
The Effects of Amitabha-Recitation: Eyewitness Accounts
Selected and Translated by the Chinese Pure Land Buddhist Association
and Hongyuan Monastery
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Published by Chinese Pure Land Buddhist Association
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Printed May 2016

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Printed in Taiwan

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Preface

This book is the first collection in English of *Accounts of Amitabha-Recitation*, the recording of first-hand experiences that's a time-honored tradition in Pure Land Buddhism. Householder Jingtuo of Hong Kong supervised the translations as well as their editing and collation, while the Taiwan-based Chinese Pure Land Buddhist Association oversaw the volume's publication and distribution.

The contents come from the *Accounts of Amitabha-Recitation* series put out by Hongyuan Monastery in Anhui Province, China. We have selected notable, classic examples, as well as some with links to Western culture and lifestyle, and had them translated into English. May these accounts circulate worldwide, so readers of different cultures and ethnicities can sample these vibrant, real-life episodes and develop faith in *Namo Amitabha Buddha*. May they resolve to be reborn in the Land of Bliss by reciting Amitabha's name exclusively – and achieve Buddhahood forthwith!

The Editors

The present volume records some very special episodes from the lives of ordinary Pure Land practitioners. The accounts are remarkable, revealing and inspiring. The diverse contents of the book can be summed up in a single phrase: *Namo Amitabha Buddha*. After reading through these stories attentively, you may find yourself unexpectedly touched by something deep in your heart, a delightful discovery.

Each account is either related or written by eyewitnesses to the events described. In every story, the genuine benefits of reciting Amitabha Buddha's great six-character name manifest themselves in one way or another. Such experiences may not be as familiar as the sun rising in the east every morning. However, they are as real as the fact that the earth circles around the sun. (Indeed, we never actually see the earth circumambulating the sun, but may feel it is the sun that revolves around the earth. Yet we do not deny the fact, even though we never see it with our own eyes.)

Not all the protagonists of these stories know the underlying causes of their experiences. They simply practice Amitabha-recitation and enjoy the resulting

benefits. They just happen, like flowers growing and blossoming in the sun without necessarily knowing why. That's simply the way flowers are – and the way “*Namo Amitabha*” works. By reciting the six-character name, we spontaneously, naturally reap the benefits.

When something is real and genuine, it is usually universal rather than particular, free from limitations of person, time, space and occasion. Yes, people may be separated by mountains and oceans, and divided by time zones, skin colors and languages. They may have different backgrounds and personalities, or worship disparate things in diverse rituals. And they have dissimilar livelihoods and achievements.

But you know what? We are not as different as we may seem. Those suffering hunger and thirst all long for food and drink, and those tormented by cold all desire warmth. Those afflicted by illness all long for health, while those lost in darkness invariably crave light. The deserted and lonely yearn for love, the fearful and miserable hanker after safety and joy. We are the same by nature: fragile, powerless, insignificant, transitory and imperfect. Like any kind of ice melting in the sun,

be it salty or sweet, dirty or clear, in coffee or in Coke, all people can benefit from reciting “*Namo Amitabha Buddha*.” They can be young or old, rich or poor, good or evil. The process resembles ice melting in the sun, spontaneously. So it is with Amitabha-recitation : We naturally enjoy its benefits while care-freely reciting the great six-character name, *Namo Amitabha Buddha*.

If a certain benefit is universal, it should also be highly accessible. It's easy to hold to “*Namo Amitabha Buddha*,” allowing it to go with us, support us and protect us. We don't have to become calm enough, sincere enough or smart enough before we start reciting “*Namo Amitabha*.” Nor do we even have to convert to Buddhism. All we need do is recite Amitabha's name at any time, quietly or out loud, alone or collectively. We can do so when we open our eyes to a new day; when we switch off the light to sleep; when we are sitting or walking; when we are cooking or driving. Whether we are happy or sad, just allow “*Namo Amitabha*” to be around us. Amitabha Buddha has already embedded his expansive love in his name, including his great compassion, virtue, power and wisdom. Holding to his name is the best way for us to be connected with Amitabha, who knows us

better than we do. He also loves us more than we do.

The real benefits of reciting “*Namo Amitabha Buddha*” are unfathomable. Being universal, they are applicable to everyone worldwide in a completely open and non-discriminatory manner. They can be easily obtained by anyone at any time. Genuine, omnipresent and accessible, “*Namo Amitabha Buddha*” belongs to everyone.

Our hearts are seeds, while Amitabha’s love for us is the sunshine. Sunlight is always ready to shine and give warmth. What about us? Are we prepared to allow Amitabha’s name to accompany us and to accept its light and warmth? Are we ready to grow and to blossom?

1.

Amitabha-Recitation Leads to Rebirth in the Pure Land

● In America, an Auspicious Rebirth

My husband Huang Xixun was chairman of the Baltimore City Taiwanese Association in the United States. He passed away in a very special, auspicious manner. I can only use the word “unfathomable” to describe what happened during that time.

My husband read very few Buddhist books and practiced Amitabha-recitation only a short time. He was not a vegetarian and passed away before he could take refuge in the Three Gems. When my friends heard how he departed, they asked me to write it all down to share with others, so they could take heart and have greater faith in their own rebirth in the Western Pure Land.

Huang Xixun was born in 1934, in Ziguan town of Kaohsiung County, Taiwan. He graduated from National Taiwan University Medical College in 1961 and furthered his studies in the U.S. In 1966, he accepted an offer of employment from the Baltimore Medical Center and was responsible for establishing a “community health center.” The facility was located in the city’s slums, where drug-trafficking, murder, robbery and similar incidents happen virtually every day.

Under Xixun’s management, the center was a huge success and was listed as a model for community health centers nationwide. He not only provided medical services to the community, but helped numerous juvenile delinquents get their lives back on track.

Xixun had always been healthy and energetic. However, in October 1991, a chest x-ray revealed a large tumor about two centimeters in diameter: It was diagnosed as glandular-type lung cancer. This kind of cancer is very difficult to treat. Normally, the patient has about three to six months to live following discovery of the tumor.

We went to the Johns Hopkins University School

of Medicine for surgery, only to find that the cancer had already spread to other parts of the chest. The doctor decided to remove the entire left lung and cut off two ribs. As a result, Xixun had to make adjustments in his breathing, speech and movements. The wound remained very painful.

Then came chemotherapy. As the drugs used were highly toxic and had powerful side effects, my husband’s stomach hurt intensely, like being stabbed with a knife. He also suffered severe vomiting and didn’t feel like eating at all. That left him with little energy. His life became hell. Though he always had a strong will to live, a few times he even said “perhaps it’s better to die.”

In the spring of 1992, Xixun had to take early retirement because of his illness. The announcement prompted a flood of thank-you letters, including a commendation from the governor of Maryland State. The mayor of Baltimore even declared March 12 “Dr. Huang Xixun Day” in the city.

By October 1993, the cancer had spread to my husband’s brain and spinal cord. The doctors who examined the brain x-ray all shook their heads. The

surface of his brain was covered with large clusters of innumerable cancer cells. At this point, the disease was virtually untreatable. However, the doctors decided to open a hole in Xixun's head, into which they inserted a small tube to inject chemotherapy drugs. They did that three to five times, but to no avail. So they gave up.

Around Christmas 1993, Xixun underwent radiotherapy treatment. The doctors decided to perform brain irradiation with the highest dosage. However, they told us frankly that radiotherapy would only keep things under control for two to six months at most. If his condition worsened, they would not be able to repeat the procedure.

Because of the spinal tumor, Xixun could not walk or stand and lost control of his bowel movements. There was nothing more that the doctors or Western medicine could do. What was left was to go home, rest and await his fate.

The blow of the terminal illness on Xixun was indescribable. The surgery, chemotherapy, radiotherapy and their attendant torments made him feel utterly miserable. When he shed tears, we cried with him; when he tossed and turned in bed, unable to sleep, so did I. My

heart ached to see him suffering so.

We had lived in Baltimore for more than 30 years, so we had many Chinese and American friends. When they heard about Xixun's illness, they came to offer help and spiritual support. Naturally, many people sent us books that discuss religion and the issue of life and death.

The one book my husband read carefully was the *Amitabha Sutra*. At the time, the cancer cells had spread to his brain and he was undergoing chemotherapy. His mental functions began to deteriorate; especially in the evenings, the nurse found him giving irrelevant answers to questions. He was no longer able, like normal people, to concentrate during his reading. However, he told me that "every page of the *Amitabha Sutra* was full of little figures of Amitabha Buddha."

In December 1993, we received a poster depicting the Three Sacred Beings of the Western Land of Bliss (Amitabha Buddha, and Bodhisattvas Avalokitesvara and Mahasthamaprapta) and a porcelain statue of Amitabha. We began to make reverences to Amitabha Buddha regularly, every morning and evening. It wasn't until we read Huang Nianzu's *Record of Heartfelt Thoughts* that

we became aware of the benefits of reciting Amitabha's name and the marvelous nature of Pure Land practice. We started to remind ourselves to do as much Amitabha-recitation as possible. If we didn't have time, we would listen to the chanting device.

I often read the *Infinite Life Sutra* to my husband. When I reached the part about "undergoing transformational rebirth in the lotus flowers of the jeweled ponds," I would say to him, "When you arrive in the Western Land of Bliss, you must let us know so we won't worry. Many people are helping you gain rebirth there. Do you know that?"

He said, "I will let you know. Please rest assured!"

By September 1994, his health had deteriorated. He was often lethargic. When he slept, I would sit next to him and practice Amitabha-recitation. When the American nurses weren't otherwise occupied, they would sit beside his bed and pray for him.

Twelve days before he passed away, Xixun was unable to eat anything. He couldn't even swallow water. He had written an instruction: "If and when I cannot eat

on my own, I do not want to be fed by artificial means. Do not use artificial methods to prolong my life."

On October 10, Xixun was sleeping around 7 p.m. and I was reciting Amitabha's name beside him. I asked Amitabha Buddha to help him pass away peacefully, without obstruction, and to receive him into the Western Land of Bliss. When he woke up about half an hour later, he told me he had dreamt of Amitabha Buddha. He said, "Amitabha told me that he knew I was a good person. He said I had saved many lives and done many good deeds. Many Bodhisattvas and people were now venerating the Buddha, reciting Amitabha's name and dedicating merit on my behalf. When the time came, he would certainly come receive me."

When Xixun said these words, he was at ease and confident, no longer afraid he might not be able to go to the Land of Bliss. I too was most grateful for Amitabha Buddha's great compassion as well as his promise to Xixun of deliverance.

My husband did not experience much pain in the final ten days. During the last three days, he was unable to speak, but his mind was clear. We recited Amitabha's

name in his ear and asked him to recite along with us in his heart.

I asked him, “Did you recite with us?” He nodded.

I asked again, “Is Amitabha here yet?” He shook his head.

About 4 p.m. on October 14, I tried to massage Xixun. I found that his hands and feet were cold; his breathing was also very weak. When I massaged his head, it turned – and he passed away.

Our son and I quickly chanted Amitabha’s name aloud in Xixun’s ear so he could follow us in recitation. I found that his head was hot. About half an hour later, I went outside to offer incense to Amitabha Buddha and to ask him and the Bodhisattvas to come and lead Xixun to the Pure Land.

Around eight o'clock, I was reciting Amitabha’s name with my eyes closed. A bright beam of shifting, multi-colored light suddenly appeared before me and enveloped Xixun’s bed. I felt a strong force sucking me to the outside. Afraid to open my eyes or to think of

anything else, I recited Amitabha’s name wholeheartedly. My eyes were closed, but I could see everything clearly. The Buddha light contained pale-pink, light-purple, gold and light-blue colors. The strongest, most dazzling color was white. This light resembled the sparkle of the highest-quality diamonds. The entire beam of Buddha light was like an intricately woven pattern, ever-changing and multi-colored.

We recited Amitabha’s name until about 2:30 the next morning. Seven or eight others joined us in doing so. As I recited with my eyes closed, a big, white lotus suddenly appeared in front of me. Then Xixun’s golden transformation body emerged. I only saw the upper body (sitting posture), but his features were very clear. He seemed much younger, as though in his thirties. He looked proper and solemn. He was attractive in appearance, like the very image of a Buddha.

Back on January 16, 1994, his 60th birthday, my husband had dreamt of the Western Land of Bliss while taking a nap. “The whole world is full of light,” he said. “The trees emit light, the ground gives off light and the sky is also full of light. This place makes people feel very

happy; it looks splendid, beautiful.”

On March Xixun saw Amitabha Buddha in a dream. Amitabha told him not to fear death. He said death was just like deep sleep and it was not painful at all. As Xixun was a doctor, he had seen many cancer patients undergo agonizing deaths. Amitabha Buddha, with his great mercy and compassion, untied this psychological knot for Xixun.

At first my husband was reluctant to leave us. During this period, he dreamt of Amitabha again. The Buddha asked him, “Are you ready to come?” Xixun said, “I have not made up my mind.” He encountered Amitabha in his dreams a few more times after that. Each time, though, he did not give the Buddha a definite answer.

One day in early September, my husband dreamt that Amitabha Buddha held a grand welcoming party for him. The next day he told me, “Last night’s welcoming party was simply amazing. The Bodhisattvas and lotus flowers were so beautiful. Amitabha told me there were about 500 Bodhisattvas at the gathering.” He went on, “The Western Pure Land is truly magnificent. I have to go there. I don’t need to think about it anymore.”

After his dream of the welcoming assembly, Xixun often saw the Three Sacred Beings of the Land of Bliss approach him from the picture frame, with many Bodhisattvas following Amitabha Buddha. He also often saw a halo above my head and our son’s head when we were reciting Amitabha’s name.

When the cancer cells were found to have spread to Xixun’s brain in November 1993, the doctors said he would at most have two or three months to live. Yet he lived for nearly a year.

Reflecting on all these remarkable things, I can only use the word “miracle” to describe them. Somehow, in this vast universe, the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas are looking after and blessing us. Perhaps we can say that Xixun had come to deliver us. If he did not get sick, my son and I would never have come into contact with the Dharma, and we would not have made so many enthusiastic and selfless Buddhist friends. They are mentors sent by Amitabha Buddha to help us. From the bottom of my heart, I thank Amitabha Buddha and all these kind people who assisted us.

(Shi Cui’e, *Buddhist Wisdom News of America*, Vol. 37)

Remarks:

He read few sutras and recited Amitabha's name
Just a short while;
He was no vegetarian and did not
Take refuge in the Three Gems.
But Amitabha's name contains boundless virtue;
To be received by him is a miracle.
Earnestly reading the *Amitabha Sutra*,
He saw numerous Buddha images therein.
In his first dream, he beheld the Pure Land's majesty,
Its ground and skies filled with light.
In his second Amitabha comforted him in person,
saying,
"Fear not death, it's just like deep sleep."
In a third reverie, Amitabha asked him repeatedly
If he was ready to go with him.
In the fourth dream, Amitabha staged a welcome
assembly,
Graced by the presence of 500 Bodhisattvas.
From then on his mind was set;
He truly wanted rebirth and let go of worldly things.
Many times he saw Amitabha and the sacred
assembly,

As well as the light emitted during Amitabha-
recitation.

In his fifth dream, Amitabha gave a personal
assurance:

"When you depart, all the holy beings will come
receive you."

The Buddha light of welcome has countless colors;

It is intricate, remarkable beyond description.

Dazzling were the light's patterns,

Ever-changing and beyond comprehension.

Then appeared a big, white lotus of great purity,

Carrying the practitioner's golden transformation
body.

His appearance was youthful and dignified,

Indistinguishable from that of a Buddha.

However extraordinary, such events

Are easily achieved through Amitabha's power.

May all who hear of this account delight in it;

May they be resolute in their aspiration to rebirth,

No longer troubled by doubt.

- English translation by Dharma Master Weitong,

Edited by Householder Jingtu

● Three Encounters With King Yama, Then Rebirth in the Pure Land Through Amitabha-Recitation

My father, Liu Yutian, a native of Laiyang in Shandong Province, was a retired official of the county secretariat. He passed away on March 12, 2014, aged 86.

When he was alive, my father did not believe in Buddhism. He was never seriously sick. In the spring of 2013, he fell down. He no longer went out, afraid of another fall. Even so, he fell again while going to the toilet. After that he just lay in bed, reluctant to get down and move about.

My father encountered King Yama, lord of the netherworld, three times. The first was in September 2013. He telephoned and asked me to go home to see him. When I arrived, he told me: "Daughter, King Yama has called for me." At the time I had been practicing Amitabha-recitation exclusively for two years and was seeking rebirth in the Land of Bliss. Though I constantly urged my father to have faith in Amitabha and recite his name, he never listened. I got scared after hearing that

King Yama had come for him.

"When I have gone," said my father, "you must remember to hire a musical troupe" – a local custom to see off the deceased. I had a flash of inspiration. "I agree," I said, "but you have to promise me one thing in return." "What?" "You must recite Amitabha's name with me and resolve to be reborn in the Land of Bliss." "All right," he said, "you teach me how."

I happily taught my father how to make the resolution and practice Amitabha-recitation, and even sent him an Amitabha-recitation device. "From now on, every day you should recite Amitabha's name along with the device," I urged him. "Once you pass away, I will hire a troupe to play '*Namo Amitabha Buddha*' for you." My father nodded. I then asked, "Dad, did King Yama tell you how much time you have left?" "I still have six months," he replied. I didn't take his remarks too seriously.

A few days later, I went back to see him and asked, "Dad, have you been reciting Amitabha's name?" He immediately sat on the sofa and, joining his palms together, recited "Amitabha." "You've come on an inspection visit," he said, as though I was asking him to

recite for me. After my mother's death, my father had found another partner; we called her "Auntie." I said to her, "You should practice Amitabha-recitation with my father every day. It would be very beneficial for you." Auntie promised me to turn on the recitation device so my father could recite.

Several months passed like the blink of an eye. One day, my father called and said King Yama had showed up a second time, telling him he had only three months left. I said to my father, "You didn't recite, right? If you had recited *Namo Amitabha Buddha*, you would be like a child of Amitabha. In normal times Amitabha Buddha would look after you, and when your life ends, he will come and welcome you to the Land of Bliss. If you recite off and on, your phone line to Amitabha Buddha is cut off. He is unable to look after you, so King Yama came instead. You still have three months, right? Make it a priority to recite and seek rebirth in the Pure Land!" My father was just saying nice words. Even after seeing King Yama twice, he still wasn't reciting.

Every night, I knelt before an image of Amitabha Buddha. I recited for an hour and dedicated the merit to

my father, asking Amitabha Buddha to help him believe, recite and aspire to rebirth in the Land of Bliss. "My dad is old," I would say. "If his life ends, please deliver him to the Land of Bliss. And if his time is not yet up, please don't let him suffer." As a matter of fact, though my father lay in bed every day, unable to get up, when I asked him if he was suffering, he said no. He just didn't feel much like eating.

After some time, my father telephoned again and asked me to come. I was startled by his appearance – his face was so red. I thought he had a fever, and was about to rush him to hospital. He told me that King Yama had come again and informed him that his time was up. My father went on: "I didn't do anything bad. Why is he coming to get me? I don't want to go." In fact, his face was so red because he was scared!

I said to him, "Hell is before you, and you still don't recite Amitabha's name. Since you don't want to go to the sublime Land of Bliss, you might as well go to King Yama's place!" "I don't want to go, I don't want to go," he insisted. "I want to go to Amitabha Buddha's Land of Bliss." I told him, "There is no time, as King Yama has

called you to go right away. If you don't recite Amitabha's name now, it will be too late. Even if you can't recite, follow the recitation device. It's all right to recite in your mind." So I helped my father with Amitabha-recitation. Approximately 10 hours later, his red face slowly started to return to its original color.

After a few days my father could neither eat nor drink. We sent him to the hospital, where doctors did a routine check and put him on a drip. We took turns to look after him and agreed that the recitation device be kept on at all times. The next morning, I prepared some sesame congee for my father. When he finished eating I asked him if there was anyone he wanted to see. He shook his head. After 8 o'clock, the doctor came to his room. He decided to insert a stomach tube and injected fruit juice and rice to provide nutrition. Auntie went home for a juice blender and the doctor began making some preparations.

By this time, my father was exhaling but not inhaling. I accelerated my Amitabha-recitation. My father waved his hands frantically in the air. Thinking his karmic creditors had arrived, I said to him: "Dad, hurry up and

recite Amitabha Buddha's name. Go to his Land of Bliss. You don't need to stay in samsara and suffer anymore. In the Pure Land, you will forever be free from old age, illness and death. You will be able to go wherever you want, eat whatever you wish. Family members will never be separated again. Dad, hurry and recite with me, otherwise you won't have another chance."

My father moved his lips weakly and started to recite. It was a true miracle. He had been bed-ridden for six months and never brushed his teeth, but a sweet scent was coming from his mouth. I told him, "When Amitabha Buddha arrives with a big lotus flower to receive you, get on it quickly and follow him to the Land of Bliss. Don't hesitate ..." I recited continuously and told my father to get onto Amitabha's lotus flower. When the medical personnel came, his had no heartbeat; his breath had ceased as well. I continued my Amitabha-recitation, until Auntie and my sister brought my father's old clothes and put them on him. Then we accompanied him into the morgue.

Next day, before the incineration, we had a final look at my father. His face was pink; it didn't have the

complexion of a dead person. The same day we sent the ashes to his hometown. I honored my promise by hiring musicians to play, and broadcasting “*Namo Amitabha Buddha*” as a condolence music for my father’s relatives. Many people joined in the singing.

Not long after my father’s passing, my granddaughter (9 years old at the time and an Amitabha-reciter) told her mother, “Last night I was sitting on a lotus flower and went to the Land of Bliss. Just as I was speaking with Amitabha Buddha, I heard somebody call me. When I turned around, I saw it was Great Grandfather” (my father). Her mother asked her, “Was he sitting on a lotus flower?” “No,” she replied, “he was standing on the flower, and his clothes were so beautiful!”

Namo Amitabha Buddha!

- By Liu Aiping

*(English translation by Householder Jingfa,
edited by Householder Jingtu)*

● **An Artisan Becomes a Monk, Gains Rebirth**

Elderly Master Di lived at Gold Mountain Monastery for many years. While there he served as a receptionist. One day, a fellow from his native village, a childhood playmate, came to visit him. This person was a craftsman, commonly known as a kitchenware mender. He patched up broken plates, dishes, bowls and chinaware, a craft that is lost today.

Master Di was a former trader who learned medicine from his uncle. During his tenure as receptionist at Gold Mountain Monastery, his fellow villager the artisan came to him and said he wanted to become a monk, with Master Di as his chosen teacher. “No way!” replied Master Di. “You are too old for that! You’re over 40, and you haven’t gone to school. Naturally you won’t be able to learn the scriptures, nor is ascetic practice something you can bear. Aren’t you asking for trouble by becoming a monk?”

Master Di admonished him repeatedly, but the man insisted on taking vows. Since they were from the same

village and had known each other since childhood, Master Di was hard put to deny him. “If you do want to take ordination and become my disciple,” said the monk, “you must do as I say.” The artisan replied, “Yes, of course! I want you to be my teacher. I’ll do anything you say.” Master Di told him, “If you do as I say, you should just practice directly. There is no time for you to learn the scriptures, in view of your advanced years.” The craftsman responded, “I’ll do anything you say! Just let me be a monk.”

“Not long ago,” Master Di told him, “there was a handicraftsman who took vows, practiced and gained enlightenment. You should learn from him.” Replied his visitor, “As long as I can be your disciple, I’ll do anything you say.” Master Di then said, “After ordination, you don’t need to undertake the Vinaya (monastic discipline). I’ll find you a small temple. Don’t step beyond its doors and just recite the name of Amitabha Buddha conscientiously. I’ll get a few sponsors to provide food for you.”

Master Di went on, “There are many Buddhists in Ningbo to the south. Almost every village has a small

temple where believers go to venerate the Buddha. I’ve been there and stayed three full years. I’ll find a small temple for you. You need not do anything except recite ‘*Namo Amitabha Buddha.*’ When you get tired, rest. Then continue reciting. Day and night, you must recite – consistently. Do not concern yourself with anything else. When the time comes, eat your two meals. I will get you a good sponsor.”

Master Di was well-known at the time and had many followers. He had someone make the arrangements. The practice and method he taught his new disciple was seclusion, also known as expedient retreat. A small temple was found for the artisan-turned-monk. Every day an old woman would come and cook two meals for him, so he no longer had to ply his craft. Since Master Di had taught him this practice, he thought, it must be a good one, certain to bring benefits. He did not know what those benefits might be. Master Di returned to Gold Mountain Monastery.

The monk performed Amitabha-recitation for three or four years, never leaving the temple. In the first flush of enthusiasm, he practiced diligently and intensively. As the

saying goes, “The first year after taking vows, the Buddha is right before you. But after three years he has moved to Vulture’s Peak – a long way off.” When a person is first motivated and taught a method of practice, he displays great sincerity and is determined to see it through. In time, however, he slackens and makes light of it.

The monk, following Master Di’s advice, recited Amitabha’s name as soon as he awoke each morning. As he used to lift things as a handicraftsman, he had strong legs. He would do Amitabha-recitation while circumambulating a statue of the Buddha. When he grew tired, he sat down to recite. Master Di did not know what progress his disciple was making.

This went on for three or four years. One day, the monk told the old woman who cooked the meals, “You don’t have to cook for me tomorrow. I won’t be having lunch.” The woman thought someone must be treating him to lunch the next day. As the monk had not been seen leaving the temple the past few years, she thought his request strange and asked him the reason for it. He replied that he had a couple of relatives and friends in the neighborhood. Then he went out to visit them. On his

return, he told the old woman, “You don’t need to come make me breakfast tomorrow morning.” The visit, she thought, must have resulted in another treat for him.

Next day, the monk remained in the old woman’s thoughts. She went to the temple around mealtime to see if he had returned. Its door was unlocked, as the place was poor and in no danger of being burgled. The woman called out at the entrance, “Master, are you back from lunch?” There was no response.

She went inside and saw him standing at the foot of his bed, facing the window and holding a string of beads. She asked him a question but got no reply. She took a closer look – and found that he was dead! He had passed away in a standing position, reciting the name of Amitabha Buddha. Stunned, she told the neighborhood residents, “The master has died standing up!”

Many flocked in to take a look. In one hand the monk held the string of beads, while ash was found in the other. People pried open his hand to discover eight or nine large silver coins inside. During those times, people in southern China did not use enameled spittoons with water inside. They used square boxes, filled with ash. They spit into the

ash, which would be replaced every other day.

The onlookers in the temple saw that its spitting box had ash inside and outside. They noted that there was ash as well on the monk's hand, which clutched eight or nine big silver coins. It dawned on them: Those coins were earnings from his former handicraft work. At the time, they were valuable indeed. As there was no cabinet in which to lock them, he had buried them in the ash of the spitting box. No thief could have imagined there might be anything worth stealing there.

Fearing that no one would find the coins, the monk took them in his hand and passed away standing up, reciting Amitabha Buddha's name. His intention was to let people see that the money could be used to give him a proper funeral. That ought to be the explanation, according to Master Di. The monk's sponsors then wrote to Master Di and told him, "Your disciple has died in a standing position."

Master Di came by boat the next day. The deceased monk remained standing for two to three days, before his teacher held a funeral for him. Master Di had fulsome praise for his disciple. "Not bad at all!" he said. "You did

not waste your time as a monk. You did much better than those prominent monks and even abbots. Few can match your achievement!"

Master Di had two disciples. One practiced Chan meditation and the other, Amitabha-recitation. We can compare the two. The Chan practitioner became a local deity after several years of hard work. And this craftsman, a mender of kitchenware, passed away in a standing position after having recited Amitabha's name for three to four years. It was quite an accomplishment.

I have heard Master Di tell this story twice. It is true and most instructive. What I said today is to let you know that Amitabha-recitation is far superior to Chan or other forms of meditation, as well as esoteric Buddhism, and much easier to accomplish! It is a practice anyone can do, nor do you have to understand the principles behind it. So long as you recite the name of Amitabha Buddha without doubt, mixed practices or deviation, you will assuredly be reborn in his realm.

All of you, monastics and laypeople, whoever you are, ordained or living in the household, must know the real benefits of Amitabha-recitation. Do it whenever time

allows. Don't bother to see if it works or not. In the end, the benefits and positive results will come.

I don't have time or ability to explain it all. I myself have seen several examples and heard about a few more. They did not occur in ancient times or many years ago. They are all contemporary cases.

All right. Better to act than to talk! Let me detain you no longer from reciting the name of Amitabha Buddha.

(From a discourse by Ven. Master Tanxu, during a seven-day Amitabha-recitation retreat)

Remarks:

Ignorant, poor and lowly of status
A kitchenware mender may appear to be.
He has no skills except eating meals
And reciting Amitabha's name.
For three years he did as he was taught
By a wise and learned mentor.
At ease and standing straight,
He was reborn in the Western Pure Land.

– *English translation by Householder Dingxie,*
Edited by Householder Jingtu

● **An Old Lady in Taiwan Passes Away,
Standing Up**

In 1968, an old lady in Jiangjun County of Tainan, Taiwan, passed away standing upright.

This old woman had recited the name of Amitabha Buddha for three years only. The karmic connection was through her daughter-in-law, who was an Amitabha-reciter. The old lady was very compassionate, a good person who had worshipped an array of deities. Her daughter-in-law persuaded her not to worship at random, but to set up a shrine at home to make reverences to Amitabha Buddha exclusively. She explained to her mother-in-law the admirable attributes of the Western Land of Bliss.

The old lady had virtuous roots. She listened carefully and took the advice. Thereafter, she recited Amitabha's name exclusively at home and wished to be reborn in the Pure Land.

For three years she recited. On the day of her death, her filial son and daughter-in-law were with her at dinnertime. "You finish eating first," she told them. "Don't

wait for me, as I am going to take a bath.” Without another word, she went to have her bath.

The couple waited a long while; the old woman did not reappear. They went to take a look and found that she had indeed bathed. Then they saw her, dressed in a Buddhist gown, standing before the Buddha image in their home shrine. She didn’t respond when they called out. They went up for a closer look: She had passed away – standing up. She did not inform her family, fearing they might intervene. How easy was her manner of passing.

Many people in southern Taiwan still remember this story well. In 1969 I was at Foguangshan Monastery, which had been opened not long before by Master Hsing Yun. He had asked me to be an instructor there. It was then that I heard the account from a worker at Foguangshan. He lived in Jiangjun County and had been a neighbor of the old lady. He told me the story and urged us to recite Amitabha Buddha’s name. “It is true that Amitabha-recitation leads to rebirth in the Pure Land,” he said. He saw with his own eyes the example of the old woman, a neighbor he had known well. She died standing up, without any sickness.

(recounted by Master Chin Kung)

Remarks:

Having exclusively worshipped, recited and aspired to rebirth,
She passed away standing, witnessed by others.
Near and far, neighbors commended her,
Saying rebirth through Amitabha-recitation is the truth.

*– English translation by Householder Jingpu,
Edited by Householder Jingtu*

● Rebirth of a Drug Abuser

The couple living next door to me are both Amitabha-reciters. They had a son who had been taking drugs for more than seven years. As a result, the family fortune was completely squandered.

At the end of April this year, the son was released from a detention center. On seeing his parents, he immediately knelt down in front of them for more than ten minutes without saying a word. His mother said to him, “Go to Mr. Wei’s house and prostrate yourself before Amitabha Buddha.”

Thanks to his virtuous roots, the young man went straight to the Amitabha shrine at my home, offering incense and doing prostrations in front of the Buddha. He also recited Amitabha’s name for a while before going home, where he continued his recitations.

In the evening of May 3 (lunar calendar), he suddenly fell to the ground in a fit due to withdrawal from his drug-taking. His parents could not afford to send him to hospital for emergency treatment. So I went to sit by his bedside and recite for him. I advised him, “Your only

way out now is to recite the name of Amitabha Buddha, who will not desert you. Reciting will ensure your rebirth in the Pure Land. Otherwise, you will end up in hell.”

Repeatedly, I explained to him in simple terms the meaning of Amitabha’s 18th Vow. I also recited together with his parents and stressed over and over the importance of his joining us in the recitations. Although he was unconscious, his breathing became more and more even as he heard our recitations. But whenever we stopped reciting, his breath became rapid again. I also saw his lips move a few times.

At 6:40 p.m. on May 5, his breathing stopped. His posture was relaxed and his complexion good, just like normal. What was truly amazing was that when his sister, a medical student, arrived, she found his pupils to be just like those of a living person.

Fellow recitation practitioners started to gather to recite for him. At about 8 o’clock, when the recitations began, the room was immediately filled with a wonderful fragrance.

Around 10 p.m., one reciter witnessed Amitabha

Buddha and the sacred assembly appearing, and saw a lotus flower in the air. He then saw the deceased walk up to that flower. Later on, he also spotted two small lotus buds hovering in the air.

Two days later, the father of the deceased dreamt of many people dressed in Buddhist gowns sitting on lotus flowers. He heard his son speaking to him: “Father, I have been learning the Dharma and practicing Amitabha-recitation.”

After another two days, the mother also had a dream in which she saw two lotus flowers, one big and the other smaller, floating in the air. She told me about the dream and asked me its meaning.

I said to her, “It may be Amitabha or it may be your son himself trying to tell you that he has already been reborn in the Western Land of Bliss. The lotuses for both you and your husband have also bloomed, though I have no idea which one is yours and which one is his. As long as you keep on reciting, small lotuses are sure to blossom one day!”

*- Recounted by Householder Beifu, May 2000
(English translation by Foyi, edited by Fojin)*

2. *Multiple Benefits From Amitabha-Recitation*

● **Amitabha in America**

There is an old saying in China that “Amitabha Buddha is in every family, Avalokitesvara in every home.” It indicates the importance of Amitabha Buddha and Bodhisattva Avalokitesvara (Guanyin) in the spiritual life of the Chinese people. Even those who know little about Buddhism sometimes say casually, “Amitabha Buddha.” Indeed, “Amitabha Buddha” has become something of a cliché. What does the name actually mean? What functions does it have? And why does the Pure Land school of Buddhism advocate the recitation of Amitabha Buddha’s name?

First, please allow me to explain why I suddenly noticed Amitabha Buddha.

At the end of 1986, Householder Yan from the Houston branch of Fo Guang Shan Monastery gave me a tape called “Five Methods of Amitabha-Recitation.” Recorded in Taiwan, it featured recitations of “Amitabha Buddha” and “Namo Amitabha Buddha” with different tunes and rhythms. It’s believed that such modes of recitation originated in China’s Tang Dynasty.

I remember that during my first vacation, I was vexed about something. Actually, I was worrying less than before, having attended several ten-day training sessions in insight meditation. So my problem was quite special, relating to negative karma from previous lives. Strange thing was, once I started reciting Amitabha’s name, my anxiety vanished without a trace. This naturally caught my attention. I really liked the five methods of Amitabha-recitation; the sounds filled me with joy.

At the beginning of 1987, I had an inspiration and began teaching a course at the Jung Educational Center, focused on the Buddha’s blueprint for liberation – the Noble Eightfold Path – as well as some basic Buddhist concepts. While making preparations, I consulted a variety of books in Chinese and English, and learned that Amitabha was a transliteration from Sanskrit, meaning

“infinite light.” Amitabha, an enlightened being, dwells in the Western Land of Bliss, some 10 trillion Buddha realms away from us. The goal of Pure Land Buddhism is to recite the name of Amitabha Buddha and be reborn in the Land of Bliss.

Throughout the millennia of Chinese history, there have been many examples of Amitabha responding to people’s recitation – thus the saying, “Amitabha is in every family.” At the Jung Center I introduced the name of *Namo Amitabha Buddha* to students and explained its pronunciation in ancient Sanskrit. “Infinite light” may not produce much of an effect in other languages, but if Amitabha Buddha is recited in Sanskrit, the consequences are special indeed. They include the elimination of karmic obstructions and deliverance of the deceased, so they are reborn in the Land of Bliss.

All my students were well-educated Westerners, both men and women, aged 30 to 40. They liked the five ways of Amitabha-recitation the first time they heard them, and asked me to make copies for them. This is where the stories of Amitabha’s responses begin. The following are examples of my students’ experiences of the effects of Amitabha-recitation.

Account No. 1

Peter was one of my students, as well as a colleague and good friend. Born in Britain, he earned a Ph.D. in electrical engineering from his country's most famous university. He worked over the past decade with Albert Szent-Gyorgyi, recipient of the Nobel chemistry prize for the discovery of vitamin C.

Peter and I were colleagues for three years. He came to the cancer center at the University of Texas last year. Possessing deep roots of wisdom, he had some personal experiences relating to previous lives. One reason we enjoyed working together was that we had similar perspectives on life.

About three weeks into the course, Peter told me that for years he had been troubled by ghosts in dreams every day before sunrise. Since he joined my class, things had become worse and the spirits appeared more often. I told him that ghosts wouldn't approach unless they had some karmic connection with him. There were two common causes. One was that his relatives or friends in previous lives were suffering in the hell domains and asking for help; the other was that his enemies in previous lives had

found him. The situation intensified because they knew he was learning the Dharma and Amitabha-recitation, and now had the ability to release them from hell. Next time the spirits came, I advised him, just recite Amitabha's name on their behalf.

The next day Peter told me that the ghosts had appeared again before sunrise. He began reciting Amitabha's name while half dreaming. The spirits immediately stopped their pestering. When he had recited a while, two twisted faces appeared in front of him and said, "Please don't stop, because we cannot make those sounds." The apparitions haven't troubled him again since. Occasionally, he felt that spirits were asking him to recite *Namo Amitabha Buddha*. These days he regularly plays the tape of the five methods of recitation while driving to and from work.

Account No. 2

Edward, in his fifties, is a worker in the oil industry. He loves yoga and *Waidangong* (a kind of *qigong*, or breathing exercise), which he began learning last summer. This year, after we founded the *Waidangong* study center, he came punctually every week to practice. Following

a session in April, we had a chat. He mentioned that the former owner of his house, who had passed away long ago, returned to her bedroom and slept there once every six weeks or so. Edward had grown accustomed to the situation.

But we, his listeners, all indicated this was not normal, as most spirits moved on to their next lives instead of remaining in place. Most people don't know what happens after death and think it is the end of everything, so they get confused when they find that their spirits live on. I suggested that Edward recite Amitabha Buddha's name the next time he saw her.

Two months later, Edward told us about the effects of reciting the sacred name. The day after our last conversation, the deceased owner turned up again. Edward was a bit nervous, concerned he might upset her if he did not pronounce the name correctly. He recited "Amita" once, and nothing happened. Then he recited, "Amitabha Buddha ... go in peace" – and she departed. The spirit left Edward three messages, one of them recommending that he spend his time more wisely, especially on good deeds such as community service and charity. She hasn't appeared again.

Account No. 3

At the end of last year, Betty's father was diagnosed with lung cancer. His condition was unstable. Cancer cells were found in his trachea this May; they had to be removed by a second round of surgery. Betty returned to Washington, D.C. from Houston to be together with her mother.

I happened to be in Washington for three days, teaching *Waidangong*. One June 14, Betty invited me to stay at her house for the night. Her father was a senior manager in a big pharmaceutical company. Their house was beautiful, with two-and-a-half floors and half an acre of backyard. It might inspire envy from outside, but Betty's mother never dared stay at home alone. So Betty came home while her father was in hospital.

That evening, I walked into her house and immediately sensed a negative atmosphere. I felt pressure in my chest while walking upstairs and it was not comfortable. After we sat quietly for an hour, I told Betty what happened. She said she had the same feeling in her chest at night, as she returned home last September when her father fell sick. She could barely breathe, and

felt as though something was trying to push her out of the bedroom. At the time she thought it was a kind of telepathic communication with her father, indicating to her that he was sick in the chest.

I sensed that the house was haunted by spirits and I wouldn't go to sleep without reciting Amitabha Buddha's name. Betty and I did so for about an hour, following the "Five Methods of Amitabha-Recitation" tape. During the first half-hour I felt a chill, but in the second it was gone. We both felt the atmosphere had become more benign and I slept peacefully.

Later, Betty told me that she once consulted a lady from Florida who has special powers. She asked whether her father's disease was related to ghosts and whether there were spirits in her house. The lady replied that two ghosts had lived in the house before, and that they had an influence on her father's illness. After she performed Amitabha-recitation regularly, the malevolent atmosphere was gone and her father's condition has improved significantly. He remains in hospital, but is much more at peace.

Betty later learned from her neighbor about some

strange goings-on in the house next door, which is more than a hundred years old. Furniture would move on their own, and a woman in black would appear at night, seen more than once by neighbors. It turns out that the territory across the pond in front of the house had belonged to native Americans. This would have gone unnoticed, if it weren't for her father's illness. The neighbor also told Betty that the woman in black hadn't shown up since Betty visited. During her visit, Betty silently recited Amitabha's name most of the time.

In life we come across many things that we don't understand, especially what happens after people die. These three cases indicate that spirits exist after death. They also show that Amitabha responds to the recitation of his name, even in a predominantly Christian country like the United States. Amitabha-recitation is something that transcends religion.

Indeed, Amitabha Buddha's compassion and power are beyond the imagination of us ordinary people. The case of Betty's father reminds me that many illnesses are related to karma and vengeful spirits. In such instances, it is very hard to cure the disease without eliminating the

relevant karmic obstructions and delivering the spirits. Amitabha-recitation, which can do both, is a rare and precious treasure. People fortunate enough to learn it should cherish the opportunity and recite the name of Amitabha Buddha as often as they can.

(by Dr. Lei Jiunan)

The author of this article was born in Tainan, Taiwan, in 1951 and emigrated to the U.S. with her parents as a child. She earned a Ph.D. in chemistry at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology after graduating from the University of Hawaii. She was the founder of Lapis Lazuli Light in Malaysia. She works in research relating to cancer prevention and treatment, and contributes to research on environmental hazards such as electromagnetic waves and the pollution of water and soil.

Remarks:

The U.S.A is the country with the highest percentage of inhabitants who have religious beliefs. Ninety percent of Americans are born Protestants or Catholics. They are unfamiliar with Buddhism, even more so with the name *Namo Amitabha Buddha*. When they recite it under certain circumstances, they do so rather mechanically and without understanding the underlying meaning. Even so, Amitabha-recitation has unfathomable effects, because the name of Amitabha Buddha is Amitabha Buddha per se. Whenever we recite, Amitabha is present. The name and the entity are one. Sentient beings who recite and recall Amitabha Buddha will receive his protection and support; in future, they will be reborn in the Western Pure Land. The various effects of recitation in the above accounts make this clear. The teaching and practice of Amitabha-recitation truly transcends nation, race and religion. It is applicable everywhere.

*– English translation by Dr. Bao Jiangyin,
Edited by Householder Jingtū*

3.

Recitation Brings Forth Amitabha's Light

● **With Each Recitation of Amitabha's Name, a Beam of Light**

I once went to the United States to propagate the Dharma. After a service, an American came up to speak with me. He introduced himself and told me, "I am a student of special powers." He said he had seen a bright ray of light coming out of the mouths of people who recited, "*Namo Amitabha Buddha*." The light from those who were reciting sincerely was so expansive it just about enveloped the entire planet. On the other hand, the light from those who were not sincere was very weak, like successive flickers.

This American learner of special powers said that it was after witnessing such an extraordinary scene that he started to study Buddhism.

(Narrated by Dharma Master Fazang)

Remarks:

Recitation of Amitabha's name brings forth the Buddha's light;
Its brightness varies with the reciter's sincerity.
If we recite sincerely and often,
Our world would connect with the Land of Bliss.

– English translation by Dharma Master Weitong,

Edited by Householder Jingtū

● Frequent Amitabha-Recitation Empowers a String of Beads

One day in 1986, I called upon Householder Lai at his home in Taipei. During our conversation he mentioned that the recitation beads of a Dharma master he knew possessed a particular power.

I long knew that Householder Lai had attained certain special powers. In order to test him, I handed him a string of beads I had on my wrist. “What about this?” I asked.

He took the beads and said, “There’s nothing special about them.” Actually, this string normally was just left on the table, without being used. I only picked it up for temporary use on this outing and hung it on my wrist.

Then I took from my pocket the 108-bead string that I normally use for Amitabha-recitation and gave it to him. “What about this one?” I asked. As soon as he touched it, Householder Lai responded, “Ah, yes! This one is powerful indeed.”

(Recorded by Huijing)

– English translation by Householder Guoshu,

Edited by Householder Jingtu

● Debating Amitabha-Recitation, Emitting Light

Once, Master Shandao was debating the virtues of Amitabha-recitation with Master Jingang in Xijing Monastery. Shandao swore an oath:

“If the teaching of the Buddha in various sutras that reciting Amitabha's name once or ten times, for a day or a week, invariably leads to rebirth in the Pure Land is truthful, not deceitful, may the two Buddha images in this hall emit light. If the teaching is false, fails to bring rebirth in the Pure Land or deceives sentient beings, may I immediately fall from this high seat into hell and suffer there eternally.” He then pointed his staff at the images in the hall – which emitted light.

(From *Mirror of Amitabha-Recitation*, Tang Dynasty)

– English translation by Householder Jingtu

● Amitabha-Recitation During Sitting Meditation Deflects a Flow of Energy

The talented Householder Lai was the artistic director of a certain television station. He mentioned that he had transmitted energy through *qigong* (breathing exercises) to several well-known performers. His efforts produced evident effects. Curious, I asked Householder Lai to do the same for me.

The two of us faced each other in sitting meditation. I closed my eyes and recited the name of Amitabha Buddha. To see how he would transmit energy, however, I opened my eyes occasionally and closed them again in recitation. I repeated this many times within several minutes. As I felt nothing, I opened my eyes; he had stopped his efforts to transmit energy and just sat still. I told him, “I felt nothing at all.” He was also puzzled and said, “Yes, that’s because the energy was circulating back and forth between my palms and your person. It could not enter your body.”

After a while, we both wanted to try again. This time I no longer opened my eyes to peer at him out of

curiosity, but focused exclusively on my recitation. After an unknown period of time, I felt nothing, like the previous occasion. So I opened my eyes and saw him still sitting there, looking at me. I said, “Still no feeling.” He replied, “It was very strange this time. The energy flowed through my palms, my wrists, my arms and then into my body.”

So with distracted Amitabha-recitation, the energy stayed somewhere between the two of us. But with concentrated recitation, it entered the body of the other person.

This suggests that a magnetic field is generated during Amitabha-recitation. If our mind is focused during recitation, the field is stronger, capable of pushing the energy sent out by the other person back into his own body.

As the *Contemplation Sutra* says, **“The light [of Amitabha] permeates all worlds, always embracing those who recite his name.”**

Remarks:

The body is the guest, the mind the host;
The body may die but the mind lives on.
As death approaches, we follow our thoughts;
They determine the circumstances of our rebirth.
If they dwell in Amitabha-remembrance and
Amitabha-recitation,
They at once attract the Buddha's light, like a
magnet.
As our thoughts merge with Amitabha's light, it
embraces us.
In a single moment we are reborn in the Pure Land.

(Recorded and written by Huijing)
– English translation by Householder Guoshu,
Edited by Householder Jingtū

4.

The Healing Power of Amitabha-Recitation

● **A U.S. Scientist Chants Amitabha – and His Back Pain Vanishes**

There is an *Amitufo* (Amitabha Buddha) chanting machine in my office. I leave it on all the time but keep the volume low so you really need to be attentive to hear it. Most people who come to my office don't ask about it.

Loren Berry and I have been working together for eight years. He is a young and ambitious American. He came to my office several times a week to discuss projects and science because I am his supervisor. Several years ago, Loren asked me, “What is the music you are playing?” I told him it's not music, it's chanting. He then asked, “What is it chanting?” I said it's chanting “*Amitufo*.” He said what is *Amitufo*? I told him:

Amitufo means the Buddha of endless light and life, the symbol of wisdom and eternal life. He is the creator of the Western Pure Land. I want to go there when my life ends. He then asked why I wanted to go there. I replied, I want to learn Buddhism and practice with *Amitufo* so one day when I become a Buddha, I will come back to save your soul. He said, really? I said yes, not just you of course, but you are one of them. He had this half-funny, half-serious look on his face but didn't say anything. I then told him Amitabha Buddha is very powerful and compassionate; remember to call out to him for help when you are in danger or suffering. He will help you out! We did not have a similar conversation again.

In March last year, Loren gave a seminar. He came into my office 30 minutes before his presentation and told me he was extremely nervous and didn't know what to do. I told him to listen to the chanting and focus on it. I suggested that he write down the scripts for his first two or three slides and read them if he is nervous. "I am going to do that," he said, and left my office. That was the second time I mentioned the chanting to him.

In mid-September 2012, Loren told me he would take a few days off to visit his parents in Maine, where they had a vacation cabin. He once told me that some people who had visited that house could sense there were other beings around. His wife, Virginia, and his sister both sensed that.

When he came into my office before leaving, I joked: "So you are going to visit your ghost friends?" I then asked him if he believed in supernatural powers such as the Buddha or Jesus Christ, or the presence of other invisible beings. He said, "No, I don't because I am a scientist. I need to have evidence in order to believe in something." He paused, then added: I don't disbelieve either, since I don't have evidence to disprove their presence. This was the third time we touched upon something related to "religion."

When we all came back from the Thanksgiving holidays on Nov. 29, 2012, Loren showed up in my office and asked about "the music, the chanting." Then he said, "Jasmine, did I tell you about my back? I injured my back two or three weeks ago." I said no. He then told me his experience.

“I went to a hardware store two weeks before Thanksgiving to look for something,” Loren said. “When I raised my hands to reach the item, suddenly my back felt so painful. I left quickly and drove home. The pain was so great that I had to lean forward against the steering wheel from time to time. I suffered from the pain all morning and didn’t know what to do. Later I decided to chant the music in your office. I browsed the web, found the music and started chanting. My daughters (one was 6 and the other 4) chanted with me. I felt the pain lessen after a few minutes. Half an hour later, the pain was gone and I was fine.” After hearing his story, I told him, “Good for you! *Amitufofo* helped relieve your pain.”

Loren’s wife also works in our department. I met Virginia in the kitchen a week later. I decided to ask her for more details about the episode. She is a very quiet person who usually doesn’t talk much. But this time she spoke up readily. She said Loren took analgesics and applied ointment to his back pain but nothing helped. He suffered for a few hours. “Suddenly,” Virginia recalled, “he got up and said, ‘I am going to chant the music in Jasmine’s office.’ Ava and Hanna saw their father’s serious demeanor and followed him into the room. They

started chanting together. Loren’s back pain was gone after a while.”

I asked Virginia what they were chanting. She said, “*Amitufofo*.” I was delighted. Never had I mentioned *Amitufofo* to her. She learned the name when she heard her husband and daughters chant it. Loren called out to Amitabha when he was suffering and the Buddha reached out to him.

I have been chanting *Amitufofo* for several years. Although I haven’t experienced his power personally, I never doubted his presence. However, *Amitufofo* showed me his compassion and power through someone who doesn’t know him well and who called out to him for help simply because he was desperate. Loren’s experience strengthens my belief in *Amitufofo*, my desire to go to Western Pure Land and my recitation practice.

Virginia told me she too chanted *Amitufofo* when they visited the “ghost house” at Christmas. She followed my advice to chant *Amitufofo* and transferred the merit therefrom to the invisible beings. She also advised them to go to the Pure Land with *Amitufofo*. When she or her daughters were sick, Virginia chanted *Amitufofo* as well.

She even told the girls to go to their rooms to chant *Amitufofo* when they didn't behave. She said Ava, the six-year-old, came back with a smiley face.

May the Berry family remember to chant *Amitufofo* from now on. May they go to Pure Land at the end of their current lives. I might have helped saved their souls without having become a Buddha.

(Recorded in English by Jasmine Min-Hwa Lin, Boston, U.S.A., on Feb. 22, 2013; edited by Householder Jingtū)

● Reciting the Name in the Surgery Ward

(1)

When I worked as an intern in the hospital's gynecology department, I met a woman who needed surgery because of a stillbirth. She was deeply distressed, both by the loss of her baby and her fear of the operation.

I visited her and urged her to recite Amitabha's name. I said to her, "Amitabha Buddha, out of his infinite compassion, cannot bear to see sentient beings suffer. He will definitely bless you."

She took my advice and kept reciting "Amitabha Buddha" over and over before being given the anesthetic.

When she came round from the surgery, she told me, "Reciting Amitabha is really wonderful. It works!" She had felt no pain at all.

During the operation, she dreamt of a Bodhisattva, whose beauty surpassed that of any fairy she had seen in movies. She was also given a tour of a place that not even

cinematic fairylands could compare with, and where she saw many big lotus flowers.

Then she heard a voice saying, “Time’s up. You can go back now.” And she slowly woke up.

- Recounted by Dr. Guo Huizhen

(2)

In my first year as a resident doctor in the department of internal medicine, I was on duty in the intensive care unit (ICU) one night when a heart-attack patient was rushed in from the emergency room. The man had stopped breathing and was unconscious. His face and tongue were dark purple. An ECG (electrocardiogram) and blood test showed that his heart had been seriously damaged.

According to the director, even patients with a less serious heart attack could not be saved. We asked the family to be psychologically prepared for the worst. As usual, I recited Amitabha Buddha’s name while I was giving emergency treatment.

We had already put the patient on an intravenous drip but could not detect any blood pressure. He remained unconscious and could not breathe by himself. His wife said with great sorrow, “People say god loves simple honest folk. How come he doesn’t love me? Doctor, please try your best to save him. I will take care of him even if he goes into a vegetative state.”

I could feel that she did have a sort of simple-minded sincerity. I comforted her and said, “In order to have a breakthrough from a crisis, one should make a great vow and recite Amitabha’s name.”

“How do I make such a vow?” she asked.

“Do it with your own sincerity,” I said.

She immediately said, “From now on my husband and I will become vegetarian and we will recite the name of Amitabha Buddha. Being a school teacher, my husband can help promote the Dharma when he is well again.”

I handed her and her children each a string of recitation beads and said, “It doesn’t help if you simply stay outside the ICU and worry. Why not calm yourself and do 10,000 recitations? Pray for Amitabha’s unfathomable blessings. We will do our best. Dedicate the merit of your recitation to him. If he doesn’t pull through, he will be reborn in the Pure Land.”

Two other doctors and I were busy watching the ECG monitor and adjusting the dosage that whole night, from 7 or 8 pm until 3 in the morning. One of the doctors

sighed, “The three of us spent the entire night on a person who doesn’t even have a pulse.”

About 4 or 5 in the morning, the patient’s blood pressure miraculously rose. He was gradually coming round. I immediately opened the door of the ICU to break the news to his family. What I saw moved me to tears – the whole family was in line reciting most earnestly and faithfully.

One of his kids wrote this on a piece of paper: “Dear Dad, how I wish you will open your kind eyes again!”

A young man came to visit and was crying so intensely that I mistook him for a relative. He said to me, “This man was my teacher. In those years, he lived in a simple hut outside someone’s courtyard and gave up his salary so we could be educated. If it weren’t for him, I wouldn’t be here today. Doctor, please bring him back!”

He was choked by tears before he could finish. I then realized that this patient was once voted one of the Top 10 Most Benevolent Teachers.

He was on a breathing machine for three days after he recovered consciousness. However, he was able to recite Amitabha's name. Besides the heart attack, he also had a rather serious case of tuberculosis. Yet he managed to walk out of the hospital, alive and well. Later, he came back to help me fund the publication of some Buddhist scriptures.

The doctors who had reviewed the man's ECG and blood-test reports and witnessed his recovery all found the entire episode incredible!

*- Recounted by Dr. Guo Huizhen
(English translation by Foxin, edited by Fojin)*

● The Story of a Singapore Policeman

My Dharma name is Jing-le. I am 63 years old and a retired policeman living in Singapore.

I started learning the Dharma and reciting the name of Amitabha Buddha when I was 40. Before that, I knew nothing about Buddhism. Given my past disposition and lifestyle, no one would believe I am now actually studying the Dharma.

At the age of 40, I was diagnosed with a parotid tumor. The news came as the shock of my life. I always took for granted that a healthy body would last. Never did I imagine that one day I would suffer from this disease.

Luckily, the tumor was benign. But some complications developed after the surgery to remove it. Tiny watery cysts formed in the sclera (white of the eye) of my left eye, which caused me severe pain. Though I followed the doctor's instruction to apply eye drops and take pain killers, the aching persisted and I was in agony. I was extremely worried that I would go blind. At the same time, because some facial nerves were disrupted

during the operation, my left cheek became numb. My face was contorted beyond recognition. It looked awful. This affliction, coupled with the unbearable pain in the eye, made me realize one thing: life truly is full of suffering. As a result, I was eager to seek help from Amitabha Buddha.

It may be that my karmic connection with Amitabha had ripened. Just at that time, I came across an elderly Dharma master. He said to me, after learning of my ordeal, “Just recite *Namo Amitabha Buddha*. Amitabha Buddha will certainly come and help you, and you will be fine.”

I didn’t know anything about the Dharma then. However, the old master was adamant and the pain in my eye was killing me. In desperation I could do little but rely on recitation of “*Namo Amitabha Buddha*.” I spent more than 40 days of my two-month sick leave reciting continually.

On the evening of the 45th day, I had a dream in which I returned to the rubber plantation in my hometown. Entering the plantation, I saw an old lady accompanied by two tall, strong men. She saw me and

said, “There is spider silk in your eye.” No sooner had she said that than she used her fingers to poke my eye and pull out some very long spider thread. Startled, I woke up.

I quietly rejoiced: It must have been a kind of resonance from Amitabha-recitation. I even wondered whether the three persons in my dream were the Three Sacred Beings of the Land Of Bliss. My confidence greatly enhanced, I carried on reciting.

In the next five days, my eye problem was healed without medication. This, I believe, was due to the merit of the 500,000 recitations I made. The facial contortion was also gone after 50 days. My eyes have since been normal.

I never stopped reciting *Namo Amitabha Buddha*. Unlike many of my friends, I didn’t hop between Dharma schools to try and get on top of various practices. I just stuck with Amitabha-recitation alone, without even going to any Dharma centers. The experience with my eye ailment made me believe strongly that there is only one thing we need to do: recite *Namo Amitabha Buddha*.

It was not until a year ago or so that I came across Master Shandao's Pure Land lineage. I came to realize that we just need to recite the name of Amitabha Buddha, and our rebirth in the Pure Land and our attainment of Buddhahood are assured. In this life, we become certain of extricating ourselves from rebirth in the Six Realms. We can achieve this entirely because of the power of Amitabha Buddha. I related to Shandao's thought at once and I knew that I had made the right decision.

Amitabha-recitation is easy, unique, splendid. It best suits people of modern society, particularly Singaporeans who are too busy to take a rest, let alone practice. We need only a teaching such as Shandao's which has no rituals, and which can be practiced anytime and anywhere. All we need do is to recite single-mindedly.

Now that I have had the good fortune of coming across this practice, I really have no more wants in this life. What remains for me to do is to "have faith and encourage others to have faith" in it, as Master Shandao exhorted us.

Namo Amitabha Buddha!

[Remarks by Master Jingben:]

The first time I met Jing-le I saw remarkable optimism in him, just as his name implies ("le" means happiness). He laughs heartily every day. Benefitting from the merit of Amitabha-recitation and lacking exposure to other schools, Dharma centers and Buddhist literature, Jing-le is relatively simple and pure. He never worries if he has a deluded mind, or whether he could actually achieve rebirth. Nor is he concerned about how much merit there is in his recitations. When he has time, he devotes it entirely to reciting.

Although we didn't spend much time together, I know he has great faith in *Namo Amitabha Buddha*. Let me share two more related accounts of Amitabha-recitation:

Once, a relative of Jing-le's had an amputation because of a medical condition. Though the wound appeared healed to bystanders, the amputee had developed a phantom limb pain after surgery and still felt intense soreness. Jing-le suggested, and his relative agreed at once, that they should recite "*Namo Amitabha Buddha*" together. After about five minutes, the pain disappeared. It was truly amazing.

Another time, a friend of Jing-le's had gone into a coma for more than a month after being treated for meningitis. When he came round, he lost his ability to speak. His wife worried that he would become mute for the rest of his life. Jing-le went to see this friend and after understanding his condition, he asked him to recite *Namo Amitabha* Buddha right away. Jing-le started reciting and, to everyone's surprise, his friend repeated the words after him seven times. Jing-le was confident and said to his wife, "Don't worry. If your husband can recite *Namo Amitabha Buddha*, I promise you he will be able to talk again." And Jing-le was right. His friend, despite suffering memory loss, can now speak normally.

Many people, despite having read many sutras, aren't able to develop the deep faith in "*Namo Amitabha Buddha*" that Jing-le has. This is probably what Master Shandao described as "developing faith through practice." Often, the confidence cultivated through recitation is much stronger than that derived from reading texts.

- Narrated by Householder Jing-le,
recorded by Dharma Master Jingben
(English translation by Foli, edited by Linghui)

● Eliminating Bad Karma From Duck-Hunting

My name is Peng Chucai. I'm 68 years old. When I was young I did not work seriously and regularly hunted wild ducks.

I live in the central area of Lake Dongting. Decades ago, a large number of wild ducks would gather there every day to forage for food.

At dusk, I would drive a boat to search for wild ducks. I carried a long-barreled gun fully loaded with small metal pellets. After taking aim, I lit the fuse and shot. The metal pellets fanned out in all directions, killing ducks that could not dodge them quickly enough. I returned with a big haul every time.

Once, however, the gun went off accidentally: Instead of hitting the ducks, I hit myself in the left arm. The pellets went through my clavicle, and the pain made me scream. Fortunately, it was not a fatal injury. Since then I have not dared hunt wild ducks.

In October 2002, my past karmic offenses caught up

with me and the left half of my body suddenly became paralyzed. I remembered a book that a Buddhist monk gave me when I made a pilgrimage to Mt. Nanyue ten years ago. (I had never opened it.) Curious, I opened the book and found a paragraph describing the benefits of Amitabha-recitation. I began to recite the name of Amitabha Buddha, according to the instructions given. Recalling the wild ducks I had killed, I felt terribly guilty!

After several days of recitation, I began to feel better. The paralyzed left half of my body gradually resumed its functions. I was very happy and vowed to recite Amitabha's name for the long term.

Every time Master Zongdao came home to visit his family, I would go and ask him to explain the significance of Amitabha-recitation. Since taking refuge in the Three Gems in July 2003, I have had an inexplicable experience. My right ear, deaf for more than a year, suddenly began to hear the faint whisperings of a voice. At 5 o'clock every morning, it would urge me, "Recite, recite, Amitabha, Amitabha ...". The voice did not stop until I finished my morning recitations at 7 o'clock.

Before the dusk, the voice would come again,

urging me to recite. It was like that every day – truly unfathomable.

I think if it weren't for the positive karmic circumstances I have encountered, I would never have been able to settle accounts with the karmic creditors from my previous and present lives.

Now, having listened to the Dharma masters, I understand Buddhism's basic principles and believe that I am an iniquitous ordinary being, subject to the cycles of birth and death. Only by having faith in the power of Amitabha's vows, relying on his deliverance and reciting his name single-mindedly, can we reborn in the Land of Bliss and leave suffering behind for happiness.

Namo Amitufo!

- Recounted by Peng Chucai, Beida Village,

Yuanjiang, Hunan Province

(English translation by Foxin, edited by Jingtu)

5.

Avoiding Jeopardy Through Amitabha-Recitation

● 'The Laws of Three-Dimensional Space Seemed to Have Been Altered'

March 29, 2015

On my way to pick up my daughter at the horse stables where she rides, I was driving north on our local stretch of E18, a highway that runs from the south of Norway up to Oslo. Due to a recent bridge collapse, the highway closes and detours through a small town on the coast. Before the road closes, however, the speed limit is decreased and the normal two lanes are reduced to one by concrete barriers. This one lane then exits the highway directly onto the detour.

Having reduced my speed, I happened to glance

in my rear-view mirror and, to my horror, saw an SUV attempting to pass me in the left lane at an incredible rate of speed. I was just about to enter the portion of road that narrows to one lane, and I understood immediately that the vehicle would not manage to pass me before colliding with the concrete barrier. The driver of the SUV, realizing this as well, began to merge into my lane. His rate of speed, however, meant that his lane change put him on a direct collision course with my vehicle.

I braced for impact; I saw that the SUV was going to sideswipe me and force me off the road into the hillside. Though I had slowed my vehicle, I was still traveling at around 70 kph, and the SUV was travelling significantly faster. The moment felt electric with catastrophe. Any collision would certainly result in death for one or both of us. Against what appeared to be an inevitable outcome, the SUV managed to execute the lane change and fall into place directly behind me without incident. The whole thing was surreal; it truly seemed as if the laws governing three-dimensional space had been momentarily altered. I was badly shaken, but otherwise unhurt. Inexplicably, our vehicles never so much as touched.

What stands out in my mind is that I had been practicing Amitabha-recitation just prior to this. I drive deliveries for a living, and one of the advantages of this line of work is that it gives me the time and solitude needed to recite the name of Amitabha Buddha. Thus, I have long made it a habit to practice *nianfo* whenever I am driving somewhere alone. Today was no exception. While I understand that this near-disaster was the flowering of some of my past evil karma, I have no doubt that my practice of Amitabha-recitation saved me from certain injury or death. Because of the intimacy with Amitabha that single-minded, exclusive recitation promotes, I was able to return home to my family.

I've known from the testimony of others that the effects of exclusive Amitabha-recitation are profound and often mysterious. Today, I know it firsthand. I share this in the hopes that it will be passed along and help to strengthen the faith of fellow practitioners. *Namo Amitufo!*

● Recitation in a Crisis: Saved From a Traffic Tragedy

It was 8 o'clock on the morning of April 12, 1992. Holding a basket, Dharma practitioner Shuk-hui was walking along a crossing on Song Jiang Road in Taipei. When she was half way across, the traffic signal suddenly turned red. At that moment, a taxi turned at high speed from the left. It could not stop in time and seemed certain to hit and kill her. At this critical juncture, she cried out: "Amitabha Buddha!" Immediately she felt an external force supporting her, then pushing her forward. She toppled over.

The car screeched to a halt and the driver got out to see if Shuk-hui was injured. He saw her stand up and straighten her clothes as though nothing had happened. She even pressed her palms together and told the driver, "Don't worry, I'm fine. Thank you for your concern!" The driver and passers-by who witnessed the incident were both relieved and amazed.

Shuk-hui continued to walk towards the marketplace, reciting Amitabha's name all the time. The more

she recited, the happier she became. She'd had an unforgettable experience of Pure Land practice and Amitabha's compassionate vow, and benefitted directly. A single recitation of Amitabha's name saved her life. Truly, it was a great augmentative cause in her practice.

(From *What I Learned From Buddhism*, by Master Guozhen)
– English translation by Householder Guoshu,
edited by Householder Jingtū

● Amitabha-Recitation Extinguishes Fire

One day in the autumn of 2005, householder Foyuan's niece A-Mei was farming in the hills of Nanning, capital of Guangxi Province in southern China. To clear the weeds and dead trees on the ground, she gathered some straw and lit a fire. She didn't take precautions against fire, however. As it happened, strong gusts arose and fanned the flames, spreading them rapidly. The fire approached a large area of sugar cane, whose crop was worth a fortune.

A-Mei was shocked. But there was no water in the hills, or any fire-fighting tools. Desperate, she cried out for help. At the same time, she tried to extinguish the flames by flapping some branches she grabbed. Her efforts were entirely in vain.

Nearby, a peasant woman heard her call for help and ran towards her, but the fire was too fierce. Exasperated, the woman blamed A-Mei, saying: "If the several acres of sugar cane worked by three production brigades were burned down, can you compensate for the loss? You will go to prison for sure." A-Mei didn't know what to do; she was scared.

At this critical moment, A-Mei suddenly remembered that a few years ago her aunt had told her about the six characters, “*Namo Amitabha Buddha.*” Reciting Amitabha’s name, her aunt said, could extinguish fires as well as help the reciter avoid disaster and gain rebirth in the Land of Bliss. It was as though A-Mei had grasped a life-saving straw. She waved her branches with all her strength, eyes closed and shouting desperately, “*Namo Amitabha Buddha, Namu Amitabha Buddha, Namu Amitabha Buddha, Namu Amitabha Buddha ...*”

Before long, A-Mei felt behind her ears the wind weakening and the fire gradually becoming smaller. When she opened her eyes, she saw that the flames had stopped spreading. The sugar cane was spared. She had escaped disaster!

A-Mei visited her aunt, householder Foyuan, during the Spring Festival (lunar new year) of 2013 and told her about the incident. Exclaimed A-Mei, “Reciting *Namo Amitabha Buddha* is truly unfathomable! You see, Auntie, I barely recited a few times before the wind stopped. The fire diminished and was eventually extinguished. Amitabha Buddha is efficacious indeed!”

– English translation by Householder Jingfa,
Edited by Householder Jingtū

● Protected by an Amitabha Card During a Highway Calamity

Householder Luo Fo’en, 27, is a native of Chengdu, China. In September 2001, he left home to work in faraway Johannesburg, South Africa. Before his departure, his mother, a Buddhist, gave him a pocket card with an image of Amitabha Buddha. She repeatedly told him to carry the card with him whenever he went out. When he got home at night, she admonished, he should respectfully place it on a table. That way, whenever she did her daily recitations of Amitabha’s name, she would be able to connect with her son wherever he was and he would be under Amitabha’s protection.

So Luo Fo’en, a non-Buddhist, put the Amitabha card in his wallet for the love of his mother. Upon returning home, he opened the wallet and placed it on a wooden box above his bed. He also put his family photos in the wallet, together with the card. Whenever he opened his wallet, he would look at his mother’s photo and say, “I will do my best and won’t disappoint you ...” He always followed her instruction and respectfully recited “*Namo Amitabha*” three times.

On December 25 that year, during the Christmas holidays, everyone was excited about visiting places. Luo Fo'en decided to go along with friends because he didn't want, when he got home in the future, to tell others he had not been anywhere in Africa during his sojourn there. Fifteen of them packed into an eight-seater passenger van and flew down the highway at high speed. South Africa's wide flat highways were ranked No. 3 in the world.

The van soon came upon a big downhill slope. As passengers in the front excitedly shouted out the speed – “170, 180, 200, 205” – disaster struck. The vehicle lost control and, like a metal barrel, rolled forward for 200 to 300 meters. All the passengers were killed – except Luo Fo'en, who miraculously escaped unharmed.

“It all happened so quickly,” he later recalled. “When I was young, I used to tie a stone to a cotton string and swing it above my head in circles. With each circle the speed got faster. Suddenly, the string broke and the stone flew out and disappeared, leaving my mind blank. That was what the accident was like. I only remembered yelling ‘Mom!’ when I realized the danger. At that moment, a golden ray of light appeared and I was

completed surrounded by it. I felt weightless, with no fear at all.”

Given the severity of the accident, there shouldn't have been any survivors. How did Luo Fo'en survive and escape without serious injury? People started talking about this and almost all thought that the Amitabha card he carried had protected him from this fatal calamity. They believed that his filial piety towards his mother and his respect for Amitabha Buddha also played a part. Suddenly, many Chinese living in South Africa began looking for Amitabha wallet cards, hoping that by carrying them they too would be protected.

Luo Fo'en is now a devout Buddhist. He does volunteer work in Chinese Buddhist temples in South Africa whenever he has time. He helps in the kitchen, or with the cleaning and tidying. Whenever he sees other Chinese pass by, he gives them an Amitabha wallet card and tells them about the story of how he escaped death because of Amitabha Buddha's protection.

- Narrated by Luo Fo'en, recorded by Lai Xiangxing

- English translation by Jingtong, edited by Jingtong

6.

Deliverance of the Dead With Amitabha-Recitation

● **Amitabha's Sacred Name Saves the Souls of 96 Cattle**

The 96 souls refer to the cattle slaughtered in a previous life by Ms. Nie, the housemaid of lay practitioner Liu Jingmi of southern Sichuan Province. Nie, a Sichuanese, had regularly been troubled by spirits and demons since her marriage. The episodes would flare up several times a year, causing her great distress.

In February 1932, Nie was serving as a domestic helper in the Liu household when she suddenly fell ill. Painful and itchy red scabs appeared all over her body. In her anguish, she wanted to kill herself. She went searching for a river, but was prevented from throwing herself into the water by local people. In a crazed manner,

she loudly sang a plaintive song of cattle slaughter. Her tones were clear and crisp, as she continued with her ruckus.

Householder Liu Jingmi approached and asked what the matter was. The reply: “My master is generous indeed. We are not Ms. Nie, but the cattle she slaughtered many lifetimes ago when she was a butcher in Wan County. There are 96 of us, and we have come to seek her life as compensation.”

Liu told them, “You are really confused. Actually it was you who killed her first, then became the cattle that she slaughtered. Otherwise, isn't it too much of a coincidence that she should have killed only the 96 of you? Now you forget you had taken her life and only recall that she had killed you. If you persist in seeking revenge, you will only prolong the cycle of suffering. What benefit could there be in this killing and counter-killing?”

“If that is so, we would be wrong,” replied the cattle. “But our necks still bleed and the pain continues. When we remember the source of our suffering, we are seized by vengeful thoughts.”

“This isn’t hard to resolve,” said Liu. He instructed a servant to fetch half a cup of water and recited the Sweet Dew Mantra three times. Then he asked Nie to drink the water. Unable to bend her wrist, she said, “How can I hold the cup with my hoof?” Liu told the servant to pour the water into her mouth.

“What marvelous water!” she exclaimed after drinking it. She then touched her own throat and cried, “It’s cured!” After feeling her hands she marveled, “The hooves are gone!” Brushing them against her head, she said: “And so are the horns!”

Amid her joy, she cried into the air, “I tell you: If you address me once more as Bodhisattva Ox King, I will not spare you!”

At this point, Liu Jingmi explained how suffering accompanies unenlightened rebirth. He also praised the peace and joy to be found in the Land of Bliss, whose denizens are forever exempt from the cycle of suffering. He asked the oxen, “Are you willing to be reborn there?”

They replied, “If things are as you say, how can we not be? But with our heavy negative karma, how can we be reborn there?”

Said Liu, “ If you resolve to recite the name of Amitabha Buddha and admire and delight in his Land of Bliss, I will ask Amitabha on your behalf to deliver you – all right?”

“Very well, very well,” they replied. “But since we have been hungry a long time, perhaps you can give us some food?”

Liu promised to do so. He filled a clean cup with water and rice, and recited the Food Transformation Mantra seven times. Then he scattered the cup’s contents into a nearby bamboo grove. Soon enough, the cattle spirits said, “We have eaten our fill” and offered happy thanks.

Liu Jingmi lit some candles and placed them on the ground near a rear window of his home, offering them to Amitabha Buddha. On behalf of the ox spirits, he recited the Rebirth Mantra, the *Heart Sutra*, the Great Compassion Mantra and the names of various Buddhas and Bodhisattvas.

“Quickly – look,” he said. “Amitabha has already arrived. He is standing outside the window, 16 feet tall

and with a golden complexion. Please get ready to follow him!”

From inside the house, Liu’s wife Wang Zhixi asked, “Can you see the Pure Land?” “Yes,” came the response. “What is it like?” asked Wang. The ox spirits described in detail what they saw – which matched the descriptions in the Pure Land sutras.

Just before departing, the spirits said sincerely and thankfully, “In one stroke, your splendid act has released us from the grievances accumulated over many lifetimes. We have troubled this woman for many years, causing her much suffering. Today, thanks to Amitabha Buddha, we will be reborn in the Land of Bliss. As for Ms. Nie, we hope you will be compassionate and encourage her to recite Amitabha’s name, so she too can gain rebirth in the Pure Land. When you and your wife are reborn there in future, we will accompany Amitabha Buddha to welcome you, returning the merit of your recitations today.” The spirits then fell silent.

Soon after, Ms. Nie regained consciousness. When her employer asked what had happened, she replied: “It was as though I entered the town in a dream. When I

reached West Street, I saw a herd of oxen coming towards me with a vicious attitude. Their necks were bleeding, and it was horrible. Amid my tension and fear, I heard your voice. The scene changed abruptly. The flat ground and lush woods had a crisp and comfortable air that was very inviting. Suddenly, I smelled rice that was more fragrant than usual. The cattle were eating rice in the woods, and they were dancing joyfully. I’m not too clear about the rest.”

From then on, Ms. Nie was no longer troubled by spirits or demons. She adopted a full vegetarian diet.

In the spring of 1934, Liu Jingmi became a monk in Xikang. His monastic name was Huiding. The recorded events had occurred before he took his vows.

(From *Everyone Is Happy, Vol. 1* and *Records of Pure Land Saints and Sages*)

Remarks:

Good person or bad, whatever the karmic circumstances,

Amitabha will manifest with a single recitation of his name.

Though he is invisible to the eyes of ordinary beings, Spirits can discern him with their five special powers. To save all who suffer is Amitabha's fundamental intent;

He does so unconditionally, proactively and equally. Those who want rebirth and recite his name will achieve rebirth;

With such faith, rebirth is accomplished with a single recitation.

– English translation by Householder Jingtū

● Amitabha-Recitation at the Point of Death: Delivering a Dozen Vengeful Souls

Master Puji is Taiwanese. Before becoming a nun, she liked to abuse people verbally and formed negative karmic links with many. Later she took her vows at Lingyin Monastery by Lake Qingcao in Hsinchu, northwest Taiwan. One day, she suddenly turned blind.

In her seventies she fell ill, with her whole body becoming swollen. She went to the Vajra Cave where Chan Master Wushang was undergoing a retreat and cried out, “Master, I’m about to die. Please teach me how to free myself from the sea of suffering.”

Master Wushang returned to the monastery and saw that her room was dirty and smelly, with excrement scattered about. Day and night, Master Puji would wail and say she was being beaten by a dozen or so people. She even called out the name of the vengeful spirits.

When the wife of her younger brother came to visit, Master Wushang asked her, “Do you recognize the names

your sister-in-law has been calling out?” “I do,” the visitor replied. “They were all people whose deaths she caused when she was young.” No wonder those bitter spirits were beating her, causing her body to bleed and swell!

Master Wuchang prepared for her a room which had been empty. In the middle of the bed he bore a cavity and placed a bucket underneath. It would accommodate her excretions.

But Master Puji wailed and cried out the names as before; she even put her head into the bucket meant for her excrement. With skillful means, Master Wuchang instructed her, “To free yourself from suffering, you must recite the name of Amitabha Buddha and seek rebirth in his Western Pure Land.” Master Puji replied, “Everything is dark before me. I do not know how to recite.”

Master Wuchang said, “Just recite along with me.”

After about an hour’s recitation, Master Puji suddenly smiled and said, “I see a great brightness in front of me. The dozen vengeful spirits are standing there, and they are smiling!”

Those souls thereupon attached themselves to her person and said, through her mouth: “Master, thank you for your compassion. A blind, thoroughly evil person has actually been able to deliver us dozen from suffering.”

Replied Master Wuchang, “One must always dispel vindictiveness, never create it. You too should recite Amitabha’s name and gain rebirth in his Pure Land even while carrying your karmic offenses. Only then will you be free of the great suffering arising from the cycle of rebirth.” He then asked Master Puji to continue reciting Amitabha’s name with him.

After another hour of recitation, Master Puji said, “The sky is now full of light. A sacred assembly, dressed in white, stands in the clouds, ready to receive us into the Western Land of Bliss.” Pressing palms together and looking up, she smiled and passed away peacefully. The swelling and blood that covered her body vanished all at once. She became clean, odorless.

(From *Eyewitness Accounts of the Effects of Amitabha-Recitation and Records of Pure Land Saints and Sages*)

Remarks:

Amid the suffering at the point of death, vengeful spirits approach;

What can save us? Only our karmic ties to Amitabha Buddha.

If we recite his name, Amitabha will protect us with his light.

With minds and bodies at ease, we, and others, will be saved together.

If we fail to recite, we would certainly fall into the hell domains,

To be reborn endlessly within the Three Wretched Realms.

The merit from Amitabha-recitation is immeasurable –

Thanks to the power of Amitabha’s great and compassionate vow.

– *English translation by Householder Jingtū*

7.

Repelling Demons With Amitabha-Recitation

● **Exclusive Amitabha-Recitation Keeps Vengeful Spirits at Bay**

There was a monk from Sichuan named Xianzhen, also known as Xigui. Before he took vows, he long headed a county as its magistrate. He killed many bandits during this time. Not long after becoming a monk, he lived in Wulei Monastery at Cixi in the city of Ningbo.

Every night, he dreamt that a pack of angry bandits, bloody and disfigured, was trying to kill him with a host of weapons. He was gripped by panic.

As a result, he resolved to recite the name of Amitabha Buddha exclusively, day and night. He became so proficient at his practice that he could recite even while dreaming.

When encountered the bandits again in a dream, he recited Amitabha's name and persuaded his antagonists to do so as well. They gradually became pacified. After a few months, the bandits disappeared from his dreams.

I shared Xianzhen's quarters for the longest time. He often told me his stories and praised the inconceivable merits and virtues of Amitabha-recitation.

(From *Pure Land Buddhism: Questions and Answers*,
by Master Hongyi)

Remarks:

A single ray is enough to light up a long-dark chamber;

A single command from a Buddha suffices to dispel all ghosts and demons.

The single-minded and exclusive recitation of Amitabha's name

Disperses resentments and enables rebirth in the Pure Land.

Amber can trap dust and magnets attract iron.

Our evil karma is like dust and iron,

While Amitabha's name is akin to amber and magnets.

We should keep this in mind, and recite his name often.

– English translation by Householder Guoshu,
Edited by Householder Jingtu

● A Glowing Amulet Exorcises Ghosts

By Master Jingzong

About 30 kilometers from Hongyuan Monastery is a village called Lianzhou. There lives a woman who has been slaughtering pigs for decades; fellow villagers call her “the Butcher.” She did not believe in Buddhas, Bodhisattva, deities and demons or the workings of karma. In fact, she opposed them all.

My younger sister married into the community and became a relative of the Butcher. The latter often sneered at my sister for reciting the name of Amitabha Buddha and being a vegetarian.

“Why on earth should a young woman like you want to be a vegetarian?” she would say. “And what is this recitation and karmic-debt business? If there really were ghosts or spirits demanding what’s due to them from those who have hurt them, they would have come for me long ago. I’ve been slaughtering pigs for decades, yet can’t you see I’m doing just fine?”

It’s no surprise she should have said that. She was so

stout and strong that even men were afraid of her. When building her own house, she managed to carry under each arm a sack of cement weighing 50 kilograms and go straight up to the roof. She could also lift a 100-kg. pig by its hind legs easily. Such abilities helped make the Butcher an unreasonable person. She bullied others during disputes. By simply glaring at her antagonist and bringing down her chopper hard on the table, she could silence anyone.

In February 2004, my sister brought the Butcher to see me: she wanted to take refuge in the Three Gems. I was taken aback by her haggard appearance. The Butcher seemed to have shrunk physically and her face was sickly black to a shocking extent. Gone was her self-confident assertiveness; she seemed a totally different person. At that instant, I thought to myself that she would not survive more than a month.

In fact, the Butcher was suffering from a strange illness – her whole body was like a bloated pig. She had to spend several hundred yuan every week at the hospital to draw out the excess fluid, after which she would look normal again. But as soon as she drank water, the

puffiness would return. Even when unbearably thirsty she dared not drink or even eat fruit. All she did was moisten her lips with a wet towel. Her misery was indescribable. When doctors couldn't heal her she turned to mediums, though they failed as well. She spent all the money she earned from slaughtering pigs on trying to cure the condition. Finally, she had no choice but to turn to the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas and to seek refuge.

I tried to comfort the pitiful woman. "It's good that you want to take refuge," I said. "Come and make three prostrations to the Buddha first." She responded, "I can hardly stand without someone holding me. Is it all right if I don't bow?"

I asked my sister to help her make a brief greeting to the Buddha and let her sit down. After the refuge-taking rituals, I explained to her that Amitabha Buddha had made a compassionate vow at his own initiative to deliver all sentient beings on an equal basis. All we need do is to have faith in and accept his deliverance, and recite his name single-mindedly. Amitabha-recitation helps us in this life to overcome adversity and avoid calamities, stay free from infirmity and achieve longevity. When our

lives end, we will be received by Amitabha and assuredly be reborn in his Pure Land. Not only will we avoid the torments of sickness and reincarnation within the Six Realms, we will also have infinite lifespans and feel perfectly at ease in body and mind.

However, I could tell that the Butcher only wanted her illness to be cured. She wasn't too concerned about rebirth in the Pure Land. Before she left, I gave her a pendant inscribed on both sides with the six Chinese characters, "*Namo Amitabha Buddha*," together with a necklace to wear. In addition, I let her have a loop with 108 prayer beads and told her, "Yours is a karmic sickness. No doctor or deity can heal it. Go home and earnestly recite the name of Amitabha!"

A month later, my sister came and told me about a peculiar incident involving the Butcher. Three days after the Qing Ming festival (tomb-sweeping day), while sitting at home during the day, the Butcher saw three ghosts enter through the door. The first spirit was in his mid-50s and wore a black top. The other two were younger, one holding a chain and the other a bowl of liquid medicine.

The eldest ghost instructed the other two, "Put

the chain round her and force the medicine down her throat.” However, despite several attempts, the spirit with the chain could not bind the Butcher. The senior ghost scolded the younger one, “What the heck are you doing? Can’t you even chain her?” Responded the younger ghost, with some rancor: “I tried, but every time I approached her with the chain, her chest emitted a light [she was wearing the Amitabha pendant] that repelled my chain.” Said the senior spirit: “In that case, chain her ankles.”

Afterwards, my sister asked the Butcher, “Why didn’t you recite the name of Amitabha at the time? The pendant you wore was glowing. Had you recited *Namo Amitabha Buddha*, wouldn’t the beam have been more intense?”

“I didn’t think of that,” said the Butcher. “I was spitting blood [she had a spittoon by her side as she often spat blood] and at the same time had to fend them off.” She happened to have the 108-beaded loop with her during the assault by ghosts and she used it as a weapon to ward off their chain. Remarkably, the beads also emitted light because, I think, she had used it for her recitation. The chain recoiled when it came into contact with the beads. The three ghosts then disappeared.

That was an amazing incident. To verify the details, we sent Master Jing’an with his video recorder to visit the Butcher. Jing’an was told the same story, with identical details. The Butcher rolled up her pants and showed him her swollen legs. They had marks from the chain with which the ghost was beating her.

Not long after the episode of “the glowing amulet exorcising ghosts,” I heard from my sister later, the Butcher was very diligent in reciting the Amitabha’s name. Her health improved rapidly. However, when the whole thing was behind her she gradually forgot about it. Without Dharma friends to guide her, she started to slacken. Occasionally she bumped into my sister, who would remind her to recite. She would step up her efforts as a result. It was in such a sporadic manner that she practiced her Amitabha-recitation. Though she has clung on to life, she is suffering from various serious ailments, struggling between life and death.

It was as though heaven and earth, deities and demons, had picked the Butcher’s case as a living example to illustrate the inexorable law of cause and effect. Indeed, it contains a message to us all: To free

ourselves from the cycle of rebirth, we must recite the name of Amitabha Buddha exclusively and seek rebirth in his Pure Land.

– English translation by Linghui, edited by Jingtū

8.

Amitabha-Recitation and Animals

● **The Ants Move House**

In the spring of 1996, I moved back home to Tainan from Taipei. In order to search for an ideal place to practice and study, I rented a house for the time being.

However, there were a lot of ants in the house. They were in the rice sacks, the garbage bin, the kitchen sink and even on the table. They made their nest in the cracks of the kitchen floor.

Seeing these little ants running around the house all day in search of food, I couldn't help feeling great compassion for them. I mashed some rice and put that at the entrance of their nest, so they could move the food in their own time. Whenever I took the garbage out, I had to wait until all the ants had left before emptying it.

Similarly, I had to be extremely careful when using the sink for fear of drowning the ants.

I still felt somewhat inconvenienced, so I decided to try a method used by Master Yinguang. I said to the ants, “I am an Amitabha-reciting monk who aspires to be reborn in the Pure Land. After my rebirth, you will be the first ones I come back to deliver from samsara. I hope you can move to another place so that I will not accidentally harm you. At the same time, I hope you will join me in reciting *Namo Amitabha Buddha*; it is my wish that you will be embraced and protected by Amitabha’s compassionate light, be reborn in the Land of Bliss and be rid of reincarnation once and for all.” After I finished speaking, I immediately recited the name of Amitabha Buddha.

The next day, not only did the number of ants not decrease, it actually increased greatly. Thousands of ants, large and small, went in and out of the nest unceasingly. When I took a closer look, they seemed to be moving things, mostly tiny white eggs, along the corner towards the door and then into a hole by the courtyard door. The distance from the kitchen to the courtyard door had to be at least four feet. However, these ants were very persistent

and continued to go in and out every day.

At the beginning, I couldn’t be sure that they were moving – until after seven days, when I didn’t see any more ants. I checked the nest, the sink, the garbage bin and the table. There were no signs of ants anywhere in the house. It struck me only then that they were moving. The move lasted seven days.

I looked through the big hole by the door in the courtyard and found a few ants going in and out. So I bought some millet and put a small heap at the entrance of the hole. Soon a lot of ants came out to move the food inside.

After that, they rarely ventured out of the hole; they of course never went back into the house. Once a week I put a pile of millet by the hole and the ants always came out to move the food inside.

- Master Huijing,

Records of the Effects of Amitabha Recitation
(English translation by Foyue, edited by Jingtong)

● An Amitabha-Reciting Parrot Is Reborn, Its Tongue Intact After Cremation

In 1987, a parrot was taken to Baotou in Inner Mongolia from Leshan, Sichuan Province. It failed to mimic human speech, as parrots normally do. Worse, it was wild and difficult to domesticate, often pecking people with its beak. This “unpopular” bird was eventually given to Householder Wang (this writer’s mother-in-law). Its new owner and her family were devout Buddhists who were especially compassionate towards small animals. They had adopted a number of injured and abandoned animals including cats, dogs, goats and doves.

After joining the Wangs, the parrot was immersed in Buddhist music and chanting, such as the “Five Ways of Intoning Amitabha” and “Sacred Name of Bodhisattva Guanyin [Avalokitesvara],” played on a tape recorder every day. Several months later, besides becoming more gentle, the dumb parrot began to recite the name of Amitabha Buddha! It chanted phrases such as “*Namo Amitufo*,” “*Amitufo*,” “*Fo Fo Fo* [Buddha Buddha

Buddha],” “*Namo Bodhisattva Guanyin*” and “*Guanyin-Fo*.” The recitations sounded clear and sweet. Sometimes, the chanting was even interspersed with remarks of encouragement: “Hurry and recite,” “Big Brother is reciting [the bird was nicknamed Big Brother]” and “Let’s recite.”

Every morning and evening, the parrot recited along with its owner. Whenever someone was chanting a sutra or reciting Amitabha’s name before the altar, it always followed suit. It could even tell when people were reciting silently. It would keep reciting until its owner stopped. Curiously, the parrot could not be taught to say anything but Amitabha’s name.

Householder Wang held gatherings in her house for fellow practitioners, who would exchange greetings such as “Hello” and “Please take a seat.” However, the bird never imitated such phrases. Instead, it just replied with “Go recite Amitabha’s name” or “*Namo Amitufo*.”

One day in May 1988, after a fright, the parrot suddenly stopped eating and kept excreting waste. Next day, the bird was dying but “*Namo Amitufo*” still came from its throat when its owner was reciting Amitabha’s

name. After it died the carcass remained pliant and its feathers verdant, as though it were alive. Householder Wang's family recited on its behalf for twelve hours.

The cremation ceremony, sacred and solemn, was hosted by Dharma Master Nengcheng from Mt. Wutai and attended by more than 110 lay practitioners. After the ritual, they collected the parrot's complete and intact tongue, more than 20 reddish-white relic flowers and dozens of relics.

Coincidentally, the remarkable rebirth in the Tang Dynasty of another parrot through Amitabha-recitation had been recorded by Master Lianchi of the Ming Dynasty. The account can be found in the second fascicle of his *Collection on Rebirth*, titled "The Rebirth of Animals in the Pure Land." During the Tang's Zhengyuan era, a Pei family in Hedong kept a parrot. It regularly recited Amitabha's name and did not take food after midday. As death approached it uttered ten recitations before expiring. More than ten shining relics were found after it was cremated. A monk named Huiguan built a terra cotta pagoda to commemorate the rare event. Yin Weigao, a native of Chengdu, said of the parrot in

a written account: "Having realizing emptiness amid mental clarity, it left relics after death."

Similar incidents were recorded in the *Chronicle of Master Xuyun*, which Pure Land practitioners find very touching. Throughout the ages, there have been repeated instances of animals gaining rebirth. They show that Amitabha-recitation is an unsurpassed practice that can be performed by all sentient beings, regardless of capability, and bring them real benefits.

- English translation by Foying, edited by Fojin

9.

Recitation from a Distance

● **Distance No Obstacle to Amitabha's Deliverance**

Zhu Qixuan was a householder from Napeng town in Qinzhou city, Guangxi Province, China. Born in 1930, he passed away at home on January 8, 2010. As Napeng had no Buddhist community and neither Zhu nor his family members were Buddhists, he was buried in his own property in a traditional Taoist ceremony, to release his soul from suffering.

His daughter, Zhu Maoyue, was married to a Taiwanese and lived in Taipei. On learning of her father's death, she immediately flew back to her hometown for the funeral. She returned to Taiwan about ten days later. She had no knowledge of Buddhism at that time and was at a loss, as she didn't know how to help her deceased father.

When she spoke with me about the matter, I told her that at that moment, only Amitabha-recitation could help her father be reborn in the Land of Bliss. In fact, that was the ultimate form of filial piety and the only way to truly benefit her father. I also introduced her to the Pure Land school's Amitabha-recitation center in Taipei, where practitioners recite the name of Amitabha Buddha and help relatives of the deceased. After the daily recitation sessions, the names of the departed are chanted and the resulting merit is dedicated to them.

Ms. Zhu was delighted to learn that. She went to the recitation center and participated in the seven-day Amitabha-recitation sessions held every Sunday morning within 49 days of his father's death. On regular days, she also followed instructions from the Dhama masters there and dedicated the merit from recitation to her father.

Zhu's widow was very concerned about where her husband went. In early February, she sought help in Napeng from a woman with psychic abilities, who immediately used her powers to find the answer. She said, "Mr. Zhu has been invited to a relative's place in a far-away place."

“Which relative?” asked Mrs. Zhu.

“His daughter!” replied the psychic. “There, he was taken to an especially bright and splendid place by a brilliant golden Buddha with big ears.

Zhu’s widow was delighted to hear that. Though she had no knowledge of Buddhism and had idea of Amitabha Buddha or the Land of Bliss, she knew that her husband had gone to a very special place.

She called her daughter in Taipei to tell her the result of the divination. Her daughter told her that as soon as she had returned to Taiwan she started to attend the seven-day recitation service and recited Amitabha’s name on behalf of her father. Both mother and daughter acclaimed the unfathomable merit of Amitabha-recitation.

When he was alive, Zhu Qixuan had neither heard of the Dharma nor recited Amitabha’s name even once. Yet he was still received by Amitabha Buddha in the Pure Land simply through the recitation dedicated to him by his far-away daughter, as well as monastics and fellow practitioners. This shows that Amitabha-recitation is simple and straight-forward, free of complicated rituals or

ceremonies. It also provides the supreme benefit of being instantly received by Amitabha Buddha. Nothing matches Amitabha-recitation in terms of its ability to transcend time and space, and to benefit both the dead and the living, oneself and others.

Zhu Maoyue’s husband, Liang Guisheng, was another who never learned the Dharma or recited the name of Amitabha Buddha. He passed away on February 27, 2010. Ms. Zhu invited monastics and fellow practitioners from the recitation center to recite Amitabha’s name for 24 hours on his behalf. An Amitabha-recitation funeral ceremony, including body cleansing, encoffination and cremation, was conducted on a voluntary basis by members of the center.

On October 21, 2013, recalling her father’s deliverance to the Pure Land, Zhu Maoyue wondered if her husband had also been reborn there. She called her mother and asked her to consult the psychic woman. The answer the psychic gave was exactly the same as that about her father. She said, “Mr. Liang has been taken to a wonderful place to live by a great, glittering golden Buddha.” This assured Ms. Zhu and gave her much peace of mind.

The events above were recounted by Zhu Maoyue, who asked me to record them. Our effort is an expression of our gratitude for the Three Gems. It is also our hope that all beings will recite the name of Amitabha Buddha and be delivered to the Land of Bliss when their lives end. May all our friends and families be reunited forever, with infinite light and life similar to that of Amitabha Buddha.

Namo Amitabha Buddha!

*- Recounted by Zhu Maoyue,
recorded by Liu Junzhong on October 24, 2013
(English translation by Foying, edited by Sik Jingtong)*

10.

Visions of the Pure Land

● What Xinzhang Saw

In the summer of 1994, Qiu Yongchang and his wife took their grandson Xinzhang for Amitabha-recitation at the home of their neighbor, Xu Qinggui. Xinzhang recited loudly and earnestly. His childish voice impressed everyone there.

After a while, Xinzhang suddenly told his grandmother, who was sitting next to him, “Grandma, I saw Amitabha Buddha teaching inside a golden house.”

His grandmother replied, “A child should never lie.”

“Grandma, I’m not lying,” Xinzhang insisted. “I really saw Amitabha Buddha.”

After they returned home, Xinzhang said to his

grandmother again, “When we were reciting, I saw Amitabha Buddha speaking in the golden house. His lotus flower was large, while those of Avalokitesvara and Mahasthamaprapta were smaller. I also saw golden birds and golden trees, and the houses were golden.” He went on: “In Amitabha’s place there was no dirt but gold on the ground. It was shining everywhere and so beautiful.”

Another day, Xinzhang and his grandmother were watching the TV show *Wonders of Mainland China*, which introduced the country’s scenic spots. While she was praising the beautiful views, Xinzhang said to her, “Granny, the views on TV aren’t beautiful at all. The Western Land of Bliss, on the other hand, is gorgeous!”

Grandma had just started learning the Dharma; she was illiterate and never read a Buddhist scripture before. Since Xinzhang seemed so serious, she asked Householder Qiu, “Our Xinzhang told me that when he recited Amitabha’s name, he saw the Western Land of Bliss and its Three Sacred Beings. All the houses, trees and birds there were golden. Is that true?”

Householder Qiu replied, “*The Amitabha Sutra* says that in the Land of Bliss, the ground is made of gold,

and the palaces and pavilions are adorned with the seven jewels. All the trees are made of gems and are neatly arranged. The birdsong is soft and pleasing to the ear, expounding the marvelous Dharma.” After hearing these words, she finally was convinced that her grandson was telling the truth.

- Narrated by Qiu Yongchang, recorded by Qingxin
(English translation by Foyue, edited by Jingtū)

