

## **Thirty days of nembutsu**

Welcome to thirty days of nembutsu. We are pleased that you have taken this opportunity to try something new which has the potential to affect deep change.

### **Why practice nembutsu?**

In this course we're offering you a taste of nembutsu because we want to pass on the wonderful benefits we've received through practicing it ourselves. We trust that over the coming days you will feel increasingly connected to all that is wholesome and nourishing in the Universe. If you are currently suffering, confused or grieving, the nembutsu can bring clarity and consolation. You will feel increasingly calm, accepting, grateful and joyful and, like us, you will begin to feel more patient and loving towards yourself and towards others.

Nembutsu is less known in the West than meditation, despite being the primary practice of millions of Pureland Buddhists in China, Japan and across the world. It became popular in 12<sup>th</sup> Century Japan as a Buddhist practice that was suitable for all, rich and poor, saints and sinners. It is especially suitable for those who feel something is missing but who are too busy to invest in long periods of spiritual practice or study.

### **What is the nembutsu?**

Nembutsu means mindfulness of Buddha. We become mindful of the Buddha by reciting or chanting 'Namo Amida Bu' which can be translated as 'little me, calling out to Amida, the Buddha of Infinite Light'. This is our way of taking refuge, and of bringing ourselves into relationship with something other than our small minds – something completely good. Namo Amida Bu is the Japanese form of the nembutsu. We sometimes chant in other languages such as Chinese (Namo Omito Fo) or Sanskrit (Amitabha).

### **Is the nembutsu for me?**

A recitation or chanting practice can seem unusual to those of us in the West, and some people feel self-conscious when they first begin to chant. We find that if you persist, it will soon begin to feel more natural. You may also have questions or feel sceptical about whether

the practice will make any difference to your life. We suggest that you notice any questions that arise and put them to one side for now. In our experience, simply doing the practice can answer many of these initial questions. To try it out, you will need to put aside five or ten minutes a day for thirty days. The nembutsu brings many benefits, so have a go and find out for yourself.

## Preparing to practice nembutsu

- ❖ Listen to both recorded nembutsu chants ([spoken](#) or [with a tune](#)) and decide whether you'd like to practice the recitation or the chanting.
- ❖ Decide when you're going to do your daily practice – it can be helpful to do it at the same time every day, such as first thing in the morning or in your lunch break.
- ❖ Decide where you're going to chant.
- ❖ Decide whether you will chant alone, or chant along with Kasper and Satya on the recording each day.

## How to practice nembutsu

- ❖ Sit comfortably and close your eyes if you want to. Chant for a minimum of five minutes, once a day. Some people like to imagine themselves being soaked in light as they chant.
- ❖ You may want to have a short period of silence before and after you chant.
- ❖ Some people like to light a candle before they start chanting or sit near an image or statue of the Buddha.
- ❖ If you feel you want to chant twice a day or for longer then do go ahead.
- ❖ If you can't find a place where you can chant out loud every day, chant in your head.
- ❖ If you forget a day, that's okay – just say 'Namo Amida Bu' and start again the next day.

## Connecting with others

We are members of Amida Shu, an international school of Pureland Buddhism founded by Dharmavidya David Brazier. You can meet other Amida Shu members from around the world at our virtual temple at [www.friendsofamide.com](http://www.friendsofamide.com) and talk to them about their own experience of nembutsu practice. You can also find out if there are any [Amida Shu groups](#) in your area, or [start your own](#).

## **Further exploration**

If you find benefits from your nembutsu practice, you can read more about Amida Shu Buddhism at [www.amidashu.org](http://www.amidashu.org). The best books to start with are 'Just As You Are: Buddhism for Foolish Beings' by Kaspalita Thompson and Satya Robyn, and 'Questions in the Sand: Buddhist Questions and Answers' by David Brazier. Dharmavidya David Brazier is the founder and head of Amida Shu.

## **Making a donation**

If you benefit from this course, you can make an optional donation of £10 or whatever you decide whether more or less to our charitable body, [Amida Trust](#), [here](#). This money will be used to support our project in Dehli, to run the temple in Malvern and to support new Amida Shu groups around the world.

## **Just As You Are**

Amida Buddha sees that we are all 'bombu' – foolish beings of wayward passion - and accepts us just as we are. As you continue to practice the nembutsu we hope that you will have an experience of being unconditionally accepted, just as we have. As Amida accepts us just as we are, it also becomes easier for us to accept and feel tender-hearted towards those around us.

Do feel free to get in touch with Kaspalita and Satya at [hello@amidamandala.com](mailto:hello@amidamandala.com) to let us know how you get on. Enjoy your practice. Namo Amida Bu.

## Glossary

There are lots of new terms to learn when you first start to practice nembutsu. These terms will eventually become as familiar as words like ‘meditation’ and ‘zen’ but, until then, here’s a glossary you can refer to as you read the emails or material online.

**Amida Buddha** – the Buddha of Infinite Light and Life.

**Amitabha** – the Sanskrit word for Amida Buddha, which we use in some of our chants.

**Amida Shu** – a school of Pureland Buddhism founded by Dharmavidya David Brazier in 1998.

**Bombu** – ‘foolish beings of wayward passion’.

**Buddha** – often used to refer to Shakyamuni Buddha, who lived in India in 500 B.C.E, but also used to refer to any fully enlightened beings including Amida Buddha.

**Dharma** – the teachings of Shakyamuni Buddha.

**Honen** – Honen Shonen was a Buddhist sage from 12<sup>th</sup> Century Japan who started Jodo Shu, the first independent Pureland school of Buddhism.

**Namo Amida Bu** – this is how we usually say the nembutsu. It is an Anglicised version of the Japanese nembutsu, Namu Amida Butsu.

**Nembutsu** – literally ‘mindfulness of the Buddha’. A Buddhist practice where we recite the name of Amida Buddha.

**Practice** – any spiritual exercise which is designed to bring us into relationship with the Buddha can be called practice. Meditation is a form of practice, and so is nembutsu.

**Pureland Buddhism** – the name given to the school of Buddhism where the central practice is nembutsu. Pureland Buddhism became a distinct school of Buddhism in 12<sup>th</sup> Century Japan, although its roots go back to the time of Shakyamuni Buddha in India (around 500 B.C.E.).

**Refuge** – taking refuge is at the heart of all Buddhism. It is suggested that we take refuge in the three jewels, Buddha, Dharma and Sangha, rather than in the things we usually take refuge in (money, status, possessions, receiving praise etc.) which are all impermanent.

**Sangha** – the community of Buddhists who practice together.

**Shinran Shonin** – a disciple of Honen who founded Jodo Shin Shu, the largest school of Pureland Buddhism in Japan.