



Amitabha Extends His Hand to Rescue Me

彌陀垂手來救渡

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By Nguyen, Ngoc-Tran on November 8, 2010

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I had prayed a long time for an opportunity to attend a seven-day Amitabha Buddha recitation. In July of 2010, I conveyed my wish to an acquaintance whom I met during a Buddha Recitation Session of Mindfulness in the Three Periods. She told me about the annual event of Amitabha Buddha recitation at the Avatamsaka Vihara Monastery that was founded by the Venerable Master Hua. I was happy to find out that Avatamsaka Vihara is located in Bethesda, Maryland, which is not far away from where I live. The Amitabha Buddha recitation retreat was scheduled for the week of October 10 to October 17, 2010. It was only mid-July, but I enthusiastically registered for the retreat, almost two months in advance.

長期以來，一直默禱能有機會參加佛七。今年(2010)七月，在一次參加三時繫念念佛法會時，於中間休息時間和一位剛認識的女士說起我的心願，她告訴我，宣化上人創建的華嚴精舍，每年都會舉辦佛七。非常高興發現華嚴精舍在馬州的貝賽斯達市，離我住的地方不太遠。今年舉辦佛七的時間，是從十月十日到十月十七日；當時不過是七月中，我已迫不及待地在兩個月前預先登記，準備參加此次靜修。

在佛七之前的一個禮拜，有點緊張，因為這不只是第一次參加佛七，也一點都不會說中文。但是我明白，世界上所有的佛教徒都用自己的母語念阿彌陀佛；無論如何，最重要的是，就算不是全部，大多數的佛教徒都知道阿彌陀佛大慈大悲的願力是要度脫眾生，也知道有西方極樂世界。我告訴自己，雖然不懂如何用中文念阿彌陀佛，但是我會安靜而誠心地用越南文默念阿彌陀佛，因此用不著緊張。

令我驚訝的是，第一天來到華嚴精舍，就有一種回家的溫暖感，而且精舍的法師們都散發出安詳法喜之氣。在這七天當中，即使才與法會的蓮友們相識，也沒什麼溝通，但精神上，強烈感覺到與他們是相繫在一起的。這種所感受到精神上的聯繫，是來自於我們都深信阿彌陀佛；都祈求往生極樂淨土，不再受果報輪迴生死，而且極可能我們的菩提願都能獲滿足。法會的念佛聲帶給我強大的正能量和美妙的法喜。

在讀過、聽過許多佛法的講演中，從文字上我熟悉理解釋迦牟尼佛有關六道輪迴的教導，和人身難得，有如盲龜在茫茫大洋中，遇到一塊浮木一樣困難。但是在精神實質層面上，對我並無什麼衝擊；直到那一刻——有一次，在坐念時，我默念彌陀名號時，同時聽到其

A week prior to the event, I was a little nervous not only because it was my very first seven-day Amitabha Buddha recitation, but because I do not speak any Chinese. However, I realized that all Buddhists in the world pronounce Amitabha Buddha differently in their native languages. Also, most Buddhists would know Amitabha Buddha for his kind and compassionate vows to liberate all beings, and the Western Land of Ultimate Bliss. With that thought, I told myself that although I did not know how to recite Amitabha Buddha in Chinese, I could quietly and sincerely recite “Nam mô A Di Đà Ph,” which means Homage to Amitabha Buddha in Vietnamese. Thus, there was nothing to be nervous about.

To my surprise, on my first day at Avatamsaka Vihara, I was warmly welcomed home by the Dharma joy radiating from the Dharma Masters. During the seven days of the retreat, I felt a strong spiritual connection with the Chinese Dharma friends in the assembly, even though we had just met and did not communicate much. Our spiritual connection was our shared faith in Amitabha Buddha. We prayed to be reborn in the Land of Ultimate Bliss so that we would be free from the samsaric cycle, and it would be possible to truly fulfill our vows for Bodhi. The sound of Amitabha Buddha chanting from the assembly gave me such a positive energy and wonderful Dharma joy.

Having read and listened to many Dharma lectures, I am familiar with Shakyamuni Buddha's teachings about the six karmic paths of reincarnation, and that being born as a human again is as hard as a blind turtle finding a piece of wood in a vast ocean. However, the lesson did not spiritually impact me until one moment during a sitting recitation session. While I was quietly reciting and, at the same time, listening to each sound of the joyful chanting of 'Amitabha Buddha' chanting filling the space of the Buddha Hall, I suddenly came to a realization: How impossible it would be to be reborn as a human again; and how endless the suffering of being reborn as an animal or a hungry ghost or in hell. The sudden comprehension of how impermanent a human life is terrified me. For the very first time, I actually felt that I was living in a karmic house ablaze in flames. For the very first time, I actually felt the severe urgency for escaping from such karmic fire.

That terrifying realization made me recite Amitabha Buddha with all sincerity and with my entire being. Amitabha Buddha...Amitabha Buddha...Amitabha Buddha... continuously and urgently I recited. Somehow, at the same time, my inner voice was praying, “Dear Amitabha Buddha, please hear my praying, please save me...please kindly save me!” Suddenly, for a moment, I felt Amitabha Buddha giving me his hand to hold, and I was rescued from the burning house of karma. It was not so much a vision as a peaceful and warm feeling that came over me. I broke down crying with tears of relief and Dharma joy. The experience only lasted for a short moment, perhaps less than a couple minutes, but the imprint of the wonderful feeling stayed with me much longer.

Before the experience, to me, reciting Amitabha Buddha was a way to worship the Buddha, but I did not actually feel the spiritual connection. Now, when reciting Amitabha Buddha, I actually feel as if I am a lost child desperately longing for Amitabha Buddha, the most compassionate and kindest father, to guide me home to the Western Land of Ultimate Bliss.

I would like to share my experience of reciting Amitabha Buddha during the seven-day retreat and to express my sincere appreciation to the Dharma Masters and all of my Dharma friends at the Avatamsaka Vihara.

他人念佛的喜悅聲，充滿了整個大殿，突然省悟了！再得人身是多麼的不可能，如果來生為畜生、餓鬼或下地獄，將是無止境的受苦！突然覺悟到人命無常，使我極端地驚恐；這是我平生第一次感覺自己住在猛烈地燃燒的火宅，第一次覺得極端迫切地要逃離這業果之火。

這樣恐怖的覺知，使我全心全意真誠地念佛：「阿彌陀佛，阿彌陀佛，阿彌陀佛……」我迫切地、不間斷地念佛。不知怎麼的，同時從內心發出一個聲音祈禱著：「親愛的阿彌陀佛！請聆聽我的祈禱，請救救我！……請慈悲救護我！」突然有一短暫時刻，感覺到阿彌陀佛伸出他的手讓我握住，我從業宅中被救了出來。我破涕而喜，取而代之的是被解救的淚水和法喜。這樣的經驗發生地很短暫，或者不到幾分鐘；然而奇妙的感覺卻盪漾內心，久久不去。

對我而言，在此次經驗之前，念佛只是尊敬地禮拜佛的一種方式，沒真正的感覺到心靈的聯繫。現在念佛時，真實地覺得自己像迷失的孩子，拼命地、誠心地渴望阿彌陀佛大慈悲父，指引我回到西方極樂世界之家。

希望能分享這次打佛七的念佛經驗，同時也由衷地感謝華嚴精舍所有的法師及蓮友們。

