of whom I go for Refuge.

(Refuges and Precepts)

2. BODHISATTVA ASPIRATION

To enable all beings to attain Buddhahood

I shall develop the supreme Bodhicitta.

May sentient beings possess happiness with its causes.

Be parted from grief with its causes.

Not be parted from the happiness wherein no grief is,
and dwell in the condition of equanimity.

3. WORSHIP

I worship Amitabha
The deep red Buddha
of infinite light.
Who sits cross-legged
On a full red lotus
In meditation's peace

Beautiful you are
In your gold-embroidered robes
Radiant you are
Your auras edged with rainbows
Vibrant you are
Shimmering above the sea.

Your left hand holds
The gesture of dhyana
Your right hand holds
The open lotus of love
Your great heart revolving
For the infinity of all beings.

(Mantra recitation and offerings)

4. PRAISE

OM

You of the supreme vajra body
to which even Brahma and Indra cannot be compared
Your body is space like
To the Dharmakaya I prostrate and give praise.

AH

You of the supreme Vajra speech
Its greatness unmatched by thunder
Its sweetness unmatched by music
You look with the eyes of compassion
To the Samboghakaya I prostrate and give praise.

HUM

You of the supreme Vajra mind
You take complete care of beings
Your gentle mind is unmatched by Brahma and Indra
To the Nirmanakaya I prostrate and give praise.

5. CONFESSION

OM

Under the power of unawareness.
In whatever way
I have strayed in mind from Amitabha
I confess.
VAJRASATTVA HUM

OM

I confess all broken samaya of body.
I prostrate and give praise to your body.

AH

I confess all broken samaya of speech.
I prostrate and give praise to your speech.

HUM

I confess all broken samaya of mind.
I prostrate and give praise to your mind.

OM HRIH SVAHA.
VAJRASATTVA OM
VAJRASATTVA AH
VAJRASATTVA HUM

E MA HO

6. ENTREATY AND SUPPLICATION

Wondrous is the Buddha of Limitless Light
As are the great compassionate ones
And the ones of great power.
All the countless Buddhas and Bodhisattvas
I supplicate with one pointed devotion.
Grant me transcendent Siddhis
Bless me so that I may attain to the Limitless Light.

HEART SUTRA

7. GRATITUDE AND RESOLUTION

Amitabha
From the sun orb of your grace
Your radiant rays of light
Have shone forth and opened wide
The lotus petals of my heart
Which breathes forth fragrance
Born of knowledge
For which I am ever bounden unto you.
Vouchsafe to bless me in my efforts
That good may come to every sentient being.
Not one movement
Will I give to any worldly purpose.
But body, speech and mind
I dedicate to you.

8. MONLAM

OM

May it be accomplished!

The vajra body
Is free from birth and death.

The vajra speech
Is the melodious song,
Unborn and unchanging.

The vajra mind
Is inactive and unchanging
Throughout the three times.

May I possess the completely pure, deathless
Body, speech and mind
Of Amitabha,
King of the drum of deathlessness.

May I attain
His body, speech, mind, qualities and action
May practice in this life be fulfilled.

May there be a great wave of blessings
For the benefit of all beings.

May blessings increase.

PUJA TO AMITABHA
ADAPTED BY RATNASURI

1. WORSHIP

Amitabha of infinite light:

I worship you with the golden light of the setting sun,

Glancing and glittering on the silken sea.

I worship you with the soft translucent light

that filters through the petals of flowers.

Again I worship you with the light that reflects

on the tiny beads of dew

that collects on roses

in the early morn.

Amitabha I bow down to you,

with the inner light of meditation

to you who is the essence

of stillness in meditation.

OM AMIDEVA HRIH

(offerings)

2. GOING FOR REFUGE

OM

I go for refuge to you Amitabha
and with you Go for Refuge
to the Buddha Shakyamuni.

AH

I go for refuge to you Amitabha
and with you Go for Refuge
to the Dharma.

HUM

I go for refuge to you Amitabha
and with you Go for Refuge
to the Sangha

(refuges and precepts)

3. BODHISATTVA ASPIRATION

To enable all beings to attain Buddhahood

I shall develop the supreme Bodhicitta.

May sentient beings possess happiness with its causes

Be parted from grief with its causes

Not be parted from the happiness wherein no grief is
and dwell in the condition of equanimity.

4. CONFESSION

OM

Under the power of unawareness.

In whatever way I have strayed from Amitabha.

I confess.

OM AMIDEVA HRIH

OM

I confess all broken samaya of body

I prostrate and give praise to your body.

AH

I confess all broken samaya of speech

I prostrate and give praise to your speech.

HUM

I confess all broken samaya of mind

I prostrate and give praise to your mind.

OM HRIH SVAHA OM AMIDEVA HRIH

5. PRAISE

OM

You who sit in deep stillness,
your body glowing with compassion
To the Dharmakaya I prostrate and give praise.

AH

You whose speech is like music of Dharma,
your discriminating wisdom looks with the eyes of
compassion
To the Sambogakaya I prostrate and give praise.

HUM

You whose mind encompasses all compassion and wisdom
To the Nirmanakaya I prostrate and give praise.

6. ENTREATY AND SUPPLICATION

Wondrous is the Buddha of Limitless Light
As are the great compassionate ones
And the ones of great power.
All the countless Buddhas and Bodhisattvas
I supplicate with one pointed devotion.
Bless me so that I may attain to the Limitless Light.

HEART SUTRA

7. GRATITUDE AND RESOLUTION

Amitabha
from the sun orb of your grace
Your radiant rays of light
have shone forth and opened wide
The lotus petals of my heart
which breathes forth fragrance
born of knowledge
for which I am ever bounden unto you.
Vouchsafe to bless me in my efforts
That good may come to every sentient being.
Not one movement
will I give to any worldly purpose.
But body, speech and mind
I dedicate to you.

PUJA TO AMITABHA
BY KAMALAVAJRI

1. WORSHIP

Amitabha, Lord of Compassion
I welcome you with precious offerings.
[name an offering]*

Amitabha, Lord of Infinite Light
I welcome you with precious offerings.
[name an offering]

Amitabha, Lord of Meditation
I welcome you with precious offerings.
[name an offering]

Amitabha, welcomed, honoured!

(*examples of offerings:
the morning star at dawn
the sound of falling autumn leaves etc)

OM AMIDEVA HRIH

[chant mantra]

2. SALUTATION

Strong and still on a red lotus throne,
Pure and bright as your white moon mat,
Amitabha, I salute you.

Fire and light dance all around you,
Ocean depths drop far below,
Amitabha, I salute you.

Deeply red your rays of love,
Warming all with compassion's gaze,
Amitabha, I salute you.

3. GOING FOR REFUGE

The parable of the White Path, as told by Shen-Tao

A man is travelling to the west when before him stretch two rivers. On the left is a river of fire. On the right, water. Between the two is a white path barely four or five inches wide. From east to west is a hundred steps. The fire scorches one side of the path, the waves ceaselessly wash the other. As if this were not enough, in the east where our traveller stands is a bunch of hooligans and wild animals, seeking to kill him. The poor man is seized with terror, but resolves to try to follow the path. At that very moment he hears a voice behind him from his own bank: "Friend, just follow the path resolutely and there will be no danger of death. To stay here is to die." And on the west bank there is someone calling out: "Come straight ahead, single-mindedly and with fixed purpose. I can protect you. Never fear falling into the fire or water!" As our traveller sets off, however, the hooligans call to him, "come back - we won't hurt you!" Nevertheless, he goes resolutely forward, reaches the west bank safely, is greeted by his good friend, and there is no end of joy. In brief, the hither shore in the parable stands for the world of samsara; the further shore in the west that of Sukhavati. The hooligans and animals, seeming friends, are our senses, consciousnesses and so on. Fire is anger and hatred; water, greed and affection. The white path is the aspiration for rebirth in the Pure Land, which actually arises amidst the passions themselves. The voice from the hither shore is that of Shakyamuni, who has disappeared from sight but who continues to point the true way. From the west bank comes the voice of Amitabha, his vow to save all beings. In such an image, easily understood and remembered, is encapsulated the message of Pure Land thought.

(Refuges and Precepts)

4. CONFESSION OF FAULTS

OM AMIDEVA HRIH

Before you, Amitabha,
I confess all my unskilful acts.
(specific confessions can be made here)
May I be purified.

OM AMIDEVA HRIH

Before you, Amitabha,
I confess all my unskilful speech.
(specific confessions can be made here)
May I be purified.

OM AMIDEVA HRIH

Before you, Amitabha,
I confess all my unskilful thoughts.
(specific confessions can be made here)
May I be purified.

5. REJOICING IN MERITS

I rejoice in the Dharma of Shakyamuni Buddha

and delight in my yidam Amitabha.

I rejoice in the merits of my teacher
Bhante Sangharakshita

And in the generosity of my preceptors
..... and

I rejoice in the precious order I belong to
and my friends and companions on the path.

SADHU SADHU SADHU
(these can be sung in different ways).

6. ENTREATY AND SUPPLICATION

(from the Smaller Sukhavativyuha Sutra)

“For what reason, Shariputra, do you think that the Buddha is called Amitabha? Shariputra, the Buddha’s light shines boundlessly and without hindrance over all the worlds in the ten directions. It is for this reason that he is called Amitabha. Shariputra, those sentient beings who hear of that land should aspire to be born there, because they will meet such sages of supreme virtue. Shariputra, one cannot attain birth in that land with few roots of goodness or a small stock of merit. Shariputra, if a good man or woman who hears the name of Amitabha Buddha holds fast to his name even for one day, two days, three, four, five, six, or seven days with a concentrated and undistracted mind, then, at the hour of death, Amitabha Buddha will appear with a host of holy ones. Consequently, when life comes to an end, the aspirant’s mind will not fall into confusion and so he will be born in the land of Utmost Bliss of Amitabha Buddha. Shariputra, perceiving these benefits, I say: All sentient beings who hear this teaching should aspire to birth in that land.”

OM AMIDEVA HRIH

(chant mantra)

7. AMITABHA'S APPEARANCE IN THE BARDO

(from the Tibetan Book of the Dead)

O son of noble family, listen without distraction. On the fourth day, Blessed Amitabha's circle of deities will come to invite you, together with the light-path of the hungry ghosts, built from desire and meanness. A red light, the purified element of fire, will shine, and at the same time Blessed Amitabha will appear before you from the western realm, Sukhavati, the Blissful. His body is red in colour, he holds a lotus in his hand and sits on a peacock throne, embracing his consort Pandaravasini. He is accompanied by the male bodhisattvas Avalokitesvara and Manjusri and the two female bodhisattvas Gita and Aloka, so that six buddha forms appear out of the space of rainbow light.

The red light of the skandha of perception in its basic purity, the wisdom of discrimination, brilliant red, adorned with discs of light, luminous and clear, sharp and bright, will come from the heart of Amitabha and his consort and pierce your heart so that your eyes cannot bear to look at it. Do not be afraid of it. At the same time, together with the wisdom light, the soft yellow light of the hungry ghosts will also shine. Do not take pleasure in it; give up desire and yearning.

At the same time, under the influence of intense desire, you will be terrified and escape from the sharp, bright red light, but you will feel pleasure and attraction towards the soft yellow light of the hungry ghosts. At that moment do not fear the red light, sharp and brilliant, luminous and clear, but recognise it as wisdom. Let your mind rest in it, relaxed, in a

state of non-action. Be drawn to it with faith and longing. If you recognise it as your own natural radiance, even if you do not feel devotion and do not say the inspiration-prayer, all the forms and lights and rays will merge inseparably with you and you will attain enlightenment. If you cannot recognise it in this way, supplicate it with devotion, thinking, "It is the light-ray of Blessed Amitabha's compassion, I take refuge in it." It is the light-ray hook of the Blessed Amitabha's compassion. Feel devotion and do not escape. Even if you escape it will stay with you inseparably.

Do not be afraid, do not be attracted to the soft yellow light of the hungry ghosts. That is the light-path of unconscious tendencies accumulated by your intense desire. If you are attracted to it you will fall into the realm of the hungry ghosts, and experience unbearable misery from hunger and thirst. It is an obstacle blocking the path to liberation, so do not be attracted to it, but give up your unconscious tendencies. Do not yearn for it. Feel longing for the luminous, brilliant red light, and say this inspiration prayer with intense one-pointed concentration on Blessed Amitabha and his consort:

When through intense desire I wander in samsara,
On the luminous light-path of discriminating wisdom,
May the Blessed Amitabha go before me,
His consort Pandaravasini behind me;
Help me cross the bardo's dangerous pathway
And bring me to the perfect Buddha state.

By saying this inspiration-prayer with deep devotion, you will dissolve into rainbow light in the heart of Blessed Amitabha, Infinite Light, with his consort, and become a sambhogakaya Buddha in the western realm, Sukhavati.

8. ASPIRING TO THE BODHICITTA

by Shen-Tao

I only wish that my body be bodily united with sunyata and my mind be assimilated with the Dharmadhatu. From my utmost nature as a sentient being, with deeds I pay homage, make offerings and worship; I welcome the coming and send off the going, until they are completely carried to the other shore. Further, with words I praise, and preach the Dharma, so that all will be exposed to my work of conversion. Those who, after hearing me, realise the Way, I will make them realise it completely. Finally, with thoughts I enter into concentration and inspection. I multiply my body through the Dharmadhatu, and responding to the capacity and circumstances of sentient beings will save them: there will not be a single one left behind.

I pronounce this aspiration and transfer it everywhere, multiplying it throughout infinite space. There will be no place where it will not prevail. Until I have completely performed this work of propagation and fully penetrated to the ultimate limits of the future, my body will never know fatigue, and my mind never be satisfied!

PUJA TO AMITABHA
BY PARAMANDHU

1. EVOCATION

OM Amitabha!

Buddha of Infinite Light

You appear at sunset.

As the red orb sinks into the ocean

Gilding the waves with golden light,

You sit upon a vast red lotus.

Your body is brilliant red,

The colour of rubies,

The colour of the setting sun,

The colour of summer's sweet berry,

The colour of autumn's leafy blood,

The colour of the reddest rose.

You sit relaxed, cross-legged,

Your hands at ease

In meditation mudra.

As you emerge from deep samadhi

Your limpid eyes,

Blue as a tropical sea,

Gaze upon us with love and compassion.

Amitabha, we bow to you.

2. HOMAGE

OM Amitabha!
Hidden in your secret heart
Is the deep red vajra,
Essence of your great love.

(reader)
Your love is pure and unobstructed

(chant in unison)
OM NAMO AMITABHAYA BUDDHAYA

Your love is strong and unwavering
OM NAMO AMITABHAYA BUDDHAYA

Your love cherishes all unstintingly
OM NAMO AMITABHAYA BUDDHAYA

Your love is selfless and free of sentimentality
OM NAMO AMITABHAYA BUDDHAYA

Your love is fathomless and radiant
OM NAMO AMITABHAYA BUDDHAYA

Your love is born of deepest meditation
OM NAMO AMITABHAYA BUDDHAYA

Your love eases the pain of all beings
OM NAMO AMITABHAYA BUDDHAYA

Your love brings joy and happiness to all beings
OM NAMO AMITABHAYA BUDDHAYA

Your love is infinite and deathless
OM NAMO AMITABHAYA BUDDHAYA

Your perfect love is rooted in emptiness
OM NAMO AMITABHAYA BUDDHAYA

3. SUPPLICATION

OM Amitabha!

Abandoning unskillful deeds

May your brilliant being

Purify my body.

AH Amitabha!

Abandoning unskillful words

May your profound mantra

Purify my speech.

HUM Amitabha!

Abandoning unskillful thoughts

May your great love

Purify my heart.

May all our unskillfulness

Dissolve in the blessings

Of your boundless infinite light.

(mantra)

OM AMIDEVA HRIH

4. DEDICATION

OM Amitabha!

By the merit of this puja

May all beings enjoy long life and happiness.

May your infinite tender light

Melt the sorrows of the world.

May all beings be at peace;

May they be filled with the great love.

(optional reading)

When through intense craving I wander in samsara,

On the luminous light-path of the discriminating wisdom,

May the Blessed Amitabha go before me,

His consort Pandaravasini behind me;

Help me to cross the bardo's dangerous pathway

And bring me to that perfect Buddha state.

SONG TO AMITABHA - A PUJA
BY DHIRAMATI

This Song was written by Dhiramati at the Buddhafield Festival, July 2000 and completed at Guhyaloka, December 2000.

Inspired by Shinran's songs to Amida.

1. WORSHIP AND SALUTATION

I bow to the western lands
To the life giving sun
The element of fire
Gift of the gods
I bow to the selfless heart
To love, compassion, devotion
To the grace of the Buddhas
I bow to Amitabha of infinite light.

I bow down to the beginningless, centreless and infinite
The perfect peace of the Buddha
Fully self awakened and self blossomed
Who once purified and expanded
Shows the fearless, permanent path
To bring realisation.

Amitabha!
Incomparably perfect in features
Exquisite in body
Poise, grace, peace!
Appearing from the void
Yet brilliant and vivid in form.

Burning red Buddha!
Ruby red Buddha!
Fire of Compassion
Fire of Love
Fire of bliss
Fire of peace
Infinite
Eternal light
AMITABHA!

(Fire dances, drumming, chanting)

OM
AMI
DEVA
HRIH

(chant slowly)

Amitabha!
Red lotus flower,
Amitabha!
Heart of love,
Amitabha!
Voice of the heart,
Amitabha!
Endless peace
Completed circle,
Amitabha!
Full of light
Bringer of light.

To you Amitabha
Homage and praise!
To you
Compassionate heart
I bow!
To you Lord of Infinite light
I make these offerings!

(offerings and mantra)

2. GOING FOR REFUGE

Hearing Amitabha's name with sincere heart
One attains the faith of a joyful mind
I take refuge in the Power of Faith.

The light of Amitabha's wisdom is measureless
All form are enveloped in its dawning light
I take refuge in the True light.

Amitabha's light radiating like a wheel without bounds
Universal Sun radiating loving kindness
I take refuge in the universally enlightened one.

Infinite skies of light, endless as space
Infinite mind of compassion without hindrance
I take refuge in Buddha Amitabha.

Pure light
Destroying all karmic bondage
I take refuge in the ultimate peace of Amitabha.

Sovereign Buddha of flaming light
The darkness of wrong paths and views opened
I take refuge in the clear seeing Amitabha.

Radiance of the light of truth
Buddha of pure light
I take refuge in Buddha Amitabha.

As far as his light illumines, love penetrates
And the joy of faith is attained
In the boundless heart of Amitabha I take refuge.

Buddha of the light of Wisdom
Buddha of unfailing Compassion

Buddha of Immeasurable light
Buddha of Wondrous light
Inexpressible light
Light awakening all beings
Beautiful light
Light transcending form
Light Surpassing sun and moon
I take refuge in the Buddha of Light.

Gathering the Dharma treasures of Enlightenment
Saving beings to fulfil the great vow
I take refuge in the ocean of the Great Heart.

The Buddha land of happiness
With all that one could ever desire
Nothing to compare in all the heavens
A harmonious, luminous field of Virtue and love
I take refuge in the blissfully unfolding
Vision of Amitabha.

Amitabha,
Mysterious, limitless power
I praise you with body, speech and mind
May all beings take refuge in you.

(Refuges and precepts)

3. CONFESSIONAL ASPIRATION

Amitabha
May I free myself
Of the burden of selfishness
May I free myself
Of all this pointless grasping
Possessing without enjoying
May I free myself
Of searching for happiness outside of myself
Without feeling what I am feeling
Trying to grasp at experiences to fill this lack.
Swallowing up what I think will give me nourishment
I only feel hungrier than before.
May I just learn to experience myself!
May I rest with this experience!
May I enjoy these pleasant feelings
Naturally, openly
Without cutting off from painful feelings
Spacious, compassionate,
May deeper feelings of love arise.

Through the blessing presence of Amitabha
May I develop contentment
May I come back to my own experience
May I practise the teachings I have
May I experience myself fully
With loving kindness.

Through Amitabha's wave of faith
May I cultivate positive states
May I dwell in the four sublime abodes
Understanding all this, feeling all of this,
Practising this,
Realising this,
That overcoming selfishness
I experience greater happiness
Seeing that I and mine go together.

That free of attachment enjoyment grows
In this very life Amitabha's realm of Bliss arises.

4. ACCUMULATING VIRTUE

Amitabha

Sun of my heart

Within your presence

I am content

Free of longing to be elsewhere

I am content

Practising the Perfections

Pratising the liberating precepts

I am content

In the stillness of meditation

I am content

Facing the truth of impermanence and death

I am content

With the simplest share

I am content

In the silent mind

I am content

Without like or dislike

To disturb the heart

I am content.

Sadhana

One sees and feels a vast expanse of clear blue sky, a deep brilliant blue. Below one sees a great ocean. It is quite calm, just a few small waves on the surface. The sea is a deep blue-green colour.

Then one sees rays of shining golden light coming from the setting sun, which is a rich red in colour, going down below the surface of the sea. It is half showing, its reflection glittering golden across the waters.

At the centre of one's vision one sees an enormous red lotus flower. The sun is to the left of us and to the right of the lotus. On this lotus flower at its heart, there is a brilliant white moon mat.

Seated on this moon mat one sees the figure of the Buddha Amitabha, sitting cross legged. He is wearing orange red robes embroidered with gold. His skin is a deep luminous glowing red. A soft and vivid red. His left hand is placed in his lap, while his right hand holds up by the stalk a single red lotus blossom. His hair is blue-black. His eyes are clear and radiant.

He has a

compassionate smile and his demeanor is one of compassion. His body is surrounded by an aura of soft red light, edged with a rainbow. His head is surrounded by an aura of soft green light also edged with a rainbow.

At his heart there is a brilliant white moon crescent. On this one sees the seed syllable HRIH - red in colour - it is the essence of Amitabha.

From the red HRIH there emanates a beam of rich red light, a clear ruby red. This ray or beam of ruby red light reaches the top of one's head and travels down the median nerve to one's heart.

And on this ray of light emanating from Amitabha's heart comes the mantra:

OM AMIDEVA HRIH

in red lettering. It follows the light to one's head then down into one's heart, and one repeats the mantra over and over again.

Finally one dissolves the visualisation gradually step by step, thus:

Amitabha dissolves into the white moon mat.
The moon mat into the lotus flower
The lotus flower into the sea
The setting sun dissolves into the sea
The sea dissolves into the blue sky
The blue sky dissolves leaving the mantra

5. DHARMA VERSES

The Dharma is the heart
The heart itself is emptiness
Only the empty heart can love
Only in silence will one understand.
The endless passage of words stills,
The mental wandering ceases,
I hear your voice in my heart
I hear your name in my heart.
Still heart
Silent heart
Vibrant heart
Heart of love
Heart of emptiness

OM AMIDEVA HRIH

Everything passes through everything else like light
It is quiet
At rest
Illuminated
Peaceful
Blissful
Look within yourself for this.
All that you need is here
Perfection in abundance
Nothing at all lacking or wanting

OM NAMO AMITABHAYA BUDDHAYA (x3)

Awaken!
To faith serene
Awaken!
To faith deep and broad
Awaken!

To the diamond heart of truth
Awaken !
To the moment of Pure faith
Awaken!
The one pointed mind
That sees the truth of Amitabha

Hear his name, remember his name, call upon his name
With trust
With confidence
With happiness
Moment by moment
Call upon the sacred name
Following the cycle of the sun
At dawn, at midday, at sunset
Through night and day
Throughout life and death
Call upon Amida

Om Namō Amitabhaya Buddhaya

Every thought arises from mind
Every word originates in mind
Word, thought, inseparable from mind
Amitabha is the infinite, boundless, compassionate Mind
Inseparable from us,

Om amideva hrih

Each breath in...
Om amideva hrih
Each breath out...
Om amideva hrih
In the beating of your heart
Om amideva hrih

All things are like sunlight reflected in water (recite x3)

Call Amitabha

Whatever the mind turns to that appears (recite x3)

Call Amitabha

OM AMIDEVA HRIH (fading into silence gradually)

6. DEDICATION AND ASPIRATION

Following the path of Amitabha
May I become a resource for all beings
Devoting myself to the welfare of others
Thereby the great vow is fulfilled.
Thus the light ray of Amitabha's compassion touches all beings.

May I always hear the song of insubstantiality in all things
In the winds
In the falling rain
In the sun's rising and setting
In the play of clouds
In the sound of voices
In the changing patterns of light.

May the gentle Dharma of Amitabha
Be heard, felt, seen, and sensed in everything.

May the conditions for the growth of all beings manifest
Wherever they are
Whoever they are.
May they be happy,
May they be free of suffering
May they progress in the path of Dharma
May they realise their own true interest.
With love and compassion may they be gently led
Into the quest for Enlightenment.
Transforming mundane cravings and passions
Into the Discriminating wisdom of Amitabha
Seeing the uniqueness and differences in things,
Free of attachment
Free of aversion
May they all cultivate an ardent desire for the qualities of
Enlightenment

With faith in the value of the three precious jewels,
Confidence that the path and goal are attainable
With self respect,
Respect for fellow Dharma farers
Serene, balanced, self contained
With vigour for the path and for the good,
Patient in the face of suffering
May I never lose heart.
May compassion and love become unwavering.
Cultivating the three wisdoms
With alertness, heedfulness, equanimity
Dwelling in the non dual realm of great joy
May the dark, disturbing aspects of my mind
Be transformed by practising the Dharma.

By the power of Amitabha's meditation
May this restless unfulfilled mind find peace
With all thoughts stilled
Tranquil, silent, calm,
Timeless in Amitabha's realm
Developing a deep, spacious awareness
Creating our worlds anew
May the spiritual potential of all beings
Unfold like the petals of lotus
In the light of Amitabha's compassion.

Identifying oneself with Amitabha
May the moment of death
Be the time of awakening.
And may we all be reborn
In the Blissful Pure Land
Of Enlightenment.

PUJA TO AMITABHA
BY KAMALASHILA

1. OFFERING

To the Holy Red Lord Amitabha,
Deeply glowing scarlet Sun of dhyana,
I offer all my riches of experience:

I offer you the Mountain of the Earth
The Eye of rich and purest form
All Tangible Forms of jewels, and flowering trees.

I offer you the Lake of calming water
The Taste of deep unfolding freedom's movement.

I offer you the Flames of Transformation
The Sound of crackling heat and hot explosion.

I offer you the Breath of fragrant healing
The Scent of Springtime airs and inspiration.

I offer you the Sky of Liberation
The space of my existence and my practice.

I offer the mysterious seed of magic
The mind's unfolding in all rich adornment
All deep expanding jewels of meditation

In welcome song I present these riches to you.

OM AMIDEVA HRIH

2. HOMAGE AND GOING FOR REFUGE

To the Infinite Buddha of Measureless Light

I offer deepest homage and respect.

To the streaming sunshine of your Teachings

I offer deepest homage and respect.

To all the warmth and beauty of the Sangha

I offer deepest homage and respect.

To the StreamWinner, threefold fetter-breaker,

To those who once and no more come to birth,

To those whose Realisation is complete,

I offer deepest homage and respect.

(Refuges and Precepts)

3. CONFESSION

I realise all my imperfected thoughts
I realise all my imperfected words
I realise all my imperfected deeds
I realise the consequence of these.
I fear to die with these sins on my head
And so I fully confess them to you
O Amitabha, hear this my regret.
Allow me to let go my clinging pride
Bear the humiliation of my truth
And act in future with no more regrets.

4. REJOICING

I am alive with mind and sense complete
I live where Dharma can be fully found
I have the Sangha.
Life could not be better.
I weep with joy in finding so much richness
I laugh with joy to realise my true nature
Ha Ha!

5. REQUESTING THE RAYS OF BLESSING

Gazing with one pointed inspiration
I formulate my wish.
Red Lord of Sunset,
Please bless me with your deepest rays of scarlet
Touch me with your sunbeams of compassion
Awaken all my unawakened wisdom.

(Silence)

6. GREAT VOW

For all beings here and everywhere around,
In gratitude for the Vow of Amitabha
I dedicate all my body, speech and mind,
All future actions, words and skilful thoughts,
To Realisation in a Pure Abode
Of His Enlightening Sun of Great Compassion.

OM AMIDEVA HRIH

RETREAT DEDICATION TO THE
BUDDHA AMITABHA
BY KAMALASHILA

1. OFFERING

To Amitabha, Buddha of Boundless Light
We come to dedicate this place.
We come to dedicate these precious hours
We come to dedicate our precious minds.
Deeply glowing scarlet Sun of dhyana,
We offer all our riches of experience:
The Eye of purest inner form
All forms of offered jewels and flowers.
The Taste of deep unfolding freedom.
The Sound of deep and silent meditation
The Scent of wafting fragrant incense.
The mind's unfolding in all rich adornment
All deep expanding jewels of meditation
In dedication may these gifts be fruitful.

OM AMIDEVA HRIH

2. HOMAGE AND GOING FOR REFUGE

To the Infinite Buddha of Measureless Light
We come with homage, refuge and respect.
We dedicate our body, voice and actions
In this place of retreat and contemplation

(Refuges and Precepts)

3. CONFESSION

I will confess all my imperfect thoughts
I will confess all my imperfect words
I will confess all my imperfect deeds
And purify my heart in preparation
For entering the heart of meditation.
O Amitabha, hear this my regret
Allow me to let go of my clinging pride
Bear the humiliation of my truth
And so act here and now without regret.

4. REJOICING

I am here,
with mind and sense complete
In this very place the Dharma can be found.
The Sangha all surround me and support me.
This is the very peak of opportunity.
I feel great joy in finding so much richness
I laugh with joy to realise my true nature
Ha Ha!

5. REQUESTING THE RAYS OF BLESSING

Gazing with one pointed aspiration
I formulate my wish.
Red Lord of Sunset,
Please bless me with your deepest rays of scarlet
Touch me with your sunbeams of compassion
Awaken all my unawakened wisdom.

(Silence)

6. GREAT VOW

For all beings here and everywhere around,
In gratitude for the Vow of Amitabha
We dedicate our body, speech and mind,
All actions here,
all words and skilful thoughts,
To Realisation in a Pure Abode
Of His Enlightening Sun of Great Compassion.

OM AMIDEVA HRIH

VERSES DEDICATED TO AMITABHA
FOR THE END OF A RETREAT

BY SUCHITTA,
BASED ON KAMALASHILA'S RETREAT
DEDICATION TO AMITABHA

SUDARSHANALOKA, OCTOBER 1999

HRIH!

It is time to leave this place of retreat
Dedicated to the Three Jewels.
I dedicated these precious hours
I dedicated this precious mind,
To Amitabha, Buddha of Boundless Light and Love.
Now I offer all the riches of my experience:
Inner and outer forms
That have delighted and moved the eye,
The taste of freedom,
And my body moving in space.
The sound of meditation, like the birdsong,
Sweet and never-ending.
The scent of flowers, of incense,
Of the rain, of Perfection.
The unfolding of mind,
The jewels of spontaneity and ritual.
These I offer to the Great Sun of Dhyana.

HRIH!

To the Infinite Buddha of Measureless Light
I came in homage, refuge and respect.
I leave this place of quiet retreat and contemplation
Dedicating again and again my body, voice and actions
To the Three Jewels.
Offering a primordial song of the Deathless.

(Refuges and Precepts)

HRIH!

I blush.
H' is the sound of the breath, moving upward.
'R' is the sound of fire.
'I' is the sound of the highest spiritual activity and intensity.
I feel shame in the presence of my better knowledge,
Of the inner intuitive knowledge of my conscience.
I have done wrong, countless deeds of body, speech and mind.
I am bound tightly by this karma.

HRIH!

Oh Amitabha, the seal of your mantra makes this karma
visible.
It is illuminated - it is directly seen.
Your seal, Oh Amitabha,
Is the emotional principle
Of goodness, compassion and sympathy.
It possesses the warmth of the sun.
Release me, Amitabha.
Please bless me and bathe me in your
Ruby sunset glow of love.

HRIH!

I am here.

I treasure this precious time

And give heartfelt thanks for it.

For this small hut, Amida, beautiful and quiet,

A place of contemplation, full of light and beauty,

That has given me so much.

I give thanks.

For the deep silence,

For the sound of the two rivers.

For the green green valley with the rocks and precipices

For the myriad songs and the flight of birds

And the possums and bushflies,

For the stars and moonlight and sun

For the infinite blue of the sky - the firmament,

Which is my own mind;

For the shape-shifting clouds,

And especially for the miracle of the stupa;

For the beings both seen and unseen

Who support and surround me,

I give thanks.

What joy to experience such happiness and flowing space

Even once in my life!

HRIH!

Amitabha, Red Lord of Sunset,
Please bless me with your deepest rays
Of scarlet and crimson,
Touch my heart with your compassion
And awaken all dormant potentialities.
Ripen and mature them
With the sunshine of your kindness.

HRIH!

As I leave this precious space
I gather inner gifts.
I move towards the world
Enriched, expanded,
With a flame in my heart.
If I tend this flame it will protect me
As I walk through the world, hurtling into its depths.
Its warmth and radiance
Is Amitabha's Vow.
Seeing more clearly,
feeling more deeply,
May I be of service to the Three Jewels.
May the Vow be fulfilled
For the sake of all that lives.

