

## **Nian Fo, Buddha Name Recitation**

Central to the practice of Pure Land Buddhism is the continual recitation of the name of Amitabha Buddha in Chinese. This practice is called “**Nian-fo**”. The words chanted or recited are either “**Amitofuo**” (*Pronounced a-mi-toe-fwo*) or **Namo Amitofuo** (meaning Praise to Amitabha).

When we chant the name of Amitabha Buddha we enter into the sanctuary of the Bodhi Mind. Like droplets of water that clean out a tank of muddy water by displacement gradually Karmic residue will be gradually displaced from the mind.

There are many methods of Chanting. It is best to find one which is best for you and your life-style.

### ***Using a Mala:***

A “mala” is a type of rosary. Usually Buddhist mala’s have 108 beads excluding the “mother” bead – the large bead at the top.

Taking the mala between your hands, close your eyes and concentrate on or visualize the Amitabha Buddha and then begin to say aloud and quietly “Amitofuo” as you pass by each bead. Complete one or three rounds or more.

### ***Using Chanting music:***

Another method is to chant with Pure Land Chanting music (available from T’ai Shen resources). This is helpful and convenient as the music can be played while driving the car or while listening to an Mp3 player.

### ***Plain recitation:***

Set aside a period of time each day or throughout the day to sit in a quiet space and quietly recite either “Namo Amitofuo” 南無 阿弥陀佛 or “Amitofuo” 阿弥陀佛. “Namo” here means “Take refuge in”. If your mind wanders simply bring it back again and do not be too concerned of the frequent wanderings of mind in the beginning. Just know the thoughts for what they are and know that before them and after them is the name of the Infinite Light Buddha. If you are in a public space silent recitation is sufficient and does not draw attention to yourself.

### ***Ten Recitation Method for busy people:***

Pure Land Buddhism is practical Buddhism. There are times when we are unable to spend lengthy periods in recitation. The Ten Recitation Method when done with Sincerity and Vows has equal merit to the other methods.

Stand in front of a statue or photo of Amitabha Buddha. If one is not available simply visualize the Amitabha Buddha and recite “Amitofuo” ten times:

1. On waking
2. Before Breakfast
3. Before morning work
4. After morning work
5. Before Lunch
6. Before afternoon work
7. After afternoon work.
8. Before Dinner
9. Before Sleeping

### ***Shantao Meditation Method:***

This method is the jewel of methods and requires much practice. A full description of this method is available in Resources.

### ***Faith, Vows and Practice:***

These are the three pillars of “Nianfo”. As followers of the Way we have faith in the words of the Amitabha Buddha and his vows to lead us into the Western Pure Land. Here is a place of sublime joy and peace and the cessation of the cycle of birth and death and consequent suffering for all times. The Buddha of Infinite Light has promised that even on our death bed and even if we have not lived a goodly life, by reciting ten times his name we shall be taken into the Pure Land. Naturally this is not an excuse for leaving our practice to the last moments of our life as we do not know the time or circumstances. We may be taken suddenly with no time for preparation or recitation!

After each recitation we commit ourselves to the vow:

*I vow that, along with other Pure Land cultivators  
I will be reborn in the Land of Ultimate Bliss,  
See Amitabha Buddha, escape Birth and Death,  
And rescue all as the Buddha does.*

Practise continually. Each moment is an opportunity to practice Nienfo: While waiting for a bus, waiting for the traffic to move in peak hour congestion. While exercising etc There are many creative ways to practice through out the day.