

Appendix G

The Commentary on the Longer Scripture About the Buddha of Infinite Life (Sukhāvatī Vyūha Sūtra Upadeśa or Amitāyus Sūtra Upadeśa, 無量壽經優波提舍) & The Verse Declaring a Vow For Spiritual Rebirth (願生偈) Attributed to Vasubandhu (天親 or 世親)

First there is an outline that summarizes the text:

After a dedication in twenty-four stanzas of verse, the Commentary itself is in ten parts:

1. Summarizing the main intent of the stanzas of verse that serve as a prologue to the discourse
2. Producing faith in this meditation on the Buddha through a five-fold gateway of mindfulness (pañca smṛti mukha, 五念門):
 - a. *Worship* (vandana, 禮拜)
 - b. *Praise* (stotra, 讚歎)
 - c. *Making a vow* (praṇidhāna, 作願) *to be reborn in the Pure Land*
 - d. *Meditative observation with introspection* (vipaśyana, 觀察)
 - e. *A dedication to turn over the merits one has attained to a higher purpose* (pariṇāmana, 迴向), going above and beyond oneself, giving it all back
3. The essential nature and 28 characteristics of this meditation (觀行體相) on the Pure Land and its inhabitants
 - a. The one essential nature and sixteen different characteristics of the Pure Land
 - b. Eight different characteristics of the Buddha
 - c. Four different characteristics of the bodhisattvas
4. Through a vow of dedication that is pure of affliction there is endowment with all of these adornments
5. The influence of other sentient beings through the skillfulness of one's own practice
 - a. *In terms of skillfulness of their own practice* (善巧自行), bodhisattvas cultivate the dual practice of:
 1. *Stillness of mind* (śamatha, 止 or 奢摩他), the essential nature of the pure mind (the single aspect)
 2. *Introspective meditation* (vipaśyanā, 觀心 or 毘婆舍那), the elaborated aspect of the pure mind (all the other characteristics)
 - b. *In terms of their skillfulness in benefiting others* (善巧利他), they dedicate and turn over all the merits they have earned (pariṇāmanam, 迴向) to a higher, transcendent purpose, giving it all back.
6. Eliminating the three obstacles through three doors of awakening to the transcendental nature of purpose
 1. *In depending on transcendental knowledge and discernment* (jñāna prajñā, 智慧) they do not seek pleasures for themselves and so eliminate any self-centered thoughts of attachments to their own lives.
 2. *In depending on mercy and compassion* (maitrī karuṇa, 慈悲) they uproot the sufferings of other sentient beings and so eliminate any thoughts that can disturb or distress others.
 3. *In depending on skillfulness in ways and means* (upāya kauśalya, 方便) they have a mind of compassion for all sentient beings and so eliminate thoughts of seeking any reward of wealth or honor from them.
7. Maintaining this spiritual awakening through three states of mind that are pure of affliction:
 - a. *The pure mind that is untainted* (niḥsaṃkleśa, 無染), unattached to the afflictions of self-interest
 - b. *The pure mind steadfast in its purpose* (pratiṣṭha, 安), uprooting the sufferings of other sentient beings.
 - c. *The pure mind that is content* (sukha, 樂), transcending any conflicts between oneself and others in making all sentient beings awaken to the greater transcendental nature of life's purpose.
8. Comparing and contrasting the terms (in items 6 and 7 above) and their meanings
9. Realizing the Buddha's original vow of dedication through its fulfillment (in the ten levels of its grounding)
10. Fulfillment of the benefits attained through a five-fold gateway of merit (pañca puṇya mukha, 五功德門):
 - a. Through the first four one attains entry into the merits and virtues of the Pure Land (the first level of grounding in joyfulness)
 1. *The door of approach* (saṃnikṛṣṭa mukha, 近門): Through the gateway of worship (vandana, 禮拜) one gets ever closer to the Pure Land.
 2. *The door to the great chorus of the assembly* (mahā parśad mukha, 大會眾門): Through the gateway of praise (stotra, 讚歎) one joins the chorus of the assembly.
 3. *The door into the house* (gṛha praveśa mukha, 宅門): Through the gateway of the transcendental vow (praṇidhāna, 作願) there is the attainment of stillness of mind (śamatha, 止) and penetration of mental resolve (samādhi, 定).

4. *The door to the inner chamber* (prāsāda garbha praveśa mukha, 屋門): Through the gateway of introspective meditation (vipaśyanā, 觀) there is entry into the transcendental discernment (prajñā, 慧) of life's purpose.
- b. Through the fifth door there is letting go of the merits and virtues attained through this mindfulness (and subsequent entry into all ten levels of grounding).
5. *The door of exit into the gardens and groves of the grounds* (vihāra vikrīḍita mukha, 園林遊戲地門): Through dedication, turning over the merits (pariṇāmanaṃ, 迴向) one has attained to a higher purpose, there is going outside (in the world beyond oneself) to deliver other sentient beings.

Now there is the text itself:

The Opening Verse In 24 Stanzas Declaring the Vow For Spiritual Rebirth:

"Blessed One! With all my heart
I devote my life without end throughout the ten directions (of time and space that will never end)
To The One Who Has Descended Into This World 'Of Unimpeded Light' (Apratihatābha Tathāgata, 無礙光如來)
And vow to be reborn in the Nation Secure in Contentment (Sukhāvatī, 安樂國)." //1

"I rely upon the scriptures (sūtra, 修多羅)
And the real transcendental virtues that they reveal
To express and retain this vow
According to the teachings of the Buddha." //2

"In observing the signs in this world
Of the noble path that transcends the three-fold sphere of sentient existence,
It is ultimately like empty space,
Boundlessly broad and great." //3

"The mercy and compassion of this straight and true path
Produce roots of virtue that transcend this world.
Its pure light and clarity are full
Like the reflected orbs of the sun and moon." //4

"The Pure Land is composed of many prized treasures,
And perfectly endowed with wondrous adornments.
Its immaculate light is blazing,
A pure clarity that dazzles those of this world." //5

"The precious virtues of its grasses,
Swaying gently to the right and left,
Are delightful to the touch,
Surpassing even the softest down (kācilindika, 迦旃鄰陀)." //6

"Countless different kinds of bejeweled blossoms
Cover the pools, streams and springs.
When a gentle breeze stirs the blossoms and leaves
The rays of light shimmer and reflect in one another." //7

"The palaces have observation towers
With an unimpeded vision of the ten directions.
The different trees display a myriad of colors,
And they are all surrounded by bejeweled railings." //8

"Countless jewels are strung on silken nets
Hanging everywhere across the span of empty space.
Various kinds of bells ring out,
Their sound proclaiming the sublime nature of life's purpose." //9

"Blossoms rain down, adorning this land,
And countless fragrances everywhere perfume it.
The Buddha's discernment is clear and pure like the light of the sun,
Dispelling the darkness of worldly ignorance." //10

"The voice of the creator (brahma ghoṣa, 梵響) travels deep and far.
It is subliminally heard in the ten directions,
Supporting the Buddha of Infinite Life (Amitāyus, 阿彌陀),
The truly awakened one, the lord of life's purpose." //11

"A host of beautiful blossoms surround The One Who has descended into this world (tathāgata, 如來).
In being reborn here, they become the blossoms of true spiritual awakening.
They enjoy the flavor of the Buddha's purpose
With the resolve of meditation (samādhi, 三昧) being their sustenance." //12

"Forever free from physical and mental distress
They feel a bliss of contentment that without interruption.
The greater track (mahāyāna, 大乘) of spiritual awakening is a field with roots of virtue
Where all are equally without any ignoble or unworthy reputation." //13

"No one is reborn here effeminate, of diminished capacity,
Or just on the lesser track of spiritual awakening on the individual level.
The highest aspirations of all sentient beings.
Are all completely fulfilled." //14

"And so I vow to be spiritually reborn
In the land of the Buddha of Infinite Life (Amitāyus, 阿彌陀佛).
This lord of treasures is immeasurably great,
Seated on the pedestal of a sublimely beautiful blossom." //15

"The light from each of the Buddha's auspicious signs and excellent refinements shines
With a form and reflection that transcends the flocks of the living.
Through the sublime voice of The One Who Has Descended Into This World
The voice of the creator is heard throughout the ten directions." //16

"Just as earth, water, fire, wind
And empty space are all inseparable,
The unshakeable hosts of humanity and heaven
Are all reborn in this ocean of transcendental knowledge that is pure of affliction." //17

"Like the Lord of Mount Sumeru,
The enlightened being is sublime and unsurpassed,
Reverently surrounded and worshipped
By all those among the brave in heaven and humanity." //18

"I see the power of the Buddha's original vow
And those who encounter it do not do so in vain.
It is able to quickly fulfill all the merits and virtues
Found in the great ocean of treasure. //19

"The Nation Secure in Contentment (Sukhāvatī, 安樂國) is pure of affliction.
Forever turning the immaculate wheel of life's purpose.
The manifestations of the Buddha and bodhisattvas are like the sun,
Steady and enduring like Mount Sumeru. //20

“With its light being gloriously immaculate
In each and every moment of thought,
It illuminates all of the Buddhas and their assemblies,
Providing meaningful benefits to the flocks of the living. //21

“Raining down divine music and clothing the ground with blossoms,
They offer up sublime fragrances and other treasures
And praise the virtues of the Buddhas
Without making any thoughts of distinctions among them.” //22

“What kind of world is there without
The treasure of virtues found in the Buddha’s purpose?
We all vow to be reborn here
And reveal this purpose, just like the Buddha.” //23

“I have made this discourse and composed this verse
With a vow to see the Buddha of Infinite Life (Amitāyus, 彌陀佛)
And together with all sentient beings everywhere
Be reborn in the Nation Secure in Contentment (Sukhāvatī, 安樂國).” //24

This concludes my opening verse on the great vow of dedication to The Scripture on the Enlightened Being of Infinite Life (Amitāyus Sūtra, 無量壽修多羅).

Vasubandhu’s Commentary on the Above Verse and The Scripture About Infinite Life:

This discourse is in ten parts:

1. The main intent in the verse on the great vow of dedication (願偈大意)
2. Producing faith in the meditation (起觀生信)
3. The essential nature and characteristics in this meditation (觀行體相)
4. Entry into a vow of dedication that is pure of affliction (淨入願心)
5. Skillfulness in both one’s own practice and the influence of others (善巧攝化)
6. Eliminating the obstacles to spiritual awakening (離菩提障)
7. Remaining in accord with this spiritual awakening (順菩提門)
8. Comparing and contrasting the terms used (in items 6 and 7 above) and their meanings (名義攝對)
9. Actual realization of the vow in practice (願事成就)
10. The complete fulfillment of benefits (利行滿足)

1. The main intent of the verse on the great vow of dedication (願偈大意)

Question: What is the purport of this opening verse on the great vow of dedication to spiritual rebirth?

Answer: To observe the Nation Secure in Contentment, (Sukhāvatī, 安樂國), to see the Enlightened Being of Infinite Life (Amitāyus Buddha, 阿彌陀佛) and to be dedicated to rebirth in this land.

2. Producing faith in the meditation (起觀生信)

Question: How does one produce a mind of faith in this meditation?

Answer: If virtuous sons and daughters cultivate and realize the five-fold gateway of mindfulness, they will ultimately attain rebirth in the Land Secure in Contentment and see the Buddha of Infinite Life.

Question: What is this five-fold gateway of mindfulness (pañca smṛti mukha, 五念門)?

Answer: They entail the five gateways of:

1. Worship (vandana, 禮拜)
2. Praise (stotra, 讚歎)
3. Making a vow (praṇidhāna, 作願)
4. Meditative observation with introspection (vipaśyana, 觀察)
5. Dedication, turning over the merits one has attained (pariṇāmana, 迴向), going above & beyond oneself

Question: How does one worship the Buddha?

Answer: One worships the Buddha through an act of the body that offers one's very own life up to:

- The Infinite Life (Amitāyus, 阿彌陀)
- The Grace That Has Descended Into This World (Tathāgata, 如來),
- The One Truly Worthy of Offerings (Arhat, 應正)
- The All Knowing One (Samyak Sambuddha, 正遍知).

Question: How does one praise the Buddha?

Answer: One praises the Buddha with an act of the mouth that invokes the names of The Ones That Have Descended Into This World (Tathāgata, 如來) and summons their illumination, clarity, knowledge, characteristics and meaning. This is aspiring to cultivate a practice that is in accordance with the transcendental nature of life's purpose (tathatā, 如實).

Question: How does one make a vow of dedication?

Answer: One always makes a vow with a single-minded determination that fixes one's thoughts on ultimately being reborn in the Nation Secure in Contentment (Sukhāvatī, 安樂國). This is aspiring to cultivate a practice of resolve with stillness of mind (śamatha, 止) that is in accordance with this transcendental nature.

Question: How does one meditate on the Buddha and the Pure Land?

Answer: One contemplates it with transcendental knowledge (jñāna, 智), discernment of purpose (prajñā, 慧), and proper mindfulness (samyak smṛti, 正念), that is, properly keeping observation of the Buddha and this Pure Land in mind and aspiring to cultivate a practice of introspective meditation (vipaśyanā, 觀心) in accordance with its transcendental nature.

Question: There are three objects involved in this meditation. What are they?

Answer: They are observing:

1. The adornment of the land of enlightenment (buddha kṣetra, 佛國土) with merits and virtues.
2. The adornment of the Enlightened Being of Infinite Life (Amitāyur Buddha, 阿彌陀佛) with merits and virtues.
3. The adornment of awakened sentient beings (bodhisattvas, 菩薩) with merits and virtues.

Question: How does one dedicate and turn over the merits one has attained (pariṇāmana, 迴向)?

Answer: In not forsaking any sentient beings who are still in the sphere where there are the sufferings of life & death (saṃsāra, 生死) and the afflictions of emotional disturbance (kleśa, 煩惱), one maintains a vow to keep returning there in order to first perfect the mind of compassion, before remaining in the Pure Land.

3. The essential nature and characteristics of the meditation (觀行體相)

This is in two parts:

- a. The essential nature and characteristics of the nation, or land of enlightenment
- b. The essential nature and characteristics of the inhabitants in this land

a. *The Nation, or Land* (kṣetra, 國土)

Question: How does one contemplate the Pure Land of the enlightened being (buddha kṣetra, 佛國土) and its adornment with merits and virtues?

Answer: The adornments of the Buddha's land with merits of virtues are invested with inconceivable powers. Their nature is like that of the magic pearl that will grant any wish (cintamaṇi, 摩尼如意寶). All of the different signs of this land resemble and complement one another.

Question: In contemplating the land of the enlightened being (buddha kṣetra, 佛國土) and its adornment (ālaṃkāra, 莊嚴) with merits and virtues, there are seventeen aspects that are recognized. What are these seventeen?

Answer: They are the realization of its virtues (the first is its essential nature while the next sixteen are its elaborated characteristics):

1. Its purity (parisuddha, 清淨)
2. Its size (pramāṇa, 量)
3. Its moral nature (prakṛti, 性)
4. Its luminous shapes and forms (varṇa saṃsthāna, 形相)

5. Its diversity (vicitratā, 種種事)
 6. Its beauty (surūpa, 妙色)
 7. Its feel (spraṣṭavya, 觸)
 8. Its three elements of water, earth & sky (apaḥ pṛthivī, ākāśa, 三種)
 9. Its rain (varṣa, 雨)
 10. Its clear light (prakāśa, 光明)
 11. Its sublime voice (brahma ghoṣa, 妙聲)
 12. Its master (īśvara, 主)
 13. Its followers (parivāra, 眷屬)
 14. Its sustenance (upabhoga, 受用)
 15. Its freedom from difficulty (akṛcchratva, 無諸難)
 16. Its gateway to the greatness of meaning, or significance (mahā artha paryāya, 大義門)
 17. Its fulfillment of all aspirations (sarva paryeṣaṇāḥ paripūrṇa, 一切所求滿足)
1. The virtues of *its purity* (parisuddha, 清淨) are expressed in the verse as:
 "In observing the signs in this world
 Of the noble path that transcend the three-fold sphere of sentient existence." //3a
 2. The virtues of *its size* (pramāṇa, 量) are expressed in the verse as:
 "It is ultimately like empty space,
 Boundlessly broad and great." //3b
 3. The virtues of *its moral nature* (prakṛti, 性) are expressed in the verse as:
 "The mercy and compassion of this straight and true path
 Produce roots of virtue that transcend this world." //4a
 4. The virtues of *its luminous shapes and forms* (varṇa saṁsthāna, 形相) are expressed in the verse as:
 "Its pure light and clarity are full,
 Like the reflected orbs of the sun and moon." //4b
 5. The virtues of *its diversity* (vicitratā, 種種事) are expressed in the verse as:
 "The Pure Land is composed of many prized treasures,
 And perfectly endowed with wondrous adornments." //5a
 6. The virtues of *its beauty* (surūpa, 妙色) are expressed in the verse as:
 "It blazes with an immaculate light
 A pure clarity that dazzles this world." //5b
 7. The virtues of *its feel* (spraṣṭavya, 觸) are expressed in the verse as:
 "The precious virtues of its grasses,
 Swaying gently to the right and left,
 Are delightful to the touch,
 Surpassing even the softest down (kācilindika, 迦旃鄰陀)." //6
 8. The virtues of *its three elements* are expressed in the verse in three parts.
 These are the three elements of water, earth and sky.
 The adornments of *the waters* (apaḥ, 水) are expressed in the verse as:
 "Countless different kinds of bejeweled blossoms
 Cover the pools, streams and springs.
 When a gentle breeze stirs the blossoms and leaves
 The rays of light shimmer and reflect in one another." //7
 The adornments of *the earth* (pṛthivī, 地) are expressed in the verse as:
 "The palaces have observation towers
 With an unimpeded vision of the ten directions.
 The different trees display a myriad of colors,
 And they are all surrounded by bejeweled railings." //8

- The adornments of *the sky* (ākāśa, 空) is expressed in the verse as:
 “Countless jewels are strung on silken nets
 Hanging everywhere across empty space.
 Various kinds of bells ring out,
 Their sound proclaiming the sublime nature of life’s purpose.” //9
9. The virtues of *its rain* (varṣa, 雨) are expressed in the verse as:
 “Blossoms rain down, adorning this land,
 And countless fragrances everywhere perfume it.” //10a
10. The virtues of *its clear light* (prakāśa, 光明) are expressed in the verse as:
 “The Buddha’s discernment is clear and pure like the light of the sun,
 Dispelling the darkness of worldly ignorance.” //10b
11. The virtues of *its sublime voice* (brahma ghoṣa, 妙聲) are expressed in the verse as:
 “The voice of the creator travels deep and far.
 It is subliminally heard in the ten directions.” //11a
12. The virtues of *its master* (īśvara, 主) are expressed in the verse as:
 “Supporting the Buddha of Infinite Life (Amitāyus, 阿彌陀)
 The Truly Awakened One, The Lord of Life’s Purpose.” //11b
13. The virtues of *its followers* (parivāra, 眷屬) are expressed in the verse as:
 “A host of beautiful blossoms surround The One Who Has Descended Into This World (Tathāgata, 如來).
 In being reborn here, they become the blossoms of true spiritual awakening.” //12a
14. The virtues of *its sustenance* (upabhoga, 受用) are expressed in the verse as:
 “They enjoy the flavor of the Buddha’s purpose
 With the resolve of meditation (samādhi, 三昧) being their sustenance.” //12b
15. The virtues of *its freedom from difficulty* (akṛcchratva, 無諸難) are expressed in the verse as:
 “Forever free from physical and mental distress
 They feel a contentment that is without interruption.” //13a
16. The virtues of *its gateway to the greatness of meaning, or significance* (mahā artha paryāya, 大義門) are expressed in the verse as:
 “The greater track (mahāyāna, 大乘) of spiritual awakening is a field with roots of virtue
 Where all are equally without any ignoble or unworthy reputation. //13b
 No one reborn here is effeminate, of diminished capacity,
 Or just on the lesser track of spiritual awakening on the individual level.” //14a
- One should know that the Pure Land is free from anything ignoble and unworthy in two ways:
1. Any character that is ignoble or unworthy
 2. Any reputation that is ignoble or unworthy
1. There are three ways of being ignoble or unworthy in character:
 - a. Just being on the lesser track of spiritual awakening on the individual level
 - b. Being effeminate
 - c. Being of diminished capacity
 Because those here are without these three deficiencies, they are without any ignoble or unworthy character.
 2. The reputation of those who are without an ignoble or unworthy character is also of three kinds.
 Not only do these three kinds of beings not exist here but one does not even hear about anyone just being on the lesser track of spiritual awakening on the individual level, being effeminate or being of a diminished capacity. Because of this, their names (in the Pure Land) are free from any reputation for an ignoble or unworthy character. ‘Equally’ (samata, 平等) here refers to all being seen in a uniform aspect, without discrimination or prejudice.

17. The virtues of *its fulfillment of all aspirations* (sarva paryeṣaṇāḥ paripūrṇa, 一切所求滿足) are expressed in the verse as:
 “The highest aspirations of all sentient beings.
 Are all completely fulfilled.” //14b

Having briefly explained these seventeen aspects of virtue that adorn the Land of the Enlightened Being of Infinite Life (Amitāyur Buddha Kṣetra, 阿彌陀佛國土), there is a revelation of the great power of merits and virtues accomplished through the grace of The One Who has descended into this world (tathāgata, 如來) as well as the benefits that are realized by others. The adornments in this land are the sublime object of ultimate reality (paramārtha satya, 第一義諦). One should in turn recognize their elaboration into sixteen characteristics and then their summary into a single nature (of purity):

“And so I vow to be spiritually reborn
 In the land of the Buddha of Infinite Life (Amitāyus, 阿彌陀佛).” //15a

b. The Inhabitants of This Land

On this there are two parts:

1. On the enlightened being who has attained the supreme awakening (Buddha, 佛)
2. On the sentient being awakening to the transcendental nature of life’s purpose (bodhisattvas, 菩薩)

1. *On the enlightened being who has attained the supreme awakening* (Buddha, 佛)

Question: How does one contemplate the adornment of the enlightened being (Buddha, 佛) with merits and virtues?

Answer: In observing the adornment (aṅgikāra, 莊嚴) of the enlightened being with merits and virtues there are eight that should be recognized.

Question: What are these eight signs?

Answer: They are:

1. The lotus seat (padma āsana, 座)
 2. The deeds of the body (kāya karman, 身業)
 3. The words of the mouth (vāk karman, 口業)
 4. The thoughts of the mind (manas karman, 心業)
 5. The great assembly (mahā saṃgha, 大眾)
 6. The leader (pramukha, 上首)
 7. The master (īśvara, 主)
 8. The unfailing foundation (amogha adhiṣṭhana, 不虛作住持)
1. Adornment with *the lotus seat* (padma āsana, 座) is expressed in the verse as:
 “This lord of treasures is immeasurably great,
 Seated on the pedestal of a sublimely beautiful blossom.” //15b
 2. Adornment with *the deeds of the body* (kāya karman, 身業) is expressed in the verse as:
 “The light from each of the Buddha’s auspicious signs and excellent refinements shines
 With a form and reflection transcending the flocks of the living.” //16a
 3. Adornment with *the words of the mouth* (vāk karman, 口業) is expressed in the verse as:
 “Through the sublime voice of The One Who has descended into this world
 The voice of the creator (brahma ghoṣa, 梵響) is heard throughout the ten directions.” //16b
 4. Adornment with *the thoughts of the mind* (citta karman, 心業) is expressed in the verse as:
 “Just as earth, water, fire, wind
 Are all inseparable from empty space.” //17a
 5. Adornment with *the great assembly* (mahā saṃgha, 大眾) is expressed in the verse as:
 “The unshakeable assemblies of humanity and heaven
 Are all reborn in this ocean of transcendental knowledge that is pure of affliction.” //17b

6. Adornment with *the leader* (pramukha, 上首) is expressed in the verse as:
 “Like the Lord of Mount Sumeru,
 The Enlightened Being is most sublime.” //18a
7. Adornment with *the master* (īśvara, 主) is expressed in the verse as:
 “Reverently surrounded and worshipped
 By all those among the brave in heaven and humanity.” //18b
8. Adornment with *the unfailing foundation* (amogha adhiṣṭhana, 不虛作住持) is expressed as:
 “I see the power of the Buddha’s original vow.
 Those that encounter it do not do so in vain.
 It is able to quickly fulfill all the merits and virtues
 Found in the great ocean of treasure.” //19

2. On the sentient beings awakening to the transcendental nature of life’s purpose (bodhisattvas, 菩薩)

When bodhisattvas who have not yet attained the mind that is pure of affliction see the Buddha and finally realize the equanimity found in the universal nature of the Buddha’s spiritual life (samatā dharma kāya, 平等法身), they are no different from those who are pure of affliction and have reached the eighth level of grounding in the unshakeable nature of life’s transcendental purpose (acalā bhūmi, 不動地) or higher. This is because they have similarly realized the serene stillness that is found in the equanimity of this universal nature. In outlining the eight aspects of the Buddha’s spiritual life that manifest The One Who has descended into this world (tathāgata, 如來), one should recognize one’s own adornments with these merits and virtues and the synergies of realization between those for one’s own benefit and those that are for the sake of others. They should all be realized in sequential order.

Question: How does one observe the bodhisattvas’ adornment with merits and virtues?

Answer: In observing their adornment with merits and virtues, one should recognize the four kinds of practice that they cultivate.

Question: What are the four practices that awakened beings (bodhisattvas, 菩薩) are adorned with?

Answer: They are:

1. *Being motionless yet penetrating* (不動而至): While abiding motionless (unshakeable) in a land of enlightenment (buddha kṣetra, 佛土) they appear in the ten directions through different manifestations, doing the Buddha’s work and cultivating their practice in accordance with its transcendental nature. This is expressed in the verse as:
 “The Land Secure in Contentment is pure of affliction.
 Forever turning the immaculate wheel of life’s purpose,
 The manifestations of the Buddha and bodhisattvas are like the sun,
 Steady and enduring like Mount Sumeru.” //20
 And so sentient beings are reborn as blossoms, rising from the mud and opening up (unsullied).
2. *Reaching everywhere in a single moment* (一念遍至): At any time they choose, they reveal their lives, emitting a great light and clarity that in a single moment reaches everywhere in the worlds of the ten directions, instructing sentient beings with various different ways and means on how to cultivate their practice and eliminate all suffering. This is expressed in the verse as:
 “With its light being gloriously immaculate
 Through each and every moment of thought,
 It illuminates all the Buddhas and their assemblies
 Providing meaningful benefits to the flocks of the living.” //21
3. *Making offerings without making distinctions* (供養無相): In reaching all these worlds, they illuminate all of the infinitely broad and great assemblies of enlightened beings without exception, making offerings to and praising the merits and virtues of all of those that have descended into this world. This is expressed in the verse as:
 “Raining down divine music and clothing the ground with blossoms,
 Making offerings of sublime fragrances and other treasures
 And praising the virtues of the Buddhas,
 There are no thoughts of distinctions among them.” //22

4. **Revealing the transcendental nature of life's purpose, like the Buddha** (示法如佛): They travel to all the places in the world that are without the Three Treasures, administering the great ocean of real merits and virtues that adorn:
 - a. The Enlightened Being (Buddha, 佛)
 - b. The True Nature of Life's Purpose (Dharma, 法) &
 - c. The Community of Faith (Saṃgha, 僧)
 They demonstrate their cultivation of practice to all in accordance with the transcendental nature in order to make them understand it. This is expressed in the verse as:
 "What world is there without
 The treasure of virtues found in the Buddha's purpose?
 We all vow to be reborn here (in the Pure Land)
 And reveal this purpose, just like the Buddha." //23

4. **Entry into a Vow That is Pure of Affliction** (淨入願心)

With entry into a vow that is pure of affliction, one is said to be adorned with the virtues of:

- a. The land of enlightenment (buddha kṣetra, 佛國土),
 - b. The enlightened being (Buddha, 佛)
 - c. Sentient beings awakening to the greater, transcendental nature of life's purpose (bodhisattvas, 菩薩)
- These three are all realized through the adornment of the mind with a vow. Entry into the Buddha's spiritual life has dual aspects, an essential nature and an elaboration into characteristics. In terms of its essential nature, one enters into a single expression of purpose. This single expression of purpose is its most pure expression. It is pure by virtue of its knowledge and discernment of the unconditional principle of the spiritual life (asaṃskṛta dharma kāya, 無為法身).

Question: One should recognize that in its elaboration there are two levels of purity. What are these two?

Answer: They are:

1. The purity of the world as a vessel, or container (bhājana loka, 器世)
 2. The purity of the beings that dwell within it (sattva, 眾生世)
1. *The purity of the world as a vessel* refers to the seventeen aspects (1 & 16) of adornment with merits and virtues that are realized in the field, or land of enlightenment (Buddha kṣetra, 佛國土). This is the purity of the world as a vessel that contains these merits and virtues.
 2. *The purity of the beings that dwell within it* refers to the eight kinds of adornment with merits and virtues realized by an enlightened being (Buddha, 佛) and the four kinds of adornment with merits and virtues realized by those awakening to the greater, transcendental nature of life's purpose (bodhisattvas, 菩薩). This is a reference to the pure, unafflicted nature of sentient beings who dwell within this world. One should recognize that, similarly, a single expression of purpose includes both of these levels of purity.

5. **Skillfulness in One's Own Practice & The Influence of Others** (善巧攝化)

- a. In terms of **skillfulness in their own practice** (善巧自行), bodhisattvas cultivate the dual practice of:
 1. *Stillness of Mind* (śamatha, 止 or 奢摩他), the essential aspect of the pure mind (as a single aspect)
 2. *Introspective Meditation* (vipaśyanā, 觀心 or 毘婆舍那), the elaborated aspect of the pure mind (as sixteen characteristics)
 This way they realize a state of mind that is gentle and pliant. Through the transcendental nature, they recognize both the essential nature and the elaboration of all their purposes into different characteristics.
- b. In terms of their **skillfulness in benefiting others** (善巧利他), they dedicate and turn over the merits they have earned (pariṇāmanaṃ, 迴向) with skillfulness of ways and means (upāya kauśalya, 方便).

Question: How are the skillful ways and means of dedicating and turning over the merits that have been earned (pariṇāmanaṃ, 迴向) accomplished by bodhisattvas?

Answer: In the skillful ways and means of their dedication, bodhisattvas turn over all of the merits and virtues that they have attained through the five-fold gateway of cultivating their practice:

1. The gateway of approach (saṃnikṛṣṭa mukha, 近門)
2. The gateway to the chorus of the assembly (mahā parśad mukha, 大會眾門)
3. The gateway into the house (gṛha praveśa mukha, 宅門)
4. The gateway into the inner chamber (prāsāda garbha praveśa mukha, 屋門)
5. The gateway into the gardens and groves outside the chamber (vihāra vikṛīḍita mukha, 園林遊戲地門)

Without seeking to abide in or hold onto any pleasure for their own lives, they desire to uproot the sufferings of all sentient beings, making a vow that they all will be included in the Buddha's Land That is Secure in Contentment. This is called the bodhisattvas' successful accomplishment of dedication through skillful ways and means (bodhisattva upāya kauśalya pariṇāmanam, 菩薩巧方便迴向).

6. Eliminating the Obstacles in Awakening to the Greater, Transcendent Nature of Life's Purpose (離菩提障)

Question: Bodhisattvas like this recognize that skillfulness of dedication *eliminates the three impediments* (antarāya vivarjanatā, 遠離違) that block *the three doors to spiritual awakening* (bodhi mukhyaṃ, 菩提門). What are they?

Answer: These three doors of spiritual awakening are:

1. In depending on *transcendental knowledge and discernment* (jñāna prajñā, 智慧) they do not seek any pleasures for themselves and so eliminate any self-centered thoughts of attachments to their own lives.
2. In depending on *mercy and compassion* (maitrī karuṇa, 慈悲) they uproot the sufferings of all sentient beings and so eliminate any thoughts that would disturb or distress others.
3. In depending on *skillfulness in ways and means* (upāya kauśalya, 方便) they have a mind of compassion for all sentient beings and so eliminate any thoughts of seeking any reward of offerings or reverence (wealth or honor) from them.

And so they are said to eliminate the impediments to the three doors to spiritual awakening.

7. Remaining in Accord With This Awakening to the Transcendental Nature (順菩提門)

Question: Bodhisattvas who eliminate these three obstacles attain *the three states of mind pure of affliction* (anāsrava citta, 清淨心) that accord with the three doors of awakening and fulfillment of their greater purpose. What are these three pure states?

Answer: They are:

1. *The pure mind that is untainted* (niḥsaṃkleśa, 無染), not seeking pleasures for their own lives.
2. *The pure mind that remains steadfast* (pratiṣṭha, 安), uprooting the sufferings of other sentient beings.
3. *The pure mind that is content* (sukha, 樂), transcending the conflicts between oneself and others and making all sentient beings awaken to the greater transcendent nature of life's purpose. One should recognize the way to comply with these three doors to fully awaken to it.

8. Comparing and contrasting the terms used (in items 6 and 7 above) and their meanings (名義攝對)

In comparing and contrasting these terms (nāma, 名) and their meanings (artha, 義):

a. We have taught about *the three doors to the awakening of the mind* (bodhi citta tri mukha, 菩提心):

1. Transcendental knowledge and discernment of purpose (jñāna prajñā, 智慧)
2. Mercy and compassion (maitrī karuṇa, 慈悲)
3. Skillfulness in ways and means (upāya kauśalya, 方便)

They are all included and contained in the *transcendental discernment of purpose* (prajñā, 般若).

For example, one should recognize that this transcendental discernment includes and contains skillfulness in ways and means.

b. We have taught about *the elimination of three obstacles* (trīṇy āvaranāni parivarjana, 三種法遠離障):

1. Self-centered thoughts about attachments to one's own life (我心不貪著自身)
2. Thoughts that bring affliction to other sentient beings (無安眾生心)
3. Thoughts about receiving rewards of offerings and reverence (wealth & honors) from others (供養恭敬自身心)

One should recognize the ways to eliminate these *three obstacles* to awakening to the transcendental nature of purpose.

c. We have taught about *the three states of mind that are pure of affliction*:

1. The pure mind that is untainted (niḥsaṃkleśa, 無染) by attachments to self-centered existence.
2. The pure mind that remains steadfast (pratiṣṭha, 安), without bringing affliction to others
3. The pure mind that is content (sukha, 樂清), beyond any conflict between self and other

One should understand that when these *three pure states of mind* are combined as one, there is realization of *the most sublime bliss of contentment* found in their transcendental nature (妙樂勝真心).

9. **Actual Realization of the Vow** (願事成就)

In *accomplishing the work of this vow* (願事成就), awakened beings are endowed with:

- The mind with transcendental knowledge and discernment (jñāna prajñā, 智慧)
- The mind skillful in ways and means (upāya kauśalya, 方便)
- The mind that overcomes obstacles (anāvāraṇa, 無障)
- The transcendental nature of the mind (tathatā, 勝真)

One should know that, in being endowed with these, one is able to be reborn in the field of enlightenment called the Pure Land (buddha kṣetra, 佛國土).

10. **The Complete Fulfillment of Benefits** (利行滿足)

In *fulfilling these benefits for others* (利他滿足) there is a mastery by the great bodhisattvas in accord with:

- The deeds of the body (kāya karma, 身業)
- The words of the mouth (vāk karma, 口業)
- The thoughts of the mind (citta karma, 意業)
- The transcendental knowledge of actions and their consequences (karma jñāna, 智業)
- The transcendental knowledge of skillfulness in ways and means that perfectly integrates these four.

The Five Doors of Merit (pañca puṇya mukha, 五功德門) are caused by the five-fold gateway of mindfulness (pañca smṛti mukha, 五念門):

Question: Further, one should recognize the gradual, sequential process by which five doors are penetrated through the five-fold gateway of mindfulness. What are these five doors?

Answer: They are:

- The door of approach* (saṃnikṛṣṭa mukha, 近門), nearing the Pure Land, is caused by entering the gateway of worship (vandana, 禮拜).
- The door to the great chorus of the assembly* (mahā parṣad mukha, 大會眾門) is caused by entering the gateway of praise (stotra, 讚歎).
- The door into the house* (gṛha praveśa mukha, 宅門) that is stillness of mind (śamatha, 止) is caused by entering the gateway of mental resolve (samādhi, 定) that is attained through the making of the transcendental vow (praṇidhāna, 作願).
- The door to the inner chamber* (prāsāda garbha praveśa mukha, 屋門) is caused by the gateway of introspective meditation (vipaśyanā, 觀 or 毘婆舍那) and leads to the transcendental discernment (prajñā, 慧) of life's greater purpose.
- The door of exit to the gardens and groves of the grounds* (vihāra vikrīḍita mukha, 園林遊戲地門) is caused by the gateway of dedication, turning over the merits one has attained to a higher purpose (pariṇāmanam, 迴向). This is going outside (above and beyond oneself) to deliver other sentient beings.

Of these five doors:

- Through the first four one attains entry into the merits and virtues of the Pure Land.
- Through the fifth door there is exit from (letting go of) these merits and virtues.
 - The door of approach* (āgama, 近門):
By worshiping the Enlightened Being of Infinite Life (Amitāyur Buddha, 阿彌陀佛) and attaining rebirth in this land, one first approaches the Nation Secure in Contentment (Sukhāvatī, 安樂國). This is entry into the first door.
 - The door to the great chorus of the assembly* (mahā parṣad, 大會眾門):
By praising the name of the Enlightened Being of Infinite Life (Amitāyur Buddha, 阿彌陀佛), one contemplates the meaning of the name of The One Who has descended into this world through summoning it. When taking refuge in the grace from this illumination while thinking about the cultivation of one's own practice, there is entry into the great chorus of the assembly. This is entering into the second door.
 - The door into the house* (gṛha praveśa, 宅門):
By having singleness of mind and focusing one's thoughts while making a vow to be reborn in this land, one cultivates stillness of mind (śamatha, 止 or 奢摩他) with mental resolve (samādhi, 三昧) and so attains entry into the bud of one of its lotus blossoms (as an embryo of enlightenment). This is entering into the third door.

4. *The door to the inner chamber* (prāsāda garbha praveśa, 屋門):
By focusing one's thoughts on the sublime adornments here, one cultivates introspective meditation (vipaśyanā, 觀心 or 毘婆舍那). Abiding in this place, one enjoys the various flavors of life's transcendental purpose, taking them all in and putting each of them to use in one's own life. This is entering into the fourth door.
5. *The door of exit to the gardens and groves of the grounds* (vihāra vikrīḍita, 園林遊戲地門):
By having great mercy and compassion in contemplating the suffering and distress of all sentient beings in this world, one further responds by revealing one's life (fully blossoming) and returning to the garden of life & death (saṃsāra, 生死) with its grove of emotional disturbances (kleśa, 煩惱). Through the power of penetration that derives from a dedication to the Buddha's original vow, one participates in the grounds where sentient beings are being taught and spiritually transformed. This is exiting through the fifth door.
- * One should recognize that bodhisattvas enter into the first four doors through a practice and realization that is for their own benefit.
- * In exiting through the fifth door, there is the practice and realization for the benefit of others, with bodhisattvas dedicating and turning over their own merits for their sake.
- Because they cultivate the five doors of practice like this, their own benefits benefit others and all quickly realize the supreme universal enlightenment (anuttara samyak saṃbodhi, 阿耨多羅三藐三菩提) together as one.