

of divine activity. However, this activity must be part of the natural processes themselves: “What if the regularities of nature were fashioned in a way that they *themselves* allowed for the divine?” [p. 191] In the most fascinating section of his book, Miller applies nuclear physics to evolutionary theory to argue that there may be more going on than meets the scientific eye. Miller draws attention to the fact that science works because it is based on causality: it is able to determine what causes what and make predictions. From this perspective, nature can be seen as a complex but deterministic system in which A causes B causes C, etc. However, when we enter the subatomic world, this concept of reality breaks down. Quantum physics has discovered that unpredictability is built into the subatomic world itself. The very structure of nature itself means that “we cannot predict in advance what will happen, no matter how precise our knowledge of the system might be” [p. 200]. The reader may ask what the subatomic world has to do with the evolution of species, but Miller is quick to point out that genetic mutations, which are one of the driving forces of evolution, take place because of events at the subatomic level: “In other words, evolutionary history can turn on a very, very small dime – the quantum state of a single subatomic particle” [p. 207]. Humans, therefore, can not have ultimate knowledge of what causes what. For Miller, the religious consequences of these findings are profound: “That ought to allow even the most critical scientist to admit that the breaks in causality at the atomic level make it fundamentally *impossible* to exclude the idea that what we have really caught a glimpse of might indeed reflect the mind of God” [p. 214]. Although Miller does not say so explicitly, the fact of quantum uncertainty makes it possible to believe in a God who shapes natural history within the laws of nature themselves.

Darel R. Falk’s and Kenneth R. Miller’s arguments are invaluable contributions to the evolution vs. God debate. They show that the debate itself is wrong footed and reflects both poor science and poor religious belief. One can only hope that what they have to say will eventually be heard in a debate that at the moment is more shaped by acrimony, rhetoric and ideological intransigence than any form of reasonable inquiry.

– Kenneth A. Locke

## **Awakening to the Infinite Light: The Heart of Amitabha Sutra**

**By Kodo Matsunami  
Tokyo : Buddhist Searchlight Center  
2006, 224pp**

The *Amitabha Sūtra* (*Sukhāvāṭīvyūha Sūtra* [Sutra of the Buddha of Infinite Light] is one of the most widely read / chanted sutras. This text recounts the world of Ultimate Bliss, the Pure Land, into which those who trust in Amitabha (Amida) Buddha’s Vows and embrace various forms of Pure Land discipline are born. This sutra was translated by an imperial edict of the Later Qin (384 – 417). The great translator Kumārajīva undertook the translation project. The Chinese and Japanese have been greatly influenced by the version made by Kumārajīva.

This *Amitabha Sutra* depicts an ideal world, a “Land of Bliss” that is located in the West Paradise. Adherents believe that Amitabha Buddha provided an alternate practice towards attaining enlightenment: the Pure Land. Instead of solitary

meditative work toward enlightenment, Pure Land Buddhism teaches that devotion to Amitabha will lead one to the Pure Land from which enlightenment will be guaranteed. Chinese Buddhist devotees believe that they can achieve their goal – to be reborn in Amitabha's Western Paradise by invoking and repeating the name of Amitabha as often as possible to reinforce a proper and sincere state of mind. Thus this scripture is one of the most important as well as popular scriptures in Chinese Buddhism as it is often part of the evening service. It is also frequently recited at Buddhist funeral services. The bereaved family members hope that the merit generated by reciting the sutra may be transmitted to the departed.

As this scripture was introduced into Japan, According to the author, more than half of the Japanese today are registered as Buddhists, and Buddhism in Japan today is organized into 13 sects comprised of 56 sub-sects. When the average Japanese wants to find a prayer for the repose of the souls of the departed, the phrase that most of them choose is Namu Amita Butsu. Thus, this Amitabha Sutra is not a sutra solely for the relief of the souls of the deceased. It is the sutra that consoles and encourages people who are in difficulties that cannot be solved by general knowledge.

The Amitabha Sutra has many English translations. Each scholar cudged his brains to work out the best translation as he could. For instance, “舍利弗。極樂國土，成就如是功德莊嚴” is an extremely difficult sentence. Let us see the following versions.

1. “The realization of The Land of Ultimate Bliss is thus meritoriously adorned,” translated by Venerable Hsuanhua;

2. “in the Land of Supreme Bliss , good qualities and ornaments like these are brought to perfection” translated by Professor Luis Gomez;
3. “This Realm of Ultimate Bliss is splendidly adorned with such excellence to bring about awakening” translated by Professor Kodo Matsunami.

Here we can see that Venerable Hsuanhua made painstaking effort not to neglect the meaning of “merit” in his translation while Professor Gomez conveys the meaning of obtaining the perfection. Professor Matsunami’s translation demonstrates the obtaining of awakening as well as the splendid scene being ornamented. The word “awakening” gives full expression to the purpose of the supreme realm in this Ultimate Bliss Land.

When we read the translation for the word “天樂” in the next sentence, we can find that Professor Matsunami translated it as “music playing to lighten the heart.” He believes that such music can bring the enlightenment to the hearers. Professor Gomez rendered it as “celestial music.” Venerable Hsuanhua translated it as “heavenly music.” Here I think that Professor Gomez brought an aesthetic meaning with a vivid touch in his translation.

Professor Matsunami offers detailed annotations to this *Amitabha Sūtra*. He divided the scripture into forty-seven sects. Then in each sect, he spends two or more pages in explaining things to help readers to understand the *Amitabha Sūtra*. The uniqueness of this book is demonstrated in Professor’s comment on and explanations to the scripture sentence by sentence. Starting from Section 9 in Chapter 2, he begins to tell reader about how Buddhism was introduced to Japan and developed there.

In the last two sections, Professor Matsunami first looks back to the

background of the *Amitabha Sutra*. He narrates how this scripture was translated into Chinese and its influence in both China and Japan. *Amitabha Sūtra*, *The Shorter Sukhāvāṭīvyūha Sūtra*, and *The Longer Sukhāvāṭīvyūha Sūtra* are regarded as the Three Pure Land Sutras. The Buddhists attach importance to the recitation of “Namu Amida Butsu (repetition of the invocation of Amitabha’s name” in order to achieve happiness. The recitation as a ritual is used to consolidate the state of mind.

Finally, Professor Matsunami dwells on the modern significance of the *Amitabha Sūtra*. We live in a more comfortable and convenient world, full of material wealth and developments in science and technology. However, we are swayed by desires, tormented by doubts and fears, conflicts, wars, and strife. People tend to believe that living a long life and making more money, material goods, fame and power are the things that make them happy. Life is dear, but Professor Matsunami believes that the rebirth in the Pure Land shows that we do not only move into that other world, but also return to this world and teach those who continue living the value and significance of human life. To return to this world, we do our best to save the other human beings from the suffering. This is the true value of human life and the spirit of Pure Land.

– Darui Long

## **The World is One Flower: Buddhist Leadership for Peace**

**Edited by Chanju Mun**  
**Blue Pine Books, Honolulu, Hawaii,**  
**2006. V+291 pp.**  
**ISBN 0-977553-2-0**

Dr. Chanju Mun edited and published five books in the year 2006. *The World is One Flower: Buddhist Leadership for Peace* is the one he edited and published last year. More than sixteen people contributed papers to this book.

Venerable Daewon Ki founded and led the International Seminars on Buddhism and Leadership for Peace, biannually held seven times during the period from 1983 to 1995.

This book edited by Dr. Chanju Mun collected twenty-one essays submitted to the first and second international seminars initiated by Venerable Daewon Ki in 1983 and 1985.

In his preface, Dr. Chanju offers readers information on a series of conferences in which the organizers tried to bring together Buddhists from Asia, Europe and America to discuss issues concerned. Even North Korean representatives were invited to participate in the conferences for further understanding and communication. Buddhists of both North and South Korea were able to pray together for the reunification between two Koreas. This shows that Buddhists were able to go beyond politics because of their commitment to peace and prosperity, the common goal of mankind.

The contributors provided valuable insights into the topic of “Buddhism and Leadership for Peace” through their own experiences and viewpoints, and in their specific situations. These articles written more than twenty years ago are still