

How to Visualize Amitabha at the Time of Death  
Explained by H.E. Garchen Rinpoche  
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Om Ah Hung

We should all pray to Buddha Amitabha that we will be born in Dewachen when we die. In praying to Buddha Amitabha, some people might think that there is a big Amitabha state somewhere; but that is not how it is. In reality, there are as many Amitabhas as there are sentient beings, and the outer nirmanakaya form of Amitabha should be visualized above one's crown. On the inner level, one's mind is buddha-nature, as are all the minds of all sentient beings. The visualization of the outer nirmanakaya is important. When you visualize Amitabha, what is the benefit?

Our mind is like a mirror—primordially pure, as is said in Dzogchen, and beings are primordially buddhas, as the Buddha said. This mind is the Buddha. The mind does not exist as something substantial: it is clear and empty. So, it is not that it is nothing, because it is clear, but it is also not something, because it is empty, like a mirror. Due to this, if you have faith and trust in Amitabha and you instantly remember Amitabha, the mind becomes Amitabha in that very moment. But if you think of "I" and you cling to the "I", all the imprints and karma gathered within that self since beginning-less time will cause you to continue to wander in samsara. When you see this, you are a Buddha; and if you don't see it, you are a sentient being wandering in samsara.

When you are dying, if you give rise to faith in Buddha Amitabha—if you just think of Amitabha and visualize Buddha Amitabha above the crown—in that moment the mind becomes Amitabha, and the appearance of Dewachen will arise. The light of Amitabha naturally displays as Dewachen, and I am explaining this in order to cut through any doubts about it. If you have cultivated devotion to Amitabha from the bottom of your heart, then later when you know that you are dying, you just think of Amitabha at that time. Then, the moment the consciousness leaves the body, it becomes Amitabha, and you take birth in Dewachen. This should be understood.

We can use a picture of Amitabha and the Prayer of Dewachen to train in this. The example I gave is that the nature of mind is like a mirror; that is what I wanted to explain. Our Dharma friends should develop faith in Amitabha and should remember Amitabha, because whatever you think of when you die will appear to you. So when you think Amitabha, that is what will appear, there is no doubt. Therefore, you can develop a trusting faith in Buddha Amitabha.

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