

# Dharma Paths of Contemplation and Invocation

*Compiled by Master Shandao*

English translation by Householder Foqing,  
edited by Householder Jingtu





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## Preface

*By Dharma Master Jingzong, adapted by Dharma Master Zongdao*

The full title of this work, *Dharma Paths of the Samadhis of Contemplation and Invocation of the Ocean-Like Characteristics of Amitabha Buddha and Associated Merits*, conveys that Amitabha Buddha's characteristics and merits are as boundless as the ocean. Whether through contemplation or invocation, infinite merit is accrued.

The practices detailed here are intended for special occasions. Among the Five Primary Practices, it specifically addresses the practice of reflection or meditation, assisting practitioners in entering into the principal karma of assured rebirth (name-recitation). In composing this work, Master Shandao seeks to inspire those who favor meditative contemplation and invocation to redirect their focus towards the exclusive recitation of Amitabha's name and reliance on his Fundamental Vow.

Master Shandao expounded the Five Primary Practices, among which the recitation of Amitabha’s name is recognized as the Karma of Assurance. In the conclusion of his *Commentary on the Contemplation Sutra*, he writes:

***Though preceding passages spoke of the merits of the meditative and non-meditative virtues, the Buddha’s underlying wish is that sentient beings recite Amitabha’s name single-mindedly.***

This underscores that single-minded recitation of Amitabha’s name is the cornerstone for the establishment of the Pure Land School and embodies Master Shandao’s consistent line of thought.

Apart from the *Commentary on the Contemplation Sutra*, known as the “Main Commentary,” his other four works, including this text, collectively form the “Supplemental Commentaries,” which evidently occupy a secondary yet supportive role to the main commentary. This book, in particular, centers on the Primary Practice of Contemplation. Both its titles and content suggest that its teaching is auxiliary and subordinate to the Karma of Assurance — name-recitation, as designated in the Main Commentary.

Only by comprehending this principle can we gain a vantage point, enabling us to take an overarching perspective, grasp the integral structure, and capture the fundamental essence of the entire work.

Ignorance of this principle is akin to ascending a mountain from its base, where even a single twig or leaf can obscure the climber's view, leading to a mistaken impression that meditative contemplation is the primary objective. As the saying goes, one cannot see the forest for the trees.

Moreover, this book marks the first in the history of the entire Pure Land tradition that comprehensive methods for assisting the dying through recitation are presented. Its lucid exposition of the benefits in the present life of Buddha-recitation — including the elimination of negative karma, receiving protection and remembrance from Buddhas and Bodhisattvas, extending lifespan, and avoiding calamities and untimely demise — has profoundly influenced Pure Land practitioners in subsequent generations.



## Introduction

*From An Overview of the Four Works in Five Fascicles, by Dharma Master Huijing*

This text has three variant titles. The opening title, appearing at the beginning of the work, is *Dharma Paths of the Samadhis of Contemplation and Invocation of the Ocean-Like Characteristics of Amitabha Buddha and Associated Merits*, in one fascicle. The concluding title, found at the end of the text, is *Sutra on the Dharma Paths of the Samadhis of Contemplating and Invoking the Ocean-Like Characteristics of Amitabha Buddha and Associated Merits*, in one fascicle. The character “Sutra” is added before “Dharma Paths.” Furthermore, at the start of the “Section on the Merits of the Five Causal Conditions” is another title, *Meaning of the Five Augmentative Causes Based on the Sutras*, in one fascicle.

The intent of the title is to convey clearly that the “Marks and Physical Characteristics of Amitabha Buddha and Associated Merits” are vast like the ocean, boundless and immeasurable.

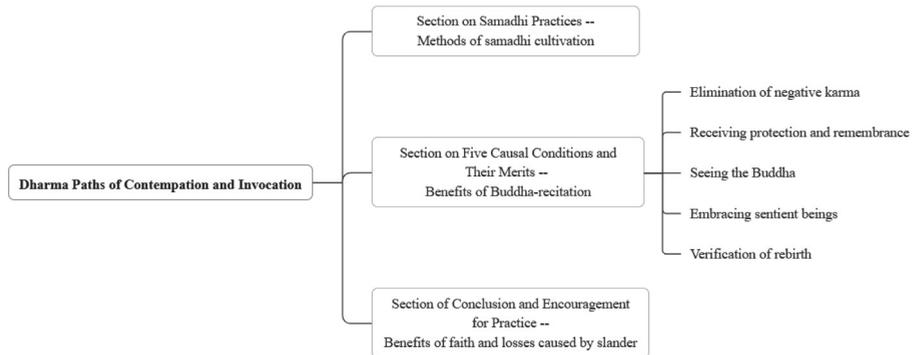
Whether through contemplating or invoking them, practitioners generate unlimited merit. Thus, this work is succinctly titled *Dharma Paths of Contemplation and Invocation*.

Its contents are organized into three parts:

The first part introduces the methods of samadhi cultivation. Drawing from the *Contemplation Sutra* and the *Pratyutpanna Samadhi Sutra*, it explores Buddha-contemplation samadhi, Buddha-invocation samadhi, ways to enter practice sites, and methods of repentance and aspiration.

The second part expounds on the benefits of Buddha-recitation. Based on six sutras, it clarifies that Buddha-recitation offers the benefits of the Five Augmentative Causes: elimination of negative karma, receiving protection and remembrance, seeing the Buddha, embracing sentient beings, and verification of rebirth.

The final part unveils the benefits of faith and the harm caused by defamation. Citing Buddhist sutras as evidence, it highlights the advantages generated by faith and contrasts them with the detrimental effects of slander, concluding with an exhortation to practice Buddha-recitation.



The first part, which introduces the methods of samadhi cultivation, corresponds to the “Section on Samadhi Practices.” It discusses various features of the practice, divided into four subsections:

1. Drawing from the *Contemplation Sutra* and the *Sutra on the Ocean-like Samadhis of Buddha-Contemplation*, this subsection introduces in detail the method of Buddha-contemplation samadhi.
2. Based on the *Pratyutpanna Samadhi Sutra*, it explains the method of Buddha-invocation samadhi.
3. Referencing multiple sutras, it outlines the method of practicing Buddha-invocation samadhi for seven days and nights within practice sites.

4. Citing various sutras, this subsection elaborates on the methods of repentance and aspiration within practice sites and provides guidance on practices and rituals for the final moments of life.

The second part, which expounds on the benefits of Buddha-recitation, constitutes the “Section on Five Causal Conditions and Their Merits.” Referencing six sutras — the *Infinite Life Sutra*, *Contemplation Sutra*, *Amitabha Sutra*, *Pratyutpanna Samadhi Sutra*, *Ten Rebirths Sutra*, and *Pure Deliverance Samadhi Sutra* — it explains that those who recite the name of Amitabha Buddha and aspire to rebirth in the Pure Land naturally receive the benefits of the Five Augmentative Causes, both in this life and at the time of death:

1. Eradication of negative karma
2. Receiving protection and remembrance from Buddhas and Bodhisattvas
3. Seeing the Buddha
4. Being embraced by the Buddha to rebirth
5. Buddhas’ verification of rebirth.

The final part, which explains the benefits of faith and the harm from slander, comprises the “Section of Conclusion and Encouragement to Practice.” It includes three rounds of questions and answers, beginning with the inquiry, “*Question*: Shakyamuni appeared in the world ...” That is followed by a concluding exhortation, which emphasizes the advantages of faith and the harms of defamation. The aim is to guide people of that time towards the practice of name-recitation. Specifically, this part

1. Expounds on the severe repercussions of slandering Buddha-invocation.
2. Describes the immense benefits of Buddha-invocation.
3. Explains approaches to repentance and elimination of negative karma.
4. Concludes with an exhortation that earnestly warns against arrogance and complacency, then guides practitioners towards single-minded recitation of Amitabha Buddha’s name.

In his *Commentary on the Contemplation Sutra*, “Section on the Underlying Meaning,” Master Shandao categorizes the Pure Land School into two paths: the Path of Importance, which advocates dedication of merit to rebirth through self-power,

and the Path of the Great Vow, which centers on dedication of merit to rebirth through other-power. In *Dharma Paths of Contemplation and Invocation*, Sections I and III illustrate the provisional, expedient teaching of the Path of Importance, while Section II accentuates the ultimate, true teaching of the Great Vow.

Section I on Samadhi Practices draws from the *Contemplation Sutra* and the *Sutra on the Ocean-like Samadhis of Buddha-Contemplation* to define “meditative Buddha-contemplation.” It also references the *Pratyutpanna Samadhi Sutra* to interpret “meditative Buddha-invocation.” Since Master Shandao himself practiced these two forms of samadhi, he presented them in this text for those inclined towards “meditative Buddha-contemplation” and “meditative Buddha-invocation,” both of which align with meditative virtues. His aim was to guide them towards embracing name-recitation under the Path of the Great Vow, a practice that relies on the power of Amitabha’s Fundamental Vow, transcending both meditative and non-meditative virtues.

Therefore, in summarizing the Method of Buddha-Contemplation Samadhi, Master Shandao specifically encourages the practice of name-recitation as “the concluding exhortation.” The text states: “To be reborn in the Pure Land, it is only

necessary to... recite Amitabha's name." The word "only" indicates exclusivity and supreme excellence, while "necessary" signifies necessity and indispensability. It is evident that Master Shandao's true intention in teaching the Method of Buddha-Contemplation Samadhi was to lead practitioners towards the practice of name-recitation.

Further, to facilitate the transition from "Buddha-contemplation" to "Buddha-invocation recitation," Master Shandao specifically compares these two practices in terms of their relative difficulty and superiority. Buddha-contemplation is difficult, and therefore "samadhi is hard to achieve," whereas Buddha-recitation is easy, and thus "it is only necessary to recite." Moreover, success in Buddha-contemplation leads aspirants to be "reborn in the Pure Land at the highest level of the highest grade." Thus, Buddha-recitation, being an easy practice with supreme merit, surpasses Buddha-contemplation. Additionally, Master Shandao does not specifically encourage Buddha-contemplation but strongly urges Buddha-recitation with the exhortation, "Exert immense diligence."

In addition, in concluding the Method of Buddha-Recitation Samadhi, Master Shandao references the *Pratyutpanna Samadhi Sutra*, where practitioners, in the state of samadhi, ask Amitabha Buddha: "What method should we practice to be reborn in your

land?” The Buddha replies by highlighting “Buddha-recitation,” stating, “Those who wish to be reborn here should recite my name without cease.” Similar to the above, this guidance aims to lead practitioners from the expedient teaching of Buddha-contemplation samadhi in the Path of Importance towards the ultimate teaching of name-recitation in the Path of Great Vow. Consequently, the next section reveals that name-recitation naturally brings the “superior benefits of the Five Causal Conditions.”

Section II on Five Causal Conditions and Their Merit elaborates on the Five Augmentative Causes, drawing from the *Contemplation Sutra*, the 18th Vow from the *Longer Sutra*, and passages on causal practices from the *Shorter Sutra*. These references illustrate the profound benefits of reciting Amitabha’s name and steer practitioners towards Amitabha-recitation as the Karma of Assured Rebirth.

In terms of “adherence to the Dharma,” name-recitation aligns with Amitabha’s Fundamental Vow, making its merit inherently “supreme.” Other practices, however, do not accord with this Vow. Regarding “suitability for the capabilities of beings,” name-recitation is accessible to both virtuous and iniquitous ordinary beings — a method that is “simple and easy.” In contrast, other practices are complex and beyond the ability of most people.

Thus name-recitation embodies the virtues of supremacy and ease, and confers benefits in this life and the next. Through the merit of the Five Causal Conditions, practitioners of all Five Vehicles can be equally reborn in the Pure Land's Realm of Rewards. The opening of the "Five Augmentative Causes" states:

***Those who recite "Amitabha Buddha" and aspire to be reborn in the Pure Land will, in this present life, have their lifespans extended and avoid the calamities of the nine untimely deaths.***

As long as one aspires to be reborn in the Pure Land and recites Amitabha's name, one will be blessed in this very life with increased longevity and protection from the misfortunes of the nine sudden, violent demises.

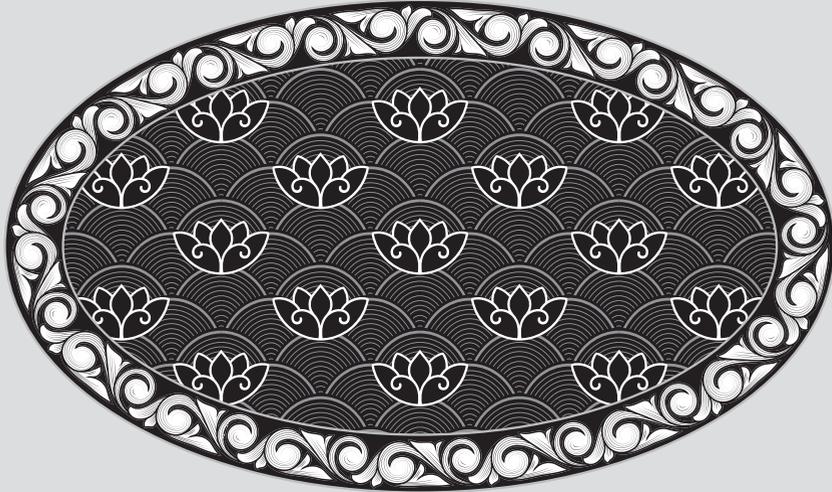
Section 3 of Conclusion and Encouragement to Practice advises the cultivation of the methods previously discussed. Although Master Shandao presents the two forms of samadhi from an equal standpoint in this text, his primary intention is evidently to stress Buddha-invocation. Furthermore, within the practice of Buddha-invocation, he does not emphasize the accumulation of merit through Buddha-invocation (the meditative aspect). Instead, his true focus is reliance on the power of Amitabha's Fundamental Vow (the Great Vow).

Within the context of the Sacred Path traditions, the practice of contemplation or meditation has long been recognized as the most essential means for transcending the cycle of rebirth. Accordingly, Master Shandao employs this form of practice as an inducement to guide practitioners from the Sacred Path to the Pure Land Path. From there, through the Path of Importance within the Pure Land teaching — encompassing the meditative and non-meditative virtues — they are further directed towards the Path of the Great Vow, which focuses solely on recitation of Amitabha’s name. Therefore, the ultimate conclusion of this work centers on the single practice of reciting Amitabha’s name exclusively.

Exclusive name-recitation allows even those weighed down by transgressions to eliminate their negative karma and attain rebirth in the Pure Land — how much more so for virtuous, saintly beings! Master Shandao offers this encouragement:

***If even iniquitous ordinary beings can have their negative karma extinguished and attain rebirth through Amitabha’s embrace, as verified by the Buddhas, how much more certain is it that sacred beings who aspire to rebirth will be reborn in the Pure Land!***





**Dharma Paths of the Samadhis of  
Contemplation and Invocation of  
the Ocean-Like Characteristics of  
Amitabha Buddha and the Merits of  
These Samadhis**

*Compiled by Master Shandao*





## I. On samadhi practices

1. Introduce the method of Buddha-contemplation samadhi according to the *Contemplation Sutra*.
2. Introduce the method of Buddha-invocation samadhi according to the *Pratyutpanna Samadhi Sutra*.
3. Introduce the method of Buddha-invocation samadhi within practice sites according to sutras.
4. Introduce the method of repentance and aspiration within practice sites according to sutras.

### i. Method of Buddha-contemplation samadhi

According to the *Contemplation Sutra*, the method of Buddha-contemplation samadhi is elucidated below. The

scriptural sources include the *Contemplation Sutra* and the *Sutra on the Ocean-like Samadhis of Buddha-Contemplation*.

Contemplate the body of Amitabha Buddha, radiant with the hue of genuine gold, surrounded by a pervasive halo of light, embodying unmatched dignity and elegance.

Practitioners: At all times and in all places, practice this contemplation constantly, both day and night. Whether walking, standing, sitting or lying down, maintain this contemplation. Always focus your mind and direct it towards the Western Pure Land, its sacred assembly, myriad treasures and sundry splendors, as if they were before your eyes. This you should know.

Furthermore, practitioners who wish to sit should first assume the full-lotus posture: Place the left foot on the right thigh, aligning it with the outer edge, and the right foot on the left thigh, also aligning it with the outer edge. Rest the right hand on the left palm, with the pads of the thumbs gently touching. Sit upright with a straight posture, closing the mouth and eyes, but keeping them neither fully open nor fully shut.

Using the mind's eye, begin contemplation from the *ushnisha* atop the Buddha's head. His scalp is golden, and his hair is dark blue, each strand curling in a spiral upon his head. The skull is snow-white, bright and clear both inside and out, with a brain the hue of crystal.

Next, contemplate his brain, which has fourteen veins, each emitting fourteen rays of light. These rays radiate from the pores at the hair roots, encircle the hair spirals seven times, and then return, re-entering through the pores at the hair tips.

Then, contemplate the same rays emanating from the pores at the roots of his eyebrows.

After that, contemplate his forehead, broad and even.

Then, contemplate his eyebrows, high and long, resembling crescents.

Afterwards, contemplate the white tuft curling between his eyebrows. The white hair is solid on the outside and hollow inside, emitting golden light from the tips that radiates directly toward the contemplator's body.

The *Sutra on the Ocean-like Samadhis of Buddha-Contemplation* states:

***Those who contemplate the mark of the white tuft, even for a moment, whether seeing it or not, will eliminate their grave, reincarnation-fated negative karma accumulated over kalpas as numerous as grains of fine sand in 9.6 billion nayutas of Ganges Rivers.***

Consistently practicing this contemplation not only effectively removes obstacles and eliminates negative karma, but also yields immeasurable merits and brings joy to all Buddhas.

Next, contemplate his eyes, broad and long, with a striking contrast between black and white, radiating pervasive brilliance.

Then contemplate his nose, refined, high and straight, like a cast gold ingot.

After that, contemplate his face, smooth and plump, without any distortion.

Following this, contemplate his ear rims and hanging earlobes, each ear canal containing seven hairs that emit light from within, illuminating the Buddha's entire body.

Then, contemplate his lips — red, beautiful, bright and moist.

Afterwards, contemplate his teeth, white, even and dense, as white as the jade-like moon, shining from within and without.

Next, contemplate his tongue — thin, broad, long, and soft. Two channels beneath its root allow saliva to flow into the throat and directly to his heart.

The Buddha's heart resembles a red lotus flower, neither fully open nor fully closed, with 84,000 petals overlapping one

another. Each petal contains 84,000 veins, and from each vein emanate 84,000 rays of light. Each ray forms a lotus adorned with a hundred treasures. Atop every lotus sits a Tenth-Ground Bodhisattva with a golden body, holding incense and flowers, offering them to the heart-king while singing praises in unison.

When practitioners engage in this contemplation, they eliminate negative karma and obstacles and attain boundless merit. All Buddhas and Bodhisattvas rejoice, as do the heavenly divinities and spirit deities.

Then, draw the mind upward to contemplate his throat and neck, both perfectly rounded, as well as his shoulders, which are also perfectly rounded.

Next, contemplate his arms, which are even, straight and perfectly rounded.

Thereafter, contemplate his palms, smooth and plump, bearing the mark of a thousand-spoke wheel; his ten fingers, slender, long, and webbed between; and his nails, the color of red copper.

Following this, elevate the mind to contemplate the Buddha's chest, smooth and plump, bearing the distinct svastika symbol of "ten thousand virtues."

Afterwards, contemplate his abdomen, flat and unprotruding.

Then, contemplate his round navel with a deep cavity, its radiance constantly illuminating both inside and out.

Next, contemplate the mark of the concealed genital region, smooth and plump as the full moon on the fifteenth night, comparable to the flatness of both the abdomen and back.

The Buddha said:

***Men and women who are lustful should contemplate the Tathagata's concealed genital mark. Their desire will be immediately quenched, their negative karma and obstacles extinguished, and they will obtain immeasurable merit. All Buddhas will rejoice, and heavenly divinities and spirit deities will accompany them with kindness, like shadows protecting them. They will enjoy longevity, peace, happiness, and be forever free from illness and pain.***

Next, contemplate his thighs and knees, with knee bones perfectly round.

Then, contemplate his shins, resembling the forelegs of the Deer King.

Afterwards, contemplate his heels, akin to the trunk of the Elephant King.

Following this, contemplate his high insteps, like the back of the Turtle King.

Thereafter, contemplate his ten toes, long and webbed between, with nails the color of red copper.

Next, contemplate the Buddha seated in the full-lotus posture, with the left foot on the right thigh, aligned with the outer edge, and the right foot on the left thigh, also aligned with the outer edge.

After that, contemplate his soles, even and bearing the mark of a thousand-spoke wheel with perfect spokes and rim, emitting light that illuminates all worlds in the ten directions.

The contemplation from the top of the Buddha's head down to his soles, bearing the mark of the thousand-spoke wheel, is called the complete contemplation of the splendid merits of the Buddha's physical form. This process is known as the Sequential Contemplation.

Second is the method of contemplating the lotus throne. After the preceding contemplation, focus on the features of the lotus pedestal. Visualize the petals overlapping one another to

form 84,000 layers. On each petal, envision billions of kingly treasures of adornment. From inside of each treasure emanate 84,000 rays of light, irradiating the Buddha's body upward. Then, contemplate the treasured lotus stems, each eight-sided and embellished with hundreds of thousands of treasures on every side, emitting brilliant light that shines both above and below.

Afterwards, contemplate the lotus stems resting upon the jeweled ground. Various treasures on the ground emit 84,000 rays of light, with each ray illuminating the Buddha's body and shining upon the Six Realms in the ten directions. Also, contemplate all the light rays touching and brightening your own body. While making this contemplation, practitioners eliminate negative karma and obstacles, attaining immeasurable merit. Buddhas and Bodhisattvas, along with heavenly divinities and spirit deities, rejoice. They accompany practitioners like shadows day and night, protecting them and ensuring their safety and stability whether walking, standing, sitting or lying down. Practitioners enjoy longevity, wealth and happiness, and are forever free from illness and pain.

By adhering to the Buddha's teachings, practitioners can behold the various phenomena in the Pure Land. Upon witnessing these phenomena, keep them to yourselves and refrain from sharing with others; otherwise, you may incur serious negative

karma and unexpectedly invite retributions such as severe illness and a shortened lifespan. Those who conform to these teachings will, at the time of death, be reborn in the Pure Land of Amitabha Buddha as upper-tier aspirants.

Contemplate in this manner, following the above procedures from top to bottom, sixteen times. Then, focus your mind on the white tuft between the Buddha's eyebrows. It is crucial to steady your mind for correct concentration, ensuring it remains free from distractions; otherwise, the meditative state will be lost, and samadhi will be difficult to achieve. This should be understood.

The foregoing is the method of Buddha-contemplation samadhi. At all times, consistently dedicate the practice to rebirth in the Pure Land. Simply follow the thirteen contemplations in the *Contemplation Sutra* to settle the mind. Attainment is then guaranteed without doubt.

Furthermore, practitioners are instructed: To be reborn in the Pure Land, it is only necessary to observe the precepts, recite Amitabha's name, and chant the *Amitabha Sutra*. Chanting it 15 times a day results in 10,000 over two years; chanting it 30 times a day achieves 10,000 in one year. Additionally, recite the Buddha's name 10,000 times a day and regularly praise the splendid phenomena of the Pure Land as scheduled. Exert immense diligence; those who complete 30,000, 60,000, or

even 100,000 daily recitations of the Buddha's name qualify as aspirants to be reborn in the Pure Land at the highest level of the highest grade. All other merits should be dedicated to rebirth in the Pure Land. This should be understood.

The above explains the method of Buddha-contemplation samadhi.

## ii. Method of Buddha-invocation samadhi

The *Pratyutpanna Samadhi Sutra, Chapter on Asking Questions*, elucidates the method of Buddha-invocation samadhi to be practiced for seven days and nights within practice sites. The scriptural source is the *Pratyutpanna Samadhi Sutra*.

***The Buddha told Bhadrakala: "There is a samadhi called 'All Buddhas of the Ten Directions Manifest in Front.' By practicing this method, you can attain all that you have inquired about."***

***Bhadrakala addressed the Buddha: "Please explain it to us. It will greatly deliver the afflicted, bring peace to***

***the ten directions, and manifest great radiance for all sentient beings.”***

***The Buddha told Bhadrapala: “There is a samadhi called ‘Fixation of the Mind.’ Practitioners should consistently practice and uphold it without pursuing any other methods. It is the foremost of all merits.”***

Subsequently, in the *Chapter on Practice* of the same sutra:

***The Buddha told Bodhisattva Bhadrपालa: “Those who wish to quickly attain this samadhi should constantly maintain profound faith and practice in accordance with the teaching. In this way, they will be able to attain it. Do not harbor even the slightest doubt. This method of ‘Fixation of the Mind’ is known as ‘Bodhisattvas’ Superior Practice.’***

***“Establish a single thought: Have faith in this teaching.***

***According to what you have heard, be mindful of that (Western) direction.***

***It is fitting to maintain this one thought and sever all other notions.***

***Keep your faith firm and free from doubt.***

***Practice diligently and do not slacken.***

***Do not give rise to thoughts of existence or non-existence.***

***Do not think of advance or retreat.***

***Do not think of before or after.***

***Do not think of left or right.***

***Do not think of non-being or being.***

***Do not think of far or near.***

***Do not think of pain or itching.***

***Do not think of hunger or thirst.***

***Do not think of cold or heat.***

***Do not think of suffering or happiness.***

***Do not think of birth or aging.***

***Do not think of sickness or death.***

***Do not think of life or lifespan.***

***Do not think of poor or rich.***

***Do not think of noble or humble.***

***Do not think of physical forms or desires.***

***Do not think of small or great.***

***Do not think of long or short.***

***Do not think of beautiful or ugly.***

***Do not think of evil or good.***

***Do not think of anger or happiness.***

***Do not think of sitting or rising.***

***Do not think of moving or stopping.***

***Do not think of scriptures or teachings.***

***Do not think of right or wrong.***

***Do not think of abandoning or grasping.***

***Do not think of thoughts or consciousness.***

***Do not think of riddance or attachment.***

***Do not think of emptiness or realness.***

***Do not think of light or heavy.***

***Do not think of difficult or easy.***

***Do not think of deep or shallow.***

***Do not think of wide or narrow.***

***Do not think of father or mother.***

***Do not think of wife or son.***

***Do not think of intimacy or estrangement.***

***Do not think of hate or love.***

***Do not think of gain or loss.***

***Do not think of success or failure.***

***Do not think of purity or turbidity.***

***Cut off all thoughts and maintain unwavering invocation.***

***Keep the mind undisturbed and advance with constant zeal.***

***Do not count the years or grow weary each day.***

***Establish a single thought and do not neglect it halfway.***

***Reduce sleep and strength your resolve.***

***Remain often in solitude and avoid gatherings.***

***Shun villains and stay close to virtuous friends.***

***Draw near to enlightened teachers and revere them as Buddhas.***

***Hold firm to your aspiration while remaining tender and gentle.***

***Reflect on the universal equality in all.***

***Distance yourself from neighbors and relatives.***

***Renounce love and passions and engage in pure practices.***

***Act in the non-active way and overcome all cravings.***

***Shed chaotic thoughts and practice meditation.***

***When studying wisdom from texts, be sure to conform with dhyana.***

***Eliminate the Three Defilements and transcend the Six Sense Spheres.***

***Eradicate lust and carnality and detach from all affections.***

***Do not covet wealth or accumulate excessive possessions.***

***Be content with meals and do not crave delicacies.***

***Be cautious never to take sentient life for food.***

***Dress according to the precepts, avoiding fine fabrics and ornaments.***

***Refrain from teasing or arrogance.***

***Do not be conceited or haughty.***

***When expounding sutras, adhere to the teachings.***

***Understand the nature of the body, recognizing it as a mere illusion.***

***Do not cling to the Five Aggregates or enter the Eighteen Sensory Realms.***

***The Aggregates are like thieves, and the Four Elements resemble vipers.***

***They are impermanent and illusory.***

***There is no permanent self; ultimately, all lack inherent substance.***

***Everything arises and dissolves through causes and conditions.***

***Fully grasp this and recognize the fundamental non-being.***

***Extend compassion and empathy to all beings.***

***Give to the poor and guide them toward the state of non-returning.***

***This is samadhi, the practice of Bodhisattvas.***

***It is the ultimate, superior wisdom that transcends all other practices.”***

***The Buddha said to Bhadrakala: “Those who uphold this practice will attain samadhi, and all the Buddhas of the present will manifest before them.***

***“Bhikkus, bhikkunis, upasakas and upasikas should practice in accordance with the teachings, observe the precepts fully, dwell in solitude and invoke Amitabha Buddha, who presently resides in the western direction. By adhering to what they have learned, they should remain mindful that his land, located ten trillion Buddha***

*realms away, is called Sukhavati (Full of Bliss).*

*“Invoke this single-mindedly for one day and night, or up to seven days and nights. After seven days have passed, you will behold it. This is like seeing things in a dream: unaware of day or night, not knowing inside or outside, with vision unblocked by obstacles or darkness.*

*“Bhadrapala, when the four groups of disciples engage constantly in this invocation, within the Buddhas’ spheres, all great mountains, Mount Sumeru and dark, obscure places of the mundane realm give way completely, posing no obstruction. The four groups do not possess clairvoyance to penetrate visually, nor clairaudience to penetrate aurally. Nor do they rely on teleportation to travel to that Buddha Land or end their present lives in this realm to be reborn in that realm. They simply perceive it while sitting in this very place.”*

*The Buddha said: “The four groups of disciples who invoke Amitabha Buddha in this realm do see him through focused invocation. Then they ask Amitabha Buddha: ‘What method should we practice to be reborn in your land?’ Amitabha Buddha replies: ‘Those who wish to be reborn here should recite my name without ceasing, and they will achieve rebirth.’”*

***The Buddha said: “Rebirth is attained through exclusive recitation. Always be mindful of the Buddha’s body, with its 32 marks and 80 physical characteristics, radiating immense light with universal illumination, unparalleled in elegance and dignity, expounding the Dharma among the assembly of Bodhisattvas. Do not forsake the form. Why? Because by not forsaking the form, and through mindfulness of the Buddha’s physical body, practitioners attain this samadhi.”***

The above elucidates the method of Buddha-invocation samadhi.

### **iii. Method of Buddha-invocation within practice sites**

Practitioners who wish to enter samadhi practice sites should fully adhere to the methods taught by the Buddha.

First, prepare the practice site by placing a statue of the Honored One and cleansing the area with fragrant water. If there is no Buddha hall available, a clean room will suffice. Sprinkle water and sweep the floor according to the prescribed methods, then position the Buddha statue against the west wall.

Practitioners may engage in practice during any of four suitable periods each month: from the 1<sup>st</sup> to the 8<sup>th</sup>, the 8<sup>th</sup> to the 15<sup>th</sup>, the 15<sup>th</sup> to the 23<sup>rd</sup>, or the 23<sup>rd</sup> to the 30<sup>th</sup>.

Practitioners, take into account the responsibilities of your household and occupation, and during any of the aforementioned periods, commence your path of pure practice. Whether for one day or up to seven days, always don fresh clothing, including new, clean shoes and socks. During this seven-day period, consume only one meal a day and observe extended abstinence. The meal should consist of soft pancakes, coarse rice and pickled seasonal vegetables. Ensure the diet remains frugal, simple, and moderate in quantity.

At the practice site, restrain your thoughts day and night, and continually focus your mind. Invoke Amitabha Buddha, ensuring both your mind and voice remain uninterrupted. Either sit or stand. For seven days, refrain from sleeping. Set aside scheduled rituals of venerating the Buddha or chanting sutras. There is no need to use counting beads either. Simply join your palms and invoke the Buddha, envisioning the Buddha with each invocation.

The Buddha said: “Envisage Amitabha Buddha’s body in the hue of genuine gold, radiating light that illuminates pervasively,

with peerless dignity and elegance, manifesting before your mind's eye.”

When invoking the Buddha, if you are standing, recite his name 10,000 or 20,000 times while standing; if sitting, recite 10,000 or 20,000 times while sitting. Do not whisper or engage in private conversations within the site.

#### **iv. Method of repentance and aspiration**

Each day and night, during the three or six periods, confess before all the Buddhas, sages, saints, heavenly and earthly governors, and karma-gods, revealing and repenting all offenses committed physically, verbally and mentally throughout this lifetime. Having faithfully repented every unwholesome deed, resume the practice of Buddha-invocation according to the prescribed methods. Do not casually share the visions you witness with others; keep the positive ones to yourself and repent the negative ones.

Vow to abstain from handling or consuming alcohol, meat and the five pungent spices. Swear that if you break this vow, both your body and mouth may be afflicted with malignant sores.

Alternatively, pledge to chant the *Amitabha Sutra* a total of 100,000 times and to recite Amitabha's name 10,000 times daily. You may chant the sutra 15, 20 or 30 times each day, depending on your capacity. Vow to seek rebirth in the Pure Land and ask for Amitabha's embrace.

## **v. Method of practice at the point of death**

Additionally, practitioners nearing the end of life, whether due to sickness or other causes, should fully rely on the aforesaid method of Buddha-invocation samadhi. Properly adjust your body and mind, facing west. Also focus your attention on contemplating Amitabha Buddha. Ensure your mind and voice are aligned, and do not allow your recitation to cease. Resolutely forge the intention to attain rebirth in the Pure Land, envisioning being welcomed by the sacred assembly presenting a lotus pedestal.

The sick person, if seeing this vision, should inform the caretaker, who, upon hearing this, should immediately take notes as informed. If the sick person is unable to speak, the caretaker

must frequently ask about any visions the sick person might be seeing. In the event of a negative vision, those nearby should recite Amitabha's name and assist in repentance to ensure the negative karma is extinguished. Once the negative karma is eradicated, the sacred assembly with the lotus pedestal should appear in response to the recitations. Record this as previously instructed.

Furthermore, practitioners, if family members or other relatives come to visit the sick person, do not allow anyone who has consumed alcohol, meat or the five pungent spices to enter. If any such individuals are present, do not let them approach the sick person. Otherwise, the patient may lose correct mindfulness, inviting disturbances from ghosts and spirits, which could lead to a turbulent death and descent into the Three Wretched Realms. Practitioners, be duly cautious, adhere to the Buddha's teachings, and jointly cultivate your own causal conditions for seeing the Buddha.

The above are the methods and functions for entering practice sites and caring for the sick.



## II. Section of five causal conditions and their merits

The meanings of the five augmentative causes are explained below in one fascicle according to the following sutras:

1. *Infinite Life Sutra;*
2. *Sixteen Contemplation Sutra;*
3. *Four-Page Amitabha Sutra;*
4. *Pratyutpanna Samadhi Sutra;*
5. *Ten Rebirths Sutra;*
6. *Pure Deliverance Samadhi Sutra.*

In solemn accordance with the teachings of Shakyamuni Buddha, particularly the above six sutras on rebirth, it is clarified that those who recite “Amitabha Buddha” and aspire to be reborn in the Pure Land will, in this present life, have their lifespans

extended and avoid the calamities of the nine untimely deaths. Each of these benefits is explained in the context of the following five causal conditions.

**Question:** The Buddha urges all sentient beings to awaken the Bodhi-mind and aspire to rebirth in the Western Pure Land of Amitabha Buddha. He encourages creating images of Amitabha, praising and venerating him, offering incense and flowers, and contemplating him day and night without ceasing. He advises the exclusive recitation of Amitabha Buddha's name 10,000, 20,000, 30,000, 50,000 or even 100,000 times. He also suggests chanting the *Amitabha Sutra* 15, 20, 30, 50 or even 100 times daily, striving to reach a total of 100,000 times. Through these practices, what merits can be gained in this life? What benefits can be obtained after the end of this life? Will rebirth in the Pure Land be attained?

**Answer:** Both in this life and after its end, there are assuredly profound merits and benefits to be gained. According to the Buddha's teachings, "five causal conditions that augment superior benefits" are clearly shown:

1. Elimination of negative karma.
2. Protection and remembrance by Buddhas and Bodhisattvas and obtaining longevity.

3. Seeing the Buddha.
4. Embracing sentient beings.
5. Verification of rebirth.

## **i. Elimination of negative karma.**

The augmentative cause of eliminating negative karma.

As stated in the *Contemplation Sutra*, those who attain rebirth in the highest level of the lower grade may have committed all Ten Evil Actions during their lifetimes. When they fall ill and face death, they meet a Dharma friend who instructs them to recite “Amitabha Buddha.” With just one recitation, they eliminate their grave, reincarnation-fated negative karma accumulated over five billion *kalpas*. This demonstrates the augmentative cause of eliminating negative karma in this very life.

Another example involves those who attain rebirth in the middle level of the lower grade, having committed medium-type offenses against the Buddha’s teachings over their lifetimes, such as breaking abstinence and precepts, and using items belonging

to the Three Gems without shame or remorse. When they fall ill and face death, and all the flames of hell rise at the same time, they meet a Dharma friend who describes the virtues of Amitabha Buddha's physical form and the splendors of his Pure Land. Hearing this eliminates their reincarnation-fated negative karma of eight billion *kalpas* and extinguishes the hellish flames. This also demonstrates the augmentative cause of eliminating negative karma in this very life.

Also, those who attain rebirth in the lowest level of the lower grade are individuals who have committed the five gravest transgressions throughout their lives, dooming them to endless suffering in hell. When they fall ill and face death, they encounter a Dharma friend who instructs them to recite the name of Amitabha Buddha ten times. With each recitation, they extinguish their grave, reincarnation-fated negative karma of 80 billion *kalpas*. This, too, represents the augmentative cause of eradicating negative karma in this very life.

Furthermore, those who, by following the *Contemplation Sutra* and other texts, paint and create illustrations depicting the splendors of the Pure Land and contemplate its jeweled ground day and night extinguish, in their present lives, thought by thought, the reincarnation-fated negative karma of 80 billion *kalpas*.

Additionally, those who paint illustrations according to sutras and contemplate the splendors of the jeweled trees, ponds, and mansions in that land extinguish, in their present lives, the reincarnation-fated negative karma accumulated over immeasurable billions of *asamkhyeya kalpas*.

Moreover, those who contemplate day and night according to the Lotus Throne Splendors Contemplation extinguish, in their present lives, thought by thought, the reincarnation-fated negative karma of 50 billion *kalpas*.

Besides, those who contemplate according to the sutra regarding Image Contemplation, True Body Contemplation, and Avalokitesvara and Mahasthamaprapta Contemplations extinguish, in their present lives, thought by thought, the reincarnation-fated negative karma accumulated over immeasurable billions of *kalpas*.

The examples cited above all illustrate the augmentative cause of eradicating negative karma in this very life.

## ii. Protection and remembrance by Buddhas and Bodhisattvas

Next, the augmentative cause of protection and remembrance.

As stated in the Twelfth Contemplation:

***For those who, at all times and in all places, wholeheartedly contemplate, day and night, the splendors of the two kinds of rewards - direct and circumstantial – of the Pure Land of Amitabha Buddha, regardless of whether they see them or not, the Buddha of Infinite Life manifests countless transformation Buddhas. Avalokitesvara and Mahasthamaprapta also emanate innumerable transformed bodies, all constantly coming to where the practitioners are.***

This pertains to the augmentative cause of protection and remembrance in this very life.

Also, as stated later in the *Contemplation Sutra*:

***For those who sincerely and constantly recite the names of Amitabha Buddha and Bodhisattvas Avalokitesvara and Mahasthamaprapta, the two Bodhisattvas always***

***act as the practitioners' supreme friends and teachers, accompanying them like shadows to protect them.***

This also represents the augmentative cause of protection and remembrance in this very life.

Additionally, as stated in the Ninth Contemplation, the True Body Contemplation:

***Amitabha Buddha's body is the hue of gold. The light from the white tuft between his eyebrows pervasively illuminates sentient beings in the ten directions, and the radiance from the pores of his body, his halo and his 84,000 marks and physical characteristics also universally shines upon them. Furthermore, each of these lights from his body and physical marks irradiates all worlds in the ten directions. For sentient beings who exclusively invoke Amitabha Buddha, the light from his mind continually bathes them, embracing and protecting them without abandonment, while those who engage in miscellaneous practices are neither illuminated nor embraced.***

This, too, demonstrates the augmentative cause of protection and remembrance in this very life.

Moreover, as stated in the *Ten Rebirths Sutra*:

***The Buddha told Bodhisattva Mountain-Ocean Wisdom and Ananda: “For those who exclusively invoke Amitabha Buddha in the Western Pure Land, aspiring to be reborn there, from this day forward, I will always ensure that 25 Bodhisattvas accompany these practitioners like shadows, protecting them and preventing evil spirits and malevolent deities from disturbing them, enabling them always to enjoy peace and security, day and night.”***

This also reflects the augmentative cause of protection and remembrance in this very life.

Furthermore, as stated in the *Amitabha Sutra*:

***Men and women who, for seven days and nights, or throughout their entire lives, single-mindedly recite “Amitabha Buddha” without deviation and aspire to be reborn in the Pure Land will always receive the protection and remembrance of Buddhas from the six directions, innumerable as grains of sand in the Ganges River. Therefore, it is named the Sutra of Protection and Remembrance.***

The title *Sutra of Protection and Remembrance* signifies that it also prevents evil spirits and malevolent deities from causing harm and ensures safety from unexpected illnesses, untimely deaths and sudden calamities, with all disasters and obstacles naturally dissipating, except for those who are not sincerely devoted. This, too, pertains to the augmentative cause of protection and remembrance in this very life.

Also, the *Pratyutpanna Samadhi Sutra*, Chapter on Practice, states:

***The Buddha told Bodhisattva Bhadrakala: “Those who, for seven days and nights, remain within practice sites, set aside all worldly connections and affairs, forgo sleep and lying down, and single-mindedly invoke Amitabha Buddha’s body in the hue of genuine gold; and those who, for 1, 3, 7, 14, 35, 42, or 49 days, or even up to 100 days or an entire lifetime, sincerely contemplate the Buddha, recite his name verbally or think of him in their mind, are all embraced by the Buddha. With such embrace, they can be certain that their negative karma has been eradicated and that they will be reborn in the Pure Land.”***

***The Buddha said: “For those who exclusively practice this Amitabha-invocation samadhi, all celestial beings, the Four Heavenly Kings, and the eight classes of dragons and other supernatural beings always accompany the practitioners like shadows, protecting them and joyfully wishing to see them. The practitioners will never encounter sudden disturbances from malevolent spirits and deities, disasters, hindrances, calamities and distress.”***

Details are provided in the *Chapter on Protection and Support* of the same sutra. This is also the augmentative cause of protection and remembrance in this very life.

Additionally, according to the *Empowerment Sutra*, Fascicle 3:

***For those who accept and observe the Three Refuges and Five Precepts, the Buddha instructed Sakra, Lord of the Devas: “You shall assign 61 celestial divinities to accompany and protect the precept-upholders, day and night, year-round, ensuring they are not harmed or disturbed by malevolent spirits and deities.”***

This also represents the augmentative cause of protection and remembrance in this very life.

Moreover, as stated in the *Pure Deliverance Samadhi Sutra*:

**The Buddha told King Bimbisara: “For men and women who, on the six fasting days each month and the eight royal days, consistently confess their transgressions before the heavenly and earthly governors and all karma-gods, and accept and observe abstinence and precepts, the Buddha commands the lords of the Six Desire Heavens to each assign 25 virtuous deities to continually accompany and protect the precept-upholders. This protection prevents them from being harmed or disturbed by evil spirits and malevolent deities and ensures they never encounter sudden illnesses, untimely deaths, calamities or hindrances, allowing them to remain always safe and secure.”**

This also falls under the augmentative cause of protection and remembrance in this very life.

Furthermore, practitioners are advised: As long as you, throughout this life, day and night without interruption:

- Exclusively invoke Amitabha Buddha
- Exclusively chant the *Amitabha Sutra*

- Praise and revere the sacred assembly and the splendors of the Pure Land
- Aspire to be reborn there
- Chant the sutra 15, 20, 30, 40, 50 or 100 times or more each day, vowing to complete the total of 100,000 chants
- Venerate and acclaim the splendors of the two kinds of rewards – direct and circumstantial – of the Pure Land of Amitabha Buddha
- In addition to entering samadhi practice sites, recite Amitabha Buddha’s name 10,000 times daily, continuing until the end of life

you will receive the remembrance of Amitabha Buddha, and your negative karma and obstacles will be eradicated. Additionally, you will be bestowed with the constant protection and remembrance of the Buddha and the sacred assembly, enabling you to attain prolonged life, peace, and happiness. The pertinent causes and conditions are thoroughly explained in the *Sutra of Parables*, the *Sutra on the Sole Practice of Samadhi*, and the *Pure Deliverance Samadhi Sutra*, among others. This also reflects the augmentative cause of protection and remembrance in this very life.

### iii. Seeing the Buddha

Next, the augmentative cause of Seeing-Buddha Samadhi.

As recounted in the *Contemplation Sutra*:

**Queen Vaidehi of Magadha constantly wished to see the Buddha while in her palace. Facing Mt. Gridhrakuta (Vulture Peak) from afar, she wept with grief and bowed in veneration. The Buddha, aware of her thoughts from a distance, disappeared from Mt. Gridhrakuta and appeared inside the royal palace. As soon as the queen raised her head, she saw the World-Honored One, his body glowing with a purple-golden color, seated on a jeweled lotus flower. Moggallana and Ananda stood in attendance on either side, while Sakra and Brahma appeared in the sky, scattering flowers as offerings. Seeing the Buddha, the queen prostrated herself on the ground, wailing to the Buddha, imploring compassion and repenting: “I humbly beseech you, Tathagata, to teach me how to contemplate the realm of pure karma.”**

According to what is demonstrated by this scriptural evidence, not only did the queen’s sincere mind allow her to see the Buddha, but the teaching was also meant for ordinary beings

in the future. Those who wish to see the Buddha should follow the queen's example by sincerely recollecting him; they will undoubtedly see him. This is because the three remembrance vow-powers of Amitabha Buddha augment their efforts externally, enabling them to see the Buddha.

The term "three powers" is defined in the *Pratyutpanna Samadhi Sutra* as follows:

***First, through Amitabha's augmentation and remembrance, which arises from the power of his great vows, practitioners are able to see the Buddha.***

***Second, through his augmentation and remembrance stemming from the power of his samadhi, they behold the Buddha.***

***Third, by the augmentation and remembrance rooted in the power of his original merits, they witness the Buddha.***

These principles are applied in the subsequent texts on the causal condition of seeing the Buddha. Thus they are referred to as the augmentative cause of Seeing-Buddha Samadhi.

**Question:** The queen was able to see the Buddha through the Buddha's augmentation and remembrance, owing to her superior meritorious blessings. However, sentient beings in the Age of

Dharma Decline are burdened with deep and heavy negative karma. How can they be comparable to the queen? Furthermore, since the underlying principle is both profound and extensive, please provide clear evidence from the Buddhist sutras for each aspect.

**Answer:** The Buddha, as a sage with the Three Penetrating Insights and unhindered mastery of the Six Supernatural Powers, perceives the various capacities of sentient beings and offers teachings accordingly, without discriminating between profound and shallow. As long as we are sincere, there is no reason to doubt that we will attain the vision.

As the *Contemplation Sutra* later says:

***The Buddha praised Vaidehi, saying: “You have asked this question well! Ananda, accept and retain the Buddha’s words and widely proclaim them to the multitudes. I, the Tathagata, will now instruct Vaidehi and all sentient beings of the future to contemplate the Western Land of Bliss. Through Amitabha’s vow-power, they will be able to see that land as clearly as their own reflection in a bright mirror.”***

These scriptural texts further attest that it is also through the external augmentation of Amitabha Buddha's three powers that practitioners can see Amitabha Buddha. Hence, it is called the augmentative cause of Seeing-Buddha-and-the-Pure-Land Samadhi.

Also, as stated subsequently in the *Contemplation Sutra*:

***The Buddha told Vaidehi: “You are an ordinary person with limited mental perception, unable to see far. Therefore, the Tathagatas, through extraordinary expedient means, have enabled you and others to attain this vision.”***

***Vaidehi replied to the Buddha: “Through the Buddha’s power, I have beheld that land today. Yet, after the Buddha’s Parinirvana, sentient beings will become tainted, wicked and devoid of virtue, burdened by the five sufferings. How will they be able to see the Land of Bliss?”***

***The Buddha responded: “Vaidehi, you and all sentient beings should focus your minds on contemplating the Western Pure Land. Envision all the jeweled banners beneath its vaidurya ground, the myriad treasures above it, and the splendors inside the structures.”***

With focused attention, practitioners can experience the same vision as the queen, as described above. Thus it is stated:

***Contemplate each aspect, ensuring the vision is perfectly clear and distinct. Whether with eyes closed or open, always maintain this visibility. Contemplating in this manner is called roughly seeing.***

This refers to seeing in the state of *vitarka* (inference) and *samjñā* (conception), which is why it is called “roughly seeing.” For those who attain the fixed-mind samadhi and verbal-recitation samadhi, their mind’s eye will open, allowing them to behold all the splendors of the Pure Land, which are infinite beyond description.

This additional scriptural evidence confirms that all ordinary beings who wholeheartedly devote themselves can indeed attain this vision; we should understand this. Those who see or hear anything should not panic or doubt. Why is that? It is through the external augmentation of Amitabha Buddha’s samadhi-power that they attain the vision. Thus, it is called the augmentative cause of Seeing-Buddha-and-the-Pure-Land Samadhi.

In the subsequent text on the Lotus Throne Contemplation, it is stated:

***The Buddha told Ananda and Vaidehi: “I will teach you the method to eliminate suffering and distress. You should analyze and expound my teaching extensively to the multitude.” As these words were spoken, the Buddha of Infinite Life, along with Bodhisattvas Avalokitesvara and Mahasthamaprapta, instantly appeared, standing in the sky. Upon seeing them, Vaidehi immediately bowed in veneration and said to Shakyamuni Buddha: “Now, through the Buddha’s power, I have seen the Buddha of Infinite Life and the two Bodhisattvas. After your Parinirvana, how can sentient beings contemplate and behold Amitabha Buddha and the two Bodhisattvas?”***

***The Buddha said: “You and all sentient beings who wish to contemplate that Buddha should begin by envisioning a lotus flower on the seven-jeweled ground. Once the image of the flower is established, contemplate the Buddha next. To do so, your mind should reflect on his 32 marks. Also contemplate each part of his body from the top of his head down to his crossed legs, one by one. As your mind envisions, the Buddha’s form will appear.”***

This is the external augmentation of Amitabha Buddha’s three powers, enabling practitioners to see the Buddha. It is also called the augmentative cause of Seeing-Buddha Samadhi.

Furthermore, it is subsequently stated in the *Contemplation Sutra*:

**To contemplate that Buddha, begin by envisioning his image. Picture a golden image seated on that lotus flower. Once this image is perceived, the mind's eye will open with clear and distinct sight, allowing a vision of all the splendors of that land.**

This is also the external augmentation of Amitabha Buddha's three powers, enabling practitioners to see the Buddha. Hence, it is called the augmentative cause of Seeing-Buddha Samadhi.

The *Contemplation Sutra* further states:

**Next, contemplate the two Bodhisattvas and all the light. See them clearly. When practitioners attain this vision, they should be able to hear, in the state of samadhi, the sounds of flowing water, radiance, splendors and so forth, expounding the Dharma. Whether entering or exiting samadhi, practitioners will continually hear the wondrous Dharma.**

This is also the external augmentation of Amitabha Buddha's three powers, enabling practitioners to see the Buddha. Therefore, it is called the augmentative cause of Seeing-Buddha Samadhi.

Moreover, as further stated in the True Body Contemplation:

***The Buddha told Ananda: “Once the image contemplation succeeds, proceed to contemplate the Buddha of Infinite Life: his body in the hue of genuine gold, his white tuft between the eyebrows, his halo manifesting transformation Buddhas, and his radiant marks and physical characteristics. Simply recall and visualize. Let the mind’s eye see. Once seen, practitioners will immediately behold all the Buddhas of the ten directions. Therefore, this is called Buddha-invocation samadhi.”***

This passage also demonstrates that the external augmentation of Amitabha Buddha’s three powers enables practitioners to see the Buddha. Hence, it is called the augmentative cause of Seeing-Buddha Samadhi.

As subsequently stated in the *Contemplation Sutra*:

***The Buddha said: “Therefore, the wise should single-mindedly contemplate the Buddha of Infinite Life, starting with one of his marks and physical characteristics. By simply contemplating the white tuft between his eyebrows and ensuring the vision is perfectly clear and distinct, practitioners will naturally see his***

***84,000 marks and physical characteristics. Once seen, they will immediately behold all the Buddhas of the ten directions and receive predictions of Buddhahood in the presence of these Buddhas, one by one.”***

This text provides further scriptural evidence that the external augmentation of Amitabha Buddha’s three powers enables ordinary beings who focus their minds on contemplation to see the Buddha assuredly. Hence, this is also called the augmentative cause of Seeing-Buddha Samadhi.

Furthermore, as stated in the Avalokitesvara, Mahasthamaprapta, Overall, and Miscellaneous Contemplations, as well as in the subsequent Nine Levels of aspirants:

***For those who practice throughout their lives, or for seven days, one day, ten recitations, or even one recitation, wishing at the time of death to see Amitabha Buddha, or for those who encounter a Dharma friend during their lifetime and can verbally recite or mentally invoke Amitabha Buddha, Amitabha will appear with the sacred assembly, holding a lotus pedestal. Practitioners will see Amitabha, the sacred assembly, the lotus pedestal, and more.***

This episode further affirms that the external augmentation of Amitabha Buddha's three powers enables practitioners to see the Buddha. Hence, this is called the augmentative cause of Seeing-Buddha Samadhi.

Moreover, it is thereafter stated in the *Contemplation Sutra*:

***The Buddha told Ananda: “This sutra is called the Sutra on Contemplation of the Land of Bliss, the Buddha of Infinite Life, and Bodhisattvas Avalokitesvara and Mahasthamaprapta. You should accept and retain it, never forgetting or discarding it. Those who practice this samadhi will see the Buddha of Infinite Life and the two Bodhisattvas in their present lives.”***

This passage, too, serves as scriptural evidence that the external augmentation of Amitabha Buddha's three powers enables ordinary beings who practice invocation to see the Buddha through the power of their own three minds. Their sincere mind, faithful mind and aspirational mind constitute the internal causes, while Amitabha Buddha's three vow-powers comprise the external conditions. The convergence of these internal and external causes and conditions allows practitioners to see the Buddha. Hence, this is called the augmentative cause of Seeing-Buddha Samadhi.

In addition, as stated in the *Pratyutpanna Samadhi Sutra*:

***The Buddha told Bodhisattva Bhadrakala: “There is a samadhi called ‘All Buddhas of the Ten Directions Manifest in Front.’ Those who wish to quickly attain this samadhi must consistently practice and hold on to it without the slightest doubt, even as minute as a hair. Bhikkus, bhikkunis, upasakas and upasikas who intend to learn and practice this samadhi should, for seven days and nights, avoid sleeping and lying down, eliminate all distracting thoughts, stay in a solitary place and invoke Amitabha Buddha in the West: his body in the hue of genuine gold, his 32 marks, his pervasive radiance and his peerless dignity and elegance. For those who contemplate single-mindedly, invoke mentally and recite verbally, thought by thought without interruption, the Buddha says they will see Amitabha in seven days. It is like observing stars at night - each star is a Buddha, and those of the four disciple groups who practice this contemplation see all Buddhas just as they see all the stars.”***

This is further scriptural evidence that the external augmentation of Amitabha Buddha’s three powers enables practitioners to see the Buddha

The term “samadhi” refers to practitioners of Buddha-invocation engaging in verbal recitation and mental invocation, free from distracting thoughts, maintaining mindfulness from one thought to the next, and allowing their voices to continue seamlessly. When their mind’s eye opens, they clearly see Amitabha manifest. This is called meditative concentration, or samadhi. When they see the Buddha, they also witness the sacred assembly and all the splendors. Hence, it is termed the augmentative cause of Seeing-Buddha-and-the-Pure-Land Samadhi.

Further, the *Moonlamp Samadhi Sutra* states:

***Recollecting the Buddha’s features and virtues,  
All sense faculties are calmed and subdued.  
The mind is unclouded, in the Dharma’s fusion,  
Gaining lore and wisdom, vast as the ocean.***

***Within this samadhi, the wise serenely reside,  
All thoughts restrained, striding in the meditation site.  
They see Tathagatas, hundreds of billions in number,  
And meet myriad Buddhas, like sands of the Ganges River.***

This is further scriptural evidence for the augmentative cause of Seeing-Buddha Samadhi.

The *Manjusri Prajna Sutra* states:

***Manjusri addressed the Buddha: “How is Single-Practice Samadhi defined?” The Buddha replied: “Men and women, in empty, quiet places, cast aside all scattered thoughts, and face the direction of a Buddha with an upright posture. Rather than envisioning any physical appearance, they recite the Buddha’s name exclusively without cease. In such recitation, they can see the Buddhas of the past, present and future.”***

This is further scriptural evidence that, out of their Universal Great Compassion, all the Buddhas confer their power of remembrance on practitioners, enabling them to see the Buddhas. This is also the augmentative cause for ordinary beings to attain Seeing-Buddha Samadhi.

## iv. Embracing sentient beings

Next, the augmentative cause of embracing sentient beings.

Among the 48 Vows in the *Infinite Life Sutra*, it is stated:

***The Buddha said: “If, when I achieve Buddhahood, sentient beings of the ten directions who wish to be born in my land and recite my name, even as few as ten times, should fail to be born there through my vow-power, may I not attain perfect enlightenment.”***

This is the vow-power embracing aspirants, ensuring their rebirth at the end of their lives. Thus, it is called the augmentative cause of embracing sentient beings for rebirth.

Furthermore, in Fascicle 1 of this sutra, it is stated:

***Sentient beings who attain rebirth in the Western Pure Land of the Buddha of Infinite Life have all relied on the karmic power of the great vows of Amitabha Buddha as the augmentative cause.***

This serves as further evidence for the augmentative cause of embracing sentient beings for rebirth.

In addition, at the beginning of Fascicle 2 of this sutra, it is stated:

***The Buddha says that sentient beings have different aptitudes — upper, middle and lower. According to their aptitudes, the Buddha persuades them all exclusively to recite the name of the Buddha of Infinite Life. When they approach death, Amitabha Buddha and the sacred assembly will surely appear to welcome them, and they will all attain rebirth in the Pure Land.***

This also reflects the augmentative cause of embracing sentient beings for rebirth.

In the *Contemplation Sutra*, the passages concerning the Eleventh Contemplation and the Nine Levels of aspirants all describe that the Buddha, without prompting, announced that as practitioners of either meditative or non-meditative virtues approach death, for each of them without fail, Amitabha, the World-Honored One, invariably appears in person with the sacred assembly, holding a lotus pedestal. He extends his hands to welcome them to be reborn in the Pure Land. This also represents the augmentative cause of embracing sentient beings for rebirth.

Furthermore, it is stated in the *Four-Page Amitabha Sutra*:

***The Buddha says that for men and women who single-mindedly recite the name of Amitabha Buddha without deviation for one to seven days, when death approaches, Amitabha Buddha and the sacred assembly will appear to welcome them, and they will be reborn in the Western Land of Bliss.***

Shakyamuni Buddha says:

***Having witnessed this benefit, I speak these words.***

This is further evidence of the augmentative cause of embracing sentient beings for rebirth.

Moreover, as stated in the 48 Vows:

***If, when I achieve Buddhahood, sentient beings of the ten directions who aspire to perfect enlightenment, perform various meritorious deeds, and sincerely wish to be born in my land, should not see me appear before them along with a multitude of sacred beings when they die, may I not attain perfect enlightenment.***

This also pertains to the augmentative cause of embracing beings for rebirth.

It is stated in the subsequent Vow:

***If, when I achieve Buddhahood, sentient beings of the ten directions who hear my name, focus their thoughts on my land and sincerely dedicate their merit with a wish for rebirth there, should not eventually fulfill their aspiration, may I not attain perfect enlightenment.***

This also represents the augmentative cause of embracing beings for rebirth.

As stated in another Vow thereafter:

***If, when I achieve Buddhahood, women in the ten directions who hear my name, rejoice in faith, aspire to perfect enlightenment, and abhor the female body, should reassume the form of a woman after death, may I not attain perfect enlightenment.***

The meaning: Through the power of Amitabha's original vows, women who recite his name will transform from female to male at the end of their lives. Amitabha will take their hands, and Bodhisattvas will support their bodies, enabling them to sit on the lotus pedestals. They will follow the Buddha to be reborn in the Pure Land, join the Buddha's great assembly, and realize the truth of non-birth.

Moreover, without Amitabha's name and vow-power, women would never be able to transform their female bodies, even over thousands or tens of thousands of *kalpas*, or as many *kalpas* as grains of sand in the Ganges River. We should understand this. Today, some monastics and lay practitioners claim that women cannot be reborn in the Pure Land. Such allegations are false and untrustworthy. The above vow serves as further scriptural evidence of the augmentative cause of embracing sentient beings for rebirth.

## v. Verification of rebirth

Next, the augmentative cause of verifying rebirth.

**Question:** Since it has been said that Amitabha's 48 Vows embrace all sentient beings for rebirth in the Pure Land, which specific type of sentient beings are embraced? Who guarantees and verifies this rebirth?

**Answer:** As stated in the *Contemplation Sutra*:

***The Buddha told Vaidehi: "Do you know? Amitabha Buddha is not far from here. You should fix your mind on contemplating his land to accomplish your pure karma.***

***This teaching will also enable all ordinary beings of future generations to be reborn in the Western Land of Bliss.”***

This passage demonstrates that, following the Parinirvana of Shakyamuni Buddha, ordinary beings can assuredly attain rebirth in the Pure Land by relying on the power of Amitabha’s vows. This illustrates the augmentative cause of verifying rebirth.

**Question:** Shakyamuni Buddha expounded his teachings to enlighten sentient beings. Why is it that, regarding the same teachings, there are both believers and non-believers, and some even ridicule and slander them?

**Answer:** Ordinary beings can be categorized into two types based on their endowments and dispositions: those with virtuous nature and those with malevolent nature. Those with virtuous nature can be further divided into five types, who, upon hearing the teachings, immediately

1. Abandon evil and practice good;
2. Forsake the heterodox and embrace the correct;
3. Discard falsehood and uphold sincerity;
4. Renounce what is erroneous and follow what is right;
5. Relinquish pretense and apply genuineness.

These five types of people, if they take refuge in the Buddha, can benefit themselves and others. At home, they practice filial piety; in society, they assist others. In their communities, they embody faith; in the royal court, they are known as noble individuals who serve their sovereign with utmost loyalty and integrity. Thus they are called virtuous by nature.

People with malevolent nature are malicious individuals who:

1. Slander genuineness and maintain pretense.
2. Defame the correct and uphold the heterodox.
3. Libel what is right and follow what is erroneous.
4. Malign sincerity and engage in falsehood.
5. Disparage goodness and commit evil.

Moreover, these five types of people, even if they wish to take refuge in the Buddha, cannot benefit themselves or others. At home, they are unfilial; in their communities, they lack faith; in the royal court, they are known as snobs who treat their sovereign with flattery and deceit, and are thus called disloyal. With respect to the virtuous and charitable, such malevolent individuals undermine the right and fabricate the wrong, focusing

solely on the negative aspects of others. Hence, they are called malevolent by nature. Furthermore, from the Buddhas, saints and sages to all the virtuous beings in the human, celestial and other of the Six Realms, these malevolent ones ridicule and disgrace them. The wise should be aware of this.

Now, through the extensive illustration of people with virtuous and malevolent natures, the relevant principles become self-evident. The underlying question is thus fully answered.

Moreover, as stated subsequently in the *Contemplation Sutra*:

***The Buddha told Vaidehi: “You and sentient beings should focus your minds on contemplating the Western Pure Land, envisioning the golden banners beneath the ground and the various treasures and splendors above it.”***

From this point to the Thirteenth Contemplation, the Buddha thoroughly addresses the two questions Vaidehi posed earlier. This serves as definite verification, encouraging both virtuous and malevolent ordinary people to turn their minds and begin practicing, so that they may all attain rebirth in the Pure Land without exception. This also represents the augmentative cause of verifying rebirth.

The *Contemplation Sutra* further states:

***In the Pure Land of myriad treasures, there are 50 billion jeweled mansions. Within these mansions, countless celestial beings perform heavenly music. These various sounds resonate with teachings on mindfulness of the Buddha, Dharma and Sangha. Once this contemplation succeeds, practitioners will, at the time of death, definitely be reborn in that land.***

This also serves as scriptural evidence for the augmentative cause of verifying rebirth.

It is later stated in the *Contemplation Sutra*:

***The Buddha told Ananda: “This wondrous flower was created through the power of Bhikku Dharmakara’s original vows. Those who wish to invoke Amitabha Buddha should first envision this lotus throne, contemplating its every aspect and ensuring their vision is perfectly clear and distinct. Once this contemplation succeeds, practitioners will certainly be reborn in the Land of Bliss.”***

This text further supports the augmentative cause of verifying rebirth.

Besides, the *Infinite Life Sutra* says:

**The Buddha told Ananda: “Sentient beings born in that land all remain in the Assembly of Assured Enlightenment. All Buddhas in the ten directions jointly acclaim that Buddha. Sentient beings who hear his name, rejoice in faith, and recite his name even once with the aspiration to be reborn there will immediately attain rebirth and abide in Non-Retrogression.**

This passage also provides scriptural evidence for the augmentative cause of verifying rebirth.

Moreover, in the *Contemplation Sutra* concerning the Nine Levels of aspirants, the sentient beings described in each level are invariably ordinary individuals, whether during the Buddha’s lifetime or living in the Five Turbidities after his Parinirvana. Each encounters a Dharma friend, who encourages and guides them to awaken faith, observe precepts, recite the Buddha’s name, chant sutras, extend veneration and offer praise, assuring them of rebirth in the Pure Land. By the power of Amitabha’s vows, they all attain this rebirth. This also reflects the augmentative cause of verifying rebirth.

Furthermore, the *Amitabha Sutra* states:

***In each of the six directions, Buddhas as numerous as grains of sand in the Ganges River all extend their tongues to cover the entire three-thousand-fold great chiliocosm, speaking sincere, honest words: Whether during the time of the Buddha or after the Buddha's Parinirvana, ordinary beings who have committed negative karma, by simply converting their minds and reciting the name of Amitabha Buddha with the wish to be reborn in the Pure Land - whether throughout their entire lifetime, for seven days, one day, ten recitations, three recitations, or even one recitation - will, at the moment of death, be welcomed by Amitabha Buddha and the sacred assembly, and will immediately attain rebirth in the Pure Land.***

According to this passage, the Buddhas of the six directions extend their tongues to conclusively bear witness for ordinary beings regarding the eradication of their negative karma and the attainment of rebirth. If one should not attain rebirth as verified, the tongues of these Buddhas, once extended out of their mouths, would never retract but would instead naturally decay and disintegrate. This also represents the augmentative cause of verifying rebirth.

With due respect, I address all aspirants: Upon hearing these words, you should respond immediately with deep lamentation and a rain of tears, resolving to repay the Buddhas' grace even if it means being crushed into pieces and reduced to dust through countless continuous *kalpas*. From this point on, you should align with the original intent of all Buddhas. How could you dare to have even the slightest fear anymore?

I also address all practitioners: If even iniquitous ordinary beings can have their negative karma extinguished and attain rebirth through Amitabha's embrace, as verified by the Buddhas, how much more certain is it that sacred beings who aspire for rebirth will be reborn in the Pure Land?

The above thoroughly answers the previous question: "What kind of sentient beings are embraced for rebirth?" This concludes the explanation of the five augmentative causes.



## III. Section of conclusion and encouragement to practice

### i. Questions and answers on negative karmic retributions for disbelief

**Question:** Shakyamuni appeared in the world to deliver ordinary beings of the Five Turbidities. Out of great compassion, he revealed that the Ten Evil Actions result in the karmic retribution of suffering in the Three Wretched Realms. With his wisdom of universal equality, he also guided human and celestial beings to seek rebirth in Amitabha Buddha's Pure Land. The Sudden Teachings in various sutras clearly convey this message. However, some openly disbelieve and jointly slander these teachings. Please indicate the negative retributions they will receive in their present lifetime and after death. Quote Buddhist scriptures in detail to provide evidence, so they may repent, mend their ways, believe in the Buddha's Great Vehicle teaching, turn their minds around, and aspire to rebirth in the Pure Land. That would be truly beneficial.

**Answer:** To address this question based on Buddhist sutras, while these wicked individuals have already been thoroughly described in the five categories of malevolent nature previously discussed, I will now directly cite scripture as clear evidence.

As stated in the *Ten Rebirths Sutra*:

***The Buddha told Bodhisattva Mountain-Ocean Wisdom: “Now, for the sake of delivering all sentient beings, you should accept and retain this sutra.” The Buddha further said to Mount-Ocean Wisdom: “This sutra is titled the Sutra on Contemplation of the Physical Form of Amitabha Buddha and the Correct-Mindfulness-Liberation Samadhi, and also the Sutra on Deliverance of Sentient Beings with Karmic Affinity Who Are Subject to the Current of Existence, the Cycle of Reincarnation and the Eight Difficulties. You should accept and retain it as such.***

***“For sentient beings who lack the causal conditions for Buddha-invocation samadhi, this sutra can open the gate to Great Samadhi, shut the door to hell, completely eliminate harmful evil spirits, and bring peace and stability to all four directions.” The Buddha told Mount-Ocean Wisdom: “This is the meaning of what I have spoken.”***

***Mount-Ocean Wisdom asked the Buddha, “Many sentient beings of future generations will slander this sutra. What will be their fate?”***

***The Buddha said: “In the future, in Jambudvīpa, there may be bhikkus, bhikkunis, men and women who, upon seeing someone read or chant this sutra, harbor anger and slander in their hearts. Due to their defamation of the correct Dharma, in their current lives, they endure various severe illnesses, lose their sensory faculties, or sustain deafness, blindness, circulatory collapse, ghostly hauntings, madness, diseases triggered by wind, cold and heat, tumors, dropsy or insanity. Severe ailments such as these will afflict them from one life to another. Suffering this way, they cannot sit or lie down at ease. They also experience bowel and urinary obstructions and are unable to live or die as they wish. Undergoing such miseries results from slandering this sutra.***

***“Upon their death, they descend into hell, enduring extreme torment for 80,000 kalpas. For hundreds of millions of lifetimes, they do not even hear the names of water or food. For slandering this sutra, they receive such karmic retributions. Occasionally, they exit the hell and are reincarnated as cows, horses, pigs or sheep,***

***living among humans, only to be slaughtered by men and endure immense vexation. This is the result of slandering this sutra.***

***“Subsequently, when reborn as humans, they constantly languish in the lowest societal positions. For hundreds of millions of lifetimes, they never experience freedom or encounter the names of the Three Gems. Because of slandering this sutra, they sustain such hardships. Therefore, it is advised not to discuss this sutra with those who lack wisdom. It should only be spoken to those with correct contemplation and correct mindfulness. Those who disrespect this sutra will fall into hell, while those who respect it will attain true liberation and be reborn in Amitabha Buddha’s Pure Land.”***

With this sutra as evidence, it is clear that, according to the Buddha’s prediction, the losses for those who slander this sutra and the benefits for those who revere it are both assured. This is what we should understand, and the underlying question is thus fully answered.

## ii. Questions and answers on the merits of belief and practice

**Question:** After the Buddha's Parinirvana, what merits can ordinary people, whether virtuous or iniquitous, attain in this life if they:

- Awaken the Bodhi-mind
- Aspire to be reborn in Amitabha Buddha's Pure Land
- Focus their minds day and night
- Dedicate their entire lifetime to reciting, contemplating, venerating, praising and making offerings of incense and flowers to Amitabha Buddha, Avalokitesvara, the sacred assembly, and the splendors of the Pure Land
- Engage in continuous contemplation, thought after thought, regardless of achieving samadhi?

Please provide detailed citations from Buddhist sutras as conclusive evidence, so practitioners may rejoice, cherish, establish faith, and embrace and practice the teachings.

**Answer:** Excellent question! It highlights the causal practices that lead to the complete cessation of the cycle of reincarnation in the Six Realms and continually open the important gateway to the everlasting bliss of the Pure Land. These practices not only fulfill Amitabha's vows but also bring universal rejoicing among all Buddhas.

Now, to provide a detailed response based on scriptural texts, refer to the *Pratyutpanna Samadhi Sutra*:

***The Buddha told Bodhisattva Bhadrapala: "For this Buddha-invocation samadhi, four items of offering facilitate joy: food and drink, clothing, bedding and medicine. Buddhas of the past attained Buddhahood by practicing this Amitabha-invocation samadhi, with these four items facilitating joy. Buddhas of the present in the ten directions also attain Buddhahood by practicing this Buddha-invocation samadhi, with these four items facilitating joy. Similarly, Buddhas of the future will attain Buddhahood by practicing this Buddha-invocation samadhi, with these four items facilitating joy."***

***The Buddha said to Bhadrapala: "Regarding this Amitabha-invocation samadhi, with the four items facilitating joy, I will provide a brief analogy to compare the merits of Buddha-invocation. Imagine a person with***

***a lifespan of 100 years, who can walk from birth and continues walking until old age, faster than a swift wind. Could anyone measure the distance this person has traveled?”***

***Bhadrapala replied: “It is incalculable.” The Buddha said: “Therefore, I tell you and all the Bodhisattvas: If good men and women fill every place this person has traveled with precious treasures and use them for alms-giving, the merits they obtain cannot compare to those acquired by someone who hears of this Amitabha-invocation samadhi and makes offerings of the four items to facilitate joy. The merits of this person surpass those from the aforementioned alms-giving by quadrillions of times, beyond all comparison.”***

***The Buddha said: “In the distant past, countless asamkhyeya kalpas ago, there was a Buddha named Simhamati in the kingdom called Bhadrakala. A chakravartin named Vascin visited the Buddha. Knowing the chakravartin’s intention, the Buddha expounded on Buddha-invocation samadhi and the four items that facilitate joy. Upon hearing this, the chakravartin rejoiced and offered various precious treasures to the Buddha, vowing to himself: May such merit ensure peace***

***and stability for all human and celestial beings in the ten directions.”***

***The Buddha said: “After the chakravartin passed away, he was reborn in the same family as a crown prince named Brahmada. At that time, a bhikku named Precious Gem frequently taught this Buddha-invocation samadhi to the four groups of disciples. When the chakravartin heard the teaching on the four items that facilitate joy, he scattered treasures upon the bhikku and offered him clothing. The chakravartin, along with 1,000 people, took the tonsure under the bhikku and sought to learn this Buddha-invocation samadhi. He and the 1,000 people consistently served their master for 8,000 years, day and night without slackening. By hearing the teaching on this Buddha-invocation samadhi just once, he attained profound, brilliant wisdom. Thereafter, he further encountered 68,000 Buddhas. From each one, he heard the teaching on this Buddha-invocation samadhi, and ultimately attained Buddhahood.”***

***The Buddha said: “Those who wish to hear the teaching on this Buddha-invocation samadhi, even from 100 miles, 1,000 miles or 4,000 miles away, will undoubtedly pursue it. How much more should those nearby seek to learn it?”***

I inform those seeking rebirth in the Pure Land that the aforementioned Buddha's teaching, which serves as clear evidence, is detailed in the *Chapter on the Merits of Offering the Four Items*.

### iii. Questions and answers on methods to eliminate negative karma

**Question:** Practitioners who:

- Follow the Buddha's teachings
- Practice diligently and assiduously
- Engage in reverential acts, invocation, walking meditation, contemplation and sutra-chanting during the six periods of each day and night
- Observe abstinence and precepts
- Maintain single-minded concentration
- Abhor the cycle of birth and death
- Fear the sufferings of the Three Wretched Realms

- Vow to be reborn in the Pure Land of Amitabha Buddha at the end of this life

may still be concerned that their residual negative karma remain unexhausted and that their current karma is aligned with the Ten Evil Actions. For those aware of these obstacles, how can they eliminate them? Please provide methods by citing the sutras in detail.

**Answer:** For a response based on scriptural texts, refer to the *Sutra on the Ocean-like Samadhis of Buddha-Contemplation*:

***The Buddha spoke to his father, the King, and the assembled audience: “In the past, there was a Buddha named Emptiness King. During the Age of Semblance Dharma, four bhikkus broke precepts and committed grave offenses. At one time, Buddha Emptiness King appeared in the night sky and said to the four bhikkus: ‘Your offenses are called “irredeemable.” To eradicate your negative karma, you can enter my pagoda, view my image, and repent sincerely. This can erase your negative karma.’ The four bhikkus abandoned all worldly affairs and followed the instructions wholeheartedly. They entered the pagoda and prostrated themselves before the image of the Buddha in repentance, like a great mountain collapsing. Writhing on the ground, they cried***

***out to the Buddha day and night continuously until death. After their lives ended, they were reborn in the land of Buddha Emptiness King.”***

With this text as proof, practitioners who wish to repent should also follow this teaching.

***The Buddha said: “After my Parinirvana, my disciples who renounce all evils, delight in practicing samatha, and, during the six periods of day and night, dedicate even a small portion of one period, or a single moment within that portion, to recollecting the Buddha’s white tuft — whether they see it or not — will eliminate their reincarnation-fated negative karma accumulated over dust-kalpas as numerous as grains of sand in 9.6 billion nayutas of Ganges Rivers.***

***“Those who hear about this white tuft and do not panic or doubt, but instead rejoice with faith, will also eliminate the reincarnation-fated negative karma of 8 billion kalpas.***

***“If bhikkus, bhikkunis, men and women who have committed the Four Root Offenses, Ten Evil Actions, Five Gravest Transgressions or defamation of the Great Vehicle:***

- ***Continuously repent over the six periods of day and night with unwavering body and mind***
- ***Prostrate with the five appendages touching the ground as if a great mountain is collapsing***
- ***Weep a rain of tears***
- ***Join their palms and face the Buddha***
- ***Recollect the mark and light of the white tuft between the Buddha's eyebrows for one to seven days***

***then the aforementioned four types of negative karma will be alleviated. Those who contemplate the white tuft but find it dark or invisible should enter a pagoda and view the white tuft between the eyebrows for one to three days, with palms joined and weeping. Additionally, even briefly hearing this teaching can eliminate the negative karma of three kalpas."***

***The Buddha addressed his father, the King, and Ananda: "Now, I will manifest my entire bodily features and radiance for you. Those with non-virtuous minds or who have violated the Buddha's precepts will perceive the Buddha differently."***

***At that time, 500 Shakyan disciples saw the Buddha's physical form as ashen. 1,000 bhikkus saw the Buddha as red clay. 16 laypersons and 24 women saw the Buddha as entirely black, while all the bhikkunis saw the Buddha as silver. The four groups of disciples then addressed the Buddha: "We do not see the Buddha's wondrous form." They pulled out their hair, threw themselves to the ground, wept with tears streaming down, and writhed in prostration.***

***The Buddha said: "Good men, Tathagatas appear in the world specifically to eliminate your transgressions and karmic retributions. Now, you may recite the names of the Seven Past Buddhas, pay respect to them, and disclose your offenses of erroneous views from past lives. You should confess and make penitence to the assembly of great virtuous monastics. By following the Buddha's words, in the midst of Buddha-Dharma adherents, prostrate with all five appendages touching the ground like a great mountain collapsing, and repent before the Buddha. After repenting, your mind's eye will open, you will see the Buddha's physical form, and your hearts will be filled with great joy."***

***The Buddha told the bhikkus: “In your previous lives, over countless kalpas, you upheld wrong views, doubted your masters, failed to observe precepts, and falsely accepted offerings from believers. Because of this karma, you fell into the realms of hungry ghosts and hell, suffering for 80,000 years. Although you have now escaped those realms, for innumerable lifetimes, you cannot see any Buddhas, only hear their names. Today, you perceive the Buddha’s body as red clay, standing only five feet tall.”***

***After the Buddha spoke these words, the 1,000 bhikkus and others repented to the Buddha by prostrating before him with all five appendages touching the ground as if a great mountain was collapsing, crying bitterly in a rain of tears. Just as the wind scatters heavy clouds, the Buddha’s golden form was revealed. Seeing the Buddha, the bhikkus rejoiced and awakened the Bodhi-mind.***

***The Buddha told his father, the King: “The 1,000 bhikkus earnestly sought the Dharma with unwavering hearts. The Buddha foretold their future Buddhahood, stating that they will all bear the same title, Namó Radiant Tathagata.”***

The source of the above method of repentance is the *Sutra on the Ocean-like Samadhis of Buddha-Contemplation*, Fascicles 2 and 3.

According to the *Sutra on the Ocean-like Samadhis of Buddha-Contemplation*, Fascicle 12, Chapter 10, *Chapter on Secret Practice*:

**The Buddha told Ananda: “In the future, sentient beings who attain this Buddha-invocation samadhi, who contemplate the marks and physical characteristics of a Buddha, and who attain the All-Buddhas-Presence Samadhi should be instructed to keep their physical, verbal and mental actions discreet, avoiding erroneous monastic livelihood and conceit. Those who engage in erroneous monastic livelihood or conceit should be recognized as possessing Superiority Arrogance, whereby they jeopardize the Buddha-Dharma, frequently cause sentient beings to develop unvirtuous minds, disturb the harmony of the Sangha, show off peculiarities, and confuse the multitudes. They are companions of demons. Such wicked ones, even if they invoke the Buddha, miss the flavor of Dharma nectar.**

***“Due to their conceit, these people are always born physically short, of lowly origin, poor and afflicted with sundry misfortunes and burdened with infinite negative karma. Be sure to guard against such negative traits and prevent them from arising. The karma of such erroneous monastic livelihood, once created, is like a rogue elephant destroying lotus ponds; it likewise ruins the roots of goodness.”***

***The Buddha told Ananda: “Those who practice Buddha-invocation should protect themselves from self-indulgence. Practitioners of Buddha-invocation samadhi who do not guard themselves and allow conceit to rise will have the evil winds of erroneous livelihood stoke the flames of arrogance, burning away virtuous dharma. Virtuous dharma refers to all the infinite states of dhyana-samadhi (meditative concentration). All Buddha-invocation practices arise from the thinking mind, which is known as the treasury of merit and virtues.”***

***The Buddha said to Ananda: “This sutra is named Unmoving Fixation of Thought; accept and retain it accordingly. It is also named ‘Contemplating the Buddha’s White-Tuft Mark’; accept and retain it accordingly. Other names include ‘Contemplating the***

**Tathagata’s Body in Reversed and Sequential Orders,’ ‘Distinguishing Each Hair Pore of the Tathagata’s Body,’ ‘Contemplating the 32 Marks, 80 Physical Characteristics and All Wisdom Light,’ ‘Ocean-like Samadhis of Buddha-Contemplation,’ ‘Gate of Buddha-Invocation Samadhi,’ and ‘Sutra on Buddhas’ Bodies Adorned with Wondrous Flowers.’ You should accept and retain it well and be careful never to forget or discard it.”**

Further, as stated in the *Great Compilation Sutra, Chapter on Helping the Dragon*:

**At that time, Dragon King Sagara invited the Buddha to his palace for a meal offering, and the Buddha accepted. After the Buddha and the sacred assembly finished eating, the Dragon King asked the Buddha to give a discourse. The Dragon King’s prince, named Kamalamukha (Flower Face), then rose before the Buddha. Extending his four limbs on the ground, he repented with a sorrowful voice: “What past misdeeds did I commit to receive this dragon body?”**

This is further scriptural evidence introducing the method of sincere repentance, which we should understand.

All sutras contain passages of this nature, but quoting them extensively is impractical. The above are brief excerpts from three sutras, intended as guidance for future practitioners. Unless sincerity is lacking, those who practice accordingly will understand that the Buddha's words are true.

Moreover, as stated in the *Sutra on Soapberry Seeds*:

***At that time, the king of Nanda, named Vaidurya, sent an envoy to the Buddha. The envoy prostrated at the Buddha's feet and related: "World-Honored One, my kingdom is remote and small, and it has been frequently beset by bandits over the years. Grain prices are soaring, diseases are spreading, and the people are suffering. I am constantly unable to rest peacefully. The Tathagata's Dharma treasury is abundant, thorough, profound and extensive; however, I am burdened with worries and business and unable to practice. I earnestly ask the World-Honored One to compassionately bestow upon me a key method that is easy for me to practice day and night, so that in future lives I may be free from all suffering."***

***The Buddha instructed the envoy: "Tell your Great King that if he wishes to eradicate the obstacles of afflictions and the hindrances of karmic retributions, he should***

*string together 108 soapberry seeds and always carry them. Whether walking, sitting or lying down, he should remain focused without distraction, reciting ‘Buddha, Dharma, Sangha’ verbally, passing one seed for each recitation. He should recite this way 10, 20, 100, 1,000 or up to 100 million times. If he completes 200,000 recitations with an undisturbed body and mind, free from pretentious and false sanctity, then upon death, he will be reborn in the Third Heaven — Yama. There, food and clothing will emerge spontaneously, and he will experience constant peace and happiness. He will also eliminate the 108 kinds of bondage karma, transcend the cycle of birth and death, enter the path towards Nirvana, and attain supreme fruition.”*

*The envoy returned and reported to the King. Overjoyed, the King bowed to the Buddha with his forehead touching the ground and addressed the World-Honored One from afar: “I respectfully accept your sacred teaching and will diligently practice as instructed.”*

*He immediately ordered his officials and citizens to prepare soapberry seeds, creating a thousand sets and giving one to each of his family members and relatives. The King continuously recited and never neglected this*

***practice, even while personally leading his army. He also thought: “The World-Honored One, with great compassion, universally responds to all. If this virtuous deed of mine allows me to escape the endless sea of suffering, may the Tathagata manifest and teach me the Dharma.” Driven by aspiration and devotion, the King refrained from eating for three days. The Buddha then appeared with the sacred assembly and, entering the palace, taught the Dharma to the King.***

This demonstrates that because the King’s mind was sincere, his obstacles were eliminated with each thought. The Buddha, knowing the king’s negative karma had been extinguished, manifested in response to his invocation. This we should understand.



