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## 祝福

时光如箭，转眼又是一年。

时间是什么呢？是生死流转，是死亡。等到了净土，不生不灭，寿命无量，就不再有对时间束缚的感叹。此间任何之智者，谁能免脱时间的束缚？

以梦幻之时间，做梦幻之佛事，大家早归净土，早醒此梦。大梦谁先觉？南无阿弥陀佛。

因为人类的有限性，很多看似正面的祝福语，其实透露出来的都是负面的信息，反映了人类的无奈与希求，如祝你快乐、祝你幸福、祝你健康、祝你长寿，等等。

“平安、快乐”的祝词，多是肤浅的粉饰；“人生是苦”的诚言，才是切骨的关爱。

### Best Wishes

How time flies, another year has gone by.

But what exactly is time? Time is the endless cycle of death and rebirth. However, once we are reborn in the Land of Bliss, we will enjoy an infinite life without further birth and death. No more lamentations over the constraints of time. In this world can anyone break through time and its constraints? Can it be done by even our wisest person?

Let us then accomplish dream like Dharma activities to overcome the illusion of time and its dreamlike limitations. May we all awaken from this dream and attain rebirth in the Pure Land as soon as possible. Who will awaken first? It will be reciters of *Namo Amitabha Buddha*.

Due to our limitations as human beings, many of our seemingly warm words of blessing really imply negative fears. These reflect our feelings of helplessness and our unrealistic hopes, such as wishing each other happiness, cheerfulness, health and longevity.

Blessings for peace and happiness are mostly superficial whitewashes. The truthful admonition that “life is suffering” reveals loving care and a profound concern.

## 新年谈“新”

心新，年才新；心好，年才好。若要“新年好”，需是“新心好”。

心若是旧的，年年过年，只是旧年，何来新年？心若新，则分分秒秒皆新，何必等待过年？

猎奇、搜新闻、学知识，并不能让心新；若能念佛，与佛心相通，便如浊溪得活水源头，清清汨汨，无时不新。

## The ‘New’ in New Year

A year is new only when our hearts feel new. A year can be a happy one only when our hearts are happy. If we wish to have a “happy new year,” we need to cultivate “happy new hearts.”

If our hearts stayed in an old state, every incoming year would feel the same as the year before, not a new one. But if our hearts are revitalized, every minute and second would be new. There would be no need to await a changing of the year.

Novelty, news developments and more knowledge do not refresh our hearts. By reciting the name of Amitabha Buddha and connecting our hearts with his, we renew them constantly. It’s like providing a muddy stream with a source of fresh water, turning the waterway sparklingly clear.

## 一叶之舟

风和日丽，一片树叶轻盈地浮在水面，时而随细浪起伏，时而顺微风旋舞。她自傲地说：“看！我是多么善于驾驭风浪、掌控自我啊！”

话音未落，一层稍大的风浪就将她卷入水底。

人生之舟，亦如水上一叶。春风得意时，便觉得自己有能力掌控一切。而人类自傲的科技之舟，总在地震、海啸中瞬间倾覆。

## **A Leaf Boat**

On a peaceful, sunny day, a leaf is lazily floating on the surface of water. It bobs along on the small waves and sails willy-nilly in the gentle breeze, saying proudly: "Look at my expertise at harnessing the wind and waves; I am the sovereign master of my course!"

But before it can finish bragging, a large wave looms and sinks it to the bottom of the pond.

The ship of life is like the leaf drifting on the surface of water. When riding on the crest of success, we would believe that we have mastery over everything. The vessel of science and technology, though a particular source of pride for humans, has always capsized suddenly in earthquakes and tsunamis.

## **艺术与净土**

艺术是什么？艺术是美。发现美，创造美，表现美。净土是纯美、绝美、无限美，经中说“无量庄严”。所以艺术家应该求生净土。

艺术取材自然，经过提炼，超越自然，如同法藏菩萨摄取二百一十亿诸佛国土精华，成就极乐庄严，最胜第一。所以艺术家应该更能领会法藏菩萨的“愿心庄严”。

## **Art and the Pure Land**

What is art? It is beauty, and the process of discovering, creating and expressing beauty. The Land of Bliss is pure, absolute, infinite beauty. The sutras speak of "immeasurable splendor." So artists should aspire to be reborn in the Pure Land.

Art derives from nature, and it refines and transcends nature. Consider Bodhisattva Dharmakara, who absorbed the finest aspects of 21 billion Buddha-lands and accomplished the Pure Land's unparalleled splendors. Artists should be more attuned than others to Bodhisattva Dharmakara's "sublimity of vows."

## 迷航

设想你正在飞行，飞机很先进，很舒适，天空很美，空中小姐服务非常周到，音乐很柔和，乘客很优雅……总之，一切都很好。你一定觉得这是一次非常好的旅行。

可正在这时，传来机长的声音：“飞机迷航了，与地面失去一切联系。我们没有着陆点，只能这样往前飞。但油量只剩几十分钟。”此时你的心情如何呢？先前所有的美好，瞬间消失。“机长！务必想尽一切办法，在油量耗尽之前找到安全的降落场。”

人一堕地，人生的飞机便起航了。即使还有四十年、五十年，也不过如飞机上的油量，只减不增，很快耗尽。

请问：人生的着陆点在哪里呢？在没有找到着陆点之前，你可以安心地享受人生吗？

权位、金钱、事业、婚姻、家庭，这一切是生命的最终着陆点吗？

如果有人认为这些就是人生的目的，就如同迷航的飞机把空中的白云当作安全的降落场一样。

## Lost in the Clouds

Suppose you are on a flight. The aircraft is state-of-the-art, comfortable. Beautiful sky outside the window, attentive stewardesses, soft music, classy passengers ... Everything is perfect. You are sure that the journey will be quite pleasant.

But suddenly comes the voice of the captain: "Our plane is off course and has lost contact with the ground. We have no landing point and must keep flying. We have enough fuel to do so only tens of minutes." How would you feel then? All those wonderful feelings disappear instantly. "Captain, please try all means to find a safe landing spot before the fuel runs out!"

When a person is born, the plane of his life takes off. Even if one has another 40 or 50 years to live, the time is like the fuel on the plane: It only decreases and will soon be used up.

Where is the landing point of our life? Can we enjoy living at ease before we find it?

Power, status, money, career, marriage, family – are any of these the final landing point of our life?

Someone who believes that these are the aim of life is like a lost plane taking the clouds in the air as a safe landing field.

## 说道理

人类空虚的心需要道理来作为它的食品；其实真正有智慧的人知道，种种的道理、理论、说辞，不过是让我们的心过得去而已。

谄曲的心需要道理的贿赂，正直的心并不需要。

念佛有道理吗？没道理。

念佛需要道理吗？不需要。

那岂不是迷信？念佛，没道理，不需要道理，也说不出道理，自然被认为是迷信，可那又何妨呢？

穷人才要掩饰穷相，富人并不怕人家说他穷。

我曾以为自己懂得了念佛的道理，现在才知道一点也不懂。

曾经需要懂得道理才能安心念佛，现在已不需要，反而更安心。

有人来问念佛的道理，我当然还会告诉他“他以为是”的道理，但我心里明白，那不过是止啼之黄叶。

一般来说，理明信深——道理越明白，信心就越深，但这是对骄傲心重的钝根人不得已的；真正谦卑的人，真正虚心的人，善根深厚的人，并不需要。

## On Reasoning

Our vacuous human minds need to be fed with reason. But truly intelligent persons know that rationales, theories and arguments only provide us inner comfort.

A mind that is accustomed to complex thinking needs reasoning. But an upright one does not.

Is it justifiable to recite *Namo Amitabha Buddha*? No, it isn't.

Do we need any justification to recite his name? No, we don't.

Then isn't that just superstition? There is no reasoning in reciting *Namo Amitabha Buddha*. We do not need it; there is nothing to be reasoned about. It is natural, then, that name-recitation is considered superstitious. But what harm does that do?

Only the poor need to conceal their poverty. The rich do not care whether others consider them penniless.

I used to believe that I understood the rationale for name-recitation. But now I know that I am totally ignorant of such things.

There was a time when I needed to understand the rationale before I could recite *Namo Amitabha* with peace of mind. But now I have no need of understanding, and I feel more at ease.

If someone asks about the reasoning behind name recitation, I would still instruct him, as he believes it to be a necessity. But I know at heart that this is only a shiny trinket used to stop a child from crying — pure expediency.

Generally speaking, the more one understands the rationale, the deeper the confidence he has. But such understanding is only necessary for arrogant people with dull faculties. The humble, modest ones, with profound virtuous roots, have no need of it.

## 骄傲的人类

城市，大清早便如此喧嚣；不，她一夜未曾休息。

忙碌的人群，忙碌的城市，忙碌的人类，昼夜不停的脚步，你要走向何处呢？哪里是尽头？哪里可以歇息？何时可以恢复日是日、夜是夜的生活？

短短五千年，人类创立了各类文明，各种文化；摩天大楼拥簇起现代化大都会，发达交通网急速膨胀，因特网无孔不在；经济繁荣，科技走向外太空。于是人站在地球上骄傲地说：“我是地球的主宰！”

但只要人类还不能避免战争，它还只是幼稚的群类，未脱荒野与野蛮；只要个人还有贪瞋痴，他依然是一个罪恶生死凡夫。

我看不出人类有任何一点可以自骄的资本。

## Human Pride

The city becomes noisy in the early dawn. Actually it has not rested all night.

In constant motion, busy people in busy crowds, making a busy city. But where are we going? Where is our destination? Where can we take a break? When can we resume a life where days are days, and nights are nights?

Over a mere five thousand years, mankind has created many cultures and civilizations. Modern skyscrapers compose our metropolises. Extensive traffic networks are rapidly expanding. The internet is everywhere and the economy prospers. Science and technology facilitate exploration into outer space, hence mankind stands proudly on the earth saying, "I am the master of the planet."

However, as long as we remain unable to eliminate wars we will still be a tribal people, not yet out of savagery and barbarism. A person who is enslaved by greed, anger and delusion is still an ordinary human being, full of negative karma and trapped in the cycle of rebirth.

I don't see anything that humans can really take pride in.

## 蝉鸣

蝉无论叫得如何声嘶力竭，都不可能说出对事物的正确认识；凡夫一切的语言思维，皆如蝉鸣，分贝很高，却无意义，只是戏论噪音。唯独口念的这一句“南无阿弥陀佛”除外。

人类陶醉于自我的知识、学问、见解，用各种语言文字表达，正如蝉陶醉于自我鸣叫一样，究竟来说皆无意义；唯独口念的“南无阿弥陀佛”是真理，是实相，但人却不晓得。

### Chirping Cicadas

Cicadas may chirp themselves hoarse, but cannot express correct knowledge of things. The speech and thoughts of ordinary beings are like the chirping of cicadas – loud but meaningless. They are just noise from hollow arguments. The sole exception is when we recite “*Namo Amitabha Buddha.*”

Humans are intoxicated with their own knowledge, erudition, perspectives, and use an array of languages to express them. That's like cicadas inebriated by their own loud chirpings. Ultimately these are all meaningless. The only truth, the ultimate reality, is our recitation of “*Namo Amitabha Buddha.*” But people are not aware of this.

## 问路

向人问路，获得对方指点，自然心怀感激，顺着指引，顺利到达目的地。不会无端地怀疑，更不会向指路人争辩：“为什么你说的路是正确的？你如何能让我相信你的指引正确？我要明白你指路的道理才愿上路，否则决不上路。”

人生路上，我们都是迷客，遇到佛的指引，有人却要明白道理，才肯相信，才愿上路，岂是智者？何时能到涅槃家乡？

### Asking for Directions

If we ask for directions and get advice, we are grateful to the person who gives it. We follow the instruction and reach the destination without mishap. We wouldn't doubt the person without reason or argue with

him: "Why is the way you indicated the right one? How can you convince me you aren't wrong? I must understand the principles behind your directions before I set out. Otherwise, I just won't start."

On the way of life, we are confused seekers. The Buddhas give us directions, but some people insist on knowing the principles before they believe and set out. Are they wise? When can they arrive at the destination of nirvana?

## 颠倒的信

“每天八杯水，有益健康。”

“每天一杯奶，强健一个民族。”

你信吗？自然很多人是信的。

说这话的人是谁？以何为依据？果然如此吗？并没有人去探问，反正大家都这么说，都这么信；我也这么信，也这么说。

“大家”真奇妙，找不出一个具体的承担人，不受问责，“他”说的话竟成了真理。

佛说：“从是西方过十万亿佛土，有世界名曰极乐。其土有佛，号阿弥陀，今现在说法。”听到的人多迟疑不信。

有根有据，佛圣所说，经典分明，听到的人翻来覆去，思想不定；无根无据，凡夫所说不负责任的话，信受不疑：这是不是也是颠倒呢？

## Misguided Belief

"Eight glasses of water a day is good for health."

"A glass of milk a day builds a strong nation."

Do you believe in those myths? Many people do.

Who said those things? On what basis? Are they really true? No one asks such questions. Since everyone believes the statements and repeats them, so will I, goes the sentiment.

That “everyone” is tricky. No specific person can be identified and held accountable. But what “he” says is considered true.

The Buddha says, “From here, towards the west and passing a hundred thousand *koṭis* of Buddha realms, there is a world named Bliss. In that land is a Buddha named Amitabha, who is now teaching the Dharma.” But many who hear this are skeptical.

The well-grounded teachings of the Buddha are recorded clearly in the sutras. Those who hear them dither and doubt. Yet the ill-founded, irresponsible words of ordinary beings are readily believed. Is this not misguided?

## 孤独的人

人，孤独地来，孤独地去，活也孤独地活着。真的有朋友吗，真的有知音吗？“天下觅一知音难矣”，这是所有人的写照。

为了避免孤独，人们组成家庭，结成社会，结成团体，共同从事活动。然而，孤独却是内心的。如同太阳虽亮，照不破内心里面的黑暗；外在的接触无论如何也驱散不了内心的孤独，反而增加无穷的纷争冲突。人啊，可怜的人，在一起也不行，不在一起也不行，这就是你的智慧吗？

嘴唇可以亲吻，肌肤可以拥抱，但谁曾真正亲吻过那一颗孤独的心，谁曾给它温暖的拥抱？

幽闭在“我”的深牢中，亿万劫来从来不曾被人亲吻爱抚，心是多么地孤独冰冷啊！

## Lonely Hearts

Each of us comes into the world alone and leaves it alone. We live lonely lives. Do we really have friends or confidants? “How hard it is to find a soulmate!” A portrait of us all.

To avoid loneliness, people bond together in families, form groups and societies, and engage in activities with others. However, loneliness is something inside us. It is like an inner darkness that isn’t dispelled even by strong sunlight. External contacts cannot eliminate the loneliness of

the spirit. Rather, they are prone to enhance conflict. Poor humans – uncomfortable alone, and together. Where is the wisdom?

Lips can be kissed and skin caressed. But who has really kissed our lonely hearts or embraced them warmly?

Trapped in the dark dungeon of the ego, our hearts have not been kissed or caressed for countless *kalpas*. How lonely and cold they are!

## 人不当人看

看人，不要当作独立具体的个人。他只是一堆因缘的聚合体，是一个因缘团，如同一团烟雾，不自在，不能自主。虽然他口口声声说“我，我”，但他并没有“我”，所以不要上当。

既然都是因缘，就会理性不情绪。难道我们可以对一团因缘的烟雾怒吼吗？指着它说“就是你，才这样”吗？

## Looking at People

When dealing with others, we should not regard them as independent, specific individuals. Each person is only an assembly of causes and effects, a circumstance of karma, a cloud of smoke – unfree and non-autonomous. He may refer to himself constantly as “I” or “me,” but that entity does not actually exist. So don’t be fooled.

If we know that everything is just cause and effect, we would be rational, not emotional. Would we shout in anger at a cloud of smoke? Would we point to it, haranguing: “You’re to blame for this”?

## 为什么

为什么天阴？因为天上有云。为什么有云？因为水蒸气聚积成云。

天阴，有云，水蒸气聚积，三者说的是一件事。自以为“为什么”的答案其实不过“是什么”的另外一种转述。

当我们无穷追问下去，没有人可以回答为什么，所有的回答都如绕口令一般，绕来绕去，原地打转。

叶为什么绿，花为什么红？我们果真知道吗？

为什么这样就是红，这样就是绿？因为这样就是红，这样就是绿。没有为什么。

哈，终极答案：这样就是红，这样就是绿。没有为什么，只有是什么。

一切万法，本来如是；但能谛信，断绝追寻。

## **Why?**

Why is the sky overcast? Because there are clouds in the sky. Why are there clouds? Because water vapor condenses to form them.

Overcast sky, clouds, condensing vapor. All three refer to the same thing. The answers to the “whys” are actually another way of replying to the question of “what.”

If we continue to press questions, no one would be able to answer. All responses would become like tongue-twisters, going around in circles.

Why are leaves green? Why are flowers red? Do we really know?

Why is this red? Why is that green? Because this is red and that is green. There is no why.

Ha, so we have the ultimate answer: This is red, that is green. There is no why, only what.

All things were originally so. Would that we can believe firmly, and forgo the pressing.

## **最后**

常常听到有人说：“我知道专修念佛好。现在先学学别的，最后再专修念佛。”难得他有专修的观念，遗憾的是他不知什么是最后。

旷劫轮回到如今，今生一定要解脱，今生已是最后。

今晚脱下鞋和袜，不知明天穿不穿，今天即是最后。

一踩油门上了路，谁能保证定回家，下一刻即是最后。

足不出户山海震，瞬间吞噬数万人，现在即是最后。

现在即是最后，念念皆是临终，一息不来，魂往何处？再向谁去讨要最后？所以，专修念佛，现在开始。

佛言：生命在呼吸间。

昙鸾大师说：无后心。

善导大师劝：念念不舍。

最后再来念佛，恐怕无佛可念。况念佛并不妨碍一切，何必自设条限？

## **The Final Moment**

I often hear people say: "I know it's good to recite *Namo Amitabha Buddha* single-mindedly. I shall practice it at the final moment, when my number is up. In the meantime, let me learn something else first." It's laudable that they recognize the value of single-minded practice. However, it's a shame they can never tell when their time will be up.

We have been trapped in the cycle of reincarnation for countless *kalpas*. We must attain liberation in this lifetime. So this life is the final life.

We never know whether we will be able to put on our socks and shoes again tomorrow after taking them off tonight. So today is the last day.

There is no guarantee that we will return home once we have put our foot down on the car's accelerator and hit the road. The next moment is the final moment.

Tens of thousands of people are killed instantly when a tsunami or earthquake suddenly strikes. Now is the last moment.

The present moment can be final, and our end may come any time. Where will our spirit go if our breath just stops suddenly? Whom will we beg for another last moment? So let's start whole-heartedly reciting Amitabha's name at once.

The Buddha says, "We only live from breath to breath."

Master Tanluan advises, "Don't look to any final moment."

Master Shandao exhorts, "Recite persistently."

If we wait till the last moment to recite, the chance may not be there. In any event, to recite the name of Amitabha Buddha does not get in the way of anything. Why do we have to set any timeframe?

## 无常

狭隘的三界憋得我们喘不过气，无常的车轮拖得人晕头转向，这个世界实在不好玩，不好过。

有南无阿弥陀佛，我们终于可以大口呼吸，扩展心胸，呼吸彻底。有南无阿弥陀佛，我们终于可以大声说话：“无常，你终止吧！”

无常，这个世界的王，它有摧伏一切的力量，宇宙星辰在它的轮下也不过如装甲车碾过土疙瘩；何况小小血肉之躯，向它抗争只如螳臂挡车，屈膝哀嚎从来不被怜悯。而今我只想对它说：“无常，就这样碾压过我的头颅吧，你将没有第二次机会。”

无常，当我们再见时，我想对你说：“老朋友，我已经知道了你的游戏，熟知了你的规则，并感恩你最后的成全。现在你是否愿意加入我的游戏，按照我的规则呢？”我相信你是会答应的。

## Impermanence

The tight and narrow confines of the Three Realms are suffocating. The constantly spinning wheel of impermanence makes us dizzy. This world is not fun; it's a tough place.

But when we recite *Namo Amitabha Buddha*, we can finally stretch, relax our shoulders, inhale and exhale deeply. Being in the presence of *Namo Amitabha Buddha*, we can exclaim: “Impermanence, you are at an end.”

Impermanence, the actual ruler of this world, has the power to destroy and subdue everything. All the stars of the universe fall under its wheel, like clods of dirt that are crushed on a busy road. So how can our fragile bodies of flesh and blood resist? Despite our petitions and pleading, we have never been exempted from the sufferings of impermanence. But today I can say: “Impermanence, you might as well run over me now, for you won’t have another chance.”

Impermanence, when we meet again I shall tell you: “Hey buddy, I know well your game and its rules, and thank you for your final facilitation. Now, will you join my game and follow my rules?” I believe you will say yes.

## 退一步

退一步，真好。退一步，海阔天空。

只要退一小步，就海阔天空，不必二步、三步，也没有二步、三步。

往里退，里面的天空真正大，外面的天空不够大。

抽身一退，金蝉脱壳，凡人不知晓，阎王找不到。

有净土才有得退，没有净土即没得退。净土与此世，只在一步。

## A Step Back

Taking a step backward is wonderful. As the saying goes: Take a step back, and endless vistas open up.

A tiny step, and boundless space is ours. Further steps are both unnecessary and unavailable.

Move back internally. The skies within are vast, while those outside aren’t big enough.

Withdraw and slip away, like a cicada casting off its skin. We will be unnoticed by others. Even King Yama has no idea of our whereabouts.

The Pure Land is where we can step back. Without it, we cannot. A single step separates the Pure Land from this world.

## 梦

梦中人说：“我昨晚做了一个梦。”在梦中他以为自己是觉醒了，其实还在做梦，不过他不知道；只有真正醒来，才明白那是梦中说梦而已。

现在的所谓“悟者”，并非皆有意欺骗世人，不过如梦中说梦，自以为觉醒而已。

除非生到净土，此梦岂易醒哉！

## Dreaming of Dreams

A dreamer says in his dream, “I had a dream last night.” In the dream, he believes he is awake, but actually he is dreaming. He is not aware of it. Only when he really wakes up does he understand he was only speaking of dreaming within a dream.

There are so-called “enlightened persons” in today’s world. Not all of them deceive people intentionally. They are merely speaking about dreaming in a dream, thinking they’re awake.

Unless we are reborn in the Pure Land, it is hard to awaken from this dream!

## 扫帚涅槃

我是扫帚，因为尽力扫尘除垢，同时也浑身藏污纳垢，成为世上最不干净的器具。有人替我委屈，说我初生时也是干干净净，为了让客厅干净、房间干净、大地干净，奉献牺牲一切，结果却戴上“不干净”的帽子。但我一点也不介意，因为这就是我的职责，也是我的价值体现。只要能让地干净，我脏一点是值得的。

记得第一次代主出征时，我可勇敢了，门后、床下、屋角，越是脏乱的地方，我干得越欢，不一会儿就把地扫得干干净净。打那以后，我也就变成了脏模样。

用不着我的时候，我让主人把我藏在门后或任何不起眼的地方，并不觉得寂寞；需要我时，我便立即出现。每一次被主人“重用”，我都欢欣鼓舞。我无怨无悔地为主效劳，也深获主人的赏识，因而有“敝帚自珍”的成语。

经过无数次的打扫，我渐渐变老了，伤筋破骨，成了半截扫把头儿。因为力不堪任，我已经向主人申请尽早将我舍弃，好让位给年青有为的一辈。但只要主人一天没有弃舍我，我就会尽力完成职守。

我扫过的垃圾堆成山，我也终将到此山安眠。又有人替我鸣不平，认为我劳苦功高，结局不应受此冷遇，何况与自己扫出去的垃圾躺卧一起，受垃圾们的奚落，情何以堪？哈！谢谢了，我并没有觉得受奚落，反而很感恩我所扫出的垃圾，是他们让我功德圆满，终成正果，我愿守着他们进入涅槃。

## **A Broom's Nirvana**

I am a broom. Because I do my best to sweep away dirt, I accumulate it and became the filthiest appliance in the world. Some people may feel I've been wronged, for I was completely clean at birth. I sacrificed everything to clean the living room, bedroom and the floor – and became “unclean” as a result. Yet I don't mind at all, for that's my responsibility. It also manifests my worth. So long as I can make the floor clean, I don't mind getting a bit tainted.

I remember the first time I sallied forth on my owner's behalf. I was fearless, venturing behind the doors, under the beds, into the corners of the house. The dirtier the spots, the happier I was. Soon everything was spic and span – and I took on my dirty look.

When I am not working, my owner hides me behind a door or another remote spot, but I never feel lonely. When I am needed, I appear immediately. Every time I am “favored for service” by my owner, I am delighted. I serve without grievance or regret and receive the deep appreciation of my owner. There's even a saying – “The lowly broom is valued by its owner” (a sentimental attachment).

After countless cleaning sessions, I've grown old. Worn and tired, I'm only half the broom I was. My increasing feebleness prompted me to ask my owner to retire me, to make way for a younger, more capable generation. But as long as my owner does not abandon me, I will do my best to complete my tasks.

I have swept a mountain of dirt and trash in my time. That is where I will rest in peace one day. Again, people may say that it's not right for me to be treated so callously, after my dedicated and valuable service. Even worse is to have to lie with the refuse I swept; I would be mortified by their mockery. Thanks very much, but I've never felt that way. Instead, I am deeply grateful to the rubbish I swept, for it enabled me to complete my meritorious actions and attain enlightenment. I would rather stay with it, even as I enter nirvana.

## 苦乐

一个人可以不关心空有、理事、迷悟、智愚，甚至善恶、罪福，但没有对苦乐不关心的。

苦乐切身、切骨、切心，分分秒秒、心心念念与我们分不开。

人的一生便是感受苦乐，努力奋斗以离苦得乐的过程；整个人类的历史便是愿离苦得乐的奋斗史。一切众生的本能追求、原始动力，便是愿离苦得乐。但我们达到目的了吗，人类达到目的了吗？科技、哲学、艺术、宗教达到目的了吗？

唯有究竟离苦得乐，生命才有价值，有尊严、庄严；否则生命如同无尽的惩罚。

生命是宝贵的，但如果不能离苦，只是苦，从苦而入更大的苦，无穷无尽的苦，苦海无边，则此生命岂非一种惩罚。

唯有离苦得乐，究竟永恒大乐，生命才光辉、圆满、庄严。

一切的不平等，最终体现在苦乐。

只要个人有苦，世界就不平等，不太平。

必须灭尽一切的苦，世界才太平。

阿弥陀佛的存在就是要拔除一切众生的苦，给予究竟的乐。

佛教若不能拔苦与乐，就没有存在的意义。

离开阿弥陀佛净土法门，还有哪一个法门能让下劣众生离苦得乐——离生死苦，得涅槃乐？

## **Suffering and Joy**

One can pay no attention to emptiness and form, theory and practice, delusion and awakening, wisdom and foolishness, even good and evil. But no one can ignore suffering and joy.

Suffering and joy cut to the quick – into our bodies, bones, hearts. Every minute and second, every thought and feeling, suffering and joy are inseparable from us.

To live is to suffer and to feel joy; life is a process of striving to leave suffering behind for joy. The history of humankind is a saga of struggle to replace misery with happiness. The instinctive pursuit, the atavistic impulse of all sentient beings is to lose suffering and win joy. But have we reached this goal? Have science, philosophy, the arts and religion attained it?

Only if we forsake suffering for joy in the ultimate sense does life take on value, dignity, even brilliance. Otherwise it would resemble endless chastisement.

Life is precious. But if we cannot leave suffering behind, all would be anguish. We would go from pain to deeper pain, boundless pain – an endless ocean of suffering. Wouldn't life then be a form of punishment?

Only by abandoning suffering for joy – realizing great, eternal joy – can our lives become radiant, complete and splendid.

All forms of inequalities eventually manifest in suffering and joy. So long as someone is suffering, the world would lack equality and peace.

It will only have peace when suffering is entirely eradicated.

Amitabha Buddha exists to eliminate the suffering of all beings and give them ultimate joy.

If Buddhism is unable to remove suffering and bring joy, it would lose its reason for being.

Besides the Pure Land path of Amitabha Buddha, is there a Dharma path that can allow mediocre ordinary beings to replace suffering with joy – to leave behind the anguish of life and death for the elation of nirvana?

### 念佛胜家亲

念佛人在一起是真亲。这种亲超过家庭之亲、血缘之亲，因为是佛缘之亲、法缘之亲。念佛人共同一慈父，同生一佛家，彼此为兄弟，念佛人拥有一颗共同的佛心。在弥陀的名号中，念佛人心相通、相知、相感、相亲。唯有心的相通是真的通，心知是真知，心亲是真亲。从此摆脱永劫的孤独，彼此忆念，彼此温暖，这是念佛的现世大利益。

念佛人才有家，念佛人才是真正一家人，一家亲。

### Reciters Are Closer Than Blood Relations

When together, Amitabha-reciters are truly close-knit. This closeness has a common origin: the Buddha and the Dharma. It surpasses family affinity and relations based on flesh and blood. Amitabha-reciters are siblings in the same Buddhist family, all belonging to one compassionate and loving father, and sharing the same Buddha-mind. Bathed in the name of Amitabha Buddha, reciters are real soulmates, with great empathy and feelings for one another. Such empathy and feelings can only be genuine when minds connect. With this special relationship, fellow reciters say goodbye to countless eons of loneliness. We think of and warm one another dearly. This is a great benefit of Amitabha-recitation in the present lifetime.

Only Amitabha-reciters can be said truly to have a home and family. Amitabha-reciters are family, and a very intimate one at that.

## 梦

梦中人虽知自己在梦，一切山河人物皆假而不真，因而不执取；但梦境依然梦境，不会自己醒来，乃至一切梦境皆混，仍在睡眠状态，真正与觉醒状态无异天地之别。

假如有觉醒的人把他唤醒，那便容易了。

长劫生死大梦，实在不容易醒来。阿弥陀佛来唤醒我们，生到净土才是真正悟道。

只要没生到净土，所谓的“开悟”都是假的，如梦中说梦。

只要能生到净土，便是长劫生死大梦之觉，彻底告别三界梦乡，自然成佛。

人生如梦，梦境非真，一切山河大地、花草、人物皆非真实，执著无益，不执著也无益，本来无益之物故。如假钞，认真、认假皆无益，问题在如何获得真钞。人生大梦，关键在于如何醒来。

“南无阿弥陀佛”便是醒梦之声，觉者之呼唤；极乐之境便是觉者真境，绝非梦乡。

念弥陀，生极乐，才是一个觉悟的人。

## Dream

A dreamer who knows he is in a dream understands that the mountains, rivers and people in it are unreal. Therefore does not cling to that dream world. Yet, until the dream is over, he remains asleep, in a state dramatically different from wakefulness. The dreamer will not wake up by himself as long as the dream continues.

However, he could easily be awoken by a person who is awake.

It is not easy to wake up from the *kalpas*-long dream of life and death. We would never attain enlightenment until Amitabha comes to wake us up and help us to be reborn to the Pure Land.

Before rebirth in the Pure Land, any so-called “enlightenment” is a false awakening, only a dream within a dream.

Once we are delivered to the Pure Land, we wake ourselves from the *kalpas*-long dream of life and death and achieve Buddhahood naturally, bidding farewell to the dream world in the Three Realms once and for all.

Life is but a dream. All the nations, landscapes, flowers and plants, and all the people in the dream world are unreal. Whether we are attached to them or not, they mean nothing to us as they are of no real benefit. It is like counterfeit notes that are of no use, whether or not they are taken as authentic. The important thing is how to obtain authentic notes. Similarly, what really matters is how to wake up from our dream of life.

“*Namo Amitabha Buddha*” is the voice that wakes us up, the calling from an awakened being; the Pure Land is the awakened being’s realm of reality, not a dream world.

Only an Amitabha-reciter delivered to the Land of Bliss is an enlightened person.

## 公共资源

阿弥陀佛是公共资源，公平成佛，是公平利益。

在我眼中，有信仰没有信仰，信仰这种宗教还是信仰那种宗教，都一样，都能念佛；念佛都能往生。那只是个人的世俗生活形态不同，与念佛毫不冲突。

至于有人出于他的宗教信仰而不念佛，那是他的信仰排斥念佛，并不是阿弥陀佛排斥他的信仰。

世界上各种宗教都宣称它信奉的是唯一的真神，拥有真理，这显然是说不通的。甚至有人为了捍卫自己的信仰，不惜发动战争。但各种教徒都热切地信奉着他们的宗教，我们也不能说他们的宗教领袖故意说假话骗人，不能视宗教的超验为虚妄不存。

这种矛盾的现象，唯有佛法可以说通：万法唯心，他们的神在他们的心中都是正确的。

佛眼视众生都一样，没有谁比谁更高贵，也没有谁比谁更卑贱；没有谁更智慧，谁没智慧；谁会修行，谁不会修行。

阿弥陀佛超民族，超国家，超宗教，超人类，超地球，超十方。

## **Public Resource**

Amitabha Buddha is a public resource that allows us all an equal opportunity to realize our Buddhahood. The benefits involved are the same for everyone.

To me, whether we have any religious faith or not, and regardless of which religion we are practicing, we can still recite *Namo Amitabha Buddha* and be reborn in the Pure Land. An individual's personal lifestyle in this mundane world does not clash with Amitabha-recitation at all.

Someone may have religious reasons not to recite Amitabha's name. It is his religious faith that repels Amitabha-recitation, rather than Amitabha Buddha rejecting his belief.

All religions in this world proclaim that their God is the only true God and what they advocate is the truth. This obviously cannot be true. Some religious fanatics even wage wars in order to stand up for what they believe in. However, all religions have their fervent followers, and we mustn't allege that religious leaders deceive their followers deliberately by lying, nor take religious transcendence as being fabricated and false.

Such contradictory beliefs can only be explained by the Buddha Dharma: Everything is created by the mind. So all Gods are right to their followers.

In a Buddha's eyes, all sentient beings are equal. No one is more noble or more humble, wiser or less wise, or more capable or less capable of practicing the Dharma.

Amitabha Buddha transcends nations, states, religions, humankind, the Earth, and the ten directions.

## 语言的力量

语言不仅仅是心的声音，还是心的使者，心的化身，心的手，心的加长机械臂。

心里想请某人送杯水，水并不会到嘴边；口中说出来，就有人送来水。

我们说的话被百千万人听到，我们的心也就分出百千万只手。阳光正面的话语，会取来阳光正面的能量，瞬间我们的正能量便会增长千万倍。阴暗负面的话，必然取回阴暗负面的能量，我们的心也就越来越黑暗，越来越沮丧了。负面的话被一万个人听到，你会收到一千万倍的负面回报。

我们要爱护我们那颗脆弱的心，就不要说难过话。再伤心，再委屈，再难过，也要咬紧嘴唇说“好，一切都很好”，当我们说好、说爱时，坏的也能变好，死的也能变活。在爱心的语言中身体即使死去，心却乘着爱的话语升入天国。这便是语言的力量。语言能让人升天，也能让人入地，端看你說什麼话。如果我们念佛，佛的名字一定送我们到佛国。

语言是心的乘载工具，你说什麼话，这句话就会送你到什麼地方。

请记住，千万不要说抱怨的话，那只会让我们堕落，只说积极的、鼓励的、感恩的话，你会有不可思议的好运。

也许会做事，不如会说话。

### **The Power of Language**

Language is not only the voice of our mind; it is also a messenger, a reflection, a hand and an extension of the mind, akin to a robotic arm.

When I need someone to bring me a glass of water, I have to voice my need so that someone can assist me. If I do not speak up, the glass of water will not appear before me.

If what we say is heard by hundreds of millions of people, our mind extends that many “hands” into the world. Bright, affirming messages generate beneficial momentum in society; they instantly magnify our collective positive energy by tens of millions of times. But malicious, nasty words inevitably produce dark energies, making our hearts gloomy and dispirited. If a negative remark is heard by ten thousand people, the speaker accumulates negative karma in equal measure.

In order to take care of my fragile heart, I shall refrain from speaking words of sorrow. No matter how heartbroken and mournful I feel, I will simply bite my tongue and say, “Okay, everything will be fine.” When we speak in an agreeable, loving way, we have the power to transform a terrible situation into a favorable one — even to make what was dead come alive! If one is embraced with loving words when he is dying, his heart and soul ascend to heaven on the wings of these words. This is how powerful language is: It may send a person up to heaven or down to hell, depending on what is said. Hence, if we practice Amitabha-recitation, the name of the Buddha will deliver us to the Pure Land.

Language is the vehicle for the mind and heart. The nature of our words determine the characteristics of our destination.

Please remember never to speak words of resentment. They only bring us down. Let us use only positive, encouraging, grateful words so that our good fortune will know no limit.

Perhaps it is more important to say the right things than to do the right things.

## 隐私

最好不要知道他人隐私，免得自心难以消化，留下阴影，从此以异样的眼光与神情看待对方。对方或者因一时信任感动，乃至需要释放将内心深处秘密告诉我们，事过境迁，很少有不后悔的，如同自己裸体处在他人眼光下，蒙羞过日，情何以堪。

为了彼此关系融洽，长期友好相处，即使对方想告诉我们他的隐私，也要善巧支开话题，免得从此彼此负累。

万一听到他人隐私，必须：

一、绝对保密。至死不向第二人吐露。

二、完全忘记。待第二次与对方见面时，如同根本不曾听见，完全不知一样。

三、视他为自。内心深自惭愧忏悔，对方所犯正是我所犯，乃至我比他犯的过失更大、更严重，绝不可起一点点高慢之心，自居道德高地。

唯有深沉的谦卑，深沉的慈悲，深沉的智慧，深沉的耐心，才能容纳、消化他人的隐私。否则，所谓的隐私对自他都是持续深密的伤害。

我们是凡夫，不是阿弥陀佛，没有可以容纳众生隐私的肚量，没有可以消化众生隐私的胃口，最好不要去碰人家的隐私。如果自认为有此肚量与胃口，只怕是夸海口。

有人说：“我有机深信，天底下对我没有新鲜事，我人无始劫来何业不造，何罪不犯，所以没什么隐私不隐私。”既然如此，为何如刺探新闻一样想听对方隐私呢？听完对方隐私，一点没有痕迹，没有印象吗？

有人说：“我是想了解对方的根机，让他自己说出隐私，以便向佛忏悔，具有机深信。”那就让阿弥陀佛听他的隐私就好，我们不可以骄傲地以佛自居，听那本属于佛听的众生秘密。

不打听、不被动听、不辗转听他人隐私。

不鼓励、不诱导对方说出他（她）的隐私。

方便遮掩，引导对方向阿弥陀佛诉说隐私。

我最怕听他人隐私。每一个隐私便如一个沉重的十字架，我自己的十字架都背不动了，哪里有力量能替他人背负呢？我这可怜的小众生，我们这些可怜的小众生啊！唯有靠阿弥陀佛来背负。

当众生向阿弥陀佛诉说隐私时，观世音、大势至恐怕都会知趣地退到一边，让众生与佛一对一地密谈，尽情倾诉，不受干扰，获得弥陀绝对的全爱。难道我们还要去插上一脚吗？

邮差只是送达密件，并不能拆读。为人说法，只是将众生私密心事引向弥陀。佛可以拆读一切众生心密，我们并没有这样的权力与能力。

### **The Secrets of Others**

It's better not to know the secrets of others, lest we cannot digest them. Such knowledge may cast shadows in our hearts, and we may come to see the other person as strange. Because of a moment of trust, sentimentality or the need for release, a person may reveal to us the secrets deep in his heart. But as time passes and circumstances change, he may regret doing so, as he was nakedly exposed to others. He will thus live in disgrace and unbearable awkwardness.

For the sake of harmonious relations and long-term amity, even if someone is willing to let me know his secret, I shall deflect the topic tactfully so that we may not burden each other.

If by chance I overhear the secret of another, I must:

1. Keep that secret strictly confidential and never disclose it to anyone else as long as I live;
2. Forget the secret completely. When I see the person again, I shall act in total ignorance of the secret, as if I never heard it;
3. Put myself in his position and feel deep shame and remorse, realizing that I have committed the same deeds he did. My faults are even more substantial and serious than his. I should never have arrogant thoughts or think that I occupy the moral high ground.

Only those who are profoundly humble, compassionate, wise and patient can take in and digest others' secrets — for those secrets have the power to inflict intense and unremitting suffering on both sides.

We are all ordinary beings, not Amitabha Buddha. We have not the tolerance nor appetite to take in and digest the secrets of sentient beings, so it's best not to handle them. Anyone who thinks he has the tolerance and appetite to do so is simply boasting.

One may say, "I believe profoundly in the iniquitous nature of sentient beings, and there is nothing new under the sun. We have all committed myriad offenses and wrongdoings from beginningless time; so how can there be secrets between us? It makes no difference if we confide in each other." If this is true, why does he thirst for others' secrets as if he were a tabloid journalist? Once he has heard the secrets, can he really claim that they have left no traces or impressions in his mind?

Someone may claim, "I just want to know about the other's inclinations and capabilities. I let him vent his secrets so he could more easily repent to the Buddhas and acquire deep faith about the iniquitous nature of sentient beings." In that case, we should leave the others' secrets with Amitabha. We must not haughtily pose as a Buddha and hear secrets that only a Buddha should hear.

We should not inquire about, passively overhear, or actively listen to the telling of others' secrets.

We should not encourage or induce anyone to tell his or her secret.

We should use expedient means to guide the other person to tell his/her secret to Amitabha Buddha.

Actually, I am worried about listening to others' secrets, for every single secret is like a heavy cross to bear. I find it burdensome to carry my own cross. What strength do I have to shoulder anyone else's? Poor me, and poor us – all little sentient beings. We can only rely on Amitabha to bear such burdens.

When a sentient being recounts her secrets to Amitabha, even Avalokitesvara and Mahasthamaprapta will discreetly step away so that she may have a one-on-one private talk with the Buddha. She can then open the floodgate of her innermost secrets without any interference, and receive the infinite love of Amitabha. How can we have a hand in this?

Think of this in terms of the delivery of sealed letters by a mailman. He must never open and read any of the letters. When we expound the Dharma teachings to others, we should merely direct them to reveal their secrets to Amitabha. Only the Buddha may unseal and read the secrets of sentient beings. We have neither the right nor the ability to do so.

## 得罪佛？

太阳不会同小草计较，阿弥陀佛又怎么会与众生计较。我们只要在佛的慈爱光中尽情舒展地生长就可以，不要小惊小怪，顾虑太多，动不动就深恐自己犯了规矩，得罪了阿弥陀佛。

没有小草得罪太阳，也没有凡夫得罪佛。

阿弥陀佛是得罪不了的佛，一切诸佛慈悲亦如是。

## Can We Offend Amitabha?

The sun does not haggle with grass. Why would Amitabha Buddha ever mind the doings of sentient beings? Bathed in his compassionate light, we can be ourselves and grow. Let's not make a fuss, worry too much, or fret easily about breaking rules or displeasing Amitabha.

Grass can never upset the sun, nor can sentient beings annoy Amitabha Buddha.

Amitabha is a Buddha we can never offend, as are all the Buddhas in their compassion.

## 小人物

要发广大心，做小人物。

发心，越大越好，乃至尽虚空、遍法界。做人，越小越好，小到不起眼、看不见，以至于无。

小人物不会骄傲，因为他是小人物，没有资格，也想不到骄傲。

小人物也不会自卑，因为他心甘情愿，在别人觉得是小，在他自己却是恰恰好。大凡自卑的人，总是想做大人物，才会自卑，否则怎么会自卑。譬如大脚穿小鞋觉得难受，小脚穿小鞋，恰恰舒服。小人物坐在属于他的一把椅子上，正正好。

小人物不会偷懒，他必须辛勤劳作，服侍人。

小人物呼之即来，挥之即去。小人物对人没有威胁。小人物受骂不敢还嘴，挨打不敢还手。小人物静悄悄没人注意，生无人知，死无人知。哦！这是多么美好的意境啊！连风过水面还要激起一层涟漪，做一个小人物，在这个世界上走过，不卷起一粒尘沙，不扰动人的耳目，来过如同没来过，生过如同没生过，比起大人物的飞沙走石，兽走鸟惊，是多么好啊！

## **To Be a Nobody**

We should have boundless resolve, but conduct ourselves as nobodies.

The greater the resolve, the better. It should extend throughout space and cover the Dharma realm. In conducting ourselves, we should be as small as possible, inconspicuous, invisible – a nobody.

A nobody cannot be haughty. He isn't qualified, nor does he even think about it.

A nobody would not feel inferior either, as she willingly chose her own status. Others may think a nobody entirely inconsequential. But to her, the diminished self is just perfect. In most cases, a sense of inferiority arises from the desire to become a somebody. Without this ambition, no one would feel inferior. Putting small shoes on big feet causes pain, but the same shoes provide comfort to small feet. A nobody sits on a chair that belongs to him; it feels just right.

A nobody cannot be lazy. She must work hard. She must serve others.

A nobody can be immediately summoned – and dismissed. He poses no threat to others, and does not retaliate when beaten or answer back when slandered. She goes without sound and stays unnoticed. Nobody knows when he was born or dies. What a wonderful notion! As it skims the water's surface, even the wind will spark ripples. But a nobody

passes through this world without stirring a single speck of dust or drawing anyone's attention. He has been and lived in this world, but it's as though he'd never come or been born. How much better than to be a somebody who, whirlwind-like, sweeps up sand and stones, scaring birds and beasts alike!

## 行善要机密

一粒种子，不论是庄稼，还是杂草，它要生长发芽，都要混迹泥土中。在黑黑的土层下，阳光照不到，鸟儿找不着，人看不见，甚至风也吹不到，它们便在那秘密地做工，吸收水份，聚集温暖，暗地里生根、发芽。等到它的根深深地扎入土地，它也就同时往上顶，终于破土而出，向着太阳、宇宙星空挺直身子，说：“我在这里！”颇有“天上天下，唯我独尊”的气概。这时，这粒种子就算“长成了”，完成了它做为种子的使命。风儿也来吹抚它，鸟儿也来献唱，就是天上的星星也不时对它眨眼微笑，太阳更是不吝关照。

假如一开始就把种子暴露在阳光下，它便不能生长发芽。

任何事情，要想成功，最初阶段都要秘密运作，暗自酝酿。恶人行恶，深谙此道，恶事往往易成；善人行善，疏于此道，善事每每流产。

所以做好事、善事更要谨慎，注意保守秘密，这样善事才容易成功。

## Doing Good Secretly

Seeds, whether those of crops or weeds, must be buried in the soil and mixed with it in order to grow and sprout. In the dark earth, away from sunshine, birds, humans and the wind, the seeds secretly do their work – absorbing water, collecting warmth, growing roots and sprouting. As the roots become deeply embedded in the earth, the sprouts extend upward. They eventually pierce the ground and bend towards the sun, the starry sky and the universe, saying: “I am here!” This is reminiscent of the infant Buddha's famous declaration that “In heaven above and on earth below, I alone am the World-Honored One!” At this moment the seed can be considered “fully grown.” It has accomplished its mission. The

plant now enjoys the gentle caresses of breezes, the dulcet melody of birds, the smiles of twinkling stars, and the care of genial sunshine.

If the seed had been exposed to the sun from the start, it would have failed to germinate.

If something is to succeed, preparations and operations in the initial stage must be carried out secretly, discreetly. Evil-doers know this well, so their negative deeds seldom fail. But those who do good often ignore the notion, hence their actions are frequently aborted.

Extra prudence is required to fulfill virtuous deeds or charitable works. They are more likely to succeed when confidentiality is taken seriously.

## 时间好比自来水管

每到年关，人们便特别容易叹无常，什么“日月如梭，光阴似箭”啊，什么“一晃又是一年”啊，什么“一岁年纪一岁人”啊……但无常并非年关才偶尔出行，而是天天、时时、分分秒秒与我们一起跑在大街上，走进厨房里，躺在床头间，只是我们习惯于漠视它，也忙得没有工夫理会它。

在我已经不会这样叹无常了。如此叹无常的人大概嫌时间太快，生命太短，而希望长命；对我来说长命短命都差不多，去年前年只是数字不一样（刚才宗道法师还指出我将2012年的事记成2013年），甚至昨天与儿时也没什么差别，都是刚刚过去。大概是年龄的关系，大脑抹平了记忆的沟槽，时间已经是平面的了，不再有纵深。

这让我想到镜子。肉眼看过去有远有近立体纵深的图景，在镜子里通通融为一个平面。我喜欢“平”这个字，以为平总是好的，如平等、平静、平和，那么平面也应该有超越立体的价值吧。

时间的平面感，让我进一步思考时间的本质。时间是什么？绝对的过去、现在、未来这样的纵深序列？久暂又是什么？俗话说“当局者迷，旁观者清”，落在立体纵深感（过去、现在、未来）的时间局中，也就被时所控，人生被切割成无穷的薄片，再组合成一个整段，如极薄的纸堆成书；然而平面的时间，却给人生命整体感，也让我们透过过去、现在、未来这样的逼窄的时间隧道，似乎成为时间的局外人，过去、现在、未来与我有何关系呢？我不在其中，我只是好玩

地看着那被人称作过去、现在、未来透明的时间隧道，看见好多车只能一辆接一辆地前行。就凭这一点，人生就够苦难的了。

大海的水也是水，狭窄的水管中的水也是水；但大海水何其自在壮阔，潮涌潮落，一时涌动，不受拘碍；水管中的水必须前、中、后细溜溜地排队向前。人心如水，是谁把它装进时间这狭窄的管道，让它丝毫不能逾越呢？这管道究竟是什么质材呢？“我”！

有人想这一段人世间的管道尽量长一些，100米延到120米。毫无意义。500米又如何？何况500米的尽头不过埋于地下，从头到尾都在管中。应该离开管道的束缚，出来，即使没有入大海，蹲在盆里也比逼在管中强。北方的冬季总要暖气循环；我们的人生，六道轮回，正如暖气管道中的循环水，从来都在暗无天日的管道中，由业力推动运行。

当佛说“没有时间”时，人们都会瞪大双眼：“啊？怎么会没有时间？没有时间人怎么活，怎么存在？”哈！人们的诧异与反驳是多么合情合理呀！可惜只是人之情、之理。大海水对自来水管中的水说“没有水管”，自来水当然也不会理解，“没水管，我们怎么生存？乱套了，水管爆裂，出事了，多可怕！”然而水天生就应该在水管中吗？

佛没有时间，所以无量寿。“我”才有时间，故受轮回。

### **Time Is Like a Water Pipe**

The year-end often sees people sighing over the fleeting nature of life. Sayings such as these are heard at that time: “Swift fly the years, how time flies”; “Another year has just flashed past”; “Oh frailty, thy name is old age”... But impermanence does not just make an occasional appearance at the end of the year. It is by our side every day, every hour, every minute, and every second. It follows us everywhere – as we walk along on the street, cook in the kitchen, and lie down in bed. However, we are habitually oblivious to it, and too busy to pay it attention.

I have long since stopped lamenting the impermanence of things in this way. Those who do so are probably perturbed by how quickly time goes by and how short life is. They wish to live long. To me, having a long or short life makes no difference. Last year and the year before last only

differ in terms of numerals. (Only just now Master Zongdao pointed out that I have mistakenly recorded events that took place in 2012 as 2013.) Even yesterday and my childhood days are almost the same: both have just slipped away. Perhaps it is my age – the folds and grooves in my memory have been smoothed out by the brain. Therefore, time is flat to me. It has no depth any more.

This reminds me of a mirror which reflects all three-dimensional views, both distant and near, as one flat surface. I like the character for “flat” (*ping* 平); it always denotes something agreeable to me. For example, equality (*ping deng* 平等), calm (*ping jing* 平静), and gentle (*ping he* 平和). In this sense, the value of being flat should probably exceed that of being three-dimensional.

My perception of time as being flat prompts me to consider this question: What is the essence of time? Is it simply the chronological depth of the past, present and future? What is long-term and what is temporary? As the saying goes, “Bystanders see more than gamesters.” When we are totally absorbed in the game of time with a three-dimensional perspective (past, present and future), we are under its control. Imagine our life being cut into countless slices, then re-assembled into a whole, much in the same way as a book consists of numerous thin pages of paper. In contrast, time which has only a flat surface gives us a sense of the completeness of life. It allows us to become dispassionate onlookers of the game of time, watching the narrow tunnel of the past, present and future. What has this got to do with me? I am not inside it. I am merely having fun watching the transparent tunnel of the so-called past, present and future, with vehicles moving forward in it one after another. Such a game alone is enough to fill lives with suffering.

Consider the water in the ocean and that in a narrow pipe. They are both water. The ocean is free and vast, with rising and falling tides. Its surges know no barriers and impediments, while pipe water is reduced to a long and slim course by the narrowness of the tube, waiting in line to flow forward. Our minds are like water. Who has poured it into the narrow pipeline of time rendering it unable to overtake at all? What is this pipe-line made of? The “ego”!

Some of us would like to see the pipeline of time in our worldly life extended as much as possible, say from 100 meters to 120 meters. There

is really no point in this. What if it is 500 meters long? The end of a 500 meter-long pipeline is still buried underground, trapping our lives inside it throughout. We should break out of the tube's confines and leave the pipeline. Even if we cannot join the ocean, we fare much better crouching inside a basin than getting squeezed in the pipe. In winter in north China, heating is supplied by hot water circulating through pipes. Our lives in the Six Realms of samsara (cycle of rebirth) are like the circulating water in the heating pipes. They are forever confined in dark conduits, propelled onward by karmic forces.

When the Buddha says, "Time doesn't exist," people are flabbergasted and raise their eyebrows. "What? How is it possible that time doesn't exist? Without time, how can we live?" Ha! How reasonable and logical such shocks and counter-arguments appear to be, except that they are just the reason and logic of humans. If the water in the ocean says to the tap water, "There is no pipe," the latter is unable to understand. "Without pipes, we cannot live and everything will turn upside down. Imagine what a disaster there would be if a pipe burst. That would be terrible!" But there again, is it natural for water to be inside a pipe?

Time does not exist for Amitabha Buddha. Hence, he has an infinite life. Only "I" have the concept of time, resulting in my ensnarement in samsara.

## 一点点

再大的大人物只是大一点点，再小的小人物也只是小一点点；再大的大事情只是大一点点，再小的小事情也只是小一点点。

这“一点点”就是你认为它大还是小，大就大这么一点点，小也只小这么一点点。拿去这一点点，一切平等。

人有这“一点点”，天下便好不热闹，好不消停。你有“一点点”，我也有“一点点”，天下大乱。

人斗来斗去，搞来搞去，争来争去，其实就这么一点点。

人心抹去这“一点点”便成佛，世界洗去这“一点点”便是净土，但不容易，必须找到专门的清洁剂——南无阿弥陀佛。

南无阿弥陀佛也只是一点点，但请莫疑。

### **Just a Bit**

A big shot, however great he may be, is just a bit great, and a small potato, however insignificant, is merely a little insignificant. A really important thing is only a tad important, while a really trivial matter is just a touch trivial.

This “little bit” is what we perceive as either great or small. Either way, it is just a bit greater or smaller. Remove that little bit and everything is equal.

When everyone goes around with “a bit” of something, the world bustles and turns restless. You have a little, I have a bit – and chaos reigns.

It is precisely over this “little bit” that people fight and compete with one another.

If we can erase the “little bit” from our minds, we will become Buddhas. If the bit is washed away, the world will transform into a Pure Land. It is not easy, though. We must obtain a special cleanser – *Namo Amitabha Buddha*.

*Namo Amitabha Buddha* is also just a bit. But please do not doubt its power.

### **做个人生背包客**

出门在外，行李越少越好。

行李太多太重：

- 一、拖累。搬上搬下，拖东拖西。
- 二、不自由。不能逛街，不敢上厕所，不敢打盹。
- 三、不安全。怕跌、怕碰、怕丢、怕偷。

人生在世，也是旅行。财富、爱情、婚姻、家庭、事业、名利、权位，甚至学识都是行李，越少越好，越简越便。

富人应当羡慕穷人，正如拖着辘重行李的人，总是羡慕轻松背包客。

出家受人羡慕，因为他穷，很少行李。出家如果也拖那么多人生行李，也就不值得尊重。

念佛，做个人生背包客，只背一件六字名号的背包，够了，要什么取什么。

其余通通舍。实在舍不得，阿弥陀佛有“行李寄存处”。

### **Live Like a Backpacker**

When we are travelling, we should take as little baggage as possible.

If we carry too many things, we will find that:

1. They are a burden. We have to move them up and down, here and there;
2. We lack freedom. We can't go shopping, and we hesitate to visit the restroom or take a nap;
3. We have little peace of mind, as we constantly worry if they might get dropped, bumped, lost or stolen.

Life is like a journey. Wealth, love, marriage, family, career, fame, power and position, even the knowledge we have accumulated – all are just baggage. The less we have, the simpler and less onerous life becomes.

The rich should envy the poor, just as a person lugging a lot of suitcases envies the carefree backpacker.

Monastics are admired by others because they are poor and have little luggage. People who have taken vows are not worthy of respect if they have too much baggage in life.

Recite the name of Amitabha Buddha and be a backpacker in life, carrying only the six-character name as luggage. That is all you need, as it contains everything.

Leave all else behind. If you cannot do that, check it at Amitabha's "Luggage Storage Office."

## 佛不是神

佛不是神。

人不能成神，只能造神。

人不能造佛，但能成佛。

佛是人成的，神却是人造的。

佛教以其缘起性空的智慧，断然否定一切的造物主，揭开一切宗教神秘的外纱。

佛教不是宗教，也没有神秘。

佛教不反对宗教，因为那是人的生活所需。

佛教不拒绝，甚至会主动利用宗教情态传播佛法，但佛教本身并不是宗教。如水可以用瓶来装，但瓶并不是水。

人间有宗教，天上也有宗教吗？

这个世界有宗教，其他世界也一定有宗教吗？至少净土是没有宗教的。

## **Buddhas Aren't Gods**

Buddhas aren't gods.

Humans cannot become deities, only make them.

We can't create Buddhas, yet we are able to attain Buddhahood.

A Buddha derives from a human being, whereas gods are man-made.

The wisdom in the Buddhist teaching of the “co-dependent arising of things and their non-independent nature” negates all divine creators and lifts the mysterious veil of all religions.

Buddhism is not a religion, nor there anything mysterious about it.

It is not, however, against religions because people need them to live.

Buddhism does not reject religious sensibilities and even makes use of them to disseminate the Dharma. But the teachings of the Buddha are not themselves a religion. It’s like using a bottle to contain water, yet the bottle itself is not water.

There are religions on earth. Are there any in heaven?

As this world has religions, do other worlds necessarily have them? At least not in the Pure Land.

## 平安

平安在内不在外。

里面得了平安，外面即使惊涛骇浪也无妨。

内在的平安，很坚固，阎罗王都撼不动，车祸之类的自然夺不走。

平安是无所畏惧。有所畏惧，患得患失，没有平安。

平安是南无阿弥陀佛。

## Being Safe

Safety is found within ourselves, not outside.

If we feel safe at heart, external storms will not affect us.

An inner sense of security is strong. It cannot be shaken by King Yama or removed by car accidents and the like.

Inner peace is fearless. When we are afraid, we fret over personal gains and losses, and serenity is elusive.

Safety is *Namo Amitabha Buddha*.

## 善恶的木桩

有一根木桩，把我们深深地钉在三界，钉在身体及地下的部分，我们称它为“恶”，而把露在外面的部分称为“善”。

人生如路，善恶是车。只要不改变人生方向，不论好车坏车，路的尽头都是轮回的万丈深渊。

善恶是人生的驱动轮，驱使我们跑在轮回路上，不过是前驱、后驱的分别。要想不上轮回路，仅仅停止前驱或后驱都不行，必须善恶的前后驱动都停止。

因果报应并不能止息我们的罪，只会让我们在罪中无休止地轮回；唯有弥陀的慈爱能灭我们的罪，不再轮回。

弥陀接我们到净土，是要过佛的日子，不是过人的日子。人有善恶，佛没有善恶，所以就不要喋喋不休地议论善恶了。

## Good and Evil

We are all impaled by a wooden stake in the Three Domains of Samsara. The part of the stake that is in the ground is called “evil,” and the part above ground “good.”

Our life is like a road, and good and evil are the car. Unless the direction of our journey changes, the car, in good condition or not, will eventually reach the end of the road, where sits the bottomless pit of karmic rebirth in the Six Realms.

Good and evil are the driving wheels of our life, propelling us forward on the road to rebirth in the various realms. The sole difference between them is that one is in front and the other in the back. If we wish to exit this road of rebirths, simply applying the brakes on the front or rear

wheels wouldn't do. We must stop both sets of wheels, the good and the evil.

The workings of karma cannot halt our wrongdoing. They can only bind us to endless incarnation. Only the compassion of Amitabha Buddha can eradicate our transgressions and free us from the cycle of rebirth.

The reason Amitabha receives us in the Pure Land is to enable us to lead the life of a Buddha, not that of a human being. There is good and evil in human lives but not in a Buddha's. Let us stop harping on what is good and what is evil.

## 我们是这个世界的客人

念佛人，他的国土永远在极乐，不在此土。他的希望，他的梦想，他的光明，他的财富，他一切的一切都在净土，不在此世。他因为受了净土的光照，便是在这里也比众人活得快乐欢喜自在幸福，是受人嫉、受人羡、受有追随效仿的宠儿。

念佛人，他在此世只是旅游，是客居，是作客的。作客的懂得作客的礼貌，不占有，不强取，打扰了主人深以为歉，受主人的款待充满感恩。作客的，脚步要轻，声音要低，态度要恭顺，心里要满足，客随主便，这样便能一路平安，广结善缘。我们来时要轻，住时也要轻，走时更轻。轻轻地来，轻轻地去。假如主人门关了，就是屋檐也足以蔽风雨，忍住咳嗽，莫要惊扰屋里人。

客走却受主人的忆念、款留、盼望，便是好客人。客住却受主人厌嫌、驱赶、恶待，便是坏客人。主人无咎。

## Guests in the World

The home of an Amitabha-reciter is always the Land of Bliss, not this world. All his hopes, dreams, radiance and wealth are in the Pure Land, not here. Because she is bathed in light from the Pure Land, she lives a happier life than others here. She is also more at ease, blessed, envied, admired, followed and imitated.

Reciters are merely tourists in this world and travel as guests. We are courteous to our hosts and have few possessions, taking none by force.

We apologize for troubling our hosts and are grateful for their hospitality. We tread lightly and speak softly. We are respectful, content and easygoing. This keeps us safe during our sojourn and allows us to make positive karmic connections. We come, stay and leave without fanfare. If our host has shut his gates, the eaves of the house provide sufficient shelter from storms. We hold back any coughs, so as not to disturb those inside.

Guests who depart are remembered, cherished and even anticipated by the host. Those who stay behind are resented, expelled and badly treated. You can't blame the host.

## 佛光无尽

冬季出门，带的衣物很多，棉被、棉袍、披风、毛衣、围巾……特别备一双布底鞋，可在北方房间有暖气时穿，很养脚。书没带几本，但有一本美国人费利尔一九一〇年龙门记行《佛光无尽》，内有很多珍贵的老照片，还有作者特殊的笔记体，让我们能跨越百年时光，去追寻当时的情景；当然我也是冲着龙门大佛来的。看得出来，现在的龙门大佛是经过精心修复的。因老照片上，大佛面有一条深长明显的裂纹，从左侧头顶直到下巴，左鼻翼也脱落凹陷，这无疑是很破相的。而现在我们能见到的大佛面相更为圆满庄严，真要感恩那些文物保护修复专家，愿他们仗此功德，得生净土。

费利尔显然被龙门大佛深深感动，他写道：

“他不仅体量巨大，而且还有极强大的感染力，气势撼人。但其中更多的不是威力，而是他悲悯的情怀。不管这是一种什么力量，我每次参观时，这种感染力都在不断增强。每个有血有肉的人一定都能感受到他的庇护。”

费利尔说得真好。费利尔是佛教徒吗？没听说，他只是一个有血有肉的人，是有情众生，凡是有情皆受佛陀庇护，他感受到这点，所以说出来。众生皆有佛性，众生皆是佛子，佛佑一切苍生，保护救度一切众生——这是我的翻译。

果然佛光无尽，遍照古今！

## Limitless Light

Leaving home in winter, I have to take with me lots of clothes, a cotton quilt, cotton robe, cloak, sweaters, scarfs ... I also pack a pair of cloth-bottom shoes, which are perfect for my feet in heated rooms in North China. There are just a few books in my luggage though. One of them is a Chinese translation of *A Thousand Graces: Charles L. Freer's 1910 Pilgrimage to the Longmen Buddhist Cave Temples*. It contains many precious old pictures and the author's writings in a special note-taking style. It takes us back a century, tracing Freer's footsteps back to those bygone days. The destination of my present journey is also the great Vairocana Buddha of the Longmen Grottoes. It is obvious that the present sculpture has been meticulously restored. The old pictures show that the face of the Buddha's statue had a noticeable long, deep crack, extending from the top left of the head to the chin, and the left nostril had fallen off. They were undoubtedly major face blemishes. But the statue we see today looks perfect and splendid. We should thank the experts involved for their protection and restoration of such cultural relics. May they be reborn in the Pure Land by the virtue of such merits.

Evidently, Freer was deeply moved by the great Vairocana statue. He wrote:

"He is not only huge in size, but also extremely appealing and compelling. Yet what exceeds the powerfulness is the projection of his compassion. Whatever it is, that appealing force constantly grows on each of my visits. Everyone of flesh and blood could feel his blessings and protection."

Well said, Mr. Freer. Was he a Buddhist? It is not known. He was just a man of flesh and blood, a sentient being. All sentient beings are protected by the Buddha. He felt that, and said it. Everyone has Buddha-nature. We are all children of the Buddha, and are always blessed, protected and delivered by the Buddha. This is my interpretation.

For sure, the light of the Buddha is limitless, and permeates all times!

## You Are So Bright

由澳返港，金色阳光照在拱型长廊，光影相间如同光的拱门，环环相连，直通远方，让人联想这是通往金色世界的光的通道。忍不住拍张照，竟引起两位外国年青人兴奋、和善、礼貌地打手势招呼，我也冲他们笑笑。过关时又遇到，先是男的和我交谈，接着女的也跟上，他们把我紧紧围住，简直要举起来，大大地夸奖、赞叹，那情形如同粉丝崇拜明星，几乎用上所有最好的赞语。我觉得纳闷：“至于吗？我有那么光彩照人、阳光灿烂、风采迷人？是不是老外的审美观有问题呀？”被一对素不相识、一面之缘的外国青年真诚赞叹，连向来脸皮厚的我也觉得腼腆、不自在起来，只能应付说：“Thank you”，哪里，过奖，抬举，而他们也异口同声、一再地说“really”。他们问我“是哪国人，佛教徒吧”，原来他们知道“佛”，一定是佛让他们如此，我当然是沾了佛光。这是一对巴黎青年，年龄约二十多岁，祝福他们。佛性是不分国籍的，他们赞我“so bright”。“bright”（光明）我很喜欢，我并没有光，如此赞语当然是献给佛的。

希望有去法国弘法的缘，这是我所看中的。

## 'You Are So Bright'

I was on my way back to Hong Kong from Macau. The sunshine glowed golden on the tube-shaped landing platform. Inside, light alternated with shadow as though many arched doors were linked together, leading into the distance. It reminded me of a luminous gateway to a golden world. I could not help taking pictures, which drew the attention of two young foreigners. Excited, they waved amicably and politely, as a gesture of greeting. I smiled back to them. When going through customs, I encountered them again. The young man first talked to me, followed by his companion. They surrounded me at close quarters, as though to lift me. They poured out compliments and extravagant words of praise, like fans adoring their idol. I was puzzled: "Really? Am I that radiant and charming? Perhaps foreigners have a different aesthetic standard." I am usually thick-skinned. But this time, I felt bashful and a bit embarrassed at being commended by young strangers from a foreign country whom I had just met. I could only reply, "Thank you ... You are too kind ... I am flattered." Yet they both repeated in almost one voice: "Really!" They asked me, "Where are you from? You must be a Buddhist." So, they had heard of "Buddha," and it must have been the Buddha who caused them

to act like that. I only bathed in the Buddha's light. The pair, from Paris, were in their twenties; bless them. Buddha-nature is not bound by nationality. "So bright," the young Parisians praised me. I like "bright" but have no radiance myself. Such words of admiration could only have been offered to the Buddhas.

I wish I could have a chance to propagate the Dharma in France. I would look forward to it.

## 听心

小孩子欢天喜地心中说出来的话，即使是错的，听到的人仍然欢喜，也不会去纠正；成年人烦恼执著心中所出言论，再怎样有理、正确，听到的人都会觉得不悦，而在口中或心中，当面或背后加以反驳。

天真欢喜心中所说的，即使是错的，也是对的；烦恼执著心中所出的，即使是对的，也是错的。

人同此心，心同此理。天真欢喜能令自己心欢喜，也就能令所有人欢喜。烦恼忧愁首先令自心不快，它所散发出去的，当然令他人也不快。

天下的人虽多，心却只有一个，都是一样的。只是人们妄想分别，把这一颗“大心”切割分裂成各人一小块，有了你的、我的，斗争无穷。若能常将自心比人心，又常将人心比自心，心与心就能同声相求。心与心本来就是同体的，比兄弟还亲，如水与水，空与空，从来不是二，只是一，说什么你的、我的。若能照顾好这一颗心——本心、大心、所有生命共有的心，就能爱所有生命。

人心是有智慧的，他不会去听你到底说了什么，更不想去分析你说的对错，他直接去听你的心，用心听心，哪里会有失误呢。若你的心烦恼不喜，说的话再有理、正确，听的心也以为那是错的，因为源头已错，所谓“一步错，步步错”。反过来，天真无邪的心，怎么说怎么对，因为心对了，源头对了，自然“一步对，步步对”。

拥有满身的道理、满身的嘴，不如拥有一颗单纯而欢喜的心。

## Listening to the Mind

The words of a happy child are pleasing, even if the usage is wrong. They delight the listener, who isn't prepared to correct them. Remarks by an adult whose mind is troubled and stubborn are disagreeable, even though they are correct and sensible. Such comments invariably attract counter-arguments, spoken or unspoken, to the speaker's face or behind his back.

Those with an innocent, joyful mind say the right things – even if what they say is incorrect. Those with edgy and grasping minds make even the right things sound wrong.

Pure, happy thoughts gladden both their thinker and others, while vexation and worry cause us misery, and our negative emotions naturally affect others. Such situations are universal, as are the feelings evoked.

All humans in fact share a single mind. However, deluded thinking prompts us to carve this “great mind” into small pieces, distinguishing between yours and mine. The result is endless fighting. If we can put ourselves in others' shoes and try to see the world through their eyes, all our minds will speak with the same voice. Originating from the same source, they are closer than brothers. Think in terms of water with water, and emptiness within emptiness. They are one, not two. There is no yours or mine. If we take good care of this wholesome, absolute mind that belongs to everyone, we will be able to love all living beings.

Our minds are wise. They cut through what is said and care not to analyze the correctness of the words spoken. We listen directly to one another's minds. How can we err if we listen to someone's mind with our own? If our mind is troubled, no matter how right or reasonable our arguments are, the message we put across can only be wrong. That's because we started off on the wrong foot. As the saying goes, “One careless move and the game is lost.” On the contrary, if we speak with a pure and untroubled mind, we cannot go wrong. When our mind, the origin of our thoughts, is right, it naturally leads us to the right path. “A single good move, and all is well.”

Better to have a pure and joyous mind than all the right words and arguments.

## 雪地潜逃

雪地潜逃的人，不论逃到哪里，追逃的人都能寻着他的足迹找到他。但天降大雪，覆盖了脚印，他便安全、欢喜，要跪下来叩谢上天。

在三界潜逃的我们，不论逃到哪里，阎魔王都能寻着贪瞋痴业力的脚印找到我们，但弥陀慈爱，降下六字名号的漫天大雪，遮盖了一切人的行踪，使阎魔王再也找不到我们，我们岂不要大大地欢喜，跪地感念佛恩呢？

爱能遮盖一切。弥陀的爱遮盖了我们一切的罪，使我们得以脱离阎王的手掌。

### Escape in the Snow

Someone who is escaping in the snow can always be traced, as his pursuers can follow his footprints. But a new snowfall covers the prints. Delighted and safe, he thanks heaven on his knees.

We are fugitives in the Three Realms. Wherever we escape, King Yama will find us by tracking our karmic steps of greed, hatred and delusion. But Amitabha Buddha lovingly covers all our tracks with a whirling snowfall – his six-character name – so King Yama will never find us. How can we not kneel with joy to show gratitude for such grace?

Love can envelop everything. With his love Amitabha covers all our sins, enabling us to escape King Yama's clutches.

## 以爱止恨

有人恨我们，我们反而要爱他。爱他纵然不能一时熄灭他心中的怒火，至少遇到这怒火不至燃烧到我们自身。慈爱是怒火以及万恶的隔离带、绝缘体，心有慈爱，万毒不侵，万恶不近。

有人恨我，我也恨人，我的心便被他的恨火点燃了，火势连成一片，彼此俱焚，没入火海。

单单从自我保护来说，我们也不应当恨人，而要爱人。

## **Nip Hatred in the Bud, With Love**

We should love those who hate us. That may not promptly cool their anger, but at least it keeps us from the flames of their fury. Love insulates us from anger and all manner of evil, and loving hearts are impervious to malice and other poisons.

If someone detests me and I hate him back, my heart has been set alight by his anger. My flames merge with his and both are consumed in a sea of fire.

Purely for self-protection, we should love, not hate, others.

## **再笨也要学着去爱**

我深深地感到众生是可怜的、愚痴的（我当然是他们当中的一员），这个世界是污染的、混乱的，混乱不堪。亿万生灵，如无头苍蝇一样，碌碌营营，在地球上穴居，居然大致还说得过去，不可思议。我们不能想象亿万车辆没有交通警察是什么状况，我相信有诸多看不见的神灵在帮助可怜的人类，否则人类社会早就崩溃。以人自我的力量能支撑七十亿斗争坚固、深怀瞋恼、无明骄傲的群类和平共处吗？不敢想象。感恩佛菩萨、上帝、真主、诸天善神。

人要爱人，爱一切，也要彼此相爱。

人爱人，不会减少什么，反而增加；人爱己，不会增加什么，反而减少。我们为什么不爱人呢？

爱，需要学习。

什么都可以不学，爱不能不学。但现实是，什么都有人教，有人学；独独爱没人教，没人学。

这也难怪，因为爱就是真理，凡人不会，当然无人教，只有从真理界来的人才会教人爱。

人们似乎以为自己天生就会爱，那是大错特错了，人最不会的就是爱。

有人责骂我们，那算什么呢？

有人误解我们，那算什么呢？

有人诽谤我们，那算什么呢？

有人伤害我们，那算什么呢？

有爱，只要有爱，一切都不算什么。误解、责骂、伤害、诽谤，这是人的常态，我们也曾这样对人。进了蚁窝，必定群蚁上身；捣了蜂巢，必受群蜂毒螫；生而为人，入了人群，彼此伤害避免不了。

我们要原谅人，因为他们不知道他们在做什么。我们也要人家原谅。

不要记恨人。记恨一个人，便让一个毒蜂叮住在身；忘记恨，让毒蜂飞去。你只要忘记恨，毒蜂便飞去了。你若更能爱，蝴蝶会为你翩翩起舞，鲜花会为你开放。

不要夸口自己的善，善未必是爱，甚至很可能是加害人的刀，爱却是绝对的善。人没有善，除非是从绝对的爱当中行出来的。所以要先学会爱，有爱必有善。没有爱，哪来善？

然而那些夸口善的人，伪善的人，也要原谅他、爱他，因为他就是那样子。爱如果讲条件，分对象，那就不是爱。

爱在哪里都不会错，在任何人身上都不会错，在任何因缘情况下都不会错，爱是真正放之四海而皆准的真理。

人不是靠粮食活命，而是靠爱活命。有粮没有爱，必死，死得很惨；有爱，即使没有粮饿死，也得永生。

在这个世界，我不愿与一个人成敌，不愿令任何人不快，但很遗憾，还是有许多人被得罪、被伤害、被冒犯，真的很抱歉。我还没有学会爱，必须回归净土，补课、猛修，否则遗憾终不平复。

再笨，也要学着去爱！

爱，是心室的暖炉，先温暖自己，再温暖别人；

爱，是心室的光明，先照亮内心，再照亮远处。

爱，永不吃亏，无本万利。 有爱，吃亏是大福；没爱，吃亏是吃亏。

爱是福的乘数：爱心大，吃小亏也能成大福；爱心小，吃大亏只培成小福。

### **Let's Learn to Love**

I feel deeply that sentient beings, myself included, are pitiful and ignorant. This is a defiled and utterly chaotic world. Living beings, in tens of billions, are bustling around like headless chickens, constantly on the go for nothing. They are all cooped up on this globe but, amazingly, are leading a passable life in general. We cannot envisage what it would be like to have billions of vehicles on the roads without traffic police. I believe that, had it not been for the countless invisible divinities who lend us pathetic human beings their timely helping hands, our society would have long since collapsed. Can we imagine that seven billion humans, who are quarrelsome, wrathful, ignorant and arrogant, coexisting by themselves in peace? Let's be grateful to all the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas, God, Allah, and the countless deities.

Let us love all others and love each other.

We have nothing to lose but everything to gain when we love others. The opposite is true when we simply love ourselves. Why don't we love other people?

There is much to learn about love.

We don't need to learn anything except love. Yet in reality, people teach and learn everything but love.

This is understandable because love is the Truth which is beyond comprehension by ordinary beings. Only beings coming from the Truth realm are capable of teaching love.

People take it for granted that they are born knowing how to love. Nothing can be further from the truth. What people are least capable of is loving.

If we are blamed, it doesn't matter.

If we are misunderstood, it doesn't matter.

If we are slandered, it doesn't matter.

If we are hurt, it doesn't matter.

Nothing really matters when there is love. It is human nature to blame, misunderstand, slander and hurt others. We all do that. One who treads on an anthill or pokes a wasp's nest is bound to get stung. Born as part of humanity, we cannot avoid hurting others or getting hurt.

We should learn to forgive those who have wronged us as they didn't know what they were doing. Likewise, we need others to forgive us.

We should not bear grudges. A grudge is like a poisonous wasp that stings. Forget about the enmity and let go of the wasp. Love others and the butterflies will dance around you and flowers bloom in joy.

Do not boast about good deeds which are not necessarily love. They can easily be the knife that inflicts injuries on others. Love is pure virtue but humans do not possess any virtue at all unless they act with unreserved love. So we must first learn to love. When there is love, there is goodness. Where can we find virtue without love?

We should forgive people who are hypocrites and vaunt their good deeds. Love them for what they are. Love is unconditional and non-discriminatory, otherwise it is not love at all.

Love never fails: wherever it is, whomever it is given to and under whatever circumstances. Love is a universal truth.

It is love, not food, that keeps us alive. If we only have food but not love, we will surely die and die a dog's death. However, with love we will be assured of eternal life even if we are starved to death.

I do not wish to make an enemy of a single soul and offend anyone in this world. Unfortunately, there are still a lot of people whom I have upset, hurt and offended. I am really sorry. I have not yet mastered the knack of loving, so I must return to the Pure Land for more tuition and practice. Or I will regret it forever.

I must try to master the art of love, no matter how stupid I am.

Love warms the cockles of our hearts. We should warm ourselves first before warming others.

Love is the radiance in our hearts. It starts to light up the deepest part of our hearts and then illuminates the world outside.

Love never causes loss. It brings huge benefits with no cost. With love, suffering loss is a blessing in disguise. Without it, a loss is a loss.

Love is a multiplier of fortune: with great compassion we will be rewarded generously for a modest outlay, while with scanty love we can expect only a minor return even for a major investment.

## 爱能融化一切

冰，斧砍锯割，成为碎块，仍然是冰，寒凝阻隔；不必锯斧费力，只要太阳一晒，自然融化为水，温润流动。

讲道理，如以斧砍冰，即使再明白，驳他体无完肤，令人哑口无言，对方未必心服。讲爱心，如阳光化冰，即使没有讲很多理，对方自然服了我们。

自力修行，如斧砍冰，纵然懂再多佛理，能说能写能分析，仍然是凡夫。他力念佛，如冰化水，蒙佛慈爱，不知不觉，转凡为圣。

打击不如温暖，讲理不如讲爱，修行不如念佛。

上根者可以智慧教导，下根者唯有慈悲感化，教不足，则化之，是名教化。

## Love Melts Everything

Ice remains ice even if it is chopped and sawn into pieces. It is freezing cold. However, the moment the sun is out, the ice will melt. It naturally turns into water, which spreads or flows gently.

To convince others through reasoning is like chopping an ice block with an axe. Our arguments may be flawless, and our advocacy may bowl them over and render them speechless. Still, we may not win them over. If we use love instead, it will be like the sun melting the ice. The other party will submit even in the absence of sound reasons.

To undertake self-power practices is no different from hacking ice blocks with an axe. We may have studied numerous Dharma principles and be able to analyze and expound them eloquently. Even so, we are still ordinary beings. When we rely on the other-power of Amitabha-recitation, it is like the sun melting ice and turning it into water. Without our even noticing it, the ordinary is transformed into the sacred.

To give someone warmth is better than to strike him. To love a person is better than to argue with her. To recite the name of Amitabha Buddha is better than self-cultivation practices.

Those with superior learning capabilities can be taught with wisdom, but those with lesser ability can only be transformed through compassion. Where instruction fails, compassion comes in. This is what we call “to enlighten.”

## 解决问题与取消问题

解决问题不如取消问题。

认为这是问题：“这个人不好，我要教训他。这件事不理想，我要改变它……”这才有了问题，也才要解决问题。也就是说，我们先无事找事造出问题，然后寻找解决。

换一个角度：“这个人虽然有缺点，但在他只能如此，他就是这样，他已经这样。这样只是结局，本身并不是问题，也没有问题。一张纸有问题吗？一棵树、一块石头、一片云，它们就以当下的状态存

在着，有什么问题吗？”摘下问题的眼镜，世界原本没有问题。世界有了问题又岂是你我小民、凡夫俗子能解决的？释迦佛不是为此来入娑婆的吗？弥陀佛不是为此而成佛的吗？既然有诸佛菩萨来解决问题，终究还是没问题。

当你不认为人不好、事不好，而以一切皆是恰到好处，因缘所成，全然接受，也就取消了所谓的问题。当一切的人事不成为问题时，该转变时自然顺缘而转变，而且必然转向有序，这就是无为而治。

要如何才能取消问题？唯有爱！

爱是不会盯住对方问题的，爱只是爱，爱只看见爱，看不见问题，如光只见光，见不到暗。爱掩盖问题，取消了问题。在爱里，一切都没有问题。

如何才有爱？唯有信受弥陀救度！

### **Problems: To Solve or to Cancel?**

It is better to cancel problems than solve them.

If something is considered a problem – “This person is no good and I must teach him a lesson,” or “This matter is disappointing and I shall make some changes” – then a problem arises, hence the need to solve it. In other words, we first create problems out of nothing, then seek solutions to them.

Or we can take a different perspective: “This person is imperfect, but that’s just how he is. This is a conclusion, not a problem; there is no problem at all. Is there a problem with a piece of paper, a tree, a stone, a cloud? These things exist as they are. Is that a problem?” When we remove our problem-focused “glasses,” the world of itself is free of problems. Those that arise are beyond the abilities of ordinary beings like ourselves to resolve anyway. Isn’t that why Shakyamuni Buddha came to our Saha world, and Amitabha Buddha attained Buddhahood? Since the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas will handle the problems, we have none ourselves.

A so-called problem will be canceled if, instead of considering a person or situation no good, we believe that all things are just right for their

purpose, the result of karmic workings that we should accept. When these aren't considered problems, they will naturally and appropriately transform according to karma. This is the time-honored notion of "management through inaction," or letting things take their course.

How can problems be canceled? Through love alone!

Love means we do not focus on others' problems. Love is only love, and sees just love – not problems. It's like light, in whose presence darkness is invisible. Love envelops problems and cancels them. Where there is love, there are no problems.

How can we generate love? Only by having faith in Amitabha's deliverance and accepting it!

## 暗夜

死寂的山野，哪里有窗户亮着灯，那里便有生气，即使周围遍是荒冢。

无明的世间，只要有人念佛，他的心灯便是亮的，透过心室之窗显出光明。

弥陀说“那里有活人，我要去看他，壮他的胆，守护他直到天明。”

## Dark Night

In the silent wilds of the mountains, where there is a light from a window, there is vitality, even if the place is surrounded by abandoned graves.

In our benighted world, if someone recites *Namo Amitabha Buddha*, the lamp in her heart lights up and glistens through its own window.

Amitabha says, "A living being is there. I shall go see her, fortify her and safeguard her until daybreak."

## 稳当

倚靠阿弥陀佛，比大石头放在大地上还要稳当、安全，绝对不会有任何的闪失。何止是孙悟空跳不出如来佛的手掌心。六字名号犹如大地，我们就像生活在大地上的一只小蚂蚁，不论爬到哪里，都在大地上。

### Safe and Sound

Relying on Amitabha Buddha is safer and more secure than a large rock sitting on the ground. Nothing can go wrong. Sun Wukong, the Monkey King, cannot leap out of the Buddha's palm. The six-character name is like the earth, and we are like small ants living on it. Wherever we go, we are still on the earth.

## 六字名号与五脏六腑

念佛人，六字为心，周身流动弥陀慈悲的血液；

六字为肝，再如何强盛的贪瞋痴三毒，自有弥陀为我们解毒；

六字为胆，不惧阎罗勾魂使者；

六字为肺，虽在娑婆，呼吸极乐清新的空气；

六字为胃，消化一切烦恼，资益功德法身。

六字，将心、肝、脾、肺换个遍；六字，令不谢色身获法身。

弥陀在我身中活，弥陀从我心中生；如印印泥，印坏文成；现生不退，平生业成。

### The Six-Character Name and Our Internal Organs

An Amitabha-reciter takes the six-character name as his heart. It pumps the blood of Amitabha Buddha's compassion throughout his body.

The name is also his liver. It cleanses the three poisons of greed, anger and delusion, however intense they may be.

A reciter considers the six-character name her gall bladder. It renders her unafraid of the envoys of King Yama who come to take our souls.

The name is her lungs. It allows he to breathe the pristine air of the Land of Bliss while still in our Saha world.

A reciter takes the six-character name as his stomach. It digests all vexations and nurtures his meritorious Dharma body.

The six characters renew all our internal organs, so we achieve the Dharma body even before we takes leave of our physical body.

Amitabha lives in our bodies and grows from our hearts. Like a wax seal on ink paste, the text is formed after the seal is broken. In this lifetime, non-retrogression is achieved and rebirth assured.

## 鸡同鸭讲

“信者恒信，不信者恒不信。”越是信受弥陀救度，自信教人信向他人宣说，对这句古语体会越深。

老虎看见牛吃草怎么也不能相信：“在地上啃那玩意怎么可以充饥？兽不吃肉怎么可以？”

牛看见水中的鱼必然疑问：“它怎么可以一天到晚闷在水里？”而鱼看见牛也纳闷：“偶尔跳出水面还行，牛兄竟一直在岸，它怎么活呀？”

小乘人说：“大乘非佛说。”圣道门人说：“佛法是讲修行的，不是如外道只讲信。”要门的人说：“弥陀救度是有条件的。”而我们信弥陀救度主动、平等、无条件。

要去和谁论道理呢？鸡同鸭讲。

佛说众生根性不同，随机说法各依方。

还是那句话：信者恒信，不信者恒不信。

弥陀救度乃是最高、最后、归宗结顶之法，无法理解，只能信！

信是心灵的频道，你信哪一道，便在哪一道。

有人只信外教，不信佛教；有人只信小乘，不信大乘；有人只信圣道，不信净土；有人只信罪福，疑惑佛智。

明信佛智，专修念佛之人对于小乘、圣道、罪福，乃至世善回向，自然心中通达，有所安立。

### **Dialogue of the Deaf**

“Believers will always believe, and non-believers will never believe.” The stronger our faith in the deliverance of Amitabha Buddha and the greater our efforts to propagate it, the more profoundly we will experience the truth of this old saying.

When a tiger sees a cow eating grass, it still does not believe. “How can that cow fill its hunger by eating such trifles? How can any animal survive without eating meat?”

When the cow spots fish in the water, it becomes skeptical. “How can they stay in the water all day?” But when fish see the cow, they are also confused. “It’s all right to jump out of the water occasionally, but how can this cow stand on land all day? How does it survive?”

Adherents of the Lesser Vehicle say, “The Greater Vehicle (Mahayana) wasn’t the Buddha’s teaching.” Followers of the Sacred Path say, “The Dharma is about self-cultivation; it doesn’t focus only on faith, like other religions.” Practitioners of Pure Land Buddhism’s Path of Importance insist, “Amitabha’s deliverance is conditional.” And we believe that the deliverance of Amitabha is at his initiative, on a basis of equality, and unconditional.

Should we debate this? It would be like a dialogue of the deaf.

The Buddha said that beings have disparate characteristics and inclinations. So he taught the Dharma accordingly.

So it’s back to “believers will always believe, and non-believers will never believe.”

Amitabha's deliverance is the loftiest, ultimate and all-inclusive Dharma path. It cannot be understood; we can only have faith in it!

Faith is a certain wavelength of the spirit. Whatever you believe is the wavelength you are attuned to.

Some people believe only other religions, not Buddhism. Others accept just the Lesser Vehicle, not the Greater Vehicle. Still others have faith solely in the schools of the Sacred Path, not Pure Land. And some believe only in wrongdoing and blessings, doubting Buddha-wisdom.

Those who have full faith in Buddha-wisdom and recite Amitabha's name exclusively are naturally able to understand thoroughly and posit the Lesser Vehicle, the Sacred Path, wrongdoing and blessings, and the dedication of merit from worldly good deeds.

## 乡下郎

在乡村里舍住久了，一草一木都觉得亲切，记得清楚，随到何处，不会迷方，实在是太熟悉了。

一旦来到陌生的大城市，便头晕脑胀，不辨方所，路也不记得，亲切感丝毫没有。因为初来乍到，不了解，不熟悉。

妄想杂念便是我们久劫贯居的乡村里舍，怎么想都觉得历历如新，得心应手，好不自在；一旦念佛，便如入了大都市，不知东南西北一样，心无抓落，无处安顿，念着念着便跑了神，迷了路，不知身在何处。这也是因为对佛名太生疏，初接触的缘故。

## Country Bumpkin

Someone who has long lived in the countryside feels intimate with every tree and bush in his village. He clearly remembers them and seldom gets lost in the vicinity. Everything is so familiar.

One time he was in a big, unfamiliar city. Unable to tell directions, he felt dizzy, his head swollen. Nor could he remember the roads. There was no sense of intimacy. As a newcomer, he was totally out of his depth.

Our deluded, jumbled thoughts are the “countryside” home we have inhabited for countless *kalpas*. Our thoughts seem novel, and we feel in control and at ease. But when we start to recite Amitabha’s name, it is as though we have entered a metropolis and cannot tell north from south or east from west. Our mind loses its anchor and becomes unsettled. As we recite, our thought wanders off and gets lost, not knowing where it is. That’s because we, as beginners, are not sufficiently familiar with the name of Amitabha Buddha.

## 怎样念佛

常有人问，称名念佛要怎样念；也常有人教要这么念，那么念。其实这些都是不必要的，也都是将简单问题复杂化了。既然说称名，也就再直白不过，如同呼喊人的名字，是张三即唤张三，是李四即称李四，没有不明白的。何以称念佛的名字，便要问怎么念呢？一句话，是把佛看得太见外、太生疏、太遥远了。没有亲切感，如同陌生人，而且高高在上，不食人间烟火，或有许多怪异的、严格的要求，不能得罪，恐犯忌讳或不净等，这样在凡夫的心中便生出要怎么念的问题。

然而龙树菩萨早就说明“念我称名”，善导大师一向解释为“称我名字”，实在是干净利落，没有含糊模棱之处。

在世间，假如有人昏迷、昏死，为了唤醒他，我们会想到怎样喊他的名，乃至声嘶力竭；又假如亲爱的人一时失忆或精神犯病，竟不认识我们，为了令他神智恢复清醒，我们也会大动感情地喊他的名；还有人做大老爷高高在上，欲显示权威，不许人随便称他的名；也有为了表示对贤德长辈的示尊避讳，这些我们都要考虑如何称他们的名。但在一般正常人，莫不直呼其名。

诸佛菩萨具足六神，慧照圆明，既不是昏死、失忆、精神病，也不是大老爷耍威，虽至德至尊，并不如世间之虚名避讳，而皆是实德名归，名包万德，不存在直呼其名或存不敬的问题，这样我们只要知道念的是哪尊佛，并清清楚楚地称念出他的名字，便是念佛。

如此称念“南无阿弥陀佛”，佛便立即听到，应声现前，感应之速，譬如清水映月。

许多乡下的老太太，念佛走得很好，大概正是因为心中没有怎样念佛的芥蒂，而日日口称，如同老熟人吧。而一些精进修行的出家人，

最后未必如乡下老太，也正因为他们心中存有怎样念佛的结块，一生瞎用功，与弥陀疏而不亲吧。

直呼佛的德名，心中亲亲切切，这就是念佛。或心中并无多少亲切，只是口称佛的名字，也即是念佛。会喊人，就会念佛。称名，又有什么难的呢？

### **How to Recite Amitabha's Name**

People often ask: How should I recite Amitabha Buddha's name? There are many teachings on recitation methods. In fact, these are unnecessary, and they complicate a simple issue. Name-recitation cannot be more straight-forward. It is like calling people's names. Tom is called Tom, and Tim is called Tim. No one can fail to understand. Why does anyone need to ask about recitation methods? In short, it's because we consider Amitabha too impersonal, unfamiliar and distant. There is no sense of intimacy, as though he were a stranger. We also tend to think he is exalted and otherworldly, or has many peculiar, stringent requirements. We assume we cannot afford to displease him, break his taboos, or commit unclean acts. Such concerns prompt ordinary beings like ourselves to ask how we should recite his name.

However, Bodhisattva Nagarjuna explained the matter long ago as "invokes me, recites my name." Master Shandao consistently interprets it as "recites my name." These statements are clear and definite, without ambiguity or vagueness.

In this world, if a person loses consciousness or falls into a dead faint, others will cry out his name and try to awaken him, perhaps even shout it at the top of their voices. If a loved one falls prey to amnesia, or becomes mentally ill, and fails to recognize anyone, we will call out her name emotionally. To highlight their authority, some dignitaries forbid people to speak their names freely. The names of respected elders may also be taboo as a token of respect. In such cases, we should consider how to state their names. But with normal people, we always say their names directly.

All Buddhas and Bodhisattvas have the six special powers and the illuminating wisdom of perfect brightness. They are not like the unconscious or mentally ill person, the amnesiac, or a luminary who

wants to show his authority. Despite their supreme and genuine virtues, there is no disrespect in stating their names directly. When we recite a Buddha's name, we only need to know which Buddha and speak his name clearly.

Once we recite *"Namo Amitabha Buddha"* in this way, he immediately hears us and manifests before us. He responds instantaneously, the way clear water reflects the moon.

Many grannies in villages pass away in a very smooth, easy manner while reciting Amitabha's name, probably because they have few concerns about how to do so. They do it day after day, like calling on a close friend. By contrast, some monastics who practice diligently may be no match for the old ladies in their final moments, for they remain anxious about their recitation methods and practice in vain all their lives. They lack intimacy with Amitabha.

We should call the name of Amitabha directly and feel intimate with him. This is Amitabha-recitation. Or we may recite without a feeling of closeness. That is also Amitabha-recitation. Anyone who knows how to call out to others is capable of Amitabha-recitation. How hard can that be?

## 不小心碰到

接到对方电话：“你打电话来有什么事？”

“我没有给你打电话呀！”

“可我这里显示你来的电话。”

“哦！可能是我的手机装在兜里，不小心碰到了哪一个键。”

不小心、装在兜里，在自己完全不知、无作意的情况下，偶尔碰到键位，也立即拨通了对方号码，收到了对方的回话。

无知、无作意，不小心，偶尔念出声佛，碰到了专属弥陀的心灵键位，阿弥陀佛不现前吗，不回应吗？

## Accidental Call

I answered an incoming call: "Hey, what's up?"

"I wasn't calling you!"

"But my phone shows your number calling."

"Oh! My phone was in my pocket. Perhaps I just pressed a key by accident."

He accidentally dialed me because his phone was in his pocket. He had unknowingly, unintentionally, tapped the key to my number, and his phone immediately got through and he received my answer.

A single thoughtless, and unmeant, recitation of *Namo Amitabha Buddha* taps that key in our heart dedicated to Amitabha. How could he not appear before us to give a response?

## 归命

归命，是弥陀至极慈悲的呼唤，也是无上严峻的命令。

弥陀要以他自己的生命完全地充满我们，替换我们，所以才要我们归命。譬如大海呼唤水滴，当一滴水归投大海时，大海全部的生命顿时充满这小小的水滴，溢满水滴。凡夫归命弥陀，弥陀的生命便充满我心，充斥法界。

单从“归命”二字，已经说明了念佛成佛，不需要更多的理论证明。归命弥陀，与弥陀佛命一体，不成佛还能成什么！

弥陀要彻底改造我们轮回颠倒、浊染不净的命运，所以呼唤我们归命。如同修汽车，必须把车开入修理站。弥陀改造我们不是用别的方式、别的材料，而是以他自己一清净正觉的佛身，来充满我们，替代我们。

归命，就是放弃自我，把“我”交到弥陀手中，任佛处置，由佛做主。故归命等于我之死，佛之活，必须经由我之死，才能给弥陀腾出空间，弥陀佛才能在原来属于我的地盘活出来。

但“我”很狡猾，当我们说“归命”，要把“我”交出到弥陀手中，“我”却很容易找到替身——善事功德，自己却悄悄地溜回来。“我”深知到了弥陀手中必然是死，所以总是乔装打扮，花言巧语，以善事功德权塞其责，每次都能奏效，蒙混过关。致使每天喊归命，喊了几十年、一辈子的佛教徒自始至终也没有归命。

归命只有一次，一归永归，毕其功于一役。归命必然是全部，一归全归，没有百分之几十。归命没有替代品，必须“我”亲自到位。世上既没有任何东西价值超过生命，也就没有任何的善事功德能大过归命。即使没有一丝一毫的善功，但只归命，便拥有阿弥陀佛一切。即使有天大的善功，没有归命，那善功还是少的。

学佛修行的全部，便是归命阿弥陀佛。

### **Entrusting Our Lives to Amitabha**

Amitabha Buddha's supremely compassionate summons is for us to entrust our lives to him. It is also a solemn instruction.

Amitabha intends fully to saturate our lives and replace them with his own life, so he asks us to entrust ourselves to him. It's like an ocean calling out to drops of water. When a tiny drop merges into the ocean, it is immediately suffused with all oceanic life. As we ordinary beings entrust our lives to Amitabha, our hearts are promptly immersed in his life, which covers the entire Dharma realm.

We know from the wording alone – “entrust our lives” – that we can gain Buddhahood simply by reciting *Namo Amitabha Buddha*. No more doctrinal proof is needed. So long as we entrust ourselves to Amitabha and become one with him, how can we fail to achieve Buddhahood?

Amitabha wishes thoroughly to change our fate, which is samsaric, distorted, defiled and impure. So he calls upon us to entrust our lives. This can be compared to the maintenance of vehicles. One must drive his car into the garage for upkeep. Amitabha does not apply other methods or materials to refurbish us. He uses his own self to fulfill and replace us – his pure and enlightened Buddha body.

“Entrusting my life” means that I abandon my ego and put “myself” into the hands of Amitabha for disposal as he sees fit. It means that my ego

dies and the Buddha lives. Only when the ego is dead can space be vacated for Amitabha to come alive in the domain that belonged to me.

But the ego is cunning indeed. When I say “I entrust my life” and surrender myself to Amitabha, my ego easily finds a substitute – virtue and meritorious deeds – and sneaks back stealthily. My ego is fully aware that it will die in the hands of Amitabha, so it disguises itself and produces specious arguments to make use of goodness and merit to evade its destiny. The ploy always works and the ego muddles through every time. Some Buddhists vow daily, even all life long, to entrust themselves, but never really do.

We each entrust our lives to Amitabha one time. Once we do so, entrustment is accomplished and lasts forever. We must entrust entirety, not a fraction of our lives. And it must be done by “me,” in person; there is no substitute. Since nothing in this world is more precious than life, no virtue or meritorious deed can surpass the entrusting of lives. I may have no shred of virtue, but if I entrust myself to Amitabha Buddha, I acquire everything he possesses. A person’s positive actions, however great, can never be sufficient if he does not entrust his life to Amitabha.

All of Dharma learning and practice is no more than entrusting our lives to Amitabha.

## “忏悔”与“后悔”

“忏悔”与“后悔”，虽然都是悔，但其意义、作用大不相同，若不知二者差别，嘴上说的是忏悔，心里实际是后悔，将对我们的身心十分不利。

忏悔是面对佛菩萨、三宝、天地神祇、父母、大德师长等尊境，真诚发露，表白自己的过错，希望获得尊境的洗净、救赎、安慰、原谅、加持，而洗心革面、重新做人，具有新的勇气与力量。

后悔基本是自己内心的嘀咕、痛悔、烦恼，即使对人说出口，对方也不具备洗净、救赎的力量。

忏悔是开放的，后悔却让罪封闭了心灵。

忏悔是生路，后悔却是死路。

忏悔是扔下罪的包袱，重新出发，轻装上阵；后悔是背上罪的负担，陷在罪业的阴影中，难以自拔。

忏悔得清净，后悔增浊染。

忏悔净除业障，后悔增加缠缚。

忏悔的力量向上，后悔却让人的心沉堕。

忏悔面向未来，获得新生；后悔没在过去，循回老路。

忏悔是从内在长出新肉，后悔却是重揭伤疤。

忏悔是佛门重要的修行方法，后悔只是世间常见的负面情绪。

同样犯过，同样是悔，一者超升，一者堕落，根本原因在于对境不同，价值面向不同，果效全然不同。

对境越是尊贵殊胜，忏悔的力量、果效越是明显。

最殊胜的忏悔对境是佛中之王的阿弥陀佛，最殊胜的忏悔方法是称念“南无阿弥陀佛”名号。《观经》明一声称念南无阿弥陀佛，灭八十亿劫生死重罪，直超弥陀佛国，往生报土。

“南无阿弥陀佛”是实相法，称名即是实相忏。实相忏如阳光出，群暗消，一切重罪无不灭除。其余忏法，凡夫行之，只能灭小小罪，而且有时处诸缘诸般限制，故远不如称名念佛。

善导大师说：“念念称名常忏悔。”

《观经》又名《净除业障生诸佛前》。

人的内心有不平，有创伤，有痛悔，需要倾诉，愿得安抚，一定要找准对境，即对方必须有能力、有慈悲洗净、安抚我们的心。不然，说还不如不说，说了会伤害同样是凡夫，同样有创伤、有痛悔、需要安抚的人，会给我们更大的伤害，自害害人，辗转相害。

阿弥陀佛没有消化不了的罪，有什么心里话，难过话，无人倾诉的忧悲苦恼，难以抑制的痛悔忧伤，尽情向阿弥陀佛倾倒。

南无阿弥陀佛。一切平安！

## **Repentance or Regret?**

Repentance and regret are quite different in terms of their significance and function, even though both involve an element of feeling sorry for wrongdoing. Ignorance of the difference may cause us to repent in speech but in fact regret at heart, something quite harmful to our mind and body.

To repent is to sincerely reveal and confess our wrongdoings in front of those we honor such as Buddhas, Bodhisattvas, the Three Gems, deities in heaven and on earth, parents, learned masters and teachers. We beg for purification, salvation, comfort, forgiveness, and blessings, vowing to reform ourselves, turn over a new leaf, and move on with renewed courage and power.

To regret, however, is basically to mutter, lament and worry about our faults. Even if we tell others about those flaws, they have no power to purify and deliver us.

Repentance opens up our heart while regret shuts it with the offenses inside.

Repentance is a way out whereas regret is a blind alley.

When we repent, we lay down the burden of our wrongdoing, and start afresh without feeling weighed down. When we regret our evildoings, we still carry their weight, which bogs us down in the mire of bad karma, and we are unable to extricate ourselves from it.

Repentance purifies us while regret defiles us further.

Repentance eliminates our karmic obstructions, but regret ensnares us more tightly in the karmic trap.

Repentance is uplifting while regret is depressing.

When a person repents, he looks forward and is given a new life. When a person regrets, he remains immersed in the past and easily slips back into his former vice.

Repentance helps to generate new tissue from the inside. Regret reopens old wounds.

Repentance is an important Buddhist practice, but regret is merely a commonplace negative emotion among humans.

For the same mistake and with a similar sense of remorse, we are raised to a higher plane of existence by the former but dragged down to lower realms by the latter. The fundamental reason is the different honored ones before whom we repent and the difference in value orientation between the two approaches. Hence, there is a big distinction in the result.

The more esteemed the being before whom we repent, the more powerful and noticeable the effect will be.

The most sublime being before whom we can repent is Amitabha Buddha and the supreme repentance method is to recite "*Namo Amitabha Buddha*." The Contemplation Sutra makes it clear that a single recitation is enough to eradicate eight billion *kalpas* of our grave karmic offences. It also enables us to gain rebirth in the Pure Land, a Realm of Rewards, transcending all stages of Bodhisattva practice.

"*Namo Amitabha Buddha*" is absolute reality. Therefore, to recite Amitabha's name is to repent at the level of absolute reality. Repenting at this level is like seeing the rising sun, which instantaneously eliminates all darkness: all our grave defilements are eradicated completely. Other methods of penitence practiced by ordinary beings can only expunge minor karmic obstructions. They are also restricted by time, place and other conditions, so they are much inferior to the method of name-recitation.

Master Shandao says, "To recite [Amitabha's name] regularly is to repent frequently."

The Contemplation Sutra is also named the Purification and Elimination of Karmic Hindrances and Attaining Rebirth in the Presence of the Buddhas.

When we are aggrieved, traumatized and feel contrite, we yearn to have someone listen to us and comfort us. It is, however, important that we find the appropriate being: someone who has the power and compassion to purify and soothe our hearts. If not, we had better keep things to ourselves since our confession will hurt the listener, who is also an ordinary being burdened with trauma and contrition, and who is equally thirsty for peace of mind. We will end up hurting ourselves more and causing harm to others through a chain reaction.

There is no vice which is too much for Amitabha Buddha to stomach. We may pour out to him our innermost thoughts, grief, unspoken sorrows and worries, and uncontrollable contrition and afflictions.

*Namo Amitabha Buddha. May we all have peace!*

## 松子与松树

一棵高大的松树，干枝苍劲，万针迎风，当初却是从一粒看不起眼的松子长出的。这一粒小小的松子里面已经包含了未来大树的每一节树枝、每一片树皮、每一叶松针的全部信息，不过我们看不出，须待因缘显现而已。

一心归命阿弥陀佛愿往生，这一心当中也包含有成佛菩提树的所有功德庄严，你是否能相信呢？此即以果地觉，为因地心。一般人看不出，也就不信念佛成佛。

心念口称的“南无阿弥陀佛”难道不是佛种吗！如同松子成松树，念佛成佛是自然。

## Pine Seeds and Pine Trees

A soaring pine tree with a strong, upright trunk and countless needles facing the wind, grew from a tiny pine seed. That seed, however, contains the entire template of the future tree, including its every branch, pine needle and inch of bark. But when we look at the seed, the

template is not visible; it will only manifest when the proper conditions appear.

Likewise, if we single-mindedly entrust our lives to Amitabha Buddha and wish to be reborn in the Pure Land, that single-mindedness encompasses all the merits, virtues and adornments of the *bodhi* tree of enlightenment. Can you believe that? It is to take the enlightenment of the Buddha's achievement ground as the essence of the practitioner's causal ground. Ordinary beings cannot perceive this, however, and hence disbelieve that reciting Amitabha's name leads to Buddhahood.

If we think of Amitabha Buddha in our minds and verbally recite his name, we sow the seeds of Buddhahood in our lives. We will quite naturally become Buddhas through name-recitation, the way a pine seed grows into a pine tree.

## 自由

人都想过自由的生活，自由自在，无拘无束；出家人更是如此。一钵千家饭，孤身万里游；高高山顶立，深深海底行；芒鞋踏破岭头云，云水生涯云水僧……想必引发古今多少出家子的神往。

但自由是什么，怎样才能臻至自由之境，对此若无正确认识，恐怕初衷虽好，结局不佳。

兹说几点，供青年出家朋友参考。

### 一、自由在内心，不在外境。

若以为外在环境不好，让我不自由，想通过改变外在环境而达至自由，无疑走入了死胡同。譬如一个人身上被枷锁，动弹有碍，不知破枷除锁，反而嫌房子太小拘缚了他，带着枷锁搬砖挑瓦，以求盖更大的房子，住着宽敞自由。不要说盖的过程，披枷戴锁，平白增加执碍，就是盖起宽大的房子，他又岂能增加一点点的自由度呢？心如枷锁，境如房子，心的枷锁捆缚了我们，不得自由；至于环境，宽得很呢。欲求自由，破除心的枷锁才是正招。

### 二、自由在此处，不在他处。

有人嫌单位不好、团体不好、地方不好、工作不好，以为换了一定会好。外境固然有影响，但若随遇而安，自由就在此处；不能随遇而安，挑精拣肥，也就难得自由了。

### 三、自由在当下，不在未来。

有人总是盼望着未来：“我现在不自由，明天、以后总会自由的。等我有钱了，有房了，有……，就自由了。”他们便这样无尽地盼望又失望，度过一生。

譬如有人一时得了忘忆症，以为自己的脚丢了，跑着到处找脚，以为前几步必有脚，不断地拉动双脚狂奔，始终也找不到。其实只要立定脚跟，当下站稳，脚就实实在在地承载着全身，哪里用得着狂奔乱走？狂奔乱走，又哪里能找到脚呢？

### 四、自由是现成，不用寻找。

“现成”意味着本来就存在，只要享受，不能新造，弥满四周，岂用寻找。如空。禅话说：“谁缚你来？”既无人缚，岂非本来即是自由人。但我们都陷于“我执”，“我执”也就是“执我”，我执缚了我，我字不破，岂得自由。

### 五、自由在佛里，不在人里。

佛大自在，人不自在。心、佛、众生，三无差别。人心只要躲在佛里面，即是自由自在，此是人得究竟自由之唯一途径。当下念佛，愿生净土，乘佛愿力，随遇而安，即是最大自由，无时无处不自由。

那些念着佛，一边口称深信念佛法门，一边嫌环境不好，到处寻找自由的人，恰如打着灯笼找光明；希望更能深入法义，以法润心，心得自由，才能充分享受自由。

另有几句提示：

自私不得自由，利他才得自由；

自大不得自由，谦卑才得自由；

爱己不得自由，爱人才得自由；

虛假不得自由，真诚才得自由；

执拗不得自由，随缘才得自由；

逃避不得自由，担当才得自由。

## Freedom

Everyone is looking for a life of freedom, a life of leisure and liberty, a life without hindrance and restraint. This is especially true of monastics. “With a bowl of alms received from a thousand homes, I roam alone for a million miles”; “I stand high on the mountaintop and stride along the deepest seabed”; “walking in a pair of straw shoes among the cloudy summits, I am a cloud-and-water monk who leads a cloud-and-water life”.... These verses must have aroused the aspiration of numerous monastics past and present.

Yet, what is freedom? How can we attain the state of a free mind? Without a correct understanding of this, one may end up failing, even if he starts out with good intentions.

Here are several points for young monastics' reference:

1. Freedom rests in our mind, not the external environment.

If we place the blame for a lack of freedom on the external environment and thus try to change the outside world, we will certainly meet a dead end. Then, like a person in shackles, we will move with the greatest difficulty as we drag around our impediments. Worst of all, we will be completely unaware that what we need to do is break the shackles. Instead, we could mistakenly believe that our small house is what inhibits our freedom. We will tote lumber, bricks and tiles in order to build a bigger house — but our shackles will only increase the difficulties of construction. Even if we manage to complete the house, do we really attain even a bit of additional freedom? Our mind can be compared to the shackles, and the environment to the house. It is our mindset that is our bondage; this is what shackles us and prevents us from finding true freedom. As for the environment, it is commodious indeed. We must break our mental shackles to pursue freedom.

2. Freedom lies here, not anywhere else.

Some people moan about their employer, job, place of residence or spouse, and long to find one that is more desirable. Of course, the external environment influences our quality of life. But when we take things as they are, freedom lies right here. Those who cannot adapt to their surroundings and act fastidiously will always find it hard to attain freedom.

3. Freedom exists in this present moment, not in the future.

Most of us always live with high hopes for the future: “I am not free at the moment, but the day will come when I will be free, either tomorrow or someday in the future. I will be free when I have enough money, have a house, have a car, have, have, have ...” Thus we live out our lives in a vicious cycle of endless expectations and endless disappointments.

This can be compared to a man with amnesia who, in his delusion, believes his feet are missing and rushes about to look for them. He is convinced that they’re only several steps ahead of him — around the next corner, perhaps. He runs about wildly, but try as he may he cannot find them. In fact, if he stops running and stands still, his feet are right there, firmly holding up his body. There is absolutely no point in scurrying around; how could he possibly find his feet that way?

4. Freedom is already there; we needn’t search for it.

“Already there” means that it always exists. All we have to do is enjoy it, without imagining that it is our job to create it. Freedom permeates everything and everywhere; there is no need to go looking for it. It is just like *sunyata* (“emptiness” in Sanskrit). As the Chan case (koan) says: “Who binds you?” Since no one binds me, I must have been free from the beginning. Even so, we are all entangled in the net of ego, which means “grasping at self.” It is the ego that binds us. So long as the ego remains intact, we will not be free.

5. Freedom is within the Buddhas, not in human beings.

A Buddha enjoys absolute freedom, but humans are not free at all. Yet there is no distinction between the nature of mind, the Buddha and sentient beings. When we hide our mind inside the Buddha’s, we are

free and at ease. This is the only way for sentient beings to attain the ultimate freedom. Let us immediately recite Amitabha's name and aspire to rebirth in the Pure Land. If we rely on the power of Amitabha's vows and accept the world as it is, we enjoy the greatest freedom, and we are entirely free at all times and in all places.

Some reciters claim they have deep faith in the Pure Land teachings. But they keep complaining about their surroundings, casting about for some idealized, imaginary freedom. They are similar to one who holds a lit lantern but goes searching high and low for a source of light. I hope we will all go deeply into the Pure Land teachings. When we nourish our hearts with the Dharma, our mind is set free, and we can enjoy freedom fully.

Some additional reminders:

Be altruistic, not selfish, and you will attain freedom;

Be humble, not arrogant, and you will attain freedom;

Be philanthropic, not self-obsessed, and you will attain freedom;

Be genuine, not hypocritical, and you will attain freedom;

Be easygoing, not stubborn, and you will attain freedom;

Be responsible, not evasive, and you will attain freedom.

## 说话不算数

总有莲友要我去说法，甚至如“逼供”一样，跪地不起。我也总是点头应允说“好啊！好啊！”然后会补上一句：“不过，天下说话最不算数的可能就是我了。”

为什么我说话不能算数？因为不能自主；谁说话算数？因缘。

世间万事，因缘作主，个人是作不了主的。也就有今日答应的事，明日改变；又有本来没想的事，一时现前。这并非一开始即不认真，而是大家都要习惯于变数，随顺于因缘。我们尽管可以计划，但也要想到：计划赶不上变化。

尽管世间万事因缘不定，却有一件决定不改变的事实，有一句对千人万人，说千遍万遍，遍遍都决定算数的话，我们就信这一句就够了。那就是：“念佛必定往生净土，必定成佛！”

### **My Promise Doesn't Count**

Our fellow practitioners often ask me to give Dharma talks. Some even kneel before me, “forcing” the issue by refusing to get up. I would nod my consent, saying “Okay, okay!” Then I would add, “But my words may be the most unreliable promise under the sun.”

Why don't my words count? Because I have no control. Whose words count? Those of *nidana* – the chain of causation.

It is *nidana* that determines all happenings in the world, not individual persons. Something promised today may be changed tomorrow. Unforeseen developments can arise suddenly. It's not that the initial commitment was made too casually. We all need to get used to variability and accommodate ourselves to the workings of *nidana*. We should plan, by all means, but we ought also to bear in mind that planning cannot keep pace with change.

Though nothing is certain in this world, one fact remains absolutely unalterable. A promise has been made to all sentient beings, innumerable times, with each time counting. To rely on it alone is enough. The pledge: “All who recite *Namo Amitabha Buddha* will be reborn in the Pure Land and attain Buddhahood!”

### **人人有权赞佛**

净土法门所有说法不过是赞叹阿弥陀佛名号功德不可思议。

赞佛功德，人人可以赞，人人都应该赞，甚至人人都必须赞。这里没有任何特权、任何限制，没有规定说谁可以赞佛，谁不可以赞佛。

赞佛是发自内心的，是他人不能替代的。我受佛恩我赞佛。

所以净土法门人人可以说法，怎样领受弥陀救度就怎样宣说，并非只有出家人才能说法赞佛。

经言：“如我今者赞叹阿弥陀佛不可思议功德之利，六方各有恒河沙诸佛，出广长舌相，说诚实言：汝等众生，当信是称赞不可思议功德，一切诸佛所护念经。”释迦诸佛如是称赞，诸大菩萨如是称赞，历代祖师如是称赞，我等后生亦当如是信、如是赞。

### **Everyone Has the Right to Acclaim Amitabha**

All the teachings of the Pure Land path merely describe the unfathomable merit and virtues of Amitabha Buddha's name.

The merits of Amitabha are available for anyone to commend. There are no special privileges, no restrictions. Nor are there any rules governing who is entitled to do so.

Acclaiming a Buddha is a heartfelt deed that cannot be done on behalf of someone else. Whoever receives the grace of a Buddha should offer praises personally.

Therefore every practitioner in the Pure Land school, and not only monastics, is entitled to expound the Pure Land Dharma and praise Amitabha Buddha. The person should do so according to the way he or she experienced Amitabha's deliverance.

The *Amitabha Sutra* says, "Just as I now commend the unfathomable power and virtue of Amitabha Buddha, Buddhas in the six directions, as numerous as grains of sand in the Ganges River, all extend their long, broad tongues speaking these words of truth: 'Sentient beings should have faith in this sutra, acclaimed as containing unfathomable merit and supported by all the Buddhas.'" As Shakyamuni Buddha — and all the Buddhas, Bodhisattvas and generations of lineage masters — acclaim such merits, we latter-day generations should have faith in their words and follow suit.

### **灯的信仰**

灯在暗中，却信仰光明。

有人说：“整个世界都是暗的，就你一点灯有什么用呢？”

“是这样吗？那我出去看看吧。”

灯走出房间，到院落、山场绕了一大圈回来了，说：“我看见山、树、花、草、虫、兽，什么都看见了，独独没有看见暗。我喊暗、找暗，也没找到。你说的暗，我真的不理解。”

暗盒虽在白昼，却信仰黑暗。

有人说：“世界光明一片，明照万物，怎么就你守着暗呢？”

“啊？什么是光明？我也出去看看吧。”

它乘飞机，渡轮船，上天入海，转了一大圈回来了，说：“我所到之处都是暗，什么也看不见，哪里有什么光明。”

灯与暗都各自守着他们的信，也都自证、自得了他们所信的。

灯能照见万物，独独见不着暗；暗能吞噬万物，独独吞不下光。

我们要作暗中的灯，即使我们自己作不了灯，也要擎一盏灯在手。

## **The Faith of a Lamp**

A lamp may be in darkness, but its faith is luminous.

Someone said, “When the whole world is dark, what good will your little lamp do?”

“Is that so? Let me go and check.”

The lamp went out of the house and then returned, having traversed courtyards and mountains. It said, “I have seen mountains, trees, flowers, grass, insects, animals – everything but darkness. I called out to darkness and searched for it, but I couldn’t find it. I really have no idea of the darkness you spoke of.”

A closed box, though bathed in daylight, puts its faith in darkness.

Someone said, “The world, and everything in, is bright. Why do you cling to darkness?”

“Oh, what is brightness? Let me have a look.”

After a long journey by airplane and ship, the box came back and said, “It was dark wherever I went. I couldn’t see anything. There’s no brightness at all!”

Both the lamp and the box remained firm in their beliefs – and each confirmed its own conviction.

Although it illuminates all things, light cannot see darkness. And darkness can swallow everything except light.

We should be a lamp in darkness. Even if we cannot be one, we should hold a light in our hands.

## 圣贤教育与凡夫教育

中国自古以来缺少的不是圣贤教育，而是凡夫教育。

圣贤教育，是现代中国人再也不能背负之重。

不将这副重担放下，中国恐怕没有希望，子子孙孙恐怕都要被压住，抬不起头，挺不直腰，迈不开步。

希圣希贤，成圣成贤，是人类共同的美好愿望。“人人皆可为尧舜。”“一切众生皆有佛性，有佛性者皆得成佛。”给人以无穷的希望与力量。

圣贤教育与凡夫教育的区别不在目标，而在现实身份定位。

圣贤教育，施教者必须是圣贤，没有凡夫可以培养出圣贤的；受教者虽不即是圣贤，也要具备成圣作贤的资质，如木虽不是凳，但可作凳，不如水永不可为凳。

在今天推行圣贤教育，施教者、受教者若自许、自肯为圣贤、准圣贤，此种定位缺失，恐将注定失败。如同演戏，演得再逼真，也是

假的。圣贤教育，教得再好，做到极致，无奈也是表面活计，假圣贤，人根不堪故。

凡夫教育指体认凡夫性，体认到自己是凡夫，有不可突破的局限性、罪性、障碍性，因为绝底绝望，完全死心，在彻底哀痛、不可救药绝望之地，心祈一种伟大慈悲力量的救度，而愿归命仰投，即置之死地而后生。

难道这种凡夫性也需要教才能明白吗？是的。人由于骄傲、虚伪，并不能深入体察凡夫罪性，而习惯以种种善行功德乔装打扮，冒充圣贤姿态。人贵有自知之明，但人已失去自知之明。

若以东西方来比较，西方基督教是凡夫教育，提倡原罪论，而东方儒文化为主属于圣贤教育。于佛教，圣道门属完美的圣贤教育，净土宗则属于典型的凡夫教育。

佛教是特别的，不论是圣贤教育，还是凡夫教育，两方面都达致极点，而又相互圆融，并行不背，方法、原理、修证阶位、功德利益都极为清晰明了。

凡夫教育有什么好处呢？

一、符合实际。大家都是凡夫，不过体认不到，没有向这方面深入。真实，是一切真理的基础，起步若不真，步步皆作假。罪，不是真理的死敌；假，才是真理的死敌。

二、心得释然宽怀。凡夫教育的背景是一种伟大慈悲的力量包容、净化、拯救有罪的凡夫，使凡夫不致于死，而走向生。凡夫的罪、有限、不净、重担、背负……尽可以向这伟大慈悲的力量倾泻，这样人心便得到释怀净化，社会才显出安乐祥和。

一个普通人有力量化解自心中根本之罪吗？能灭贪瞋痴，断见思烦恼吗？不可能！故圣贤教育在当代对绝大多数人也就是走不通的死路。

三、先死后生，转凡成圣。以佛教净土宗来说，凡夫教育即是机法两种深信，先认定自己是罪恶生死凡夫、无有出离之缘，才能无疑无虑，乘佛愿力，定得往生，必致成佛。

一个罪人没有把自心的罪完全暴露在佛光下，受佛光的炙烤、照耀，无地自容，无所逃遁，无处藏身，只能乖乖就范；而急急用种种伪善（不离贪瞋之世间有漏善业）的包装把罪包裹起来，让无明的毒液好端端封存着，一点也没动到它的底，接着便在包装上雕龙画凤，彩绘油漆，刻出种种圣贤的模样，这济什么事呢？正如盛满粪尿的花瓶。

要凡夫做圣贤很累、很难，除了极少数人如鲤鱼跳龙门，跳超凡夫界限，真入圣贤无碍之域，多数人皆是画虎不成反类犬，不仅圣贤没做成，就是凡夫也做得不清不白，没鼻子没眼，伸又伸不直，曲又曲不得，成了内在压抑、扭曲，外表混沌、模糊的怪物。

做凡夫要做得清白，能屈能伸，有鼻有眼，必须要信受弥陀救度。

人能信受弥陀救度，内在佛性的生命便得苏醒，这是进入圣贤之域乃至成佛的必要前提。

既不伪作圣人，也不贬抑凡夫，借用孔老夫子的话，“君子素位而行”，在凡夫素于凡夫，以凡夫身份，老实念佛。是心作佛，是心是佛，佛岂不圣乎！此是凡夫希圣希贤、成佛作祖最现实稳当的途径、捷径，免去多少捏怪、造作。

### **Education for Saints or Ordinary People?**

What China has lacked since ancient times is education for ordinary people, not that for saints (virtuous people of exemplary moral standards).

Education for saints is a burden that contemporary Chinese can no longer bear.

China will have little hope if this burden is not removed, with successive generations of its children being unable to hold their heads high, walk tall and move forward.

To be a saint or a virtuous person is a common aspiration of mankind. Sayings such as these instill great hopes and strength in people: “Everyone can be as virtuous as the two ancient sagely emperors Yao and Shun” and “All sentient beings have Buddha-nature and can become enlightened.”

The difference between education for saints and that for ordinary people lies in how the stakeholders are positioned, not in the educational objective.

In the former, those who teach must be saints themselves, as ordinary people can never nurture saints. The students, though they are not yet saints, must have the aptitude and capability of becoming one. For example, a piece of wood, although not a bench, could be made into a bench, whereas water can never become one.

Education for saints today is bound to fail unless both the teachers and the students are sure of their capabilities and pride themselves in being saints and saints-to-be respectively. If not, the whole thing will be like a stage play which, despite its brilliant performance, remains a world of make-believe. So it is with education for saints. No matter how good and refined the teaching is, sadly, it can only be a façade: ordinary beings simply do not have the aptitude and capacity to be a saint.

As to education for ordinary people, we must recognize that our capability is that of ordinary beings, with the immutable limitations, iniquitous nature and karmic hindrances of humans. In utter hopelessness and deep sorrow, we yearn for some great and compassionate power to free us from a state of desolation. We are willing to entrust our lives completely to this power. This is our last-ditch effort to obtain a new lease on life.

Does a person need to be educated about ordinary human nature? Unfortunately yes. Due to arrogance and hypocrisy, people fail to gain any insight into their iniquitous nature as ordinary beings. Customarily, they don the costumes of saints and act in a virtuous manner through a multitude of meritorious deeds. It is important that we should know our limitations. However, these days no one seems able to do this anymore.

Comparative studies of the East and West suggest that the Christian doctrine of original sin in the West amounts to education for ordinary people, while the dominant Confucianism in the East can be said to be education for saints. In Buddhism, the schools of the Sacred Path represent perfect education for saints, while the Pure Land school is a typical kind of education for ordinary people.

Buddhism is unique in that its education for both saints and ordinary beings are equally sublime. They exist side by side without conflict, and are compatible with each other. Their respective methodologies, theories, levels of attainment, merits and benefits are all defined in an extremely clear manner.

What are the advantages of education for ordinary people?

1. It is realistic. We are all ordinary beings although we lack the ability to recognize our ordinary nature and have not studied it deeply. Reality is the foundation of all truths. If the first step is false, all subsequent steps are false. The greatest rival of truth is falsehood, not wrongdoing.

2. It sets our hearts at ease. Behind education for ordinary people is a great and compassionate power which embraces, purifies and delivers iniquitous ordinary people. It saves us from dying and gives us life. Whatever offenses, limitations, impurities, burdens or chips on our shoulders we have, we can pour our hearts out to this great and compassionate power. With our visceral worries removed, the society we live in will become a happy and harmonious place.

Is an ordinary being able to expunge his own deep-rooted wrongdoings? Can he eradicate greed, anger and ignorance, and free himself from the delusions of views and thoughts? Certainly not! As such, education for saints is a dead end for most of us in this day and age.

3. It gives us a second life, transforming us from ordinary people into saints. As far as the Pure Land school of Buddhism is concerned, education for ordinary people involves two kinds of deep faith: firstly, firmly believing that we are iniquitous ordinary beings subject to endless rebirth and, since time immemorial, have died and been reincarnated, without any hope of ending such cycles; and secondly, deeply trusting that only Amitabha Buddha can deliver us through the amazing power of his 48 vows. If we are resolute in these beliefs, we are certain to be reborn in the Pure Land and attain Buddhahood without fear or worry.

An iniquitous ordinary being who fails to expose fully her innermost offenses under the light of the Buddha is not letting her transgressions bathe in sunshine and be illuminated by it. Her defilements remain unrevealed, are in hiding and unashamed, and are still trying to put up a fierce resistance. In desperate attempts to keep her wrongdoings under

wraps, she quickly invokes a multitude of feigned virtues (none other than worldly flawed merits infused by greed, anger and ignorance) to package them. The venom of delusion sits tightly inside the package without being disturbed one bit. She then decorates the parcel with the most exquisite art to portray a saintly look. But what good could this bring? It is like a beautiful vase filled with excrement.

It is difficult and exhausting for ordinary people to pose as saints. With the exception of a very few who have successfully jumped beyond the bounds of ordinary beings, like the carp that leapt over the Dragon's Gate (a Chinese proverb meaning a brave and successful attempt) and arrived at the defilement-free realm of the saints, most of us simply end up with a pathetic travesty, trying to draw a tiger, which only looks like a dog (meaning that if you try to copy a genius, you will only make yourself ridiculous). Not only do we fail to become saints, we cannot even be proper ordinary beings as we are completely distorted: a face without nose and eyes; limbs that cannot stretch or bend. In short, a monster with a suppressed and twisted mind and a nebulous and blurry appearance.

If we want to become ordinary beings who are innocent, and able to withstand any situation in life and also to tell good from bad, we must have faith in Amitabha Buddha and accept his deliverance.

Having faith in Amitabha's deliverance will awaken the Buddha-nature within us, a prerequisite to gaining access to the realm of saints and even attaining Buddhahood.

We should neither pretend to be saints, nor run down ordinary people. To borrow from Confucius: "An honorable man acts in accordance with his station in life." As ordinary people we should be content with our place, reciting the name of Amitabha Buddha in such a capacity scrupulously. Devoting ourselves whole-heartedly to aspiring to become a Buddha means we are aspiring to become saints as well. Hence Amitabha-recitation is the most realistic approach and surest shortcut for ordinary people to become Buddhas and saints, saving us much fakery and hypocrisy.

## 佛法不可比

身为佛弟子，听到世人说佛教是文化，佛教是哲学，即使不开口相辩，心中当然不会认同。但当有人说佛教是宗教，且每每拿来与其他宗教相比时，很多佛弟子便默认了，也会自觉不自觉与世间宗教相比较。

但请记住：佛教是真理，并非世间法之宗教。“诸行无常，诸法无我，涅槃寂静”之三法印，“真如实相”之一法印有任何宗教的印痕、气息吗？

佛法是究竟世出世解脱真理，永远不可以世间染污、束缚之法相比类。至于佛教一度沦落为宗教，那又是另当别论。也因为沦落为宗教，便掩去了佛法的真理之光。要以佛法救众生于水火，可能还要先把佛法从宗教形式的桎梏中解放出来。

### **Buddhism Has No Comparison**

When hearing people claim that Buddhism is a culture or a philosophy, Buddhist practitioners will certainly deny it in their minds even if they are reluctant to debate them. But if someone calls Buddhism a religion and compares it with other creeds, many Buddhists may give tacit consent and even draw parallels between it and other worldly religions, consciously or otherwise.

But let us remember: Buddhism is the truth, not a worldly religion. Is there any trace of religion in the teachings of the Three Dharma Seals (impermanence, non-self and nirvana) or the Seal of the One Truth (True Suchness, Ultimate Reality)?

Buddhism is the absolute truth for worldly and extra-worldly liberation. There is no comparison between it and the defiled, constrained doctrines of this world. That Buddhism was once reduced to a religion is an issue best left to another discussion. It was by virtue of such reduction that the light of truth in Buddhism was eclipsed. For sentient beings to obtain relief from misery and suffering through the Dharma, it may be necessary first to free Buddhism from the shackles imposed by the form of religion.

## 我在中国想念你

按：随着法门的日益发展，善导大师的净土教法引起了越来越多国际人士的关注。多个国家的净土行人纷纷在其个人 facebook 上转载有关善导大师净土思想的文章。今由海外莲友发心，特开设净宗法师的官方 facebook 主页（名为：Master Jingzong 净宗法师），将陆续发表净土宗英文文章，满足英语世界莲友闻法、学法的需求。

下文是应净土居士的提议，为 Master Jingzong 净宗法师 facebook 主页上写的开场白：“我在中国想念你”。

南无阿弥陀佛，大家好！

我叫释净宗，是一位佛教出家法师。我正在中国弘愿寺，心里想着世界各地的你们。

人不认识也会想吗？是的，不认识也会想，这种想不会有任何的功利性，也不会局限于因认识而有的记忆片断中，因而更深沉，更清净，更本质，更广大。

窗外阳光明媚，群树随风摇曳，快乐地生长。不论在中国、美国、俄罗斯、巴西，阳光下的一棵树都是一样的。一个太阳下，生长在世界各国的人也不应该有太大的差别。

语言会有障碍，心却没有障碍，当语言交流不便时，我们可以用爱心交流。人心会有障碍，佛的名号却没有障碍，当我们心力有所不及时，可以念“南无阿弥陀佛”。

来者都是有缘人。希望我们共同了解这一句“南无阿弥陀佛”，他是我们生命的阳光；我们是阳光中的生长的树。

我在这里为你们念“南无阿弥陀佛”，并希望在阿弥陀佛的净土见到您。无限祝福！

释净宗于中国弘愿寺

## **I Am Thinking of You in China**

*Editor's Note:* As the Pure Land school develops, more and more non-Chinese are showing interest in Master Shandao's Pure Land lineage. Practitioners from different countries have begun to share on Facebook English material and posts relating to the teachings of Master Shandao. Spurred by our overseas Dharma friends, we have worked with them to launch an official Facebook page for Master Jingzong ("Master Jingzong 淨宗法師"). It will feature English articles on the Pure Land school and cater to the need of English-speaking practitioners for access to the Dharma as they study and learn it.

Master Jingzong, responding to a proposal by Householder Jingtū, composed these opening remarks to his Facebook page. They are titled "I Am Thinking of You in China."

Greetings – *Namo Amitabha Buddha!*

My name is Shi Jingzong, a Buddhist Dharma master. I am presently in Hongyuan Monastery, China, thinking about all of you around the world.

Do people think about others they don't know? Yes, they do. This kind of mindfulness is free of utilitarian calculations; it is also unlimited by the fragmented memories that make up our knowledge of others. As a result, it goes deeper. It is purer, broader and more rudimentary.

Outside my window the sunlight glistens and the trees sway with the wind, happily alive. Whether in China, America, Russia, Europe or Brazil, trees in the sunshine are alike. Beneath the same sun, people in various countries worldwide shouldn't really be that different.

Language may be a separator, but there is no barrier between minds. When language impedes dialogue, we can communicate with the love and compassion in our hearts. And when our hearts and minds fall short, the name of Amitabha Buddha remains free of all impediments. Whenever our mental and spiritual capabilities fail us, we can recite "*Namo Amitabha Buddha.*"

It is karma that brings us together here. Together, too, I hope we will seek to understand "*Namo Amitabha Buddha.*" For Amitabha is the sunshine in our lives; we are trees that are growing in the sunshine.

I would like to recite “Namo Amitabha” on your behalf, and hope to see you in the Pure Land of Amitabha Buddha. May you all be abundantly blessed!

- Shi Jingzong; Hongyuan Monastery, China

## “不”与“不”不一样

同样一件事，母亲说“不”，与警察说“不”不一样。一者爱心为本，一者法律无情。母亲说不，甚至呵责打骂，小孩子会更加贴近、抱住母亲的腿，边哭边抱；警察说不，犯人莫不恐惧惊逃。

同样，佛陀制戒说“此不可为”，和严肃的因果律说“此不可为”不一样。一者呵护有加，一者报应不爽。

又，圣道门说“不”，与净土门说“不”不一样。圣道门说“不”就是“不”，不断贪瞋痴烦恼，不破人法二执，决定不能出离生死、成就佛道。

净土门说“不”未必是“不”，为彰抑止之慈悲，不应有贪瞋，不可五逆谤法。此之说“不”反令造罪众生归命弥陀救度。

寺院、道场、团体必须要有规矩，也会说“不”，但应如母亲、弥陀说“不”，而不是如法律、因果说“不”；是以爱心为前提，不以惩罚为铁律。

## The Multiple Meanings of ‘No’

The word “no” has different meanings, depending on who says it. When a mother speaks it, she does so out of love. But when a policeman says it, he wants to enforce the law in a dispassionate manner. When a mother is saying no to, or even scolding or beating her child, the youngster gets closer to her, crying yet clinging to her leg at the same time. When a policeman says no, the criminal is scared and tries to run away.

In the same vein, when the Buddha laid down precepts governing the “don’ts,” they are not the same as the “don’ts” under the solemn law of cause and effect. The former is to protect us, while the latter prompts the rule of retribution.

Moreover, when the schools of the Sacred Path says “no,” the connotation is entirely different from the “no” of the Pure Land school. “No” in the former case means that one simply cannot end the cycle of rebirth and gain Buddhahood without eliminating the afflictions of greed, anger and delusion, and letting go of the duality of self and all things. The “no” is absolute.

But in the case of the Pure Land school, “no” is not necessarily absolute. When we are enjoined to avoid greed and anger, or committing the Five Gravest Transgressions, these are prohibitive exhortations stemming from great compassion. Such “no’s” actually have the effect of helping defiled beings entrust their lives to the deliverance of Amitabha Buddha.

There have to be rules in monasteries, Dharma centers and Buddhist communities, and “no” is used in these places. But such “no’s” should be expressed the way a mother or Amitabha Buddha would say them – and not as though they were legal principles or ineluctable laws of karma. The “no’s” should be rooted in love, rather than the steely spirit of punishment.

## 念佛与做人

佛要念，人要做。

是佛弟子，要好好念佛；是人，要好好做人。

净土法门，从果向因。佛为果，人为因。

念佛为先，做人为后；

念佛为主，做人为次；

念佛第一，做人第二；

念佛是根本，做人是枝末。

得根本必得枝末，能好好念佛必能好好做人；

失根本一切皆失。

只管教人念佛，不怕他只会念佛不会做人。如树根本活，自发枝叶，不必担心根活了却不会发芽。

人做不好，人不像人，是因为没念佛，这时不是教他做人，而要转教念佛。

不是做一个好人再来念佛，而是自知是一个恶人，必须念佛。前者以念佛只是锦上添花，后者以念佛为雪中送炭；前者骄傲，后者谦敬。

纵然有一百项优点，只要有骄傲一项缺点，所有的优点都会荡然无存，如同满碗的水，瞬间倾覆。即使有一百个缺点，只要有谦敬的心，便能像大海处低一样，众德之水自然注满。

靠自己，我们算是一个好人吗？能做一个好人吗？不能！罪恶生死凡夫，常没常流转，无有出离之缘。

一个罪人，有资格教人做好人吗？没有。

看不到念佛人能成佛，却看到他不会做人，不是他不会做人，而是看的人不会成佛。鸡蛋里挑骨头，看走了眼，不识人。

不认识念佛人，便不认识佛；因佛活在念佛人身上。

金币上是有泥污，可我们为什么要盯住那泥污，指认它是泥污呢？看不到金子，只看到泥，说明不认识金子。

### **Amitabha-Recitation and Being a Good Person**

It is essential that we recite the name of Amitabha Buddha; it is also crucial that each of us seeks to be a good person.

As Buddhists, we should recite Amitabha's name properly. As human beings, we should endeavor to act virtuously in all our affairs.

Pure Land teachings and practice go from consequence to cause. Amitabha Buddha is the consequence, and people are the cause.

Amitabha-recitation always comes before being a good person; it should be given priority. This is because Amitabha-recitation is the root, while

being a good person is the branch. The health of the branch will not be a problem if the root is strong. Hence, one who practices Amitabha-recitation will naturally conduct herself with virtue. But if you lose the root, you lose everything.

Just teach people to recite Amitabha's name; there is no need to worry that they will misbehave. This would be like worrying that a tree will not sprout leaf buds in the springtime. So long as the root is sound, the branches of the tree will issue a marvelous array of leaves, flowers and fruit.

The reason that someone does evil is that he is not an Amitabha-reciter. In this situation, it is necessary to teach him to recite Amitabha's name instead of teaching him to reform his actions.

One doesn't need to be a good person before starting Amitabha-recitation. It's because one knows he is an evil person that he needs to recite Amitabha's name. For such a person, Amitabha-recitation is a lifeline in a storm-tossed sea; for the person who believes she is already virtuous, Amitabha-recitation may seem like icing on the cake. But these two people illustrate the difference between humility and arrogance.

Even if one has already cultivated much virtue, a single moment of arrogance will nullify years of moral discipline. This is like a water-filled bowl that might tip over any moment. But if one has a humble mind, then, like a low-lying sea, he will naturally aggregate the waters of virtue, even though he is presently a moral reprobate.

Can we really be considered a good person if our virtue is the result of rigorous self-discipline? No! As Master Shandao says, "I am an iniquitous ordinary being subject to endless rebirth. Since time immemorial, I have died and been reborn, without hope of ever leaving the cycle of rebirth."

Is a person, heavy with negative karma, qualified to teach others to be good? No.

If a person criticizes an Amitabha-reciter for not behaving well, it suggests that the former is unable to become a Buddha as he cannot realize the reciter's assured attainment of Buddhahood. Such nitpicking shows he lacks perception and is a bad judge of others.

He who fails to recognize Amitabha-reciters cannot know Amitabha Buddha, because the Buddha lives on the reciters' bodies.

A gold coin may be covered in filth, but this does not diminish its value. If we reject such a coin, it means we have eyes only for dirt, not gold. The loss is ours.

## 心安

心不动才能安，动即不安。

心满足才安，不满足即不安。

无危险才安，有危险心不安。

没有恐惧才安，有恐惧即不安。

除了南无阿弥陀佛，世间没有安心法。

## Pacifying the Mind

Only a tranquil mind can be at ease. One that's restless is never easy.

Only a satisfied mind can be at peace. One that isn't, can't ever be so.

Only when danger is absent can there be a sense of security. If peril is present, our minds are anxious.

Only without fear can our hearts be settled. They will tremble if dread exists.

Except "*Namo Amitabha Buddha*," our world has no methods to pacify our hearts and minds.

## 善护这颗心

譬喻阳光照在草木上虽亮，不如照在金子上亮；佛光救度善人固然感动，不如救度恶人更让人感动。

这个世界可以有、也一定有不喜欢我的人，但在我们心中不应有不喜欢的人。我喜欢人，我欢喜；我恼恨人，我恼恨。只为自己欢喜，也要喜欢人。

外面是黑的，屋里更要光明；

外面是冷的，屋里更要温暖。

别人错误，我们更要正确；别人恼恨，我们更要慈愍。

不必唱高调，单是为了自己好，令自心欢喜，我们也要如此。

众生皆是自虐狂。我们疯狂地虐待自己那一颗无比贵重、无比柔嫩、无比亲切的心，似乎那根本不属于我们。我们因此饱受无量痛苦，付出惨重代价，但却至死不悔，说：“就是你，才让我这么痛苦。”尽管可以颠倒黑白，嫁祸于人，但却于事无补。

利人者必先自利，害人者必先自害。

这个世界自利利人者，少之又少；自害害他者，多之又多。

众生如中魔咒，浑然忘我，一意孤行，锲而不舍地从事自害害人。

### **Protect This Heart Carefully**

Just as sunlight shining on gold radiates more brightly when it shines on gold than it does on grass and trees, Amitabha Buddha's light delivers the wicked more touchingly than it does the virtuous.

There will always be people who don't like us, but in our hearts we should not dislike anyone. When we like others, we feel happy; when we hate others, we suffer. We should try to like other people — even if just for our own happiness.

The world is dark outside, so we need more light in the house of our hearts;

It is cold outside, so we need more warmth inside.

When others make mistakes, we should strive to be more precise; when others nurse a grudge, we should strive to be more compassionate.

There is no need for bragging or pretention; it is enough that, for our own benefit and happiness, we act in the above ways.

All of human society is based on masochism. We insanely torture our valuable, vulnerable and cordial hearts. It would seem that our hearts don't belong to us at all. We suffer unfathomable pain for this cruelty — truly, a heavy price. But we refuse to repent, even when death is near, and say to those around us: “It is *you* who cause me such pain.” We call black white, and white black, and shift the blame onto others. Such a useless gesture!

People who benefit others will benefit themselves first; people who harm others will harm themselves first.

Few people in this world benefit themselves and others at the same time. But there are many who harm others and bring untold harm upon themselves.

All sentient beings are cursed with folly: They blindly, willfully and insistently jeopardize others — as well as themselves.

## 唯一的“亲人”

心，难道不比钱财贵重吗？但人却宁愿为了钱财名利，让这颗心伤到血淋淋。

一切幸福的回报，出自心；一切痛苦的惩罚，源于心。你怎么待它，它就如何回应。

照顾好你的心，让它欢喜，让它光明，它是你唯一的“亲人”，其余皆是别人，它才是你本身。

在漆黑的夜，我只需豆点的光。

有阿弥陀佛，我心满足；心满足，一切满足。

## Our Only Intimate

Isn't our heart more valuable than money? Yet there are those would bloody their hearts for fame and fortune.

All happy rewards originate in your heart — as do all painful punishments. It will respond the way you treat it.

Take care of your heart, let it be happy and let it be bright. It is your only "intimate"; everything else is related to others. Only your heart is yourself.

In the dark night, we need only a tiny light.

When Amitabha Buddha is there, my heart is full. If my heart is full, so is everything else.

## 夜读

夜读点灯，只问灯亮不亮，不问暗深不深。

浊世念佛，只问佛能不能救，不问众生有没有罪。

## Reading at Night

When we read by lamplight, we ask only whether the light is bright enough, not how dark the night is.

When we recite the name of Amitabha in a defiled world, we ask only if he can deliver us, not whether we sentient beings are wicked.

## 碧空中的丝丝云

碧蓝的天空有一丝丝的云，显得格外灵动、妩媚。夕阳西下时，那云便火一样燃烧起来，通体透明，庄严了无尽的天际。

念佛的人生也要有少少的苦恼，少少的挫折、不如意。弥陀慈光中，这一切都成了幸福的资财、甜美的回忆。

## A Sliver of Cloud in the Sky

A sliver of cloud is crossing the blue sky ... how nimble and charming! As the sun sets in the west, the cloud lights up like a fire. Completely transparent, it beautifies the boundless firmament.

Amitabha-reciters also need to face a little vexation, a few setbacks, occasional disappointments. Bathed in the compassionate light of

Amitabha Buddha, all these become the stuff of good fortune and sweet memories.

## 时间与念头

时间是念头的影子。

时间快，念头比时间更快。

念头快，时间也快；念头慢，时间也慢；念头终止，时间也终止。

时间只是念头走过的痕迹，时间并不存在。

一真法界，如波平的大海。

一念忽动，幻起一只船，这只船在海面上航行，留下长长的水波纹。它驶过多长？又驶向哪里？对大海来说，海里是不存在的，那是船的计算。

船便是“我”，行便是念头生灭，水纹海里长短便是时间。

## Time and Thoughts

Time shadows thoughts.

Time may be quick, but thoughts are faster.

When thoughts appear quickly, time is fast too; when they come slowly, time is sluggish as well. When thoughts stop, so does time.

Time merely tracks the passage of thoughts; it has no independent existence.

The Ultimate Dharma Realm is like a calm, tranquil ocean.

A thought appears and conjures a ship. The vessel sails in the ocean, leaving long, trailing ripples. How far has it sailed? Where is it going? To the ocean, nautical miles do not exist. They are a calculation by the ship.

The ship is “me”, sailing is the arising and falling away of thoughts, and

the length of the ripples and mileage is time.

## 认识佛

我们不可能认识佛，只能认识佛名。

我们认识了佛的名字，也就认识了佛。

但我们连佛的名字也不认识，我们心以为那不过是佛的名字而已，一串文字符号，一串声音符号，吉祥一点，意思好一点，祝福的话，赞叹之语，还能有什么呢？

## Knowing Amitabha

We can't know Amitabha Buddha, only his name.

If we knew Amitabha's name, we would know him as well.

But we don't even know Amitabha Buddha's name. We think it is his name only -- a set of symbolic characters or sounds, somewhat auspicious, containing positive meaning and blessings, acclamatory. What can we gain from that?

## 苦与累

身为凡夫，仍在浊世，苦会有一些，累也会有一些，但只是一点点而已，超过一点点的部分都是被我们的心放大了。倘若不以苦为苦，不以累为累，也就不怎么觉得苦，不怎么觉得累；倘若以苦为苦，以累为累，便觉得苦不能出头，累难以直腰。就是蚊子的嗡嗡声，经过扩音器，也如惊雷一样地响了。

## Suffering and Weariness

As ordinary human beings living in this impure world of afflictions, we inevitably experience a bit of suffering and weariness. But only a little bit. If the suffering and tiredness seem to be more than a little bit, they are merely being exaggerated by our minds. If we don't take the suffering and tiredness too seriously, we will not feel so woeful and weary. On the contrary, if we magnify our suffering and exhaustion, they will become

unbearable and there will be no end to our sorrow and fatigue. Even a mosquito's buzzing will sound thunderous if amplified by a loudspeaker.

## 记得与归命

我们念佛并不是靠“记得”而念念不舍，而是靠“归命”。归命自然念念不舍，记得并不能念念不舍。

譬如父子相认，一认永认，血亲不隔，并非只是记得。今日记得，明日还要记得，乃至一生都要记得：此长者是我父。乃至每日醒来，重复昨日记忆：彼长者是我父。

莫说有时忘记，纵然日夜不眠，记得此事，也无父子相认之亲。

归命之人，如父子相认，穷子归父，自然忆佛，念佛深恩，即使晚上睡着不曾记得，仍睡得安稳、甜蜜。祖师释为“亲缘”。

## Remembering and Entrusting

We recite *Namo Amitabha Buddha* persistently because we “entrust our lives” totally to him, not because we happen to remember to recite. This “entrusting” naturally leads to unremitting recitations which cannot be achieved simply by remembering.

To give an example: A father and son who were long separated are now reunited. Once that happened, they are father and son forever. This blood relationship is a fact and does not rely only on their memory. Today, the son remembers that this elder is his father. He still remembers this tomorrow, and even for a lifetime. Every morning when he wakes up, his memory of yesterday lives again: This elderly person is my father.

If we did not entrust our lives to Amitabha Buddha, even if we remember to recite his name night and day, there does not exist an intimate relationship like that between the reunited father and son. And of course, we sometimes do forget to recite.

A person who entrusts his life to Amitabha Buddha is just like a down-and-out son who finally returns home to be with his father. He naturally thinks of the Buddha and is extremely grateful for the latter's compassion and kindness. He sleeps like a log even if he does not

remember the recitation while sleeping at night. The lineage masters of our school called this relationship “karmic intimacy.”

### “幸”还是“不幸”

有人从来没有感受到人生的苦，身体健康，头脑聪明，资财充足，诸事遂顺，众人羡慕；他只看到别人的苦，自己并不苦。这样的人应该很幸运、很幸福了吧，但，很遗憾，他可以说是一个很不幸的人。

“人生是苦”是佛陀揭示的人生真谛、人生实相，上自帝王，下至百姓，究竟无人能免，于此人生实相毫无觉知，此是无知盲昧的不幸。

未证无生法忍，同在六道轮回，竟以他人之苦，自己不苦，此是骄己慢人的不幸，亦是眼光短浅的不幸。

如在火宅，四面焰起，浓烟滚滚，不过有人已被火舌所吞，自己只是暂时火舌未卷，便以此处为安乐，此是安处险境之不幸。

已註解 [1]: 佛使建议改为：自己暂时未被卷入而已

及至火舌上身，众苦加凑，方才惊慌忙乱，一片嚎啕，呼天不应，叫地不灵，此是猝不及防、后悔不及的不幸。

身体不如人，头脑不如人，钱财不如人，诸事不遂，众苦逼迫，固然是人生的不幸，但由此痛觉人生是苦，誓求出离，念佛往生，圆成佛道，由小不幸，换来大幸福、大圆满的人生，真是何幸如之！

苦恼的人有福了，弥陀必哀愍他的苦；

不幸的人有福了，弥陀必解救他的不幸；

谦卑的人有福了，弥陀必加福于他；

念佛的人有福了，从此在弥陀的光明中。

### ‘Happy’ or ‘Unhappy’

Some people never feel life’s pain. They are healthy, smart, rich, successful, and able to fulfill their desires without obstruction. They seem so enviable. They can only see others’ pain; they themselves are

untouched by life's suffering. How lucky and happy they are! Unfortunately, they might actually be very unlucky.

"Life is painful" is the fundamental truth revealed by the Buddha. This knowledge eventually comes to all, whether king or commoner. But there are some people who go through life blind to this basic reality. It is due to their ignorance that they are so benighted.

There are people yet not attained the Tolerance of Non-Arising Dharmas, and who have not escaped the endless cycle of rebirth, who only believe that others are suffering, not themselves. This is a pathetic stance, caused by arrogance and short-sightedness.

There are people who feel safe and happy even when they are trapped in a burning house with billowing smoke. Others may be swallowed up by the fire, but they are, for now, spared by the flames. It is but a miserable and temporary fluke.

People do not panic until they are actually on fire and suffering terrible pain. They scream and cry wretchedly, but it's useless. Too late do they bemoan their negligence.

There are countless people who are not as healthy, smart, rich and successful as others; who are trapped in agony. If they would take the truth of suffering as their starting point, they would realize deeply how painful samsaric life is. If they would aspire to rebirth in the Pure Land by reciting the name of Amitabha Buddha, and thus attain the highest perfection in Buddhism, their small misfortunes would turn into the great blessings of a happy and perfect life. No one else would be as lucky as they.

People who suffer pain now are relieved because they will receive Amitabha's compassion;

People who feel miserable now are saved because they will receive Amitabha's deliverance;

People who are humble now are honored because they will receive Amitabha's blessing;

People who recite his name will be surrounded by the light of Amitabha Buddha.

## 重视因缘

因缘成事，故当重视因缘。

人未必能成事，因缘一定成事，故重视人不如重视因缘。

人只是无量因缘当中的一环，因缘乃一切人事关系的总和，故重视因缘包含重视人，是全方位、全视野的活动。

因缘幽微，因缘不说话，故常被漠视、忽视；人聒躁、主观，往往放大自我掩盖其余，故虽智者也常被其欺骗。

弥陀调化我们、成熟我们、成就我们，不是靠莫名其妙、无来由的神变，而是靠密密麻麻，连环钩锁，充斥在我们四周看得见、摸得着的因缘。

神迹非是常态，因缘才是常态。常态的因缘中有弥陀的大神迹。

我们永远不知道弥陀的因缘葫芦中藏着什么药，永远不知道弥陀下一步要下出什么样的因缘棋，我们只能诚惶诚恐、谨小慎微、亦步亦趋地随着弥陀因缘的脚步。

苦乐顺逆，利衰成败，我们能知道吗，能判断吗？我们一概不知，只能全盘接受。

我们所能知道的、所能做的便是：这件事，这个人，这句话，这个因缘出现了，我要谨慎善待，如敬大宾，如见王使，不敢有半点疏忽。

这样，因缘便会向我们展露它的秘底、它此行的目的，以及它要给我们的宝藏。因缘完成使命，便要回去回复王命了；那背后看不见的王便会根据因缘使者的回复决定赏罚。

面对因缘，莫要怨叹，也不选择，不回避，不决定，不作任何的轻举妄动，只要随顺，耐心、再耐心，敬待、再敬待，倾听、再倾听；好让它回复王命时说我们的好，这样我们便得到大奖。

### **Pay Attention to Causative Karma**

Everything results from causes and supporting conditions. We should attach great importance to such causative karma.

Human effort may not achieve intended results, but causative karma guarantees them. So we should ascribe greater significance to the latter than the former.

A person's role is just one of countless links in the chain of causation, while causative karma is the sum of all relationships between people and things. When we pay attention to causative karma, we also embrace individuals and their roles. It is a full-spectrum activity, guided by an all-encompassing perspective.

The detailed workings of causative karma are subtle and hard to decipher. They are mute, so are often ignored and neglected. Because people are generally loud and subjective, magnifying their merits at the expense of others, they can fool even the wise.

Amitabha Buddha transforms and matures us, enabling our accomplishments, not by means of some mysterious, magical power but through the interwoven links of causative karma, which are visible and discernible all around us.

Miracles are rare but causative karma is standard. The amazing paranormal power of Amitabha Buddha exerts itself in normal situations.

When it comes to the workings of causative karma, we can never know what's up Amitabha's sleeve, nor can we guess what his next move will be. All we can do is tread behind him cautiously and with great reverence, as he maps out our path of causes and conditions.

Can we predict the vicissitudes of life? No, we know nothing about them and can only accept them in their entirety.

We can, however, tell when some elements of causative karma appear: an incident, a person, something said by someone. We should treat them well, as though they were honored guests or envoys from the royal court.

Causative karma will then reveal to us its secrets, purposes and treasures. His mission accomplished, the envoy will report back to his invisible king, who will then decree rewards or punishments accordingly.

In the face of causative karma, never complain, select, evade or decide. Don't react rashly but just go along. Be extremely patient and respectful, and tune in carefully. When the emissary puts in a good word for us in his report to the king, we will be rewarded with a top prize.

## 消化因缘

因缘如同食品，要能消化，才能转为有益身体的养分。

再好的因缘，不能消化，于事无补；再坏的因缘，若能消化，常见奇功。

可说因缘无好坏，只看能不能消化而已。

如何消化因缘、转化因缘？

只保持一念为弥陀、为众生、为法门永不改变的初心，便能消化一切逆顺因缘，滋益法身，壮大法门，逢凶化吉，无往不利。因为阿弥陀佛有一个强大的胃，能陶冶天地，运化乾坤。

但有一念为“我”的心，决定横生逆阻，万事消它不得，转它不动，化它不了。

## Digesting Causative Karma

Causative karma is like food, which needs to be digested before it can be converted into nutrients for the body.

However wholesome the karma may be, it cannot help us if we are unable to assimilate it. On the contrary, unfavorable causative karma can produce miraculous outcomes if it is properly consumed.

In other words, there is no good or bad causative karma per se. It all depends on whether it is properly absorbed.

How can we digest and transform causes and supporting conditions?

Provided we never change our initial resolution to work for Amitabha Buddha, and to benefit other sentient beings and our Pure Land tradition, we will be able to assimilate all causative karma, positive and negative. Our Dharma bodies will be nourished and our lineage will flourish. Ill fortune will turn into good luck. Amitabha Buddha has a very strong stomach and can mould everything for the better.

It takes but a single selfish thought to create obstructions. We then find that problems become stuck and refuse to budge.

## 单独传法

有人让我单独为他传法，我说：“对不起，我做不到。”

譬如手电筒可以单独照某一个人，为其专用，但是你对太阳说“只照我一人”，太阳说“我做不到”，太阳一出必定普照万物。

弥陀救度之法，万机平等，如阳光普照，并不存在单独传法之事，也无任何隐秘，也无何人不堪、何人不需要，故此法门非是手电筒的法门，而是法界普行共运之大法，喻为超日月光。

## Exclusive Propagation

Someone asked me to teach him the Dharma one on one. “Sorry,” I said, “I can’t do that.”

It is possible for a flashlight to shine upon a single person, be for her exclusive use. But when you say to the sun, “Shine upon me only,” it will reply, “I can’t do that.” When it appears, the sun necessarily shines on all things.

Everyone is equal before the Dharma of Amitabha Buddha’s deliverance. It is like the sun, which illuminates every corner of the land. There is no such thing as exclusive transmission. The teaching contains no secrets, nor does the question arise of whether someone is worthy or in need. So

this Dharma path isn't a flashlight path. It is a great, universal teaching, whose light surpasses that of the sun and the moon.

## 将错就错 西方极乐

这个世间有对有错吗？问答的目标是明辨对错吗？世间人也许这么认为，但一个佛法者他所有的目的、言语的引导，都是让人念一句“南无阿弥陀佛”，只要达此目的，再怎样错也是对；不以此为目的，再怎样对也是错。

因为“南无阿弥陀佛”即是真理，究竟真理，除此之外世间没有真理，能令人入于真理当然就对了。所谓“将错就错，西方极乐”。

### Make the Best of Our Mistakes

Is there “right” and “wrong” in the world? Is the purpose of questions and answers to distinguish right from wrong? Most people might think so. But whatever a Dharma learner says or does is to induce others to recite “*Namo Amitabha Buddha*.” If she succeeds, whatever she does is right. If that is not her aim, whatever she does will be wrong.

“*Namo Amitabha Buddha*” represents the ultimate truth. Since it can draw us into the truth, of course it is right. As the saying goes, “Make the best of our mistakes and be reborn on the Western Land of Bliss.”

## 信仰的灯

因为有灯，故能照见万物，并非以手摸出一件件物，便能证明自己有了灯。

心中有信仰的灯，信仰佛、菩萨、祖师，即使是一个愚笨的人，不需穷思竭想，也能轻松明白、解答那些有学问、有头脑，但没有信仰的人认为艰深复杂的问题。

### Lamp of Faith

Because we have a lamp, we can see everything. But being able to feel the shape of an object with our hands doesn't prove that we have a lamp.

If we have the lamp of faith in our hearts – faith in the Buddhas, Bodhisattvas and lineage masters – even though we are foolish humans, we can easily understand and explain issues that the erudite and intelligent find difficult and complex.

## 人为何喜新厌旧？

喜新厌旧是常人心理，喜好新奇的，厌倦老旧的。

或曰：喜欢古董总是喜欢老旧吧？

不，仍然是喜新厌旧。当新奇不再新奇，甚至日常一般新奇也令人产生厌倦时，人便向“古”去寻求新奇。总之，人要不断地变换花样去填喂那颗永远也填不饱的好奇心。

人为何有这种喜新厌旧的心理呢？曰：人心无常。

无常，是人心的本质；无常，是人心的根本存在状态。

这样一颗念念生灭、变动不居的心，当然只能喜新厌旧。

念念未来成为新的而来，念念现在成为旧的而去，时间的压迫也让人不得不过在念念迎新送旧当中。人还能选择吗？

当习惯成为自然，迎新送旧就成了喜新厌旧，只不过喜新厌旧又更加了一层人的夸张情感、虚伪造作。

当人心还没有碰触到永恒之常，便不可能改变喜新厌旧的毛病。当人心一旦接触到常恒真理，那喜新厌旧的惯性就会慢慢止息。

## **Out With the Old, In With the New**

It is normal for people to tire of the old. In the same time, they love what's new and are curious about it.

Does a fondness for antiques indicate a love for the old?

When people are weary of something, they seek novelty by turning to antiquity. In short, people are always looking for new ways to feed their perpetually curious minds.

What causes such behavior? The impermanence of the human mind.

Impermanence is the essential nature of the mind, as well as the latter's existential state.

A mind that's continually changeable, whose every thought arises and falls away, cannot but tire of the old and hanker after the new.

Future thoughts arrive and become the new, while present thoughts depart and turn into the old. The pressures of time also force on people a mindset of seeing off the old and welcoming the new. Do they have a choice?

When habit becomes second nature, fare-welling the old and welcoming the new becomes loving the new and loathing the old. The latter only adds a layer of exaggerated affectation.

Before our minds encounter permanence, we will not be able to avoid the problem of loving the new and loathing the old. Once our minds come into contact with eternal truths, however, our propensity to favor the new over the old will fade away gradually.

## 大盗

窃物者小偷，窃国者大盗。

窃国者小偷，窃心者大盗。

大盗即“我”。一切善事功德，无不被“我”窃去。

“圣人”不死，大盗不止。

彻底放弃自力修行成贤成圣之心，令“我”之大盗无所窃，即饿死。

## Bandits

If one who steals things is termed a thief, one who usurps state power is called a bandit.

And if he who seizes state power is a thief, she who steals minds is a bandit.

The bandit is our ego, "I." All positive, virtuous deeds are stolen by "I."

If we cling to the notion of cultivating "sacredness," we would be always subject to the sway of the bandit, "I."

Only by thoroughly abandoning our desire to gain saintliness through self-power practice can we render "I" incapable of robbing us. The bandit would starve.

### 水涨船高

筑业力坝，聚杂毒水，浮我慢船。水涨船也高，“我”字总为大。

念佛，毁业力坝，泻杂毒水，降我慢船，现无为地。

### The Water Swells, the Boat Rises

We build a dam of karmic obstacles, accumulate the water of sundry poisons and float a boat of pridefulness. As the water swells, the boat rises with it. "I" is always in command.

By reciting the name of Amitabha, we destroy the dam of karmic obstacles, release the water of various toxins and lower the boat of egocentric pride. The unconditioned realm manifests.

### 佛无味

五谷、菜蔬、瓜果各有其味，水淡味，风无味，空不可触知。故知越是虚灵，越是无味。

佛为至虚至灵，故佛无味。佛无味，念佛亦无味。

### Amitabha Is Without Taste

The five grains, green vegetables, melons and fruits have their own tastes. Water is insipid and the wind tasteless. Emptiness can neither be

touched nor known. The more ethereal something is, the more tasteless it will be.

Amitabha Buddha is the ultimate in ethereality and emptiness, so he is without taste. Since he has no taste, neither has the recitation of his name.

## 佛不可吃

食物可咀嚼，水可吞咽，风可呼吸；虚空即不可咀嚼，不可吞咽，不能呼吸。

佛即虚空，玄巧之牙、灵异之喉、体验之鼻，皆无所措。

今有念佛求体验者，如以牙咬虚空，鼻吸虚空，一愚也。待至牙酸鼻凉，复以虚空为酸为凉，二愚也。谓他人曰：“我有深法，能令汝知虚空之味。”三愚也。人指其愚而不受，曰：“我亲尝虚空为酸凉之味，汝不知，反来障我。”愚之又愚也。

## Amitabha Can't be Eaten

We can chew food, swallow water and breathe the air. But empty space cannot be chewed, swallowed or breathed.

Amitabha Buddha is like space. Adroit teeth, nimble throats and accomplished noses cannot come to grips with it.

Reciters who seek special experiences are like people who want to bite empty space with their teeth or breathe it through their noses. The effort is foolish. When their teeth hurt and their noses become cold, they think space is painful and cold. Foolish, again. Then they tell others, "I have discovered a profound method that can make you experience empty space." Foolish once more. When people point that out to them, they retort: "I have experienced the discomfort and the cold of space. You know nothing about it, yet you come to obstruct me." Utterly foolish!

## 佛淡如水

念佛，平平淡淡，君子之交淡若水也；追求玄奇体验，小人之交甘若醴也。

有体验则信喜，无体验即不安，以体验为重、佛言为轻，是小人心态：“小人甘以绝”，终必离绝佛法大道。

### **Recitation Is as Insipid as Water**

Amitabha-recitation is flat and insipid like water. So are relations between gentlemen. Seeking mystical experiences, lesser men relate in ways as pungent as wine.

They are happy when such experiences occur – and anxious if they don't. It is the mindset of lesser men to stress personal experience over Amitabha's teaching. When the sweetness ends, they assuredly stray from the Dharma path.

## 影子

在日光下狂奔，想甩开影子，很可笑。

凡夫努力修行，看破、放下，以求无我，除我执，正如日下甩影一般。

### **Shadows**

To try and cast off our shadows by running wildly in the sun is silly.

Ordinary beings diligently practice self-cultivation, seeing through delusion and letting go. They seek selflessness and the elimination of ego. They are like those who try to lose their shadows under the sun.

## 一叶知秋

秋风起，一片树叶飘落前庭，黄红斑斓，寂静无声，细心的人一看，便知秋来了，是谓一叶知秋。

一叶何以知秋？

须知此一叶非止一叶，它是大自然的缩影。经过春生夏长，墨绿转为焦黄，繁荣趋于沉寂，气温渐凉，空气干爽，它便收了浆，挂在枝上静静地等待，终于无挂无碍，轻身一飞，旋落于地。此是自然，不假人为。故虽日头依然灼热，满树不乏浓荫，而能一叶知秋。

但假如是人为造作，烟熏火烤，力撼身摇，纵然满树叶落不剩一片，依然不是秋。

### **A Solitary Leaf Heralds the Fall**

The fall breeze deposits a solitary leaf in the courtyard. Streaked in yellow and red, it drops quietly to the ground. A vigilant observer will know that autumn has arrived. "A single leaf heralds the fall," goes the saying.

How does a falling leaf tell us autumn is coming?

We should know that the leaf is more than a leaf; it's a miniature of nature. Growing from spring to summer, dark-green leaves have turned burnt yellow, and luxuriance is replaced by quiescence. As temperatures drop and the air becomes crisp, the leaves are dry. They hang quietly, expectantly on the tree. Eventually, without a care in the world, they fly freely to the ground. The process is entirely natural, with no human input. It remains hot during daytime and green leaves still cover the trees, but a single, yellow falling leaf announces the advent of autumn.

However, if the above phenomena were man-made, with leaves dried by a fire and the tree shaken by hand, even if all leaves fell to the ground, it would have nothing to do with autumn.

### **阿弥陀佛不值一文**

大道不过三两句，说破不值一文钱。

大道至简。大道，普遍的真理，最为简单，明明白白在那里，并不玄妙神秘，但却说不破，无法言表，不可称，不可说，不可思议。道可道，非常道。

一定要说，明明白白说出来，人们也会因为自心障蔽，依然无法理解，也不觉得有何尊贵，反而会看轻，认为不值一文钱。

以佛教净土宗来说，大道就是“南无阿弥陀佛”。这就是说破了，但“南无阿弥陀佛”值钱吗？可说不值一文钱。人们仍然纷纷以世间福善、自我修行为贵，即使念佛也要寻找功夫、体验，找些玄奇，否则便觉平淡无味，又以平淡无味而轻视小看这一句南无阿弥陀佛。总之，以南无阿弥陀佛为不值钱，必须加上些什么以增值。

### **Amitabha Buddha Isn't Worth a Cent**

Great truth can be summed up in a few phrases. When revealed, it isn't worth even a cent.

Great truth is very simple. It is universally valid and exceedingly plain, straightforward. It is neither abstruse nor mysterious. However, it is impossible to explain in words and cannot be fathomed. The Way, or truth, that can be articulated is not the eternal Way.

If we insist on stating a great truth and do it clearly, people would still find it hard to understand as their minds are clouded. They don't see its value. So they dismiss it as worthless.

To Buddhism's Pure Land school, the Way is "*Namo Amitabha Buddha.*" It reveals the truth. But how much value do people attach to *Namo Amitabha Buddha*? Not even a cent. What they treasure more are worldly good deeds and self-cultivation practices. Even if they recite *Namo Amitabha Buddha*, they seek advanced ability, special experiences and mystical encounters. Otherwise, they find the practice too ordinary and dull. So they look down on the recitation of "*Namo Amitabha Buddha.*" In short, they reckon *Namo Amitabha Buddha* lacks worth and want to add value to it by putting in something extra.

### **钱并非越多越好**

一般人对于钱财总认为越多越好，其实钱财乃身外之物，并非越多越好，而是适当就好。既不多，也不少，刚刚好。

但多少算适当呢？今以穿衣为喻。

身外之物而与身最贴近、最密切的便是衣服，衣服越大越好吗？显然不是。姚明的衣服一般人穿上连路也没法走。穿衣，合身就好，既不大，也不小。

其余一切身外之物，比照可知，皆有一个度的问题。住房太大，太豪华，耗人精气，房不养人，人要养房。夜晚置身一大仓库，空间很大，气便消散，睡不安稳；小小一间，便觉气盈神足。故宫里皇上的卧室也只小小一间，便于养气。现在人对于钱财一味贪多贪大，根本不晓得要适度。

衣服适度，感觉自然，得体，无牵挂，不拖累，行动方便，实用庄严。钱财也一样，需得之自然，用之自然，只有方便，并无拖累，便是与我们福德之身相配的。如为了挣钱、守钱、花钱，过于劳累辛苦，甚至造一身业，招一身病，又积众怨，显然是超过了，这时必须舍财，如瘦身减肥才健康。

只知积财，不知舍财，是现代人不幸的一个原因。

## **More Isn't Better**

A common belief is that the more money we have, the better off we will be. But money is merely an external possession, and more is not necessarily better. "Just enough" is best. Neither too much nor too little, but in between.

How much is enough? Consider clothing.

Among world possessions, our clothes are the most intimate. Is bigger always better? Clearly not. Try putting on Yao Ming's clothes and walking at the same time. Apparel that fits us well is the best. Neither too big nor too small.

By the same token, all our possessions should be of an optimal amount or size. A house that is too large and opulent drains its residents' energy. It does not nurture those who live in it; they lose their vitality. We would not sleep well in a big warehouse because our energy is dissipated within its expanse. But sleeping in a cozy little room helps us feel rested and refreshed. Even the Emperor's bedroom in the Forbidden City was a tiny one, as it helped preserve his vigor. Today, greed drives people to want

ever more wealth and bigger sizes. They know nothing about “just enough.”

When a piece of clothing fits us well, we feel comfortable and unconstrained. It looks proper and seemly on us. It is the same with our wealth. It should be appropriately earned and rightly used. It should serve good causes according to our virtuous leanings, rather than become a liability. If making, amassing and spending money exhausts us or, worse, corrupts our soul and makes us sick or resented, then we know we have gone too far. We should give money away for the benefit of others. It is like losing weight for the sake of our health.

One reason people today are unhappy is because they know only how to accumulate wealth, not how to give it away.

## 变

心性改变，容貌一定改变，命运也一定改变。

里面变了，外面怎么能不变！

苹果熟了，表面通红；稻谷熟了，外壳金黄。春天，大地回暖，地表松软滋润。无情之物，尚且如此。

内心柔软，容貌一定慈眉善目，表情一定和颜悦色。

## Change

If our mind transforms, so will our appearance – and our destiny.

How can the exterior stay the same if the interior has changed?

When apples ripen, their skin turns bright red. When rice matures, its husk becomes golden. In spring, the earth becomes warm and the soil spongy and moist. Even these insentient things are like this.

If our hearts are soft and warm, our faces will invariably be kindly and pleasant, radiating harmony.

## 婴儿饮食

初生婴儿必须纯饮母乳才能消化吸收，健康成长，渐渐粥汤、软饭、蔬果、糕饼，脾胃壮实之后，不论吃下什么都能转为身体有益的养分；但一开始就令吃杂食，越是山珍海味越是要了它的命。

我们在佛法中实是婴儿，必须喝佛法纯乳，专学净土一法，专念弥陀一佛，才能法身健康成长。此时便好高骛远，好多好杂，研多法门，学多经教，涉多宗派，以满足好奇心，博取大通家之虚荣，必然自取死路，以满肚子杂七杂八的学问撑死了法身慧命。

### **Diet for Babies**

New-born babies need to be breast-fed to grow healthily, as mother's milk is easy to digest. Gradually, they can feed on porridge, mushy rice, vegetables and fruits, and cakes. Whatever food they consume will be transformed into beneficial nutrients as their digestive systems have become robust. But if they eat indiscriminately as young babies, they will suffer. The more exotic delicacies they are given, the more harm will result. The infants may even die.

We are really babies when it comes to the Dharma. Only pure Dharma milk is suitable for us. For our Dharma body to grow healthily, we should exclusively learn the Pure Land teachings and recite the name of Amitabha Buddha. If we get ambitious and engage in assorted practices, or let our curiosity and vanity lead us astray into the teachings of sundry schools, we will reach a dead end. Our life as a Buddhist practitioner will be over, snuffed out by the weight of hodgepodge knowledge.