

The World of Dewachen

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How to Take Rebirth in the Pure Land of Dewachen, the Realm of Great Bliss.

If we observe the various beings and the different realms in which they are born, we realize that these realms are various. Some are of an impure sort and the beings who appear there, experience suffering. Other realms are mixed; beings are experiencing both suffering and pleasant situations. Finally, there are the blissful realms in which beings enjoy only happiness.

The rebirth in such or such realm is based on their individual karma. Karma induces the manifestation of the realm: past actions are the cause of its manifestation, as they are the cause of the rebirth of beings in these realms, most of which are unsustainable in nature. Some realms can be described as "good", others "bad", according that they bring happiness or suffering. In any case, from the perspective of Mahayana, they are the result of karma and are therefore of an illusory nature.

According to the Theravada Buddhist approach (*Sravakayana*), one distinguishes two things: the beings of a world and the world itself. The Theravada view asserts that the world is made of atoms having a substantial existence, but that the birth of beings in the world is only due to their karma.

Theravada or Mahayana approaches are both coming from the words of the Buddha. He taught different views to suit the different capacities of the persons who received his teachings. There is no opposition or contradiction between the views of Theravada and of Mahayana.

The Theravada teaches something that is true only to some extent, without nevertheless going completely against reality. Yet, at the deeper level of the real nature of things, the teachings of Mahayana are more accurate. Rather than contradictory, these two explanations should be seen as complementary, with regards to the level they address.

For example, the Earth is made of atoms. All the realms, good or bad, are made of earth and therefore of atoms. The beings appear in these realms according to their karma. This point of view is shared by both Theravada (as ultimate reality) and Mahayana (as provisional reality.)

The Theravada view will stop at this point. The Mahayana goes further and asserts that these worlds in which beings appear according to their karma are not, in the ultimate sense, made of substantial atoms. These do not actually exist, and belong to the domain of illusion.

With this view of Mahayana, one takes a further step, asserting that the constitutive elements of matter, or of the world, belong to the domain of karma; they are not truly existing entities. To demonstrate this, the Mahayana developed metaphysic and a multitude of logical reasoning to support the understanding that the atoms do not actually exist and one cannot find a truly existing entity.

According to Mahayana, the earth, the realm in which we live, comes from karma: this earth is simply an expression of the illusion in which we find ourselves. This illusion can be shared: despite the wide variety of karmas - each with a specific karma - common features can be found in these karmas.

It is these commonalities that make you end up experimenting with the people around you the same kind of realm, the same illusion. Beings are innumerable and yet there are collective things, the types of shared experiences that come from these common features of karma. Of course, within these collective manifestations, each individual experiences particular things; individual karma is of great variety.

The approach of Mahayana considers that both beings and the world that hosts them, the receptacle, are the production of illusion that appear to them as a location. Through this, we come to understand the true nature of phenomena. Such is the way of Mahayana.

Let's return to the world of Dewachen or Realm of Great Bliss. For now, we do not have the ability to perceive it or to go there, because we have not accumulated the necessary karma to be born in such a place, even if that realm exists somewhere, in some manner. We imagine it a bit like the moon, but we do not have yet the opportunity to see it or to be born there.

Dewachen is a manifestation of Buddha Amitabha's activity. This Buddha has completed the ten perfections, and thanks to the merit thus accumulated, he was able to create the realm of Dewachen for the benefit of all beings.

Buddha Amitabha was initially an ordinary being who generated Bodhicitta and developed a lot of efforts to achieve Buddhahood. To do this, he practiced the ten paramitas and led them to complete perfection. He also formulated many wishes and aspiration prayers to create this pure land where beings could be reborn easily.

With the completion of paramitas and his aspiration prayers, Amitabha managed to manifest this pure land, the result of a merit accumulated for a long time, expression of very meritorious actions performed in the past.

In fact, Buddha Amitabha did not practice in order to attain enlightenment. He followed another approach. At one time, he was a disciple of a Buddha who gave him specific instruction, and explained to him how a great bodhisattva can manifest a pure land beneficial to all beings. Buddha Amitabha, as a disciple, learned all that he needed to do to reach this goal and manifest a pure land able to help the beings trapped in their delusion and enduring suffering due to karma.

There are blissful lands created by the karma of some beings, but these lands are of an unsustainable nature, because they are still based on conflicting emotions. As long as there is an ego, that is to say the belief in a really existing self, one is plunged in ignorance and afflicted states and disturbing emotions develop.

These negative emotions lead us to perpetrate imperfect actions that create karma, from which emerges an illusory system. The illusion throws us even more under the power of emotions that, in turn, motivate further actions that intensify the creation of karma. It strengthens illusion, etc. Thus we turn and wander in the cycle of conditioned existence. Ignorance generates afflicted emotions, ego grasping therefore creates the realms into which ordinary beings are born. The Buddha, of whom he was the disciple, explained this to

Amitabha. The Buddha also explained him how to create a pure land devoid of illusory and emotional characteristics.

Amitabha took firmly the vow to generate a pure land by the sheer force of his wish, and labored tirelessly to manifest a pure land which is a help to all beings in suffering. With this motivation, Amitabha obtained spontaneous enlightenment and became truly a Buddha. He did not reach Buddhahood by pursuing the goal of his own enlightenment. It was an unexpected result of his selfless activity. Having obtained the spontaneous awakening due to his determination to work for the good of all beings, his wishes came true and this pure land became obvious: it is the fruit of all his wishing prayers.

We have seen that there are different worlds resulting from different conditions. Some worlds are the result of actions perpetrated in the past that ripen, producing a world corresponding to karma. Other realms are the result of both actions and wishes of the past. Finally, there are realms that are primarily the result of aspiration prayers and wishes expressed in the past. By observing the world we currently inhabit, we can realize that it is part of the second category. It is a world produced by both past actions and expressed wishes.

On the contrary, if we take the example of the infernal realms, those of the hungry ghosts and the animal states, they are the result of negative actions of the past. As for the pure land, they are the result of the aspirations and wishing prayer; in particular the *Realm of Great Bliss, Dewachen*, is the result of the aspirations and wishes of the Buddha Amitabha.

If we wish to be reborn in *Dewachen*, we must be open to the power of Amitabha's wishing prayer in order to receive the fruit of this aspiration. We create, therefore, the causes to be receptive to the influence of the Buddha Amitabha's wishes that will lead us to take rebirth in *Dewachen*.

From the moment when one connects to the Buddha Amitabha wishes, all karma present in our stream of consciousness is eliminated and does not come to fruition. On the contrary, the only thing that appears, is a rebirth in Dewachen, the fruition of the wish of Buddha Amitabha.

Indeed, we have in our stream of consciousness, a karma that is the sum of past actions. It can cause us to take rebirth in the realms characterized by pain and suffering or conversely characterized by experiences of happiness. In any case, these experiences are merely a fleeting ripening of karma. When one is able to receive the power of Amitabha's wishes, the positive or negative karma that would lead us to rebirth in conditioned worlds dissipates and gives way to rebirth in Dewachen.

To create the causes that will connect us with Amitabha's wishes, our daily practice must lead us to develop the bodhisattva attitude: it is the path of Bodhicitta.

We focus all our efforts on an altruistic life conduct, a mind attitude turned toward the others. We strive to reduce the negative attitudes of mind, veils, mental obscuration that generate suffering. Avoid, among others, to be excessively self-conscious or be trapped in states of extreme jealousy, anger or aggression.

The anger that needs to be eliminated is that leading to hatred. The anger developed, while trying to aggressively protect oneself from our entourage, is more damaging than any wrath

that might arise while helping others. The latter is not an emotion of the same nature than the first.

We practice daily, with constant efforts, Mind-Training. We enhance the qualities of love, compassion and patience and decrease the negative states of mind. It is important to take the Bodhisattva vows and firmly persevere in the Bodhicitta attitude. It is more than a mere wish, it is a commitment that needs to be renewed again and again. We can do the ritual of restoration on our own, so as to repair the damage done to this commitment through our wrongdoings.

The second most important point, after Bodhicitta, is to frequently contemplate the pure *Land of Dewachen*. Some Sutras explain where it is located, and what is to be found there: flower blossom, pools, rivers, lotus-houses, etc. They also provide descriptions of Buddha Amitabha and of the Bodhisattvas in this pure land. It is necessary to frequently contemplate Dewachen and become acquainted with it, because, from the perspective of Mahayana, the worlds are the manifestation of karma or wishes. The world of Dewachen is only the fruit of Buddha Amitabha's wishes.

According to contemporary science, all the planets are round. I cannot say whether this is the case for Dewachen because all shapes are possible. Apparently, it feels evenly flat when you experience it. One might think that flat is boring, but those in Dewachen do not feel bored at all. There are many flowers and trees, a lot of wonderful things described in texts such as the "*Prayer for rebirth in Dewachen*." I will not elaborate on these descriptions. I invite you to read these texts and let your imagination run freely.

Once one has read these descriptions one can better visualize Dewachen. Whenever possible we train to think that we are in this pure land in the company of its inhabitants: the Buddha Amitabha, Chenrezig, Vajrapani, and present in front of them, all the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas.

We can support this, with purification practices such as *The Confession of Downfall to the Thirty-Five Buddhas*. This prayer has a great cleansing power. It's really important to focus on this aspect of purification, which comprises four phases:

1/ First, the generation of Bodhicitta

2/ Then one visualizes in this pure land, the Buddha Amitabha among the thirty-five Buddhas.

3/ Facing them, we develop a strong intention to purify all the negative actions of the past – the effect of the purification will be in proportion to the sincerity of our intent. We receive the blessings of the Buddhas and purification takes place.

4- Finally, we wish to be reborn in Dewachen and that all beings can also experience it by themselves. It ends with a prayer of dedication.

We shouldn't wait until the moment of our death and having to cross the intermediary state (*Bardo*) to generate the wish to be reborn in Dewachen! It is not at all necessary to cross the

intermediary state; we must go directly to Dewachen. The *Bardo*, the intermediate state of the becoming, only exists when the karma of this life fades away as another karma ripens slowly. It is a kind of a transition period during which the mind wanders.

If we develop a very strong aspiration to be reborn in Dewachen, the ripening is immediate and one doesn't go through the *Bardo* experiences. Therefore it is advised to strongly develop this wish and firmly focus all one's efforts to be reborn in the pure land of Dewachen, so as to directly go there. This implies an intense daily practice.

One can strengthen this wish with the practice of the *Conscious-Transferring (Powa)*, with the help of which the consciousness is transferred more quickly. Faster, does not mean that we may risk dying on the spot and reaching Dewachen right away, as we do this practice, but rather that we will have developed the ability to effortlessly go to this pure land, immediately at the time of our natural death.

The Amitabha Sadhana, A Vajrayana Practice.

The practice of Amitabha comprises several phases.

1/The first phase is to visualize yourself as four armed Chenrezig emerging from a large and excellent lotus. It means that while the upper part emerges, the lower part is still in the heart of the lotus.

Chenrezig has four arms. Two hands are joined holding a *Jewel-That-Grants-All-Wishes (Mani Ratna)*; the other two hands hold a rosary (right) and a lotus flower (left). In front of you is the Buddha Amitabha with Chenrezig on one side, and Vajrapani on the other. All three are marked with the three seed syllables *Om Ah Hung*, respectively at the forehead, throat and heart. In the heart of Buddha Amitabha is a lotus surmounted by the letter *Hri*, surrounded by the mantra *OM AMI DEWA HRI*

You are Chenrezig, and all that you have visualized in front of you, is also visualized inside your body: the pure land, the Buddha Amitabha, Chenrezig, Vajrapani, etc. Inside your body, is equally found in the heart of Buddha Amitabha, the lotus surmounted by the moon disc and letters of the mantra.

As you recite the mantra *OM AMI DEWA HRI*, you imagine that the mantra garland rotates simultaneously in the heart of Buddha Amitabha in you and of that which is in front of you. Light radiates out of the Buddhas foreheads, and out of your own. It reaches the Buddhas realms and the Pure Land of Amitabha. This light returns loaded with blessing in the form of millions of bodies of Buddha Amitabha, letters of the Sanskrit alphabet and objects such as the Buddha Amitabha alms bowl filled with Amrita, Vajra scepter, etc.

This rain of Buddha's form, letters and sacred objects is absorbed in you and in all beings. You therefore, receive the blessing of all Buddhas. Such is the visualization to be conducted while reciting the mantra.

2/ Secondly, when this practice is completed, the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas present in front of you merge into light and are absorbed in you. Yourself visualized as Chenrezig, as well as the visualization inside your body, progressively dissolves into the very nature of emptiness.

At this point, you abide in Mahamudra meditation according to your capacity. When this meditation is completed, in one instant, you reappear in the form of Chenrezig, with the pure land and the Buddhas inside yourself.

3/ Finally, you make the dedication prayer through which you direct the merit accumulated by this practice towards all beings.

The practice is now completed and one can resume one's daily life.

By practicing every day in such a way, one is certain to be reborn in the pure land at the end of our life. We must, nevertheless, be very attentive to karma and the actions we perform. If we do negative actions, the result of this practice may disappear.

The strongest negative karma is mainly created by mind, more than by the ensuing actions. The most powerful negative karma is generated by states of violent anger or strong jealousy. Desire can also be a problem; though it depends on the type of desire. Being very attached to something disturbs us and may carry us away. Nevertheless, desire is a tendency that can be transformed, while very strong anger and powerful jealousy always remain negative. Jealousy cannot become positive: all of its forms are negative. Regarding anger, there are some nuances; there may be some healthy wrath, it is important to analyze what arises in the mind. If one recognizes that a strong negative emotion appears, it must be immediately remedied. The analysis of the emotions that arise in the mind is also one of the aspects of Mahamudra practice.