

tice of reciting the name of Buddha Amitabha 10 times at 9 occasions of a day)<sup>12</sup> and Seven [Days] Nianfo Dharma Gathering (*fo-ch'i*); choosing a form is up to each individual Pure Land believer. Other practices, like extensively reading or listening to the sermons of Pure Land sutras, are also frequently used by believers together with the recitation in their daily practice.

This recitation practice is just one of the 3 conditions for being reborn into the Pure Land. The 3 conditions are called the Three Provisions (*san-tzu-liang*). Apart from recitation, the other 2 provisions are absolute faith in Buddha Amitabha, his Buddha Realm, and the efficacy of his vow and a strong will to be reborn there. It is believed that with the 3 provisions satisfied, one will be guided by Buddha Amitabha to be reborn into the Pure Land at one's dying moment.<sup>23,25,26</sup>

Compared with other Buddhist schools, the practice of Pure Land School is usually considered unique. In other Buddhist schools, one has to rely solely on self-power, namely one's own efforts, to correct one's false thoughts, words, and deeds and to eliminate the afflictions they cause by implementing the practices of the Noble Eightfold Path, mentioned earlier, in order to achieve Buddhahood. However, the practices of the Pure Land School allow one to rely on both self-power and other-power, namely the power of Buddha Amitabha, to attain Buddhahood. The aid of Buddha Amitabha's power is that by fulfilling his 48 great vows to attain Buddhahood, he has created perfection of the Western Pure Land for those who wish to transcend reincarnation within the 6 realms. Pure Land practitioners only need to overcome afflictions by reciting the name of Buddha Amitabha to achieve a rebirth in the Pure Land.<sup>23,24,27</sup> It is believed that after being reborn into the Pure Land, one will study in that Buddha Realm, by receiving Buddha Amitabha's teachings and benefiting from the miraculous features there, without regressing in their practice until one becomes a Buddha.<sup>23,24</sup> According to the *Infinite Life Sutra*, Buddha Amitabha's vows also promised that those who are reborn into the Pure Land will become Bodhisattvas at once and learn all the ways to assist other sentient beings to become Buddhas.<sup>22,23</sup> Therefore, the practice of the Pure Land School is known as a shortcut among all Buddhist schools,<sup>23,24</sup> and has been con-

stantly advocated by ancient and modern Chinese Buddhist masters and widely accepted by Chinese Buddhists.

### Case Study

The following 2 "good death" cases show how the beliefs and practices of the Pure Land School described above are applied to face and manage death in reality.

#### Case One

Mrs. Lu was a native of Nanking, a city in Mainland China. She moved to Taiwan with her family in June 1947. Together with her husband, she retired after working in a tobacco factory for 40 years. They were both sincere Pure Land Buddhists with a profound hope to be reborn in Western Pure Land. They also influenced all of their family to become Buddhists.

In 1957 or 1958, Mrs. Lu contracted arthritis, which was very severe. Although she passed a critical state under the care of doctors, Mr. Lu, and her children, her legs gradually lost their functions. Within 2 or 3 years, she could no longer walk.

After becoming crippled, Mrs. Lu became more diligent than before in practicing Buddhism. She did not know how to read scriptures but just followed Mr. Lu or Buddhist cassette tapes to recite Buddha Amitabha's name or scriptures. She also listened to Buddhist preaching on the radio. Everyday she stayed in bed and listened to scriptures or recited Buddha's name. In about 1971, she found that her heart felt uncomfortable if she lay down, so she began to sit on the bed to practice meditation or recitation. When she felt sleepy or tired, she would lean back on her quilt to take a rest.

On March 8, 1977, Mrs. Chang, a neighbor of Mrs. Lu who worked at a hair salon in the tobacco factory, paid her a visit. Mrs. Lu told her: "After a few days, I will be going. Let us talk more". Mrs. Chang wondered where she would go, since she was unable to walk. Therefore, she made an inquiry. Mrs. Lu replied: "I'm going to the original home of our Buddha nature" (an expression of death). Out of surprise, Mrs. Chang looked at her, and as she did not appear ill at all,