

Appendix J

An Esoteric Explanation of the Name 'Infinite Life & Light' (Amida Hishaku, 阿彌陀秘釋) By Kakuban (覺鑌)

First there is a general explanation:

The Enlightened Being of Infinite Life & Light (Amita Buddha, 阿彌陀佛) is the grace of transcendental knowledge that observes the nature of life's greater purpose with subtly compassionate discernment (praty avekṣana jñāna, 妙觀察智). Descending from the existential nature of the spiritual life (svabhāvika dharma kāya, 自性法身), it is the foundation that all sentient beings depend on to penetrate the nature of enlightenment.

Within a single mind with self-awareness (sva saṃvedana or sva saṃvitti, 自證), there is a transcendental vision of the real purpose for all things. With self-awareness and a perfectly rounded knowledge of all purposes, there is a comprehension of the mental states of all sentient beings. Therefore, the existential nature and the character of this single mind includes all of the truths of duality, yet there is no contradiction among them. The matter and mind in the nine spheres of life's purpose¹⁶ (dharma dhātu, 法界) are all similarly endowed with the five transcendental kinds of knowledge in which all the diverse forms of the universe are found in their full array. In fact:

- * All the blessed beings in the assemblies of the four sacred spheres of worship (maṇḍalānāṃ catuṣṭaye, 四曼)⁹⁹ have always been found in the five projections of one's own afflicted purpose (pañca skandha, 五蘊),¹¹ and
- * The three mysteries (trīni guhyāni, 三密), the unafflicted thoughts, words & deeds of these blessed beings, have always been found within the mental speculations about the nine boundless kinds of consciousness (nava vijñāna, 九識).¹⁰⁰

With there being this single mind, so there are all of its purposes. The sphere of the Buddha and the sphere of sentient beings are inseparable and yet there is also their duality. This single mind is the Buddha's primordial existential nature, and it is impossible to realize it by seeking it out (through the speculations of the discursive mind). Only because there are the confusions of affliction is there the transcendental knowledge that reveals it. This is a reference to becoming enlightened in this very life (即身成佛).

In teachings that emphasize the external aspects of Buddhism:

- * When those with dull capacities are taught of the Buddha's life being something external to one's own life and the Pure Land being outside of this tainted world we live in, it is to encourage ordinary and foolish people who have deep attachments (to their false beliefs) and bring (palliative) benefits to those who have committed the worst kinds of evil.
- * When those with keener capacities are taught about the transcendental nature of life's purpose, they are only shown a shallow and simplified version of it while still concealing its ultimate reality.

The real teaching about the true nature of the Buddha's spiritual life (dharma kāya, 法身) opens up the transcendental knowledge that destroys (any remaining) attachments to feelings.

In awakening to the deep source of this single mind, there are the nine degrees of the lotus blossom that open up as the nine projections of consciousness⁹⁸ in the mind that is pure of affliction. Upon revealing enlightenment through the three mysteries (of unafflicted thoughts, words and deeds), the auspicious signs and the excellent refinements of the five Buddhas are similarly perceived through the five sensory capacities. Who seeks the adornments of treasure in a land that is far away? Who illuminates the sublime forms and characteristics that are found somewhere else?

Confusion and awakening are both found in the identity of the self. The Buddha's spiritual life (buddha kāya, 佛身) is not something to be found outside of the thoughts, words and deeds (of this life). With the transcendental and the superficial being inseparable, the attainment of pure bliss is found within the five paths of this world.¹⁶ In the moment of awakening to this principle (yukti, 理趣), there is the mind of the Bodhisattva that is called 'The Master (or Lord) Beholding the Cries of This World' (Avalokiteśvara, 觀自在菩薩). In all purposes, whether they are conditional or unconditional, there is an awakening to this single mind and its principle of equanimity that transcends all of the obstacles and hindrances (that arise from emotional disturbance and cognitive dissonance). This is a state of mind that is ultimately free from attachments to any speculations about distinctions (vikalpa, 分別). Because the nature of this realization is found in a single moment of thought, it is called the Infinite Life & Light That Descends Into This World (Amita Tathāgata, 阿彌陀如來).

This is the main idea.

Next there is an explanation of the name and title of this Buddha:

In India, this Buddha is called Amita, short for Amitāyus & Amitābha. The Chinese translation for these are Infinite Life (Wú Liáng Shòu, 無量壽) and Infinite Light (Wú Liáng Guāng, 無量光) respectively, but overall there are thirteen different names that have been used in translation. These different names are based on the different functionalities of meaning found in the revealed teachings about this Buddha. In the esoteric school, all of these different names are nothing but titles for the one enlightened being descending into this world (tathāgata, 如來) (one describes The Infinite Life while the other twelve describe The Infinite Light). Nevertheless, we will now explain the real meaning of these thirteen different names.

1. The spiritual life (dharma kāya, 法身) descending into this world (tathāgata, 如來) has an infinite lifespan, dwelling in the palace of the spiritual realm (dharma dhātu, 法界) without ever arising or perishing. Because of this, some call The Great Illuminator Descending Into This World (Mahā Vairocana Tathāgata, 大日如來) the Enlightened Being *Of Infinite Life* (Amitāyur Buddha, 無量壽佛).
2. The transcendental knowledge of the spiritual life descending into this world observing the nature of life's greater purpose with subtly compassionate discernment (praty avekṣana jñāna, 妙觀察智) is endowed with a light that everywhere illuminates countless sentient beings and countless worlds and so is ever providing benefits to them. Because of this, some call The Great Illuminator Descending Into This World the Enlightened Being *Of Infinite Light* (Amitābha Buddha, 無量壽佛).
3. The transcendental knowledge of the spiritual life descending into this world observing the nature of life's greater purpose with subtly compassionate discernment is boundless and without any division into parts. Because of this, some call The Great Illuminator Descending Into This World the Enlightened Being *Of Boundless Light* (Anantābha Buddha, 無邊光佛).
4. The transcendental knowledge of the spiritual life descending into this world observing the nature of life's greater purpose with subtly compassionate discernment is unhindered by obstacles, whether its purposes are conditional (saṃskṛta, 有爲) or unconditional (asaṃskṛta, 無爲). Whether viewed as being transcendental (paramārtha satya, 眞諦) or conventional (saṃvṛti satya, 俗諦), it penetrates the real characteristics and natures found in the minds of all of sentient beings as well as all of the different characteristics found in grasses, trees, mountains, rivers and everything else. Because all of these are comprehended simultaneously without any obstacles or hindrances, The Great Illuminator Descending Into This World is also called the Enlightened Being *Of Unimpeded Light* (Apratihatabha Buddha, 無礙光佛).
5. The transcendental knowledge of the spiritual life descending into this world observing the nature of life's greater purpose with subtly compassionate discernment is endowed with a light that is incomparable and is unknowable in relative terms. In being primordial and beyond any speculations (nirvikalpa, 無分別) that arise from mental associations (saṃjñā, 想), the transcendental nature of enlightenment is also inexpressible in relative terms. Because this transcendental knowledge of subtly compassionate observation is free from attachment to both transcendental and speculative aspects, The Great Illuminator Descending Into This World is called the Enlightened Being *Of Incomparable Light* (Apratisamābha Buddha, 無對光佛).
6. The transcendental knowledge of the spiritual life descending into this world observing the nature of life's greater purpose with subtly compassionate discernment is endowed with a light that is like a blazing flame, illuminating the darkness of ignorance found in the consciousness of sentient beings that distinguishes imagined objects (mano vijñāna, 意識). Because it burns up all the defilements of emotional disturbances like a flame, some call The Great Illuminator Descending Into This World the Enlightened Being *The Supreme Flame of Light* (Tapanābha Uttama Buddha, 炎王光佛).
7. The transcendental knowledge of the spiritual life descending into this world observing the nature of life's greater purpose with subtly compassionate discernment is endowed with a light that not only extinguishes the darkness of ignorance in sentient beings but reveals the palace of realization in their minds. Because it is the source of the very first awakening to the contentment that neither arises nor perishes, The Great Illuminator Descending Into This World is also called the Enlightened Being *Light of Joyfulness* (Pramuditābha, 歡喜光佛).
8. The transcendental knowledge of the spiritual life descending into this world observing the nature of life's greater purpose with subtly compassionate discernment is able to simultaneously determine the real meaning of both transcendental & conventional reality (paramārtha satya & saṃvṛti satya, 眞俗二諦) and illuminate all conditional & unconditional purposes (saṃskṛta dharmas & asaṃskṛta dharmas, 有爲無爲諸法). Because of this, The Great Illuminator Descending Into This World is also called the Enlightened Being *Light of Transcendental Knowledge & Discernment* (Jñānaprajñābha Buddha, 智慧光佛).
9. The transcendental knowledge of the spiritual life descending into this world observing the nature of life's greater purpose with subtly compassionate discernment is content in its own purpose. Because it is forever continuous and unchanging, The Great Illuminator Descending Into This World is also called the Enlightened Being *never-ending Light* (Nirantarābha Buddha, 不斷光佛).

10. The transcendental knowledge of the spiritual life descending into this world observing the nature of life's greater purpose with subtly compassionate discernment is a perfect enlightenment (samyak saṃbodhi, 等覺) even beyond the ten levels of grounding in the transcendental nature of life's purpose (daśa bhūmi, 十地). Because it is inconceivable, some call The Great Illuminator Descending Into This World the Enlightened Being *Of Inconceivable Light* (Acintyābha Buddha, 難思光佛)
11. The transcendental knowledge of the spiritual life descending into this world observing the nature of life's greater purpose with subtly compassionate discernment goes beyond the powers of the virtuous and the noble, much less those of ordinary people. Because it is impossible to praise it enough, some call The Great Illuminator Descending Into This World the Enlightened Being *Of Light That is Beyond Any Words* (Atulyābha, 無稱光佛).
12. The transcendental knowledge of the spiritual life descending into this world observing the nature of life's greater purpose with subtly compassionate discernment is never tainted by the objects of the senses. Because of this, some call The Great Illuminator Descending Into This World the Enlightened Being *Of Light That is Immaculate* (Vimalābha Buddha, 淨光佛)
13. The transcendental knowledge of the spiritual life descending into this world observing the nature of life's greater purpose with subtly compassionate discernment is endowed with a light that is ever abiding independent of day and night as well as time and space. There is no place or time that is without it. Because its light transcends the sun and moon of this world, The Great Illuminator Descending Into This World is called the Enlightened Being *Of Light That Surpasses That of the Sun and the Moon* (Abhibhūya Candra Sūrya Jihmīkaraṇābha Buddha, 超日月光佛).

Like this, the names and titles of all the Buddhas and bodhisattvas throughout time and space are just different names for the greatness of the spiritual life (dharma kāya, 法身). Put another way, all the Buddhas and bodhisattvas throughout space and time are just manifestations of the distinctions attesting to the transcendental knowledge of The Great Illuminator That Descends Into This World (Mahā Vairocana Tathāgata, 大日如來) and all the words and utterances of sentient beings about the nature of its greater purpose are, without exception, just mystic names for this enlightened being. Those who are confused about this are said to be sentient beings while those awakened to it are said to be endowed with the transcendental knowledge of the Buddha. Because of this, those who utter the three syllables of the name Amita are able to extinguish the consequences that have arisen from the immoral acts that have been committed since the very beginning of time. In reciting and remembering this one Buddha Amita, one will acquire the endless blessings of transcendental knowledge. Just as a single gem in Indra's net⁹⁶ suddenly reflects the images of an inexhaustible number of gems simultaneously, in reciting and remembering this one Buddha Amita, one instantly fulfills countless virtues that are without bounds.

Next there is an explanation of the meaning of the Sanskrit syllables within the name:

- * **A** signifies that which neither arises nor perishes (anutpādam anirodham, 不生不滅) from the very beginning of time, realized through the equanimity of the single mind.
- * **Mi** signifies the greatness of identity (mahā ātman, 大我) found in selflessness (nairātma, 無我), also realized through the equanimity of the single mind.
- * **Ta** signifies the serene stillness (śānta, 寂靜) of the transcendental nature (tathatā, 如如) that is found in all the purposes of this single mind.

Further:

- * **A** signifies the family of enlightened beings (buddha kula, 佛部). It reveals knowledge of the principle of non-duality because the existential nature and characteristics of the spiritual realm are all in a single mind.
- * **Mi** signifies the lotus family (padma kula, 蓮華部). The transcendental knowledge that observes the nature of life's greater purpose with subtly compassionate discernment is like a lotus blossom because, in it, the aspects of duality and the nature of emptiness are never tainted by the objects of the senses or the mind that imagines and distinguishes them (mano vijñāna, 意識).
- * **Ta** signifies the family of the thunderbolt (vajra kula, 金剛部). The transcendent knowledge that observes the nature of life's greater purpose with subtly compassionate discernment emanates from the existential nature of the enlightened beings that descend into this world. Its adamant nature is able to destroy all the enemies of this enlightenment that arise as emotional disturbances and false speculations.

Further:

- * **A** signifies the nature of emptiness (śūnyatā, 空), the existential nature of the single mind is itself devoid of any mental images that are not real.
- * **Mi** signifies the nature of the temporary, mental construct (prajñaptisat, 假有). In the equanimity of the single mind, all purposes only hypothetically exist like illusions.
- * **Ta** signifies the dialectical principle of the middle way (madhyama pratipad, 中道). In the equanimity of the single mind, all purposes are free from the extremes of duality because they are not clung to as fixed aspects.

Furthermore:

- * **A** signifies the nature of existence (bhāva, 有) because the existential nature and character of the single mind has a fundamental existence that neither arises nor perishes.
- * **Mi** signifies the nature of emptiness (śūnyatā, 空) because the existential nature of these purposes of the single mind cannot be grasped through the speculations of the discursive mind.
- * **Ta** signifies the nature that is not only emptiness (aśūnyatā, 不但空) because the purposes of the single mind derive from the merits and virtues of a spiritual life (dharma kāya, 法身) that never ends.

And furthermore:

- * **A** also signifies the cause (hetu, 因). The nature of the Buddhas is caused by awakening to the single mind while the nature of sentient beings is caused by delusions about it.
- * **Mi** signifies practice (caryā, 行). By eliminating attachments to personalities and purposes there is a realization of the dual nature of emptiness, the empty nature of identity (ātma śūnyatā, 我空) and the empty nature of purpose (dharma śūnyatā, 法空). This dual realization leads to the fruit of enlightenment.
- * **Ta** signifies the effect (phala, 果). In revealing the nature of non-duality, there is knowledge of the transcendental principle (bhūta tathatā, 如如) found in the single mind. Because of this, there is the fruit of enlightenment.

Like this, there are the methods employed to analyze the Sanskrit syllables of the name Amita. And these syllables have no fixed aspects in their mutual relationships, just as images that are reflected in the gems of Indra's net⁹⁶ cannot be clung to or discarded, because the equanimity of the single mind is impossible to grasp through the speculations of the discursive mind. This is the way to understand the meaning (of the syllables). Because these sounded syllables are inseparable from their meanings and these meanings are inseparable from their sounded syllables, to hold onto one as being real while discarding the other as false is to make improper speculations about them.

To loathe this world that we must all endure together (saḥā loka, 娑婆世界) while seeking rebirth in the Land of Pure Bliss (Sukhāvatī, 極樂世界), or to hate one's own depraved life while revering the life of the Buddha is called the ignorance that is based on the delusion of false speculations. Even in the corrupted world, during the end times when there is the demise of the Buddha's purpose (saddharma vipralopa, 末法) in this world, if one continues to meditate on the transcendental sphere of life's purpose (dharma dhātu, 法界) with equanimity of mind (samatā, 平等), how can one not enter into the path of enlightenment?