Nine Grades Stages of Achievement in Pure Land Buddhism

What do the Nine Grades Stages Signify?

According to the Contemplation Sūtra, the right whole acts (P: Saṁmā kaṁmaṁta; S: Samyak-karmānta; C: 正業) are represented by nine grades of lotuses. In this regard, it needs to be ascertained that as compared to the factors of dependent origination of cause, it is the “Threefold merit” which represent the true cause. Likewise, the right deeds are represented by “three realms of the nine grades”. Thus, once the practitioners are in a position to accomplished the true cause (threefold merit), they will easily find themselves in a position to perform the right deeds as well.

What does the term ‘threefold merit’ essentially stands for? It can be briefly described in the following way.

The first of the merit is worldly or mundane goodness including good actions in general, or common type (S: Laukika) of good roots (S: Kusala-mùla). It implies that even though the practitioners do not actually comprehend the Buddha Dharma, they can still realize the principles of human conduct such as filial piety, respect for elders, loyalty, faithfulness, etc. all by themselves.

The second merit lies in observing the precepts which are together called the goodness of Śīla or morality (P: Śīla; C: 持戒). It must be kept in mind in this regard that there are differences between Śīla for deva, the man (S: Purusa), the hearer (S: Sràvaka), a being who aspires for enlightenment (S: Bodhisattva). Exhortation to practise morality or virtue (S: Śīla) is included in this goodness. Certain assumptions attributed to it are as follows:
There are accomplishments of Śīla;
There are not enough accomplishments of Śīla;
There are neither observations nor accomplishments of Śīla;
There are no accomplishments of Śīla, etc.
If they just make great vows and transfer merits for the rebirth in the Pure Land, then they can be there.

The third of the merit is that of belonging to the spiritual or supramundane world of good roots, etc. in which the practitioner should read and recite the Mahāyāna Sūtras (大乘經), practice the six Pāramitās (六度波羅蜜) or perfections of certain virtues, accomplish the four Satyas (真理) or truths and all other pure and good actions such as persuading others to hear the Law, the law of cause and effect. If, on the other hand, a practitioner who do not practice in one of the threefold merit, will be said to be belonging to the ten evil things (S: Dasàkusala; Ch: 十善業道), the heretical views (S: Drsti)\(^1\) or Icchantika (一闡提). However, the threefold merit is the way for the practitioner who would want to attain one of the three rankings of the nine grades in the Pure Land of the Amitābha Buddha.

In order to exactly understand the nine grades of rebirth in the Amitāyur-dyāna Sūtra (佛説觀無量壽佛經), the Sūtra of Contemplation of the Buddha of Infinite Life (hereafter referred to as the Contemplation Sūtra “Ch: Kuan-Ching or 觀經”) has a scriptural source. Therefore, the Contemplation Sūtra emphasizes the concept of Vipaśanā or 観 (contemplation in which practitioners are required to experience on the

\(^1\) The Sanskrit word “Drsti” comes from the verb “Drs” which means “to see”. Drsti refers to the “gaze, seeing, inner sight, vision, opinion”...
sixteen-step contemplation). It is stated here: “Every known author of extant commentaries on the Kuan-ching tried his hand at ranking the nine grades within the framework of the traditional Buddhist Path. Although the Kuan-ching was the only sutra to discuss the nine grades, this issue so captivated Pure Land exegetes that even authors in treatises and commentaries on other sutras felt compelled to express their views on the subject.”

The concept of the Pure Land Buddhism has its roots in India and was introduced to China during the latter half of the second century AD through translations of Sūtras. Furthermore, the concept of nine grades of rebirth had become influential text by the late sixth century, although, in general, it was regarded as an apocryphal work. The most widely discussed on the significance of the nice grades of rebirth focused on the two famous Pure Land Patriarchs in the modern time. These were Hui-Yuan (慧 远) and Shan-Tao (善 導) who contributed to the ranking of the nice grades of rebirth for the foreordained social status, occupation and karma of the practitioners. Thus, the ranking of the nine grades of Hui-Yuan can be delineated as follows:

1) Highest of high Mahāyāna: Fourth Bhūmi and above
2) Middle of high Mahāyāna: Firth three Bhūmis
3) Lowest of high Mahāyāna: Practice of Resolution and Lineage stages
4) Highest of middle Hīnayāna: People of the initial three [Āryapudgala] stages (Stream-winner, Once-retener, Non-retuner)
5) Middle of middle Hīnayāna: Inner and Outer Prthagjanas prior to Path of Insight
6) Lowest of middle Hīnayāna: Worldly Prthagjanas prior to Path of Insight

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3 Ibid, pp. 82-83. Also see: T 1749.37.182a12-c22.
7) Highest of low Mahāyāna: Outer Prthagjanas. Those who have begun to train in the Mahāyāna path. They are not even in the Path ranking.

8) Middle of low Mahāyāna: Outer Prthagjanas. Those who have begun to train in the Mahayana path. They are not even in the Path ranking.

9) Lowest of low Mahāyāna: Outer Prthagjanas. Those who have begun to train in the Mahāyāna path. They are not even in the Path ranking.

Similarly, Shan-tao’s ranking can be summed up as follows:4

1) Highest of high Mahāyāna: Prthagjanas] of utmost virtue

2) Middle of high Mahāyāna: Mahāyāna Prthagjanas

3) Lowest of high Mahāyāna: [Prthagjanas] who generate the Mahāyāna mind

4) Highest of middle Hinayāna: Prthagjanas who observe Hinayāna precepts.

5) Middle of middle Hinayāna: Prthagjanas without virtues

6) Lowest of middle Hinayāna: [Prthagjanas] who have not encountered the Buddha Dharma [prior to their deathbed]

7) Highest of low Mahāyāna: Prthagjanas who require the help of a teacher

8) Middle of low Mahāyāna: [Prthagjanas] who cannot maintain [precepts]

9) Lowest of low Mahāyāna: [Prthagjanas] who commit such evil acts as the Five Grave Transgressions and the Ten Evils

In the light of the above mentioned classifications, we can understand that the ranks of Hui-Yuan (慧遠) are clearly assigned higher position. On the other hand, Shan-Tao’s ranking of the highest of the high grade is at par with or even lower than Hui-Yuan’s lowest of the low. However, neither is disputed in this case. Further, in the discussions on between Hui-Yuan (慧遠) and Shan-Tao (善導), it has been stated: “Hui-yuan

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4 Ibid, p. 83. Also see: T 1753.37.248b7-250a8.
explicitly assigns the nine grades as objects of visualization that directly inspire the devotees engaged in the visualizations towards higher ranks of rebirth in the Pure Land. *Shan-tao*, in contrast, treated the nine grades not as objects of visualization but as descriptive statements of the nature and capability of the devotees, with *Vaidehī* as an example of such a devotee”.

Furthermore, the idea of *Shan-tao* (善導) has been expressed in this way: “For *Shan-tao*, therefore, such *Bodhisattvas* need not resort to a *Prthagjana* such as *Vaidehī* who would petition the *Buddha* on their behalf to teach them about rebirth in the Pure Land”. Therefore, the idea of rebirth in the *Sukhāvatī*, in which embedded by the various degrees in the ranking of the nine grades. According to the Contemplation *Sūtra* (*Amitāyurdhyānasūtra*) ensures that all sentient beings will be reborn into the Western Paradise (*सुखावती / Sukhāvatī* or 極樂) of *Amitābha Buddha* (阿彌陀佛). It is the excellence of *Amitābha*’s grace toward all beings. In this connection, *Śākyamuni Buddha* (釋迦牟尼佛) preached to Queen *Vaidehī*, who in the Contemplation *Sūtra* (觀經) followed his secret instructions on the sixteen contemplations, and to *Ānanda*, a disciple, that people in the lowest grade of the lowest level of rebirth, who lack the knowledge of contemplation, could at the moment of death chant “*Namo Amitābha Buddha*” (南無阿彌陀佛) ten times to rid themselves of the past sins of eight hundred billion *kalpas* (劫 or measurements of time) or in the *Amitāyurdhyānasūtra* (觀無量壽佛經) stated that: “If you cannot concentrate on the Buddha then you should say instead, “Homage to *Amitābha Buddha* or 阿 彌 陀 佛.” In this way, he sincerely and continuously says, ‘Homage to *Amitābha Buddha’* (*Na-mo-o-mi-t’o-fo* or 南無阿彌陀佛) ten times. Because he calls the *Buddha’s Name*, with each repetition the evil karma

5 Ibid, pp. 84-85.
6 Ibid, p. 85.
that would bind him to birth and death for eighty koṭis of kalpas is extinguished.”

On the basis of this contextual connection, according to Hisao Inagaki and Harold Stewart, Shan-tao’s nine grades have been described thus:

“For Shan-tao (善導), therefore, such Bodhisattvas need not resort to a Prṭthagjana such as Vaidehī who would petition the Buddha on their behalf to teach them about rebirth in the Pure Land. These concerns make it clear that Shan-tao regarded the aspirants of the nine grades in the same context as that of Vaidehī.

“Based on Shan-tao’s argument in the Shan-tao Commentary, modern commentators have rejected Hui-yuan’s ranking because they insist that the instruction of the Kuan-ching was for the Prṭthagjana, not, as Hui-yuan and other masters’ claim, for the Āryapudgalas. Therefore, they argue that the nine grades cannot be assigned to the Āryapudgala stages as Hui-yuan did.”

However, the basis of this rejection should be inadequate understanding of the position of Hui-yuan (慧遠). In the beginning of Hui-yuan’s Commentary in the Kuan-ching appeared that Hui-yuan never contended for the intended of Āryapudgalas position. For Hui-yuan, given the nature of Pure Land and considered the Kuan-ching as instruction for Prṭthagjanas and not for Āryapudgalas, then Hui-yuan expressed that: “It is known [to be a sutra of the sudden teaching] because this sutra was taught specifically for Vaidehī, who, as will be explained below, was a Prṭthagjana.”

Furthermore, in order to clearly understand the commentarial tradition of the Kuan-ching, the eminent Dharma Master Hui-yuan (慧遠) comes to understand this context as:

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7 Hisao Inagaki and Harold Stewart, The Three Pure Land Sūtras, Numata Center for Buddhist Translation and Research, USA, 2003, p. 98.
9 Ibid, p. 85.
“In short, Hui-yuan’s contribution lies in having successfully integrated the nine grades into the orthodox Buddhist Path. Furthermore, it not only constituted the earliest known ranking of this sort but also served as the standard interpretation of this subject for many subsequent commentators.”\textsuperscript{10} However, Hui-yuan (慧遠) has agreed with Shan-tao (善導) that the Kuan-ching (善導) was taught for the Prthagjanas (人), and on the other hand, rank some of the nice grades as “Āryapudgalas”\textsuperscript{11}. Beside, Shan-tao (善導) has give assumption that the Āryapudgalas of the nine grades can be treated in the same context as Vaidehī.

After taking cognizance of what has been discussed above, Dharma Master Hsuan Hua (宣化上人) expressed the nine grades stage such as: “Each of the nine grades also has nine ranks, making eighty one (81) in all. Living beings in all of these grades are led to the other shore-Nirvana.”\textsuperscript{12} Therefore, sentient beings at different levels of the cosmic world are numberless. They live in the realms that belong to their different karmas (業). In this context, the awakened one saw that we live in the world of Desire Realm (欲界) according to our karmas of greed or desire, hatred or anger and ignorance (貪、嗔、痴) also known as The Three Fires.

Furthermore, we are living in the Realm of Desire (欲界) which is so called because of the existence of different types of desires including wealth desire, sex desire, fame desire, food desire, and sleep desire, etc. For the practitioners who really want to attain the realm of calm and happiness life, they have to cutting off all desires and surpass the boundary of the Desire Realm (欲界). In contrast, however, the numberlessness of

\textsuperscript{10} Ibid, p. 87.

\textsuperscript{11} Āryapudgala: means One who begins sincere training on the Buddhist path becomes a Āryapudgala (Pāli: ariyapuggala), a "noble person" who is eventually guaranteed enlightenment as an Arhat.

\textsuperscript{12} V. Master Hsuan Hua, “The Buddha Speaks of Amitābha Sūtra”, Buddhist Text Translation Society, CA, 2002, p.44.
sentient beings is very hard to control as the origin of suffering in the so called Desire Realm lies in greed, angry, ignorance, hatred, and worries. Therefore, in order to help all sentient beings to understand the strict rules of deed, speech, and thought, etc, the Lord Buddha has taught us the goal of deliverance in this present Sahā world (Sahā lokadhātu or 娑婆世界). Thus, in order to understanding the nine grades stage, in which relating the true cause and the right deeds, now, we should come to depict the three realms of the nine grades stage in the Pure Land.

1) The highest level of high grade

The Sūtra on Contemplation of Amitāyus (佛說觀無量壽佛經) says: “The Buddha said to Ānanda and Vaidehī, “Those who attain birth on the highest level of the highest grade are sentient beings that who resolve to be born in that land, awaken the three kinds of faith, and so are born there. What are the three [kinds of faith?] They are, first, sincere faith; second, deep faith; and third, the faith that seeks birth there by transferring one’s merit. Those who have these three kinds of faith will certainly be born there.

There are three other kinds of sentient beings who also attain birth. Who are the three [other kinds of sentient beings]? They are, first, those who have a compassionate heart, abstain from killing, and observe the precepts; second, those who chant the Mahāyāna Sūtras (大乘經典) of greater scope; and third, those who practice the six forms of mindfulness. They aspire to be born in that Buddha land by transferring there the merit of practice. With the merit acquired from doing these acts for one to seven days, they attain birth….

“After being born in that land, he sees the Buddha’s body (佛身) complete with all its physical characteristics and also the bodies of the bodhisattvas equally complete with all their physical characteristics. Hearing the discourse on the wonderful Dharma sent forth
by the light and the jeweled trees, he then reaches the insight into the non-arising of all dharmas. In a single moment, he visits and worships all the Buddhas of the ten directions and receives from each of them the prediction of his future Buddhahood (佛 果). Returning to the Pure Land, he is endowed with innumerable hundreds of thousands of dhāraṇis. Such a person is called one who attains birth on the highest level of the highest grade.”

In the above passage, the Buddha preaches belonging for the cultivators and practitioners in the highest stage of the highest grade. Therefore, the cultivators and practitioners of Mahāyāna (大 乘) capacity should strive towards becoming

a. The sentient beings that who have to resolve to be born in the Pure Land (淨 土) in deep faith.
b. The sentient beings that who intended to motivate the aspirants for rebirth in Pure Land of Amitābha Buddha.
c. The sentient beings that who to open the Bodhi-mind (Bodhicitta or 菩 提 心).
d. The sentient beings that who have to known the benefit of practitioners attainted rebirth in the Pure Land (淨 土).

As we have discussed above, this is the highest stage of the highest grade in the Pure Land (淨 土). Thus, according to master Shan-tao’s Commentary, the upper three ranking stages of the nine grades have been described in this way: “The highest of the high grade refers to the Bodhisattvas from the fourth Bhūmi up to the seventh Bhūmi. The middle of the high grade refers to Bodhisattvas from the first Bhūmi up to the fourth Bhūmi…The lowest of the high grade refers to Bodhisattvas from the Lineage stages up to the first

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Bhūmi….All these people of the three grades constitute the ranks wherein the Āryapudgalas of Mahāyāna are reborn.” However, it appears in this context that the contemporary of Shan-tao and a proponent of Pure Land teaching also regarded the Inner and Outer Prthagjanas as Āryapudgalas in his Pure Land Treatise.  

In general, according to the Contemplation Sūtra, the position of the highest stage of high grade is occupied by sentient beings that who resolve to be born in Pure Land, awaken the three kinds of faith, and so are born there. In this context, Śākyamuni Buddha (釋迦牟尼佛) has given that part of the canon spoken voluntarily and not in reply to questions or appeals (Udāna or 優陀那) for the benefit of sentient beings. Here are the three kinds of faith that have been found obligatory.

a) Sincere Faith

Faith is of great importance to the cultivators and practitioners. In the Avaṁsaka-Sūtra (華嚴經), it is stated that “Faith is the basis of the Path, the mother of virtues/Nourishing and growing all good ways…Faith can ensure arrival at enlightenment.” The practitioners lacking in Faith in their practice will not attain the state of enlightenment. In this context, the practitioners should observe the three conditions (Trividhā-dvāra) called deed, word, and thought rooted in sincere faith from their mind.

The practitioners would therefore want to be reborn in the Pure Land. To achieve this goal, they should first practice in the true of sincere mind. There are two kinds of the real

15 The differences arise in the interpretation of the term Prthagjanas and Āryapudgalas are reborn in the Pure Land. Therefore, the highest of the high grades is ranked the initial mind of the Ten-Transferences (Inner Prthagjanas), and the Outer Prthagjanas in which so called the initial mind of Ten-Faiths refers to the middle of the high grades.
nature (S: Tattva). The first one aims to benefit our own (S: Atmahitam; C: 自利 or 自度) real nature. In this case, the practitioners should prevent and leave all of the Non-Buddhist Dharmas whereas the four respect-inspiring forms of the demeanors in walking, standing, sitting, lying. The second one aims to benefit others (S: Parahita; C: 利他 or 度他) in real nature. In this case, the practitioners should practice all of the meritorious action (P. Kusala-kamma, S. Kuśala-karma, C. 善業) of the Bodhisattva path (菩薩道) by the true of sincere mind, viz. The work of the mouth (S: Vacì-karma) always to praise the being the dependent condition and being the resultant person of the Amitābha Buddha and to be weary with the life of the suffering of the threefold world (S: Tribhāva; C: 三界) of illusory existence in which sentient beings transmigrate and the six conditions of sentient existence (六道).

The karma operating in the body of the practitioners should practice the sincere respect to the Amitābha Buddha, to offer the four offerings to the Amitābha Buddha and the two kinds of being the dependent condition (依報) and being the resultant person (正報). And the function of thought, the practitioners should observe the Amitābha Buddha Name recitation and observe the dependent condition and being the resultant person in the Pure Land of Amitābha Buddha. Finally, the practitioners should destroyed the threefold of evil action and developed the threefold of good action by the true of sincere mind. Therefore, whenever the practitioners can attain on the above those mentioned, then we called the true of sincere mind (至誠心 or 真诚心).

b) Deep Faith

In the book of ‘Buddhism of Wisdom and Faith’ given stated: “The Deep Faith is not external words or discriminating thought; it is realization, the Pure Mind [True Mind]
without a trace of doubt.” Looking for an explanation this case, it is one of the threefold of faith in the Pure Land method is could not be missing; because, Deep Faith should help practitioners develop their sincere practice, indeed, Deep Faith is great benefit. Therefore, there are two kinds of deep faith. The first is Deep faith that our present here is the worldly man with heavy karmas in the circle of rebirths (Samsāra), or to wallow in the (Samsāra) world in which very difficult to get the good cause to overcome the Ocean suffering yet. The second is Deep Faith that the Amitābha Buddha with forty eighth Vows to help all sentient beings. Moreover, the practitioners should deep faith in this Contemplation Sūtra which preaches by the Śākyamuni Buddha with threefold of merit, the nine grades, the two kinds of being the dependent condition (依報) and being the resultant person (正報) in the Pure Land of Amitābha Buddha, etc. In this connection, however, according to the Dharma Master Thich Thien Tam, there are three levels such as: “The first element of the Mind of Faith encompasses Faith in the words of the Buddha and in the noumenal and phenomenal aspects of the Pure Land. The second element encompasses Faith in the great Vow of Amitābha Buddha and in his ‘other-power’ to save and lead us to rebirth. The third element encompasses belief in our own self-nature, our own vows, and the cause and effect of the Buddha Recitation practice. To truly recognize the above three factors is to have deep Faith.”

c) The Faith that seeks birth there by transferring one’s merit

The transfer merit acquired to aspiring to be born in the Pure Land in need. Therefore, whenever we have to mention to the Faith that seeks birth in the Pure Land by transferring merit that the practitioners should practice all good deeds from their three conditions (Trividhā-dvāra) which are called deed, word, thought, viz., the whatever we attained in the stage of all good deeds that transfer merit and aspiring to be born in the

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18 Ibid, p. 63.
Pure Land, keep deep Faith in mind. The practitioners could not attach in seeing, learning, understanding, and practicing in a different way. Therefore, the power of unfailing progress (Viryabala) leads the practitioners to be born in the Pure Land of the Amitābha Buddha’s compassionate and Vows. In this case, means that the practitioners who should practice the Buddha Dharma in an internal way represent the correct Faith that seeks birth in the Pure Land by transferring of merit.

However, whenever the practitioners accomplish the above three kinds of faith, then there is no reason to absent in the Pure Land of the Amitābha Buddha. According to the teaching of Pure Land Path, the practitioners should practice what is stated in the Sūtra: “There are three other kinds of sentient beings who also attain birth. Who are the three [other kinds of sentient beings]? They are, first, those who have a compassionate heart, abstain from killing, and observe the precepts; second, those who chant the Mahayana sutras of greater scope; and third, those who practice the six forms of mindfulness. They aspire to be born in that Buddha land by transferring there the merit of practice. With the merit acquired from doing these acts for one to seven days, they attain birth.” And moreover, “After being born in that land, he sees the Buddha’s body complete with all its physical characteristics and also the bodies of the bodhisattvas equally complete with all their physical characteristics...he is endowed with innumerable hundreds of thousands of dhāraṇis.” In this state means that the practitioners who seat on the jewel lotus flower represents one of the eight virtues in the Pure Land, and following behind the Amitābha Buddha there are two benefits that listening and observing.

2) The middle level of highest grade

The Amitāyur-dhyāna Sūtra (佛說觀無量壽佛經) stages: “Those who attain birth on the middle level of the highest grade do not necessary uphold and chant the sutras of

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greater scope, but they comprehend the teachings of the Buddha so well that when they hear the supreme truths they are not dismayed. They have deep faith in the law of karmic cause and effect and do not slight the Mahāyāna. They transfer the merit acquired to the Land of Utmost Bliss, aspiring to be born there…”

Based on this statement which relates to the middle level of the highest grade, the implication for the practitioner who aspires to be born in the pure land is rooted in four kinds of sense:

a. According to the Sūtra teaches that the practitioners in the middle level of the highest grade do not necessary uphold and chant the Mahāyāna Sūtra.
b. To listening and understanding the meaning of emptiness (S: Śūnyatā or śūnya; P: suñña; C: 空 or 空性) of the Mahāyāna path in a very skilful.
c. The practitioners should deep faith in the law of cause and effect of this finite impermanent world and the spiritual world [super-mundane] (S: Lokottara), the cause, action, effect of pleasant and suffering. In this context, the deep faith in the law of cause and effect should be suitable with the third of merit.
d. In this practice and transfer merit the practitioners should attained in the western pure land.

Furthermore, in the Sūtra, the seven-jeweled lotus flowers are also represented. The Amitābha Buddha, Avalokiteśvara, Mahāsthāmaprāpta, and innumerable sages and attendants, carrying a purple-gold lotus seat, praise and welcome the practitioners that there are five kinds of sense:

a. The Amitābha Buddha and innumerable sages and attendants are owner coming.

20 Ibid, pp. 93-94.
b. The practitioner is about to die (death-proximate *karma*) in this life.

c. The *Amitābha Buddha* and innumerable sages and attendants appear with a purple-gold lotus seat before the practitioner.

d. The *Amitābha Buddha*, *Avalokiteśvara*, *Mahāsthāmaprāpta*, and innumerable sages and attendants praise the practitioners, saying, ‘Son of the *Dharma*, because the practitioner who had practiced the *Mahāyāna*, appreciate the supreme truths, and narrate all the good actions was done.

e. The *Amitābha Buddha* saying, ‘I have come to welcome you’ means the *Buddha* afraid that the practitioner still distrust.

Moreover, the *Sūtra* also represents a thousand Transformed *Buddhas* who have come to welcome to a seven-jeweled pond of that land. In this context, the practitioner who was sitting on the purple-gold seat and be born in a seven-jeweled pond of pure land, in which opens after one night because of the practitioner was not deep in practice. There are five kinds of sense:

a. The *Amitābha Buddha* and a thousand Transformed *Buddhas* extend their hands all at once toward the aspirant.

b. By the *Buddhas* extend their hands to welcome the practitioner who was himself seeing sitting on the purple-gold seat.

c. The practitioner himself seeing sitting on the purple-gold seat, joins his palms and praise the *Amitābha Buddha*, and innumerable sages and attendants.

d. Relating to time was belonging to fastest or slowest.

e. In an instant, the practitioner was born in a seven-jeweled pond of that land.

In this regard, the *Sūtra* represents that the *Buddha* and *Bodhisattvas* together release a flood of light that illuminates the aspirant’s body. After a great jeweled flower opens there are five kinds of sense:
a. The light of the *Buddha* and *Bodhisattvas* together release a flood of light that illuminates the aspirant’s body.

b. Aspirant’s eyes open by the flood of light that illuminates.

c. By the store of merit from his previous life, he hears voices everywhere expounding only the most profound and supreme truths.

d. After hear the most profound and supreme truths, descending from his golden seat, bows with joined palms and praises the *Buddha*.

e. After seven days in this world, immediately reaches the stage of non-retrogression for realizing highest, the perfect enlightenment.

Moreover, the *Sūtra* represents that able to fly in the ten directions to offer and revere all the *Buddhas*, in which mean for benefit and receive from each *Buddha* in that land. The five kinds of sense in this context are as follows:

a. The practitioner’s himself able to fly in the ten directions, as he wishes.

b. To spend from each direction the practitioner should offer and revere all the *Buddhas*.

c. Learn and practice various *samādhis* from each *Buddhas*.

d. The time of practitioner attains the insight into the non-arising of all *dharmas*.

e. The practitioner receives from each Buddha the prediction of aspirant’s future *Buddha-hood*.

On the basis of the above mentioned statement, such a person is called one who attains birth on the middle level of the highest grade.

3) The lowest level of the highest grade

The *Amitāyur-dhyāna Sūtra* stages: “Those who attain birth on the lowest level of the highest grade likewise accept the law of karmic cause and effect, do not speak slightlying
of the Mahāyāna, and awaken aspiration for highest enlightenment. They transfer the merit acquired to the Land of Utmost Bliss, aspiring to be born there…”

In this context, the Buddha would want to show the position of the practitioners in the lowest level of highest grade belonging to Mahāyāna. There are three kinds of sense in this level:

a. The practitioner, there is not enough faith or non-consistent in the law of cause and effect. Mean that there is faith in the law of cause and effect, but not deep faith. If, the practitioner deep faith in the pure land that there is pleasure in dharma nature (S: asamkrta), in which there is non-active and free from the passions or senses, the realm of truth (S: dharmadhātu; C: 法界) should be permanence in that land.

b. Although, there is discontinued in faith, but the practitioner should not speak slightingly of the Mahāyāna. Because the Sūtra teaches that if the practitioners who arising speak slightingly of the Mahāyāna, in this case, even if a thousand transformed Buddhas appear and surrounded before the practitioners also could not save them to the pure land.

c. The practitioners should realize that this life all are sufferings and spend their whole heart to the pure land. Furthermore, the practitioners should accomplish the compassionate vows of the Bodhisattvas and make wows return to help all sentient beings. In this context is suitable with the third of merit in the threefold merit.

Furthermore, the Sūtra also represents the transfer merit acquired to the Land of Utmost Bliss and when such an aspirant is about to die, the Amitābha Buddha, together with Avalokiteśvara, Mahāsthāmaprāpta, and a host of attendants, come to welcome the practitioners, there are nine kinds of sense in this context such as:

21 Ibid, pp. 94-95.
a. The practitioner, when such an aspirant is about to die (death-proximate karma) in this life.

b. The Amitābha Buddha, together with Avalokiteśvara, Mahāsthāmaprāpta, and a host of attendants, come to welcome the practitioners with bringing a golden lotus flower.

c. The Transformed Buddhas extend their hands all at once, and have come to welcome aspirant.

d. The Amitābha Buddha, together with Avalokiteśvara, Mahāsthāmaprāpta, a host of attendants, and all Transformed Buddhas praise the aspirant.

e. The practitioners have destroyed impure karmas and awakened pure aspiration for highest enlightenment.

f. Although, the practitioner seeing the Amitābha Buddha, but still suspicious about for the rebirth in the pure land. So, all the host attendants saying, ‘we have come to welcome you’.

g. When aspirant viewed all this, the aspirant finds himself seated upon a golden lotus flower, which then closes.

h. The practitioner following the World-honored One, then immediately attains birth on the pure land.

i. After the practitioner attains birth on the pure land, then he was staying in a seven-jeweled pond.

Furthermore, the Amitāyur-dhyana Sūtra also teaches that, after the practitioner attains in a seven-jeweled pond, there are benefits such as: the aspirant beholds the Buddha, sees the Buddha’s body, hears all the sounds and voices proclaiming the wonderful Dharma, travel in all the ten directions to make offerings to the Buddha and hear their profound teachings.
However, in the light of what has been stated above, these three together are known as the contemplation of the highest grade of aspirants, in consonance with the fourteenth contemplation.

4) **The highest level of the middle grade**

In the *Amitāyur-dhyāna Sūtra* the Lord Buddha said to Ānanda and Vaidehī stated that: “Those who attain birth on the highest level of the middle grade are the sentient beings that keep the five precepts, observe the eight abstinences, practice in compliance with various precepts, and abstain from committing the five grave offenses and other transgressions. They transfer the merit acquired to the Western Land of Utmost Bliss, aspiring to be born there…”

Evidently, the *Buddha* would want to show the position in this level for the practitioners. In this stage is belonging to Hīnayanists. Thus, there are four kinds of sense in the perception of *Buddha Dharma* such as:

a. The fundamental ability of the practitioner should be perception or should not be perception of the *Buddha Dharma*.

b. To receive and retain the abstinence and precepts of the Hīnayanist’s teachings.

c. The ability of the Hīnayanist’s precepts is not enough ability to abolish the Five Grave Offenses (*Icchantikas*).

d. The practitioners receive and retain the Hīnayanist’s precepts and should not break the moral. In this context, should be suitable with the second of merit. However, the practitioners should hold the goodness of *Śīla* to transfer the merit acquired and aspiring to be born in the pure land, the land of utmost bliss.

22 Ibid, p. 95.

23 The Lesser Vehicle who cultivate the *catvāry āryasatyānī*, the Four Noble Truths and thereby attain to *Nirvāṇa* with Residue.
Furthermore, the *Amitāyur-dhyāna Sūtra* also represents that when such a practitioner is about to die (death-proximate *karma*) and the *Amitābha Buddha* appears before the practitioner, surrounded by a host of monks (together with a great community of *Bhiksus*)\(^{24}\) and radiating a golden light. In this context, there are six kinds of sense such as:

a. This human life is too short and impermanent.

b. The *Amitābha Buddha* and a host of monks appear before the practitioner without group of *Bodhisattvas*. Because of, the practitioner was belonging to fundamental ability of *Hīnayanist*, therefore, the response to appeal for the *Hīnayanist*.

c. The *Amitābha Buddha* was radiating a golden light to the practitioner.

d. By the compassionate of *Amitābha Buddha* expounds the truth of suffering, emptiness, impermanence, and no-self for the practitioner, and praised renunciation of the world as the way to escape from suffering.

e. The aspirant understanding those *Dharmas* and the aspirant greatly rejoices, finds him-self seated upon a lotus flower. Then, the aspirant kneels down, joins the palms, and worships the *Amitābha Buddha*.

f. The aspirant kneels down and worships the Buddha in this life, before aspirant raises the head, and then attains birth in the western pure land.

Moreover, the *Amitāyur-dhyāna Sūtra* also represents that the lotus bud of aspirant soon blossoms and the flower opens. Three senses in this regard are described in the following way:

a. The opening of lotus-jewel flower symbolises the deep practice in the *Śīla* of the aspirant.

b. The various sounds and voices appreciate the benefit of the Four Noble Truths.

\(^{24}\) In Sanskrit word known as: *mahatā bhikṣusaṅghena sārdham*. 
c. After hearing the “Four Noble Truths”, the aspirant attains arhatship.

However, the teaching in the Amitāyur-dhyāna Sūtra refers to the one who has attained birth on the highest level of the middle grade. The stage of Hinayananist acquires the three kinds of transcendent and the six supernatural powers, and realizes the eight samādhis of liberation (S: Asta-vimoksa).

5) The middle level of the middle grade

According to the Amitāyur-dhyāna Sūtra, “Those who attain birth on the middle level of the middle grade are the sentient beings that observe for at least a day and a night the eight abstinences for a novice, or the complete precepts of a monk or a nun, and do not violate any of the rules of conduct. They transfer the merit acquired to the Land of Utmost Bliss, aspiring to be born there…”

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25 According to the Theravada Buddhism, the word arhat (Ch: 阿羅漢) means anyone who has reached the total Awakening and attained Nirvāṇa, in which a person who has free from all defilements or destroyed greed, hatred, and delusion. The arhat attains the three insights such as: insight into the mortal conditions of self and other in previous lives; supernatural insight into future mortal conditions; and nirvāṇa insight. There are also four grades of Arhat: (1) Śrotāpanna (Stream-winner); (2) Sakṛdāgāmin (Once-Returner); (3) Anāgāmin (Never-Returner); (4) Arhat (the Arhat full grade) one with nothing left to learn. But, on the other hands, in stage of Śrotāpanna, Sakṛdāgāmin, Sakṛdāgāmin are still Śākṣa means one with something left to learn.

26 The Arhat attains the six supernatural powers (S: sadabhijnā or Abhijnā) through the fourth degree of dhyāna such as: (1) Divyacaksu, divine eye; (2) Divyasrotra, divine ear; (3) Rddhisāksākrya, magical powers; (4) Purvānivāsānu-smrtijnā, remembrance of one's former state of existence; (5) Paracittā-jnāna, ability to perceive other person's thoughts; (6) Āsavaksaya-jnāna, supernatural consciousness of the waning of vicious propensities; extinction of the cankers. And the Arhat also acquired attains the eight samādhis of liberation such as: (1) liberation, when subjective desire arises, by examination of the object, or of all things and realization of their filthiness; (2) liberation, when no subjective desire arises, by still meditating as above; (3) liberation by concentration on the pure to the realization of a permanent state of freedom from all desire. The above three correspond to the four dhyānas; (4) liberation in realization of the infinity of space; (5) liberation in realization of infinite knowledge; (6) liberation in realization of nothingness, or nowhereness; (7) liberation in the state of mind where there is neither thought nor absence of thought. These four arise out of abstract meditation in regard to desire and form, (8) liberation by means of a state of mind in which there is final extinction, nirvāṇa, both of sensation (vedānā) and consciousness (samjñā).

In the light of the above message, the Buddha would want to show the position at this level, which belonged to the Hinayanist. In this stage, there are three kinds of sense which are as follows:

a. The practitioners should observe the eight abstinences (P: Atthanga-sīla) for at least a day and a night.

b. The practitioners should observe the precepts taken by the novice (S: Srāmanera).

c. The practitioners should observe the complete precepts (Upasampadā) for monk and nun.

The level of precepts, as suggested here, was the same for those who receive and observe at least a day and night in order to attain the stage of free from evil and defilement, pure and clean (S: visuddhi). In this context was suitable with the second of merit relating to Śīla practice to aspiring to the western pure land.

Furthermore, in the Amitāyur-dhyāna Sūtra, it is also stated that the practitioners should transfer the merit acquired to the pure land by the perfumed of the virtue of observing the precepts. Whenever such an aspirant is about to die, the Amitābha Buddha appears with attendants to welcome the practitioner. There are eight kinds of sense in this context which can be summed up as follows:

a. This human life was impermanent and not too long.

b. The Amitābha Buddha and attendant of monks appear to welcome.

c. The Amitābha Buddha appears with radiating a golden light to the practitioner.

d. The attendant of monks appears with carrying a seven jeweled lotus flower.

e. The practitioner hears in the sky above praising with saying ‘Man of good deeds’.

f. The Amitābha Buddha praised: the practitioner deep faith and followed the teachings of the Buddhas, etc, therefore the Amitābha Buddha have come to welcome the practitioner.
g. After hearing the *Amitābha Buddha* himself praising: the practitioner finds himself seated upon the lotus flower, and the flower having closed.

h. The flower having closed, the aspirant was born on a jeweled pond of the western pure land. After seven days the lotus bud unfolds mentioned to temporal conception.

Moreover, in the *Amitāyur-dhyāna Sūtra* also represents stated that; after the lotus bud unfolds there are seventh kinds of benefit such as:

a. After the lotus bud unfolds, the aspirant opens his eyes then sees the *Amitābha Buddha*.

b. The practitioner pays homage to the World-honored One.

c. The practitioner rejoices at hearing the *Dharma* and reaches the stage of stream-winner (*śrota-āpanna*).

d. After half a *kalpa*, becomes an *arhat*.

6) The lowest level of the middle grade

According to the *Amitāyur-dhyāna Sūtra* stated that: “Those who attain birth on the lowest level of the middle grade are good men and women who are dutiful to and care for their parents and do benevolent deeds for others…”

On the above that message mentioned the *Buddha* would wants to show the position of the practitioners in this level. This lowest level of middle grade there are fourth kinds of sense was suitable for the vehicle of humankind such as:

a. The fundamental ability of the practitioners should be mentioned.

b. The filial respect and dutiful to care parents and relatives, etc, in this state was suitable with the first kind of merit.

c. The practitioners in this stated always in harmony and benevolent deeds for others.
d. Although, these human beings nothing ever hearing and understanding the Buddha Dharma. But, filial respect and care to parents only. Whenever about to die, these human beings seeing, meeting, hearing, understanding to the Buddha Dharma, then dies and in as short a time attains birth in the ‘Sukhāvatīvyūh’\(^{29}\) of the Amitābha Buddha.

Moreover, the message in this Sūtra we also come across state that after seven days the lotus bud unfolds but still different in many details. And there are three kinds of sense after meets Avalokiteśvara and Mahāsthāmaprāpta and reaches the stage of stream-winner such as:

a. After birth in the western pure land the aspirant meets Availokiteśvara and Mahāsthā-maprāpta.

b. The aspirant meets Avalokiteśvara Bodhisattva and Mahāsthāmaprāpta Bodhisattva and rejoins in hearing the Dharma from them.

c. The aspirant becomes an arhat after one smaller kalpa.

On the above that was mentioned in the Am. Dh. S. teaches that these three together are known as the contemplation of the lowest level of middle grade, in which suitable with the fifteenth contemplation.

7) The highest level of the lowest grade

The Buddha represents to Ānanda and Vaidehī in the Amitāyur-dhyāna Sūtra stated that:

“Those who attain birth on the highest level of the lowest grade are the sentient beings that commit various evil acts but do not slander the Mahāyāna Sūtras of greater scope. When a foolish person such as this, who has committed much evil but feels no remorse, is

\(^{29}\) The word Sukhāvatī contains the word sukhā means “bliss”.
about to die, he may meet a good teacher, who praises the titles of the twelve divisions of the *Mahāyāna* scriptures. By hearing these sutra titles, he is released from the burden of evil karma that would bind him to birth and death for a thousand *kalpas*. Furthermore, this wise teacher advises him to join his palms and call, ‘Homage to *Amitāyus Buddha* (*Na-mo-o-mi-t’o-fo*).’ Calling the Name of the *Buddha* extinguishes the evil *karma* that would bind the dying person to birth and death for fifty *koṭis* of *kalpas*…”

On the above that message mentioned the *Buddha* would wants to show the position of living beings in this level, in which stage that living beings living in the state of evil conduct in thought and deeds which lead to the evil *karma*. There are five kinds of sense in this context such as:

a. To mentioned about the general motor to commit evil act.

b. To mentioned about the original artifact of the evil deeds.

c. To mention about the sentient beings that who have commit various evil acts, but do not slander the *Mahāyāna Sūtras*.

d. To mention about the person who commit the evil acts, such as this person is a foolish person.

e. To mentioned about the foolish person, because a foolish person such as this who has committed much evil but feels no remorse.

Furthermore, in the *Amitāyur-dhyāna Sūtra* also represents that the foolish person such as this whenever is about to die may meet a wise teacher advise to calling ‘homage’ to the Name of *Amitābha Buddha* extinguishes the evil *karma*. There are sixth kinds of sense in this context such as:

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31 Homage or reverence in the *Sanskrit* language word as ‘*Namaḥ*’ which was refers to taking refuge and returning the life in worship to the Buddha. In this case, the translation of “homage to the *Buddha Amitābha*” is *Namaḥ* or *Namo amitābhabuddhāya*. 
a. To mentioned: is about to die (death-proximate \textit{karma}).

b. The aspirant may meet a wise teacher to advise the way to rebirth in the western pure land.

c. This wise teacher praises the titles of the twelve divisions of the \textit{Mahāyāna Sūtras} for the aspirant is about to die.

d. By hearing these \textit{Mahāyāna Sūtra} titles, the aspirant may released from the burden of evil karma that would bind him to birth and death for a thousand \textit{kalpas}.

e. The wise teacher advises the aspirant to join the palms and call homage to \textit{Amitābha Buddha}.

f. By calling the Name of \textit{Amitābha Buddha}, extinguishes the evil \textit{karma} from fifty \textit{koṭis} of \textit{kalpas}.

Furthermore, in the \textit{Am. Dh. S.} also represents that the aspirant who was about to die and reborn on the seven lotus-jeweled flower pond by hearing the Name of \textit{Buddha}, the \textit{Dharma}, and the \textit{Sangha}, etc, there are sixth kinds of sense in this context such as:

a. Is about to die, whenever the aspirant calling homage to the Nam of \textit{Amitābha Buddha} then sends his transformed body and those of \textit{Avalokiteśvara} and \textit{Mahāsthāmaprāpta} to the aspirant.

b. The Transformed body of \textit{Avalokiteśvara} and \textit{Mahāsthāmaprāpta} appearing before the aspirant and praise in immediately.

c. The Transformed body of \textit{Avalokiteśvara} and \textit{Mahāsthāmaprāpta} appearing before the aspirant, praise to the aspirant and advise the way to get benefits from calling the Name of \textit{Amitābha Buddha}. After that the evil \textit{karma} has been extinguished and then the \textit{Bodhisattvas} say ‘we have come to welcome you’.

d. The Transformed body of \textit{Avalokiteśvara} and \textit{Mahāsthāmaprāpta} appearing, the aspirant sees a flood of light from that Transformed Buddha fill the room.

e. By seeing a flood of light, then the aspirant known that is about to die.
f. The aspirant seated on a jeweled lotus flower, follows the Transformed Buddha and born on a jeweled pond.

Moreover, in the Am. Dh. S. represents that within forty nine days (in seven weeks) the lotus bud opens. There are five kinds of sense of benefits after the lotus bud pens such as:

a. The Avalokiteśvara Bodhisattva and Mahāsthāmaprāpta appear before and releasing great floods of light to the aspirant.

b. The Avalokiteśvara Bodhisattva and Mahāsthāmaprāpta appear adjacent the lotus flower of the aspirant.

c. The Avalokiteśvara Bodhisattva and Mahāsthāmaprāpta explain the extremely profound teachings of the twelve divisions of the scriptures to the practitioner.

d. After having heard the profound teachings of Mahāyāna Sūtras, the aspirant accepts them in faith and awakens aspiration for highest enlightenment.

e. The practitioner acquires clear understanding of the one hundred dharmas and enters the first stage of a Bodhisattva.

However, in this stage of the highest level of the lowest grade, the aspirant was reborn on the pure land by the calling homage the Name of Amitābha Buddha and also calling the Name of Buddha, the Dharma, and the Sagha, the Three Treasures in Buddhism (S: Triratna, or Ratnatraya).³²

8) The middle level of the lowest grade

According to the Amitāyur-dhyāna Sūtra the Buddha said to Ānanda and Vaidehī stated that: “Those who attain birth on the middle level of the lowest grade are the sentient beings that violate the five precepts, the eight precepts, or the complete precepts

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³² In Sanskrit word for when living beings all become mindful of the Triple Jewel such as: Buddha-manasikāra, Dharma-manasikāra and Saṅgha-manasikāra.
of a monk or a nun. A foolish person such as this steals from the Sangha, or takes the personal belongings of monks, or preaches the Dharma with impure motives, but feels no remorse. Thus he defiles himself by evil karma and because of this he is liable to fall into hell…”

On the above that mentioned the Buddha would wants to show the position of the sentient beings, in which the fundamental ability disobey in Buddhist precepts there are some difference levels in this context such as:

a. To mention about the fundamental ability of the person who has commit the evil.
b. The majority sentient beings who have commit the evil karmas.
c. The person such as who has steals from the Saṅgha.
d. To mention the person who preaches the Dharma with impure motives for self benefits.
e. To mention the person who has committed the evil karmas but feels no remorse.
f. The person who defiles himself by the evil karmas, besides this person such as incites others to commit evil karmas.
g. This person such as was reliable to fall into the hell.

Furthermore, in the Am. Dh. S. the Buddha also represents that the person who has committed such as when is about to die, by the meeting of a wise teacher advises the aspirant to rebirth on the western pure land. There are nine kinds of sense in this context such as:

a. To mention: the person who was about to die (death-proximate karma).
b. The flames of hell suddenly close in on person such as.
c. Whenever the flames of hell suddenly close in on to burn a person, suddenly may meets a good teacher.

33 Ibid, pp. 97-98.
d. The wise teacher explains and describes the ability compassionate and virtues of the Amitābha Buddha.

e. The compassionate and virtues of the Amitābha Buddha could extinguished the evil karma that would bind an aspirant to birth and death for koṭis of kalpas by after heard the Name of Amitābha Buddha.

f. The fierce flames of hell turn into cool and refreshing breezes after the extinguished evil karma.

g. The wafting heavenly flowers appear before the aspirant.

h. The Transformed Buddha accompanied by Bodhisattvas to welcome the aspirant.

i. The time for the aspirant departed: belonging to the time in lowest or fastest.

Furthermore, the Buddha also represents that the lotus bud opens and after the lotus bud opens, there are three kinds of sense in this context such as:

a. The lotus flower bud opens, and then Avalokiteśvara and Mahāsthāmaprāpta comfort the aspirant.

b. The Avalokiteśvara and Mahāsthāmaprāpta teach the noble voices and profound Mahāyāna Sūtras for the aspirant.

c. The aspirant hearing the profound and immediately awakens the highest enlightenment.

However, on the above mentioned such a person was called one who attains the middle level of the lowest grade.

9) The lowest level of the lowest grade

According to the Amitāyur-dhyāna Sūtra the Buddha said to Ānanda and Vaidehī stated that: “Those who attain birth on the lowest level of the lowest grade are the sentient beings who commit such evils as the five grave offenses, the ten evil acts, and all
kinds of immorality. Owing to such evil karma, a fool like this will fall into evil realms and suffer endless agony for many *kalpas*…”

On the above that message mentioned that the *Buddha* would want to show the position of the sentient beings who has committed the five grave offenses. In this context, there are seven kinds of sense such as:

a. To mention above a push to make evil acts.
b. To mention above the ten bad actions and all kinds of immorality (S: *Akuśala-karma*).
c. To collect and analyses the evil *karma*.
d. The person who commits such evil *karma* was not a wise man.
e. The person who make a heavy *karma* would get suffer endless agony.
f. To mentioned and emphasized above the law of cause and effect.
g. The causes of all evil acts are the endless agony in effect for many *kalpas*.

Furthermore, in the *Amitāyur-dhyāna Sūtra* also represent that the sentient beings in the lowest level of the lowest grade, in which practiced to calling the Name of *Amitābha Buddha* in order to rebirth in the Pure land of Utmost Bliss. There are tenth kinds of sense of benefits by the practice calling the Name of the *Buddha* such as:

a. To mentioned: This person was made an evil *karma*.
b. To mentioned: When this person was about to die (death-proximate *karma*).
c. To mentioned: when this person was about to die, may meets a wise teacher.
d. To mentioned: The wise teacher consoles this aspirant to be mindful of the *Buddha*.

e. To mentioned: This person was too tormented by the pain, therefore this aspirant could not mindful or concentrate on the Buddha.

f. To mentioned: The good teacher then advises this aspirant to calling homage to the Name of Amitābha Buddha.

g. To mentioned: In this way, the aspirant sincerely and continuously calling homage to the Name of Amitābha Buddha in repetition.

h. To mentioned: By the sincerely and continuously calling the Name of Amitābha Buddha then the evil karma that would bind this aspirant to birth and death for koṭis of kalpas was extinguished.

i. To mentioned: When this aspirant was comes to die in mindful on Buddha, and then the golden lotus flower appears before this aspirant for welcome.

j. To mentioned: belonging to the time for the rebirth in the pure land in lowest or fastest.

Moreover, in the Amitāyur-dhyāna Sūtra also represents that the aspirant was born within a lotus bud in the Land of Utmost Bliss and after when the flower opens there are three kinds of benefit of sense in this context such as:

a. To mentioned: the Avalokiteśvara Bodhisattva and Mahāsthāmaprāpta Bodhisattva teach the voices of great compassion and profound Dharma for the aspirant.

b. To mentioned: by hearing profound Dharma, then the aspirant extinguished evil karma.

c. To mentioned: after hearing the profound Dharma, the aspirant rejoices and immediately awakens aspirant for enlightenment.

However, all the above that mentioned was belonging to the lowest level of lowest grade for those who attains on this level. Moreover, in these three of the lowest grades are known as suitable for the aspirant in the sixteenth contemplation. Furthermore, according
to the teachings in the *Amitāyur-dhyāna Sūtra* that the threefold merit and the nine grades that was belonging to the part of the canon spoken voluntarily and not in reply to appeals (S: *Udāna*) by the great compassionate of the Lord Buddha for the benefits of all sentient beings. Moreover, last but not least, according to Kenneth K. Tanaka that who has written the synopsis on the ranking of the nine grades in the context of the traditional path was relating to Hui-Yuan played a key role in this practice promoting such as:

a. Chi-tsang’s commentary: *Bodhisattvas* of sixth *Bhūmi* (highest of high and middle of high grades) and first *Bhūmi* (lowest of high); those who attain *Hīnayāna Ārayapudgala* ranks (middle grades); those who attain *Mahāyāna* effects (low grades).

b. The *Tun-huang* manuscripts by an anonymous author: the last mind in the Ten-Transferences stages, the Ten-Understandings and Ten-Practices stages, and the Ten-Faiths stages (the high three grades); *uṣmagata* and *murdhān* stages, General and Specific *smṛtyupasthāna*, and Five [Meditations] for Terminating [the Perversions of] the Mind (the middle three grades); *Prthagjanas* who raise the *Bodhi* mind, who break the Five Precepts and who perform unvirtuous acts (the three low grades).

c. Chia-ts’ai’s Pure Land Treatise: the first mind of the Ten Understanding stages, the first mind of the Ten-Faiths stages, and the entire *Prthagjanas* of Good Destinies prior to the Ten-Faith stages (the three high grade); *Hinayanists* of the latter four of the Seven Skillful Means, those of the former three of the Seven Skillful Means, and the entire *Prthagjanas* of the Good Destinies from those who have accepted the Five Precepts up to those of the Seven Skillful Means (the three middle grades); the entire *Prthagjanas* who commit evil, such as Ten Evils and Five Grave Offenses (all three low grades).

d. The *Chih-I* Commentary: from Lineage to Practice of Resolution stages (equal Ten-Understandings to Ten-Transferences stages) (the three high grades); Ten-
Faiths stages and below (the three middle grades); the entire Prthagjanas (the three low grades).

e. The Shan-tao Commentary: (see listing above).\textsuperscript{35}

On the list above was increase in value for the discussion of the ranking of the nine grades. On that above we are realized that all the beings who reach the Buddhaland (Buddhakṣetra) of the Buddha of Limitless Life are irreversible in position, thought, and conduct. They never retreat from their quest for Bodhi, etc. Finally, the figure of the ranking of the nine grades in which refers to engaged Pure Land Buddhism and morality in the modern world.\textsuperscript{36}


\textsuperscript{36} Whenever living beings all become mindful of the Triple jewel such as: Buddhamaṇasikāra or Buddhānusmṛtiḥ, Dharma-manasikāra and Saṅgha-manasikāra, etc there aren’t even words to name the three evil paths, those of hell-beings, animals or ghosts (S: nirayānāṃ, tiryagyoṣṇāṃ, yamalokasya), viz, the names of the three evil paths (greed, anger, ignorance) not exist in this world, i.e., that is the Land of Happiness of Amitābha Buddha.