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一、法会圣众同俱分

I. The Assembly of Sages Present at the Dharma Gathering

同俱者，俱此正修功德也。从来读弥陀经者往往徒慕西方之极乐，而未明极乐之意境，徒知西方有相之庄严，而未达无相之功德庄严，徒发愿往生，而未解如何得往生之义，徒知西方一门之义，而未通西方普门之妙。	"Together with" means sharing in the merits of this very practice. Those who have long read the Amitābha Sūtra often merely yearn for the bliss of the Western Pure Land without understanding the spiritual realm of ultimate bliss; they know only the adornments with form in the West, without realizing the meritorious adornments of the formless; they merely vow to be reborn there, without understanding how rebirth is attained; and they know only the meaning of the single gate to the West, without comprehending the wonder of the universal gate of the West.
西方极乐世界者，圆遍十方，一普互摄，至广大精密之佛土也。凡佛经文浅者义深，如此经与普门品等是，而经首特点出诸名者，由舍利弗至阿　楼驮十六人。	The Western Land of Ultimate Bliss is a Buddha-land that perfectly pervades the ten directions, in which the one and the universal mutually encompass one another, reaching the utmost vastness and subtle precision. In Buddhist scriptures, plain wording often conveys profound meaning; this is so in this sūtra and in the Universal Gate Chapter. At the beginning of this sūtra, certain names are specially singled out: sixteen persons, from Śāriputra to Aniruddha.
为小乘偏空者，未能直证大乘，宏开般若，佛转说有世界以为证，欲其勿偏空而转知有也。十六人中，特以舍利弗为首者，以佛为小乘说般若必不离智慧较高之舍利弗也，是谓咐嘱。	For those of the Lesser Vehicle who incline toward biased emptiness and are not yet able to directly realize the Mahāyāna and broadly open up prajñā, the Buddha further taught of a world with form as evidence, wishing them not to cling to biased emptiness but to turn and recognize existence. Among the sixteen, Śāriputra is especially placed first because, when the Buddha teaches prajñā to those of the Lesser Vehicle, he cannot do without Śāriputra, whose wisdom is comparatively lofty. This is called entrusting.
大菩萨中，以文殊为首者，明此经非通般若不可，次阿逸多菩萨者，弥勒也。佛先说有相，以融归于性，可知性相融通，非空非有，而极乐之意境始开，是谓护念。故此经不可仅执文字解，当兼从意境会，然后知佛之广大慈悲矣。世有愿与诸圣众同俱而往生者乎，幸先除成见，俯纳鄙见，一试其究竟如何。	Among the great bodhisattvas, Mañjuśrī is placed first to make clear that this sūtra cannot be understood without prajñā. Next is Bodhisattva Ajita, who is Maitreya. The Buddha first teaches forms in order to integrate them back into intrinsic nature. Thus it may be known that nature and form

	interpenetrate: neither empty nor existent. Only then does the spiritual realm of ultimate bliss begin to open. This is called being held in mindful care. Therefore, this sūtra must not be interpreted merely by clinging to its words; one must also comprehend it through its spiritual realm. Then one will know the Buddha's vast compassion. Are there people in the world who wish to be reborn together with all the noble assembly? May they first relinquish their preconceived views, kindly consider these humble views, and test for themselves what the ultimate outcome may be.
如是我闻，一时佛在舍卫国　树给孤独园，与大比丘僧千二百五十人俱，皆是大阿罗汉，众所知识：长老舍利弗，摩诃目犍连，摩诃迦叶，摩诃迦旃延，摩诃俱罗，离婆多，周利　陀伽，难陀，阿难陀，罗　罗，梵波提，宾头卢颇罗堕，迦留陀夷，摩诃劫宾那，薄拘罗，阿　楼驮，如是等诸大弟子。	Thus have I heard. At one time, the Buddha was staying in the Jetavana Grove, Anāthapiṇḍada's Park, in Śrāvastī, together with a great assembly of 1,250 bhikṣus. All were great arhats, known and recognized by the assembly: Elder Śāriputra, Mahāmaudgalyāyana, Mahākāśyapa, Mahākātyāyana, Mahākauṣṭhila, Revata, Śuddhipanthaka, Nanda, Ānanda, Rāhula, Gavāṃpati, Piṇḍola Bhāradvāja, Kālodayin, Mahākapphiṇa, Vakkula, and Aniruddha—together with such great disciples.
并诸菩萨摩诃萨：文殊师利法王子，阿逸多菩萨，乾陀诃提菩萨，常精进菩萨，与如是等诸大菩萨。及释提桓因等无量诸天大众俱。	Also present were great bodhisattvas: Mañjuśrī, Prince of the Dharma; Bodhisattva Ajita; Bodhisattva Gandhahastin; Bodhisattva Ever-Vigorous; and such other great bodhisattvas. There were also Śakra, Lord of the Devas, and countless multitudes of devas.

二、佛说从西方极乐世界分

II. The Buddha's Teaching on the Western Land of Ultimate Bliss

众生有五智，佛土亦有五方，在中国而论，中为印度，东为五台山之文殊院，此凡夫可到者也。南为普陀，非今普陀，北为时轮道场，即香巴拉国，将来必通于世而转轮王出焉。此王一出，世界三灾消除，自然太平矣。	Sentient beings possess five wisdoms, and Buddha-lands likewise have five directions. Speaking in terms of China, the center is India; to the east is Mañjuśrī's monastery on Mount Wutai, a place that ordinary beings can reach. To the south is Potalaka—not the present-day Putuo. To the north is the Kālacakra practice site, namely the land of Shambhala, which in the future will certainly become connected with the world, and there a wheel-turning king will appear. Once this king

	appears, the three disasters of the world will be eliminated, and peace will naturally prevail.
西即所谓西方成就门之极乐世界，即阿弥陀佛，密教尊为空行佛母，言彼佛能于无尽虚空界行化无量众生。此佛母遍照十方，一切摄受。十万亿佛土者，向十方各有十万亿也，即言其圆遍也，不必要于此土为十万也。	To the west is the Land of Ultimate Bliss, the so-called Western Gate of Accomplishment; that is, Amitābha Buddha, whom Esoteric Buddhism venerates as the Ḍākinī Buddha-Mother. This means that this Buddha can travel throughout the boundless realm of empty space to teach and transform immeasurable sentient beings. This Buddha-Mother illuminates the ten directions and receives all beings. The “hundred thousand koṭis of Buddha-lands” means that in each of the ten directions there are a hundred thousand koṭis of Buddha-lands; it indicates complete pervasiveness. It need not be measured solely from this land.
其义下再明之。密宗成佛，初为即生成佛，次为中阴成佛，再次为死后生于学佛之家而修成佛。彼所云之空行佛母，即接引带业往生之弥陀佛也。	Its meaning will be explained further below. In Esoteric Buddhism, there are three ways of attaining Buddhahood: first, attaining Buddhahood in this very life; second, attaining Buddhahood in the intermediate state; and third, being born after death into a family that studies Buddhism and cultivating oneself to Buddhahood. The Ḍākinī Buddha-Mother spoken of there is precisely Amitābha Buddha, who guides beings to rebirth while they carry karma.
苟其人心地初明，慕西心切，真能将世缘一切放下者，即心不颠倒，可与佛母缘合而往生矣。故此三处，非有神通不能往。神通者，心通也。心通后，始可以除习气而与佛心相印矣。	If a person has only begun to clarify the mind-ground, deeply yearns for the West, and can truly let go of all worldly ties, then the mind will not be confused. Such a person can join in affinity with the Buddha-Mother and attain rebirth. Therefore, these three places cannot be reached without spiritual powers. Spiritual powers mean that the mind is unobstructed. Only after the mind is unobstructed can one eliminate habitual tendencies and have one’s mind sealed in accord with the Buddha’s mind.
佛特开此慈悲广大法门，为应当时十六大弟子之机者一，应后此无量众生之有缘者二，当知人人本有缘，人人未必有福。福者，信心不逆，而又肯真修者也。故曰难信之法。彼佛今现在说法，此何法乎？曰难信之法耳。	The Buddha specially opened this vast Dharma gate of great compassion: first, in response to the capacities of the sixteen great disciples of that time; and second, for the immeasurable sentient beings of later times who have the requisite affinities. One should know that everyone inherently has affinities, but not everyone necessarily has the blessings.

	Such blessings consist in faith that does not turn back and in being willing to undertake genuine practice. Hence it is called a Dharma difficult to believe. “That Buddha is now present, teaching the Dharma.” What Dharma is this? It is simply a Dharma difficult to believe.
所谓极乐者，又何事乎？曰明心后意境之极乐也。若以有相之富贵为乐，佛又何必苦口告舍利弗哉？故此经全在意境上之极乐，倘有门户我见之诤，急速蠲除，毋自误可也。	What, then, is meant by “ultimate bliss”? It is the ultimate bliss of the state attained after realizing the mind. If one took the riches and honors of material form to be bliss, why would the Buddha have painstakingly instructed Śāriputra? Thus, this sūtra is entirely concerned with the ultimate bliss of this state. If disputes arise from sectarianism and self-view, eliminate them at once; do not mislead yourself.
尔时佛告长老舍利弗，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。舍利弗，彼土何故名为极乐？其国众生无有众苦，但受诸乐，故名极乐。	At that time the Buddha told the Elder Śāriputra: “West of here, beyond a hundred thousand koṭis of Buddha-lands, there is a world named Ultimate Bliss. In that land there is a Buddha named Amitābha, who is now present, teaching the Dharma. Śāriputra, why is that land called Ultimate Bliss? Because the sentient beings of that land have none of the many sufferings; they receive only every kind of bliss. Therefore it is called Ultimate Bliss.”

三、彼土依报妙相功德庄严分

III. The Meritorious Adornments of the Splendid Attributes of the Dependent Recompense in That Land

佛以众生执取有相，就以妙相庄严引之，盖一切幻相，不离幻心，幻心由真性所自出，则幻亦不妨权作为真，正不必拘执于真幻耳。盖以体言，一切非幻，以相言，一切非真，非幻非真者，为净空功德，此为初步方便法。且眼中所见者同，而观感不同，则各人之福报不同耳，是以有九品之分。	Because sentient beings cling to appearances as real, the Buddha guides them through the splendid adornments of subtle forms. All illusory appearances are inseparable from the illusory mind, and the illusory mind itself arises from true nature. Thus, there is no harm in provisionally regarding illusion as real; one need not rigidly cling to distinctions between the real and the illusory. In terms of essence, nothing is illusory; in terms of appearances, nothing is truly real. That which is neither illusory nor real is the merit and virtue of pure emptiness. This is an initial expedient method.

	Moreover, although what people see with their eyes is the same, their perceptions differ; this is simply because each person's blessings differ. Hence there is a division into nine grades.
又舍利弗，极乐国土，七重栏　，七重罗网，七重行树，皆是四宝周匝围绕，是故彼国名为极乐。	Moreover, Śāriputra, the Land of Ultimate Bliss is surrounded on all sides by seven tiers of balustrades, seven tiers of netting, and seven rows of trees, all made of the four precious substances. For this reason, that land is called Ultimate Bliss.
又舍利弗，极乐国土，有七宝池，八功德水，充满其中，池底纯以金沙布地，四边阶道，金银琉璃玻璃合成，上有楼阁，亦以金银琉璃玻璃砗磲赤珠玛瑙而严饰之。池中莲华，大如车轮，青色青光，黄色黄光，赤色赤光，白色白光，微妙香洁。舍利弗，极乐国土，成就如是功德庄严。	Moreover, Śāriputra, in the Land of Ultimate Bliss are pools of the seven precious substances, filled with water possessing eight meritorious qualities. The bottoms of these pools are entirely covered with golden sand. Their four sides have stairways made of gold, silver, lapis lazuli, and crystal. Above them stand pavilions, also adorned with gold, silver, lapis lazuli, crystal, mother-of-pearl, red pearls, and agate. The lotuses in the pools are as large as carriage wheels: blue lotuses emit blue light, yellow lotuses emit yellow light, red lotuses emit red light, and white lotuses emit white light. They are subtle, wondrous, fragrant, and pure. Śāriputra, the Land of Ultimate Bliss is adorned with such merit and virtue.

四、彼土依报妙音功德庄严分

IV. The Meritorious Adornment of Wondrous Sounds in That Land's Dependent Recompense

极乐世界者，心极乐也，但又何可废色声耶？惟不著于相，不为声色所缚，得大自在之极乐耳。此分由有相，渐入虚灵境界，而仍不离有为之供养，有相之庄饰，若与共命也。	The Land of Ultimate Bliss is the mind's ultimate bliss. But how could forms and sounds therefore be discarded? One simply does not cling to appearances and is not bound by sounds and forms; thus one attains the ultimate bliss of great freedom. This section proceeds from form and gradually enters the realm of empty luminosity, yet it still does not depart from conditioned offerings and adornments with form, as in the case of the kalaviṅka and jīvajīvaka birds.
至于表性，则一切物皆不离自性，自性清净中断无善恶交索之理，更安有恶道之名哉？正以法身成就，随境无不怡然自乐。	As for what expresses intrinsic nature, all things are inseparable from intrinsic nature. Within the purity of intrinsic nature, there can never be any principle by which good and evil become entangled; how,

	then, could there be even the name of an evil realm? It is precisely through the accomplishment of the dharmakāya that, in every circumstance, one is naturally joyful and at ease.
虽闻鸟鸣莺莺，亦若念念在佛，意境已高，三十七助道品中，正从五根五力七菩提八圣道分一切处著力，何得再将前四分十二品加入，回头倒修之理！故法音宣流者，自然而变化者也，非彼佛必再演此幻法以迷人也。	Even when hearing the melodious calls of birds, one is as though constantly mindful of the Buddha. The spiritual state is already elevated. Among the thirty-seven factors conducive to awakening, one should apply effort throughout to the five faculties, five powers, seven factors of awakening, and Noble Eightfold Path. How could one add the preceding four divisions and twelve factors again, turning back to cultivate them in reverse? Therefore, the propagation of the Dharma sound is natural and transformative; it is not that the Buddha must again expound this illusory Dharma in order to delude people.
且能往生彼土者，亦即同是弥陀德性者也。密宗弥陀有四义，其第四义即一切众生自性弥陀也。未往生之众生，尚得同具，况已生者乎。	Moreover, those who can be reborn in that land share in the virtues of Amitābha. In Esoteric Buddhism, Amitābha has four meanings; the fourth is that Amitābha is the intrinsic nature of all sentient beings. Even sentient beings who have not yet attained rebirth equally possess this nature; how much more so those who have already been reborn there?
故欲发心往生者，切勿自欺以欺人，自问果能以一念清净否，于世无诤，于法净信否，念佛法僧，果能自然否。苟存一分功利，即着一分我见，生前既未成就，死后安得往生。音者，耳也，自问其心也。经过此关，然后再言往生入正报之理。	Therefore, those who wish to arouse the resolve for rebirth must never deceive themselves and thereby deceive others. Ask yourselves: Can you truly maintain purity in a single thought? Are you free from contention in worldly affairs? Do you have pure faith in the Dharma? Is your mindfulness of Buddha, Dharma, and Saṅgha truly natural? If even a fraction of self-interested calculation remains, then a fraction of self-view is present. If one has not accomplished this during life, how can one attain rebirth after death? Sound pertains to the ear; one must ask one’s own mind. Only after passing through this gate may one speak of the principle of attaining rebirth and entering the direct recompense.
又舍利弗，彼佛国土，常作天乐，黄金为地，昼夜六时，雨天曼陀罗华。其土众生，常以清旦，各以衣　，	Moreover, Śāriputra, in that Buddha-land heavenly music is constantly played, and the ground is of gold. During the six periods of day and night,

盛众妙华，供养他方十万亿佛，即以食时，还到本国，饭食经行。舍利弗，极乐国土，成就如是功德庄严。	māndārava flowers rain down from heaven. The sentient beings of that land, each morning, fill the hems of their robes with many wondrous flowers and make offerings to a hundred thousand koṭis of Buddhas in other lands. When it is time to eat, they return to their own land, take their meal, and then engage in walking meditation. Śāriputra, the Land of Ultimate Bliss is adorned with such merits and virtues.
复次，舍利弗，彼国常有种种奇妙杂色之鸟，白鹤孔雀，鹦鹉舍利，迦陵频伽共命之鸟，是诸众鸟，昼夜六时，出和雅音，其音演畅，五根五力，七菩提分，八圣道分，如是等法。其土众生，闻是音已，皆悉念佛念法念僧。	Furthermore, Śāriputra, that land always has many kinds of wondrous birds of varied colors: white cranes, peacocks, parrots, śāris, kalaviṅkas, and jīvajīvakas. All these birds, throughout the six periods of day and night, bring forth harmonious and elegant sounds. Their sounds proclaim the five faculties, five powers, seven factors of awakening, Noble Eightfold Path, and teachings such as these. When the sentient beings of that land hear these sounds, they are all mindful of the Buddha, mindful of the Dharma, and mindful of the Saṅgha.
舍利弗，汝勿谓此鸟，实是罪报所生，所以者何？彼佛国土，无三恶道。舍利弗，其佛国土，尚无恶道之名，何况有实！是诸众鸟，皆是阿弥陀佛，欲令法音宣流，变化所作。	Śāriputra, do not say that these birds were truly born as the retribution for evil karma. Why is this so? That Buddha-land has no three lower realms. Śāriputra, in that Buddha-land there is not even the name of the evil realms, much less their actual existence. All these birds are transformations created by Amitābha Buddha in order to cause the Dharma sound to spread.
舍利弗，彼佛国土，微风吹动，诸宝行树，及宝罗网，出微妙音，譬如百千种乐，同时俱作，闻是音者，自然皆生念佛念法念僧之心。舍利弗，其佛国土，成就如是功德庄严。	Śāriputra, when a gentle breeze stirs the rows of jeweled trees and jeweled nets in that Buddha-land, they give forth subtle and wondrous sounds, like hundreds of thousands of kinds of music playing all at once. Those who hear these sounds naturally give rise to the mind of mindfulness of the Buddha, mindfulness of the Dharma, and mindfulness of the Saṅgha. Śāriputra, that Buddha-land is adorned with such merits and virtues.

五、彼土正报法性功德庄严分

V. The Merits and Adornments of the Dharma Nature of the Principal Recompense in That Land

此分言彼佛法性之功德，光明照十方，是其用，寿命无量，是其体。	This section speaks of the merits of that Buddha's Dharma-nature: his light illuminates the ten directions—this is its function; his life span is immeasurable—this is its essence.
此当分对言之，前云佛有五土，自然同具五智，在人，本我自性为毗卢，一门也，对各方，为普门也，此佛土，释迦为毗卢，一门也，对他世界，为普门也，彼土亦由是，阿弥陀，在西方本身为毗卢，一门也，而对十方国，光明遍照，普门也，佛土与佛土，一普互摄，则我与弥陀，亦属一普互摄，只缘众生体同用异，不能起用耳。	This should be explained in terms of the distinction between the particular and the universal. Earlier it was said that a Buddha has five lands and naturally possesses the five wisdoms. In human beings, one's inherent original self-nature is Vairocana; this is the particular aspect. In relation to all directions, it is the universal gate. In this Buddha-land, Śākyamuni is Vairocana; this is the particular aspect. In relation to other worlds, it is the universal gate. The other land is likewise so: Amitābha, in his own person in the West, is Vairocana; this is the particular aspect. Yet in relation to the lands of the ten directions, his light shines everywhere; this is the universal gate. Buddha-land and Buddha-land mutually encompass one another through the particular and the universal; thus I and Amitābha likewise mutually encompass one another through the particular and the universal. It is only because sentient beings share the same essence but differ in function that they cannot activate this function.
今修净业者，不先明此理，则彼佛处空行来接，而我难与相合，又将如何往生耶？密宗双身法用意，即我与佛，神交意会，无分彼此也。口持阿弥陀名者，名其本身也。	If those who now cultivate pure karma do not first understand this principle, then even if that Buddha comes through empty space to receive them, it will be difficult for them to accord with him. How, then, can they be reborn there? The purpose of the Esoteric Buddhist practice of dual bodies is that I and the Buddha commune in spirit and understanding, without any division between self and other. When one orally recites the name Amitābha, one is naming one's own original body.
号为阿弥陀者，意中念念想见其光明遍照无遗，我亦同此受摄也。以用在前而体在后者，非倒置也，欲行者先作观想，思惟敬仰之切，而持名为有用耳。此分关键至大，为全经之干，行者必得光明心地，入于严密，彼佛	To call him Amitābha means that, in one's thoughts, one continually envisions his light universally shining without omission, and that I too am embraced by it. That function is mentioned first

空行摄化，我以空心受摄，若是而不往生者，未之有也，不此之务，而兴无谓之诤，其谁欺乎？	and essence afterward is not a reversal: the intent is for practitioners first to visualize him, reflect upon him, and revere him earnestly, so that Buddha-name recitation becomes effective. This section is of the greatest importance and is the framework of the entire sūtra. Practitioners must attain a luminous mind-ground and enter into rigorous concentration. That Buddha comes through empty space to embrace and transform them, while I, with an empty mind, receive his embrace. If one does this and is not reborn there, such a case has never existed. Rather than attend to this, people stir up pointless disputes—whom are they deceiving?
舍利弗，于汝意云何，彼佛何故号阿弥陀。舍利弗，彼佛光明无量，照十方国，无所障碍，是故号为阿弥陀。又舍利弗，彼佛寿命，及其人民，无量无边阿僧　劫，故名阿弥陀。舍利弗，阿弥陀佛，成佛以来，于今十劫。	Śāriputra, what do you think? Why is that Buddha called Amitābha? Śāriputra, that Buddha's light is immeasurable; it illuminates the lands of the ten directions without obstruction. Therefore he is called Amitābha. Moreover, Śāriputra, the life span of that Buddha and of his people is immeasurable and boundless, extending for asaṃkhyeya kalpas. Therefore he is called Amitābha. Śāriputra, Amitābha Buddha attained Buddhahood ten kalpas ago.

六、彼土圣众伴侣无量分

VI. The Incalculable Number of Noble Companions in That Land

此言彼土人物之胜也，所谓诸上善人也，善而上善，非善恶比量之善矣，善且不有，是名至善，亦名清净。故众生生者，皆阿　跋致，此言不动地，能一心不乱者也。	This speaks of the excellence of the beings in that land—the so-called assembly of foremost good people. Their goodness is the highest goodness, not goodness measured in contrast to evil. When even goodness is not posited, this is called supreme goodness; it is also called purity. Therefore, all sentient beings born there are avaivartika, that is, established on the immovable ground and capable of one-pointedness of mind without distraction.

不动地为初地菩萨，即欢喜地，斯可与彼世界相合，倘有一意挂碍，热恼随生，微细之恶念即起，为何能俱，况彼土无恶道之名，而我有恶念之实，岂能在无数阿跋致中，单能容一位恶众生耶？故当自问现在能否做到加入彼土	The immovable ground is the first bhūmi of a bodhisattva, the Ground of Joy; only then can one accord with that world. If one harbors even a single attachment, distress and vexation immediately arise, and the slightest evil thought is stirred. How could one then be together with them? Moreover, in that land there is not even the name of the evil realms, whereas I have the reality of evil thoughts. How could, among innumerable avaivartikas, there be room for even a single evil sentient being?
与圣众同为伴侣，不必问他日可以往不往也，此全在气味程度意境之相合，能合则虽不往而亦往矣，不能合者，则空愿又有何补，必焉持名以助之，克期求证如第七分也。	Therefore, one should ask oneself whether one can now enter that land and join the assembly of sages as companions. There is no need to ask whether one may or may not be reborn there in the future. It depends entirely upon the accord of one's disposition, degree of attainment, and spiritual realm. If they accord, then even without going, one has gone; if they do not accord, what help is there in empty vows? One must certainly uphold the Name to assist this, and seek realization within a fixed period, as in the seventh section.
又舍利弗，彼佛有无量无边声闻弟子，皆阿罗汉，非是算数之所能知，诸菩萨众，亦复如是。舍利弗，彼佛国土，成就如是功德庄严。又舍利弗，极乐国土，众生生者，皆是阿　跋致。其中多有一生补处，其数甚多，非是算数所能知之，但可以无量无边阿僧　说。	Moreover, Śāriputra, that Buddha has immeasurable and boundless disciples among the śrāvakas, all of them arhats, whose number cannot be known by calculation. The assembly of bodhisattvas is likewise. Śāriputra, that Buddha-land is adorned with such virtues and accomplishments. Moreover, Śāriputra, all sentient beings born in the Land of Ultimate Bliss are avaivartika. Among them are many who, in one more lifetime, will succeed to Buddhahood. Their number is extremely great and cannot be known by calculation; it can only be described as immeasurable, boundless asaṃkhyeyas.

七、应当发愿持名往生分

VII. The Section on Making Vows for Rebirth Through Buddha-Recitation

此等事业，何等广博伟大，岂能草草成就！虽人人有分，而人人自弃，不依佛旨，又当奈何！能自深信决定向上一路者，善根也，值佛闻法，肯一心苦行，一日不成则七日，一七不成则七七，于此七日中，不知何日忽	How vast and great are such undertakings; how could they be accomplished hastily? Although everyone has a share in them, everyone abandons themselves. If they do not follow the Buddha's

而证入不乱境界，渐入于打成一片之境，于是久久缘熟，一日至七日，无一日不如是心定矣，所谓三月不违仁，此因缘也。	intent, what can be done? To be able to have deep faith in oneself and resolutely proceed along the upward path is a root of goodness. Having encountered the Buddha and heard the Dharma, one is willing to practice austerely with one mind: if one day does not suffice, then seven days; if one seven-day period does not suffice, then seven periods of seven days. During these seven days, one does not know on which day one may suddenly realize the state of non-distraction, gradually entering the state of becoming continuous and undivided. Then, after a long time, when conditions ripen, whether for one day or seven days, there will not be a single day in which the mind is not thus settled. This is what is meant by “for three months without departing from benevolence”; it is a matter of causes and conditions.
二者相合福德成就，必具胜缘，少且不足，至于临终十念必具有前缘，盖早已厌弃娑婆，绝无二念，除了生西，绝无二路，则一念已足矣。倘发愿不切，持名不诚，目前一心常乱，临时不免颠倒。	When these two come together and merit and virtue are fulfilled, superior conditions must be present; a small measure is insufficient. As for the ten recitations at the time of death, they must be supported by prior conditions. For one has long since wearied of and abandoned the Sahā world, with absolutely no second thought; apart from rebirth in the Western Pure Land, there is absolutely no other path. Then a single thought is enough. But if one’s vows are not earnest, one’s holding of the Name is not sincere, and one’s mind is ordinarily in constant confusion rather than one-pointed, then at the critical time one cannot avoid confusion and inversion.
佛之为此言者，表因地法行，果地圆成也，非定示一生前死后也。	The Buddha spoke these words to indicate the practice at the causal stage and complete fulfillment at the fruition stage; they are not necessarily to be understood in terms of before and after death.
世人于我见是利等句，欢喜要听，独于一心不乱句之办法，及第十分佛说五个难字，反忽略过去，务以十念尚可往生为之巧护，夫方便诱进，原属慈悲，不知另有劣慧众生，受其姑息，谓种善根则可矣，能否往生，当问行者自己。	When worldly people hear such words as “I see this benefit,” they are delighted and wish to hear them. Yet they neglect the method for attaining one-pointedness of mind, as well as the five occurrences of the word “difficult” spoken by the Buddha in the tenth section. They insist on cleverly defending themselves with the claim that rebirth is still possible through ten recitations. Skillful means

	of guiding people onward are, of course, compassionate; but they do not realize that there are also sentient beings of inferior wisdom who take this as indulgence, thinking that it is enough merely to plant roots of goodness. Whether one can attain rebirth or not should be asked of the practitioner personally.
如何问法，则问平时意境，是否能超然解脱，七日中能否如是一片把个主要物拿住，始蒙西方佛来护念，与诸上善人俱矣。	How should one question oneself? One should ask whether, in one's ordinary mental state, one can transcend and be liberated; whether, during seven days, one can become thus continuous and undivided and hold fast to the principal matter. Only then will one receive the mindful protection of the Buddha of the Western Pure Land and be together with all the most virtuous people.
舍利弗，众生闻者，应当发愿，愿生彼国，所以者何？得与如是诸上善人俱会一处。舍利弗，不可以少善根福德因缘，得生彼国。	Śāriputra, when sentient beings hear this, they should make vows and aspire to be born in that land. Why? Because there they may gather together in one place with such people of supreme goodness. Śāriputra, one cannot be born in that land with few roots of goodness, merit and virtue, and causes and conditions.
舍利弗，若有善男子善女人，闻说阿弥陀佛，执持名号，若一日，若二日，若三日，若四日，若五日，若六日，若七日，一心不乱，其人临命终时，阿弥陀佛，与诸圣众，现在其前，是人终时，心不颠倒，即得往生阿弥陀佛极乐国土。舍利弗，我见是利，故说此言，若有众生，闻是说者，应当发愿，生彼国土。	Śāriputra, if any good man or good woman hears of Amitābha Buddha and holds fast to his name for one day, two days, three days, four days, five days, six days, or seven days, with one-pointedness of mind without distraction, then at the time of that person's death, Amitābha Buddha, together with the assembly of sages, will appear before them. When that person dies, their mind will not be confused or inverted, and they will immediately attain rebirth in Amitābha Buddha's Land of Ultimate Bliss. Śāriputra, because I see this benefit, I speak these words: if sentient beings hear this teaching, they should make vows and aspire to be born in that land.

八、十方有佛同此劝信护念分

VIII. All Buddhas in the Ten Directions Exhort Faith and Offer Protection Section

此分表西方与十方，一门与普门互摄之妙，但能互摄之主要物。果何物乎？曰此不乱心也，所护念经者，非此	This section expresses the wonder of the mutual inclusion of the Western Pure Land and the ten

千余言之文字弥陀经也，乃十方恒沙诸佛所同证者也。	directions, of the single gate and the universal gate. But what is the principal means by which they mutually include one another? It is this undistracted mind. The sūtra protected and kept in mind is not merely the Amitābha Sūtra of a little more than a thousand Chinese characters; it is that which all the Buddhas of the ten directions, as numerous as the sands of the Ganges, have jointly realized.
十方佛各各四布，遍照十万亿佛土，光光互摄，融入一佛性海，此弥陀而毗卢也，此分重在亦有，各于其国，广长，遍覆，当信是，不可思议，所护念经等字眼，一一体味其意境，其中尤妙在隐一同字，若我心与十方诸佛同印，	The Buddhas of the ten directions are each distributed in the four quarters, illuminating everywhere a hundred thousand koṭis of Buddha-lands. Their lights mutually encompass one another and merge into the ocean of one Buddha-nature: Amitābha is Vairocana. This section particularly emphasizes such words as “also,” “each in its own land,” “broad and long,” “pervading and covering,” “you should believe this,” “inconceivable,” and “the sūtra protected and kept in mind.” Savor the significance and realm of each word. Most wonderful of all is the implicit word “same”: if our minds bear the same seal as the Buddhas of the ten directions,
则定为一切诸佛之所护念，皆得不退转于无上菩提，至此方是善根福德因缘具足，如是广大法门，非发广大心，具无量法器者，难与言也。	then we will certainly be protected and kept in mind by all Buddhas, and all will attain non-retrogression from unsurpassed, perfect enlightenment. Only then are the roots of goodness, merit and virtue, causes, and conditions complete. Such a vast Dharma gate is difficult to discuss with those who have not aroused a vast mind and do not possess the capacity for immeasurable Dharma.
佛转说此一段，亦金刚经以十方虚空喻大心之意，又恐贪执一方，自小其志趣，是为最上乘者说，盖四十九年中，佛之慈度，惟去我执，今贪执西方者，亦非佛之旨也，信心愿力，固不可不坚，西方十方，义不可不圆，圆观则义	In expounding this passage again, the Buddha also conveys the meaning of the Diamond Sūtra’s analogy of the space of the ten directions to a great mind. He further fears that people may cling greedily to one direction and narrow their own aspirations. This is spoken for those of the highest vehicle. Throughout the forty-nine years, the Buddha’s compassionate liberative work was solely to remove attachment to self. Those who now greedily cling to the Western Pure Land likewise do not accord with the Buddha’s intent. Faith, vows, and strength of aspiration certainly must be firm;

	yet the meaning of the Western Pure Land and the ten directions must also be complete. With comprehensive contemplation, the meaning
无不通，理达则见无不净，三世诸佛，都一鼻孔出气，岂十方而不同护念也哉！其言十方有佛者，不欲执于一方也，以各有因缘也，其言广长舌相说诚实言者，法之广大也，入佛之正宗也。	leaves nothing that is not understood; when principle is fully grasped, no view remains impure. The Buddhas of the three times all breathe through one nostril—how could the Buddhas of the ten directions not equally protect and keep beings in mind? The statement that there are Buddhas in the ten directions is meant to prevent attachment to one direction, for each has its own causes and conditions. Their speaking truthful words with the mark of the broad and long tongue reveals the vastness of the Dharma and entry into the Buddha's true lineage.
一切唯心，心念于魔则魔，于佛则佛，故净土者，修行人果地功德成就之总称也，无论此方十方，此法彼法，归根总在信受勿疑，决可成就，盖自净其土，法最圆满广大，心与佛会，决定得受护念，读经者勿拘于文字可也，能明自性之弥陀，则知所护念者矣。	All is mind-only: when the mind thinks of māras, it is a māra; when it thinks of Buddha, it is Buddha. Thus, the Pure Land is the collective designation for the accomplishment of the merit and virtue of fruition by practitioners. Whether this direction or the ten directions, this Dharma or that Dharma, at root it all lies in faithfully accepting without doubt; accomplishment will certainly be attained. To purify one's own land is the Dharma that is most complete and vast. When mind meets with Buddha, one will certainly receive their protection and remembrance. Readers of the sūtras need not be constrained by words. If one can understand the Amitābha of one's own nature, one will know what it is that is protected and kept in mind.
舍利弗，如我今者，赞叹阿弥陀佛不可思议功德之利，东方亦有阿　　佛，须弥相佛，大须弥佛，须弥光佛，妙音佛，如是等恒河沙数诸佛，各于其国，出广长舌相，遍覆三千大千世界，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。	Śāriputra, just as I now praise the inconceivable benefits of Amitābha Buddha's merit and virtue, so too in the eastern world there are Akṣobhya Buddha, Sumeru-Form Buddha, Great Sumeru Buddha, Sumeru-Light Buddha, Wondrous-Voice Buddha, and Buddhas such as these, as numerous as the sands of the Ganges. Each, in his own land, brings forth the mark of the broad and long tongue, pervading and covering a great trichiliocosm, and speaks truthful words: "You sentient beings should believe this sūtra of praise for inconceivable merit and virtue, protected and kept in mind by all Buddhas."

舍利弗，南方世界，有日月灯佛，名闻光佛，大焰肩佛，须弥灯佛，无量精进佛，如是等恒河沙数诸佛，各于其国，出广长舌相，遍覆三千大千世界，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。	Śāriputra, in the southern world there are Sun-Moon-Lamp Buddha, Renowned-Light Buddha, Great Blazing-Shoulder Buddha, Sumeru-Lamp Buddha, Immeasurable-Diligence Buddha, and Buddhas such as these, as numerous as the sands of the Ganges. Each, in his own land, brings forth the mark of the broad and long tongue, pervading and covering a great trichiliocosm, and speaks truthful words: “You sentient beings should believe this sūtra of praise for inconceivable merit and virtue, protected and kept in mind by all Buddhas.”
舍利弗，西方世界，有无量寿佛，无量相佛，无量幢佛，大光佛，大明佛，宝相佛，净光佛，如是等恒河沙数诸佛，各于其国，出广长舌相，遍覆三千大千世界，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。	Śāriputra, in the western world there are Immeasurable-Life Buddha, Immeasurable-Form Buddha, Immeasurable-Banner Buddha, Great-Light Buddha, Great-Brilliance Buddha, Jewel-Form Buddha, Pure-Light Buddha, and Buddhas such as these, as numerous as the sands of the Ganges. Each, in his own land, brings forth the mark of the broad and long tongue, pervading and covering a great trichiliocosm, and speaks truthful words: “You sentient beings should believe this sūtra of praise for inconceivable merit and virtue, protected and kept in mind by all Buddhas.”
舍利弗，北方世界，有焰肩佛，最胜音佛，难沮佛，日生佛，网明佛，如是等恒河沙数诸佛，各于其国，出广长舌相，遍覆三千大千世界，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。	Śāriputra, in the northern world there are Blazing-Shoulder Buddha, Most-Victorious-Voice Buddha, Unyielding Buddha, Sun-Born Buddha, Net-of-Light Buddha, and Buddhas such as these, as numerous as the sands of the Ganges. Each, in his own land, brings forth the mark of the broad and long tongue, pervading and covering a great trichiliocosm, and speaks truthful words: “You sentient beings should believe this sūtra of praise for inconceivable merit and virtue, protected and kept in mind by all Buddhas.”
舍利弗，下方世界，有师子佛，名闻佛，名光佛，达摩佛，法幢佛，持法佛，如是等恒河沙数诸佛，各于其国，出广长舌相，遍覆三千大千世界，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。	Śāriputra, in the lower world there are Lion Buddha, Renowned Buddha, Renowned-Light Buddha, Dharma Buddha, Dharma-Banner Buddha, Upholder-of-Dharma Buddha, and Buddhas such as these, as numerous as the sands of the Ganges. Each, in his own land, brings forth the mark of the broad and long tongue, pervading and covering a great trichiliocosm, and speaks truthful words: “You sentient beings should believe this sūtra of praise

	for inconceivable merit and virtue, protected and kept in mind by all Buddhas.”
舍利弗，上方世界，有梵音佛，宿王佛，香上佛，香光佛，大焰肩佛，杂色宝华严身佛，娑罗树王佛，宝华德佛，见一切义佛，如须弥山佛，如是等恒河沙数诸佛，各于其国，出广长舌相，遍覆三千大千世界，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。	Śāriputra, in the upper world there are Brahmā-Voice Buddha, King-of-Constellations Buddha, Supreme-Fragrance Buddha, Fragrance-Light Buddha, Great Blazing-Shoulder Buddha, Buddha Whose Body Is Adorned with Multicolored Jewel Flowers, King-of-Śāla-Trees Buddha, Jewel-Flower-Virtue Buddha, Beholder-of-All-Meanings Buddha, Sumeru-Mountain Buddha, and Buddhas such as these, as numerous as the sands of the Ganges. Each, in his own land, brings forth the mark of the broad and long tongue, pervading and covering a great trichiliocosm, and speaks truthful words: “You sentient beings should believe this sūtra of praise for inconceivable merit and virtue, protected and kept in mind by all Buddhas.”
舍利弗，于汝意云何，何故名为一切诸佛所护念经？舍利弗，若有善男子善女人，闻是经受持者，及闻诸佛名者，是诸善男子善女人，皆为一切诸佛之所护念，皆得不退转于阿耨多罗三藐三菩提。是故舍利弗，汝等皆当信受我语，及诸佛所说。	Śāriputra, what do you think? Why is this called the sūtra protected and kept in mind by all Buddhas? Śāriputra, if good men or good women hear this sūtra and uphold it, and hear the names of these Buddhas, then these good men and good women will all be protected and kept in mind by all Buddhas, and will all attain non-retrogression from unsurpassed, perfect enlightenment. Therefore, Śāriputra, all of you should faithfully accept my words and what all the Buddhas have spoken.

九、三时众生发心即同往生分

IX. Section on Sentient Beings of the Three Times Who, Upon Arousing the Resolve, Attain Rebirth Alike

信为功德之母，信成就者，即功德成就也。	Faith is the mother of merit and virtue. When faith is accomplished, merit and virtue are accomplished as well.
佛言初发心即成佛，世人偏执于死后方可往生，此为根本大误，生西原在死后，但能否往生，决在生前，此言发愿之胜，苟能于四大分离，十分痛苦时，能一心于佛，其能不恋恋于世爱情见可知，脱然解化，自属可能，但必生前常常作观，愿力坚强，一念之转，八万四千功行，当下在一空字中已一切成就矣。	The Buddha said that upon first arousing the resolve, one immediately becomes a Buddha. Yet people stubbornly maintain that one can be reborn only after death. This is a fundamental and grave error. Rebirth in the Western Pure Land indeed occurs after death, but whether one can attain rebirth is decided during life. This shows the

	excellence of making vows. If, when the four elements are separating and one is in extreme pain, one can remain one-pointedly focused on the Buddha, then it is evident that one is not attached to worldly love and views. To be liberated and transformed is naturally possible. Yet one must regularly contemplate this during life and make one's vows strong. With a turn of a single thought, the eighty-four thousand practices are, in that very moment, all accomplished within the single word emptiness.
此是至难行，至难信之法，断非临时张皇可办，故一念功行，即不退转，今发愿若已生六句，正相对，不是二义，心力之大，莫可与比，此顿入如来地之法也，故曰不退转于无上菩提。	This Dharma is most difficult to practice and most difficult to believe. It can by no means be accomplished in a moment of panic at the last minute. Therefore, a single thought of practice leads to non-retrogression. The six phrases—having already made vows, now making vows, and about to make vows; having already been reborn, now being reborn, and about to be reborn—correspond exactly; they are not two separate meanings. The power of mind is beyond comparison. This is a Dharma for suddenly entering the ground of the Tathāgata; hence it is said, "non-retrogression from unsurpassed, perfect enlightenment."
舍利弗，若有人已发愿，今发愿，当发愿，欲生阿弥陀佛国者，是诸人等，皆得不退转于阿耨多罗三藐三菩提，于彼国土，若已生，若今生，若当生。是故舍利弗，诸善男子善女人，若有信者，应当发愿，生彼国土。	Śāriputra, if there are people who have already made vows, now make vows, or are about to make vows, wishing to be reborn in Amitābha Buddha's land, all these people will attain non-retrogression from unsurpassed, perfect enlightenment. In that land, they have already been reborn, are now being reborn, or will be reborn. Therefore, Śāriputra, all good men and good women who have faith should make vows to be reborn in that land.

十、浊世众生障重难信分

X. The Difficulty of Faith for Heavily Obstructed Sentient Beings in the Defiled World

彼诸佛等称赞释迦牟尼佛，能为甚难之事，非事之难也，正显娑婆众生，其性刚强，难以调伏之难也。	The Buddhas praised Śākyamuni Buddha for being able to accomplish exceedingly difficult deeds. The difficulty does not lie in the deeds themselves; rather, it reveals how beings in the Sahā world are obstinate by nature and difficult to tame.
此五浊恶世，皆由心造，心之坚固者为见浊，心眼为五浊所蒙，则不能见，虽宣说各种庄严，无由信入矣，故佛不能度无缘之人，连说五个难字，从可知矣，吾愿行者，知难则重法，重法则知佛之慈悲，无微不至，加意警惕，一心皈佛，庶报佛恩于万一耳。	This Sahā world of the five turbidities is all created by the mind. The mind's stubborn firmness constitutes the turbidity of views. When the mind's eye is obscured by the five turbidities, it cannot see; thus, even when the various adornments are expounded, there is no way for one to enter through faith. Therefore, the Buddha cannot liberate those without affinity. From the repeated use of the word "difficult" five times, this may be understood. I hope that practitioners, knowing the difficulty, will value the Dharma; valuing the Dharma, they will recognize that the Buddha's compassion leaves nothing unattended, remain especially vigilant, and take refuge single-mindedly in the Buddha, thereby perhaps repaying, in some small measure, the Buddha's grace.
舍利弗，如我今者，称赞诸佛不可思议功德，彼诸佛等，亦称赞我不可思议功德而作是言，释迦牟尼佛，能为甚难希有之事，能于娑婆国土，五浊恶世，劫浊、见浊、烦恼浊、众生浊、命浊中，得阿耨多罗三藐三菩提，为诸众生，说是一切世间难信之法。	Śāriputra, just as I now praise the inconceivable merits of all Buddhas, so too those Buddhas praise my inconceivable merits and say these words: "Śākyamuni Buddha is able to accomplish exceedingly difficult and rare deeds. In the Sahā world, in the evil age of the five turbidities—the turbidity of the kalpa, the turbidity of views, the turbidity of afflictions, the turbidity of sentient beings, and the turbidity of life—he attains unsurpassed perfect awakening and, for the sake of all sentient beings, expounds this Dharma that is difficult for all the world to believe."
舍利弗，当知我于五浊恶世，行此难事，得阿耨多罗三藐三菩提，为一切世间说此难信之法，是为甚难。	Śāriputra, you should know that in the evil age of the five turbidities, I accomplish this difficult deed: I attain unsurpassed perfect awakening and expound this Dharma, difficult for all the world to believe. This is exceedingly difficult.

十一、三时众生同时得法乐分

XI. Section on Sentient Beings of the Three Times Simultaneously Attaining Dharma Bliss

佛说此经已，不独当时一切听众，即现在未来诸众生，一切世间天人阿修罗，乃至鬼畜地狱，无不缘此法得度而大快乐也。因闻法而信，因信而受，受而奉行，行证微妙，无不欢喜，作礼而去者，心向往之，若已生若今生若当生者矣，但最要者为信受，信受此难信之法耳。	When the Buddha had finished speaking this sūtra, not only all those present at that time, but also all sentient beings of the present and future—every being in the world, including devas, humans, asuras, and even ghosts, animals, and beings in the hells—could, through affinity with this Dharma, attain liberation and great happiness. On hearing the Dharma, they give rise to faith; through faith, they accept it; having accepted it, they uphold and practice it; through practice, they realize its subtle wonder. All rejoice. Those who bow in reverence and depart set their hearts upon it, whether already born, now being born, or yet to be born. Yet the most essential point is faith and acceptance: faith in and acceptance of this Dharma, which is difficult to believe.
佛说此经已。舍利弗及诸比丘，一切世间天人阿修罗等，闻佛所说，欢喜信受，作礼而去。	When the Buddha had finished speaking this sūtra, Śāriputra and the bhikṣus, together with all the devas, humans, asuras, and other beings in the world, having heard what the Buddha had taught, rejoiced, believed and accepted it, paid homage, and departed.