The Scripture on the Buddha’s Teaching About Meditation
On the Enlightened Being ‘Of Infinite Life’

_Buddha Bhāṣita Amitāyur Dhyāna Sūtra_

佛說觀無量壽佛經

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Like this I have heard:
At one time the Buddha was dwelling on Vulture’s Peak by the City of the Royal House, with a large assembly consisting of one thousand two hundred fifty monks and thirty-two thousand bodhisattvas. Mañjuśrī, a prince of life’s true purpose, was the head of the assembly.

At this time, in the great City of The Royal House, there was a crown prince named Ajātaśatru who, following the evil counsel of his friend Devadatta, forcibly arrested and detained his father, the King Bimbisāra. He confined the king to a dungeon in the castle with walls that were made of stone seven layers thick and proclaimed to the court that no one could visit him.

However, Bimbisāra’s chief courtesan Vaidehī revered the great king. Each day, after bathing and grooming herself, she would smear her body with a paste of honey and flour and conceal a grape beverage in her necklaces so that she could secretly nourish him during conjugal visits in the dungeon. After eating the pastry and drinking the grape juice, the former king would seek water to rinse out his mouth. Having done so, he would then join his palms together with reverence, face towards Vulture’s Peak, worship the Blessed One from afar and then speak these words of prayer:

“Your disciple Mahā Maudgalyāyana has been my intimate friend. May you have mercy and compassion on me, and send him to confer upon me the eight precepts of commitment to an austere life.”

On hearing this, the Blessed One dispatched Mahā Maudgalyāyana, who flew as quick as a falcon to be with the former king and, day after day, bestowed the eight precepts of commitment to austerity on him. The Blessed One also dispatched the venerable monk Pūrṇa to teach him each day about the true nature of life’s purpose. This went on for a period of three weeks. Having had a chance to eat the honey paste and hear about the nature of life’s purpose, the former king showed in his countenance that he was content and at peace.

After these three weeks had passed, Ajātaśatru asked the chief guard of the dungeon if his father was still alive. The guard answered him by saying:

“Great king, the chief courtesan of your father has been secretly smearing a paste of honey and flour on her body and wearing necklaces containing a grape beverage. She has been providing this nourishment to the king during her conjugal visits, and the ascetics Mahā Maudgalyāyana and Pūrṇa have been descending from the sky each day to teach the king about the nature of life’s purpose. It has been impossible for us to control them.”

When Ajātaśatru heard these words he became furious, saying:

“My mother is a traitor because she has become an accomplice working for my enemy. These ascetics are evil people, using artful magical spells to play with the former king’s mind. Together, they have prevented this evil king from dying for these many days.”

He then brandished his sharp sword, intending to slay his mother.
At this point, two ministers approached the new king. One was Candraprabha, who was quick, brilliant and endowed with much wisdom. The other was Jīvaka, a renowned physician. After saluting the new king, Candraprabha spoke up first, saying:

“Great king, we have learned from the holy scriptures, the great discourses and the ancient wisdom of the Vedas that, from the earliest times, there have been as many as eighteen thousand kings who have killed their own fathers out of greed for the thrones of their nations. However, we have never heard of any of them killing their own mother this way. Should the king now dare to commit such a grave offense, it will bring disgrace upon the lineage of our ruling class. As your subjects we cannot bear to witness this. It would be the act of an outcast, and we will not stay here with you if you do this.”

Having spoken, the two great subjects withdrew, stepping backwards with their hands on their swords. Surprised and alarmed, Ajātaśatru then turned to Jīvaka and asked him:

“Are you not on my side?”

Jīvaka answered him, saying:

“Great king, be careful, do not harm your mother.”

On hearing this, the new king relented and sought their forgiveness. Laying down his sword, he did not harm his mother. Instead, he ordered his guards to confine her to a chamber deep in the castle and never allow her to leave it again.

When Vaidehī was locked up in confinement, she became pale and ashen with worry and despair. Facing towards Vulture’s Peak, she worshipped the Buddha from afar and spoke these words:

“Blessed One, One That Has Descended Into This World - before, you used to send Ānanda to come and console me. Now, I am worried and in utter despair. The Blessed One is majestic and exalted, but I no longer have any way to see you. I pray that you send your disciples Mahā Maudgalyāyana and Ānanda to come visit me.”

Having spoken these words, she grieved and wept a shower of tears. Bowing down towards the Buddha and worshiping him from afar, she did not raise her head back up for even a moment.

Although the Blessed One was on Vulture’s Peak at this time, he knew what weighed on Vaidehī’s mind. He dispatched Maha Maudgalyāyana and Ānanda to come down to her through the emptiness of space. The Buddha himself also vanished from Vulture’s Peak and reappeared in her chamber deep within the royal house.

When Vaidehī finally raised her head, she suddenly saw the Blessed One, the Buddha Śākyamuni before her. His body was a burnished golden color and he was seated on a lotus blossom composed of hundreds of jewels. Maudgalyāyana attended him on his left while Ānanda attended him on his right. The Lord Almighty of Heaven, the Creator of the Universe, the Guardians of the World and a host of other heavenly beings were also seen surrounding the Buddha in the emptiness of space, showering down the divine blossoms they held as offerings to him.

When Vaidehī saw the Blessed One, she took off her necklaces and prostrated herself on the ground. Weeping and sobbing before the Buddha, she said:

“Blessed One! What immoral act in the past did I commit to bear this evil child? Blessed One! Why have you had such a (familial & spiritual) affiliation with Devadatta? Blessed One! I pray that you tell me of a place where there is no sorrow or distress, a refuge where I may go to be spiritually reborn. I no longer take pleasure in the jungle.

The Land of Pure Bliss
we live in and the depravities of its evil world. This place is corrupted, filled with hells, demons of hunger and brutal beasts. So much evil has accumulated here! May I never again hear these evil voices or see these evil people. I now face the Blessed One, prostrate myself on the ground, seek mercy and confess my moral transgressions. I pray that the sun-like Buddha teach me how to meditate on a refuge from this suffering in such a way that all my actions will be pure of affliction.”

The Blessed One then emitted a golden ray of light from the middle of his brow that illuminated all the innumerable worlds of the ten directions. Upon turning inward, this ray remained on the crown of the Buddha’s head where it was transformed into a golden beacon that looked like Mount Sumeru. All the other Buddhas in the sublimely pure nations and lands of the ten directions were revealed through it:
* Some of these lands were composed of the seven treasures.
* Some simply consisted of lotus blossoms.
* Some were like the palace of the great lord that rules over all the heavens in the sphere of desire.
* Some were like mirrors of crystal in which the light of all these innumerable nations and lands of the Buddhas in the ten directions were reflected.

All of these beautiful visions were made for Vaidehī to see and to choose from.

She then spoke to Buddha again, saying:
“Blessed One, although all these nations of the Buddhas are pure and radiant with light and splendor, I now wish to be reborn in the World of Pure Bliss, the site of the Enlightened Being of Infinite Life. Blessed One, I pray that you teach me how to properly deliberate on it and penetrate it.”

The Blessed One then gently smiled upon her, with the radiance of five colors being projected from his mouth. Each of these rays of light became illuminated on the crown of King Bimbisāra’s head. Although the great king was still imprisoned in the dungeon, his mind’s eye became unobstructed and he was able to see the Blessed One from afar. Worshiping him by bowing his head with his face down, he then spontaneously attained the fruit of one who will never again need to return to this world. The Blessed One then spoke to Vaidehi, saying:
“Did you not know that the Enlightened Being of Infinite Life is not very far from here? You should focus your mind and carefully meditate on the actions of those in this nation that are pure of affliction. I will now teach you about this with metaphors so that ordinary beings in the future will aspire to cultivate actions that are pure of affliction, enabling them to attain rebirth in this western Land of Pure Bliss. Those who desire to be reborn in this nation should undertake cultivation of the three blessings of unafflicted conduct:
1. First, they should offer filial duty and support to their fathers and mothers, serve and respect their teachers and elders, have a kind heart that abstains from the intentional taking of life and cultivate the ten kinds of virtuous acts.
2. Second, they should accept and embrace the Three Treasures and all the precepts of moral commitment to virtuous and noble purposes, never being in violation of them through the dignity of their conduct.
3. Third, they should inspire the minds of sentient beings to awaken to the transcendental nature of life’s purpose, deeply believe in cause & effect of karma & retribution, read and recite the scriptures about the greater track of the noble path and encourage others to diligently cultivate this practice.

These three kinds of conduct are said to be the actions that are pure of affliction.”

The Land of Pure Bliss
The Buddha then further said to Vaidehī:

“Do you not now understand that these three kinds of conduct are the primary cause for the Buddhas’ actions through the past, present and future?”

The Buddha then addressed both Ānanda and Vaidehī:

“Listen carefully and consider well what you hear! The One That Has Descended Into This World has now taught about making actions that are pure of affliction for all the sentient beings of the future who will be subject to the damages inflicted by emotional disturbances, the enemies that destroy mental resolve.

* You have done well, Vaidehī, because your questions about this have been most appropriate!
* Ānanda, you should accept and keep in mind the Buddha’s words and teach of them to as many different audiences as possible.

The One That Has Descended Into This World will now teach Vaidehī and all sentient beings of future generations how to meditate on this western Land of Pure Bliss. Through the power of the Buddha’s grace there is the ability to see this pure unafflicted nation and land as if one was holding up a clear mirror and looking at the image of one’s own face. When seeing all the things in this Nation and Land of Sublime Contentment, one’s mind will rejoice and one will attain an enduring meditation on the true nature of life’s purpose that neither arises nor perishes and transcends one’s own life in this world.”

The Buddha then spoke just to Vaidehī, saying:

“You are an ordinary person with a weak mind and confused thoughts. You have not yet attained the divine eye of meditation and so you cannot observe that which is far away in space and time. However, the enlightened beings that have descended into this world have different skillful ways and means to make you acquire this vision.”

Vaidehī then spoke to the Buddha, saying:

“Blessed One, those who are like me can now see this nation and its land through the power of the Buddha’s grace. However, after the Buddha’s passing, how will sentient beings who are tormented by the five kinds of suffering that arise from corruption, evil and lack of virtue be able to see the Enlightened Being of Infinite Life and this World of Pure Bliss?”
On the First Thirteen Visualizations & The Virtues of Mental Resolve

#1 Visualization of the Setting Sun
The Buddha then addressed Vaidehī:
“You and all those like you should first focus your minds on a point to the west, directing all of your thoughts towards this single place. How does one go about doing this? All sentient beings except those who are born blind should begin by looking towards the setting sun and inspiring mindful thoughts about it. Properly seated in meditation and facing westward, you should gaze towards the setting sun, with your mind steadily focused on it and your thoughts never straying from it, seeing it as if it were a drum suspended over the horizon. Having visualized it, whether your eyes are open or closed, you will always be able to clearly see it anywhere. This first meditation is called ‘visualization of the setting sun’. Observing it this way is said to be a proper meditation on it. Observing it any other way is said to be an incorrect meditation.”

#2 Visualization of the Waters
The Buddha then addressed both Ānanda and Vaidehī:
“Having accomplished this first meditation, you should next visualize a great body of water (before the setting sun), seeing it everywhere in the western quarter under heaven. Seeing that it is clear and calm, you should distinctly visualize it without any distracting thoughts. Having seen it this way, you should then imagine it turning solid like ice, reflecting everything like a mirror. After visualizing it this way, you will then further see it as if it were made of beryl, reflecting what is on the outside while at the same time revealing what is on the inside. Having imagined it this way, you will then see all of the different reflections of what is found inside and outside this ground of beryl.

* Below there are golden pillars made of diamonds and the seven treasures that support this ground of beryl. These pillars each have eight sides and eight corners, and they are each adorned with hundreds of different kinds of jewels. Each of these jewels emits thousands of rays of light and each ray of light has eighty-four thousand different colors. As they are reflected in the ground of beryl, they shine like a million suns. They are so dazzling that they cannot all be seen in detail.

* Above the ground of beryl there are golden cords that crisscross and intersect like nets, with the different areas of the ground divided into distinct fields that are each illuminated by one of the seven treasures.

* From within each of these treasures there is a radiance of five hundred colors. The rays of this light are like blossoms that resemble the stars and the moon. When suspended in the emptiness of space, they turn into beacons of light through which there are seen millions of buildings composed of hundreds of kinds of jewels. Each side of these beacons is adorned with millions of blossoms and banners as well as countless musical instruments.

* Eight kinds of pure breeze rise up from the light to play these instruments, producing sounds that teach the truths about suffering, emptiness, impermanence and selflessness. This second meditation is called ‘visualization of the waters’. When producing this visualization of the waters in your mind, each observation of them should be clear and thorough in detail, whether your eyes are open or closed. You should never forget this vision or become distracted by other objects. Except when in (deep, dreamless) sleep, you should ever remember it and keep it in mind. Observing the waters this way is said to be a proper meditation on them. Observing them any other way is said to be an incorrect meditation.”
The Buddha then said to both Ananda and Vaidehī:

“When these reflections on the waters are made, they are called rough visions of the ground in the Land of Pure Bliss. When you attain a meditation on them with perfect mental resolve, you will see the ground in this land so clearly that it will be impossible to express it all in detail. This third meditation is called ‘visualization of the ground’.”

The Buddha then just addressed Ananda:

“You should keep the Buddha’s words in mind and teach of this visualization of the ground for all those of future generations who desire to become free from suffering. When they meditate on this ground, they will eliminate the consequences that have arisen from the immoral acts they have committed along the stream of life and death over eighty million lifetimes. Upon renouncing their attachments to life in this world, they will certainly be reborn in the Pure Land and without any doubt they will attain a realization of this visualization. Observing the ground this way is said to be a proper meditation on it. Observing it any other way is said to be an incorrect meditation.”

The Buddha then addressed Ananda and Vaidehī:

“When having visualized the ground, you should next meditate on its bejeweled trees. In each observation of these trees, you will visualize there being seven rows of seven trees. Each of these trees is eighty-four thousand yojanas tall. These bejeweled trees have blossoms and leaves that are perfectly composed of the seven treasures. Each of the blossoms and leaves produce different colors from these treasures.

- From beryl-colored blossoms there arises a golden radiance.
- From crystal-colored blossoms there arises a crimson radiance.
- From carnelian-colored blossoms there arises a radiance like mother of pearl.
- From mother of pearl-colored blossoms there arises an emerald radiance.

Coral, amber and the other treasures serve as reflecting ornaments. On each tree there are seven rows of beautiful stringed pearls that cover them like nets. Between each row of nets there are five million palaces with beautiful blossoms like those found in the palace of the Creator where celestial children naturally dwell. Each child wears necklaces composed of five hundred million of the Almighty Lord of Heaven’s most auspicious gems of wish fulfillment. The radiance of these magic gems shines for hundreds of yojanas like the light from a hundred million suns and moons blended together. It is impossible to describe them all in detail. The colors from these jewels all rise up and blend together. The different rows of trees are arranged in an orderly way and their leaves are spread out in proper proportion. Among the leaves beautiful blossoms are produced, spontaneously bearing fruits composed of the seven treasures. Each leaf of the trees is equally twenty-five yojanas in length and width. Their leaves have thousands of colors with hundreds of different patterns. Like celestial ornaments, they have a host of beautiful blossoms that are like the golden color of the Jambū River. They spin like wheels of fire between the leaves, issuing forth fruits like those from the vase of the Almighty Lord of Heaven. Emitting a great radiance of light, they turn into flagpoles and canopies with innumerable jewels. Inside these bejeweled canopies there are reflections of all the Buddha’s works throughout the billion-fold world. All the nations of the Buddhas in the ten directions are revealed to be here as well. Upon seeing these trees, you should also meditate on each of them in a proper sequential order, observing the trees’ trunks, branches, leaves, blossoms and fruits and distinguishing each of them clearly in detail. This fourth meditation is called...
‘visualization of the trees’. Observing the trees this way is said to be a proper meditation on them. Observing them any other way is said to be an incorrect meditation.”

#5 Visualization of the Pools of Fresh Water
The Buddha then again addressed both Ānanda and Vaidehī:

“Having already visualized the trees, next you should deliberate on the pools of fresh water. For those who aspire to visualize the fresh waters found in the Land of Pure Bliss, there are these pools with their different kinds of virtue. The waters of each pool are composed of the seven treasures but here they have the nature of suppleness and pliability. Springing forth from royal wish-fulfilling gems, these waters are then divided into fourteen different branches. Each branch is made of one of the colors of these seven treasures. The banks of these waters are a yellow gold, and their beds are covered with a sand composed of multi-colored diamonds. In each pool there are six million lotus blossoms made of these seven treasures. Each lotus blossom is round, symmetrical and twelve yojanas in diameter. The waters arising from these wish-fulfilling gems flow among the blossoms and meander between the trees. As they ripple, their sounds sublimely teach about the nature of suffering, emptiness, impermanence, selflessness and the ways of spiritual deliverance. They also praise the many auspicious signs and excellent refinements of the Buddhas. These royal wish-fulfilling gems also issue forth a beautiful golden splendor that is transformed into birds with the colors of hundreds of different jewels. Their songs are melodious and elegant, ever recalling and praising the enlightened being, the true nature of life’s purpose and the community of faith. This fifth meditation is called ‘visualization of the waters with the eight kinds of virtue’. Observing the pools of fresh water this way is said to be a proper meditation on them. Observing them any other way is said to be an incorrect meditation.”

#6 Visualization of the Buildings
The Buddha again addressed Ānanda and Vaidehī:

“There are a host of bejeweled nations in this land. In each of its regions there are found five hundred million bejeweled buildings. In the chambers of these buildings there are countless divine beings creating heavenly music. There are also musical instruments suspended in space like bejeweled celestial flagpoles, playing by themselves without a player. In this symphony of sounds, everywhere there are teachings that recall the enlightened being, the true nature of life’s purpose and the monks that are found in the community of faith. In making this meditation there is a rough vision of the World of Pure Bliss with its bejeweled trees, its grounds and its pools of water. This sixth meditation (on the mind-made structures found here) is called ‘a general visualization of the environment in the Pure Land’. When you see it, there will be an elimination of the consequences that have resulted from the gravest acts of evil committed over countless millions of lifetimes. Furthermore, after your life ends, you will certainly be reborn in this Nation of Pure Bliss. Observing the buildings this way is said to be a proper meditation on them. Observing them any other way is said to be an incorrect meditation.”

#7 Visualization of the Lotus Seat
The Buddha again addressed both Ānanda and Vaidehī, saying:

“Listen carefully to the following words, deliberate on them and remember them well. I will now teach of a specific method to eliminate suffering and distress. You should ever keep it in mind and broadly teach of its details to those in the great assembly of faith.”

When these words were spoken, the Enlightened Being of Infinite Life appeared standing
in the emptiness of space attended by the two great Bodhisattvas ‘Beholding the Cries of
This World’ & ‘Endowing Sentient Beings With Great Spiritual Strength’ to the Buddha’s
left and right respectively. The splendor of light was so magnificent that it was impossible
to see it all in detail. The light from the golden sands of a hundred thousand Jambū Rivers
could not be compared to it. When Vaidehī saw the Buddha of Infinite Life, she worshiped
at Śākyamuni’s feet and spoke to him, saying:
“Blessed One: Now, through the power of your grace, I have seen the Enlightened Being
of Infinite Life and these two great bodhisattvas. How will ordinary sentient beings in
the future be able to see them through the power of this grace after you are gone?”
The Buddha answered Vaidehī, saying:
“Those who aspire to observe this Buddha should mindfully visualize a lotus blossom
rising up from the ground composed of the seven treasures. Each petal of this blossom
produces hundreds of precious colors that course through its eighty-four thousand veins.
It is like a celestial painting, with the eighty-four thousand rays of light from each of its
veins being clearly seen and distinguished. The length and width of each petal is at least
two hundred fifty yojanas, and the blossom has eighty-four thousand petals of this size or
greater. Between each of the petals there are a hundred million royal wish-fulfilling gems
that serve as reflecting ornaments. Each of these wish-fulfilling gems emits thousands of
rays of light, and these rays serve as canopies composed of the seven treasures, everywhere
covering the ground. The pericarp of this blossom serves as a pedestal composed of the
Lord Almighty’s most auspicious of wish-fulfilling gems. It is gloriously decorated with
eighty thousand diamonds, rubies, wish-fulfilling gems of the creator and nets composed
of strings of beautiful pearls. There are four pillars that arise spontaneously above this
pedestal with bejeweled banners, each of them as high as a hundred million Mount
Sumerus. Above these banners there are bejeweled canopies like those found in the
celestial palace of Yama, the lord over judgment, repentance and atonement, with each of
them also having five hundred million sublimely precious gems that gloriously decorate
them. Each of these jewels emits eighty-four thousand rays of light and each ray of light in
turn creates eighty-four thousand different hues of a golden color. Each of these golden
colors pervades the land, here and there being transformed into different auspicious signs
such as diamond pedestals, nets of gems and clouds that are composed of various different
kinds of blossoms. Everywhere in the ten directions this ground is transformed at will
through the accomplishment of the Buddha’s work. This seventh meditation is called
‘visualizing the lotus seat’.
The Buddha then only addressed Ānanda:
“This visualization of the lotus seat is realized through the power of grace that comes from
the original vows made by the Monk ‘Treasury of Purpose’ (Dharmākara, 法藏). One who
aspires to recall this Buddha should first visualize this beautiful lotus seat and meditate
on each petal, gem, ray of light, pedestal, pillar and banner, distinguishing each and every
one of them, just as one sees the image of one’s own face in a mirror. In realizing this
visualization, one will eliminate the accumulated consequences of the immoral acts that
have been committed along the stream of life and death over five hundred million lifetimes
and there will most certainly be rebirth in the World of Pure Bliss. Observing the lotus seat
this way is said to be a proper meditation on it. Observing it any other way is said to be an
incorrect meditation.”
The Buddha then again addressed both Ānanda and Vaidehi:

"Having seen this lotus seat, one next visualizes an image of the Buddha. Why is this so?
The grace of the spiritual lives of the enlightened beings that have descended into this
world enters into the hearts and minds of sentient beings through the transcendental
sphere of life’s purpose. Because of this, when you visualize an image of the Buddha,
there will be the appearance of the thirty-two auspicious signs and eighty excellent
refinements that are found in the greatness of humanity. With the mind assuming the
form of enlightenment, there is an awakening to the mind of enlightenment, and so the
Buddha’s ocean of omniscience arises through these visualizations of the mind. As a
consequence, one should wholeheartedly focus one’s mind on and carefully visualize:

‘The Enlightened Being’,
‘The One That Has Descended Into This World’,
‘The One Who Is Truly Worthy’ &
‘The One Who Is Truly Omniscient’.

One begins by reflecting on an image of the Buddha. Whether one’s eyes are open or
shut, each precious image of the Buddha enthroned upon a lotus seat is the color of the
golden sands in the Jambū River. Having already acquired this image of the seated
Buddha, the mind’s eye opens up and one clearly and distinctly sees the Land of Pure
Bliss, its ground adorned with the seven treasures, its rows of trees draped with silken
shrouds and its sky filled with a host of bejeweled silken nets. Upon visualizing these
things, they become as clear as if they were in the palm of one’s hand. Having seen them,
one should further visualize a great lotus blossom rising up to the left of the Buddha. It is
just like the one described before, no different. One then sees another great lotus blossom
just like it arising to the Buddha’s right. Next, one visualizes an image of the Bodhisattva
‘Beholding the Cries of This World’ on the lotus seat to the Buddha’s left, emitting a golden
radiance that is the same as the one described before. Then one visualizes an image of the
Bodhisattva ‘Endowing Sentient Beings With Great Spiritual Strength’ on the lotus seat to
the Buddha’s right. Having made these visualizations, all the images of the Buddha and
the bodhisattvas everywhere emit a beautiful radiance. This light is a golden color that
shines upon the bejeweled trees. Below each tree there are another three lotus blossoms,
and upon each of them there are similar images of the Buddha and the two bodhisattvas,
with their light everywhere flooding the land. When these visualizations have been made,
the practitioner will hear the flow of the fresh waters and see the radiance of the light
shining on the bejeweled trees, with mallards, geese and pairs of perching ducks all
proclaiming the sublimely true nature of life’s purpose. Whether entering or exiting this
meditation, one will always hear these teachings about it. Having heard them, upon
leaving the meditation, the practitioner will forever remember them and keep them in
mind, never forgetting them. They will also combine this meditation with recitation of the
scripture and deliberation on its meaning.

* If the meditation is inconsistent with the scripture, it is said to be a false visualization.
* If it is consistent, it is said to be a rough vision of the Land of Pure Bliss.

This eighth meditation is called ‘visualizing a reflected image of the Buddha’. Those who
make this meditation eliminate the consequences resulting from the immoral acts they
have committed along the stream of life and death over countless millions of lifetimes.
Because this apparent manifestation reveals the grace that descends from the spiritual
life of the Buddha, it is called ‘the resolve of meditation attained through recalling the
enlightened being’. Observing it this way is said to be a proper meditation on it.
Observing it any other way is said to be an incorrect meditation.”
Visualization of the Buddha ‘Of Infinite Life’

The Buddha then again addressed both Ānanda and Vaidehi:

“Having made these visualizations, you should further observe the light and splendor arising in the signs of grace from the spiritual life of the Enlightened Being of Infinite Life (Amitāyur Buddha, 阿彌陀佛). Ānanda, you should know that:

* The body of the Buddha of Infinite Life is a golden color, like the hundreds of billions of particles of gold in the Jambū River that flows through the Heaven of Yama, lord over judgment, repentance and atonement.
* The Buddha is as many yojanas tall as there are grains of sand along sixty trillion of the River Ganges.
* In the middle of the Buddha’s brow there is a white whorl of hair curling to the right that is the size of five Mount Sumerus.
* The eyes of the Buddha are clear and the size of the waters in the four great oceans, with the blue irises and the whites of the eyes being clearly distinguished.
* The pores of the Buddha’s skin emit a clear radiance like that of Mount Sumeru.
* The Buddha’s halo of light illuminates a hundred billion-fold worlds. Inside this halo there are as many manifestations of the Buddha’s spiritual life as there are grains of sand along hundreds, thousands, millions and billions of the River Ganges. Each of these manifestations of the Buddha’s spiritual life also has a host of countless bodhisattvas serving it.

The Enlightened Being of Infinite Life has eighty-four thousand auspicious signs. In each of these, there are eighty-four thousand excellent refinements. In each of these excellent refinements there are in turn eighty-four thousand rays of light. Each of these rays of light shines everywhere in the worlds of the ten directions, embracing and never forsaking all the sentient beings who keep the Buddha in mind. The radiant signs and refinements found in all these manifestations of the Buddha are impossible to completely describe in detail. You should continuously recall this visualization to make your mind clearly see them all. Those who see these things will also see all the Buddhas of the ten directions. Because of this, it is called ‘the resolve of meditation attained through recalling and keeping the Buddha in mind’. Making this observation is also called ‘visualizing the grace descending from the spiritual lives of all the Buddhas’. By observing this, one also sees their minds. With there being the minds of the Buddhas, so there is the greatness of their mercy and compassion. In being endowed with this unconditional mercy and compassion there is the inclusion and acceptance of all sentient beings. Upon making this observation and renouncing attachment to one’s own life in this world of suffering, there will be a spiritual rebirth before the Buddhas in this other world, the transcendental sphere of life’s purpose, where there is an enduring meditation on this nature of purpose that neither arises nor perishes and goes beyond one’s own life in this world. Because of this, those with wisdom should focus their minds through meditation and deliberation on the Enlightened Being of Infinite Life. Those who have already observed this Buddha of Infinite Life and penetrated each of these auspicious signs and excellent refinements only need to observe the white whorl of hair in the middle of the Buddha’s brow to ultimately make them all clearly understood. Upon seeing this one sign, they will spontaneously see all of these eighty-four thousand signs and refinements. And those who visualize this Enlightened Being of Infinite Life will then see all of the countless Buddhas of the ten directions. Because they see all of these countless Buddhas before them, they will have a prophecy of their future enlightenment bestowed upon them. This ninth meditation is also called ‘visualizing the grace of the Enlightened Being of Infinite Life in all of its forms’.

Observing it this way is said to be a proper meditation on it. Observing it any other way is
said to be an incorrect meditation.”

#10 Visualization of the Bodhisattva ‘Beholding the Cries (Prayers) of This World’
The Buddha again addressed both Ananda and Vaidehi:

“Having clearly and distinctly seen the Buddha of Infinite Life, next you should visualize
the Bodhisattva ‘Beholding the Cries of This World’ (Avalokiteśvara, 觀世音菩薩).

* This bodhisattva’s body is of a burnished golden color and is as many yojanas tall as
eighty trillion times the number of grains of sand there are along the River Ganges.
* The crown of the bodhisattva’s head has a fleshy protuberance, surrounded by a
halo of light with a radius of a hundred thousand yojanas. Within this halo there
are five hundred manifestations of the Buddha’s spiritual life that are just like that of
the Buddha Śākyamuni. Around each of these manifestations of the Buddha there
are those of five hundred bodhisattvas with countless divine beings attending them.
* Within the radiance of the halo emanating from the bodhisattva’s body, there are
seen sentient beings from the five spiritual paths that span from heaven to hell, all
presenting different forms and signs.
* On top of the bodhisattva’s head there is a crown composed of the Lord Almighty’s
most beautiful wish-fulfilling gems, over which stands a manifestation of the
Buddha that is twenty-five yojanas tall.
* The face of the Bodhisattva ‘Beholding the Cries of This World’ is the color of the
gold found in the waters of the Jambū River.
* The whorl of hair in the middle of the bodhisattva’s brow is endowed with the
colors of the seven treasures, and from it is emitted the splendor of eighty-four
thousand different rays of light. Each ray of this light contains countless hundreds
of thousands of manifestations of the Buddha’s spiritual life, with each of them in
turn having countless bodhisattvas in attendance. They all reveal themselves in
different forms at will and fill all the spheres of the ten directions.
* The arms of the bodhisattva are the color of a crimson lotus.
* There are eighty thousand different kinds of light forming necklaces and bracelets
that emit a beautiful splendor and everywhere reflect all of the beautiful adornments
of this bodhisattva.
* The palms of the bodhisattva’s hands produce the five hundred million different
colors that are found in lotus blossoms.
* The ten fingers of the bodhisattva are each endowed with eighty-four thousand
kinds of prints that are each like a unique stamp. Each of these fingerprints has
eighty-four thousand different colors, and each of these colors in turn contains
eighty-four thousand different hues of light. The radiance from this light is subtle
delicate, illuminating all things everywhere. With these precious hands, the
bodhisattva welcomes and guides sentient beings.
* When the feet of the bodhisattva are raised, their soles reveal the sign of a thousand
spoked wheel on the ground below. These are spontaneously transformed into
pedestals that emit five hundred million rays of light. When the feet of the
bodhisattva come back down, there are blossoms, diamonds and pearls scattering
about everywhere, covering everything.

All the other auspicious signs and excellent refinements of the bodhisattva are the same
as those of the Buddha, without any difference. The only sign that is differently blessed
is the size of the fleshy protuberance on the very top of the head and its invisible crown.
This tenth meditation is called ‘visualizing the true form of the Bodhisattva ‘Beholding
the Cries of This World’.”

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The Buddha then just addressed Ānanda:

“Those who desire to see the Bodhisattva ‘Beholding the Cries of This World’ should make this meditation. Those who accomplish it will not encounter any misfortunes, as they will be cleansed of all their karmic obstacles and they will eliminate the consequences from the immoral acts they have committed along the stream of life & death over an immeasurable number of lifetimes. In just hearing the name of this bodhisattva they will attain countless benefits. How many more will there be if they carefully meditate on all of these signs and refinements? Those who desire to meditate on the Bodhisattva ‘Beholding the Cries of This World’ should begin by observing the fleshy protuberance found at the top of the bodhisattva’s head and then observe the divine crown. The host of other signs are then observed in sequential order and clearly distinguished as if they were objects in the palm of one’s hand. Observing it this way is said to be a proper meditation on it. Observing it any other way is said to be an incorrect meditation.”

#11 Visualization of the Bodhisattva ‘Endowing Sentient Beings With Great Spiritual Strength’

The Buddha addressed Ānanda and Vaidehi:

“Next you should visualize the Bodhisattva ‘Endowing Sentient Beings With Great Spiritual Strength’ (Mahā Sthāma Prāpta).

* The measurements of this bodhisattva’s body are the same as those of the Bodhisattva ‘Beholding the Cries of This World’.
* The halo of light has a radius of two hundred twenty-five yojanas and then shines for another two hundred fifty yojanas beyond this.
* The light emanating from the bodhisattva’s body illuminates the lands of the ten directions, making them a burnished golden color. All sentient beings with a karmic connection with this bodhisattva can see this.
* From each pore of this bodhisattva’s skin, one can see a pure and beautiful splendor of light that shines in the ten directions from as many Buddhas as there are grains of sand along an infinite number of the River Ganges. For this reason, this bodhisattva is said to have a boundless radiance.
* Through the transcendental knowledge and discernment that universally illuminates the true nature of all sentient beings, this bodhisattva is endowed with a supreme power of grace that is able to free them all from the three roads of evil. For this reason, this bodhisattva is said to endow them with great spiritual strength.
* The divine crown on this bodhisattva’s head has five hundred bejeweled lotus blossoms. Each of these blossoms has a pericarp endowed with five hundred jewels that serves as a pedestal. On each of these pedestals, the signs of the breadth and length of all the pure and beautiful lands of the Buddhas in the ten directions are revealed.
* Atop the crown of the bodhisattva’s head there is a fleshy protuberance that is like the bud of a red lotus. Upon this fleshy protuberance there is a single bejeweled vase. Its magnificent light and splendor everywhere reveal the accomplishment of the Buddha’s work.

The other signs of this bodhisattva’s body are the same as those of ‘Beholding the Cries of This World’, without any difference.

* When this bodhisattva walks, all the worlds of the ten directions tremble and shake. Each place where the ground trembles and shakes, a hundred million bejeweled blossoms appear. Each of these bejeweled blossoms reveals glorious adornments that are like the others found in the World of Pure Bliss.
When this bodhisattva sits down, the lands of the seven treasures all tremble and shake simultaneously, from the Land of the Buddha ‘Of Golden Splendor’ below to the Land of the Buddha ‘Of the Supremely Clear Light’ above. In between these, there are all the multiple incarnations of the Buddha of Infinite Life, the Bodhisattva ‘Beholding the Cries of This World’ & the Bodhisattva ‘Endowing Sentient Beings with Great Spiritual Strength’ that are as countless as the particles of dust in the universe. Everywhere they assemble on lotus seats in the clouds over the World of Pure Bliss, filling up the sky. Here they proclaim and teach about the sublime nature of life’s purpose and deliver sentient beings from suffering.

This eleventh meditation is called ‘visualizing the true form of the Bodhisattva ‘Endowing Sentient Beings With Great Spiritual Strength’. In meditating on this bodhisattva, one will eliminate the consequences that have resulted from the immoral acts that have been committed over a countless number of lifetimes along the stream of life and death. Those making this meditation will no longer need to dwell in a womb (with only an embryonic nature of enlightenment) and will always be able to travel freely throughout all the pure and beautiful lands of the Buddhas. Those who have accomplished this visualization are said to have attained completely perfect meditations on both the Bodhisattva ‘Beholding the Cries of This World’ and the Bodhisattva ‘Endowing Sentient Beings With Great Spiritual Strength’. Observing them this way is said to be a proper meditation on them. Observing them any other way is said to be an incorrect meditation.”

#12 The Universal Visualization of the Spiritual Life

The Buddha then addressed both Ānanda and Vaidehī:
“When seeing these things, a visualization will arise in the mind in which you will see yourself being reborn in the western World of Pure Bliss, seated on a lotus blossom in a cross-legged posture. You will first visualize the lotus blossom being closed around you and then see it opening up. When it unfurls, you will visualize it being endowed with a radiance of five hundred colors that perfectly illuminates your life. Upon opening up your eyes, you will see the Buddhas and bodhisattvas filling up the sky and hear the waters, the birds, the trees of the forests and the sound of the Buddhas’ voices everywhere proclaiming the sublime nature of life’s purpose as expressed in the twelve narrative styles of the scriptures. When leaving this meditation, you will always remember it and keep it in mind, never forgetting it. Upon seeing these things, one is said to see the Buddha of Infinite Life and the World of Pure Bliss. This twelfth visualization is called ‘meditating on the universal nature of the spiritual life’. The countless manifestations of the Buddha of Infinite Life are forever descending to the place where people practice this meditation, together with those of the Bodhisattva ‘Beholding the Cries of This World’ and the Bodhisattva ‘Endowing Sentient Beings With Great Spiritual Strength’. Observing it this way is said to be a proper meditation on the universal nature of the spiritual life. Observing it any other way is said to be an incorrect meditation.”
The Buddha then again addressed both Ānanda and Vaidehi:
“If you are sincere about being spiritually reborn in this Land of Pure Bliss to the west, you should first observe a sixteen-foot-tall image of the Buddha standing over a lotus pond. As explained before, the true size of the Enlightened Being of Infinite Life is without bounds and beyond the power of the ordinary mind to comprehend. However, through the power of grace from the past vows of The One That Has Descended Into This World, those who aspire to visualize and keep this Buddha in mind will certainly be able to do so. In merely visualizing an image of the Buddha, there are limitless blessings of merit to be attained. How many more so are there in meditating on the perfect signs that descend from the grace of the Buddha’s spiritual life? Through the spiritual power of grace, the Enlightened Being of Infinite Life can be transformed into any form at will and be revealed in any of the lands of the ten directions. Sometimes there is the manifestation of a great body that fills up the whole of the sky while at other times there is the manifestation of a smaller body that is sixteen or even eight feet tall. All of these different manifestations are of a pure golden color. The manifestations of the Buddha’s halo and the bejeweled lotus seat are as explained before. The Bodhisattvas ‘Beholding the Cries of This World’ and ‘Endowing Sentient Beings With Great Spiritual Strength’ appear to be the same wherever they are. Sentient beings can only distinguish between these two bodhisattvas by observing the signs on the crowns of their heads. They both support the Enlightened Being of Infinite Life by everywhere spiritually transforming sentient beings. This thirteenth meditation is called ‘observing the different visualizations of the spiritual life.’ Observing them this way is said to be a proper meditation on them. Observing them any other way is said to be an incorrect meditation.”
On the Last Three Visualizations & The Virtues of Mental Dispersion

#14a Visualization of the Higher Level of Spiritual Rebirth for those with a Higher Capacity:

The Buddha then spoke to both Ānanda and Vaidehī:

“Overall, people are endowed with nine grades of capacity for being reborn into this Pure Land to the west. First among these is the higher level of spiritual rebirth for those with a higher capacity. When sentient beings vow to be spiritually reborn in this nation, they inspire the three inner states of the faithful mind that serve as the means for this rebirth. And what are these three? They are:

1. Utter sincerity
2. Depth of conviction
3. A vow of dedication to be reborn in the Pure Land.

Those endowed with these three states of mind will surely be reborn into this nation. There are also three outer kinds of conduct sentient beings perform to sustain this spiritual rebirth. What are these three? They are:

1. Having a heart of loving kindness that practices abstinence from the intentional taking of life and is endowed with precepts of commitment to moral virtue.
2. Reading and reciting the scriptures on the greater vehicle of spiritual awakening and its broad universal principles
3. Cultivating practice of the six kinds of mindful recollection

When sentient beings dedicate all the merit they have earned from these three kinds of virtuous conduct to spiritual rebirth in the nation of the Buddha of Infinite Life, they will attain this rebirth in from one to seven days. Because these people are diligent and courageous, by the time that they are reborn in this nation of the Pure Land, they see the Enlightened Being of Infinite Life before them, together with the Bodhisattva ‘Beholding the Cries of This World’, the Bodhisattva ‘Endowing Sentient Beings With Great Spiritual Strength’, countless manifestations of the Buddha’s spiritual life and a great assembly that includes hundreds of thousands of monks, students of the noble path and countless divine beings from the heavens of meditation who dwell in palaces made of the seven treasures. The Bodhisattvas ‘Beholding the Cries of This World’ and ‘Endowing Sentient Beings With Great Spiritual Strength’ appear before them holding adamantine pedestals for them to sit upon. The Enlightened Being of Infinite Life emits a great radiance that illuminates the lives of these practitioners. The Buddha and the bodhisattvas all stretch out their hands to greet and welcome them. The Bodhisattva ‘Beholding the Cries of This World’ and ‘Endowing Sentient Beings With Great Spiritual Strength’ then praise the practitioners’ diligence of effort. Upon seeing all of this, the practitioners rejoice and jump for joy. Seeing themselves seated on these adamantine pedestals, they follow the Buddha and are reborn into this nation in the time it takes for them to snap their fingers. Having been reborn in this Pure Land, they see the grace arising from the spiritual lives of the Buddha and the bodhisattvas with their full host of auspicious signs in the radiance and splendor of the bejeweled forest where they proclaim and teach about the sublimely true nature of life’s purpose. Having heard this, they attain an enduring awakening to this sublime nature of purpose that neither arises nor perishes and transcends their lives in this world. In the passing of a single moment, they appear before a succession of Buddhas from all the Pure Lands of the ten directions. Having served this procession of Buddhas, they receive a prophecy of their enlightenment from each of them. Upon returning to their own Land (of Pure Bliss), they have learned and mastered retention of countless hundreds and thousands of prayers. This is called ‘the higher

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level of spiritual rebirth for those with a higher grade of capacity’.

#14b Visualization of the Intermediate Level of Spiritual Rebirth for Those with a Higher Capacity

“Next, there is the intermediate level of spiritual rebirth for those with a higher grade of capacity. Although they do not necessarily accept, embrace, read and recite the scriptures on the universal principles of the greater vehicle teaching, they skillfully understand their meaning and their minds are not alarmed or shaken by their ultimate significance. With deep faith in the cause and effect of actions and their consequences, they do not malign or ridicule the teachings of this greater vehicle doctrine. They dedicate all of the merits and virtues they have attained in their aspiration to be reborn in the Nation of Pure Bliss. When the lives of these practitioners come to an end, they will see the Enlightened Being of Infinite Life before them, surrounded by the Bodhisattva ‘Beholding the Cries of This World’, the Bodhisattva ‘Endowing Sentient Beings With Great Spiritual Strength’ and a great host of countless followers, all holding pedestals of a burnished golden color for them. The Buddha then offers each of them these words of praise:

‘As a prince of life’s true purpose, you have practiced with an understanding of the ultimate significance of the greater vehicle. Because of this, we have now come to greet and welcome you.’

Simultaneously the hands from a thousand manifestations of the spiritual life of the Enlightened Being of Infinite Life are then extended to them. These practitioners see themselves seated on these pedestals of burnished gold. With their palms pressed together they stretch out their arms and praise the Buddha. In just a single moment, they are reborn in the pools of the seven treasures found in this nation. These burnished golden pedestals are in great bejeweled lotus buds that open up over the span of a single night. The bodies of the practitioners also become a burnished golden color and below their feet there are lotus blossoms composed of the seven treasures. The Buddha and the bodhisattvas simultaneously emit a radiant splendor, illuminating the lives of these practitioners, whose eyes have opened up and become clear. Because of the merit earned in their past lives, they everywhere hear a host of voices that effortlessly teach deep truths of the greatest significance. They then descend from their golden pedestals and worship the Buddha with their palms pressed together, praising the Blessed One. Within seven days, they will attain a realization of the supreme universal enlightenment and never turn back. They will then be able to fly throughout the ten directions, serve the Buddhas there and cultivate their resolve of meditation. Within the span of a short lifetime, they will attain an enduring meditation on the nature of life’s purpose that neither arises nor perishes and transcends their lives in this world, and a prophecy of their enlightenment will be revealed to them. This is called ‘the intermediate level of spiritual rebirth for those with a higher grade of capacity’.”

#14c Visualization of the Lower Level of Spiritual Rebirth for Those with a Higher Capacity

“Next, there is the lower level of spiritual rebirth for those with a higher grade of capacity. They also believe in the cause and effect of karma and retribution and do not malign or ridicule the scriptures on the greater vehicle, only aspiring to awaken to the nature of life’s supreme purpose. With a vow to dedicate the merits and virtues they have attained, they seek rebirth in the Nation of Pure Bliss. When the lives of these practitioners come to an end, the Buddha of Infinite Life comes to welcome each of them, holding a golden lotus blossom, together with the Bodhisattva ‘Beholding the Cries of This World’, the Bodhisattva ‘Endowing Sentient Beings With Great Spiritual Strength’ and a host of followers. Then five hundred manifestations of the Buddha’s spiritual life are created
that all simultaneously extend their arms with the following words of praise:

‘Prince of the True Purpose, because you have now aspired to awaken to the supreme nature of this purpose, we have come to welcome you.’

When they see these things, these practitioners see themselves sitting on these golden lotus blossoms. After being seated on them, the blossoms close up. Upon following the Blessed One they attain spiritual rebirth in one of the pools of the seven treasures found in this land. The lotus blossoms open up after a single day and night. Within another seven days, they get to see the Buddha. Although they see the Buddha, at first they do not see the host of auspicious signs and excellent refinements in clear detail. After a period of three weeks, they are able to see them thoroughly and hear a host of voices all proclaiming the sublime nature of life’s purpose. Traveling throughout the ten directions, they make offerings to the Buddhas there, hearing them teach about it. In the span of three short lifetimes, they attain entry into illumination of the hundred-fold sphere of life’s purpose and abide in joyfulness, the first level of grounding in its transcendental nature. This is called ‘the lower level of spiritual rebirth for those with a higher grade of capacity’.”

#14 The Conclusion on Spiritual Rebirth for Those with a Higher Grade of Capacity

“This fourteenth meditation is called ‘visualizing spiritual rebirth for those with a higher grade of capacity’. Observing it this way is said to be a proper meditation on it. Observing it any other way is said to be an incorrect meditation.”

#15a Visualization of the Higher Level of Spiritual Rebirth for Those with an Intermediate Capacity

The Buddha again addressed Ānanda and Vaiḍēhi:

“Next there is the higher level of spiritual rebirth for those with an intermediate grade of capacity. These are sentient beings who accept and keep moral commitments such as the five precepts of the lay life or the eight precepts of austerity, as well as those who cultivate the full precepts of an ascetic. They have also never committed any of the five most consequential acts of evil or other such immoral acts. With these virtuous capacities, they arouse a vow to dedicate the merits they have earned to spiritual rebirth in the World of Pure Bliss to the west. At the end of their lives, the Enlightened Being of Infinite Life appears before them surrounded by a following of many monks, emitting a golden radiance and teaching about the nature of suffering, emptiness, impermanence and selflessness. They also praise the virtues of leaving home and attaining freedom from suffering. The practitioners witnessing this rejoice greatly, seeing their own lives seated on the pedestals of lotus blossoms, with their heads remaining bowed and their palms pressed together, worshiping the Buddha. Before raising their heads, they attain rebirth in the World of Pure Bliss. The lotus blossoms open up soon thereafter. When the blossoms unfurl, they hear a host of voices praising the teachings on the four truths about life’s purpose and find themselves on the path of those worthy beings who are endowed with the three kinds of illuminated knowledge, the six kinds of spiritual penetration and the eight kinds of emancipation. This is called ‘the higher level of spiritual rebirth for those with an intermediate grade of capacity’.”

#15b Visualization of the Intermediate Level of Spiritual Rebirth for Those with an Intermediate Capacity

“Next there is the intermediate level of spiritual rebirth for those with an intermediate grade of capacity. These are sentient beings who are able to embrace the eight precepts of austerity, the precepts of a novice ascetic or the full precepts of an ascetic for at least a single day and night with flawless demeanor. When they dedicate the merits and virtues they attain from their cultivation to the seeking of rebirth in the Nation of Pure Bliss, the
The fragrance of their moral commitment perfumes this cultivation. At the end of their lives, these practitioners see the Enlightened Being of Infinite Life before them with many followers, emitting a golden radiance and holding lotus blossoms for them composed of the seven treasures. The practitioners then hear a voice in the sky praising them, saying:

“Good sons, because virtuous people like you have followed and obeyed the teachings of the Buddhas of the past, present and future, I have come to welcome you.”

The practitioners see themselves seated atop these lotus blossom seats. The blossoms then close up and they are reborn in the World of Pure Bliss to the west. (Within seven days) the lotus blossoms will open up. Upon unfurling, they open up their eyes, press their palms together and praise the Blessed One. Upon hearing the Buddha teach about the true nature of life’s purpose, they rejoice and become stream-enterers. After a half a lifetime, they become truly worthy beings. This is called ‘the intermediate level of spiritual rebirth for those with an intermediate grade of capacity’.”

#15c Visualization of the Lower Level of Spiritual Rebirth for Those with an Intermediate Capacity
“Next there is the lower level of spiritual rebirth for those with an intermediate grade of capacity. These are virtuous sons and daughters who fulfill their filial duty by supporting their fathers and mothers and practicing worldly benevolence and righteousness. When their lives come to an end, they meet good spiritual acquaintances who teach them about the sublime contentment found in the nation of the Buddha of Infinite Life and the forty-eight great vows made by the monk ‘Treasury of Purpose’. Having heard about these things, when their lives come to an end they will be reborn in the western World of Pure Bliss in the time it takes for a strong man to flex his arm. Upon being reborn here, within seven days they meet the Bodhisattvas ‘Beholding the Cries of This World’ & ‘Endowing Sentient Beings With Great Spiritual Strength’, hear the teachings about the true nature of life’s purpose, rejoice and become stream-enterers. After the passing of one short lifetime, they awaken to the fruit of becoming truly worthy beings. This is called ‘the lower level of spiritual rebirth for those with an intermediate grade of capacity’.”

#15 The Conclusion on Spiritual Rebirth for Those with an Intermediate Capacity
“This fifteenth meditation is called ‘the visualization of spiritual rebirth for those with an intermediate grade of capacity’. Observing it this way is said to be a proper meditation on it. Observing it any other way is said to be an incorrect meditation.”

#16a Visualization of the Higher Level of Spiritual Rebirth for Those with a Lower Capacity
The Buddha again addressed Ānanda and Vaidehi:
“Next there is the higher level of spiritual rebirth for those with a lower grade of capacity. These are sentient beings who have committed many unwholesome acts. Although they have not maligned or ridiculed the scriptures about the universal principles of life’s purpose, these foolish people have committed many unwholesome acts without any shame or humility. When the end of their lives approach, they meet good spiritual acquaintances who praise the titles, chapters, and passages of the great vehicle scriptures with their twelve narrative styles. By hearing the words of these scriptures, they eliminate and are freed from the gravest consequences caused by the evil actions they have committed over thousands of lifetimes. Those with wisdom also teach them to press their palms together, stretch out their arms and say “I take refuge in the Enlightened Being of Infinite Life” (‘Namo Amitāyur Buddhayaḥ’). Because they call on the Buddha’s name like this, they are able to eliminate the consequences caused by the immoral acts they have committed over fifty million lifetimes. When this happens, manifestations of the spiritual life of
the Enlightened Being of Infinite Life are sent down to them as well as those of the Bodhisattvas ‘Beholding the Cries of This World’ and ‘Endowing Sentient Beings With Great Spiritual Strength’. Upon appearing before them, they praise each of these people, saying:

“Well done, good son! Because you have called out the Buddha’s name and repented for your immoral acts, we have come to welcome you.”

With these words being spoken, the practitioners see a radiance and splendor from the manifestations of the Buddha’s spiritual life that fill the rooms they are in. Upon seeing this, they rejoice and it is the means for them to depart gracefully from this life. Through the vehicle of the bejeweled lotus blossom, they follow these manifestations of the Buddha and are reborn in the bejeweled pools of the Pure Land. Within seven weeks, these blossoms unfurl and the Bodhisattvas ‘Beholding the Cries of This World’ and ‘Endowing Sentient Beings With Great Spiritual Strength’ stand before them with greatness of compassion, emitting a wondrous splendor of light and teaching them the very deep scriptures about the transcendental nature of life’s purpose in their twelve narrative styles. Having heard them with faith and understanding, they aspire to awaken to the supreme nature of this purpose. Within the span of ten short lifetimes, they will attain entry into an illumination of the hundred-fold sphere of life’s purpose and abide in its first level of grounding. This is called ‘the higher level of spiritual rebirth for those with a lower grade of capacity’ and ‘getting to hear the names of the Buddha, the Dharma & the Samgha’. In hearing the names of these Three Treasures there is the attainment of this spiritual rebirth.”

#16b Visualization of the Intermediate Level of Spiritual Rebirth for Those with a Lower Capacity

The Buddha again addressed Ānanda and Vaidehī:

“Next there is the intermediate level of spiritual rebirth for those with a lower grade of capacity. These are sentient beings who have:

* Violated precepts of moral commitment, including the five precepts to leading a morally virtuous life among the laity, the eight precepts of those committed to an austere life and the many precepts observed by those committed to an ascetic life.
* Stolen property belonging collectively to the community of faith or taken the goods of its individual members
* Taught others of unclean purposes without any shame or humility, and
* Glorified themselves in evil purposes.

Because they have committed these immoral acts they have fallen into hell. As the end of their lives approach and the fires of hell close in on them all at once, they meet good spiritual acquaintances with greatness of mercy and compassion who praise the name of the Enlightened Being of Infinite Life (Amitāyur Buddha, 阿弥陀佛) and teach about this Buddha’s ten powers of transcendental knowledge and other awesome virtues. Broadly praising the powers found in the radiance and splendor of grace that descend from the peerless spiritual life of this Buddha, they also praise the five projections of its purpose:

1. The projections of its moral commitment
2. The projections of its meditative resolve
3. The projections of its transcendental discernment
4. The projections of its spiritual emancipation, and
5. The projections of its emancipated knowledge and vision of the transcendental nature of life’s purpose.

Having heard about this, these people are able to eliminate the consequences that have arisen from the immoral acts they have committed along the stream of life and death over eighty million lifetimes. The fierce fires of hell are transformed into cool breezes that blow...
down divine blossoms from heaven. On all these blossoms there are manifestations of the Buddhas and bodhisattvas, greeting and welcoming them. In an instant they are reborn inside lotus blossoms that enter the pools of the seven treasures found in the Pure Land. After a span of six lifetimes, these lotus blossoms unfurl and the Bodhisattvas ‘Beholding the Cries of This World’ and ‘Endowing Sentient Beings With Great Spiritual Strength’ teach them the very deep scriptures about the greater vehicle of spiritual awakening with the comforting sounds that come from the voice of the creator. Having heard them, they aspire to awaken to the supreme nature of life’s purpose. This is called ‘the intermediate level of spiritual rebirth for those with a lower grade of capacity’.”

#16c Visualization of the Lower Level of Spiritual Rebirth for Those with a Lower Capacity
The Buddha again addressed Ānanda and Vaidehī:
“Next there is the lower level of spiritual rebirth for those with a lower grade of capacity. These are sentient beings who have committed the most immoral actions, including the ten unwholesome acts and five most consequential acts of evil. By committing these acts, these deluded people have fallen into the path of evil for a countless number of lifetimes and the hell of suffering that is relentless and endless. When the end of their lives approach, they meet good spiritual acquaintances who teach them about the sublime nature of life’s purpose with various different kinds of comforting words that make them bring the Buddha to mind. However, these people are constantly tormented by their suffering and have no time to rest and recall the Buddha with any continuity. Because of this, their good spiritual acquaintances then address them by saying:
“If you are unable to keep this Buddha in mind, just try to call out your devotion to the Enlightened Being of Infinite Life in words. With utter sincerity, you should try to call out “I take refuge in the Enlightened Being of Infinite Life” (‘Namo Amitāyur Buddhayaḥ’) ten times in succession with perfect continuity.”
Because they call on the Buddha’s name in thought after thought like this, they eliminate the consequences that have accumulated from the immoral acts they have committed along the stream of life and death over eighty million lifetimes. When their lives come to an end, they each see a golden lotus bud before them that is like the orb of the sun, and in a single moment they are reborn inside these buds in the World of Pure Bliss. After the full span of twelve great eons, lotus blossoms will unfurl from these buds. With greatness of compassion, the voices of the Bodhisattvas ‘Beholding the Cries of This World’ and ‘Endowing Sentient Beings With Great Spiritual Strength’ then teach these people about the true meaning of life and their unwholesome purposes are eliminated. Upon hearing them teach, these people rejoice and aspire to attain spiritual awakening. This is called ‘the lower level of spiritual rebirth for those with a lower grade of capacity’.”

#16 The Conclusion on Spiritual Rebirth for Those with a Lower Grade of Capacity
“This sixteenth meditation is called ‘the visualization of spiritual rebirth for those with a lower grade of capacity’.”

The Conclusion

When the Blessed One finished speaking and Vaidehī and her five hundred female attendants had heard the Buddha’s teaching, Vaidehī saw all of the broad and far-reaching signs that are found in the World of Pure Bliss. In seeing the grace descending from the spiritual lives of the Buddha and the two bodhisattvas, her heart rejoiced and she offered up praise for that which she had never before seen. In an instant, she had a great spiritual awakening and attained an
enduring meditation on the transcendental nature of purpose that neither arises nor perishes and went far beyond her life in this world. Her attendants also aspired to realize the supreme universal enlightenment and vowed to attain rebirth in this Nation of Pure Bliss. The Blessed One then prophesized that they would all attain this rebirth and that, upon doing so, they would all attain the meditation in which all the Buddhas appear standing before them. Countless divine beings in the heavens of meditation also aspired to realize this supreme spiritual awakening.

Ānanda then arose from his seat and spoke before the Buddha, saying:

“Blessed One, what should we call this scripture and why should we faithfully accept it and keep its essential purpose in mind?”

The Buddha then addressed Ānanda:

“This scripture is called:
‘Meditation on the Nation and Land of Pure Bliss,
‘The Buddha of Infinite Life,
‘The Bodhisattva ‘Beholding the Cries of This World’ &
‘The Bodhisattva ‘Endowing Sentient Beings With Great Spiritual Strength’. It is also called:
‘On the Purification and Elimination of Karmic Obstacles’ and
‘The Attainment of Spiritual Rebirth Before the Buddhas’. You should faithfully accept and keep it in mind so that you never forget or forsake it. Those practicing with this resolve of meditation will see the Enlightened Being of Infinite Life and the two bodhisattvas in this very life. Even if virtuous sons and daughters only hear the names of the Buddha and the bodhisattvas, they will eliminate the consequences that have resulted from the immoral acts they have committed along the stream of life and death over a countless number of lifetimes. How much more will they realize if they remember these names and keep them in mind? You should know that those who recall this Buddha will become the white lotus blossoms among humanity, with the Bodhisattvas ‘Beholding the Cries of This World’ & ‘Endowing Sentient Beings With Great Spiritual Strength’ as their distinguished friends. They will be seated at the very place of enlightenment and be reborn in the family of the Buddhas.”

The Buddha again addressed Ānanda, saying:

“You should keep these words in mind well, for those that do so keep in mind the name of the Enlightened Being of Infinite Life.”

After the Buddha spoke these words, the venerable Maudgalyāyana, the venerable Ānanda and Vaidehī had all heard this teaching of the Buddha and rejoiced greatly.

The Blessed One then walked back through the emptiness of space and returned to Vulture’s Peak. Ānanda later told the great assembly about the events that had transpired. Countless people, divine beings in the heavens of meditation, dragon spirits in the waters, spirits in the earth and other supernatural beings then also heard the Buddha’s teaching. They all rejoiced, worshiped the Buddha and then departed to propagate it.

End of The Scripture on the Buddha’s Teaching About Meditation on the Enlightened Being ‘Of Infinite Life’

Amitāyur Buddha Dhyāna Sūtra, 觀無量壽佛經