

Removing All Karmic Obstacles

拔除一切業障

A Medicine Buddha Practice
Including a five-colored cord ritual

五色縷法

This practice will be offered online once a month, led by Zen Master Cheong Se Do



Contents

Introduction	i
Opening Prayers and Chants	vii
Yaksa Yeorae Bul Chanting	viii
Before Beginning the Sutra	ix
The Medicine Buddha Sutra	1
The Medicine Buddha Dharani	10
End of the Medicine Buddha Sutra	20
Chanting the names of the 12 Yakcha Daejangs	21
Four Great Vows	23
Endnote about the text of the Sutra	24
Appendix: On Hakuin's Prayer	26
Glossary	27

Introduction

by Zen Master Cheong Se Do

Many different practices are recommended in the Medicine Buddha Sutra. Three in particular stand out:

1. Reading/reciting the sutra
2. Reciting the name of the Medicine Buddha
3. Reciting the Dharani of the Medicine Buddha

These three practices are mostly self-explanatory. They are easy and straightforward to implement. For example, the entire sutra can be read in under an hour.

In addition to the above three practices, there are many others recommended in the Sutra, some of which are not so self-explanatory (or easily implemented):

1. Making “five-colored longevity banners”
2. Lighting lamps and keeping them burning for 49 days
3. Making images of the Medicine Buddha
4. Copying the entire sutra by hand
5. Releasing prisoners
6. Purchasing 49 different species of live animals that are being sold as food, and then releasing them into the wild (thus sparing their lives)

Right at the end of the sutra there is one more practice that is recommended. This is at the point where the Yakcha Daejangs (the “Yaksa Generals”) suddenly appear. Before getting into who (or what) a Yakcha Daejang is, let’s first listen to what they have to say, and what they are encouraging us to do:



“Wherever this sutra circulates or wherever there are sentient beings who hold fast to the name of the Medicine Master Lapis Lazuli Radiance Tathagata and respectfully make offerings to him, whether in villages, towns, kingdoms or in the wilderness, we will all protect them. We will release them from all suffering and calamities **and see to it that all their wishes are fulfilled.**”

“Sentient beings afflicted by disease or calamity and wishing to escape should also read or recite this sutra. **Using a five-colored cord, they should tie a knot for each of our names – untying them when their wishes are fulfilled.**”

Rituals involving “five-colored cords” are quite popular among East Asian Buddhists (in China, Korea, Vietnam, and Japan). “Five-Colored Cord Rituals” (五色纒法) based on the Medicine Buddha Sutra have been practiced in China since the early Tang dynasty (1400 years ago), and in Korea for almost as long.

(By the way, it’s not only in the Medicine Buddha Sutra that one finds such practices. There are two different five-colored cord rituals described in the “Great Dharani Sutra”, the sutra in which Avalokitesvara first taught the famous “Great Dharani”. And there are other sutras that also make reference to five-colored cords.)

The “Removing All Karmic Obstacles” practice has three parts. The **first** part consists of chanting that culminates in reciting the name of the Medicine Buddha (Yaksa Yeorae Bul) 108 times. The **second** part is reading the sutra itself (including recitation of the Dharani). In the **third** part we chant the names of the Yakcha Daejangs and make one knot in a five-colored cord for each of the names, as described in the sutra (but you can still participate in the chanting if you don’t have your own cord).



Each knot in the five-colored cord corresponds to a **wish** that you make. Before the practice itself is performed, you should write down your 12 wishes. It's important to know that the Chinese word being translated here as "wish" is 願 (pronounced "won"), which is also the same word used for the Medicine Buddha's "12 Great **Vows**": 十二大願. The Medicine Buddha's vows are also frequently referred to throughout the Sutra as his "original **vows**": 本願.

The Chinese word 願 is also the same word translated as "yearn" in the last line of the Sutra Opening Verse: "I **yearn** to understand the Tathagata's true meaning": 願解如來真實義. And it is also found in the "Four Great **Vows**": 四弘誓願. It is also the word translated as "aspiration" in the title of the "Mantra to Accomplish Great **Aspirations**": 願成就真言. And it is the word translated as wish in this quote from the *Longer Sukhāvativyūha Sūtra*: "How could there be any **wish** not fulfilled?": 何願不得.

So, before starting the "Removing All Karmic Obstacles" practice, you should first make a list of 12 things that you wish for. And, not to belabor the point, in addition to "wish", "vow", "yearn", and "aspiration", 願 has many more possible shades of meaning: "desire", "intention", "hope", "seek", "pledge", "pray", etc.

So, what should you put on your "Yakcha Daejang Wish List"? Of course, it's up to you to decide, but here are some suggestions for how to come up with your list:

1. Don't wish for something to just happen **to you**, that is, for something to just magically appear out of nowhere (like winning the lottery). Focus on your **aspirations**



(that is the word that I like to use for 願 in this context). What do you **aspire to**? What are things that you really want to **do**. Focus especially on things that you know you are capable of, but that will require some commitment, attention, and perseverance on your part. In other words, things that you **can** accomplish, but that you **might not** accomplish if you don't really apply yourself.

2. Wish for things that will bring you happiness and satisfaction, but that will cause no harm to any other sentient being.
3. Include some low hanging fruit in your list, and especially things that can be accomplished in the short term.
4. But also include more challenging things on your list, even things that could take months or years to accomplish.
5. Be sure to include your spiritual aspirations in the list, but don't exclude things from the list if they aren't necessarily spiritual. Remember: The Medicine Buddha and the Yakcha Daejangs want you to be happy (and healthy)!
6. And, finally, if you come up with more than 12 things, good! You can repeat this practice.
7. Oh – there is one more thing: remember to **write down** your wishes (intentions, aspirations, or whichever word you prefer)!

Here are 12 of the things currently on my own list (many of which I have been able to check off):

1. complete my first Korean class (done)
2. sign up for second Korean class (not done)
3. send in my passport application (done)
4. complete this document you are reading right now (almost done!)
5. go to December (2023) retreat at Furnace Mountain (done)



6. make pdf that I promised to send out to local meditation group (not done)
7. do at least 4 in-person retreats at Furnace Mountain in 2024 (not done)
8. do a mobile-phone friendly version of the “[Writing the Ox](#)” web application (not done)
9. get the total number of characters in “[Writing the Ox](#)” up to 2,000 (not done)
10. read Prince Shotoku’s commentary on the Vimalakirti Sutra (not done)
11. read Prince Shotoku’s commentary on the Srimala Sutra (not done)
12. start more window-box flowers from seed (done)

Many western Buddhists (and possibly some non-westerners, too) might feel a little uncomfortable with the whole idea of asking/praying for help from the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas, not to mention the Yakcha Daejangs. But this is precisely what Shakyamuni Buddha is encouraging us to do in the Medicine Buddha Sutra.

Some people might even be tempted to think: “But I am a Zen student and this doesn’t sound very Zen”. And that is one reason why the practice begins with a wonderful quote from Zen Master Hakuin. This is a prayer that he wrote when he was 19 years old, in which he asks the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas, and also the “benevolent Gods in the heavens and the local Deities worshipped at eighty thousand altars throughout this land” for their “imperceptible help.”

Now we can return to this question: just what is a Yakcha Daejang? A Yackha (or “Yaksa” or “Yaksha”) is one of the so-called “eight types of Heavenly Beings”. Here are the names of all eight.

1. Gods (天)
2. Dragons (龍)



3. Yakchas (藥叉)
4. Geondalbas (乾闥婆)
5. Asuras (阿修羅)
6. Garudas (迦樓羅)
7. Kinnaras (緊那羅)
8. Mahoragas (摩睺羅伽)

The Gods inhabit and reign over the highest heavenly realms. Dragons are, well, Dragons. The Yakchas are sometimes referred to as “nature spirits”, and that is probably as good a description as any. Geondalbas (aka “Gandharas”) are also called “Incense Gods” because it is believed that they feed only on the smell of incense and do not require any other food or drink. Asuras are like the Gods, but they rule over the *lower* heavenly realms (and so they are often referred to as the “jealous Gods”). Garudas are birdlike creatures that live for 8000 years. Four Garuda Kings are specifically mentioned in the Lotus Sutra because they vowed to protect that Sutra. Kinnaras are also bird-like, but they are known mostly for their music, so they are sometimes called “Music Gods”. There are also Kinnara Kings in the Lotus Sutra who vow to protect that Sutra. Mahoragas are “Snake Gods”. In the Avatamsaka Sutra, ten Mahoraga Kings vow to protect that Sutra.

Oh, and Daejang (大將) means “great general”. So, a “Yakcha Daejang” is the leader of a large group of Yakchas.

The practice itself begins on the next page.



[First, recite Hakuin's prayer for imperceptible help, and then the quote from the Longer Sukhāvativyūha Sūtra]

"I place my trust in the Buddhas of the Ten Directions who have perfected the Ten Paramitas, in all the great Bodhisattvas who have realized the Way, in the benevolent Gods in the heavens who guard and protect the Dharma, and the local Deities worshipped at eighty thousand altars throughout this land. Please take pity on me and extend to me your imperceptible help."

~~~~~

**"Those who have deeply sincere minds and who seek the Way with unceasing diligence will certainly achieve their goal. How could there be any wish unfulfilled?"**

[then do the 4 chants below, followed by Yaksa Yeorae Bul chanting]

**Evening Bell Chant  
Homage to the Three Jewels  
Extend Life Ten Phrase Kannon Sutra  
Heart Sutra  
Great Dharani**



# Yaksa Yeorae Bul Chanting

**namu dong bang yaksa yuri gwang bul**

homage east direction medicine master lapis lazuli radiance buddha

**namu jwa bu cheo il gwang byeon jo bo sal**

homage left next buddha sun radiance universal illumination bodhisattva

**namu u bu cheo wol gwang byeon jo bo sal**

homage right next buddha moon radiance universal bodhisattva

**namu dong bang man wol se gye shib i sang won**

homage east direction full moon dharma realm 12 supreme vows

**yaksa yuri gwang yeorae bul**

☯ **yaksa yeorae bul (108x)**

**jo cheong pal bu jin eon** (Mantra Inviting the Eight Types of Heavenly Beings)

☯ **om salba dibaniga anari sabaha (8x)**

**The Medicine Buddha guides all sentient beings with his 12 great vows. His heart is completely filled only with compassion. The roots of illness and inverted views in ordinary beings are very deep. If we do not meet the Medicine Buddha it is very difficult to cut through the entangling net of our own wrong-doing. Therefore, we single-mindedly take refuge in and pay homage to the Medicine Buddha.**



*[Before beginning the Sutra, first recite:*

- 1. the Mantra for Purifying Speech*
- 2. the Sutra Opening Verse]*

[mantra for purifying speech]

**jeong gu eop jineon**

**suri suri maha suri susuri sabaha (3x)**

[Sutra Opening Verse]

**"The supreme Dharma, profound and wondrous,  
is rarely encountered, even in myriad kalpas.  
Being able to hear and uphold it now,  
I yearn to understand the Tathagata's true  
meaning"**

[The text of the Sutra begins on the next page]



# The Sutra of The Medicine Master Lapis Lazuli Radiance Tathagata

[\[https://tripitaka.cbeta.org/T14n0450\\_001\]](https://tripitaka.cbeta.org/T14n0450_001)

[0404c15]

Thus have I heard: Once Buddha Sakyamuni, the World Honored One, was traveling widely through many different regions to teach and transform the people. When he arrived in Vaisali, he rested under the Tree of Musical Sounds. The World Honored One was accompanied by a great Assembly that included 8,000 great Bhiksus and 36,000 great Bodhisattvas, as well as kings, great ministers, Brahmins, laymen and laywomen, Gods, Dragons, and the other types of Heavenly Beings, and other human and non-human beings, who all gathered respectfully around the Buddha as He preached the Dharma.

At that time, Munsu Bosal [Manjushri], Prince of the Dharma, receiving the awesome spiritual power of the Buddha, rose from his seat, adjusted his robe to bare his shoulder and knelt on his right knee. He bowed deeply, and with palms joined, respectfully addressed the Buddha:



“World-Honored One, may I please request you to explain the various names and titles, the great original vows, and the superlative virtues of the Buddhas, so that those who are listening to you will be freed of karmic obstacles, while in the future, sentient beings in the Dharma Semblance Age will also derive great benefit and joy.”

The Buddha praised Munsu Bosal, saying:

“Excellent! Excellent, Munsu! Out of great compassion, you have urged me to explain the names and titles, merits and virtues and original vows of the Buddhas, in order to liberate those who are bound by karmic obstacles, and to bring benefits, peace and joy to all sentient beings in the Dharma Semblance Age. Now, listen attentively and reflect very carefully upon what I am about to say.”



Munsu Bosal replied: “So be it, World Honored One. We will joyfully listen to whatever you wish to teach.”

The Buddha then said to Munsu Bosal:

[0405a01]

“East of this world, past countless Buddha-lands – more numerous than the grains of sand in ten Ganges Rivers – there exists a world called Pure Lapis Lazuli. The Buddha of that world is called the **Medicine Master Lapis Lazuli Radiance Tathagata**, Arhat, Perfectly Enlightened One, Perfect in Mind and Deed, Well Gone, Knower of the World, Unsurpassed Being, Tamer of Passions, Teacher of Gods and Humans, Buddha, and Bhagavan.

“Munsu, when the World-Honored **Medicine Master Lapis Lazuli Radiance Tathagata** first set out on the Bodhisattva Path, he solemnly made Twelve Great Vows to enable sentient beings to accomplish all of their aspirations.



## First Great Vow

“I vow that in a future life, when I have attained Anuttara-Samyak-Sambodhi, brilliant rays will shine forth from my body, illuminating infinite, countless, boundless realms. This body will be adorned with the Thirty-Two Marks of Greatness and Eighty Auspicious Characteristics. Furthermore, I will enable all sentient beings to become just like me. [令一切有情，如我無異]”

## Second Great Vow

“I vow that in a future life, when I have become a Buddha, my body, inside and out, will radiate far and wide the clarity and flawless purity of lapis lazuli. This body will be adorned with superlative virtues and dwell peacefully in the midst of a web of light more magnificent than the sun or moon. The light will awaken the minds of all beings dwelling in darkness, enabling them to engage in their pursuits according to their wishes.”



### Third Great Vow

“I vow that in a future life, when I have become a Buddha, I will, with infinite wisdom and skillful means, provide all sentient beings with an inexhaustible quantity of goods to meet their material needs. They will never experience deprivation of any kind.”

### Fourth Great Vow

[0405a18]

“I vow that in a future life, when I have become a Buddha, I will set all who follow unwholesome paths upon the path to Enlightenment. Likewise, I will set those who follow the Sravaka and Pratyeka-Buddha paths onto the Mahayana path.”

### Fifth Great Vow

“I vow that in a future life, when I have become a Buddha, I will help all the countless sentient beings who cultivate the path of discipline in accordance with my Dharma to observe the rules of conduct to perfection, in conformity with the Three Root Precepts. Even those guilty of disparaging or violating the Precepts will regain their purity upon hearing my name and avoid descending to the Lower Realms.”





## Sixth Great Vow

“I vow that in a future life, when I have become a Buddha, sentient beings whose bodies are imperfect or deficient in any way, or who are suffering from various illnesses – will, upon hearing my name, acquire well-formed bodies, endowed with intelligence, with all senses intact. They will be free of illness and suffering.”

## Seventh Great Vow

“I vow that in a future life, when I have become a Buddha, sentient beings afflicted with various illnesses, with no one to help them, nowhere to turn, no physicians, no medicine, no family, no home – who are destitute and miserable – will, as soon as my name passes through their ears, be relieved of all their illnesses. With mind and body peaceful and contented, they will enjoy home, family and property in abundance and eventually realize Unsurpassed Supreme Enlightenment.”



## Eighth Great Vow

“I vow that in a future life, when I have become a Buddha, for the sake of all simple and limited sentient beings, I will proclaim the Correct Dharma, causing them to all gain passage to the other shore, nirvana, and to escape from the cycle of birth, old age, sickness, and death. They will enter the Dharma Gate of Wisdom, and I will cause all things to be clear to them, so that they will no longer have doubts. In future lives they will be endowed with noble features and eventually attain Anuttara-Samyak-Sambodhi and become just like me.”

## Ninth Great Vow

[0405b09]

“I vow that in a future life, when I have become a Buddha, I will help all sentient beings escape from the demons’ net and free themselves from the bonds of wrong views. Should they be caught in the thicket of wrong views, I will lead them to correct views, gradually inducing them to cultivate the practices of Bodhisattvas and swiftly realize Unsurpassed Correct Enlightenment.”



## Tenth Great Vow

“I vow that in a future life, when I have become a Buddha, those sentient beings who are shackled, beaten, imprisoned, condemned to death or otherwise subjected to countless miseries and humiliations by royal decree – and who are suffering in body and mind from this oppression – need only hear my name to be freed from all these afflictions, thanks to the strength of my merits, virtues, and great spiritual powers.”

## Eleventh Great vow

“I vow that in a future life, when I have become a Buddha, if sentient beings who are tormented by hunger and thirst – to the point of creating evil karma in their attempts to survive – should succeed in hearing my name, recite it single-mindedly and hold fast to it, I will first completely satisfy their hunger and thirst with the most exquisite food and drink. Then they can enjoy the wondrous flavor of the Dharma and I will firmly establish them in a state of peace and happiness.”



## Twelfth Great Vow

“I vow that in a future life, when I have become a Buddha, if there are sentient beings who are suffering day and night because they are utterly destitute, lacking even clothes to protect them from heat and cold, as well as from mosquitoes and biting flies, if they should hear my name, recite it single-mindedly and hold fast to it, their wishes will be fulfilled. They will immediately receive all manner of exquisite clothing, precious adornments, flower garlands and incense powder, and will enjoy music and entertainment to their hearts’ content.”

“Munsu, these are the subtle, mysterious, and supreme vows made by the World-Honored **Medicine Master Lapis Lazuli Radiance Tathagata**, Arhat, Perfectly Enlightened One, while he was following the Bodhisattva Path.

“Munsu, even if I spoke for a kalpa, or even longer than a kalpa, I would not be able to describe the wonders of this Buddha’s 12 Great Vows, nor could I fully describe the wonders of the pristine Buddha-land that he attained.



“Munsu, the **Medicine Master Lapis Lazuli Radiance Tathagata’s** Buddha-land is utterly pure. You will find no temptations, no realms of unfortunate rebirth, nor even cries of suffering there.

“In this Buddha-land, the ground is made of lapis lazuli, the boundaries are demarcated with golden cords, the towns, towers, palaces, pavilions, as well as the balconies, windows and draperies are all made of the Seven Treasures. The merits, virtues and adornments of this realm are identical to those of Amitabha Buddha’s Western Pure Land.

“In this Buddha-land dwell two great Bodhisattvas, Ilgwang Byeonjo Bosal [Sun Radiance Universal Illumination 日光遍照], and Wolgwang Byeonjo Bosal [Moon Radiance Universal Illumination, 月光遍照]. Among the countless Bodhisattvas, they are the leaders. Each in turn will serve as successor to the World-Honored **Medicine Master Lapis Lazuli Radiance Tathagata** and as the able guardian of His True Dharma treasury.



“For these reasons, Munsu, all devout men and women should vow to be born in this Buddha-land.”

Buddha Sakyamuni then told Munsu Bosal:

“There are sentient beings who cannot tell right from wrong. They are greedy and mean, do not practice charity, and do not understand the rewards of generosity. They are ignorant and unintelligent. Lacking the foundations of faith, they amass riches, which they assiduously hoard. Whenever they come across anyone seeking charity, they become annoyed; if forced to give, they feel as much pain and regret as if they were parting with their own flesh.

“Moreover, there are also countless sentient beings who are miserly and avaricious. They spend time amassing wealth, while not daring to spend it even on themselves, let alone on parents, spouse, children, servants, or beggars. When they die, these greedy persons will descend to the realms of hungry ghosts or animals.



“However, even though they may suffer such a fate, if in a previous existence in the human realm they happened to hear the name of the **Medicine Master Lapis Lazuli Radiance Tathagata**, and now are able to recall and recite his name, even briefly, they will immediately vanish from the Lower Realms to be born once more among humans. However, they will now remember their stay in the Lower Realms and, dreading their past suffering, will cease to wallow in worldly pleasures. They will gladly practice charity themselves, and praise others who do so.

“Eventually, they will even be able to donate their head, eyes, limbs, blood, flesh, or other parts of their bodies to those who need them, not to mention mere material possessions.

[0405c25]

“Moreover, Munsu, there are sentient beings who have accepted the teachings of the Tathagata but have violated the Precepts. Or, they have not violated the Precepts, but have broken the regulations.



“Or else, while they have violated neither the Precepts nor the regulations, they have disparaged Right Views; or they have not disparaged Right Views but have abandoned extensive study of the Dharma and thus cannot explain the profound meaning of the sutras preached by the Buddha. Or else, although they may be learned, they have grown conceited. Because conceit clouds the mind, they believe that they are in the right and others are in the wrong. Therefore, they deprecate the Correct Dharma – and ally themselves with demons.

“Such deluded persons not only follow wrong views themselves they also lead countless other sentient beings into the same great pitfall. These sentient beings are bound to wander endlessly in the realms of hell-beings, animals, and hungry ghosts.

“Yet, if they should succeed in hearing the name of the **Medicine Master Lapis Lazuli Radiance Tathagata**, they will abandon their evil conduct and begin to cultivate wholesome ways, and thus avoid descending to the Lower Realms.





“Even those who cannot abandon evil practices or cultivate wholesome teachings, and thus descend to the Lower Realms, can still benefit from the awesome power of the Tathagata’s original vows. If through this power, they should hear his name even briefly, their time in the Lower Realms will end and they will be born again in the human realm. They will hold correct views, diligently pursue their practice, and tame their minds. They will then be able to abandon the home life to become monks or nuns. They will uphold and study the Dharma of the Tathagatas rather than disparaging and violating it. With correct views and extensive study, they will fathom the extremely profound meaning of the teachings, abandon all conceit, and cease to disparage the Correct Dharma. They will no longer have demons as companions and will gradually cultivate the practices of Bodhisattvas and swiftly perfect them.



“Moreover, Munsu, there are sentient beings who are avaricious, envious, jealous, and accustomed to praising themselves and disparaging others. They are bound to sink down to the three Lower Realms, suffering intense misery for countless thousands of years. When this intense suffering comes to an end, they will be born in the Saha world as oxen, horses, donkeys, or camels. Often beaten and mistreated, they will suffer hunger and thirst and constantly travel along the road carrying heavy loads. If they succeed in coming back as human, they will be among the poor and lowly, always serving others, constantly receiving orders, never being free.

“However, if any of them, in a former incarnation as a human being, have heard the name of the World-Honored **Medicine Master Lapis Lazuli Radiance Tathagata** and, as a result of this good cause, now remember and with a completely sincere mind take refuge in him, they will, thanks to this Buddha’s spiritual powers, escape all suffering.



“Their senses will be sharp, and they will be wise and learned, constantly seeking the supreme teachings, and meeting with good spiritual friends. They will break forever through Mara’s net, smash the shell of delusion, dry up the river of afflictions and thus escape all the worry and suffering of birth, old age, disease, and death.

“Moreover, Munsu, there are sentient beings who love to quarrel, create schisms, and engage in legal disputes. They constantly make themselves and others suffer, creating and increasing all kinds of evil karma with body, speech, and mind.

“They plot against one another without mercy, while invoking the spirits of mountains, forests, trees, and tombs. They kill sentient beings and use their flesh and blood to propitiate the Yakcha [藥叉] and Rachal [羅刹] demons. They may also write down the names and make images of those against whom they harbor grudges, curse them with evil mantras [惡呪] or try to harm or kill them with potions, sorcery, or demons-raised-from-the-dead.



“However, if these sentient beings succeed in hearing the name of the **Medicine Master Lapis Lazuli Radiance Tathagata**, none of their evil practices will any longer be able to cause harm. Moreover, the mind of compassion will gradually arise in them and also in their intended victims, and they will all come to experience great peace and joy. All those involved will abandon harmful thoughts, leaving behind their angry, spiteful minds, and they will be happy and satisfied with what they have. They will no longer seek to encroach upon others but will instead seek to benefit one another.

[0406b06]

“Moreover, Munsu, within the Fourfold Assembly of monks, nuns, laymen, and laywomen, as well as among other men and women of pure faith, there are those who are able to adhere to the Eight Precepts for a full year or for three months a year, dedicating these good roots toward rebirth in Amitabha’s Western Pure Land of Ultimate Bliss, where they can devote themselves completely to the study and practice of the Correct Dharma.



“If their rebirth in the Pure Land is still uncertain, but they hear the name of the World-Honored **Medicine Master Lapis Lazuli Radiance Tathagata**, then, at the time of death, eight great Bodhisattvas will come to their aid, namely,

**Munsu Bosal** [文殊師利菩薩, Manjusri]

**Kwanseum Bosal** [觀世音菩薩, Avalokitesvara]

**Daeseji Bosal** [大勢至菩薩, Mahasthamaprapta]

**Mujinui Bosal** [無盡意菩薩, Aksayamatri]

**Bodanhwa Bosal** [寶檀華菩薩, Ratnacandana]

**Yagwang Bosal** [藥王菩薩, Bhaisajya-rajā]

**Yaksang Bosal** [藥上菩薩, Bhaisajya-samudgata]

**and Mireuk Bosal** [彌勒菩薩, Maitreya].

Those great Bodhisattvas will travel through space and descend to show them the way to the Pure Land, where they will be reborn spontaneously within jeweled flowers of many hues.



“Or else they might be born in the Celestial Realms. Despite their birth in the Celestial Realms, their good roots are still not exhausted, and thus they will not be born again in the Lower Realms. When their lifespan in the Celestial Realms comes to an end, they may return to the human world as Wheel-turning Kings, ruling over the Four Continents around Mount Sumeru. With awesome virtues and ease, they will set countless hundreds of thousands of sentient beings onto the path of the Ten Virtues.

“Or else, such persons may be born as Ksatriyas, or Brahmins, or as members of great and prosperous families, with abundant wealth and overflowing granaries and storehouses. They will be endowed with noble features, numerous family members and retainers, as well as intelligence, wisdom, bravery, vigor, and the imposing demeanor of a great hero.



“Likewise, if there are those who harbor doubts because their roots of faith are deficient, and if they were able to hear the name of the World-Honored Medicine Master Tathagata, then as a result of this good cause, they will hear the Correct Dharma, causing them to gain passage to the other shore, nirvana, and to escape from the cycle of birth, old age, sickness, and death. In future lives they will be endowed with noble features and eventually realize Anuttara-Samyak-Sambodhi.

“Munsu, when the **Medicine Master Lapis Lazuli Radiance Tathagata** attained Enlightenment, he realized, by virtue of his original vows, that sentient beings endured various ailments, such as emaciation, terrible disabilities, fever, dysentery, jaundice, etc. Some were the targets of black magic or various poisons, while others suffered short lives or untimely death.

“At that time, seeking to put an end to these miseries and fulfill the desires of sentient beings, he entered a samadhi called ‘Eliminating All the Suffering and Afflictions of Sentient Beings’.



“Once he entered that samadhi, a brilliant light shone forth from his urna as he uttered a great Dharani [大陀羅尼]:

南無 薄伽伐帝

鞞殺社窣嚩 薛琉璃

鉢刺婆喝囉闍也

怛他揭多耶 阿囉喝帝

三藐 三勃陀耶

怛姪他

唵 鞞殺逝 鞞殺逝

鞞殺社 三沒揭帝

莎訶

**namo bhagavate**

**bhaiṣajyaguru vaiḍūrya**

**prabharājāya**

**tathāgatāya arahate**

**samyak sambuddhāya**

**tadyathā:**

**oṃ bhaiṣajye bhaiṣajye**

**bhaiṣajya-samudgate**

**svāhā!**

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MXyp1PETQvw>





“As he uttered this Dharani he was bathed in light. The entire cosmos emitted a great radiance, as it rumbled and shook. All sentient beings experienced great ease and joy, as all their suffering and illnesses were removed.

“Munsu, if you come across any men or women suffering illness, you should constantly cleanse them, bathe them, and rinse their mouths. You should single-mindedly recite this Dharani 108 times over their food, medicine, or water, from which insects have been removed. Once they have consumed the food or drink, their illness and suffering will disappear. If they have something they wish for, they should single-mindedly recite this Dharani, and their wish will be fulfilled. They will be free of disease, enjoy a longer life and, at death, be born in the realm of the Medicine Master, where, now beyond retrogression, they will advance toward Enlightenment.

“Therefore, Munsu, men or women who single-mindedly revere and respectfully make offerings to the **Medicine Master Lapis Lazuli Radiance Tathagata** should constantly recite this Dharani, never letting it out of their minds.



“Moreover, Munsu, upon hearing the various names and titles of the **Medicine Master Lapis Lazuli Radiance Tathagata**, Arhat, Perfectly Enlightened One, men and women of pure faith should recite and hold fast to this name.

“Each morning, at dawn, having bathed themselves and cleaned their teeth, they should make offerings of fragrant flowers, incense, perfume, and various kinds of music before an image of this Buddha. Furthermore, they should copy this sutra or have others do so, as well as single-mindedly recite it and listen to explanations of its meaning.

“They should offer all the necessities of life to the Dharma masters who teach this sutra, making sure they lack nothing.

“In this way, devout men and women will be under the protection of the Buddhas. All their wishes will be fulfilled, and they will eventually realize Supreme Enlightenment.”



Munsu Bosal then respectfully addressed the Buddha: “O, World-Honored One, I vow that in the Dharma Semblance Age, I will use every skillful means to help men and women of pure faith hear the name of the World-Honored **Medicine Master Lapis Lazuli Radiance Tathagata**. Even in their sleep, I will awaken their consciousness with the name of this Buddha.

“O, World-Honored One, if any devout persons should read, recite and uphold this sutra, or lecture upon it, explaining its meaning to others, or copy it, or have others copy it, or if they should pay it the utmost reverence, adorning it with fragrant flowers, perfumes, incense powder and sticks, garlands, necklaces, banners, canopies, dance and music, and protecting it with precious, five-colored cloth – and if they should prepare a clean site, erect a high altar and place the sutra upon it – the Four Great Celestial Kings, their retinues as well as countless hundreds of thousands of other divinities, will thereupon proceed to this place to make offerings and guard this sutra.



“World-Honored One, wherever this treasure of a sutra has spread and there are people capable of upholding it, you should know that, thanks to the **Medicine Master Lapis Lazuli Radiance Tathagata’s** original vows, his virtues and the power of his name, the place will be free of untimely death. In that place, there will no longer be evil demons or spirits to sap the vital energy of the people.

“Even if there were, these devout men and women would recover, enjoying good health and peace of mind.”

[0406c07]

The Buddha then spoke to Munsu:

“So be it, so be it, Munsu. It is just as you say. If men and women of pure faith wish to make offerings to the World-Honored **Medicine Master Lapis Lazuli Radiance Tathagata**, they should first make an image of this Buddha, and then place it upon a pure, clean altar.



“They should scatter all kinds of flowers, burn all varieties of incense, and adorn the place with banners and pennants. For seven days and nights they should adhere to the Eight Precepts, consume only pure food, bathe, and perfume themselves, put on clean, fresh clothing and keep their minds undefiled, free of anger or malice.

“Moreover, they should develop feelings of kindness, compassion, joy, and equanimity toward all sentient beings, while bringing them benefits, peace and happiness. They should play music and sing the praises of the Buddha, while circumambulating his image in a rightward direction. They should bear in mind the Tathagata’s merits, virtues, and original vows, while reading and reciting this sutra, reflecting on its meaning, and explaining it to others.

“Whatever they wish will then be fulfilled – whether it be longevity, wealth, or anything else, such as official position or the birth of sons and daughters.



“Moreover, if any sentient beings suddenly suffer nightmares and witness all kinds of evil omens – such as flocks of strange birds, or hundreds of ominous signs throughout their homes – they need only venerate the World-Honored **Medicine Master Lapis Lazuli Radiance Tathagata** with all kinds of wonderful offerings, and the nightmares, evil omens, and inauspicious signs will all disappear, no longer able to cause them harm.

“If any sentient beings are in fear of water, fire, knives, poison, falling off a precipice, or of vicious beasts – such as wild elephants, lions, tigers, wolves, bears, venomous snakes, scorpions, centipedes, millipedes, mosquitoes, or biting flies – they need only single-mindedly recall and recite the name of the Buddha, while respectfully making offerings to him, and they will escape all these terrors. If a country should be subject to foreign invasion, banditry or rebellion, the inhabitants need only recall and recite the name of the Tathagata, while paying homage to him, and all these calamities will likewise disappear.



“Moreover, Munsu, there are men and women of pure faith who throughout their lives have not worshipped any deities, but have single-mindedly taken refuge in the Buddha, the Dharma, and the Sangha and upheld the Precepts – the five or ten lay Precepts, the 400 Bodhisattva Precepts or the 250 Bhiksu or 500 Bhiksuni Precepts. However, if any of them have violated the Precepts they have taken and fear falling into the Lower Realms, they should concentrate on reciting the name of the Buddha and respectfully make offerings to him. They will then certainly avoid rebirth in the Three Lower Realms.

“If women who experience extreme pain during childbirth can, with utmost sincerity, recite the Tathagata’s name, praise, venerate and make offerings to him, they will be relieved of their suffering.



“The children born to them will be without defects, attractive in appearance, causing those who see them to rejoice. They will be endowed with keen senses and intelligence, along with a quiet disposition. They will seldom become ill, nor will evil spirits sap their vital energy.”

The World-Honored One then asked Ananda: [\[0407a17\]](#)

“I have just extolled the merits and virtues of the World-Honored **Medicine Master Lapis Lazuli Radiance Tathagata**. These merits and virtues are shared by all Buddhas and are difficult to comprehend. Do you have faith in them or not?”

Ananda respectfully replied: “O, Great Virtuous World-Honored One, I do not have any doubts about the sutras preached by all the Tathagatas. Why? It is because the Tathagatas’ karma of body, speech and mind are all pure. O, World-Honored One, the sun and the moon may fall, Mount Sumeru, the majestic king of mountains, may tremble, but the words of the Buddhas can never change.





“O, World-Honored One, some sentient beings, whose roots of faith are deficient, may hear of the merits and virtues of the Buddhas and think, ‘how can we obtain such great advantages just by reciting the name of the **Medicine Master Lapis Lazuli Radiance Tathagata** alone?’ Because of this lack of faith, they even develop disparaging thoughts, thus forfeiting great benefits, and remaining in the long, dark night of ignorance. Again and again, they will descend to the Lower Realms.”

The Buddha then said to Ananda: “If these sentient beings should hear the name of the World-Honored **Medicine Master Lapis Lazuli Radiance Tathagata**, single-mindedly recite and hold fast to it without harboring doubts, then it will be impossible for them to sink down to the Lower Realms.

“O, Ananda! These extremely profound practices of the Buddhas are difficult to believe in, difficult to understand. Yet you are now able to accept them. You should realize that this is all due to the awesome power of the Tathagatas.



“O, Ananda! Even the Sravakas, Pratyeka Buddhas, and Bodhisattvas who have not reached the Tenth Ground cannot understand and believe in this truth. Only the Bodhisattvas who are one lifetime away from Buddhahood can understand and believe it.

“O, Ananda! A human rebirth is difficult to achieve. To believe in, respect and honor the Triple Jewel is even more difficult. To hear the name of the World-Honored **Medicine Master Lapis Lazuli Radiance Tathagata** is more difficult still.

“O, Ananda, the **Medicine Master Lapis Lazuli Radiance Tathagata** has cultivated countless Bodhisattva practices, employed countless skillful means, and made countless far-reaching vows. If I were to take a kalpa or more to recount them, this would still not be enough time to exhaustively describe all these wonderful practices, vows, and skillful means.”



At that time, a Great Bodhisattva in the Assembly, named Gotal Bosal [救脫菩薩], arose from his seat, adjusted his robe to bare his right shoulder, knelt on his right knee, bowed and, with palms joined, respectfully addressed the Buddha:

“O, Great Virtuous World-Honored One, in the Dharma Semblance Age there will be sentient beings who suffer numerous calamities, and are always sick and emaciated, unable to eat or drink, their throats dry and lips parched, their eyes seeing darkness everywhere. As the signs of death appear, they are surrounded by parents, family, friends, and acquaintances weeping and lamenting.

“As such patients lie in bed Yama sends his messengers, whose job is to lead the consciousness of the dying person to appear before the King of Justice. Now, all sentient beings have inborn spirits who record everything they do, both their transgressions and their merits. These spirits then present the patient’s entire record to Yama, King of Justice.



“At that time Yama questions the dying person and tabulates their good and bad karma before deciding upon their fate.

“If, at that point, the relatives and acquaintances of the patient are able to take refuge in the World-Honored **Medicine Master Lapis Lazuli Radiance Tathagata** on behalf of the patient, invite monks and nuns to recite this sutra, light seven-tiered lamps and hang five-colored longevity banners, the patient’s consciousness may return then and there, and the patient will remember everything that has happened, as if it had been a dream.

“Or else, after 7, 21, 35, or 49 days, the patient may then regain consciousness, and, as if awakening from a dream, will recall everything that was witnessed about the consequences of good and bad karma.

“Having personally witnessed the consequences of karma, such persons will never again create evil karma, even if their lives are in danger.



“Therefore, men and women of pure faith should uphold the name of the **Medicine Master Lapis Lazuli Radiance Tathagata**, venerate, and make offerings to him according to their means.”

[0407c01]

Ananda then asked Gotal Bosal: “Good Man, how should we venerate and make offerings to the World-Honored **Medicine Master Lapis Lazuli Radiance Tathagata** and how should we make the longevity pennants and lamps?”

Gotal Bosal replied: “Virtuous One, in order to help the patient recover, you should adhere to the Eight Precepts for seven days and seven nights, make offerings of food, drink and other necessities to monks and nuns in accordance with your means, pay homage and respectfully make offerings to the World-Honored **Medicine Master Lapis Lazuli Radiance Tathagata** six times a day and recite this sutra forty-nine times.



“You should light forty-nine lamps, make seven images of the Tathagata and place seven lamps, each as large as a cartwheel, before each image, letting them burn continuously for forty-nine days and nights. You should also make five-colored banners, forty-nine hand-lengths long.

“Furthermore, you should release forty-nine species of animals, thus sparing their lives.

“The patient may then escape danger and will not be under the sway of evil demons, nor subject to untimely death.

[0407c13]

“Moreover, Ananda, when the anointed Ksatriya kings find themselves beset by calamities, such as epidemics, foreign invasion, internal insurrection, an adverse alignment of the stars, an eclipse of the sun or the moon, unseasonable storms, or a failure of the monsoons, they should develop compassionate feelings toward all sentient beings.



“They should also pardon prisoners and make offerings to the World-Honored **Medicine Master Lapis Lazuli Radiance Tathagata** in accordance with the rites described earlier.

“Thanks to these good roots and the power of the Tathagata’s original vows, peace and stability will immediately return to the affected countries; the rains and winds will be favorable; crops will mature on time, and everyone will be healthy and happy. The country will be free of evil Yakcha demons out to harm the populace. All the evil omens will immediately disappear, and these anointed Ksatriya kings will enjoy greater longevity and vitality, and finer appearance, as well as greater health and freedom than ever before.

“O, Ananda, the queens, consorts, princesses, royal heirs, great ministers, court ladies, officials or commoners who suffer disease and other misfortunes should also make offerings to the Medicine Buddha.



“They should make five-colored longevity banners, light lamps, ensuring that they burn continuously, liberate all kinds of animals, scatter flowers of various colors and burn various kinds of incense renowned for their fragrance. They will then recover from disease and escape misfortune.”

Ananda then asked Gutal Bosal: “Good Man, how can an expiring lifespan be lengthened?”

Gutal Bosal replied: “Virtuous One, did you not hear the Tathagata explain the nine forms of untimely death? I would urge everyone to make longevity banners and lamps and cultivate merits and virtues. Thanks to such cultivation, they will escape suffering and misfortune throughout their lives.”

[0407c28]

Ananda further asked: “What are the nine forms of untimely death?”





Gutal Bosal replied: “Some sentient beings contract a minor illness which goes untreated for lack of a physician or medicine; or else, even when there is access to physicians and medicines, the wrong medicine is prescribed, causing premature death. Or, the patients, believing the false pronouncements of earthly demons, evil teachers, or practitioners of black magic, may panic – unable to calm their minds.

“They may then engage in divination or perform animal sacrifices to propitiate the spirits, praying for blessings and longevity – all in vain. Through ignorance, confusion, and reliance on wrong, inverted views, they meet with untimely death and sink into the hells, with no end in sight. This is the first form of untimely death.

“The second form is execution by royal decree. The third is losing one’s vitality to the demons through hunting, gambling, debauchery, drunkenness, or extreme dissipation. The fourth is death by fire; the fifth is death by drowning. The sixth is being devoured by wild animals. The seventh is falling off a mountain or a cliff.



“The eighth is death by poison, incantations, evil mantras, or demons-raised-from-the-dead. The ninth is from hunger or thirst, for lack of food and water.

“These are the nine forms of untimely death mentioned by the Tathagatas. There are also countless other forms, which are too numerous to describe.

“Moreover, Ananda, Yama is responsible for keeping the karmic register of everyone in the world.

“If sentient beings have been unfilial, committed the five heinous crimes, disparaged the Triple Jewel, broken the laws of the land, or violated the major Precepts, Yama evaluates the severity of their wrong deeds and decides on their fate.

“Therefore, I urge sentient beings to light lamps, make banners, liberate animals, and cultivate merits in order to avoid suffering and misfortune.”



At that time, there were twelve powerful Yakcha Daejangs in the Great Assembly named:

1. **Gung Bi La Daejang,**
2. **Beol Jeol La Daejang,**
3. **Mi Gi La Daejang,**
4. **An Jeo La Daejang,**
5. **Al Ni La Daejang,**
6. **San Jeo La Daejang,**
7. **In Dal La Daejang,**
8. **Pa I La Daejang,**
9. **Ma Ho La Daejang,**
10. **Jin Dal La Daejang,**
11. **Cho Du La Daejang, and**
12. **Bi Gal La Daejang.**

Each was accompanied by a retinue of 7,000 Yakchas.

They all raised their voices in unison and said respectfully to the Buddha:



“O, World-Honored One, today, thanks to the Buddha’s awesome power, we have succeeded in hearing the name of the **Medicine Master Lapis Lazuli Radiance Tathagata** and no longer fear descending to the Lower Realms.

“Together, with one mind, we take refuge in the Buddha, the Dharma, and the Sangha for the rest of our lives and pledge to support all sentient beings – bringing them genuine benefits and joy.

“Wherever this sutra circulates or wherever there are sentient beings who hold fast to the name of the **Medicine Master Lapis Lazuli Radiance Tathagata** and respectfully make offerings to him, whether in villages, towns, kingdoms or in the wilderness, we will all protect them. We will release them from all suffering and calamities and see to it that all their wishes are fulfilled.

“Sentient beings afflicted by disease or calamity and wishing to escape should also read or recite this sutra. Using a five-colored cord, they should tie a knot for each of our names, untying them when their wishes are fulfilled.”



Thereupon, Buddha Sakyamuni praised the great Yakcha Daejangs with these words: “Good indeed, good indeed, great Yakcha Daejangs! Those of you who wish to repay the benevolence and the virtues of the World-Honored **Medicine Master Lapis Lazuli Radiance Tathagata** should always benefit and bring joy to all sentient beings in this way.”

Ananda then asked the Buddha: “World-Honored One, what should we call this teaching, and how should we adhere to it and put it into practice?”

Buddha Sakyamuni replied to Ananda: “This teaching is called the ‘Original Vows, Merits and Virtues of the **Medicine Master Lapis Lazuli Radiance Tathagata**’ or the ‘Dharani of the Vows of the Twelve Yakcha Daejangs to Benefit Sentient Beings’ or ‘Removing All Karmic Obstacles’. You should uphold it as such.”



When the Bhagavan finished speaking, the great Bodhisattvas, as well as the great Sravakas, kings, ministers, brahmins, lay-persons, Gods, Dragons, Yakchas, Geondalbas, Asuras, Garudas, Kinnaras, Mahoragas, and other human and non-human beings all rejoiced at the Buddha's words. They faithfully accepted them and put them into practice.

## **End of the Sutra of the Medicine Master Lapis Lazuli Radiance Tathagata**



## Chanting the Names of the Twelve Yakcha Daejangs

**namu bul ta bujung gwang nim beop he**

Homage to the Buddha and his attendants, who honor this Dharma Assembly with their presence.

**namu dal ma bujung gwang nim beop he**

Homage to the Dharm and its attendants, who honor this Dharma Assembly with their presence.

**namu seung ga bujung gwang nim beop he**

Homage to the Sangha and their attendants, who honor this Dharma Assembly with their presence.

**namu dong bang man wol se gye shib i sang won**

Homage to the East Direction Full Moon Pure Land 12 Supreme Vows

**jo cheong pal bu jin eon** [Mantra inviting the eight types of Heavenly Beings]

**om salba dibaniga anari sabaha (8x)**

1. **gung bi la dae jang** (16x each)
2. **beol jeol la dae jang**
3. **mi gi la dae jang**
4. **an jeo la dae jang**
5. **al ni la dae jang**
6. **san jeo la dae jang**
7. **in dal la dae jang**
8. **pa i la dae jang**
9. **ma ho la dae jang**
10. **jin dal la dae jang**
11. **cho du la dae jang**
12. **bi gal la dae jang**



**myeor eop jang darani** (Dharani to Remove Karmic Obstacles)  
**om bara mani dani sabaha** (3x)

**won seong chwi jin eon** (Mantra to Accomplish Great Aspirations)  
**om a mo ka sal ba da ra sa da ya shi be hum** (3x)

**bul sol so jae gil sang darani** (Dharani for Good Fortune and to Eliminate Disasters)  
**na mu sa man da mot ta nam a ba ra ji**  
**ha da sa sa na nam danyata**  
**om ka ka ka hye ka hye hum hum a ba ra**  
**a bara bara abara bara abara**  
**ji tta ji tta ji ri ji ri bba da bba da**  
**son ji ga shi ri ye sabaha** (3x)

**bo gweol jin eon** (Mantra for Repairing Mistakes)  
**om ho ro ho ro sa ya mo ke sabaha** (3x)

**bo ho hyang jin eon** (Mantra of Universal Dedication)  
**om sa ma ra sa ma ra mi ma ra ja ra ma ja geo ra ba ra**  
**hum** (3x)

(Praising the Buddha's Infinite Virtues and Merit, from the Avatamsaka Sutra)

**chal jin shib yeom ga su ji**  
**dae hae jung su ga eum jin**  
**heo gong ga ryang pung ga gye**  
**mu neung jin seol bul gong deog**





## **Four Great Vows**

(Sino-Korean)

**bal sa hong seo won**

**jung saeng mu byeon seo won do**

**boen noe mu jin seo won dan**

**beom mun mu ryang seo won hak**

**bul to mu sang seo won seong**

(English)

**Sentient beings are numberless, we vow to save them all**

**Delusions are endless, we vow to cut through them all**

**The teachings are infinite, we vow to learn them all**

**The Buddha Way is inconceivable, we vow to attain it**

(Sharing of Merit)

**May whatever excellent qualities**

**We have gained from this practice**

**Be extended for the benefit of all beings.**



## Endnote on the English text of the Sutra used in “Removing All Karmic Obstacles”

The English language version of the Medicine Buddha Sutra used in the “Removing All Karmic Obstacles” practice was prepared by Zen Master Cheong Se Do. It is based on Xuanzang’s Chinese version of the Sutra, which was translated from the Sanskrit in the 7<sup>th</sup> century AD. The blue numbers in brackets that appear on most pages correspond to the section numbers found in the online Chinese version of the Sutra available at the website of the Chinese Buddhist Electronic Text Association here:

[https://tripitaka.cbeta.org/T14n0450\\_001](https://tripitaka.cbeta.org/T14n0450_001)

In preparing this version, extensive use was made of the English translations by (1) Minh Thanh and P.D. Leigh (who produced their translation with the guidance of Dharma Master Hsuan Jung), (2) Raoul Birnbaum, and (3) the Fo Guang Shan International Translation Center.

Thanh and Leigh’s translation is freely available online here:

[https://www.buddhanet.net/pdf\\_file/medbudsutra.pdf](https://www.buddhanet.net/pdf_file/medbudsutra.pdf)

Raoul Birnbaum’s translation is included in his book *The Healing Buddha*:

<https://www.shambhala.com/the-healing-buddha-699.html>

The Fo Guang Shan International Translation Center’s translation is available in the book *Sutra of the Medicine Buddha with Teachings Dharma Rites and Prayers* by Venerable Master Hsing Yun:

<https://www.blpusacorp.com/sutra-of-the-medicine-buddha/>

One significant aspect of the version of the sutra used in the “Removing All Karmic Obstacles” practice is the replacement of Xuanzang’s text of the 8<sup>th</sup> Great Vow with the version found in the “Ta Li scroll”, using the English translation by Raoul Birnbaum from his book *The Healing Buddha* (p. 64 of



the Shambhala 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition). Birnbaum’s translation is based on the one by Edith Chapin and Alexander Soper in the book *A Long Scroll of Buddhist Images*.

In the version of the Sutra used in this practice, the names of Bodhisattvas, as well as the names of the Yakcha Daejangs, are given using the Korean pronunciation. It’s important to understand that these are actually the Chinese names as found in Xuanzang’s version of the Sutra, but the Traditional Chinese characters are transliterated with their Sino-Korean pronunciation. It’s also important to know that no one really knows how Classical Chinese was pronounced in the Tang dynasty, when Xuanzang lived and worked.

Another thing to note about this version of the Sutra is that whenever Xuanzang uses the “full name” of the Medicine Buddha, 藥師琉璃光如來, this is rendered in full in English (and always in **bold**) as **Medicine Master Lapis Lazuli Radiance Tathagata**.

Finally, neither the Medicine Buddha Dharani nor the names of the “8 Great Bodhisattvas” are found in Xuanzang’s original text. However, these are traditionally included in the practice of reciting the Medicine Buddha Sutra, and that tradition is honored in this English version.

Everyone should follow Shakyamuni Buddha’s advice to pursue “extensive study of the Dharma” with the goal of understanding “the profound meaning of the sutras preached by the Buddha”. At the same time, we must never become conceited, like those who “believe that they are in the right and others are in the wrong”, for they “deprecate the Correct Dharma – and ally themselves with demons.” Fortunately, simply hearing the name of the Medicine Buddha is all it takes to reminds us to “abandon all conceit”. Then we can “gradually cultivate the practices of Bodhisattvas and swiftly perfect them.”

Zen Master Cheong Se Do (清世道), March 10, 2024

[The most recent version of this document should always be available for free download in pdf format here: <https://www.mindisbuddha.org/class-uploads/removing-all-karmic-obstacles.pdf>.]



## Appendix: On Hakuin’s Prayer for “imperceptible help”

At the age of 19, Hakuin experienced an intense spiritual crisis. He had already been a Buddhist monk for several years, but he was despondent over his lack of progress. He thought to himself: “What a pitiful creature I am. I look like a monk but I’m not. I resemble a layman too, but I’m not a layman. I’m not a Confucian, a Shintoist, or follower of Lao Tzu or Chuang Tzu either. Will I ever be able to confirm my ‘Mind Master’? What is to become of me!” At this point he broke down in tears.

In Hakuin’s autobiographical account, he tells us that he was all alone in the small temple where he lived at the time. As “streams of tears” continued to cascade down his cheeks, he looked up and saw the temple’s Guest Hall. It just so happened that at this time all the books had been removed from the temple’s library and were stacked up on desks in this Guest Hall (“for the annual airing of the temple library”).

The head priest of this Temple was a great scholar, but also very harsh with his students. The only reason Hakuin put up with the at times brutal treatment was because “no one else in the present age can match his wise learning, not to speak of his mastery of poetry and literature. I could hardly hope to encounter another teacher like him.” One imagines that this Temple, under the guidance of such a great scholar, must have had quite an extensive library, the entire contents of which was now right in front of Hakuin.

Gazing at these piles of books, Hakuin lit incense, performed prostrations, “and prayed earnestly to the Gods and Buddhas for their guidance.” This is the point at which Hakuin spontaneously uttered his prayer for “imperceptible help.” Having prayed, he then closed his eyes and “slowly approached a pile of books on one of the desks.” Hakuin continues: “I reached out with my thumb and forefinger and fished blindly among the stacks until I had fixed on a single volume among them. I pulled it out, raised it high above my head several times in veneration. Then I opened it. What a risky gamble I had taken! I might have pulled out a book on medicine or ritual, mathematics or divination, a biography or history, or some Confucian work. Yet marvelously, from among all those volumes, I had chosen ***Spurring Zen Students Through the Barrier!*** What a wonderful stroke of luck it was for me!”

Hakuin was to carry this book with him for the rest of his life. The quote from the *Longer Sukhāvativyūha Sūtra* that is part of the “Removing All Karmic Obstacles” practice is from the same book.

[Quotes are from Norman Waddell’s [Hakuin’s Precious Mirror Cave](#).]



# Glossary

[nothing here yet .....]

