

RUNNING TIDE



Issue 29: Bodhi



Running Tide

Running Tide offers a voice for faith and practice, as well as critical, existential and socially engaged enquiry within the broad framework of Pureland Buddhism.

We publish short articles, poetry, pictures, interviews, comment and Buddhist resource materials.

Opinions expressed are those of the contributors and do not necessarily reflect the position of the Amida Order, Amida Trust, or other associated organisations.

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The Amida Order and Amida School are a religious order and communion, respectively, following the Pureland tradition, established under the auspices of the Amida Trust. In this periodical the letters OAB after a name indicate membership of the Order of Amida Buddha and the letters MAS indicate membership of the Amida School. The Amida School is also referred to as Amida-shu. All Order members are also School members.

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Kaspalita



This last week I have been consumed with publishing things. Satyavani is re-launching all of her novels under her new Buddhist name, and I have been involved in that process, designing the covers and interiors – but the project readers of RT will be most interested in is Dharmavidya's new book: Not Everything is Impermanent.

I've just approved the proof copy, which means that it will be available to buy in bookshops and on your kindle very shortly.

This new book is a collection of teachings on all sorts of subjects from essays on Unconditional Love to teachings about Buddhist psychology and what it means to be an ordinary human being.

You can see a sneak preview of the book on page 4.

This whole issue of RT was inspired by our Bodhi Day celebrations last Decemeber in different ways. From Dharmavidya's article "Every Day is Bodhi Day", to the reflections on Bodhi day from Order members around the world, to Satya's reflection on our continuous chanting practice.

Emmet Fox's text about prayer was handed to me by a Sangha member a few weeks ago, and I reproduce it here as it seems to capture, for me, the relationship between an ordinary being and the Buddha. Although expressed in Christian language, Fox's idea of prayer seems to describe the nembutsu perfectly.

I'm really pleased to share a piece by Ananda Norman on pastoral care with you. Ananda is doing invaluable work on Big Island in Hawaii and his thoughtful reflections on his model of pastoral care are an important contribution to the world of socially engaged Buddhism.

If you'd like to submit an article for publication in a future Running Tide please to email me at kaspalita@amidatrust.com

Producing RT is not always the joy it should be, as producing it is squeezed in between the other parts of my life, but when I look at each issue I am reminded how important it is and how grateful I am to everyone that contributes. There is important Dharma here and it is a privilege to share it with you.

Namo Amida Bu. ☸



Every day Bodhi Day

Dharmavidya David Brazier



Tree of ENLIGHTENMENT by ~timbarow via Creative Commons <http://timbarow.deviantart.com/>

When Shakyamuni saw the morning star and was enlightened he said, I was, am and will be enlightened together with all things. Enlightenment is a way of seeing, a *dhi*. When the *dhi* is complete we call it *sama-dhi*. This is the beginning and the end of the Eight-limb Path. Everything is encompassed between *samyak-dhi-ti* and *samyak-sama-dhi*. The best rendering of *samyak* is probably whole-hearted. So what we are talking about is whole-hearted wholeness.

There are transformations in human consciousness such that one experiences the world in a different way. That way is whole, radiant, and full of wonder. Compared with ordinary consciousness it is as if somebody



switched the light on in a dark room. Most of us who walk the spiritual path have had some glimpse of this kind of light at one time or another. Buddha could enter that place at will.

In the Pure Land of Sukhavati there is a great tree. This tree is vast and shining, as if made from many kinds of jewels. The light from it can be seen from a thousand miles away. Beneath this tree sits Amitabha Buddha, Quanyin and Shichi. They are having wonderful conversations about Dharma in all its multiplicity of meanings and applications. It is the best imaginable breakfast conversation.

Adam and Eve had to leave the garden of Eden and go forth in the world to labour and multiply because God was worried that having disobeyed him once they might do so again and eat of the Tree of Life. The fruit of the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil was the cause of their fall. Enlightenment is beyond good and evil, beyond formulas and categories. Amitabha dwells at ease.

Had they eaten of the Tree of Life they would have been like the immortals of Chinese legend or the gods on Olympus, or even the gods before Olympus. How would it be to be such a god? We can tell from the stories of the gods that the soap-opera continues. The gods still have their version of Neighbours, and the gossip gets around faster than Facebook, but at least they are not all selling themselves on Linked-In. The gods at least do not have to sell themselves, they know who they are and are spared the insecurity of having to make something of themselves for public consumption. That's why we find them so alarming.

In Buddhism, being a god is not the ultimate. Better to be a Buddha than a god. We pray that all may be enlightened. That would be wonderful. The Way of Pureland is not to seek one's own enlightenment, but to pray for that of others, to make offerings to a myriad Buddhas and to trust that by living in faith we advance their project to free as many as possible, including ourselves, from the burning house.

If you approach the Garden of Eden you have to do so by the Eastern Gate. However, there stands Manjushri with a flaming sword barring the way. While we are in the domain of gain and blame we can never pass. Only the myokonin of simple faith can make the kind of offering that will lead old



Manjushri to put down his weapon and share a joke and a tale.

Such a happy soul can drink the ambrosia without it going to her head because she enjoys eternal life already. Now it is winter. Soon it will be spring. All is silent but much is happening beneath the earth. I sit in my rustic house and write these words. Later I shall dig the soil. Around me spiders are weaving their webs, lethal to flies. In the morning they will all be decked with dew more splendid than the jewels of Solomon.

When Buddha spoke the gods gathered to listen. He was, is and will be teacher of gods and men. If our gods are the sort that gather and listen to Buddha then our life will be rich, for, as in the Pratyutpanna Sutra, everywhere I look there will be a sign of Buddha to be seen. I will live in a world of nembutsu and the great tree will never be quite out of my sight. ☸

Coming soon - the new Dharma book from Dharmavidya

Not Everything is Impermanent

**Zen Therapy &
Amidist Teachings
of David Brazier**



Not Everything is Impermanent

Zen Therapy & Amidist Teachings of David Brazier

Not Everything Is Impermanent explores what it means to be a fallible human being in an imperfect world. It shows us how we can live a joyful and meaningful life supported by faith, compassion and wisdom.

“...a book by a true Bodhisattva - an awake awakening being - who brings his compassion and insight to those with troubled hearts everywhere.”

~ Rev. Saigyo Terrance Keenan, author of *St. Nadie in Winter: Zen Encounters with Loneliness*

“...the hitch-hiker’s guide to no-bullshit Buddhism.”

~ Alastair McIntosh, author of *Soil and Soul*

“A fine dharma book. Rich in anecdote, it guides the reader on a radical path of awakening.”

~ Roshi Joan Halifax, Founder and Abbot of Upaya Zen Center

From ‘Not Everything is Impermanent’:

...I do not think that it is possible for us to have a final and definitive text on spirituality. We should not think of such texts as final or indisputable. We must proceed with sensitivity and intelligence and recognise both our limitations and the paradoxical complexity of the human situation. Spirituality is the human calling toward a sublimity beyond what our human capacity can grasp in words, but it is the journey, not the arrival. Even when one is inspired by the most perfect source, the medium of transmission is still human. People argue about whether the Bible or the Koran or the Bhagavad Gita is the ultimate holy book, but even if these books were inspired by God they were still written by humans, about humans, for humans, in human language and figures of speech, each belonging to a particular point in history. However, just because we have no perfect guidance it does not follow that one should do nothing. We each have to walk our path by the best lights we can find and we may sometimes find them in unlikely places...



The Golden Key to Prayer

Emmet Fox

This treatise on prayer by Emmet Fox was handed to me by a friend recently. He said that the prayer that Fox (an early 20th Christian spiritual leader) describes resonated with his nembutsu practice. When I read the text I felt the same resonances. I find parallels in my own Pureland practice with Fox's spiritual experience and his description of prayer. ~Kaspa

I have compressed this essay into a few pages. Had it been possible I would have reduced it to as many lines. It is not intended to be an instructional treatise, but a practical recipe for getting out of trouble. Study and research are well in their own time and place, but no amount of either will get you out of a concrete difficulty. Nothing but practical work in your own consciousness will do that. The mistake made by many people, when things go wrong, is to skim through book after book, without getting anywhere. Read The Golden Key several times. Do exactly what it says, and if you are persistent enough you will overcome any difficulty. -- Emmet Fox

Prayer will enable you, sooner or later, to get yourself, or anyone else, out of any difficulty on the face of the earth. It is the Golden Key to harmony and happiness. To those who have no acquaintance with the mightiest power in existence, this may appear to be a rash claim, but it needs only a fair trial to prove that, without a shadow of doubt, it is a just one. You need take no one's word for it, and you should not. Simply try it for yourself, and see.

God is omnipotent, and man is His image and likeness, and has dominion over all things. This is the inspired teaching, and it is intended to be taken literally, at its face value. Man means every man, and so the ability to draw on this power is not the special prerogative of the mystic or the saint, as is so often supposed, or even of the highly trained practitioner. Whoever you are, wherever you may be, the Golden Key to harmony is in your hand now. This is because in scientific prayer it is God who works, and not you, and so your particular limitations or weaknesses are of no account



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in the process. You are only the channel through which the divine action takes place, and your treatment will really be just the getting of yourself out of the way. Beginners often get startling results at the first time of trying, for all that is absolutely essential is to have an open mind, and sufficient faith to try the experiment. Apart from that, you may hold any views on religion, or none.

As for the actual method of working, like all fundamental things, it is simplicity itself. All that you have to do is this: *Stop thinking about the difficulty, whatever it is, and think about God instead.* This is the complete rule, and if only you will do this, the trouble, whatever it is, will presently disappear. It makes no difference what kind of trouble it is. It may be a big thing or a little thing; it may concern health, finance, a lawsuit, a quarrel, an accident, or anything else conceivable; but whatever it is, just stop thinking about it, and think of God instead -- that is all you have to do.

The thing could not be simpler, could it? God Himself could scarcely



have made it simpler, and yet it never fails to work when given a fair trial.

Do not try to form a picture of God, which is impossible. Work by rehearsing anything or everything that you know about God. God is Wisdom, Truth, inconceivable Love. God is present everywhere; has infinite power; knows everything; and so on. It matters not how well you may think you understand these things; go over them repeatedly.

But you must stop thinking of the trouble, whatever it is. The rule is to think about God, and if you are thinking about your difficulty you are not thinking about God. To be continually glancing over your shoulder, as it were, in order to see how matters are progressing, is fatal, because that is thinking of the trouble, and you must think of God, and of nothing else. Your object is to drive the thought of the difficulty right out of your consciousness, for a few moments at least, substituting for it the thought of God. This is the crux of the whole thing. If you can become so absorbed in this consideration of the spiritual world that you really forget for a while all about the trouble concerning which you began to pray, you will presently find that you are safely and comfortably out of your difficulty -- that your demonstration is made.

In order to "Golden Key" a troublesome person or a difficult situation, think, "Now I am going to 'Golden Key' John, or Mary, or that threatened danger"; then proceed to drive all thought of John, or Mary, or the danger right out of your mind, replacing it by the thought of God.

By working in this way about a person, you are not seeking to influence his conduct in any way, except that you prevent him from injuring or annoying you, and you do him nothing but good. Thereafter he is certain to be in some degree a better, wiser, and more spiritual person, just because you have "Golden Keyed" him. A pending lawsuit or other difficulty would probably fade out harmlessly without coming to a crisis, justice being done to all parties concerned.

If you find that you can do this very quickly, you may repeat the operation several times a day with intervals between. Be sure, however, each time you have done it, that you drop all thought of the matter until the next time. This is important.

We have said that the Golden Key is simple, and so it is, but, of



course, it is not always easy to turn. If you are very frightened or worried it may be difficult, at first, to get your thoughts away from material things. But by constantly repeating some statement of absolute Truth that appeals to you, such as *There is no power but God, or I am the child of God, filled and surrounded by the perfect peace of God, or God is love, or God is guiding me now*, or, perhaps best and simplest of all, just *God is with me* -- however mechanical or dead it may seem at first -- you will soon find that the treatment has begun to "take," and that your mind is clearing. Do not struggle violently; be quiet but insistent. Each time that you find your attention wandering, just switch it straight back to God.

Do not try to think out in advance what the solution of your difficulty will probably turn out to be. This is technically called "outlining," and will only delay the demonstration. Leave the question of ways and means strictly to God. You want to get out of your difficulty -- that is sufficient. You do your half, and God will never fail to do His.

"Whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved." ❀

Only repeat the name of Amida with all your heart. Whether walking or standing, sitting or lying, never cease the practice of it even for a moment. This is the very work which unfailingly issues in salvation, for it is in accordance with the Original Vow of that Buddha.

(Honen, quoting Zendo
[Chinese: Shan-tao])





Reflections on Bodhi Day

The tulips have just begun to open in our garden, and although there was still snow on the hills a couple of weeks ago December feels long ago. Each Decemeber we came together as a Sangha to celebrate the Buddha's enlightenment, this is a special time for reflection on the meaning of practice and what we become enlightened to.

It's good to make space to reflect on the Buddha's story and enlightenment more than once a year though, and it is in this spirit that I share these reflections from our various Bodhi day celebrations last year.

From Jnanamati, in Belgium

After twelve hours we finished chanting at nine last night, here in Belgium. It was a wonderful experience to be fully immersed in the nembutsu. The little shrine room has two huge glazed doors that look out onto the garden. Yesterday's snow, steady for much of the early part of the day, gave a magical feel to the view and brought extra light into the room.

This morning, Bodhi day, we sat for service at 8.00 a.m. the group numbering seven in total. Again the room is brightened by yesterday's snow, now glistening as the dipping temperature has turned the white carpet to ice. Drops on the branches of trees and bushes are like diamonds. After a period of sitting in silence and reciting Namo Amida Bu, Dharmavidya talks about Shakyamuni's enlightenment. The familiar story becomes fresh again, as the morning star had been so profoundly fresh and new to Shakyamuni Buddha on this morning over two thousand six hundred years ago.



Dharmavidya talks about how whilst we may be far from this sort of awakening we can nonetheless know this light. He invites us to think about for what reason the light of this star shines might be shining on us. He mentions the magic of the snow describing it as like 'the icing on a cake' for this special day in our calendar.

At eleven in the morning we come together to celebrate the admission of Diederik to Amida shu, and Lut, Annetta and Karin to the Order. Dharmavidya talks about membership of the Amida school as reflecting a persons individual commitment to a wide and varied sangha by virtue of sharing the spirit of nembutsu and the Pure Land way. To be part of the Order is to demonstrate commitment to supporting the work that brings the heart of Buddhism to people in the way that Shakyamuni and his disciples did.



After the ceremonies the group met for a stone passing. People talked personally about their gratitude for other's support and a renewed feeling of connection. This sense of connection was extended as we thought about the three other locations where practice and advancements were taking place, a sense of sharing in a spirit that reverberates around the world.

This afternoon Karin and Diederik have left, and Lut, having joined us just this morning, will stay until tomorrow. The group is now smaller but in good spirits - Maitrisimha and Annetta are cooking the celebration supper and we will gather again for a period of sharing this evening, and for practice. You are all in our thoughts. Happy Bodhi day. ❁

From Nancy D, at Amida Mosaic in Cananda



Warmly welcomed by James and Prajna, the Amida Mosaic Sangha celebrated Enlightenment Day in their home, a comforting refuge for all.

It was a beautiful day filled with chanting, quiet reflection, vow ceremonies and the coming together of many grateful, generous hearts.

For much of the day we chanted, and chanted, and chanted some more! We found expression of the nembutsu in a variety of ways... as a sitting/walking meditation, accompanied by the melodic beat of a drum, even during a wonderful walk on a forested path. Voices blending together, hearts uplifted and full of thanks.

Interludes of gentle poetry and reflection were offered by Prajna throughout the day as well.



To complete the celebration, several sangha members joined together in taking vows of Refuge, in a lovely, intimate ceremony led by Prajna, and assisted by other sangha members.

Side by side, we honoured this very special day. Some gathered ahead of time to prepare the meeting place with lovely decorations. Others prepared delicious, nourishing snacks and lunch or brought a favourite dish to the potluck dinner. Some travelled distances just to share this day together. Collectively we also raised funds for Amida India and Heartlinks-Peru. It was a wonderful reflection of community, and friendship.

Here is an excerpt of one of the poems that Prajna read this day. It speaks to the preciousness of each other. And the preciousness of sangha. Namō Amida Bu. ☸

A Ritual To Read To Each Other

If you don't know the kind of person I am
and I don't know the kind of person you are
a pattern that others made may prevail in the world
and following the wrong god home we may miss our star.

William Stafford (The Way It Is)

From Kuvalaya, in Switzerland

I spent Bodhi day here in my flat thinking. I woke early and went to the shops to buy some flowers for the shrine. It's snowed all week here and I enjoyed a crisp morning walk through the snow. Afterwards, I came home and arrange the flowers, chanting and reflecting on how preparing the space for practice and caring for it are one of my favourite practices. I spent some time chanting, sitting silently, and thinking of you all. ☸



Pastoral Care on Big Island

Ananda Normann

The district of Puna on the Big Island of Hawaii is a large rural district of 500 square miles. It consists of many large undeveloped subdivisions with no public water, no improved roads, and many households running gasoline generators for their electric needs. Neighborhood Place of Puna is a small non-profit serving families living in the Puna district.

Because land is relatively affordable, families with limited resources tend to rent, squat on, or buy land in Puna. Many of them live in cheaply built huts, collect rain for their basic water needs, and commute on foot and in illegal vehicles, to stores, schools, and offices. For most poor families it is a precarious life of hardship, lack, and constant struggle.

The rural poor are invisible. For the most part they live out of sight, hidden in the jungle down long rutted tracks. Many of them are good families, trying to make the best of a bad situation. They have been pushed to the edge of society by poverty, unfortunate circumstances, and bad choices.

Over 10 years ago Neighborhood Place of Puna was created out of a deep concern for these families. The model Neighborhood Place of Puna uses is a simple one based on research showing the effectiveness of regular and ongoing home visitation in preventing child abuse and neglect. While our first concern is the safety and well being of the children, our main focus is on strengthening families through teaching basic skills, providing parenting education, connecting families to outside resources, and making sure the families have a basic level of stability and in their lives.



Photo by Jose Felipe Ortego via Flickr/Creative Commons

While working with a family we may find ourselves doing everything from teaching the basics of hygiene to helping a mom enroll in university. Each family needs help in different areas, and some families are more receptive than others. What is the same from family to family is the importance of starting the work by building a strong relationship rooted in trust, mutual respect, and consistency.

The families come to us voluntarily. They either hear about us from friends and neighbors, or they meet us in our outreach to the community: at food pantries, public water stands, stores, parks, and elsewhere. The outreach work of caring for our community is nothing new. It is, in my mind, just a new form of the ages old practice of pastoral care. We, a non-profit, are now in the role traditionally held by the Parrish church.

Pastoral care is different from pastoral counseling. The latter has evolved to become, primarily, a form of professional and licensed talk therapy. The former is undertaken by lay individuals, paraprofessionals, and ordained individuals, professionals.



Pastoral care, as I am using it here, is about going out into the community to meet with individuals and families in their homes and the places where they work. Pastoral care is about a willingness to see the reality of the way families live and partake, in some little way, of their hardships and suffering. It is about building trust and relationships that create the possibilities for small changes. Most importantly, pastoral care, offers a very real way to mitigate family isolation and the many difficulties it can cause.

Recently, Neighborhood Place of Puna was contacted by the hospital to help a woman in their care who had just given birth. Unfortunately this new mom did not have a child safety car seat for her newborn. In Hawaii you must have a child safety car seat for your newborn at the time of discharge. If not, the hospital will discharge you and turn your baby over to Child Protective Services.

The obstetrics charge nurse contacted us to help this mom get a child safety car seat. Our outreach staff met with the Mom in the hospital and discovered that she is living with her husband and five children in what is essentially an open carport. The children are well loved and cared for but the situation is a challenge. Thanks to neighbors the family had some limited access to water.

The whole family was sleeping on the ground. Clothes were kept in cardboard boxes, which mean they were damp and soggy. Fresh food was wrapped in paper and kept in a plastic cooler, but without ice. Food was prepared on a small hibachi.

Seeing the way the family was living, our staff worked over the weekend to improve their living situation. First we got a car seat so that mom and baby could come home. Second we purchased tarps, plastic tubs, and some mats so the family could stay a little dryer and get up off the ground. We also managed to negotiate with the neighbor, to allow the Mom and the newborn to spend the nights in their living room.

During the week, we begin the work of trying to find better



housing for this family. However, on our return visit the next week, we find Mom limping and in pain. Fortunately our outreach workers know when to be pushy and get past someone's pride. Sure enough, the mother had fallen and torn the sutures from her C-Section. The incision was infected and oozing. Not a time for the faint of heart. The outreach worker pulls out their medical supplies and helps the woman clean the wound and apply a simple dressing. We then take the mother to the doctor's office and spend the entire day waiting, with the mother, for the doctor to readmit her to the hospital.

I am glad to report that the mother healed. Neighborhood Place of Puna was able to work with this family for several months and help them find a better living situation. The dad has been able to get a job and things are looking up.

The question that nags at the back of my mind is, "What if we hadn't been there?" What would have happened to the Mom if we only visited once a month or once a quarter? Would the family still be together? Would "Child Protective Services" have removed the children?"

In this case, the family was a healthy family who cared about their children. They were, however, trapped in poverty, and the discrimination and isolation that poverty creates. Neighborhood Place of Puna exists to help just these families, families who are struggling to do the right thing, but lack so much: money, resources, and skills.

Some families have more problems than others. There are, of course, issues of addiction, domestic violence, dysfunction, and child abuse. However, the vast majority of the families that we visit and work with and build relationships with are suffering from lack. Not only do they lack resources, they lack the esteem that comes from being valued. The harsh reality is that all too often an individual's value is tied to their economic situation.

Who is visiting these families? Who is helping their children?



Here in Puna there is a tremendous amount of isolation and need for ongoing outreach into the local community. At the moment Neighborhood Place of Puna is the only organization reaching out to these families and providing weekly in-home assistance.

Neighborhood Place of Puna is demonstrating one model of what is possible. It is a simple model, based on things we all know. People need the warmth of human interaction to thrive and be successful. They need love and compassion.

This is a model based on the work of skilled paraprofessionals. Most of our staff did not go to school to do this work. All of us live in the community and care deeply about the families we serve. In our model, the workers are paid. However, the model could work as a hybrid using both paid and volunteer staff. It is not an expensive program to run. No one is getting rich doing the work. However it can be challenging work and it is easy for outreach workers to get into trouble without proper supervision. Training is important, since the work needs a certain level of discipline and skill to help the family in ways they might not immediately appreciate. As is trendy to say these days, we are offering families a hand-up not a handout.

Neighborhood Place of Puna is a secular organization. We have no religious affiliation. However, it is not difficult for me to see how churches could use our model to reach out to and care for their local community. Think about your local church, and ask yourself how much time church members spend meeting and getting to know their neighbors? By neighbors, I do not mean the person in the pew next to you, rather the family or individual that lives next to the church. Is there someone just around the corner that needs a little help? Is a family down the street struggling? Do the local kids need a safe place to meet when the weather turns ugly?

Each community has its own needs. Pastoral Care is about finding out what those needs are and trying, in little ways, to help. It may involve home visitation or it may not. But it will involve a commitment to meet and care for those around you. ☸



Reflections on Continuous Chanting

At the begining of the year we held a 7 hour chanting session in Malvern, a reprise of the Bodhi retreat practice.

Little me

Satyavani Robyn

I spent seven hours yesterday singing the same six syllables over & over again.

I sung them four times, and then stopped while Kasper sang them, and then I sang them again. For most of the day, one or both of us were joined by other voices. We left the room to make tea and to eat, but there was no break in the chant.



We sat and sang for twenty minutes, and then we walked and sang for twenty minutes. I can feel it in my legs this morning! The tune changed all by itself. The rhythm shifted from slow & sweet to fast & syncopated and back again.

Six syllables.

These six syllables are at the heart of my spiritual practice: Namo Amida Bu.

I wrote the words in big letters on three pieces of paper, and stuck them up on the wall behind our make-shift shrine with our golden Buddha, two big vases of yellow chrysanthemums and three tea-lights on the gold-and-purple piece of cloth we found at a car-boot sale.

For most of the day I quite enjoyed myself, but it didn't feel like anything deep was happening. Most of the time slipped past quickly.



There were low points where my head hurt and where we were alone and where five minutes seemed to take hours to pass.

And then at four o'clock a friend entered the room and I was suddenly brim-full of emotion. A gratitude for all the people who'd fought through the snow to join us, for my sangha, for the beautiful space we were borrowing, for this practice which has been passed down from teacher to teacher through the centuries.

Under each of the three words I'd written a short-cut explanation of what they meant. Bu is Buddha. Amida is the Buddha of infinite light and infinite life. And I translated Namo as 'Little me, calling out'.

Little me, calling out to something infinitely bigger.

I kept reading these two words and hearing the truth of them, somewhere deep.

At the beginning of the day, with just me and Kaspa chanting, I felt embarrassed. This was Little me, forgetting that it's not all about me and how I look and whether the day was a success or not. My concerns felt so huge and consuming. Will anyone come to this chanting day I've organised? Will they enjoy it? Will we make enough money from the donations? Is there enough food? Will they like me? Will they think we look like idiots?

As soon as I got caught by the chant, I relaxed. I could trust that the day would proceed with or without me, that the people joining us were perfectly capable of taking responsibility for their own happiness. I remembered that there was something bigger than Little me, and I could trust it absolutely.

It's difficult to put these experiences into words. But I wanted to try because I hope that you might also have an inkling of what it is to be a Little me. And that this deep sense of your own limitation, of Little me, will also point you towards the infinite. That this little taste of the infinite will allow you to relax, to surrender to something, and to live your life with more courage, with more love, with a deeper sense of being-at-home.

Say it once with me. See if you can feel it. Little me, Infinite compassion. Namo Amida Bu. ☸



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UNITED KINGDOM

Amida London hosts regular day retreats and other events. As well as a Dharma centre it is also the home of **The Institute for Zen Therapy**

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Amida Newcastle has regular weekly meetings in Gosforth.

sujatin@gmail.com
http://lotusinthemud.typepad.com/amida_newcastle/

Amida Sheffield have weekly meetings.

Telephone: 0114 272 4290
amidasheffield@blueyonder.co.uk
<http://pureland.wordpress.com>

Amida Malvern have weekly & monthly meetings in Malvern.

Telephone: 01684 572 444
kaspalita@amidatrust.com
www.malvernsangha.co.uk

EUROPE

Amida Belgium has regular meetings, and events for Buddhist practice and Buddhist psychology.

<http://www.namoamidabu.be>

Amida Israel

Amida Israel Sangha meets on the 3rd Sunday each month, 20:30 - 22:30 for practice & sharing.

ymatri@gmail.com

NORTH AMERICA

Amida USA & Amida Hawai'i

The Amida USA is a non-profit church based in Hawai'i created to further the spread and practice of Amida-shu Pureland Buddhism.

<http://www.amidausa.org/>

Amida Mosaic (Ontario, Canada)

The Amida Mosaic Sangha is a community of spiritual friends. Amida Mosaic Sangha activities are held in London Ontario under the leadership of Prajnatara T. Bryant, a Gankonin with the Amida Order.

amidamosaic@gmail.com
<http://amidamosaic.com>



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From Honen's Ippyaku-shiju-gokajo mondo
One Hundred and Forty-five Questions and Answers

Is it true that when a corrupt person dies, Amida Buddha will go back without taking him to the Pure Land?

Why does Buddha not return without taking the person, just because that person is corrupt? For Buddha, there is no difference between a righteous person and a corrupt person. The corrupt may be seen as righteous and the righteous be seen as corrupt, depending on one's perspective. Nembutsu is the only important thing. Even if you are clean, you will not have divine favor if you do not recite Nembutsu. Just chant Nembutsu - casting aside all the conventional ideas. There is much evidence to prove this.

Even if we are not priests, can we still be reborn in the Pure Land?

There are many lay people who are reborn in the Pure Land.



Visit Eleusis this summer. Eleusis is the new identity of Amida France, it will be a centre for all sorts of spirituality and explorations of sacred practices.

Come and join us for everything from our Arts Week to our Intensive Practice Week.

<http://amidatrust.typepad.com/france>