I have selected the topic of the "Kyogyoshinsho" because this text, among all of Shinran's writings, shows him not only to be a religious leader, but also a thinker and intellect as well. The work also expresses his sense of mission and dedication to share the dharma with others. In order to fulfill his mission Shinran had to position Pure Land teaching in the context of the religions of his time, that is, Japanese native religion and the various sects of Buddhism, as well as in relation to other schools of Pure Land teaching claiming Honen as their authority.

It is Shinran's declaration of faith and his understanding of the fundamental meaning the Nembutsu and Buddhism. However, the text has been little known or understood even among Shin followers, because the text was not easily available. There was no printing. Copies were made laboriously by hand. In addition, most people were illiterate. Shinran, as a scholar, wrote in the Chinese style -- kambun -- though he also translated it into Japanese for leaders of the congregations he had established. Consequently, the "Kyogyoshinsho" is not a devotional book or a text we read for enjoyment. Rather, it is a text which must be studied. We are most fortunate in our age that the entire text has become available through the translation made by the Hongwanji International Center. It is a weighty text, published in four volumes. Each volume is readable and has an excellent introduction to explain important aspects of the text.
As we approach the new era, it is very important that we understand our faith and relate it to the issues of our time. We should not only "feel" Jodo Shinshu, but we should "know" it. In the "Kyogyoshinsho" Shinran lays out the reasons and basis for his faith. It is his confession of faith and gratitude, based on his own experience of spiritual despair and disillusionment which he encountered during his monastic life on Mount Hiei and his later explorations of the teaching together with his teacher Honen. As a result of many years of reading, research and reflection, Shinran compiled this text as his enduring witness to the meaning of Amida Buddha's Primal Vows for his life and for humanity. The text is perfumed with his deep gratitude, compassion and a critical spirit, embodied in a universal spiritual vision of the all-embracing compassion and wisdom of Amida Buddha which rejects no one.

One may ask, why is intellectual insight important and even necessary? We can see that our ancestors, who never had such materials available, lived by their faith joyfully and meaningfully. This is true. But the times have changed and more is demanded as a result of higher levels of education and the diversity of religious alternatives open to people, as well as the spiritual need of the time for a comprehensive, compassionate perspective on life. It is clear, however, that not everyone will be a scholar. They do not need to be. The issue is not scholarship. The issue is personal involvement and the quest for understanding. It is the questioning and questing attitude that Rennyo advocated in his letters. If one does not care to understand one's faith, it becomes blind faith.

Though not everyone may have opportunity for deep study, someone must do it, otherwise the tradition withers and shrivels. I use a car, moped and computer, but I don't know in detail how they operate. I cannot be an expert in everything. Nevertheless, someone must know these things so when they break down, I can get them fixed. We are not speaking here of all of us becoming experts and technicians. However, in religion we are talking about ourselves, the quality and depth of our lives. In the process of religious development and growth, no one can do it for you. Each person must make some effort to study the faith or it loses its vitality and meaning, not only for oneself, but also for those who will come later, our children and grandchildren.

Consequently, I am brought back to the "Kyogyoshinsho" as the foundation of Shin Buddhism. Though Shinran wrote numerous works and composed poems, gathas, this text is organized and structured to deal with the major points for understanding Shin Buddhism. It is the text book of faith. People frequently criticise book learning in contrast to experience. As far as it goes, it is true. One's experience is crucial for the way one deals with texts and how one lives. Books teach us many things, because they are the result of other people's experiences and are valuable for us. Without the "Kyogyoshinsho", how would we know Shinran's thought that inspires our faith today? How would we know the meaning of the Primal Vow he transmitted? Maintaining and sharing the faith depends on our knowledge of what he wrote.

The "Kyogyoshinsho" itself is a work in six sections, Teaching, Practice, Faith, Realization, True Buddha Land and Transformed Buddha Land. The text is divided in two parts. The first five chapters give an outline of the essential content of shinjin or true entrusting. The second division is the final sixth chapter which deals with Shinran's view of other traditions of Buddhism and Japanese religion. The first division, comprising five chapters, correlates each aspect of the faith with central
The Vows of Amida Buddha. For Shinran all aspects of religious reality and experience are the manifestations of particular Vows.

The chapter on teaching is primarily the eighteenth Vow and establishes the true authority which is the basis of Shin Faith. Shinran locates this authority in the Larger Pure Land Sutra because it relates the foundational story concerning Amida's Vows and establishment of the Pure Land. The chapter on Practice gives the Buddhological basis of the Nembutsu showing that it is the fulfillment of the seventeenth Vow which declares that all Buddhas praise Amida's Name. The Name as the essence of the Nembutsu is the spiritual foundation for our recitation of that name and its role in assuring us of enlightenment.

The chapter on Faith or shinjin is the crucial section of the text. It is grounded in the eighteenth Vow also and discusses the three minds of the Vow, sincerity, trust, and aspiration for birth in the Pure Land, which are essentially the manifestation of Amida's true mind. This mind is manifested in the human spirit as conviction and commitment. Faith in Shin Buddhism is not merely belief in a system of teaching, but an inner awareness of the truth and reality of the Vow and the conviction that inspires lively religious life. In this way, Shin Buddhism is experiential. Something moves the person inwardly with the realization that here is the truth.

Chapter four, Realization, and five, True Buddha Land, turn from present realities of religious experience and life to our future fulfillment. Realization is based on the eleventh Vow that, we are among the group of the truly settled and assured of Nirvana. This assurance is received in this life, while after attaining birth in the Pure Land, we return to this world to work for the deliverance of all beings in accord with the twenty-second Vow. The True Buddha Land is based on the two Vows, twelve and thirteen which promise that Amida Buddha will be the Buddha of eternal life and infinite light.

The True Buddha Land signifies that entry into the Pure Land is the attainment of Buddhahood. In these designations Shinran is not interested simply that we are born in the Pure Land in order to be happy and have a life in paradise. Rather, he shows that, identified with the Buddha, the true purpose of religious life in this world and in the future life is to share the dharma with all beings and bring about their deliverance. To be religious is not to be selfish and self-centered, concerned with one's own enjoyment or only of those immediately related to us.

For Shinran, each Vow with its fulfillment is for all beings. Our true fulfillment is to play a role in that goal in this world and in our future. Shinran gives the most elevated and spiritual definition to interest in personal survival after death, which is an important aspect of religion. He removed egocentric, selfish concerns from religion, making it an expression of gratitude and compassion. When we observe the structure of Shinran's thought about the fulfillment and meaning of human life, it is clear that it is comprehensive, covering the past in the foundational story of Amida's becoming Buddha. It deals with the present in the reality of the name and the experience of true entrusting. It holds up an ideal of the future as we also share in the process of guiding all beings to enlightenment. With the sixth chapter, Shinran deals with present issues of our relation to alternative ways of thinking and living. He deals with the inward and outward aspects of religious life; spiritual reality and personal experience.
The sixth chapter of the "Kyogyoshinsho" requires some special attention. Here we see that Shinran did not live in a vacuum, isolated from the rest of the world of his time. He had to relate his experience and thought to the various alternatives available in his society. Shinran explores alternative forms of Buddhism, focusing particularly on Pure Land Teaching because of the confusion created by disagreements in interpretation of Honen’s Nembutsu teaching among his successors. We have called this section his philosophy of religion, because he sets in order from his opponents.

Shinran’s analysis of Pure Land teaching brings out principles common to other approaches to deliverance and enlightenment in Buddhism. His critique is aimed at self-power, self-striving forms of religious endeavor and in principle extends to all other forms of religion. He also takes up folk religion and the basic style and character of Japanese religion. According to Shinran’s perspective, religions may be typed in terms of the Primal Vows dealing with the path to enlightenment. Here three Vows become the focal Vows, the twentieth and the eighteenth. The nineteenth Vow, represented by the Pure Land Meditation Sutra covers all religious alternatives designated as self-striving, or perhaps in our time, self-help. Today, meditation is widely advocated in a variety of forms from Yoga to Zen and Vipassana or T.M.

One can get a following easily by promoting some form of meditation and offering peace of mind, health, wealth or some form of release from stress, etc. Morality or good deeds involves the common assumption in religions worldwide that one earns salvation through good works. Religion has been a strong support of morality by proposing that good deeds bring benefits and bad deeds bring punishment, usually from some deity. In the case of East Asian religions the area of morality meant submission to ruling authorities and reverence for parents and ancestors.

The second path is the 20th Vow which Shinran interprets to refer to the meritorious practice of Nembutsu. In this path one uses the Nembutsu as a means to acquire merit for birth in the Pure land or for other benefits and to purify oneself from all evils. The 18th Vow is the supreme Vow of endowed trust as outlined in the first five sections of the work. It is the true path of Nembutsu, the Nembutsu of true faith. This schematic, symbolic organization of religious principles around the Vows was not just an abstract theory for Shinran. He testifies that he himself had experienced all these alternatives in the famous passage called Turning through the Three Vows. We gain a glimpse of his development from autobiographical statements in the "Kyogyoshinsho", as well as his wife, Eshin-ni’s letters where she relates his deep religious anxiety and uncertainty encountered in the course of his monastic life.

Through his training and religious life Shinran came to understand that the demands for purification and rigorous discipline in Buddhism are self-defeating. It is a problem to know how much purification we need to assure enlightenment, or how pure we may be at any time. As the Chinese teacher Zendo pointed out, we have been revolving for countless eons on the wheel of births and deaths, and we have not been enlightened. We are still revolving, like a revolving door. Hence, the quest for purity is endless and like the horizon moves forward as we move forward. From another angle, Shinran noted the self-righteousness of those who do good. The greatest problem are those who are good and know they are good.

All human, finite actions are open to comparison. A person may do something better, longer, more frequently than someone else and so become proud of their superiority.
Another problem is that sincerity is required to validate religious action. However, who knows when they are sincere? We all act out of a variety of motives when we do something. We never have pure motivation. Religion may become a cloak for ego aggression; a way of sorting people out the good from the bad, the pious from the pagan. If we look at history, we see that religion has often been the cause of problems rather than the solution.

In Shinran's religious view, therefore, self-striving religion, egocentric-religion is erroneous because it does not truly resolve the problem of human fulfillment and itself can become a source of self-congratulation. While the worldly good deeds advocated by the nineteenth Vow are important for the well being of society, they may become distorted when used as a means of gaining personal power and benefits. The intended good, what we call "do-gooding" often demeans the recipients of that good and masks the real problem in society, which is our desire for power, recognition and status. When Shinran found the paths of the nineteenth and twentieth Vows inadequate to deal with his despair, he turned to the eighteenth Vow under the guidance of Honen. There he found true spiritual release which he recounts with joy and gratitude in the epilogue of the "Kyogyoshinsho."

The solution to the religious problem for Shinran was to displace the ego from its self-seeking position. The only way to do this according to him, was to understand one's nature through deep self-reflection and through encounter with the teaching of the Vow. We must realize that we can do nothing to advance our spiritual condition. Rather, it has been achieved through the Vow and Amida's unconditional compassion which excludes no one. When we trust in the Vow and experience release from self-striving, religion becomes a matter of gratitude rather than competition. It is response and responsibility for Amida's compassion.

Shinran's insight is important in our contemporary society because religion has been made an instrument of ego-satisfaction and self-interest. The questions people ask are: "What do you get out of your religion?" "What does it do for you?" For Shinran, there is no benefit from religious faith. We don't get anything out of it. While Shinran speaks of benefits, they are truly spiritual benefits of having great joy, awareness of Buddha's compassion and having gratitude, of always practising great compassion and having the assurance of one's ultimate fulfillment.

While everyone desires the worldly benefits of health, wealth and success, they must be viewed carefully for the understanding of spiritual reality they imply. Praying for some benefit means that a god is asked to play favorites, to bless me rather than someone else. We see it frequently in sports where the player attributes his victory to god, despite the fact that there are believers on the other side as well who were praying. It happens in war that enemies who hold the same religion pray to god for the victory of their side.

Consequently, Shinran exhorts his followers not to be concerned with such beliefs and prayers. They are merely reflection of our ego-centrism which ultimately blocks our enlightenment. According to Shinran, the only reality is Amida Buddha. The reality symbolized by Amida supercedes the lesser gods and powers of the ancient folk religion. He shows that the gods of the universe are subordinate to and allied with Amida. Therefore, there is nothing to fear from the gods for those who trust in Amida. Shinran declares that for those who trust in Amida, the gods bow down and worship that person, rather than people fearing the gods. Shinran liberated his
followers from all forms of spiritual domination, oppression and exploitation. However, Shinran was not simply trying to promote his way at the expense of others. He was also a force for reconciliation. Though he disagreed with others, he never condemned the person, but rather focused on the adequacy of their ideas.

In addition, he tried to show that, despite differences which appear among teachings, they must be seen, from the standpoint of the Vow, as part of the overall design of the Buddha to bring all people to enlightenment. As a means to harmonize divergent religious practices, particularly those in the Pure Land tradition, Shinran developed the theory of "kensho-onmitsu" or "on-ken," the distinction of the hidden and manifest. According to this theory, people practice according to the nineteenth or twentieth Vows. Although in themselves they are inadequate to assure final enlightenment, as Shinran knew himself, they are stages offered by the Buddha to guide people to the eighteenth Vow and to true entrusting. As people experience the frustration and uncertainty of their path they become open to the message of the Vow and develop trust. All forms of religious teaching from this standpoint are upaya or hohen, that is, compassionate means of the Buddha. The theory has much to say about our attitude to other faiths. Shinran does not condemn. He analyzes the adequacy or inadequacy of a view. He does not simply oppose for the sake of opposition. He also recognizes the common human aspiration involved in religious faith. All people in their respective faith are seeking the meaning of human life. Human beings, conscious of the fragility and brevity of life, seek an ultimate fulfillment.

Shinran sees the yearning of the sea of beings as the working of the Vow in all things (Yuushinshomon'i). Shinran recognizes the compassion of Amida in all expressions of faith. This is not to say indifferently that they are all the same. He looks from the standpoint of trust in Amida's Vow. Such a perspective enabled Shinran to deal with all people with compassion and to guide them with sensitivity and to see into their true spiritual condition. Arguing religion is fruitless. Rather, we should illuminate religious views by getting to the core issue of the ego and its involvement with religion.

The question is not whether a given religion is true or false in comparison to ours, but whether a religion encourages or supports ego-centric, self-seeking attitudes; whether it divides people, labeling them good or evil because they do not agree with that religion, or whether, like Shinran, the religion brings people together in recognition of their common human search for meaning. Shinran gives us the standpoint in the "Kyogyoshinsho" to approach contemporary issues by going into depth on the process of deliverance and the central experience of true entrusting. He also gives us guidance in understanding religious alternatives and the issues they raise.

Finally, he gives us insight into both the diversity of religious practices and the unity of religious aspiration which is grounded in the power of Amida's Vow as the basis for hope for all people. More than that, under the cover of this thought Shinran conveyed a broad spiritual vision which stirred people in his time and has the capacity to do so today. His vision embodies the spirit of Mahayana Buddhism, giving it, perhaps, its most universal and yet personal expression. Further, through personal self-reflection and study, the teaching opens the inner world of the human spirit, while its outer expression transcends all manner of human distinctions and discriminations.
Consequently, the "Kyogyoshinsho" remains as the sourcebook and guidebook for all Shin Buddhists. It is the charter for the revitalization of the sangha in this momentous time of change and transition. The symbols and images that Shinran employs in his work are relevant to our modern search for meaning. Shinran, as a result of his own search for spiritual fulfillment, found the answer to his questions in the Pure Land path which shares the Mahayana awareness of the larger, cosmic context of human existence which is animated by the spirit of the eternal Buddha's compassion and wisdom.

Compassion and wisdom are symbolic terms which reflect the reality that all life is sustained through interdependence and that we a part of a larger world order which we sometimes speak of as Buddha's Golden Chain. It makes clear our responsibility to nurture life. Shinran understands that reality is inconceivable. It is a great mystery. Our own existence is a great mystery, when we contemplate the wonders of our mind and body, let alone the vast realm of nature and the cosmos.

The world of spirituality which Shinran sets forth in the "Kyogyoshinsho" gives a context of meaning and direction for our modern living, even in the face of the many contradictions and negations of everything we may consider true and worthy. Essentially, Shinran gives us a perspective to respond to the question: what does it mean to be human? How can we affirm and fulfill our humanity in this kind of world? Through the teaching of the "Kyogyoshinsho" Shinran gives us a lens to focus the issues of human existence and the basis for living with self-reflection and affirmation. As the lens of a magnifying glass concentrates the rays of the sun and produces fire, so the "Kyogyoshinsho" focuses the meaning of the Nembutsu, Amida's name and Vows to fire up the commitment necessary for the renewal and revitalization of Shin Buddhism in the new age.

Preface

When I humbly contemplate matters, I realize that the inconceivable universal Vow is the great ship that carries us across the sea of samsara, which is difficult to cross, and that the unhindered Light is the sun of wisdom, which breaks the darkness of ignorance.

When the opportunity to reveal the Pure Land Way became ripe, Devadatta incited Ajatashatru to commit grave offenses; and when a person to be saved by the Pure Land practice appeared, Shakyamuni led Vaidehi to choose her birth in the Land of Peace and Provision. All this shows that human incarnations of sages equally sought to deliver multitudes from suffering and that the World Hero, out of pity, especially wished to save
those who commit the five gravest offenses, abusers of the Dharma and those without any potential for goodness.

Hence, I know clearly that the Auspicious Name of the all-complete, supreme virtue is the embodiment of the perfect Wisdom which can turn evil into merit and also that the Joyful Faith, indestructible like diamond but difficult to accept in our hearts, is the truth which removes our doubts and awakens us to Enlightenment.

This is indeed the true teaching, which is easy to practice even for ordinary, inferior people, and is the shortest way that is easy to follow for dull and stupid people. Of all the lifetime teachings of the Great Sage, nothing surpasses this ocean-like virtue. Those who wish to leave this defiled world of samsara and aspire for the Pure Land, those who are confused about religious practices and faiths, those who are dark in mind and lacking in wisdom, and those who are burdened with heavy evil karma and many hindrances - should, by all means, esteem the Tathágata Shakyamuni's exhortation and follow the supreme direct path to Enlightenment; they should exclusively hold fast to the this practice and only uphold Faith.

Oh, how difficult it is to encounter the strong influence of the universal Vow, even in many cycles of birth-and-death! How difficult it is to attain the True Pure Faith, even in millions of kalpas! If you are fortunate enough to attain Practice and Faith, you should rejoice at your close relationship with Amida from the distant past. If your mind is still covered with a net of doubt, you will continue to wander about in samsara for myriads of kalpas. How trustworthy are the words of truth, which say that we are embraced in Amida's Light and never forsaken! How extraordinary and wonderful is the Right Dharma! Hear and reflect; be careful not to hesitate too long.

What a joy it is that I, Gutoku Shinran, disciple of Shakyamuni, have had a rare chance to meet with the Pure Land scriptures from India and the commentaries by Chinese and Japanese masters which are difficult to meet and have been able to hear their teachings which we can only rarely hear! Having respectfully accepted in faith the Teaching, Practice and Enlightenment of the True Pure Land Way, I deeply acknowledge the Tathágata Amida's Benevolence. Here I rejoice over what I have heard and marvel at what I have received.

Chapter On the True Teaching

Larger Sutra on the Buddha of Infinite Life:
The True Teaching
The True Essence of the Pure Land Way

Chapter 1: A Collection of Passages Revealing the True Teaching of the Pure Land Way
1 When I humbly contemplate the true essence of the Pure Land Way, I realize that [Amida's] Merit-transference has two aspects: one is the aspect of Going forth and the other, that of Returning. Concerning the aspect of Going forth of the Merit-transference, there are True Teaching, Practice, Faith, and Enlightenment.

2 If I am to reveal the True Teaching, it is the *Larger Sutra on the Buddha of Infinite Life*. The outline of this sutra is: Amida brought forth the Vow, by which he widely opened the Dharma-store; out of compassion for the ordinary, inferior people, he chose from amongst the Dharma-treasures the jewel of merit and freely endows it to them. Shakyamuni appeared in the world and expounded various teachings of the Way; but he wished to save multitudes of beings by endowing them with true benefits. Therefore, to expound the Primal Vow of Amida Tathágata is the central theme of the *Larger Sutra*, and his Name is its essence. How do we know that Shakyamuni's primary objective in appearing in this world was to expound this sutra?

3 It is stated in the *Larger Sutra*, fasc. 1:

[Ánanda said] "World-Honored One, today all your senses are radiant with joy, your body is serene and glorious, and your august countenance is as majestic as a clear mirror whose brightness radiates outward and inward. The magnificence of your dignified appearance is unsurpassed and beyond measure. I have never seen you look so superb and majestic as you do today. With respect, Great Sage, this thought has occurred to me: Today, the World-Honored One dwells in the rare and marvelous Dharma; today, the World-Hero dwells in the Buddha's abode; today, the World-Eye concentrates on the performance of the leader's duty; today, the World-Valiant One dwells in the supreme Enlightenment; today, the One Most Honored in Heaven realizes the Tathágata's virtue. The Buddhas of the past, present and future contemplate each other. How can this present Buddha not contemplate the other Buddhas? For what reason does his countenance look so majestic and brilliant?"

Then the World-Honored One said to Ánanda, "Tell me, Ánanda,
whether some gods urged you to put this question to the Buddha or whether you asked about his glorious countenance from your own wise observation."

Ánanda replied to the Buddha, "No gods came to prompt me. I asked you about this matter of my own accord."

The Buddha said, "Well said, Ánanda. I am very pleased with your question. You have shown profound wisdom and subtle insight in asking me this wise question out of compassion for sentient beings. As the Tathágata, I regard beings of the three worlds with boundless great compassion. The reason for my appearance in the world is to expound various teachings of the Way and save multitudes of beings by endowing them with true benefits. Even in countless millions of kalpas it is difficult to come upon and meet a Tathágata. It is as difficult as seeing an udumbara flower, which blooms very rarely. Your question is of great benefit and will enlighten all heavenly and human beings. Ánanda, you should realize that the Tathágata’s perfectly enlightened wisdom is unfathomable, capable of leading innumerable beings to emancipation, and that [589c] his insight cannot be obstructed; nothing can hinder it."

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4 It is stated in the Teaching Assembly of the Tathágata of Infinite Life [fasc.1]:

Ánanda said to the Buddha, "World-Honored One, having seen the Tathágata’s countenance radiating rare, majestic glory, I have entertained this thought. No gods came to prompt me."

The Buddha said to Ánanda, "Well said, well said. Your question has pleased me. With careful observation of the Tathágata’s subtle insight, you have asked me this question. All Tathágatas, Arhats, and Perfectly Enlightened Ones, dwelling in the Great Compassion, benefit multitudes of beings. To realize their wishes, this Great Being has appeared in the world like an udumbara flower, which blooms very rarely. In order to help their work, you have asked me this question. Also, having pity on all sentient beings and being moved to give them spiritual benefit, you have asked me, the Tathágata, this good question."
It is stated in the *Sutra on the Equal Enlightenment* [fasc. 1]:

The Buddha said to Ánanda, "We know of an *udumbara* tree; it bears fruit but no flowers. A Buddha appears in the world as rarely as this tree blossoms. Even if a Buddha dwells in the world, it is extremely difficult to encounter him. I have become a Buddha and here I am. Being a revered monk, wise and virtuous, you know the Buddha's intention beforehand. You never forget to stay close to me and serve me. I will answer your question. Listen well and attentively."

Master Kyeong-heung explains [in the *Commentary on the Larger Sutra*]:

'Today, the World-Honored One dwells in the rare and marvelous Dharma' describes the appearance, which the Buddha manifests by his transcendent power. It is not only unusual but also unequaled. 'Today, the World-Hero dwells in the Buddha's abode' shows that he dwells in the Samadhi of Universal Equality and subdues the king of devils, the powerful gods. 'Today, the World-Eye concentrates on the performance of the leader's duty' shows that he is first and foremost in guiding sentient beings; his five eyes are called 'the leader's duty.' 'Today, the World-Valiant One dwells in the supreme Enlightenment' shows that he dwells in the four wisdoms, with which he attains the highest and peerless state. 'Today, the One Most Honored in Heaven realizes the Tathágata’s virtue' describes the Buddha as the Lord of the Ultimate Reality, for he embodies Buddha-nature, which is not void. 'Ánanda, you should realize that the Tathágata’s perfectly enlightened wisdom...' describes the rare and marvelous Dharma. 'His insight cannot be obstructed' describes the supreme Enlightenment. 'Nothing can hinder it' describes the Tathágata’s virtue.

The above quotations afford clear testimony of the fact that the *Larger Sutra* is the True Teaching. It is indeed the correct exposition of the Dharma for which the Tathágata appeared in the world; it is the wonderful scripture, rare and supreme; the ultimate doctrine of the One-Vehicle teaching; the golden words which make possible quick attainment of perfect and all-merging truth; the sincere words praised by all the Buddhas in the ten quarters; the teaching of truth befitting the time and the capacities of people. Let us be clear about this.
1 When I humbly contemplate the 'Going forth' aspect of Amida's Merit-transference, I realize that there are Great Practice and Great Faith. The Great Practice is to call the Name of the Tathāgata of Unhindered Light. This Practice contains all good and roots of virtue, and is perfectly accomplished and most efficacious in bringing about emancipation. It is the treasure-sea of merits of True Suchness, the absolute truth. For this reason, it is called Great Practice. This practice comes from the Vow of Great Compassion, the [Seventeenth] Vow, which is called the Vow that the Name shall be glorified by all the Buddhas. It is also called the Vow that the Name shall be praised by all the Buddhas and the Vow that the Name shall be lauded by all the Buddhas. Further, it can be called the Vow accomplishing the Going-forth aspect of the Merit-transference, and also the Vow of the Nembutsu chosen from among many practices.

2 Concerning the Vow that the Name shall be praised by all the Buddhas, the Larger Sutra states:

   If, when I attain Buddhahood, innumerable Buddhas in the lands of the ten quarters should not all praise and glorify my Name, may I not attain perfect Enlightenment.
3 The Large Sutra [fasc. 1] also states:

When I attain Buddhahood,
My Name shall be heard throughout the ten quarters;
should there be any place where it is not heard,
May I not attain perfect Enlightenment.

I will open the Dharma-store for the multitudes
and endow them all with treasures of merit.
Being always among the multitudes,
I will proclaim the Dharma with a lion's roar.

4 Concerning the fulfillment of this Vow, the [Large] Sutra [fasc. 2] states:

All Buddhas, Tathágatas, in the ten quarters, as numerous as the
sands of the River Ganges, together praise the inconceivable,
supernal virtue of the Buddha of Infinite Life.

5 The Large Sutra [fasc. 2] also states:

The majestic virtue of the Buddha of Infinite Life is boundless. All
the innumerable, uncountable, and inconceivable Buddhas,
Tathágatas, in the worlds of the ten quarters praise him

6 The Large Sutra [fasc. 2] also states:

By the power of the Buddha's Primal Vow,
All who hear his Name and aspire for birth,
Will, without exception, reach his land
and effortlessly enter the Stage of Non-retrogression.

7 It is stated in the Teaching Assembly of the Tathágata of Infinite Life [fasc. 1]:

I have made great vows to the Tathágata [Lokeshvararaja].
May he testify that they are the cause of the supreme
Enlightenment.
Should these excellent vows not be fulfilled,
May I not become [590b] a peerless Honored One possessed of the
ten powers.

I shall endow gifts to those incapable of constant practices,
Deliver widely the poor and the destitute from sufferings,
And benefit the world by giving them peace and happiness....

Having performed the practices of the supreme and valiant ones,
I shall become a hidden treasury for the poor and the destitute;
having also accomplished good acts, I shall be a Peerless One.
Among the multitudes I shall preach the Dharma with a lion's roar.

8 Further it is stated [in the Teaching Assembly of the Tathágata of Infinite Life, fasc. 2]:

Ánanda, for this reason, Buddhas, Tathágatas, in the immeasurable,
innumerable, inconceivable, incomparable and limitless worlds all praise the virtue of the Buddha of Infinite Life.

9 It is stated in the Sutra on the Way of the Salvation of Humans by Amida, the Perfectly Enlightened One, that Transcends all Buddhas, fasc. 1, [also known as the Larger Sutra on Amida and the Sutra on the Twenty-four Vows - Shinran's note]:

The fourth vow: When I attain Buddhahood, my Name shall be heard throughout the countless Buddha-lands of the eight quarters, zenith, and nadir. All Buddhas shall each in their own land explain my virtues and the excellent qualities of my land to the multitudes of monks. All the gods, humans, and even insects that hop, fly, crawl or creep, having heard my Name, will, without exception, entertain a compassionate heart. Those who thus dance with joy in their hearts shall all be born in my land. Having fulfilled this vow, I shall become a Buddha. Should this vow not be fulfilled, may I not attain Buddhahood.

10 It is stated in the Sutra on the Immeasurably Pure and Equal Enlightenment, fasc. 1:

When I attain Buddhahood, my Name shall be heard throughout the innumerable Buddha-lands of the eight quarters, zenith, and nadir. All Buddhas shall each praise my virtues and the excellent qualities of my land to the multitudes of disciples. All the gods, humans, and even insects that hop, fly, crawl or creep, that, having heard my Name, dance with joy in their hearts shall be born in my
land. If not, may I not attain Buddhahood. [The 17th vow]

When I attain Buddhahood, people of other Buddha-lands, who have heard my Name with evil intentions in previous lives or aspire to be born in my land for the sake of attaining Enlightenment, may wish to be born in my land. After the end of their lives, they shall, instead of being reborn in the three evil realms, all be born in my land as they wish. If not, may I not attain Buddhahood. [The 19th Vow]

Prince Ajatashatru and the five hundred sons of a wealthy man, having heard the twenty-four Vows of the Buddha of Infinite Purity, danced with joy in their hearts, and aspired, "We all wish to be like the Buddha of Infinite Purity when we attain Buddhahood."

Knowing this, the Buddha [Shakyamuni] said to the monks, "In future, innumerable kalpas from now, Prince Ajatashatru and the five hundred sons of the wealthy man shall become Buddhas like the Buddha of Infinite Purity."

The Buddha continued, 'Prince Ajatashatru and these five hundred sons of the wealthy man have practiced the Bodhisattva Path for innumerable kalpas, during which they each made offerings to forty billion Buddhas. Now they have come to make offerings to me. In a previous life when the Buddha Kashyapa was in the world, Prince Ajatashatru and the five hundred sons of the wealthy man became my disciples. Now they all have gathered and we meet here again.

When all the monks heard the Buddha's remarks, their hearts danced with joy. ....

Such people, having heard the Buddha's Name, Will attain peace of heart and gain great benefit; we ourselves will share in this virtue, And take up the seats of blessedness in this land.

The Infinitely Enlightened One gives us the prediction of our Enlightenment: "I made the Primal Vow in a former life, Promising that all who hear my preaching of the Dharma Would unfailingly come to be born in my land."
All the vows that I made will be fulfilled; those who wish to come here from various lands will all reach my land and Attain the Stage of Non-retrogression after one lifetime."

Quickly transcend this world and Reach the Land of Peace and Bliss. After reaching the Land of Infinite Light, One can make offerings to innumerable Buddhas.

Those who lack the merit are unable to hear even the name of this sutra; only those who have strictly observed the precepts can now hear the teaching of this Dharma.

Evil, arrogant, corrupt, and indolent people cannot readily accept this teaching. But those who have met Buddhas in their past lives Rejoice to hear the teaching of the World-Honored One.

To obtain human life is extremely difficult; Even if a Buddha dwells in the world, it is difficult to meet him; it is hard to attain wisdom of faith; once you have heard the Dharma, strive to reach its heart.

If you have heard the Dharma and do not forget it but adore and revere it with great joy.

You are my good friend. For this reason, you should awaken aspiration for Enlightenment.

Even if the whole world is on fire, be sure to pass through it to hear the Dharma; then you will surely become a World-Honored One And everywhere deliver beings from birth, old age and death.
11 It is stated in the *Sutra of the Lotus of Compassion*, fasc. 2, "Chapter on Great Charity", (translated by the Tripitaka-master Dharmaksema) [this should read "fasc. 3, Chapter on Giving Predictions to Bodhisattvas" - *Translator's note*], :

When I attain Buddhahood, all the sentient beings in immeasurable, boundless and incalculable Buddha-lands who hear my Name and wish to be born in my land by cultivating roots of good, shall, after death, be unfailingly born there. Excepted are those who commit the five gravest offenses, abuse the sages, or destroy the Right Dharma.

12 It is thus clear that when sentient beings call the Name, all their ignorance is destroyed, and all their aspirations are fulfilled. Calling the Name is the most excellent and truly wondrous Right Act. The Right Act is [591a] the Nembutsu. The Nembutsu is *Namu Amida Butsu*. *Namu Amida Butsu* is the Right Mindfulness. This one should know.

13 It is stated in the *Discourse on the Ten Stages* [Chapter on Entry into the First Stage]:

A certain (master) explains [the verse] and says, "The Pratyutpanna-Samadhi and Great Compassion are the home of all Buddhas, because all Tathágatas are born from them. Of the two, the Pratyutpanna Samadhi is the father, and Great Compassion is the mother."

He next presents a second interpretation, "The Pratyutpanna-Samadhi is the father, and the insight into non-arising of all dharmas is the mother." The above interpretations are based on the following verse of the *Aid to Bodhi* [i.e., Nargarjuna’s *Provision for Bodhi*]:

The Pratyutpanna-Samadhi is the father;
Great Compassion and insight into non-arising are the mother;
And all Tathágatas
Are born from these two.
The home is free of faults' means that the home is free of defilement. Hence, 'undefiled dharmas' are the Six Paramitas, the four virtues, skillful means, Prajnaparamita, goodness, wisdom, and the Pratyutpanna-Samadhi, Great Compassion and various insights. These dharmas are free of defilement and free of faults. For this reason, the home is said to be free of defilement. Since the Bodhisattvas (of the First Stage) make these dharmas their home, they are free of faults.

'Turning from the worldly paths, they enter the superior Supramundane Path' means: 'the worldly paths' are the paths taken by ordinary people. 'Turning from' means stopping. The paths of ordinary people do not lead ultimately to Nirvana, but result in continuous coming and going in samsara. Hence, they are called 'paths of ordinary people.' 'The Supra-mundane Path' is the way of deliverance from the three worlds; hence, it is called 'the Supra-mundane Path.' It is described as 'superior' because it is extraordinary. 'Enter' means that they unmistakably follow this Path. Since they reach the First Stage with such a mind, this stage is called 'the Stage of Joy.'

**Question:** Why is the First Stage called 'the Stage of Joy'?

**Answer:** Just as (the Sravakas of) the First Fruit Ultimately reach Nirvana, The Bodhisattvas who have reached this stage Are always full of joy in their hearts.

In them the seeds of Buddhas, Tathágatas, Are able to grow naturally. For this reason, they are called Wise and good people.

'Just as (Sravakas) reach the First Fruit' means 'just as they reach the Fruit of Entering the Stream.' For them, the gates to the three evil realms are closed forever. They discern the principle (of the Four Noble Truths), enter it, and realize it; dwelling in the steadfast principle of truth, they abide in an immovable state of mind, until they reach Nirvana. Since they have severed the (eighty-eight) delusions that are to be dealt with in the Path of Insight (into the Noble
Truths), their hearts leap with great joy. Even if they may become lax in discipline, they will not be subject to the twenty-ninth existence in samsara.

Suppose one splits a hair into a hundred strands, and draws the ocean-water with one of them. A few drops of water thus drawn are compared to the amount of karmic suffering that has already been extinguished (by the Sravakas of the First Fruit). So the remaining karmic suffering to be dealt with is like the rest of the ocean-water. Even so, their hearts rejoice greatly.

This is also the case with bodhisattvas. When they reach the First Stage, they are called 'those born into the Tathágatas' home.' All gods, dragons, yakshas, gandharvas, etc., and also Sravakas and Pratyekabuddhas, make offerings to and worship them. For what reason? Because this home is free of faults. [591b] Such bodhisattvas have turned from the worldly paths, entered the Supra-mundane Path, joyfully revered Buddhas, and thus attained the four virtues and the reward for the Six Perfections. Since they enjoy the taste of the Dharma and keep the seeds of Buddhahood from destruction, their hearts greatly rejoice. The remaining karmic suffering that those bodhisattvas have yet to extinguish would appear to be only a few drops of water. Although it takes a hundred thousand kotis of kalpas to attain the highest, perfect Enlightenment, the remaining karmic suffering seems like a few drops of water when compared with the karmic suffering they have undergone since the beginning-less past. In fact, the karmic suffering to be dealt with is like the rest of the ocean-water. For this reason, this stage is called 'the Stage of Joy.' [It is stated in the Discourse on the Ten Stages, Chapter on the Specific Features of the First Stage:]

**Question:** The bodhisattvas of the First Stage are described as 'having much joy.' Since they have gained various merits, they use joy as the name of this stage. They should rejoice in the Dharma. What brings them joy?

**Answer:**
To be constantly mindful of Buddhas and the 
supreme qualities of the Buddhas 
Is the rare practice that certainly assures one's 
Enlightenment; hence, one has much joy in one's 
heart.

Such being the cause of joy, bodhisattvas in the First 
Stage have much joy in their hearts. 'To be mindful of 
Buddhas' means to contemplate the past Buddhas, 
such as Dipankara, the present Buddhas, such as 
Amida, and the future Buddhas, such as Maitreya. If 
they constantly contemplate these Buddhas, the 
World-Honored Ones, they feel as if these Buddhas 
were before their eyes. They are the most honored in 
the three worlds, and there is no one who 
excells them. For this reason, they have much joy.

Concerning the phrase, 'to be mindful of the supreme 
qualities of the Buddhas,' I will briefly explain the 
fifty special qualities of the Buddhas: First, capable of 
freeing in the air freely as they wish; second, capable of 
transforming themselves freely and limitlessly; third, 
capable of discerning various sounds freely and 
without obstruction; fourth, capable of knowing the 
thoughts of all sentient beings freely by uncountable 
means; ... 

Concerning the phrase, 'to be mindful of the 
bodhisattvas of the Stage of Definite Assurance,' such 
bodhisattvas have received predictions of their 
attainment of the highest, perfect Enlightenment, 
entered the Stage of Non-retrogression, and gained 
the insight into the non-arising of all dharmas. An 
army of devils, even ten million kotis in number, 
could not disturb and confuse them. These 
bodhisattvas will attain Great Compassion and 
accomplish the Dharma of the Great Being... This is 
the meaning of 'being mindful of the bodhisattvas of 
the Stage of Definite Assurance'.

'To be mindful of the rare practice' means to 
contemplate the supreme, rare practice of the 
bodhisattvas of the Stage of Definite Assurance. By so
doing, they attain much joy in their hearts. This practice is beyond the capacities of all ordinary beings; neither Sravakas nor Pratyekabuddhas are able to perform it. It leads to the path of unhinderedness and that of emancipation of the Buddha-dharma and awakens one to the all-knowing wisdom. Again, since one contemplates all the practices to be performed in the ten stages, one attains much joy in one's heart. For this reason, if bodhisattvas can enter the First Stage, they are said to be in [the Stage of] Joy.

**Question:** There are ordinary beings that have not yet awakened aspiration for highest Enlightenment, and there are those who have awakened it but not yet reached the Stage of Joy. The second group of people may attain joy by contemplating the supreme qualities of the Buddhas and the rare and marvelous practices of the bodhisattvas of Definite Assurance. What difference is there between the joy of such people and that of the bodhisattvas who have reached the First Stage?

**Answer:**

Bodhisattvas who have reached the First Stage have much joy in their hearts, thinking, "I shall definitely attain the Buddhas' immeasurable merits."

The bodhisattvas who have reached the First Stage and are dwelling in the Stage of Definite Assurance will attain immeasurable merits when they contemplate Buddhas. [They are convinced:] "I shall unfailingly attain the same merits. Why? Because I have already reached the First Stage and am dwelling in the Stage of Definite Assurance." Others lack this conviction. For this reason, bodhisattvas of the First Stage have much joy in their hearts, but others have not, because even when they contemplate the Buddhas, they have no conviction that they will certainly become Buddhas. Let us take a prince of a wheel-turning monarch for example; born into the family of a wheel-turning monarch, he possesses the physical marks of a wheel-turning monarch. When he thinks of the virtues and noble character of past wheel-turning monarchs, he is convinced, "I have the same marks, and so I will obtain similar wealth and noble character." And so his mind is full of joy. Without the physical marks of a wheel-turning monarch, he would not attain such a joy. Similarly, when bodhisattvas of the
Stage of Definite Assurance contemplate Buddhas and their great merits, dignified deportment and noble character, they will think, "I have the same physical marks, and so I shall certainly become a Buddha." So thinking, they will have a great joy. But other people have no such joy. With the mind of concentration, they deeply penetrate into the Buddha-dharma and so their minds are unshaken.

14 Further, it is stated [in the Discourse on the Ten Stages, chapter on the Purification of the First Stage]:

What is 'the power of faith becoming dominant'? If one accepts without doubt what one has heard and seen, this is called 'becoming dominant' and also 'excelling.'

Question: Two kinds of 'becoming dominant' are distinguished: one is quantitative dominance and the other is qualitative excellence. Which applies here?

Answer: Both are implied. When bodhisattvas enter the First Stage, they obtain the flavor of merits, and so their power of faith increases. With the increased power of faith they contemplate the immeasurable, profound and subtle merits of the Buddhas, and accept them in faith. For this reason, their faith is both vast and superior. 'To practice Great Compassion deeply' means as follows: Bodhisattvas' pity for sentient beings penetrates their bones; hence, 'deeply'. They seek the Buddha's Enlightenment; hence, 'great.' With the compassionate heart, they always seek to benefit sentient beings and bring them peace and ease. There are three kinds of compassion....

15 Further, it is stated [in the Discourse on the Ten Stages, chapter on the Easy Practice]:

There are innumerable modes of entry into the Buddha's teaching. Just as there are in the world difficult and easy paths - traveling on foot by land is full of hardship and traveling in a boat by sea is pleasant - so it is among the paths of the bodhisattvas. Some exert themselves diligently, while others quickly enter Non-retrogression by the easy practice based on faith....
Those who wish to enter the Stage of Non-retrogression quickly should reverently hold [the names of these Buddhas] in mind and recite them.

If a bodhisattva wishes to enter in his present body the Stage of Non-retrogression and realize the highest perfect Bodhi, he should be mindful of those Buddhas of the ten quarters. Recitation of the names is encouraged in the chapter on Non-retrogression of the Sutra on the Questions of the Boy Ratnacandra...

In the land called Bhadra (Good) in the west there dwells a Buddha named Anantaujas (Immeasurable Light); [592a] The light of his body and his wisdom are brilliant, shining everywhere without limit. Those who hear his name will enter the Stage of Non-retrogression....

Innumerable kalpas ago there was a Buddha named Sagarashri (Ocean-like Virtue); under his guidance, those Buddhas of the present made vows, resolving: "My life shall be limitless and my light shall shine with boundless intensity. My land shall be exceedingly pure and those who hear my name shall definitely become Buddhas"...

Question: If we hear the names of those ten Buddhas and hold them deeply in our hearts, we shall not regress from reaching the highest, perfect Enlightenment. Are there names of other Buddhas and bodhisattvas, which enable us to enter the Stage of Non-retrogression?

Answer:

There are Amida and other Buddhas and various Great Bodhisattvas;
Those who recite their names and are mindful of them single heartedly also enter the Stage of Non-retrogression.

You should reverently worship those Buddhas, such as Amida, and recite their names. I will expound the Buddha of Infinite Life. There are Buddhas, such as Lokeshvararaja. These Buddhas, World-Honored Ones dwelling in the pure realms of the ten quarters recite Amida’s Name and are mindful of his Primal Vow, which is as follows: If one contemplates me, recites my name, and takes refuge in me, one will instantly enter the Stage of Assurance and subsequently attain the highest perfect Enlightenment.

For this reason, you should always be mindful of him. I will now praise him in verse.

The Buddha of Infinite Light and Wisdom, whose body is like a mountain of genuine gold,
I worship with my body, speech, and heart by joining hands and bowing down toward him....

If one is mindful of that Buddha's infinite power and merit,
One will instantly enter the Stage of Definite Assurance. So I am always mindful of Amida...

If one, aspiring to become a Buddha, contemplates Amida in one's heart,
Amida will instantly manifest himself before this person. So I take refuge in the Primal Vow-Power.

[By the Primal Vow-Power,] bodhisattvas of the ten quarters
Come to make offerings to him and hear the Dharma.
So I bow down to him...

If there is anyone who plants roots of good but entertains doubts, the flower [he will be born into] will not bloom;
For those who have pure faith, flowers will bloom, and they will see the Buddha.

The present Buddhas of the ten quarters praise this Buddha's merit in various ways. So I now take refuge in him and worship him...

Boarding the boat of Eightfold Noble Path, he ferries people over the sea that is difficult to cross; He has crossed it himself and now carries others across. So I worship the one who possesses unrestricted power.

Even if all the Buddhas praised his merit for innumerable kalpas, [592b] They could not fully honor it. So I take refuge in the Pure Person.

Like those Buddhas, I have praised his boundless virtue. By this act of merit, I pray that the Buddha may always think of me.

16 Vasubandhu's *Discourse on the Pure Land* states:

Depending on the sutras' exposition Of the manifestation of true merit, I compose verses of aspiration in a condensed form, Thereby conforming to the Buddha Dharma...

When I observe the Buddha's Primal Vow-Power, I find that those who meet with it do not pass in vain. They are enabled to gain quickly The great treasure-sea of merit.

17 Further it states [in the *Discourse on the Pure Land*]:

Bodhisattvas accomplish the practice for their own benefit with the four gates in the phase of 'going in.' One should realize the implication of this. Through the fifth gate of 'going out' bodhisattvas accomplish the practice of benefiting others by
transference of merit. One should realize the implication of this. Thus, by performing the five mindful practices, bodhisattvas accomplish both self-benefit and benefit of others, and so quickly attain highest, perfect Enlightenment.

18 It is stated in the *Commentary on Vasubandhu's Discourse on the Pure Land* [fasc. 1]: When I [T’an-luan] reverently read Nargarjuna’s *Discourse on the Ten Stages*, I find the following passage:

There are two paths by which bodhisattvas reach the Stage of Non-retrogression: the Path of Difficult Practice and the Path of Easy Practice. The Path of Difficult Practice is a way of trying to reach the Stage of Non-retrogression in the period of the five defilements when no Buddha dwells in the world. It is difficult to follow this path and there are reasons for this. In order to clarify this, I shall outline several reasons as follows:

1. Non-Buddhist ways of doing what seems to be good are at variance with the bodhisattva’s practice.
2. The Sravakas pursuit of self-benefit obstructs the bodhisattva’s acts of great compassion.
3. Evil-doers, who have no regard for consequences, destroy the superior merit of others.
4. The results of good deeds based on deluded thinking offer a distraction from sacred practices.
5. Relying solely on our own power, we miss the support of the Other-Power.

These facts are seen everywhere. The Path of Difficult Practice is, therefore, like an overland journey painstakingly made on foot.

The Path of Easy Practice is followed by aspiring to be born in the Pure Land through faith in Amida Buddha and quickly attaining birth in his Pure Land by his Vow-Power. In the Pure Land we are sustained by the Buddha’s Power and join those who are rightly established in the Mahayana Path. ‘Rightly established’ refers to the Stage of Non-retrogression. The Path of Easy practice is, therefore, like a pleasant journey on water.

The *Discourse on the Sutra of the Buddha of Infinite Life* is indeed the ultimate teaching of Mahayana, a ship sailing before the favorable wind of Non-retrogression. ‘Infinite Life’ is another name for the Tathāgata of the Pure Land of Peace and Bliss. While he was
staying in Rajagriha and Shravasti, Shakyamuni expounded to the assembly the glorious virtues of the Buddha of Infinite Life. The essence of the sutras expounded at that time is the Name of Amida Buddha. Sometime later, a sage, Bodhisattva Vasubandhu, took this compassionate teaching of the Tathāgata to heart. Based upon the sutras, he composed the Verses of Aspiration for Birth and wrote a commentary on them to explain their meaning.

19 Further it is stated [in the Commentary on Vasubandhu's Discourse on the Pure Land, fasc.1]:

Furthermore, he [Vasubandhu] has taken weighty vows. Without the support of the Tathāgata’s supernatural power, how could he fulfill them? Here Vasubandhu entreats the Buddha to support him with his supernatural [592c] power, and so respectfully addresses the Buddha 'With singleness of mind’ is the phrase with which Bodhisattva Vasubandhu professes his faith. It means that he is mindful of the Tathāgata of Unhindered Light, aspiring to be born in the Land of Peace and Bliss, and is continually mindful of him without the intervention of any other thought....

Concerning the line, "[I] take refuge in the Tathāgata of Unhindered Light Shining throughout the Ten Quarters," ‘take refuge in' is the gate of worship. 'The Tathāgata of Unhindered Light Shining throughout the Ten Quarters' is the Gate of Praise. How do we know that to take refuge in the Buddha is to worship him? Bodhisattva Nargarjuna uses phrases such as the following in his verse in praise of Amida: 'I bow and worship,' 'I take refuge,' and 'I take refuge in and worship him.' In the explanatory section of this Discourse Vasubandhu says 'performing the Five Mindful Practices.' Worship is one of the Five Mindful Practices. Bodhisattva Vasubandhu already aspired to be born in the Pure Land. Why then should he not worship (Amida)? Hence, we know that 'to take refuge in him' is 'to worship him.' But 'worshiping' can simply imply 'revering'; it does not necessarily mean 'taking refuge.' 'Taking refuge' necessarily means 'worshiping.' From this one can infer that 'taking refuge' has a deeper meaning. On the one hand, the verses are the profession of the author's faith and so it is natural that he should say 'I take refuge.' On the other hand, the explanatory section gives the meaning of the verses and so here he discusses the matter generally, using the word 'worship.' These two expressions complement each other.
How do we know that saying 'the Tathágata of Unhindered Light Shining throughout the Ten Quarters' is the Gate of Praise? It is said in the explanatory section: "What is praise? I call the Name of the Tathágata. For I wish to practice in accord with the Dharma, that is, in accord with the Tathágata’s embodiment of the light of wisdom and with the signification of his Name." ... 

When Bodhisattva Vasubandhu says 'the Tathágata of Unhindered Light Shining throughout the Ten Quarters,' he glorifies this Tathágata by the name that exactly describes him as the illuminating body of wisdom. Hence, we know that this line is the gate of praise.

"And aspire to be born in the Land of Peace and Bliss": this line is the Gate of Aspiration. Aspiration for birth implies Bodhisattva Vasubandhu's taking refuge in Amida....

**Question**: In Mahayana sutras and discourses it is repeatedly explained that sentient beings are, in the final analysis, like space, unborn. Why does Bodhisattva Vasubandhu state that he aspires to be born?

**Answer**: When it is explained that sentient beings are, like space, unborn, there are two possible meanings. First, sentient beings and their births and deaths conceived as real by ordinary people are, after all, as non-existent as the hair of a tortoise or open space. Second, since all things are produced by causes and conditions, they are as un-produced and as non-existent as open space. The birth that Bodhisattva Vasubandhu desired should be taken in the sense of [produced by] causes and conditions. Because birth takes place depending on causes and conditions, it is only provisionally called 'birth,' not in the sense that there are real sentient beings and real births and deaths as ordinary people imagine.

**Question**: In what sense do you speak of 'birth'?

**Answer**: When someone among those who are thus provisionally called 'men' performs the Five Mindful Practices, his thought in the preceding moment becomes the cause of his thought in the following moment. The provisional 'person' in this defiled land and the provisional 'person' in the Pure Land (who he is going to be) are neither exactly the same [593a] nor definitely different. Likewise, the thought of the preceding moment and that of the
following moment are neither exactly the same nor definitely different. Why is this so? If they were the same, there would be no causality, and if they were different, there would be no continuity. This principle is explained in detail in the discourses dealing with the problem of 'sameness' and 'difference'.

I [T'an-luan] have above explained the first stanza that presents the first three Mindful Practices....

It is stated [in the Discourse on the Pure Land]:

    Depending on the sutras' exposition
    Of the manifestation of true merit,
    I compose verses of aspiration in a condensed form,
    Thereby conforming to the Buddha Dharma....

What does Vasubandhu depend on, and why and how does he depend on it? First, what does Vasubandhu depend on? He depends on the sutras. Second, why does he depend on them? Because the Tathāgata (Amida mentioned in the sutra) is the manifestation of true merit. Third, how does he depend on them? He complies with them by performing the Five Mindful Practices....

'Sutras' refers to (the Buddha's) own exposition (of the Dharma), which is one of the twelve divisions of the Buddhist teachings. They include the four Agamas or the (Hinayana) Tripitaka. Apart from these, Mahayana sutras are also called 'sutras.' 'Depending on the Sutras' refers to Mahayana sutras, which are not included in the (Hinayana) Tripitaka. In other words, they do no refer to such sutras as the Agamas.

Concerning the phrase 'the manifestation of true merit,' there are two kinds of merit: (1) the merit which accrues from the activity of a defiled mind and is not in accordance with the Dharma-nature: Such merit arises from the various good acts of ordinary men and heavenly beings. It also refers to the reward of human and heavenly states of existence. Both the cause and effect of such good acts are inverted and false; hence they are called 'false merit'. (2) The merit, which is produced from the wisdom and pure karma of bodhisattvas, and which serves to glorify Buddhist action: It conforms to the Dharma-nature and has the characteristic of purity. This Dharma is not inverted and false; hence it is called 'true merit'. Why is it not inverted? Because it conforms to the Dharma-nature
and agrees with the twofold truth. Why is it not false? Because it takes in sentient beings and leads them to ultimate purity. Concerning the lines,

I compose verses of aspiration in a condensed form, 
Thereby conforming to the Buddha Dharma,

'Holding (all)' means 'to hold something together and keep it from dispersing.' '(Holding) all' means 'much [meaning] condensed into a few [words]'....

'Aspiration' means 'to wish to be born in the Pure Land'....

'Conforming to the Buddha Dharma' means that [the verses of aspiration and the Buddha-dharma] fit each other like a box and its lid.... It is stated [in Vasubandhu's Discourse on the Pure Land]:

How does one transfer [the merit of practice]? One does not forsake suffering beings, but constantly resolves in one's mind to perfect the Great Compassion by putting Merit-transference above anything else.

The Merit-transference has two aspects: the 'going' aspect and the 'returning' aspect. The 'going' aspect is that one turns one's merit over to all sentient beings with the aspiration that all will be born together into Amida Tathāgata’s Pure Land of Peace and Bliss.

It is stated in the Collection of Passages Concerning Birth in the Land of Peace and Bliss [fasc. 1]:

The Sutra on the Buddha-Contemplation Samadhi says:

[Shakyamuni] urged his father, the King, to practice the Nembutsu-Samadhi. His father, the King, asked the Buddha, "Why do you not recommend to me, your disciple, the practice of meditating on the ultimate virtue of the Buddha's stage, which is identical with True Suchness, Real Aspect, or the highest principle of Void ness?"
The Buddha answered his father, the King, "The ultimate virtue of the Buddhas is the boundless and profoundly subtle state and is possessed of transcendent faculties and the wisdom of emancipation. This is not a state fit to be practiced by ordinary beings. So I urge you, the King, to practice the Nembutsu-Samadhi."

His father, the King, asked the Buddha, "What are the characteristics of the merit of the Nembutsu?"

The Buddha replied to his father, the King, "Suppose there is a forest of eranda trees, forty yojanas square wide, and there is in it a single cow-head sandalwood, whose roots and sprouts are still underground. The eranda forest is full of foul smell and completely devoid of pleasant scent. If someone bites a flower or fruit of the tree, he will become insane and die. Later, when the sabdak-wood spreads its roots and buds and is about to grow into a tree, it emits luxuriant fragrance and finally transforms this forest into a sweet-smelling one. Those who see this are wonder-struck."

The Buddha said to his father, the King, "A thought of the Nembutsu which all sentient beings hold in birth-and-death is like this. If only one concentrates one's thought on the Buddha without interruption, one will surely be born in the presence of the Buddha. Once this person attains birth in the Pure Land, he will transform all the evils into Great Compassion, just as the fragrant tree transforms the eranda forest."

Here the eranda tree symbolizes the three poisons and three hindrances within the sentient beings and innumerable grave karmic evils, which they commit. The candana tree represents the thought of Nembutsu in the sentient beings. "Is about to grow into a tree" shows that if only sentient beings keep practicing the Nembutsu without interruption, the cause of their birth in the Pure Land is accomplished.

**Question:** By the example of the merit of the Nembutsu of one sentient being [i.e. Shakyamuni's father] we can guess that it
applies to all sentient beings. How can the power of the merit of a single Nembutsu destroy all hindrances, just as a single fragrant tree transforms an eranda forest, forty-yojana square wide, into a sweet-smelling one?

**Answer:** I will clarify the inconceivable merit of the Nembutsu-Samadhi by quoting from various Mahayana scriptures. The *Garland Sutra* says:

If a man strikes a lute whose strings are made of the sinews of a lion, with one strike, all the strings of other lutes snap. Likewise, if a man practices the Nembutsu-Samadhi with the Bodhi-mind, all his evil passions and hindrances are destroyed. Again, if a drop of milk from a lion is placed in a vessel, which contains milk from a cow, ewe, ass, and other animals, it penetrates the mixed milk unhindered, destroying it and transforming it into pure water. Likewise, if only a man practices the Nembutsu-Samadhi with the Bodhi-mind, all the devils and various hindrances pass by without causing him any trouble."

The *Garland Sutra* further states:

Just as a man who has taken a potion to make himself invisible travels from one place to another without being seen by others, if one practices the Nembutsu-Samadhi with the Bodhi-mind, one cannot be seen or detected by any evil spirit or anyone who might cause harassment, and so one can go anywhere without hindrance. It is because the Nembutsu-Samadhi is [593c] the king of all samādhis.

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21 It is further stated [in the *Collection of Passages Concerning Birth in the Land of Peace and Bliss*, fasc. 2]:

A Mahayana discourse [*Commentary on the Maha Prajñāpāramitā Sutra*] says:
It is not that all the other samādhis are not worthy of samādhis. For a certain samādhi can eliminate greed but cannot eliminate anger and ignorance; another can eliminate anger but cannot eliminate greed and ignorance; still another can eliminate ignorance but cannot eliminate anger. There is a samādhi, which can eliminate hindrances of the present but cannot eliminate those of the past and future. If one constantly practices the Nembutsu-Samadhi, it eliminates all hindrances, whether of the present, past or future.”

22 It is also stated in the same work [fasc. 2]:

The Verses on the Larger Sutra says:

If one hears the virtuous Name of Amida,
Rejoices, praises, and takes refuge in it,
One will gain great benefit even with one Nembutsu;
That is, one will obtain the treasure of merit.

Even if the whole universe were filled with fire,
Pass through it straightaway to hear the Buddha's Name.
If one hears Amida's Name, one will enter the Stage of Non-retrogression.
For this reason, I bow and worship the Buddha with singleness of heart

23 It is further stated in the same work [fasc. 1]:

The Sutra on the Questions of Maudgalyayana says:

The Buddha said to Maudgalyayana, "In all rivers and streams there are floating grasses and trees. They are carried down without regard to the objects, which go before or follow, until they all merge in the great ocean. So it is in the world. Even though the rich and noble may freely enjoy pleasures, they cannot escape birth, old age, sickness, or death. Through failure to accept the Buddha's teaching, those who may be born as humans in the life to come must undergo extreme hardship and are unable to be born in the country where thousands of Buddhas appear. For this reason, I declare: It is easy to go to the Land of the Buddha of Infinite Life and attain Enlightenment there. But
people fail to perform practices and attain birth there; instead, they follow the ninety-five wrong paths. I call such people 'those without eyes' and 'those without ears'."

Such are the teachings of the scriptures. Why do people not abandon the Path of Difficult Practice and follow the Path of Easy Practice?

24 The Master of Kuang-ming temple says [in the Hymns of Birth in the Pure Land]:

The Prajñāpāramitā Sutra Expounded by Manjushri states.

I wish to explain the Samadhi of Single Practice. I encourage you to dwell alone in a quiet place, eliminate all distracted thoughts, and concentrate your mind on one Buddha. Do not contemplate his physical characteristics, but exclusively recite his Name. Then, thinking mindfully, you will be able to see Amida and all the other Buddhas.

**Question:** For what reasons do you directly encourage the exclusive recitation of the Name, and not the practice of contemplation?

**Answer:** Because sentient beings have deep hindrances and their minds are coarse and rough, while the objects of contemplation are subtle; their thoughts are agitated and their minds disturbed, so that they cannot accomplish contemplation. Thereupon, the Great Sage, out of compassion for them, directly encouraged people to recite the Name only. For recitation of the Name is easy, and through the continuous practice of it one can attain birth in the Pure Land.

**Question:** When one exclusively recites the Name of a Buddha, why do so many Buddhas appear? Is this not a mixture of wrong and right contemplations and the mixed appearance of one and many Buddhas? [594a]
**Answer:** All Buddhas have attained one and the same Enlightenment, and so they are not different in form from each other. Even if you see many Buddhas by contemplating one, how could this run counter to the universal principle?

Further, it is stated in the *Contemplation Sutra*:

> I urge people to practice contemplation while sitting, worship, and mindful recitation. In all these acts, it is best to face the west. It is like a tree falling in the direction it leans. If for some reason you are not able to face the west, you may simply imagine that you are facing the west.

**Question:** All Buddhas have equally realized the three bodies, and their compassion and wisdom have been accomplished perfectly and without any distinction. Even if one may face any direction, worship one Buddha, be mindful of him and recite his Name, one can still attain birth. Why do you solely praise the Buddha in the west and encourage us to worship him and recite his Name?

**Answer:** Although the Enlightenment of all Buddhas is one and the same, when discussed in terms of vows and practices, they have their own causes and conditions. Hereupon, Amida, the World-Honored One, originally made deep and weighty Vows, through which he embraces beings in the ten quarters with his Light and Name. As he establishes Faith in us, our birth is easily attained by the Buddha's Vow-Power while we recite the Nembutsu throughout our lives or even ten times or once. That is why Shakyamuni and other Buddhas especially encourage us to turn our thoughts to the west. We should, however, understand that this does not mean that elimination of our hindrances and evil karma is not achieved through recitation of the names of other Buddhas. Those who continuously recite the Name, as explained above, until the end of their lives, will all be born in the Pure Land, ten out of ten and a hundred out of a hundred. Why? Because such people are free of obstructions from outside and dwell in the state of right-mindedness, and so they are in accord with the Buddha's Primal Vow, in harmony with the teaching and in agreement with the Buddha's words.

Further, Shan-tao says [in the *Hymns of Birth in the Pure Land*]:

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25
Since this Buddha watches over only the Nembutsu followers, embraces them and does not forsake them, he is called 'Amida.'

26 He also says [in the Hymns of Birth in the Pure Land):

The ocean of Amida's Vow that arose from Wisdom
Is deep, vast, and unfathomable.
Those who hear the Name and aspire for birth

All, without exception, reach his Land.
Even though the great thousand worlds were filled with fire,
Pass through them straightforwardly to hear the Buddha's Name.
Those who have heard the Name, rejoice and praise its virtue
Will all be born in that Land.

After ten thousand years the Three Treasures will perish,
But this Larger Sutra will remain for a hundred years more.
People during that time who hear and recite the Name even once
Will all attain birth there.

27 He also says [in the Hymns of Birth in the Pure Land]:

I am in reality an ordinary unenlightened being subject to birth-and-death, burdened with deep and heavy evil karma and hindrances and transmigrating in the six realms. The suffering I have received is indescribable. Now I have encountered a good teacher and heard from him about the Name that has been brought out by Amida's Primal Vow. I will aspire for birth by reciting the Name single-heartedly. May the Buddha, out of compassion, not abandoning the original universal Vow, embrace me as his disciple.

28 He also says [in the Hymns of Birth in the Pure Land]:

**Question:** What merit and benefit do we acquire in the present life by calling the Name of Amida Buddha and worshiping and contemplating him?
**Answer:** One utterance of the Name of Amida Buddha can remove the heavy evil karma that will cause one to transmigrate in Samsara for eight billion kalpas. Worshipping and focusing our thoughts upon Amida - along with other acts - have the same effect. The *Sutra on the Ten Ways of Attaining Birth* states:

If there are sentient beings who focus their thoughts upon Amida Buddha and aspire for birth in his land, the Buddha immediately sends twenty-five bodhisattvas to protect them, keeping evil spirits and evil devas away from them at all times and in all places, day and night, whether they are walking, standing, sitting or lying down."

It is further stated in the *Contemplation Sutra*:

If practitioners call the Name of Amida Buddha and worship and focus their thoughts upon him, aspiring to be born in his land, the Buddha immediately sends innumerable transformed Buddhas and transformed bodies of Avalokiteshvara Bodhisattva and Mahasthamaprapta Bodhisattva to the practitioners to protect them. Together with the twenty-five bodhisattvas mentioned before, these transformed bodies surround them a hundredfold and a thousand-fold and stay with them at all times and in all places, day and night, whether they are walking, standing, sitting or lying down.

Since there are such excellent benefits, you should accept this in faith. May all practitioners receive Amida’s sincere heart and seek to attain birth in the Pure Land.

It is further stated in the *Larger Sutra*:

If, when I become a Buddha, all sentient beings in the ten quarters who call my Name even ten times fail to be born in my land, may I not attain perfect Enlightenment.
This Buddha, having attained Buddhahood, now dwells in the Pure Land. You should know that his weighty vows are not in vain. Sentient beings who call his Name will unfailingly attain birth.

It is further stated in the Amida Sutra:

If sentient beings hear of Amida Buddha, they should hold fast to his Name, calling it with a concentrated and undistracted mind for one day, two days, up to seven days. When their lives are about to end, Amida Buddha will appear before them with a host of sages. When they die, their minds will not fall into confusion and so they will be born in his Land.

The Buddha Shakyamuni said to Shariputra, "Since I perceive these benefits, I declare: Those sentient beings who hear this teaching should awaken aspiration and desire to be born in that land."

The sutra next states:

The Buddhas in the eastern quarter, as numerous as the sands of the Ganges, as well as those as numerous as the sands of the Ganges in each of other quarters - south, west, north, nadir and zenith - each in their own lands, extending their tongues and covering with them the universe of a thousand million worlds, pronounce these words of truth: You, sentient beings, should accept this sutra which is protected by all Buddhas. Why is this sutra called 'protected (by all Buddhas)'? If there are sentient beings who call the Name of Amida Buddha for seven days, or one day, even once, or even down to ten times or think of him once, they can unfailingly attain birth. Because (all Buddhas) testify to this, this is called 'the sutra which is protected (by all Buddhas).'

The sutra next states:

Those who call the Buddha's Name and attain birth are constantly protected by Buddhas of the six quarters, numerous as the sands of the Ganges.
Hence, this is called 'the sutra which is protected (by all Buddhas).'</p>

Since we have this supreme Vow, we should trust it. Why do all the Buddhas' children not make a firm resolution and strive to go to the Pure Land? (The second fascicle of Liturgy of the Collected Passages from Sutras by Chih-sheng consists of Hymns of Birth in the Pure Land by Master Shan-tao. This passage comes from that.)

29 It is also stated [in the Essential Meaning of the Contemplation Sutra]:

The Universal Vow [594c] is presented in the Larger Sutra. All good and evil ordinary beings will not attain birth without recourse to the karmic power of Amida Buddha's Great Vow as the supreme working.

30 It is also stated [in the Essential Meaning of the Contemplation Sutra]:

'Namo' means 'to take refuge'; it also has the significance of 'making aspiration and transferring (merits).’ 'Amida Butsu' is the practice. For this reason, one can definitely attain birth.

31 It is stated [in the Method of Contemplation of Amida Buddha]:

Concerning 'the supreme working to embrace beings,' one of the Forty-eight Vows in the Larger Sutra says, "If, when I become a Buddha, the sentient beings of the ten quarters who, aspiring to be born in my land, call my Name even ten times, fail to be born there through my Vow-Power, may I not attain perfect Enlightenment." This means that the practitioners who aspire to birth are embraced by the Vow-Power - when their lives are about to end - and are enabled to attain birth. Hence, this is called 'the supreme working to embrace beings.'"

32 It is also stated [in the Method of Contemplation of Amida Buddha]:

The Buddhas wish all good and evil ordinary beings to convert their minds, perform Pure Land practices, and thereby attain birth. This is 'the supreme working of all Buddhas testifying to our attainment of birth.'
It is also stated [in the *Hymns on the Pratyutpanna Samadhi*]:

There are different Dharma-gates numbering eighty-four thousand. The sharp sword for cutting asunder our ignorance, its effects, and the karmic cause of suffering in Samsara, is Amida's Name. With a single utterance of the Name, all our evils are removed.

Our numerous karmic evils of the past and self-power calculations are destroyed; even without being taught, we are led into the gate of True Suchness.

For attaining freedom from many kalpas' suffering in this Saha world
We are especially indebted to the benevolence of Shakyamuni, the true teacher;
Using various skillful means based on careful consideration,
He selected the teaching-gate of Amida's Universal Vow and led us into it.

We see from the above that the word 'namu' means 'to take refuge' (kimyo). 'Ki' means 'to come to'; it also means 'to rely joyfully' (ketsu) and 'to trust' (kisai). 'Myo' means 'act,' 'summoning,' 'causing,' 'teaching,' 'expounding,' 'exhorting with sincerity,' 'providing the compassionate means,' and 'calling.' 'Kimyo,' therefore, is the command of the Primal Vow, summoning us to trust it.

'Making aspiration and transferring (merits)' (hotsugan eko) refers to the mind of the Tathágata who already made the Vow resolving to endow the practice to sentient beings.

'The practice' (sokuze gokyo) is the working of the selected Primal Vow.

'One can definitely attain birth' (hittoku ojo) shows that one attains the Stage of Non-retrogression. Concerning this, the [Larger Sutra] states, "immediately attains (birth)" (sokutoku) and [Nargarjuna's] commentary says, "definitely assured" (hitsujo). 'Soku' (immediately) reveals the very instant in which the true cause of our birth in the Recompensed Land is settled through hearing and understanding the Vow-Power. 'Hitsu' (certainly) describes the state in which the Diamond-hard Mind has been established.
35 It is also stated in the Shorter Pure Land Liturgy of Nembutsu Chant in Five Stages (by Fa-chao, 8th c.):

The Tathágata Shakyamuni provided the teaching in two ways, in full and in summary, according to the capacities of the people. By so doing, he intended to lead all to Ultimate Reality in the end. To those who seek to realize true non-origination, who else can give the appropriate teaching? Indeed, the Nembutsu samádhi is truly the supreme and most wonderful Dharma-gate. With the Name realized by the Forty-eight Vows of Amida, the Dharma-king, the Buddha saves sentient beings, [595a] exercising the Vow-Power....

The Tathágata, while always dwelling in the ocean-like samádhi, raised his hand with webbed fingers and said to his father the King: "O King, you should now sit cross-legged and exclusively practice the Nembutsu. How can you seek no-thought by annihilating thought? How can you seek non-origination by annihilating origination? How can you seek Dharma-body by negating forms? How can you seek emancipation by not relying on words?"

How wonderful it is that the true Dharma of the ultimate principle is Oneness and yet it transforms beings and benefits people! Since each Buddha's great vows differ from others', Shakyamuni manifested his accommodative body in the world of defilement and Amida appeared in the Pure Land. Although their lands are different - one is defiled and the other pure, the benefit they give to beings is the same. It is indeed the teaching-gate of the Pure Land alone that is easy to practice and easy to realize. The Western Quarter is exquisite, and the land is incomparable. It is adorned with lotuses of a hundred jewels, which open in nine different ways to take aspirants of different grades into them. This is due to the Buddha's Name....

It is stated in the hymns by Fa-chao, disciple of Shakyamuni, based on the Sutra in Praise of the Pure Land:

The sacred Name of the Tathágata Amida is clearly manifest beyond measure;
It prevails everywhere in the worlds of the ten quarters.
Simply by calling the Name, all can attain birth.
Avalokiteshvara and Mahasthamaprapta come in person to welcome them.

Amida's Primal Vow is particularly superb; With compassionate skillful means he leads ordinary beings to the Pure Land. Thus all sentient beings attain emancipation; Those who recite the Name are immediately rid of karmic evil.

When ordinary beings reach the Western Quarter, Their karmic evils, countless as particles, from long past kalpas will perish. Endowed with the six supernatural powers, they attain unrestricted freedom in action; Forever freed of old age and sickness, they are liberated from impermanence.

It is stated in the hymns by Fa-chao based on the Sutra on the Life of the Buddha:

What is called the Right Dharma? The teaching that accords with truth is the true teaching. Now right and wrong teachings should be distinguished; Carefully examine each teaching and do not leave any in obscurity.

The Right Dharma surpasses the worldly teachings.

Observance of the precepts and sitting meditation are called the Right Dharma; Attainment of Buddhahood through the Nembutsu is the true teaching. Those who do not accept the Buddha's words are non-Buddhists; The view that rejects the law of cause and effect is a nihilistic view.

The Right Dharma surpasses the worldly teachings.

How can meditation and observance of the precepts be the Right Dharma? The Nembutsu-Samadhi is the true teaching. To see one's true nature and realize one's mind (in the Pure Land) is to become a Buddha. Why is this not in accord with truth?
It is stated in the hymns based on the *Amida Sutra*:

> In the Western Quarter one advances in the Way more quickly than in this Saha world,  
> Because that land is free of the five desires and adversaries.  
> To become a Buddha, one does not require good acts;  
> One just sits on a lotus seat and concentrates on Amida.

Practice in this world of the five defilements is liable to regression;  
Nothing is more advantageous than going to the Western Quarter through the Nembutsu.  
Having reached there, one effortlessly realizes perfect Enlightenment;  
Then one returns to the world of suffering and becomes a bridge for others to cross to emancipation.

Among the myriad practices, Nembutsu is the most essential;  
No other teaching surpasses the Pure Land gate in bringing about emancipation quickly.  
Not only is this the exposition from the golden mouth of the Buddha, our Master,  
But all Buddhas of the ten quarters transmit this message and testify to its truth.

When one recites the Name of the Buddha in this world,  
A lotus grows in the Western Quarter.  
If one continues to recite it all one's life,  
The flower comes here to welcome this person.

It is stated in the hymns by Master Tz'u-min based on the *Pratyutpanna Samadhi Sutra*:

> Those who have assembled today in the hall,  
> You have transmigrated everywhere in samsara for countless kalpas, as numerous as the sands of the Ganges.  
> As I reflect, this human existence is difficult to obtain;  
> It is like blooming of an udumbara flower.

Through a rare chance, we have come to hear the Pure Land teaching;  
We have encountered the opening of the Dharma-gate of the Nembutsu.
Indeed, we have encountered the call of Amida's universal Vow; We have seen the assemblage converting their minds with Faith.

Today we have joined in praising Amida in accord with the sutras; We have pledged with each other to meet on the higher lotus seats. We have met in the hall free of devils' hindrances; We have met again here without being hampered by illness.

We have accomplished the meritorious act for seven days; The Forty-eight Vows will unfailingly take us to the Pure Land. I urge all the fellow-practitioners of this hall: Strive diligently to convert your minds and go to the Pure Land.

Let me ask you, "Where is your home?" It is the seven-jeweled lotus seat in the pond of the Land of Utmost Bliss. Amida Buddha, in his causal stage, made the universal Vow: Whoever hears my Name and concentrates on me, I will welcome to my land.

No discrimination is made between the poor and destitute and the rich and noble, Or between the inferior and the highly gifted, Or between those who have heard much and those who observe the precepts, Or between those who break the precepts and those who have deep evil karma.

If only people convert their minds and recite the Nembutsu many times, They are transformed, as if rubble were turned into gold. I make an announcement to the assemblage here: Those who share the same connection with Amida and seek to go to the Pure Land should ask each other –

**Question:** Where should we aspire to go? 
**Answer:** To Amida's Pure Land.

**Question:** By what cause can we attain birth there? 
**Answer:** Nembutsu recitation naturally brings you there.

**Question:** We have much karmic hindrance in this life; How can we possibly enter the Pure Land?
Answer: By calling the Name, you can rid yourself of your karmic evil,
As when a shining lamp enters a dark room.

Question: Can ordinary people attain birth there?
How is it possible that one recitation brightens the darkness?
Answer: If you remove doubt and recite the Nembatsu many times,
Amida naturally comes close to you in person.

It is stated in the hymns by Fa-chao based on the Sutra on Contemplation of the Buddha of Infinite Life:

Foolish beings who have committed the ten evil acts and the five gravest offenses
Have been sinking in samsara for eternally long kalpas, covered with dust of evil passions.
When they reach Amida's land by calling his Name even once, they will become one with the Dharma-nature Body.

36 Master Kyeong-heung says [in the Commentary on the Larger Sutra]:

The Tathágata Shakyamuni's detailed exposition of the Larger Sutra is divided into two parts. First, he fully expounds the (cause and) result of the Tathágata Amida's Pure Land, [595c] namely, his practices and his accomplishments. Next, he fully expounds the cause and result of sentient beings birth in the Pure Land, namely, Amida's embrace and the benefit to be gained.

37 He also says [in the Commentary on the Larger Sutra]:

It is stated in the Sutra of the Lotus of Compassion, "Chapter on Giving Predictions to Bodhisattvas":

At that time, the Tathágata Treasure-store praised the wheel-turning monarch, saying, "Very well, very well.... Great King, in the western quarter, after passing a thousand million kotis of Buddha-lands, there is a world called August, Good and Undefiled. In that land there is a Buddha named August Sound-King.... He is at present preaching the Right Dharma to bodhisattvas.... It is the land of genuine Mahayana, pure and unadulterated. Sentient beings are born
there transformed in the same form. There are no women, not even the word for woman. The merit of that Buddha-land is manifested as pure adornments. All are exactly the same as the Great King vowed, showing no difference at all.... Now your name shall be changed to Infinite Purity."

It is stated in the *Teaching Assembly of the Tathāgata of Infinite Life*, fasc. 1:

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Amida established such extensive, great universal Vows and has already fulfilled them all. They are rare in the world. Having made these Vows, Amida dwelt peacefully in truth and accomplished various merits, with which he brought to perfection his vast and pure Buddha-land of majestic glory.
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38 Kyeong-heung further says [in the *Commentary on the Larger Sutra*]:

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Since Amida has accomplished the two adornments of merit and wisdom, he equally endows sentient beings with the merit of practice. Since he benefits sentient beings with the merit of his own practice, he realizes accomplishment of his merit in them.
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39 He also says [in the *Commentary on the Larger Sutra*]:

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Through good causes provided for us over eons of time, we can encounter the Buddha and rejoice to hear the Dharma.
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40 He also says [in the *Commentary on the Larger Sutra*]:

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The people in the Pure Land are sages, and the land is exquisite. Who would not exert themselves to go there? Aspire for birth by doing good. The cause of birth having already been accomplished, how can the result not be obtained spontaneously? Hence, 'naturally.' Irrespective of whether you are noble or base, you are enabled to attain birth. Hence, 'no discrimination between the high or the low.'
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41 Again he says [in the *Commentary on the Larger Sutra*]:

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"The land is easy to reach, but very few actually go there. It rejects nobody, but naturally and unfailingly attracts beings." *[Larger Sutra, fasc. 2]* By performing the causal practice, all can attain birth. Without performing it, very few attain birth. Anyone who seeks birth by performing the causal practice is not rejected; hence, 'easy to go to.'

42 He also says [in the *Commentary on the Larger Sutra*]:

'Because of the Primal Vow-Power' means that through the Vow-Power one attains birth. 'Because of the perfectly fulfilled Vow' means that his Vows are complete and there is nothing lacking. 'Because of the clear and manifest Vow' means that what Amida sought to attain was unfailingly realized. 'Because of the firm Vow' means that his Vows cannot be destroyed by any influence from outside. 'Because of the accomplished Vow' means that his Vows were bound to be fulfilled.

43 He also says:

In general, in order to make ordinary and inferior beings increase their desire for birth, one should reveal the excellent qualities of that land.

44 He also says:

There is a statement, "In this world they performed bodhisattva practices." From this we know that King Arenemi once lived in this world. So did Samudrarenu.

45 He also says:

By hearing of the vastness of the Buddha's majestic virtue, one reaches the Stage of Non-retrogression.
46 It is stated in the *Collection of Passages on the Land of Bliss* (by Tsung-hsiao):

The general officer in charge of military affairs, Chang-lun, says:

"The Name of the Buddha is very easy to hold, and the Pure Land is very easy to reach. Among the eighty-four thousand teaching-gates, there is none that is superior to this quick way to emancipation. By setting aside a little time in the early morning, you should by all means store merit for the indestructible provision which will last for eternal kalpas. That is to say, with slight effort one gains inexhaustible merit. What affliction do sentient beings suffer that keeps them from taking up the Name? Ah, all is a dream or illusion, and is unreal. Life is ephemeral and hard to maintain for long. The moment one breath is not followed by another, the next life begins. Once the human life is lost, it will not be regained even in ten thousand kalpas. Unless we attain realization this time, what can the Buddha do to save us? May all of you deeply reflect on impermanence and be careful not to regret in vain! Thus I, Chang-lun, the Layman of Pure Bliss, urge those with whom I am karmically related."

47 Dharma-master Ch'ing-wen of Shan-yin, master of the T'ien-t'ai school, says:

Because the Buddha's Name manifests from his true body of recompense, because it arises from the ocean-like compassion, because it arises from the ocean-like Vow, from the ocean-like wisdom, and from the ocean-like Dharma-gates, to call exclusively the Name of this Buddha is to call the names of all Buddhas. Because it contains immeasurable merit, it destroys the hindrances of our karmic evil, thereby enabling us to be born in the Pure Land. Why should there be any doubt about this?

48 Yuan-chao, master of the Vinaya School, says:

With great compassion the Buddha revealed the Pure Land teaching and benevolently recommended this in many Mahayana
scriptures. There are people who doubt and slander this after seeing and hearing it; being sunk in self-complacency, they do not seek spiritual transcendent attainment. The Tathāgata considered such people to be pitiable beings. They do not accept this because they do not realize that this teaching is indeed extraordinary. It does not choose between wise and foolish, monks and laypeople; it does not question whether one has practiced for a long time or not, nor whether one's karmic offense is heavy or light. It only requires firm Faith as the cause of birth in the Pure Land.

49 He further says:

In various Pure Land sutras there is totally no mention of hindrances of devils; hence, we know that in this teaching there is no hindrance of devils. This matter is discussed in great detail in the Dharmagate of True Faith by Master Ch'ing-wen of Shan-yin. Let us quote the discussion in full:

**Question:** Some say, "It may happen that at the time of death one beholds the Buddha and bodhisattvas coming in radiant light and bringing a lotus-seat and, accompanied by heavenly music and wonderful fragrance, one is welcomed to attain birth. This is all devils' work." I wonder if this assertion is true.

**Answer:** When one practices samādhi in accordance with the Sutra of the Samadhi of Heroic Advance, devils of the five aggregates may appear. When one practices samādhi in accordance with the Treatise on Mahayana (Treatise on Awakening of Faith in Mahayana), the external devils i.e., heavenly devils) may appear. When one practices samādhi in accordance with the Discourse on Cessation and Contemplation, "time spirits" may appear. All of these appear when different kinds of devils' hindrance which are determined by different natures of self-power of the practitioners of meditation are stimulated by meditative practices. If you clearly realize this and apply proper remedy, these hindrances are immediately removed. If, however, you assume that you are already sages, you will suffer from the devils' hindrances. (The above shows that practice to realize enlightenment in this world may give rise to devils' hindrances.)

Concerning the Nembutsu-Samadhi that we now practice, we rely on the Buddha's power. It is just as those who are close to [596b] the king are free of any danger of assault. It is because Amida
Buddha has the power of great compassion, the power of great Vows, the power of great wisdom, the power of great samádhi, the great majestic power, the great power to destroy evils, the great power to subdue devils, the power of the divine eye to see far, the power of the divine ear to hear at distance, the power to know others' thoughts, and the power of universally shining light with which Amida embraces sentient beings. Amida has all these inconceivable powers. How could he not protect persons of the Nembutsu and keep them from hindrances until death? If he could not protect them, what would be the use of his power of compassion? If he could not remove devils' hindrances, what would be the use of his power of wisdom, power of samádhi, majestic power, power to destroy evils, and power to subdue devils? If he could not perceive beforehand and allowed devils to inflict hindrances upon the practitioner, what would be the use of his power of divine eye to see far, power of divine ear to hear at distance, and power to know others' thoughts? The \textit{Contemplation} Sutra states:

\begin{quote}
The rays of light that issue from Amida Buddha's physical characteristics and minor marks illumine all the worlds of the ten quarters, embracing and not forsaking sentient beings of the Nembutsu.
\end{quote}

If one who recites the Nembutsu suffered devils' hindrance at the time of death, what would be the use of his power of universally shining light with which he embraces sentient beings? Moreover, many sutras describe how people of the Nembutsu perceive miraculous signs at the time of death. These are all the Buddha's words. How could you belittle them and say that those signs belong to the devils' sphere of actions? I have thus corrected and cleared the wrong thoughts and doubts. You should awaken the true faith.

\textbf{50} [Yuan-chao] also says (in the \textit{Commentary on the Amida Sutra}):

\begin{quote}
The ultimate teachings of the One Vehicle all point to the Land of Bliss as the last refuge. The Name of Amida's Buddhahood is most distinguished as the embodiment of the perfect virtues of a myriad practices. Amida in his causal state a bodhisattva established the Vows. Holding fast to his aspiration, he accomplished practices. He entertained compassion to save beings for "dust-motes" kalpas. There is no place, even as small as a mustard seed, where he did
not abandon his life for their sake. He embraced and guided all, without exception, with the Six Paramitas of compassion and wisdom. He never failed to respond to the need of the people by giving away his possessions and his own self. When conditions matured, his practices were fulfilled and his virtues were perfected; and thus he all at once perfectly realized the three Buddha-bodies, and the myriad merits manifest themselves in the four characters, \([A\text{-}mi\text{-}da\text{-}butsu]\).

51 He also says:

What is more, our Buddha Amida encompasses beings with his Name. And so, as we hear with the ears and recite it with the lips, boundless exalted merits enter into our hearts and become the seeds of Buddhahood forever; they instantaneously remove heavy karmic evil, which would entail transmigration for a hundred million kalpas, thereby making us realize the highest enlightenment. We truly know that the Name possesses much merit, not little goodness.

52 He also says:

Concerning right mindfulness, when ordinary people are about to die, they have no control over their consciousness. So all kinds of karmic seeds, both good and evil, manifest themselves. Some give rise to wicked thoughts, some wrong views, some loving attachment, and others manifest devilish features of insanity. Do we not say that all of these are caused by inverted thoughts? But those who had previously recited the Buddha's Name had their karmic evil destroyed and karmic hindrances removed. Emitting the fragrance of pure karma within and embraced by the Light of Compassion, they are instantly delivered from sufferings and attain pleasures [of the Pure Land]. A passage of the sutra below urges us to seek birth, because there is such a benefit. [596c]

53 [He also says: in the Commentary on the Contemplation Sutra]

Master Tz’u-yun [or Tsun-shih of T’ien-chu temple] explains:

Only the pure act for birth in the Land of Peace and Provision is the quick way to truth. Therefore, you should practice it. Any one of the four kinds of
Buddhists who seeks to destroy ignorance quickly and remove forever the karmic evils, such as the five gravest offenses and the ten evil acts, both heavy and light, should perform this practice. Those who wish to maintain pure observance of the Mahayana or Hinayana precepts for a long time, attain the Nembutsu-Samadhi, and accomplish the bodhisattva's Paramitas, should learn this method. Those who wish to be free of fear at the time of death, attain peace and comfort of mind and body, see hosts of sages appear and extend their hands to welcome them, so that they may be rid of defiling afflictions for the first time and immediately reach the Stage of Non-retrogression, thereby realizing the non-arising of all dharmas without passing long kalpas -- they should learn this method.

Why do you not follow the Dharma-words of this ancient sage? In the above five sections, I have briefly presented the essentials [of the Contemplation Sutra]. I will not discuss more here. A detailed exposition will be given in the explanatory section.

According to the Catalog of Scriptures compiled in the K'ai-yuan era, there were two translations of this [Contemplation Sutra]. The earlier version has been lost. The one that exists was translated by Kalayashas. The Biography of Monks [compiled in the Liang dynasty] has this note: "Kalayashas is translated as "Time-praise"; he came to the capital in the beginning of the Yuan-chia era of the Sung dynasty, during the reign of Emperor Wen.

54 [He also says: in the Commentary on the Contemplation Sutra]

Tz'u-yun [or Tsun-shih] praises in a hymn:

This is the supreme teaching of all the teachings that fully explain the truth;
This is the highest teaching of all the teachings that lead to the perfect Enlightenment quickly.
[He also says: in the *Commentary on the Contemplation Sutra*]

Tai-chih [or Master Yuan-chao] praises in a hymn:

This is the One Vehicle teaching that leads to perfect Enlightenment quickly;  
It is pure and unadulterated.

Chieh-tu [a disciple of Yuan-chao] of the Vinaya School says:

The Buddha's Name contains practices performed for many kalpas;  
a myriad virtues accumulated by them are manifested in the four-character Name [*A-mi-da-butsu*]. Therefore, anyone who recites it gains no small benefit.

Yung-ch'in [a disciple of Yuan-chao] of the Vinaya school says:

If you recite and contemplate the auspicious Name of the Buddha with your mouth and mind, you will unfailingly be endowed with the immeasurable merits, which he accumulated from his causal state to his Buddhahood.

He also says:

All the Buddhas have realized True Reality after practicing for "dust-mote" kalpas and yet they grasp nothing. Hence, they made formless great vows; they performed excellent practices of no-abode; they realized ungraspable Enlightenment; they dwell in the lands of no-adornment; they manifest transcendent powers of no-transcendent powers; they display eloquent tongues covering the whole universe to preach speechless speech. For this reason, they urge us to accept this [*Amida* *sutra*] in faith. How could we conceive of this or discuss it? In my humble opinion, the inconceivable virtues of the Buddhas are at once comprised in Amida's two kinds of recompensed glorious adornments [i.e., recompensed body and land]. Concerning the practice of holding the Name, the Buddhas (who urge it) should include Amida.

Master Chia-hsiang of the Three-Discourse school says [in his commentary on the *Contemplation Sutra*]:

**Question:** How can the Nembutsu-Samadhi eliminate so much karmic evil?
**Answer:** My interpretation is this: the Buddha possesses immeasurable merits. By being mindful of his immeasurable merits, one can have one's immeasurable karmic evil destroyed.

60 Master Beob-wi of the Consciousness-Only school says [in his commentary on the *Larger Sutra*]:

All Buddhas invest their virtues in their names. To call their names is to glorify [597a] heir virtues. Virtues destroy karmic evil and produce merits. So do the names. If one believes in a Buddha's name, it is certain and without doubt that it produces good and destroys evil. Why should there be any doubt about birth in the Pure Land through recitation of the Name?

61 Fei-hsi of the Zen school says [in his *Discourse on the Nembutsu-Samadhi, the King of Jewels*]

The Nembutsu-Samadhi is the best of all-good. Because it is the foremost of a myriad practices, it is called 'the king of samádhis.'

62 It is stated in the *Collection of Essential Passages Concerning Birth* [fasc. 3]:

(Secondly,) although the acts to be performed by the three groups of aspirants presented in the *Two-fascicle Sutra* [i.e., the *Larger Sutra*] are distinguished into different levels in depth, they have this common element: "single-minded and exclusive mindfulness of the Buddha of Infinite Life." Thirdly, among the Forty-eight Vows Amida made a special vow concerning the Nembutsu teaching, declaring, "If the beings who repeat the Nembutsu even ten times would not be born, may I not attain perfect Enlightenment." Fourthly, the *Contemplation Sutra* states, "For those with extremely heavy karmic evil there is no other way of salvation. They can attain birth in the Land of Utmost Bliss only through recitation of Amida's Name."

63 It is also stated in the same work, fasc. 3:
We should rely on the six kinds of virtue (of the Buddha) presented in the *Sutra on Contemplation of the Mind-base*: 1) the supreme, great field of virtues, 2) the supreme, great benevolence, 3) the most honored of all beings, whether they have no legs, have two legs or many legs, 4) the one who is extremely rare to encounter like an *udumbara* blossom, 5) the only one who appears in the universe of a thousand million worlds, and 6) the one who fully possesses all the worldly and supra-worldly merits. With these six kinds of virtues, the Buddha continuously benefits all sentient beings.

64 With reference to these six kinds of virtues, Master Genshin says:

1. Practice the Nembutsu! All who say "Namo butsu" even once have already attained the Buddhist Path. Hence, I take refuge in and worship the supreme field of virtues.

2. Practice the Nembutsu! The Buddha looks upon sentient beings with compassionate eyes without discrimination, as though each of them were his only child. Hence, I take refuge in and worship the Mother of Greatest Compassion.

3. Practice the Nembutsu! All Great Beings of the ten quarters revere and worship Amida, the Holy One. Hence, I take refuge in and worship the Most Honored One among the beings who have two legs.

4. Practice the Nembutsu! Hearing the Buddha's Name even once is rarer than encountering an *udumbara* blossom. Hence, I take refuge and worship the one most difficult to encounter.

5. Practice the Nembutsu! No two Honored Ones simultaneously appear in the one hundred kotis worlds. Hence, I take refuge and worship the Great Dharma-king who rarely appears in the world.

6. Practice the Nembutsu! The sea of virtues of the Buddha, Dharma and Sangha is of one entity throughout the three periods of time. Hence, I take refuge and worship the Honored One who fully possesses the myriad perfect virtues.
He also says [in the same work, fasc. 1]:

If a robe is perfumed with flowers of a *palijata* tree even for a single day, its fragrance far surpasses the scent perfumed with flowers of *campaka* and *varsika* trees for a thousand years.

He also says [in the same work, fasc. 3]:

It is like a pound of "stone-liquid" transforming a thousand pounds of copper into gold. In the Himalayas grows a herb called "enduring." If a cow eats it, *manda* is produced. If the *shirisa* tree faces the constellation Krittika, it bears fruit. [597b]

The *Collection of Passages Concerning the Nembutsu of the Selected Primal Vow* compiled by Genku states:

*Namo amida butsu*: The fundamental act for the attainment of birth is the Nembutsu.

It also states: If you wish to free yourself from birth-and-death quickly, you should, of the two superior teachings, lay aside the Path of Sages and choose to enter the Pure Land Path. If you wish to enter the Pure Land Path, you should, of the two practices, right and sundry, abandon all sundry practices and choose to rely on the right practices. If you wish to perform the right practices, you should, of the two kinds of acts, right act and auxiliary acts, set aside the auxiliary acts and take up and exclusively practice the Act of Right Assurance. The Act of Right Assurance is to call the Buddha's Name. Recitation of the Name certainly enables one to attain birth, because it is based on the Buddha's Primal Vow.

We now clearly know (from the above quotations) that the Nembutsu is not a self-power practice performed by ordinary people or sages; hence, it is called 'practice not to be transferred (toward the Buddha).’ Mahayana and Hinayana sages as well as people with karmic evil, whether heavy or light, should all equally take refuge in the great treasure-sea of the Selected Primary Vow and attain Buddhahood through the Nembutsu.
Hereupon, the *Commentary on Vasubandhu’s Discourse on the Pure Land* [fasc. 2] states:

> In the Land of Peace and Bliss there is no one who is not born transformed from within the pure flower of Amida Tathāgata’s Enlightenment. (They are so born) by one and the same path of the Nembutsu, and not by other paths.

Thus, those who have received True Practice and Faith have much joy in their minds; hence this state is called 'Stage of Joy.' It is compared to the First Fruit (of Hinayana sage hood), because sages of the First Fruit will not be subject to the twenty-ninth state of existence, even though they become slumberous and indolent. Even more certain of emancipation are multitudes of beings of the ten quarters who rely on this Practice and Faith, for they are embraced and never forsaken. For this reason, this Buddha is called 'Amida.' This (saving activity) is called the Other-Power. Hereupon, the Mahasattva Nargarjuna says [in the Chapter on the Easy Practice], "they immediately enter the Stage of Definite Assurance." Master T’an-luan says [in the *Commentary on Vasubandhu’s Discourse on the Pure Land*], "they join those who are Rightly Established in the Mahayana Path." We should respectfully trust in and exclusively follow this Practice.

We truly know that if it were not for the compassionate father of the virtuous Name, there would be no active cause of birth; if it were not for the compassionate mother of Light, there would be no passive cause of birth. Even if the active and passive causes are united, without the karma-consciousness of Entrusting Heart, one would not reach the Land of Light. The karma-consciousness of True Entrusting Heart is the internal cause, and the father of Name and the mother of Light are the external conditions. When the internal cause and the external condition are united, one realizes the body of truth in the Recompensed Land.

Therefore, Master (Shan-tao) says [in the *Hymns of Birth in the Pure Land*], "With the Light and the Name, Amida embraces and benefits all beings throughout the ten quarters, guiding them to realize Faith." (Fa-chao) says [in the *Shorter Pure Land Liturgy of Nembutsu Chant in Five Stages*], "Attaining Buddhahood through the Nembutsu is the true teaching of the Way." (Shan-tao) also says [in the *Commentary on Non-meditative Practice*], "The true teaching of the Way is difficult to encounter." We should discern this well.
Concerning the Practice and Faith transferred to us in the phase of Going Forth, there is, in Practice, "one utterance" in Practice and there is, in Faith, "one thought" in Faith. The one utterance of Practice reveals, with regard to the number of Nembutsu recitations, the ultimate point of the Easy Practice of the selected Primal Vow.

Therefore, the Larger Sutra [fasc. 2] states:

The Buddha said to Maitreya, "If there are people who hear the Name of that Buddha, rejoice so greatly as to dance, and call it even once, then you should know that they have gained great benefit [597c] by receiving the unsurpassed virtue."

Master of Kuang-ming temple (i.e., Shan-tao) says "down to one utterance" [in the Commentary on Non-meditative Good], also "one pronouncing, one utterance" [in the Hymns of Birth in the Pure Land] and also "exclusive thought, exclusive utterance" [in the Commentary on Non-meditative Good].

Master Chih-sheng quotes in the Collection of Liturgies from Scriptures, fasc. 2, [a passage from Shan-tao's Hymns of Birth in the Pure Land]:

Deep mind is True Entrusting Heart. It is to accept in faith that one's own self is an ordinary person full of evil passions, with few roots of good, and unable to escape from this "burning house," transmigrating in the three worlds. It is also to believe, without a single thought of doubt, that Amida's original, universal Vow enables anyone who calls the Name even down to ten times or hears it, to attain birth without fail. Hence, it is called "deep mind."

In the Larger Sutra the term "even (down to)" is used; in the Commentary on Non-meditative Good "down to" is used. These terms are different but their meaning is the same. Further, "even (down to)" can include both once and many times. "Great benefit" is contrasted to small benefit. "Unsurpassed" is contrasted to surpass able. We truly know that the unsurpassed great benefit is the true benefit of the One Vehicle. Small benefit which is surpass able refers to the eighty-four thousand provisional teaching-gates.

"Exclusive thought" in the Commentary on Non-meditative Good means single-mindedness; it describes the absence of "double-mindedness." "Exclusive utterance" is the single practice; it
describes the absence of a second practice.

"Calling the Name once" transmitted to Maitreya is the single pronouncing. The single pronouncing is the single utterance. The single utterance is the single practice. The single practice is the right practice. The right practice is the right act. The right act is the right mindfulness. The right mindfulness is the Nembutsu; this is *Namu amida butsu*.

78 When we board the ship of the Vow of Great Compassion and sail out on the vast sea of Light, the breezes of the utmost virtue blow softly and the waves of our karmic evil turn into merit. Thus, the darkness of ignorance being broken, we shall quickly reach the Land of Infinite Light and realize Great Nirvana. Then we shall act in accord with the virtue of Samantabhadra. This we should know.

79 The *Collection of Passages Concerning Birth in the Land of Peace and Bliss*, fasc. 1, states:

"Repeating the Nembutsu ten times" is simply an indication of the number by the Sage [Shakyamuni]. When one repeatedly utters the Nembutsu and focuses one's thought on it, without being distracted by other matters, one's act for attainment of birth is accomplished, and nothing more is needed. Why do we take the trouble of keeping count of the number of our Nembutsu recitation? There is another piece of advice: those who practice the Nembutsu for a long time should, in many cases, follow this way. The beginners, however, could very well count the number, for there is a scriptural reference to support this.

80 These passages quoted above are clear testimony that reveals the True Practice. We truly know that this is (the practice of) the selected Primal Vow, the supreme practice that is unequaled and rare, the right Dharma that is all-complete and truly excellent, and the ultimate and unhindered Great Practice. This we should know.

81 The Other-Power is the Tathāgata’s Primal Vow-Power. [598a]
"The Primal Vow-Power" shows that great Bodhisattvas with their bodies of Dharma always dwell in Samadhi and yet manifest various bodies, employ various transcendent powers and proclaim various teachings through their Primal Vow-Power; it is like an asuras harp, which spontaneously produces music even though there is nobody to play it. This is called the feature of the fifth merit in the Stage of Teaching Others.

"Bodhisattvas accomplish the practice for their own benefit with the four gates in the phase of 'going in.' One should realize the implication of this." 'To accomplish' means to fulfill for one's own benefit. 'One should realize the implication of this' means that one should realize that by accomplishing self-benefit one is able to benefit others; one cannot benefit others without first benefiting oneself."

"Through the fifth gate of 'going out' Bodhisattvas accomplish the practice of benefiting others by transference of merit. One should realize the implication of this." 'To accomplish' means to attain the frutitive Stage of Teaching Others as the result of transference of merit to them. One can benefit others, whether in the stage of cause or in the stage of effect. 'One should realize the implication of this' means that one should realize that by accomplishing self-benefit one is able to benefit others; one cannot benefit oneself without being able to benefit others.

"Thus, by performing the five mindful practices, Bodhisattvas accomplish both self-benefit and benefit for others, and so quickly attain anuttara-samyak-sambodhi." The Dharma, which the Buddha has attained, is called 'anuttara-samyak-sambodhi,' and because he has realized this 'bodhi,' he is called Buddha. 'Quickly attain anuttara-samyak-sambodhi' means 'quickly become a Buddha.' 'A' means 'not'; '(n)uttara,' 'above'; 'samyak,' 'right'; 'sam,' 'universal'; and 'bodhi,' 'way.' Together, the term is translated 'the highest, right and universal Way.' 'Highest' means that this Way (Bodhi) has probed the principle of reality to the depths and thoroughly investigated the ultimate nature of existence and so there is nothing that surpasses it. The reason for its being so (i.e., the highest) is that it is 'right.' 'Right' implies sacred wisdom. Because it knows all that exists just as they are, this is called 'right wisdom.' Because the
ultimate nature of existence is non-characteristic, the sacred wisdom is unknowing. 'Universal' has two meanings: 1) the sacred mind universally knows all things; 2) the Dharma-body universally pervades the Dharma-realm; neither body nor mind is limited in pervasiveness. 'Way' means the path of non-hindrance. The [Garland] Sutra says, "The Unhindered Ones throughout the ten quarters transcend birth-and-death by the single path." 'The single path' means the single path of non-hindrance. 'Non-hindrance' implies the realization that birth-and-death is identical with Nirvana; such a teaching of insight into non-duality has the characteristic of non-hindrance.

**Question:** For what reason is it said, 'quickly attain anuttara-samyak-sambodhi'.

**Answer:** Because, as it is said in the Discourse [on the Pure Land], "by performing the Five Mindful Practices, (Bodhisattvas) accomplish both self-benefit and benefit for others." When we deeply probe into the roots, we find that Amida Tathágata provides the predominant condition. [598b] There is a difference between 'benefit by the Other' and 'benefit for others.' Speaking from the Buddha's viewpoint, one should say 'benefit for others.' Speaking from the viewpoint of sentient beings, one should say 'benefit by the Other.' Since the Buddha's Power is under discussion, one should say, 'benefit for others.' One should realize this implication. Generally speaking, attainment of birth in the Pure Land and the various practices performed by the bodhisattvas and human and heavenly beings living there are brought about by the Primal Vow-Power of Amida Tathágata. The reason for saying so is that if it were not for the Buddha's Power, the Forty-eight Vows would have been made in vain. Now I [i.e., T’an-luan] will select three vows to demonstrate the import of this.

The [Eighteenth] Vow says:

If, when I attain Buddhahood, the sentient beings of the lands of the ten quarters who sincerely and joyfully entrust themselves to me, desire to be born in my land, and call my Name even ten times, should not be born there, may I not attain perfect Enlightenment. Excluded, however, are those who commit the five gravest offenses and abuse the right Dharma.
Due to the Buddha's Vow-Power, one attains birth by invoking the Name ten times. Since one attains birth, one is freed from transmigration in the three worlds. Since one thus attains deliverance from transmigration, this is the first proof for the rapid attainment [of\textit{anuttara-samyak-sambodhi}].

The [Eleventh] Vow says

If, when I attain Buddhahood, humans and gods in my land should not dwell in the Definitely Assured Stage and unfailingly reach Nirvana, may I not attain perfect Enlightenment.

Due to the Buddha's Vow-Power, one dwells in the Rightly Established Stage. Because one dwells in the Rightly Established Stage, one unfailingly reaches Nirvana. Once one has reached Nirvana, there will be no more suffering of transmigration. Hence, this is the second proof for the rapid attainment [of \textit{anuttara-samyak-sambodhi}].

The [Twenty-second] Vow says:

If, when I attain Buddhahood, Bodhisattvas in the Buddha-lands of the other quarters who visit my land should not ultimately and unfailingly reach the Stage of Becoming a Buddha after One More Life, may I not attain perfect Bodhi. Excepted are those who wish to teach and guide sentient beings in accordance with their original vows. For they wear the armor of great vows, accumulate merits, deliver all beings from birth-and-death, visit Buddha-lands to perform the Bodhisattva practices, make offerings to Buddhas, Tathágatas, throughout the ten quarters, enlighten countless sentient beings as numerous as the sands of the River Ganges, and establish them in the highest, perfect Enlightenment. Such bodhisattvas transcend the course of practice of the ordinary bodhisattva, manifest the practices of all the bodhisattva stages, and cultivate the virtues of Samantabhadra.
Due to the Buddha's Vow-Power, one transcends the practices of the ordinary bodhisattva, manifests the practices of all the bodhisattva stages, and cultivates the virtues of Samantabhadra. Since one thus transcends the ordinary bodhisattva stages, this is the third proof for the rapid attainment [of anuttara-samyak-sambodhi].

When we ponder on the Other-Power, it is the predominant condition [for our rapid attainment of anuttara-samyak-sambodhi]. How can it be otherwise?

I will present another illustration to show the distinctive features of 'self-power' and 'other-power.' One observes the precepts from fear of the three painful states of existence. Because one observes the precepts, one is able to practice meditation. By practicing meditation, one cultivates transcendent powers. With the transcendent powers one is able to travel freely in the four continents. This is called 'self-power.' Though a man of little virtue who rides a donkey cannot fly, if he were to follow the procession of a wheel-turning monarch, he could fly in the air and travel in the four continents without any hindrance. [598c] This is called 'other-power.' How foolish are scholars of these latter days! Having heard that the Other-Power is to be trusted in, they should accept it in faith, and should not entertain restricted views.

83 Master Yuan-chao says [in the Commentary on the Contemplation Sutra]:

The way of destroying delusion and realizing True Suchness in this world, which is based on one's self-power, is expounded in various Mahayana and Hinayana sutras. The way of realizing Enlightenment after going to another land and hearing the Dharma there is necessarily dependent on the Other-Power and so birth in the Pure Land is taught. Although these two ways are different, they are both means for making us realize our minds (as they are).

84 Concerning 'the ocean of the One-Vehicle' [which appears in Shan-tao's Essential Meaning of the Contemplation Sutra], the One Vehicle is the Great Vehicle. The Great Vehicle is the Buddha Vehicle. To attain the One Vehicle is to attain the highest, perfect Enlightenment. The highest Enlightenment is the realm of Nirvana. The realm of Nirvana is the ultimate Dharma-body. To attain the ultimate Dharma-body is to reach the ultimate end of the One
Vehicle. There is no other Tathágata; there is no other Dharma-body. Tathágata is Dharma-body. To reach the ultimate end of the One Vehicle is to realize the boundless and endless (Enlightenment). In the One Vehicle there are no Two Vehicles or Three Vehicles. The Two Vehicles and Three Vehicles are established to lead us into the One Vehicle. The One Vehicle is the vehicle of the highest truth. It refers solely to the One Buddha Vehicle of the Vow.

85 The *Nirvana Sutra* ["Chapter on the Sacred Practice"] states:

Men of good families, True Reality is called the Great Vehicle; the principles outside the Great Vehicle are not called True Reality. Men of good families, True Reality is the Buddha's exposition, not the devil's. If this is the devil's exposition, not the Buddha's, it cannot be called True Reality. Men of good families, True Reality is the Single Way, pure and non-dual.

86 This sutra also states [in the "Chapter on Virtuous King"]:  

How do bodhisattvas follow One Reality? They provide means of leading all sentient beings to the Single Way. The Single Way is the Great Vehicle. Buddhas and bodhisattvas divide it into three for the sake of sentient beings. Thus bodhisattvas follow it without running counter to it.

87 This sutra also states [in the "Chapter on Expounding the Dharma like a Lion"]:  

Men of good families, there are two kinds of ‘ultimate’: the ultimate which glorifies Buddhahood and the ultimate which has been consummated; the former is the ultimate in the worldly realm, and the latter is the ultimate in the supra-worldly realm. The ultimate, which glorifies Buddhahood, refers to the Six Paramitas; the ultimate, which has been consummated, refers to the One Vehicle, which all sentient beings will realize. The One Vehicle is called Buddha-nature. For this reason, I proclaim that each and every sentient being possesses Buddha-nature. Every one of the sentient beings possesses the One Vehicle. Because it is covered over by their ignorance, they cannot see it.

88 This sutra also states [in the same chapter]:
Why do you expound 'one'? Because all sentient beings, without exception, possess the One Vehicle. Why do you expound 'not one'? Because the Three Vehicles are established. Why do you expound 'neither one nor not one'? Because (the absolute truth) is beyond the scope of reckoning. [599a]

89 The *Garland Sutra* ["Chapter on Clarification of Difficulties"] states:

The Dharma realized by Manjushri (i.e., Nembutsu-Samadhi) is eternally unchangeable;
To the Dharma-king (Amida) belongs only this one Dharma.
All the (Buddhas) who have realized the principle of un-hindered-ness
Have liberated themselves from birth-and-death by the Single Path.

The bodies of all the Buddhas
Are only one Dharma-body;
They possess one and the same mind and wisdom;
Their (ten) powers and (four) fearlessnesses are equally the same.

90 Now, we see that the spiritual attainment described above is all the great benefit to be gained in the Pure Land of Peace and Provision and the inconceivable, ultimate virtues actualized by the Buddha's Vow.

91 'Ocean' (in the 'ocean of the One Vehicle') has the following meaning: all the river waters of sundry practices and sundry good acts which ordinary people and sages have performed since the beginning-less past and the ocean waters of evil passions, and numerous as the sands of the River Ganges, of those who have committed the five gravest offenses, those who have abused the Dharma, and those devoid of good roots, are transformed into the waters of the great treasure-ocean of a myriad of true virtues, as numerous as the sands of the River Ganges, actualized by the Great Compassion and Wisdom of the Primal Vow. Hence, the metaphor of 'ocean.' Here we truly know the import of a sutra, which states, "The ice of evil passions melts and becomes the water of virtue."

The ocean of the Vow does not keep the corpses of sundry good acts performed by the middle and the lower sages of the Two
Vehicles (without changing them into Amida's virtues). How then does it keep the corpses of false and perverted good acts and poisoned and mixed thoughts of humans and gods?

92 Thus, the Larger Sutra [fasc. 2] states:

Neither Sravakas nor bodhisattvas are able to know
The Sage's Mind exhaustively;
They are like those who are born blind
And yet wish to guide others.

The ocean of the Tathágata’s wisdom
Is deep, vast and boundless.
Even sages of the Hinayana cannot fathom it;
Only the Buddha clearly knows it.

93 It is stated [in T'an-luan's Commentary on Vasubandhu's] Discourse on the Pure Land, fasc. 2:

What is the accomplishment of the glorious merit of the unfailing sustenance? It is said in the verse:

When I observe the Buddha's Primal Vow-Power,
I find that those who meet with it do not pass by in vain.
They are enabled to gain quickly
The great sea of the treasure of merit.

Accomplishment of the merit of the unfailing sustenance is said of Amida Tathágata’s Primal Vow-Power. I shall briefly present some (examples of) vain provisions, which do not support (one's life) and, thereby, reveal the meaning of the 'unfailing sustenance.'...

'Unfailing sustenance' results from the original Forty-eight Vows of Dharmakara Bodhisattva and is maintained by the transcendent Power that Amida Tathágata can freely use now. His Vows gave rise to the Power; the Power fulfills the Vows. The Vows have not been established in vain; the Power is not empty. The Power and Vows work in complete harmony, and not in the least discordant with each other; hence, 'accomplishment.'
It is also stated [fasc. 1]:

The word 'ocean' describes the Buddha's omniscience; it is limitless in depth and breadth, and does not hold impure merits of the Two Vehicles; it does not retain the 'corpses' of the middling and inferior (Vehicle); hence, this is compared to an ocean. For this reason, it is stated:

Heavenly and human beings, unshakable (in their spiritual attainments),
Are born out of the ocean of pure wisdom.

'Unshakable' means that the heavenly and human beings in his land have acquired the root of Mahayana, and so their minds cannot be shaken by anything.

The Master of Kuang-ming temple [i.e., Shan-tao] says [in the Essential Meaning of the Contemplation Sutra]:

I rely on the Bodhisattvas-pitaka,
The teaching for sudden emancipation, the ocean of the One Vehicle.

He also says [in the Hymns on the Pratyutpanna Samadhi]:

In the Ornament Sutra the teaching for gradual emancipation is expounded.
One reaches the Stage of Non-retrogression after performing practices for ten thousand kalpas.
The teachings expounded in the Contemplation Sutra [599b] and the Amida Sutra
Are those for sudden emancipation, the Bodhi[sattva]-pitaka.

In the Collection of Passages on the Land of Bliss, Tsung-hsiao says:

One grain of elixir transforms iron into gold; one word of truth transforms evil karma into good.

Now, when I compare the Nembutsu with various good practices in regard to the teaching, there are the following comparisons:
1. easy over against difficult;
2. sudden over against gradual;
3. crosswise over against vertical;
4. transcending over against traversing;
5. harmonizing with (the Vow) over against discordant;
6. great over against small;
7. much over against little;
8. superior over against inferior;
9. intimate over against alien;
10. near over against far;
11. deep over against shallow;
12. strong over against weak;
13. weighty over against light;
14. wide over against narrow;
15. unadulterated over against mixed;
16. short way over against long way;
17. quick over against slow;
18. special over against ordinary;
19. un-retrogressive over against retrogressive;
20. straightforwardly expounded over against casually expounded;
21. recitation of the Name over against meditative and non-meditative practices;
22. exhaustive exposition of truth over against partial exposition of truth;
23. encouraged (by Buddhas) over against not encouraged;
24. uninterrupted over against interrupted;
25. unceasing over against ceasing;
26. continuing over against not continuing;
27. unsurpassed over against surpass able;
28. highest of the high over against lowest of the low;
29. inconceivable over against conceivable;
30. virtue of the fruitive stage over against causal practices;
31. exposition on the Buddha's own initiative over against exposition on others' request;
32. not to be transferred (to the Buddha) over against to be transferred 33. protected (by Buddhas) over against not protected;
34. verified (by Buddhas) over against not verified;
35. praised (by Buddhas) over against not praised;
36. transmitted (to Maitreya) over against not transmitted;
37. perfect teaching over against imperfect teaching;
38. practicable over against not practicable;
39. selected (by Amida) over against not selected;
40. true over against temporary;
41. not seeing the Buddha's passing into Nirvana over against seeing the Buddha's passing into Nirvana;
42. beneficial even in the age of Extinct Dharma over against not beneficial;
43. (practice of) the Other-Power over against (practices of) self-power;
44. conforming to the Vow over against not conforming to the Vow;
45. (practitioners are) embraced over against not embraced;
46. leading to the Definitely Assured State over against not leading to it;
47. leading to birth in the Recompensed Land over against leading to birth in the Transformed Land.

Such are the comparisons. However, when I ponder on the ocean of the One Vehicle of the Primal Vow, I see that it is the all-merging, perfect, unhindered, absolute, and unparalleled teaching which brings about the quickest effect.

99 Next, making a comparison with regard to practitioners, there are the following comparisons:

1. entrusting over against doubting;
2. good over against evil;
3. right over against perverse;
4. right over against wrong;
5. truthful over against vain;
6. true over against false;
7. pure over against defiled;
8. wise over against dull;
9. quick over against slow;
10. noble over against mean;
11. bright over against dark.

Such are the comparisons. However, when I ponder on the receptacle of the ocean of the One Vehicle, I see that the Diamond-hard Faith is the absolute and unparalleled receptacle.

100 Respectfully I proclaim to all aspirants of birth: The ocean of the One Vehicle of the Universal Vow is consummated with the utmost virtues which are unhindered, boundless, supreme, wonderful, ineffable, unspeakable and inconceivable. Why is it so? Because the Vow is inconceivable.
The Compassionate Vow is: 1. like the great space because its excellent virtues are vast and boundless; 2. like a great vehicle because it carries all ordinary people and sages; 3. like a wonderful lotus flower because it cannot be defiled by anything in the world; 4. like Sudarshana, the king of medicine, because it cures all illnesses of evil passions; 5. like a sharp sword because it cuts the armor of all arrogance; 6. like the banner of the Heroic General [Indra] because it subdues all the devils’ armies; 7. like a sharp saw because it cuts all the trees of ignorance; 8. like a sharp ax because it chops down all the branches of suffering; 9. like a good teacher because it frees us from all the bondages of birth-and-death; 10. like a leader because it shows the essential way of emancipation for ordinary people; 11. like a spring because it inexhaustibly supplies the water of wisdom; 12. like a lotus flower because it is not defiled by any karmic evil; 13. like a swift wind because it disperses the fog of all hindrances; 14. like sweet nectar because it completely possesses the taste of all virtues; 15. like the right path because it leads multitudes of beings into the castle of wisdom; 16. like a magnet because it draws beings to the cause (of birth) of the Primal Vow; 17. like the Jambunada gold because it outshines all the good acts of the conditioned world; 18. like a hidden storehouse because it stores all the teachings of the Buddhas; 19. like the great earth because all the Tathágatas of the past, present and future throughout the ten quarters arise from it; 20. like the light of the sun because it dispels the darkness of ignorance of all ordinary people awakens Joyful Faith in them; 21. like a king because it surpasses (the teachings of) all sages of the Upper Vehicles [i.e., Buddhas]; 22. like a strict father because it guides all ordinary people and sages; 23. like a compassionate mother because it nurtures the true cause of birth in the Recompenses Land; 24. like a nursing mother because it fosters and protects all the aspirants of birth, whether good or evil; 25. like the great earth because it sustains all those who are to be born; 26. like the great floods because it washes off all the grime of evil passions; 27. like the great fire because it burns the firewood of all the wrong views; and 28. like the great wind because it goes everywhere in the world without hindrance.

[The compassionate Vow] leads beings out of the three worlds, the castle of fetters, and closes the gates of the twenty-five states of existence. It enables us to reach the True Recompensed Land, and distinguishes the right path from wrong ways. It dries up the ocean of ignorance and carries us into the ocean of the Vow. It enables us to board the ship of Omniscience and to float in the ocean of multitudes of beings. It fills the store of merit and wisdom, and opens the store of Expediency. Indeed, we should reverently receive and uphold it.

Now, with regard to the Vows, there are (Vows of) True Practice and Faith, and also there are (Vows of) expedient practice and faith. The Vow of True Practice is the Vow that the Name shall be praised by all the Buddhas. The Vow
of True Faith is the Vow of Sincere Mind and Joyful Faith. These are the Practice and Faith of the Selected Primal Vow. Those who receive and practice them are all good and evil beings, the sages of the Mahayana and Hinayana, and ordinary, foolish people. The kind of birth they attain is the Inconceivable Birth. The Buddha and the Land are the Recompensed Buddha and the Recompensed Land. All of this is the accomplishment of the Inconceivable Vow, the ocean of One Reality, or True Suchness. This is the ultimate teaching of the Larger Sutra on the Buddha of Infinite Life and the right purport of the true teaching of the Other-Power.

Hereupon, acknowledging the Buddha's benevolence and wishing to repay it, I have perused the Master (T'an-luan's) Commentary and found the following passage:

A Bodhisattva submits to the Buddha just as a dutiful son obeys his parents or a loyal subject serves his sovereign, [600a] whether king or queen, with actions not motivated by his desires but always in compliance with the wishes of the sovereign. Since he is appreciative of the Buddha's benevolence and eager to repay it, he naturally addresses the Buddha first. Furthermore, he has taken weighty vows. Without the support of the Tathágata's supernatural power, how could he fulfill them? Here (Vasubandhu) entreats the Buddha to support him with his supernatural power, and so respectfully addresses the Buddha.

Thus, having taken refuge in the true words of the Great Sage and perused the commentaries of the great masters, I have realized the profundity of the Buddha's benevolence. And so I have composed the Hymn of True Faith and Nembutsu.

102

I take refuge in the Tathágata of Infinite Life;
I take refuge in the Buddha of Inconceivable Light.
Bodhisattva Dharmakara, in his causal stage,
Was in the presence of Lokeshvararaja, the Enlightened One.

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

Dharmakara chose and cherished his Vows after contemplation for five kalpas. He further vowed that his Name would be heard throughout the ten quarters. Amida sends forth universally the immeasurable and boundless Light, The unimpeded, incomparable and majestically flaming Light,
The pure Light, the Light of joy, the Light of wisdom, The unceasing, inconceivable and ineffable Light, And the Light outshining the sun and the moon; with these Lights he illumines the innumerable worlds. All sentient beings are shone upon by his Light.

The Name promised in the Primal Vow is the Act of Right Assurance; The Vow of Sincere Mind and Joyful Faith provides the cause of our Birth; To attain the state next to the Buddha and realize Great Nirvana Is due to the fulfillment of the Vow which assures our unfailing attainment of Nirvana.

The reason for the Buddha's appearance in the world Is, above all, to expound the Primal Vow of Amida, wide and deep as the ocean. All beings in the evil age of the five defilements Should believe in the truth of the Buddha's words.

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

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

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

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

The Nembutsu promised in the Primal Vow of Amida Buddha
Is difficult for evil people who have wrong views and are arrogant
To receive and retain with Joyful Faith;
Of all difficulties nothing is more difficult than that.

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

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

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

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

The Bodhisattva Vasubandhu composed a discourse, in which he professed
That he took refuge in the Tathágata of Unhindered Light;
In accordance with the sutras he expounded the true merits,
And clarified that the Great Vow enables us to leap over [samsara] crosswise.

He revealed One Mind in order to emancipate multitudes of beings
Through Amida's transference of merits by the Power of his Primal Vow.
Upon entering the Great Treasure-Ocean of Merits,
We will unfailingly join the Great Assemblage

Upon reaching the World of Lotus-store,
We will realize True Suchness and attain Dharma-body.
Then, playing in the forests of evil passions, we will display supernatural powers;
Entering samsaric states, we will manifest accommodative and transformed bodies to save beings.

Master T'an-luan was venerated by the King of Liang;
Facing toward his place, the king worshiped him as a Bodhisattva.
When Bodhiruci, the Tripitaka master, gave him a Pure Land scripture,
T'an-luan burned his Taoist texts and took refuge in the Land of Bliss.

He wrote a commentary on the Bodhisattva Vasubandhu's discourse, explaining in it:
Both the cause and the effect of our birth in the Land of Recompense come from Amida's Vows;
The karmic energy for our birth and returning to this world originates from the Other-Power.
The cause of attaining the Stage of Right Assurance is Faith alone.

When Faith is awakened in the minds of deluded and defiled ordinary people,
They are made aware that birth-and-death is Nirvana.
After they unfailingly reach the Land of Infinite Light,
They will save sentient beings everywhere, so says T'an-luan.
Master Tao-ch’o determined that by the Path of Sages
Enlightenment is difficult to attain
And clearly presented the Pure Land Path as the only way of salvation.
He disparaged practicing thousands of acts of merits with self-power
And urged us to recite exclusively the Name of perfect virtues.

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

Shan-tao alone clarified the true intent of the Buddha Shakyamuni.
Out of compassion for those who practice meditative or non-meditative good as well as those who commit the five gravest offenses and the ten evil acts,
He clarified that the Light and the Name are the cause and condition for birth in the Pure Land.
When aspirants are led into the Sea of Great Wisdom of the Primal Vow,
They are endowed with Faith, indestructible as diamond;
After attaining a single thought of Joy of oneness with Amida,
They obtain the three insights, as did Vaidehi,
And will realize the Eternal Bliss of Dharma-nature.

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

Those with extremely heavy evil karma should only recite the Buddha’s Name.
Although I, too, am in Amida’s embracing Light, [600c]
My evil passions hinder me from perceiving it,
But his Light of Great Compassion never ceases to shine on me untiringly.

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

Transmigration in the house of samsara
Is definitely caused by the fault of doubt; Quick entry into the Capital of Tranquility and No-action Is necessarily realized by Faith.

The bodhisattvas and masters of this school who spread the teaching of the Pure Land sutras Have saved innumerable beings, totally defiled and evil. People of the present age, both priests and laymen, should with one accord Only accept in faith the teachings of those virtuous masters.

(Here ends the Hymn, 120 lines in 60 verses)

**Chapter On The True Faith**

**Chapter 3: A Collection of Passages Revealing the True Faith of the Pure Land Way**

**Preface**

When I deeply contemplate matters, I find that attainment of Joyful Faith arises from the Tathágata [Amida's] Mind in which the Primal Vow was selected and embraced and that the awakening of True Faith occurs through the compassionate skillful means of the Great Sage [Shakyamuni]. However, the monks and laypeople of this latter age and the masters of these days, drowned in the concepts of "one's self-nature [being identical with Buddha]" and "[all that exists is in] one's mind," despise true Enlightenment in the Pure Land; or, deluded by self-power efforts to perform meditative and non-meditative good practices, they are ignorant of the Diamond-hard True Faith. Now I, Gutoku shaku Shinran, have sincerely accepted the true teaching of the Buddhas and Tathágatas and
studied the doctrines of the discourse-writers and commentators. Guided by the beneficial revelation of the Three Sutras, I will elucidate, in particular, the “flower-passage” concerning the One Mind [by Vasubandhu]. In so doing, I will present some questions and later give answers to them by citing clear evidence. Being appreciative of the Buddha's deep benevolence, I am not afraid of people's abuse. Those who aspire for the Pure Land and those who abhor this defiled world are requested not to slander this teaching, even though they may choose to accept or discard it.

The Vow of Sincere Mind and Joyful Faith

The people who dwell in the Rightly Established Stage

Chapter 3: A Collection of Passages
Revealing the True Faith of the Pure Land Way

1 When I reverently contemplate the Merit-transference in the Phase of Going, I find that there is Great Faith. Great Faith is the divine prescription for the long life without death, the wonderful way of aspiring for the Pure Land and abhorring the defiled world, the Direct Mind endowed through the selected Primal Vow, the deep and vast Joyful Faith endowed by the Other-Power, the True Faith that is indestructible like diamond, the Pure Faith for easy attainment of birth in the Pure Land which, nevertheless, very few gain, the One Mind embraced and protected by the Light that issues forth from Amida's Mind, the great entrusting heart that is rare and supreme, the quick way that is difficult for the people of the world to trust, the true cause of realizing Great Nirvana, the White Path that leads to quick attainment of all-complete virtues, and the ocean of Faith that contains True Suchness and One Reality.

This Mind arises from the Vow of attaining birth through the Nembutsu. This great Vow is called the selected Primal Vow, also called the Vow of the Three Minds of the Primal Vow, the Vow of Sincere Mind and Joyful Faith, and the Vow of Faith for our Going Forth [to the Pure Land].
For the ordinary, foolish people who are eternally sunk in Samsara, the multitudes of beings who are floundering in transmigration, the supreme wonderful fruition of Enlightenment is not difficult to realize; it is the true Joyful Faith that is, indeed, difficult to realize. Why is it so? Because it is attained through the endowment of the Tathāgata’s Power; because it arises through the Power of Great Compassion and Universal Wisdom. If one, by rare chance, obtains Pure Faith, this Mind is not perverted, nor vain. On attaining Faith, sentient beings of extremely heavy and grave karmic evil will have Great Joy in their hearts and receive protection and loving care of all the Holy Ones.

2 The passage of the Vow of Sincere Mind and Joyful Faith in the Larger Sutra, fasc. 1, states:

If, when I attain Buddhahood, sentient beings in the lands of the ten quarters who sincerely and joyfully entrust themselves to me, desire to be born in my land, and call my Name even ten times, should not be born there, may I not attain perfect Enlightenment. Excluded, however, are those who commit the five gravest offenses and abuse the right Dharma.

3 The Teaching Assembly of the Tathāgata of Infinite Life [fasc. 1] states:

If, when I realize the highest Enlightenment, living beings in other Buddha-lands who, having heard my Name, transfer all their roots of good to my land in every thought, desire to be born in my land and call my Name even ten times, should not be born there, may I not attain Enlightenment. Excepted, however, are those who commit evil acts that would consign them to Avichi hell and those who abuse the right Dharma and the sages.

4 The passage on the fulfillment of the Primal Vow [i.e., the Eighteenth Vow] in the Larger Sutra [fasc. 2] states:

All sentient beings, having heard his Name, rejoice in faith and are mindful of him even once through his sincere transference of merit to them. Aspiring to be born in his land, they attain birth and dwell in the Stage of Non-retrogression. But excluded are those who commit the five gravest offenses and abuse the right Dharma. [601b]
The Teaching Assembly of the Tathágata of Infinite Life, translated by Bodhiruci, [fasc. 2] states:

All living beings in the Buddha-lands of other quarters, having heard the Name of the Tathágata of Immeasurable Life, awaken a single thought of Pure Faith, rejoice, and enjoy Amida's transference of all the roots of good to them, thereby wishing to be born in the Land of Immeasurable Life. All will then be born there in accordance with their wishes, attain the Stage of Non-retrogression and, finally, realize the highest, perfect Enlightenment. Excluded, however, are those who commit the five evil acts that would consign them to Avichi hell, abuse the right Dharma and slander the sages.

The Larger Sutra, fasc. 2, also states:

If you have heard the Dharma and do not forget it
Buddha regard and revere it with great joy,
You are my good friend. For this reason,
You should awaken aspiration for birth.

The Teaching Assembly of the Tathágata of Infinite Life, fasc. 2] also states:

Such people are those endowed with great, majestic virtue. They will be born in the land consummated with the distinguished virtues of the boundless Buddha-Dharma.

It is stated in the same sutra [fasc. 2]:

The Tathágata’s virtues are only known to Buddhas;
The World-Honored One alone can reveal them.
They are beyond the knowledge of devas, Nagas and yakshas,
And the Two Vehicles themselves have no words to describe them.

Even if all living beings became Buddhas,
With their practices surpassing Samantabhadra, and having reached the Other Shore,
Sought to expound one Buddha's virtues
During the period of many inconceivable kalpas,
And even passing the period in which they enter Nirvana,
They would not be able to fathom the Buddha's supreme wisdom.
For this reason - if those who have faith, hear much teaching
And receive favors of good friends,
Are able to hear this profound and excellent Dharma -
They will receive protection and the loving care of all the Holy Ones.
Only Buddhas thoroughly know the Tathágata’s supreme wisdom
And the meanings of the teaching that reach throughout space.

Hence, having heard much about [Amida's] Land of Various Wisdos,
Accept in faith the true words of my teaching.
It is extremely difficult to receive human existence;
It is also difficult to encounter a Tathágata’s appearance in the world.

It is rare indeed to obtain the wisdom of Faith.
Hence, the practitioner should pursue the Way with diligence.
If you hear this wonderful Dharma,
All the Buddhas will always rejoice.

9 The Commentary on Vasubandhu’s Discourse on the Pure Land [fasc. 2] states:

[Vasubandhu says,] "One calls the Name of that Tathágata which describes his Light, the embodiment of Wisdom, wishing to practice in accord with the Dharma, that is, in agreement with the significance of the Name."

"To call the Name of that Tathágata" means to call the Name of the Tathágata of Unhindered Light; "...describes his Light, the embodiment of Wisdom of that Tathágata" shows that the Buddha's light is the embodiment of wisdom. This light is unhindered in illuminating all the worlds of the ten quarters. Its activity of removing the darkness of ignorance of all the sentient beings throughout the universe cannot be compared with the light of the sun and moon or with the brilliance of the [mani-]gem, which can only remove the darkness of a hollow or cave. Next, "wishing to practice in accord with the Dharma, that is, in agreement with the significance of the Name" shows that the Name of the Tathágata of Unhindered Light is capable of removing the darkness of ignorance of sentient beings and of fulfilling all their aspirations.

If, however, he who calls the Name and remembers [Amida] finds ignorance still persisting in his mind and, consequently, his aspiration has not yet been fulfilled, [601c] it is because he has not
been practicing in accord with the Dharma, that is, in agreement with the significance of the Name. What is the cause of not practicing in accord with the Dharma, or in agreement with the significance of the Name?

It is due to failure to understand that the Tathāgata [Amida] is a Body of Reality and also a Body for the Sake of Living Beings.

It is also due to the three incorrect faiths:

1. one's faith is not sincere; at one time it exists and at another it does not;
2. one's faith is not single-hearted, because it is not firm;
3. one's faith is not constant, because it is mingled with other thoughts.

These three are mutually related, each becoming the cause of the next. Thus, because one's faith is not sincere, it is not firm. Because it is not firm, one's thought [of Amida] is not continuous. Because one's thought is not continuous, one cannot attain firm faith. Because one's faith is not firm, it is not sincere. If these incorrect faiths are eliminated, one can practice in accord with the Dharma. Therefore, the author of the Discourse says at the beginning, "with singleness of mind, I ..."

It is stated in the Hymns in Praise of Amida Buddha [composed by Master T'an-luan]:

All beings, having heard Amida's virtuous Name,  
Attain Joyful Faith, rejoice in what they hear  
And call his Name even once. The Person of sincerity, Amida,  
Endows merits to them. All who aspire for birth attain birth.  
Excluded are those who commit the five gravest offenses and abuse the right Dharma.  
Hence, I prostrate myself to worship him and aspire to be born there.

11 It is stated in the Commentary on the Contemplation Sutra [Commentary on the Meditative Practice] by the Master of Kuang-ming temple:

"According to one's wishes" [in the passage which says "Amida's transcendent powers are unhindered; they work everywhere according to one's wishes"] has two meanings: first, Amida saves
all sentient beings according to their wishes; second, according to Amida's wishes, he observes beings to be saved with the five kinds of perfectly illuminating eyes and, freely exercising the six transcendent powers, approaches them, in body and mind, simultaneously in a single moment; he then enlightens them with deeds, words, and mental acts. The ways in which he benefits them are different for each individual.

12 He also says [in the Commentary on the Introductory Part]:

The beings in the six realms equally experience the five defilements and the five kinds of suffering, and none can ever be free of them. They are constantly tormented by them. Anyone who does not receive such afflictions cannot be counted among ordinary beings.

13 He also says [in the Commentary on the Non-meditative Practice]:

The passage from "What are the three?" to "will unfailingly be born in his land" distinguishes the Three Minds and clarifies that they are the true cause of birth. This passage is divided into two: 1. it is shown that the World-Honored One has profound and unfathomable intent in endowing benefits to the beings in accordance with their capacities, and so unless the Buddha himself raised the question and revealed the point, there would be no way of understanding his intent; 2. it is shown that the Tathágata himself gave the answer, explaining the Three Minds mentioned before.

The [Contemplation] Sutra states: "First, Sincere Mind (shijoshin): 'shi' means true, and 'jo' means sincere. [Amida] here wishes to show clearly that both the understanding and the practice to be cultivated by all sentient beings with their bodily, verbal and mental acts ought to come from what [Amida] accomplished with a true and sincere mind. We should not show outwardly how wise, virtuous, and diligent we are, because, inwardly, we entertain deceitfulness. Being possessed of all kinds of greed, anger, falsity, and crookedness, we can hardly remove our evil nature; we are indeed like snakes or scorpions. Even if we perform practices with bodily, verbal, and mental acts, they are called [602a] 'poisoned good acts' and also 'false practices'; they are not called 'true practices.' Practices performed in such a state of mind are all called 'poisoned good acts,' even if we painstakingly strive, mind and
body, throughout the twelve periods of the day and night, running up and down, as if to sweep fire off our heads. It is completely wrong to seek birth in that Buddha's Pure Land by transferring [the merits of] such poisoned practices there. Why? The reason is that, when Amida Buddha in his causal state performed Bodhisattva practices, all his acts with body, mouth and mind were done with a true and sincere mind at all times, even every thought-moment or instant.

What is given [by Amida] constitutes what we aspire for. All that is given is true. There are two kinds of true and sincere mind: one is of self-benefit and the other is of Other's benefit... Regarding the three kinds of acts, which are not good, we should discard what Amida discarded with a true and sincere mind. When we practice three kinds of good acts, we should practice what Amida practiced with a true and sincere mind. Thus we uphold [Amida's] true mind, whether dealing with matters inside or outside, bright or dark. Hence, 'Sincere Mind.'

"Second, Deep Mind": Deep Mind is the deep entrusting faith. It has two aspects: one is to believe deeply and unwaveringly that we are actually ordinary beings of karmic evil subject to birth-and-death, ever sinking and ever transmigrating in Samsara since innumerable kalpas ago without a chance to escape from it. Second is to believe deeply and unwaveringly that the Forty-eight Vows of Amida Buddha enfold sentient beings, enabling them to board his Vow-Power and attain birth. It is also to believe deeply and unwaveringly that Shakyamuni Buddha expounds in the Contemplation Sutra the three meritorious acts, the nine grades of aspirants, and the two kinds of good, that is, meditative and non-meditative, and also bears witness to and praises the primary and dependent rewards, that is, the Buddha's body and land, with a view to making people aspire for the Pure Land. It is also to believe deeply and unwaveringly that in the Amida Sutra Buddhas of the ten quarters, as numerous as the sands of the Ganges, present themselves as witnesses and urge all ordinary beings to attain birth unfailingly.

May all practitioners of Deep Mind single-heartedly accept the Buddha's words and hold fast to the [Nembutsu] practice, even at the risk of their lives. Let them give up what the Buddha urges them to give up and practice what he urges them to practice. Let them leave what he urges them to leave. To practice this way is
called 'to follow the Buddha's teaching and to accord with the Buddha's intent.' This is also called 'to accord with the Buddha's Vows.' Such practitioners are called 'true disciples of the Buddha.'

Further, all practitioners who perform practices with deep faith in accordance with this [Contemplation] Sutra are able to guide other beings without mistakes. Why? Because the Buddha is a person of perfect Compassion, and also his words are words of truth. Those who haven't yet attained Buddhahood are imperfect in wisdom and practice; being still in the stage of training, they have not yet completely removed their evil passions and their residues, and so their aspiration for Buddhahood has not yet been fulfilled. Such sages and ordinary people cannot decisively know the Buddhas' intent however hard they may try to fathom it. Even if they are able to understand it correctly, they ought to request the Buddha's testimony as the final authority. If one's interpretation agrees with the Buddha's intent, [602b] he approves of it, saying, "So it is, so it is." If not, he will say, "Your exposition is incorrect." The words not approved by the Buddha are unauthentic, without benefit and useless, but those approved by the Buddha are in accord with his right teaching. Every word and exposition of the Buddha is the right teaching, the right principle, the right practice, the right understanding, the right act and the right wisdom. How could any bodhisattva, human or Deva determine whether the Buddha's words are correct or not, no matter how long or short they may be? The Buddha's exposition is the teaching that fully clarifies truth, while expositions by bodhisattvas or others are all teachings that do not fully clarify the truth. We should reflect on this.

For this reason, I now respectfully urge all the aspirants for the Pure Land who have close ties with us to accept the Buddha's words with deep faith and hold them with utmost care. Do not believe in the unauthentic teachings of bodhisattvas and others, and do not entertain doubts and delusions, or confuse yourself, thereby losing the great benefit of attaining birth....

Shakyamuni urges all ordinary beings to practice the Nembutsu with singleness of heart throughout their lives; when they die, they will definitely be born in that land. All the Buddhas of the ten quarters, without exception, praise and recommend this teaching and give testimony to its truth. Why do they do so? Because their great compassion arises from the same essence. One Buddha's teaching is the teachings of all the Buddhas; all the Buddhas'
teachings are one Buddha's teaching. Hence, it is stated in the Amida Sutra:

Shakyamuni praises various adornments of the Land of Utmost Bliss, and also urges ordinary people to focus their thoughts on Amida's Name for one to seven days, thus leading them to attain birth there.

It is further stated in the passage that follows:

In each of the ten quarters there are Buddhas as numerous as the sands of the Ganges, who praise Shakyamuni for appearing in the evil age of the five defilements, in the evil world when evil beings, wrong views, evil passions, evil acts and disbeliefs prevail, glorifying Amida's Name and urging sentient beings to call it, so that they unfailingly attain birth.

This is the testimony. Further, the Buddhas of the ten quarters, fearing that sentient beings might not accept the teaching of one Buddha, Shakyamuni, extended their tongues with one accord and covered with them the whole universe containing a billion worlds; they then spoke the following true and sincere words:

Sentient beings, you should accept in faith Shakyamuni's teaching, his words of praise, and his testimony. All ordinary people, regardless of the amount of their karmic evil and merit or of the length of time of their practice, should single-mindedly concentrate on Amida's Name, even up to the end of their lives of a hundred years and down to one to seven days. There is no doubt that they will unfailingly attain birth.

Thus, one Buddha's teaching is testified to by all the Buddhas. This is called 'establishing faith in the persons [i.e., Buddhas].'...

Next, the right practice is again divided into two: first, one concentrates on Amida's Name with singleness of heart, being mindful of it every moment, whether one is walking, standing, sitting or lying down, and regardless of the length of time of one's practice; this is called [602c] "the Act of Right Assurance" because it is in accord with the Buddha's [Eighteenth] Vow. [Second,] if one
performs acts, such as worshiping and reciting sutras, this is called "Auxiliary Acts." All good acts other than these two kinds of acts are called "Sundry Practices."... They are called "loose and mixed practices." Deep Mind is so called for the above reasons.

"Third, Mind of Aspiring for Birth by Merit-transference": Those who wish to attain birth by making aspiration and transferring merit should, without fail, be definitely sure to make use of [Amida's] aspiration to transfer his merit [to the sentient beings] with true and sincere mind and so dwell in the thought of attaining birth. Since this mind of deep entrusting is [indestructible] like diamond, it is not shaken or destroyed by people of other views, other teachings, different understandings or different practices. You should firmly and resolutely hold [to the Vow] with singleness of heart and take the Path straightforwardly, without heeding remarks of others. For, if you are indecisive as to whether to go forward or if you retreat and look back apprehensively, you will stray from the Path and fail to gain the great benefit of birth in the Pure Land.

**Question:** People of wrong and miscellaneous practices with different understandings and pursuits may come up to you and confuse you by putting forward troublesome questions and declaring, "You will not attain birth." Or they may say, "To all beings, whether ordinary people or sages, you, sentient beings, have, from distant kalpas ago up to this present life, committed the ten evil acts, the five gravest offenses, and the four serious transgressions, also abused the Dharma, destroyed the seed of Buddhahood, violated the precepts, destroyed the right view, and so forth; yet, you have not been able to eliminate this evil karma. Such evil karma will bind you to the evil realms in the three worlds. How is it possible that by performing meritorious deeds and practicing the Nembutsu only for one life-time, you reach the undefiled land of no-birth and attain the Stage of Non-retrogression forever?"

**Answer:** The teachings and practices taught by the Buddhas are more numerous than the number of particles or sand-grains. Favorable conditions for realizing enlightenment that fit the propensities of people are diverse. To give an illustration, in the experience of people of the world, they do not doubt what they see with their eyes: light disperses darkness, space enfolds, the earth bears and nurtures, water moistens and grows, and fire ripens and
destroys. These are relative things that can be observed with the eye. They are distinct in a myriad ways. In how much more multifarious ways does the inconceivable power of the Buddha Dharma not benefit us?

To go out from one [Dharma-]gate is to go out from a gate of evil passions; to enter one [Dharma-]gate is to enter a gate of emancipation-wisdom. Thus, we should undertake any practice in accordance with given conditions and seek emancipation. Why do you disturb me with a practice, which is not the essential practice suitable to my condition? What I like to hold on to is the practice suitable to my conditions; it is not what you seek. What you like to hold is the practice suitable to your conditions, which is not what I seek. By performing practices in accordance with each person's desire, one can without fail quickly attain emancipation.

Practitioners, you should know that if you wish to gain knowledge of the Way, you can learn, as you please, all about ordinary beings and sages, even about the Buddha's fruition. But if you wish to undertake practice, never fail to follow the method of practice [603a] suitable to your conditions. For you will gain much benefit by making a small effort.

I wish to say to all aspirants for birth: I will now present a parable for the practitioners in order to protect their Faith and to guard it against attacks by those who have wrong, perverted and unauthentic views. What is the parable?

Suppose a man is traveling a hundred thousand li toward the west. On the way, he suddenly comes upon two rivers: one is a river of fire that extends southward, and the other is a river of water that extends northward. The two rivers are each a hundred paces wide and unfathomably deep, extending endlessly to the north and south. Where they meet, there is a white path, four or five inches wide. This path is a hundred paces long from the east bank to the west. The waves of the water splash and the flames of the fire burn the path. The waves and flames alternate without ceasing.

This traveler has already journeyed far into the open plain where there is no one to be found. Suddenly, there appear many bandits and vicious beasts. Seeing him alone, they approach competing with each other to kill him. Afraid of death, he at once runs to the west. When he suddenly sees this great river, he says to himself,
"This river extends endlessly to the south and to the north. I see a white path in the middle, but it is extremely narrow. Although the two banks are close to each other, how can I get across? Undoubtedly, I shall die this day. When I turn round to return, I see bandits and vicious beasts coming closer and closer. If I try to run toward the south or north, I see vicious beasts and poisonous insects vie with each other to attack me. If I seek the path to the west, I will certainly fall into one of the two rivers of water and fire.

His horror at this moment is beyond expression. So he thinks to himself, "If I turn back now, I shall die; if I stay, I shall die; if I go forward, I shall die, too. Since I cannot escape death in any way, I would rather follow this path. Because there is a path, it must be possible to cross the rivers."

When this thought occurs to him, he suddenly hears a voice from the eastern bank urging him, "Take this path with firm resolution. There is no danger of death. If you stay there, you will die." Again, he hears another voice from the western bank calling to him, "Come at once single-heartedly with right mindfulness. I will protect you. Do not fear that you may fall into the calamities of water or fire." Since the traveler hears this voice urging him from the bank and the calling from the other, he resolutely, body and soul, takes the path and proceeds at once without doubt or apprehension.

As he takes a step or two, he hears the voices of the bandits on the eastern bank, "Come back! That path is treacherous. You cannot cross it. Undoubtedly, you are sure to die. We have no evil intentions in pursuing you." Though hearing the calling voices, this person does not even look back. As he proceeds straight on this path with singleness of heart, he, in no time, reaches the western bank and is now free from all danger. There he meets his good friend, and his joy knows no end. This is the parable. [603b]

The meaning of the parable is as follows. 'The eastern bank' is the burning house of this Saha world. 'The western bank' is the Treasure Country of Utmost Bliss. 'Bandits and vicious beasts calling with feigned friendship' refer to sentient beings' six sense-organs, six consciousnesses, six sense-bases, five aggregates, and four elements. 'The open plain where there is no one to be found' refers to always mixing with evil friends without having a chance to meet a true good teacher. 'The two rivers of water and fire' describes
sentient beings' greed and lust, which are like water and their anger and hatred, which are like fire. 'The white path in the middle, four or five inches wide' shows that a pure aspiration for birth arises from within sentient beings' evil passions of greed and anger. Since greed and anger are intense, they are compared to the water and fire. Since good mind is faint, it is compared to a white path. Further, 'waves always splash the path' describes that greed always arises and defiles one's good mind. 'Flames always burn the path' shows that anger and hatred burn the Dharma-treasure of virtue. 'This man at once takes the path westward' shows that he, at once, proceeds westward by turning aside various practices. 'Hearing a voice from the eastern bank urging him to proceed, he immediately takes the path to the west' shows that even though Shakyamuni is already dead and people cannot see him, his teaching still exists which can be followed; the teaching is compared to the voice. 'As he takes a step or two, bandits call him to return' shows that people of different understandings, different practices and wrong views confuse him with their false views, saying, "You will commit evil karma and fall back from the Path." 'There is a man on the western bank calling to him' refers to the purport of Amida's Vow. "In no time he reaches the western bank and rejoices at seeing his good friend" shows that the sentient beings who have long been sinking in the state of birth-and-death, transmigrating from the eternal past and being deluded and bound by their own karma, from which they cannot set themselves free, are now urged by Shakyamuni to proceed to the west and also summoned by Amida's Compassion; faithfully following the wishes of the two sages, they take the path of Vow-Power with constant mindfulness while unafraid of the two rivers of water and fire; after their death, they will be born in his land, where they will see the Buddha with boundless joy.

Since all the practitioners always have this understanding and thought in performing practices in three modes of action, whether walking, standing, sitting, and lying down, regardless of time, whether day or night, we call such a state of mind 'Mind of Aspiring for Birth by Merit-transference.' Also Merit-transference [lit. turn and face toward] means that after we have been born in that land, we awaken Great Compassion, with which we turn toward and enter birth-and-death to teach and guide sentient beings. This is also called 'Merit-transference.'

If one possesses the three minds, there is no practice that will not be accomplished. It does not stand to reason that even though one
already has aspiration and practice, one cannot attain birth. It is to be noted that these three minds also apply to meditative goods.

[603c]

14 [Shan-tao] also says [in the Hymns on the Pratyutpanna Samadhi]:

Reverently I say to all my fellow practitioners for Pure Land birth: You should be deeply grateful. Shakyamuni Tathāgata is truly our compassionate father and mother. He awakens the unsurpassed Faith in us by various means.

15 The Newly Compiled Catalog of Scriptures in Chen-yuan Era, fasc. 11, states:

The Collection of Liturgical Passages from Various Sutras, two fasc., compiled by Chih-sheng, monk of the West Ch'ung-fu temple during the T'ang dynasty. By the Imperial order, dated 23rd day of the 10th month, 15th year of Chen-yuan [800 A.D.], it was newly included in the Tripitaka. When Chih-sheng compiled the first fascicle of the liturgies from various sutras, he quoted the hymns for the midday chant from Shan-tao's Hymns of Birth in the Pure Land in presenting the liturgy for the Contemplation Sutra. The second fascicle bears the title, "Collected by Bhiksu Shan-tao."

In the important passages from the Collection of Liturgical Passages it is stated:

Second is Deep Mind. It is true entrusting heart. We realize that we are ordinary beings full of evil passions, with little stock of good, subject to transmigration in the three worlds and unable to escape from this burning house. We also realize, without so much as a thought of doubt, that the original universal Vow of Amida definitely enables those who recite the Name even ten times or hear it to attain birth. For this reason, this mind is called "Deep Mind."...

Those who have heard
The Name of Amida Buddha,
Rejoicing as they attain a single thought of Faith,
Will all be born in that land.
It is stated in the *Collection of Essential Passages Concerning Birth* [fasc. 1]:

We read in the "Chapter on Entrance into the Dharma-realm" [of the *Garland Sutra*]:

If a man obtains a medicine that renders him indestructible, his enemies and adversaries will not be able to find the opportunity to harm him. So it is with bodhisattvas and Mahasattvas. If they obtain the Dharma-medicine for securing the indestructible Bodhi-mind, no evil passions, Maras, or adversaries will be able to destroy them. Again, if a man obtains a mani-gem from the ocean and makes it his ornament, he will not be drowned in deep waters. Likewise, if [bodhisattvas] obtain the mani-gem of Bodhi-mind, they will not be drowned in the sea of birth-and-death. It is also like the adamant, which does not decay even if immersed in water for a hundred thousand kalpas. Bodhi-mind will not perish or become damaged even if it is submerged in the karma of evil passions in birth-and-death for immeasurable kalpas.

It is also stated in the same work [*Collection of Essential Passages Concerning Birth*, fasc. 2]:

Even though I am in Amida's embrace, my evil passions obstruct my sight and so I cannot see [the Light]; however, Great Compassion always shines on me untiringly.

Thus, there is nothing, whether Practice or Faith, that has not been transferred to us by Amida Tathāgata out of his pure Vow-Mind. It is not that there is no cause [for birth] or that there is a cause other than this [endowed Practice and Faith]. This we should remember.

*Question:* In the Primal Vow, the Tathāgata already made the Vow of Sincere Mind, Joyful Faith and Desire for Birth. Why does the author of the *Discourse* [Vasubandhu] profess 'One Mind'?

*Answer:* In order to make ignorant sentient beings understand more easily,
Amida Tathágata made [the Vow of] Three Minds, but the true cause of Nirvana is only Faith. For this reason, it seems that the author of the Discourse puts the three together into one.

20 When I consider the literal meaning of the Three Minds, the three should be one. The reason is as follows: with regard to Sincere Mind (shishin), shi means true, real and sincere; shin means seed and fruit. With regard to Joyful Faith (shingyo), shin means true, real, sincere, full, utmost, accomplished, function, heavy, discerning, test, expounding, and loyal; gyo means desire, aspiration, appreciation, rejoiceing, delight, joy, gladness and happiness. With regard to Desire for Birth (yokusho), yoku means vow, aspiration, awakening and realization; sho means accomplishing, making, doing and raising.

We clearly realize as follows. Sincere Mind is the mind of true, real and genuine [wisdom] and of the seed [of Buddhahood]; hence, it is not mixed with doubt. Joyful Faith is the mind full of truth and sincerity, the mind of utmost trust and reverence, the mind of clear perception [of Amida's saving power] and steadfastness, the mind of aspiration and appreciation, and the mind of joy and delight; hence, it is not mixed with doubt. Desire for Birth is the mind of certainty and assurance [of Birth], the desire to become [Buddha] and perform [altruistic activities], and the mind endowed by the Great Compassion; hence, it is not mixed with doubt.

When I consider the meanings of the characters that make up the words for the Three Minds, they are the true mind not mixed with delusion and the sincere mind not mixed with falsehood. I truly realize that it is the mind not mixed with doubt; hence, it is called Joyful Faith. Joyful Faith is One Mind; One Mind is True Entrusting Heart. For this reason, the author of the Discourse professed 'One Mind' at the outset [of the Discourse]. This we should realize.

21 Question: From the above explanation of the meanings of the characters, I see that it is reasonable for the author of the Discourse to put together the three into one. But how can we conceive of the Vow of Three Minds, which Amida Tathágata made for the benefit of ignorant and evil sentient beings?

Answer: The Buddha’s intention is difficult to fathom. I will, however, venture to guess his intent. From the beginning-less past to this day and up to this moment, the ocean-like multitudes of beings have been defiled and evil and lack the pure mind; they have been deluded and deceitful and lack the true mind. Consequently, when the Tathágata awakened compassion for all suffering ocean-like sentient beings and performed the Bodhisattva practices for inconceivable, millions and billions of kalpas, his practices in three modes of action have never
been impure or untrue, even for a thought-moment or an instant. With the pure and true mind, the Tathágata perfected the complete, all-merging, unhindered, inconceivable, indescribable and ineffable supreme virtue. The Tathágata endows his Sincere Mind to the ocean-like multitudes of beings who are full of evil passions, evil karma and perverted wisdom. This is the true mind endowed by him to benefit such beings; hence, it is not mixed with doubt. The basis for the Sincere Mind is the Sacred Name of the supreme virtue.

22 Thus, we read in the Larger Sutra [fasc. 1]:

He [Dharmakara Bodhisattva] did not harbor any thought of greed, hatred or cruelty; nor did he allow any ideas of greed, hatred or cruelty to arise. He was unattached to any form, sound, smell, taste, touch or idea. Possessed of the power to persevere, he did not avoid undergoing various afflictions. Having little desire for his own sake, he knew contentment. Without any impure thought, enmity, or stupidity, he dwelt continually in tranquil samádhi. His wisdom was un-obstructible, and his mind free of falsehood and deceitfulness. With an expression of tenderness in his face and with kindness in his speech, he spoke to others in consonance with their inner thoughts. Courageous and diligent, strong-willed and untiring, he devoted himself solely to the pursuit of the pure Dharma, thereby benefiting multitude of beings. He revered the Three Treasures, respected his teachers and elders, and thus adorned his practices with a great store of merits. By so doing, he enabled sentient beings to partake of them.

23 The Teaching Assembly of the Tathágata of Infinite Life [fasc. 1] states:

The Buddha said to Ánanda, "Monk Dharmakara widely proclaimed those great, universal Vows before Lokeshvararaja Tathágata, devas, humans, devils, Brahma, mendicants and brahmanas. He has already fulfilled the Vows. Having proclaimed those Vows, which were rare in the world, he dwelt firmly in the realization of them. He obtained various merits, with which he adorned the pure Buddha-land of extensive majestic virtues. The time that elapsed while he performed such Bodhisattva practices was immeasurable, innumerable, inconceivable, unequaled kotis of nayutas of a hundred thousand kalpas. During that time, he did not harbor in his mind even a thought of greed, anger or stupidity, nor conceive any idea of greed, cruelty or anger. He never had an attached thought of form, sound, smell, taste or
touch. For all sentient beings he embraced a feeling of love and respect as he would do for his relatives. He had a docile and friendly nature and never resorted to violence. He always maintained a heart of compassion and patience for all living beings, and was never deceitful or flattering. Neither was he indolent or slothful. He encouraged them all to do good acts and led them to seek the pure Dharma. For the sake of all beings, he courageously remained steadfast in his resolve and never retreated. Thus he benefited the whole world and fulfilled his great Vows.

24 The Master of Kuang-ming temple [Shan-tao] says [in the Commentary on the Non-meditative Good]:

It is completely wrong to seek birth in that Buddha's Pure Land by transferring [the merits of] such poisoned practices there. Why? The reason is that, when Amida Buddha in his causal state performed Bodhisattva practices, all his acts with body, mouth and mind were done with a true and sincere mind at all times, even every thought-moment or instant. What is given [by Amida] constitutes what we aspire for. All that is given is true. There are two kinds of true and sincere mind: one is of self-benefit and the other is of Other's benefit.... Regarding the three kinds of acts, which are not good, we should discard what Amida [604c] discarded with the true and sincere mind. When we practice three kinds of good acts, we should practice what Amida practiced with the true and sincere mind. Thus we uphold [Amida's] true mind, whether dealing with matters inside or outside, bright or dark. Hence, 'Sincere Mind.'

25 From the true words of the Great Sage and the explanation of the master of this school [Shan-tao], we truly realize that this mind is the true and sincere mind endowed by the Buddha for our benefit through the inconceivable, indescribable, and ineffable ocean-like Vow of great wisdom of the One Vehicle. This is called 'Sincere Mind.'

26 In the above passage we find the word "true."

Concerning "true," the Nirvana Sutra ["Chapter on Sacred Practice"] states:

True Reality is the single path of purity that does not presuppose a second path. True Reality is none other than Tathāgata; Tathāgata
is none other than True Reality. True Reality is none other than space; space is none other than True reality. True Reality is none other than Buddha-nature; Buddha-nature is none other than True Reality.

27[Shan-tao's] Commentary [on the Non-meditative Good] says 'whether dealing with matters inside or outside, bright or dark.'

In the phrase 'inside or outside,' 'inside' refers to the supra-worldly, and 'outside' refers to the worldly. In the phrase 'bright or dark,' 'bright' refers to the supra-worldly, and 'dark' refers to the worldly. Further, 'bright' refers to wisdom, and 'dark' refers to ignorance. The Nirvana Sutra ["Chapter on Sacred Practice"] states:

Darkness refers to the worldly, and brightness refers to the supra-worldly. Darkness refers to ignorance, and brightness refers to wisdom.

28Next, Joyful Faith is the ocean-like Faith, complete, all merging and unhindered, consummated with the Tathágata’s Great Compassion. For this reason, it is not mixed with doubt. Hence, it is called Joyful Faith. The basis for Joyful Faith is Sincere Mind endowed by the Other-Power. However, all the ocean-like multitudinous beings, since the beginning-less past, have been transmigrating in the sea of ignorance, drowning in the cycle of existences, bound to the cycle of sufferings and lacking pure Joyful Faith. As a natural consequence, they have no true Joyful Faith. Therefore, it is difficult for them to meet the highest virtue and attain the supreme Pure Faith. All the ordinary beings with limited capacities, at all times, constantly defile their good minds with greed and lust, and their anger and hatred continuously burn the treasure of Dharma. Even if they act and practice as busily as though they were sweeping fire off their heads, their practices are called 'poisoned and mixed good' and also 'deluded and deceitful practices,' and are not called 'true acts.' To seek to attain birth in the Land of Infinite Light with these deluded and poisoned good would be in vain. Why? Because when the Tathágata [Amida] performed the Bodhisattva practices, his three modes of action [605a] were not mingled with doubt, even for a thought-moment or an instant. Because this mind [Joyful Faith] is the Tathágata’s Great Compassion, it necessarily becomes the decisive cause of birth in the Land of Recompense. The Tathágata, out of compassion toward the suffering multitudes, endowed the unhindered, great
Pure Faith to the ocean of beings. This is called True Entrusting Heart of the Other-Power.

29 The passage of fulfillment of the Vow of Faith, the Primal Vow, reads as follows:

All sentient beings, having heard his Name, rejoice in faith and remember him even once.

30 It is also stated [in the Teaching Assembly of the Tathāgata of Infinite Life, fasc. 2]:

All sentient beings in the Buddha-lands of other quarters, having heard the Name of the Tathāgata of Immeasurable Life, awaken a single thought of Pure Faith and rejoice.

31 We read in the Nirvana Sutra ["Chapter on Lion's Roar"]:  

Men of good families, Great Compassion and Great Benevolence are called Buddha-nature. Why? Because Great Compassion and Great Benevolence accompany Bodhisattvas just as shadows accompany things. All sentient beings will ultimately and surely realize Great Compassion and Great Benevolence. For this reason, I make this remark, "All sentient beings have Buddha-nature." Great Compassion and Great Benevolence are called Buddha-nature. Buddha-nature is called Tathāgata. Great joy and great abandonment are called Buddha-nature. Why? Because if Bodhisattvas and Mahasattvas were unable to abandon the twenty-five states of existence, they would not be able to realize the highest, perfect Enlightenment. Because all sentient beings ultimately and surely attain it, I say that, "All sentient beings have Buddha-nature." Great joy and great abandonment are Buddha-nature. Buddha-nature is Tathāgata. Buddha-nature is Great Faith. Why? Because it is through Faith that Bodhisattvas and Mahasattvas have accomplished all the Paramitas, from charity to wisdom. Because all sentient beings ultimately and surely attain Great Faith, I say, "All sentient beings have Buddha-nature." Great Faith is Buddha-nature. Buddha-nature is Tathāgata. Buddha-nature is called "the One Child Stage" [or the stage in which one regards each being as one's only child]. Why? Because through attainment of "the One Child Stage" Bodhisattvas have realized the mind of equality with regard to all sentient beings. Because all sentient beings ultimately and surely attain "the One Child Stage," I
make this remark, "All sentient beings have Buddha-nature." "The One Child Stage" is Buddha-nature. Buddha-nature is Tathágata.

32 It is also stated [in the Nirvana Sutra, "Chapter on Kashyapa"]:  

Concerning the highest, perfect Enlightenment, Faith is its cause. Although there are innumerable causes of Enlightenment, if Faith is presented, they are exhaustively included in it.

33 It is also stated [in the Nirvana Sutra, "Chapter on Kashyapa"]:  

There are two kinds of faith: one arises from hearing, and the other arises from thinking. This person's faith arises from hearing, and not from thinking. Hence, it is called incomplete faith. There are another two kinds of faith: [605b] one is to believe that there is the path to Enlightenment, and the other is to believe that there are people who have attained it. This person only believes that there is the path to Enlightenment, but does not believe that there are people who have attained it. This type of faith is called incomplete faith.

34 It is stated in the Garland Sutra [Chin version, "Chapter on Entry into the Dharma-realm"]:  

Those who hear this teaching, rejoice  
In faith and entertain no doubt  
Quickly realize the supreme Enlightenment;  
They are equal to the Tathágatas.

35 It is also stated in the same sutra [T'ang version]:  

The Tathágata removes forever  
The doubts of all sentient beings,  
And fulfills their aspirations  
According to their wishes.

36 The same sutra also states [T'ang version, "Chapter on Bhadrashri Bodhisattva"]:  

Faith is the source of Enlightenment and the mother of virtues;  
It nurtures all kinds of goodness.
It cuts asunder the net of doubt and leads us away from the currents of desires;
It opens up the Highest Path of Nirvana.

Faith is free of defiled mind and is pure;
It destroys arrogance, and is the root of reverence;
It is the foremost treasure of the Dharma-store;
It is the hand of purity that receives various practices.

Faith performs charity ungrudgingly;
Faith rejoicingly enters the Buddha Dharma;
Faith augments wisdom and virtues;
Faith unfailingly reaches the stage of the Tathāgata.

Faith purifies the sense organs and makes them clear and sharp;
Since Faith-power is firm and strong, nothing can destroy it.
Faith destroys forever the root of evil passions;
Faith solely leads one to the Buddha's virtues.

Faith knows no attachment to the external world;
It keeps away all adverse conditions and secures safety from them;
Faith transcends Maras' paths
And manifests the Highest Path of Emancipation.

Faith keeps the seeds of virtues from decay;
Faith grows the tree of Enlightenment.
Faith augments the supreme wisdom.
Faith causes all Buddhas to appear.

For this reason, if we explain in the order of performing practices,
Joyful Faith is foremost, which is extremely difficult to attain...

If one constantly reveres Buddhas with faith,
That means making great offerings.
If one makes great offerings,
One comes to accept in faith the Buddha's inconceivable working.

If one constantly upholds the sacred Dharma,
One never tires of hearing the Buddha's teaching;
If one never tires of hearing the Buddha's teaching,
One comes to accept in faith the Dharma's inconceivable power.
If one reverently serves pure monks,
One's faith will not retrogress;
If one attains un-retrogressive faith,
One's power of faith becomes immovable.

If one gains power of faith, which is immovable,
One's sense-organs become pure, clear and sharp;
If one attains pure, clear and sharp sense-organs,
One can approach good teachers.

If one approaches good teachers,
One can practice and accumulate extensive good;
If one practices and accumulates extensive good,
One acquires the great causal power [for attaining Buddhahood].

If one acquires the great causal power,
One gains the excellent, decisive understanding;
If one gains the excellent, decisive understanding,
One is protected by all the Buddhas.

If one is protected by all the Buddhas,
One awakens Bodhi-mind;
If one awakens Bodhi-mind,
One learns the virtues of the Buddhas.

If [605c] one cultivates the virtues of the Buddhas,
One is born in the Tathāgata's family;
If one is born in the Tathāgata's family,
One learns skillful means.

If one learns skillful means,
One can attain pure Joyful Faith;
If one attains pure Joyful Faith,
One realizes the distinguished supreme mind.

If one realizes the distinguished supreme mind,
One constantly practices the Paramitas;
If one constantly practices the Paramitas,
One accomplishes the Mahayana.

If one accomplishes the Mahayana,
One makes offerings to Buddhas as prescribed;
If one makes offerings to Buddhas as prescribed,  
One's mindfulness of the Buddha does not waver.

If one's mindfulness of the Buddha does not waver,  
One always sees innumerable Buddhas;  
If one always sees innumerable Buddhas,  
One sees that the quintessence of the Tathāgata is eternal.

If one sees that the quintessence of the Tathāgata is eternal,  
One realizes that the Dharma is imperishable;  
If one realizes that the Dharma is imperishable,  
One attains un-hindered-ness in acquiring intellectual powers.

If one attains unhindered intellectual powers,  
One can expound boundless teachings;  
If one expounds boundless teachings,  
One saves sentient beings with compassionate heart.

If one saves sentient beings with compassionate heart,  
One attains the firm mind of great compassion;  
If one attains the firm mind of great compassion,  
One rejoices in the profound Dharma.

If one rejoices in the profound Dharma,  
One gets rid of the faults of the conditioned world;  
If one gets rid of the faults of the conditioned world,  
One frees oneself from arrogance and unruliness.

If one frees oneself from arrogance and unruliness,  
One can benefit all beings without exception;  
If one benefits all beings without exception,  
One can dwell in birth-and-death without feeling fatigued.

37 It is stated in the Commentary on Vasubandhu's Discourse on the Pure Land [fasc. 2]:

...one can practice in accord with the Dharma. Therefore, the author of the Discourse says at the beginning, 'with singleness of mind, I...'

38 It is also stated in the same work [fasc. 2]:

At the beginning of a sutra it is stated, 'Thus [I have heard]'; this indicates the faith with which one is led [into the teaching].
Next, Desire for Birth is the Tathágata’s command calling the multitudes of beings to come to his land. The basis for Desire for Birth is true Joyful Faith. Indeed, this is not a desire of transferring one’s merit with self-power as harbored by Mahayanists or Hinayanists, ordinary people or sages, or those who practice meditative or non-meditative good. Hence, it is called 'not transferring one's merit.'

The sentient beings of the worlds, which are as numerous as dust particles, floundering in the sea of evil passions and drifting in the sea of birth-and-death, lack the true desire or pure desire to transfer one's merit. For this reason, the Tathágata [Amida] awakened compassion for all suffering beings and performed the Bodhisattva practices; at that time, all his practices in the three modes of action were carried out, every thought-moment or instant, with transference of his merit as his principal concern, thereby fulfilling the Great Compassion, and so, to the ocean of all beings he endows true Desire for Birth that benefits others. [606a] Desire for Birth is [the Buddha's] desire to transfer his merit [to sentient beings]. This is the mind of Great Compassion; hence, it is not mingled with doubt.

Here, we find that the passage of fulfillment of the Vow with regard to Desire for Birth is stated in the [Larger] Sutra, fasc. 2, as follows:

... through [Amida's] sincere transference of merit. Aspiring to be born in his land, they attain birth and dwell in the Stage of Non-retrogression. But excluded are those who have committed the five gravest offenses and abused the right Dharma.

It is also stated [in the Teaching Assembly of the Tathágata of Infinite Life, fasc. 2]:

If they appreciate [Amida's] transference of the roots of goodness and aspire to be born in the Land of Immeasurable Life, they shall all be born there according to their wishes and attain the Stage of Non-retrogression and, finally, realize the highest, perfect Enlightenment. Excluded, however, are those who commit the five evil acts that would consign them to Avichi hell, abuse the right Dharma and slander the sages.

[Commentary on] Vasubandhu's Discourse on the Pure Land [fasc. 2] states:
"How does one transfer [the merit of the practice]? One does not forsake suffering beings, but constantly resolves in one's mind to perfect the Great Compassion by putting Merit-transference above anything else." The Merit-transference has two aspects: 1) the 'going' aspect and 2) the 'returning' aspect. The 'going' aspect is that one turns one's merit over to all sentient beings with the aspiration that all will be born together into Amida Tathāgata’s Pure Land of Peace and Bliss. The 'returning' aspect is that after having been born in his land, one acquires the fruit of the Shamatha and Vipashyana practices and attains the power of employing expedient means, whereby one re-enters the dense forest of birth-and-death and leads all sentient beings into the Buddhist Path. Whether 'going' or 'returning,' one seeks to deliver sentient beings from the sea of birth-and-death. For this reason, Vasubandhu says, "...perfect the Great Compassion by putting Merit-transference above anything else."

43 It is also stated in the [Commentary, fasc. 2]:

'The pure [manifestation] entering into the Vow-Mind' is as follows: "I [i.e., Vasubandhu] have explained above the contemplation of accomplishment of the glorious merits of the Buddha-land, the Buddha and the Bodhisattvas. These three kinds of accomplishment are adorned with the Vow-Mind. One should realize the implication of this." "One should realize the implication of this" means that one should realize that the three kinds of glorious accomplishment are, in their origin, [Dharmakara’s] adornment with the Pure Vow-Mind through the Forty-eight Vows, and so on. Since the cause is pure, the result is equally pure. They are not what has come into existence without any cause or by some other cause.

44 It is also stated in the Commentary [fasc. 2]:

"The fifth gate in the phase of 'going out' is to observe with Great Compassion all suffering beings, manifest accommodated and transformed bodies, and enter the garden of birth-and-death and the forest of evil passions, where [Bodhisattvas] play about, exercising transcendent powers; they thus dwell in the stage of teaching others through the transference of merit by their Primal Vow-Power. This is called the fifth gate in the phase of 'going out'."
The Master of Kuang-ming temple [Shan-tao] says [in the *Commentary on the Non-meditative Good*]:

Again, those who transfer merit aspiring to be born in the Pure Land should unfailingly avail themselves of the Vow which Amida transfers with decisive and true and sincere mind and dwell in the thought of attaining birth. Since this mind is a deep faith like diamond, it is not liable to be disturbed or destroyed by people of different views, different teachings, other understandings or other practices. You should decisively and single-mindedly hold fast to the Vow and proceed straightforwardly [606b] without giving heed to what others say. If you waver between going forward and retreating and look back with cowardly apprehensions, you will stray from the Path and lose the great benefit of attaining birth.

Truly we realize that, in the parable of the two rivers, 'the White Path four or five inches wide' has the following meaning: 'white' in 'the white path' is contrasted to 'black'; 'white' refers to the white act selected and adopted [in the Vow], that is, the Pure Karmic Act endowed to us for our Going forth. 'Black' refers to the black [evil] actions of our ignorance and evil passions and also to the miscellaneous good deeds done by the followers of the Two Vehicles, humans and devas. 'Path' is contrasted to 'lane'; the Path refers to the straight path of truth of the Primal Vow - the supreme Great Path leading to the Great and Complete Nirvana. 'Lanes' refer to small passages of the teachings of the Two Vehicles and Three Vehicles and of myriad good deeds and various practices. 'Four or five inches wide' refers to the four elements and the five aggregates that constitute sentient beings. 'A pure aspiration for birth arises' means attainment of the Diamond-hard True Faith; since it is the ocean of Great Faith endowed by the Primal Vow-Power, it is indestructible; hence, it is compared to diamond.

It is stated in the *Commentary on the Contemplation Sutra* [i.e., *Essential Meaning of the Contemplation Sutra* by Shan-tao]:

People of the present, both monks and laypeople, have each awakened the highest aspiration,
But birth-and-death is extremely difficult to abhor, and the Buddha Dharma hard to seek.

Together you should make the diamond-hard resolution and leap over the four violent streams; ...
Those who have received the Diamond-hard Mind, coming into
accord with [the Vow] in a flash of thought,
Shall realize the fruition of Nirvana.

48 It is also stated in the same [Commentary on the Introductory Part]:

Having thoroughly attained the True Faith, you should abhor this
Saha world of pain, aspire for the Unconditioned Realm of
Happiness, and enter forever the state of eternal bliss. But it is not
easy to enter straightaway the Realm of No-action; nor is it easy to
escape readily from the Saha world of afflictions. Unless you
awaken the diamond-hard aspiration, how can you eradicate
forever the roots of birth-and-death? If you do not closely follow
the Compassionate One, how can you free yourselves from the long
sorrow?

49 It is also stated in the same [Commentary on the Meditative Practice]:

'Diamond' indicates the undefiled [wisdom].

50 Hence, we truly realize that although Sincere Mind, Joyful Faith and Desire
for Birth are different terms, their significance is the same. Why is it so? Because
the Three Minds are not mingled with doubt, and so they are the True One Mind.
This is called the Diamond-hard True Faith. The Diamond-hard True Faith is
called True Entrusting Heart. True Entrusting Heart is necessarily accompanied
by [recitation of] the Name. [Recitation of] the Name, however, is not always
accompanied by Entrusting Heart of the Vow-Power. For this reason, the author
of the Discourse [Vasubandhu] declares at its beginning, 'I, with One Mind,' and
also says [fasc. 2] '... wishing to practice in accord with the Dharma, that is, in
agreement with the significance of the Name.'

51 When I contemplate the ocean of Great Faith, I see that it does not
discriminate between the noble and mean, monks and laypeople, men and
women, old and young. The amount of the karmic evil committed is not
questioned, nor is the length of practice considered. It is neither practice nor
good acts; neither sudden attainment nor gradual attainment; neither [606c]
meditative practice nor non-meditative practice; neither right contemplation nor
wrong contemplation; neither contemplation of forms nor contemplation of non-
form; neither in everyday life nor at the end of life; neither many recitations nor a
single recitation. It is solely Joyful Faith, which is inconceivable, indescribable
and ineffable. It is like the agada medicine, which destroys all poisons. The
medicine of the Tathágata’s Vow removes the poisons of our wisdom and
stupidity.
With regard to the Bodhi-mind, there are two kinds [of teachings]: vertical and crosswise. The vertical [teaching] is again divided into two groups: vertical transcendence and vertical going-out. The vertical transcendence and the vertical going-out refer to various teachings - accommodative and real, exoteric and esoteric, Mahayana and Hinayana. The Bodhi-mind in these teachings is the mind set on attaining Bodhi by the roundabout way of practice for many kalpas; it is the diamond-hard mind of self-power, that is, the great mind of the Bodhisattva.

The crosswise [teaching] is again divided into two groups: crosswise transcendence and crosswise going-out. The crosswise going-out is the Bodhi-mind of self-power within the Other-Power teaching, set on performing practices - right and miscellaneous, meditative and non-meditative. The crosswise transcendence refers to Joyful Faith endowed to us by the Vow-Power; it is called the aspiration to attain Buddhahood. The aspiration to attain Buddhahood is the Great Bodhi-mind for crosswise [transcendence]. This is called the Diamond-hard Mind of Crosswise Transcendence.

Concerning the Bodhi-mind, whether crosswise or vertical, the same word is used with different meanings. The essential point, however, is entry into truth, and the true mind is fundamental. It is wrong to follow perverted and mixed practices, and it is a loss to entertain doubt.

Those who aspire for the Pure Land, both monks and laypeople, should deeply understand the golden words concerning "imperfect faith" and so become free of the wrong concept with "imperfect hearing."

The Commentary on Vasubandhu’s Discourse on the Pure Land [fasc. 2] states:

In the Sutra of Infinite Life preached at Rajagriha, I find in the section on the three grades of aspirants that although their practices differ according to their superior or inferior qualities, they all, without fail, awaken the aspiration for the highest Bodhi. The aspiration for the highest Bodhi is the resolve to attain Buddhahood. The aspiration to attain Buddhahood is the resolve to save all sentient beings. The aspiration to save sentient beings is the resolve to embrace sentient beings and lead them to attain birth in a Buddha-land. It follows that those who wish to be born in the Pure Land of Peace and Bliss should awaken the aspiration for the highest Bodhi. If there is anyone who does not awaken the aspiration for the highest Bodhi but, having heard of the endless pleasures to be enjoyed in that land, desires to be born there simply because of
such pleasures, he will not attain birth. And so, it is said, "they do not seek to enjoy the pleasures for their own sustenance" but "to remove the sufferings of all sentient beings." "The pleasures for their own sustenance" means that the Pure Land of Peace and Bliss has been produced and maintained by Amida Tathágata’s Primal Vow-Power, and so there is no end to the pleasures to be enjoyed. The meaning of 'the transference of merit' is that one transfers the merits that one has accumulated to all sentient beings so that they, too, will take the Buddhist Way. [607a]

54 Master Yuan-chao says [in the Commentary on the Amida Sutra]:

It is extremely difficult because no other [Buddha] could do [just as Shakyamuni did]; it is rare because the world has never seen this.

55 He also says: The Nembutsu teaching does not discriminate between fools and the wise, the rich and the poor; it does not question the length of your practice or whether your practice is good or bad. So long as you are resolute and unwavering in your faith, you will attain birth with ten utterances of the Nembutsu, even if sinister signs may appear at the end your life. It is the Dharma by which ordinary and foolish beings bound by evil passions, those in the lower state of society, such as hunters and traders, can instantly transcend birth-and-death and attain Buddhahood. This is called '[the Dharma] which is the most difficult thing in the world to accept in faith.'

56 He further says:

It is difficult to perform practices and attain Buddhahood in this evil world. A second difficulty is to expound this teaching for the sake of all sentient beings. These two difficulties serve to clarify that the Buddhas' praise [of Shakyamuni] is not vain. Sentient beings are led to hear and accept the teaching in faith.

57 Yung-ch'in of the Vinaya School says [in the Notes to the Commentary on the Amida Sutra]:

Concerning the difficulty of accepting this Dharma in faith, to transform ordinary people into sages through this Dharma is actually as easy as turning one's palms - so easy that many people with shallow wisdom are skeptical about this. Thus the Larger Sutra, fasc. 2, states, "[The Pure Land] is easy to reach, but very few
actually go there." Hence, we know that this Dharma is difficult to accept in faith.

58 It is stated in the Notes to Yuan-chao's Commentary on the Amida Sutra [by Chieh-tu]:

'Not to discriminate between fools and the wise' is said because there are different human capacities, such as sharp and dull. 'Not to discriminate between the rich and the poor' is said because there are different karmic rewards, such as strong and weak. 'Not to question the length of your practice' is said because there are different effects of practice, such as deep and shallow. 'Not to question whether your practice is good or bad' is said because there are different natures of practice, such as agreeable and disagreeable. 'So long as you are resolute and unwavering in your faith, ... even if sinister signs may appear at the end of your life' is said because the Contemplation Sutra, in the section of the middle level of the lowest grade, states, "the flames of hell suddenly close in on him, and so forth." 'Ordinary and foolish beings bound by evil passions' is said because they are possessed of two kinds of delusion. "Those in the lower state of society, such as hunters and traders, can instantly transcend birth-and-death and attain Buddhahood. This is called [the Dharma] which is the most difficult in the world to accept in faith" means that such evil persons as hunters and wine dealers can transcend Samsara and attain birth through ten utterances of the Nembutsu, and so, is not this teaching difficult to accept in faith?

Amida Tathágata is called the True Illumination, the Equally Enlightened One, the Inconceivable One, the Ultimate Resort, and Great Arhat, the Great Consolation, the One Equal to the Unequaled, and the Inconceivable Light.

59 In the postscript of the Collection of Passages on the Land of Bliss [by Tsung-hsiao] it is stated:

There are always many who practice the Pure Land teaching, but very few reach its gate and enter it straightaway. There are always many who discuss the Pure Land teaching, but very few grasp its essentials and directly expound them to others. But I have never heard of anyone who presents his view while having hindrances and obscurities within himself. I present my view since I have
understood the teaching. Of all hindrances, nothing is stronger than greed; of all obscurities, nothing surpasses doubt. In the Pure Land teaching, these two elements, greed and doubt, eventually cease to cause any hindrance. They are never left alone; Amida's universal Vow always and spontaneously enfolds them. This is its natural working.

Chapter On The True Faith

Chapter 3: A Collection of Passages Revealing the True Faith of the Pure Land Way

Part 2

60 When I contemplate the true Joyful Faith, there is in it a single thought. The single thought reveals the very first moment when Joyful Faith is awakened in us, and also expresses the great and inconceivable joy [of receiving Faith].

61 In connection with this, the Larger Sutra, fasc. 2, states:

All sentient beings, having heard his Name, rejoice in faith and [607b] are mindful of him even with a single thought - through his sincere transference of merit; aspiring to be born in his land, they will attain birth and dwell in the Stage of Non-retrogression.

62 Further it is stated in the Teaching Assembly of the Tathágata of Infinite Life, fasc. 2:

All sentient beings in the Buddha-lands of other quarters, having heard the Name of the Tathágata of Infinite Life, awaken a single thought of Pure Faith and rejoice.

Also the Larger Sutra, fasc. 2, states:

By the Buddha's Primal Vow-Power, Hearing his Name, they aspire to be born in his land.

Again, it is stated [in the Teaching Assembly of the Tathágata of Infinite Life, fasc. 2]:

They hear the Buddha's virtuous Name.

63 It is stated in the Nirvana Sutra ["chapter on Kashyapa"]:.
What is called 'imperfect hearing'? To accept only a half of the twelve divisions of the scriptures expounded by the Tathágata and reject the other half - this is called 'imperfect hearing.' Also, even if one upholds these six divisions of scriptures, they cannot recite them and so one's exposition of the scriptures cannot benefit others; this is called 'imperfect hearing.' Further, having received the six divisions of the scriptures, one upholds, recites, and expounds them for the sake of disputation, in order to defeat others in discussions, to gain profit or for secular purposes; this is called 'imperfect hearing.'

64 The Master of Kuang-ming temple says [in the Commentary on the Non-meditative Practice]: 'single-hearted practice of the Nembutsu' and also 'wholehearted practice of the Nembutsu.'

65 When the Larger Sutra says 'hear' [in the phrase 'having heard the Name'], it means that sentient beings, having heard how the Buddha made and fulfilled the Vow, entertain no doubt. This is what is meant by 'hear.' 'Faith' [in 'rejoice in faith'] refers to Faith endowed by the Primal Vow-Power. 'Rejoice' shows the state of joy in body and mind. 'Even (once)' is the word that comprises both many and few. 'A single thought' means that one's Faith is free of double-mindedness; hence, it is called 'a single thought.' This is what [Vasubandhu] calls 'the One Mind.' The One Mind is the true cause of birth in the Pure Land of Recompense.

When we acquire the Diamond-hard True Faith, we transcend crosswise the five evil realms and the eight adverse conditions, and unfailingly gain ten benefits in this life. What are the ten? 1. The benefit of being protected by unseen divine beings; 2. The benefit of attaining the utmost virtues; 3. The benefit of our karmic evil being transformed into good; 4. The benefit of being protected and remembered by all the Buddhas; 5. The benefit of being praised by all the Buddhas; 6. The benefit of being protected constantly by the light of Amida's heart; 7. The benefit of having much joy in our hearts; 8. The benefit of acknowledging Amida's benevolence and repaying our debt of gratitude for his virtues; 9. The benefit of constantly practicing great compassion; 10. The benefit of entering the Rightly Established Stage.

66 The word 'exclusive practice of the Nembutsu' mentioned by the Master [Shan-tao] is the sole practice. 'Singleness of mind' refers to the One Mind.
Hence, 'a single thought' in the passage of fulfillment [of the Eighteenth Vow] refers to the singleness of mind. The singleness of mind is the deep mind. The deep mind is the deep faith. The deep faith is the steadfast deep faith. The steadfast deep faith is the decisive mind. The decisive mind is the supreme mind. The supreme mind is the true faith. The true faith is the enduring mind. The enduring mind is the sincere mind. The sincere mind is mindfulness. Mindfulness is the true One Mind. The true One Mind is the great joy. The great joy is the True Entrusting Heart. The True Entrusting Heart is the Diamond-hard Faith. The diamond-hard mind is the aspiration for Buddhahood. The aspiration for Buddhahood is the desire to save sentient beings. The desire to save sentient beings is the desire to embrace sentient beings and bring them to the Pure Land of Peace and Bliss. This desire is the great Bodhi-mind.

This mind is the Great Compassion, for it arises from the wisdom of infinite light. The ocean-like Vow is without discrimination; hence, aspiration for Bodhi is without discrimination. Since aspiration for Bodhi is without discrimination, the wisdom of the Path is also without discrimination. Since the wisdom of the Path is without discrimination, the Great Compassion is without discrimination. The Great Compassion is the right cause of the Buddha's Enlightenment.

67 It is stated in the Commentary on Vasubandhu’s Discourse on the Pure Land, fasc. 2:

Those who wish to be born in the Pure Land of Peace and Bliss should awaken the aspiration for the highest Bodhi.

68 It is also stated in the same, fasc. 1:

'That mind itself produces Buddhas' [in the Contemplation Sutra] means that the [meditating] mind [i.e., Faith] becomes Buddha. 'That mind is itself the Buddha' means that there is no Buddha apart from the [meditating] mind. It is just as fire comes from wood but is not separate from the wood. Because it is not separate from the wood, it burns the wood. The wood becomes fire, which burns the wood and turns it, too, into fire.

69 The [Master of] Kuang-ming temple says [in the Commentary on the Meditative Practice]:
This mind becomes Buddha. This mind is itself Buddha. There is no Buddha apart from this mind.

70 Hence we realize that the One Mind is described as 'to practice in accord with the Dharma.' This is the right teaching, the right meaning, the right practice, the right understanding, the right act, and the right wisdom.

71 The Three Minds are the One Mind; the One Mind is the Diamond-hard True Faith. I have given the answer concerning this matter in the above passages. Reflect on this.

72 The *Discourse on Tranquilization and Contemplation*, fasc. 1, states:

'Bodhi' is an Indian word; here [in China] it is translated as 'Way.' 'Chih-to (citta)' represents an Indian sound; here it is translated as 'mind.' Mind means discerning.

73 'Transcending crosswise and cutting off the four streams' [quoted above (47) from Shan-tao's work] means: 'crosswise' contrasts with vertical transcendence and vertical going out. 'Transcendence' is the word that contrasts with roundabout trekking. 'Vertical transcendence' refers to the true Mahayana teachings. 'Vertical going out' refers to provisional Mahayana teachings, that is, the teachings of the Two Vehicles and the Three Vehicles which provide roundabout approaches. 'Crosswise transcendence' refers to the absolute and all-complete true teaching actualized by the fulfillment of the [Eighteenth] Vow, that is, the true essence [of the Pure Land Way]. There is also 'crosswise going out,' which refers to the meditative and non-meditative teachings applicable for the three kinds of aspirants and the nine grades of beings, that is, the acts of virtue for roundabout approaches leading to the Transformed Land or the Land of Sloth and Pride. In the Pure Recompensed Land produced by the Great Vow,[608a] there is no distinction of grades and stages. In an instantaneous thought-moment, one quickly realizes the highest, perfect, true Enlightenment. Hence, we say 'crosswise transcendence.'

74 The *Larger Sutra* says, fasc. 1, "[Dharmakara] made the supreme, unsurpassed vows."

75 It also says, fasc. 1:
I have made vows, unrivaled in all the world;
I shall certainly reach the unsurpassed Way.

My Name shall be heard throughout the ten quarters;
Should there be any place where it is not heard,
May I not attain perfect Enlightenment.

76 It also says, fasc. 2:

Strive to escape from Samsara and be born in the Land of Peace and Provision. Then, the five evil realms having been instantly destroyed, they will naturally cease to be, and so you will progress unhindered in your pursuit of the Way. The Pure Land is easy to reach, but very few actually go there. It rejects nobody, but naturally and unfailingly attracts beings.

77 It is stated in the Larger Sutra on Amida (translated by the Tripitaka Master Chih-ch'ien), fasc. 2:

Strive to escape from Samsara. When you are born in the Land of Amida Buddha, the causes of the five evil realms will be destroyed and those realms will naturally cease to be. You will progress unhindered in your pursuit of the Way. The Pure Land is easy to reach, but very few actually go there. It rejects nobody, but naturally and unfailingly attracts beings.

78 'Cutting off' [the four streams] means that since you have awakened the One Mind for Going forth, there is no more states of existence that you must undergo, no more realm [of Samsara] that you are destined for. Both the causes and results of the six realms and the four modes of birth will be destroyed. You will immediately sever the birth-and-death in the three worlds. Hence, we say 'cutting off.' 'The four streams' are the four violent streams; they also refer to birth, aging, sickness, and death.

79 The Larger Sutra, fasc. 2, states:

The you will surely attain the Buddha's Enlightenment
And everywhere deliver beings from the river of birth-and-death.

80 It is also stated [in the Sutra on the Equal Enlightenment]:
You will surely become World-Honored Ones
And deliver all beings from birth, old age, and death.

81 The *Nirvana Sutra* ["Chapter on Lion's roar"] states:

Nirvana is called an island. For what reason? Because the four violent streams cannot wash it away. What are the four violent streams? First, desire; second, existence; third, wrong views; and fourth, stupidity. For this reason, Nirvana is called an island.

82 The Master of Kuang-ming temple says [in the *Hymns on the Pratyutpanna-Samadhi*]:

I say to all practitioners: Abhor birth-and-death ordinary beings, and do not cling to it; aspire for Amida's Pure Land, not think lightly of it. If you abhor the Saha world, you will forever part from it; if you aspire for the Pure Land, you will eternally dwell in it. If you part from the Saha world, the causes of the six realms will cease to be, and the resultant states of transmigration will spontaneously perish. If the causes and the results cease to be, the forms and names [of samsaric states] will be immediately annihilated.

83 He also says [in the *Hymns of Birth in the Pure Land*]:

My respectful wish is this: All the aspirants for birth should reflect on their abilities. Those who aspire in this life to be born in that land, should never fail to strive, mind and body, whether walking, standing, sitting or lying down, and never abolish the continuous practice day and night. It may seem somewhat painful to continue to practice throughout your life until death, [608b] but the moment your life ends, you will in the next moment be born in that land, where you will enjoy the unconditioned Dharma-pleasure for eternally long kalpas. Until you become Buddha, you will not be bound to any more birth-and-death. Is this not joy? Reflect on this.

84 The true disciple of the Buddha means this: 'true' contrasts with false and provisional. 'Disciple' means a disciple of Shakyamuni and other Buddhas, namely, the practitioner who has attained the Diamond-hard Faith. Because one
certainly realizes Great Nirvana with this Faith and Practice, one is called the true disciple of the Buddha.

85 It is stated in the *Larger Sutra* [fasc. 1]:

If, when I attain Buddhahood, sentient beings in the immeasurable and inconceivable Buddha-lands of the ten quarters, who have been touched by my light, should not feel peace and happiness in their bodies and minds surpassing those of humans and devas, may I not attain perfect Enlightenment.

If, when I attain Buddhahood, sentient beings in the immeasurable and inconceivable Buddha-lands of the ten quarters, who have heard my Name, should not gain the bodhisattva's insight into the non-arising of all dharmas and should not acquire various profound dharanis, may I not attain perfect Enlightenment?

86 It is stated in the *Teaching Assembly of the Tathágata of Infinite Life* [fasc. 1]:

If, when I attain Buddhahood, sentient beings in the immeasurable, boundless, inconceivable and unequaled worlds throughout the ten quarters, who have received the Buddha's glory and have been illumined and touched by its light, should not feel peace and happiness in their bodies and minds surpassing those of humans and devas, may I not attain perfect Enlightenment.

87 It is also stated in the *Larger Sutra* [fasc. 2]:

If you have heard the Dharma and do not forget it
But regard and revere it with great joy,
You are my good friend.

88 It is further stated in the same [fasc. 2]:

Anyone who sincerely desires birth in the Land of Peace and Bliss is able to attain purity of wisdom and supremacy in virtue.

89 It is further stated [in the *Teaching Assembly of the Tathágata of Infinite Life*, fasc. 2]:

"those who have attained vast and superior understanding."
90 It is also stated in the same [fasc. 2]:

"Such people, those who have attained great, majestic virtue, will enter the distinguished gateway of the vast Dharma.

91 It is stated in the Contemplation Sutra:

You should know that all who are mindful of that Buddha are like white lotus-flowers among humankind.

92 We read in the Collection of Passages Concerning Birth in the Land of Peace and Bliss [fasc. 1 & 2]:

I will explain the prescribed method of preaching and hearing the Dharma according to various Mahayana sutras. The Great Assembly Sutra says:

The preacher of the Dharma should think of himself as the physician-king intent on eliminating pains; he should consider the Dharma preached to be nectar or manda. Those who hear the Dharma should seek to attain superior understanding and be cured of their illnesses. If such is the preacher and the listener, they are able to make the Buddha Dharma flourish. They will always dwell in the presence of the Buddha.

We read in the Nirvana Sutra:

The Buddha said, "If a person sincerely practices the Nembutsu-Samadhi, the Buddhas of the ten quarters will always watch over him, just as if they were actually in front of him."

Hence, the Nirvana Sutra states:

The Buddha said to Bodhisattva Kashyapa, "If there are sons or daughters of good families [608c] who always sincerely perform the exclusive practice of the Nembutsu, whether they dwell in mountain forests or in villages, whether they practice it in the daytime or at night, and whether they do so while sitting or lying down, Buddhas and World-Honored Ones always
watch over them, just as if they were before their eyes, and are ready to accept their offerings and endow merits to them."

According to the *Commentary on the Maha Prajñāpāramitā Sutra*, there are three explanations of this. First, the Buddha is the supreme Dharma-king, and Bodhisattvas are the Dharma-vassals. The only person we should venerate and revere is the Buddha, the World-Honored One. For this reason, we should always be mindful of the Buddha.

Second, there are many Bodhisattvas, who profess, "Since innumerable kalpas ago, the World-Honored One has nurtured our Dharma-bodies, Wisdom-bodies and bodies of Great Compassion. Through the Buddha's aid, we have been able to accomplish meditation, wisdom and immeasurable practices and vows. In order to repay our indebtedness to his benevolence, we desire to be near him and serve him always, just as the ministers who have received the king's grace are always mindful of him."

Third, there are many Bodhisattvas, who also make this remark, "When we were in the causal stage of discipline, we met bad teachers and so we abused Prajña and consequently fell into the evil realms. During the passage of immeasurable kalpas we performed other practices without being able to attain emancipation. Later, one day, when we were with a good teacher, he taught us the Nembutsu-Samadhi, which eliminated various hindrances and enabled us to attain emancipation. Because of this great benefit, we wish we shall not be separated from the Buddha."

The *Larger Sutra* [fasc. 2] states [in effect]:

> If you wish to be born in the Pure Land, the basic requirement is to awaken the Bodhi-mind. The reason is that Bodhi is a name for the supreme Path. If you have awakened the aspiration for Buddhahood, this aspiration is so vast as to pervade the Dharma-realm. This aspiration is everlasting, reaching the limit of the future age. It is free of all the hindrances of the Two Vehicles. If you have awakened this aspiration even once, the beginning-less cycle of birth-and-death will be destroyed."
The *Great Compassion Sutra* has this to say:

What is ‘Great Compassion’? If you exclusively and continuously practice the Nembutsu, you will definitely be born in the Land of Peace and Bliss when your life ends. Those who in their turn encourage others to practice the Nembutsu are called those who practice the Great Compassion.

The Master of Kuang-ming temple says [in the *Hymns on the Pratyutpanna-Samadhi*]:

How regrettable it is that my fellow-beings doubt what should not be doubted!  
The Pure Land is before your eyes; it should not be denied.  
Do not argue whether Amida embraces you or not;  
What is essential is whether or not you single-mindedly direct your thoughts [towards the Pure Land].

They say [to each other] that from now until the time they attain Buddhahood,  
They will repay the Buddha's benevolence by praising him for a long kalpa.  
If not blessed by the Great Power of Amida's vow,  
When and in which kalpa would we be able to escape from this Saha world?

How can you expect to reach the Treasure Land now?  
It is indeed due to the power of the Great Master of the Saha world.  
Without the exhortation of the Great Master and Good Friend,  
How can you enter the Pure Land of Amida?

He also says [in the *Liturgy for Birth*]:

It is extremely difficult to encounter an age in which a Buddha appears in the world;  
It is also difficult for the people to realize the wisdom of Faith.  
To be able to hear the rare Dharma  
Is among the most difficult.

To accept it in faith and teach others to believe in it  
Is the difficulty among all the difficulties.
To spread the Great Compassion everywhere and guide others
Is truly to repay the Buddha's benevolence.

95 He also says [in the same work]:

The color of Amida's body is like the golden mountain;
The rays of light of his physical characteristics and marks illumine
the ten quarters;
Only those who recite the Nembutsu are enfolded in the Light;
Realize that the Primal Vow has the strongest power.

The Tathágatas of the ten quarters extend their tongues and give
witness:
Through exclusive recitation of the Name, you reach the land in the
West;
Mounting the lotus-dais, you will hear the excellent Dharma;
You will see the vows and practices of the ten Bodhisattva stages
manifest themselves spontaneously.

96 He also says [in the Method of Contemplation of Amida Buddha]:

Should there be sentient beings who are exclusively mindful of
Amida Buddha, the light of the Buddha's heart always shines on
them, protecting and never forsaking them. It is not stated that the
light shines on practitioners of various other acts and embraces
them. This is also the strong condition of protection in the present
life.

97 Again he says [in the Commentary on the Introductory Part]:

'They will rejoice and attain the insight' shows that when the pure
light of Amida Buddha's Land suddenly appears before one's eyes,
what a joy it would be! Out of this joy, one attains the insight into
the non-arising of all dharmas. This is also called 'perception of joy,'
'perception of awakening,' and 'perception of faith.' Since this
remark is made long before [exposition of the main part of the
sutra], it has not yet been clarified when the Queen [Vaidehi]
actually attained this insight. [The Buddha] wanted her to seek this
benefit wholeheartedly. This means that when one courageously
and single-heartedly desires to visualize [Amida], one attains the
insight. This is mainly the insight realized in the ten stages of faith,
not the one realized in or above the stages of understanding and practice.

98 He also says [in the Commentary on the Non-meditative Practice]:

The passage from 'those who are mindful of the Buddha' to 'will be born into the family of the Buddhas' clarifies that the merit of the Nembutsu-Samadhi surpasses anything else; it cannot be compared with merit of various good acts. This passage is divided into five sections: First, exclusive recitation of Amida Buddha's Name is presented. Second, the persons who recite the Name are praised. Third, those who continuously practice the Nembutsu are described as extremely rare; nothing can be compared with them, and so pundarika is used as an analogy. Pundarika is called 'excellent flower' among human beings; also called 'rare flower'; also 'the very best flower'; and is also called 'wonderful, excellent flower' among human beings. This flower has traditionally been called 'auspicious flower.'

The practitioners of the Nembutsu are 'excellent people' among human beings, 'wonderful, excellent people' among human beings, 'the very best people' among human beings, 'rare people' among human beings, and 'the most excellent people' among human beings.

Fourth, When you single-mindedly recite Amida's Name, Avalokiteshvara and Mahasthamaprapta will always follow you and protect you, just as shadows follow things. They are like your close friends and teachers.

Fifth, already in this life, you receive such benefit. After the end of your life, you will enter the family of the Buddhas, that is, enter the Pure Land. After you have reached there, you will hear the Dharma for a long time and visit other Buddha-lands to make offerings to the Buddhas. Thus the cause and result of Buddhahood are accomplished. How can the seat of Enlightenment be far away?

99 Wang Jih-hsiu says [in the Collection of Passages on the Pure Land Teaching]:

I read in the Sutra on the Buddha of Infinite Life, "All sentient beings who, having heard his Name, rejoice in faith and are mindful of
him even once, aspiring to be born there, will attain birth and dwell in the Stage of Non-retrogression. "The Stage of Non-retrogression' is *avaivartika* in Sanskrit. The *Lotus Sutra* says "(it is) the stage of reward attained by Bodhisattva Maitreya." Those who attain birth through a single thought of mindfulness are the same as Maitreya. The Buddha's words are not said in vain. The *Sutra on the Buddha of Infinite Life* is truly the shortest way to birth, the divine method of eliminating suffering. All should accept it in faith.

100 The *Larger Sutra* [fasc. 2] says:

Sixty-seven kotis of non-retrogressive bodhisattvas from this world will be born there. Each of these bodhisattvas has previously made offerings to innumerable Buddhas, and is next [to Buddhahood] like Maitreya.

101 Further it is stated [in the *Teaching Assembly of the Tathágata of Infinite Life*, fasc. 2]:

The Buddha said to Maitreya, "There are seventy-two kotis of bodhisattvas in this Buddha-land [i.e., Saha world]. They have planted various roots of good at the place of a hundred, thousand immeasurable kotis of nayutas of Buddhas, and so have attained the Stage of Non-retrogression. They will be born in that land."

102 Yung-ch'in of the Vinaya School says:

In the profundity of the teaching, nothing surpasses the ultimate doctrine of the *Garland Sutra* or the excellent message of the *Lotus Sutra*. But we have never seen in those sutras prediction of Buddhahood given to all sentient beings. It is due to the benefit of [Amida's] inconceivable virtue that all sentient beings receive in the present life the prediction of attaining the highest, perfect Enlightenment.

103 We truly realize: Because Mahasattva Maitreya has attained the diamond-hard mind of the Equal Enlightenment, he will reach the stage of the highest Enlightenment under a dragon-flower tree, where he will give three sermons; whereas, because the followers of the Nembutsu have acquired the Diamond-hard Mind of the Crosswise Transcendence, they will realize the great Parinirvana on the eve of the moment they die. Hence, it is said, "the same [as Maitreya]."
Moreover, those who have attained the Diamond-hard Faith gain the perception of joy, awakening, and faith as Vaidehi did. This is because the True Faith endowed to them for their going forth has penetrated their hearts and also because the inconceivable Primal Vow has been working on them.

104 Chih-chueh of the Ch'an School says in praise of the followers of the Nembutsu [quoted by Tsung-hsiao in his Collection of Passages on the Land of Bliss]:

How wonderful! The Buddha's Power is inconceivable; there has not been anything like this in all ages.

105 Master Yuan-chao of the Vinaya School says [quoted in the same]:

As for the clear understanding of the doctrine and contemplation, who excels Chih-che [i.e., Chih-i]? Near the end of his life, he upheld the Contemplation Sutra; after glorifying the Pure Land, he passed away.

As for the insight into the Dharma-realms, who is equal to Tu-shun? He urged all the four groups of Buddhists to be mindful of the Buddha; after perceiving the miraculous signs, he passed away to the West.

As for practicing dhyana and seeing Buddha-nature, who surpasses Kao-yu and Chih-chueh? They formed societies for contemplating the Buddha and both attained the highest grade of birth.

As for deep learning in Confucian studies, who can match Liu, Lei, Liu Tzu-hou and Po Lo-t'ien? They all took up the brush and wrote sincere words, aspiring to be born in that land.

106 'Provisional' (disciples) refer to practitioners of the Path of Sages and those who practice meditative or non-meditative good of the Pure Land Way.

107 Thus, the Master of Kuang-ming temple says [in the Hymns on the Pratyutpanna-Samadhi]:

The Buddha's teaching has many gates, numbering eighty-four thousand, Precisely because the capacities of beings are different.
108 He also says [in the Hymns of the Nembutsu Liturgy, fasc. 2]:

Provisional gateways of expedience are the same and not different [in their objective].

109 He also says [in the Hymns on the Pratyutpanna-Samadhi]:

Teaching gates, which differ from each other, are called the 'gradual teaching';
One must perform painful practices for tens of thousands of kalpas before realizing the non-arising of all things.

110 'False' (disciples) refer to the adherents of the sixty-two views and the followers of the ninety-five wrong paths.

111 The Nirvana Sutra ["Chapter on What the multitudes heard"]:

The World-Honored One always preached, "All the non-Buddhists learn the ninety-five [wrong teachings] and fall into the evil realms.

112 The Master of Kuang-ming temple says [in the Hymns of the Nembutsu Liturgy, fasc. 2]:

The ninety-five [wrong teachings] all defile the world;
Only the Buddha's Single Path is pure and tranquil.

113 I deeply realize: How sad it is that I, Gutoku Shinran, sunk in the vast sea of attachments and desires and lost in the great mountain of fame and profit, do not rejoice at joining the group of the Rightly Established Stage, nor do I enjoy coming nearer the realization of true Enlightenment. How shameful, how grievous it is!

114 Concerning the beings with incorrigible illnesses, the Buddha said in the Nirvana Sutra ["Chapter on Actual Illnesses"]:  

Kashyapa, there are three kinds of people in the world, whose illnesses are hard to cure: first, those who slander the Mahayana; second, those who commit the five gravest offenses; and third, those devoid of the seed of good. These three illnesses are the most serious in the world and cannot be cured by Sravakas,
Pratyekabuddhas, or bodhisattvas. Sons of good families suppose a person is stricken with a fatal illness but there is no cure; yet, appropriate treatment and the medicine specially prescribed by the doctor are given to this person. Without them, his illness could not be cured and there is no doubt that he would die. Sons of good families, these three kinds of people are like this. Having heard the Dharma from the Buddha or a Bodhisattva, their illnesses are cured and so they can awaken the aspiration for the highest, perfect Enlightenment. But Sravakas, Pratyekabuddhas or bodhisattvas, whether they preach the Dharma or not, cannot bring such people to awaken the aspiration for the highest, perfect Enlightenment.

115 It is also said in the same sutra ["Chapter on Sacred practice"]:  

At that time, there was in the great town of Rajagriha the King Ajatashatru. Being of vicious nature, he often engaged in killing. Committing four evils in speech, he was possessed of greed, anger, and stupidity, and his heart raged furiously. Through his association with evil people, he became attached to the worldly pleasures of the five desires, which led him to commit an outrageous act of murdering his innocent father, the king. Because of this, he developed a fever of remorse. Because of the fever of remorse in his heart, scabs formed all over his body. Their foul stench and filth kept people away. He thought to himself, "I have already received in this present body the retribution of my evil act. The karmic retribution of hell must be drawing near." [610a]

At that time, his mother, the Queen Vaidehi, applied various ointments to his body, but the scabs spread and showed no sign of alleviation. The king said to his mother, "These scabs are caused by the mind, not the product of the four material elements. If someone says he can cure them, it is contrary to reason that he can do so."

At that time, there was a minister named Candrayasahs. He went to see the king. Standing on one side, he said to the king, "Great King, why are you sorrowful and emaciated, and why does your countenance look unhappy? Do you have pain in the body or in the mind?" The king replied to the minister, "How should I not have pain in mind and body? I committed the outrageous act of murdering my innocent father. I once heard from a wise man that there are in the world five kinds of people who cannot escape falling into hell; they are people who have committed the five
gravest offenses. I have already committed immeasurable, boundless and incalculable karmic evils. How could I not have pain in the body and in the mind? There is no good physician who can cure me."

The minister said to the king, "Do not grieve so much." He then remarked in verse:

If one is sorrowful all the time,  
The sorrow grows and multiplies.  
It is just as sleep indulged in  
Grows and becomes intense.  
So it is with craving lust  
And drinking wine.

"The king has said that there are in the world five kinds of people who cannot escape falling into hell. Who has been to hell and, after coming back, reported to you? Hell is simply talked about in the world by many so-called wise men. You also say that there is no good physician who can cure your illness of mind and body. There is a great doctor named Purana Kashyapa. He has complete knowledge of everything and attained freedom in exercising power. Having thoroughly practiced the pure and sacred acts, he now always expounds the path to the supreme Nirvana to immeasurable and boundless sentient beings. He teaches thus to his disciples:

- There is no black karma, nor retribution of black karma;
- There is no white karma, nor reward of white karma.
- There is no black or white karma, nor their retribution or reward.
- There is no superior act nor inferior act.

This master is now in Rajagriha. I pray, Great King, that you condescend to pay a visit to him and let him treat your mind and body."

The king replied, "If he could unmistakably get rid of my karmic evil, I would certainly go to him for refuge."

Again, there was another minister named Praptagarbha. He came up to the king and made this remark, "Great King, why are you so
emaciated, with your lips dried up and your voice feeble? What affliction torments your body and mind?" The king replied, "How should I not have pain in mind and body? I am ignorant and blind, having no eyes of wisdom. I made friends with many evil people. In particular, following the advice of Devadatta, the evil person, I outrageously murdered my father who was devoted to the right Dharma. Once I heard a wise man recite this verse:

If you entertain ill thoughts  
And commit evil acts  
To your father or mother,  
To the Buddha or his disciple, [610b]  
The retribution will be  
Falling into Avichi hell.

Because of this, I tremble with fear and am greatly tormented. I fear there is no treatment, even by a good physician."

The minister continued, "Great King, pleased do not be so fear-stricken. There are two kinds of law: one is for those who have renounced the world and the other is for kings. The law for kings recognizes the case in which one becomes a king by killing one's father. Although such an act is a high treason, it does not actually constitute a crime. It is like the karala worm; it necessarily tears through its mother's womb to be born. This is the law of birth for the worm. Even though it tears through its mother's womb, this does not form any crime. It is also like a mule with foal. The law of statesmen is like this. Even if one kills one's father or brother, this is not actually a crime. The law of those who have renounced the world stipulates that to kill even a mosquito or an ant is a crime. You say that there is no good physician in the world who can cure your illness in mind and body. There is a great master named Maskarin Goshaliputra. He has attained omniscience and has compassion for sentient beings as if they were his own children. He has freed himself from his evil passions and is able to extract the sharp arrows of the three poisons from sentient beings. This master is now in the great town of Rajagriha. I pray, Great King that you condescend to pay a visit to him. If you see him, your karmic evils will be destroyed."

The king replied, "If he could unmistakably get rid of my karmic evil, I would certainly go to him for refuge."
There was another minister named Tattvalabdha. He came up to the king and spoke in verse:

Great King, why have you
Cast off your bodily ornaments?
Why is your hair so disheveled?
What is this all about?
Does your mind ache or your body?

The king replied, "How should I not have pain in mind and body? My father, the late king, was benevolent and tenderhearted. He looked on people with loving-kindness. He was really free of fault. He went to see a soothsayer, who said, 'When born, this child will certainly kill his father.' Even after hearing this, he cared for me and raised me. Once I heard a wise man make this remark: if there is a person who commits incest with his mother, violates a nun, steal from the Sangha, kills one who has awakened the aspiration for the highest Bodhi, or murders his own father; such a person will definitely fall into Avichi hell. How should I not have pain in mind and body?

The minister said, "Great King, you should not grieve and suffer so much.... All sentient beings have residues of their karma. Due to the karmic conditions, they repeatedly undergo birth-and-death. Since the late king had a residue of karma for which he received the retribution of being killed by you, you are not to blame. I pray, Great King, that you take things easy and do not grieve. For it is said:

If one is sorrowful all the time,
The sorrow grows and multiplies.
It is just as sleep indulged in
Grows and becomes intense.
So it is with craving lust
And drinking wine.

(There is a master named) Samjayin Vairatiputra.... [610c]

Again, there was a minister named Sarvarthajna. He came up to the king and made this remark.... The king replied, "How should I not have pain in mind and body? ... I committed the outrageous act of killing the late king, though he was innocent. Once I heard a wise man say, 'If one kills one's father, one will undergo great torment
for immeasurable and uncountable kalpas.' There is no doubt that I will fall into hell before long. There is no good doctor who can cure my illness of karmic evil." The minister said, "I pray, Great King, that you give up sorrow and affliction. Have you not heard that a long time ago, there was a king named Rama. He killed his father and ascended to the throne. Great King Bhadrika, King Viruchin, King Nahusa, King Kathika, King Visakha, King Candraprabha, King Suryaprabha, King Kama and King Bahujanadhara -- these kings killed their fathers and ascended to the throne. But not one of them has gone to hell. At present, King Virudhaka, King Udayana, King Canda, King Musaka and King Padma -- they have killed their fathers, but none of them suffer from sorrow and affliction. Although people speak of hell, realm of hungry ghosts and heavenly realm, who has ever seen them? Great King, there are only two states of existence: the state of humans and that of animals. Although there are these two states, one is not born through causes and conditions, neither does one die through causes and conditions. If there are neither causes nor conditions, what is good and what is evil? I pray, Great King, that you do not entertain grief and fear, for it is said:

If one is sorrowful all the time,
The sorrow grows and multiplies.
It is just as sleep indulged in
Grows and becomes intense.
So it is with craving lust
And drinking wine.

(There is a master named) Ajita Kesakambalin...."

Again, there was a minister named Mangala.... "What is the meaning of hell [naraka]." Let me explain it. Nara means earth, and ka means to break. Breaking hell without having any karmic retribution; this is called hell. Again, nara means human, and ka means heavenly. By killing one's father, one reaches the human or heavenly realm. For this reason, the ascetic Vasu proclaims, 'By killing sheep, one gains the pleasure of the human or heavenly realm.' This is called hell. Again, nara means life, and ka means long. By killing beings, one gains long life. This is called hell.

"Great King, for this reason, hell does not actually exist. Great King, it is just as one sows wheat and reaps wheat; also just as one sows rice and reaps rice. By destroying hell, one attains hell. By killing
people, one gains human life.

"Great King, if you listen to my explanation, you will see that there is actually no killing. If there is a real ego, one cannot kill it. If there is no ego, one cannot kill it, either. Why? Because if ego exists, it does not undergo any change; since it is eternally abiding, one cannot kill it. It cannot be broken, destroyed, bound, nor does it get angry or rejoice, like empty space. How would there be the crime of killing. If there is no ego, then all things are impermanent. Because they are impermanent, they perish every moment. Because they perish every moment, the killer and the killed also perish every moment. If they perish every moment, who is to blame?

"Great King, it is like fire being innocent in burning wood, also like an ax being innocent in cutting down a tree, also like a scythe being innocent in cutting the grass. When a sword kills a man, it is not a person; and so it is innocent, nor is the person to blame. When poison kills a man, it is not a person; and so the poison is not to blame. How can there be a crime? So it is with all the myriads of things; there cannot actually be killing, and so how can there be a crime? I pray, Great King, that you do not allow yourself to give rise to sorrow and affliction, for it is said:

If one is sorrowful all the time,
The sorrow grows and multiplies.
It is just as sleep indulged in
Grows and becomes intense.
So it is with craving lust
And drinking wine.

Now there is a great master named Kakuda Katyayana."
Again, there was a minister named Abhaya.... "Now there is a great master named Nigrantha Jnatiputra...."

At that time there was a great physician named Jivaka. He went up to the King and said, "Can you sleep well?" The King answered in verse.... "Jivaka, my illness is very serious. I committed the outrageous act of killing the king who was devoted to the right Dharma. There is no good doctor; medicine, spell or careful nursing that can cure my incorrigible illness. Why? Because I outrageously killed my father, the late king, who followed the law of justice in ruling the state and was blameless in his conduct. I feel as if I were a fish on the ground.... A long time ago, I heard a wise man say, 'If a man's acts in body, speech and mind are not pure, you may be
sure that he will definitely fall into hell.' This is exactly what I am. How could I sleep peacefully? There would not be a great doctor, unrivaled in the world, whose medicine of the Dharma could remove my pain of illness."

Jivaka replied, "It is wonderful that even though you committed a crime, you have a profound remorse in your heart and are full of shame and repentance. Great King, Buddhas and World-Honored Ones always teach as follows:

There are two good acts that save sentient beings. One is shame and the other is repentance. Shame keeps one from committing evil acts, and repentance leads others to refrain from committing evil acts. Again, shame is shamefulness felt within oneself, and repentance is confession of one's evil acts to others. Further, shame is feeling shame before other people, and repentance is feeling shame before devas. These are called shame and repentance. Those without shame and repentance are not worthy of men; they are called animals. Because you feel shame and repentance, you respect your parents and teachers. Because you feel shame and repentance, you can maintain harmony with your parents, brothers and sisters.

It is wonderful, Great King that you are filled with shame and repentance.... You say that there is no one who can cure your illness. You ought to know, Great King that the son of King Shuddhodana of Kapilavastu - his family name is Gautama and his given name, Siddhartha - naturally attained awakening without a teacher and realized the highest, perfect Enlightenment.... He is Buddha, the World-Honored One. Possessed of the diamond-hard Wisdom, he can destroy all the karmic evil of sentient beings. It would be wrong to say that he could not.... Great King, the Tathágata has a cousin named Devadatta, who caused disunity in the Sangha, hurt the Buddha's body, and killed the nun Lotus. He thus committed the three gravest offenses. By expounding to him various essentials of the Dharma, the Tathágata lessened his heavy karmic evil. Thus the Tathágata is regarded as a great, distinguished physician. He is unlike the six masters...."

[The deceased King Bimbisara's voice is heard in the air.] "Great King, by committing one grave offense, one fully receives retribution for that. By committing two grave offenses, one receives
two times as much retribution. By committing all the five grave offenses, one receives five times as much retribution. Great King, you certainly know that you cannot escape from the retribution for your evil acts. I pray, Great King that you quickly go to see the Buddha. People other than the Buddha, the World-Honored One, cannot possibly save you. As I feel pity for you, I, too, urge you to take my advice."

Hearing these words, the Great King was filled with fear and his whole body shook with terror. The five parts of his bodyviolently trembled like a plantain tree [in a storm]. He looked upward and replied, "Who is in the heaven? No form is seen; only the voice is heard."

"Great King, I am your father, Bimbisara. You ought to follow Jivaka's advice. Do not follow the words of the six ministers who have wrong views."

Hearing this, the King fainted and fell on the ground. The scabs on his body spread more and grew in intensity, and also their stench became even worse. Cooling medicine was applied to the scabs, but they gave forth vapor and their poisonous fever rose ever higher, showing no sign of alleviation.

[Ministers] .................................[Masters]
1. Great Minister Candrayashas....... 1. Purana Kashyapa
3. A minister named Tattvalabdha .....3. Samjayin Vairatiputra
4. A minister named Sarvarthajna .....4. Ajita Kesakambalin
5. Great Minister Mangala [611c].......5. The ascetic Vasu

116 It is also stated in the same sutra [chapter on Sacred Practice]:

[The Buddha said:] "Sons of good families, as I have declared, for the sake of King Ajatashatru, I will not enter Nirvana. You may not understand the profound meaning of this. The reason for this is: 'for the sake of' means for all ordinary beings. 'King Ajatashatru' means all those who commit the five gravest offenses. Also, 'for the sake of' means for all beings subject to conditioned states of existence. I do not dwell in the world for the sake of the beings who
have attained the unconditioned state. Why? Because one who has attained the unconditioned state is no longer a sentient being. 'Ajatashatru' refers to those possessed of evil passions. Further, 'for the sake of' is for the sentient beings who have not yet seen Buddha-nature. I do not dwell long in the world for those who have seen Buddha-nature. Why? Because one who has seen Buddha-nature is no longer a sentient being. 'Ajatashatru' refers to all those who have not yet awakened aspiration for the highest, perfect Enlightenment. Again, 'for the sake of' is said of Buddha-nature. 'Ajata' means not produced. 'Shatru' means enemy. Because one does not produce Buddha-nature, one gives rise to the enemy, that is, evil passions. Because one gives rise to the enemy, evil passions, one does not see Buddha-nature. When one does not give rise to evil passions, one sees Buddha-nature. Because one sees Buddha-nature, one can firmly dwell in the great and complete Nirvana. This is what is meant by 'not produced.' Hence, the name 'Ajatashatru.'

"Sons of good families, 'Ajata' means not produced; what is not produced is Nirvana. 'Shatru' refers to worldly matters. 'For the sake of' means not defiled. Because [the Buddha] is not defiled by any of the eight kinds of matters, he does not enter Nirvana for immeasurable, boundless and countless kalpas. For this reason, I say, "For the sake of Ajatashatru, I will not enter Nirvana for countless kotis of kalpas."

"Sons of good families, the Tathāgata’s mystic words are inconceivable. The Buddha, Dharma and Sangha are also inconceivable. Bodhisattvas, Mahasattvas, too, are inconceivable. The Great Nirvana Sutra is equally inconceivable."

Then the World-Honored One, the Great Compassionate Guide, entered the Samadhi of Moon-light Love for the sake of King Ajatashatru. Having entered the Samadhi, the Buddha emitted a great flood of light. The light, which was pure and refreshing, reached the King and shone upon his body. Then the scabs were instantly healed....

The King [612a] said to Jivaka, "He is the foremost of the [five kinds of] gods. For what reason does he emit this light?"

"Great King, it seems to me that this auspicious sign is for your sake. Because you said that there was no good physician who could
cure my body and mind, he first emits this light to heal your body, and then your mind." The King said to Jivaka, "Does the Tathágata, the World-Honored One, care to think of me?"

Jivaka replied, "Suppose a man has seven children. When one of them becomes ill, the parents' hearts lean heavily toward this sick child, though their hearts are not biased. Great King, so it is with the Tathágata. Although he is equally compassionate for all sentient beings, he is especially concerned about those who have karmic evil. The Buddha's compassionate thought is on indolent and unruly persons; he pays little care to diligent persons. Who are diligent persons? They are the bodhisattvas of the first six stages. Great King, various Buddhas, World-Honored Ones, do not perceive sentient beings' family origin, age, wealth, auspicious times, astrological references, craftsmanship, low status in society, or status as man or maidservants. They perceive only those sentient beings who possess the good mind. If they have the good mind, the Buddhas' compassionate thought is on them. Great King, you should realize that this auspicious sign is the light which the Tathágata sends forth as he enters the Samadhi of Moon-light Love."

The King then asked, "What is the Samadhi of Moon-light Love."

Jivaka replied, "Just as the moon-light causes all the blue lotuses to bloom in clear brilliance, the Samadhi of Moon-light Love causes sentient beings to open up the good mind. Hence, it is called 'the Samadhi of Moon-light Love.' Great King, just as the moonlight produces joy in the hearts of travelers, this Samadhi produces joy in the hearts of those who practice the path of Nirvana. Hence, called 'the Samadhi of Moon-light Love'...." It is the king of all good; it is the nectar. It is what all sentient beings love and adore. Hence, it is called 'the Samadhi of Moon-light Love'...."

Then the Buddha said to the whole assembly, "Among the causes and conditions which bring all sentient beings closer to the highest, perfect Enlightenment, nothing is more important than good friends. For, King Ajatashatru, if you did not follow Jivaka's advice, you would certainly die on the 7th day of next month and fall into Avichi hell. Hence, with the approach of the day of death, nothing is more important than a good friend."

On the way [to the Buddha's place], King Ajatashatru heard that
King Virudhaka of Shravasti was burned to death while cruising in a boat and that Monk Kokalika, while alive, fell into Avichi hell through a cleft that suddenly appeared in the earth. Sunaksatra, on the other hand, had committed various evil acts, but all his karmic evil was destroyed when he visited the Buddha. Having heard these stories, Ajatashatru said to Jivaka, "I have heard these two kinds of stories, but I still have anxiety. Since you have come to see me, Jivaka, I want to ride on the same elephant with you. When I am about to fall into Avichi hell, hold me tight and keep me from falling. For I [612b] have heard in the past that one who has attained the Way never falls into hell...

[The Buddha said,] "Why do you say that you will certainly fall into hell? Great King, all the karmic evil committed by sentient beings is of two kinds: light and heavy. The evil committed with the mind and speech is light. The evil committed with the body, speech, and mind is heavy. Great King, when you have committed evil with the mind and speech but not with the body, the retribution you will receive is light. Great King, in the past you did not verbally command that [your father] be killed, but you simply ordered that his legs be cut off. Great King, if you had ordered your vassals to behead him, they would have beheaded him straightaway while he was standing. If they had executed him while he was sitting, you would be innocent. How much less innocent you are, since you did not give such an order.

"King, if you are guilty, all Buddhas, World-Honored Ones, are also guilty. The reason is that your father, the former king Bimbisara, always planted roots of good [by making offerings] to the Buddhas. For this reason, he was able to secure the throne in this life. If the Buddhas had not accepted the offerings, he would not have become a king. If he had not become a king, you would not have killed him in order to seize the kingdom. So if you are guilty of committing evil by killing your father, we Buddhas are equally guilty. If the Buddhas, the World-Honored Ones, are not guilty, how can you alone be guilty?

"Great King, Bimbisara formerly conceived an evil thought. He went into Mt. Vipula; hunting deer, he went up and down in the moor, but he shot no game at all. He happened to meet a hermit who had acquired the five transcendent powers. Having seen him, the King conceived enmity and an evil thought: 'I have been hunting. The reason I have shot no game must surely be that this
man has driven the game away.' He then ordered his attendants to kill the hermit.

"At the time of death, the hermit became enraged; because of an evil thought he had conceived, he lost the transcendent powers. He vowed, 'I am completely innocent. With your thought and words, you have outrageously ordered my execution. In the next life, I will execute you in the same manner with thought and word.' Hearing this, the King became remorseful and conducted a burial service for the dead body.

"The former king thus received light retribution and escaped falling into hell. How would you, King, receive the retribution of tortures in hell when you have not done such an act? The former king committed evil and himself received the retribution. How should you be guilty of killing him? You say that your father, the king, was innocent, but was he really innocent? Since he committed evil, he received retribution. If he had not committed evil, he would not have received retribution. If your father, the former king, was innocent, how could there be retribution? In this world, Bimbisara received both good and evil recompense. So the recompense he received was actually indeterminate. Because his recompense was indeterminate, your act of killing is also indeterminate. If so, how can it be determined that you will fall into hell?

"Great King, the insanity of sentient beings is [612c] of four kinds: 1) insanity induced by greed, 2) insanity caused by drugs, 3) insanity caused by spells, and 4) insanity caused by one's karmic conditions in the past. Great King, these four kinds of insanity are found among my disciples. Even though such disciples commit much evil, I have never declared that they have broken the precepts. Their acts will not lead them to the three evil realms. If they regain their senses, I do not tell them that they have violated the precepts. King, you originally killed your father out of greed for the kingdom. It was in the state of insanity induced by greed that you did this. How is it possible that you are guilty of committing evil? Great King, it is like a man who kills his mother in dead drunkenness but, when he becomes sober, is full of remorse. You should realize that such an act does not produce retribution. King, you were intoxicated with greed. You did not commit that act in the normal state of mind. If it was not committed in the normal state of mind, how could you be guilty?
"Great King, an illustration of a magician may be presented here. At the crossroad he magically creates various forms of men and women, elephants, horses, ornaments and robes. Foolish people take them as real, but the wise know that they are not. So it is with killing. Ordinary people take it as real, but Buddhas, the World-Honored Ones, know that it is not.

"Great King, it is also like the echo of a voice in the mountain valleys. Foolish people take it as a real voice, but the wise know that it is not. So it is with killing. Ordinary people take it as real, but Buddhas, the World-Honored Ones, know that it is not.

"Great King, it is also like a person who entertains a malicious intent but approaches you with feigned friendship. Ignorant people take that as true friendliness, but the wise, knowing thoroughly, realize that it is an empty pretense. So it is with killing. Ordinary people take it as real, but Buddhas, the World-Honored Ones, know that it is not.

"Great King, it is like taking up a mirror and looking at one's image in it. Ignorant people take the image as real, but the wise, knowing thoroughly, realize that it is not. So it is with killing. Ordinary people take it as real, but Buddhas, the World-Honored Ones, know that it is not.

"Great King, it is like shimmering of heated air. Ignorant people take it as water, but the wise, knowing thoroughly, realize that it is not. So it is with killing. Ordinary people take it as real, but Buddhas, the World-Honored Ones, know that it is not.

"Great King, it is like a mirage. Ignorant people take it as real, but the wise, knowing thoroughly, realize that it is not. So it is with killing. Ordinary people take it as real, but Buddhas, the World-Honored Ones, know that it is not.

"Great King, it is like enjoying the pleasures of the five sensual desires in a dream. Ignorant people take it as real, but the wise, knowing thoroughly, realize that it is not. So it is with killing. Ordinary people take it as real, but Buddhas, the World-Honored Ones, know that it is not.

"Great King, I have attained thorough understanding concerning the way of killing, the act of killing, the one who kills, and the
consequences of killing, and also the emancipation from the consequences, but this does not mean that I am guilty of killing. King, even if you know about killing, how can this make you guilty? Great King, it is like a man in charge of wine; he knows much about wine, but he does not become drunk unless he drinks.

"Again, one who knows about fire does not burn. In the same way, King, you know about killing but how can that make you guilty? Great King, sentient beings commit various crimes in the daylight and also commit theft in the moonlight, but they do not commit any crime when there is no sun or moon in the sky. It is true that because of the sun and the moon crimes are committed, but they are not really guilty. So it is with killing....

"Great King, just as Nirvana is neither existent nor non-existent and yet it is existent, so it is with killing. Although it is neither existent nor non-existent and yet it is existent, it is not existent for one who is repentant and is not non-existent for one who is not repentant. For one who receives retribution of killing, it is existent. For one who realizes void-ness, killing is considered non-existent. For one who sees entity in each thing, killing is not non-existent. For one who clings to the view of existence, killing is existent, because such a person receives retribution. One who rejects the view of existence receives no retribution. For one who realizes the eternal presence of Nirvana, killing is not existent. For one who does not, it is not non-existent. One who clings to the eternal presence of Nirvana cannot see killing as non-existent, because such a person receives retribution for evil acts. Thus one who clings to the eternal presence of Nirvana cannot see killing as non-existent. For this reason, although killing is neither existent nor non-existent, it is described as existent. Great King, sentient beings are so termed as long as they exhale and inhale breath. When exhaling and inhaling of breath is cut off, this is called killing. The Buddhas speak of killing in accordance with the common practice in the world....

[Ajatashatru said:] "O World-Honored One, as I observe things in the world, I see that from a seed of the eranda grows a eranda tree. I do not see that from a seed of the eranda grows a candana tree. I now see for the first time that from a seed of the eranda grows a candana tree. I mean that the eranda seed is myself and the candana tree is Faith that has no root in my heart. By 'having no root' I mean that formerly I did not know what it was to revere the
Tathāgata, and did not believe in the Dharma and Sangha, either. I describe this as 'having no root.' World-Honored One, had I not encountered the Tathāgata, the World-Honored One, I would undergo immeasurable suffering in the great hell for immeasurable and countless kalpas. I have now met the Buddha. Having observed the Buddha's virtue, I will destroy with it the evil passions and evil thoughts of sentient beings."

The Buddha said, "Great King, very good. I now realize that you will unfailingly destroy the evil thoughts of sentient beings."

"World-Honored One, so long as I can surely destroy evil thoughts of sentient beings, even if I were to dwell in Avici hell, undergoing pain for immeasurable kalpas for the sake of sentient beings, I would not regard such pain as unbearable."

At that time, innumerable people of Magadha all awakened the aspiration for the highest, perfect Enlightenment. Because those innumerable people awakened the great aspiration, [613b] King Ajatashatru's heavy evil karma became slight. The King, the Queen, the consorts and court ladies equally awakened the aspiration for the highest, perfect Enlightenment.

At that time, King Ajatashatru said to Jivaka, "Jivaka, even before I die, I have already attained the pure heavenly body. Abandoning the short life, I have acquired long life; casting aside the impermanent body, I have gained a body of eternity. I will lead sentient beings to awaken the aspiration for the highest, perfect Enlightenment...."

Having uttered these words, the disciple of the Buddhas [i.e., Ajatashatru] [made offerings to the Buddha] with various jeweled banners ... and praised him with a verse:

Your words of truth are exceedingly subtle and wonderful,
Skillful in guidance and in the use of expression;
They are a treasury of profound mystic truths.
For the sake of the multitude,
You display extensive words to explain the principles;
For the sake of the multitudes, you present short explanations.
Being possessed of such words,
You cure the illnesses of sentient beings.
If there are sentient beings
Who are able to hear these words,
Whether they accept them in faith or not,
They will surely come to know the Buddha's teaching.
The Buddhas always speak in gentle words,
But for some people, they expound in rough words.
Their words, both gentle and rough,
Are grounded in the highest truth.
For this reason, I now
Take refuge in the World-Honored One.
The Tathágata’s words are of one taste,
Like the waters of the great ocean.
This we call the highest truth.
Hence, there are no meaningless words;
What the Tathágata now teaches -
The various innumerable teachings -
Men and women, old and young, hear
And are equally led to the highest truth.
[Nirvana] is without cause and without effect,
Non-arising and non-perishing.
So it is called Great Nirvana.
Those who hear the Dharma can have their bonds
destroyed.
The Tathágata, for the sake of all beings,
Always becomes one's father or mother.
Know that all sentient beings
Are the Tathágata’s children.
The World-Honored One of Great Compassion
Performed painful practices for the sake of the multitudes,
Like a person possessed by spirits
Running about wildly in a frenzy.
I have now been able to meet the Buddha
And acquired good through the three modes of action;
May I transfer the merit accruing from this
Toward attainment of the supreme Bodhi.
I now make offerings
To the Buddha, Dharma and Sangha; [613c]
May I, with the merit of this,
Ensure the ever presence of the Three Treasures in the world.
I have now acquired
Various merits;
May I, with such merits, defeat
The four Maras of sentient beings.
Having met with evil friends, I have committed offenses
Which bring retribution in the past, present and future.
These offenses I now repent before the Buddha.
May I never commit such evils again.
May all sentient beings alike
Awaken the aspiration for Bodhi
And with concentrated thought always
Be mindful of all the Buddhas of the ten quarters.
May all sentient beings
Destroy their evil passions forever
And clearly see Buddha-nature
As Manjushri does.

Then the World-Honored One praised King Ajatashatru, "Very good, very good! It should be known that if a person awakens the Bodhi-mind, he adorns assemblies of Buddhas. In the past, Great King, you have already awakened aspiration for the highest, perfect Enlightenment for the first time in the presence of Buddha Vipashyin. From that time until my appearance in the world, you have never fallen into hell and undergone suffering there. You should know, Great King, that the Bodhi-mind produces immeasurable reward like this. Great King, from now on, be ever careful to cultivate the Bodhi-mind. The reason is that by doing so, you will be able to extinguish immeasurable karmic evil."

Then King Ajatashatru and all the people in Magadha rose from their seats, circumambulated the Buddha three times, took their leave and returned to the palace town.

117 It is also stated [in the Nirvana Sutra, "Chapter on Kashyapa"]:

Sons of good families, King Bimbisara of Rajagriha had a prince named Sudarshana (Good-looking One), who under the influence of previous karma gave rise to atrocious thoughts; he tried to kill his father, but had no chance. At that time, a wicked man Devadatta, equally under the influence of some karmic cause in the past, produced evil thoughts against me and tried to kill me.
Having acquired the five transcendent powers, he soon succeeded in establishing a friendly relation with Prince Sudarshana.

Devadatta demonstrated various miracles to the prince: he disappeared from where there was no exit and reappeared through the gate, or went out through the gate and reappeared from where there was no gate. On another occasion, he manifested an elephant, a horse, an ox, a sheep, a man or a woman. Having seen these, Prince Sudarshana entertained the thoughts of friendship, joy and respect. Thereupon, he had various things prepared and offered them to Devadatta.

The prince next said, "Great Master, the Saint, I [614a] wish to see mandarava blossoms." Then Devadatta immediately ascended to the Heaven of Thirty-three Devas and sought to obtain blossoms from the devas. But since his merit had already been exhausted, nobody gave him blossoms. Failing to obtain the blossoms, he thought, "Mandarava blossoms have no sense of 'I' or 'mine', so no crime will be committed even if I pick them." As soon as he tried to pick them, he lost his transcendent powers. He then found himself in Rajagriha. Full of shame, he was not able to see Prince Sudarshana.

He further thought, "I will now go to the Tathágata and ask him to grant me his Sangha. If the Buddha agrees, I will be able to give instructions as I please and order about Shariputra and others."

Then Devadatta came to me and said, "I request you, Tathágata, to leave the leadership of the Sangha to me. I will expound various teachings to them and transform and train them." I replied to this foolish man, "Shariputra and others, having learned the great wisdom, are trusted and respected by the world. Nevertheless, I do not transfer the leadership of the Sangha to them. How much less would I leave it to the care of a fool like you who deserves to be spat on!"

Thereupon, as Devadatta's evil thought increased, he said, "Gautama, even though you now keep the Sangha under control, its power will not last long. It will perish before my eyes."

As soon as he uttered these words, the earth shook six times. As Devadatta fell to the ground, a violent wind arose about his body, blowing up dust and covering and soiling the body with it. Seeing
this bad omen, Devadatta made this remark, "If I am doomed to fall into Avichi hell in this present life, I will take revenge of the great evil done to me."

Then Devadatta stood up and went to see Prince Sudarshana. Seeing him, Sudarshana asked the master, "Why do you look so emaciated and sorrowful?"

Devadatta replied, "I am always like this. Do you not know?"
Sudarshana said, "Please explain the reason. What is the cause of this?" Devadatta said, "I have become your close friend. Those outside the palace abuse you, saying you are in the wrong. When I hear this, why should I not be sorrowed by this?"

Prince Sudarshana further said, "How do the people of the kingdom abuse and insult me?" Devadatta replied, "They abuse you, calling you 'Unborn Enemy'." Sudarshana asked, "Why do they call me 'Unborn Enemy'? Who made this name?"

Devadatta answered, "Before you were born, all the soothsayers predicted, 'This child, when born, will surely kill its father.' For this reason, people outside the palace all called you 'Unborn Enemy.' Those inside the palace, however, [614b] called you 'Sudarshana' in order to protect your feelings. Having heard the soothsayers' words, Queen Vaidehi, after the delivery, dropped you from the top of the tower. When you hit the ground, one of your fingers was broken. For this reason, people also called you 'Broken Fingered.' When I heard this, I was so full of sorrow and resentment that I could not tell this to you."

Devadatta, relating this and other pernicious stories to the prince, instigated him to kill his father. He said, "If you kill your father, I will kill the Mendicant Gautama."

Thereupon, Prince Sudarshana asked a minister named Varsakara, "Why did the Great King give me the name 'Unborn Enemy'?" In reply the minister told him all that had happened, which was the same as Devadatta's explanation. Upon hearing this, Sudarshana together with the minister seized his father the king, confined him in a place outside the palace, and ordered the four kinds of soldiers to guard it. Hearing this, Queen Vaidehi immediately went to see the king. But the guards under strict order of the king intercepted her and did not allow her to enter. Angered by this, the queen
rebuked them.

Then the guards reported to the prince, "The wife of the great king wishes to see your father the king. Should we allow her in or not?" Hearing this, Sudarshana became enraged. He immediately went to his mother, grasped her by the hair, drew his sword and was about to kill her.

Then Jivaka said to the great king, "Since the foundation of this kingdom, no woman has ever been executed, however grave her offenses may be. How would you kill the woman who gave birth to you?"

Sudarshana, hearing this, followed Jivaka's advice and let go of his mother. But he stopped supplying the great king with any clothing, bedding, food, drink and medicinal drink. Seven days passed, and the king's life ended.

Seeing his father's death, Prince Sudarshana became remorseful. Minister Varsakara taught him various evil views, saying, "Great King, all kinds of acts are blameless. Why are you remorseful?" Jivaka further said, "Great King, you must know that this act of yours involves a twofold evil: one is killing your father, and the other is killing a Stream-winner. Apart from the Buddha, there is no one who can remove your evil." King Sudarshana said, "The Tathágata is pure and free of defilement. How would he see such an evil man as me?"

Sons of good families, I was aware of this happening. I said to Ánanda, "After three months, I will enter Nirvana." Hearing of this, Sudarshana immediately came to see me. As I expounded the Dharma to him, his heavy karmic evil became slight, and he attained Faith that has no root in him.

Sons of good families, having heard my words, my disciples failed to understand my intent and made this remark, "The Tathágata has declared that he would enter complete Nirvana." Sons of good families, there are two kinds of bodhisattvas: [614c] bodhisattvas in the true sense and those in provisional name. Bodhisattvas in provisional name, upon hearing that I would enter Nirvana in three months, all fell into a regressive thought, saying, "If the Tathágata is subject to impermanence and will not dwell in the world [forever], what should we do? In order to resolve this matter [of
impermanence], we have undergone great pain for countless lifetimes. The Tathágata, the World-Honored One, has perfected and is possessed of immeasurable merit; still, he cannot destroy the Mara of death. How could we destroy it?"

Sons of good families, for the sake of such bodhisattvas, I declare, "The Tathágata is eternally abiding and immutable." If my disciples, hearing this, fail to understand my intent, they will say, "The Tathágata will ultimately never enter Nirvana."

118 From the words of truth of the Great Sage, we see that when the three kinds of people difficult to save, or the three kinds of illness difficult to cure, entrust themselves to the universal Vow of Great Compassion and take refuge in the ocean of Faith of the Other-Power, the Buddha arouses compassion for them and cures their illness, in other words, he takes pity on them and heals their sickness. It is like the excellent medicine of manda curing all illnesses. Beings of the defiled world, the multitudes full of depravity and evil, should seek to attain the True Faith, indestructible like diamond. They should hold fast to the Primal Vow, the excellent medicine of manda. This one should realize.

119 In various Mahayana sutras, the beings difficult to save are mentioned. The Larger Sutra, fasc. 1, says, "Excluded are those who commit the five gravest offenses and abuse the right Dharma." It is also said [in the Teaching Assembly of the Tathágata of Infinite Life, fasc. 1], "Excepted are those who commit evil acts that would consign them to Avici hell and those who abuse the right Dharma and the sages." The Contemplation Sutra clarifies that those who commit the five gravest offenses can attain birth, but does not state that those who abuse the Dharma can. The Nirvana Sutra speaks of the beings difficult to save and the illnesses difficult to cure. How should we understand [different expositions in] these teachings of truth?

120 Answer: It is stated in the Commentary on Vasubandhu's Discourse on the Pure Land, fasc. 1:

**Question:** The Larger Sutra says, "Aspirants for birth [in the Pure Land] will all attain birth, excepting those who have committed the five gravest offenses and abused the right Dharma." The Contemplation Sutra says, "Those who have committed the five gravest offenses and the ten evil acts as well as various other evils will also attain birth." How do you harmonize those descriptions in
the two sutras?

**Answer:** The [Larger] Sutra mentions the committing of the two gravest evils, namely, the five gravest offenses and the abusing of the right Dharma. Since one has committed those two kinds of evils, one is not able to attain birth. The other sutra mentions only the committing of the ten evils and the five gravest offenses; it does not mention abuse of the right Dharma. Since one has not abused the right Dharma, one is able to attain birth.

**Question:** If there is a man who has committed the five gravest offenses but not abused the right Dharma, he will, according to the [Contemplation] Sutra, be able to obtain birth. Suppose there is a man who has abused the right Dharma but has not committed the five gravest offenses. If he desires birth in the Pure Land, will he be able to attain it?

**Answer:** He who has committed the transgression of abusing the right Dharma [615a] will not be able to attain birth, even though he has not committed any other evils. For what reason? The [Perfection of Great Wisdom] Sutra says:

Those who have committed the five gravest offenses will fall into the Great Avichi hell, where they will receive retributions of the grave evils in various ways for one kalpa. Those who have abused the right Dharma will also fall into the Great Avichi hell. When the period of one kalpa comes to an end, they will be sent to the Great Avichi hell of another world. In this way, such evildoers will consecutively pass through a hundred thousand Great Avichi hells.

The Buddha thus did not mention the time of their release [from the Avichi hells]. This is because the transgression of abusing the right Dharma is extremely grave. Further, the right Dharma refers to the Buddha Dharma. Such ignorant persons have abused it; therefore, does it stand to reason that they should seek birth in a Buddha-land? If they seek birth merely from a desire to enjoy pleasures, it is as if they sought to attain ice, which is not made from water, or fire, which does not produce smoke. Is it not contrary to reason that they would be able to attain birth?

**Question:** What is the act of abusing the right Dharma?

**Answer:** If one says, "There is no Buddha," "There is no Buddha
Dharma," "There is no bodhisattva," or "There is no Dharma for bodhisattvas," such views, held firmly in the mind by one's own reasoning or by listening to others' teachings, are called 'abusing the right Dharma.'

**Question:** The fault of holding such views belongs only to those who hold them. What suffering does it cause to other beings, which makes it more serious than the five gravest offenses?

**Answer:** If there were no Buddhas or bodhisattvas who edify living beings by teaching them ways of both worldly and supra-mundane good, how could they know about [the Confucian moral virtues, namely,] humanity, righteousness, propriety, wisdom, and sincerity? The result would be that all worldly good, such as those virtues, would perish and there would be no wise men and holy sages [who practice the way of supra-mundane good]. You only know of the graveness of the five gravest offenses. You are not aware that they arise from the absence of the right Dharma. For this reason, abusing the right Dharma is the gravest of all evils.

**Question:** Sutras explaining the law of karma state that it is like a balance; a heavier object pulls it down. According to the *Contemplation Sutra*, those who have committed the five gravest offenses and the ten evil acts as well as various other evils, will fall into the evil realms, where they will pass many kalpas undergoing immeasurable sufferings. If, however, at their death they meet a good friend, who urges them to recite the Name 'Homage to the Buddha of Infinite Life,' and accordingly repeat it ten times continuously with sincere heart, then they will obtain birth in the Pure Land of Peace and Bliss. There they will join those who are rightly established in the Mahayana Path. Thus, they will not retrogress [from the attainment of Enlightenment] and will forever be free from various sufferings in the three evil realms. How do you explain this in the light of [the law of karma according to which a heavier karma] pulls one down? Furthermore, from the beginning-less past, sentient beings have been given to acts of various defilements, and so they are tied to the three worlds. If, as you say, they can attain emancipation from the three worlds by mere mindfulness of Amida Buddha with ten repetitions of his Name, what will become of the bondage of karma?
**Answer:** You consider the bondage of karma, such as the five gravest offenses and the ten evil acts, as heavy, and the ten repetitions of the Name by a man of the lowest level of the lowest grade as light. And so you contend that such an evildoer will first fall into hell owing to his evil doing and thus be tied to the three worlds. Now let us examine the weight of karmic evils in the light of Buddhist principles.

It is dependent on (1) the state of mind, (2) the object, and (3) the degree of concentration, and not by length of time.

(1) The state of mind: The evildoer in question has committed evils in his false and perverted state of mind, whereas the ten repetitions of the Name arise when he hears the teaching of True Reality from a good friend who consoles him by various skillful means. One is truthful and the other false. How can they be compared with each other? Suppose there is a room, which has been dark for a thousand years. If a light is cast into the room even for a short while, the room will instantly become bright. How could the darkness refuse to leave because it has been there for a thousand years? This is what is meant by 'the state of mind.'

(2) The object: The evildoer with deluded thoughts has committed evils to other sentient beings who have also come into existence as the result of evil passions and deluded thoughts. The ten repetitions of the Name arise from the unsurpassed Faith by taking as object the Name of Amida Tathágata of a glorious body of skillful means that comprises immeasurable merits, which are true and pure. Suppose there is a man hit by a poisoned arrow, which has pierced his sinews and broken a bone. If he hears the sound of a drum treated with a special antidote, the arrow will instantly come out and the poison will be removed. It is stated in the *Shurangama-samádhi Sutra,* "A parable may be given of a medicine called 'remover.' If, in time of battle, it is applied to a drum, those who hear the sound of the drum will have the arrows extracted and the poison removed. So it is with bodhisattvas, Mahasattvas. If they dwell in the Shurangama Samadhi or hear its name, the arrows of the three poisons will spontaneously come out." How could the arrow stuck in the body be too deep to come out when the sound of the drum is heard? Also, how could the poison be too strong to be removed? This is what is meant by 'the object.'
The degree of concentration: The evildoer has committed evils with a thought, which anticipates the result and is, therefore, mixed with other thoughts. The ten repetitions of the Name are based on a state of mind, which does not anticipate results and is, therefore, not mixed with other thoughts. This is what is meant by 'the degree of concentration.'

From the above examination of three matters, it is clear that the ten repetitions of the Name are stronger than the five gravest offenses or the ten evil acts and so this 'stronger' karma prevails, enabling the evildoer to escape from the three states of existence. Thus there is no discrepancy between the two sutras.

**Question:** How long is 'one thought'?

**Answer:** There are a hundred and one arisings and perishings [of a dharma] in one moment; there are sixty such moments in one thought-moment. The term 'thought' under discussion does not have this temporal meaning. The ten repetitions of the Name are ten consecutive thoughts of Amida Buddha, not mingled with other thoughts, whether they arise from contemplation of his entire body or part of it, depending upon the conditions. [Ten] repetitions of the Name should be interpreted in the same way.

**Question:** If our thoughts settle on some other thing [than Amida], we can collect and re-direct them [to him]. We can, in this way, count the number of the Nembutsu thoughts. But when the number of repetitions of the Name is knowable, they cannot arise one after another without interruption. When we concentrate and focus our thoughts [on the Name], how can we count the number of them?

**Answer:** When the [Contemplation] Sutra speaks of 'ten times,' it simply means to show that the karmic force necessary for birth in the Pure Land is accomplished [by this act]. We do not need to know the number of it. As it is said, the summer cicada [has] no knowledge of spring or autumn. How could that insect know that it is summertime? Those who know this speak like that. Likewise, only those who have transcendent faculties can tell that the karmic force necessary for birth in the Pure Land is accomplished by the ten repetitions of the Name. We have only to remember Amida continuously, thought after thought, without thinking of other things. Why is it necessary to know the number
of repetitions of the Name? But if you must know it, there is a method. Follow the method, which has been transmitted orally [from master to disciple]. This method should not be written down.

The Master of Kuang-ming temple says [in the Commentary on the Non-meditative Practice]:

**Question:** According to the Forty-eight Vows, only those who commit the five gravest offenses and those who abuse the right Dharma are excluded from attainment of birth. Here, in the passage of the Contemplation Sutra on the lowest grade of the lowest class it is disclosed that those who abuse the Dharma are rejected but those who commit the five gravest offenses are saved. What is the implication of this?

**Answer:** This matter is to be understood as a teaching to prevent us from doing evil. In the Forty-eight Vows those who abuse the Dharma and those who commit the five gravest offenses are excluded from salvation, for these two kinds of evil are the gravest of all karmic hindrances. If sentient beings commit them, they will at once fall into Avichi hell, where they are tormented for many kalpas without a chance of escape. Fearing that we would commit these two kinds of offenses, the Tathágata, through skillful means, forbids us to commit them, saying that offenders will not attain birth. This does not mean that they are not really saved and embraced.

When it is disclosed in the passage on the lowest grade of the lowest class that those who commit the five gravest offenses are saved but those who abuse the Dharma are excluded, it is because the beings of this group have already committed the five gravest offenses, and so they should not be abandoned and left to repeat transmigration. Thus Amida, awakening Great Compassion, enfolds them and brings them to the Pure Land. Since, in this case, the offense of abusing the Dharma has not yet been committed, in order to prevent them from doing so, it is stated that if one abuses the Dharma, one will not attain birth. This is said of the karmic evil that has not yet been committed. If one has committed this offense, one is still enfolded by Amida and brought to the Pure Land. Although such an offender is able to attain birth there, he will be enclosed in a lotus bud and pass many kalpas in that state.
While these offenders stay in lotus buds, they have three obstructions: first, they cannot see Buddhas and a host of sages; second, they cannot hear the right Dharma; third, they cannot visit Buddha-lands to make offerings to the Buddhas. Apart from these obstructions, they are free of various sufferings, as it is said in the sutras, "they are like bhiksus who have entered the pleasure of the Third Dhyana Heaven." One should know that although they are enclosed in the lotus buds for many kalpas, are they not far better than undergoing various torments in Avichi hell for many kalpas? This matter has been explained as a teaching to prevent us from doing evil.

He also says [in the *Hymns of the Nembutsu Liturgy*]:

The Pure Land is forever free of abusive language and hatred; all are equal and there is no sorrow or affliction. Humans and devas, whether good or evil, can all go to be born there. Upon reaching there, their distinctions no longer exist. Being the same in their spiritual attainment, they dwell in the Stage of Non-retrogression. What made this so? When Amida was in his causal stage, under the guidance of Buddha Lokeshvararaja, he abandoned the throne and left his home. He then awakened the mind of Compassion and Wisdom and widely proclaimed the Forty-eight Vows. Through the Buddha's Vow-Power, those who have committed the five gravest offenses and the ten transgressions can have their karmic evil removed and attain birth. Whether they are those who have abused the Dharma or those lacking the seed of Buddhahood, all attain birth if they convert their minds.

The five gravest offenses are explained as follows [in the *Ten Causes of Birth*]: According to Tzu-chou, there are two traditions concerning the five gravest offenses. One is [616a] the five gravest offenses in the tradition of the Three Vehicles: 1) intentionally killing one's father; 2) intentionally killing one's mother; 3) intentionally killing an arhat; 4) destroying the harmony of the Sangha with perverted views; and 5) causing blood to flow from the Buddha's body with an evil intent. They are called 'gravest' (literally, 'going against') because they go against the field of benevolence and the field of merits. Those who commit these gravest offenses, when their bodies perish and their life ends, definitely fall into Avichi hell, where they undergo pain without interruption for one great kalpa. Hence, these offenses are called
'the karma bringing about uninterrupted pain.' The *Abhidharma-kosha* mentions the five acts bringing about uninterrupted pain as equivalents to those above. A verse reads:

Violating one's mother or a nun of the stage of non-learning [equivalent to the offense of killing one's mother],
Killing a bodhisattva who abides in meditation [equivalent to the offense of killing one's father],
Killing a sage of the stage of learning or non-learning [equivalent to the offense of killing an arhat],
Destroying the cause of harmony of the Sangha [equivalent to the offense of destroying the Sangha],
Destroying stupas [equivalent to causing blood to flow from the body of the Buddha].

The second tradition is the five gravest offenses of Mahayana, as stated in the *Sutra Expounded to Nigranthas*:

1) Destroying stupas, burning sutra-repositories, or stealing properties of the three treasures. 2) Slandering the teaching for the Three Vehicles by saying that it is not the sacred teaching of the Buddha, obstructing and depreciating it, or hiding it. 3) Beating and rebuking those who have renounced the world, whether they observe the precepts, have received no precepts, or have broken them; enumerating their transgressions, confining them, sending them back to the secular life, forcing them to do menial work, enforcing tax duties on them, or putting them to death. 4) Killing one's father, killing one's mother, causing blood to flow from the body of the Buddha, destroying the harmony of the Sangha, or killing an arhat. 5) Rejecting the law of causation and constantly performing the ten transgressions throughout life.

It is stated in the *[Ksitigarbha's Ten-Wheel] Sutra*:

1) Killing a Pratyekabuddha with an evil intention; this is the offense of killing. 2) Violating an arhat nun; this is an immoral act. 3) Stealing or destroying offerings made to the three treasures;
this is an act of stealing. 4) Destroying the harmony of the Sangha with perverted views; this is an act of speaking false words.

Chapter On The True Enlightenment

The Vow of unfailing attainment of Nirvana

The Birth that is Inconceivable

Chapter 4: A Collection of Passages Revealing the True Enlightenment of the Pure Land Way

1 If I am to reveal, with respect, the True Enlightenment, it is the supreme state of perfect accomplishment realized by the Other-Power, that is, the ultimate fruition of unsurpassed Nirvana. It originates from the Vow of unfailing attainment of Nirvana, which is also called the Vow of realization of great Nirvana.

When we, ordinary people filled with evil passions, the multitudes defiled by karmic evil and subject to birth-and-death, attain the Faith and Practice transferred by Amida for our Going forth, we will immediately join the Mahayana group of the Rightly Established Stage. Because we dwell in the Rightly Established Stage, we unfailingly reach Nirvana. Unfailing attainment of Nirvana is [attainment of] eternal bliss. The eternal bliss is the ultimate state of tranquility and extinction. Tranquility and extinction [616b] is the supreme Nirvana. The supreme Nirvana is the Unconditioned Dharma-body. The Unconditioned Dharma-body is True Reality. True Reality is Dharma-nature. Dharma-nature is True Suchness. True Suchness is Oneness. We note that Amida Tathágata comes from Thus-ness and manifests various forms of Recompensed, Accommodated and Transformed Bodies.

2 The passage of the Vow of unfailing attainment of Nirvana in the Larger Sutra, fasc. 1, reads:

If, when I attain Buddhahood, humans and devas in my land should not dwell in the Rightly Established Stage and unfailingly reach Nirvana, may I not attain perfect Enlightenment.

3 It is stated in the Teaching Assembly of the Tathágata of Infinite Life, fasc. 1:
If, when I become Buddha, the sentient beings in my land should not decidedly attain the Stage Equal to Perfect Enlightenment and realize Great Nirvana, may I not attain Bodhi.

4 The passage of the fulfillment of this Vow in the [Larger] sutra, fasc. 2, reads:

Sentient beings who are born in that Buddha-land all reside among those who are rightly established, because in that Buddha-land there are neither those who are wrongly established nor those who are not definitely established.

5 It is also stated [in the Larger Sutra, fasc. 1]:

That Buddha-land is pure and serene, resplendent and blissful. It borders on the Unconditioned Nirvana. The Sravakas, bodhisattvas, heavenly beings and humans there have lofty and brilliant wisdom, and are masters of supernatural powers. They are all of one form, without any differences, but are called 'heavenly beings' and 'humans' simply by analogy with states of existence in other worlds. They are of noble and majestic countenance, unequaled in all the worlds, and their appearance is superb, unmatched by any being, heavenly or human. They are all endowed with bodies of naturalness, emptiness and infinity.

6 It is also stated [in the Teaching Assembly of the Tathágata of Infinite Life, fasc. 2]:

Sentient beings of that land and those to be born there will fully realize the supreme Bodhi and reach the Nirvanic state. For what reason? Because those who are in the wrongly established stage and those who are not definitely established stage are unable to understand that the cause [of birth] has been established [by the Buddha].

7 The [Commentary on Vasubandhu's] Discourse on the Pure Land, fasc. 2, states:

Accomplishment of the glorious merit of the wonderful Name is described in the verse as:
The sacred Name enlightens people far and wide;  
It is subtle and wonderful and is herd everywhere in  
the ten quarters.

Why is this inconceivable? A sutra says that those who only hear of  
the purity and blissfulness of that land and wholeheartedly desire  
to be born there and those who have attained birth all enter the  
Rightly Established Stage. This shows that the name of the land  
performs the work of the Buddha. How can we conceive of this?

Accomplishment of the glorious merit of the Lord Buddha is  
described in the verse as:

[The Land] is firmly upheld by Amida,  
The Enlightened One, the Dharma-King.

Why is this inconceivable? Amida, the Enlightened One, is  
inconceivable. The Pure Land of Peace and Bliss is firmly upheld  
(juji) by the merit-power of Amida, the Enlightened One, and so  
how can we conceive of this?

'Ju' means not to change or perish; 'ji' means to keep something  
from dispersing or being lost. It is like applying antidotal treatment  
to seeds. The seeds thus processed will not be destroyed by water  
or fire. When favorable conditions arise, the seeds will sprout. How  
is this possible? It is due to the power of the antidotal treatment.  
Once a man is born in the Pure Land of Peace and Bliss, if he  
afterwards desires to be reborn in the three worlds to teach and  
guide sentient beings, he is able to terminate his life in the Pure  
Land and be reborn therein according to his wishes. Although he is  
reborn in the 'water' and 'fire' of various states of the three worlds,  
the seed of supreme Bodhi is never subject to decay. How is this  
possible? It is due to the power of Amida, the Enlightened One,  
which firmly supports and maintains [the Pure Land and the  
beings born there].

Accomplishment of the glorious merit of kinsmen is described in  
the verse as:

The hosts of sages in the likeness of pure flowers  
surrounding the Tathágata  
Are born there, transformed from within the flower of  
Enlightenment.
Why is this inconceivable? In the realms of various births, whether from womb, from an egg, from moisture or by metamorphosis, one's kinsmen are many, and there are tens of thousands of varieties of pleasure and pain resulting from the inhabitants' different acts [in the past]. In the Land of Peace and Bliss there is no one who is not born transformed from within the pure flower of Amida Tathágata's Enlightenment. [They are so born] by one and the same path of the Nembutsu, and not by other paths. Within the four seas, all [Nembutsu practitioners], even those living in the remotest places, are their brothers. Hence, their kinsmen are innumerable. How can we conceive of this?

8 It is also stated in the same work, fasc. 2:

Those who wish to be born in the Pure Land are originally divided into nine classes but [after they have been born there] there are no differences, just as the water of the Tzu and that of the river Sheng become of one taste [upon entering the sea]. How can we conceive of this?

9 It is also stated in the same work, fasc. 2:

Accomplishment of the glorious merit of purity is described in the verse as: When I contemplate the nature of that Land I find that it surpasses all states of existence in the three worlds. Why is this inconceivable? When ordinary men full of evil passions attain birth in the Pure Land, the karmic bonds of the three worlds will not affect them any more. Even without severing evil passions, they will attain the state of Nirvana. How can we conceive of this?

10 It is stated in the Collection of Passages Concerning Birth in the Land of Peace and Bliss, fasc. 2:

The transcendent powers of the two Buddhas [i.e., Amida and Shakyamuni] are equal. Be that as it may, Shakyamuni Tathágata does not speak of his own capacities, but especially reveals Amida's distinguished capacities out of his desire to make all sentient beings equally take refuge in Amida. For this reason, in many sutras Shakyamuni praises Amida and urges beings to take refuge in him. We ought to be aware of the Buddha's intent. Master T'an-luan's
true intention was to turn to [the Land in] the West for refuge, so he composed hymns of praise in the spirit of the *Larger Sutra*:

The Sravakas and bodhisattvas in the Land of Peace and Bliss
As well as humans and devas, too, all thoroughly attain wisdom;
Their bodily appearance and adornments are the same.
Different names are applied to them simply in accordance with customs in other worlds.
Their countenances are noble and beautiful and beyond compare;
Their delicate and subtle bodies are unlike those of humans and devas.
They are of the substance of emptiness and boundlessness.
For this reason, I prostrate myself and worship the One Possessed of the Power of Equality.

11 We read in the commentary of the Master of Kuang-ming temple [i.e., *Essential Meaning of the Contemplation Sutra*]:

The Universal Vow is presented in the *Larger Sutra*. All good and evil ordinary beings will not attain birth without recourse to the karmic power of Amida Buddha's Great Vow as the supreme aid. Furthermore, the Buddha's hidden intent is vast and profound, and so his teachings are difficult [617a] to understand. Even those in the stages of the Three Sagacities and the Ten Sages cannot fathom it; how can we, petty fools outside the rank of the Ten Beliefs, know its significance? As I reverently contemplate matters, Shakyamuni, on this shore, urges us to go to the west, while Amida from that Land comes to welcome us. In the midst of the calling voice from there and the voice of exhortation from here, how could we refuse to go westward? We should sincerely devote ourselves to this teaching until the end of our life and, after abandoning our defiled bodies, realize the eternal bliss of Dharma-nature.

12 He also says [in the *Commentary on the Meditative Practice*]:

The Capital of Tranquility and Inactivity in the West
Is ultimately free and blissful, above existence and
non-existence.
With the heart imbued with Great Compassion, one freely sports in the Dharma-realm;
Transforming oneself into various forms, one benefits beings equally and without discrimination.

Exercising transcendent powers, one expounds the Dharma;
One manifests glorious physical characteristics and marks, and then enters Nirvana without residue.
Apparitional adornments are produced according to one's wishes;
The multitudes who see them have all their karmic evil removed.

I also praise in hymns:

Let us return home!
We should not stay in our native land of Maras.
Since innumerable kalpas ago, we have been transmigrating
In the six realms, taking up our abodes everywhere.

Nowhere have we seen any pleasure;
We only hear the voices of samsaric pain.
After the end of this life,
Let us enter the Capital of Nirvana.

13 When I contemplate the Teaching, Practice, Faith, and Enlightenment of the Pure Land Way, I realize that they are the benefit endowed through the Tathāgata’s Great Compassion. Whether the cause or the effect, there is nothing that has not been accomplished through the Merit-transference by the Tathāgata’s Pure Vow-Mind. Because the cause is pure, the effect is also pure. This we should know.

14 Second is the aspect of Returning of the Merit-transference. This is the benefit we receive for the activity in the stage of benefiting and teaching others. It originates from the Vow of unfailing attainment of the rank next to Buddha. It is also called 'the Vow of attainment of Buddhahood after one life-time.' It can also be called 'the Vow of the Merit-transference for our return to this world.' Since this Vow appears in the Commentary on Vasubandhu's Discourse on the Pure Land, I will not quote it here. Refer to the Commentary.
15 It is stated in the *Discourse on the Pure Land*:

The fifth gate in the phase of 'going out' is to observe with Great Compassion all suffering beings, manifest accommodated and transformed bodies, and enter the garden of birth-and-death and the forest of evil passions, where [bodhisattvas] play about, exercising transcendent powers; they thus dwell in the stage of teaching others through the transference of merit by their Primal Vow-Power. This is called the fifth gate in the phase of 'going out.'

16 It is stated in the *Commentary on Vasubandhu's Discourse on the Pure Land*, fasc. 2:

The 'returning aspect' is that after having been born in his land, one acquires the fruit of the cessation and contemplation practices and attains the power of employing expedient means, whereby one re-enters the dense forest of birth-and-death and leads all sentient beings into the Buddhist Path. Whether 'going' or 'returning,' one seeks to deliver sentient beings from the sea of birth-and-death. For this reason, [Vasubandhu] says, "...perfect the Great Compassion by putting Merit-transference above anything else."

17 It is also stated in the same work, fasc. 2:

[Vasubandhu] says, "When bodhisattvas who have not yet attained the pure mind see the Buddha, they will finally be able to realize the Dharma-body of Equality and will eventually be equal to bodhisattvas of pure mind and those of the upper stages [617b] in the realization of tranquility and equality."

The Dharma-body of Equality' is said of a bodhisattva of the eighth stage or above, who has a body manifested from the Dharma-nature.

'Tranquility and equality' is the principle of tranquility and equality realized by such a Dharma-body bodhisattva. Because he realizes the principle of tranquility and equality, he is called [a bodhisattva of] 'Dharma-body of Equality'; because this principle is realized by a bodhisattva of Dharma-body of Equality, it is called 'the principle of tranquility and equality.'
Such a bodhisattva attains a samádhi called 'Produced from the Fruit.' With the transcendent power of this samádhi, he can, while remaining in the same place, instantaneously and simultaneously manifest himself in any or every land throughout the ten quarters. He can then make offerings in many ways to all Buddhas and their assemblies of sages. He can also manifest himself in various forms anywhere in innumerable worlds where there are no Buddhas, no Buddhist teachings or no assemblies of Buddhist practitioners, and teach and save all the sentient beings there. Although he always performs such Buddhist activities, he has, from the beginning, no thought of going and coming, of making offerings or of saving beings. For this reason, the body [of such a bodhisattva] is called 'the Dharma-body of Equality', and the Dharma he has realized is called 'the principle of tranquility and equality.'

'Bodhisattvas who have not yet attained the pure mind' are bodhisattvas from the first to the seventh stages. They can also manifest their bodies in a hundred worlds where no Buddhas live, or a thousand, ten thousand, a koti or a billion kotis of worlds, where they perform the Buddha's work. But in order to do so, they must make conscious efforts to enter that samádhi. Without making efforts, they cannot enter it. Because they still require conscious efforts, they are called 'those who have not yet attained the pure mind.' If those bodhisattvas desire to be born in the Pure Land of Peace and Bliss, they can see Amida Buddha there. Having seen the Buddha, they eventually attain the same bodies and the same realization as bodhisattvas of the higher stages. It is exactly for this reason that such bodhisattvas as Nargarjuna and Vasubandhu aspired for birth in Amida's Land.

**Question:** In the *Sutra on the Ten Stages* we read that bodhisattvas rise through stages as they accumulate immeasurable merit by practicing for many kalpas. How could it be that when one sees Amida Buddha one will eventually attain the same body and the same realization as bodhisattvas of the higher stages?

**Answer:** [The Discourse] says 'eventually ... equal' and not 'instantly ... equal.' Simply because one eventually attains the same (body, etc.), [the Discourse] says 'equal.'

**Question:** If one does not instantly become equal [to a bodhisattva of a higher stage], why is it not said [in the Discourse] that, when a bodhisattva reaches the first stage, he will gradually rise through
stages until he spontaneously becomes equal to a Buddha? Why is it said that he will be equal to a bodhisattva of a higher stage?

**Answer:** When a bodhisattva has attained great tranquility in the seventh stage, he no longer envisions Buddhas to whom he should strive to become equal, nor does he see sentient beings whom he should save. Thus he is tempted to abandon the Buddhist Way and enter the [Hinayanistic] realization of True Reality. At that time, if Buddhas of the ten quarters do not admonish him with their divine power, he will pass into extinction and be like a Hinayana [sage]. If, however, a bodhisattva goes to the Land of Peace and Bliss and sees Amida Buddha there, he will not have this problem. For this reason, one should say 'eventually [617c] ... equal [to a bodhisattva of a higher stage].' Further, in the *Larger Sutra*, one of Amida Tathágata’s Primal Vows reads:

> If, when I attain Buddhahood, bodhisattvas in the Buddha-lands of the other quarters who visit my land should not ultimately and unfailingly reach the Stage of Becoming a Buddha after One More Life, may I not attain perfect Bodhi. Excepted are those who wish to teach and guide sentient beings in accordance with their original vows. For they wear the armor of great vows, accumulate merits, deliver all beings from birth-and-death, visit Buddha-lands to perform the bodhisattva practices, make offerings to Buddhas, Tathágatas, throughout the ten quarters, enlighten countless sentient beings as numerous as the sands of the River Granges, and establish them in the highest, perfect Enlightenment. Such bodhisattvas transcend the course of practice of the ordinary bodhisattva stages, manifest the practices of all the bodhisattva stages, and actually cultivate the virtues of Samantabhadra.

Reading this sutra, one may assume that bodhisattvas in that Land do not rise from one stage to the next. The ten-stage system appears to be a method of guidance provided by Shakyamuni Tathágata for inhabitants of Jambudvipa. Why should other pure lands necessarily be the same? Among the five inconceivabilities, the Buddha Dharma is the most inconceivable.

If you assume that bodhisattvas must necessarily rise from one
stage to the next and that there is no way of transcending stages you are not yet completely familiar with the teaching. I will show you by the analogy of a tree called 'Very Strong.' This tree grows underground for a hundred years. It then grows, above ground, a thousand feet in height each day, and keeps growing at the same rate. If one calculates its height reached after a hundred years, how can it be compared with tall pine trees? Pine trees grow not more than an inch a day. How can one believe in such a tree? He will argue: "When one hears that Shakyamuni Tathágata enlightened [Shariputra] to Arhatship at one session or that he made people realize the insight into the non-arising of all dhammas in the brief time before breakfast, he will think that these are words of expedient means to guide people to Buddhism and are not the literal truth." So, hearing the present discussion, he will not believe it. Extraordinary words do not reach the ears of ordinary people. So we must expect such a question as: "How is this possible?"

[Vasubandhu] says, "I have briefly explained the eight aspects [of the Buddha's activity], demonstrating that the Tathágata’s glorious merits for his own benefit and that of others have been accomplished in due order. You should realize the implication of this."

What is this order? The seventeen aspects mentioned before were about accomplishment of the glorious merit of the Land. Having seen the Land's aspects, we should know the lord of the Land. Therefore, we contemplate the Buddha's merit. How is he adorned and where does he sit? This question leads us first to visualize the seat. Having seen that, we envision the lord who sits there. Next, we contemplate the Buddha's glorious body. Having seen that, we contemplate his voice and name. Hence, we next concentrate on the Buddha's glorious speech. Having realized how widespread his Name is, we should consider how he acquired that Name. And so we next contemplate the Buddha's glorious mind. Having realized that he has attained accomplishment of the three kinds of karma, we should distinguish who deserve to be taught by this great master of men and devas. Therefore, we should next [618a] contemplate the merits of the congregation. Having seen that the congregation has immeasurable merits, we should know who is the head. Hence, we contemplate the head, who is the Buddha [Amida]. Since we may perhaps consider him simply as the most senior member, we should next contemplate his lordship. Having visualized his lordship, we should realize his superior virtue; so we
next contemplate the glorious merit of his unfailing sustenance. In this way, the eight aspects are presented in due order.

Concerning 'contemplation of the bodhisattvas,' [Vasubandhu] says, "What is the contemplation of accomplishment of the glorious merits of the bodhisattvas? It is to contemplate the bodhisattvas, in whom we find accomplishment of the merits in performing the four right practices. You should realize the implication of this."

True Suchness is the very substance of all existence. Since [the bodhisattvas of the Pure Land] perform practices while realizing that their essence is Suchness, their practices are, in fact, non-practice. To perform practices while aware that they are non-practice is called 'practice in accord with the Dharma.' Although their essence is one, this is divided into four according to the distinct meanings, which are implied. For this reason, the four practices are all described 'right.'

[Vasubandhu] says, "What are the four? First, while dwelling motionless in a Buddha-land, [bodhisattvas] display various transformed bodies throughout the ten quarters, manifest performance of practices in accord with the Dharma and engage constantly in the Buddha's work. The verse says:

The Land of Peace and Bliss is pure and serene;
[The Buddha] always turns the undefiled wheel [of Dharma].
Transformed Buddhas and bodhisattvas [illumine the whole world] like the sun,
[While remaining motionless] like Mt. Sumeru.

For they seek to enable sentient beings to bloom like lotuses in a muddy pool."

Bodhisattvas in and above the eighth stage always dwell in Samadhi. Without leaving their abodes, by the power of Samadhi, they can reach all the worlds of the ten quarters, where they make offerings to the Buddhas and teach sentient beings. 'The undefiled
wheel [of Dharma] is part of the virtue of Buddhahood, which is free of the defilements of evil passions and their residues. The Buddha always turns the wheel of Dharma for the sake of bodhisattvas, and various great bodhisattvas also turn the same wheel of Dharma, without resting even for a short while, in order to awaken and guide all living beings; hence, 'always turns.'

The Dharma-body is like the sun, whose rays of light, in the form of accommodated bodies, pervade all the worlds in the ten quarters. 'Like the sun' is not really an adequate description. Since it is brilliant and motionless, it is also described as 'like Mt. Sumeru.' Regarding 'lotuses in a muddy pool,' it is said in the [Vimalakirti Sutra]: "Lotuses do not grow on high land; they grow in low and muddy pools." This metaphor shows that ordinary beings, while submerged in the mud of evil passions, are still able to produce the flower of enlightenment through the guidance of bodhisattvas. Indeed, [the bodhisattvas in the Pure Land] endeavor to inherit and exalt the Three Treasures and always ensure their continuance in the world.

[Vasubandhu] says, "Second, at any time they choose, their accommodated and transformed bodies emit great light and reach all worlds in the ten quarters simultaneously and in a flash of thought in order to teach and guide sentient beings; for they seek to remove the suffering of all sentient beings by various expedient means, practices and acts. The verse says:

The pure, glorious light [of the bodhisattvas],
In a flash of thought and simultaneously,
Illumines each and every Buddha's assembly
And gives benefit to multitudes of beings."

When it is said above, "while dwelling motionless, they can reach [all the worlds in the ten quarters]," this could mean that there is a lapse of time between their actions. For this reason, it is said here that all their actions take place in a flash of thought and simultaneously, without any time intervening.
[Vasubandhu] says, "Third, having reached all the worlds without exception, they illumine each and every Buddha's assembly. On such a vast and immense scale, they make offerings to the Buddhas, Tathāgatas, pay homage to them and praise their virtues. The verse says:

    They shower heavenly musical instruments, flowers, robes, Fine incense, and so forth, with which they worship the Buddhas; They praise and extol the merits of the Buddhas Without discriminative thoughts."

'Without exception' shows that they reach all the worlds and the great assemblies of all the Buddhas, without leaving any world or any Buddha's assembly unvisited. Seng-chao says:

The Dharma-body has no form of its own and yet manifests various forms, corresponding to [the conditions and capacities of sentient beings]. The sound of the ultimate truth has no words and yet extensively unfolds scriptures of profound teachings. The unfathomable expediency has no planning and yet works in agreement with things.

This is, indeed, the implication here.

[Vasubandhu] says, "Fourth, they visit places in all the worlds in the ten quarters where the Three Treasures do not exist. Establishing and glorifying the ocean-like merit of the treasures of the Buddha, Dharma and Sangha, they display and explain the correct practices to all. The verse says:

    If there is any world in the universe Without the treasure of merit of the Buddha Dharma, I resolve to be born there And to preach the Dharma as does a Buddha."
The first three passages speak of visits of [the bodhisattvas] to all [the worlds] but these are all lands where Buddhas dwell. Without this (fourth) passage, one might suppose that for the Dharma-body there are places where the Dharma does not reach and that the supreme good [of the bodhisattvas] contains parts which are not good. Here ends the chapter on the objects of contemplation.

The following is the fourth chapter of the 'Commentary' Section, called 'the pure [manifestation] entering into the Vow-Mind.' 'The pure [manifestation] entering into the Vow-Mind' is as follows:

[Vasubandhu] says, "I have explained above the contemplation of accomplishment of the glorious merits of the Buddha-land, the Buddha and the bodhisattvas. These three kinds of accomplishment are adorned with the Vow-Mind. One should realize the implications of this."

'One should realize the implications of this' means that one should realize that the three kinds of glorious accomplishment are, in their origin, [Dharmakara's] adornment with the Pure Vow-Mind through the Forty-eight Vows, and so on. Since the cause is pure, the result is equally pure. They are not what has come into existence without any cause or by some other cause

[Vasubandhu] says, "Presented in brief, they enter into the One Dharma Principle."

The seventeen aspects of the adornments of the Land, the eight aspects of the adornments of the Tathágata and the four aspects of the adornments of bodhisattvas are the extensive manifestation. 'Entering into the One Dharma Principle' is the all-inclusive principle.

Why is it shown that the extensive manifestation and the all-inclusive principle enter into each other? The reason is that Buddhas and bodhisattvas have two Dharma-bodies: (1) Dharma-body of Dharma-nature and (2) Dharma-body of Expediency. From the Dharma-body of Dharma-nature originates the Dharma-body of Expediency; through the Dharma-bodies of Expediency the
Dharma-body of Dharma-nature is revealed. These two Dharma-bodies are different but inseparable; they are one but not the same. For this reason, the extensive manifestation and the all-inclusive principle enter into each other. Those two are comprised in the Dharma-body. If bodhisattvas did not realize interpenetration of the two ways of presentation, they would not be able to benefit both themselves and others.

[Vasubandhu] says, "The One Dharma Principle is the Purity Principle; the Purity Principle is Unconditioned Dharma-body that is to be realized through True Wisdom."

These three phrases enter into each other, the previous one leading to the next. [618c] For what reason is [the ultimate principle] called 'the [One] Dharma [Principle]'? Because it is the Purity [Principle]. For What reason is it called 'the Purity [Principle]'? Because it is Unconditioned Dharma-body realized by True Wisdom. 'True Wisdom' is the wisdom of realizing True Reality. Because True Reality is without forms, true wisdom is unknowing. 'Unconditioned Dharma-body' is the body of Dharma-nature. Because Dharma-nature is Nirvanic, Dharma-body is formless. Because it is formless, there is no form, which it cannot manifest. Therefore, [the body] adorned with the marks of excellence is itself the Dharma-body. Because it is unknowing, there is nothing that it does not know. For this reason, the wisdom of knowing all forms of existence is the true wisdom. The reason why 'Wisdom' is described as 'True' is in order to show that it is neither free of mental effort nor non-effort. The reason why 'Dharma-body' is described as 'Unconditioned' is in order to show that the Dharma-body is neither possessed of form nor without form. When a negation is negated, how can a double negation be a [simple] affirmation? Indeed, absence of negation is called affirmation. If an affirmation exists by itself without opposition, it is no longer an affirmation. [The ultimate principle] is neither an affirmation nor a negation; it is beyond description even by a hundred negations. Hence, 'Purity.' Purity refers to Unconditioned Dharma-body that is to be realized with True Wisdom.

[Vasubandhu] says, "Purity is distinguished into two kinds. One should realize this."
Concerning these [three] principles, each leading up to the next, by penetrating the [One] Dharma [Principle], one enters into the Purity [Principle]; by penetrating the Purity [Principle], one enters into the Dharma-body. Now, two kinds of purity are to be distinguished. And so, it is said, "One should realize this."

[Vasubandhu] says, "What are the two kinds? First, purity of the land as the receptacle, and second, purity of its inhabitants. The purity of the land refers to the accomplishment of the seventeen kinds of adornment of that Buddha-land; these are called the purity of the land. The purity of the inhabitants refers to the eight kinds of adornment of the Buddha and the four kinds of adornment of bodhisattvas; these are called the purity of the inhabitants. Thus the One Dharma Principle contains these two kinds of purity. One should realize the implication of this."

The inhabitants have come into being as the primary reward for their individual karma, while the land is the derivative reward which is enjoyed and shared by those who have common karma. The primary reward and the derivative one are not the same. And so, it is said, "One should realize the implication of this."

It is to be noted that all things are [transformations of] mind; for nothing exists outside of mind. The inhabitants and the land are neither different nor the same. Since they are not the same, they are distinguishable according to their different characteristics. Also, since they are not different, they are both pure.

'Land as the receptacle' is that which is to be used. The Pure Land is the realm which is used by its pure inhabitants. Hence, it is called a 'receptacle.' If a dirty container is used for clean food, it becomes contaminated because of the dirty container. If a clean container is used for dirty food, it becomes contaminated because of the dirty food. Both must necessarily be clean before they can be so described. For this reason, the word 'Purity' necessarily covers these two kinds.

Question: When you say that the purity of the inhabitants means that of the Buddha and the bodhisattvas, are the human and
heavenly beings [born in the Pure Land] excluded? [619a]

Answer: No, they can also be described as 'pure,' although they are not yet really pure. For example, sages who have renounced the world are called 'bhiksus' because they have 'killed' the enemy of evil passions. Ordinary people who have renounced the world, whether they observed the precepts or not, are also called 'monks.' It is like a crown prince; at his birth, he is possessed of the thirty-two physical marks of excellence and is one to whom the seven treasures will belong. Even though he is not yet able to rule as a Cakravartin, he is called 'Cakravartin' because he will surely become one. So it is with those human and heavenly beings. Since they all join those who are rightly established in the Mahayana Path, they will surely acquire the pure Dharma-body. Because they are sure to attain it, they can be described as 'pure.'

Concerning 'converting beings by skillful means,' [Vasubandhu] says, "Bodhisattvas thus practice cessation concerning the all-inclusive principle and contemplation on the extensive manifestation, and so attain the pliant mind.

'The pliant mind' is the non-dual mind attained by performing the harmonious practice of cessation concerning the all-inclusive principle and contemplation on the extensive manifestation, just as an object is perfectly reflected in water when the water is both clear and calm.

[Vasubandhu] says, "They truly realize both the extensive manifestations and the all-inclusive principle."

'To realize truly' means 'to know in accord with True Reality.' Neither the twenty-nine aspects of the extensive manifestations nor the all-inclusive principle is in disagreement with True Reality.

[Vasubandhu] says, "Thus they accomplish the transference of merit by skillful means."

'Thus' means that both the extensive manifestation mentioned earlier and the all-inclusive principle mentioned later are in accord with True Reality. When they realize True Reality, they see the perverse and false nature of the sentient beings in the three worlds.
When they see the perverse and false nature of the sentient beings, the true compassion arises. When they realize the true Dharma-body, true devotion arises. Compassion, devotion and skillful means are explained below.

[Vasubandhu] says, "What is the bodhisattvas' transference of merit by skillful means? The bodhisattvas' transference of merit by skillful means is that they turn over all the merits and roots of good accumulated by performing the five kinds of practice, such as worship, to all sentient beings to remove their sufferings, for they do not seek to enjoy the pleasures for their own sustenance, but wish to embrace all sentient beings and help them attain birth in that Buddha-land of Peace and Bliss together with themselves. This is called 'bodhisattvas' accomplishment of the transference of merit by skillful means'."

In the Sutra on the Buddha of Infinite Life preached at Rajagriha, I find in the "section on the three grades of aspirants" that although their practices differ according to their superior or inferior qualities, they all, without fail, awaken the aspiration for the highest Bodhi. This aspiration is the resolve to become a Buddha. The aspiration to become a Buddha is the resolve to save all sentient beings. The aspiration to save sentient beings is the resolve to embrace sentient beings and lead them to attain birth in a Buddha-land. It follows that those who wish to be born in the Pure Land of Peace and Bliss should awaken the aspiration for the highest Bodhi. If there is anyone who does not awaken the aspiration for the highest Bodhi but, having heard of the endless pleasures to be enjoyed in that land, desires to be born there simply because of such pleasures, he will not attain birth. And so, it is said, 'they do not seek [619b] to enjoy the pleasures for their own sustenance' but 'to remove the sufferings of all sentient beings'.

'The pleasures for their own sustenance' means that the Pure Land of Peace and Bliss has been produced and maintained by Amida Tathāgata’s Primal Vow-Power, and so there is no end to the pleasures to be enjoyed.

The meaning of 'the transference of merit' is that one transfers the
merits that one has accumulated to all sentient beings so that they, too, will take the Buddhist Way.

'Skillful means' is that bodhisattvas desire to burn with fire of their own wisdom the grasses and trees of the evil passions of all sentient beings. They resolve, "Should there be even one sentient being who has not yet attained Buddhahood, I would not become a Buddha." But, although all sentient beings have not yet become Buddhas, even then bodhisattvas do attain Buddhahood. This is like trying to burn all grasses and trees with a wooden poker. Before all the grasses and trees are consumed by fire, the poker itself is burnt out. In the same way, the bodhisattva attains Enlightenment before other sentient beings do, even though he places their emancipation above his own. Hence, this is called 'skillful means.'

'Means' here implies that the bodhisattva resolves to embrace all sentient beings and lead them to birth in that Buddha-land of Peace and Bliss. That Buddha-land is the path to ultimate realization of Buddhahood, the unsurpassed means of guidance.

Concerning 'eliminating hindrances to Bodhi,' [Vasubandhu] says, "Having mastered the method of accomplishing the transference of merit, bodhisattvas can now eliminate the three hindrances to Bodhi. What are the three? First, by entering the gate of wisdom (chi-e), they do not seek their own pleasure, and thus they eliminate any thought of self-attachment."

'Chi' means to know how to advance [towards Bodhi] and keep oneself from any relapse into [the Hinayana stages]; 'e' means to realize emptiness and ego-less-ness. Because of chi, they do not seek their own pleasure; and because of e, they eliminate any thought of self-attachment.

[Vasubandhu] says, "Second, by entering the gate of compassion (ji-hi), they remove the sufferings of all sentient beings and eliminate disinclination to give them peace."

'Ji' means to remove suffering; 'hi' means to give pleasure. Through
$ji$, they remove the sufferings of all sentient beings; through $hi$, they eliminate disinclination to bring peace to them.

[Vasubandhu] says, "Third, by entering the gate of expedient means ($ho\text{-}ben$), they attain compassion for all sentient beings and thus eliminate any thought of seeking veneration and respect by others."

$Ho$ means righteous; 'ben' means to disregard oneself. Through righteousness, they attain compassion for all sentient beings; by disregarding themselves, they eliminate any thought of seeking veneration and respect from others. [Vasubandhu] says, "These are called elimination of the three kinds of hindrances to Bodhi."

Concerning 'coming into accord with Bodhi,' [Vasubandhu] says, "Having thus eliminated the three kinds of hindrances to Bodhi, bodhisattvas can now completely attain the three minds which are in accord with Bodhi. What are these? First, the undefiled pure mind: [they attain this mind] because they do not seek their own pleasure."

Bodhi is the state of undefiled purity. If bodhisattvas sought pleasures for their own sake, they would run counter to Bodhi. For this reason, the undefiled pure mind accords with Bodhi.

[Vasubandhu] says, "Second, [619c] the peaceful pure mind: [bodhisattvas attain this mind] because they seek to remove the sufferings of all sentient beings."

Bodhi is the state of purity in which all sentient beings are led to dwell in peace. If bodhisattvas did not endeavor to remove the sufferings of all sentient beings, they would run counter to Bodhi. For this reason, [the mind] to remove the sufferings of all sentient beings accords with Bodhi.

[Vasubandhu] says, "Third, the blissful pure mind: [bodhisattvas attain this mind] because they enable all sentient beings to reach Great Bodhi and [for this purpose] they receive sentient beings and lead them to attain birth in that Land."
Bodhi is the state of ultimate eternal bliss. If bodhisattvas did not seek to lead all sentient beings to the ultimate eternal bliss, they would run counter to Bodhi. How can beings attain the ultimate eternal bliss? It is through the gate of the Mahayana. The gate of Mahayana is the Buddha-land of Peace and Bliss. For this reason, [Vasubandhu] says, "receive sentient beings and lead them to attain birth in that Land," and also "These are called 'completely attaining the three minds which are in accord with Bodhi.' One should realize the implication of this."

Concerning 'correspondence between [some key] terms,' [Vasubandhu] says, "The three gates mentioned above - wisdom, compassion and skillful means - contain Prajna; Prajna contains skillful means. One should realize the implication of this."

'Prajna' is the insight of penetrating to Suchness (ε); 'skillful means' is the wisdom of knowing provisional means (chi). If one reaches Suchness, one's mental acts become tranquil; if one becomes conversant with provisional means, one knows all about sentient beings. The wisdom of knowing all about sentient beings arises in response to their needs and yet it is unknowing. Insight into Nirvanic tranquility is unknowing and yet it sees through beings. Thus Prajna and skillful means work co-operatively; while interacting, they are tranquil. Because of the working of wisdom, one does not lose tranquility, while active; because of the power of skillful means, one does not cease to be active, while absorbed in tranquility. And so, [it is said] 'wisdom, compassion and skillful means contain Prajna; Prajna contains skillful means.'

'The implication' is that wisdom and skillful means are the parents of a bodhisattva. Unless he depends on wisdom and skillful means, the duties of the bodhisattva are not fulfilled. The reason is that, if he seeks to perform them for the sake of sentient beings without having wisdom, he will fall into erroneous views. If he contemplates the Dharma-nature without having recourse to skillful means, he will merely attain [Hinayanistic] True Reality. Hence, it is said, 'One should realize the implication of this.'

[Vasubandhu] says, "The three eliminations mentioned above - elimination of any thought of self-attachment, elimination of disinclination to give peace to sentient beings, and elimination of any thought of
seeking veneration and respect by others - are the ways of removing hindrances to Bodhi. One should realize the implication of this."

All existing things create hindrances to each other, like wind disturbing calm, earth obstructing [the movement of] water, water extinguishing fire, the five transgressions and the ten evils preventing rebirth as a man or heavenly being and the four erroneous views hindering the attainment of the Sravakas goal. If these three kinds of thought are not eliminated, they will prevent the realization of Bodhi.

'The implication' is that if one wishes to be free of hindrances [to Bodhi], one should eliminate those three kinds of hindrances.

[Vasubandhu] says, "The three minds mentioned above - undefiled pure mind, peaceful pure mind and blissful pure mind - are combined [620a] to form 'the supreme, blissful, unsurpassed and true mind.' One should realize the implication of this."

Concerning 'blissful,' three kinds of bliss or pleasure are distinguished: (1) external pleasure, or pleasure arising from the five sense-perceptions; (2) internal pleasure, or pleasure arising from consciousness absorbed in the first, second and third meditations (in the realm of form); and (3) the pleasure of the Dharma-music, or bliss arising from wisdom; it arises from love of the Buddha's merit.

When the three states of mind - the mind free of any thought of self-attachment, the mind free of disinclination to give peace to sentient beings, and the mind free of any thought of seeking veneration and respect by others - grow pure and strong, they are together called 'the supreme, blissful, unsurpassed and true mind.' The word 'supreme' means excellent, for this bliss arises from contact with the Buddha. The word 'unsurpassed' means transcending pleasures in the three worlds. The word 'true' means not false and not deluded.

Concerning 'fulfillment of the vow and the acts, [Vasubandhu] says, "In this way the bodhisattvas' mind of wisdom, mind of expediency, mind of non-hindrance, and unsurpassed and true mind bring
about birth in the Buddha's Pure Land. One should realize the implication of this."

'One should realize the implication of this' means that one should know that with those four kinds of pure virtue one can be born in the Buddha's Pure Land, and not under other conditions.

[Vasubandhu] says, "This is called 'accomplishing the acts of the bodhisattvas and Mahasattvas as they desire through the five Dharma-gates.' The acts of body, speech, mind, wisdom and skillful means as mentioned above are the Dharma-gates that conform to the way of birth in the Pure Land."

'As they desire' means that with those five kinds of merit-power one can be born in the Buddha's Pure Land, where one attains complete freedom in action. 'The act of body' refers to worship; 'the act of speech,' to praise; 'the act of mind,' to aspiration; 'the act of wisdom,' to contemplation; and 'the act of wisdom of skillful means,' to merit-transference. What is meant here is that when those five acts are united they constitute the Dharma-gates that conform to the way of birth in the Pure Land and so enable one to attain complete freedom of action.

Concerning 'accomplishment of the beneficial acts,' [Vasubandhu] says, "Again, there are five gates, which in order produce five kinds of merit. One should realize the implication of this. What are the five gates? They are: (1) the gate of approach, (2) the gate of great assemblage, (3) the gate of residence, (4) the gate of chamber, and (5) the gate of playing ground."

Those five gates show the way of 'going in' and 'going out.' Firstly, in the phase of 'going in,' reaching the Pure Land is the aspect of 'approaching,' for when one enters the Rightly Established Stage of Mahayana, one approaches the highest, perfect Enlightenment. When one has reached the Pure Land, one enters the Tathágata’s 'great assemblage.' Having joined the assemblage, one reaches the 'residence' through the practice of calming one's mind. Having entered the residence, one proceeds to the 'chamber' through contemplation practice. Having accomplished these practices, one reaches the stage of teaching others. The stage of teaching others is
the stage of the bodhisattvas' playing for their enjoyment; for this reason, the phase of 'going out' is called 'the gate of playing ground.'

[Vasubandhu] says, "Of those five gates, the first four produce the merit in the phase of 'going in' and the fifth produces [620b] the merit in the phase of 'going out'."

What is the merit in the phases of 'going in' and 'going out'? It is stated in the Discourse:

"The first gate in the phase of 'going in' is to worship Amida Buddha in order to be born in his Land; by this one attains birth in the Land of Peace and Bliss, and so it is called the first gate in the phase of 'going in'."

To worship the Buddha with an aspiration to be born in the Buddha-land is the feature of the first merit.

[Vasubandhu] says, "The second gate in the phase of 'going in' is to praise Amida Buddha, while reciting his Name in compliance with its meaning and practicing in compliance with his light of wisdom; by this, one joins the great assemblage. This is called the second gate in the phase of 'going in'."

To praise in compliance with the meaning of the Tathágata’s Name is the feature of the second merit.

[Vasubandhu] says, "The third gate in the phase of 'going in' is to aspire single-mindedly and whole-heartedly to be born there and to perform the practice of cessation, the samádhi of tranquility; by this one can reach the Land of Lotus-Treasury. This is called the third gate in the phase of 'going in'."

To aspire single-mindedly to be born in that Land by practicing tranquility and cessation of thought is the feature of the third merit.

[Vasubandhu] says, "The fourth gate in the phase of 'going in' is to contemplate whole-heartedly those glorious adornments and so practice contemplation;
by this one can reach that Land, where one will enjoy various flavors of the Dharma. This is called the fourth gate of 'going in'."

'Various flavors of the Dharma' means that by practicing concentration one enjoys innumerable flavors of the Buddhist Path related to the glorious adornments [of the Pure Land], such as the flavor of contemplating the purity of the Buddha-land, the flavor of Mahayana that embraces sentient beings, the flavor of everlasting sustenance [of those born in the Pure Land], and the flavor of [bodhisattvas'] practices and vows to establish Buddha-lands in response to the needs of sentient beings. Hence, 'various.' This is the feature of the fourth merit.

[Vasubandhu] says, "The fifth gate in the phase of 'going out' is to observe with great compassion all suffering beings, manifest accommodated and transformed bodies, and enter the garden of birth-and-death and the forest of evil passions, where [bodhisattvas] play about, exercising transcendent powers; they thus dwell in the stage of teaching others through the transference of merit by [Amida's] Primal Vow-Power. This is called the fifth gate in the phase of 'going out'."

'To manifest accommodated and transformed bodies' describes the manifestation mentioned in the chapter on the Universal Gate in the Lotus Sutra. 'To play' has two meanings: (1) 'freedom of action,' for bodhisattvas save sentient beings as easily as a lion hunts a deer, or as if one is playing; and (2) 'saving without seeing the saved,' for when bodhisattvas observe sentient beings, they see them as ultimately non-existing; even though they save innumerable beings, they realize that not even one has really entered Nirvana. The way they save sentient beings is like playing. 'The Primal Vow-Power' shows that great bodhisattvas with their bodies of Dharma always dwell in Samadhi and yet manifest various bodies, employ various transcendent powers and proclaim various teachings through [Amida's] Primal Vow-Power; it is like an asuras harp which spontaneously produces music even though there is nobody to play it. This is called the feature of the fifth merit in the stage of teaching others. [620c]
Hereupon, from the Great Sage's words of truth, I truly realize that it is through the Merit-transference by the Vow-Power that we attain the Great Nirvana. The beneficial acts in the phase of Returning express the true intent of the Other-Power. Accordingly, the author of the Discourse, Vasubandhu, proclaims the vast and unimpeded One Mind, thereby universally guiding the multitudes of this Saha world, which is defiled by evil passions. Master T'an-luan clarifies the Going and Returning aspects of Merit-transference that arises from Great Compassion, and also carefully expounds the profound meaning of 'Other's benefit' and 'benefiting others.' We should respectfully uphold this teaching, and above all, accept it in faith.

Chapter On The True Buddha and Land

The Vow of Immeasurable Light
The Vow of Immeasurable Life

Chapter 5: A Collection of Passages Revealing the True Buddha and Land of the Pure Land Way

1 When I reverently contemplate the True Buddha and Land, I find that the Buddha is the Tathágata of Inconceivable Light and his Land is the Land of Immeasurable Light. They are called the True Recompensed Buddha and Land because they have been rewarded for the Vows of Great Compassion. Amida already made the Vows that is, the Vows of Light and Life.

2 The Larger Sutra states:

If, when I attain Buddhahood, my light should be limited, unable to illuminate at least a hundred thousand kotis of nayutas of Buddhalands, may I not attain perfect Enlightenment.

3 Again it is stated in the same sutra:
If, when I attain Buddhahood, my life span should be limited, even to the extent of a hundred thousand kotis of nayutas of kalpas, may I not attain perfect enlightenment.

The passage of fulfillment of these Vows reads:

The Buddha said to Ánanda, "The majestic light of the Buddha of Infinite Life is the most exalted. No other Buddha's light can match his.... For this reason, the Buddha of Infinite Life is called by the following names: the Buddha of Immeasurable Light, the Buddha of Boundless Light, the Buddha of Unhindered Light, the Buddha of Incomparable Light, the Buddha of the Light of the King of Flame, the Buddha of Pure Light, the Buddha of the Light of Joy, the Buddha of the Light of Wisdom, the Buddha of Unceasing Light, the Buddha of Inconceivable Light, the Buddha of Ineffable Light, and the Buddha of the Light Outshining the Sun and the Moon. If sentient beings encounter his light, their three defilements are removed; they feel tenderness, joy and pleasure; and good thoughts arise. If sentient beings in the three realms of suffering see his light, they will all be relieved and freed from affliction. At the end of their lives, they all reach emancipation. The light of the Buddha of Infinite Life shines brilliantly, illuminating all the Buddha-lands of the ten quarters. There is no place where it is not perceived. I am not the only one who now praises his light. [621a] All the Buddhas, Sravakas, Pratyekabuddhas and bodhisattvas praise and glorify it in the same way. If sentient beings, having heard of the majestic virtue of his light, glorify it continually, day and night, with sincerity of heart, they will be able to attain birth in his land, as they wish. Then the multitudes of bodhisattvas and Sravakas will praise their excellent virtue. Later, when they attain Buddhahood, all the Buddhas and bodhisattvas in the ten quarters will praise their light, just as I now praise the light of the Buddha of Infinite Life."

The Buddha continued, "The majestic glory of the light of the Buddha of Infinite Life could not be exhaustively described even if I praised it continually, day and night, for one kalpa."

The Buddha said to Ánanda, "The life of the Buddha of Infinite Life is so long that it is impossible for anyone to calculate it. To give an illustration, let us suppose that all the innumerable sentient beings in the worlds of the ten quarters were reborn in human form and that every one became a Sravaka or Pratyekabuddha. Even if they
assembled in one place, concentrated their thoughts, and exercised the power of their wisdom to the utmost to reckon the length of the Buddha's life, even after a thousand million kalpas they still would not reach its limit."

5 It is stated in the Teaching Assembly of the Tathágata of Infinite Life:

Ánanda, for this reason, the Buddha of Infinite Life has the following different names: Immeasurable Light, Boundless Light, Light Free of Attachment, Unhindered Light, King of the Brilliance of Light, Majestic Light, Pleasant Light, Light of Joy, Light Which Deserves to be Seen, Inconceivable Light, Incomparable Light, Ineffable Light, Light Outshining the Sun, Light Outshining the Moon, and the Light Outshining the Sun and Moon. His Light is pure and immense and gives pleasure and happiness to the bodies and minds of sentient beings. It also gives joy and delight to gods, dragons, yakshas, asuras and others in all the other Buddha-lands.

6 It is stated in the Sutra on the Immeasurably Pure and Equal Enlightenment:

Going beyond samsara swiftly,
You should reach the Land of Peace and Bliss;
Having attained the Land of Immeasurable Light,
You will make offerings to innumerable Buddhas.

7 It is stated in the Sutra on the Way of Salvation of Humans by Amida, the Perfectly Enlightened One, that Transcends all Buddhas, [fasc.1] translated by Chih-ch'ien:

The Buddha said, "Amida's Light is most august and peerless. No other Buddhas' light can compare with it. Of all the countless Buddhas of the eight quarters, zenith and nadir, there are some who emit light from their heads that extends seventy feet; some others who emit light that extends a li.... There are still some others who emit light from their heads that shines over two million Buddha-lands."
The Buddha continued, "Such is the extent reached by the light from the heads of countless Buddhas of the eight quarters, zenith and nadir. The light from the head of Amida Buddha [621b] shines over ten million Buddha-lands. The reason why there are such differences in the distance covered by these Buddhas' lights is that when they were seeking the Way as bodhisattvas in their previous lives, their merits, which they vowed to attain, were naturally
different in scale. Upon attaining Buddhahood, they acquired what they had vowed. This accounts for the difference in the extent of their lights. The majesty of the Buddhas, however, is certainly the same. Their vows based on their free will and their acts are not predetermined. The extent of Amida's Light is the greatest. Other Buddhas' lights do not match his.

The Buddha praised the supreme quality of Amida Buddha's Light, saying, "Amida Buddha's Light is of the finest quality; it is the most excellent of all that is good; it is pleasing beyond compare; it is superb and unparalleled. Amida Buddha's Light is pure, serene, and unblemished and lacks nothing. Amida Buddha's Light is incomparably excellent, shining a thousand million kotis times more brilliantly than the sun and moon. It is the brightest of all Buddhas' lights. It is the most excellent of all lights, the strongest of all lights, and the finest of all lights. It is the king of all Buddhas, the most august of all lights, and the most brilliant of all lights. Since it illumines all the dark and murky places in countless worlds, they are always radiant. Of all humans and even insects that hop and worms that crawl, there is none that does not see Amida's Light. Of all beings that see it, there is none that does not rejoice with the mind of compassion. Of all beings who are possessed of lust, anger and stupidity, there is none who, upon seeing Amida's Light, does not come to perform good acts. If those suffering in the realms of hell, animals, hungry spirits, or asuras, see Amida's Light, there is none who does not gain respite and, though not delivered at once, after death, attain emancipation from sorrow and pain. Amida Buddha makes his Light and Name heard throughout the boundless, limitless and countless Buddha-lands in the eight quarters, zenith and nadir, so there is none among gods and humans who does not hear or perceive them. Of those who hear or perceive them, there is none who does not attain emancipation."

The Buddha said, "I am not the only one who praises the Light of Amida Buddha. Countless Buddhas, Pratyekabuddhas, bodhisattvas and arhats of the eight quarters, zenith and nadir all praise Amida as I do."

The Buddha further said, "If there are people, good men and good women, who, having heard Amida Buddha's voice, praise his Light and always extol his glorious features sincerely, morning and
evening, without interruption, they will attain birth in the Land of Amida Buddha as they wish."

8 It is stated in the Sutra on Amoghapasha's Divine Manifestation and Mantra:

The realm where you will be born is Amida [621c] Buddha's Pure Recompensed Land. Born transformed from a lotus-flower, you will see Buddhas all the time and realize various insights concerning dharmas. Your life-span will be immeasurable, extending to a hundred thousand kalpas. You will at once reach the highest, perfect Bodhi, from which you will never fall back. I will always protect you.

9 The Nirvana Sutra [Chapter on the Four Aspects] states:

Again, emancipation is called nothingness; nothingness is emancipation. Emancipation is Tathágata; Tathágata is nothingness; it is the activity of no-action.... True emancipation is non-arising and non-perishing. For this reason, emancipation is indeed Tathágata. So is Tathágata - non-arising and non-perishing, neither aging nor dying, neither subject to destruction nor decay. It is not a conditioned dharma. For this reason, it is said: Tathágata enters Great Nirvana...

Further, emancipation is called unsurpassed supremacy.... Unsurpassed supremacy is true emancipation; true emancipation is Tathágata...When one has realized highest, perfect Enlightenment, one becomes free of loving attachment and doubt. Being free of loving attachment and doubt is true emancipation; true emancipation is Tathágata...Tathágata is Nirvana; Nirvana is the inexhaustible; the inexhaustible is Buddha-nature; Buddha-nature is certainty; certainty is highest, perfect Enlightenment.

Bodhisattva Kashyapa said to the Buddha, "World-Honored One, if Nirvana, Buddha-nature, certainty and Tathágata are terms which have the same meaning, why do you teach the Three Refuges?"

The Buddha replied to Kashyapa, "Son of a good family, all sentient beings seek the Three Refuges because they fear samsara. Through the Three Refuges, they come to know of Buddha-nature, certainty and Nirvana. Son of a good family, there are some Dharma-terms which are called by the same name but have different meanings;
there are other Dharma-terms whose names and meanings are
different. Concerning the same name used with different meanings,
that which is eternal is Buddha, Dharma, and Sangha; Nirvana and
space are both eternal. These are examples of the same name used
with different meanings. Concerning different names used with
different meanings, Buddha is termed enlightenment, Dharma is
termed non-enlightenment, and Sangha is termed harmony,
Nirvana is termed emancipation, and space is termed non-good
and unimpeded. These are examples of different names used with
different meanings. Son of a good family, the same applies to the
Three Refuges.

10 It is also stated [in the Nirvana Sutra, Chapter on the Four Dependables]:

Light is called un-decaying; what is un-decaying is called
Tathāgata. Again, light is called wisdom.

11 It is also stated [in the Nirvana Sutra, Chapter on the Sacred Practice]:

Sons of good families, all conditioned things are impermanent.
Space is unconditioned, and so it is eternal. Buddha-nature is
unconditioned, and so it is eternal. Space is Buddha-nature;
Buddha-nature is Tathāgata; Tathāgata is unconditioned; the
unconditioned is eternal. The eternal is [622a] Dharma; Dharma is
Sangha; Sangha is unconditioned; the unconditioned is eternal....

Sons of good families, I will show you an illustration: milk is
produced from a cow, cream from the milk, curdled milk from the
cream, butter from the curdled milk, and manda is produced from
the butter. Manda is the finest. If one takes it, one's illnesses are all
cured, for all kinds of medicine are contained in it.

Sons of good families, so it is with the Buddha. The Buddha sets
forth the twelve-divisioned scriptures; from the twelve-divisioned
scriptures arise the sutras; from the sutras arise the Extensive
sutras; from the Extensive sutras arise the Perfection of Wisdom sutras;
from the Perfection of Wisdom sutras arises the Great Nirvana Sutra,
just as manda is obtained last of all. Buddha-nature is compared to
manda; Buddha-nature is Tathāgata.

Sons of good families, for this reason, it is taught that the merit
possessed by the Tathāgata is immeasurable, boundless and uncountable.

12 It is also stated [in the Nirvana Sutra, Chapter on the Sacred Practice]:

Sons of good families, the path is divided into two kinds, eternal and temporary. The characteristics of bodhisattvas are of two kinds, eternal and temporary. So is Nirvana. Non-Buddhist paths are described as temporary, whereas the Buddhist path is described as eternal. The Bodhi, which Sravakas and Pratyekabuddhas attain is described as temporary, whereas the Bodhi which bodhisattvas and Buddhas attain is described as eternal. The emancipation of the non-Buddhist paths is described as temporary, whereas the Buddhist emancipation is described as eternal.

Sons of good families, the path, Bodhi and Nirvana are all described as eternal. All sentient beings, however, are unable to see them because they are constantly covered by immeasurable evil passions and so they lack the eye of wisdom. Hence, desirous of seeing them, sentient beings observe the precepts, practice meditation and cultivate wisdom. Through these practices, they can see the path, Bodhi and Nirvana. This is called bodhisattvas' attainment of the path, Bodhi, and Nirvana. The nature and characteristics of the path are indeed non-arising and non-perishing. Hence, they cannot be grasped.... Although the path is formless, one can see it and conceive of it as actually possessing efficacy.... Further, the mind of a sentient being is not a material thing, neither long nor short, neither rough nor fine, neither bound nor emancipated, nor is it visible. However, as a dharma, it is an existing thing.

13 It is also stated [in the Nirvana Sutra, Chapter on the Virtuous King]:

Sons of good families, because Nirvana possesses great pleasure, it is called Great Nirvana. Nirvana is the state of non-pleasure. Because it possesses four kinds of pleasure, it is called Great Nirvana. What are the four? The first is destruction of all pleasures. Non-destruction of pleasures is called pain. If pain exists, Nirvana is not called Great Pleasure. Since pleasure is destroyed, pain ceases to exist. Non-existence of pleasure and pain is called Great Pleasure. The nature of Nirvana is non-existence of pleasure and pain. Hence, Nirvana is called [622b] Great Pleasure. For this
reason, it is called Great Nirvana.

Next, sons of good families, there are two kinds of pleasure: pleasure of ordinary people and that of Buddhas. The pleasure of ordinary people is temporary and subject to decay, and so it is non-pleasure. Buddhas' pleasure is eternal pleasure; since it is not subject to change, it is called Great Pleasure.

Next, sons of good families, there are three kinds of sensation: painful sensation, pleasant sensation, and sensation of neither pain nor pleasure. Neither pain nor pleasure is also classified as pain. Nirvana, too, is neither pain nor pleasure, but is called Great Pleasure. Since it is Great Pleasure, Nirvana is called Great Nirvana.

Second, because Nirvana is Great Tranquility, it is called Great Pleasure. The nature of Nirvana is Great Tranquility, because it is free of all that disturbs and torments mind and body. Because Nirvana is Great Tranquility, it is called Great Nirvana.

Third, because Nirvana is omniscient, it is called Great Pleasure. That which is not omniscient is not called Great Pleasure. All Buddhas, Tathágatas, are omniscient, and so they are called [possessed of] Great Pleasure. Because it is Great Pleasure, it is called Great Nirvana.

Fourth, because [in Nirvana] the indestructible body is attained, it is called Great Pleasure. If the body is subject to decay, it is not described as possessing pleasure. The Tathágata’s body is diamond-hard and un-decaying. Because it is not a body of evil passions or impermanence, it is called Great Pleasure. Because it is Great Pleasure, it is called Great Nirvana.

14 It is also stated [in the Nirvana Sutra, Chapter on the Virtuous King]:

Because Nirvana is inexplicable and inconceivable, it can be called Maha parinirvana. Because it is genuinely pure, it is called Great Nirvana. In what way is it genuinely pure? There are four kinds of purity. What are they? First, the twenty-five states of existence are described as impure. Since they are forever destroyed, it can be called pure. That which is pure is Nirvana. Nirvana such as this can be called an existence, but Nirvana is not really an existence. In accordance with the worldly practice, Buddhas and Tathágatas teach that Nirvana is an existence, just as people of the world call
someone who is not one's father 'father,' call someone who is not one's mother 'mother' or call those who are not one's parents 'parents.' So it is with Nirvana; in accordance with the worldly practice, it is taught that Buddhas are existent and are Great Nirvana.

Second, because of karmic purity. The karmas of all ordinary people are impure, and so they are not Nirvana. The karmas of Buddhas and Tathāgatas are pure, and so they are called Great Purity. Because it is Great Purity, it is called Great Nirvana.

Third, because of the purity of the body. If the body is impermanent, it is described as impure. Since the Tathāgata’s body is eternal, it is called Great Purity. Because it is Great Purity, it is called Great Nirvana.

Fourth, because of purity of the mind. If the mind is defiled, it is called impure. The Buddha's mind is undefiled, and so it is called Great Purity. Because it is Great Purity, it is called Great Nirvana.

Sons of good families, those [who practice the teaching of the Nirvana Sutra] are called sons and daughters of good families.

15 It is also stated [in the Nirvana Sutra, Chapter on the Virtuous King]:

Sons of good families, Buddhas and Tathāgatas [622c] do not give rise to evil passions. This state is called Nirvana. The wisdom they possess is unimpeded in penetrating dharmas; so they are called Tathāgatas. Tathāgatas are not ordinary beings, Sravakas, Pratyekabuddhas or bodhisattvas; so they are called Buddha-nature. The Tathāgata’s body, mind, and wisdom pervade, without hindrance, the immeasurable, boundless, and uncountable lands; so it is called space. Since Tathāgatas are eternal and are not subject to change, they are called True Reality. Thus Tathāgatas do not remain in the ultimate Nirvanic state; such beings as those are called bodhisattvas.

16 It is also stated [in the Nirvana Sutra, Chapter on Kashyapa];

Kashyapa Bodhisattva said, "World-Honored One, Buddha-nature is eternal, like space. Why does the Tathāgata explain that it belongs to the future? Tathāgata, when you say that icchantikas do
not possess any good, does this mean that they do not have any thought of love toward their fellow disciples, their teachers, parents, relatives, wives or children? If they have such a thought, is this not good?"

The Buddha replied, "Very good, son of a good family, it is gratifying to me that you have asked me this question. Buddha-nature is like space, belonging to neither past nor future nor present. All sentient beings have three kinds of bodies: past, future and present bodies. In the future they will attain glorious pure bodies and be able to see Buddha-nature. For this reason, I say that Buddha-nature belongs to the future. Sons of good families, for the sake of sentient beings, at one time I present a cause as an effect, and at another I present an effect as a cause. In this sutra, therefore, I present life [effect] as nourishment [cause], and also present form [effect] as the tactile sensation [cause]. Because one attains a pure body in the future, I refer to Buddha-nature as belonging to the future."

"World-Honored One, if such is the Buddha's exposition, why do you declare that all sentient beings have Buddha-nature?"

"Sons of good families, even if sentient beings have no Buddha-nature now, you should not consider Buddha-nature as non-existent. It is like space. Although its nature is nothingness, you cannot consider it as non-existent at present. Again, although all sentient beings are impermanent, their Buddha-nature is eternal and is not subject to change. For this reason, I declare in this sutra that sentient beings' Buddha-nature is neither within nor without, like space. It is neither within nor without, like space, and yet it is existent. That which is within and without is space, but we do not consider it one or eternal. Nor can we consider it omnipresent. Further, space is neither within nor without, but all sentient beings possess it. So it is with Buddha-nature.

"Concerning icchantikas you speak of, they perform such acts as bodily acts, verbal acts, mental acts, acts of grasping, acts of desiring, acts of giving, and acts of understanding, but they are all wrong acts. For what reason? Because they do not seek proper causation. Sons of good families, it is like haritki's roots, stalk, branches, leaves, flowers, and fruits, which are all bitter. Acts of icchantikas are like this." [623a]
It is also stated [in the Nirvana Sutra, Chapter on Kashyapa];

Sons of good families, the Tathágata possesses the power of knowing the capacities of beings. Hence, discerning the superior, average or inferior capacities of beings, he, with a thorough knowledge of particular persons, changes them from inferior to average; also, with a thorough knowledge of other persona, the Tathágata changes them from average to superior; again, with a thorough knowledge of still other persons, the Tathágata changes them from superior to average; further, with a thorough knowledge of different persons, the Tathágata changes them from average to inferior. Thus one should know that the capacities of sentient beings are not fixed. Since they are not fixed, their roots of goodness can be destroyed; after they have been destroyed, they may arise again. If the capacities of sentient beings were fixed, after they have been destroyed, they would not arise again. Again, we could not say that the icchantikas' life span in hell is one kalpa. For this reason, sons of good families, the Tathágata teaches that dharmas have no fixed natures.

Kashyapa Bodhisattva said to the Buddha, "World-Honored One, the Tathágata must have known, with his power of knowing people's capacities, that Sunaksatra would destroy his roots of goodness. Why did you allow him to leave home to join the Sangha?"

The Buddha replied, "Sons of good families, a long time ago, when I became a mendicant, my [half-]brother Nanda, my cousins Ánanda and Devadatta, and my son Rahula all followed me, renounced the world and practiced the way. If I had not allowed Sunaksatra to leave home, he would have succeeded to the throne. If so, he would have employed his power as he pleased and destroyed the Buddha-dharma. For this reason, I allowed him to leave home and engage in the practice of the way. Sons of good families, if Sunaksatra had not become a mendicant, he would have destroyed his roots of goodness. In that case, he would have been bereft of benefit for immeasurable lives. Now, after joining the Sangha, he destroyed his roots of goodness, but still he observed the precepts and paid homage to and revered the elders, the seniors and the virtuous people. He also practiced the first through the fourth meditations. These are good causes. Such good causes produce good things. When good things are produced, he would engage in the practice of the way. When he practiced the way, he
would realize the highest, perfect Enlightenment. For this reason, I allowed Sunaksatra to leave home and join the Sangha. Sons of good families, if I had not allowed Monk Sunaksatra to renounce the world and receive the precepts, I would not have deserved to be called the Tathágata possessed of the ten powers.... Sons of good families, the Tathágata knows well the superior, average and inferior capacities of sentient beings. Therefore, the Buddha is called one who possess power of knowing people's capacities."

Kashyapa Bodhisattva said to the Buddha, "World-Honored One, the Tathágata possesses the power of knowing people's capacities. Thus, knowing well the distinct capacities of all sentient beings, such as superior, average and inferior, and also sharp and dull, the Tathágata acts in response to the people, their intentions, and the time. Hence, the Tathágata is called one who possesses the power of knowing people's capacities.... At times he teaches that those who violate the four major prohibitions, those who commit the five gravest offenses and icchantikas all have Buddha-nature...."

"The Tathágata, the World-Honored One, [623b] explains one thing in two ways in response to the conditions of the country, to the times, to others' use of words, to the needs of the people, and to their various capacities; namely, he uses innumerable names for one thing, he uses innumerable names that have one and the same meaning, and he uses innumerable names for innumerable meanings.

"What is 'using innumerable names for one thing'? 'Nirvana' may be presented as an example. It is called 'Nirvana,' also 'non-arising,' 'non-emerging,' 'no-act,' 'unconditioned,' 'taking refuge,' 'cave shelter,' 'emancipation,' 'light,' 'torch,' 'the other shore,' 'fearlessness,' 'non-retrogressive,' 'place of peaceful rest,' 'tranquility,' 'formlessness,' 'non-duality,' 'single practice,' 'coolness,' 'no darkness,' 'un-hindered-ness,' 'no dispute,' 'non-defilement,' 'vastness,' 'nectar,' and also 'auspiciousness.' This is an example of 'using innumerable names for one thing.'

"What is 'using innumerable names that have one and the same meaning'? Shakra may be presented as an example....

"What is 'using innumerable names for innumerable meanings'? 'Buddha' and 'Tathágata' are examples of this. 'Tathágata' is a different name with different meaning, so is 'Arhat,' also 'Samyaksambuddha,' 'helmsman,' 'leader,' 'enlightened one,'
'possessed of wisdom and practice,' 'great king of lions,' 'mendicant,' 'Brahman,' 'tranquil one,' 'donor,' 'gone to the other shore,' 'great physician king,' 'great elephant king,' 'great dragon king,' 'giver of the eye,' 'possessed of great power,' 'great fearlessness,' 'mass of jewels,' 'caravan leader,' 'one who has attained emancipation,' 'great man,' 'teacher of gods and humans,' 'great pundarika,' 'solitary and peerless one,' 'great field of merits,' 'great wisdom-sea,' 'no characteristics, and also 'one possessed of eight wisdoms.' These are all different names with different meanings. Sons of good families, this is 'using innumerable names for innumerable meanings.'

"Further, there are cases in which the Tathágata uses innumerable names with one meaning. An example of this is 'aggregates.' It is called 'aggregates,' also 'perversion,' '[fourfold noble] truth,' 'four bases of mindfulness,' 'four kinds of nourishment,' 'four bases of consciousness,' 'existence,' 'path,' 'time,' 'sentient beings,' 'world,' 'highest truth,' 'three practices,' namely, body, precepts, and mind, also 'causality,' 'evil passions,' 'emancipation,' [623c] 'twelve causations,' also 'Sravakas, Pratyekabuddhas and Buddhhas,' also 'hell, hungry spirits, animals, humans and gods,' also called 'past, present and future.' These are examples of 'using innumerable names with one meaning.'

"Sons of good families, the Tathágata, the World-Honored One, for the sake of sentient beings presents a brief meaning while expounding extensively, and also presents extensive [names and meanings] while giving a short one. He also explains the highest truth in terms of worldly truth, and explains the worldly truth in terms of the highest truth."

18 It is also stated [in the Nirvana Sutra, Chapter on the Sacred Practice];

Kashyapa said, "World-Honored One, the highest truth is also called 'path,' also 'Bodhi' and also 'Nirvana'...."

19 It is also stated [in the Nirvana Sutra, Chapter on Kashyapa];

Sons of good families, I have stated in this sutra that the Tathágata’s body is distinguished into two: one is physical body and the other is Dharma-body. The physical body is the accommodated or transformed body manifested by skillful means.
This body is subject to birth, old age, sickness, and death, and can be described as long or short, black or white, this or that, and also, it may or may not require learning. If my disciples hear this but fail to understand my intention, they will say, "The Tathágata has decisively stated that the Buddha-body is a conditioned dharma."

Dharma-body is eternal, blissful, almighty, and pure. It is forever free of birth, old age, sickness and death, and is neither white nor black, neither long nor short, neither this nor that, and neither requiring learning nor not requiring it. Whether or not the Buddha appears in the world, he is constantly unmoving and undergoes no change. Sons of good families, if my disciples hear this but fail to understand my intention, they will say, "The Tathágata has decisively stated that the Buddha-body is an unconditioned dharma."

20 It is also stated [in the Nirvana Sutra, Chapter on Kashyapa];

As I have explained in the twelve divisions of scriptures, some are the teachings which are in accord with my intention, some are those which are in accord with others' intention, and some are those which are in accord with both my intention and others'....

Sons of good families, when I said that bodhisattvas of the tenth stage see a little of Buddha-nature, this is the teaching, which is in accord with others' intention. Why did I say, "see a little"? Bodhisattvas of the tenth stage have attained such samádhis as 'Heroic Advance' and also the three thousand Dharma-gates, hence clearly aware of the fact that they will attain the highest, perfect Bodhi, but do not see that all sentient beings will definitely attain the highest, perfect Bodhi. For this reason, I say that bodhisattvas of the tenth stage see a little of Buddha-nature.

Sons of good families, I always declare that all sentient beings have Buddha-nature; this is the teaching, which is in accord with my own intention. That all sentient beings are unceasing and unperishing and that they eventually attain the highest, perfect Bodhi - this is the teaching, which is in accord with my own intention. Although they all have Buddha-nature, they cannot see it because it is covered over by evil passions - this is my teaching and also yours; this is called the teaching which is in accord with my and others' intention. Sons of good families, the Tathágata sometimes expounds innumerable teachings in order to present one teaching.
It is also stated [in the *Nirvana Sutra*, Chapter on Lion's Roar]; [624a]

One who is awakened to all things is called [one who possesses] Buddha-nature. Bodhisattvas of the tenth stage cannot be called all-awakened ones; even if they see Buddha-nature, they cannot see it clearly. Sons of good families, there are two kinds of seeing: seeing with the eyes and seeing through hearing. All Buddhas, World-Honored Ones, see Buddha-nature with their eyes as clearly as if they were looking at a mango in the palms of their hands.

Bodhisattvas of the tenth stage see Buddha-nature through hearing but not very clearly. Bodhisattvas of the tenth stage only know that they will definitely attain the highest, perfect Bodhi but do not know that all sentient beings have Buddha-nature.

Sons of good families, those who see it with the eyes are Buddhas, Tathágatas. Bodhisattvas of the tenth stage see Buddha-nature with the eyes and also see it through hearing. All sentient beings up to bodhisattvas of the ninth stage see Buddha-nature through hearing. Even when bodhisattvas hear that all sentient beings have Buddha-nature, if they cannot believe this, we do not say that they see it through hearing....

The Bodhisattva-Mahasattva, Lion's Roar said, "World-Honored One, all sentient beings are incapable of knowing the Tathágata’s mind. How can they observe and know it?"

"Sons of good families, all sentient beings are indeed incapable of knowing the Tathágata’s mind. If they want to observe and know it, there are two ways: one is seeing with the eyes and the other is seeing through hearing. If they see the Tathágata’s bodily acts and know that this is the Tathágata, it can be said that they see him with the eyes. If they see the Tathágata’s verbal acts and know that this is the Tathágata, it can be said that they see him through hearing. If they see the Tathágata’s countenance which is unequaled among all sentient beings and know that this is the Tathágata, it can be said that they see him with the eyes. If they hear his subtle and supreme voice, which is unequaled among the voices of all sentient beings and know that this is the Tathágata, it can be said that they see him through hearing. If they see the transcendent power displayed by the Tathágata, they may wonder whether it is for the sake of sentient beings or for his own benefit; then they realize that it is for sake of sentient beings and not for his own benefit and that this is what the Tathágata is. To realize thus is seeing him with the eyes. If
they see the Tathágata observing sentient beings with the wisdom of knowing others' thoughts, they may wonder whether it is for the sake of his own benefit for the sake of sentient beings; then they realize that it is for the benefit of sentient beings and not for his own benefit and that this is what the Tathágata is. To realize thus is seeing him through hearing."

The Discourse on the Pure Land says:

O World-Honored One, with singleness of mind, I
Take refuge in the Tathágata of Unhindered Light
Shining throughout the Ten Quarters,
And aspire to be born in the Land of Peace and Bliss.

When I contemplate the nature of that land,
I find that it surpasses all states of existence in the three worlds.
It is ultimately like space,
Vast and without bounds.

It is stated in the Commentary on Vasubandhu's Discourse on the Pure Land:

Accomplishment of the glorious merit of purity is described in the verse as: [624b]

When I contemplate the nature of that land
I find that it surpasses all states of existence in the three worlds.

Why is this inconceivable? When ordinary men full of evil passions attain birth in the Pure Land, the karmic bonds of the three worlds will not affect them any more. Even without severing evil passions, they will attain the state of Nirvana. How can we conceive of this?

It is also stated in the same work:

Out of the Great Compassion of the Right Path
And from the root of supra-mundane good has it arisen.

These two lines show what is called 'accomplishment of the glorious merit of essential nature'. "Nature' means 'base.' This
means to say, the Pure Land complies with the Dharma-nature and is not in conflict with the Dharma-base. It originates in the same way as explained in the Garland Sutra, "Chapter on the origination of the Tathāgata from the Dharma-nature just as treasure is produced from mani, the king of gems." Another meaning is that repeated practice becomes the essential nature. That is to say, Dharmakara Bodhisattva repeatedly performed the Practices Perfection, thereby producing [the supreme nature of the Pure Land]. Again, 'essential nature' refers to the Sages' Family. Formerly, in the presence of Lokeshvararaja Buddha, Dharmakara Bodhisattva attained insight into the non-arising of all dharmas. This stage is called the Sages' Family. While dwelling there, he made the Forty-eight Great Vows, whereby he was able to establish his land called 'the Pure Land of Peace and Bliss.' This means that this land is the result of that cause. Here the cause is explained in the result; hence, [Vasubandhu] calls it 'essential nature.' Further, 'essential nature' has the meaning of 'being so of necessity' and 'unalterable.' [The essential nature of the Pure Land is] like the nature of the ocean, which has one taste; upon flowing into it, all river water 'necessarily' acquires that one taste, and the taste of the ocean is 'not altered' by that of the river-water. It is also like the nature of the body, which is impure; when things beautiful to look at, sweet-smelling, and of wholesome taste are taken into it, they all become defiled. Those born in the Pure Land of Peace and Bliss are free of the impurity of body and mind; they will ultimately attain the Dharma-body of Purity, Equality, and No-action. This is because the Land of Peace and Bliss is perfected with the nature of purity.

Out of the Great Compassion of the Right Path
And from the root of the supra-mundane good has it arisen.

['The Right Path'] means the Great Path of Universal Equality. The reason why the Great Path of Universal Equality is called 'the Right Path' is that Universal Equality is the essence of all dharmas. Since all dharmas are equal [in essence], the Bodhi-mind [which Dharmakara awakened upon realizing the essence of dharmas] is universally equal. Since the Bodhi-mind is universally equal, the Path [to Enlightenment which he followed] is universally equal. Since the Path is universally equal, the Great Compassion [which attended it] is also universally equal. The Great Compassion is indeed the right cause of the Buddhist Path. Hence, it is said:
There are three kinds of object for which [three kinds of] compassion are aroused: first, that which takes sentient beings as its object is called small compassion; second, that which takes dhamas as its object is called medium compassion; and third, that which takes nothing as its object is called Great Compassion. Great Compassion is the supra-mundane good. Since the Pure Land of Peace and Bliss has been produced by this Great Compassion, it is regarded as the origin of the Pure Land. Hence, it is said:

'And from the root of the supra-mundane good has it arisen.'

25 It is also stated in the same work:

**Question:** When we read Dharmakara Bodhisattva's Vows and Nargarjuna Bodhisattva's [Verses of] Praise, we find that they mention the existence of many Sravakas as if it were something marvelous. Why is this so?

**Answer:** Sravakas regard ultimate reality as the [final] Enlightenment. It is presumed that they cannot produce the seed of aspiration for Enlightenment of the Buddha. But, with [624c] the inconceivable Divine Power of his Primal Vow, the Buddha embraces them and enables them to be born in the Pure Land. With his Divine Power, he will certainly make them awaken aspiration for the highest Bodhi. It is just as a chin bird kills fish and shellfish when it enters the water but the dead fish are all revived when a rhinoceros enters the water. Just so, [the Buddha enables Sravakas to] awaken [the Bodhi-mind which they] cannot achieve [by their own power]. This is indeed a marvelous thing. Moreover, of the five inconceivabilities, the Buddha Dharma is most inconceivable. That the Buddha [Amida] enables Sravakas to awaken the aspiration for the highest Bodhi is indeed difficult to conceive.

26 It is also stated in the same work:

By 'the inconceivable power' is meant that the power of the seventeen kinds of glorious merit of the Buddha-land is beyond comprehension. According to various sutras, there are five inconceivabilities: first, the number of sentient beings [which neither
increases nor decreases]; second, karma-power, third, dragons' power [to cause rain to fall]; fourth, meditation-power [to produce miracles, etc.]; and fifth, the power of the Buddha Dharma. Regarding the inconceivability of the Buddha-land, there are two powers: first, the karma-power, namely, [the power] produced by Dharmakara Bodhisattva's supra-mundane goodness and the karma-power of his Great Vow; and second, the power of Amida, the Enlightened King of the Dharma, that maintains [the Pure Land].

27 It is also stated in the same work:

Concerning 'manifestation of the perfection of self-benefit and benefiting of others,' [Vasubandhu says in the Discourse]:

I have briefly explained the seventeen kinds of glorious merits of Amida Buddha's land, which manifest the Tathágata’s perfection of both the great merit-power for his own benefit and the merit for benefiting others.

'Briefly' implies that the merits of the land are of innumerable kinds, and not limited to seventeen. It is said that Mt. Sumeru is contained in a mustard-seed and one pore of the skin holds the great ocean. Is this because of the miraculous power of the mountain or the ocean or because of the power of the mustard-seed or the pore? It is simply because the miraculous power of the [bodhisattva] is capable of it.

28 It is also stated in the same work:

What is the accomplishment of the glorious merit of the unfailing sustenance? It is said in the verse:

When I observe the Buddha's Primal Vow-Power, I find that those who meet with it do not pass it in vain. They are enabled to gain quickly The great sea of the treasure of merit.

The accomplishment of the merit of the unfailing sustenance describes Amida Tathágata’s Primal Vow-Power... 'Unfailing sustenance' results from the original Forty-eight Vows of
Dharmakara Bodhisattva and is maintained by the transcendent Power that Amida Tathágata can freely use now. His Vows gave rise to the Power; the Power fulfills the Vows. The Vows have not been vain; the Power is not empty. The Power and Vows work in complete harmony, and are not in the least discordant with each other; hence, it is said 'accomplishment.'

29 The *Hymns in Praise of Amida Buddha* composed by Master T'an-luan say:

Namu Amida Butsu
Explaining this, we call him 'Infinite Life'; I give my praise in accompaniment to the sutra; he is also called 'Peaceful Sustenance.'

Since Amida attained Buddhahood, ten kalpas have passed;
His life-span is indeed beyond measure.
The halo of his Dharma-body pervades the Dharma-realm,
Shining on the blind and ignorant of the world; hence,
I prostrate myself and worship him. [625a]

His Light of Wisdom cannot be measured;
Therefore, the Buddha is also called 'Infinite Light.'
All those with limited dimensions are benefited by the Light that dawns in their minds;
Hence, I pay homage to the True Illumination.

His halo of emancipation is without bounds;
For this reason, he is also called 'Boundless Light.'
Those touched by the Light are freed of the ideas of 'being' and 'non-being.'
Hence, I bow in worship to the Equally Enlightened One.

His Light-cluster is unhindered like space.
For this reason, the Buddha is also called 'Unhindered Light.'
All those with hindrances receive the Light's benefit.
Hence, I prostrate myself and worship the Inconceivable One.
His Light of Purity is incomparable.
For this reason, the Buddha is also called 'Incomparable Light.'
Those who encounter his Light are rid of their karmic bonds.
Hence, I bow in worship to the Ultimate Refuge.

The Buddha's Light shines forth most brilliantly.
For this reason, the Buddha is also called 'King of Blazing Light.'
The darkness of the three lowest realms is dissipated by the Light.
Hence, I prostrate myself and worship the Great Arhat.

His Light of Enlightenment is brilliant, and its color is superb.
For this reason, the Buddha is also called 'Light of Purity.'
Once shone upon by the Light, we are freed of our karmic defilements,
And all attain emancipation. Hence, I prostrate myself and worship him.

Sending forth the Light of Compassion far and wide, he bestows happiness.
For this reason, the Buddha is also called 'Light of Joy.'
Wherever the Light reaches, it enables us to attain joy of Dharma.
Hence, I bow and prostrate myself to worship the Provider of Great Consolation.

The Buddha's Light destroys the darkness of ignorance.
For this reason, the Buddha is also called 'Light of Wisdom.'
All Buddhas and sages of the Three Vehicles Together praise and extol him. Hence, I bow in worship to him.

His Light shines everywhere at all times.
For this reason, the Buddha is also called 'Unceasing
Light.'
By accepting in faith the Power of his Light, with continuous mindfulness,
We all attain birth. Hence, I prostrate myself and worship him.

His Light cannot be fathomed, except by Buddhas.
For this reason, the Buddha is also called 'Inconceivable Light.'
Buddhas of the ten quarters praise our birth
And extol Amida's virtue. Hence, I bow in worship to him.

His majestic Light is above all distinctive features and so cannot be described in words.
For this reason, the Buddha is also called 'Ineffable Light.'
Amida became a Buddha through the Vow of Light;
his Light illumines blazingly.
It is praised by all Buddhas. Hence, I prostrate myself and worship him.

His Light shines brilliantly, surpassing the sun and moon.
For this reason, the Buddha is also called 'Light Outshining the Sun and Moon.'
Even Shakyamuni Buddha could not praise him exhaustively.
Hence, I bow and worship the Unequaled One....

Our Master, Nargarjuna Mahasattva,
Appeared at the beginning of the Age of Semblance Dharma and corrected degenerate teachings.
He closed wrong paths and opened the right way.
He is the eye for all beings in this Jambudvipa continent.
Reverently accepting the words of the Honored One, he reached the Stage of Joy;
He took refuge in Amida and attained birth in the Land of Peace and Bliss.

From the beginning-less past, I have wandered about in the three worlds,
Subject to transmigration caused by false and deluded thoughts.
The karma I commit every moment, every instant,
Ties my feet to the six realms and keeps me in the three painful states of existence.

May Amida protect me with the Light of Compassion,
And ensure that I do not lose my Bodhi-mind.
I praise the Name of the Buddha's Wisdom and virtue.
May all beings of the ten quarters who are closely related to Amida hear this teaching

And may all who aspire for birth in the Land of Peace and Bliss
Realize their desire without hindrance.
I will transfer all my merits, whether great or small,
To all beings, so that all may be born there together.

I entrust myself to the Inconceivable [625b] Light,
Single-heartedly take refuge in him, bow and worship him.

Those with Infinite Wisdom of the three times throughout the ten quarters,
Having equally practiced in accord with Oneness,
have become 'Perfectly Enlightened.'
Their two kinds of wisdom are fully perfected, and their Enlightenment is the same.
Their saving activity, which is in keeping with the conditions of beings, is truly immense.

My taking refuge in Amida's Pure Land
Is taking refuge in all Buddha-lands.
I praise one Buddha with singleness of heart.
May my praise extend to the Unhindered Ones throughout the ten quarters.

To each one of the immeasurable Buddhas of the ten quarters,
I sincerely prostrate myself and pay homage.
The Master of Kuang-ming temple says [in the *Essential Meaning of the Contemplation Sutra*]:

**Question:** Is Amida's Pure Land a recompensed land or a transformed land?

**Answer:** It is a recompensed land, not a transformed land. How do you know this? The *Mahayana Sutra on the Equal Nature* says:

The Western Land of Peace and Bliss and Amida Buddha are a recompensed land and a recompensed Buddha.

It is also stated in the *Sutra on the Buddha of Infinite Life*:

When Monk Dharmakara was performing the bodhisattva practices under Lokeshvararaja Buddha, he made the Forty-eight Vows. In each Vow, he promised to the following effect:

If, when I become a Buddha, the sentient beings of the ten quarters call my Name even ten times aspiring to be born in my land, but fail to attain birth, may I not attain the perfect Enlightenment.

He has already become a Buddha. This means that he is a body of reward for his causal Vows. Furthermore, in the Contemplation Sutra it is stated that when the three classes of aspirants of the highest grade are about to die, Amida Buddha together with his transformed bodies come to welcome them. In this case, the recompensed body together with transformed bodies come and extend their hands to them; hence, the sutra says 'together with.' From this testimonial passage we know that Amida is a recompensed body.

It is to be noted that 'recompensed body' and 'accommodated body' are synonyms, like 'eye' and 'visual organ.' In the earlier translation [of the Compendium of Mahayana] 'recompensed' was
rendered 'accommodated,' but in the later translation 'accommodated' was rendered 'recompensed.' Basically, 'recompensed' means that the causal practice is not futile, but necessarily brings about its result in the future. The result corresponds to the cause. Hence, we say 'recompensed.' Again, the myriad practices performed during three uncountable kalpas necessarily bring Bodhi. Now, Enlightenment has already been realized; this is the accommodated body. Concerning the Buddhas of the past and present, three bodies are distinguished. There is no other body apart from them. Even though the eight major events [of a Buddha's life] have infinite variations and the Buddhas' names are as numerous as the sand-grains and dust-motes, viewed from the perspective of their essential nature, all [manifestations of the Buddhas] are contained in transformed bodies. Amida is actually a recompensed body.

**Question:** Speaking of 'recompensed body,' it is eternally abiding, neither arising nor perishing. For what reason is it stated in the Sutra on the Prediction of Avalokiteshvara's Buddhahood that there is a time when Amida Buddha enters Nirvana? How do you interpret this?

**Answer:** Whether or not a Buddha enters Nirvana is a matter that belongs to the realm of Buddhas, of which sages of the Three Vehicles are unable even to have a glimpse with their shallow wisdoms. How much less so with us, petty and ordinary people! We cannot possibly know the reason. If, however, you insist on knowing this, I will draw upon a sutra for clear evidence. It is stated in the *Larger Perfection of Wisdom Sutra*, "Chapter on Nirvana being not Illusory":

> The Buddha said to Subhuti, "What do you think: if an illusory man creates an illusory [625c] man, is the latter of real substance or not, is it empty or not?"

Subhuti replied, "World-Honored One, it is not."

> The Buddha said to Subhuti, "Form is illusion; sensation, conception, volition and consciousness are
illusion. All things up to All-knowing Wisdom are illusion."

Subhuti said to the Buddha, "World-Honored One, are worldly dharmas illusion? Are supra-worldly dharmas also illusion? The four bases of mindfulness, four correct strivings, four bases of supernatural knowledge, five faculties, five powers, seven factors for awakening, eightfold noble path, and three gates of emancipation; the Buddha's ten powers, four fearlessnesses, four unhindered wisdoms, eighteen special qualities; the results of various practices, and those in the stage of sagacity and the sages, namely, stream-winners, once-returners, non-returners, arhats, Pratyekabuddhas, bodhisattvas, Mahasattvas, and Buddhas, World-Honored Ones -- are they all illusion?"

The Buddha replied to Subhuti, "All dharmas are illusion. Among these dharmas there are illusory dharmas for Sravakas, those for Pratyekabuddhas, those for bodhisattvas, those for Buddhas; also there are illusory dharmas based on evil passions, and those based on karmic causation. For this reason, Subhuti, all dharmas are illusion."

Subhuti said to the Buddha, "World-Honored One, in various stages of destruction of evil passions, such as the fruit of stream-winner, the fruit of once-returner, the fruit of non-returner, the fruit of arhat, and the path of Pratyekabuddha, the practitioners destroy the residue of evil passions. Are these all illusion?"

The Buddha said to Subhuti, "All dharmas that have the aspect of arising and perishing are illusion."

Subhuti said, "World-Honored One, what dharma is not illusion?"

The Buddha said, "The dharma that neither arises nor perishes is not illusion."

Subhuti said, "What dharma neither arises nor
perishes and so is not illusion?"

The Buddha said, "Nirvana which is free of falsity is the dharma that is not illusion."

"World-Honored One, you the Buddha have taught that all dharmas are equal and that they have not been created by Sravakas, Pratyekabuddhas, bodhisattvas, Mahasattvas or by Buddhas. Whether a Buddha appears in the world or not, the essential nature of all dharmas is always voidness. Voidness of their essential nature is Nirvana. Why is this dharma, Nirvana, not illusion?"

The Buddha said to Subhuti, "So it is. All dharmas are equal; they have not been created by Śravakas, and so on. Voidness of their essential nature is Nirvana. If bodhisattvas who have newly awakened aspiration for Bodhi hear that all dharmas are ultimately void in their essential nature and that even Nirvana is illusion, their hearts will be agitated and fear-ridden. For the sake of those initiate bodhisattvas, I deliberately make a distinction, saying that all dharmas that arise and perish are illusion and those that neither arise nor perish are not illusion."

From this scripture we clearly know that Amida is definitely a recompensed body. [626a] This does not preclude Amida from entering Nirvana in the future. The wise should realize this.

Question: If, as you say, the Buddha and his land are a recompensed body and land, they are too high and subtle for lesser sages. How could ordinary people with defilements and hindrances enter there?

Answer: Considering sentient beings' defilements and hindrances, they cannot possibly hope to attain birth there. But when they entrust themselves to the Buddha's Vow, it becomes the strong cause enabling those of the Five Vehicles equally to enter Amida's land.

31 He also says [in the Commentary on the Introductory Section]:
The passage [in the *Contemplation Sutra*] beginning with "I now wish to be born in [the Pure Land of] Amida" shows that Queen Vaidehi especially chose the land where she desired to be born. This refers to Amida's land. Each of the Forty-eight Vows gave rise to the supreme cause; through the cause the excellent practice was performed; through the practice the excellent result was attained; through the result the excellent recompense was accomplished; through the recompense the Land of Peace and Bliss was manifested; through the Land of Bliss the compassionate saving activity was revealed; through the compassionate saving activity the gate of wisdom was opened. The compassionate mind is inexhaustible; so is wisdom. Through the joint practice of compassion and wisdom, the nectar of Dharma has been made available everywhere. Thus the Dharma-nourishment benefits the multitudes of beings universally. Many other sutras encourage us to follow this sutra. Many sages join their hearts in urging us to take this path. For this reason, the Tathágata secretly led the Queen to choose her birth in Amida's land.

32 He also says [in the *Commentary on the Meditative Practice*]:

The Capital of Tranquility and No-action in the West Is ultimately free and peaceful, transcending existence and non-existence. With the mind imbued with Great Compassion, one sports in the Dharma-realm. Manifesting bodies of incarnation, one benefits beings equally without discrimination.

Let us return home! We should not stay In this realm of devils. Since innumerable kalpas ago We have been transmigrating In all the states of the six realms.

Nowhere has there been any pleasure; We only hear the voices of samsaric pain. After the end of this life, Let us enter the capital of Nirvana!

33 It is also stated [in the *Hymns of the Nembutsu Liturgy*]:
The Land of Utmost Bliss is the Nirvana Realm of No-action;
I fear those who perform sundry practices following given conditions are perhaps unable to be born there.
Hence, the Tathágata Shakyamuni selected the essential teaching,
And taught us to be mindful of Amida with singleness of heart.

34 It is also stated [in the Hymns of the Nembutsu Liturgy]:

Following the Buddha, one effortlessly returns to Naturalness;
Naturalness is Amida's land.
Free of defilements and non-arising, it is originally the realm of truth.
Whether going or returning, advancing or stopping, one always follows the Buddha;
One realizes there the Body of Dharma-nature of No-action.

35 It is also stated [in the Hymns of the Nembutsu Liturgy]:

Amida's excellent fruit of Enlightenment is called supreme Nirvana.

36 Master Kyeong-heung says [in the Commentary on the Larger Sutra]:

'Buddha of Infinite Light' - because the Light is beyond calculation.
'Buddha of Boundless Light' - because there is nothing it does not shine upon.
'Buddha of Unhindered Light' - because it is not hindered by anyone or anything.
'Buddha of Incomparable Light' - because bodhisattvas' [lights] cannot be compared with it.
'Buddha of the Light of the King of Flame' - because the Light is unrestricted in its activity and nothing surpasses it.
'Buddha of Pure Light' - because it has arisen from the roots of good free of greed and also because it removed the defilements of greed from the minds of sentient beings; the Light is pure because it is free of the defilements of greed.
'Buddha of the Light of Joy' - because it has arisen from the roots of good free of anger and also because it removes fierce anger from the minds of sentient beings.
'Buddha of the Light of Wisdom' - because it has arisen from the roots of good...
free of stupidity and also because it removes sentient beings' mental activities related to ignorance. 'Buddha of Unceasing Light' - because the Buddha's constant Light always illumines and benefits beings. 'Buddha of Inconceivable Light' - because sages of the Two Vehicles cannot fathom it. 'Buddha of Ineffable Light' - because those of other vehicles [than the Buddha] are unable to evaluate it. 'Buddha of the Light Outshining [626b] the Sun and the Moon' - because the sun cannot shine universally but Amida's Light illumines this Saha world pervasively. That all beings receive the Light's brilliance on their bodies is due to the Vow of making bodies and minds of sentient beings soft and gentle [the 33rd Vow].

37 We clearly know from the Tathágata’s teaching of truth and the masters' commentaries that the Pure Land of Peace and Provision is the true Land of Recompense. Sentient beings with delusion and defilements cannot see Buddha-nature here, because it is covered over by evil passions. The [Nirvana Sutra] [Chapter on Kashyapa] says: "I say that bodhisattvas of the tenth stage see a little of Buddha-nature." Hence, we know that when we reach the Buddha Land of Peace and Bliss, Buddha-nature will certainly be revealed to us - through the Merit-transference by the Primal Vow-Power. It is also stated in the [Nirvana Sutra] [Chapter on Kashyapa] says: "Sentient beings will, in the future, attain and glorify bodies of purity and be able to see Buddha-nature."

38 It is stated in the Discourse on the Awakening of Faith in Mahayana:

To realize that even though there is an exposition, there is no one who expounds it, and that [even though there is thinking,] there is no one who thinks - this is called 'being in accord with reality.' To become free of thought is to enter [the samadhi].

[Fei-hsi's explanation:] 'To enter' means to enter the samádhi of True Suchness. It is to be noted that the state of no-thought is that of Wonderful Enlightenment. It is to realize how the first arising of mind takes place. To realize the first arising of mind is no-thought; even the bodhisattvas of the tenth stage cannot know it. Since people of today have not yet reached the ten stages of faith, why should they not rely on Ashvaghosa Mahasattva? He says, "From speech one enters no-speech; from thought one enters no-thought."

39 When I contemplate 'recompense,' I find that the accomplished land has resulted as the recompense for the Tathágata’s ocean-like Vow. Hence,
Concerning the ocean-like Vow, there is true and provisional. For this reason, concerning the Buddha-land, too, there is true and provisional.

By the right cause, the selected Primal Vow, the True Buddha-land has been established.

Concerning the True Buddha, the *Larger Sutra* says, "Buddha of Boundless Light, Buddha of Unhindered Light"; also, *the Sutra on the Way of Salvation of Humans by Amida, the Perfectly Enlightened One, that Transcends all Buddhas* says: "The king of all Buddhas, the most august of all lights." The Discourse on the Pure Land says "Homage to the Tathágata of Unhindered Light Shining throughout the Ten Quarters."

Concerning the True Land, the *Larger Sutra* ([the Sutra on the Immeasurably Pure And Equal Enlightenment)] says "the Land of Infinite Light"; also it [the Teaching Assembly of the Tathágata of Infinite Life] says "the Land of Wisdoms." The *Discourse on the Pure Land* describes it as "ultimately like space, vast and without bounds."

Concerning birth in the Pure Land, the *Larger Sutra* says, "They are all endowed with bodies of Naturalness, Emptiness, and Infinity." The *Discourse on the Pure Land* states, "The hosts of sages in the likeness of pure flowers surrounding the Tathagata are born there, transformed from within the Flower of Enlightenment." Also the *Commentary on Vasubandhu's Discourse on the Pure Land* says, "[They are so born] by one and the same path of the Nembutsu, and not by other paths." Also it is said [in the *Hymns of the Nembutsu Liturgy*], "Inconceivable Birth."

Provisional Buddhas and Lands are discussed below.

Both the true and provisional [Buddhas and Lands] have been recompensed for the ocean-like Vow of Great Compassion. Hence, we know that they are Recompensed Buddhhas and Lands. Since there are thousands of different karmic causes for birth in the provisional Buddha-lands, there are thousands of different Buddha-lands. They are called Provisional Transformed Buddhhas and Lands. [626c] Those who are ignorant of the distinction between the true and provisional [Buddhas and Lands] fail to acknowledge the great benevolence of the Tathagata.

Accordingly, I have disclosed the True Buddha and True Land. These are the very objective, which the true essence of the Pure Land way seeks to clarify. Respectfully revere and accept in faith the right teaching of Shakyamuni, the Master who preached the sutras, and the writers of the discourses and the expositions by the Pure Land masters. You should particularly uphold them. You should be well aware of this.