

PATH TO PURE LAND

THE FINAL TEACHING OF UPASAKA XIA LIAN JU

淨修捷要英文版

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NAMO AMITA BUDDHA

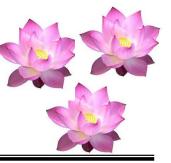


南無阿彌陀佛



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Moreover, I sincerely exhort everyone to turn the great Dharma Wheel and propagate this important Dharma teaching. Translate it into other languages so that all people of every culture can cultivate it and plant seeds of Dharma.

Brian Chung

DEDICATION OF MERIT

May the merits and virtues accrued from this work repay the kindness of my Mother, Father and Elders and relieve them from their sufferings.



May my Mother, Father and Elders bring forth the heart of understanding and compassion and, at the end of this life, be born together in the Land of Ultimate Bliss.



"In fact, if you practice virtue in this world for ten full days, the merits derived will surpass that of cultivating elsewhere in the Samsara for a whole millennium. The reason is that the other worlds are naturally pleasurable due to the superior virtue and merit of their inhabitants. Thus, there are no grounds for committing evil. Conversely, the world we reside in has little good but plenty of evil. People here are harassed by scarcity and must toil for a living. In addition, the food and drink here are toxic and bitter. The evil habits of this world increases with each passing day."

- Infinite Life Sutra

"Anywhere a Buddha goes—whether to a state, a city, or a hamlet — people will be converted and brought towards the Way.

All the lands beneath the stars will be serene and harmonious.

The Sun will shine bright and the Moon will be luminous.

Pleasant breezes and timely rains will be the norm.

Plagues, intrigues and calamities will not occur.

Society will be prosperous and peaceful.

Soldiers and arms will be of no use.

Virtue will be revered and humaneness cherished.

All will feel compelled to refine themselves with etiquette and deference.

Society will be free from thieves and bandits.

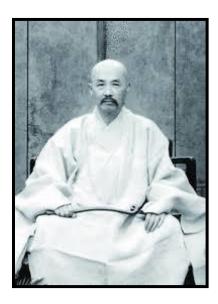
There will be neither grievances nor miscarriages of justice.

The powerful will not exploit the weak.

Everyone will naturally be satisfied and content."

-Infinite Life Sutra

TRANSLATORS FOREWORD



Upasaka Xia Lian Ju (夏蓮居居士)

The Path to Pure land is the profound final teaching of the eminent Upasaka Xia Lian Ju. The 32 recitations and prostrations of this practice can be easily and quickly done, but deliver just as much merit as fully reciting the great Mahayana Sutras.

However, in order to truly benefit from this practice, you must approach it with a sincere and empty mind. Buddhist sutras are about profound meaning that extend beyond mere words. This meaning and wisdom can only be unlocked with diligent mindfulness. Thus, whenever you are practicing this teaching, you must diligently and sincerely do so. Moreover, you must not try and figure out its meaning or analyze it, just mindfully cultivate it. The wisdom of the Buddha transcends logic and any speculation by an unenlightened being will only result in more delusions and superficial opinions.

According to the Venerable Master Chin Kung, sacred texts must be sincerely recited for at least 1000 times before defilements are wiped away, allowing wisdom to shine forth from the Buddha-nature. Thus, if you cultivate this teaching for three years, and in accordance with the previous instructions, you will most likely gain profound insight. If you single-mindedly dedicate the resulting merits towards rebirth in the Land of Ultimate Bliss, it is without doubt that Pure Land can be achieved.

UPASAKA XIA LIAN JU'S FOREWORD

The Dharma-door of Amitabha Pureland is the rarest and most profound Dharma; even though it is simple to cultivate, few ever have the extraordinary privilege to faithfully do so. Unless a person is willing to be devotedly courageous and venture forth into the deep blue Sea of Dharma, he will never realize the profound insight of the Buddha.

In the Avatamsaka Sutra, the Ten Great Vows of Samantabhadra takes refuge in the Land of Ultimate Bliss. Furthermore, the Bodhisattva Vasubandhu cultivates the path towards Pure Land through the five virtuous intentions of reverence and refuge, praise and admiration, great vows, discernment and merit dedication.

Today in the Dharma-ending Age, many practice Buddhism only superficially. Such cultivators cannot easily understand the Dharma-door of Amitabha, which is the Buddha's highest and deepest teaching. Only by diligently reading and becoming familiar with the great Mahayana Sutras can one experience the profound wisdom of Amitabha.

Furthermore, a majority of those who cultivate the Dharma-door of Pureland today uphold only the Shorter Sutra of Amitabha, and only the version translated by Kumarajiva. It is rare indeed to find someone who also practices Xuanzang's translations and upholds the Longer Sutra of Infinite Life.

Thus, even though many study this Dharma-door, only a few truly, sincerely and faithfully cultivate it. A man with insufficient faith and wavering resolve cannot hope to truly benefit from this Dharma-door.

In 1880, when I was gravely ill, I vowed to consolidate and streamline the Buddha's sutras so as to facilitate easy acceptance and understanding--to realize the Patriarch's vision of creating a simplified practice (Path to Pure Land) for the masses and beginners. Enabling them to receive the Buddha's responses within the three karmas of body (prostration), speech (recitation) and mind (mindfulness).

This practice is also in full accordance with the five virtuous intentions. Those who cultivate this practice will be able to expel all of their wandering thoughts.

Moreover, as each prostration is immediately followed by recitation of the Buddha's name and passages from the sutras, right mindfulness can manifest while false thoughts are given no opportunity to creep in. Not only can one accomplish the thirty two recitations and prostrations of this practice within in a short amount of time, the merit and virtue accumulated will be vast and incomparable. As of now, the Path to Pure Land is on its fourth printing and many have benefitted greatly from it.

Compared to other ways of cultivation, this practice saves both time and energy, thus proving itself to be a great convenience in today's busy environment. Anyone who regularly cultivates this practice will see their heart fuse with the Sagely sapience found herein. Eventually, they will be at one with their Buddha-nature and profound wisdom will arise naturally without the need for deep study, discourse or analysis. Cultivation of this practice is the same as cultivating Non-abidance and achieving the purity of the Land of Ultimate Bliss.

Afterwards, when they read the great sutras, they will encounter no obstacles; achieving rebirth in the Land of Ultimate Bliss becomes as easy as sailing downstream amid favorable winds.

Every word herein is sourced from the sutras and must therefore be treated with respect and recited with sincerity. Cultivate it in the manner of Bodhisattva Vasubandhu's five virtuous intentions and four principles of deference, single-mindedness, uninterrupted recitation and lifelong devotion. Do so and the rare, esoteric and subtle wisdom of the Buddha will reveal itself to you.

Upasaka Xia Lian Ju

THE THIRTY TWO RECITATIONS AND PROSTRATIONS

Incense Praise

Let this true incense of Sila and Samadhi constitute a pious offering, and may its virtuous smoke saturate and increase the good roots of all who are touched by it.

May delightful fragrances and bright inner light pervade across the ten quarters, sincerely drawing in the Buddha's compassionate blessings and protection.

Namo Incense Cloud Canopy Bodhisattva Mahasattva (recite thrice)

1) With one heart, contemplate and revere the Patriarch of the Saha World, the Teacher of the Nine Realms, the Tathagata and World-Honored One. He patiently displayed the Eight Stages of Attaining Bodhi whilst dwelling among the five turbidities, and it was he who showed joyous Great Compassion towards sentient beings by speaking the Dharma, opening their Dharma-eye, blocking the path to the evil realms, opening the way to virtue and propagating the simple but profound Dharma-door that liberates all beings. A great benefactor and esteemed eminence, the Original Patriarch of Dharma, Shakyamuni Buddha.

Namo Original Patriarch Shakyamuni Buddha (prostrate once and recite thrice)

2) With one heart, contemplate and revere the Patriarch of the Land of Ultimate Bliss. When he was still sowing the seeds of Bodhi he heard the profound Dharma. Henceforth, he vowed to attain Unsurpassed Upright Realization, to abide in true wisdom and to deracinate the causes of the never-ending pain of birth and death. Thus, he abdicated his crown and joined the Sangha, becoming a monk called Dharmakara. He cultivated the Bodhisattva Way and amassed merit and virtue for limitless kalpas. His great and exalted vows were soon perfected and his name now encompasses tens of thousands of virtues. Moreover, his name is praised across the ten quarters for he is the guide to salvation—Amita Buddha.

3) With one heart, contemplate and revere the western direction, where hundreds of thousands of millions of Buddha-lands away, there is a Buddha-land called Ultimate Bliss. When Dharmakara attained Unsurpassed Bodhi, he became known as Amita and assumed the title Tathagata of Infinite Life and Light, Worthy of Offerings, Impartial and Enlightened. This title perfectly represents the ten honors of Buddhahood. He dwells amidst complete augustness and boundless merit, in the Pure Land—Amita Buddha.

Namo Amita Buddha (prostrate once and recite thrice)

4) With one heart, contemplate and revere the pure Dharmakaya. It exists everywhere, neither arises nor ceases to be, neither comes nor goes, and cannot be truly understood or expressed through language and duality. Fulfilling the vows promising salvation to all sentient beings, the Western Land of Ultimate Bliss and the Land of Sole and Lasting Light welcomes sentient beings from the entire Dharma-realm, allowing them to leave the sufferings of the Saha World behind and attain everlasting bliss. Greatly Benevolent Greatly Compassionate, Amita Buddha.

Namo Amita Buddha (prostrate once and recite thrice)

5) With one heart, contemplate and revere the perfect Sambhogakaya. Wherever it abides, there is never even a hint of suffering, calamities, evil realms and demon skandhas. Moreover, there will also exist not the harsh and volatile phenomena of summer, winter, rain, storm clouds and darkness. Always boundless, spacious, smooth, upright, full of wondrous beauty and surpassing all the worlds of the ten quarters—the adorned and exalted Pure Land—Amita Buddha.

Namo Amita Buddha (prostrate once and recite thrice)

6) With one heart, contemplate and revere the infinite lifespans, infinite bright light, the Bodhisattva disciples, the Shravakas and devas, all endowed with everlasting life. The land and the name surpasses anything found in the ten quarters and are free from both decline and impermanence; rare, exalted and built to last for all eternity—Amita Buddha.

7) With one heart, contemplate and revere the Buddha of Infinite Life, also known as the Infinite Light Buddha and the Buddha of Boundless, Unhindered and Unsurpassed Light. Moreover, he is also praised as the light of wisdom, everlasting light, pure light, joyous light, light of liberation, light of peace and refuge, light surpassing that of the sun and moon and unimaginable light. Peerless and unrivaled, the King of Buddhas, Amita Buddha.

Namo Amita Buddha (prostrate once and recite thrice)

8) With one heart, contemplate and revere infinite light and life. The brightness of the Tathagata and World-Honored One shines across the entirety of the ten quarters. Sentient beings whose cultivation allows them to meet such light will see their virtues bloom and their defilements wither to dust. Their minds and bodies become easeful and flexible; all afflictions cease and every anxiety dissolves. Of all such mighty and divine bright light, his is the foremost and even the light of all the Buddhas of the ten quarters cannot match it—Amita Buddha.

Namo Amita Buddha (prostrate once and recite thrice)

9) With one heart, contemplate and revere the Land of Ultimate Bliss and its Patriarch, who is seated upon his throne and exuding majestic merit. His august appearance and shining brightness illuminates all the worlds of the entire universe without exception. Like a radiant golden colossus rising from the sea, drowning out the light of everything and everyone else. The Buddha's light is pure, clear, bright and resplendent. Reverently surrounded by innumerable Shravakas and Bodhisattvas, Amita Buddha.

Namo Amita Buddha (prostrate once and recite thrice)

10) With one heart, contemplate and revere the Patriarch and Guru of the Land of Ultimate Bliss, who presently appears there to speak the profound Dharma to multitudes of sentient beings. He allows them to reap immense benefit and enjoy the utmost peace and bliss. The Bodhisattvas of the ten quarters all prostrate before him, hear his Dharma, receive his blessings, and praise and make offerings to him, Amita Buddha.

11) With one heart, contemplate and revere the fact that the Buddha arises from within the heart and that the heart manifests along with the Buddha. Outside the heart, there is nothing and the Buddha is nothing but the heart. Outside, there is no heart as all are one. When a man recites the name of Amita Buddha, he is at one with his inner self-nature, and Pure Land rebirth is the only way to return to the original self-nature. As seeking begets simultaneous response, the Pure Land, which is hundreds of thousands of millions of worlds away, can be reached in a blink of an eye. The heart does what the heart is, Amita Buddha.

Namo Amita Buddha (prostrate once and recite thrice)

12) With one heart, contemplate and revere the Mahayana and Vajrayana teachings, which are one. Moreover, the body and its milieu are one and not separate. Reciting Amita Buddha is the same as reciting any mantra and the Patriarch is the Guru. The Great Light Vairocana Buddha is rooted in Infinite Light and Life. Thus, the Land of Vairocana and the Pure Realm of Ghanavyuha are not independent from the Land of Ultimate Bliss, they are one and the same. Primordial and encompassing the entirety of the ten quarters, Amita Buddha.

Namo Amita Buddha (prostrate once and recite thrice)

13) With one heart, contemplate and revere the six words that unify tens of thousands of Dharma-doors; the one door that is the universal door. All matter and form are truth. All wandering thoughts can be converted into what is real. The entire self-nature lies in cultivation and full cultivation lies in the self-nature. Broad learning is rooted in profound focus; exclusive cultivation is the same as upholding every virtue and practicing every wisdom. With each utterance, one becomes awakened, and no thoughts stray from the Patriarch Guru, Amita Buddha.

14) With one heart, contemplate and revere the truth that infinite light and life is your original wisdom. By resolving to recite the Buddha's name, the seeds of wisdom are sown. Rely on the Pure Land's august virtue to illuminate your self-nature. The seeds of wisdom never parts with original wisdom; know this and you are directly upon the path to enlightenment. However, even a moment of separation will cause you to fall into delusion. Omniscient and easefully aware of the thoughts of all sentient beings, with Sole Light and true purity, not partaking in the intrigues of emotion, profound and without duality, Amita Buddha.

Namo Amita Buddha (prostrate once and recite thrice)

15) With one heart, contemplate and revere the name adorned with tens of thousands of virtues. It can eradicate any offense and if one single-mindedly recites it, all defilements and obstacles will naturally dissolve. Not only will the Way- heart become mature, both merit and wisdom will grow and increase. At the moment of death, a host of Sages will appear and benevolently bestow their blessings, ensuring that one's heart remains unconfused. One will be welcomed into the Land of Ultimate Bliss to dwell in the Seven Jeweled Lagoon, and when the lotus blooms the glory of Bodhi is achieved. Amita Buddha

Namo Amita Buddha (prostrate once and recite thrice)

16) With one heart, contemplate and revere the Land of Ultimate Bliss, its virtuous breezes, blossoms that rain down like confetti, its wondrous fragrances, and its divine bliss, springs, lagoons, jeweled trees, bejeweled screens and celestial peafowls. Such beauty, light, scents and serene sounds pervade across the entire land. Such accomplished merit and augustness are solely for the benefit of sentient beings, to help their good roots to grow. Created by grand vows and immense strength, Amita Buddha.

17) With one heart, contemplate and revere the Land of Ultimate Bliss, and what lies upon its golden soil, between its rows of jeweled trees, inside its lotus lagoons and within its bejeweled pavilions. Having vowed for Bodhi, recited the Buddha's name and achieved rebirth in the Land of Ultimate Bliss, they now abide in upright stillness and the permanent state of Avivartika. Appearance and countenance wondrous and regal, rare beyond the world, equally beautiful and without any variation in quality. Body ethereal and devoid of coarse or solid forms. These are the virtuous who inhabit the Land of Ultimate Bliss, fitting reward for having recited Amita Buddha with unceasing concentration.

Namo Amita Buddha (prostrate once and recite thrice)

18) With one heart, contemplate and revere the Land of Ultimate Bliss, and those who sit under its Bodhi Tree and stand beside its jeweled balustrades. Upon hearing the profound sounds of Dharma, they gain Anutpattika-dharma-ksanti and enjoy all kinds of Mahayana Dharma bliss. These Bodhisattvas are complete with merit, wisdom and august virtue. Moreover, they easefully enjoy transcendental powers and whatever they wish for appears on demand. These Mahabodhisattvas are the heirs of the Buddha, for they have all recited Amita Buddha with unceasing concentration.

Namo Amita Buddha (prostrate once and recite thrice)

19) With one heart, contemplate and revere The Land of Ultimate Bliss, and its Way-places, pavilions, lecture halls and viharas. The multitudes of beings who are reborn in Pure Land, whether Sage or commoner, now blissfully speak the Dharma, hear the Dharma or practice divine powers while suspended in the air or on the ground. As they cultivate in accordance with their will, no one fails to achieve perfection. These Bodhisattvas and Sages have all recited Amita Buddha with unceasing concentration.

20) With one heart, contemplate and revere those of the ten quarters who possess the eminent long tongue of honesty and speak true words. They praise the incredible merit of the Buddha of Infinite Life and strive to allow all sentient beings to hear his name, give rise to the pure heart, pensively accept and hold his name, take refuge in and make offerings to him, single-mindedly dedicate all their good roots, follow the vows, and attain Avivartika and Unsurpassed Bodhi. They are the multitudes of Buddhas as numerous as sand grains in the Ganges.

Namo Amita Buddha (prostrate once and recite thrice)

21) With one heart, contemplate and revere those of the six directions who praise the Original Patriarch's monumental undertaking of preaching the simple but profound Dharma across every realm. They exhort all sentient beings to single-mindedly develop faith and acceptance; they protect cultivators of the ten directions and those attaining Pure Land rebirth. They are the multitudes of Buddhas as numerous as sand grains in the Ganges.

Namo Amita Buddha (prostrate once and recite thrice)

22) With one heart, contemplate and revere the words of the Infinite Life Sutra: "In a future time when the Dharma perishes and evil flourishes, the Buddha will retain this one Sutra out of compassion, and allow it to last for another hundred years. Those who meet it will realize their dreams no matter what they may be." Thus, single-mindedly prostrate to the boundless, perfect, simple, straightforward, convenient, complete, most rare and hard to meet Dharma-treasure: The Mahayana Infinite Life, Adornment, Purity, Impartiality, and Enlightenment Sutra (大乘無量壽莊嚴清淨平等覺經).

23) With one heart, contemplate and revere the Dharma-door that is the Buddha vehicle of true teachings, the sea where all virtues flow into, open to both Sages and commoners and cultivated by both the brilliant and base. The door that encompasses the Eight Teachings, perfectly amalgamates the Five Houses, cuts sideways through the Samsara to reach the Four Lands, and allows the nine grades of rebirth to be attained within one life. Praised in unison by the Buddhas of the ten quarters, the true meaning of thousands of sutras and tens of thousands of discourses, the Jeweled King of Samadhi, the unimaginably profound Dharma-door.

Namo Amita Buddha (prostrate once and recite thrice)

24) With one heart, contemplate and revere the transformation body of Amita Buddha, he who entered Samadhi through the process of hearing and reflecting, returned to the self-nature and attained Unsurpassed Bodhi. He who cultivated the Bodhisattva-Way, attained Pure Land rebirth and made great and profound vows. He who is the Universal Dharma-door, the savior of those who cry in pain, and he who gives immediate relief and response. Anyone who sincerely takes refuge in him while in dire need or danger, will be extricated to safety. A colossus as regal as Tyrian purple and the finest gold, Avalokitesvara Bodhisattva.

Namo Amita Buddha (prostrate once and recite thrice)

25) With one heart, contemplate and revere the first Patriarch of the Pure Land School, he who entered Anutpattika-dharma-ksanti through reciting the Buddha's name, tamed the six senses through pure and unceasing recitation, which also gave true Bodhi and allowed Samadhi to be entered. His is the foremost way. Dwelling with Avalokitesvara in this Saha World to show the path to immense benefit and bliss, he does not forsake anyone, especially those who are willing to recite the Buddha's name. Helping all to leave the evil realms and attain unsurpassed benefit, the boundless body of light and wisdom, Mahasthamaprapta Bodhisattva.

26) With one heart, contemplate and revere he who majestically sits upon the seat of honor in the Tathagata of Infinite Life's congregation. He who is the master of the Avatamsaka Sutra, exudes augustness at all times, transforms into the Vajra-sattva, and is the eternal first Patriarch of the Vajrayana School. Humble and always collecting the Avatamsaka and Lotus Dharma, the King of Ten Great Vows who is sworn to the Land of Ultimate Bliss, of grand vows and great conduct, Samantabhadra Bodhisattva.

Namo Amita Buddha (prostrate once and recite thrice)

27) With one heart, contemplate and revere the Crown Prince of Dharma, Teacher of Seven Buddhas, Exalted, Wondrous, Auspicious, and Defilement Free Grand Sage. He who vows to ascend to the Land of Ultimate Bliss together with all sentient beings, to cherish only one Buddha, exclusively recite his name, and to meet Amita while mindful of him. Of great and profound wisdom and boundless Samadhi, Manjursi Bodhisattva.

Namo Amita Buddha (prostrate once and recite thrice)

28) With one heart, contemplate and revere he who, at the assembly of Rajgir hill, was personally entrusted with the Mahayana Infinite Life Sutra and the duty to spread the Dharma-door of Pure Land. He who is currently in the Inner Court of Tushita, waiting to achieve Perfect Enlightenment under the Bodhi Tree at the future Thrice Dragon Blossom Assemblies. Of boundless merit, Maitreya Bodhisattva.

Namo Amita Buddha (prostrate once and recite thrice)

29) With one heart, contemplate and revere Sariputta, the esteemed great disciples, Sagely protectors, and the Sixteen Lay Bodhisattvas of the Tathagata of Infinite Life's congregation. All of them follow the eminent Samantabhadra, who is complete with limitless virtues, vows and firmly abides in all meritorious Dharmas. These are the multitude of Mahabodhisattvas.

30) With one heart, contemplate and revere the past and present Dharma Masters of the Pure Land School. They have established disciplines, spoken the sutras, taken refuge in Pure Land, reconciled the various proper teachings to the Pure Land, received the precepts, spread the Dharma and anointed the heads of the pious. They are the multitude of Dharma Masters.

Namo Amita Buddha (prostrate once and recite thrice)

31) With one heart, contemplate and revere the Three Treasures, dharma protectors, Bodhisattvas of the ten quarters, Vajras, Brahma-devas, gods, dragons, protector spirits, Sages and wise men of the universe and Dharma-realm.

Namo Amita Buddha (prostrate once and recite thrice)

32) With one heart, bear the burdens of your current and past life parents, relatives, teachers and karmic enemies. Dedicate your cultivation to them all, prostrate to the Three Treasures in their place, repent their offenses on their behalf, and carry all sentient beings of the Dharma-realm towards the Western Land of Ultimate Bliss, to attain rebirth there and perfect wisdom together.

Namo Amita Buddha (prostrate once and recite thrice)

Praise to the Buddha of Infinite Life:

The Buddha of Infinite Life and King of Sweet Dew has majestic merit and potent vows. Sincere and pious recitation of his name will eradicate calamities, eliminate obstacles, and transform burning houses into delightful breezes. By Welcoming the Buddha's light within the heart of Bodhi, roots of merit, wisdom and virtue naturally increase. Recite it single-mindedly and without doubt. Allow the smoke of the incense of Sila and Samadhi to regularly adorn you. Faith, Resolve and Action are the three nourishments that sustains your practice. He is the benevolent ship of salvation that sails upon the sea of suffering, Namo Greatly Compassionate, Greatly Benevolent, of Great Strength and Great Vows, Guide and Savior, Amita Buddha of the Western Land of Ultimate Bliss.

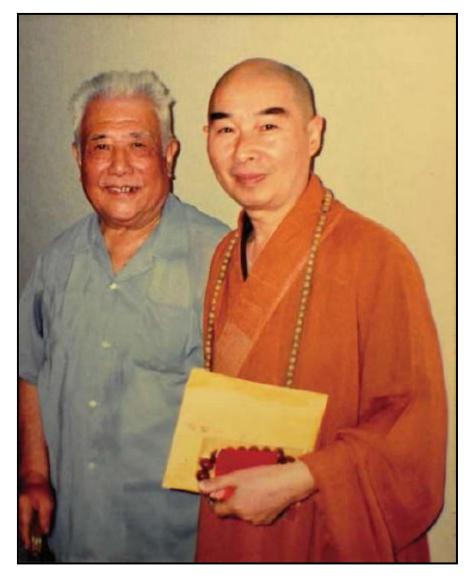
NAMO AMITA BUDDHA

(Recite either one thousand times or ten thousand times).

Dedication of Merit:

I hereby dedicate the merit derived from this practice to all sentient beings of the Dharma-realm, all beings of the Samsara and four types of birth, and to all current and past karmic creditors. May they, through the power of the Dharma, gain liberation. Let those who are alive receive increased merits and have their lifespans prolonged, and may the departed achieve Pure Land rebirth. Let us all escape the wheel of suffering and reach the shores of liberation together.

Acknowledgments:



Left: Upasaka Huang Nien Tsu (黃念祖老居士)/ Right: Ven.

Master Chin Kung (淨空法師)

This translation would not have been possible without the nine hour long deathbed commentary of the Path to Pure Land by Upasaka Xia Lian Ju's great disciple, the Upasaka Huang Nien Tsu (one of the teachers of the esteemed Ven. Master Chin Kung). Spoken just before his Pure Land rebirth in order to repay his Upasaka Xia's kindness, it is his last and most important teaching.

The commentary (Chinese) is titled: 淨修捷要報恩談