



**Grandmaster JinBodhi Teaches**

**The Sutra of Contemplation  
on Amitabha Buddha**

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**on Amitabha Buddha**

**Translated from Sanskrit into Chinese by**  
**Tripitaka Master Kalayashas**  
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**Namo Amitabha Buddha!**

(Repeat Three Times)

## **Sutra Opening Verse**

The unexcelled, most profound, and  
exquisitely wondrous Dharma  
is difficult to encounter throughout  
hundreds of thousands of millions of eons.

Since we are now able to see, hear, receive and retain it,  
may we comprehend the true meaning of the Tathagata.

**Sutra:** Thus, have I heard: At one time, Sakyamuni Buddha was staying on Gr̥dhrakūṭa Mountain near Rājagṛha City with a great assembly of one thousand two hundred and fifty great bhikṣus and thirty-two thousand bodhisattvas, led by Dharma-Prince Mañjuśrī.

**My Understanding:** I heard the Buddha's teaching as follows. At one time, Sakyamuni Buddha was staying on Vulture Peak which was in Rājagṛha City's suburb. There was an attendance of one thousand two hundred and fifty senior disciples, as well as thirty-two thousand bodhisattvas led by Mañjuśrī Bodhisattva.

**Sutra:** At that time, in the great city of Rājagṛha, there was a prince named Ajātaśatru. He followed the counsel of his evil friend Devadatta and arrested his own father, King Bimbisāra. He confined him in a cell surrounded by walls seven layers deep, forbidding any officials or ministers from going there.



**My Understanding:** There was a prince named Ajātaśatru in the City of Rājagṛha. Devadatta, an evil friend of Ajātaśatru, abetted Ajātaśatru to arrest Ajātaśatru's own father – King Bimbisāra. Ajātaśatru confined him in a secure room surrounded by walls seven layers deep and hoped to starve him to death. In addition, the prince forbade any officials or ministers from going near or visiting King Bimbisāra.

**Sutra:** The queen, whose name was Vaidehi, remained loyal to the king. Purifying herself by bathing, she anointed her body with honey and wheat flour, and filled her ornaments with grape juice. She then offered them to the king in secret.

**My Understanding:** The king's wife was Vaidehi. She remained respectful and loyal to King Bimbisāra. Because the prince held the king captive to starve him to death,

Vaidehi, the prince's mother, came to the rescue. She bathed her body clean and anointed her body with ghee, honey and cooked wheat flour; and filled her ornaments and jewelries with grape juice. She then secretly offered the food to King Bimbisāra.

**Sutra:** At that time, the king ate the flour paste and drank the juice, then asked for some water. Having rinsed his mouth completely, he respectfully placed his palms together and facing Gṛdhrakūṭa Mountain, bowed to the World-Honored One from a far distance. He said, “Great Maudgalyāyana is my friend; I beg for your compassion to initiate me in the Eight Precepts.” Thereupon, Maudgalyāyana flew to the king like a swooping eagle. Day after day, he came like this to initiate the king in the Eight Precepts. The World-Honored One also sent Venerable Puṇṇa to expound Dharma to the king.

**My Understanding:** At that time, King Bimbisāra ate ghee, honey and cooked wheat and drank the juice, then he asked for some water. Having rinsed his mouth completely, he respectfully placed his palms together and facing the direction of Vulture Peak, bowed to the Buddha from a far distance. He said, “Great Maudgalyāyana, you are my dearest friend. I beg for your compassion to initiate me in the Eight Precepts.” Thereupon, Maudgalyāyana flew like an eagle and quickly arrived at the location where King Bimbisāra was held captive. Day after day, he came like this to initiate the king in the Eight Precepts. Sakyamuni Buddha also sent Venerable Puṇṇa to expound Dharma to King Bimbisāra.

[Editorial Note]

The Eight Precepts include: (1) No killing; (2) No stealing; (3) No sexual misconduct; (4) No false speech; (5) No alcohol abuse; (6) No eating at the wrong time; (7) No wearing ornaments, no using perfume, no entertainment; (8) No sitting on or lying in a tall and wide bed.

**Sutra:** Three seven-day periods passed in this fashion. Because the king could eat the flour and honey paste and hear Dharma, his countenance became peaceful and joyful.

**My Understanding:** Twenty-one days passed in this fashion. Because King Bimbisāra ate the flour and honey paste and heard and cultivated Buddha’s teachings, his countenance became peaceful and joyful.

**Sutra:** At that time, Ajātaśatru questioned the guard: “Is my father, the king, still alive?” The guard replied, “Your Majesty, the queen anoints her body with flour and honey paste and fills her ornaments with juice to feed the king. The monks, Maudgalyāyana and Puṇṇa, come from the sky and expound Dharma to the king. It is impossible to stop them.” Hearing this, Ajātaśatru became enraged with his mother and said, “My mother is a criminal and with criminals does she associate! Those evil monks used illusions and



incantations. They have caused this evil king to escape death for many days.” Then, he seized a sharp sword intending to kill his mother.

**My Understanding:** At that time, Ajātaśatru came and questioned the guard: “Is my father, the king, still alive?” The guard replied, “Your Majesty, your mother anoints her body with cooked flour, ghee and honey and fills her ornaments with grape juice. She comes every day to feed King Bimbisāra. Maudgalyāyana and Puṇṇa come from the sky and expound Dharma to the king. We cannot stop them.” Hearing this, Ajātaśatru became enraged with his mother and said, “My mother is a criminal, and she's an accomplice of that old scumbag! Maudgalyāyana and the other ordained monks are evil too. They enchanted him for many days so he won't starve to death!” Then, Ajātaśatru seized a sharp sword to execute his mother.

**Sutra:** At that time, there was a wise and intelligent minister named Moonlight. Along with Jīvaka, he bowed to the king and said, “Your Majesty, we have heard it said in the Vedic Discourses that since the beginning of this eon, there have been eighteen thousand evil kings who had killed their own fathers because they desired the throne; yet never have we heard of anyone who committed the heinous crime of killing his mother. Your Majesty, if you commit such a vicious murder, you will disgrace the Kshatriyas. As your ministers, we cannot even bear to hear of it, for this indeed is the act of a Chandala. We cannot stay here any longer.”

**My Understanding:** At that time, there was a wise and intelligent minister named Moonlight. He came to meet Ajātaśatru along with Jīvaka, who was a virtuous and celebrated physician. Moonlight bowed to Ajātaśatru and admonished, “Your Majesty, the scriptures of Brahman record that there have been eighteen thousand murderous kings who had killed their own fathers to seize the throne. Yet, we have never heard of any immoral person who

committed the heinous crime of killing their mother. Your Majesty, if you become the first ever person to offend the law of Nature and murder your mother, you will disgrace the aristocratic caste of Kshatriya. We cannot bear to witness such a happening. Your Majesty, if you proceed to do so, you are no different from someone who is not even in the four main castes – an untouchable or a butcher! We cannot stay here any longer.”

**Sutra:** Having spoken these words, the two ministers began to withdraw, each with his hand grasping his sword. Astounded and fearful, Ajātaśatru called out to Jīvaka and said, “Are you going to desert me?” Jīvaka replied, “Your Majesty, restrain yourself and do not harm your mother!”

Hearing this, Ajātaśatru repented and begged their forgiveness. Immediately, he put away his sword and stopped the urge to kill his mother. Instead, he ordered that she be confined to her residence so that she could not leave again.

**My Understanding:** Having spoken these words, the two ministers began to withdraw, each with his hand grasping his sword. Astounded and fearful, Ajātaśatru called out to Jīvaka and said, “Will you not advise me ever again?” Jīvaka admonished, “Great King, be prudent. No matter what, do not murder your mother!”

Hearing this, the king repented and begged their forgiveness. He immediately abandoned his sword and gave up all thoughts of killing his mother. He ordered the guard, “Confine the Queen Mother to her chamber in the palace and do not allow her to leave.”

**Sutra:** Having thus been confined, Vaidehi was stricken with sorrow and grief. Facing the faraway Gṛdhraakūṭa Mountain, she prostrated herself towards the Buddha and said, “Tathagata, World-Honored One, in former times, you never failed to send Ānanda to come and comfort me. Now I am greatly distressed and have no way to look upon

World-Honored One's majesty. I pray, send Venerable Maudgalyāyana and Venerable Ānanda to come and meet with me." Having said this, she wept sorrowful tears that fell like rain as she bowed to the Buddha.

**My Understanding:** Since confinement, Vaidehi pined away in sorrow and grief. Facing the faraway Vulture Peak, she prostrated herself towards the Buddha and prayed, "Tathagata, World-Honored One, in former times, you never failed to send Ānanda to come and comfort me. Now I am greatly distressed. World-Honored One! You are dignified and virtuous, I would not dare to meet you at this time. I pray that you may send the elders, Maudgalyāyana and Ānanda, to come and meet with me." Having said this, Madam Vaidehi wept sorrowful tears that fell like rain as she prostrated in the direction of the Buddha.

**Sutra:** But even before she raised her head, the World-Honored One, who was then staying on Gṛdhrakūṭa

Mountain and knew the thoughts in Vaidehi's mind, ordered Great Maudgalyāyana and Ānanda to go in the sky.

The Buddha also disappeared from Gṛdhrakūṭa Mountain and reappeared in the royal palace. When Vaidehi finished her prostration and raised her head, she saw the World-Honored One, Sakyamuni Buddha. His body was the color of purple-gold and he was seated on a hundred-jeweled lotus flower, attended by Maudgalyāyana on his left side and Ānanda on his right. Śakra and Brahmā, along with the other heavenly guardians, hovered in the sky about him. Heavenly flowers filled the sky like rain, as offerings to the Buddha.

**My Understanding:** The World-Honored One, who was staying on Vulture Peak, knew the thoughts in Vaidehi's mind even before she raised her head after prostration. So he immediately ordered Venerable Great Maudgalyāyana and Venerable Ānanda to go to her from the sky.



The Buddha also departed from Vulture Peak and arrived at Madam Vaidehi's chamber in the royal palace. When Madam Vaidehi finished her prostration and raised her head, she saw Sakyamuni Buddha. His body was the color of purple-gold and he was seated on a hundred-jeweled lotus flower. Maudgalyāyana stood on the Buddha's left side and Ānanda stood on the Buddha's right. Śakra, Brahmā, and other heavenly guardians hovered in the sky on guard. Heavenly flowers filled the sky, like rain, as offerings to the Buddha and at the Buddha's bestowal.

**Sutra:** When Vaidehi saw the Buddha, the World-Honored One, she removed her ornaments, rose, and prostrated on the ground. Weeping bitterly, she faced the Buddha and said, “World-Honored One, what crime did I commit in the past that should cause the birth of such an evil son? World-Honored One, what were the karmic conditions that caused you to become a family relative of Devadatta? My only wish is for World-Honored One to expound on a place without distress where I might be reborn. I do not like the turbid

and evil world of Jambudvīpa. This turbid and evil world is full of hell-beings, hungry ghosts and beasts, and the unkind who gather here. I pray that in the future I may hear no evil sounds and see no evil beings. Prostrating on the ground before World-Honored One, I plead and repent. I pray for Buddha's power to teach me to contemplate a place of pure and kind karma.”

**My Understanding:** When Madam Vaidehi saw Sakyamuni Buddha, she removed her ornaments and prostrated on the ground. Weeping bitterly, she said to Sakyamuni Buddha, “World-Honored One! What sin did I commit in the past that caused the birth of such an evil and vicious son? World-Honored One! What were the karmic conditions that caused you to become a family relative of Devadatta? My only wish is for World-Honored One to introduce me to a place free of worries and pain. I would like to be reborn in such a place. I do not want to be in this filthy world of humans. This filthy world is full of hell-beings, hungry ghosts and beasts, and many unkind beings

who gather here. I pray that in the future, in the world I reborn to, I may hear no evil and see no evil beings. Prostrating on the ground before World-Honored One, I plead for your pity and acceptance of my repentance. I pray that Buddha's teachings and wisdom, like sunlight, can guide me to contemplate a world of pure kind karma."

**Sutra:** At that time, the World-Honored One emitted golden light from between his eyebrows. It illuminated all the countless worlds of the Ten Directions and upon returning, rested atop the Buddha's head, forming a golden tower resembling Mount Sumeru. The pure and wondrous worlds of all the Buddhas of the Ten Directions manifested in the tower. Some of these lands were made of the seven kinds of jewels, and other lands consisted entirely of lotus flowers. Some lands resembled the heavenly palace of Īśvara, and some were like crystal mirrors. All the lands of the Ten Directions manifested. These countless lands of the Buddhas, including their solemnness and majesty, could be seen by Vaidehi.

**My Understanding:** When Madam Vaidehi was talking, Sakyamuni Buddha emitted light from between his eyebrows. The light was golden in color, illuminating the countless worlds of the Ten Directions. Then the light returned to the crown of the Buddha's head and formed a golden tower resembling Mount Sumeru. A variety of Buddha Lands and Pure Lands were displayed in the light. Some of the Buddha Lands were made of seven kinds of jewels. Some of the Buddha Lands were as beautiful as lotus flowers. Some were as grand and magnificent as heavenly palaces. Some were clear and sparkling as if made of crystals. Even ordinary eyes could clearly see the solemnness and majesty of the countless Buddha Lands. Madam Vaidehi observed every one of them with her own eyes.

**Sutra:** Then, Vaidehi said to the Buddha, "World-Honored One! All these Buddha Lands are pure and full of illumination. I would like to be born in the World of

Ultimate Bliss where Amitabha Buddha resides. I pray that World-Honored One can instruct me how to concentrate and attain samādhi.”

**My Understanding:** At that time, Madam Vaidehi said to Sakyamuni Buddha, “World-Honored One, although these Buddha Lands and Pure Lands are all pure and clear, bright and gleaming, I only wish for the Western World of Ultimate Bliss where Amitabha Buddha resides. I pray that World-Honored One can teach me how to be reborn to the World of Ultimate Bliss.”

**Sutra:** At that time, the World-Honored One gently smiled, and from the Buddha’s mouth emerged a five-colored light, each ray of light illuminating the top of King Bimbisāra’s head.

At that time, although the great king was confined, his mind’s eye was unhindered and he saw the World-Honored

One. Prostrating in reverence, he spontaneously advanced to the stage of anāgāmin.

**My Understanding:** Hearing this, Sakyamuni Buddha smiled compassionately, and from the Buddha’s mouth emerged a five-colored light, each ray of light illuminating the top of King Bimbisāra’s head. At that moment, although King Bimbisāra was confined in a dark chamber, his “mind’s eye” was unhindered. He contemplated Sakyamuni Buddha and prostrated respectfully. During this process, King Bimbisāra’s merits and virtues grew and quickly he attained a stage of realization – the stage of severing all ties from the Desire Realm.

[Editorial Note]

Anāgāmin is the third of the four stages of awakening in Theravada Buddhism: śrotāpanna, sakṛdāgāmin, anāgāmin, and arhat.



**Sutra:** At that time, the World-Honored One said to Vaidehi, “Don’t you know that Amitabha Buddha is not far from here? You should concentrate your thoughts and contemplate the people in that Buddha Land who have succeeded through pure karma. I shall now give you detailed instructions so that you and the future sentient beings who desire to cultivate pure karma may attain birth in the Western World of Ultimate Bliss.”

**My Understanding:** At this time, Sakyamuni Buddha told Madam Vaidehi, “Do you know now? Amitabha Buddha is not far from here. You should concentrate your thoughts and attentively contemplate the saints of the Western World of Ultimate Bliss. I shall now give you detailed instructions so that you and the future sentient beings who desire to cultivate purity and wisdom may readily attain birth in the Western World of Ultimate Bliss.”

**Sutra:** “Those who desire to be born in that land must perform the three meritorious acts. First, they should attend dutifully to their parents; honor and take care of their teachers and elders; with a compassionate mind, refrain from killing, and cultivate the Ten Virtuous Acts. Second, they should receive and uphold the Three Refuges, keep the various precepts, and refrain from breaking the rules of conduct. Third, they should awaken the bodhicitta, deeply believe in the principle of Karma, read and recite the Mahayana teachings, and encourage those who practice the Way. These three are called the pure karma.”

**My Understanding:** “Those who wish to be reborn in the Western World of Ultimate Bliss must cultivate three meritorious actions. First, be filial and attend dutifully to their parents; honor and take care of their teachers and elders; have a compassionate mind; refrain from killing; and cultivate the Ten Virtuous Acts. Second, take refuge in the Buddha, the Dharma and the Sangha; receive and uphold various precepts; and keep the dignity and manner

of a self-cultivator. Third, aspire bodhicitta – the mind of benefiting all sentient beings; deeply believe in the principle of Karma; read and recite the Mahayana sutras; and encourage others to self-cultivate diligently. These three acts are the basic practices for a successful self-cultivation.”

[Editorial Note]

1. Pure Karma is also known as undefiled karma. It is the karma of pure kindness, as well as the karma of three meritorious actions: the merits of worldly kindness, the merits of upholding precepts, and the merits of practicing Buddha’s Way. These three meritorious actions are the direct cause of sentient being’s rebirth in the Pure Lands.

2. Ten Virtuous Acts are: (1) No killing; (2) No stealing; (3) No sexual misconduct (no abuse of desires, no harming of others and their families); (4) No harsh words (no foul language); (5) No divisive actions; (6) No false speech (no defamation, no slandering, no deceiving, no spreading

rumors); (7) No frivolous words (no flattering with harmful intent); (8) No greed; (9) No hate; (10) No ignorance.

**Sutra:** The Buddha further said to Vaidehi: “Do you now know? These three kinds of karma are the pure karma and true cause for the enlightenment of all the Buddhas of the past, present and future.”

**My Understanding:** Sakyamuni Buddha further said to Madam Vaidehi: “Do you understand now? These three kinds of actions are the basic foundation of the enlightenment of all the Buddhas of the past, present and future.”

**Sutra:** The Buddha said to Ānanda and Vaidehi, “Listen attentively! Listen attentively! Ponder and remember this well. I, Tathagata, will now expound the pure karma for the benefit of the future sentient beings who are tormented by

the bandits of afflictions. Excellent, Vaidehi, for asking about this.”

**My Understanding:** Sakyamuni Buddha said to Venerable Ānanda and Madam Vaidehi, “You should listen attentively and comprehend it wholeheartedly. I will now expound on the approach to purity and liberation to benefit future sentient beings who wish to be freed from afflictions and sufferings. Excellent, Vaidehi, you asked a very good question.”

**Sutra:** “Ānanda! You should receive and uphold Buddha’s words and proclaim them widely to the multitudes of beings. I, Tathagata, will now instruct Vaidehi and all the future sentient beings in the contemplation of the Western World of Ultimate Bliss. By the power of Buddha, they will see that Pure Land as clearly as seeing their own images in a bright mirror. When they see that land and its ultimate and wondrous joy, they will rejoice and immediately acquire

complete and pure wisdom that is not born and does not cease.”

**My Understanding:** “Ānanda, you should take my words to heart and propagate my teachings widely. I will now instruct Vaidehi and all the future sentient beings in contemplating the Western World of Ultimate Bliss. By the power of Buddha’s blessing, you will see the pure land of the Western World of Ultimate Bliss as clearly as seeing your face in a mirror. When you see the Western World of Ultimate Bliss and various aspects of its wondrous beauty, you will rejoice; therefore, immediately acquire complete and pure wisdom that is not born and does not cease.”

**Sutra:** The Buddha said to Vaidehi, “You are an ordinary person whose mental abilities are weak and feeble. As you have not attained the divine eye, you cannot see very far, but Buddhas and Tathagatas have special means to allow you to see it.”



**My Understanding:** Sakyamuni Buddha told Madam Vaidehi, “You are an ordinary person with relatively weak comprehension and contemplation skills. As you have not attained the supernormal power of the divine eye, you cannot see the faraway world and that realm. However, Buddhas and Tathagatas have special means to help you see the Western World of Ultimate Bliss.”

**Sutra:** Then Vaidehi said to the Buddha, “World-Honored One! People like me are enabled by Buddha’s power to see that land now. But after Buddha’s passing, how will sentient beings see Amitabha Buddha’s World of Ultimate Bliss when they are impure, evil, unkind, and burdened by the five sufferings?”

**My Understanding:** Then Madam Vaidehi said to Sakyamuni Buddha, “World-Honored One, mundane people like me can see the Western World of Ultimate Bliss

with Buddha's blessing. In the future, after Buddha's nirvana, all the sentient beings will be in an evil, impure and suffering state. Then how would they be enabled to see Amitabha Buddha and the World of Ultimate Bliss?"

**Sutra:** The Buddha said to Vaidehi, "You and all sentient beings should single-mindedly concentrate your thoughts on one direction: the west. How to contemplate? Anyone who contemplates, all the sentient beings who are not born blind and have eyes have seen the setting sun, just contemplate this."

**My Understanding:** Sakyamuni Buddha told Madam Vaidehi, "You and all sentient beings should single-mindedly concentrate your thoughts at one place – always contemplating the west without deviation. How to contemplate? All the sentient beings who are not born blind have seen the setting sun; just contemplate this."

**Sutra:** “Sit upright facing the west and attentively look at where the sun will set. Your mind is resolute, and your concentration should not waver. See the setting sun, it appears like a drum. Once the sun is seen; then, whether the eyes are shut or open, it is clear and distinct. This is the contemplation of the sun and the first contemplation.”

**My Understanding:** “Sit upright and properly facing the west and attentively contemplate the image of a setting sun. Concentrate your thoughts, be resolute and unwavering. See the setting sun appearing like a drum suspended above the horizon. Once the setting sun is seen, whether the eyes are shut or open, this image is clear and distinct. This is the ‘Contemplation of the Sun’ and the first contemplation.”

**Sutra:** “Next form the contemplation of water. See the water as clean and pure, which leads to clear perception and the mind will not be distracted. Once this water is seen, contemplate that it is ice. Having contemplated the ice as

brilliant and transparent, see it as clear crystal. When this contemplation is completed, see that the clear crystal ground is bright and clear, both inside and out. The clear crystal ground is supported and secured from below by a golden-bannered pillar adorned with the seven precious jewels. The golden-bannered pillar has eight corners and eight sides, each side is adorned with hundreds of jewels, each jewel shines with thousands of light rays, and each ray of light has eighty-four thousand colors. As the lights are reflected on the clear crystal ground, they look like thousands of millions of suns, so dazzling that it is impossible to see them all in detail. On the surface of this clear crystal ground, golden paths intricately mesh and crisscross like a net of cords, and the seven kinds of precious jewels form borders demarcating the intersected parts of the ground. Each jewel emits light in five hundred colors. The light appears in the shapes of flowers, stars or moons. Suspended in the sky, they form a tower of light.”

**My Understanding:** “Next form the ‘Contemplation of the Water.’ See clean and pure water; contemplate earnestly and attentively. Once this water is seen, envision the water transforming into ice. Sunlight shines through the ice; it is very realistic. Then, this ice turns into a clear crystal. Clear crystal is like glass; when sunlight shines through it, it is incredibly transparent and bright. After contemplating the clear crystal, contemplate that the entire ground is made of clear crystal. It is bright and transparent, both inside and out.

“A giant pillar made of gold supports the entire clear crystal ground from below. This precious pillar has eight corners and eight sides, and each side is adorned with various jewels. Each jewel radiates beautiful light, and each ray of light consists of beautiful colors. As these beautiful colors shine upon the clear crystal ground, it is as if countless suns are shining, making it impossible to see any detail.

“On the clear crystal ground, ropes made of gold separate various roads and sections. Seven kinds of precious jewels also form borders that demarcate this clear crystal world.

Each jewel emits light in various colors. Each ray of light is like beautiful flowers, dazzling stars and moons, as though a mega-sized light tower is suspended in the vast, borderless sky.”

**Sutra:** “There are thousands and millions of pavilions made of hundreds of jewels. Both sides of the tower are adorned with billions of flower-banners and countless musical instruments in solemnness. Pure breezes of the eight pleasing qualities are produced by these rays of light. The breezes cause the musical instruments to play in voices that proclaim suffering, emptiness, impermanence and non-self.

“This is the contemplation of the water and the second contemplation.”

**My Understanding:** “There are thousands and millions of impressive pavilions made of various jewels. Both sides of the precious tower are adorned with countless beautiful



flower-banners and musical instruments hovering in the air. It is highly auspicious and gratifying. Eight types of pure breeze drift out from these rays of light. The breezes cause the musical instruments in the sky to play wondrous sounds proclaiming suffering, emptiness, impermanence and non-self.

“This is the ‘Contemplation of the Water’ and the second contemplation.”

**Sutra:** “When the contemplation of the water has been achieved, each image should be clearly seen whether the eyes are shut or open, and should be constantly kept in your mind except when eating.

“Accordingly, these contemplations are called the indistinct perception of the ground of the World of Ultimate Bliss. If you attain the state of samādhi, you will see the ground of that land so clearly and distinctly, and it cannot be adequately described.

“Thus, it is the contemplation of the ground and the third contemplation.”

**My Understanding:** “When the ‘Contemplation of the Water’ is achieved, repeatedly practice the contemplations one by one to make the image more realistic. The images do not fade or disappear whether the eyes are shut or open. It is as if you are always immersed in this contemplation except when eating.

“This contemplation is an indistinct view of the World of Ultimate Bliss. However, when this contemplation can form readily, the image can be seen clearly, distinctively, and realistically; words cannot adequately describe the images.

“This is the ‘Contemplation of the Ground;’ the third contemplation.”

[Editorial Note]

Samādhi is an unmovable, extremely absorbed state.

**Sutra:** The Buddha said to Ānanda, “You are the keeper of Buddha’s discourses for all the future sentient beings. I proclaim the dharma of contemplating the ground for those who wish to be liberated from suffering. If they can contemplate the ground, they will transcend eight billion eons of punishments of birth and death. When they leave this life, they will definitely be born into the Pure Land with a heart that is free of doubt.

“To practice this method is called the right contemplation, and to practice otherwise is called the wrong contemplation.”

**My Understanding:** Sakyamuni Buddha said to Venerable Ānanda, “You can comprehend my teaching and proclaim the ‘Contemplation of the Ground’ to all the future sentient beings who wish to liberate themselves from suffering. When skilled at this contemplation, they will be freed from eight billion eons of punishments of birth and

death. When they leave this life, they will definitely be born into the Pure Land and attain great freedom.

“Those who practice according to the above method have practiced the ‘Right Contemplation,’ and to practice otherwise is the ‘Wrong Contemplation.’”

**Sutra:** The Buddha said to Ānanda and Vaidehi, “When the contemplation of the ground can be achieved, next contemplate the jeweled trees. To contemplate the jeweled trees, one should see them one by one and form an image of seven rows of trees. Each tree is eight thousand yojanas high. Each tree is adorned with blossoms and leaves made of all seven kinds of jewels.”

**My Understanding:** The Buddha said to Venerable Ānanda and Madam Vaidehi, “When you can contemplate the ground, next contemplate the jeweled trees one by one in detail. First, contemplate there are seven rows of jeweled trees, and each tree is 8000 yojanas high. All the blossoms

and leaves are made of seven kinds of jewels. Each tree is replete with all kinds of jewels.”

[Editorial Note]

Yojana is a measure of distance that was used in ancient India. It is the distance that a bull can travel in one day.

**Sutra:** “Each blossom and leaf are the color of a different jewel. From the clear crystal-colored is emitted a golden light; from the rock crystal-colored is emitted a crimson light; from the agate-colored is emitted an iridescent light; from the iridescent-colored is emitted a pearl-green light. In addition, coral, amber and all the other myriad jewels serve as dazzling ornaments. Exquisite nets of pearls completely cover the trees. Each tree is veiled by seven layers of nets. Between each of the nets there are fifty billion exquisite flower palaces that resemble the palace of the Brahma King.”

**My Understanding:** “Each blossom and leaf radiate light in a different color. From the clear crystal-colored is emitted a golden light; from the rock crystal-colored is emitted a crimson light; from the agate-colored is emitted an iridescent light; from the iridescent-colored is emitted a pearl-green light. Coral, amber and many other jewels decorate the trees and radiate beautiful and dazzling light. Exquisite nets of pearls completely cover the trees. Seven layers of nets veil each tree, and between each layer of nets are fifty billion exquisite palaces resembling the palace of the Brahma King.”

**Sutra:** “Celestial children naturally reside in each palace. Each of these children wears ornaments made of fifty billion śakrābhi lagna maṇi. The light from these mani jewels illuminates a hundred yojanas in all directions, like a constellation of billions of suns and moons which cannot be fully described. The intermingling of the light from these various jewels produces an unexcelled color. The rows of these jeweled tree paths are evenly arranged, and their

foliage is equally spaced. From among the leaves appear exquisite blossoms. Upon these flowers, fruits made of the seven kinds of jewels naturally appear. Each leaf is twenty-five yojanas in diameter. Each leaf, similar to celestial ornaments, has thousands of colors and hundreds of different patterns. There are exquisite flowers in the color of Jambū gold. Like revolving wheels of fire, they gently roll among the leaves. Various fruits appear from these flowers in forms similar to Śakra's vase.”

**My Understanding:** “Celestial children naturally and comfortably reside in each palace. Each child wears many mani jewels as ornaments. The light from these mani jewels illuminates 100 yojanas in all directions, like a symphony of countless suns and moons which cannot be fully described. The various jewels produce dazzling light that interact with each other producing the most brilliant color.

“These amazing, jeweled trees are arranged in orderly rows. The dense foliage radiates beautiful light. From among the leaves appear many wondrous and exquisite blossoms.



Upon these flowers, various colored fruits made of the seven kinds of jewels appear. Each leaf is 25 yojanas in diameter. Each leaf has many extraordinary colors and varieties of patterns like natural ornaments. There are exquisite flowers in golden color as if revolving wheels of fire roll among the leaves. The exotic fruits produced have a similar form as the vase of Śakra, the heavenly king.”

[Editorial Note]

1. Mani jewel is the luminous jewel worn on Heavenly King Śakra, which can illuminate the Thirty-Three Heavens (Trāyastriṃśa Heaven).
2. Jambū gold is produced from the gold sand found in rivers running through the forest of Jambū trees in Jambudvīpa. Its color is reddish-gold with a tone of purple flames. Thus, it is the most magnificent of all types of gold.
3. Śakra’s vase is the vase of Heavenly King Śakra, and it can fulfill all wishes.

**Sutra:** “Great illumination forms banners and flags, as well as infinite jeweled canopies. In these jeweled canopies, all the deeds of the Buddhas of the three-thousand-great-thousand worlds appear. The Buddha Lands of the Ten Directions also appear within. When you have seen the trees in this way, contemplate each detail in order: contemplate and see the trunks, the branches, the leaves, the flowers and the fruits; each is clear and distinct.

“This is the contemplation of the trees and the fourth contemplation.”

**My Understanding:** “Great illumination forms countless banners, flags, and jeweled canopies. In these jeweled canopies, all the compassion in the three-thousand-great-thousand worlds is displayed as if showing a movie. The Buddha Lands of the Ten Directions (i.e., all the Buddha Lands in the universe, whether in the East, West, South, North, Up or Down) also appear in the canopies. When you can contemplate these, continue to practice the contemplation taught in this section one by one. When

these contemplations become familiar and can form readily, you can easily contemplate and see the trunks, the branches, the leaves, the flowers, and the fruits; each is clear, distinct, and realistic.

“This is the ‘Contemplation of the Trees’ and the fourth contemplation.”

**Sutra:** “Next, contemplate the bodies of water. This is how to do so. The land of Ultimate Bliss has eight bodies of water.

“The water of each lake is made of the seven jewels. These soft and gentle jewels emerge from a wish-fulfilling jewel, the king of jewels. The water of each lake flows into fourteen streams, each in the wondrous color of the seven jewels. The banks of each channel are made of gold, and the bed is strewn with the sand of variegated diamonds. In each body of water, there are sixty billion lotus flowers made of the seven jewels. Each lotus flower is perfectly round and is twelve yojanas in diameter. Mani water flows among the flowers and courses back and forth amidst the trees.”

**My Understanding:** "Next, contemplate the bodies of water. There are eight bodies of water in the Western World of Ultimate Bliss.

"The water is made of seven kinds of jewels; they are soft and gentle. The water emerges from a wish-fulfilling jewel, the king of jewels, and flows into 14 streams. Each stream has the brilliant colors of seven jewels. Each channel's banks are made of gold, and the bed is strewn with all kinds of diamonds. In each body of water, there are sixty billion lotus flowers made of seven jewels. Each lotus flower is 12 yojanas in diameter. Mani jewel water flows among the flowers and irrigates the jeweled trees."

**Sutra:** "The delicate and exquisite sounds of the flowing water proclaim the teachings of suffering, emptiness, impermanence, non-self and the pāramitās. They also praise the physical features and characteristics of the Buddhas. From the wish-fulfilling king-jewel, delicate and

exquisite golden rays of light issue forth and transform into singing birds as colorful as hundreds of jewels. Their harmonious and elegant songs continually praise the Buddha, the Dharma and the Sangha.

“This is the contemplation of the waters of eight virtues and the fifth contemplation.”

**My Understanding:** “The flowing water makes delicate and exquisite sounds proclaiming the beautiful state of suffering, emptiness, impermanence, and non-self. They also praise the physical features and characteristics of the Buddhas. From the wish-fulfilling king-jewel, delicate and exquisite golden rays of light issue forth and transform into various birds in colors of jewels. Their gentle and elegant songs continually praise the Buddha, the Dharma, and the Sangha.

“This is the ‘Contemplation of the Waters of Eight Virtues,’ and the fifth contemplation.”

**Sutra:** “In every region of that land of myriad treasures, there are fifty billion jeweled palaces. In those palaces, there are countless heavenly beings playing heavenly music. Musical instruments are suspended in the sky like the heavenly jeweled banners. The instruments spontaneously produce myriad sounds without being played. These sounds praise the Buddha, the Dharma and the Sangha.

“When this contemplation has been completed, it is called the indistinct perception of the World of Ultimate Bliss, the jeweled trees, the jeweled ground and the jeweled lakes.

“This is a general contemplation and the sixth contemplation.”

**My Understanding:** “The World of Ultimate Bliss is made of many treasures. There are fifty billion jeweled palaces in every region of the land. In those palaces, countless heavenly beings are playing wondrous music. Some musical instruments are suspended in the sky like heavenly jeweled banners. The instruments spontaneously

produce sounds without being played. These sounds praise the Buddha, the Dharma, and the Sangha.

“When this contemplation can be formed readily, it is called an indistinct perception of the World of Ultimate Bliss, the jeweled trees, the jeweled ground, and the jeweled lakes.

“This is the ‘General Contemplation,’ a broad view of the World of Ultimate Bliss, and the sixth contemplation.”

**Sutra:** “For those who see this, their heavy and evil karma accumulated from measureless tens of billions of eons are eliminated. At the end of this life, they will definitely be born in that land. To practice this method is called the right contemplation, and to practice otherwise is called the wrong contemplation.”

**My Understanding:** “Those who have achieved this contemplation have also eliminated extremely heavy and evil karma accumulated from immeasurable eons. At the end of this life, they will definitely be reborn in the Western

World of Ultimate Bliss. Those who practice according to this method have practiced the right contemplation, and to practice otherwise is the wrong contemplation.”

**Sutra:** The Buddha said to Ānanda and Vaidehi, “Listen attentively! Listen attentively! Ponder and remember this well. I shall now analyze and expound for you the Dharma by which you may free yourselves from sufferings and afflictions. Keep it in your minds, and explain it widely for the benefits of the multitudes of beings.”

As these words were spoken, the Buddha of Infinite Life appeared in the sky. Avalokiteśvara and Mahāsthāmaprāpta, two Mahasattvas, stood in his attendance to the left and right. They shone with such brilliant illumination that it was impossible to see them in detail. The radiance of hundreds and thousands of Jambū gold could not compare to it.



**My Understanding:** Sakyamuni Buddha said to Venerable Ānanda and Madam Vaidehi, “Please listen attentively and consider it well. I shall now explain how to free yourselves from suffering and afflictions. Remember it and explain it in detail to sentient beings.”

At that moment, the Buddha of Infinite Life appeared in the sky. Avalokiteśvara Bodhisattva and Mahāsthāmaprāpta Bodhisattva stood in attendance of this Buddha on the left and right sides. They shone with such brilliant illumination that it was impossible to see them in detail. The radiance of hundreds and thousands of Jambū gold could not compare to it.

[Editorial Note]

The Buddha of Infinite Life is Amitabha Buddha.

**Sutra:** When Vaidehi saw the Buddha of Infinite Life, she knelt at the feet of Sakyamuni Buddha and said, “World-Honored One! It is by Buddha’s power that I am now able

to see the Buddha of Infinite Life and the two Bodhisattvas. How can the sentient beings in the future contemplate the Buddha of Infinite Life and the two Bodhisattvas?”

The Buddha said to Vaidehi, “Those who wish to contemplate that Buddha should concentrate their thoughts and form the contemplation of a lotus flower on the seven-jeweled ground.”

**My Understanding:** When Madam Vaidehi saw the Buddha of Infinite Life, she knelt at the feet of Sakyamuni Buddha and prostrated respectfully. After paying reverence, Madam Vaidehi said to Sakyamuni Buddha, “World-Honored One, I am now able to meet the Buddha of Infinite Life and the two Bodhisattvas through Buddha’s blessing. How can the future sentient beings see the Buddha of Infinite Life and the two great Bodhisattvas?”

Sakyamuni Buddha said to Vaidehi, “Those who wish to see the Buddha of Infinite Life should contemplate a lotus flower on the seven-jeweled ground.”

**Sutra:** “Each petal of that lotus flower has the color of hundreds of jewels and eighty-four thousand veins that are like heavenly paintings. Each vein has eighty-four thousand rays of light so clear and distinct that one can see all of them. Even the smallest lotus flower is two hundred and fifty yojanas in diameter. Each lotus flower has eighty-four thousand such petals, and between each petal are ten billion mani jewels, the king of jewels, serving as dazzling ornaments. Each of these mani jewels sends forth thousands of light rays which, like seven-jeweled canopies, cover the entire ground.”

**My Understanding:** “Contemplate that each lotus flower petal is as beautiful as the colors of various jewels. Each petal has eighty-four thousand veins that are like heavenly paintings. Each vein emits rays of light so clear and distinct that one can see all of them. A smaller lotus flower is 250 yojanas in diameter. Each lotus flower has eighty-four thousand such petals. The space between each petal is

decorated with ten billion mani jewels, the king of jewels. Each of these mani jewels radiates great illumination. The illumination, like an immeasurable canopy made of the seven jewels, covers the entire ground of the World of Ultimate Bliss.”

**Sutra:** “There is a pedestal made of śakrābhi lagna jewel. This lotus flower pedestal is studded and adorned with eighty thousand vajra kijsuka, Brahma mani jewels, and wondrous pearl nets.

“Four columns with jeweled banners naturally arise from this pedestal. Each jeweled banner is the size of hundreds, thousands, and billions of Mount Sumeru. Atop these bannered columns are jeweled canopies like that of the palace of the Yama Heaven. Each canopy is adorned with fifty billion rare and exquisite jewels. Each of these precious jewels emits eighty-four thousand rays of light, and each ray of light creates eighty-four thousand different shades of gold. Each golden ray of light illuminates the entire jeweled ground and transforms itself everywhere into various forms.

Some form vajra pedestals, some form nets of pearls, and others form clouds of various kinds of flowers. In all the ten directions, they transform freely and perform the works of Buddhas.

“This is the contemplation of the lotus throne and the seventh contemplation.”

**My Understanding:** “There is a giant lotus flower pedestal made of mani jewels. This pedestal is studded and adorned with eighty thousand diamonds, red gemstones, Brahma mani jewels, and beautiful pearl nets.

“Four columns with jeweled banners naturally arise from this lotus flower pedestal. Each jeweled banner is the size of hundreds, thousands, and billions of Mount Sumeru. Atop these bannered columns are jeweled canopies as boundless and immeasurable as the night sky and dazzling stars. Each canopy is adorned with fifty billion exquisite jewels. Each of these precious jewels emits infinite light rays, and each beam of light creates a variety of gold colors. Each gold color shines on the precious ground of the World of Ultimate

Bliss and transforms into different forms at all times. Some form diamond pedestals, some form nets of pearls, and others form clouds of various kinds of flowers. These lights transform freely in all directions manifesting a state of compassion, purity, and ease.

“This is the ‘Contemplation of the Lotus Throne’ and the seventh contemplation.”

**Sutra:** The Buddha said to Ānanda, “These exquisite flowers were originally created by the power of Dharmākara Bhikṣu’s vows. Those who wish to contemplate that Buddha should first contemplate the image of the lotus throne. When contemplating this image, do not stray into other contemplations; perceive each detail one by one. Each leaf, each jewel, each ray of light, each pedestal and each banner should be as clear and distinct as seeing the reflection of one’s own face in a mirror. Those who have completed this contemplation will transcend five trillion eons of punishments of birth and death. They definitely will be born in the World of Ultimate Bliss.

“To practice this method is called the right contemplation, and to practice otherwise is called the wrong contemplation.”

**My Understanding:** Sakyamuni Buddha said to Venerable Ānanda, “These wondrous and exquisite flowers were created by the power of Dharmâkara Bhikṣu’s vows. Those who wish to contemplate the Buddha of Infinite Life should first practice the ‘Contemplation of the Lotus Throne.’

“When practicing this contemplation, do not contemplate anything else. Contemplate earnestly and realistically. Perceive each detail one by one. Each leaf, jewel, ray of light, lotus pedestal, and banner should be as clear and distinct as seeing your face in a mirror. Those who have achieved this contemplation have also eliminated five trillion eons of punishments of birth and death. They definitely will be born in the World of Ultimate Bliss.

“Those who practice this contemplation have practiced the right contemplation, and to practice otherwise is the wrong contemplation.”

[Editorial Note]

Dharmâkara Bhikṣu was the name of Amitabha Buddha when he was an ordained monk cultivating the Bodhisattva Path.

**Sutra:** The Buddha said to Ānanda and Vaidehi, “When you have seen these contemplations, next you should contemplate the Buddha. And why is that? Each Buddha-Tathagata is dharmakāya and is in the mind of all sentient beings.

“This is why when your mind perceives Buddha, it is your mind that possesses the thirty-two prominent features and the eighty secondary characteristics. Your mind forms an image of Buddha, and your mind is Buddha. The wisdom of Buddhas – true, universal and ocean-like – arises from this



mind. This is why you should single-mindedly concentrate and attentively contemplate that Buddha, that Tathagata, that Arhat, that Samyaksambuddha.”

**My Understanding:** Sakyamuni Buddha said to Venerable Ānanda and Madam Vaidehi, “When you have seen these things, next you should contemplate the Buddha. Why is that? Because each Buddha-Tathagata is the dharmakāya (embodiment of Dharma) and is in the mind of all sentient beings.

“Thus, when your mind perceives Buddha, your mind possesses the thirty-two prominent features and the eighty secondary characteristics. Your mind forms an image of Buddha, and your mind is Buddha. All Buddhas are omniscient, and their wisdom is as vast as the ocean. Right understanding and right views arise from the mind; therefore, you should single-mindedly concentrate and attentively contemplate the Buddha of Infinite Life and attain the same right understanding and right views as the Buddha.”

[Editorial Note]

1. The thirty-two prominent features and the eighty secondary characteristics are used to describe the remarkable physical characteristics of Buddha.

2. Tathagata (Thus Come), Arhat (Worthy One), and Samyaksambuddha (Supremely Enlightened One) are three titles of Buddha.

**Sutra:** “To contemplate that Buddha, you must first contemplate his image, and whether your eyes are open or closed, you should see this precious form in the color of Jambū gold and seated upon that flower throne. Once that Buddha’s figure is seen sitting there, your mind’s eye will be opened, and you will see everything clearly and distinctly. See the Land of Ultimate Bliss solemnly adorned with the seven kinds of jewels; see the jeweled ground, the jeweled lakes and the rows of jeweled trees; see the heavenly jeweled canopies completely covering the trees and the jeweled nets

completely filling the sky; see these things as clearly and distinctly as seeing the palm of your hand.”

**My Understanding:** “If you wish to contemplate the Buddha of Infinite Life, you must first contemplate an image of the Buddha of Infinite Life. Whether your eyes are open or closed, you can see the reverent Buddha solemnly adorned with the seven kinds of jewels. He is emitting golden light and sitting on a grand lotus flower throne. Once you can perceive the Buddha’s image and the grand lotus flower throne, your mind’s eye will open, and you will see everything clearly and distinctly. See the entire Land of Ultimate Bliss adorned with the seven kinds of jewels, it is solemn and magnificent. See the heavenly jeweled canopies completely covering the jeweled ground, jeweled lakes and rows of jeweled trees. See the jeweled nets completely filling the sky. Your contemplation is clear, realistic and distinct as if seeing something in the palm of your hand.”

[Editorial Note]

The mind's eye refers to the ability of the mind to see or imagine, and the creativity of contemplation.

**Sutra:** “Once this has been seen, you should again form the contemplation of a large lotus flower on the Buddha's left side. This lotus flower should be exactly like the one contemplated before. Then form the contemplation of another large lotus flower on the Buddha's right side. Contemplate an image of Avalokiteśvara Bodhisattva seated on the left flower throne with a golden body exactly as the one contemplated before. Contemplate an image of Mahāsthāmaprāpta Bodhisattva seated on the right flower throne.”

**My Understanding:** “Once these contemplations are achieved, next contemplate a large lotus flower on the Buddha's left side. This lotus flower should be exactly like the one contemplated before. Then, contemplate another

large lotus flower on the Buddha's right side. Contemplate an image of Avalokiteśvara Bodhisattva seated on the left flower throne with a golden body. Contemplate an image of Mahāsthāmaprāpta Bodhisattva seated on the right flower throne.”

**Sutra:** “When this contemplation has been completed, the figures of the Buddha and two Bodhisattvas all emit illumination. The golden illumination shines on the jeweled trees. At the foot of each tree, there are also three lotus flowers and atop these lotus flowers, sit the figures of the Buddha and two Bodhisattvas so that the land is completely filled with such images.”

**My Understanding:** “When this contemplation has been completed, the figures of the Buddha and Bodhisattvas all emit illumination. The golden illumination shines on the jeweled trees. At the foot of each tree, there are also three lotus flowers and atop these lotus flowers, sit the figures of

the Buddha and two Bodhisattvas so that the land is completely filled with such images.”

**Sutra:** “When this contemplation has been completed, the self-cultivator will hear the flowing waters, the illumination, the jeweled trees, the geese, the mandarin ducks proclaiming exquisite Dharma. Whether or not the self-cultivator is in meditation, he will always hear these exquisite teachings. Even after rising from meditation, keep the teachings in mind and do not forget them. Then, confirm it with the sutras. If it is inconsistent, it is called an illusory contemplation. If it is consistent, it is called the attainment of an indistinct contemplation of the World of Ultimate Bliss.

“This is the contemplation of the figures and the eighth contemplation.

“Those who practice this contemplation will eliminate countless millions of eons of punishments of birth and

death. And, in this very life, attain the samādhi of contemplating Buddha.”

**My Understanding:** “When this contemplation has been completed, the self-cultivator will hear the flowing waters, the illumination, the jeweled trees, the geese, the mandarin ducks proclaiming Buddha’s exquisite teachings. Whether in meditation or not, the self-cultivator will always hear these exquisite teachings. Even after rising from meditation, keep the teachings in mind and do not forget them. And, confirm it with the sutras. If it is inconsistent, it is called an illusory contemplation. If it is consistent, it is called the attainment of an indistinct contemplation of the World of Ultimate Bliss.

“This is the ‘Contemplation of the Figures’ and the eighth contemplation.

“Those who practice this contemplation will eliminate countless millions of eons of punishments of birth and

death. In this moment, they have attained the pure state of contemplating Buddha.”

**Sutra:** The Buddha said to Ānanda and Vaidehi, “When this contemplation has been completed, next one should further contemplate the physical features and the illumination of the Buddha of Infinite Life. Ānanda, you should know that the body of the Buddha of Infinite Life is hundreds of thousands of millions of times as bright as the golden Jambū of the Yama Heavens. That Buddha’s height measures as many yojanas as the sands of sixty-trillion nayutas of Ganges Rivers. Between that Buddha’s eyebrows is a tuft of white hair that curls gently to the right and is the size of five Mount Sumerus. The Buddha’s eyes are pure like the waters of the four great oceans; the black and the white are clear and distinct. The pores of the Buddha’s body emit rays of light that are as immense as Mount Sumeru. The halo around that Buddha’s head is as large as a third-order world-system of a billion worlds. Within the halo, there are as many manifestations of Buddha as the sands in hundreds



of trillion nayutas of Ganges Rivers. Each Buddha manifestation is attended by a great assembly of countless Bodhisattvas manifestations.”

**My Understanding:** Sakyamuni Buddha said to Venerable Ānanda and Madam Vaidehi, “After this contemplation has been completed, one should next further contemplate the physical features and the illumination of the Buddha of Infinite Life. Ānanda, you should know that the body of the Buddha of Infinite Life is incomprehensibly tall and is purple-gold in color. Between that Buddha’s eyebrows is a tuft of white hair that curls gently to the right and is the size of five Mount Sumerus. The Buddha’s eyes are like the waters of the four great oceans; the black and the white are clear and distinct. The pores of the Buddha’s body emit rays of light that are as immense as Mount Sumeru. Amitabha Buddha’s halo of wisdom is unimaginably large. Within the halo around his head, there are incomprehensible, infinite and countless

manifestations of Buddha. Each Buddha manifestation is attended by countless Bodhisattvas manifestations.”

**Sutra:** “The Buddha of Infinite Life has eighty-four thousand physical features. In each of those features, there are eighty-four thousand secondary characteristics of excellence. Each of those marks of excellence sends forth eighty-four thousand rays of light. Each ray of light illuminates universally upon the worlds of the Ten Directions embracing the sentient beings who are mindful of the Buddha, never to be abandoned.”

**My Understanding:** “The Buddha of Infinite Life has eighty-four thousand physical features. In each of those features, infinite auspiciousness and excellence emit immeasurable illumination. Each ray of light illuminates universally upon the worlds of the Ten Directions embracing the sentient beings who are mindful of the Buddha, never abandoning anyone.”

**Sutra:** “No words can adequately describe that Buddha’s illumination, physical features, characteristics of excellence, and manifestations. But upon remembering these contemplations, your mind’s eye will see them. To see these is to see all the Buddhas of the Ten Directions. Because you see these Buddhas, it is called attaining the samādhi of contemplating Buddha.”

**My Understanding:** “No words can adequately describe Amitabha Buddha’s illumination, glorious appearance, and countless manifestations. But whenever you contemplate, you can readily contemplate this Buddha. Those who are able to contemplate this Buddha have seen all the Buddhas of the Ten Directions. This is the pure state of contemplating Buddha.”

**Sutra:** “To practice this contemplation is to contemplate the body of all Buddhas. By contemplating the bodies of

Buddhas, you also see the mind of Buddhas. The mind of Buddhas is the mind of great compassion and this unconditional compassion embraces all sentient beings.”

**My Understanding:** “Those who practice up to this contemplation are practicing the ‘Contemplation of All Buddha Bodies.’ Because you have contemplated Buddha’s body, you have also seen Buddha’s heart. The heart of Buddha is great loving-kindness and compassion. Buddha, with this unconditional compassion, embraces and takes care of all sentient beings.”

**Sutra:** “One who practices this contemplation, upon the end of this life, will be reborn into the presence of Buddhas and attain complete and pure wisdom that is not born and does not cease. Therefore, the wise should concentrate their thoughts and attentively contemplate the Buddha of Infinite Life.”

**My Understanding:** “One who practices this contemplation, after they leave this world, will immediately be reborn into the presence of Buddhas and attain complete and pure wisdom that is not born and does not cease. Therefore, the wise self-cultivators should concentrate their thoughts and attentively contemplate the Buddha of Infinite Life.”

**Sutra:** “To contemplate the Buddha of Infinite Life, begin with one of the physical features. Contemplate only the tuft of white hair between the eyebrows until it becomes very clear and distinct. Once the white tuft is contemplated, the eighty-four thousand physical features and characteristics will naturally appear. Having contemplated the Buddha of Infinite Life is contemplating the infinite Buddhas of the Ten Directions. These countless Buddhas will give predictions of the self-cultivator’s future Buddhahood.”

**My Understanding:** “To contemplate the Buddha of Infinite Life, begin with one of the physical features. Contemplate only the tuft of white hair between his eyebrows until it becomes very clear and distinct. A self-cultivator who can contemplate the white tuft can naturally contemplate all eighty-four thousand physical features and characteristics. A self-cultivator who can contemplate the Buddha of Infinite Life has also seen all Buddhas of the Ten Directions. These Buddhas will appear before the self-cultivator who has contemplated the Buddha and give predictions of the self-cultivator’s future Buddhahood.”

[Editorial Note]

To give a prediction of future Buddhahood: Buddhas, bodhisattvas, arhats, and eminent monks can predict and assure a self-cultivator’s accomplishments, stages of attainment, and their future path.

**Sutra:** “This is the comprehensive contemplation of all the physical features of the Buddha and the ninth contemplation. To practice this method is called the right contemplation, and to practice otherwise is called the wrong contemplation.”

**My Understanding:** “This is the ‘Comprehensive Contemplation of All the Physical Features of the Buddha’ and the ninth contemplation. To practice this method is called the right contemplation, and to practice otherwise is incorrect.”

**Sutra:** The Buddha said to Ānanda and Vaidehi, “When you have clearly and distinctly seen the Buddha of Infinite Life, next contemplate Avalokiteśvara Bodhisattva.

“This Bodhisattva’s body is eighty trillion nayutas of yojanas tall and is purple-gold in color. On the crown of the head is an uṣṇīṣa. A halo of light shines from behind the neck and measures hundreds of thousands of yojanas in size.

“Within this halo of light are five hundred Buddha manifestations that resemble Sakyamuni Buddha. Each Buddha manifestation is attended by five hundred Bodhisattva manifestations and countless numbers of heavenly beings. Within the illumination, sentient beings of the five realms of saṃsāra appear in all their various forms.”

**My Understanding:** The Buddha said to Venerable Ānanda and Madam Vaidehi, “You have clearly and distinctly seen the Buddha of Infinite Life, next contemplate Avalokiteśvara Bodhisattva. Avalokiteśvara Bodhisattva’s body is eighty trillion nayutas of yojanas tall and is purple-gold in color. On the crown of the head is a fleshy protuberance. A halo of wisdom shines from behind the neck, illuminating a vast distance. Within this halo are five hundred Buddha manifestations that resemble Sakyamuni Buddha. Each Buddha manifestation is attended by five hundred Bodhisattva manifestations and countless numbers of heavenly beings. Within Avalokiteśvara



Bodhisattva's illumination, sentient beings of the five realms of saṃsāra appear in all their various forms.”

[Editorial Note]

The sentient beings of the five realms of saṃsāra include those in the Heaven Realm, Human Realm, Animal Realm, Ghost Realm and Hell Realm.

**Sutra:** “Atop the Bodhisattva's head is a heavenly crown made of śakrābhi lagna maṇi jewel. Above this heavenly crown stands a manifestation of Buddha, twenty-five yojanas high. The face of Avalokiteśvara Bodhisattva is the color of Jambū gold. A tuft of hair between the eyebrows possesses all the colors of the seven kinds of jewels, and streaming from it are eighty-four thousand different rays of light. Within each ray of light, there are immeasurable and countless hundreds of thousands of manifestations of Buddha. Each manifestation of Buddha is attended by countless manifestations of Bodhisattvas. These Buddha

and Bodhisattvas manifestations all freely transform themselves and completely fill the worlds of the Ten Directions.”

**My Understanding:** “Atop Avalokiteśvara Bodhisattva’s head is a heavenly crown made of the heavenly king’s luminous pearls. On top of this heavenly crown stands a manifestation of the Buddha, 25 yojanas high. Avalokiteśvara Bodhisattva has a beautiful purple-gold face. A tuft of white hair between the eyebrows emits jeweled light, and from it streams vibrant light. Within each ray of light, there are immeasurable and countless manifestations of Buddha. Each manifestation of Buddha is attended by countless manifestations of Bodhisattvas. These Buddha and Bodhisattvas manifestations freely transform themselves and completely fill the worlds.”

**Sutra:** “This Bodhisattva’s arms, the color of a red lotus flower, are adorned with ornaments made of eight billion

exquisite rays of light. Within these ornaments, solemn objects are displayed in their entirety. The palms of the hands are the color of fifty billion lotus flowers of various colors. The hands have ten fingers and each fingertip shows eighty-four thousand images like impressed patterns. Each image has eighty-four thousand colors and each color emits eighty-four thousand rays of light. Each soft, delicate light illuminates all beings. With these precious hands, this Bodhisattva embraces and guides all sentient beings.”

**My Understanding:** “Avalokiteśvara Bodhisattva’s arms are in the color of a pinkish-red lotus flower. Brilliant jewels with beautiful light and color make the Bodhisattva even more solemn. The Bodhisattva’s palms are also pinkish-red. There are beautiful images on each fingertip, like an inscription of elegant patterns. Each image emits countless rays of light. Each soft, delicate light illuminates all beings. With these precious hands, this Bodhisattva embraces and guides all sentient beings.”

**Sutra:** “When this Bodhisattva raises a foot, the mark of a thousand-spoked wheel on his sole spontaneously transforms into fifty billion pedestals of light. When the foot is lowered, vajramani flowers are spread everywhere, filling and covering everything.”

**My Understanding:** “When this Bodhisattva walks, the mark of a thousand-spoked wheel on his sole spontaneously transforms into fifty billion pedestals of light that benefit all sentient beings. When the foot lowers, beautiful vajramani flowers float around the Bodhisattva’s body.”

**Sutra:** “All other physical characteristics and marks are excellent and perfect, almost exactly like Buddha’s. However, the uṣṇīṣa on the crown of the head and the invisible mark on the head are inferior to those of World-Honored One.”

**My Understanding:** “The Bodhisattva’s body is excellent and perfect, almost exactly like Buddha’s. However, the fleshy protuberance on the crown of the head and the invisible mark on the head are not as perfect as that of Buddha.”

[Editorial Note]

The invisible mark on the head is one of the thirty-two prominent features of Buddha. Buddha’s body is incomprehensibly tall, his wisdom is compassionate and immense, his merits and virtues are complete and perfect, and his head emits great illumination; thus, the top of Buddha’s head cannot be seen clearly.

**Sutra:** “This is the contemplation of Avalokiteśvara Bodhisattva’s true physical features and the tenth contemplation.”

**My Understanding:** “This is the ‘Contemplation of Avalokiteśvara Bodhisattva’s True Physical Features’ and the tenth contemplation.”

**Sutra:** The Buddha said to Ānanda, “Those who wish to contemplate Avalokiteśvara Bodhisattva must do so with this method of contemplation. Those who practice this contemplation will not encounter any misfortune; their karmic obstructions will be purified, and countless eons of punishments of birth and death will be eliminated. One gains immeasurable merits just by hearing this Bodhisattva’s name. How much more so if one attentively contemplates this Bodhisattva?”

**My Understanding:** Sakyamuni Buddha said to Ānanda, “Those who wish to contemplate Avalokiteśvara Bodhisattva must do so with this method of contemplation. Those who practice this contemplation will not encounter any misfortune. Furthermore, their karmic obstructions

will be purified, and countless eons of punishments of birth and death will be eliminated. One gains immeasurable merits just by hearing this sacred, great Bodhisattva's name. How much more so if one attentively contemplates this Bodhisattva?"

**Sutra:** "Those who wish to contemplate Avalokiteśvara Bodhisattva should first contemplate the uṣṇīṣa on the head. Next, contemplate the heavenly crown. Then, contemplate the remaining physical characteristics in order. All of them should be seen as clearly and distinctly as seeing the palm of your hand. To practice this method is called the right contemplation, and to practice otherwise is called the wrong contemplation."

**My Understanding:** "Those who wish to contemplate Avalokiteśvara Bodhisattva should first contemplate the fleshy protuberance on the head. Next, contemplate the Bodhisattva's heavenly crown. Then, contemplate the

remaining physical characteristics in order. All of them should be seen as clearly and distinctly as seeing the palm of your hand. To practice this method is called the right contemplation, and to practice otherwise is incorrect.”

**Sutra:** “The next contemplation is that of Mahāsthāmaprāpta Bodhisattva, whose body is the same size as that of Avalokiteśvara. The halo of light is one hundred and twenty-five yojanas in size and illuminates two hundred and fifty yojanas. The light emanating from the purple-gold body illuminates the lands of the Ten Directions and can be seen by all sentient beings who have a karmic connection with this Bodhisattva. Even if one only sees the light emanating from one of the pores of this Bodhisattva, one can immediately see the countless Buddhas of the Ten Directions and their pure and wondrous light. Thus, this Bodhisattva is called ‘Boundless Light.’”



**My Understanding:** “The next contemplation is of Mahāsthāmaprāpta Bodhisattva. This Bodhisattva’s body is similar to Avalokiteśvara Bodhisattva in size. The halo of light is 125 yojanas in size and illuminates 250 yojanas. The light emanating from the purple-gold body illuminates the lands of the Ten Directions. All sentient beings with a karmic connection to this Bodhisattva can see him. Even if one only sees the light emanating from one of the pores of this Bodhisattva, one can immediately see the pure and wondrous light of countless Buddhas of the Ten Directions. Thus, this Bodhisattva is called ‘Boundless Light Bodhisattva.’”

**Sutra:** “With this light of wisdom, all beings are illuminated, enabling them to be freed from the Three Evil Paths and attain unsurpassed powers. Thus, this Bodhisattva is called Mahāsthāmaprāpta.”

**My Understanding:** “Mahāsthāmaprāpta Bodhisattva illuminates all with this light of wisdom. He frees sentient beings from the three evil realms and gives them infinite wisdom. Thus, this Bodhisattva is called the ‘Arrival of Great Power Bodhisattva.’”

[Editorial Note]

The Three Evil Paths refer to the three evil realms, including the Hell Realm, Ghost Realm, and Animal Realm.

**Sutra:** “This Bodhisattva’s heavenly crown is adorned with five hundred jeweled lotus flowers, and each jeweled lotus flower has five hundred jeweled pedestals. Within each pedestal, the pure, exquisite, and boundless Buddha Lands of the Ten Directions manifest in their entirety. The uṣṇīṣa on this Bodhisattva’s head is like a padma flower, and in front of this uṣṇīṣa is a treasure vase filled with illumination which manifests the deeds of Buddha.

“The remaining bodily features are exactly the same as those of Avalokiteśvara, without differences.”

**My Understanding:** “This Bodhisattva’s heavenly crown is adorned with five hundred lotus flowers. There are five hundred lotus pedestals on top of each lotus flower. Within each lotus pedestal, the pure, exquisite, and boundless Buddha Lands of the Ten Directions manifest in their entirety. The fleshy protuberance on Mahāsthāmaprāpta Bodhisattva’s head is like a red lotus flower. On the fleshy protuberance is a treasure vase filled with illumination displaying Buddha’s compassion, purity and wisdom.

“Mahāsthāmaprāpta Bodhisattva’s remaining bodily features are exactly the same as those of Avalokiteśvara Bodhisattva, without differences.”

**Sutra:** “When this Bodhisattva walks, the worlds of the Ten Directions all tremble and shake. Fifty billion jeweled flowers appear on this shaking ground, each as magnificent

and majestic as the World of Ultimate Bliss. When this Bodhisattva sits down, the seven-jeweled lands are all shaken.”

**My Understanding:** “When this Bodhisattva walks, the worlds of the Ten Directions all tremble and shake. Fifty billion jeweled flowers appear on this shaking ground, each as magnificent and majestic as the World of Ultimate Bliss. When this Bodhisattva sits down, the seven-jeweled lands are all shaken.”

**Sutra:** “From the Golden Light Buddha Land below to the Light King Buddha Land above, and all the lands in between, there are manifestations of the Buddha of Infinite Life, of Avalokiteśvara and Mahāsthāmaprāpta. The manifestations are as countless as dust particles - all assemble like clouds in the Land of Ultimate Bliss - filling the entire sky. Sitting on lotus flower thrones, they proclaim

the exquisite Dharma that liberates sentient beings from suffering.

“This is the contemplation of Mahāsthāmaprāpta Bodhisattva. It is also known as the contemplation of the physical features of Mahāsthāmaprāpta. Those who can contemplate this Bodhisattva has made the eleventh contemplation.”

**My Understanding:** “From the Golden Light Buddha Land below the Western World of Ultimate Bliss to the Light King Buddha Land above, and all the lands in between, there are countless manifestations of the Buddha of Infinite Life, of Avalokiteśvara Bodhisattva and Mahāsthāmaprāpta Bodhisattva. These manifestations all assemble like clouds in the Land of Ultimate Bliss, filling the entire sky. Sitting on lotus flower thrones, they proclaim exquisite Dharma liberating sentient beings from the ocean of suffering.

“This is the ‘Contemplation of Mahāsthāmaprāpta Bodhisattva.’ It is also known as the ‘Contemplation of the

Physical Features of Mahāsthāmaprāpta.’ Those who can contemplate Mahāsthāmaprāpta Bodhisattva have made the eleventh contemplation.”

**Sutra:** “Asaṃkhyeyas eons of punishments of birth and death will be eliminated for those who practice this contemplation. They will no longer be born from the womb and will frequently travel throughout the pure and exquisite lands of the Buddhas.

“When this contemplation is completed, it is called the complete perfection of the contemplation of Avalokiteśvara and Mahāsthāmaprāpta.”

**My Understanding:** “Self-cultivators who practice this contemplation can eliminate countless eons of punishments of birth and death. In the future, they will not be reborn from the womb; instead, they will immediately be reborn into the World of Ultimate Bliss. They can also frequently travel throughout the lands of the Buddhas.

“When this contemplation is completed, it is called the ‘Complete Perfection of the Contemplation of Avalokiteśvara and Mahāsthāmaprāpta.’”

[Editorial Note]

“Be born from the womb” refers to the embryonic and fetal development in a mother’s womb and the process of childbirth from a mother’s womb.

**Sutra:** “When you have seen these things, contemplate yourself as being born in the Western World of Ultimate Bliss sitting in lotus position inside a lotus flower. Contemplate the lotus flower closing and opening.”

**My Understanding:** “Next, the self-cultivator should contemplate oneself as reborn in the Western World of Ultimate Bliss. Sitting cross-legged inside a lotus flower,

contemplate the lotus flower as being closed and contemplate the lotus flower as being opened.”

**Sutra:** “When the lotus flower opens, the light of five hundred colors shines and illuminates your body. Then open your eyes and see the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas all over the sky. Hear the sounds of water, birds, trees, and hear the voices of Buddhas all proclaiming the exquisite Dharma in accordance with the twelve categories of Buddhist scriptures.”

**My Understanding:** “When the lotus flower opens, over 500 colors of light illuminates the self-cultivator sitting inside the lotus flower. Sitting in the lotus flower, the self-cultivator will see Buddhas and Bodhisattvas all over the sky when they open their eyes. They will hear the sounds of water, birds, trees, and the voices of Buddhas and Bodhisattvas. These sounds all proclaim the exquisite



Dharma in accordance with the principles of Buddhist sutras.”

**Sutra:** “If the self-cultivator can remember everything after rising from meditation, the self-cultivator has made the ‘Contemplation of the Buddha of Infinite Life and the World of Ultimate Bliss.’

“This is the comprehensive contemplation and the twelfth contemplation.”

**My Understanding:** “If the self-cultivator can remember the teachings and contemplation after rising from meditation, the self-cultivator has made the ‘Contemplation of Amitabha Buddha and the World of Ultimate Bliss.’”

“This is the ‘Comprehensive Contemplation’ and the twelfth contemplation.”

**Sutra:** “The Buddha of Infinite Life, who has countless manifestations, will always accompany the self-cultivator along with Avalokiteśvara and Mahāsthāmaprāpta.”

**My Understanding:** “The Buddha of Infinite Life, who has countless manifestations, will always accompany and benefit the self-cultivator along with Avalokiteśvara Bodhisattva and Mahāsthāmaprāpta Bodhisattva.”

[Editorial Note]

Self-cultivator refers to the person practicing Buddhism and listening to this sutra.

**Sutra:** The Buddha said to Ānanda and Vaidehi, “If you sincerely wish to be born in the Western World, you should first contemplate an image of the Buddha that is 1.6-*zhang* in height standing on the surface of a lake. As previously explained, the physical measurements of the Buddha of

Infinite Life are boundless and beyond ordinary minds' grasp. But because of the power of that Tathagata's vows from previous lives, those who contemplate the Buddha will definitely succeed. Simply contemplating the Buddha's image brings one immeasurable merits; how much more so if one contemplates the complete and perfect physical features and characteristics of this Buddha?"

**My Understanding:** Sakyamuni Buddha said to Venerable Ānanda and Madam Vaidehi, "If you sincerely wish to be born in the Western World of Ultimate Bliss, you should first contemplate an image of the Buddha of Infinite Life. Contemplate 1.86-meter-tall figure standing on the surface of a seven-jeweled lake. As previously explained, the physical measurements of the Buddha of Infinite Life are boundless and beyond ordinary minds' grasp. But because of the power of Amitabha Buddha's compassionate vows, those who contemplate the Buddha will attain great accomplishments. Simply contemplating a 1.86-meter-tall figure of this Buddha brings one immeasurable merits; how

much more so if one contemplates the complete and perfect physical features and characteristics of this Buddha?"

**Sutra:** “Amitabha Buddha can readily utilize supernormal powers as he wishes and can freely manifest various forms throughout the lands of the Ten Directions. He may appear as a great body that fills the sky or as a small body only 1.6 or 1.8-zhang tall. These manifestations are pure gold in color. Within the halo of light, there are manifestations of Buddha and jeweled lotus flowers, as described before.”

**My Understanding:** “Amitabha Buddha can readily utilize supernormal powers as he wishes and can freely manifest various forms throughout the lands of the Ten Directions. He may appear as a great body that fills the sky or as a small body about 1.86 meters tall. These manifestations are pure gold in color. Within the halo of light, there are manifestations of Buddha and jeweled lotus flowers, as described before.”

**Sutra:** “Avalokiteśvara and Mahāsthāmaprāpta Bodhisattvas can manifest themselves in the same form as sentient beings at anytime and anywhere. By observing the features of their heads, one can distinguish between Avalokiteśvara and Mahāsthāmaprāpta. These two Bodhisattvas assist Amitabha Buddha in liberating all sentient beings.

“This is the miscellaneous contemplation and the thirteenth contemplation.”

**My Understanding:** “Avalokiteśvara Bodhisattva and Mahāsthāmaprāpta Bodhisattva can manifest themselves in the same form as sentient beings at anytime and anywhere. By observing the features of their heads and crown, one can distinguish between Avalokiteśvara and Mahāsthāmaprāpta Bodhisattvas. These two Bodhisattvas assist Amitabha Buddha in liberating all sentient beings.

“This is the ‘Miscellaneous Contemplation’ and the thirteenth contemplation.”

**Sutra:** The Buddha said to Ānanda and Vaidehi, “Those reborn in the Western World are classified into nine grades. For the sentient beings in the highest grade of the highest level of rebirth, if they wish to be reborn in that land, they have to awaken three types of minds.

“What are the three? The first is the mind of ultimate sincerity, the second is the mind of profound faith, and the third is the mind which vows for rebirth in that land by dedicating one’s merit. Those possessing the three types of minds will definitely be reborn in that land.”

**My Understanding:** The Buddha said to Venerable Ānanda and Madam Vaidehi, “Those reborn in the World of Ultimate Bliss are classified into nine grades. In the situation of the sentient beings in the highest grade of the highest level of rebirth: if these sentient beings wish to be

reborn in the Western World of Ultimate Bliss, they have to awaken the mind of sincerity, unwavering belief, and vow to dedicate all of their merits for rebirth in the World of Ultimate Bliss. Those possessing these three types of minds will definitely be reborn in the World of Ultimate Bliss.”

**Sutra:** “There are three other types of sentient beings who will be reborn there. What are the three? First are the compassionate ones who refrain from killing and abide by the precepts; second are those who read and recite the Mahayana Vaipulya sutras; third are those who cultivate the six practices of anusmṛti. They dedicate the merits for rebirth and vow to be reborn in that land. By these merits and virtues, they will attain rebirth in one to seven days.”

**My Understanding:** “Also, three types of sentient beings will be reborn in the World of Ultimate Bliss. What are the three? The first type is compassionate people who refrain from killing and abide by the precepts strictly. The second

are those who regularly read and recite the Mahayana sutras. The third are those who practice the six recollections and aspire to liberation from afflictions. During this process, they accumulate various merits and virtues and accomplish their vows to be reborn in the World of Ultimate Bliss. By these merits and virtues, when the time comes, they will attain rebirth in one to seven days.”

[Editorial Note]

1. Mahayana sutras are the Buddhist scriptures that can enlighten oneself, enlighten others, and benefit all sentient beings.

2. Six Recollections are the recollections of the Buddha, the Dharma, the Sangha, the Precepts, Generosity, and the Heavens.

**Sutra:** “When a self-cultivator is about to be reborn in that land, because of his diligence and boldness, Amitabha Tathagata appears before him along with Avalokiteśvara,



Mahāsthāmaprāpta, countless manifestations of Buddha, a great assembly of hundreds and thousands of bhikṣus, śrāvakas, countless heavenly beings, and seven-jeweled palaces. Holding a vajra pedestal, Avalokiteśvara Bodhisattva approaches the self-cultivator along with Mahāsthāmaprāpta Bodhisattva. Amitabha Buddha emits great illumination that radiates the self-cultivator’s body and extends welcoming hands along with the Bodhisattvas. Avalokiteśvara and Mahāsthāmaprāpta, along with countless other Bodhisattvas, praise and encourage the self-cultivator.”

**My Understanding:** “When a self-cultivator is departing to the World of Ultimate Bliss, because of their diligence and boldness, Amitabha Buddha appears before them along with Avalokiteśvara Bodhisattva, Mahāsthāmaprāpta Bodhisattva, countless Buddha manifestations, Buddhist monks, Sound-hearers, heavenly beings, and seven-jeweled palaces. Holding a diamond pedestal, Avalokiteśvara Bodhisattva approaches the self-cultivator along with

Mahāsthāmaprāpta Bodhisattva. Amitabha Buddha emits great illumination that radiates the self-cultivator and extends welcoming hands along with many Bodhisattvas. Avalokiteśvara Bodhisattvas and Mahāsthāmaprāpta Bodhisattva, along with countless other Bodhisattvas, praise the self-cultivator; then encourage them to enhance their vow.”

**Sutra:** “Upon seeing this, the self-cultivator rejoices enthusiastically. He sees himself sitting on the vajra pedestal and following the Buddha, is reborn into that Buddha Land as quickly as the snap of a finger.”

**My Understanding:** “The self-cultivator rejoices at the sight of the Buddha and Bodhisattvas and sees themselves sitting on the diamond pedestal. Following behind the Buddha, the self-cultivator instantly arrives in the Western World of Ultimate Bliss.”

**Sutra:** “Once reborn in that land, the self-cultivator sees the Buddha’s physical body and the complete and perfect features. He also sees the complete physical features of the Bodhisattvas. The Buddha proclaims the exquisite Dharma in the illumination of the jeweled forests. Having heard the Dharma, the self-cultivator instantly awakens the complete and pure wisdom that is not born and does not cease. In an instant, the self-cultivator visits and venerates all the Buddhas of the Ten Directions. In the presence of each Buddha, he receives a prediction of his future Buddhahood. Returning to the original Buddha Land, he attains countless hundreds of thousands of gateways of dhāraṇīs.

“Such a person is in the highest grade of the highest level of rebirth.”

**My Understanding:** “Upon arrival in the World of Ultimate Bliss, the self-cultivator sees Amitabha Buddha’s physical body, wisdom, and complete and perfect features, as well as the solemn and elegant physical features of many Bodhisattvas. They proclaim the exquisite Dharma in the

illumination of the jeweled forests. Having heard the Dharma, the self-cultivator immediately awakens the complete and pure wisdom that is not born and does not cease. In an instant, the self-cultivator visits and venerates all the Buddhas of the Ten Directions and receives predictions of their future Buddhahood before each Buddha. The self-cultivator returns to the original Buddha Land and attains fundamental and ultimate wisdom.

“Such a person is in the highest grade of the highest level of rebirth.”

**Sutra:** “The sentient beings in the middle grade of the highest level of rebirth do not necessarily uphold and recite the Vaipulya sutras, but fully understand their meaning. Upon hearing the highest truth, their minds are not perplexed or shaken. They deeply believe in karma and do not slander the Mahayana. They dedicate the merits of their virtuous and meritorious acts and vow to be reborn in the World of Ultimate Bliss.”

**My Understanding:** “The circumstance for sentient beings in the middle grade of the highest level of rebirth is that they do not necessarily recite, read or learn the Mahayana sutras; have strong comprehension; like and pursue purity and wisdom; deeply believe in karma; do not slander the Mahayana teachings. By dedicating these merits and virtues, they vow to be reborn in the Western World of Ultimate Bliss.”

**Sutra:** “When such a self-cultivator’s life is about to end, he will be surrounded by Amitabha Buddha together with Avalokiteśvara, Mahāsthāmaprāpta, countless beings, attendants and retinues. They hold a purple-gold pedestal and come before him. They praise, ‘Son of Dharma! You have practiced the Mahayana and have realized the supreme truth. Thus, I have come to welcome you.’

“With this, Amitabha Buddha and thousands of manifestations of Buddha extend their hands all at once.”

**My Understanding:** “When such a self-cultivator’s life is about to end, they will be surrounded by Amitabha Buddha together with Avalokiteśvara Bodhisattva, Mahāsthāmaprāpta Bodhisattva, and countless beings. They hold a purple-gold pedestal and come before the self-cultivator. They praise, ‘My child! You have sprouted a mind of benefiting sentient beings and profound realizations. Thus, we have come to welcome you.’ With this, Amitabha Buddha and many Buddha manifestations extend their hands in guidance.”

**Sutra:** “The self-cultivator sees himself sitting on a purple-gold pedestal, joining his palms and praising the Buddhas. In an instant, he is reborn in the seven-jeweled lake of that Buddha Land. The purple-gold pedestal becomes a great jeweled lotus flower and opens after one night.”

**My Understanding:** “The self-cultivator sees themselves sitting on a purple-gold pedestal, joining their palms and praising the Buddhas. Then, in an instant, they are reborn in the seven-jeweled lake in the Western World of Ultimate Bliss. The purple-gold pedestal the self-cultivator sits on becomes a great jeweled lotus flower and opens after one night.”

**Sutra:** “The self-cultivator’s body becomes the color of purple-gold, and beneath his feet is the seven-jeweled lotus flower. The Buddha and Bodhisattvas all emit light to illuminate the self-cultivator’s body and open his eyes. Because of the accumulation of merits from his previous lives, he can hear various voices exclusively proclaiming the most profound, supreme truth. Descending from the golden pedestal, he pays reverence to the Buddha with joined palms and praises the World-Honored One.”

**My Understanding:** “The self-cultivator’s body becomes the color of purple-gold, and beneath his feet is the seven-jeweled lotus flower. Amitabha Buddha and the Bodhisattvas all emit great light. When the illumination shines on the self-cultivator’s body, his eyes open. Because of his karmic conditions from the human world, he can now hear the Buddha and Bodhisattvas expounding the most profound, supreme truth to him. Afterward, he descends from the golden pedestal, pays reverence to the Buddha with joined palms, and praises the Buddha of Infinite Life.”

[Editorial Note]

Purple-gold is gold with a purple hue. It is supreme gold and is equivalent to the Jambū gold of India.

**Sutra:** “After seven days, the self-cultivator attains Anuttarā-Samyak-Saṃbodhi and will not regress. He now has the ability to fly to the worlds of the Ten Directions. He can revere all the Buddhas and learn various samādhi from



them. After one small eon, the self-cultivator attains the complete and pure wisdom that is not born and does not cease. In the presence of Buddha, he receives a prediction of his future Buddhahood.

“These are sentient beings in the middle grade of the highest level of rebirth.”

**My Understanding:** “After seven days, the self-cultivator attains the wisdom of supreme perfect enlightenment and will not regress. He can fly to the worlds of the Ten Directions, revere all the Buddhas, and practice the highest cultivation with them. After one small eon, the self-cultivator attains the complete and pure wisdom that is not born and does not cease; and receives a prediction of their future Buddhahood in the presence of Buddha.

“These are sentient beings in the middle grade of the highest level of rebirth.”

**Sutra:** “The sentient beings in the lowest grade of the highest level of rebirth also believe in karma, do not slander the Mahayana, and awaken the aspiration for the highest perfect enlightenment. They dedicate the merits of their virtuous and meritorious acts and vow to be reborn in the Western World of Ultimate Bliss.”

**My Understanding:** “The sentient beings in the lowest grade of the highest level of rebirth also believe in karma, do not slander the Mahayana, and aspire to the path of liberation. By dedicating these merits and virtues, they vow to be reborn in the Western World of Ultimate Bliss.”

**Sutra:** “When such a self-cultivator’s life is about to end, he will be welcomed by Amitabha Buddha together with Avalokiteśvara, Mahāsthāmaprāpta, many other bodhisattvas and five hundred Buddha manifestations, all holding a golden lotus flower. These five hundred manifestations of Buddha extend their hands and praise,

‘Son of Dharma! You are pure and you have awakened the aspiration for the highest perfect enlightenment. I have come to welcome you!’”

**My Understanding:** “When such a self-cultivator’s life is about to end, they will be greeted by Amitabha Buddha together with Avalokiteśvara Bodhisattva, Mahāsthāmaprāpta Bodhisattva, many other bodhisattvas and five hundred Buddha manifestations. Holding a golden lotus flower, they welcome the self-cultivator. These five hundred Buddha manifestations extend their hands and praise, ‘My child! You are pure and easeful and aspire to the highest perfect enlightenment. We have come to welcome you!’”

**Sutra:** “Having seen these, the self-cultivator sees himself sitting on a golden lotus flower which then closes. Following the World-Honored One, the self-cultivator is immediately reborn in the seven-jeweled lake. After one day and one

night, the lotus flower opens, then within seven days, the self-cultivator beholds the Buddha. Although he can see the body of the Buddha, not all the physical features and characteristics are clear in the self-cultivator's mind. But after three seven-day periods, he can see clearly and distinctly and hear a variety of voices, all widely proclaiming the exquisite Dharma. The self-cultivator then travels to each of the Ten Directions to make offerings to all the Buddhas and to hear their most profound Dharma teachings. After three small eons, the self-cultivator attains the hundred gateways of Dharma and resides in the Ground of Joy.

“These are sentient beings in the lowest grade of the highest level of rebirth. This is called the contemplation of the highest level of rebirth and the fourteenth contemplation.”

**My Understanding:** “Having seen these, the self-cultivator sees themselves sitting on a golden lotus flower which then closes immediately. Following behind the Buddha, the self-cultivator is immediately reborn in the

seven-jeweled lake in the Western World of Ultimate Bliss. The lotus flower opens after one day and one night. Within the next seven days, the self-cultivator finally beholds the Buddha. Although the self-cultivator can see the body of Amitabha Buddha, their mind is not clear. But after another twenty-one days, the self-cultivator can see the Buddha's wondrous characteristics and features clearly and distinctly. At this time, the self-cultivator can also hear various voices, all widely proclaiming the exquisite Dharma. The self-cultivator then travels to the worlds of the Ten Directions, makes offerings to all the Buddhas, and hears their most profound teachings. After three small eons, the self-cultivator attains the first stage of bodhisattva attainment – Ground of Joy Bodhisattva.

“These are sentient beings in the lowest grade of the highest level of rebirth. The above describes sentient beings in the highest level of rebirth. It is called the ‘Contemplation of the Highest Level of Rebirth’ and the fourteenth contemplation.”

**Sutra:** The Buddha said to Ānanda and Vaidehi, “The sentient beings in the highest grade of the middle level of rebirth are those who uphold the Five Precepts, abide by all of the Eight Precepts, and cultivate the practice of precepts. They have not committed the Five Heinous Crimes and are free from various other wrongdoings. They dedicate the merits of these virtuous roots and vow to be reborn in the Western World of Ultimate Bliss.

“When such a person’s life is about to end, he will be surrounded by Amitabha Buddha, together with bhikṣus, attendants and retinues, radiating golden light. They have come to proclaim the teachings of suffering, emptiness, impermanence and non-self; and praise the renunciation that liberates one from sufferings.”

**My Understanding:** Sakyamuni Buddha said to Venerable Ānanda and Madam Vaidehi, “The sentient beings in the highest grade of the middle level of rebirth are those who uphold the Five Precepts, abide by all of the Eight Precepts, and practice the precepts. They have not

committed the Five Heinous Crimes and are free from other serious wrongdoings. They dedicate the virtuous roots of practicing precepts and vow to be reborn in the Western World of Ultimate Bliss.

“When such a person’s life is about to end, Amitabha Buddha, attended by many Buddhist monks, will come before him radiating golden light. They will proclaim the teachings of suffering, emptiness, impermanence and non-self; and praise the renunciation that liberates one from sufferings.”

[Editorial Note]

1. The Five Precepts include: (1) No killing; (2) No stealing; (3) No sexual misconduct; (4) No false speech; (5) No alcohol abuse.

2. The Eight Precepts include: (1) No killing; (2) No stealing; (3) No sexual misconduct; (4) No false speech; (5) No alcohol abuse; (6) No eating at the wrong time; (7) No

wearing ornaments, no using perfume, no entertainment;  
(8) No sitting on or lying in a tall and wide bed.

3. The Five Heinous Crimes include: (1) Murdering one's father; (2) Murdering one's mother; (3) Killing an arhat; (4) Shedding the blood of Buddha; (5) Creating a schism within the Sangha.

**Sutra:** “After seeing this, the self-cultivator’s heart is filled with great joy. He sees himself sitting on a lotus flower pedestal. The self-cultivator kneels with his palms joined together and pays reverence to the Buddha. Even before raising his head, he is reborn in the World of Ultimate Bliss.

“After a short while, the lotus flower opens. As the flower opens, the self-cultivator hears various sounds and voices praising the Four Truths. Instantly the self-cultivator attains the stage of an arhat, acquires the Three Wisdoms and Six Supernormal Powers, and realizes the Eight Liberations.



“These are sentient beings in the highest grade of the middle level of rebirth.”

**My Understanding:** “After seeing this, the self-cultivator’s heart is filled with great joy. They see themselves sitting on a lotus flower pedestal. The self-cultivator kneels with his palms joined together and pays reverence to the Buddha. Even before raising his head, he is quickly reborn in the World of Ultimate Bliss.

“After a short while, the lotus flower opens. As the flower opens, the self-cultivator hears various voices praising the Four Truths. Instantly the self-cultivator attains the stage of an arhat. They gain knowledge of their past, present, and future lives. They attain the six supernormal powers of divine eyes, divine ears, mind reading, knowledge of one’s past lives, liberation from saṃsāra, and instant transportation through space and time. They are enabled with eight methods of liberation.

“These are sentient beings in the highest grade of the middle level of rebirth.”

[Editorial Note]

The Four Truths are the Buddha’s earlier teachings which include the truth of suffering, cause of suffering, cessation of suffering, and the way to liberation.

**Sutra:** “The sentient beings in the middle grade of the middle level of rebirth are those who abide by all of the Eight Precepts for at least one day and one night. Or, they observe the precepts of śrāmaṇera for one day and one night. Or, for one day and one night, they observe the complete set of precepts for the ordained and do not violate any rules. They dedicate the merits of these virtuous acts for rebirth and vow to be reborn in the World of Ultimate Bliss.”

**My Understanding:** “The sentient beings in the middle grade of the middle level of rebirth are those who abide by all of the Eight Precepts for at least one day and one night. Or, they observe the precepts of novice monastics for one day and one night. Or, for one day and one night, they observe the complete set of precepts for the ordained and do not violate any rules. Dedicating their merits and virtues of abiding precepts, they vow to be reborn in the World of Ultimate Bliss.”

[Editorial Note]

1. Precepts for śrāmaṇera (and śrāmaṇerī) are the Ten Precepts upheld by novice Buddhist monastics.
2. A complete set of precepts refers to those upheld by ordained Buddhist monastics. There are 250 rules for bhikṣus and 348 rules for bhikṣuṇīs.

**Sutra:** “Permeated with the fragrance of these precepts, when the self-cultivator’s life is about to end, he sees

Amitabha Buddha, together with attendants and retinues, radiating golden light. Each of them carries a seven-jeweled lotus flower and comes in front of the self-cultivator. The self-cultivator then hears a voice from the sky saying, ‘Kind man! As you are a virtuous person who has followed the teachings of past, present and future Buddhas, I have come to welcome you.’ The self-cultivator sees himself sitting on a lotus flower. As the lotus flower closes, he is reborn in the Western World of Ultimate Bliss.

“After spending seven days in the jeweled lake, the lotus flower opens. When the flower is fully open, the self-cultivator, whose eyes are now open, joins palms together and praises the World-Honored One. Hearing the Dharma, the self-cultivator rejoices and attains the stage of a śrotāpanna. After half an eon, he becomes an arhat.

“These are sentient beings in the middle grade of the middle level of rebirth.”

**My Understanding:** “Because the self-cultivator practiced these precepts, when their life is about to end, they see Amitabha Buddha, together with attendants and retinues, radiating golden light. Each carries a seven-jeweled lotus flower and comes in front of the self-cultivator. The self-cultivator hears a voice from the sky praising, ‘Kind man! You are a virtuous person who has followed the teachings and precepts of past, present and future Buddhas. I have come to guide you.’ The self-cultivator sees themselves sitting on a lotus flower. As the lotus flower closes, they are reborn in the Western World of Ultimate Bliss.

“The self-cultivator spends seven days in the jeweled lake; then, the lotus flower opens. When the flower is fully open, the self-cultivator opens their eyes, joins palms together, and praises the Buddha of Infinite Life. Hearing the Dharma, the self-cultivator rejoices and attains the stage of a śrotāpanna, the first stage of awakening. Then, he attains the stage of arhat after half an eon of self-cultivation.

“These are sentient beings in the middle grade of the middle level of rebirth.”

**Sutra:** “The sentient beings in the lowest grade of the middle level of rebirth are those kind men and kind women who attend dutifully to their parents and practice compassionate deeds in their life. When the life of such a person is about to end, he encounters a virtuous friend who fully explains Amitabha Buddha and the Land of Ultimate Bliss and expounds the Forty-Eight Great Vows of the Dharmâkara Bhikṣu.”

**My Understanding:** “The sentient beings in the lowest grade of the middle level of rebirth are those who attend dutifully to their parents and practice compassionate deeds in their life. When such a person’s life is about to end, they encounter a virtuous friend who fully explains Amitabha Buddha, the Western World of Ultimate Bliss, and the Forty-Eight Great Vows of the Dharmâkara Bhikṣu.”

**Sutra:** “Having heard these things, when the end of life comes, in the time as short as a strong person takes to extend his bent arm, he is reborn into the Western World of Ultimate Bliss.”

**My Understanding:** “After such a person hears these explanations, their life soon ends. Then, they are reborn into the Western World of Ultimate Bliss in as short of time as a strong person takes to extend their bent arm.”

**Sutra:** “After seven days, he meets Avalokiteśvara and Mahāsthāmaprāpta. Hearing the Dharma, he rejoices and attains the stage of a śrotāpanna. After a small eon, he becomes an arhat.

**My Understanding:** “After seven days, such a person meets Avalokiteśvara Bodhisattva and Mahāsthāmaprāpta

Bodhisattva. Hearing these two Bodhisattva's Dharma teachings, he rejoices and attains the stage of a śrotāpanna, the first stage of awakening. Then, he attains the stage of arhat after a small eon of self-cultivation."

**Sutra:** "These are sentient beings in the lowest grade of the middle level of rebirth. This is called the contemplation of the middle level of rebirth and the fifteenth contemplation."

**My Understanding:** "These are sentient beings in the lowest grade of the middle level of rebirth. This is called the 'Contemplation of the Middle Level of Rebirth' and the fifteenth contemplation."

**Sutra:** The Buddha said to Ānanda and Vaidehi, "The sentient beings in the highest grade of the lowest level of rebirth are those who have created countless evil karma, but they do not slander the Vaipulya sutras. Such a foolish person repeatedly committed evil acts yet felt no remorse."



When his life is about to end, he meets a virtuous friend who proclaims the titles of the twelve categories of the Mahayana scriptures. Hearing these titles eliminates severe and evil karma from thousands of eons. This wise man also teaches him to join his palms together and recite ‘Namo Amitabha Buddha.’ Because he recited the Buddha’s name, five billion eons of severe punishments of birth and death are eliminated.”

**My Understanding:** Sakyamuni Buddha said to Venerable Ānanda and Madam Vaidehi, “The sentient beings in the highest grade of the lowest level of rebirth are those who have created countless evil karma, but they do not slander the Mahayana sutras. Such a foolish person has created much evil karma yet has no remorse for their wrongdoings. When their life is about to end, they meet a kind man who proclaims the titles of Mahayana sutras. Hearing these titles eliminates their evil karma from thousands of eons. This kind man also teaches them to join their palms together and recite ‘Namo Amitabha Buddha.’

Because they recited the Buddha's name, five billion eons of severe punishments of birth and death are eliminated.”

**Sutra:** “At that time, that Buddha sends a manifestation of himself and the manifestations of Avalokiteśvara and Mahāsthāmaprāpta to appear before this dying person. They praise him, saying, ‘Kind man! Because you have recited the Buddha's name, your various evil karma has been eliminated. We have come to welcome you.’ After these words have been spoken, he immediately sees the Buddha's manifestation radiate light, illuminating the entire room. Having seen this, he rejoices and his life comes to an end. Then, riding on a jeweled lotus flower, he follows behind the Buddha's manifestation and is reborn in a jeweled lake. After seven seven-day periods, the lotus flower opens.”

**My Understanding:** “At that time, the Buddha of Infinite Life sends a manifestation of himself and the

manifestations of Avalokiteśvara Bodhisattva and Mahāsthāmaprāpta Bodhisattva to appear before this person. They praise him, saying, ‘Kind man! Because you have recited the Buddha’s name, your various evil karma has been eliminated. We have come to welcome you.’ After these words have been spoken, the dying person immediately sees the Buddha’s manifestation illuminating the entire room and rejoices. Then, the person’s life comes to an end. Riding on a jeweled lotus flower and following behind the Buddha’s manifestation, the person is reborn in a seven-jeweled lake in the World of Ultimate Bliss. After forty-nine days, the lotus flower opens.”

**Sutra:** “When this flower opens, the great compassionate Avalokiteśvara Bodhisattva and Mahāsthāmaprāpta Bodhisattva radiate great illumination. Standing before him, the Bodhisattvas expound on the profound scriptures of the twelve categories. Upon hearing this, he accepts it in understanding and faith and awakens the aspiration for the

Unsurpassed Way. After ten small eons pass, he attains the hundred gateways of Dharma and enters the first ground.

“These are sentient beings in the highest grade of the lowest level of rebirth.”

**My Understanding:** “When this lotus flower opens, the great compassionate Avalokiteśvara Bodhisattva and Mahāsthāmaprāpta Bodhisattva radiate great illumination. Standing before this person, the Bodhisattvas expound on the profound Dharma. Upon hearing this, the person not only understands the teachings they also believe firmly without doubt and aspire to unsurpassed bodhicitta. After ten small eons, the person reaches the first stage of bodhisattva attainment.

“These are sentient beings in the highest grade of the lowest level of rebirth.”

**Sutra:** The Buddha said to Ānanda and Vaidehi, “The sentient beings in the middle grade of the lowest level of

rebirth are those who violate the Five Precepts, the Eight Precepts, and the complete set of precepts for the ordained. Such a foolish person steals sangha's property and monks' personal belongings, preaches Dharma with impure intent and feels no remorse. And with various evil karma, he is arrogant. Because of his evil karma, such a perpetrator shall fall into hell. When his life is about to end, the fires of hell shall engulf him at once.”

**My Understanding:** Sakyamuni Buddha said to Venerable Ānanda and Madam Vaidehi, "The sentient beings in the middle grade of the lowest level of rebirth are those who violate the Five Precepts, the Eight Precepts, and the complete set of precepts for the ordained. Such a foolish person steals personal belongs from the ordained monastics, speaks of lies and slanders, and feels no remorse. They have these evil karmas and yet are arrogant. Because their wrongdoings generated evil karma, they should fall into hell. The fires of hell shall engulf them immediately when their life ends."

**Sutra:** “When such a person meets a virtuous friend who, with great compassion, praises and explains the majestic virtue and ten powers of the Amitabha Buddha to him, the virtuous friend extensively praises that Buddha and the transcendental power of illumination. Furthermore, he praises the precepts, the meditation, the wisdom, the liberation and the knowledge of that liberation. When such a person hears these teachings, eight billion eons of punishment of birth and death are eliminated. Hell’s fierce flames are transformed into pure and cool breezes that gently blow and bring heavenly flowers. On top of the flowers are manifestations of Buddha and Bodhisattvas who have come to welcome him.”

**My Understanding:** “Such a person might have the opportunity to meet a virtuous friend who will compassionately expound to him Amitabha Buddha’s majestic power, great compassion, profound virtues and merits, and transcendental power of illumination.

Furthermore, the virtuous friend praises the precepts, the meditation, the wisdom, and the principle of liberation. When such a person hears these teachings and understands the principles, their eight billion eons of punishment of birth and death are eliminated. Then, hell's fierce flames are transformed into pure and cool breezes that gently blow and bring heavenly flowers. On top of the flowers are manifestations of Buddha and Bodhisattvas who have come to welcome this person.”

**Sutra:** “In one thought-moment, he is reborn inside a lotus flower in a seven-jeweled lake. After six eons, the lotus flower opens. Avalokiteśvara and Mahāsthāmaprāpta reassure him using the Brahma voice and expound the profound Mahayana sutras. Upon hearing this Dharma, he immediately awakens the aspiration for the Unsurpassed Way.

“These are sentient beings in the middle grade of the lowest level of rebirth.”

**My Understanding:** “Instantly, the person is reborn inside a lotus flower in a seven-jeweled lake of the World of Ultimate Bliss. After six eons, the lotus flower finally opens. Avalokiteśvara Bodhisattva and Mahāsthāmaprāpta Bodhisattva reassure the person using the heavenly voice and expound the profound Mahayana sutras. Upon hearing these teachings, the person immediately aspires to unsurpassed bodhicitta.

“These are sentient beings in the middle grade of the lowest level of rebirth.”

**Sutra:** The Buddha said to Ānanda and Vaidehi, “The sentient beings in the lowest grade of the lowest level of rebirth are those who create unkind karma by committing the Five Heinous Crimes, the Ten Evil Acts, or various other unkind acts. Because of his evil karma, such a foolish person shall fall into the evil realms and experience endless suffering for many eons.



“When such a foolish person’s life is about to end, he meets a virtuous friend who provides various kinds of comfort, explains the exquisite Dharma, and teaches him to chant to the Buddha. If that person is too tormented by pain and too weak to chant, the virtuous friend says, ‘If you are unable to chant to the Buddha, you should recite the name of the Buddha of Infinite Life. With a sincere mind and an uninterrupted voice, chant “Namo Amitabha Buddha” ten times.’ By chanting the Buddha’s name repeatedly, eight billion eons of punishments of birth and death are eliminated.”

**My Understanding:** Sakyamuni Buddha said to Venerable Ānanda and Madam Vaidehi, “The sentient beings in the lowest grade of the lowest level of rebirth are those who create evil karma, have committed severe crimes of the Five Heinous Crimes, the Ten Evil Acts, or various other wrongdoings. Because such a foolish person has committed these wrongdoings, they shall fall into the evil realms and experience endless suffering for many eons.

“When such a foolish person’s life is about to end, he might meet a virtuous friend who provides comfort, expounds compassionate Dharma teachings, and teaches him to chant to the Buddha. If that person is too tormented by pain and too weak to chant, the virtuous friend advises, ‘Don’t worry if you cannot chant the many Buddha’s names. Follow me and recite the name of the Buddha of Infinite Life. Chant sincerely, and do not let the sound of chanting be interrupted. Chant “Namo Amitabha Buddha” at least ten times.’ By repeatedly chanting this Buddha’s name, eight billion eons of punishments of birth and death are eliminated.”

**Sutra:** “When such a person’s life is ending, he sees a golden lotus flower appear in front of him like a sun. In the time of one thought-moment, he will be reborn in the World of Ultimate Bliss.

“After spending twelve great eons in the lotus flower, the lotus flower finally opens. Avalokiteśvara and Mahāsthāmaprāpta, in the voice of great compassion,

proclaim the true nature of all Dharmas eliminating his evil karma. Upon hearing this, he rejoices and immediately awakens the aspiration for bodhicitta.

“These are sentient beings in the lowest grade of the lowest level of rebirth. This is called the contemplation of the lowest level of rebirth and the sixteenth contemplation.”

**My Understanding:** “When such a person’s life is ending, he sees a golden lotus flower appear in front of him like a sun. Instantly, he will be reborn in the Western World of Ultimate Bliss.

“After this person spends twelve great eons in the lotus flower in the seven-jeweled lake, the lotus flower finally opens. At that moment, Avalokiteśvara Bodhisattva and Mahāsthāmaprāpta Bodhisattva use compassionate voices to expound Dharma and eliminate their evil karma. Upon hearing this, the person rejoices and immediately aspires to bodhicitta.

“These are sentient beings in the lowest grade of the lowest level of rebirth. This is called the ‘Contemplation of the Lowest Level of Rebirth’ and the sixteenth contemplation.”

**Sutra:** As these words were spoken, Vaidehi and her five hundred female attendants, having heard the Buddha’s words, immediately saw the boundless and magnificent features of the World of Ultimate Bliss, the body of the Buddha and two Bodhisattvas. Joy filled their hearts and they marveled at this unprecedented occurrence. They suddenly attained great enlightenment and the complete and pure wisdom that is not born and does not cease. The five hundred female attendants awakened the aspiration for Anuttarā-Samyak-Saṃbodhi and vowed to be reborn into that land. The World-Honored One assured all of them that they would be reborn there and that after rebirth, they would acquire the samādhi of being in the presence of all Buddhas. Countless heavenly beings also awakened the aspiration for the Unsurpassed Way.

**My Understanding:** As Sakyamuni Buddha spoke these words, Madam Vaidehi and her 500 female attendants, having heard the Buddha's words, immediately saw the boundless and magnificent land of the World of Ultimate Bliss. They also saw the forms of Amitabha Buddha, Avalokiteśvara Bodhisattva and Mahāsthāmaprāpta Bodhisattva. Joy filled their hearts and they marveled at this unprecedented and extraordinary occasion. They suddenly reached enlightenment and attained the complete and pure wisdom that is not born and does not cease. All 500 of the female attendants awakened the aspiration for unsurpassed bodhicitta and vowed to be reborn in the Western World of Ultimate Bliss. Sakyamuni Buddha assured all of them that they would be reborn in the Western World of Ultimate Bliss. After rebirth in the World of Ultimate Bliss, they will be in the wondrous presence of all Buddhas. Countless heavenly beings after listening to the teachings of the Buddha also awakened the aspiration for the unsurpassed bodhicitta.

[Editorial Note]

Aspiration for the Unsurpassed Way refers to the mind that is determined to cultivate Buddha’s teachings. It is the same mind that aspires to bodhicitta.

**Sutra:** At that time, Ānanda rose from his seat and said to the Buddha, “World-Honored One! What shall this sutra be called? How should the essence of this Dharma be received and kept?” The Buddha said to Ānanda, “The name of this sutra is the ‘Contemplation of the World of Ultimate Bliss, the Buddha of Infinite Life, Avalokiteśvara Bodhisattva and Mahāsthāmaprāpta Bodhisattva.’ It is also called the ‘Purification and Elimination of Karmic Obstacles for Attaining Rebirth in the Presence of All Buddhas.’ You should receive and uphold this sutra and never forget it.”

**My Understanding:** At that time, Venerable Ānanda stood up and asked the Buddha, “World-Honored One! How shall this sutra be named? How should we learn such

an important sutra?” Sakyamuni Buddha answered Venerable Ānanda, “The name of this sutra is the ‘Contemplation of the World of Ultimate Bliss, the Buddha of Infinite Life, Avalokiteśvara Bodhisattva and Mahāsthāmaprāpta Bodhisattva.’ It is also called the ‘Purification and Elimination of Karmic Obstacles for Attaining Rebirth in the Presence of All Buddhas.’ You should remember this sutra and never forget it.”

**Sutra:** “Those who practice this samādhi will be able to see the Buddha of Infinite Life and two Bodhisattvas in this lifetime. If kind men and kind women merely hear the name of this Buddha and these two Bodhisattvas, the immeasurable eons of punishments of life and death are eliminated. How much more so if these people practice the contemplations?”

**My Understanding:** “Those who practice this exquisite teaching will be able to see the Buddha of Infinite Life and

two great Bodhisattvas in this lifetime. People who have the karmic opportunity to hear the names of Amitabha Buddha and the two great Bodhisattvas, their immeasurable eons of punishments of life and death are eliminated. How much more so if people practice the contemplations?”

**Sutra:** “People who practice these contemplations of the Buddha are the puṇḍarīka flower among human beings. Such a self-cultivator has Avalokiteśvara Bodhisattva and Mahāsthāmaprāpta Bodhisattva as excellent friends, and will sit in the place of enlightenment and will be born into a family of buddhas.”

**My Understanding:** “People who earnestly practice according to this sutra are the purest beings. Avalokiteśvara Bodhisattva and Mahāsthāmaprāpta Bodhisattva are their best friends. These people will become enlightened beings in the future.”



[Editorial Note]

Puṇḍarīka is a white lotus flower that symbolizes holiness and purity.

**Sutra:** The Buddha said to Ānanda, “You should carefully remember these words. To keep these words in mind is to keep the name of the Buddha of Infinite Life in mind.”

**My Understanding:** Sakyamuni Buddha told Venerable Ānanda, “You should carefully remember my teachings. Comprehending these teachings is to contemplate the Buddha of Infinite Life.”

**Sutra:** When the Buddha had spoken these words, Venerable Maudgalyāyana, Venerable Ānanda, Vaidehi and all the others greatly rejoiced to hear the Buddha’s teaching.

At that time, the World-Honored One walked through the open sky and returned to Gṛdhrakūṭa Mountain. At that

time, Ānanda fully explained what happened to the great assembly. Countless heavenly beings, dragon-like beings and yaksas greatly rejoiced to hear the Buddha's teaching. They paid reverence to the World-Honored One and then withdrew.

**My Understanding:** When Sakyamuni Buddha spoke these words, Venerable Maudgalyāyana, Venerable Ānanda, Madam Vaidehi, and all the others greatly rejoiced to hear the Buddha's teaching.

At that time, Sakyamuni Buddha walked through the open sky and returned to Vulture Peak.

Then, Venerable Ānanda fully disseminated this teaching to a broad public. Countless heavenly beings, dragon-like beings, yaksas, and other beings greatly rejoiced to hear the Buddha's extraordinary teaching. They rejoiced, paid reverence to the Buddha, and withdrew.

**Namo Amitabha Buddha!**

(Repeat Three Times)

## **Merit Dedication Verse**

May these merits and virtues  
adorn Buddhas' Pure Lands,  
repay the fourfold kindness from above,  
and relieve the suffering of the three realms below.

May all who see or hear of this,  
aspire the bodhicitta and  
at the end of this life,  
be reborn together in the Land of Ultimate Bliss.

Principle reference of the Chinese sutra:

Chinese Buddhist Electronic Text Association (CBETA)



**BODHI DHARMA.**