

## *Taste of Buddha Dharma* 佛法味

Verses by our most revered Shinshu teacher, Zuiken Saizo Inagaki

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(1)

Namo Amida Butsu is my compassionate Parent.  
The compassionate Parent is calling to me  
From the Land of Utmost Bliss.

He is awaiting me  
In the Land of Utmost Bliss.

The beautiful lotuses are emitting lights.  
How lovely are the beautiful sounds of birds!  
The Pure Land is my motherland;  
The Land of Bliss is the home of the compassionate Parent.

(2)

All day long work weighs us down.  
At night we are exhausted and tend to be neglectful.  
Nevertheless, I am grateful;  
I have the compassionate Parent who never forgets me.

(3)

No need to worry —  
The compassionate Parent is waiting for me  
No need to bring a gift —  
The compassionate Parent is expecting me.

Whether you are righteous or evil or very sinful,  
The compassionate Parent  
Knows this from ages past.  
Seeing through everything, He beckons us.  
No need at all to make up for it.

As when I was born, just like that  
Waving my arms all the way home.  
I go to the Land of Utmost Bliss.

I go to meet the compassionate Parent, who I am longing to see;  
I go to meet the compassionate Parent, who is longing to see me.  
Why worry?  
Why be nervous?

(4)

There it is! The call of the Buddha, “right here and now.”  
The calling sound of the six-character Name\*,  
Calling to me: “Come, come!”  
Without a mind of having to die,  
How reluctantly we must part with this world!  
When our energy is exhausted — finished up — when our destiny ends,  
We pass away amid tears.

Die then, but cheerfully;  
Time to die is time to float, like a lotus blossom.

\* *Six-character Name*: Namo Amida Butsu (南无阿弥陀佛)

(5)

In the Land of Utmost Bliss, there are still fathers.  
In the Land of Utmost Bliss, there are still mothers.  
The children will come along;  
The grandchildren will come along

To meet one another, to come together.  
The speeches made are the voices of the Dharma.  
Look up and meet our compassionate Parent, Amida Nyorai\*!

*Amida Nyorai*: Tathāgata Amitābha (阿弥陀如来)

(6)

The life of man is but fifty years.  
Fifty years are just like another dream within the dream.  
While life is dreamlike we can still lose our temper;  
While listening to the Buddha-dharma, we still have desires.

From dawn till dusk,  
The flames of anger are burning;  
The river of desire is billowing.

To assume that by listening to the Buddha-Dharma  
One will not lose one's temper easily,  
And desires will get fewer and fewer—  
How presumptuous such a frame of mind is!  
The more aged you are, the more desires there will be;  
The older you become, the more easily you lose your temper.

After losing my temper,  
After the desires arise,  
This shameful being that is me  
Can only be saved by the compassionate Parent,  
Can only be saved by Amida Buddha—  
The beckoning sounds of the wonderful Vow-Power—  
The promise of the inconceivable Buddha-wisdom.

(7)

Between the two rivers of water and fire,  
The beckoning sound echoes inconceivably,  
Calling to this useless being that is "me,"  
Calling to this being that has no one to rely upon—  
This beckoning sound is the sincere mind of the Buddha.

Trusting and relying on the sound of Great Compassion,  
Advance to the other shore—the Land of the West.

Salvation is in the beckoning sound,  
The true and real sound of salvation—  
The Land of Utmost Bliss is the only way.  
The faith that is heard in such a way is the mind of the compassionate Parent.

Ah, so happy!  
It is really fascinating and exciting.  
What a joy!  
My sleeves are drenched by tears and Namu Amida Butsu—  
Even the sound of the Nembutsu\* comes from the Buddha's compassion.

*Nembutsu*: The invocation of Amida's name—the words Namu Amida Butsu (nien-fo: 念佛)

(8)

To think that in order to attain birth in the Pure Land  
The mind has to be purified as well as the body,  
The saying of the Nembutsu should not be interrupted,  
The three karmic energies have to be perfectly clean—  
In this way only can birth be attained.  
If this is the way that you think about birth in the Pure Land,  
Then you would be completely wrong.

When we are only slightly ill,  
We begin to think we may be dying.  
We might fume for nothing more than a petty matter—  
The river of desires has no bound.  
Whichever way you look at it,  
No matter what,  
It is unreasonable that you could attain birth.

If only those who are qualified are to be born there—  
If only a good person can attain birth—  
Then it is nothing extraordinary.

Committing evils throughout my life,  
This villain who is oblivious to the Buddha's benevolence  
Could not attain birth in any event.  
Hell is decidedly my definite abode.  
This villain, who has a clear ending,  
Calling out, seizing and holding on  
Without letting go, he is carried by Namu Amida Butsu to the Land of Utmost  
Bliss,  
Carried along to birth—amazing!

(9)

Only Faith—oh, only Faith!  
The stage of explaining theories and parading your knowledge  
Cannot make attaining birth in the Land of Utmost Bliss possible in any case.

The wisdom of bombu\* is comparable to the wisdom of monkeys;  
Whatever they think, say, and do  
Is purely the evil karma of the three evil realms.

If you can manage it, go on, try it! Harvest stores of merit and virtue.  
Even if you have accumulated merit for a thousand years,  
All this can be burnt to ashes with a single flame of anger.

If you can manage it, go on, try it! Contemplate the Dharma while sitting in  
zazen.

Just one day of sitting zazen—  
Your legs and feet and your waist  
Will complain in spasms of pain.  
The mind is as confused as a tangled skein,  
As scattered as grains of sesame.  
It is like horses running wild;  
It is like monkeys jumping around in the branches.  
It is a daydream to obtain “no thought” and “no mind.”  
You still mind it when your rice is overcooked!  
You still hear the disputes of your children!  
You still think of the things that cause you to hate!  
You still remember it all quite clearly,  
Three years ago,  
The money your neighbor borrowed from you!  
The wandering thoughts are overwhelming.

Even if you spur on the mind of self-power,  
Putting much effort into self-powered practice,  
Bombu wanting to become a Buddha  
Is much harder even than lifting up the whole world.

The ghostlike three poisons transformed into a Buddha—  
This is the wonder of all wonders.  
Just give yourself up! Ah, Faith alone!  
The golden words of the Buddha are not unreal;  
The command of Amida Buddha is not empty.

*Bombu*: Ignorant beings filled with base desires.

(10)

My mind is like a peephole.  
Though the mind is ever changing and transient,  
Unchanged is the truth and reality of the compassionate Parent.

My mind is like muddy water.  
Though the mind is impure and unclear,  
Untainted is the pure mind of the compassionate Parent.

My body is like horses and donkeys.  
Though my body is burdened and exhausted with evil karma,  
Amida Buddha has made the Original Vow;  
The heavy evil karma is made not so heavy.

I am blind—an idiot!  
Though I cannot find my destination,  
The Buddha possesses the eyes of wisdom.  
I have the compassionate Nyorai\*, who guides my way.

*Compassionate Nyorai*: Amida Nyorai or Tathāgata Amitābha (阿弥陀如来)

(11)

The sword of karma is so dreadful!  
The karmic retribution is so dreadful!  
The mishaps that follow one after another  
Include the evil karma created in this life time—  
The retribution comes swiftly.

The retribution will come again  
Unexpectedly!  
The accumulated karma is as high as a mountain,  
As bottomless as the ocean.  
The karmic retribution is Avici hell;  
The ghost armies and fire are waiting.

As this is your own created evil,  
You definitely cannot escape!

For the one who embraces hell:  
Your worship of the Buddha is thanks to His compassion.  
In hell, you are able to listen to the Buddha-Dharma.  
This is inconceivable!

Just because such an inconceivable compassion exists,  
We can hear the Dharma that cannot be heard;  
Relying on the power of the Dharma,  
We are taken to the Western Paradise.  
So happy!  
So grateful!

(12)

The disasters that one accumulates with age—  
This or that, however much—  
Simply because of the seeds of evil karma you sowed,  
Have finally sprouted.  
You should be aware of this!

“I am a good person,  
Therefore I do not deserve retribution.”  
You are just stupid to think like that.

How is it possible to see your own good with your own eyes?  
It is ridiculous!  
The more you listen to the Buddha-Dharma, the more you will understand,  
And the more you discipline yourself, the more you become aware of the fact  
that you are indisputably wicked.  
If you gradually see your own evil, then  
This is real.

Therefore, do not blame Heaven or curse the earth.  
Therefore, do not bear hatred towards people.  
Do not in any way speak ill of others!

The evil especially of slandering the monks is quite heavy.

Even if you are a good person,  
There are effects of karma,  
And you can't avoid pain and suffering.

Look, look!

The difficulties that Shinran Shōnin had to face when he turned ninety —  
The Lord Buddha too had been framed by Devadatta time and again, and  
almost died of his machinations  
When the Lord Buddha was gravely injured.

Also, there was a time  
When the armed forces of the king of Kashi Kosala came to attack,  
Desiring to destroy the country of the Lord Buddha, the Kapilavastu.  
Lord Buddha just waited in the shade for the forces to come.  
Sitting in meditation,  
Staying still, he did nothing.  
These events had also happened twice.

Besides, Yan Hui of China,  
Confucius' favorite disciple, who also claimed to have the highest virtue,  
Yet he was short-lived —  
Did he not die in his youth?

Consider this, ponder it well!

For a man like me,  
Who is immoral and always creates evil,  
Who has never done any practice,  
Who has never accumulated any virtue,  
Paying no respect to parents —  
How is it possible for me to encounter good things?

The ground breaking open,  
A huge flame bursting out  
To engulf you while you live would be your just deserts!

However, until today,  
Why are you still enjoying three meals a day,  
Not trampled underfoot to death by horses and cattle?  
You have complained again and again for bitterness of life.  
However, in this triple-fold world, can you ever find a person happier than  
you?  
To live until today, to whom are you indebted?  
Had it not been for the benevolence of the Buddha, what else could it be?

So, please listen!

Do not hope that anything cheerful, joyful or pleasant might happen.  
You should know about poverty, fire, and flood,  
And that you will surely get sick and die.  
In the event that there is nothing befalling you today,  
Thank the Guardian, the Buddha.  
Be happy to be guarded by the Buddha in the course of everyday life.

When the karmic energy has manifested,  
Know that this is in natural response to the principle of cause and effect;  
During that time, you should be able to acknowledge aloud that "it is simply  
a matter of course!"  
Pursue your life with such awareness.  
Living in this burning house and impermanent world,  
We anticipate the Land of Peace and Bliss to come.  
Every day we live in the light and wisdom of Buddha;  
No matter how tough life is, we are still able to take it.

Walking step-by-step in the light for the span of fifty years,  
Even if there is only seven days of life left to spare,  
We should diligently and uninterruptedly repay the kindness of the Buddha  
by saying His Name.  
Good children should live their lives in such a way.

(13)

Dangerous, dangerous, how dangerous this world is!  
Beguiled by desires, you feel giddy and your vision is blurred.  
Taking advantage of people in order to get promotion,  
Telling a pack of lies and believing in what is not true,  
Reviling the Nembutsu followers,  
Turning deaf ears to your parents,  
Having an abusive tongue, mixed words, and being free in what you say,  
Disbelieving the law of cause and effect,  
Believing in neither Buddha nor Dharma —  
People who lead such a life  
Are dangerous, dangerous, dangerous indeed!

It is as if skating on very thin ice,  
Or standing upon the edge of an abyss —  
Dangerous, dangerous, extremely dangerous!

The retribution will come soon enough, now and forever;  
The retribution waits for no man.  
Beginning with this life, you can experience a living hell.

When huge guilt is created, you should repent.  
Even if the wrong is tiny enough, we should avoid it.  
We should reflect on our mistakes during the course of life.

(14)

No matter how poor you are,  
You just can't steal.  
To be truthful and simple-minded in life—  
How light-hearted and carefree this is!

No matter how penniless you are,  
It is pointless to talk about it—  
The retribution of not paying respect to the Buddha—  
At this late hour.

Even if you have become a beggar,  
There is something you just can't forget,  
There is something you must not skip—  
Even if you have nothing important, you ought to come to pay your respects  
to the Buddha.  
Even if you have nothing important, you ought to say the Nembutsu.  
Do not forget about "diligence"!

You may have accumulated millions in wealth;  
You may be very prosperous.  
However, you may also fall into hell for incalculable eons.  
What is the use of it all, if you were to suffer miserably?

I can leave neither wealth  
Nor stock of possessions behind;  
The only relic that I shall leave  
Is this saying—  
Keep it in mind!  
"Either the Buddha or our parents are in the Land of Bliss."  
Together, let us cherish this happily!

If the children are dead,  
If the parents are dead,  
If at the beginning a person has his body and mind settled,  
The Nembutsu of gratitude responding to the benevolence of Buddha  
Will naturally flow out from his mouth;  
There is no directing of virtue as great as this.

(15)

This living body will definitely succumb to death.  
That person is dead, this person is dead —  
They were still doing fine the day before,  
But today they have all become cadavers,  
Staggering forlornly along the river Styx in the underworld. So pitiful!

Man will die! Man will die!  
Old as well as young, robust as well as ill —  
Life is like lightning and morning dew;  
It disappears in a flash like dew on a blade of grass.  
Life is such that you can hardly predict tonight;  
Impermanence will come at any time.  
Think it over carefully!

“The afterlife that you will be going to, isn’t it bright enough?  
Of course it is not pitch-dark, but it isn’t bright either.  
I have so much faith!  
I am seriously saying the Nembutsu!  
And I have never bullied anybody . . .  
Buddha will probably take me to the Land of Ultimate Bliss.”  
If your innermost being is so unclear,  
Regretfully I dare tell you that you will not be born in the Pure Land.

Watch this man of low capacity, like a revolving lamp.  
No matter how many times it turns,  
You will still be the same old self.  
Other than falling into hell, what else do you have?  
This incurable wretch  
Is saved by the inconceivable Vow-Power.  
Amida Buddha’s hand is so strong and powerful —  
Trust reverently to Him!  
Joy is born instantly from one moment of trust  
Thanks to the inconceivable virtue of the transcendent Power.

Namo Amida Butsu is the proof given by the Buddha;  
Namo Amida Butsu is the directing of the Buddha's virtue;  
Namo Amida Butsu is the Great Compassion;  
Namo Amida Butsu is the compassionate Father-and-Mother.  
He is my compassionate Father-and-Mother, and hence  
He calls on me:  
"I save you as you are.  
Come just as you are, just as you stand there."

Zuiken